

New Era 181

Chapter 181 - Winds Rising

A burst of cold wind blew, and goosebumps rose on Chen Shouyi's skin.

It's really cold.

Even though Chen Shouyi's physique already far exceeds that of ordinary humans, anyone would struggle to last long, naked in this freezing and frigid deep night, especially after losing a large amount of blood earlier, leaving his body even more weakened.

After all, while Natural Healing allows him to heal at an astonishing speed, the lost blood does not replenish automatically.

He opened the attribute panel for a glance.

Sure enough, he found that all physical attributes had slightly decreased.

Fortunately, none by much, generally only dropping by 0.1 or 0.2, and with a few days of rest, these attributes should fully recover.

"Let's go!" Chen Shouyi closed the attribute panel and called to the Shell Lady.

Upon hearing his words, the Shell Lady swiftly ran a few steps, leapt more than a meter high, hugged Chen Shouyi's arm in mid-air, and nimbly climbed, soon flipping onto his shoulder.

...

The park covers several hundred acres, and the place where the battle occurred was deep inside the park, not causing any disturbances.

Chen Shouyi skillfully avoided soldiers patrolling the streets, quickly returned to his bedroom, placed the Shell Lady on the bed, tiptoed to the bathroom, took a shower, and thoroughly washed off the bloodstains.

Then he packed the torn clothes into a bag and placed them under the bed, planning to throw them in the outside garbage can tomorrow.

He stared out the window for a while. In the hazy night, faint fires flickered from several chimneys.

After gazing for quite a while, he finally drew the curtains and lay down on the bed.

Soon, he was asleep.

...

The next day, Chen Shouyi reported his findings through Bai Xiaoling to the Hedong City Government.

For the next few days, everything was calm and peaceful.

It's just that the draft for the veterans became increasingly urgent, many soldiers and government staff from street offices walked into the community, taking away one veteran after another.

Chen Shouyi could already sense the atmosphere of war.

...

The Lunar New Year arrived.

Compared to previous years, this year's New Year felt particularly desolate, with the entire Hedong City hardly exhibiting any festive atmosphere.

Oppressive and heavy.

Only a few carefree kids played in the community early in the morning.

In fact, neither government offices nor major factories were on holiday during this New Year.

At noon, Chen Dawei specially prepared a table full of dishes.

"Are we about to go to war?" Even Mrs. Chen sensed something wasn't right about the recent atmosphere.

"Don't guess blindly!" Chen Dawei said, then after a while, sighed and said, "What good does worrying do?"

Chen Shouyi remained silent. In front of major events, even for someone like him who was almost as powerful as a Martial Artist, he could only go with the flow. Not to mention fearsome and unimaginable gods, even a single High Priest from another world almost caused his death.

This was because the opponent was not adept at fighting; otherwise, he would have been dead.

The dining atmosphere was somewhat solemn. After the meal, as Chen Shouyi was about to return to his bedroom, he was stopped by Chen Xingyue:

"Brother, I've made great progress lately. Could you help me test if I have the strength of a Martial Artist?"

Chen Shouyi glanced at the living room and said, "Okay, let's go outside!"

The two soon walked to the park within the community. It was still mealtime, and there were few people in the park, so they picked a secluded spot:

Chen Shouyi broke a branch nearby, threw it to his sister, and said, "No need to test physical fitness; a Martial Artist is meant for actual combat. You attack, and let me see."

Chen Xingyue took the branch eagerly and said, "Brother, don't be careless!"

With that, she tapped her foot lightly, her figure like an agile cat, thrusting at Chen Shouyi's shoulder with a rapid sword thrust.

Chen Shouyi remained motionless, just slightly shifted his shoulder to narrowly dodge his sister's thrust: "Don't hold back, at this level, you're not yet at Martial Artist strength, and you certainly can't hurt me."

Chen Xingyue gritted her silver teeth and sliced horizontally with the branch.

Chen Shouyi immediately performed a backbend, his waist almost bonelessly bending while his legs remained firmly planted on the ground, avoiding her attack.

"There's some skill, but still not enough. The strikes must be faster, and the movements need to be more agile."

Chen Xingyue, without saying a word, grit her teeth and attacked furiously.

The branch sliced through the air, continuously producing "whoosh" sounds. However, regardless of how she attacked, unless she purposely slashed at his feet, he would only slightly retreat, otherwise, his feet remained as if nailed to the ground, unmoving.

A few minutes later, Chen Xingyue stopped, face flushed and panting, exasperatedly saying, "Brother, can't you stop dodging?"

This was indeed quite discouraging.

"I can't let you attack freely; it would hurt me too, you know!" Chen Shouyi curiously replied.

"Actual combat is more like you hit and I hit back." Chen Xingyue explained.

"That would be over in one move."

"Brother, how could you be like this? I'm your sister, can't you let me win a bit?" Chen Xingyue felt a tightness in her chest, almost bursting with anger.

"Alright, I was just kidding." Chen Shouyi chuckled, seeing his sister's slightly darkened face and feeling the frustrations he'd once had with her dissipate, bringing a sense of relief.

Afterward, Chen Shouyi controlled his strength and practiced with Chen Xingyue.

With his strength nearly equivalent to a Martial Artist, instructing Chen Xingyue felt completely superior, and within a minute, her stormy attacks were forced into exhaustion, drenched in sweat.

"Brother, do I have the strength of a Martial Artist now?" On the way back, Chen Xingyue asked.

Though she was visibly fatigued, her eyes sparkled brightly. Since arriving in Hedong City, she hadn't indulged in a carefree practice with anyone for a long time.

"You're close. Your physical fitness is sufficient, but flexibility and coordination are still far from adequate. You haven't completed flesh refining during tranquility, have you?" Chen Shouyi thought for a moment and said.

"Yeah, still far off. I've only just refined the four limbs," Chen Xingyue replied.

"You've refined most of it already; you're in great shape. In half a year to a year, you might complete it." Chen Shouyi said, noting that while physical fitness can be supplemented with resources, this aspect offers no shortcuts and must be developed step by step, even for him.

"Still can't match Brother!"

"Don't compare yourself to me."

...

A few days later, a steam truck covered with a tarpaulin stopped at the entrance of the community, drawing many curious glances.

"Dad, Mom, the car is here; let's get on board."

The family, along with Bai Xiaoling, who came to help, carried large bags of luggage onto the truck, where many people were already present.

"Brother Chen, are you on this trip too?"

Upon hearing a familiar voice, Chen Shouyi turned to see Qin Liuyuan. His family seemed larger, including a white-haired elder, his wife, and two sons, with his eldest son appearing close in age to Chen Shouyi.

Chen Shouyi greeted with a smile, "Yes, what a coincidence."

Not chatting much, he exchanged a few pleasantries then stowed away the luggage, sitting with his parents and sister on the side.

Chapter 182 - Safe Zone

"Dad, who was that just now?" a tall young man asked quietly.

His father was stern and authoritative, so anyone who made his father greet them first was clearly not ordinary, although he did seem quite young.

The younger son looked over immediately, full of curiosity.

Qin Liuyuan looked at his two sons with a complex expression. He used to think his sons were very talented. As a second-generation martial artist, his eldest son passed the Martial Artist Apprentice test at fourteen and became a Martial Artist at seventeen. His second son was even more gifted, passing the apprentice test at thirteen and now, at sixteen, already possessing the power of a Martial Artist.

But when you compare yourself to others, you often fall short.

Compared to Chen Shouyi, who looked about the same age as his eldest son, it was like the difference between a dragon and a snake. His sons were like snakes, while the other was a true dragon, even he himself could only see him from a distance.

"A colleague! But he should be the strongest in all of Hedong City, or even Jiangnan Province. Show some respect if you meet him in the future," Qin Liuyuan sighed and whispered.

The family was shocked, feeling as if a huge wave had risen in their hearts.

"You should really build a good relationship with him!" an elderly man with white hair said, "I think things are about to get chaotic. When the time comes, you definitely won't be able to stay behind like a civilian."

"Yes, Dad, I'll handle it carefully. Don't worry," Qin Liuyuan quickly replied.

...

The steam truck continued on its way and reached the outskirts half an hour later.

Steam trucks loaded with large amounts of coal drove along the highway. Within just a minute, Chen Shouyi saw three steam trucks pass by. Compared to before the mutation, this pathetic transportation volume seemed negligible.

But now, it was simply astonishing.

Large industrial zones lined the highway, belching white smoke, the air filled with a choking smell. Compared to the sporadically located factories in the city, this was the true industrial base of Hedong City.

Moreover, it was more vibrant and lively, with much stricter defense; countless turrets and sentry posts could be seen everywhere along the road.

A few minutes later, the truck entered a residential area.

Chen Shouyi sat inside the truck, looking out.

The residential area was quite large, more like a small town than a community, complete with shopping malls, entertainment facilities, primary and secondary schools, and office buildings.

The ground here was clearly not yet fully leveled, and the landscaping work had not been done in time. Many places were still under construction, workers busy everywhere.

Before the mutation, it was a time of soaring real estate prices in Hedong. This large residential area was evidently one of the projects started then.

But no one expected the situation to suddenly change. The once-hot real estate market froze completely when banks could no longer release money.

Soon, the truck drove into a villa area.

...

The completion here was higher than the ordinary residences in the community. Though the exterior still looked like a construction site, the interior had been simply renovated, with all sorts of furniture complete.

The group entered Villa 24, and Chen Xingyue plopped down heavily on the sofa with a look of joy, "Such a big house."

"It's nice, but it'll be a hassle to clean," Mrs. Chen said as she put down her luggage, looking around with joy in her eyes.

This villa was a three-story villa, with a building area of 480 square meters according to the property certificate. Before the mutation, it would have cost at least thirty to forty million, even in the outskirts, not to mention now it's a Safe Zone, something money can't buy.

Next, everyone checked the various rooms.

It seemed they knew the identity of the homeowner; a 30-40 square meter training room was specially set up on the first floor. But this training room might only be used by Chen Xingyue. With Chen Shouyi's strength, a serious training session would probably ruin the floor.

...

In the evening, after having dinner, Chen Shouyi returned to his new bedroom and lit the gasoline lamp equipped inside, instantly brightening the whole room.

If there was anything that satisfied Chen Shouyi the most here, it was this portable gasoline lamp. Compared to the dim candlelight he used before, the brightness of this gasoline lamp was comparable to the electric lights before the mutation.

Next, he released the Shell Lady.

"Great Giant, have you changed sleeping places again?" The Shell Lady looked around in surprise.

She jumped off the desk, constantly looking around the room.

This bedroom was much larger than the previous one. Although it wasn't the master bedroom, this side bedroom was still three to four times bigger than his original bedroom and had its own bathroom. He no longer had to compete with his sister.

"What do you think of this place? Do you like it?" Chen Shouyi asked the Shell Lady.

"I like it!" The Shell Lady nodded quickly at his words.

She looked east and west, quickly drawn to an oil painting hanging on the wall.

"What are these two bad giants doing?"

Following her finger, Chen Shouyi saw an oil painting of a man and woman embracing and kissing on a bed. The painting was quite beautiful and artistic, without any indecency.

But evidently, Chen Shouyi wasn't someone who appreciated art. After a few glances, he felt a bit parched, his mind wavering.

Why is something like this hanging in the bedroom? This is a bad influence on the Shell Lady.

Snapping back to reality, he quickly took the oil painting down, broke the frame, tore out the painting, crumpled it into a ball, and threw it in the trash, intending to keep it out of sight and out of mind. As he did so, he mumbled, "They're just fighting."

"You're so dumb, don't you get it? These two bad giants are 'kissing'!" The Shell Lady scoffed at him while speaking, then pursed her lips, making loud kissing noises into the air.

Chen Shouyi looked at the Shell Lady, her expression like a female rogue, and felt a tightness in his chest.

She knew and still asked?

Was this deliberate?

Does Peppa Pig also have content unsuitable for children like this?

.....

Chen Shouyi was among the earlier ones to relocate. At first, it seemed empty and deserted, with little population.

But within a few days, it gradually became lively, with more and more people. Various government agencies and research institutes started moving in, with large numbers of steam trucks entering and exiting the Safe Zone daily.

Located near the countryside, there was a vegetable base and a large-scale farm nearby. Without the heavy logistics costs, prices were lower, even cheaper than before the mutation.

The city's high prices weren't due to dwindling supplies but were impacted by logistics. City residents couldn't afford the high prices, while rural vegetables and meat couldn't be transported out, dropping to floor prices.

Time passed quietly day by day.

Chen Shouyi spent most of his time training daily, as he had nothing else to do, though visitors were frequent, starting with Qin Liuyuan and his two sons.

Afterward, several neighbors living nearby also visited, getting acquainted.

Chapter 183 - The Calamity of the Divine Country

After March arrived, this place became increasingly lively. As malls and supermarkets gradually reopened, the Safe Zone began to regain a hint of its pre-apocalyptic prosperity.

Walking into the supermarket, looking at the bustling crowd, Chen Shouyi almost felt as if he had returned to the past, if not for the gasoline lamps replacing the electric lights overhead and the meager selection of goods on the shelves.

He walked to the toy section of the supermarket and swept all eight boxes of Barbie Dolls, each measuring about fifteen centimeters, into his shopping cart.

These were likely old stock, and it would likely become increasingly difficult to purchase them as time went on.

Fortunately, each box of Barbie Dolls came with eighteen outfits, totaling one hundred forty-four outfits across the eight boxes. The Shell Lady could wear them for several years, and if she was frugal, with some mending and patching, they could last her over a decade.

Next, he moved to the adult clothing section and filled his cart with a huge pile of goods for himself.

He tended to wear out clothes and shoes quickly these days.

The clothes and shoes he bought might last ten to twenty wears if he's lucky; if not, they might be ruined after just one wear. For him, no matter how good the clothes are, they all end up the same way.

After checkout, he walked out of the supermarket and glanced up at the sky—it was yet another overcast day.

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Unlike the universe where Earth existed, the alternate world was made up of a multi-layered structure. Besides the main world, there were countless demi-planes attached to the main plane, resembling a giant bubble surrounded by numerous small bubbles.

These bubbles varied in size; some emitted a dull sheen, while others glowed faintly.

Some were gradually disintegrating, like a balloon being punctured, with a vast amount of matter ejecting outward, forming a spectacular yet terrifying stream of material.

Others were gradually taking shape, with the surrounding space bizarrely distorting, as countless substances were drawn in, forming a massive vortex.

In one of the small planes emitting a hazy glow.

It appeared abundant with bird songs and fragrant flowers, lush shades of green, overflowing with life. Numerous tribes, large and small, here worked with the rising sun and rested with its setting, living a happy, peaceful, and simple life.

These people were not ordinary life forms but were special creations under the Divine Country's laws from the souls of deceased followers; every follower, based on their age at death and the extent of their devoutness in life, was able to coalesce a brand new body under these divine laws.

They were known as Petitioners.

The degree of a follower's devoutness determined the age of the Petitioner's body, as well as its strength; the more devout the follower, the younger and stronger the body, and the less prone to illness.

Indeed, they would still experience birth, aging, sickness, and death, but as long as a certain devoutness level was maintained, they could revive again; if their devoutness was robust enough, they might even live eternally.

Therefore, the more ancient the god, the larger the number of Petitioners, often tens or hundreds of times greater than their terrestrial followers.

However, these Petitioners could not be compared with terrestrial followers because their very existence depended on consuming the Divine Country's strength. A hundred devout Petitioners might not even be as beneficial to the deity as one devout terrestrial follower.

Nonetheless, numbers compensated for everything; a god who had been around long enough would find the Power of Faith provided by Petitioners often surpassing that of earthly followers, even by several times.

Here, there was little danger, and no need to worry about sustenance; every Petitioner lived a calm and harmonious life.

However, such scenes were only in the past; at present, the Divine Country was facing a tremendous upheaval.

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Inside a simple yet majestic palace, a Giant with a waist girded by a beast hide emitting brilliant hues sat high on the Divine Throne, his brow furrowed.

His entire body muscled and knotted, standing six to seven meters tall in just the upper body, bearing a primitive appearance and exuding a rugged yet resolute aura. To one side of the Throne rested a Giant Axe, three to four meters long, adorned with countless mysterious patterns.

He was the God of Courage, Dabono.

At that moment, He seemed to sense something and raised His head, His gaze piercing through the grand palace, through the clouds, looking toward the endless sky. The entire demi-plane was shrouded in clouds, with lightning and thunder, resembling an apocalyptic scene.

At this moment, centering on the palace, nearly ten million Petitioners were positioned over several hundred square kilometers, a black mass kneeling down, fervently praying loudly, their voices echoing through the Divine Country.

With a thunderous boom, a massive meteor, ablaze with fierce flames, descended from high above with an annihilating momentum, swiftly parting the dense clouds, tearing open a massive gap several kilometers wide.

Before even reaching the ground, the violent gale caused distant forests to lean to one side.

Seated on the Divine Throne, Dabono's hand moved slightly, but He let it drop again resignedly.

This was a sign of His divine rank about to fall; futilely expending Divine Power only worsens the situation instead of improving it.

The Divine Country is a demi-plane, but a demi-plane isn't the Divine Country.

If the demi-plane is compared to a program, then the Divine Country is the demi-plane with a controlled backend; through countless years of divine transformation and influence, the entire Divine Country has long been closely intertwined with Him, melding with His divine rank and position, becoming His domain and stronghold.

Here, His power can be amplified geometrically; a mere thought could turn mountains into seas, deserts into forests, breath into clouds, and sighs into rain, shifting the colors of the world, inciting storms.

Yet nothing in the world is flawless; once a divine rank falls, the Divine Country cannot be maintained and will inevitably encounter severe damage as well.

Two consecutive outpourings of Original Force caused His strength to diminish continuously; even the transmission of Power of Faith became harder, suffering severe losses; of the ten portions of faith energy, less than half remain, almost unable to sustain His divine rank, on the verge of falling back to a Demigod.

Especially recently, as conflicts between the gods surged in chaotic disorder, He absolutely didn't wish His weakness to be detected and attacked, leading to eternal slumber.

After about ten seconds, the enormous fireball finally crashed heavily into a forest.

With a "boom," the entire Divine Country trembled violently.

A giant mushroom cloud slowly rose, endless shockwaves mixed with flames rapidly spreading around, about to approach the outermost Petitioners. But all Petitioners showed no sign of fear; even in the face of imminent death, they continued to pray loudly.

Finally, Dabono extended His hand, and an invisible yet gentle force instantly spread.

The originally destructive shockwave turned into a gentle breeze upon contact with this force.

The Divine Country may suffer damage, but the Petitioners must not endure any losses.

Although Petitioners can revive after death, if the deity stood by and watched followers die without intervention, doubts might infiltrate their revived belief, even affecting more Petitioners.

In such times, wavering faith would be disastrous for Him.

After the meteor's passing, the Divine Country seemed to temporarily channel the unrest, finally stabilizing again.

Dabono picked up the massive War Axe and stood up from the Divine Throne, observing the now devastated Divine Country, a flicker of distress and ferocity crossed His face. The ordeal of the Divine Country this time solidified His resolve.

Chapter 184 - Never a Moment's Peace

In the evening, Chen Shouyi finished practicing the "Thirty-Six Forms of Body Refinement" twenty times, stopping with a full head of sweat, as his muscles were unnaturally twitching slightly.

He opened the attribute panel and took a look.

A hint of disappointment appeared on his face:

"Progress is getting slower and slower!" Chen Shouyi thought to himself.

Since consuming the Divine Blood, for more than half a month now, apart from an increase of 0.1 in agility, none of the other physical attributes have increased.

He even suspected that the 0.1 increase in agility was already at the edge of change.

The attributes only show up to one decimal point, whether it's 14.55 or 14.64, according to the general principle of rounding, they would only show 14.6, but once it reaches 14.65, although it looks like an increase of only 0.01, it actually shows an increase of 0.1 in the value.

However, while there was limited progress in physical attributes, the mental attributes improved significantly, with perception increasing by 0.3, reaching 12.5, and willpower also improving quickly, increasing by 0.3, reaching 13.3.

Now, the Sword Aura he unleashed could reach nearly five centimeters in length, significantly increasing its power, as it could completely slice through metal as thick as a spoon, and with cutting wood, it no longer consumed much of his mental energy.

The key point is that this Sword Aura is invisible and colorless, making it undeniably an effective tool for ambushes.

In a battle, if the opponent is unprepared and careless, it could result in anything from a mere skin cut to a full-scale abdominal incision.

Afterward, Chen Shouyi went to the bathroom to enjoy a refreshing cold shower; a water heater had been installed on the villa's rooftop, but after taking cold showers for so long, he was used to it.

Before long, he dressed, grabbing a towel and began drying his hair as he returned to the bedroom.

The Shell Lady was sitting on the bed, earnestly sorting through the small pile of clothes that stood like a small mountain in front of her, occasionally trying on a new outfit by taking off her current clothes, striking various poses while constantly looking back and forth.

Seeing Chen Shouyi come over, she eagerly solicited his opinion: "Good giant, how does this outfit look on me?"

The word "clothes" in the otherworld's language has no specific term; the Shell Lady learned this word from an animation's Chinese language.

"Looks great!" Chen Shouyi said.

The Shell Lady immediately beamed with joy, put it down, took off that outfit, picked up another one to try on, and continued to ask: "How about this one? Does it look good?"

"Looks great too!"

"How about that one?"

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"Looks good, looks good, anyway you are so adorable, everything looks good on you." Watching as the Shell Lady continuously tried on over a dozen outfits in just five or six minutes, Chen Shouyi finally began to lose patience.

He almost doubted if he had done something wrong?

If he had known, he wouldn't have given her so many clothes at once.

The Shell Lady, coaxed into delight, asked: "Good giant, why are your 'clothes' not as pretty?"

Faced with this question, Chen Shouyi was momentarily speechless, regaining his senses, and replied crossly: "As long as your clothes are pretty, why care about so much other stuff?"

"Oh!" The Shell Lady responded cheerfully and contentedly, no longer speaking, as she continued enthusiastically trying on clothes.

Is she really that happy?

Watching the Shell Lady so happy despite being reprimanded, Chen Shouyi couldn't quite understand her peculiar thought process.

However, considering that she is a creature from another world, he also came to a realization.

Since she is a creature from another world, it is not surprising that her thinking differs from that of normal humans.

Chen Shouyi then decided not to bother her, lying down on the big bed, letting her amuse herself.

Recently, he discovered a method of quickly enhancing the intensity of his willpower, and during this past half month, his willpower improved rapidly thanks to it.

He closed his eyes, and his mind quickly entered the Gray Mist Space.

On the World Tree, he located one of the Memory Leaves and promptly dove his consciousness into it.

...

"What's Brother Chen looking at?" asked Xiao Changming, beside him at a cave entrance.

"I think there's something abnormal about these clouds, doesn't look naturally formed!" Chen Shouyi looked up at the clouds, his face grave.

...

Chen Shouyi's true consciousness floated in the air as if watching a movie, observing a scene from his past memory. Next, he looked toward the sky, just in time to see the clouds parting instantly as a colossal object plummeted downward like a meteor, landing in a valley with an earth-shattering crash.

This was a scene from a month ago during a search of the Giant Scythe Insect Nest, witnessing a part of a divine battle.

With a single thought, Chen Shouyi's consciousness surged upward.

In the sky, a majestic giant formed of clouds was rapidly taking shape, surrounded by flashes of lightning and claps of thunder. The closer Chen Shouyi got, the more he could clearly feel this True God's oppressive presence.

He had never seen such a terrifying aura.

He had faced the junior version of the Earth Giant face-to-face and had even killed the Tree God, but a thousand or ten thousand Tree Gods combined wouldn't be as frightening as this cloud giant.

Chen Shouyi even had an illusion as if he was facing not a creature but a burning sun scorching all beings, the intimidating pressure setting his soul ablaze, his consciousness beginning to burn with anxiety.

It felt as though this wasn't some illusory memory but genuine and formidable power.

He grit his teeth and continued onward relying on his perseverance, the thick lightning dancing like serpentine dragons frequently flashed beside him, but Chen Shouyi had verified in an unpleasant experience that these lightning bolts posed no threat to him.

In fact, in the Memory Space, apart from the frightening and unavoidable pressure emitted by the True God, all other matter and energy had no effect on him.

If not for this immunity, he would not dare attempt such a suicidal approach towards a deity.

As he neared a hundred meters from the cloud giant, the pressure was nearly overwhelming, threatening to make Chen Shouyi faint. Looking at this enormous giant as large as a mountain, his mind seemed to lose its constraints, as fears began to gallop uncontrollably.

Human emotions have thresholds, serving as self-protection. Once this threshold is crossed, emotions become uncontrollable and unable to adjust, potentially impacting one's health mildly or life severely, such as overwhelming joy or grief, or even being scared to death by fear.

The higher the willpower, the better one can control their emotions, preventing them from easily surpassing their thresholds.

Only lasting a few seconds, Chen Shouyi was ejected from the Memory Space.

He opened his eyes abruptly, feeling a splitting headache, his vision darkening in bouts, as immense fatigue washed over him, putting him to sleep.

The Shell Lady, who was busy on the side, heard snoring, turned to glance at the already sleeping Chen Shouyi, paused slightly, thought for a moment and then put down the small clothes in her hands. Her little feet ran to the large quilt, grasping a corner with both hands, her face reddening as she dragged it over to cover Chen Shouyi.

Standing only fifteen centimeters tall, she wasn't much higher than the quilt's thickness, making this a significant endeavor for her. She worked up and down, toiling for a good ten minutes before successfully covering him with the quilt.

The Shell Lady finally tucked the quilt in, standing in front of Chen Shouyi with her hands on her hips, her face flushed from the effort, panting as she self-satisfiedly muttered:

"What a silly giant, never giving anyone peace of mind."

She then ran back to the small mountain of clothes, sat down again, and continued enthusiastically organizing the outfits.

Chapter 185 - Great Upheaval (Part 1)

Otherworld, vast grasslands.

Tens of thousands of barbarian troops formed a five to six-kilometer-long line, advancing slowly.

Among the line, over a hundred giant beasts resembling Komodo dragons but several times larger, were particularly eye-catching. These beasts, on Earth, would undoubtedly be the largest land creatures.

The giant beasts carried mountain-like supplies on their backs, causing the ground to tremble slightly with each step.

Compared to other tribesmen who resembled wild men, these barbarians exhibited a much higher level of civilization, with primitive bows and shields appearing among their weapons. Most of the barbarians wore clothing woven from coarse vines instead of animal hides.

However, those wearing such clothing were of lower status among the barbarians.

Those who were priests or strong warriors still wore animal hides.

This is not surprising; wearing animal hides is much more comfortable than clothes woven from thorny vines, and at times, it symbolizes personal strength.

Moreover, the hides of some powerful beasts provided stronger defense, protecting one's life.

Even on Earth, a well-preserved animal hide would be more expensive than ordinary clothing.

Except for the restrictions caused by mysterious power, which prevented the development of metal weapons, this civilization was transitioning from primitive hunting tribes to feudal agrarian civilization.

...

At this moment, one of the giant beasts in the procession seemed to be attracted by a patch of tender grass by the roadside and suddenly veered off course. A small-statured barbarian who was following the giant beast hurriedly chased after it in fright.

He looked to be only fifteen or sixteen years old, with dark, thin skin, not even half the height of the giant beast. A single massive leg of the beast was as thick as his waist. As he desperately ran to catch up, he silently prayed.

"Great God of Courage above, please don't let anything happen!"

Although this giant beast was a herbivore and mostly gentle, it could be quite temperamental at times. Once provoked, it would be a disaster.

In fact, he wasn't the first beast tamer; three before him had been trampled to death by the beast in a fit of madness, their bodies reduced to pulp.

The giant beast trotted a few dozen meters and stopped in front of a patch of grass, snorted happily, spraying a mist, then lowered its head to graze.

The barbarian youth, huffing and puffing, arrived beside the giant beast. Seeing what the beast was eating, he immediately thought to himself, "This is bad."

It was a kind of thorny sour grass with sharp little thorns on its leaves, tasting sour. It was the brute beast's favorite food, and he himself occasionally nibbled on it as a snack when his mouth felt dry and tasteless.

If he stopped it from eating at this moment, the youth could already predict his fate: he would certainly end up like the previous tamers, trampled into a pile of pulp.

The brute beast flicked its tongue, rolling a large patch of thorny sour grass into its mouth; the sharp little thorns seemed to be of no concern to it.

Just then, a priest dressed in luxurious animal hides, holding a long whip, approached with an impatient expression.

Seeing this, the barbarian youth became anxious and hurriedly called out a few tentative cries, only to be met with a warning growl.

"Believer, what's happening?" the priest called out grimly from a distance.

The barbarian youth was so scared that he fell to the ground, stammering, "Pri... priest sir, it's the thorny... sour grass!"

The priest approached, glanced at the grass the giant beast was eating, instantly understood, and his expression softened. "May the Great God of Courage bless you, believer, rise. This is not your fault!"

Saying so, he silently recited the "Beast Taming Art," and a kind light quickly entered the brute beast's body.

The Beast Taming Art was the most basic of divine arts, not very effective on wild and untamed beasts, but it worked wonders on those already partly domesticated. The beast shook its head and stopped eating, following the priest back to the line.

The barbarian youth, head drooping, quickly followed.

"Believer, remember this is the last time!" The priest, driving the giant beast back to the procession, snapped back.

"Yes, priest sir." The barbarian youth hurriedly knelt down again on the grass and shouted loudly.

...

Chen Shouyi woke up naturally. As he opened his eyes, he felt refreshed, with the headache from before his nap completely gone.

The kerosene lamp in the bedroom was still lit. He looked at his watch; it was only half-past four.

He opened his status panel and a hint of joy flashed in his heart; his willpower had increased by 0.1 points.

After lying for a few more seconds, he sat up from the bed. Glancing around, he noticed the Shell Lady nearby, gleefully and tirelessly putting on and taking off clothes. Seeing the silly yet endearing smile on her small face, Chen Shouyi couldn't comprehend what joy she found in it.

Anyway, from childhood to adulthood, whenever his mother bought him a bunch of clothes and asked him to try them on, he never wanted to.

"Why aren't you sleeping yet?" Chen Shouyi asked.

Perhaps because she was too engrossed, the sudden voice startled the Shell Lady, and she only then noticed the giant had woken up. She patted her plump chest, "Oh, giant, you scared me!"

Then she sighed and said, "I haven't finished yet, I'm so tired today, and there's still one—one more piece of clothing I haven't tried on yet?"

"Alright, alright, keep busy!" Chen Shouyi said helplessly.

He picked up the sword and carefully felt his body's exertion in the bedroom.

His movements were gentle and smooth, his muscles flowing like mercury, each move as natural as thought.

For a "Martial Artist Entering Serenity" who had completed the body refining phase, controlling one's muscles became second nature. Even though he'd only practiced for about a month, the optimized swordsmanship was already well-understood, completely replacing the old, crude version.

On his swordsmanship level, it had already leaped to: Mastery: 12.

And it was still progressing rapidly.

Barely using any force on his feet, he hovered over the ground as if gliding forward over three meters, like a nimble swallow. His sword slid silently across a walnut clothing rack.

"Damn!"

Chen Shouyi snapped out of it, smacking his forehead.

Curse your itchy hands!

Seeing that half of the clothing rack was dropping to the ground under gravity, Chen Shouyi quickly stepped forward and caught it before it landed.

Just as Chen Shouyi was about to put it aside and continue his practice, a sudden dull sound came from outside.

It was like the distant rumble of thunder.

At first, Chen Shouyi didn't pay much attention, but soon the booming noises became more frequent, and before long, it sounded like boiling thick porridge, as if the whole world was rolling and shaking.

This was artillery fire!

And there had to be at least dozens, even hundreds of cannons firing together to create such a boiling porridge-like sound.

Chen Shouyi stood dumbfounded for a moment, then suddenly came to his senses, stepping forward to the window and quickly pulling back the thick floor-length curtains, but unfortunately, the distance was too dark, and he couldn't see anything.

Chapter 186 - Upheaval (Part 2)

Chen Shouyi watched for a good while before returning to sit on the bed.

Listening to the dense cannon fire, he sat in a daze, somewhat entranced.

He hadn't received any notification of exercises, nor heard any rumors, besides, even if it were an exercise, it wouldn't take place at four or five in the morning.

Something definitely happened.

...

The cannon fire echoed for a full half-hour before gradually thinning out, and after another hour, it completely ceased, with only occasional sporadic shots.

For some reason, hearing the silence after the cannon fire, unease welled up in his heart.

The sky outside had begun to brighten.

A new day had already arrived.

Chen Shouyi stood in front of the window, watching the hurried footsteps and heavy faces of pedestrians in the villa area, as if a huge stone weighed on his heart.

This was a villa area within the Safe Zone, inhabited by none other than the military and political elite, and at the very least, martial artists.

One of whom Chen Shouyi knew, was the second-in-command of Hedong City, who had recently specially visited Chen Shouyi's home on behalf of the City Government for condolences and visits.

At that time, he wore a warm smile, full of friendliness, yet now his face was dark with clouds, looking grave, as he hurried away accompanied by two aides.

...

Yun Mountain is located within the Hedong Cheng'an District, with an elevation of over 220 meters and a vertical height of 183 meters, stretching seven kilometers from east to west and three kilometers from north to south. It is a well-known scenic spot in Hedong City and the largest natural park.

At this moment, the originally picturesque Yun Mountain had inexplicably shortened, littered with rubble and crisscrossed trees, remnants of bodies scattered everywhere.

Smoke filled the air, a scene of desolation and bloodiness.

A giant beast, its body mangled and bloody, lay helplessly on the ground, emitting cries of despair. Its abdomen had been torn open by shells, spilling intestines and organs, exuding a pungent bloody stench.

A barbarian youth stood petrified next to the beast's corpse, his face stricken with terror.

The earlier apocalyptic scene of earth-shattering destruction deeply shook his spirit.

He personally witnessed, the powerful warriors of the tribe being effortlessly torn to shreds by the heavenly fire, blown into the air, and he also saw the giant beast he was tasked to tame, collapse with a wail, powerless to struggle.

Although after the mutation, human strength had weakened a thousandfold, regressing almost overnight from modern times to the near past, they were still not to be reckoned with by the barbarians.

This large barbarian army had barely surfaced when it was spotted by reconnaissance airships hovering above. Half an hour later, before the entire barbarian army could emerge from the passage, overwhelming artillery shells and rocket barrages began to raze the ground.

Several months had passed since the second mutation, enough time to urgently retrofit weapons no longer suited to the current environment. For instance, weapons originally with electronic fire control had been converted to mechanical control, and the ammunition, weakened post-mutation, had been mixed with more powerful TNT and hexogen compounds.

In the era of black powder, the propellant and explosive were the same component, that being black powder.

But as the times moved to the near-modern, explosives and propellants began to separate. Now the propellant in cannons is typically smokeless powder, while the explosives are usually more powerful TNT and hexogen mixtures.

The two cannot be substituted; propellants require relatively stable combustion, pushing the shell forward in the barrel by expanding gases, while explosives ignite rapidly, almost instantaneously exploding.

Before the mutation, replacing the propellant with explosives would result in only blowing up the barrel itself.

However, since the mutation, the rate of chemical reactions has decreased, weakening the power of explosive weapons. As long as the charge is controlled, the barrel can now withstand this bore pressure, with firing ranges potentially exceeding those before.

When a barrage of artillery and rockets, roaring from several kilometers or even over ten kilometers away, hit, the barbarian army was instantly devastated, completely caught off guard. At this moment, no matter how strong an individual's power, facing such an earth-shattering scene, they fared no better than sheep to be slaughtered.

If it weren't for the God of Courage miraculously intervening at the last moment, this war would have been a completely asymmetric massacre.

...

From the start of the war until now, the barbarian youth stood like a stone statue, mind blank, unable to recover for a long time, until a lash struck his body with a sharp snap.

Feeling the scorching pain on his back, his spirit immediately returned, shivering into full clarity.

Turning around, he promptly knelt on the ground: "Priest, my lord!"

"Believer, what are you standing here for? Return to camp and assemble. The great God of Courage has descended in person; all resistance is like a long spear into soft mud, easily pierced through. My lord will surely occupy this world," the priest fervently encouraged.

"Yes, Priest, my lord!" The barbarian youth instantly stood up.

Has the great God of Courage truly descended?

Just earlier, he was too frightened to notice anything.

Recalling the greatness of the God of Courage, his previously panicked emotions quickly faded, and he immediately felt invigorated.

But soon, the excitement in his heart swiftly subsided.

He saw the battlefield scattered with wounded and remnants of bodies, pained moans echoing continuously.

Then he spotted a familiar figure, his face turning pale, and he hurried forward: "Uncle Sireid, what happened to you?"

He saw Uncle Sireid's strong chest had been pierced with a massive hole, blood gurgling out nonstop, only exhaling, no longer inhaling: "Uncle Sireid, hold on, I'll go plead to the Priest!"

"Is that you, Little... Little Saiqi? Don't bother the Priest, it's useless... Don't be sad, besides I'm... I'm going to the Divine Country to enjoy blessings!" He said with difficulty, blood spilling as he managed to pull out a stiff smile.

"Yes, Uncle Sireid, I'm not sad, I heard the Priest say it's a land overflowing with milk and honey. You'll live happily there, no pain, no death, food everywhere, and you can eat meat every day, oily and fragrant meat." Though he said this, Little Saiqi couldn't stop his tears from flowing.

Since he was young, only Uncle Sireid treated him well; every time he returned from hunting, he would kindly share some with him. Whenever he felt lost and helpless, Uncle Sireid would come and comfort him.

Even becoming a Beast Tamer for the tribe was because Uncle Sireid spent several animal skins to pull some strings and got him in. Otherwise, as an orphan, how could he have become an enviable Beast Tamer?

In his eyes, Uncle Sireid was the closest family he had.

"Yes... indeed, I've longed to go to the Divine Country." Sireid said, his face momentarily flushed unnaturally as if with a final burst of energy: "Little Saiqi, this war is extremely dangerous. Be clever, take great care. I feel... I feel... the great God of Courage..."

Before he could finish, a mouthful of blood rushed out. His eyes bulged, and he fell silent.

"Uncle Sireid!" Little Saiqi cried out in sorrow.

Chapter 187 - Mighty Deity

A giant thirteen or fourteen meters tall floated thousands of meters in the sky, overlooking this incredible city. Even for someone as knowledgeable as He was, He felt a shock from the heart. Seeing the grand and towering buildings, His own Divine Hall seemed like a rough thatched hut.

At this moment, the God of Courage, Dapono, felt both joy and worry.

The joy was in the astounding population density of this world, as was rumored, packed with people. The abundant resources of faith here would likely drive even those Main Gods with Powerful Divine Power mad.

The worry was that upon entering this world, His Divine Power dissipated like erosion, rapidly and with barely any left. Even the link between Him and His followers' Power of Faith was incredibly weak, barely existent.

His already precarious divine status instantly fell to that of a Demigod.

Most severely, under the world's powerful counterattack, to prevent the complete annihilation of His precious followers, He consumed even the last of His Divine Power.

No matter how powerful He was, He was ultimately alone and needed help to spread the faith. In preparing for this invasion, He had put all His eggs in one basket, with most priests, including apprentice priests, all mobilized. Should they be completely wiped out, this distant expedition would lose without defeat.

Since achieving True God status, He had never felt so weak at this moment.

As His divine status fell, He could vaguely feel the Divine Country connected to His mind experiencing violent turbulence, but at this moment, He couldn't handle it all.

This entry into this world was, from the start, a gamble, an adventure.

Before coming, He was already mentally prepared.

This undeveloped world was undoubtedly a massive gold mine. Although the believers nurtured here provided Him with pitifully little Power of Faith, the sheer number could compensate for everything.

Once He gained a foothold here, not only could His divine status quickly recover (His insight remained, only temporarily diminished, and as long as the Power of Faith was sufficient to support it, returning to Weak Divine Power would naturally follow).

Under the abundant Divine Power, even in a century or so, making a push for a lower level of Divine Power might not be impossible.

...

He curiously and with a hint of awe examined the world beneath Him. It was a world He completely could not comprehend. He could feel it was a gigantic sphere rather than a flat Tam World.

And beyond the sphere, in that deep and dark world, there seemed to be more spheres. Even farther away, something seemed to emit faint light. He didn't know how big this world was, maybe even larger and more mysterious than His Tam world.

The gods knew too little about this world. Since neither incarnations nor projections could be used here, few gods would risk themselves. Some daring gods, far stronger than Him, paid the price of falling many years ago.

Many cautious and timid gods feared this world like a tiger and mostly sent some followers to infiltrate it. Moreover, even if a god successfully entered this world unharmed and returned, such precious information would never be shared.

At this moment, He felt something and looked in a certain direction.

Dozens of metal cones shot up from the ground, heading toward Him at high speed.

"What annoying things!" A slight disdain flashed across His face as He dived towards the ground.

Although without Divine Power, His strength drastically decreased, losing mysterious methods, and this world's weak Original Force made the energy supplied by His Divine Fire incredibly feeble.

Not to mention compared to when He was a Weak God, even in comparison to a Demigod with no Divine Power, the strength He could exert here was not even one percent of what He could in the Tam World.

Still, these weren't things that anti-aircraft guns could deal with.

In fact, His flying speed in the air wasn't fast, only one or two hundred meters per second, not even reaching the speed of sound, but He had an extremely terrifying ability to predict and think quickly, often avoiding shells one or two kilometers away in advance.

...

On the rooftop of a building.

"Aim quickly... quick! Quick! Quick,"

Several soldiers frantically operated an anti-aircraft gun, the long ammunition belt quickly disappearing, and a large number of casings fell to the ground, making a string of ding-ding sounds.

A few seconds later, the concrete floor of the rooftop cracked instantly, filled with web-like cracks.

Dapono's huge body suddenly stood on the rooftop.

With a cold expression, He glanced at several soldiers who were scared to death by His Divine Oppression.

"Foolish mortals!" He murmured in a deep voice.

Then He looked at this strange weapon, His face hardened, and the giant axe in His hand instantly emitted a scorching red light. The next moment, He swung it fiercely, and the anti-aircraft gun was instantly cut in two, the cut glowing red, seemingly melting.

He looked forward and leapt again.

"Boom!" The air exploded in place, leaving a pile of milky sound barrier clouds. A shock wave expanded rapidly, and the already cracked rooftop of the building completely opened up a large hole.

At the same time, His figure had vanished from the spot, and when He reappeared, He was already on a street a kilometer away.

He sprinted furiously. Compared to flying, His running speed was undoubtedly several times faster, easily surpassing twice the speed of sound. As He ran swiftly, the street looked like it was exploding, opening up meter-wide, half-meter-deep holes, while the glass on both sides of the road buildings shattered.

...

A gigantic steam tank, over ten meters long and six or seven meters wide, spewed steam, slowly advancing. Suddenly, a gust of wind blew past, a massive shadow flashed, and the whole steam tank was instantly split into two halves, then flew like divided waves towards the buildings on both sides, accompanied by a scattering of numerous parts.

The next moment, it crashed heavily into a building. The building, like tofu, opened up a large hole, and a small five-story building wobbled slightly before it could no longer support itself, collapsing to one side, sending up a huge cloud of dust.

...

Early in the morning, the entire Safe Zone was in a panic. A maddening message began to spread rapidly: the Cheng An area had been completely overrun, with all military forces utterly destroyed.

Some said a Barbarian God had descended, while others said it was a large-scale Barbarian invasion, but either way, the situation was already quite dire.

The Cheng An area is only forty to fifty kilometers away, reachable within an hour or two by a steam truck, or in half a day by bicycle.

In a crisis, the spread of information is unimaginably fast, and no strong means can control it.

After nine o'clock, Chen Shouyi noticed two steam-powered airships ascending and flying into the distance, heading not towards the Cheng An area but to the north.

After eleven, more troops were mobilized towards here.

On the road, military trucks loaded with artillery, often dragging behind an armored vehicle or rocket launcher, began urgently deploying defenses around the Safe Zone.

Chapter 188 - Reassurance

The Safe Zone not only includes the small central urban area but also encompasses a large nearby key industrial area, with a population of over thirty thousand, a considerable portion of whom are highly skilled professionals. This place is undoubtedly the essence of Hedong City now.

Until the evening, the roads outside were still bustling with traffic, with hordes of soldiers and artillery gathering here.

Chen Shouyi wandered outside for a while and returned home.

"Shouyi, is everything alright outside?" Mrs. Chen stood up, asking worriedly.

"Mom! Don't worry, it's fine. With so many troops, they can't reach here!" Chen Shouyi comforted.

Despite his reassurance, it's impossible not to be worried. Nowadays, rumors are rampant outside, especially since noon when a large group of refugees poured in, everyone began to feel uneasy and anxious.

Just in the afternoon, all government-run grain and oil stores started to impose temporary purchase limits based on identity.

War comes unexpectedly, bringing more than just panic to people.

"Let's stop asking questions and eat!" Chen Dawei changed the topic, saying: "I made your favorite sweet and sour ribs today!"

...

The atmosphere was somewhat heavy during dinner.

After finishing his meal, Chen Shouyi was about to return to his room when a City Government staff member came to the house.

"Hello, Chief Advisor Chen. I'm from the City Government Office. Sorry to disturb your rest. I'm here to inform you to attend a meeting at the City Government's conference room," the staff member said politely.

"A meeting?" Chen Shouyi asked, puzzled.

"Yes, Chief Advisor Chen, all Martial Artists in the Safe Zone have to attend."

Chen Shouyi nodded and didn't ask further,

Soon after, he and the staff member rode bicycles respectively, heading to the new location of the City Government.

Entering the conference room, he discovered that quite a few Martial Artists were already inside. At first glance, there were over a hundred of them. It was the first time Chen Shouyi had seen so many Martial Artists gathered together.

Considering Hedong City has over a thousand Martial Artists, this gathering almost represents one-tenth, and more Martial Artists were arriving.

"Chen Shouyi, you're also in the Safe Zone. Come sit here," a fair-skinned "handsome guy" immediately stood up, waving.

Following the voice, memories instantly clicked in his mind—this was the female Martial Artist from the same group named Song Jieying, sporting short hair and dressed in men's attire. If it weren't for her noticeably rounded chest, one might suspect her to be a handsome guy.

He promptly stepped forward, smiling: "It's been a long time!"

"Indeed, ever since we last met, I've seen the other people quite frequently, but never you. You seem to never visit the Martial Artist Club." Song Jieying laughed.

"Perhaps I don't enjoy socializing!" Chen Shouyi said self-deprecatingly.

Although his previously introverted and shy nature had been completely cured with increased will and confidence, some things couldn't change—for instance, he disliked noisy occasions and wouldn't purposely socialize with strangers.

"Don't just stand, let's sit down and chat." Song Jieying suggested with a smile.

As Chen Shouyi was about to sit down, the staff member standing by quickly said, "Sorry, Chief Advisor Chen, your seat is arranged in the first row!"

Song Jieying thought she misheard, and asked, "Chief Advisor?"

The staff member beside explained, "Mr. Chen is one of the three Chief Advisors directly under the City Government."

Song Jieying looked at Chen Shouyi, mouth agape in shock.

"Sorry, I'll go over first. Let's chat next time when we're free," sensing the awkward atmosphere, Chen Shouyi quickly said.

"Alright, alright!" Song Jieying responded, recovering quickly.

Watching him stride away with a staff member accompanying him, Song Jieying still couldn't quite believe it. It's been only a few months since the Martial Artist assessment, and he has already become a Great Martial Artist.

It's like he's cheating!

...

Chen Shouyi sat down at the seat with his name on it.

"Brother Chen, you're here!" Qin Liuyuan stood up, greeting him.

The buzz-cut middle-aged man beside him looked at Chen Shouyi curiously upon hearing Qin Liuyuan's words. They had just been talking about him and he turned out to be even younger than expected.

This was another Safety Chief Advisor, Cui Ziweng, whom Chen Shouyi had met during his first mission—leaving a profound impression. But back then, he was a nobody, and Cui Ziweng had likely forgotten him.

"Yes!" Chen Shouyi greeted and then turned to Cui Ziweng, politely saying: "Hello, General Manager Cui."

Cui Ziweng promptly stood up, shaking hands with Chen Shouyi: "Hello, Lao Qin was just mentioning you!"

"Really!" Chen Shouyi smiled.

"It was just small talk, about the last mission," Qin Liuyuan quickly explained, fearing Chen Shouyi might misunderstand, and then changed the topic: "What do you think this meeting is for? It can't be unifying Martial Artist forces to form a special department, can it?"

"Impossible," Cui Ziweng shook his head: "That would clearly violate policies, and it wouldn't be allowed from above."

Chen Shouyi also nodded slightly in his mind. The state's policy towards Martial Artists has always been both attracting and guarded, and most Martial Artists were aware of this. If all Martial Artists unified, then who would lead? Who would feel secure?

While entities like the Third Object Investigation Bureau and Martial Arts Public Office and Disciplinary Check Division are purely Martial Artist departments, their number is limited, and their authority is confined to a closed Martial Artist community, not involving ordinary citizens.

Perhaps only a purely military force can have Martial Artists in high positions.

"The meeting's about to begin; we'll know then. Saying more now won't help." Chen Shouyi said solemnly.

Qin Liuyuan sighed, leaning back in his chair: "That's true."

...

Half an hour later, all Martial Artists streamed out.

Chen Shouyi sighed, as guessed, the meeting lacked substantive content, merely offering reassurance and stabilizing morale.

Upon reflection, it's true—turbulent times spark uprising. As the strongest individual force among humans, if Martial Artists harbor ambitions under the current circumstances, it would accelerate societal collapse.

However, Hedong City's attitude indirectly showed the situation hadn't worsened irredeemably, or there was confidence in resolving the invasion.

"Do you think there are Barbarian Gods among the invading Barbarians?" Chen Shouyi asked Qin Liuyuan upon exiting the new City Government building. During the meeting, Hedong City's top leader didn't mention Barbarian Gods, causing him to doubt.

Qin Liuyuan paused, shook his head, and said gravely: "Even if there aren't Barbarian Gods, there must definitely be beings equivalent to them, otherwise the Safe Zone wouldn't be in such a state. Ordinary Barbarians can't withstand structured military units."

Chen Shouyi recalled the constant flow of military trucks loaded with ammunition on the roads near the Safe Zone, nodding in realization.

"I'll go on ahead." Chen Shouyi pushed out his bicycle from the parking shed, pedaled firmly, and the bicycle shot forward like an arrow released from a bow.

Chapter 189 - Slaves

Hedong Cheng'an District, inside a residential building.

Xue Songjie held a baseball bat in his right hand and a pair of binoculars in his left, crouching behind the curtain, cautiously observing the outside through a small gap.

He was burly with a rugged face, and if one ignored his dough-like pale skin and his belly large enough to suggest he was six months pregnant, he was just like Zhang Fei reincarnated.

But Xue Songjie felt like he was about to piss himself in fear.

Ever since being jolted awake by the sound of bombardment early yesterday morning, he felt an intense unease, and the subsequent events proved his suspicions correct.

A terrifyingly massive shadow roamed the city like a hurricane.

Wherever it passed, the glass of buildings on both sides shattered, and the asphalt road looked as though it had been bombarded with artillery, with deep craters appearing every hundred meters or several hundred meters apart.

He saw with his own eyes a guard post not far away, which turned into a pile of rubble before it even had a chance to respond, with a cannon barrel flying up into the sky, now embedded like a chimney in the fourth-floor wall of a nearby building.

It felt like he was in a nightmare, but the cruel part was, this was no nightmare.

Groups of bold citizens, riding bicycles, sped down the street. Since yesterday till now, he had seen this scene dozens of times, and each time as he watched people desperately fleeing, Xue Songjie broke into a cold sweat for them.

They were truly risking their lives; if they encountered that dreadful figure, they'd be crushed to pulp in an instant.

But as he watched them ride further and further away, a restlessness gradually took hold of his heart.

It seemed like that terrible figure hadn't appeared again since morning.

What if... with a stroke of luck, they could really escape?

Cheng'an District was no longer safe, but who knows about other districts. At the very least, running further away, leaving Hedong, there would surely be a safe place.

Xue Songjie felt a tug of war in his heart.

On one hand was the constant threat of death, on the other was temporary stability, and the choice between the two left him indecisive.

As he was lost in these thoughts, wave after wave of bicycles quickly sped down the street opposite, and even many residents within the community were leaving.

Frowning, he took out a crumpled pack of cigarettes from his pocket, drew a similarly crumpled cigarette, lit it with some kindling, and took a deep drag on the dim flame.

The stimulating smoke swirled a few rounds in his lungs and was exhaled heavily.

Half a minute later, he threw the half-smoked cigarette onto the gleaming floor, ground it under his foot hard, bit his teeth, and a trace of ruthlessness flashed across his face.

"Damn it, I must go! If I don't, it will be too late!"

Xue Songjie glanced out the window, quickly returned to the room to pack, taking money, of course, a few clothes too, knowing that once he left, he likely wouldn't be able to return for a while. Also, some food and drink had to be packed, in case the journey wasn't smooth, he wouldn't end up starving.

By the time he was done, more than ten minutes had passed.

Carrying large and small bags, he couldn't help but glance at the window again before leaving his home.

But with just that one glance, a chill spiraled up from his tailbone, spread throughout his body, leaving him cold all over.

His hand slackened, and the luggage fell to the ground.

A group of dozens of people, either dressed in animal skins or in clothes looking like beggars, with strange appearances, walked into the community.

These were Barbarians!

Although he had never seen them in person, he had seen many on the internet and news; at this moment, he recognized them at a glance due to their peculiar attire.

Many of them were still stained with blood, whether it was theirs or humans', he didn't know.

But Xue Songjie felt it was humans'.

Recalling the terrifying rumors about these Barbarians, his urge to urinate intensified.

At this moment, he noticed that a leading Barbarian seemed to say a few words.

Two Barbarians immediately stayed at the entrance, while the others began to disperse in all directions, heading towards various buildings in the community in groups of twos and threes, and before long, two Barbarians had already entered the entrance of the residential building where his home was located.

With a shiver, he snapped back to reality, hurriedly picking up the baseball bat he had tossed on the ground, continuously taking deep breaths, trying to calm himself, although his hands holding the baseball bat still trembled uncontrollably.

...

The sky was overcast.

Several hours later, a team consisting of thousands of people moved their steps, leaving the community.

Some were terrified and uneasy, others numb and despairing.

Children's and women's cries mingled into clamorous chaos.

Xue Songjie, amidst the crowd, stared straight ahead, trying hard not to look at the short and stout Barbarian beside him.

The Barbarian's dark and heavy Long Spear was impaled with a head twisted with an agonized expression, blood dripping down the wood, soaking his hands in blood.

This was the consequence many faced when they attempted to flee, slaughtered like chickens, their heads twisted off and impaled on spears for intimidation.

There wasn't a single elderly person in the entire team because all the elderly had already been put to death before the roundup.

Barbarian youth Saiqi, like the other Barbarians, held a large bundle of loot in his left hand, his right hand's Long Spear similarly piercing a head.

Before coming, he was quite nervous, filled with fear, but at this moment his mood was as comfortable as if he had eaten a large piece of greasy, dripping fat.

This group of slaves from another world was quite docile, there wasn't much resistance, only a few dozen slaves were killed, and just by displaying their heads, the rest became as obedient as livestock.

Of course, even if they resisted it wouldn't work, even with his small frame, given enough time, he could easily kill all the Alien Race slaves here.

These Alien Races were just too fragile, like tender grass stems, breaking easily with a gentle snap.

Yet such a weak tribe possessed endless food and meat, lived in houses far more magnificent than the temple, and had all sorts of exquisite decorations that dazzled him.

Thinking of these, Saiqi couldn't help but feel a surge of anger and envy.

Everything here was so novel and shocking, so beautiful, it was as if everything beautiful he could imagine in the Divine Country was like this.

Fortunately, now everything here belonged to them.

Thinking of the prospect of having all this in the future, especially an unlimited supply of meat, Saiqi's steps became brisk.

It was at this moment, a loud bang sounded.

The companion walking in front of him suddenly clutched his chest and fell down.

Upon hearing such a bang, Saiqi shivered all over, the scenes of yesterday's nightmarish event instinctively replaying in his mind, and while he was still in a daze, this dull bang continued with a distinctive rhythm.

...

Bang! Bang! Bang...

With each sound, a Barbarian fell.

Facing such long-distance attacks, many Barbarians just dumbly stood in place, glancing around suspiciously, having no means to respond.

Fear began to spread!

When the sixth Barbarian fell, the remaining Barbarians finally couldn't suppress their panic and began to flee frenziedly in all directions.

In just a few seconds, the group of dozens of Barbarians disappeared without a trace.

Crouched on the ground with the crowd, Xue Songjie watched the quickly vanishing Barbarians, feeling as though he was still dreaming.

...

Five or six hundred meters away, inside a tall building, two snipers dressed in civilian clothes quickly packed up their weapons, placed them into a weapon case, and swiftly relocated.

Chapter 190 - Hope of Restoring Power

Although the defense forces of Cheng'an District have been largely destroyed by the God of Courage, more soldiers have dispersed and integrated into the entire city, blending in with the residents.

The most complex and brutal form of modern warfare is urban warfare, with its intricate environments, dense architecture, invisible enemies, and murderous gunfire... All these factors make urban warfare filled with bizarre and unpredictable complexities.

For the Barbarians, invading without understanding the mode of modern human warfare, it's like having one foot in Hell.

Perhaps the elite forces among the Barbarians can sense danger in advance, even avoid sniper bullets, but for the majority, the bullets from sniper rifles, with their initial speed of three times the speed of sound, are absolutely lethal (the bullet's propellant has been replaced).

...

The number of refugees pouring into the Safe Zone is increasing, and the central square of the small city is filled with numerous tents. Everyone has a worried expression, and many are sobbing loudly.

These refugees come from Cheng'an District, and even more from nearby unfallen districts. As panic spreads, more and more citizens are migrating to the suburbs and countryside. Only a small part rushes into the Safe Zone, while more scatter into the rural areas around Hedong City or even leave Hedong, moving further away.

Chen Shouyi walked down the street, glanced toward the square, and then withdrew his gaze.

Rumors have gradually been confirmed: an existence suspected to be a Barbarian God is wandering continuously in Cheng'an District.

His power is terrifying, even once stopping all shells and rockets mid-air, returning them to their original paths in an instant, heavily damaging the stationed forces in Cheng'an District.

He sighed:

"Such an existence is truly terrifying. Even if it's not the Barbarian God, it's not far off. Even though I am now comparable to a Martial Artist, facing such a creature, I'm not much better than an ordinary person. Just one encounter and I'd probably be crushed to pieces."

At the intersection of the street ahead, a girl in a thick down jacket sat on several stacked red bricks, with a drawing board in front of her. Her lips turned a bit pale from the cold in winter.

"Big brother, do you want a sketch portrait?" As soon as she saw Chen Shouyi approaching, the girl quickly called out.

Chen Shouyi stopped immediately. Her face was youthful, looking about the same age as his sister. Her buff-colored down jacket was dirty in patches, and her stall was near the refugee camp, so it was apparent that she was a refugee.

"Five yuan a piece, very cheap. It's not like you're not paying. If that's not okay, four yuan will do." Seemingly sensing Chen Shouyi's hesitation, the girl immediately said.

Seeing the anticipation in her eyes, Chen Shouyi nodded, "Then draw one for me."

"Thank you, big brother." The girl showed a hint of delight, then apologized, "There's no seat here, could you please stand for a bit? It won't take long."

"It's fine, go ahead and draw!"

The girl breathed a sigh of relief, picked up the sketch pencil, and began drawing quickly.

After more than ten minutes, the drawing was finished. The girl handed the drawing to Chen Shouyi, saying with hopeful eyes, "Big brother, do you think it's okay?"

He took a look; the style was cartoonish, with a cold expression, tightly pressed lips, and no hint of a smile. It only bore a three to four-tenths resemblance to him. He chuckled inwardly and shook his head slightly, but he said, "It's drawn quite well."

Then he took out his wallet and pulled out a hundred-yuan bill, handing it over.

The girl took it with some embarrassment, "I don't have that much change right now, I'll go to the supermarket and get it for you."

"No need for change!" Chen Shouyi stuffed the wallet back into his pocket, waved his hand, and started to walk away.

The girl stood there, dazed, watching Chen Shouyi walk further and further away until he disappeared around the street corner.

...

At a garbage can, Chen Shouyi crumpled the drawing into a ball and tossed it inside.

Suddenly, he heard a sharp whistling from behind. Instinctively he reached to the left, catching a pebble in his hand. His face turned cold, and he tightened his grip, instantly crushing the pebble into powder, then turned around to look.

At one glance, his previously cold and stern expression quickly dissipated: "So it's you. I thought someone was playing a joke on me."

"Do you have eyes on the back of your head? How could you catch that?" Song Jieying came over, smiling as she pushed a bicycle.

She was wearing a wool coat on her upper body and black jeans below. Chen Shouyi thought himself quite handsome, but compared to this stylish androgynous woman, he still fell short.

"The sound of the wind and a sixth sense, it's nothing unusual." Chen Shouyi said nonchalantly.

His current perception was already 12.5, with a range of nearly two meters. Even if he closed his eyes and blocked his ears, anything that came near this range couldn't escape his detection.

"Having become a major Martial Artist, your tone is really different now, handsome. So how should I address you, General Manager Chen?" Song Jieying joked.

Women always have some advantage in social interactions, especially beautiful women. If it were a male Martial Artist, he probably wouldn't dare to make such jokes.

"Just call me Chen Shouyi!" Chen Shouyi also smiled slightly, looking at her bicycle frame. Dangling from it was a snakeskin bag with something alive inside, he asked, "What's that?"

"Just came back from a nearby village, bought an old hen and some cabbage, planning to make stew tonight."

...

The two chatted as they walked, and a few minutes later, Song Jieying stopped at the entrance of a small community, looked at Chen Shouyi teasingly with a smile, "I live here, want to come upstairs for a visit?"

"No, I've got things to do!"

Chen Shouyi indeed had tasks at hand. Next, he went to the new campus relocated from Jiangnan University.

Space in the Safe Zone was tight, and what was allocated to Jiangnan University was only about the size of a larger high school. It didn't take long for him to find Bai Xiaoling's cousin, Professor Guan Miao Guan.

In her office, as soon as Guan Miao saw Chen Shouyi, she stood up promptly and led him to a secluded corner.

"Why are you looking for me?" Guan Miao spoke while cautiously observing the surroundings.

Her husband was a jealous type, and if acquaintances saw her and spread the word to her husband, it would inevitably lead to quarrels.

"I wanted to ask, any research progress on the last sample of Divine Blood?" Chen Shouyi inquired.

"Not that quickly, many instruments aren't usable now, we can only perform preliminary testing. Why do you ask?" Guan Miao was puzzled, then realized: "You want to separate the tangible matter from the remaining Divine Blood, don't you?"

Chen Shouyi had nothing to hide, nodding. The situation in Hedong City was dire, with the Barbarian invasion and even the possible arrival of a Barbarian God, making him eager to enhance his strength.

If the remaining Divine Blood could be utilized, his powers could improve considerably over a short period.

"Forget about it, unless power is restored, there's no way to mass extract it."

A flicker of disappointment crossed Chen Shouyi's heart, but he hadn't expected much anyway.

"Isn't there any way to restore electricity?"

Guan Miao gave him a disdainful glance, having never had a good impression of Chen Shouyi, and mocked, "Anyone with some scientific common sense wouldn't ask such a question. If you were my student..."

"Shut up!" Chen Shouyi's face darkened as he approached, "Don't ask for trouble."

This woman really was asking for it!

Cornered against the wall, Guan Miao was like a lamb under a tiger's paw, her face turning pale. She threatened softly, "What are you planning? This is a school, you better not act rashly."

Catching the scent of her fragrance, Chen Shouyi felt a surge of emotions. He quickly controlled his breathing, suppressing the turmoil within, and took a few steps back: "Speak up!"

Now strong and vigorous, going through puberty, he was easily provoked. If not for his strong will and focus on his training, he'd long be consumed by his desires.

"A real brute." Guan Miao muttered quietly, no longer daring to provoke him: "Electricity still exists, the force field from another world is merely interfering with the flow of free electrons, and this interference has a quantifiable extent, with no impact on organisms."

Power laboratories have verified experimentally that once the voltage reaches 1200 volts, the current can flow normally. At 15 kV, this interference's effects will vanish completely, and electricity won't be consumed needlessly."

"So the mysterious force field from another world doesn't affect high-energy phenomena?" Chen Shouyi asked.

"You could say that, but powering a city isn't so simple. Our country's civilian electricity standard is 220v, while industrial is 380v, forming a complete industrial system. The current situation has overturned that entire system.

Though high-voltage lines can still transmit, all electrical appliances and machines will be unusable if they receive over 1200 volts of output.

Especially current electronic communications and chips mostly operate on low power, and when connected to over a thousand volts of high voltage, they'll be burnt through. With the current industrial and scientific conditions, focusing efforts for small-scale adaptive use is possible, but to restart electricity universally, even in the most optimistic scenario, will require at least five years."