

New Era 221

Chapter 221 - Conflict

The night gradually deepened.

A gasoline lamp hanging on a simple tripod emitted a pale light.

From time to time, students would get up to go to the makeshift toilets in tents nearby, and the whole playground was noisy, with soldiers on alert everywhere.

Chen Shouyi patrolled the playground along with the military martial artists.

Except for Xiao Changming who was relatively polite, the other two senior martial artists didn't show any friendliness at all. Especially one with a face full of flesh, who frequently challenged him with his gaze.

It ignited a simmering rage in Chen Shouyi's heart.

If not for the wrong circumstances, and this being military grounds, he would have slapped him to death.

Xiao Changming occasionally glanced at the students and suddenly asked solemnly, "Have you ever experienced hallucinations?"

Chen Shouyi withdrew his gaze and replied casually, "Perhaps!"

"You didn't understand. I mean genuine hallucinations, where you see people or things that others can't, as if you're speaking nonsense that no one else comprehends." Xiao Changming said seriously.

Chen Shouyi's heart jumped suddenly at the words, and for some reason, he recalled the scene of the curse last time, along with the eerie apparitions in City Hall Square. Yes, on the way back from training in

the hills last time, he saw students from the Martial Arts Academy visiting the site of the Barbarian God's fall at City Hall Square.

Could it be that all of this was triggered by that event?

Thinking this way made the timeline seem to fit perfectly.

"What are you trying to say?" Chen Shouyi asked, a hint of gloom rising in his heart.

"There's something the female officer didn't tell you, perhaps she wasn't aware. After this incident occurred, your police quickly conducted class checks and found a strange clue. During roll call in the class where the first death occurred, one person was found missing."

"That seems normal, doesn't it? Faced with such a bizarre murder case, it's natural for a person to feel fearful, perhaps he went home temporarily." Chen Shouyi said gravely.

Xiao Changming sighed and said seriously, "But the key point is that during roll call, more than one student in the class insisted he was sitting in the corner of the classroom, behaving bizarrely, with clothes soaked in blood, his abdomen swollen like a balloon. By all means, such obvious signs of crime should have been reported or controlled, yet those who saw him seemed unaware of his abnormality, until everyone realized something was wrong, and he suddenly disappeared."

Rumble...

A flash of lightning pierced the night sky, illuminating everyone's faces in pale light.

Chen Shouyi glanced at the playground. No wonder the patrol never approached the group of students, probably as a precaution. After all, every power has its limit and cannot ignore distance. Looking at the distant students, he felt as if everyone was behaving strangely.

A raindrop fell on Chen Shouyi's cheek, and he instinctively wiped it.

"It's raining!" Another dark-skinned senior martial artist from the military looked up at the sky and said.

Soon after!

Pat, pat... pat...

Large drops of rain began to fall from the dark sky, causing the playground to become tumultuous. With tents limited, most were already provided to the refugees pouring into the safe zone, leaving no extra tents for the students.

Chen Shouyi wiped the cold rain from his face and knew things were getting troublesome.

Not only did the students lack tents, but the guarding soldiers did too. Although it was already April and the weather had begun to warm, the nighttime temperature was about five or six degrees. With this cold rain, students might barely manage with the physique of martial artist apprentices, but ordinary soldiers would not last long.

Within half a minute, his clothes were already soaked through, with the cold dampness penetrating his body.

He noticed several teachers approaching the soldiers to negotiate, perhaps hoping to take shelter from the rain, but judging by the situation, the soldiers refused them, leading to a heated argument.

The rain grew heavier, accompanied by lightning streaking across the sky.

The entire night sky alternated between brightness and darkness.

Gradually, students went forward, joining the line of argument.

These students had been forced to stay on the playground since yesterday, and discontent had been building in their hearts,

Facing school lockdown and personal detention, especially with the ogre rampaging through the campus, no one could remain calm or reasonable. Now, drenched by the icy rain, they were on the verge of outbreak.

The two groups started arguing, with escalating intensity.

Nearby soldiers, seeing the situation worsening, immediately approached with full vigilance.

The number of people from both sides increased, escalating the emotions further.

At this moment, a highly agitated student suddenly pushed through the soldiers, quickly running towards the front school building, shouting as he ran, "In such heavy rain, they want to freeze us to death, charge!"

There's a herd mentality in crowds; with this one shout, everyone began surging against the soldiers, and the thin wall of people was breached by the rush. This was a group of three thousand martial artist apprentices, each capable of taking on ten ordinary people, the effect was like a flood overwhelming — no one could stop them.

"Don't shoot! Strict warning! Don't shoot!" a distant military officer shouted vehemently.

...

Soon, various cries of "Don't shoot" echoed continuously.

If such an incident escalated, it would become a severe political issue, beyond the responsibility anyone could bear from him to his superiors, and even those above them.

"Dammit, this sucks!" Xiao Changming cursed angrily, frustrated that what could have been an opportunity to catch the ogre was thwarted by this rainstorm.

"Captain, there's still a chance, it can't escape." The military martial artist with the fleshy face said, then glanced coldly at Chen Shouyi: "Someone is probably relieved, huh?"

"Are you talking about me, you bastard?" Chen Shouyi's heart went cold, and he turned to look at him.

The repeated provocations of the other made him furious.

The military martial artist was slightly taken aback. He had just intended to mock him a little, avenging Captain Lei, not expecting the other to be so defiant even in the presence of two senior martial artists and a martial artist.

But in his view, the other was merely a senior martial artist himself, nothing to fear. He laughed loudly, scornfully saying:

"What's the problem? You civilian martial artists are the most cowardly, aren't you? Am I wrong? That senior martial artist who died from your group even begged us for mercy, what a joke!"

"At least most of us participated in the battle and faced the Barbarian God directly, whereas where were you? I only saw ordinary soldiers, not your military martial artists. Moreover, we don't have the kind of familial support you do, being pampered and spoon-fed, with resources prioritized to you, even so much you can be made into martial artists!" Chen Shouyi retorted coldly, suspecting the divine blood given to him had been tampered with.

"That's enough, we're all comrades fighting side by side." Xiao Changming said awkwardly, lightly reprimanding: "Everyone should say a little less, cool down!"

The military martial artist with the fleshy face snorted, his expression sullen, and closed his mouth.

Chen Shouyi sneered but did not speak further.

He looked ahead, where many students were rapidly running past them.

At this moment, he vaguely felt the reality around him suddenly blurred slightly, the distant scenery becoming obscure and unreal. He paused in surprise, just about to take a closer look when everything seemingly returned to normal.

Chapter 222 - Eerie

At first, Chen Shouyi thought his blurry vision was just water from the rain entering his eyes.

But he quickly sensed something was wrong!

Something was very wrong!

Just moments ago, there were students running everywhere, but now they had suddenly vanished.

Everything became eerily quiet, as if the whole world consisted only of the four of them.

"It's coming!" Chen Shouyi warned.

Another flash streaked across, lighting up the night sky.

Xiao Changming slowly unsheathed his sword and signaled to the other three. The two military Martial Artists immediately understood, and the three stood back-to-back, forming a triangle stance, each drawing their swords, fully on guard.

However, Chen Shouyi didn't move, he simply gripped his sword hilt, standing alone on the side, listening carefully to the surrounding sounds, yet he heard nothing besides the rain and the heavy breathing of those present.

Time passed second by second.

The rain fell harder, visibility quickly blurred, and the whole world turned into a dark haze, even the light from the gas lamp twenty meters away grew dim and ethereal.

He could vaguely sense danger approaching but didn't know from where.

Pa-pa-pa...

At this moment, a series of footsteps approached, as if someone was briskly coming from afar. Everyone's heart tightened, ready for combat, yet soon the sound abruptly stopped.

"I'll go check!" The dark-skinned Martial Artist said in a deep voice.

"Be careful, return quickly, and when you spot the target, alert loudly and don't take risks," Xiao Changming said; he didn't refuse, as passive defense here was clearly not a good strategy.

Now with such heavy rain and extremely low visibility, the nearby running students make it difficult for soldiers in the distance to spot them.

"Alright!"

Saying this, he tore through the rain curtain, rushing towards the sound. After running just over ten meters, his figure was completely lost.

Everyone waited anxiously, and a minute passed, yet he still didn't return.

"Something might have happened, let's go find him!" Xiao Changming said gravely.

Pa-pa-pa...

Suddenly, footsteps came again. Chen Shouyi's heart jumped, and he turned sharply to see the military Martial Artist returning from another direction.

"Lao Liu, why did it take so long?" The hefty Martial Artist questioned impatiently.

"Chased far, the rain was too heavy, and I nearly couldn't find you upon returning!" the dark-skinned Martial Artist stated expressionlessly.

"Well, did you find anything after chasing?" Xiao Changming asked.

The dark-skinned Martial Artist shook his head without speaking.

Chen Shouyi instinctively glanced at the dark-skinned Martial Artist, lightning illuminated the sky, casting his face in shadow and light. He slightly lowered his head, his expression gloomy; inexplicably, he gave Chen Shouyi a sense of something sinister and evil.

Suddenly, he thought of something, bit his tongue sharply, and focused his mind intensely.

The next moment, it was as if images were skipping, the whole world trembled slightly, then quickly returned to normal. Yet in that instant, Chen Shouyi faintly saw a horrific scene.

This was not the dark-skinned Martial Artist at all!

It was a youth with eyes as dark as ink, surrounded by a faint black aura like a demon, standing with an eerie smile beside Xiao Changming and the other Martial Artist, his belly bulging like a pregnant woman, seemingly squirming slowly.

Chen Shouyi's hair stood on end, completely unexpected, he was right beside him.

Perhaps sensing Chen Shouyi's gaze, the dark-skinned Martial Artist turned his head expressionlessly to glance at him, then withdrew his gaze upon seeing Chen Shouyi look away.

Chen Shouyi's heart pounded fiercely; he secretly took a deep breath, silently moving closer, step by step.

He walked very slowly, relaxed as if he were just casually moving about.

Until he was two or three steps away.

Clang!

He suddenly drew his sword, thrusting fiercely, moving like wind and thunder. But just as he made contact, the world shook, offering a slight resistance at the sword's tip; the next moment his vision blurred, and the figure was already completely lost.

The three stood back-to-back in a triangle, extremely close to one another. Chen Shouyi's full-force thrust exceeded three times the speed of sound, the fierce sword wind tearing the air apart, the remnant force instantly shredding the camouflage clothing on one side of the two men.

The hefty Martial Artist beside him felt a burning sensation at the waist, turned to see Chen Shouyi wielding his sword and searching around, his anger flared up: "What are you doing, kid?"

Chen Shouyi felt irritated inside, suddenly lifted a foot and kicked him hard in the abdomen, sending him flying: "Shut the hell up!"

Bam!

Wang Yue fell heavily into the mud, rolled several times, clutching his aching abdomen with a twisted expression, nearly passing out from the pain; disbelief overwhelmed him at the speed of Chen Shouyi's movements, too fast for him to react before being hit.

"Fool, see if your buddy is still here? If you keep mouthing off, do you really think I won't kill you?" Chen Shouyi said coldly, while vigilantly observing the surroundings.

Xiao Changming originally prepared to help Wang Yue after he fell, but stopped upon hearing those words.

Having quickly glanced around, his heart jumped – Liu Zhen, who stood beside him moments ago, had vanished.

Wang Yue also clenched his teeth, face pale and forced himself to stand up, his hand firmly gripping the sword, looking around gloomily without a word.

Just now, Chen Shouyi had only made a mock kick; his foot had barely touched the abdomen before withdrawing most of the force. Had it been full force, the body would likely have broken apart.

"What just happened?" Xiao Changming asked solemnly.

"Your comrade is likely dead, the person beside you moments ago was someone else." Chen Shouyi explained gravely, while staying highly alert: "He can deceive our vision!"

"Damn it!" Xiao Changming cursed, his face darkening. "What do we do now?"

"I don't know!" Chen Shouyi replied.

As they spoke, he suddenly sensed a faint airflow change irregularly, as if someone was stealthily approaching him.

This creature really holds a grudge!

He glared fiercely, shouting:

"Die!"

His long sword slashed across, tearing through the thick rain screen instantly.

Yet his hand found only empty air, slashing at nothing again!

Such speed.

A bizarre, eerie laughter faintly echoed in the air as if both near his ears and far away.

"What happened?" Xiao Changming gripped his sword nervously.

"Someone attacked me!" Chen Shouyi responded, sweeping a quick glance around, a chill creeping over him. He continued gloomily: "Your other comrade has vanished as well!"

Xiao Changming's face changed dramatically, he shouted: "Wang Yue! Wang Yue! Where are you?"

"Stop shouting, let's go find him," Chen Shouyi said.

Though they'd had a conflict earlier, ultimately it was only verbal. He knew when to hold back; letting him truly die wasn't an option.

Xiao Changming gravely nodded; the two hurried to the location where Wang Yue had last been, searching rapidly around, but failing to find any trace of him.

Chen Shouyi wiped rainwater from his face, suddenly stopping in realization. The surroundings began to fluctuate violently, the Illusion Realm seeming to swiftly collapse, soldiers' running figures and dense gunfire slowly emerging.

A figure shrouded in black aura, ghost-like, dashed through the rain and quickly disappeared from view, gunfire incessantly echoing.

Chen Shouyi glanced around to find a skeletal remains were lying within twenty meters nearby, while Wang Yue lay on the ground unscathed with closed eyes.

His chest subtly rose and fell, he was evidently still breathing.

After Xiao Changming awakened him, he looked around bewildered and afraid, completely unaware of what had occurred.

Chapter 223 - Brutality

At this moment, the students had already entered the teaching building, and there were basically no other people on the playground except for the soldiers.

The intense gunfire had not ceased, and bullets were flying all over the playground.

Here was temporarily no longer their battlefield, let alone no one could catch up even if they wanted to chase that creature.

Xiao Changming pulled out a pack of cigarettes, realizing they were all soaked. Frustrated, he crumpled them into a ball and tossed them onto the playground.

"Captain, want one of mine?" Wang Yue said, pulling out a metal cigarette case from his pocket and offering one.

"Chen... General Manager Chen, want one?" He squeezed out a slightly embarrassed smile on his muscular face. After all, the two had clashed earlier, but a battlefield is the easiest place to turn enemies into friends. Minor conflicts and prejudices mean little in the face of life and death.

Besides, he had just made a trip through hell.

Chen Shouyi glanced at him unexpectedly: "Thanks, I don't smoke."

Wang Yue didn't insist and soon was smoking with Xiao Changming nearby.

The atmosphere was silent and oppressive!

The rain continued to fall, but it had changed from a torrential downpour to a drizzle, greatly improving visibility.

ZiZiZi...

Suddenly, the sound of a machine cannon abruptly rang out.

Xiao Changming tossed his cigarette, his expression tense: "That creature wants to escape?"

To avoid collateral damage, the machine cannons were placed in buildings around the school, as the last line of insurance, and wouldn't be used lightly.

After all, the power of these devastating weapons was excessively large, each nearly one pound projectile could easily penetrate structures. In dense firing, a mistake would be an outright massacre.

Chen Shouyi couldn't help but silently pray that the machine cannon could leave this creature behind.

But he quickly became disappointed.

A few seconds later, Chen Shouyi saw that bizarre silhouette swiftly fleeing back along the original path, tearing through the rain curtain, leaving a comet-like long tail behind.

It seemed quite furious, screaming and shrieking all the way, its sharp sound akin to nails scratching glass but amplified countless times, causing the nearby teaching buildings' glass to shatter.

A soldier stood numbly ahead, looking around.

The next moment, the vague silhouette dashed past him in a flash, and without any reaction, the soldier's head flew skyward, blood spurting from the neck.

Its figure was like smoke or mist, with agility beyond imagination; in just a little over a second but less than two, six or seven soldiers met their demise at its hands.

No gun could aim at it, and once the distance closed to forty or fifty meters, everyone seemed to enter an illusion realm, unable to see its figure. Some soldiers, even in terror, randomly fired their rifles, inadvertently affecting nearby soldiers.

The three of them didn't move because this creature was coming in this direction.

"Spread out!" Chen Shouyi said gravely, watching the scene unfold: "It can distort our senses, and if it confuses friend and foe, it will be disastrous."

Everyone felt startled upon hearing this, realizing the possibility, and quickly ran in various directions.

...

Suddenly, Chen Shouyi cursed under his breath, finding the creature was charging straight towards him without a hint of hesitation, not even glancing at the others.

Obviously, his previous attack had left a lasting impression.

Covering almost a hundred meters in the blink of an eye, Chen Shouyi lost sight of it the next moment.

Chen Shouyi tightly clenched his sword hilt, his eyes fierce with murderous intent.

"Come on then, I don't believe I can't take you down."

Suddenly, he felt a chilling breeze from behind, his scalp tingling, as he sharply twisted his waist and swung a sword backward.

Still empty, he cut through nothing.

After the swing, he didn't stop, following the flow of air, he stepped forward swiftly, sweeping across with the sword again, yet still missed.

Within the illusion realm, his vision had been thoroughly obscured, and his keen hearing and smell seemed to have problems, even his perception was severely weakened. Fortunately, his Wind Control talent remained, allowing him to barely discern through the changing air flows.

He simply closed his eyes!

Focusing his mind, he made every effort to counter the opponent's lightning-fast attacks.

He seemed to be fighting an enemy that didn't exist. No matter how swift his attacks, they yielded no effect.

But to the distant onlookers, a different scenario unfolded.

Two figures were moving at high speed.

If Chen Shouyi's figure was barely discernible, then the creature was nothing but a blur. Its body floated unpredictably, advancing and retreating, surrounding Chen Shouyi as if multiplying into several entities, assaulting him from all sides.

Inertia seemed to have vanished for it.

Wang Yue glanced at Xiao Changming's tense expression from afar, vaguely understanding something.

Why the captain was so polite to a civilian Martial Artist, and why the other disregarded Captain Lei.

If he could comfort himself saying he was unprepared when he was kicked, justifying it as a sneak attack, now he was utterly awakened!

This he damn calls a Martial Artist.

If this was merely a Martial Artist, what did that make him?

A Martial Artist, or a Martial Artist Apprentice?

Perhaps even Xiao Captain and Captain Lei as Martial Artists...

He dared not think further.

...

"Hiss!"

Chen Shouyi finally lagged half a beat behind, and before he could react, he felt a sharp pain in his chest as the opponent's sharp claws left a shallow bloodstain.

He suddenly swung his sword to push the figure away.

Laughing heartily, he immediately threw away the sword and spread his arms wide.

"Come on!" he shouted fiercely, his face distorted with rage. "Come kill me!"

Chen Shouyi finally discovered a weakness in this monster; it was extremely agile, but its strength was relatively weaker, barely at the Martial Artist Level.

A few days ago, Chen Shouyi certainly wouldn't have dared to take such a risk, as even the strength of a Martial Artist could be lethal to him.

But now, he was entirely different; his powerful defense was essentially immune to Martial Artist Level attacks. Although a Martial Artist could injure him, unless they hit a vital point, it wouldn't be fatal.

Of course, dealing with swords is a different matter.

Even as a Martial Artist, Chen Shouyi wouldn't dare to block a sword with his flesh.

Fortunately, the opponent's biggest weapon was only its claws.

As long as he didn't get his throat torn open or hit other weak spots, he had nothing to fear.

Faced with Chen Shouyi's provocation, the monster seemed utterly enraged. It let out a sharp cry, reverberating through the eardrums.

The next moment, a gale blew from the left side, the air flowing fiercely. Chen Shouyi quickly raised his hand to defend, but as he raised it, he felt pain in his arm, and the entire sleeve got torn off.

The monster struck once and fled again.

Chen Shouyi closed his eyes and shouted loudly, "Trash, too weak, come again!"

As soon as he finished speaking, another gust of wind surged from the front. This time, Chen Shouyi didn't fight back, only protecting his throat and face, allowing the opponent to attack. Soon a long bloodstain was torn open on his chest, the force used this time far greater than before, the wound reaching a depth of an inch.

Clearly angered by Chen Shouyi's disregard and provocation, it was furious!

...

Xiao Changming watched as Chen Shouyi bled continuously from the repeated attacks, soon his whole body was stained red. His brows furrowed deeply, his hand gripped the sword hilt tightly, which emitted a creaking sound.

"Damn, what's he doing? Has he really given up?"

...

Rip...

Another bloodstain appeared on Chen Shouyi's body, the massive blood loss made him feel his strength rapidly draining, and the monster's claws seemed to carry poison, causing the wounds to start feeling numb.

Fortunately, with repeated success, it finally relaxed its vigilance and didn't flee after a single attack. It only took a step back before eagerly attacking again. However, as its claws tore into his abdomen muscles, those muscles suddenly clamped down tightly.

Taking advantage of the opponent's moment of hesitation, Chen Shouyi's hands clasped onto its body like iron shackles, exclaiming, "Got you!"

In an instant, the monster let out an ear-piercing scream, its mind flashing a moment of blankness. Fortunately, it was brief, and he regained his senses, desperately restraining the monster's struggling body. Then, he grabbed its arm, revealing a fierce and savage expression, and slammed it violently to the ground:

"Die for me!"

With a thunderous crash, accompanied by a series of dense bone-breaking sounds.

Mud splashed, the ground shook slightly, creating a shallow pit.

Meanwhile, the surrounding environment also began to tremble, as the Illusion Realm rapidly faded away.

The monster finally revealed its true form.

Chen Shouyi didn't dare let up, lifting its broken body once more, swinging it forcefully.

Twice!

Thrice!

...

Like an explosion, the loud noises continued unabated.

Masses of flesh and internal organs detached from the corpse and splattered around. The more Chen Shouyi smashed, the lighter it felt in his hand, and by the sixth strike, he suddenly smashed in vain.

He woke up to find only a soft, limp half-arm, like a pile of rotten meat, remained in his hand. The body had turned into fragments, covering a hundred square meters around, the intense smell of blood nauseating enough to make one's stomach turn.

He felt a hint of disgust, casually throwing away the arm.

...

In the distance, Xiao Changming, Wang Yue, and the soldiers on guard stared in astonishment, utterly shocked.

Chen Shouyi walked up to Wang Yue and asked, "Give me a cigarette!"

"Wait...wait!" Wang Yue stammered, his hand trembling as he fumbled in his trouser pocket several times without taking it out. The metal cigarette case seemed stuck in the pocket. In his urgency, he yanked it hard, tearing the pocket before finally retrieving the case.

He took out a cigarette and respectfully lit it for him.

Xiao Changming also quickly walked over, looking at his blood-drenched body: "Are your injuries okay, should we take you to the hospital?"

"Just minor wounds, nothing serious, a nap will do." Chen Shouyi waved off.

He could feel the numbness of the wounds fading, slowly starting to heal. As long as no toxin hindered the healing, it was merely minor injuries for him.

He took a deep drag of the cigarette, promptly coughing from the smoke.

No one laughed; who would dare laugh at someone who had just turned a terrifying monster into a pile of flesh with their bare hands?

"Tell the leaders I'm heading out first," Chen Shouyi said without a fuss, tossing away the cigarette.

Speaking this, he swiftly walked away.

"Fortunately, he has no real ambition for power, otherwise..." Xiao Changming muttered to himself as he watched his figure quickly vanish into the darkness.

Chapter 224 - The Wronged Shell Lady

The rain was pattering down.

Chen Shouyi was pushing a bicycle, moving step by step,

fresh blood swiftly flowing down his body, pooling into the water on the concrete ground underfoot, turning the water a pale red as he walked past.

His shoes had long been shredded in the battle, the soles completely detached, leaving only the pitiful laces and the canvases of the shoes dangling from his feet.

He couldn't be bothered to untie them, letting them drag as they will.

Passing a trash can, Chen Shouyi stopped, tore off his already blood-soaked shirt, and tossed it into the bin.

The cold rain pelted the wounds on his flesh, carrying a sharp sting, and quickly drawing the heat away from his body.

He couldn't help but shiver.

The residual toxin from the creature greatly slowed the healing of his wounds. In the past, his wounds would have scabbed over and healed by now, but now they were healing slowly, with toxic blood continuously being expelled from the wounds, dark red blood seeping out non-stop, quickly washed away by the rain, leaving the wounds looking somewhat pale.

The significant blood loss left him a bit weak, his face pale and devoid of color, his body slightly chilled.

"Physical defense is indeed very important. Without having practiced Horizontal Training, I might not have made it this time!"

"But the defense is still a bit too weak. If the enemy had wielded weapons, I might not have been able to hold out until they were exhausted and would have fallen already." Even though the battle was over, recalling it made his heart skip a beat.

Previously, the opponents he encountered all had agility lower than his. Relying on speed and superior reaction, he always triumphed without fail. However, this high-agility creature allowed Chen Shouyi to fully experience the suffering of being low in agility.

He simply had no ability to counterattack.

Of course, part of the reason was that he could not see the target.

But even if he could see the creature, the outcome of the battle wouldn't have been much better.

Chen Shouyi pushed his bike and walked slowly for a few minutes; finally, the last bit of toxic blood was expelled, the fresh blood returned to its normal vibrant red, and he immediately controlled the muscles around the wound to close up.

The hideous and terrifying wounds quickly became fine lines.

A few seconds later, the itch intensified suddenly.

He exhaled softly, finally setting aside the last great worry in his heart.

"I wonder what time it is!"

He reached out to check the time, only to find the glass of the watch on his left wrist was gone, and most of the mechanical parts inside had spilled out.

The wristwatch was a luxury item, a universal mechanical watch used for Earth and the otherworld, specifically for Explorers and had cost him tens of thousands.

But the quality was truly dreadful, how long did it even last!

Chen Shouyi grumbled inwardly, tore the strap apart violently, and threw it into a distant trash can.

Looks like he must prepare a few more watches next time.

Five or six minutes later, the itch on the wounds subsided, and his injuries were already healed.

Chen Shouyi rubbed off the old scab from his chest, abdomen, and back, then he mounted his bicycle and sped towards home.

...

The lights at home were still on, his parents were clearly still waiting for him.

A warm feeling rose in Chen Shouyi's heart. Nearing his home, he stopped and carefully checked his whole body.

There were no traces of injury on his chest; even the new tender skin that had grown was now indistinguishable from the old skin around it. If one didn't look carefully, one wouldn't be able to tell the difference.

Then he took off his pants, scrubbing the stubborn bloodstains and attached bits of flesh with rainwater before putting them on again.

After preparing himself, he once again mounted his bicycle and rode towards home.

After placing the bicycle in the garage, he vigorously rubbed his face and pushed open the door.

"Dad, Mom, I'm back."

Not only were Father Chen and Mrs. Chen still awake, but even his sister was in the living room, keeping them company. As soon as Chen Shouyi entered, she couldn't help but yawn.

"Finally back, hurry up and change your clothes, be careful not to catch a cold. In such cold weather, you still come over in the rain, why didn't anyone give you a raincoat on the way back." Mrs. Chen hastily stood up and said, seeing him unharmed, she finally relaxed.

Chen Shouyi said, "I was in a hurry to come back."

"What's the hurry, are you hungry? I could fix you some supper." Chen Dawei stood up and said.

Chen Shouyi checked the time and found it was already half past one, and immediately said, "Dad, don't bother, you and mom should go to sleep. It's so late now."

...

After finally persuading his parents and sister to go back to sleep, Chen Shouyi went to the kitchen.

He opened the pressure cooker and found there was still plenty of cold rice inside, enough for six or seven people, obviously his dad had counted him as well when cooking last night. He added some water to the rice in the pressure cooker, and turned on the gas stove to reheat it.

He then went to the dining room and found there were also a lot of leftovers.

He couldn't resist finding a pair of chopsticks, picking up a braised pork trotter, and stuffing it into his mouth, chewing both meat and bone, and swallowing it down.

His stomach finally felt somewhat comfortable.

The intense battle earlier, combined with the huge energy consumption for self-healing of wounds and the weakness after blood loss, left him starving as if he could devour a whole cow.

...

An hour later, he contentedly rubbed his stomach and climbed the stairs.

As the food began to digest, his previously chilled body grew warm, and his strength gradually returned.

He opened his briefcase, woke the sleeping Shell Lady, and fed her honey.

As soon as he sat on the bed, a strong sense of exhaustion swept over him. He pulled the covers over himself and fell fast asleep, unable to keep his eyes open any longer.

Shell Lady sat on the bed, dazed, staring at the sleeping giant.

She initially thought the giant woke her up because they were going out at night.

Unexpectedly, after waking her, he went to sleep himself.

Shell Lady sighed, muttering to herself, "What a foolish giant, I wasn't even hungry, but he woke me up, now I can't sleep."

"Well, I might as well tidy up the clothes, it's been a while!"

Her eyes lit up, and she quickly jumped off the bed, her little legs moving, heading towards one of the lower drawers of the wardrobe.

She tilted her head, trying to recall how the giant opened it?

After a while, she gripped the drawer handle with her little hands and slowly pulled it open with considerable effort, her face turning bright red. As soon as she opened a small gap, she couldn't wait to jump into the drawer...

...

The next day, Chen Shouyi opened his eyes, clenched his fists tightly, feeling the strength in his body. Although he hadn't fully recovered, the weakness from yesterday was nowhere to be found. Presumably, he would recover completely by the next morning.

He habitually opened the attribute panel and took a look.

He noticed that his willpower had increased by 0.2, and the attribute had reached 13.3.

It seemed yesterday's battle wasn't without gain.

He closed the attribute panel.

He immediately sat up and turned his head to look at the pillow beside him, only to find no trace of Shell Lady.

He pondered, stood up, grabbed the quilt, and gently shook it, but nothing fell out.

Where has she run off to again?

"Wake up!" Chen Shouyi called out.

Then he heard no response.

Could it be she was snatched away by a mouse?

But he hadn't seen any mice here!

He jumped off the bed and searched the room carefully.

At this time, he faintly heard a soft sound, concentrated on listening for a moment, then hurriedly followed the sound, walking to the wardrobe. Gently pulling open the drawer, he found Shell Lady crying, wiping her tears, her eyes swollen like two little cherries.

"Good...good giant, you finally found me!" Shell Lady hiccuped in grievance, her tears uncontrollably streaming down.

"Why are you locked in here?" Chen Shouyi said with a mix of amusement and pity, remembering he had placed her on the bed before going to sleep.

This question immediately brought sadness back to Shell Lady, causing her to cry even louder.

She cried as she pointed to the drawer, stammering in explaining her grievances.

"This...this is a bad thing, it... it trapped me when I wasn't paying attention and wouldn't let me... wouldn't let me out, boohoo..."

"From now on, I won't put my pretty clothes in this bad thing ever again!"

"I yelled 'good giant' until my voice became hoarse, but you... you didn't hear me!"

"Boohoo..."

Chapter 225 - Terrifying Teeth

"Wuwuwu..."

Shell Lady spoke with increasing grievance, crying so much that she could barely catch her breath.

"Alright, alright, it's my fault. You're the best, don't cry. I'll give you a gemstone later." Chen Shouyi comforted the little Shell Lady, unable to suppress a smile. These drawer tracks have dampening; once opened, they close slowly automatically. Evidently, Shell Lady got trapped inside after entering the drawer.

While it's easy to open the drawer from the outside, it's difficult to open it from the inside.

To a small creature like Shell Lady, the furniture here is nothing but traps!

"Then I want a big gemstone!" The Shell Lady, who had been crying loudly, abruptly stopped her tears and exclaimed.

"Okay!" Chen Shouyi agreed cheerfully, then scooped the Shell Lady out of the drawer.

"Wait, big giant, I don't want to put my pretty clothes in that bad thing anymore!" Shell Lady pointed angrily at the drawer.

"Then where do you want to put them?" Chen Shouyi asked puzzled.

Shell Lady immediately pointed with her little hand at the drawer beside: "I want to put them there!"

...

Today, it was rare for Chen Shouyi to stay at home and not go out.

However, even so, he didn't stay idle.

Early in the morning, Chen Shouyi started practicing Horizontal Training Thirty-six Poses, which, after fusion, is more comprehensive and much stronger than the original Body Training Thirty-six Poses. Since it could attract more Mysterious Power, even without the Thirteen Taibao Horizontal Training part, its effects are better than the original.

Since the practice of Horizontal Training Thirty-six Poses, both constitution and agility have slightly improved, demonstrating its potency.

After practicing dozens of times and letting his stamina recover, Chen Shouyi felt his muscles tense, with an implicit strength, and his overall prowess was mostly restored.

He clenched his palm forcefully.

"Bang!"

The air in his palm was fiercely compressed, producing a firecracker-like explosion, and the surrounding air scattered wildly.

Feeling sticky all over, he went to the bathroom to take a shower. While drying his hair, he walked to the mirror to examine his teeth carefully.

"Huh!"

He showed a slight odd expression on his face.

His teeth were nearly fully grown now. Except for a few large molars that seemed slightly small, the rest had completely grown in, but the new teeth after this swap appeared normal at first glance. Upon closer inspection, they were dauntingly non-human.

His teeth resembled fine jade, with a subtle semi-translucence, being round and delicate, and quite densely packed, with each tooth appearing more slender and compact than a normal person's.

Chen Shouyi immediately counted them; surprisingly, there were forty.

"Did I count wrong?"

He quickly counted again, finding the same result—forty teeth, not one more, not one less, filling his entire mouth, causing his whole face to look more sharp and stern.

"Shouldn't a normal person have only 28 teeth, even with 4 wisdom teeth totaling just 32?" he thought to himself.

He gently clacked his upper and lower teeth, producing a "ding ding ding" sound like the clear chime of metal and jade.

"Growing like this is quite bizarre!"

Chen Shouyi gazed at his teeth, his face filled with melancholy.

Although he could feel these teeth being more robust than the original, this odd feeling made them uncomfortable to look at, emanating like an uncanny creature.

"Forget it, having them is better than missing them; at least speaking doesn't whistle through them now. At worst, smile less in the future; it should be less noticeable!"

...

While Chen Shouyi went downstairs to eat breakfast, Chen Xingyue also came down, frequently and curiously glancing at Chen Shouyi.

"What? Haven't seen your brother this handsome before?"

"Blech! So shameless." Chen Xingyue looked at him disdainfully, then showed curiosity: "Brother, why aren't you wearing a mask now?"

"Such a novelty, my teeth are fixed, of course I don't need to wear it anymore." Chen Shouyi replied casually.

"When did you fix them? How come I didn't know?" Chen Xingyue asked in puzzlement.

"Busybody, do I need to tell you everything? There's plenty you don't know!" Chen Shouyi said, eyeing her.

...

Although last night's battle was quite low-key in Chen Shouyi's view, its impact quickly spread.

Shortly after lunch, a high-ranking deputy mayor from Hedong City visited, his words carrying a mix of persuasion and politeness, hinting that his penalty would soon be lifted and that treatments matching his abilities would be reviewed.

A Martial Artist the city government might overlook, but a Great Martial Artist is noteworthy for Hedong City now, and a potential Martial Artist's prowess demands significant attention, making it impossible to ignore.

To confirm Chen Shouyi's Martial Artist strength from a mere battle is challenging, but even a basic comparison suggests Chen Shouyi's strength.

Hedong City sacrificed two Great Martial Artists and three Martial Artists against that creature, all silently, whereas Chen Shouyi killed the creature, thus proving he is far stronger than ordinary Great Martial Artists.

Crucially, he's only eighteen years old, still rapidly advancing in strength, with limitless future possibilities barring untimely death.

Such a person requires allure and appeasement, or else it's sheer folly.

The deputy mayor stayed for half an hour before leaving.

...

"It's really the deputy mayor; you can't tell at all! His manner was so polite, lacked any airs." Mrs. Chen remarked as she returned after seeing the guest out.

"Everything depends on the person; his demeanor changes with different people. Unexpectedly, I also have my days of grandeur." Chen Dawei said, stroking his round belly joyfully. Though he didn't know his son's strength or deeds, a deputy mayor's visit surely signified something significant.

"Look at you brag. He's here to visit our son; what's it got to do with you?" Mrs. Chen mocked him.

"Isn't the son mine?"

"You didn't give birth; I did!"

"Without me, could you have given birth?"

Chen Shouyi pretended not to hear, attempting to sneak upstairs, only to be stopped by his sister.

"Brother, the deputy mayor mentioned enhancing your treatment; what does it mean?" Chen Xingyue asked doubtfully, more attuned to this compared to their slower parents.

Chen Shouyi paused; he couldn't be honest. How could he admit he was already a Martial Artist, having deceived everyone before?

"Well... it means I performed well; why do you ask so many questions? Come, take the iron rod, let's practice outside."

"I don't want to go!" Chen Xingyue pouted, refusing to engage in such self-torture. After practicing a whole afternoon yesterday, her arms were still faintly sore.

Chen Shouyi instantly raised one finger.

"A hundred? Too little; a hundred an hour, maybe!" Chen Xingyue's eyes lit up, instinctively bargaining.

Chen Shouyi paused briefly; why did she assume it was a hundred? His intent clearly was a thousand. A hundred couldn't hire a Martial Artist for an hour, surely a dream come true!

Feigning reluctance, he replied: "Fine, a hundred it is."

Chapter 226 - Railway Disruption (Double -)

"Alas, Chen Yuwei hasn't attended school this semester. I wonder how Brother and Sister-in-law are doing in Dongning?" Chen Dawei suddenly brought up the topic of our uncle's family during dinner and sighed.

Chen Shouyi continued eating in silence.

"Do you want to go back to Dongning to see?" Mrs. Chen paused in her motion of picking up food and asked.

"I have that in mind. If I don't go back to Dongning, I just can't feel at ease!" Chen Dawei sighed and replied.

"Things are chaotic with military unrest now; we don't know how the situation is over there." Mrs. Chen said with a worried expression.

"Dad, Mom, let me go!" Chen Shouyi knew he couldn't remain silent any longer, swallowed his food, and said, "Anyway, I shouldn't have much going on these days!"

Chen Dawei hesitated for a moment. Thinking about his son's Martial Artist strength, he felt reassured and nodded, saying, "Alright, then you go. Be careful, and if Dongning becomes too chaotic, bring uncle's family back here. The house is big enough to accommodate them anyway."

"Brother, I want to go too!" Chen Xingyue quickly chimed in. She had the best relationship with her cousin, and her uncle and aunt spoiled her, unlike Chen Shouyi, who had always been treated like a child picked up from somewhere.

Before Chen Shouyi could refuse, Mrs. Chen chastised, "What are you going for? Stay at home obediently."

"Oh!" Chen Xingyue replied with a face full of disappointment.

She sighed inwardly; if she didn't become a Martial Artist soon, she'd have no authority at home!

In the past, Mom used to scold Brother, but since Brother became a Martial Artist, the tables have turned, and it's her who gets scolded.

When will I become a Martial Artist?

Chen Xingyue couldn't help but glance at Chen Shouyi, who was eating, feeling her wrist grow increasingly sore.

...

After dinner, Chen Shouyi returned to his bedroom, sat on the bed, and pondered silently.

"From the situation last time I was back, the environment around Dongning isn't better than Hedong City, maybe even worse; it borders the territory of the God of Hunting, and I have no idea about the current situation now!"

Communications are down, and some bad news is intentionally being blocked. Outside of Hedong City, he doesn't know what's going on in the outside world.

"But with my strength, as long as I avoid encountering particularly powerful existences and act cautiously, it should be safe," he thought to himself.

Sitting for a while, he released the Shell Lady from his briefcase, teased her for a moment, and then picked up his sword to start practicing.

...

The next morning, Chen Shouyi felt his body was fully recovered, brimming with vitality and overflowing with strength, without any sense of weakness.

He practiced the Horizontal Training thirty-six styles several times, took a shower, and began to pack.

In truth, there wasn't much to pack, besides weapons and money, just various documents and a change of clothes. This trip to Dongning would take at least a day; if unlucky, encountering unexpected situations might stretch out to three or four days.

...

"Come back early and stay safe," Mrs. Chen reminded.

"Don't worry, Dad, Mom, and Xing Yue, I'm leaving!" Chen Shouyi said, then hung the briefcase and sword on the bike's handlebar and pushed out the bicycle.

The train station was still far away; he could only ride his bike there.

Although passenger buses now operate on some major routes in Hedong City, including steam buses from the safe zone to the train station, not only is there a limited number of services each day, but those with bad luck might have to wait a long time, making it slower than riding a bike.

...

Ever since the Barbarian God invaded, Hedong District has become much more desolate.

Riding all the way, the streets were sparsely populated, and most of the shops on both sides were closed.

Many office building windows are shattered, with nobody to fix them.

The entire district, at a glance, is a scene of ruins, lacking the former splendor, exuding a sense of desolation.

About an hour later, after arriving at the train station, Chen Shouyi parked and locked his bike.

"Management fee is two yuan," said an older administrator with a red armband, "five yuan for overnight!"

Chen Shouyi took out his wallet and handed over a ten-yuan note. "What if I park for a few days?"

"Check the number of days when you return, an extra two yuan per day," the administrator replied.

"Alright!"

After handing over the money and receiving change, Chen Shouyi walked into the station's ticket office. Although it was only seven in the morning, the place was already crowded with people. Chen Shouyi stood in a long queue, finally reaching the counter:

"One for Dongning City!"

"Dongning, Dongning is no longer operating!" The young ticket seller said without looking up.

"Not operating! Why isn't it operating?" Chen Shouyi's heart sank as he quickly asked.

"It's an order from above, how would I know..." The ticket seller impatiently raised her head, but upon seeing Chen Shouyi's handsome face, her tone immediately softened a few degrees, and an amiable smile appeared, "Sir, is there anything else you need?"

Realizing he wouldn't get any answers from the ticket seller, Chen Shouyi hesitated and decided to compromise, asking, "Is there a station close to Dongning?"

"Please wait, let me check. There are tickets for Dongxing Station!"

"Then give me one!" Chen Shouyi said.

"Hard seat, ten thirty, eighty-five yuan!"

This price is even more expensive than the original high-speed train. After paying, Chen Shouyi left the ticket office with heavy steps, his face looking serious.

"Dongning's railway is actually out of service. Has it already fallen?"

Chapter 227 - Railroad Disrupted (Double - , Part 2)

He couldn't help but worry about his uncle's family's situation.

...

It was still early before the train departure, so Chen Shouyi walked out of the station, planning to find a place to eat breakfast first.

The train station has always been a mix of all sorts of people, especially now when most people are living in hardship, and security has deteriorated further.

A young man with a delinquent look and long hair brushed past him.

Chen Shouyi's expression turned cold, and his hand swiftly grabbed the young man's wrist:

"Ouch, ouch, ouch, don't, don't, let go... man, I was wrong!" The long-haired youth's face turned white, and his body arched in pain, feeling as if the hand gripping his wrist was like an iron clamp about to break it. Instantly, he realized he'd encountered something tough.

Chen Shouyi reached out, retrieved his wallet from the young man's hand, and then released him.

"Man, look, you didn't really lose anything..."

Chen Shouyi said coldly, "Scram!"

The long-haired youth immediately slunk away, not daring to utter a single harsh word. Although the opponent looked young, his indifferent expression even made this experienced swindler tremble in fear, clearly someone who had killed before.

Watching the thief leave, Chen Shouyi put his wallet back in his trouser pocket and quickly walked towards the breakfast shop outside.

...

"Chug..."

An old-fashioned steam train spewed white steam, like a giant steel beast, slowly rolled into the platform, its speed decreasing until it came to a stop.

Once the train door opened, a group of people queued up to board.

"Please show your credentials!" a train police officer said, looking at the sword in a young man's hand.

Chen Shouyi took out his Martial Artist Certificate, and after the officer took a careful look, he immediately saluted and returned the certificate.

The carriage was sparsely seated with less than half filled, giving off a strange indescribable smell. He looked down at the near-bare metal patterned floor beneath his feet.

The age of this green-painted train was definitely older than him.

He found his seat, placed his backpack with a bow and clothes on the luggage rack, and sat down with his briefcase in his arms.

The two young girls who were chatting looked up at him when they heard the noise, their cheeks blushing slightly and their voices becoming much softer.

The younger of the two looked about the same age as Chen Xingyue, while the older was around twenty-one or two. Their appearances were somewhat similar, likely indicating they were sisters.

Chen Shouyi noticed the older sister carried a sword beside her and had calluses on her palm, indicating she was either a Martial Artist Apprentice or a Martial Artist, of course, if she weren't, she wouldn't have been able to bring a sword on the train.

"You study martial arts too?" The older sister, clearly bolder, asked.

"Uh, yes!" Chen Shouyi replied, "Where are you all headed?"

"Dongxing, handsome, what about you?"

"I'm heading to Dongxing too!"

"Are you from Dongxing as well, little brother?" The younger sister suddenly asked sweetly, "Like my sister, are you here to take the martial arts exam?"

"Ah, no! I just live in Hedong, and I'm going to Dongxing to handle some affairs. Did you pass the exam?" Chen Shouyi replied politely.

"Of course, my sister is a genius; she passed in one go, very impressive." The younger sister said proudly, clearly admiring her sister greatly.

Look at the sisters of others!

Chen Shouyi felt a bit envious, unlike his own sister, who was always waiting to see him make a fool of himself or get scolded.

"That's really impressive!" Chen Shouyi said, without much sincerity.

"Don't listen to her nonsense; geniuses are everywhere in this world. I heard from those who have taken the test before that the requirements for this exam have been relaxed, making it much easier, with a pass rate of sixty percent." The older sister said with a blush.

At this moment, Chen Shouyi thought of something and suddenly asked, "Do you know what happened over in Dongning?"

Dongning and Dongxing were very close, neighboring, and only about a hundred kilometers apart.

"Dongning!" The older sister recalled, "It's a mess over there now; I heard there are cultists everywhere, even pulling up rail tracks and roads!"

"Hasn't the army intervened?" Chen Shouyi asked in confusion.

"I heard they have fought a few times but eventually withdrew from the district." The older sister said.

Chen Shouyi felt a chaotic mess inside hearing this, knowing that if the military had withdrawn, Dongning had clearly fallen completely.

He clenched his fist tightly, then slowly loosened it.

"Whooo..."

At that moment, the long sound of the train whistle sounded, and the train gradually started moving.

After chatting a while with the two girls, Chen Shouyi turned quiet, looked out the window as the scenery slowly receded.

In the distance lay a sprawling industrial area with countless chimneys standing tall, spewing thick black smoke. The trees by the roadside were covered with a layer of dark gray dust, almost obscuring their natural green color.

Under the thick fog, several swallows chased each other, flying through the air.

Chen Shouyi withdrew his gaze, his mood gradually calming down. No matter how dangerous Dongning was, since he had already come, he had to go at least once, at the very least to find out whether his uncle's family was alive or dead.

"Hot boxed meals, anyone? Freshly made boxed meals, anyone?" The train's vendor pushed a small cart, shouting while walking over.

"What boxed meals are available?" Chen Shouyi stopped the trolley. The old-fashioned train moved very slowly, taking at least four hours to reach Dongxing Station, by which time it would be two or three in the afternoon, long past meal time.

"Chicken leg meal, duck leg meal, ribs meal, potato beef brisket meal, which one do you want?"

"Potato beef brisket meal, please! Give me six boxes!" With that, Chen Shouyi glanced at the two sisters, who looked startled, and continued, "No, make that eight boxes, how much is it?"

"Four hundred and eighty yuan in total!"

So expensive, it's almost like the prices in Hedong District from before.

"Give me three bottles of water too!"

"All together, four hundred ninety-five yuan!"

After paying, Chen Shouyi placed the boxed meals on the small table in front, inside metal boxes with a square cover on top, no longer the disposable type from before.

"I didn't even ask what you like to eat, don't know if you'll like it?" Chen Shouyi handed over two boxed meals and two bottles of water.

The two sisters exclaimed "Ah," their faces turning red:

"We brought snacks," the older sister said.

"Well, I bought them already, can't just throw them away." Chen Shouyi persuaded.

"Alright, thank you!"

"Thank you!"

The sisters thanked him separately, the older with an air of composure.

The younger spoke as softly as a mosquito.

Chen Shouyi left them be and focused on eating. He finished one box in one or two minutes, then moved to the second, third... sixth box.

After opening a bottle of mineral water and emptying it,

The two sisters were still eating slowly, occasionally exchanging glances to share their thoughts discreetly.

At this point, the two sisters were bewildered.

He really ate it all!

Ate it all!

Although they knew he bought so many meals to be eaten, they hadn't expected that he'd eat them all, and so quickly, seemingly capable of having a few more.

They couldn't figure out how his stomach could handle so much.

The train moved slowly forward, and Chen Shouyi gently unzipped the briefcase, glanced at the soundly sleeping Shell Lady, and began to rest his eyes, drifting into a doze.

...

"Dear passengers, hello! The next stop is Dongxing East Station. Passengers wishing to alight, please prepare your luggage ahead of time for disembarking."

A train attendant entered the carriage, announcing while walking, and soon moved on to another carriage.

Chen Shouyi opened his eyes, glanced at his new watch.

He found it was almost three o'clock.

Remaining seated for over ten more minutes, the train began to slow to a stop, and he grabbed his luggage, stepping off the train with the two sisters.

...

"Goodbye then!" Exiting the station, Chen Shouyi waved farewell.

The two sisters watched Chen Shouyi's departing figure, and the younger sister suddenly said, "He's definitely stronger than you."

"Why?" The older sister retorted, somewhat unconvinced.

"He ate more than you, so he must be stronger, and when I mentioned you passed the martial arts assessment, he didn't seem surprised!" The younger sister analyzed.

"Seems like it. Oh, I didn't even ask for his name, but since he's in Hedong City, we might run into him again."

Chapter 228 Blockade

After leaving the train station, Chen Shouyi walked to the newsstand: "Give me a map of Dongxing City!"

"Do you want the ink-printed map or the older color-printed map? The ink-printed one is a bit cheaper, five yuan each, while the color-printed one is expensive, a hundred yuan each. These maps are all old stock, and they're getting rarer; they might even become collectibles in the future..." the newsstand owner said with a hearty laugh.

"The color-printed one!" Chen Shouyi interrupted his long speech and handed over a hundred-yuan bill.

This time when he went out, he carried quite a lot of money with him, enough for his expenses for the next few days.

He opened the map, carefully looked for the route to Dongning, then closed it and put it in his backpack.

"Mister, may I ask you something?" Chen Shouyi asked the newsstand owner, "Do you know what's going on over in Dongning?"

"You want to go to Dongning? I advise against it; even if you go, you won't be able to get in."

...

A few minutes later, Chen Shouyi left the newsstand, his brows furrowed.

The newsstand owner's words were very similar to those of the two sisters on the train, even suggesting the situation was worse. Now the entire Dongning area is surrounded and blocked by the military, yet for some reason, both sides are in a strange state of calm.

He looked up at the grey sky, exhaled softly, and walked forward.

Dongxing City is one of the eleven prefecture-level cities in Jiangnan Province, and before the mutation, its economic level was always above average. Yet, steam-powered vehicles on the street were pitifully few. Even after walking for more than ten minutes, Chen Shouyi only saw one.

Perhaps because it hasn't experienced war, compared to the sparsely populated urban area of Hedong City, there are significantly more people here, and it's much livelier. On both sides of the streets, there are many open shops.

After asking several passersby, Chen Shouyi finally found a shop that sold bicycles.

...

The setting sun gradually slanted westwards, and the clouds seemed to be dyed with a layer of golden light.

A young man wearing a travel backpack was riding quickly on the provincial road with his back to the sunset.

On both sides of the road, newly planted rice seedlings in the fields were lush and growing robustly, about the height of chopsticks. Many farmers were kneeling in the fields, clearing weeds among the seedlings.

Up ahead by the river, huge wind-powered waterwheels lined up along the riverbank, their blades slowly turning in the gentle breeze, drawing river water into the ditches. It felt like a return to ancient times.

This young man is Chen Shouyi.

Starting from Dongxing City, he rode quickly all the way and had now reached the outskirts of Qingyu District, bordering Dongning City.

He stopped, took a bottle of mineral water out of his backpack, unscrewed it, and drank while looking up at the sky.

Chen Shouyi's expression was slightly grave. From here, he could see a large number of military airships floating in the distance, like sesame seeds. Clearly, the newsstand owner was right; the entire Dongning was under military blockade.

After resting for a while, he put the water bottle back in his backpack pocket and continued cycling.

However, after only riding for a few minutes.

He heard a crisp "crack" sound, as if something stuck the pedal, making it difficult to move.

Chen Shouyi immediately got off the bicycle and looked at the completely broken chain, his face looking displeased.

Damn, the quality is so bad!

After the mutation, industrial production capacity plummeted, and industrial prices skyrocketed several times or even tenfold. This roughly made, unpolished, clumsy bicycle cost him more than two thousand yuan.

He didn't mind the price.

Being someone who enjoys the treatment of a Grand Martial Artist, Chen Shouyi wasn't short of money, but the quality was so poor.

How long has he even ridden?

Even if he rode a bit fast and exerted a little force, the chain shouldn't have broken!

There's still a long way to go.

Chen Shouyi frustratedly slapped the seat.

With a "bang," the seat and the springs inside flew out, the entire main shaft bent.

Unfortunately, no matter how frustrated, it was useless. After taking a few deep breaths, Chen Shouyi took his briefcase and sword, which were hanging on the handlebars, placed the bicycle by the roadside, and began walking miserably.

As night fell, the farmers in the fields started to return home one after another.

When no one was around, Chen Shouyi immediately picked up his pace.

Even though he was walking, every step covered a distance of six to seven meters, just as fast as riding a bicycle. It's not that he couldn't go faster, it would just consume too much energy.

Night quickly descended.

There were no street lights on the provincial road, and it was pitch black all around, with only faint glimmers of light coming from villages in the distance.

"One kilometer ahead is Dongning City," Chen Shouyi quickly passed under a traffic sign.

"Finally about to enter Dongning!" His expression was grave as he continued forward.

Several minutes later, as he observed this small town near Dongxing, it seemed already abandoned. The streets were empty, and the houses on both sides were pitch black without any lights, eerily quiet like a ghost town.

Compared to the previously clean roads, this place was quite dirty and disordered, with trash everywhere.

Scattered clothes, shattered pots and pans, various bottles, and even occasionally stray bullet casings and already darkened bloodstains could be found.

There had obviously been some conflicts during the town's migration.

Chen Shouyi was a bit worried about the Shell Lady's situation. After opening the zipper and taking a look, he found she was still sound asleep, so he zipped it back up.

After walking a few more kilometers, Chen Shouyi finally saw lights in the distance.

There was a blockhouse, with searchlights on top of the blockhouse constantly sweeping the surrounding area. More than a dozen soldiers were standing on both sides of the road, and there was a barricade across the highway, blocking the road.

Noticing Chen Shouyi approaching, all the soldiers immediately became vigilant, unlocking their safeties and aiming their guns.

"Who goes there? Entry is prohibited here."

Chen Shouyi raised his hands: "Don't misunderstand, I mean no harm. I'm from Hedong and have both a Martial Artist Certificate and a Safety Consultant Certificate from the Hedong City Government. I have relatives in Dongning City, and this time I'm here to bring them back."

Although Chen Shouyi already possessed the strength of a Martial Artist, his documents were still the original Martial Artist ones, as there wasn't even a qualification for a Grand Martial Artist in Hedong City, let alone a Martial Artist.

Upon hearing this, the soldier's tense expression relaxed a bit, but the gun in his hand remained aimed firmly.

At a signal from an officer with a lieutenant's insignia, a dark-faced soldier quickly jogged over.

Chen Shouyi took out two certificates from his pocket.

The soldier took them and carefully compared them.

"Platoon leader, both certificates are genuine, and the person is indeed the Safety Consultant from Hedong City."

On hearing this, the platoon leader immediately made a gesture to stand down. All the soldiers lowered their guns and said, "Sorry for the inconvenience, it's our duty. However, although your identity checks out, according to orders from above, entry into Dongning is currently prohibited to everyone. I'm afraid you'll have to turn back!"

Chapter 229 - Defender Team

Next, Chen Shouyi tried to understand the specific situation in Dongning City, but the other party refused on the grounds of military secrets.

Seeing that he couldn't get any information, he didn't persist and turned around to leave.

It would be unwise to have a conflict with these soldiers.

Moreover, such a blockade was like an empty threat to him.

The sentry posts surrounding Dongning were not densely distributed, with one every couple of hundred meters. In this pitch-dark night, they might prevent ordinary people from entering but couldn't stop Chen Shouyi at all.

With his speed exceeding a hundred meters per second, he was even faster than the beam of a searchlight.

The only trouble was that the path to bypass the sentry post was not easy to walk.

He glanced from side to side.

On both sides of the highway were fields filled with seedlings, with water not yet drained.

In the Jiangnan area, early rice is usually transplanted around Qingming, early April in the Gregorian calendar, only ten to twenty days ago. From this, he deduced that the blockade was probably set up around this time.

After walking several hundred meters, Chen Shouyi found a cement farm road.

Following the farm road for fifty or sixty meters, he chose a small path along a field ridge and walked onto it.

Fortunately, the field ridge here wasn't made of muddy piles but was also paved with cement and, after being scorched by the sun during the day, was extremely dry.

He placed his backpack in front of him, walked near the sentry post, and waited for the searchlights on both sides to sweep past.

He immediately activated his body, pushing off with his toes. The cement ridge road shattered instantly, and simultaneously, his figure shot away like an arrow off the string, disappearing from the spot.

The scenery on both sides quickly flew past him, and as his silhouette flashed by at high speed, the rice on both sides quickly flattened.

"Who goes there!" A soldier shouted as he heard the commotion. Soon after, sporadic gunshots sounded as a warning.

But in this pitch blackness, they couldn't see him, and even if they could, with Chen Shouyi's speed, they couldn't aim.

Within just a few breaths, Chen Shouyi had already dashed three or four hundred meters away.

His speed gradually slowed as he returned to the highway.

At this moment, Chen Shouyi heard a faint noise from his briefcase. He immediately unzipped it and saw the Shell Lady with disheveled hair and a wrinkled skirt.

She was slumped inside the briefcase, looking bewildered, a bit unclear about the situation.

"Good Giant, did an earthquake just happen?"

"Yes, go back to sleep!" Chen Shouyi replied calmly.

"Stupid Giant, you can't sleep during an earthquake!" the Shell Lady said seriously.

"Who taught you that?" Chen Shouyi was curious. He hadn't taught her this, and when she used to live on the island, she probably didn't know these things.

"Prepared told me!" the Shell Lady said. Thinking of Prepared, her face turned gloomy: "Good Giant, when can we see Prepared?"

She really couldn't forget it.

"The things for seeing Prepared are broken; we can't see." Chen Shouyi said.

Seeing the pitch-black night and the empty highway, he abandoned the idea of letting her continue sleeping.

He picked up the Shell Lady and placed her on his shoulder.

Thankfully, she only mentioned it once and didn't bring it up again. Sitting on Chen Shouyi's shoulder, her tiny eyes like green beans were piercingly observant, clutching her tiny fists, and her face filled with vigilance.

To her, the common frogs and water snakes in the fields on both sides of the road were no less frightening than fierce beasts.

...

The road was littered with bullets, and occasionally, there were isolated craters.

Chen Shouyi's expression grew more solemn, and he subconsciously quickened his pace. By eight o'clock, he had already reached the outskirts of Dongning City.

Looking at the dark city in the distance, a hint of excitement flashed across his face.

Finally, he's back!

This was, after all, his hometown, a place in his heart that could not be replaced by any other city.

As he was feeling emotional, the Shell Lady suddenly said with vigilance: "Good Giant, a bad Giant is coming this way!"

"Go back in the bag and sleep for a while!" Chen Shouyi said to the Shell Lady.

"Okay!" the Shell Lady replied readily.

Chen Shouyi put her back into the briefcase and zipped it up. Not long after, a group of six people with torches came walking along the road toward him.

They had an assortment of weapons, some had swords, others machetes, but most carried wooden clubs.

When the group saw Chen Shouyi ahead of them, their expressions slightly froze, and soon a middle-aged man who seemed to be their leader excitedly shouted: "There's a little rascal trying to escape, catch him, don't let him run away."

The next moment, the group frantically charged at him.

These people varied in age, the young being only fourteen or fifteen, while the older ones were fifty or sixty, but each shared a crazed and twisted expression.

Originally, Chen Shouyi wanted to understand the situation here, but seeing this, his face turned cold.

He kicked down the person running in front with one move.

Then his body flickered, avoiding a wooden club, while lightly waving his hand, sending a young man of about eighteen or nineteen flying as if hit by a car, soaring through the air for three or four meters before tumbling to the ground.

In just a breath's time, the six were downed swiftly and efficiently.

A burly man tried to stand up again, but Chen Shouyi's quick step and a frontal kick left his face bloody, knocking him unconscious instantly. Seeing this, everyone else calmed down instantly.

Subsequently, Chen Shouyi grabbed the hair of the middle-aged man who had yelled earlier and forcibly pulled him up: "Can you tell me what's going on here?"

"You... you're dead, we're from the Defender Team..."

"Slap!"

Chen Shouyi's face turned cold as he sharply slapped him.

The middle-aged man's head spun, buzzing, and he spat out a few bloodied teeth as he glared at him venomously:

"Go on, kill me, damned blasphemer..."

"Slap!"

"I..."

"Slap!"

Chen Shouyi struck him three times on the same side of his face. The middle-aged man was dumbstruck, his left cheek became swollen and purple like dough, and his left eye started oozing blood. This time, he grew wiser and kept his mouth shut.

"I'll ask, you answer, understood."

The middle-aged man nodded vigorously, and the surroundings fell silent, the atmosphere still.

"Slap!"

Once more, Chen Shouyi slapped him, impatiently saying: "Talk!"

"Un... understood!"

"Who are you people?"

"We... we're from the Defender Team." The middle-aged man replied fearfully.

"What Defender Team, explain clearly!" Chen Shouyi frowned impatiently.

The middle-aged man shrank his neck in fear and quickly said: "We're from the Church night patrol!"

"What Church, that Barbarian God?" Chen Shouyi asked, feeling a trace of irritation.

A flash of anger crossed the middle-aged man's face: "We serve the great God of Hunting."

"Slap!" This time Chen Shouyi used greater strength, knocking him to the ground. He immediately yanked him back up by his hair.

The middle-aged man's face was now battered, blood pouring down, his ears and eyes began to bleed.

"How many of you are there?"

The middle-aged man spat blood, his smile bitter: "The entire Dongning, all are our people."

"Quite bold!"

Chen Shouyi chuckled lightly, his tone chilling. He released the middle-aged man's hair, patted his cheek, and turned to walk away.

A few steps later, he halted abruptly.

Then he swiftly turned, his body like an afterimage, and fiercely punched toward his head.

"Boom!"

The entire skull exploded like a watermelon.

The others lying on the ground only felt a gust of bloody wind. When they came to their senses, they saw a headless corpse already on the ground, blood gushing out in spurts.

Everyone was dumbfounded, their bodies stiff as if petrified.

Chapter 230 - Rage

After venting his inner rage, Chen Shouyi left quickly without much killing.

After walking a kilometer or two, he heard the footsteps of the Church patrol again.

With a light leap, he grabbed the window of the second floor facing the street.

Once the patrol passed underneath and gradually moved away, he lightly jumped down again.

Watching the distant group of figures, a chill flashed in Chen Shouyi's eyes:

"The Church, priests, and patrols! Clearly, Dongning has completely fallen under the control of the God of Hunting. I just don't know whether the God of Hunting is here. If so, it would be dangerous."

Though he was powerful, against the Barbarian God, even a Martial Artist was not much better than an ant—at most, a larger ant.

"I hope my luck isn't that bad!"

Chen Shouyi withdrew his gaze and quickened his pace.

At this moment, he heard the clinking sounds from a distance, seemingly coming from the square ahead. He was slightly cautious and continued to walk lightly forward, soon reaching the square.

He looked towards the sound.

In the center of the square stood a giant stone about five meters tall. In the dim torchlight, over a dozen stone masons stood on ladders, holding wedges and steel chisels, striking this giant stone.

This was a bizarre statue, neither fully human nor bird. The statue had largely taken shape, with only some details left to carve.

It had a bird's head and a human body, holding a Long Spear in its left hand and gripping a creature resembling a snake in its right. Its eye sockets were inlaid with red gems that reflected a blood-like color in the night.

At just a glance, Chen Shouyi had a strong intuition that this was undoubtedly the Divine Statue of the God of Hunting.

Perhaps from looking too long, he felt the statue suddenly came to life, its body rapidly swelling until it towered into the clouds. A pair of huge, scarlet eyes looked down at Chen Shouyi, and faintly, countless whispers seemed to praise the God of Hunting.

He experienced a moment of disorientation but then returned to his senses.

When he looked at the statue again, a trace of dread appeared in his eyes.

"Just a statue has such mysterious power. This God of Hunting is likely far stronger than that God of Courage," he mused.

Chen Shouyi's gaze shifted back to the unaffected stone masons who were still striking the statue:

"However, this illusion should be due to my keen perception, enabling me to receive more mysterious information than ordinary people. The stone masons, as ordinary people, are not affected much and do not hallucinate, at most subtly influenced, just like in front of the City Hall Square where the God of Courage died."

Chen Shouyi did not look further and quickly left the square.

Chen Shouyi's uncle lived in the eastern part of the city. He avoided over a dozen patrol teams along the way. Almost traversing the whole city, he made it to his uncle's neighborhood by nine o'clock at night.

The neighborhood was pitch black, without a trace of light.

Not far in, a dirty Chihuahua started barking incessantly at Chen Shouyi from a distance, soon attracting more stray dogs into a chorus, making the whole neighborhood noisy.

Chen Shouyi cursed under his breath.

Of all the dogs, he hated Chihuahuas the most—their small size but boldness and loudness were annoying.

Before he got close, the Chihuahua tucked its tail and quickly fled, then stopped afar, continuing its barking.

As he walked along, the Chihuahua kept barking throughout.

Annoying Chen Shouyi immensely.

Fortunately, he soon arrived at the base of his uncle's residential building.

The ground floor's iron gate was tightly shut. Chen Shouyi went up and lightly tugged it a few times, hesitated, and gave up the idea of forcing it open.

"Uncle!"

Chen Shouyi retreated a few meters and shouted loudly.

However, he stopped suddenly after just one shout.

He realized a problem.

Since there were patrols everywhere on the streets and no night travelers, it was evident that a curfew was in place. If he shouted rashly, it might attract the attention of those with ill intentions.

Though he wasn't afraid, he disliked trouble.

He glanced up at the fifth floor, where his uncle's family lived.

With a light leap, he grabbed the fourth floor's window, pushed against the windowsill with both hands, and his body hung beneath the fifth floor's window. Chen Shouyi gently pushed the locked window,

With a "crash,"

The window made a loud noise, shattering into fragments.

Too lazy to clean up the remaining broken glass, Chen Shouyi pushed against the windowsill, his body agilely slipping into the room like a monkey.

He had just landed.

A shrill scream pierced his eardrums.

Women are indeed troublesome.

With a quick movement, Chen Shouyi immediately covered Chen Yuwei's mouth tightly.

"Quiet!" Chen Shouyi said in a deep voice.

In the darkness, with her mouth covered tightly, Chen Yuwei stared wide-eyed in terror, her face pale, shaking her head vigorously, tears involuntarily trickling from her eyes.

Chen Shouyi felt his arm pressing against a soft spot, his body stiffening as if electrified, swiftly lifting his arm.

"Sister, don't be afraid, it's me, Chen Shouyi. I'll let go now, but please don't scream again."

Feeling his cousin's initially stiff body quickly relax, Chen Shouyi promptly released his hand.

"You scared the living daylights out of me," Chen Yuwei gritted her teeth, punching his chest a few times in annoyance, then whispered, "Why did you come to Dongning? It's dangerous here."

As Chen Shouyi was about to ask about the situation, his aunt's voice suddenly came from outside.

"Yu Wei, what happened?"

"Mom, Shou Yi is here."

"Uncle is dead!" Chen Shouyi said, disbelief on his face, "How did he die? What on earth happened?"

In the living room, the oil lamp's flame flickered constantly, casting a dim light.

His aunt's face was haggard, as if she had suddenly aged over a decade. She nervously walked to the door, pressed against the security door, listened for a moment, then returned and said in a low voice:

"Half a month ago, chaos erupted in Dongning. After the God of Hunting destroyed the army here, a large number of Barbarians began pouring in and established the Church... Quite a few people were remnants from the previous cult. With these people's cooperation, they quickly took control of the entire Dongning.

Now, everyone must go to the local church at 6 AM for morning prayers, and again at 5 PM for evening prayers. Your uncle was too stubborn and loudly cursed the running dogs of the Barbarian God in the church, angering them, and was taken away and sacrificed alive."

Tears shimmered in Chen Yuwei's eyes, her eyes red, she tilted her head slightly, striving not to let the tears fall.

"Now our family is marked, and we only receive half the rice others do... Plus, some malicious person came up with the idea that my daughter and I are often criticized in the church. Even at home, there's no peace. If I hadn't fought with a knife desperately, perhaps Yu Wei..."

"This city has gone mad!"

Chen Shouyi's anger could no longer be suppressed. He slammed the table sharply, and with a crack, it shattered into pieces, fragments scattered everywhere.