

New Era 211

Chapter 211 - Deaf

Ever since the original Director of Martial Arts Legal Affairs and Disciplinary Supervision, Fang Shengjie, was killed by the Pantheon, the world faced abnormalities. Coupled with a series of troublesome events that followed, the appointment of a new director was delayed, causing the department's work to be almost at a standstill.

The assessment of Martial Artists was interrupted for a long time, and the function of supervising their discipline became virtually ineffective.

Now, only a few days have passed since the punishment of Martial Artists, and Cui Ziwen's death still lingers as a deterrent.

The authorities appointed a new Martial Artist from the military as the new director, not only to reorganize work in these two areas but also as a sign of their dissatisfaction with these undisciplined civilian Martial Artists.

He pondered silently, anticipating that this department would become stronger and more assertive in the future.

However, it shouldn't affect him much. He's always been law-abiding, and they couldn't possibly control him.

"Director Lei, why don't you say a few words?" Number One in the city said with a kind smile.

Lei Ruiyang nodded: "Sure!"

Then, after glancing at everyone, he began to speak:

"I won't make a self-introduction. Number One has already done that; I will only say three points."

His voice was strong and carried the rigidity of a soldier, echoing continuously in the meeting.

Chen Shouyi could tell just from the voice that the other person was evidently a forceful figure.

"First, I was a soldier before, and I have only one requirement for Martial Artists: discipline, adherence to the law, and unconditional obedience to orders from above."

The meeting room immediately started buzzing. Although most Martial Artists wouldn't commit crimes and hadn't defied orders from above, this condescending manner of speaking was overwhelmingly domineering, making it uncomfortable to hear.

Lei Ruiyang coldly glanced at the area of civilian Martial Artists, and the meeting room quickly quieted down.

"Second, all Martial Artists, including senior ones, must undergo a month-long closed military training, tentatively scheduled for next week. The specific time will be notified later!"

This time, even Chen Shouyi frowned slightly, and his face darkened.

He wasn't really against military training, as a month was not that long and could be endured. The key issue was the closed military training—what would happen to Shell Lady then?

Would he leave her in his sister's care?

After a month, would Shell Lady still recognize him?

By then, it might be like a meat bun thrown at a dog, gone with no return. With Shell Lady's lack of moral principles, facing monetary temptation, she could be lured away in no time, changing sides.

The next moment, he vaguely sensed a sharp gaze landing on him. He lifted his head to see Lei Ruiyang's hawk-like eyes staring intently at him.

"Chief Advisor Chen, you seem to have a different opinion. Why don't you share it with us?" Lei Ruiyang said calmly.

As soon as these words were spoken, the meeting room became exceptionally quiet, the atmosphere tense, with countless gazes turning this way—not only from the civilian Martial Artists but also from many military Martial Artists.

Chen Shouyi was momentarily stunned, his expression turned cold, and a surge of suppressed anger flared up uncontrollably.

He could understand the new leader's initial authority display, but to use him as a public demonstration, a stepping stone, was infuriating. Was he really taken to be so pliable, made of clay? He coldly said:

"I'm sorry, I didn't hear clearly, could you please repeat what you just said?"

Lei Ruiyang's jaw muscles bulged, a flash of anger in his eyes. He had always looked down on the undisciplined nature of civilian Martial Artists. This time, transitioning from the military to serve as the Director of Martial Arts Legal Affairs and Disciplinary Supervision, he aimed at transforming this situation.

He was mentally prepared for resistance from Martial Artists, intending to prove his authority by confronting this young civilian senior Martial Artist in the meeting room but had encountered a tough opponent instead.

In the military, he'd encountered many such defiant individuals, and he specialized in dealing with them: "Looks like Chief Advisor Chen has some hearing issues, doesn't he?"

"Sorry, did you just say something?" Chen Shouyi pretended to be puzzled.

A sudden laugh emerged from the area of civilian Martial Artists, seemingly a signal, followed by an outburst of laughter in the entire civilian Martial Artists' area.

Lei Ruiyang clenched his teeth in anger, his face dark with rage, pointed furiously at Chen Shouyi: "You damn..."

Number One beside him also frowned slightly, thinking this temper was a bit too hot-headed.

"Alright, Director Lei, Chief Advisor Chen, let's all say a little less and continue the meeting!" Xiao Changming suddenly mediated, giving a subtle glance.

Having personally witnessed Chen Shouyi's strength, he was well aware of the opponent's power.

The impression left by that insect nest exploration mission was so deep that even now, he felt he had little chance against Chen Shouyi back then, let alone considering the strengthening effects of two Divine Blood consumptions on him.

Lei Ruiyang's strength was slightly above his own.

Of course, this was also because their abrupt increased strength had not yet been fully adapted to, lacking integration. It's like someone only used to driving a tractor suddenly having to drive a sports car, unable to fully utilize its performance in a short amount of time.

He believed this would be completely different in a while.

Lei Ruiyang didn't catch Xiao Changming's hint, but after this distraction, he came back to his senses, realizing he'd slightly lost his composure. Since his power surge, he'd become irritable, quick to anger, often unable to control it.

He gave Chen Shouyi a cold look, forcibly suppressing his rage, and diverted his gaze: "Regarding some disorderly senior Martial Artists, I won't say anymore today. I hope Cui Ziweng's case serves as a warning!"

Chen Shouyi listened with a dark expression but didn't provoke further. Not that he feared him, but this was a meeting room, with the city's top leader present, causing too much commotion would be inappropriate.

"I will continue with the last point. Jiangnan Province is currently applying for a senior Martial Artist assessment site. It shouldn't be long before Hedong City can conduct its own senior Martial Artist assessments. That's all I have to say!"

But the new leader's supposed three fires were greatly diminished after this interruption.

Number One smiled: "The military style is strict and decisive, straightforward and efficient, then let's adjourn the meeting!"

...

All Martial Artists filed out, with a clear divide between civilian and military sides.

"You were a bit too impulsive!" Qin Liuyuan said: "I don't think he's a magnanimous person."

While nodding in response to the enthusiastic greetings from other Martial Artists, clearly his actions today earned him considerable prestige among civilian Martial Artists, Chen Shouyi casually said: "I haven't done anything wrong and have always obeyed orders from above—what can he do to me? We have no hierarchical relationship with the Martial Arts Legal Affairs and Supervision Department."

In fact, he felt he had been sufficiently restrained and conciliatory, even pretending ignorance during the meeting. With his previous short temper, he would have long started a verbal assault, unexpectedly finding someone even more hot-tempered, angering him with a mere word.

Did someone really think that becoming a Martial Artist automatically put them above others?

"You're still too young, not knowing the depths of human deceit," Qin Liuyuan shook his head.

A short while later, Song Jieying also came over to offer some comfort, echoing Qin Liuyuan's words, making him feel as if his downfall was imminent.

He exhaled a frustrated breath as he exited the building with the other Martial Artists.

Damn!

"I'll go on ahead!" He said, pulling out his bicycle. After bidding farewell to Qin Liuyuan and others, he propelled himself forward, and the bicycle shot off like an arrow.

At that moment, he couldn't wait any longer, eager to enter the Memory Space to test the opponent's strength.

To see what exactly made the opponent so arrogant.

Chapter 212: Slaughter

Chen Shouyi gave Shell Lady a bath, changed her into new clothes, then took out a bunch of glass beads and placed them on the bed, where she began counting them for fun, while he trudged back to the bathroom to clean the dirty clothes she'd taken off.

After applying soap and scrubbing several times, the white princess dress was still marred by patches of gray and black.

Chen Shouyi frowned slightly.

Seeing the dress, it was like a pristine field of snow with a black footprint on it, utterly displeasing to the eye.

What did Shell Lady do during the day? It had sticky tree sap on it that wouldn't come off.

Next time we go out, I should dress her in gray or black, so any dirt won't show—or maybe just let her go without clothes, since she wears so little and never seems to feel cold.

As for this dress? He hesitated slightly, then waved his hand and dropped it accurately into the trash can.

After all, she has plenty of clothes, wasting one doesn't really matter!

He washed his hands, dried them with a towel, and walked back to the bedroom.

At last, he had a moment to enter the Memory Space.

He lay on the bed, thought for a moment, and upon opening his eyes again, he was already in the Gray Mist Space.

He walked to the World Tree and chose a memory leaf from today's memories, and his mind immersed into it.

The space changed, and Chen Shouyi felt himself back in the conference hall.

The previous scene replayed.

"Chief Advisor Chen, it seems you have different thoughts, why don't you share them?" Lei Ruiyang said lightly.

"Tell it to your mother, you idiot!"

As soon as he spoke, Chen Shouyi felt the pent-up frustration from leaving the meeting dissipate in large part.

He was training so hard every day, striving to improve his prowess for one day when he would no longer have to endure the taunts of idiots.

If you're not convinced, I'll beat you to death!

Of course, now he could only indulge in this feeling within the Memory Space, as his current strength couldn't leap outside the rules to bypass them.

Amid the bewildered faces of the attendees, Chen Shouyi suddenly stomped the ground hard, causing the floor to shake slightly. In the next moment, the table before him shattered by his body's collision, sending countless wooden splinters shooting like arrows in all directions.

Before they could fall in the Earth's gravity, these splinters were swept further by a surge of wind.

A blurred figure sliced through the air, quickly approaching.

"How dare you!" At this moment, Lei Ruiyang finally reacted, shouting, disbelief still lacing his face, seemingly unable to fathom how reckless the opponent was—completely isolating himself in Hedong City.

He kicked the podium, and the massive redwood table, weighing hundreds of pounds, seemed light and rolled fiercely toward Chen Shouyi, while he strode violently at Chen Shouyi.

Facing the rolling podium, Chen Shouyi's expression didn't change a bit. His feet landed lightly on the rolling table like a swallow skimming the water, and in the next moment, he made an airborne kick at Lei Ruiyang's head.

Lei Ruiyang seemed ready for this moment, a cold smile appearing on his lips, as his big hand wrapped in fierce wind reached for his foot swiftly like electricity.

Chen Shouyi snorted inwardly; this kick was a feint with only about fifty to sixty percent strength. As soon as the opponent was about to grab his foot, he quickly retracted it and then launched it out again at even greater speed.

Even the air was torn with the kick.

Lei Ruiyang's expression drastically changed; he underestimated the opponent. His face was rattled by the wind, and in the nick of time, he barely shielded his head with another hand; the next moment, a terrifying dull thud resounded in the conference room.

His entire body was kicked flying; his left hand was oddly twisted, face bloodied.

While still airborne, a blurred figure quickly chased him, both hands rapidly grabbing his left leg.

Lei Ruiyang was evidently dazed from the kicks, only responding when Chen Shouyi grabbed him, and started struggling fiercely.

The opponent's dreadful strength made Chen Shouyi feel like he was grasping a giant snake rather than a leg, almost breaking his hold with its power.

But the moment was already too late; Chen Shouyi shouted fiercely, exerting all his strength, and slammed the leg violently into the ground.

A thunderous boom erupted like the sound of snapping beans; the floor was instantly cratered. The leg he was clutching kicked once like a frog that had been beheaded, completely stiffening.

At this moment, Chen Shouyi felt a chill in his heart, raising the corpse by the leg and hurling it forcefully behind him.

A shadow stepped back hurriedly:

"Chen Shouyi, you're courting death!" Xiao Changming shouted, his face dark, murderous intent evident.

Seeing Xiao Changming, Chen Shouyi chose not to withdraw, ready to test his might.

Lei Ruiyang obviously underestimated him earlier, not using his full strength, leaving Chen Shouyi unsatisfied.

Chen Shouyi hurled the corpse toward him, then rapidly charged forward.

Xiao Changming narrowly dodged the corpse, suddenly seeing a shadowy fist enlarge before him, and hurriedly raised his arm to block the attack, while his other fist aimed at Chen Shouyi's head.

Chen Shouyi tilted his head slightly, easily dodging, feeling a stinging pain as the wind grazed his face. Instead of retreating, he approached, his feet gliding as he closed in, but Xiao Changming, now alert, quickly stepped aside.

The two exchanged blows swiftly, their figures blurring.

The marble floor exploded with many shallow pits, dust swirling everywhere.

After all, Chen Shouyi hadn't trained much in hand-to-hand combat. Although mastering one skill leads to mastering many, swordsmanship and hand-to-hand combat are different disciplines, and he lacked the other's experience.

Yet with agile footwork and superior reaction speed of roughly twenty to thirty percent, he remained composed.

But resolving Xiao Changming in a few moves wasn't easy.

Moreover, the attacking side has a longer journey than the defending side, partially offsetting the reaction gap. Coupled with the opponent's cautious defense, the resolution was delayed.

More martial artists from the military drew closer to the podium.

At this point, a senior martial artist attempted to ambush Chen Shouyi from behind.

The next moment, he was sent flying by Chen Shouyi's swift back kick, soaring through the air, with cracks like firecrackers from his bones suggesting his chest was fully collapsed, obviously no longer alive.

Given his current level of strength, senior martial artists were utterly insignificant.

Yet the massive recoil also caused Chen Shouyi's body to pause momentarily.

Xiao Changming tried to seize this rare chance, abandoning defense, stepping forward, his fist producing a sonic boom, aiming at Chen Shouyi's face.

Chen Shouyi squinted slightly against the fierce wind, his body remarkably unmoving, and before the punch landed, the right foot that kicked the senior martial artist earlier lifted sneakily.

In the next moment, the heel struck the chin heavily, with a crack sound, shattering it completely.

Meanwhile, the immense impact jerked his head back sharply, his cervical vertebra immediately fracturing, and the body rolled a few times in mid-air, falling heavily on the ground.

Chen Shouyi refrained from engaging further with the increasing number of military martial artists, quickly retreating from the Memory Space.

...

"That was so satisfying!" Lying on the bed, Chen Shouyi opened his eyes, looking thrilled.

This kind of unbridled, consequence-free, sheer enjoyment of battle made him feel utterly liberated.

The whole fight consumed less than ten seconds, two of which were wasted on showing off.

But without the showing off, blindly charging wouldn't be fun at all.

It would be like soy milk without soy sauce and green onions—soulless!

Even in a virtual Memory Space, rather than reality, without showing off, there's still no savor or flavor.

After a wave of excitement, he gradually calmed down.

"Seems like I've reached the strength of a martial artist."

"Combat is the best yardstick for measuring strength. Anyone who can kill a martial artist naturally has a martial artist's strength. If I had found a sword earlier, it would have ended much more cleanly."

Yet he could feel these two newly promoted martial artists hadn't fully exerted their true power. Their combat strength was brutish but lacked finesse, with slightly rigid movements—even less adept than senior martial artists. This was evidently the side effect of a sudden surge in power. As time goes on, their strength will likely continue to improve.

But there's nothing to fear.

Chen Shouyi squinted his eyes slightly: "What difference does it make when becoming stronger, merely between one sword and several swords, besides, in about twenty days, my Martial Skills Upgrade can be optimized again."

Chapter 213 Gap-Toothed

Inside a training room in a villa.

Lei Ruiyang's expression was gloomy, his body like a blur of shadows, frantically swinging his sword. In the nearly 120-square-meter enclosed training room, the air howled, and sonic booms echoed. An ordinary person opening the door would likely be blown back by the air currents if they opened the door.

As one of the only two Martial Artists in Hedong City, the upper echelon naturally pays high attention to Lei Ruiyang. Not only is a large villa directly provided in the Safe Zone, but the entire basement is specially remodeled into a high-intensity training room, including the walls, all covered with a thick layer of steel plates to meet his training needs.

Even so, countless footprints of various depths have already been left on the steel plates.

Lei Ruiyang vented for a few minutes before stopping with a blank expression, grabbed a towel, wiped his sweat, and left the training room.

As he walked to the living room on the first floor, ready to take a sip of water, a knock on the door came from outside.

He frowned slightly, went over to open the door, and found that it was Xiao Changming. His expression was slightly surprised: "Lao Xiao, why are you here?"

His relationship with Xiao Changming wasn't close enough for one to visit the other on their own initiative.

Although both are Military Martial Artists, they don't see each other often.

The military district's Martial Artist troops are divided into two large teams: one is the Special Forces team, which he used to be in charge of; the other is the Interworld Reconnaissance team, led by Xiao Changming. The two are responsible for different affairs and often tested each other, so naturally, their relationship isn't great.

"Come in and have a seat!" Xiao Changming said, surveying the room's furnishings as he sat on the sofa, "The house provided by the city is good, why not hire a nanny?"

Lei Ruiyang poured him a cup of boiled water, saying indifferently, "I'm looking!"

After some simple chatting, Xiao Changming got to the point: "I'm here about the matter at today's meeting."

"I figured it out already, you're here to lobby, aren't you?" Lei Ruiyang said with a blank expression. He wasn't foolish; seeing Xiao Changming smooth things over in the meeting room earlier, he guessed Xiao Changming knew that civilian Martial Artist.

"Lobbyist?" Xiao Changming's eyebrows furrowed slightly in confusion.

"You wouldn't say you don't know that Martial Artist named Chen Shouyi, would you? Don't worry, I'm not the kind of person to hold a grudge. As long as he doesn't provoke trouble, I will leave him be!" Lei Ruiyang coldly said. Mentioning Chen Shouyi's name, his barely contained anger surged back up.

Such arrogance, such arrogance.

What confidence makes him dare to challenge a Martial Artist face to face, with his pitiful self-esteem?

"I do know him, but that's not the point." Xiao Changming, also somewhat annoyed by Lei Ruiyang's cold attitude, retaliated: "I'm just here to tell you! Chen Shouyi isn't just any regular Martial Artist. Before consuming Divine Blood, he was already the number one in Jiangnan Province, and now he might already be a Martial Artist. Most importantly, he's only eighteen years old, think carefully about it."

Having said his piece, Xiao Changming didn't stay much longer and quickly left.

Lei Ruiyang sat motionless on the sofa, his face somber!

The next moment, he fiercely kicked the coffee table, and with a loud bang, the glass coffee table instantly shattered, scattering glass shards across the entire living room.

...

Early the next morning, Chen Shouyi cautiously sat up from his bed, and just as he moved, the Shell Lady suddenly opened her eyes, rolling around like she was sleepwalking, then sat up from beside the pillow, rubbing her sleepy eyes with a big yawn.

"Are you leaving again?" she asked weakly.

"It's still early, go back to sleep. Don't worry! I'll call you when I go!" Chen Shouyi replied speechlessly.

"Oh!" The Shell Lady lay down again, closed her eyes, and within seconds, her gentle snoring softly started again.

She's been sleeping too little these days. Previously, she would sleep for ten to twenty hours straight, now she barely sleeps five to six hours, clearly sleep-deprived.

Chen Shouyi got dressed, went to the bathroom, squeezed some toothpaste, and began brushing his teeth.

After brushing for a while, he suddenly felt something was wrong. He immediately spat out the white foam and found streaks of blood mixed in it.

He stared in surprise; this was simply incredible. Given his gums' resilience, they might bleed if brushed with a wire brush, but even if he brushed as hard as possible with soft nylon bristles, it'll never cause bleeding.

He quickly rinsed his mouth with clean water and looked in the mirror. His neat white teeth reflected a glossy, porcelain-like sheen, yet blood streaks had seeped between his front teeth.

He licked his front teeth with his tongue and found they were slightly loose.

"I haven't bumped my front teeth these days. Also, even if they did get loose, my Natural Healing ability should have repaired them quickly." Chen Shouyi wondered, baffled.

He stared at the mirror for a long time, finally unable to resist gently pinching his front tooth and tugging it lightly. He swore he didn't use much force, yet it easily came out.

He looked at the bloody tooth, dumbfounded and incredulous.

This was the front tooth that had accompanied him for over a decade, which he thought would age with him and live together into old age. Yet unexpectedly, it had left him ruthlessly ahead of him.

Chen Shouyi immediately rinsed his mouth again, spitting out a mouthful of blood foam, looking at his teeth with a missing front tooth in the mirror, he found it hard to accept.

Holding the uprooted front tooth in his hand, he thought absentmindedly: "This should be able to be reattached, right?"

...

"Brother!" Chen Xingyue greeted Chen Shouyi as he walked into the dining room.

Chen Shouyi nodded. He didn't speak, imagining that if he opened his mouth and his sister saw the missing front tooth, his dignity as a brother would be gone.

He sat down at the table and silently started eating breakfast.

"Brother, what's wrong with you today? You seem so strange!" Chen Xingyue asked, somewhat puzzled.

"Strange in what way?" Chen Shouyi mumbled under his breath while eating breakfast.

"Just everywhere!" Chen Xingyue said casually, not delving further into it, and then changed the topic excitedly: "Brother, I read in the newspaper that in five days, the Martial Arts Notarization Office will organize a martial artist examination. Do you think I should go?"

Since Chen Shouyi left the remaining Divine Blood for his parents and Chen Xingyue, she had been progressing rapidly in her strength, already possessing martial artist abilities, especially in physical fitness, which had long surpassed ordinary martial artists.

"You want to register?" Chen Shouyi asked, looking up.

"Yes!" Chen Xingyue replied, still unclear.

"No way!" Chen Shouyi firmly rejected.

Nowadays, it was not the peaceful time like before. Becoming a martial artist was far from glamorous; instead, it entailed great risks. Furthermore, the city government and the military were strong now, and once the summons order was issued, there was no room for retreat. One adventurer in the family was enough; his sister, a girl, should stay at home to care for their parents.

Moreover, he had just clashed with the director of the Martial Arts Notarization and Inspection Office. If they found out she was his sister, who knows what they might do?

The human heart is malicious, especially concerning his sister; he dared to speculate with the greatest malice.

"Why? Are you saying it's dangerous? I'm not afraid!" Chen Xingyue said angrily; becoming a martial artist had always been her dream, but now her brother brutally denied it.

Chen Shouyi realized his attitude might be wrong, so he softened his tone: "It's not that I'm preventing you from going, but your strength is still far from that of a martial artist. Let me ask you, have you completed the stage of staying still and refining your flesh?"

"No...no!" Chen Xingyue blushed and then explained, unconvinced: "But I've made great progress lately, and even if I haven't reached it, I already have the strength of a martial artist."

"Let me ask you another question: How much practical combat experience do you have? Don't tell me you train every day, because training and combat experience are two different things?" Chen Shouyi continued to question.

Chen Xingyue's momentum weakened further, murmuring: "Is this part of the examination too?"

Her combat experience was almost non-existent, having only unintentionally killed a petty thief.

"Sigh, you are still too young and know little about the martial artist examination. As a martial artist, physical fitness isn't everything; combat power is fundamental. The examination tests not only physical fitness but also actual combat!

When you can withstand one move from me, you can participate in the martial artist examination."

"Hmph, I can't believe I can't withstand one move from you. You're just a senior martial artist after all." Chen Xingyue still said somewhat unconvinced.

"Why not give it a try?" Chen Shouyi raised an eyebrow.

Oh, my foolish sister, you're out of touch. Brother is not merely a senior martial artist now, but a martial artist. Even senior martial artists can't withstand one move from me, let alone you, a novice martial artist.

"Let's try then!" Chen Xingyue gritted her teeth.

"Alright, no need to go outside, let's keep it simple - sitting here, using chopsticks as swords." Chen Shouyi picked up a chopstick and glanced sideways at his sister: "Are you ready? I'm about to start."

"Re...ready," Chen Xingyue couldn't help swallowing, gripping the chopstick tightly, feeling a bit nervous.

Just as she finished speaking, she saw her brother's hand blur, and the next instant a gust of wind blew strongly against her face, sending her hair flying back, pulling painfully at her roots.

When she came to her senses, she saw a chopstick, still, ten centimeters from her throat.

It could have been even closer. With Chen Shouyi's skill at controlling strength to perfection, he could stab wherever he wanted, as deep as he desired, with an error margin of no more than a millimeter.

However, he couldn't ensure the chopstick didn't carry Sword Aura; if, by chance, he pierced his sister's throat just for showing off, no amount of regret would suffice.

Chen Shouyi withdrew the chopstick, smiling smugly, revealing teeth with a missing front one, his speech affected: "See, you still have a long way to go before becoming a martial artist!"

Chen Xingyue had initially been crestfallen due to her brother's blow, but seeing his teeth, she couldn't help but burst into laughter, both amused and concerned: "Brother, where's your front tooth gone?"

Chapter 214 Shame

Chen Shouyi, who had just been smug, closed his mouth awkwardly upon hearing this.

My front tooth didn't offend anyone, I brush my teeth every morning and evening, and rinse my mouth after meals. How did it disappear? I would like to know too.

Unfortunately, Chen Xingyue wasn't planning to let him off so easily. Holding back laughter, she pretended to be concerned, "Brother, were you beaten up?"

Upon hearing this, he sneered and felt a bit suffocated in his chest, glared and said angrily, "Why do you keep annoying me, asking so many questions? Just eat your breakfast properly!"

He reluctantly took a few bites and couldn't eat anymore, then stood up and said, "I'm done eating."

He walked out the front door, got his bicycle out of the garage, and prepared to go to the hospital to have his fallen tooth replanted.

Such a minor surgery could be completed within half an hour, and with his Self-Healing ability, after the surgery, it would look exactly as it was before.

Chen Xingyue chased to the doorway, looking at her brother who was clearly in a bad mood, and shouted loudly from behind, "Brother, you still haven't said how your front tooth disappeared?"

Chen Shouyi's face darkened, and without acknowledging his gloating sister, he kicked off on his bicycle and quickly rode towards the hospital.

A few minutes later, he parked his bike in the hospital's bike shed. After registering at the service desk and inquiring with the nurse, he found out he had come too early. The dentist wouldn't start work until eight, and it was only six thirty now.

But he could only patiently wait.

As time ticked by, he finally waited for the dentist to start work.

"What's your situation, a cavity?" asked a female dentist who looked around thirty, addressing Chen Shouyi.

Chen Shouyi immediately showed his missing front tooth: "My tooth fell out, can it be replanted? I brought the fallen tooth with me!"

Saying this, he took the already cleaned front tooth out of his pocket.

"If the root is intact, the tooth can be replanted. Let me check your gums first, open your mouth... a bit wider please!" The female dentist said, picking up a dental mirror and forceps, and started to prod in his mouth.

The more she examined, the more puzzled she became. She found that a new tooth was growing inside his gums.

Though it had just started to emerge and was still enveloped within the gum, it felt quite hard to the touch. She was confident that her judgment was correct.

But this was rather baffling, almost unheard of.

A person only has one set of teeth in their lifetime, usually starting at age six when their baby teeth come out and are replaced by more permanent adult teeth around age twelve, which last a lifetime.

She had been practicing for six years and had never encountered anyone getting a second set of teeth before, nor were there any medical cases similar to this.

After a lengthy inspection, she released this rare case, glanced up and down at Chen Shouyi, then picked up the medical record book, glanced at the first page of personal information, and finally couldn't help asking, "Are you really eighteen years old... could it be that your age is written wrong?"

For instance, six or seven years old!

Of course, she only thought that last line to herself. Even if the person ate hormones from birth, they couldn't possibly grow to be this tall and strong.

"Of course, it's not written wrong!" Chen Shouyi was puzzled by the question and asked, "Does this have anything to do with implanting a tooth?"

"No, Mr. Chen, your situation is quite special, and it's not possible to implant a tooth!"

"Could it only be a fake tooth then?" Chen Shouyi said a bit disappointedly. Although fake teeth look like real ones, upon closer inspection, they can still be identified.

"Please let me finish! You can't get a tooth implanted right now. I suspect that a new tooth is growing inside, but I can't confirm it yet. It needs some time to observe, and I suggest you come back in three days to check on it."

...

Chen Shouyi walked out of the hospital, still unable to believe it.

His tongue touched the gap where his tooth was missing, and it seemed like there really was some hard thing there.

"Could Natural Healing also regenerate limbs, grow back fallen teeth!" Chen Shouyi thought and thought, and could only attribute it to his innate ability: "I wonder how long it will take for it to grow back to normal!"

Thinking of this, he couldn't help but feel a headache coming on.

It was imaginable that as a dignified Martial Artist in the eyes of outsiders, once he opened his mouth showing a gap from his missing front tooth, it really would lose all dignity.

"Forget it, I should stay low profile for a while!"

Chen Shouyi pushed out his bicycle and hurriedly rode back home with a depressed look.

...

On the small hill outside the Safe Zone.

"Hey Giant, you're missing a tooth." Shell Lady squatted on a nearby tree, blinked her eyes, and seriously reminded him.

Her small hand clutched a poor, chubby little white worm, not sure from where it was caught, continuously squishing it.

"I know!" Chen Shouyi said in a muffled voice while assembling his War Bow.

"Did you lose it and can't find it?" Shell Lady asked curiously.

Why is everyone's curiosity so strong? It's just a tooth, what's the big deal, why pay so much attention to it?

"The tooth was worn out, so I pulled it out and threw it away!" Chen Shouyi said irritably.

Upon hearing this, Shell Lady felt a bit worried, quickly showing a neat row of small white teeth, urgently asked Chen Shouyi, "I've been using my teeth for a long time too, do you think they still look new?"

A little showoff.

Chen Shouyi looked up at her and found it curious. He had never brushed her teeth, and when she lived in the other world, she didn't have the concept of teeth brushing either, yet her teeth were like white jade, translucent and beautiful like a piece of art.

"Very new, very beautiful," Chen Shouyi unreservedly praised her.

"Oh!" Shell Lady immediately beamed with joy, she softly clacked her upper and lower jaws together, making a faint tinkling sound, excitedly said, "My teeth are not only very beautiful, very new, but also very strong, when I was little, I even bit dead a bad worm that wanted to eat me."

Chen Shouyi glanced at her tiny cherry-like mouth, about three millimeters wide, he really couldn't imagine what a brutal scene that would be.

...

After a whole day of training outside.

When Chen Shouyi finally got home, he was immediately bombarded with questions by his parents. Obviously, his sister, the traitor, had already spread the word about this incident.

Chen Shouyi could only come up with an excuse to muddle through.

Eventually, he was forced to open his mouth, and under the aggressive scrutiny of his parents and sister, he shamefully opened his mouth to show the gap.

"No worries, just get a tooth implanted, it won't affect life," Chen Dawei laughed heartily.

Chen Shouyi did not disclose the matter of a new tooth growing, as it was too astonishing.

Overall, his mood for the day was utterly ruined.

However, when it came time to eat, he discovered that this wasn't even the worst part; he found the tooth next to the gap was also loose and shaky.

After hastily finishing his meal, he quickly went to the bathroom in his bedroom and looked in the mirror again and again.

"Damn, am I going to have to replace all my teeth?"

Although Chen Shouyi kept telling himself that he shouldn't pull that tooth out anymore, in the end, his hands couldn't resist and he pulled it out.

Looking at the massive gap in the mirror, almost wide enough to fit a Shell Lady sideways, and even the air he breathed out made a hissing sound as it leaked out.

He couldn't help but secretly resolve not to speak until the teeth fully grew back.

Chapter 215 - Methods

By the second day, things got even worse. He endured the pain and pulled out three more teeth below.

On the third day, he numbly pulled out another five.

...

And by the seventh day, he had pulled out all his teeth.

In just a few days, his cheeks and mouth had sunken in, and his entire appearance had drastically changed. His originally handsome image had turned into a sneaky and unattractive appearance, making it hard to look at.

In the evening, Chen Shouyi looked at himself in the mirror, baring his teeth. The new, sharp, white front teeth emerging made him feel nothing; his face was numb with indifference.

This is just the darkness before dawn. Just endure a little longer, and soon there will be no need to hide or be ashamed.

He opened the attribute panel and glanced at it.

The days of hard training had shown significant results: his agility increased by 0.1, reaching 14.8. Additionally, both perception and willpower increased by 0.1, now at 12.8 and 13.1, respectively.

In terms of knowledge skills, his archery finally advanced from proficient to mastery level. Although it was just a slight improvement, it was a significant leap. Now his arrow-shooting speed had stabilized from ten arrows per second to thirteen arrows per second.

The progress was truly astonishing.

At this moment, there was a knock at the door: "Bro, Sister Xiao Ling is looking for you?"

"Got it!" Chen Shouyi closed the attribute panel and said.

He felt a bit puzzled. It was already eight o'clock in the evening, a time when most people were already asleep. Why would someone seek them out so late? Had something big happened?

He immediately put on the mask beside him, opened the bedroom and closed the door.

Chen Xingyue had long gotten used to her brother's appearance and felt somewhat powerless to complain.

These past few days, her brother had been acting a bit weird and not normal. He was always elusive, and even during breakfast and dinner, he was nowhere to be seen. If he hadn't been sleeping at home at night, one might have thought he had disappeared.

It's just a lost tooth; is it really worthy of hiding from everyone? Plus, he didn't even think of getting it fixed. She felt her brother's mind was not quite right recently, and she dared not tease him anymore, fearing it would make things worse.

...

Bai Xiaoling sat in the living room, a bit restless. Seeing Chen Shouyi come down, she immediately stood up. Although she found it odd that he wore a mask, she didn't overthink it. After his parents and Chen Xingyue left the room, she immediately said:

"General Manager Chen, why haven't you attended military training?"

"Military training? When did this happen?" Chen Shouyi frowned, puzzled.

"You don't know?" Bai Xiaoling was taken aback. Surprised, she asked, "It started the day before yesterday, hasn't anyone informed you?"

"The day before yesterday?" Chen Shouyi murmured, recalling that his mother and sister had mentioned someone looking for him several times, but they hadn't said what it was about, so he didn't pay much attention.

Over the past few days, because of his tooth issue, he was always elusive, leaving early before dawn and returning home only after dark, with no attention to outside matters.

In fact, storms were brewing in Hedong City these days. Orders were issued not only targeting martial artists but also organizing workers, farmers, students, and urban unemployed residents through their respective units or streets and towns to conduct basic military training while expanding the militia.

Even his villa area held an emergency war evacuation drill while he was absent.

Chen Shouyi explained the situation.

Bai Xiaoling, being sharp, immediately said, "General Manager Chen, someone is definitely scheming against you. Even if they couldn't inform you during the day, they should have at night. Have you offended someone lately?"

He nodded, feeling a chill in his heart. This event, thinking even with his lost tooth, he could guess it was Lei Ruiyang's doing. Unexpectedly, the other party was so sly!

"It's unfortunate that only your parents and sister know about this, which doesn't count as evidence." Bai Xiaoling didn't inquire about whom he had offended. Anyone at his level was beyond her small position's capacity to confront. Pacing around, she thought aloud, "However, maybe we can dig into the one who issued the notice to possibly have the punishment rescinded."

"If no evidence is found, what punishment might I face?" Chen Shouyi solemnly asked.

"It's not clear yet," Bai Xiaoling said:

"The exact penalty hasn't been determined. I heard whispers from a friend working in the city government; those above might not let this slide easily. You, as a martial artist, leading in military training evasion, may be made an example of, at least with a warning."

"What about something more serious?" Chen Shouyi asked.

"There is no precedent for this, so it's hard to gauge, but it likely won't be too severe. At most, it might involve being docked or penalized financially. Let me look into it for you, though chances aren't high since there's no CCTV now."

Chen Shouyi's tightly knitted brows relaxed:

"Forget it, don't bother. If there's punishment, so be it."

A mark on a martial artist is meaningless, negligible at best. Even financial penalties are not a big deal, as last month's salary plus bonuses of 5.65 million would sustain him for a long time.

If the penalty is rescinded and he's asked to continue military training, would he actually go?

"Don't be careless; the higher-ups' impression of you might sour then." Bai Xiaoling said worriedly on his behalf.

...

After Chen Shouyi's advice, Bai Xiaoling soon left.

He returned to his bedroom, his heart still darkened.

Though he didn't want to participate in military training, given the Shell Lady's situation and his image issues, Lei Ruiyang's interference, to some extent, ended up helping him avoid the dilemma. But these petty methods are truly irksome.

He walked to the window, pulled back the curtain, and quietly watched the night outside.

The distant roar of machinery in the industrial area echoed faintly.

"I'll swallow my pride this time, but don't let it happen again..." He touched his sunken cheek, a cold gleam in his eye as he murmured to himself.

"Good Giant, I'm not going to make it. I can't keep my eyes open, I'm going to sleep!"

Hearing the Shell Lady's voice, Chen Shouyi's stern expression softened immediately.

"Don't sleep yet. Eat something first." he quickly said, glancing at the Shell Lady who sat on the bed with her head bobbing and eyes barely open. He immediately took out some honey, mixed half a spoonful with hot water, and placed it in front of her.

"Wake up, hurry and wake up."

Hearing the sound, the Shell Lady opened her heavy eyelids, gazed sleepily at the honey, and drank a few mouthfuls with her head drooping. Her small body swayed slightly like a wobbly dummy before she lay down on the bed and soon started snoring softly.

Chapter 216 - Sudden Inspiration

Three nights later, Chen Xingyue, dressed in pajamas, knocked on Chen Shouyi's bedroom door and handed him a letter delivered by a government employee.

He accepted it and tore it open, finding inside a notice regarding his evasion of military training.

"A warning and a deduction of this month's salary?" He thought to himself.

This punishment isn't too severe; a warning is the lightest level of administrative penalty. After that, there are records, major records, demotion, dismissal, and expulsion. Also, the deduction is only from his salary, not from various Martial Artist allowances.

Clearly, Hedong City doesn't want to punish too harshly, forcing him, a prominent Martial Artist, to leave.

"Brother, what's the letter about, what's written in it?" Chen Xingyue asked curiously, trying to peek.

Chen Shouyi quickly scanned through the letter, glanced at his overly curious sister, and asked, "Do you want to see it?"

Chen Xingyue nodded her head vigorously, her face full of anticipation.

"This is classified; we can talk about it once you're a Martial Artist!" Chen Shouyi sniffed, holding the letter in his hand. He then rubbed his hands together vigorously, turning the entire letter into tiny fragments that scattered to the ground.

He then calmly patted his hands clean.

Seeing her brother's rude attitude, Chen Xingyue puffed her cheeks in anger and gritted her teeth, saying, "Just because you're a great Martial Artist, what's so great about that? Just you wait, give me another month, and I refuse to believe I can't dodge one of your moves!"

"Don't talk big, or you'll find the disappointment greater than the hope," Chen Shouyi raised his eyebrows and said.

Within ten days, the third optimization of Body Refinement 36 will be complete. Based on previous optimizations, his power should increase substantially in a month.

Besides, even if he makes no progress, a Martial Artist dodging a Martial Master's move is practically impossible.

"Just you wait; I refuse to believe it!" Chen Xingyue ground her teeth and said resentfully, then turned and stomped away.

Bulling his sister made Chen Shouyi's previously gloomy mood from the punishment feel much better.

The sibling rivalry between Chen Shouyi and his sister had long become commonplace; this minor squabble was just part of their daily routine. Of course, they say thirty years east, thirty years west; now the tables have turned, and he's on top again, which could last for a very long time, until life's end.

He looked at the paper fragments at the door, suddenly slapped his forehead, and reluctantly took out a broom and dustpan to clean them up.

...

At dawn, while still misty, Chen Shouyi walked along the street, wearing a mask and carrying a bow and sword.

It was April, and the climate was gradually warming. The Safe Zone was no longer unfinished like when he first arrived; the unpaved roads had been transformed into cement surfaces, and willows were transplanted along the roadside.

The willow branches, with newly grown leaves, slightly swayed in the gentle morning breeze, giving a sense of spring's vitality.

At the corner of a breakfast shop, a tall stout woman and a thin middle-aged man were busy sweating, even though it was only 5:30 in the morning, the breakfast shop was already bustling with customers.

Upon seeing Chen Shouyi with a mask, the woman brightened and eagerly wiped her hands with a towel and greeted him, "What would you like today?"

"The usual, fifty meat buns and fifty vegetable buns, to take away!"

This was not just breakfast; it included lunch as well.

"We don't have enough now; you'll have to wait a bit."

"That's fine, no worries!" Chen Shouyi said indifferently and then entered the breakfast shop, sitting at an empty seat.

The woman handed a bowl of noodles to a customer and politely said to Chen Shouyi, "Would you like to eat something now to tide over?"

She knew that people carrying swords were either Martial Artists or Martial Artist Apprentices, and they had enormous appetites and got hungry easily.

"No need, no need!" Chen Shouyi quickly refused.

His teeth grew very slowly, even the fastest-growing front teeth were only the size of a green bean, he feared that if he took off his mask, he'd become the center of attention.

He preferred not to garner such attention.

Soon, the buns he ordered were ready.

The hundred buns were swiftly packed into five bags by the woman; Chen Shouyi paid and stuffed them into his backpack one by one and got up to leave.

Passing by City Hall Square, he saw a group of students in Martial Arts Academy uniforms being led by several teachers on a tour early in the morning at the site of the Divine Corpse's fall, with some daring students even crossing the warning line, walking around inside.

The nearby soldiers on duty showed no intention to stop them.

Chen Shouyi frowned slightly, as the place had become eerie and sinister full of resentment since the fall of the Barbarian God, even he wouldn't dare approach, yet these bold students seemed wanton in risking their lives without fear of mishap.

Hesitating for a moment, Chen Shouyi quickly walked over and advised, "It's very dangerous inside; you'd better not approach."

Several Martial Artist Academy teachers were quietly chatting, glanced at him due to his words, likely thinking him young and not taking him seriously, soon resumed their conversation.

A female student, reasonably attractive among the crowd, expressed discontent, saying, "Don't talk nonsense, what's dangerous?"

Chen Shouyi shook his head and said nothing more, turning around and leaving; wise is as wise does, since he had already warned them, he fulfilled his responsibility.

"Really absurd." said the pretty female student, watching Chen Shouyi's back.

"Class President, don't mind him; many people have visited here already, without danger?" said an average-looking teenage boy loudly.

"Yeah, it's really meddlesome, even us Martial Artist Apprentices aren't afraid!" said a boy with a face full of acne.

"Class President, thirsty? I brought a bottle of mineral water for you." said a tall boy, ingratiatingly.

"Mineral water, from half a year ago, almost expired, huh?"

The nearby boys immediately flocked to please, the Martial Arts Academy had more boys than girls, and female Martial Artist Apprentices were rare, most of them stout, while those reasonably attractive were cherished as endangered species.

"Aren't you annoying!" The female student said irritably, turned her head away, ignoring these sycophants, watching the boys within the warning line for a while. Perhaps influenced by that mysterious gentleman earlier, an unease crept into her mind.

...

"Bang! Bang! Bang..."

Dense and continuous shadows of fists rained like string plucking on a vast pine tree. Bark and wood chips scattered, occasionally splattering blood, the entire tree shook, quivering, a few minutes later, a 20 cm deep hollow appeared on the trunk.

During the memory space fights with two newly promoted Martial Masters, Chen Shouyi realized his body seemed vulnerable. Or rather, compared to his formidable offensive power, his body seemed fragile.

In that battle, after kicking Lei Ruiyang, he subsequently killed him, Xiao Changming's jaw was broken by a kick, neck bone directly fractured, and while he appeared victorious, apparently unharmed, in reality, particularly the last hit, his toes and even the back of his foot suffered various degrees of fractures.

The offensive power in Martial Arts is so strong that it far exceeds his defensive capabilities.

Even a Martial Artist's fists and feet striking his body could possibly cause injury.

Perhaps due to this reason, very few Martial Artists specifically trained in endurance or bone strength, nor have they developed methods like Body Refinement 36 or quiet meditation that enhances physical toughness.

It's akin to modern fighter jet duels, getting hit means defeat, whether your defense is strong or not, it can't stop a missile strike; focusing energy instead on improving maneuverability, enhancing stealth capabilities, and boosting the fighter's firepower...

To some extent, the development of human Martial Artists embodies this mindset.

Moreover, Chen Shouyi speculates that the higher-ups may also consider preventing Martial Artists from losing balance; when Martial Artists can ignore bullets, their level of danger multiplies exceptionally.

Previously, he never focused on this weakness, but today, perhaps due to the processing notice's influence, an idea suddenly struck him: why shouldn't he develop a skill to boost physical strength?

Others might not achieve this, but for someone with the Book of Knowledge, like him, it's certainly possible.

Chapter 217 - Horizontal Training

The Shell Lady squatted on a large tree nearby, each of her hands holding a plump little insect. She watched the Giant in the distance continuously pounding on the tree, yawned out of boredom, watched for a while longer, and then stopped paying attention to the Giant. She lowered her head, placed the two insects on a branch, and began to poke at them with her fingers.

"Hmm, one of them seems to have stopped moving."

She hurriedly grabbed the half-dead insect, shook it with force, and pinched it again.

Despite her small size, her grip was by no means weak. The poor insect was squeezed so that its body kept expanding and contracting, and green liquid and excrement were squeezed out of it.

After fussing with it for a while, the Shell Lady placed the insect back on the branch and disappointedly found that it still didn't move. Without any attachment, she threw the insect off the tree and focused all her attention on the other one, which was still crawling with some strength.

...

The indentation on the tree grew bigger and bigger, and after ten or so minutes, the tree finally broke and fell with a loud crash.

Chen Shouyi glanced at his bloody fist, waited for half a minute, and then rubbed off the scab. Fresh pink skin was revealed on the back of his hand, and the skin became visibly thicker and darker. Three to four minutes later, it gradually became consistent with his other skin, and the differences became less noticeable.

Chen Shouyi felt the back of his hand, carefully experiencing the sensation:

"It seems to have some effect. The newly generated skin is slightly thicker than before, and it seems to have become tougher."

Chen Shouyi didn't find it miraculous. The skin of someone who works outside every day is naturally more resilient than that of someone who stays home all the time. It is a natural adaptation to the environment, with the skin producing corresponding defenses as a stress response.

Due to the existence of Natural Healing, he shortened this adaptation process to thousands of times. Effects that typically require months could be seen in just half an hour.

Chen Shouyi immediately decided to experiment a little.

He found another large tree and used the same strength as before, this time slightly increasing his force from twenty percent to twenty-five percent.

However, after just one punch, he stopped in pain, almost breaking his bones.

Looking at his bloody fist, Chen Shouyi thought to himself, "The effect doesn't seem to be that apparent."

Yet, he didn't feel disappointed. He had initially only tried it on a whim, without any real expectations. Besides, increasing physical strength isn't something that can be achieved with such crude and primitive methods.

He opened the attribute panel and took a glance, noticing that the half-hour practice had increased his unarmed combat skill.

...

Though it was just past noon, Chen Shouyi returned early.

After returning to the Safe Zone, he turned into a bookstore and headed straight to the section with Martial Arts Books. In the entire store, this section had the most people, mostly youths and teenagers, though there were also quite a few older individuals.

It was evident that the current situation had led to more people practicing Martial Arts, and the atmosphere was becoming more and more prominent.

The books here were introductory material for beginners in Martial Arts.

Placed in the bestseller section was a book titled "New Edition: Thirty-Six Physical Training Methods and Insights," surrounded by a crowd,

but these books didn't interest Chen Shouyi at all. He carefully searched through several bookshelves, looking for a long time without finding what he wanted.

Over the past twenty years, Martial Arts had developed rapidly, and some old training methods, having little effect, were gradually being replaced and ignored. After all, it was better to practice standard Martial Arts, as it was promoted by the government and had tangible results.

Leaving the bookstore, Chen Shouyi looked slightly disappointed:

"If only the internet was still around. I could easily search for this stuff. But with the current situation, where can I find these books?"

Suddenly, his eyes lit up: "Jiangnan University!"

As one of the top universities in the Great Xia Country, there should be Martial Arts laboratories, and with them, a collection of related books wouldn't be lacking. Exercises like the Thirty-Six Physical Trainings and Internal Practice are not conjured out of thin air; they are consolidated from various ancient and modern domestic and international training methods, refining them and continuously modifying and perfecting them.

The more he thought about it, the more it made sense, and he eagerly headed to Jiangnan University.

Before long, he found Guan Miao again.

The two walked to a secluded corner.

"What do you want with me now?" Guan Miao asked coldly.

"I need you to help me borrow some books," said Chen Shouyi straightforwardly, seemingly unconcerned by her rejection.

"The sun must be rising in the west. A big brute like you suddenly wants to study?" Guan Miao scoffed.

Initially feeling somewhat hopeful, Chen Shouyi's anger flared at her words.

"Damn it, can't you talk properly?"

But realizing he needed her help, he swallowed his anger and said impatiently, "Are you going to help me or not?"

"Is this how you ask for favors? You called me out here just to have a professor borrow books for you? Am I not busy?" Guan Miao sneered.

"You're just an associate!" Chen Shouyi's face darkened, his fists creaking in his hands, "Stop wasting time. Don't make me resort to force."

"What books do you need?" Guan Miao's expression changed, and she took a step back, capitulating.

As expected, you can't speak gently with this woman.

"Books on traditional martial arts, like hard Qi Gong, Iron Cloth Shirt, anything that trains physical defense. The more, the better! To prevent you from going through the motions, at least a hundred," Chen Shouyi added a condition to avoid being perfunctorily treated.

The more samples, the richer the knowledge. Then the Book of Knowledge's deductions would likely be more effective.

"That's impossible!" Guan Miao exclaimed in shock at Chen Shouyi's huge request, and seeing his face darkening, she quickly explained, "Even if I'm a professor, I can't borrow that many books at once."

"How many can you borrow?"

"Twenty!" Guan Miao replied, pausing before adding, "But I still have eight that I haven't returned, so I can only give you twelve."

"Are you lying to me?" Chen Shouyi asked with suspicion.

"How dare I lie to you? Aren't I afraid of being beaten?" Guan Miao turned her head, pouted, and replied mockingly.

"If only twelve, then twelve for now!" said Chen Shouyi.

...

At the library entrance, Chen Shouyi had been waiting for over half an hour when Guan Miao finally came out with a disgruntled expression and handed him a stack of books.

"When will you return them?" Guan Miao asked coldly.

Golden Bell Shield, Iron Cloth Shirt, Crimson Palm, Iron Head Skill, Iron Crotch Skill, Hard Qi Gong, Thirteen Taibao Horizontal Training...

Each book wasn't thick, at most a few dozen pages. Chen Shouyi checked them and said, "I'll return them to you tomorrow. If it's not enough, I might need you to help borrow some more!"

Guan Miao's expression became even more displeased.

Chapter 218 - Thirty-Six Techniques of Horizontal Training

Chen Shouyi excitedly returned to his bedroom, took the Shell Lady out from the inner pocket of his coat, and placed it on the bed. He casually grabbed a handful of glass beads from the drawer and said:

"Play by yourself!"

"I'm missing gems!" Shell Lady glanced at the glass beads and said expressionlessly.

"I didn't steal yours!" Chen Shouyi said helplessly.

I just wanted to take a little break, and it's not allowed. I really owe her!

He had no choice but to take out all sizes of glass, one by one for her. Some glass beads were only as small as mung beans, making them hard to pick up by hand. After a lot of effort, he finally placed all the glass beads on the bed for her.

Seeing Shell Lady still counting them one by one with suspicion, Chen Shouyi simply ignored it.

After washing his hands in the bathroom, he eagerly sat at his desk, took off his mask, picked up a book called Qi Gong, and began to read.

This is a method of training through special breathing and resistance training, which further enhances the pain tolerance and cell density strength of the trained area. It's quite simple.

As for whether it's effective, Chen Shouyi didn't know.

He looked at the publication date and publisher at the back of the book and found it was printed in 1998, published by the Military Defense Publishing House.

1998 was the third year after the war with the other world. The first edition of the Thirty-six Styles of Body Refinement should have been released. Coupled with the fact that the publisher had a military background, it should have some effect.

The whole book only had over twenty pages and was finished in less than five minutes.

...

Chen Shouyi went through book after book, finding some effects to be quite practical. With his rational thinking combined with his Martial Arts experience, he felt that there was some feasibility.

While some were exaggerated, claiming that with deep practice, one would be invulnerable to swords and spears. Chen Shouyi could understand to some extent, for ordinary people, he could even be considered invulnerable to swords and spears, though this 'spear' did not refer to a gun that fires bullets.

As for being immune to water and fire, moving as fast as lightning, walking on water without leaving a trace, that was sheer exaggeration. If these cultivation techniques were truly useful, then countries would just promote these instead of developing Martial Arts.

At this moment, there was a knock on the door:

"Mom's calling you for dinner." Chen Xingyue said coldly.

"I'm not coming down. Bring it up for me." Chen Shouyi snapped back to reality from the book and said. In his current state, how could he go down for dinner? It would all be exposed at once.

"I won't help you. If you don't want to eat, just starve." Chen Xingyue said coldly, still not over yesterday's anger. It's already nice of her to call him for dinner, let alone bring it for him. He was dreaming.

"A thousand!" Chen Shouyi immediately said, "I'll give you a thousand pocket money then."

"Really, you're that kind-hearted?" Chen Xingyue, behind the door, asked suspiciously, her eyes brightening.

"When have I ever lied to you? If you don't want it, forget it."

"I want it! I want it! You're the best, big brother. I'll bring the food right away." Chen Xingyue said excitedly.

Soon, Chen Shouyi heard the sound of his sister's footsteps moving away quickly.

After easily settling his sister, he continued to go through those books.

...

After eating the meal his sister brought, he planned to try one of the cultivation techniques.

After much consideration, he finally chose the Thirteen Taibao Horizontal Training, because it combined physical resistance training, breathing techniques, and visualization methods. From the perspective of optimization by the Book of Knowledge, having multiple directions meant there was bound to be a breakthrough point.

Chen Shouyi immediately began to stand as required by the technique, relaxing his body and slightly closing his eyes.

His breathing became slow and long, with his abdomen and chest rising high, making his whole person seem to inflate like a balloon, then slowly shrink as he exhaled.

After breathing hundreds of times, he felt proficient and began to visualize, as described in the book, the Heaven and Earth Spiritual Qi continuously surging toward his Dantian, forming a fireball, and then imagined this fireball spreading to every part of his body.

For Chen Shouyi, who has already mastered deep meditation and can enter a profound meditative state at any time, this visualization was no effort at all.

In just one breath, he completely fell into a state without thoughts, a state of complete forgetfulness.

Gradually, it was as if there really was a fireball burning fiercely in his Dantian, making his whole body feel hot and scorching.

After more than ten minutes, he opened his eyes and touched his skin, finding it genuinely warm.

However, this should be self-hypnosis. If there was indeed Heaven and Earth Spiritual Qi, it should be the Mysterious Power drifting from the other world, but he didn't feel even a hint of Mysterious Power being drawn.

He opened the attribute panel, and a hint of joy flashed across his face.

"It really worked!"

The last entry in the knowledge skills section now read Thirteen Taibao Horizontal Training.

"Thirteen Taibao Horizontal Training (Not yet proficient)"

Before practicing cultivation, he didn't dare to hold out much hope and never expected it to be so easy.

"Could it be that the Book of Knowledge can somehow act according to my will? I wanted to form the Thirteen Guardian Horizontal Training cultivation technique, and the Book of Knowledge began to respond," he pondered inwardly.

He stopped thinking about it and focused again on the newly formed cultivation technique.

"Should I waste an energy point to optimize it!"

Chen Shouyi felt a bit tempted in his heart.

Regarding whether the original cultivation technique had any effect, he thought that since it was published by a legitimate publisher and included in Jiangnan University, it should have some effect. But to actually achieve what the book described: invulnerability and immense strength, he found it hard to believe.

For ordinary people, even practicing for a lifetime might not even equate to a Martial Artist Apprentice.

Do not underestimate a Martial Artist Apprentice, whose physical attributes nearly reach the limits of what humans could achieve twenty years ago. If they participated in the Olympics, they could sweep all the gold medals in track and field events.

The unoptimized Thirteen Guardian Horizontal Training is nothing but dispensable.

Thinking about spending a bit of energy and delaying it for another six or seven days, Chen Shouyi gritted his teeth and went to lie on the bed, choosing to optimize.

The energy points he had accumulated dropped rapidly from 7.85 to 6.85.

In the next moment, a wave of dizziness ensued, and a dream came over him.

In the dream, he visualized his breathing repeatedly. Soon, someone used a wooden stick to strike him forcefully. The person was just a shadow, and their features were entirely unclear.

As time passed, his movements began to change.

His breathing rhythm gradually altered, possessing a certain rhythm. Then his body, which had been originally motionless, began practicing the Thirty-Six Body Refining Forms. In deep contemplation, strands of mysterious power gathered in his dantian.

No longer was it a flame, but a green, counterclockwise spinning tornado, a gust of wind, fitting with his innate ability.

...

Chen Shouyi suddenly opened his eyes and immediately opened the attribute panel.

The Thirty-Six Body Refining Forms and the Thirteen Guardian Horizontal Training had both vanished, replaced by an unnamed cultivation technique.

"Unnamed (Uninitiated)"

"I didn't expect the two skills to completely fuse. It seems that as long as the knowledge is obtained, it's universal," he thought.

At this moment, he suddenly thought of a question: what about the next optimization? Is it the second or third optimization?

Upon testing, he found he was overthinking it; there was no loophole to exploit.

Looking at the unnamed label, with a thought, it changed to "Horizontal Training Thirty-Six Forms."

...

He got up from the bed, walked to an open space, and began his first practice.

A few minutes later, after clumsily completing an extremely complex set of movements, he felt a much denser mysterious power than the previous plain Thirty-Six Body Refining Forms integrating into his dantian.

Whereas previously, this mysterious power was like a drizzle, now it turned into a gentle rain. Under his contemplation, this mysterious power transformed into a wildly spinning tornado, then swept across muscles, organs, bones, and throughout every part of his body.

As this wind blew, the muscles seemed to tighten more, the bones itched faintly, and the skin felt somewhat taut.

"The effect is unexpectedly obvious!"

A touch of joy flashed across his heart, and he continued to practice repeatedly.

After practicing a full fifteen times, he finally felt exhausted and stopped, his entire body already flushed and burning like fire.

Chen Shouyi guessed his body temperature was likely over forty degrees.

Yet he didn't feel any discomfort, rather, it felt like bathing in a hot spring, his whole body was comfortable.

He opened the attribute panel, and the previously uninitiated Horizontal Training Thirty-Six Forms leapt to "Proficient: 15".

After all, a significant part of this skill was originally the already mastered Thirty-Six Body Refining Forms. Although the visualization was slightly different from entering a static state, it was largely similar, and not difficult. He quickly adapted to it, with the most challenging aspect being the breath control he had never encountered before.

If it weren't for this aspect holding him back, his proficiency might have jumped straight to mastery.

Chen Shouyi rolled up his sleeve, aimed his fingernail at his arm, and scratched hard.

With a 'screech' sound!

It felt like an ordinary person scratching a car tire, producing a tooth-gritting sound, and simultaneously, five deep blood marks appeared on his arm, causing him to gasp in pain.

"It seems I've been a bit too impatient."

Chapter 219 - The Mysterious Case

The full moon hung in the black sky, casting down a pristine, frost-like moonlight.

Outside one of the boys' dormitories of the Jiangnan Martial Arts Academy, now relocated to the Safe Zone, a large group of students whispered fearfully, their faces filled with terror and unease.

Inside the dormitory, bones and pieces of flesh were scattered everywhere, with blood almost covering the entire floor. The strong scent of blood was pungent, nearly permeating the whole floor.

The police had already arrived at the crime scene to investigate. At this moment, a middle-aged officer was questioning the students: "Did you hear any strange noises while you were sleeping?"

"No!"

"Didn't hear anything!"

"We're so exhausted from training every day that we fall asleep as soon as our heads hit the pillow."

The middle-aged officer frowned and asked again, "Who discovered it first?"

"It was me!" A strong student hesitated before stepping forward and saying, "I woke up at night because I had to use the bathroom urgently, and when I got up, I smelled blood, which is how I discovered the situation."

The middle-aged officer stared intently at him. He looked a bit nervous, but that was a normal reaction when facing the police and didn't prove anything. Moreover, his coat was open, revealing his pajamas, and there were no bloodstains on his pajamas at all.

In this kind of bloody dismemberment case, it was entirely impossible not to be stained with blood unless he changed his pajamas beforehand. However, without more evidence, these were just baseless speculations.

Just then, another officer whispered in the middle-aged officer's ear: "We found bite marks on the bones!"

Hearing this, the middle-aged officer was startled, his scalp tingling. He had originally thought the meat had been moved by the murderer, as many heinous crimes often defy common sense.

He had never imagined that it had been eaten—the dorm housed four strong adult men, weighing at least four or five hundred pounds in total.

He examined a skull among them, the flesh on its face bitten off and the skullcap lifted, leaving the inside completely empty, making the entire dormitory feel eerily sinister.

...

Shell Lady crouched on a tree, her eyes unblinking as she observed the distant naked Giant, occasionally lifting her little skirt to look down and make careful comparisons, her serious little face full of confusion.

It really is so strange.

And not pleasant to look at at all.

Like a vicious giant worm.

...

Chen Shouyi stood between four large trees, each as thick as an arm's embrace, with rough, layered bark. Thanks to the preservation efforts in recent years, these trees had not been felled.

However, it took Chen Shouyi considerable effort to find these four trees standing close by in the small mountain.

Taking a deep breath, his chest and abdomen began to expand as he adjusted his breathing with the Horizontal Training Thirty-Six styles. After a few breaths, he pushed off the ground sharply and lunged toward one of the trees.

"Bang!"

The tree shook violently as bits of bark and wood chips exploded in all directions. His chest felt tight, almost making him vomit blood, but he gritted his teeth and hurled himself at another tree.

Each of his impacts carried a force of several tons.

This was after he controlled most of his strength. If he used all his might, the trees might not break, but his bones would certainly be shattered.

Time and again, he crashed against the trees, new wounds appearing even before the old ones could heal. After about a dozen hits, he was covered in blood, feeling as though ants were nibbling his body, causing a mix of pain and itching.

With these relentless collisions, Chen Shouyi vaguely felt that his muscles seemed to be tempered, binding more tightly together. Power seemed to flow more freely, as if the optimized combination of the Thirteen Tai Po Horizontal Training and the Body Refining Thirty-Six styles produced a result greater than the sum of its parts.

He practiced for the entire morning.

After eating the leftovers from breakfast at noon, he practiced the Horizontal Training Thirty-Six styles a few more times, rested for a bit, and continued his physical resistance training.

...

Four days quickly passed.

On a small path in the fields outside the Safe Zone.

"Brother, you really want me to hit you!" Chen Xingyue held an iron bar as thick as a child's arm, looking both eager and torn. It was solid; the entire thing weighed nearly a hundred pounds.

Are you sure it won't be a problem hitting your body?

"If I say hit, then hit, stop talking nonsense, hurry up!" Chen Shouyi said impatiently.

He had made great progress in the past few days. Not only had his physique and agility each increased by 0.1 points, but his resistance to blows had also improved drastically.

As of this morning, he could no longer find any trees suitable for his training on the small mountain. Trees with a diameter of less than twenty to thirty centimeters could be knocked down with one hit, and even those with a diameter of forty to fifty centimeters couldn't last long before breaking after about ten minutes of training.

"Brother, you said it, so here I come." Chen Xingyue steeled herself, saying that her brother had always hit her when they were young, and she'd never hit her brother before.

With that, she lifted the iron bar and did not dare to exert too much force, fearing she would really hurt her brother, lightly tapping on his back instead.

"Harder." Chen Shouyi didn't even flinch as he said.

...

"A bit harder, don't hold back!"

...

"You haven't eaten, have you? Didn't you say you're a martial artist? Is this all the strength a martial artist has?"

"Thud, thud, thud!"

Chen Xingyue, enraged by Chen Shouyi's sharp tongue, gritted her teeth, her face darkened, and swung the rod wordlessly at his body. The iron rod whooshed through the air.

Her brother was simply like he was made of rubber; when the rod hit his body, his muscles would bounce it off faster, numbing her palms.

Even now, she could only use four to five parts of her strength, not because she didn't want to, but because she dared not. If she used too much force, she didn't know if she could bring her teasing brother down, but she knew her own arm would definitely dislocate or even fracture.

Are great martial artists this strong? This is simply abnormal!

"Don't just hit the back, also..." Chen Shouyi said.

"Thud!"

Before he could finish, the heavy rod struck his chest with a loud dull thud. Chen Shouyi nearly lost consciousness from the impact, and before he could catch his breath, the rod came down like raindrops on his abdomen and thighs.

"Hiss!"

A heavy strike with the rod hit his pelvis, the searing pain turning Chen Shouyi's face pale.

But he would endure the hardship he brought upon himself and immediately adjusted his breathing with the Horizontal Training Thirty-Six styles, continuing to withstand it.

When pain becomes constant, it becomes a habit!

Seeing that her brother was unbothered even when hit on the bones, Chen Xingyue no longer held back, striking wildly at the legs and arms. Had Chen Shouyi not caught the rod in the end, she might have even dared to hit him on the head.

Does she really want to commit fratricide!

His head hadn't been deliberately trained yet.

If the rod smashed down, even if it didn't spill his brains, it would surely cause a bloody mess.

...

The sun sets in the west.

A large and a small silhouette rode bicycles back to the Safe Zone.

"Brother, am I really not at martial artist strength yet?" Chen Xingyue asked, somewhat doubting her abilities.

"What do you think?" Chen Shouyi suppressed the itchy pain from his bones healing and said blandly.

"Maybe I'm still a bit short!"

"What's a bit short? You still have a long way to go; you can't even fully utilize your strength yet."

"Hmph, don't get smug. I'm only sixteen. You only became a martial artist in the second half of your seventeenth year. I have more than a year to go." Chen Xingyue rallied herself, feeling unconvinced.

...

Chen Shouyi and his sister returned home, put away their bicycles, and as they walked in, they saw Bai Xiaoling already sitting in the living room.

Chapter 220 - Beyond Imagination

Chen Shouyi noticed Bai Xiaoling's somewhat anxious expression and knew something had happened.

"Mom and Dad! I'm back."

"Officer Bai has been waiting for you for a long time!" Mrs. Chen said.

Bai Xiaoling quickly said, "No, I just got here not long ago."

"Actually, is it urgent?" Chen Shouyi asked.

"Not urgent, not urgent!"

"Alright, let me go change first." Chen Shouyi said.

He quickly went upstairs, tore off his clothes and pants which were already tattered from an iron rod, and threw them in the trash can. Then he hurriedly took a shower in the bathroom, casually picked out some clothes to change into, put on a mask, and walked out of the bedroom.

...

The two walked out the door.

"What's the matter?"

"There's a tricky task!" Bai Xiaoling replied in a low voice while walking quickly, "Let's talk on the way; I'll ride on your bike, the road is a bit far!"

When she said bike, she was naturally referring to a bicycle.

Chen Shouyi had no objections, placed his bow bag on the handlebars, and wheeled the bicycle out from the garage.

After getting on, Bai Xiaoling naturally wrapped her arms around Chen Shouyi's waist. She had learned her lesson the last time and said:

"This mission is quite dangerous. The incidents occurred at Jiangnan Martial Arts Academy. The first death was five days ago; four students in one dorm room had their bodies quietly gnawed away, leaving only a pile of bones.

So far, the death toll has reached 26 people, including 22 students, two Martial Arts Teachers, and two military Martial Artists, one of whom was a Great Martial Artist!"

Chen Shouyi frowned slightly upon hearing this.

Currently, the safety of Hedong City is always under military responsibility, and Martial Artists in the Safe Zone are still in closed military training. The deployment of military personnel didn't seem surprising, but he hadn't expected even a Great Martial Artist to die.

He also noticed another issue: none of the deceased were ordinary people. Even the most ordinary students at the Martial Arts Academy have the strength of a Martial Artist Apprentice, and the teachers who teach Martial Arts are basically Martial Artists.

"Is it a Barbarian or a monster?" Chen Shouyi asked.

"It's still unclear. Before I came, I roughly reviewed the case files. Judging by the bite marks on the bones and the footprints at the scene, it seems to be a creature similar to a human, possibly a Barbarian, or maybe a human?"

"No one saw it?" Chen Shouyi asked in confusion.

Logically, with so many people in the academy, no matter how strong, there should have been witnesses.

"That's exactly the strangest part: no one has seen its true face. It's almost as if it can become invisible. Even that military Great Martial Artist died silently; his remains were only discovered the next morning."

Chen Shouyi's heart skipped a beat. This case was truly perplexing. A Great Martial Artist had no chance to resist and died silently: "What about the military Martial Artists, didn't they mobilize?"

"The authorities are in contact," Bai Xiaoling said.

At least it's not up to just one person.

Chen Shouyi felt slightly relieved.

What people fear most isn't knives or guns but often things related to mystery. He was most afraid of this kind of strange monster where nothing was clear.

He just wondered which Martial Artist would come?

Xiao Changming?

Or Lei Ruiyang!

But the most likely candidate should be Xiao Changming. Civilian Martial Artists are undergoing closed training, and there had to be someone to guard them. With his strong temperament, he would even watch over these civilian Martial Artists during training.

...

The newly relocated Jiangnan Martial Arts Academy is located at the very edge of the Safe Zone, close to the countryside. Compared to the old campus, the new one is pathetically small, about the size of a primary school.

It seems this place was initially planned as a primary school.

At this time, the entire Martial Arts Academy was completely surrounded by fully armed soldiers. From the balconies of the nearby buildings, a large number of snipers could be seen faintly. Chen Shouyi could even spot several machine guns mounted on the rooftops.

An atmosphere of solemnity prevailed.

When Chen Shouyi and Bai Xiaoling presented their Chief Advisor and police officer credentials at the gate, they found even more military and police personnel inside.

Many soldiers and police officers were inspecting the ground inch by inch, attempting to locate where the cannibalistic creature might be hiding.

"Is the creature confirmed to be inside the Martial Arts Academy?" Chen Shouyi turned his head and asked.

"Most likely. The military surrounded the entire academy yesterday, but two military Martial Artists still died overnight," Bai Xiaoling said as she adjusted her hair that had been tousled by the wind. Riding on Chen Shouyi's bicycle was really thrilling.

Especially on a stretch of the road close to the Martial Arts Academy, the surface hadn't even been paved with cement yet, making the whole bicycle bounce around. She still couldn't feel her behind.

The whole thing was numb.

Chen Shouyi parked the bicycle in the shed and quickly walked into a large office, which had already become a joint command center for the police and military.

Xiao Changming and two military Great Martial Artists were already there. When Chen Shouyi walked in, only Xiao Changming nodded slightly in greeting; the other two Great Martial Artists remained cold-faced.

Clearly, after offending Lei Ruiyang in the last meeting, he had also to some extent offended the military Martial Artists, or at least did not leave a favorable impression. The military always valued unity, and now probably many didn't look favorably upon him.

Chen Shouyi remained calm and indifferent.

There was nothing much to care about; the military Martial Artists and civilian Martial Artists have never been able to see eye to eye.

After Bai Xiaoling introduced him, Chen Shouyi shook hands with the police and military leaders separately, exchanged a few pleasantries, and found a seat to sit down.

The police were represented by a vice director, while the military representative was a regimental commander.

But compared to the numerous military Martial Artists, the police side seemed sparse, with Chen Shouyi being the only one.

"Xiao Li, give Chief Advisor Chen an update on the current situation." The vice director, named Fang Zhihai, was a thin middle-aged man who spoke to a competent-looking young female officer standing nearby.

"Yes, Director Fang!"

"Hello, Chief Advisor Chen, I'm Li Zhenzhen!" The police officer first prepared a cup of tea for Chen Shouyi, then briefed him on the situation: "Currently, all students and teachers have gathered on the playground. It's the main area of protection for this mission. You'll work as mobile forces along with the military Martial Artists..."

The female officer gave a concise update on the situation.

Chen Shouyi pondered; the purpose of this arrangement was likely not just to protect. There seemed to be an aspect of surveillance and investigation. If the goal was purely to ensure the safety of students and teachers, they could easily be evacuated from this dangerous campus or join the search teams.

The police probably suspect that the mysterious perpetrator might be hidden among the students and teachers.

...

They had boxed meals for dinner. Even though they ordered four boxes for his large appetite, Chen Shouyi still felt only half full.

He deliberately went to a secluded corner on the third floor of the administration building to eat, then put on his mask and was just about to head downstairs.

Rumble...

From the overcast sky came rolling thunder, and a bolt of lightning streaked across the distant sky. He immediately looked up at the sky, noticing it was covered in dark clouds.

He gently sniffed the air.

It seemed to carry a whiff of moisture.

"It might rain," Chen Shouyi thought to himself, "Tonight's going to be a long one!"

It's already mid-April, the weather's gradually warming, and these drizzly days are becoming more frequent.

He checked his watch; it was still before five. Based on previous murder times, they usually happened late at night, so he thought he had a lot of time and walked out of the administration building. After asking a soldier, he soon arrived at the playground.

At a glance, the playground was densely packed with students and teachers sitting on the ground, probably numbering over three thousand. Teachers of each class were currently receiving their class's boxed meals.

Looking at the students' faces, there wasn't much panic; rather, many had the excitement of being part of a group activity. The atmosphere was unusually lively.

The playground had few trees, only a circle of small trees planted along the walls. Judging by the mounded dirt beneath them, they seemed to have been planted recently.

After carefully surveying the surrounding terrain, Chen Shouyi turned and headed back to the administration building.