

New Era 191

Chapter 191 - Accomplice and Principal Offender

Ten minutes later, Chen Shouyi left the new campus of Jiangnan University.

"Snap!"

He stepped into a puddle, cold muddy water splashing all over his legs.

Chen Shouyi snapped back to reality, cursed silently, and quickly shook his legs to fling off the excess water.

Since March, the temperature had noticeably warmed up. It was no longer as freezing as February. Except for the nights which were still below zero, during the daytime when the sun was out, it could basically stay above zero.

Apart from the roads outside, the small town was filled with muddy stone roads full of potholes. After the ice layers melted, they turned into puddles. If you weren't careful, you'd end up soaked in muddy water.

Chen Shouyi shook his head, dispelling the excess emotions from his mind. He opened his attribute panel to check the current energy accumulation.

"It's already at 5.7. To enhance my strength in a short time, I can only think of using it somehow," he mused silently.

His gaze swept past the energy accumulation and looked at the skills section under "Archery."

"Archery: Proficiency 16"

This was the lowest proficiency among all his combat skills. Compared to the "Mastery 12" level of swordsmanship, the skill level of "Proficiency 16" was worlds apart. It could only be considered mediocre and barely adequate,

but this weakest skill was also the most powerful. At mid-short range, an outstanding divine archer could absolutely kill an enemy above their level.

"The optimization of the Thirty-Six Body Refinement Techniques can only be postponed. Fortunately, this first optimization doesn't consume much, just 1 point. At the current rate of energy accumulation, it will only take six or seven days to replenish."

...

Evening!

The newly installed gas lamps in the new district emitted a pale light, while fully armed soldiers patrolled back and forth incessantly.

Carrying a bow case, Chen Shouyi was stopped and questioned several times on the road before finally leaving the new district smoothly.

Reaching the road outside, the rhythmic roar of machinery from the factories on both sides was deafening in this quiet deep night. From time to time, a steam truck loaded with goods rolled past slowly.

Nowadays, the factories here basically ran on 24-hour shifts. Yet, even so, Chen Shouyi estimated the current production efficiency was not even a tenth or a hundredth of the pre-mutation level.

Before the mutation, all devices were automated and semi-automated, and CNC machines had become entirely universal. Now, almost everything had regressed to the level of before and after World War I. Although some aspects might be more advanced, there wasn't much difference.

He started to quicken his pace. With just a slight force on his ankles, he could cover five to six meters with each step, as if shrinking the ground. Within just ten minutes, his figure had already swept past the farthest factory, covering nearly ten kilometers.

Next, Chen Shouyi left the road and took a path leading to a hill in front.

Seeing no one around, he unzipped his jacket, and soon a tiny person, just a bit larger than a finger, eagerly scuttled out from inside, loudly complaining: "Oh giant, if I stayed any longer, I'd be suffocated to death."

"How could that suffocate you?"

"Stupid giant, I said I was almost suffocated," the Shell Lady pouted. As she spoke, she grabbed Chen Shouyi's clothes and swiftly climbed up to his shoulder, enthusiastically looking around.

...

Chen Shouyi's hand moved like a phantom, like a breeze brushing across the bowstring, a single arrow swiftly flew over a hundred meters, heavily piercing through a bowl-thick pine tree, leaving a large hole in the center. The arrowhead continued with its force, embedding into a rock, the tail feather vibrating violently with a buzzing sound.

At this moment, the pine tree trembled a few times and soon slowly split in half, crashing down.

The huge commotion frightened a mouse hiding in the hole, making it dash out immediately.

"Oh giant, there's a bad mouse here! Quickly kill it," the sharp-eyed Shell Lady said excitedly. Ever since she was startled by a mouse last time, she had developed a hatred for these ugly and fierce creatures.

Chen Shouyi said nothing, quickly took an arrow from the quiver on his back, and lightly touched the bowstring, sending the arrow shooting out like lightning.

The next moment, the arrow, moving at three times the speed of sound, hit the mouse's body solidly, exploding the entire mouse into pieces, with blood and flesh flying everywhere.

"Giant, you are awesome, you blew the mouse apart! Look, look, there's another ferocious bird," the Shell Lady, face flushed with excitement, pointed eagerly to the far-off sparrow perched quietly in the tree.

Chen Shouyi chuckled triumphantly and drew another arrow.

The next moment, an arrow flew instantly over eighty to ninety meters, smashing the unsuspecting sparrow into pieces, with a flurry of feathers flying around.

"Using the optimized archery to shoot, my hand holding the bow becomes steadier, less prone to shake, and the arrows shot are much more accurate. Moreover, it discards superfluous movements, making the technique extremely simple and efficient. If I become proficient, my drawing speed can increase by one to two times," he mused silently.

The optimization of archery mainly reflects the coordination and technique of muscle exertion while drawing the bow.

Even before taking the Divine Blood, his drawing speed could reach seven or eight arrows per second. During peak performance, it could even reach ten arrows per second, and after taking the Divine Blood, he could consistently maintain ten arrows per second.

Now, with the archery optimization, once he becomes proficient, his shooting speed will reach new heights.

...

Until four in the morning, the accomplice and executioner Chen Shouyi and the principal perpetrator Shell Lady happily began their journey back.

This massacre resulted in the death of more than thirty mice, over fifty sparrows and similar birds, and two pheasants. Unfortunately, those two pheasants had been blown apart by arrows moving at three times the speed of sound, leaving no trophies.

The loss was that all the arrows were used up.

These arrows were either shot deep into the forest and could not be retrieved or embedded in the soil, making them hard to dig out. Some arrows were even buried half a meter deep in the soil. With that much effort, it was better to simply buy a new batch.

"Oh giant, shall we come again after sunset tomorrow?" the Shell Lady asked eagerly, her face still flushed with excitement.

Watching these creatures, which could usually threaten her, get torn apart under her command was truly exhilarating.

Before Chen Shouyi discovered her, the Shell Lady lived an isolated life of hiding and lurking. For her, there wasn't much concept of good and evil. Anything that posed a threat was naturally considered bad and was better off dead.

Then, everything would be wonderful.

"Sure!" Chen Shouyi replied.

"Mwah mwah mwah!" In her excitement, the Shell Lady kissed Chen Shouyi's face several times. "Giant, you're the best."

Chen Shouyi wiped a slight trace of saliva from his face.

There really was no feeling at all!

Entering the industrial zone, Chen Shouyi grabbed the Shell Lady, and amidst her protests, tucked her into his jacket, zipped it up, and quickly walked forward.

Chapter 192 - Fury

March 7, 2016, the weather is overcast.

In the park at the foot of Yun Mountain, thousands of raggedly dressed humans were clearing the boulders that had rolled down from the mountain under the watchful eyes of Barbarians.

A chubby man in his twenties was clutching a stone, staggering forward with his large belly, panting like an old bellows.

He felt he couldn't hold on anymore and thought it would be better to just die.

He had never exerted himself so much before.

With blistered hands, sore and weak arms, and an almost broken back, he felt every day was like a year for the past two days. He could feel every cell in his body, even every fat molecule, protesting strongly.

Rest!

Rest!

He urgently needed rest!

In just two days, he felt he had lost weight, and his beloved fat was slipping away quickly.

He carried the stone, trudged to the distant foot of the mountain, dropped the stone, and walked to a hidden corner, finally unable to hold on, legs trembling, and plopped down on the ground.

A strong sense of relief spread throughout his body, and he felt a tingling sensation, unable to suppress a groan.

"I wish I could sit here forever!"

He hadn't been sitting for long when he keenly noticed many people around him frequently signaling to him with their eyes.

The chubby man immediately sensed something was wrong and hurriedly looked around.

He saw a Barbarian from afar striding toward him, face fierce and menacing, eyes sharp as a hawk's with a tinge of intense killing intent, and the chubby man shivered all over, immediately scrambling to his feet.

But it was already too late.

"Damn scum!" the Barbarian cursed in a low voice in the common tongue, face filled with hatred, swinging the long whip without any restraint or hesitation.

The whip made a piercing shriek, and in the next moment, the chubby man's clothes exploded, revealing a deep wound on his pale back, yellow fat and crimson muscle rolled to the sides, and even the white ribs were faintly visible.

Receiving such a heavy blow, the chubby man's eyes bulged like light bulbs, and he collapsed to the ground, twitching all over.

Blood continuously flowed from the corner of his mouth, mixed with fragments of his internal organs, it was clear this blow had completely crushed his insides.

The Barbarian wasn't satisfied with just one whip, he repeatedly lashed over a dozen times, pieces of clothing and countless bits of flesh flying through the air.

Finally, the Barbarian kicked the brutally whipped corpse, now a heap of mush, and gave a cold glance at this group of lowly slaves, then strode away.

...

"Damn rats!"

Dabono swung the Giant Axe at a multi-story office building, cleaving the air, and a gust of wind whipped up, a flash of red energy appearing and disappearing. The entire building shook slightly, leaving a slanted fine crack as if cut by a laser, and soon enough, the upper part of the building slipped down along the crack.

"Boom!" A huge crash.

The ground shook violently as nearly ten thousand tons of weight smashed to the ground, producing a loud noise, and smoke rose up like a mushroom cloud.

Dabono panted heavily, the fury in his eyes almost tangible.

Lately, the God of Courage, Dabono, had grown increasingly irritable, with the endless ambushes in this world igniting a fire of wrath in his heart.

Before stepping into this world, his army of followers was nearly sixty thousand strong, now, after constant attacks, less than three thousand remained, most having perished during the overwhelming native counterattack upon entering this world.

Yet, for the God of Courage, losses from direct confrontation caused only heartache rather than anger.

When invading this world, he was mentally prepared for failure and even demise; if this world were so easily conquered, how would it fall to him?

What truly enraged him were those cowardly, despicable, shameless rats lurking in shadows.

They hid in dark corners, using those peculiar weapons to ambush and kill them one by one. Their attire disguised to resemble the weak civilians of this world, with even their physical prowess not much greater.

Even he couldn't tell with his own eyes who were the Warriors of this world and who were the civilians.

This sudden blow dashed Dabono's initial belief that he had successfully established a foothold in this world and could begin spreading and harvesting faith.

The massive losses now made all the Barbarians hesitant to advance, even the strongest Warriors' hearts pounded in fear when facing these invisible, deadly attacks.

"You despicable blasphemers, originally I was going to mercifully wait for you to submit to me and become my followers, but clearly you squandered your last precious chance." He muttered to himself, eyes aflame with rage.

As a deity of high intelligence, he wouldn't make the mistake of only treating the symptoms. These ambushing Warriors were clearly operating under commands from this nation (which he perceived the city to be a powerful nation).

By severely targeting this nation's resistance force, making them completely understand and deeply despair at what formidable existence they were resisting, then controlling the nation's king, those ambushing Warriors would naturally cease to be a problem.

In the next moment, he slammed the ground, streets shattered into web-like cracks, and a wave of infrasound instantly spread.

At the same time, he launched into the air like a rocket.

Seconds later, he stood thousands of meters high, observing the groups of this world's magical war machines in the distance, sneering as he dived down.

...

"Welcome!" a beautiful salesgirl smiled at the cold weapon store counter of a mall.

"Where are the arrows?" Chen Shouyi asked, holding a briefcase.

"Please follow me!" the salesgirl smiled.

Chen Shouyi arrived at the arrows counter, looking at the regular arrows commonly used:

"Why have the prices increased?"

Ordinary metal arrows like these used to cost just over ten yuan each for the cheaper ones and a bit over twenty for the better ones, but now they had risen to over forty?

"We're very sorry, recently the price of crude steel has skyrocketed, and rising processing costs are beyond our control," the salesgirl quickly explained.

Chen Shouyi understood completely: "Let me have a look at an arrow."

The salesgirl took one out and handed it over.

Chen Shouyi picked up the arrow and inspected it, finding the processing quality had slightly declined, the shaft was much rougher than before, which once resembled a work of art, now appeared unfinished, though the balance and center of gravity were still fine.

"I'll take three hundred, no, better make it six hundred!"

"How... how many?" The salesgirl's eyes widened, stuttering slightly.

It wasn't like before anymore, people with money were scarce, having ten thousand meant being wealthy. She initially thought it was just a small order of a dozen or so arrows, didn't expect it was a large order.

"Six hundred, is there a problem?"

"No problem, no problem!" the salesgirl hurriedly said.

"I also want twenty Armor-Piercing Arrows." Then Chen Shouyi pointed to the Armor-Piercing Arrows with the dark, heavy arrowheads.

These Armor-Piercing Arrows used tungsten steel arrowheads, extremely hard, reportedly a 300-pound War Bow could penetrate a two-centimeter standard steel plate within ten meters.

"How much is it all?" Chen Shouyi asked.

"A total of twenty-eight thousand five hundred!"

...

After paying, Chen Shouyi carried the heavy quiver, left the mall, got his bike from the parking lot, glanced at the gloomy sky, pushed off, and rode home quickly.

Chapter 193 - Upheaval (Part 3)

The small district within the safe zone has already started leveling the ground.

Wherever Chen Shouyi's gaze passed, there were workers densely packed everywhere.

Many of these workers had potbellies, clearly not the type of people who had done much manual labor; most of them were refugees who had recently migrated here.

Since the mutation, the unemployment rate has remained high, and only in newly established safe zones has the employment rate reached pre-mutation levels.

Outside the safe zone, in the entire Hedong City, probably only one or two out of every ten people can find work, while the majority are unemployed and can only rely on relief stations for sustenance,

Does the city government have money now?

It absolutely does, quite a lot of it.

Ever since banks were unable to operate normally, a huge amount of funds has accumulated in the banks, which were subsequently managed by the city government. If these funds were divided and distributed to the people, every person could potentially receive one to two million.

However, any slightly rational authority would not do such a thing.

Money is essentially a contract between the owner and the market regarding exchange rights; fundamentally, it is an agreement between owners. If you strip away the essence of currency, money is just a piece of paper. Aside from looking exquisite, it holds no value.

In the current situation, with a tight supply of materials on the market, if a huge amount of money was evenly distributed to the people, the first thing everyone would do would probably be to purchase large quantities of food and other materials, hoarding them like hamsters preparing for winter.

The result would be market inflation, currency devaluation, and soaring prices.

The entire society would only become more chaotic.

Presently, prices can remain relatively stable, and market supply steady, thanks to the fact that the public has very little cash in their hands; even if they were wealthy before, the cash coupled with gold and other preservation items wouldn't be too much.

Chen Shouyi put his bicycle in the garage and pulled down the iron roll gate.

Carrying a heavy bag of arrows, he walked into the living room, and Chen Xingyue curiously came over:

"Brother, what did you buy?"

"Nothing much, just arrows!" Chen Shouyi raised the arrow bag to show her.

"Such a big bag, how many did you buy?" Chen Xingyue asked.

"Over six hundred!"

Chen Xingyue's jaw dropped in astonishment at the words, then she immediately hugged Chen Shouyi's arm, using an unheard-of sweet voice to plead, "Brother, you're the best, could you give me some?"

"Stop, can you talk properly, you don't even have a bow, what do you need arrows for?" Chen Shouyi felt goosebumps rising all over him and quickly said.

Chen Xingyue blinked and continued to plead, "Brother, don't you still have a bow? You don't use it anymore, could you give it to me?"

Then she added, "You've never given me a gift since we were little!"

Chen Shouyi heard this and didn't feel at all embarrassed.

It sounds like you have ever given me anything.

He grumbled to himself.

"Alright, alright, it's just an old bow, here you go!" Chen Shouyi said.

He originally planned to buy a women's martial artist war bow for his sister when his paycheck came in a few days.

Now seeing her thrifty and understanding, it was clearly unnecessary.

Due to the natural strength advantage of males, the standards for female martial artists and male martial artists are different. The standard for a male martial artist-level war bow is five hundred pounds, while females only need four hundred pounds.

Although five hundred pounds might be a bit heavy for his sister, who barely has the physique of a martial artist, it's perfectly fine for regular practice, at most drawing a few times before the arms become sore.

"Brother, you're truly the best!"

Watching his sister jump up and down, hugging his arm with a look of excitement, Chen Shouyi swallowed the harsh truth he was about to reveal.

Forget it, better not to upset her, let her stay oblivious.

After all, as a brother, I should have the magnanimity of a brother.

"Hold on, I'll get it for you!" Chen Shouyi set down the arrow bag, went to the second-floor bedroom, and brought back a bow case.

Chen Xingyue eagerly unzipped the bow case, and it wasn't long until the war bow was assembled.

This martial artist-level war bow is always durable, capable of adapting to various battlefield environments. Even without much maintenance from Chen Shouyi, it still looked as good as new.

Chen Xingyue grew more and more delighted as she looked at it, exclaiming, "Where are the arrows? Give me one."

Watching his sister's eager expression, Chen Shouyi was speechless. He took one from the arrow bag and handed it to her, reminding her, "Be careful, don't let go, if you shoot the wall, you'll be in big trouble and definitely get scolded."

Chen Xingyue silently thought to herself, all the damage at home over the years has been caused by you, I never dared to mention it.

There was once when you played with fire in the room and almost set the house on fire.

Though she only dared to think these words, fearing that if she spoke out and her brother got angry and took back the war bow, it would be a disaster.

She sweetly said, "Don't worry, I'm not a beginner!"

The Martial Artist Apprentice exam includes an archery assessment, and speaking of it, Chen Xingyue has been learning archery longer than Chen Shouyi.

She used the standard technique, forcefully pulling back the bowstring, her long white neck revealing a few blue veins, her face flushed red, then slowly relaxed the pull.

Chen Shouyi estimated that with her strength and stamina, she could draw it six or seven times before reaching her limit.

Seeing she could handle it, Chen Shouyi stopped bothering her and counted out fifty ordinary arrows from the arrow bag, picked up the arrow bag, and prepared to return to his bedroom: "You can practice slowly by yourself, I'll give you fifty arrows, if it's not enough, come ask me."

"Brother, you're the best, thank you so much."

"I've used this war bow for quite some time..." Chen Shouyi began to say when his sister interrupted him.

"Don't worry, brother, I know, this is your first war bow, I'll take good care of it."

Chen Shouyi stood there, opened his mouth, and swallowed the next phrase, "Do with it as you like."

...

Chen Shouyi returned to the bedroom, put the arrow bag down, pulled out an armor-piercing arrow, his fingers tracing the sharp arrowhead.

The armor-piercing arrow was much heavier than normal arrows, tungsten's density is higher than gold, though the arrowhead isn't pure tungsten but tungsten steel, still, its density is twice that of ordinary steel. The entire arrowhead weighs one pound, with a streamlined and sharp design, dark black color flashing coldly, showcasing its frightening penetration capability.

Using eight hundred pounds to support such a heavy arrowhead, its close-range power is estimated to far exceed that of anti-material sniper rifles, capable of easily piercing through military armored vehicle armor.

He looked at it eagerly, couldn't resist wanting to test it, but upon glancing around the environment, he vigorously suppressed the urge.

No rush!

Better wait until tonight to experiment.

After fiddling with it for a while, Chen Shouyi placed the arrow on his desk, intending to practice the Body Refinement Thirty-Six Styles a few times before dinner to exercise his body.

However, just as he assumed the starting stance, the sound of cannons rang out from afar, sending a pang to his heart, making him promptly stop. First, there were relatively crisp anti-aircraft fire sounds, soon followed by the oppressive rumble of heavy artillery.

In a swift movement, he stepped to the window and quickly drew open the curtains.

With his enhanced eyesight, he could make out the distant horizon; countless anti-aircraft shells exploding overhead created plumes of black smoke that hadn't completely dissipated, hanging in the air like shadows.

It lasted two to three minutes before all cannon sounds abruptly ceased.

But rather than feeling relieved, Chen Shouyi only grew more anxious.

Sure enough, before long, the cannon sounds resumed with greater intensity, seemingly closer as well.

Chapter 194 - Upheaval (Part 4)

Outside the villa, shadows were running everywhere, and the workers who originally leveled the ground were swiftly disbanded.

The sound of cannon fire stopped intermittently, sporadically, and each time the cannon fire lasted from as short as half a minute to as long as three to four minutes, with very brief intervals.

Sometimes he sat on the bed, sometimes he would stand up and pace back and forth.

His heart was filled with anxiety and unease.

Although he hadn't seen it with his own eyes, listening to that intermittent cannon fire, he could vaguely imagine a terrifying presence quickly tearing down Hedong City's defenses and coming rapidly in this direction.

His heart seemed shrouded in a thick dark cloud, pressing down on him, making it difficult to breathe.

At this time, the door was knocked violently.

"Brother, brother! Open the door, hurry!"

It was Chen Xingyue's voice.

Chen Shouyi came to his senses, took a deep breath, and the anxiety on his face had completely disappeared, replaced by a calm and composed expression.

He had become the backbone of the family, others could panic, but he could not.

He walked over and opened the door.

"Mom asked me to call you for dinner!" Chen Xingyue said, then couldn't help but ask anxiously, "Brother, will we be okay here?"

"Don't overthink it. The Safe Zone is a key defense area, unlike other places!" Chen Shouyi reassured her.

With the army moving day and night these days, the area outside the Safe Zone had almost been turned into a fortress. Chen Shouyi estimated that nearly half of Hedong City's military forces had gathered here.

However, even so, he had little confidence in whether they could kill that suspected Barbarian God-like terrifying presence.

...

The atmosphere during dinner was oppressive, everyone silently pondering their own thoughts.

"How much rice do we have left at home?" Mrs. Chen suddenly broke the silence and asked Chen Dawei.

"There should be more than five hundred pounds! Don't worry, every few days I buy a sack." Chen Dawei replied, as he was the one who cooked most of the meals, he knew best about the rice stock.

With two big eaters in the house, food consumption was rapid; a fifty-pound sack of rice would be finished in a few days, and the monthly rice expenses alone would cost over three to four thousand. Were it not for Chen Shouyi's substantial salary and subsidies, in a normal working-class family, they might only survive on wind from the northwest and relief food.

"The cannon fire has stopped again!" Chen Xingyue reminded.

The mechanical clock on the dining room wall ticked steadily.

Making a crisp and pleasant ticking sound.

The atmosphere suddenly quieted down, even the eating slowed down, as if everyone was waiting for the next round of cannon fire.

But this time, the interval was exceptionally long, lasting a full ten minutes, so much so that dinner was finished without any cannon fire sounding.

"Has it been killed?" Chen Xingyue said hopefully.

Chen's father and Mrs. Chen couldn't help but breathe a sigh of relief upon hearing that.

"I knew nothing would happen. With so many troops and cannons, it's impossible not to win, what's being said outside is too exaggerated." Mrs. Chen said.

But as soon as she finished speaking, everyone felt the ground shake,

simultaneously, a huge explosion sounded in the distance.

Within just a few seconds, the cannon fire grew increasingly dense, almost forming a continuous barrage, and dust began to fall from the ceiling.

This close cannon fire was likely from the troops stationed just outside the Safe Zone.

Listening to the earth-shattering din outside.

Fear cloaked everyone's figure, thinking of the terrifying rumors about the Barbarian God, everyone's hearts grew increasingly uneasy.

At this time, Chen Shouyi quickly said, "Dad, Mom, Xingyue, all of you go to the basement now."

Nowadays, basements are standard in villa projects, with space of more than a hundred square meters; currently, besides one room being used as a storage area, most of it is unused.

"Brother, what about you?"

"I'll go get the weapons, I'll be right over." Chen Shouyi said.

"Then I'll go get mine too." Chen Xingyue said.

Chen Shouyi didn't speak, just nodded and stepped out of the dining room, sprinting quickly up to the second floor.

He opened the bedroom door, took a step towards the window, pulled open the curtain, and looked far into the distance.

It was already five o'clock, the sky beginning to darken, through the window, the distant horizon was a blaze with fire and smoke, and he could even vaguely see rockets spewing fierce flames, flying swiftly in the air.

The frontline of the war was only about ten kilometers away, in such a war, this distance almost placed him within the battlefield.

Even if he traveled from here to the battlefield, it would only take a few minutes.

Even before taking Divine Blood, his sprinting speed could reach fifty meters per second, and now it could nearly reach a hundred meters per second.

Running speed depends on stride frequency, stride length, and wind resistance. Naturally, stride frequency is closely linked to agility (reaction capability). With his seven times the average agility, during a sprint, he even has the presence of mind to wait for the other foot to land.

And stride length relates to leg strength; his strength was enough for him to step fifteen to sixteen meters in a run.

As for wind resistance factors, for someone with Wind Control like him, the effect is negligible.

Of course, running speed isn't just about higher stride frequency or greater stride length, the two balance each other, compromise with each other, and reach a maximum middle ground.

Otherwise, Chen Shouyi's speed wouldn't be merely ten times that of normal people, but fifty to sixty times (agility*strength).

Of course, this was the speed of full exertion, which could only last for half a minute before exhaustion sets in. However, even normal running speed for Chen Shouyi meant covering ten kilometers within a few minutes, with hardly any noticeable depletion of stamina.

...

Chen Shouyi glanced quickly and drew back the curtain, then took out a portion of arrows from the arrow pack, loading them one by one into three shoulder-mounted quivers, one specifically for Armor-Piercing Arrows.

Then he took down the War Bow from the wall and stringed it.

After a minute, he returned to the window, the distant smoke had thickened and blurred his view completely.

Unsure if it was an illusion, the cannon fire outside seemed to have thinned out considerably, lacking the previous density.

In reality, it proved not to be an illusion.

As time went on, the cannon fire became increasingly sparse.

A forceful knock sounded on the bedroom door:

"Brother, Mom wants you to come back to the basement." Chen Xingyue shouted at the door.

"I know, you go ahead, I'll be right there." Chen Shouyi said.

"Hurry then!"

Chen Xingyue quickly left, Chen Shouyi stood dazed for a few more minutes, the cannon fire finally fell deathly silent.

A deathly silence.

Chen Shouyi seemed to petrify, standing motionless, his body stiff.

Until the door once again resounded with Chen Xingyue's intense knocking, he then jolted awake.

"We can't stay here!"

He immediately grabbed his briefcase containing the Shell Lady and his Long Sword, and opened the bedroom door.

Chapter 195 - The King

Just as he and his sister reached downstairs, a knock sounded at the door.

Chen Shouyi opened the door, and a group of soldiers came in. The leading officer, a captain, said solemnly, "Chief Advisor Chen, according to wartime temporary regulations and Martial Artist discipline rules, you have been drafted."

Chen Shouyi felt a heavy weight in his heart; in fact, when he heard the knocking, he already had some suspicion.

Martial Artists have always been quasi-military personnel. Once it's wartime, they have the obligation of mandatory conscription, though this rule doesn't manifest during peacetime, and no Martial Artists are drafted. Now, it's evidently the most critical time.

Chen Shouyi looked at the soldiers, who were mere ordinary people, and felt silent in his heart. From their faces, he could see their unease and fear, but more so, their determination and resolve.

He feared death; remembering the terrifying gods in the Memory Space made his hair stand on end, and he felt no will to fight. However, looking at these soldiers, his words turned into: "Alright!."

His blood hadn't turned cold yet. If he were a civilian, it would be understandable to hide, but as a great Martial Artist with immense power, he couldn't shamelessly hide in a dark corner and let the soldiers risk their lives upfront.

"Brother, you can't go!" Chen Xingyue, standing beside him, panicked.

"I'll be fine; wait for my return!"

"Do you need any preparation?" The captain's expression softened, showing a bit of respect. He knew that even if the other party refused, they couldn't enforce it. If a great Martial Artist were angered, the soldiers holding guns here could be massacred in a short time.

"No need!"

Chen Shouyi said, already carrying what he should have. Before leaving, he turned and handed the briefcase with the Shell Lady to Chen Xingyue, saying solemnly, "I've left a gift for you inside. Remember to feed her honey... Also, take good care of Mom and Dad!"

"Brother!" Tears welled up in Chen Xingyue's eyes. She knew this was already an arrangement for after the event. She turned and shouted, "Dad, Mom! Come quickly to persuade brother!"

Seeing this, Chen Shouyi hurriedly said to the soldiers, "Let's go!"

As he spoke, he swiftly walked forward, and the soldiers immediately trotted to keep pace.

...

A steam truck was parked at the entrance.

Half a minute later, having already seated on the truck, Chen Shouyi looked back at his family's villa.

Mrs. Chen and Chen Dawei waved desperately toward him, full of anxiety and worry. The sight made Chen Shouyi's eyes burn, and he clenched his heart hard, turned his head, leaned back against the carriage, looked up, and remained motionless.

Soon, Chen Shouyi and the soldiers stopped at the plaza of the City Government building.

...

On a battlefield filled with smoke.

Watchtowers turned into ruins, a tank cut in half, twisted artillery barrels, and the remnants of corpses scattered all over.

A colossal Giant strode over the flames left by the white phosphorus incendiary bullet, and as He passed, the flames automatically moved aside.

At this time, the beast skin wrapped around His waist, which still shone brilliantly even on Earth, was already tattered. His body was black and gray, even with strands of golden blood at His lips, nostrils, and ears, looking quite ragged.

This was caused by His accidental entry into a trap set by these Blasphemers.

The intense explosion launched Him, swept by a terrifying airwave. If He hadn't keenly sensed danger and decisively stopped at the periphery, He might have been severely injured or even fallen.

Nevertheless, He felt extremely weak.

Gods, as immortal high-level beings, are fundamentally different from ordinary life.

The moment He became a Demigod, contacted the Plane Origin, and received Original Force infusion, He would condense a divine body based on the laws comprehended.

This body has an energy-like nature, with immortal properties, no longer needing to eat to sustain life activities but relying on the supply of Divine Fire (Divine Power should be used sparingly, as it's precious to any god).

However, even though this divine body condensed using the Plane Origin is powerful, its drawbacks are also present: once injured, it is extremely difficult to recover, and serious injuries may require decades or even centuries of slumber for gradual recovery.

Of course, if Divine Power is abundant, the recovery time would be greatly shortened.

Therefore, once becoming True Gods, all gods would spend significant energy and Divine Power to construct their nests, building them into impregnable fortresses. Their true bodies rarely venture out to avoid unforeseen disasters, mostly operating through avatars.

...

At this moment, He slightly tilted His head to dodge a sniper bullet.

His gaze sharply turned to the left, at a frantic figure six hundred meters away, who shed disguise and began to flee. He cursed, "Damn Blasphemer!"

The next moment, with a "boom" of sonic booms, His figure instantly vanished.

Although His running speed had slowed significantly, He could still easily surpass the speed of sound. In just under two seconds, the soldier was seized in His grasp.

However, the soldier was covered in blood, already lifeless, leaving Him with nowhere to vent His fury.

This time, His keen ears heard a sizzling sound, discovering the mortal warrior's chest tied with dozens of iron lumps. Before He could react and throw away the body, His massive hand exploded into a burst of raging fire, instantly pulverizing the soldier's body, flesh flying.

He spread His already blackened hand wide, a fierce and sinister expression on His face, as intense anger surged from His heart to His mind, roaring at the sky with a thunderous sound wave.

"Foolish and vile mortals, my mercy and tolerance have been exhausted..."

His words were cut short by a rain-like torrent of cannon fire.

In a half-collapsed watchtower far ahead, a soldier previously knocked unconscious by the Giant's roar struggled to stand up, operated a half-human-tall giant double-barreled cannon, and desperately shot at the Giant.

The shells, mixed with sporadic tracer rounds, traced a path like a waving long whip.

However, the reflexes and thought speed of a God are exceedingly quick; these dense high-speed bullets could be easily dodged in His eyes. Slightly shifting His body, He dodged the foremost shells.

Then He moved against the direction of the cannon shots, advancing at a snake-like speed.

A few seconds later, with a bang, the double-barreled cannon, along with the soldier's body, was split in two.

He stood grim-faced with a War Axe amidst the ruins, breathing heavily, his body staggering, nearly dropping to his knees. Continuous high-intensity activity had worn Him down.

"This damned other world!" He cursed softly.

"Fortunately, most of the resisting forces have been eliminated. Not much combat is needed from now on."

He prepared to control this nation and get it on track, then return to the Tamu World to recover His wounds promptly.

He stood at the spot for a few minutes, slightly recovering strength, then took a step, spanning hundreds of meters, swiftly heading towards the Safe Zone by mystical guidance.

He sensed the powerful center of this nation residing there.

Chapter 196 - Fierce Battle

Chen Shouyi jumped out of the vehicle, and the steam-powered car immediately turned around, heading off in the distance, clearly to summon other Martial Artists.

He was only accompanied by a Captain.

He looked up at the city government building.

This fifteen-story new city government building was originally an office building, with all glass walls. However, at this moment, all the glass here had been shattered, with a large amount of broken glass on the ground, not yet cleaned up.

Dozens of machine guns were cross-deployed on each floor, their nearly two-meter-long slender barrels extending out like sharp spikes.

Seeing Chen Shouyi's gaze, the nearby Captain introduced, "This is a 30mm caliber land combat machine gun, dismantled from armored vehicles. It can easily penetrate ordinary armor!"

However, these arrangements did not make Chen Shouyi feel any relief. If it were really that easy to deal with, the Barbarian God would have been resolved long ago, and wouldn't be waiting until now.

Moreover, these weapons were still manually aimed, and even for a large Martial Artist like him, as long as he moves quickly, these weapons might find it difficult to hit him, let alone the rumored terrifying Barbarian God.

Before the anomaly, humanity's main large-scale weaponry had almost all become automated and semi-automated, mainly relying on fire control radar and electro-optical detection systems to find targets, fire control computers to calculate target location and gun aiming coordinates, and command drive devices to control the gun's aim and fire.

High mobility, beyond-visual-range, and intelligent warfare, combined with satellites, could completely annihilate enemies a thousand miles away.

However, after the mutation, humanity's combat power seemed to regress by decades overnight.

Facing conventional warfare, these weapons still held massive power, but facing such extraordinary beings, it was like a clumsy, lame strongman, unable to exert his strength.

Chen Shouyi withdrew his gaze and, stepping on the glass, entered the city government building with a heavy heart.

The lobby was filled with a tense and anxious atmosphere, and many soldiers hurried about, even running half the time.

Chen Shouyi followed the officer all the way to the eighth floor, which was a spacious hall occupying the entire floor. There were already many Martial Artists and quite a few soldiers, with two machine guns set up.

"Hello, General Manager Chen."

"General Manager Chen, you're here too."

...

Seeing Chen Shouyi enter, many nearby Martial Artists greeted him one after another.

Most of these Martial Artists were unfamiliar to Chen Shouyi, but that didn't prevent them from knowing who Chen Shouyi was. Since the last meeting, all Martial Artists had quietly remembered this young Martial Artist in their hearts.

Chen Shouyi nodded to each in acknowledgment and then stood at the edge of the floor.

At this moment, the last ray of sunset light had been swallowed by the horizon, as night slowly descended.

The number of incoming Martial Artists kept increasing to dozens soon; Song Jieying also arrived and exchanged a few words with Chen Shouyi before standing solemnly to the side.

Not long after, Qin Liuyuan also walked in with a stern look. He glanced around, saw Chen Shouyi, and walked straight over, asking in a low voice:

"Brother Chen, are you confident?"

Chen Shouyi did not look at him, shook his head, saying he had no confidence at all.

Qin Liuyuan sighed heavily and said no more.

As time ticked by, more Martial Artists entered, but the other great Martial Artist Cui Ziwen had yet to appear.

During this time, the first in Jiangnan Province, led a group of high-ranking military and government officials to inspect, specially shaking hands with Chen Shouyi and Qin Liuyuan, the two great Martial Artists, saying a few words of encouragement before leaving swiftly.

...

Throughout, no one mentioned who would command this Martial Artist unit.

A burst of fireworks in the distance shot up into the sky, exploding into a red glow.

Someone shouted, "The enemy is here, everyone, get ready!"

Chen Shouyi's heart tightened as he suddenly faced an enemy. He swiftly drew an arrow from his quiver, held it in his hand, and looked into the distance, but perhaps due to the buildings, he saw no trace.

Just then, he noticed a plume of smoke billowing from the gaps between distant buildings, rapidly spreading.

A few seconds later, he finally saw a massive figure, swiftly closing in along the avenue.

It was a giant about thirteen or fourteen meters high with bulging muscles all over its body. Every time it pushed off the ground, a cloud of white vapor formed at the spot. One moment, it was a kilometer away, but within a breath, it was only five or six hundred meters away.

The sound of machine guns finally erupted.

Countless bullets rained down in dense barrages, yet despite its massive size, it was unexpectedly agile. Some shells, it didn't even dodge, blocking them with its huge war axe, creating bursts of sparks and easily deflecting them.

Five hundred meters, three hundred meters... In just a second, it was two hundred meters away.

Meanwhile, a disconcerting aura began to permeate the air, a divine oppression.

Some Martial Artists had already started shooting arrows, but Chen Shouyi remained motionless.

He watched the giant figure, feeling somewhat puzzled inside.

It was undoubtedly extremely powerful, possessing incredible agility to easily reach supersonic speeds and strength so fearful that in a head-on confrontation, he'd likely be crushed to pulp in an instant.

The two were not on the same level at all.

But compared to the divine beings in the memory space, it was vastly weaker, like a firefly to a full moon.

At that moment, Chen Shouyi took a deep breath and moved instantly. At this life-and-death moment, he cast aside all fear, achieving a deep calmness.

His hand, like a phantom, instantly drew the bowstring and fired an arrow.

Then a second arrow, a third... each arrow locked onto the opponent's silhouette.

His speed was unparalleled, the roar from his arrows formed a continuous stream, launching an arrow every 0.1 seconds. With Chen Shouyi joining the fray, the advancing figure of the giant was immediately slowed down.

The giant swung its war axe, shattering some arrows that were heading its way, letting out an angry roar.

The massive sonic wave even created visible ripples in the air, like a terrible sonic boom weapon, causing some soldiers' ears to bleed, and the firing noises of the machine guns to thin out.

Just as Chen Shouyi felt the situation was dire, a steam truck suddenly crashed through the building's first-floor wall, heading towards the giant.

Not just one, there were more steam trucks coming from the various corners around the city government building, seemingly to encircle the giant.

The giant seemed to sense danger, decisively halting its advance, and with a single step, it leaped over several dozen meters. As Chen Shouyi's eyes caught its figure, the nearest steam truck was already smashed into pieces, debris shooting out in all directions.

The giant destroyed three trucks in quick succession, but as it approached the fourth, the steam truck exploded violently, engulfing its figure in flames.

Each of these self-destruct trucks carried several tons of TNT. Compared to a conventional cruise missile, which has only half a ton of TNT in its warhead, though TNT's power diminished after the mutation, the sheer quantity made up for it all.

A huge blast wave swept across the building, shaking it fiercely, and the glass windows of nearby residential buildings shattered one after another.

Chen Shouyi watched as the giant figure flew backward in the flames of the explosion, rapidly heading their way.

His eyes suddenly shone.

Now is the time!

Chapter 197 - Godslayer

The giant flying in mid-air was still a good one hundred and thirty meters away from Chen Shouyi, far beyond his optimal attack range. However, such a massive target naturally had no chance of missing.

A thirteen-meter tall giant might not seem much just by looking at the numbers, but you should know that common four-story residential buildings are only twelve or thirteen meters tall, and its frame is as wide as a mid-sized bus.

If you walked up close, its massive physique alone would be enough to strike fear into people's hearts, making them shudder.

Chen Shouyi swiftly drew an arrow, his hands turning into a blur as they gently stroked the bowstring, pulling back and releasing, shooting out, then drawing another arrow from the quiver on his back.

Time was of the essence!

He noticed that although the giant's body was being hit directly by violent explosions, it was unlikely to be fatal just yet. Except for a large amount of golden-red blood on its body, the body was still intact.

If he waited for the giant to recover its senses, all efforts might end in vain.

The arrow with an initial speed exceeding a thousand meters per second continued its swift flight through the air, the second arrow already shooting out like lightning.

Until Chen Shouyi reached for the third arrow, the first had just hit the target.

However, the pathetic damage caused made Chen Shouyi's heart grow cold, the arrow hitting its back only to shatter and break instantly upon impact, leaving nothing but a shallow pit, almost unharmed.

It was then that he suddenly realized, wishing he could slap himself.

The atmosphere of the battle was far too tense; adrenaline was rushing fiercely, nerves were highly strung, and the great distance earlier meant he had used only ordinary arrows to suppress its advance. After all, the Armor-Piercing Arrows were few in number, and at his shooting speed, he could use them all in less than two seconds.

As a result, even at this critical moment, Chen Shouyi had forgotten to use Armor-Piercing Arrows.

"Damn!"

His right hand that was reaching for the arrow slightly paused and quickly reached for the very right quiver.

All of this, speaking of it, actually delayed less than 0.1 seconds, and at that time, Qin Liuyuan beside him had just shot the first arrow.

Chen Shouyi instantly pulled back the bowstring; an Armor-Piercing Arrow already shot out.

...

At this moment, Dabono finally awoke from the daze of violent explosions, feeling the more serious injuries of the divine body, a strong fire of anger burning fiercely in its chest, its face ferocious!

Since coming to this world, it felt everything was going wrong, as if all luck had left it, with every step forward filled with thorns and mud, ambushes and traps everywhere.

These damned mortals were far more treacherous and cunning compared to its simple-minded followers, despicable and shameless, full of plots and schemes.

Then it suddenly sensed a small high-speed object rapidly shooting towards its back; its body instinctively prepared to dodge, but as soon as the thought moved, a strong sense of weakness came from its heart, causing its movement to pause.

Immediately after, its back felt a sharp pain.

At this moment, the machine gun bullets also started sweeping towards this side, like waving long whips, and soon there were scattered bullets hitting its body.

"Ah!" Dabono roared out in pain, a trace of panic mixed with anger in its howl.

Although the injuries caused were not serious, merely superficial wounds to it, they no doubt snowballed the already severe injuries.

It mustered remaining strength, rapidly diving towards the ground; in midair, its flexibility greatly decreased along with higher consumption, not to mention that it was already extremely weak.

Chen Shouyi's expression was grave, locking onto the target, continually pulling the bow and releasing arrows.

The giant's defense was simply incredible, even tougher than steel, even the Armor-Piercing Arrow could only barely pierce a tip, less than five centimeters deep, barely breaking its skin at its scale.

As for the machine gun's power, it was even weaker, not even matching him.

All the martial artists were desperately shooting arrows, creating a scene like a rain of arrows pouring down, yet only Chen Shouyi and Qin Liuyuan could inflict minor damage on it; for it, all other arrows were mere scratches,

"Boom," the giant plummeted straight to the ground.

In front of the City Government's square, a large pit instantly appeared, with countless rubble flying everywhere.

It stood up, seeming ready to escape, but just as it took a step, its body staggered, almost collapsing.

The remaining few self-destructive trucks were desperately turning directions, driving towards the giant. Before even approaching fifty-six meters, the first one began to self-destruct, the flames and shockwave of the explosion instantly hurling it dozens of meters.

Two consecutive self-destructs pushed it finally to some limit; the massive body struggled to stand, and upon standing just sprayed a mouthful of golden-red blood forcefully. In the next moment, machine gun bullets crazily struck its massive body, with fine blood and flesh flying everywhere, its body swaying under the impact of the bullets.

It finally felt a trace of despair rising in its heart.

Noticing those bizarre automatic walking machines again charging towards it, it understood it was destined to escape.

Its face showed a hint of madness, just using its hand to cover its eyes, and proceeded to walk amid dense bullets towards the City Government building.

Its steps were slow, inferior to ordinary people, but paired with its enormous physique, it still reached speeds of tens of meters per second, closing to less than fifty meters from the City Government building in a short time.

The divine pressure grew stronger, filling hearts with dread and pervasive panic.

Chen Shouyi was desperately shooting arrows; his Armor-Piercing arrows had long been exhausted, now only ordinary arrows remained.

The giant suddenly lifted its head, with sharp and venomous eyes glancing to the eighth floor: "King of mortals... do you think you have won, you too will pay the price of death..."

With clumsy Chinese, the deep voice echoed in all directions.

Chen Shouyi met its eyes, a strong sense of unease arising in his heart. He somehow felt it seemed to be speaking to him.

What did it mean by this king?

As his mind quickly processed thoughts, he released the bowstring, an arrow flying straight into its eye, burying deep up to the arrow's shaft.

Its body swayed, a hint of grimace flashing, and in the next instant, it gathered remaining strength and leaped forcefully.

However, it truly could not manage anymore; the massive silhouette bounded only about twenty meters in mid-air before crashing heavily in front of the building, struggling a few times, never having another chance to stand.

Dozens of machine guns all concentrated firing on the giant, with nearly ten thousand rounds per second pounding its back relentlessly.

Blood and flesh on its body scattered everywhere, disappearing rapidly, revealing crystalline bones and wriggling organs after a few minutes...

This storm-like attack persisted for over ten minutes before finally ceasing.

A heap of colossal corpse, reduced to mere remnants of flesh sprawled across the square, surrounded by countless pieces of flesh and Divine Blood covering a shallow layer.

Fierce cries of triumph reverberated through the building.

Soldiers and martial artists experiencing survival from disaster shouted and yelled excessively, contagiously spreading throughout the entire Safe Zone.

Chen Shouyi thoroughly relaxed, discarding the War Bow, unceremoniously plopping down on the ground, though at this point nobody minded anymore.

Chapter 198 - Eerie and Bizarre

The roadside gas lamps emitted a pale glow.

The long street seemed to lead into endless darkness. With a War Bow slung over his back and a Long Sword in hand, Chen Shouyi walked alone on the road.

He kept feeling like he had forgotten something, but no matter how much he pondered, he couldn't recall.

He hurried towards home, but today this road seemed exceptionally long.

He felt as though he had been walking for a long, long time, perhaps half an hour, or maybe most of the night. He felt tired and weak, his head dizzy and he longed to sit down and take a rest.

But he hadn't arrived home yet, he couldn't rest.

His parents and sister should be anxious by now, not having seen him for so long, they must be worried.

He paused slightly, puzzled by these thoughts:

"Why would mom, dad, and my sister be eager to see me? Have I been away from home for long? But why does it feel like I've just been away for a short time?"

Just then, a familiar voice interrupted Chen Shouyi's thoughts.

"Chen Shouyi, is that really you? I thought I was mistaken."

Upon hearing this, Chen Shouyi looked up happily to see a beautiful figure standing ahead: "Zhang Xiaoyue, what are you doing here?"

"I live here now. My family moved to Hedong City half a year ago, and then we moved here. I've been thinking of you every day. Have you thought of me?" Zhang Xiaoyue walked up to Chen Shouyi and asked shyly.

"Yes, of course, I've been thinking of you too!" Chen Shouyi quickly stepped forward and grabbed her delicate hand, immediately speaking.

Though he hadn't thought of her for some time, he knew that this was not the moment to speak honestly.

Gently, Zhang Xiaoyue withdrew her hand, her face flushed.

"Where do you live now?" Chen Shouyi asked with joy filling his heart.

"I'm not telling you!" Zhang Xiaoyue teased, "It's actually not far ahead. Just walk along the road and you'll see it. Would you like to sit at my place? My parents aren't home today."

Chen Shouyi looked into the distance, where it was entirely dark, as if countless shadows and ghosts loomed. That darkness gave him a sense of unease, an instinct to stay away, especially since he was eager to get home.

"Not today, but I can come to your house tomorrow!" Chen Shouyi declined.

"Alright, but you're missing a great opportunity!" Zhang Xiaoyue giggled playfully, almost tempting Chen Shouyi to agree.

"By the way, why are you carrying a sword?"

"I'm a Martial Artist now, so of course I can carry a sword!" Chen Shouyi boasted in front of the woman he loved.

"You're amazing!" Zhang Xiaoyue admired, "Can I see your sword?"

"Sure, no problem!"

Chen Shouyi removed the sword and handed it over.

Curiously observing it, Zhang Xiaoyue gently unsheathed the sword.

Chen Shouyi was startled by how strong Zhang Xiaoyue was; the sword weighed a dozen kilograms. Lifting it normally was one thing, but holding the hilt and drawing it horizontally required considerable wrist and arm strength.

Even an average adult male would struggle, unable to hold it for long, let alone a petite girl.

However, Chen Shouyi didn't think much of it; perhaps Zhang Xiaoyue had started practicing Martial Arts in the past six months.

Brandishing the sword aimlessly a few times, a hint of gloom crossed Zhang Xiaoyue's charming face. Suddenly, she turned the sword and lunged it at Chen Shouyi's chest.

Chen Shouyi thought Zhang Xiaoyue was joking, preparing to dodge, yet a wave of intense weakness struck him, his body unable to move.

The Long Sword pierced straight through his chest, slicing into his heart. He felt an all-encompassing pain, his legs giving way, sitting helplessly on the ground. His disbelieving gaze fixed on Zhang Xiaoyue, whose face twisted with a hint of madness, he asked: "Why?"

"You liar! You never thought of me, go to hell!"

"Go to hell!"

"Go to hell!"

...

A cacophony of low, sharp, and whispering voices swirled around his ears, overwhelming his mind. As he came to his senses once more, Zhang Xiaoyue's figure had vanished:

"Damn it, what's going on? Why has Zhang Xiaoyue gone crazy?"

"Something's wrong, really wrong!"

He lowered his head, looking at the sword in his chest, grasping the hilt, mustering every ounce of strength to pull it out slowly.

Blood instantly gushed forth like a river, he covered his chest, struggling to stand.

"I must get home!"

His pace faltered as he marched onward, leaving a trail of blood behind. Feeling his body grow increasingly frail, life seemed to be slipping away swiftly, he feared he was truly dying.

He looked up towards the darkness in the distance, where countless demons and spectres seemed to grin and snarl.

"Why hasn't the wound started Self-Healing? And where exactly is this place?" A hint of doubt flickered within him.

He constantly felt he had forgotten something.

Dragging his weary limbs forward, blood continued to flow as he journeyed onward. After what felt like an eternity, his familiar villa revealed itself, with his parents and sister standing at the door, their faces adorned with smiles.

But for some reason, Chen Shouyi sensed a trace of falseness and eeriness in those smiles.

"Shou Yi, what happened to you?" Father Chen and Mrs. Chen rushed over in panic upon seeing Chen Shouyi's bloodied chest, supporting him upright:

"We'll get you to the hospital right away."

His sister stood beside him, her face pale with fright, unsure of what to do.

Gazing at his worried family members, it seemed he might have been overthinking.

But just as his thoughts began to turn, he felt a sharp blade slice through his back, sending a fiery pain surging through him. Before his sluggish mind could react, his head was struck heavily with blunt force, dizziness and disorientation took hold, and his body swayed uncontrollably, eventually collapsing into unconsciousness.

When he came to, he found himself in the living room, his entire body bound tightly.

Suddenly, the sound of sharpening knives pierced his ears, prompting him to strain his neck and look. He saw his father, clad in an apron, sitting beside him with a maniacal smile, consistently sharpening a knife.

"Dad, what are you doing?"

"Sharpening knives, of course!" Chen Dawei replied, focused on the cleaver without turning his head.

"Why are you sharpening knives and why tie me up?" Weakly struggling, Chen Shouyi found himself utterly powerless.

"To kill you for meat, naturally."

"Dad, are you insane?"

"Of course, I'm not crazy. You are a beast, what use is there to keep you alive? You're better off dead!"

"You're better off dead!"

"Dead!"

"Die!"

...

An incessant torrent of voices bombarded his ears again, compounding his headache. Were it not for a thread of conscious awareness, he'd truly believe himself deserving of death.

Mrs. Chen walked into the living room, carrying a blood-stained hammer, she spoke to Chen Dawei:

"The water's boiling, make it quick."

Then she gazed at Chen Shouyi with a kindly smile: "Son, why are you still alive?"

Chen Shouyi instinctively tilted his head back and closed his eyes in agony.

This must be fake, perhaps it's all just a nightmare.

"Mom and dad, let me kill brother instead." Chen Xingyue's voice suddenly chimed in: "Brother is so annoying, he used to bully me as a kid, he even ripped up my certificates secretly."

"Alright, then you do it." Chen Dawei replied sinisterly.

Chen Shouyi kept his eyes tightly shut, paying no heed.

"Brother, for everyone's sake, you're just unnecessary, please die."

Chen Shouyi heard nothing but the sound of a blade being drawn. The next moment he felt a coolness on his neck, and he completely lost all physical sensation. He strained to open his heavy eyelids, his vision washed red, turning blurred and distorted.

His parents and sister surrounded him, sinister smiles etched on their faces, sounds faintly ringing in his ears.

"My poor son, is finally dying!"

"We're still young, if he dies, we can still have another one."

"Brother, you won't blame us, right? But you're really annoying!"

The sounds seemed to drift further away, his sight rapidly darkening. He struggled to blink his heavy eyelids, then slowly closed them, as his mind gradually descended into silence.

"So this is what death feels like?" A thought flashed in his mind before sinking into oblivion.

Chapter 199 - Memory Space Transformation

Chen Shouyi suddenly woke up, his face filled with terror.

"Did you have a nightmare?"

Though he felt a splitting headache, his muddled thoughts were now completely clear.

He looked around and was startled to find himself unwittingly in the Gray Mist Space; when he saw the World Tree, he was even more frightened.

Between the branches and forks of the World Tree, a dark aura permeated, giving a sense of ominousness and evil.

After only a few more glances, his mind began to flood with distractions, as if countless venomous voices whispered curses and maledictions by his ears.

Chen Shouyi avoided his gaze, no longer daring to look, feeling uneasy inside.

"Seems like it wasn't just a simple nightmare earlier; what exactly is happening?"

He remembered that after fighting the Barbarian God, he had collapsed to the ground, watching the crowd cheer loudly, even being passionately embraced by Song Jieying. Then, his memory had a gap, only returning to consciousness in the bizarre, absurd nightmare.

Recalling the terrifying scenes and the experience of gradually slipping into death, he still felt a lingering fear and a chill in his heart.

The nightmare was so real that it remains vivid even now; if not for the Book of Knowledge pulling him here, freeing him from the nightmare, he suspected he might have truly died.

He once read online about a famous wrist-slashing experiment.

The experiment supposedly took place in South India in 1936; the subject was a death row inmate who had to choose between dying from excessive blood loss or hanging. The inmate chose the former, was blindfolded, and tied to a bed during the process.

His wrist skin was cut open—just superficial wounds not severing the arteries—while scientists made him believe the sound of dripping water beside him was his blood. The result? After some time, the inmate indeed died.

The brain is the central hub of a living organism; when your psychological cues convince you everything is real, that you are gradually dying, you may eventually die.

"Undoubtedly, this curse-like nightmare was absolutely caused by that deceased Barbarian God! Only such an existence would possess such mysterious means."

"Moreover, before dying, it seemed to identify itself as the king and even said something threatening!"

Thinking of this, Chen Shouyi silently cursed inwardly.

What a disaster out of nowhere!

What made it think it was the king? Because he was the strongest among everyone?

Sure enough, a foolish creature from an alternate reality.

...

Then he noticed the black mist shrouding the World Tree, becoming lighter, as if being slowly absorbed by the World Tree.

He let out a breath of relief; his greatest fear was the inability to purge this ominous aura. Now it seemed the World Tree was more powerful than imagined, truly worthy of being the legendary Divine Tree supporting the alternate world.

On reflection, trees naturally purify the air, so to the World Tree, the black mist might just be akin to smog.

Chen Shouyi simply sat on the ground, patiently waiting.

Though slightly worried about his physical state, to avoid encountering the nightmare again, he could only patiently wait here until the black mist was fully absorbed. Fortunately, before his memory broke, people surrounded him everywhere, so there was no worry about lacking bodily care.

...

Chen Shouyi waited for a full half hour; the last trace of dark aura was completely absorbed by the World Tree.

Differing from previous absorption of divinity, the World Tree didn't grow taller after absorbing the black mist. However, Chen Shouyi noticed the emerald Memory Leaves became more lustrous, adding a hint of material texture to the previously ethereal sensation.

...

Perhaps focusing too intently, the space shifted, and once clear again, Chen Shouyi found himself sitting on the floor of the living room at his old house in Dongning, opposite a sister who appeared five or six years old.

Her hair was braided in pigtails, wearing a pink little dress, her chubby round face appeared carved and polished.

Between them piled a mountain of blocks.

Clearly, this was his childhood memory.

He was building a Transformer, while his sister was building a castle.

As they played, they quarreled over an architectural block.

"I got this first!" His sister's tender voice shouted angrily, her chubby face puffed with baby fat.

Little Shouyi sniffled and huffed, "But I saw it long ago, give it to me!"

"No!"

The two began arguing, with the older Shouyi clearly stronger than Chen Xingyue; he eventually snatched the block from his sister, claiming victory.

Xiao Xingyue pursed her lips, aggrievedly crying out, "Bad brother, I... I'll tell Mom and have her spank you!"

Speaking so, she indignantly stood up, wiping tears and running toward the stairs.

Inhabiting his childhood self, Chen Shouyi reminisced about what happened next: he first beat his sister, of course resulting in a predictable outcome where he was spanked soundly by Mrs. Chen.

He didn't want to watch his childhood self bullying his sister's antics, intending to withdraw.

Just then, a strand of information suddenly emerged in his mind, and after digesting it, he was filled with disbelief.

Since absorbing the Barbarian God's curse, the Memory Space had undergone a transformation; by expending certain energy, he could actually control his body.

"Why not give it a try!" Chen Shouyi's heart stirred.

With that thought, a peculiar sensation immediately arose from his heart.

Little Shouyi's consciousness completely vanished, the governing force of the body becoming his volition.

He tentatively moved his small hands; the muscles were raw and sluggish, weaker than a feeble chicken with less than five combat power. Noticing Xiao Xingyue nearing the stairs, Chen Shouyi hurriedly stood up and gestured, calling, "Xing Yue, come here, come here."

"Bad brother, why are you calling me? You want to apologize, don't you?" Xiao Xingyue halted upon hearing this, her small legs skipping over. Although her face was tear-streaked, she carried herself proudly like a hen having laid an egg, raising her chin triumphantly.

Witnessing this scene, Chen Shouyi found it unbelievable—this scene wasn't in his memory, was it the Book of Knowledge's simulation effect?

So realistic, so natural, neither the dialogue nor event evolution showed the slightest stiffness.

"If you don't want me to tell Mom, you must let me ride like a pony!"

Sure enough, she was annoying from a young age.

Recalling the earlier nightmare where Chen Xingyue had turned dark, Chen Shouyi couldn't help but feel indignant.

Gazing at Xiao Xingyue so close, he couldn't resist stretching both hands and pinching her chubby cheeks hard.

"Wah!" a louder cry than before echoed through the living room.

"Mom! Mom! Brother... he pinched me!"

Seeing this, Chen Shouyi quickly made his escape from the Memory Space; as for whether his younger self would be punished, he didn't care—after all, even if he did nothing, he couldn't escape being spanked in memory.

As the thought crossed his mind, his expression turned slightly serious, briskly walking to the World Tree to inspect the Memory Leaves he entered earlier.

Memory images flowed across the leaf like a fast-forwarding film.

Soon, it reached the earlier scene.

Chen Shouyi watched for a moment, then let out a sigh of relief.

"Indeed, memory is unchangeable, unaffected by my disturbance—the earlier episode was clearly the Book of Knowledge's simulation effect!"

Then he felt a subtle thrill; if so, wouldn't he be able to do practically anything within the Memory Space from now on?

Chapter 200 - The Shameless Older Brother

Safe Zone Hospital.

At this moment, the hospital was already full, with injured people everywhere and doctors and nurses hurrying about.

With the war ending, a large number of injured soldiers from the front were being transported to the rear after initial treatment. The limited hospital beds were far from sufficient, and even more injured people had to be temporarily accommodated in a nearby shopping mall.

However, even in a war hospital, the treatment for injured officers and soldiers was vastly different.

In a VIP ward, a young man lay on the bed, surrounded by people, either martial artists or high-level government officials.

"How is he doing?" The deputy mayor, who was visiting on behalf of the City Government, asked.

"It's still hard to determine anything for now!" A middle-aged doctor in his forties carefully worded his reply. The electricity was already out, rendering many instruments unusable, making detailed examinations impossible: "Based on preliminary diagnosis, there doesn't seem to be any major issue with his body, he's quite healthy!"

The deputy mayor couldn't help but look at the nurse beside the bed who was futilely attempting to draw blood from his arm, causing his mouth to twitch slightly; it wasn't just healthy, it was almost abnormal.

The hefty and anxious middle-aged nurse was on the verge of collapse internally.

As an experienced nurse working on the front lines for over twenty years, she had seen all kinds of arms; young and old, male and female, ugly and handsome, belonging to ordinary people and martial artists alike.

If all those arms were cut off and connected together, while they couldn't circle around Earth, they would definitely be enough to go around the Safe Zone, and if piled up, they'd fill a warehouse.

Yet, she had never encountered a situation like this before.

The young man's skin was as tough as high-strength composite material, and the muscles underneath were moving around like mice, spontaneously writhing under stress to reduce force, making it nearly impossible to penetrate with a needle, almost leading her to suspect that he wasn't human at all, but a Barbarian in human skin.

"Then why hasn't he woken up yet?" The deputy mayor asked.

"There are many reasons for this, maybe it's compensatory sleep from extreme fatigue or temporary shock from intense emotional fluctuations," the doctor thought for a moment and replied.

...

The deputy mayor stayed for a while before leaving, as there was plenty of subsequent work needing attention and arrangement despite the war having ended, being in the high level of the City Government, he couldn't afford to stay there long.

After the deputy mayor left, most of the martial artists soon left as well.

By the time Chen Shouyi woke up, there were only six people left in the room; apart from Song Jieying, the other five were somewhat unfamiliar faces.

"You're awake?" Song Jieying exclaimed in surprise when she saw Chen Shouyi wake up.

Seeing this, the others quickly stood up like springs, offering their well-wishes in a flurry of words.

"General Manager Chen, are you okay?"

"General Manager Chen, would you like some water?"

"I'll call the doctor!"

...

To a martial artist, a senior martial artist was a figure worthy of awe.

They stayed here just to make a good impression!

Even if there's nothing they can do to help now, should another dangerous mission like this arise in the future, having a connection might mean getting some aid within his abilities when encountering danger.

Chen Shouyi sat up in bed, expressing his gratitude: "Thank you all for taking care of me, but there's no need to bother yourselves; I'm fine now."

All the martial artists hurriedly exchanged polite words.

As he glanced at the time, he found it was already nine o'clock, three hours since the battle ended, and quickly stood up from the bed, saying: "It's already so late, your families must be anxious waiting; let's go home together!"

Though he was just an eighteen-year-old youth, younger by seven or eight years than the youngest here, Song Jieying, with others nearly his father's age, no one found his words awkward, quite the contrary, they seemed perfectly natural.

"Are you really okay? You suddenly passed out before, maybe you should get checked again," Song Jieying said worriedly.

"Really, nothing's wrong. I know my condition," Chen Shouyi replied helplessly, knowing exactly what had happened.

...

Mrs. Chen paced anxiously in the living room, occasionally stepping out to look down the road amidst the cheerfully celebrating crowds outside, yet at this moment, she felt no joy.

"Why isn't he home yet? Wasn't it over already?" Mrs. Chen said worriedly.

Chen Dawei, sitting on the sofa with hands on his forehead, remained silent for a while before saying: "Don't worry; maybe something held him up, or he's celebrating with others."

"A message would be good, too, but he's so grown up and still so clueless. When he gets back, I'll deal with him," Mrs. Chen said, her eyes turning red, quickly turning her head to wipe her eyes to cover up.

"Mom, Brother is a senior martial artist; he'll be fine. I'll go check outside again!" Chen Xingyue said, her eyes also red. She quickly ran out and hadn't gone far before she saw Chen Shouyi approaching briskly.

Chen Xingyue let out an "Ah," turned, and ran back quickly, shouting excitedly: "Dad, Mom, Brother's back!"

...

Upon entering the living room, Chen Shouyi found himself having his ear promptly tugged by Mrs. Chen.

"You know how to come back, do you? Look at the time!"

Chen Shouyi looked at Mrs. Chen's reddened eyes, not daring to dodge, inexplicably fearful that she might suddenly pull out a hammer from somewhere to knock on his head.

Or, Father Chen standing behind might suddenly wield a kitchen knife.

Damn this curse, it's creating some psychological shadows now.

A fleeting train of thought crossed his mind.

"Mom, it hurts! Stop pulling. I went to the hospital to visit an injured colleague!" He had already prepared his excuse on the way home.

Chen Xingyue watched with a schadenfreude expression as her brother grimaced. Serves him right.

"What happened to your colleague?" Mrs. Chen asked quickly, releasing Chen Shouyi.

"Nothing serious, just got knocked out by an explosion, resting a few days will be fine," Chen Shouyi answered.

...

Seeing the old couple quickly placated, Chen Shouyi breathed a sigh of relief and then turned to Chen Xingyue asking: "Xing Yue, where's the briefcase I entrusted to you?"

"Still in the basement!" Chen Xingyue said, a sly smile appearing on her face: "Wait, Brother, didn't you say you'd give all the stuff to me?"

She remembered her brother seemed to say before leaving that there was a gift left for her inside, which needed to be fed with honey or something, obviously a secret pet of his!

"What do you mean give it to you? You definitely misheard. I never said that," Chen Shouyi steadfastly denied. The Shell Lady was his little treasure; now that he was back, how could he possibly give her away.

Noticing her expression, seemingly indicating she hadn't opened the briefcase to see the Shell Lady, he mentally sighed in relief, planning to reclaim it easily.

"Mom, see how Brother won't keep his word!" Chen Xingyue said.

"I didn't say that!" Chen Shouyi quickly retorted.

"Yes, you did."

"No, I didn't!"

"Whoever lies is a puppy!"

"Aren't you childish? I'm too tired to argue with you!"

"Mom, see, Brother feels guilty!"

Mrs. Chen, getting a headache from their bickering, nudged Chen Dawei, saying: "You two keep arguing, we're off to bed!"

Ignoring her, Chen Shouyi headed to the basement, soon returning with the briefcase.

Chen Xingyue hadn't had much hope; she was mainly curious. Her brother, who had never shown much affection for animals, secretly raising one was indeed surprising.

She followed up, coaxing: "Brother, what kind of pet are you raising? Let me take a look!"

"No way!" Chen Shouyi resolutely refused, knowing the Shell Lady, such a beautiful Thumbelina, would be totally alluring to young girls. Once she sees it, peaceful days might be over forever.

If Chen Xingyue were to treat the Shell Lady nicely and use a bunch of Glass Beads as temptation, what if she gets lured away? Chen Shouyi wouldn't have time to cry.

Given the Shell Lady's obsession with Glass Beads, there was a high chance of this happening.

No room for negotiation on this matter!

Remaining persistent all the way, Chen Xingyue trailed Chen Shouyi to the bedroom door, still wanting to sneak a peek, but got pushed out by Chen Shouyi, who quickly shut the door.

Standing in front of the closed door, Chen Xingyue stomped her foot, saying indignantly:

"Such a miser, fine, then I won't look."