

New Era 261

Chapter 261 - Third Optimization

During dinner, Mrs. Chen suddenly said to Chen Dawei:

"Do you think we should open another restaurant? I've noticed that restaurant businesses have been doing quite well lately."

Chen Dawei patted his increasingly plump stomach and hesitantly replied:

"I don't mind, but the situation is quite unstable now. We might end up working for nothing again. Last time, we paid a rent of over a hundred thousand, and I don't even know who to ask for it back. We couldn't even find the landlord, and with the renovations, we lost two hundred thousand."

Even if there hadn't been any changes, with that restaurant's poor business, they would likely have gone bankrupt, Chen Shouyi thought to himself while eating.

"I've already checked. Rent is very cheap now, even in prime locations, it's only twenty per square meter per month. As long as business is good, we can recoup the costs in a month!" Mrs. Chen set down her chopsticks and said excitedly.

"That cheap!" Chen Dawei exclaimed in surprise. That was indeed a bargain.

"There aren't many people with spare money now, and many have a cautious mindset like you, which is why it's so cheap. People who are too timid won't make money." Mrs. Chen said proudly.

Seeing his parents wanting to get back into the business, Chen Shouyi couldn't stay silent anymore and couldn't help but say, "Mom, Dad, I think it's better to forget it. Our family isn't short on money!"

He now gives the family fifty thousand every month, enough for a family of four to live on.

People who haven't run a restaurant don't know how hard it is.

Back in Dongning, his parents had to go to the market to buy vegetables at six in the morning, and after coming back, they had to handle the ingredients. They could only rest a bit in the afternoon, and at night they would be busy again, working until after ten at night every day.

And there's no rest all year except during the New Year.

"Yes, Mom! Big brother is making money, so why should you work so hard!" Chen Xingyue quickly said after swallowing a mouthful of rice.

"I know you're being filial, but I can't stay at home all the time. I'd become sick from idleness." Mrs. Chen said. She had gotten used to being busy, and felt uneasy when she was idle.

...

After dinner, Chen Shouyi returned to his bedroom feeling a bit gloomy.

"Oh well, let them open the shop if they want. As long as they're happy.

Anyway, with my dad's poor cooking skills, it's probably going to end up like last time, not too busy."

The Shell Lady entertained herself on the bed. He hardly ever put her in the briefcase anymore since no one came into the bedroom anyway.

He drew out his sword, feeling the force of his muscles, the tip of the sword silently exhaling Sword Qi.

"Good giant, when will you go back to our place to have a look?" The Shell Lady asked with a sigh after playing for a while.

Chen Shouyi's mind wavered, the Sword Qi dissipated, and he stopped: "What, want to go back? It's very dangerous there, much more than here."

He knew that the place the Shell Lady meant was not just the little island, but the other world. She seemed to be a bit homesick.

The Shell Lady hesitated slightly, tilted her head, and said seriously: "But I can fly."

With your slow flying speed, what use is it?

If you could fly faster back then, I wouldn't have caught you.

"In a few days, let's see," Chen Shouyi said. He wasn't sure if the spatial passage in Hedong City was still open, hoping it hadn't been completely closed.

"Good giant, you're the best!"

...

At eleven o'clock, Chen Shouyi stared unblinkingly at the energy points on his attribute panel.

A few minutes later, the number that had stayed unchanged at 8.99 finally jumped to 9.00.

He let out a long breath, having waited so long, he finally reached it.

He immediately stood up, impatiently selected the Horizontal Training Thirty-Six Form for optimization, and as soon as he willed it, the energy points that had just reached nine were instantly emptied.

As the familiar dream quickly descended, a flash of thought crossed his mind.

Darn it, too impatient!

I haven't even laid down on the bed yet!

The next moment, he fell completely into the dream.

...

Who knows how long later, when he opened his eyes, he unsurprisingly found himself lying on the floor. Instead of getting up immediately, he closed his eyes again, quietly savoring the gains from the dream.

The optimization this time was quite significant, and it was completely different from the initial version of the Body Training Thirty-Six Form, with no similarity at all. Not only was the difficulty much higher and more complex, but the integration of the thirteen steps of Horizontal Training also brought more mysterious changes.

Especially, before, the Original Force from the other world, though forming a blue tornado in the Dantian during practice, would quickly dissipate afterward. But now, the optimized technique could condense this energy, forming a blue vortex...

At this moment, Chen Shouyi suddenly felt something covering his foot, hurriedly opened his eyes, and found that the quilt on the bed had been dragged to the floor by the Shell Lady.

She was currently trying hard to pull the quilt, her body continuously retreating, struggling to cover Chen Shouyi with it, her little face flushed red with exhaustion.

Chen Shouyi found it both funny and touching. It really wasn't easy for her.

Just as she seemed to run out of strength and stopped to catch her breath, she muttered to herself, "I'm exhausted. The stupid giant is getting lazier by the day, needing me to take care of him."

Chen Shouyi immediately sat up with a dark line across his forehead.

Hearing the commotion, the Shell Lady quickly turned around, her little face looked adorable as she said, "Good giant, you're awake."

"Hmm!" Chen Shouyi replied grumpily, got up, picked up the quilt and dusted it off, then put it back on the bed.

"Good giant, you shouldn't sleep on the floor. You know that could make you sick." The Shell Lady said as she quickly followed Chen Shouyi on her little legs, then jumped onto the bed and advised, "Prepared said it would make you ill."

"I got it." Chen Shouyi said gloomily, looking at the Shell Lady's serious expression, deciding not to argue with her.

Once the Shell Lady calmed down again.

Chen Shouyi, unable to suppress his itch, got up to start practicing the thrice-optimized version.

With a long and slow breath, his mind became tranquil as a still lake, entering a deep meditative state.

His entire being swelled like a giant, then slowly contracted, and at the same time, he began practicing the new Thirty-Six Form.

This optimized version was incredibly difficult, every subtle movement required coordination from a specific group of muscles, even internal organs, to work together. These subtle movements weren't complete actions in themselves.

For example, simply raising a hand required dozens of complex changes in muscles and organs from lifting to fully raised, involving almost every muscle in the body several times, many of which defied conventional movement logic.

These weren't the hardest part though, with the memory from the dream, and being in the refinement stage of meditative bodily training, slowing down and doing it gradually, he could manage awkwardly.

The hardest part was the unusual feedback from the body.

Whereas the twice-optimized version's body reaction was the accumulating prickling of electric shocks.

The thrice-optimized version's was a simultaneous assault of sore, numb, pain, and itch.

"Hiss!"

Just after finishing the seventh move, his mind trembled, and Chen Shouyi's whole body seized up, muscles twitching, drenched in cold sweat.

Chapter 262 - Third Optimization (Part 2)

"Damn!"

"This cultivation technique is simply impossible for humans to practice!"

His body was sore, numb, aching, and itchy.

Even Chen Shouyi, who could calmly open his own chest cavity and reach in to fix a broken rib, had his face scrunched up, continuously gasping, with an overwhelming urge to scream loudly.

He reached out to pat the knotted muscles on his body, slowly easing them.

Feeling the negative state of his body gradually dissipate, he exhaled deeply, releasing a scorching breath.

"I can't be distracted this time. I'll master the thirty-six forms first. Once I'm proficient, I'll integrate them with Horizontal Training!" Chen Shouyi pondered.

He rested for about a minute, took a deep breath, entered a deep meditation, and continued to practice the thirty-six forms.

This time, without distractions, the situation was better than last time, and he practiced up to the ninth form before his movements were interrupted.

"Progress!"

Sweat was pouring from his entire body as he kept patting his muscles. The sweat soaked a large section of the floor. He walked to the desk, picked up the thermos, poured himself a cup of hot water, and drank it in one gulp without minding the heat.

"Continue!" he gritted his teeth, saying to himself.

...

The light outside the window gradually brightened; morning had arrived. Chen Shouyi turned off the gas lamp that had been lit, dragging his trembling body and painfully pulling open the curtains. The sunlight shone through the window, and the piercing light made Chen Shouyi squint slightly.

After practicing for most of the night, he could only reach the fifteenth form before he was exhausted.

Yet, it was this difficulty that made Chen Shouyi's determination even stronger, gritting his teeth to persist.

He could foresee the powerful effects once this cultivation technique was mastered.

Hard work pays off; without more arduous effort, there could be no greater reward.

He went to the bathroom, took a shower, sat on the bed to rest for a while, and only after the muscle spasms subsided did he go downstairs.

After breakfast, he returned and took a short nap for two hours. Upon waking, he continued practicing.

...

Four days later, on the mountains near the Safe Zone.

Chen Shouyi's entire body was flushed, steam billowed, emanating a blistering heat.

The tenth form...

The fifteenth form...

The twenty-first form...

Chen Shouyi's face showed no expression, his mind calm, practicing each form methodically, with the muscles on his body continuously rippling, resembling countless mice scurrying around swiftly.

Finally, he completed the thirty-sixth form smoothly.

The next moment, the weak yet ubiquitous Original Force of this world surged like a tide, delving into skin, muscles, organs, bones, nerves... into every corner, with the body's negative state rapidly receding. He felt as if drinking a refreshing cold drink on a scorching summer day, his entire being filled with an intense sense of euphoria.

He stopped, unable to suppress the excitement in his heart, a wide grin forming uncontrollably, shouting out loud.

The tremendous sound wave startled the nearby Shell Lady, causing her to squirm, accidentally crushing an unfortunate bug, spreading juice everywhere, her heart pounding wildly. She cautiously glanced at Chen Shouyi, not daring to make a sound.

The past few days, the simple-minded Giant seemed mentally disturbed, irritable, quick to anger, giving an intimidating look that made her somewhat fearful.

She released her grip, looked at the poor bug she had squashed in her hand, sighed, and promptly discarded it.

Another one dead.

Around here, such good bugs that don't bite, aren't smelly, and are obedient and well-behaved weren't many and hard to find.

...

Chen Shouyi paid no mind to Shell Lady's small actions. His heart was now filled with joy.

It wasn't easy!

Over the past four days, he barely slept, only catching one or two hours a day, excluding meal times. At least twenty hours each day were spent practicing, and finally, he succeeded.

He rested for a while, planning to strike while the iron was hot and continue practicing.

The second round was completed smoothly.

The third round, however, ended in failure.

The fourth round continued smoothly.

After five continuous rounds, his body finally succumbed to exhaustion and stopped.

In this intermittent struggle, by evening, his movements had become extremely fluid.

...

The next day, he continued practicing the thirty-six forms alone. By the third day, he had become proficient to the extreme, naturally able to perform them, then he began practicing the complete Horizontal Training thirty-six forms.

Inhale...

Exhale...

In the bedroom, Chen Shouyi was naked from the waist up. As he inhaled, it was as if a high-power vacuum cleaner were operating, tugging at the window and doors making a loud noise, as he exhaled, air currents surged, resembling a gust of wind inside the room.

Within his Dantian, a small pale blue vortex spun rapidly, getting darker towards the center, with countless Original Force being drawn in, quickly merging into the vortex.

Meanwhile, a slight itch began from the abdomen, spreading rapidly all over the body, with this itching sensation, his body's cell alignment seemed to become more tightly packed, beyond this whether it was the surface skin or the membranes of internal organs were being subtly thickened.

...

Late night.

Hedong Railway Station!

A few gas lamps lit the place brightly.

A steam train slowly approached the station. Once the train stabilized, the door opened, and a large mass of passengers poured out like packed sardines, along with disheveled refugees among them.

The small-scale recovery war of Ningzhou had begun, and these were refugees from the fallen zones.

Hedong City had already arranged ahead of time to receive them, with dozens of steam trucks lined up at the station entrance. Soon, a large number of refugees, under soldiers maintaining order, boarded the trucks in an orderly fashion.

A group of people lagging behind the refugee crowd.

"I'll remind you once more, your parents and wives are in the hands of the Church. If you choose to betray, not only will you cause our death, theirs will be miserable too!" A middle-aged man with a gloomy face said almost inaudibly.

"No need for your reminder, Deng Shiming, Captain Deng." A tall, brawny man responded with a sneer.

"The world is set for a dramatic change, ultimately ushering in the age of the divine. I'm merely someone who recognizes the changing tide. Xu Dahu, you think you're unwavering and noble, but you're just all talk. Admit it!

If you dare, shout that you're a spy sent by the cult. There are soldiers all around here." Deng Shiming said disdainfully, lowering his voice.

Seeing Xu Dahu remain silent, his fists tightly clenched, he warned again:

"Don't think that we're the only batch sent here, we have ways of conveying your betrayal."

"Alright, alright, Captain Deng, Xu Dahu did not mean it, he's probably struggling with internal conflict. But serving someone, anyone, is still serving. As long as we're alive, all is well.

Think of our family, we aren't reckless. Consider if this makes sense!" Another middle-aged man, with a kindly face, mediated.

"What are you whispering about, hurry up and catch up!"

Chapter 263 - Farewell, Fighter Jets

Chen Shouyi walked through the street, avoiding puddles along the way.

It had just rained early yesterday morning, bringing a touch of long-lost coolness to the weather, which had recently started to become a bit hot.

He checked his status panel, looking at the strength attribute, his face slightly surprised and excited:

"The optimized version thrice over is indeed powerful. After only officially training for a day, strength has already increased by 0.1 points. At this rate of improvement, it won't be long before my strength undergoes a tremendous transformation."

"Even now, if I were to fight Sun Mengyuan again, I believe I could win more easily." He felt a little eager but decided to give up, thinking it through, since everything in the virtual space was fake.

However, every time he made her wet herself, it always felt a bit excessive, and he couldn't get past the moral barrier in his mind!

In fact, the greatest improvement in recent days has been not the strength, but the will.

These days, practicing day and night every day, enduring painful torment like hell every moment, has fully tempered his willpower, increasing by as much as 0.2 points, reaching fourteen points.

A few dirty and untidy street kids were playing by the roadside, each time someone passed by, they would deliberately stomp on puddles, causing pedestrians to dodge repeatedly, their clothes splashed with dirty water all over.

Someone couldn't stand it and reached out to hit them, and the kids giggled and quickly ran away wildly.

Most people could only admit their bad luck.

The kids repeated the mischief over and over, enjoying themselves immensely, joyful laughter echoed on the street.

At this moment, when they saw Chen Shouyi coming from afar, they immediately showed playful smiles on their faces, seeming to want to try the same trick again. But before they could act, one glance from Chen Shouyi froze them in their tracks, their bodies becoming rigid as if struck by lightning, faces pale until Chen Shouyi left, and only then did they regain their senses.

"Scared me to death." A kid around eight or nine sniffled, still shaken.

"Me too, this person is so scary. I felt like I didn't dare to move a muscle." Another slightly older child clutched his chest where his heart was pounding fiercely, agreeing repeatedly.

"This person must be a Martial Artist. There are many Martial Artists around here. Let's not play here anymore, let's go to the park and dig cicada nymphs, they are delicious when fried, very fragrant."

"Okay, let's go!" The kids couldn't help but swallow and then bolted towards the distant park.

Chen Shouyi glanced back at this group of kids with their hometown accents.

"These must be the kids of the recent refugees who came to the Safe Zone!" he thought silently.

In recent days, more and more refugees have been migrating to Hedong, with some being settled in the Safe Zone.

"Look, a plane!" Someone shouted from afar,

The pedestrians erupted in excitement, stopping in their tracks and looking up at the sky.

Chen Shouyi was momentarily stunned upon hearing this, and immediately looked up.

He soon saw three small silver dots flying slowly in a formation towards them, they were three jet fighters, trailing long contrails behind them.

Chen Shouyi's heart was filled with disbelief.

After the mutations, gasoline and diesel combustion became relatively slow, and ignition points were higher.

The series of changes in physical constants meant that current engines could no longer start and function normally, causing all previous cars, including airplanes, to completely stop, gradually replaced by steam-powered cars and airships.

He once thought he would never see such sights again, yet surprisingly, they reappeared in the sky today.

"It makes sense, science is about understanding the laws and utilizing them. If current engines can't be used, then new engines are designed. If gasoline's ignition point is higher and burns slower, then pressurize the engine!

Gasoline is still gasoline; its combustion value hasn't changed."

Buzz...

The fighter formation flew overhead slowly, gradually moving away.

Chen Shouyi watched for a long time, then withdrew his gaze, filled with excitement. These past days, he's been overshadowed by deep gloom.

In fact, he had been pessimistic about the current situation.

The Barbarian God's formidable power was despair-inducing. With current human strength, apart from using high-yield nuclear bombs as a desperate measure, sacrificing one thousand to kill one hundred, there was really no good solution against the Barbarian God?

But the appearance of these three fighters was undoubtedly a glimmer of hope!

Compared to the slow-flying steam airships, fighters completely outmatched them in terms of maneuverability and combat power.

Before the mutations, Great Xia's most advanced stealth fighters could cruise at speeds of 2.8 Mach, with maximum speeds reaching 3.5 Mach.

There were also waverider vehicles that could fly near space, reaching up to 8 Mach.

Such high speeds even made the Barbarian God seem insignificant by comparison.

As far as Chen Shouyi knew, due to Earth's weak Original Force constraints, the Barbarian God's flying speed wasn't fast, meaning that as long as humanity restored its pre-mutation strength, it could deliver an asymmetrical strike against the Barbarian God.

...

With the appearance of the three fighters, the entire Safe Zone buzzed with excitement, many people stood by the roadside discussing fervently, with expressions of excitement as if celebrating a festival.

It had been a long time since news this exhilarating appeared.

In recent days, the atmosphere in Hedong had become increasingly oppressive and tense.

The news of the fall of the Ningzhou area had long been the talk of the town, and every day on the highway, trucks loaded with munitions and soldiers could be seen passing by, under such circumstances, even the children knew that war was imminent again.

...

Chen Shouyi walked all the way to Jiangnan University and found Guan Miao in the office.

"Returning your books!" The two walked to a secluded corner, and Chen Shouyi handed over a stack of books.

She wore a gray-white fine velvet hip-hugging skirt, revealing a small section of her calf, and a faint bruise on her fair face appeared rather jarring.

"In the future, when borrowing books, don't come looking for me anymore!" Guan Miao said coldly after taking the books.

"Alright, my cousin is studying here now; I'll let her borrow next time!" Chen Shouyi said, feeling somewhat guilty for troubling her for so long. If it weren't too abrupt to give money, he would've compensated her with it earlier:

"By the way, what happened to your face, did someone hit you?"

Upon hearing this, Guan Miao's expression turned even uglier; she clenched her fingers, her anger rising, and her chest heaved violently.

Her husband was a jealous person, and recently some idle gossip started circulating, saying she had been getting close to some pretty boy lately, leading to a big argument between them. This bruise was left from that incident and hasn't faded yet.

It was a completely undeserved disaster.

If only she didn't think she couldn't beat him, and he wasn't a violent maniac, she would've slashed his damn face. She coldly said, "It's none of your business, I accidentally bumped into the door.

If there's nothing else, I'll leave now, and don't come looking for me again."

She turned and left quickly with a frosty expression.

Chen Shouyi watched her back, feeling somewhat baffled.

Did I say something wrong?

Chapter 264 - Safe Now

In the following days, Chen Shouyi spent most of his time each day in training.

Life was monotonous yet disciplined, but Chen Shouyi found joy in it. The noticeable increase in strength he experienced almost daily fascinated him deeply.

Not only was his physical aptitude improving, but his body's defenses were also becoming exceptionally tough.

In the past few days, his skin gradually became thicker, denser, and smoother, resembling a layer of hard rubber. It appeared delicate, but an ordinary person, using just hand strength, would find it difficult to even deform it, let alone pinch it.

Fortunately, he could feel that his skin's sense of touch hadn't become numb or insensitive; it remained quite sensitive.

...

At noon, the scorching sunlight beat down.

With the arrival of June, Hedong City's temperatures soared, exceeding thirty-five degrees every day.

Behind a small hill, there was an abandoned quarry.

Chen Shouyi's figure flashed like lightning, crossing thirty to forty meters in an instant. In the next moment, his back crashed heavily against a giant rock over four or five meters tall.

"Boom!"

With his weight of one hundred kilograms and speed exceeding a hundred meters per second, such an impact generated energy comparable to a car hitting head-on at a speed of a hundred kilometers per hour, with an even greater impact force on a single surface area.

The massive rock, weighing hundreds of tons, shook violently, moving five or six centimeters sideways. Stone dust filled the air on the impact side, and countless rubble tumbled down.

With a surge of willpower, Chen Shouyi cleared the surrounding dust in an instant, creating a "vacuum" zone!

He coughed a few times, spitting out clotted blood mixed with stone dust, and frowned slightly:

"It seems that the strength of the internal organs is still somewhat lacking!"

"The skin also feels burning hot; obviously, it got scraped during the violent collision with the rock's edges."

He reached behind his back, touched the wound, and found that it was just slightly scratched. After all, it was only rock; its hardness was low, and upon high-speed impact, it turned to powder the moment it contacted the skin.

Since a few days ago, when his sister unleashed her full force under his repeated urging, thrusting an iron rod heavily into his chest, causing him to fracture ribs and vomit blood, she was scared stiff. No

matter how he repeatedly explained that such trivial injuries were of no consequence to him or even offered more rewards as temptation, his sister stubbornly refused to lay a hand on him again.

If he hadn't proven he was unharmed afterward, she would've been scared enough to carry him to the hospital.

Left with no choice, Chen Shouyi had been using this rather clumsy method for resistance training. Fortunately, the results were quite decent, improving the strength of his internal organs and skin beyond what simple iron rod strikes could achieve.

Once the dull pain in his chest gradually faded, he slowly backed up thirty or forty meters, took a deep breath, and then forcefully sprang forward, crashing into the giant rock once more.

...

By evening time.

With a resounding "boom," the giant rock, already reduced to less than two meters from repeated impacts, finally shattered into pieces, scattering countless fragments.

Chen Shouyi called out to the Shell Lady, who had been playing by herself on the side, and quickly returned.

Walking along the road, he calmed his mind and sensed his Dantian.

Seeing the small energy vortex still present in his Dantian, he breathed a sigh of relief.

This vortex had just formed today and appeared quite fragile, as if it might dissipate with the slightest disturbance, prompting him to check on it periodically to reassure himself.

Since having this vortex, he noticed that even without training, his body was continuously absorbing the free Original Force from the alternate world.

"Unfortunately, Earth's Original Force is too weak. Even active training yields limited effects, let alone this passive absorption, which achieves less than one-thousandth of the active training effect, rendering it almost useless!" Chen Shouyi mused:

"Perhaps I should really consider going to the alternate world for some serious training time; that would likely greatly accelerate my strength improvement."

Upon reaching the Safe Zone, Chen Shouyi noticed something was amiss.

The streets were filled with soldiers, and passersby were being stopped for checks.

"What's going on?" A hint of doubt flashed across his mind,

"Please show your household registration certificate!" a soldier said sternly.

This document had been implemented last month. Everyone was required to get one from the local neighborhood committee, including Chen Shouyi; however, he had tossed it into a drawer and never carried it since obtaining it.

Chen Shouyi rummaged through his backpack and pulled out a document, asking:

"I didn't bring my household registration certificate; will this do?"

The young soldier instinctively took the red document upon seeing the embossed national emblem on it. The first line on the document read:

"Jiangnan Provincial Government!"

The next line read:

"Master Level Martial Artist Certificate"

The young soldier merely glanced at it, and his whole body shook as he looked up at Chen Shouyi in shock. Not daring to flip through it recklessly, he respectfully handed it back with both hands: "Hello, sir!"

If it were just a Martial Artist Certificate, there would still be a considerable chance of forgery, but a master level martial artist certificate was nearly impossible to fake. Not only would it be easily exposed, but ordinary people probably haven't even heard of it.

"I'm not any sort of 'sir'!" Chen Shouyi remarked, then asked, "What's going on here?"

"Some cultists have escaped, and right now there's a citywide manhunt." The soldier said honestly.

...

The room was filled with smoke; three people sat on the sofa, cigarette after cigarette.

Nearby, a couple lay on the floor, tightly bound, with a dirty rag stuffed in their mouths, their faces full of terror.

"Damn it!" Xu Dahu extinguished his cigarette butt forcefully, then lit another, taking a drag in frustration: "I knew something would go wrong?"

The spies who infiltrated the refugee squads were never believers; they came to Hedong under coercion or voluntarily to spread the cult, thus easily passing anti-cult investigations.

But the original five-person team now has only two left. The other three were ordinary people skilled in rhetoric, responsible for missionary work, while the two martial artists provided the necessary force during the missionary process.

During the hunt, those people couldn't escape at all; they were either killed or captured.

"Stop talking crap after the fact. Who would've thought, people here are so vigilant, as soon as we recruited a few people, the military police came." Deng Shiming said gloomily, holding a cigarette and slightly squinting his eyes.

Since the last Barbarian God's invasion, the Safe Zone has become extremely vigilant against cults. Not only do newspapers cover it extensively, but anti-cult slogans can also be seen all over the alley walls on the streets.

Especially after the God of Courage was killed at the City Hall Square, the citizens' awe of the Barbarian God plummeted, and their immunity and alertness to cults surpassed those in other places.

Xu Dahu suppressed the irritation in his heart, saying hoarsely: "Then what do we do now?"

"Wait!" Deng Shiming replied.

"Not running?" Xu Dahu asked, puzzled.

"Run where? It's full of soldiers outside; walk into a trap?" Deng Shiming sneered.

Just then, he faintly heard voices coming from the corridor outside.

"Quiet!" Deng Shiming's heart tightened. He hushed and got up, walked to the door, pressed his ear against it, and listened carefully for a moment before his face turned grim: "Someone's coming to check the rooms. Let's go!"

"What about these two?" Xu Dahu asked.

"They've already seen our faces, kill them!" Deng Shiming turned back, saying coldly.

The young couple heard this, their faces full of terror as they started to struggle violently, making muffled sounds.

Xu Dahu's face showed struggle, feeling a bit of reluctance.

"Hurry up!" Deng Shiming urged.

Xu Dahu gritted his teeth, a hint of ferocity flashed across his face. He reached out and grabbed the two by the neck, then looked away, applying force with his hands. With a crisp crack, the necks were bent.

Then, the two of them dragged the corpses into the bedroom, covered them with floor-length curtains, and quickly picked up the cigarette butts on the floor, throwing them into the trash can, creating a scene as if no one was home.

After doing all this, the two walked to the balcony, looking at the soldiers all around the complex, their faces darkened.

"Damn it!" Deng Shiming cursed under his breath.

The two didn't hesitate much, knowing that being discovered here was only a matter of time; running away was their only slim chance.

Taking advantage of a moment when the soldiers were unprepared, the two quickly jumped off the third-floor balcony.

"Stop, who goes there!" a soldier shouted.

The two soldiers standing below hadn't reacted yet when Deng Shiming pulled out a short sword from his coat and stabbed one in the chest, while the other soldier's neck was snapped by Xu Dahu with a palm strike, and the two fled swiftly.

Scattered gunfire began to ring out, but the two moved quickly, advancing in a zigzag, making it impossible for bullets to hit. In just a few breaths, they had already escaped the community and reached the streets.

It was rush hour, and the streets were crowded with pedestrians.

Though soldiers still flooded the street, the two of them had smiles on their faces.

Heaven helps those who help themselves.

These pedestrians were their best cover; the soldiers wouldn't dare open fire in the crowd. Perhaps they could really escape here, and as long as they ran all the way to the countryside, they'd be safe!

Chapter 265 - Impossible

Deng Shiming's face revealed a hint of a grim smile, his short sword held in a reverse grip, and he stepped forward like an arrow, swinging the short sword, accompanied by a soft "hiss."

A passerby fearfully clutched his neck, but the blood continued to gush out from between his fingers like a fountain.

Joy surged in Deng Shiming's heart.

To martial artists, ordinary people were as weak as chicks, so vulnerable that they could be killed with a wave of the hand.

Previously, he was restricted by various constraints. Even though he possessed greater power, he had to suppress his violent nature, abide by laws and regulations, and live obediently like ordinary people.

But now he didn't have to endure anymore; the intense pleasure from slaughter made his blood boil, his body shaking slightly in excitement.

He charged forward recklessly, cutting throats of passersby with his short sword wherever he went.

The street quickly descended into chaos, with screams and cries from the crowd rising and falling, as countless pedestrians scrambled in all directions like headless flies.

A nearby soldier immediately fired into the air as a warning, shouting for the crowd to duck down; however, the pedestrians, paralyzed by fear and having lost their sanity, did not respond, only continued to flee wildly.

Suddenly, a figure appeared like the wind, striking the soldier's chest, accompanied by the sound of dense bones shattering, causing the soldier's entire chest to cave in and his body to be sent flying.

It was Xu Dahu, who followed closely behind.

The tall and strong martial artist who earlier showed reluctance in killing a couple, now had a face full of ferocity, like a fierce tiger.

The two advanced quickly, one after the other, as the crowd seeing them hurriedly dodged, causing chaos in the street.

Deng Shiming felt increasingly relaxed; the more chaotic the scene, the easier it was to mix in and escape. If he slipped into the panic-stricken crowd at the right moment, who could find them?

Just then, a young man with a sword hanging from his waist walked quickly against the flow of people, toward this direction.

"Looking for death!" Deng Shiming's face showed a trace of cold smile, gripping the short sword tightly, his toes lightly tapped the ground, and charged forward violently.

Despite saying so, deep down he didn't dare to underestimate; this person who carried a sword on the street was clearly not ordinary, at least a martial artist apprentice, or maybe even a martial artist.

The young man looked at the rapidly approaching figure, his expression unchanged, stopped in place, standing indifferently.

Watching his cold face, a trace of unease flashed in Deng Shiming's heart, but with the bow drawn, he could not stop now.

"Bluffing!"

He shouted lowly, thrusting a sword like lightning.

This thrusting attack utilized force from the toes, through the legs, hips, waist, chest, arms, to the fingers, integrating the whole body's strength, with unparalleled explosive power — his peak strike.

With his Senior Martial Artist strength, he believed that even a great martial artist would avoid this strike.

The strong gust blew the young man's hair to fly, finally he moved, raised his hand, seemingly slow but actually very fast, and grabbed Deng Shiming's arm.

A crisp slapping sound.

Deng Shiming's body suddenly changed from high speed to stillness, the originally violent impact force forcibly interrupted, his arm couldn't bear this terrifying impact force, instantly breaking into several sections, bone spikes piercing the skin, even the shoulder behind bulged greatly, the whole arm about to tear apart.

He felt like he was hit by a heavy truck head-on, his mind blank.

Before the body pain could transmit, the next moment he felt a severe shock to the head, his vision darkened, and he completely lost consciousness.

Chen Shouyi casually slapped this cultist to the ground, then looked up at the other cultist.

As if being watched by an ancient giant beast, cold sweat trickled from Xu Dahu's forehead, his steps retreating, his body unable to stop trembling.

Impossible!

This was impossible!

Everything before his eyes was beyond his usual perception; even a great martial artist couldn't stop a Senior Martial Artist's thrust attack with bare hands. Not to mention the speed, even the terrifying impact force was enough to break a great martial artist's arm.

"Will you surrender, or choose to let me take action?" Chen Shouyi asked softly.

He was still holding the Shell Lady in his arms; if he moved violently, she might fly out again like last time.

"I... I..." Xu Dahu glanced at Deng Shiming lying on the ground, arm twisted, life and death unknown, swallowed hard as cold sweat flowed.

Facing this terrifying monster, he had no thought of luck in his heart. Seeing Chen Shouyi seemingly preparing to move over, he hurriedly said, "I... I surrender."

At this time, the surrounding soldiers had already rushed over and controlled Xu Dahu, among them was Wang Yue, the military's great martial artist, whom Chen Shouyi had met before.

This great martial artist, who had a conflict with Chen Shouyi before, now appeared respectful and said, "General Manager Chen, you're here!"

"Well, I'll leave this to you guys; I'll take my leave first." Chen Shouyi nodded lightly and said.

"Take care."

...

The street returned to peace again, with pedestrians discussing.

Chen Shouyi walked on the street, and no one recognized him as the person who stopped the murderer earlier.

Since being recognized as a Martial Artist by the above, it was as if he was forgotten, with his days becoming more leisure, and everyday tasks not even bothering him.

Now Jiangnan Province recognized three martial artists.

Xiao Changming was an active-duty colonel in the military district, Lei Ruiyang was the director of Martial Arts notarization and ethics inspection office, while he was still holding a nominal position of safety consultant.

This was probably the difference between civilian martial artists and those cultivated within the system.

The former was free with few constraints, but if one wanted to be specially nurtured by the government, receive resource inclinations, and hold high positions, it was impossible, and one could only rely on oneself.

Fortunately, these were not a big deal for Chen Shouyi either.

...

The next morning, Chen Shouyi trained the Horizontal Training Thirty-Six Styles for a while, showered, then carried a backpack and an arrow bag, walked down to the restaurant on the first floor.

His sister was already having breakfast.

He picked up a glass of milk on the table and drank it in one gulp, "I'll be heading out for a few days. Inform Mom and Dad when they come back in the evening."

His parents moved quickly; they had already secured a store two days ago and went out early every day, hardly seen.

"Why don't you tell them yourself; do you have another assignment?" Chen Xingyue swallowed a bun whole, asking curiously.

"No, I'm just simply going out for a few days to relax." Chen Shouyi said, thought for a while, took out his wallet, and pulled out about twenty bills, handing them over.

Chen Xingyue quickly grabbed them, feeling the thickness of the money, her eyes widened, "Trying to bribe me!"

Chen Shouyi snorted inwardly, "Isn't this to prevent you from exaggerating when you're telling?" But he said, pretending shamelessly, "How can this be called bribery? Isn't it reasonable for a brother to give his sister pocket money?"

"You have such a kind heart!" Chen Xingyue glanced at him, prideful like a peacock.

"Then return the money to me!" Chen Shouyi snorted and said.

"I was just saying!" Chen Xingyue immediately wilted, muttering under her breath.

After outwitting his sister, Chen Shouyi went to a nearby bicycle shop to buy a new bicycle, then headed straight to the city.

Chapter 266 - The Wondrous Abilities of Divine Creatures

Chen Shouyi raced down the road on his bicycle.

On the highway, steam trucks flowed endlessly, one after another, raising clouds of dust on the coal-ash-covered roads whenever they passed by.

The industrial zone on both sides of the road had been continuously expanding. Compared to six months ago when he first arrived, the entire industrial area had doubled in size, with even more factories hastily under construction.

Chen Shouyi looked up, noticing two warplanes flying in from a distance. Judging by their direction, they were probably returning from reconnaissance near Ningzhou.

These days, the number of fighter planes had gradually increased. The most Chen Shouyi had seen at one time was a formation of ten aircraft streaking across the sky.

With twenty years in a state of combat readiness, the amount of weapons held by the Great Xia Country was astonishing, with an extremely rapid turnover of various weapon systems.

Before the abnormalities, the number of active fighter jets alone had long been maintained at around 30,000.

If including those fighter jets that had retired and been placed in storage over the years, the total would even exceed 100,000.

Even though the active jets were difficult to retrofit due to their electronically controlled systems, a significant number of retired jets with mechanical controls still existed, amounting to at least several thousand.

At least for the short term, the only thing limiting the number of fighter jets was the production speed of new engines.

...

Half an hour later, Chen Shouyi arrived in the lower district.

The urban area was still desolate and rundown.

Chen Shouyi deliberately passed by his residential area. The security booth at the entrance had hardly any security personnel, and the door was locked. The park inside was overgrown with weeds, and the hedges had grown wildly, with no one to trim them.

It was only seven o'clock, right during the peak of human traffic, but the neighborhood was sparse with people. Only a few scattered pedestrians were seen riding bicycles, leaving the area, seemingly heading to work.

Chen Shouyi glanced at his window and sighed softly.

He turned around and biked swiftly towards the nearby spatial passage.

...

"Military area, no entry for unauthorized personnel."

Chen Shouyi immediately took out a prepared exploration pass. A soldier received it, saluted, and quickly allowed him through.

He exhaled with relief, his biggest fear was that the spatial passage had been completely sealed off, making entry impossible.

In fact, sealing it wouldn't ensure much safety. For beings like the Barbarian God who possessed terrifying power, sealing it would only make the passage easier to discover and breaking through it would only take one or a few strikes.

He pushed his bike into a parking shelter, where the defenses had become more rigorous. Two more round pillboxes equipped with machine guns towered around. Chen Shouyi had just bought a lighter filled with a highly flammable gas for the otherworld, and a small can of petrol at a supply market.

A lieutenant specializing in welcoming Explorers approached.

After exchanging brief pleasantries, the lieutenant said, "You've come a bit early; it's not time to enter yet. There are still six hours before daylight in the otherworld. Perhaps you'd like to rest in the lounge for a while, or come back later tonight."

"No problem, you arrange it," Chen Shouyi replied.

The otherworld is a hundred times more dangerous at night than in the day, not only due to the presence of fierce beasts but also various eerie Natural Spirits. However, ever since he discovered that Sword Qi could effectively kill spirits, his fearful perception had changed significantly.

As long as they weren't excessively powerful Natural Spirits, the ordinary ones could be killed easily.

"But this is against regulations; the spatial passage isn't open to Explorers before dawn," the officer said with a smile.

Chen Shouyi furrowed his eyebrows: "Really can't enter?"

For some reason, seeing Chen Shouyi frown caused the lieutenant to feel anxious, as if a weight pressed on his heart, sensing an overwhelming pressure from him. Hastily, he said with a forced smile, "These rules aren't to make it difficult for you Explorers, but to ensure your safety; the otherworld night is indeed too dangerous."

Chen Shouyi relaxed his brow, took off his backpack, and pulled out a Martial Arts Instructor Certificate: "I believe I can protect my own safety."

The lieutenant received it and trembled all over upon a glance: "I can't make this decision; I will report to the camp commander!"

"Hurry up then!"

The lieutenant jogged off.

Chen Shouyi waited for a few minutes, and soon, two figures approached, one after another.

"My apologies for the neglect, my apologies. I am Yue Long, the camp commander here!"

He was short in stature, but his voice was loud and carried a cheerful smile from the start.

"Chen Shouyi!"

They shook hands.

"Mr. Chen, do you happen to know Colonel Xiao from the special brigade?" Yue Long asked with a smile.

"Xiao Changming?" Chen Shouyi said quietly: "We've worked on several missions together."

A slight annoyance flared up in him.

This was a doubt about his identity.

"So, you know each other. Colonel Xiao used to be an instructor for us," Yue Long chuckled, covering it up, and quickly moved onto the main point: "You wish to access the passage, of course, that's no issue. I'll make arrangements right away."

With the camp commander's order, everything proceeded smoothly.

Thick iron gates opened one by one, chains pulling them apart. As the final iron gate opened, a dense surge of Original Force from the otherworld suddenly poured into his body, streams of air flowing chaotically around him, revealing faint vortices.

At the same time, a subtle aura of a Divine Creature emanated from within.

Soldiers nearby accompanying him suddenly felt a weight pushing down on their hearts, the air thickening, making it difficult to breathe, feeling an intimidating majesty radiating from the Explorer beside them.

A few soldiers dared not look again after a glance, exchanging glances with each other, seeing astonishment reflected in each other's eyes.

Oblivious to the soldiers' reactions, Chen Shouyi descended the steps one step at a time.

After a wave of spatial shift, when his vision cleared again, night had already replaced day. He glanced at the forest, a faint glow emitting from his eyes. In the past, aside from the spirit of the priest, he could see no other spirits. But now, nothing could hide from him.

A multitude of Natural Spirits roamed the ground or engaged in battles, devouring one another.

Most of these Natural Spirits were exceedingly weak, some were merely fragmented animal souls, lacking any intelligence, moving purely by instinct.

He glanced down, noticing a weak Natural Spirit underfoot, screeching in terror as if encountering something horrifying. It fled, its body evaporating like ice under a scorching sun, disappearing before it had dashed even a meter.

He felt a slight strangeness on his body, and as he looked closely, he realized he was emitting an imperceptible and strange luminescence.

"Is it because I've become a Divine Creature?" he muttered to himself.

Sensing the chaotic winds around, a thought crossed his mind,

"Boom!"

A terrifying cyclone, over ten meters tall, appeared instantly, sweeping up countless leaves and weeds. Its immense presence silenced the nearby beastly growls and chattering insect sounds.

"Indeed, the otherworld is a realm of transcendence!" A sense of heroic delight welled up in his heart, and he immediately jumped down from the ten-meter-high steps.

As soon as he leaped, a fierce wind abruptly appeared beneath his feet. Under normal circumstances, the threefold gravity would have dragged him down, but the wind slowed his descent slightly. This wind, equivalent to a level eight gale, could easily blow a person away on Earth, but in the threefold gravity of the otherworld, it wasn't considered impressive.

It merely slowed his descent somewhat.

In the next moment, his feet hit the ground heavily, producing a dull thud.

Fortunately, his body had become extremely strong, and aside from his legs feeling slightly numb, he was unharmed.

Chapter 267 - Sacrifice

The weak Natural Spirit beneath his feet emitted a faint scream, vanishing into thin air before it could escape.

The eerie atmosphere around quickly dissipated.

This world could be said to be full of Natural Spirits everywhere.

During the day, they hide within large trees, rock crevices, underground, or in dark caves, making them almost impossible to see. But at night, that's when they come out to roam.

Of course, the majority of Natural Spirits are no more than weaklings, mere ephemeral shrimp that have no impact on living creatures. However, some are innately powerful, devouring countless souls, commanding mountains, rivers, and lakes, harnessing the great forces of nature, and even absorbing belief to ignite Divine Fire.

Fortunately, Chen Shouyi's luck wasn't that bad.

The Natural Spirits here were quite weak, so weak that as soon as he got close, they quickly dissipated, their souls extinguished.

His body exuded a dim glow, this glow seemed to have an invisible power, almost lethal to these weak Natural Spirits.

At this moment, he felt a wriggle from his chest.

A tiny figure poked her head out, cautiously taking in the surroundings before quickly retracting, leaving only two vigilant eyes visible. In a voice as soft as a fly, she said:

"Good Giant, there are so many nasty spirits here. Let's go back."

Chen Shouyi looked at the Shell Lady's timid appearance and laughed, "Weren't you always wanting to come here?"

"But, it's already sunset here, it's so scary!" The Shell Lady cowered in Chen Shouyi's embrace, clutching his T-shirt tightly with her small hands and said anxiously.

Countless glowing insects drifted like ribbons through the forest, resembling rivers floating in mid-air, eerie yet beautiful. Chen Shouyi glanced at them and withdrew his gaze, comforting:

"Don't worry, it's fine, we're very safe."

As long as he wasn't reckless, or unlucky enough to encounter some particularly powerful creatures, a Martial Artist like him could mostly ensure safety in the alternate world.

"Oh!" The Shell Lady replied softly, without further words, but widened her eyes even more and perked up her ears, warily watching the surrounding movements.

Chen Shouyi surveyed their surroundings, determined the direction, and strode forward.

The alternate world forest and Earth's forest were no different, filled with a chilly yet decaying scent.

Compared to his last visit, the temperature here had clearly dropped significantly.

The alternate world's winter was fast approaching!

As a mountain breeze blew through, the forest howled like ghosts and wolves, and Chen Shouyi, wearing a T-shirt, felt a chill.

A creature as massive as a Giant Wolf, using the cover of the wind, moved lightly and quietly through the trees, approaching silently, its ghostly eyes glowing with an elusive light in the darkness.

It had a sleek build, agile posture, strong and powerful limbs, and black shiny fur like smooth satin, reflecting a faint shimmer in the forest's speckled light.

It moved silently, blending into the darkness. As it neared, its steps grew softer, its mouth half-opened, exposing a mouth full of sharp teeth.

"Good Giant, a fierce Giant Beast is coming from behind," the Shell Lady said nervously in a soft voice.

Chen Shouyi didn't speak, just nodded slightly, as he too had sensed it, his right hand subtly resting on the sword hilt.

This "Giant Wolf" stealthily approached within five to six meters before leaping forward to attack, its entire smooth fur rippling like mercury. It lunged, jaws wide, aiming to bite Chen Shouyi's neck.

But just as it moved, Chen Shouyi turned around without warning, the cold Long Sword elongated rapidly like a silver light, forming a straight line with his arm.

The cold sword tip pierced instantly through its chin, passing through the jaw, finally exiting from the back of its head, its mouth securely jammed by the sword, limbs frantically kicking.

Chen Shouyi withdrew the sword, lifted it by the neck, weighing it for a moment.

It weighed over three hundred kilograms.

Took it on the road with him.

"With my current appetite, this should last for several days, and the fur can be skinned to use as a mattress."

...

Though half a year had passed, Chen Shouyi still remembered the path from the last time.

He walked quickly and, a dozen minutes later, reached the Fluorite Cave once more.

He pushed aside the vines concealing the cave entrance, entered with the Long Sword, and the beautiful glow inside decorated the cave with bizarre and fantastical colors, making it not at all dark.

A group of odd-looking small creatures, seeing Chen Shouyi enter, fled quickly in fright.

Clearly, during this time, there had already been a new owner here.

He threw the carcass on the ground, opened the bow bag, quickly assembled the War Bow, then set it aside.

For the following days, this would be his temporary abode.

...

As the sky gradually brightened, the morning forest was heavy with moisture, dew accumulated overnight continuously dripped down the vine leaves and flowers. The Shell Lady, all wet, lingered among the flowers of the vines, busy as a bee.

At night, she still shivered like a dog, huddled in a corner, motionless.

But as soon as the alternate world's sun came out, she immediately became full of energy, eagerly starting to collect nectar.

Outside the cave, after Chen Shouyi poured some gasoline, a pile of dry twigs and pampas grass finally began to burn.

These dry twigs and pampas grass were from the nest of the cave's original owner or the one before that; now they served as his barbecue firewood.

Once the firewood was lit with difficulty, he set up a hind leg skewered with a stick over a simple stone-built rack.

He opened the attribute panel, eyes falling on the stats.

Strength: 15.3

Agility: 15.2

Constitution: 16.1

Intelligence: 14.5

Perception: 13.3

Will: 14.0

"To gain so much, just from one night of training, my agility and constitution each increased by 0.1 points. Such results are astonishing," Chen Shouyi thought surprised.

"Three times Earth's gravity, a thousandfold richer Original Force, the alternate world is entirely a training paradise for me. I wonder about the results in the coming days?"

He flicked a finger, a bug flying in front of him was swiftly flicked away, smashing into a tree trunk and bursting into a bout of goo.

At this moment, Chen Shouyi's face showed a peculiar expression.

In his mind suddenly flashed a blurry image, a group of several hundred people, prostrated on the ground, praying loudly:

"Great God of Calamity, we beseech you to bless our tribe, for favorable weather, to harvest more food..."

It happened again!

This kind of occurrence used to appear only in dreams, he didn't expect it to appear when awake in the alternate world.

And it wasn't just stray Barbarians anymore, but an entire Barbarian Tribe.

This blurry image flickered briefly, like a radio with bad reception, quickly fading away. But Chen Shouyi knew it wasn't an illusion — the Barbarian Tribe from the Dongning Spatial Passage that he had haphazardly left behind was definitely conducting a ritual for him.

Chapter 268 - 255: Current State of the Barbarian Tribe

Chen Shouyi couldn't quite comprehend the Barbarian's thought process.

From scattered Barbarian believers to the entire tribe, how could development happen so quickly within just under a month?

It's almost like a plague.

Moreover, I've never even responded!

Could it be because I've become a divine creature?

Chen Shouyi pondered thoughtfully.

What piqued his curiosity even more was this mysterious way of information dissemination, completely ignoring spatial distance.

He eagerly wanted to enter the Book of Knowledge Space to see if there were any new changes inside?

However, he patiently waited for the hind leg to finish roasting before sprinkling it with the brought salt and pepper.

The meat from the otherworld was full of chewiness and carried an alluring fragrance. Although his roasting was mediocre, he still ate the entire hind leg without leaving a trace.

After breakfast, he laboriously pushed over a large boulder from nearby to block the cave's entrance, plunging the cave into darkness.

This wasn't Earth, where even if he lay comatose in a forest, no wild beast could gnaw at his body. But here, there were predators everywhere that could pose a threat to him.

If he got attacked by wild beasts while entering the Book of Knowledge Space, he'd truly die with regrets.

The Shell Lady had no objections to staying in the darkness. As a creature accustomed to hiding and seeking shelter, this was the kind of safe, secure nest where she could rest with peace of mind.

Of course, if the gaps were a bit smaller, that would be even better.

...

After finishing these tasks, Chen Shouyi found a clean spot to sit down, then closed his eyes and entered the Book of Knowledge Space.

He was surprised to find the space had expanded again and felt much brighter. Compared to the last time he entered a few days ago, it had expanded by two to three meters, reaching a radius of thirty meters, with a small World Tree at its center emitting a dim light.

An unusual gleam flashed in his eyes.

This change was quite significant!

At this moment, he felt an urge and looked up towards the sky.

He couldn't restrain his shock any longer.

The sky, once shrouded in gray mist and chaos, had transformed into a clear starry sky.

This was no metaphor; it had truly turned into a starry sky.

He saw dozens of stars emitting a crisp, pale silver light.

Some stars were bright, dazzling, while others were faint, indistinguishable unless looked at carefully.

One of the brightest stars caught his eye, and in a daze, he saw a Barbarian kneeling, praying loudly.

"Could this star represent a follower?"

He looked at each one and found that apart from the brightest star, he couldn't sense the others—they seemed to be shallow believers.

...

On the Barbarian Island near the Dongning Spatial Passage.

Still beneath the "Tree God."

The tree, which had lost its divinity, hadn't died; it remained verdant and impressive.

But the mysterious leaves that once gleamed like emeralds had turned into ordinary leaves, and the airflow that lingered between its branches had vanished without a trace, completely reduced to the mundane.

Similarly, the tribe no longer worshipped it.

Over two hundred Barbarians prostrated themselves around a three-meter-high crude stone statue, praying loudly.

The statue was quite simple and rough; it was impossible to discern its features, and its body proportions were severely distorted.

A young Wizard painted all over and dancing frenziedly, his face manic.

With the final blood sacrifice and the tribe's repeated prayers.

The stone statue finally emitted a hazy glow, spreading outward. As this Domain of Faith expanded, the Natural Spirits hidden within the earth fled quickly as if their butts were on fire; some weak spirits even had their soul bodies dissipate, turning into a weak energy that merged into this Domain of Faith.

The eerie atmosphere had completely vanished.

Many Barbarians felt a sense of awe and reverence; those who had initially doubted or even hated the "God of Calamity" quickly curled up their hearts, not daring to harbor any thoughts of desecration.

This was a god capable of killing the Tree God!

Stronger than the Tree God.

A breeze blew past, making the tree leaves rustle gently.

...

Ever since Chen Shouyi slaughtered most of the young adults in this tribe, the Barbarian's days had quickly become difficult.

The most direct manifestation was the rapid decrease in food. Previously, they would get by somehow.

But winter was fast approaching.

Due to elemental inertia, the world's winter was harsher than Earth's.

Most animals would reduce activity and begin hibernating. Usually, this time was when food was massively stored to prepare for winter. However, now, let alone storing food, the entire tribe couldn't even eat their fill.

Without adequate food, the tribe couldn't survive the cruel winter.

To worsen the situation, the Tree God lost its divinity and could no longer protect the tribe from the invasion of evil Natural Spirits.

There were several powerful Natural Spirits on this island.

Every night, they would emerge. They naturally had no impact on the robust Barbarians, but to those old and frail, they were like greedy leeches. Once entangled, the body would weaken day by day until death, eventually even the soul being devoured.

Since the Tree God's Domain of Faith dissipated, almost every few days, an elder would die.

The entire tribe fell into a state of panic.

The belief in the "God of Calamity" started as an act of a few terrified Barbarians secretly.

Many primitive beliefs often stem from fear and the unknown.

To the Barbarians, an alien with strange skin color, mysterious attire, and unmatched might and brutality perfectly fit the persona, gaining a mysterious aura in their imagination, becoming the embodiment of disaster and misfortune.

If Chen Shouyi hadn't become a divine creature, maybe over time, the fear lingering in the Barbarians' hearts would gradually fade, and the belief would rapidly vanish, ultimately forgotten in memory.

But there were no ifs.

The moment Chen Shouyi achieved divinity, during prayers, the Barbarians faintly sensed his presence.

What followed was a chain reaction.

Did the Barbarians have loyalty to the Tree God? Certainly, they did.

But it was more about practicality.

A god unable to protect the tribe's survival would never receive sincere devotion.

If the Tree God never showed anything divine, the Barbarians would accept it casually while still worshipping. But now that the Tree God lost its ability, aside from its still formidable presence, it was of no use!

At this moment, another "god" appeared within their view.

The Barbarians naturally switched camps in minutes.

As for integrity, in the face of cruel survival, what is that?

Can it be eaten?

Under the new Clan Leader, overcoming opposition, the entire tribe swiftly changed its faith in a short time.

Chapter 269 - Squandering Heaven's Gifts

"Am I being forcibly worshipped here?" He had a strange thought pass through his mind.

At this moment, he noticed that the light from the stars quickly dimmed, dropping several magnitudes in brightness. Earlier, Chen Shouyi could still see dozens of stars, but now only four or five were visible, and their light was extremely weak.

"Looks like the ritual is over!"

This change in brightness made Chen Shouyi feel that the ritual was like a concert, with an insane atmosphere during the performance, everyone going crazy, but once the curtain falls and people leave, the enthusiasm quickly cools and fades.

Chen Shouyi continued watching for a while before withdrawing his gaze. Apart from the initial novelty and excitement, he quickly found it rather dull.

He didn't feel a noticeable increase in strength, nor did he gain any extraordinary abilities.

Thinking about it, it made sense. There were only a few dozen believers in total, most of whom were temporarily elevated shallow believers. What could such a small number of believers achieve?

That small island probably had just about two hundred people left, and even if they all became believers, that's all it would amount to.

With this time, it'd be better to focus on cultivation.

As for these unfortunate believers, just let things take their natural course. Maybe they will come in handy one day.

After staying for a while, Chen Shouyi exited the Book of Knowledge Space.

...

After leaving the space, Chen Shouyi didn't continue cultivating but instead patiently removed safety hazards around the Shell Lady, one by one.

"Here, there's a fierce Giant Beast inside. Quickly, kill it!" Shell Lady shouted nervously as she squatted on Chen Shouyi's shoulder.

Chen Shouyi glanced at the small hole the size of an arm on the ground and stomped heavily on it.

"Boom."

The pressured air exploded, and the ground flipped over like an explosion, making a grand scene.

The flying mud droplets hadn't yet splashed onto Chen Shouyi's body when they were halted in mid-air by his will, then fell like raindrops.

He was now increasingly adept at using his will, although it didn't provide much combat strength, it was quite useful for assisting with small tasks.

"Is it still alive?"

Shell Lady tilted her ear, listened carefully for a while, then exclaimed excitedly, "You killed it."

"There's another one here!" Her small hand immediately pointed to a distant place and said loudly.

Chen Shouyi immediately walked over and stomped forcefully again.

...

In the blink of an eye, he had stayed here for six sunrises and sunsets.

Outside the cave, wearing only shorts, his body blurred like a phantom, rapidly changing positions. The Long Sword flashed in the air, leaving trails of shadows, accompanied by fierce winds that spread out centered around his body.

Suddenly, his body seemed to elongate, swiftly crossing seven to eight meters in an instant.

With a loud "boom."

The Long Sword pierced into a big tree that required two people to wrap their arms around, creating a small hole.

Chen Shouyi withdrew the sword and stopped. Sweat slid down his taut chest muscles as he picked up a towel, wiping off the sweat, and thought: "Earth's time has almost passed ten days; I should go back."

During this period of training in the otherworld, his progress was remarkable; his strength and agility both increased by 0.3 points, reaching 15.6 and 15.4, even his physique and perception improved by 0.1 points, reaching 16.2 and 13.4.

Including the first night, his attributes increased by a total of 1 point.

He clenched his fists forcefully, causing the air to explode with a loud sound:

"Now my strength is over nine hundred kilograms, only a step away from the Martial Artist's evaluation standard of one thousand kilograms, just about 0.1 attribute point difference, which can easily be reached in about ten days to half a month on Earth."

"However, my agility is far higher than the Martial Artist standard. If I were to fight closely with Sun Mengyuan now, the battle would probably end in just a few moves."

...

Seeing Chen Shouyi stop, Shell Lady blushed, holding a crystal about the same size as her, and slowly flew over, working hard to reach the front of Chen Shouyi:

"Hey giant, help me check if this is a gem?"

Chen Shouyi took it from her hand and found it to be a roughly octahedral transparent crystal, seemingly carefully wiped clean by Shell Lady, appearing clear and bright, full of luster.

Moreover, under the morning light, it emitted enchanting colors.

He glanced at it and said decisively, "No!"

Then casually tossed it to the ground.

What is a gem?

Glass Beads and Crystal Balls are gems!

If she picked up any stone as a gem, the entire value system would collapse.

How could anyone deceive later?

So, anything that doesn't meet the Glass Bead standard is garbage!

Even true gems must be decisively discarded as garbage!

"Oh!"

Shell Lady looked at the transparent crystal thrown to the ground like rubbish by the giant, her small face immediately drooped, and she responded dejectedly, then quickly flew away from Chen Shouyi's shoulder.

While Shell Lady was not paying attention, Chen Shouyi immediately picked up the crystal beneath his foot, quietly looking at it under the sunlight:

"Could this be a diamond?" He assessed the uniquely lustrous octahedral crystal, feeling a bit unsettled.

Just as Chen Shouyi planned to test its hardness with something, a faint voice spoke from behind.

"Giant, what are you doing?"

Feeling guilty, Chen Shouyi was startled, his grip instinctively tightened, and the Crystal Stone he held was thoroughly crushed.

He turned around casually and said, "Nothing!"

Shell Lady darted him a suspicious glance and quickly flew away.

Skulking around all day, giving me a fright!

Chen Shouyi cursed inwardly.

He looked at the powdered fingers and rubbed them stealthily. Suddenly, he felt a slight itch, quickly opened his hand, and upon blowing away the powder, he was shocked to find slight cuts on his skin.

"Hiss, such hard material, could it really be a diamond?" Chen Shouyi sucked in a cold breath.

Given his nightly relentless practice, his skin had become incredibly tough, estimating that even a Martial Artist, wielding a regular Long Sword, would struggle to pierce his thick skin with a powerful lunge.

This powder, being able to cut his skin, was clearly not ordinary crystal.

It was probably indeed a diamond.

Reflecting on how he had just crushed a Glass Bead-sized high-grade diamond into powder, he couldn't help but feel a toothache.

...

The otherworld's sun gradually slanted to the west as he checked his watch, calculating Earth's time.

Looking at how Shell Lady kept searching tirelessly among the rubble, he couldn't help but think about the crushed diamond, and retorted irritably:

"Let's go!"

Shell Lady flew onto Chen Shouyi's shoulder, then landed lightly, saying, "Giant, where are we going?"

"Going home!"

"I've been wanting to return, it's too dangerous here." Shell Lady exclaimed excitedly.

Look at that cowardice.

While walking, Chen Shouyi casually squeezed the neck of a dangling exotic snake flat and tossed it far away.

Chapter 270 - Model Brother

The soldiers at the base were astonished to see Chen Shouyi emerge.

Ten days had passed, and they thought this powerful explorer had tragically perished, yet he was still alive and unharmed.

Chen Shouyi didn't plan to make a big scene. After exiting the tunnel, he rode his bicycle away from the place.

On Earth, it was already morning.

Chen Shouyi caught the scent of breakfast from a nearby shop, and couldn't help but salivate.

He had been surviving in the wilderness for ten days, eating nothing but various kinds of grilled meat every day.

Initially, the flavor was quite good, making Chen Shouyi feel a unique taste and wilderness charm. But eating the same thing every meal, every day? Even the best dishes would make anyone sick of them. This urgent need to venture out definitely played a part.

He parked his bicycle and walked inside.

"What would you like to eat?" a charming lady owner soon came over to serve him.

"One bowl of salty soybean milk, three pieces of fried dough sticks, two baskets of soup dumplings," Chen Shouyi looked at the menu.

He was not as hearty as he used to be; his appetite was shrinking, now similar to an average person, perhaps due to the absorption of Power of Faith.

"Please wait a moment!" the lady owner said with a smile. She soon twisted her hips and first brought two baskets of soup dumplings.

"Chen Shouyi?"

As soon as Chen Shouyi began to eat, he suddenly heard a familiar voice. He looked towards the entrance and stood up in surprise, saying, "Teacher Wang, what a coincidence!"

He didn't expect to see his Martial Arts tutoring teacher here.

She was wearing a short-sleeved sports outfit, her hair in a ponytail, looking a bit reserved, unlike the casual attitude she had before, "I live nearby, so I come here for breakfast every day."

"Don't just stand there, come over and sit!" Chen Shouyi invited.

Wang Ruyue hesitated a bit, then sat down in front of him, arranging the hair falling over her temples with her white fingers, "Haven't seen you for a long time. Bai Xiaoling told me you've become a great Martial Artist."

Chen Shouyi was slightly stunned, remembering they were good friends. But this news seemed somewhat outdated. "Yes."

The nearby diners couldn't help but gaze curiously and with respect as they heard the two talking.

For ordinary people, Martial Artists were already awe-inspiring, not to mention great Martial Artists, whom most people never even met.

Wang Ruyue found herself unaccustomed to the identity change, and the conversation suddenly froze.

The once shy, bashful teenager from her coaching classes had now shed his innocence, becoming someone she looked up to.

...

When Chen Shouyi returned home, it was almost seven o'clock, and his parents and sister were surprisingly all there.

"Mom, Dad, I'm back."

"Where did you go these days without telling us?" Mrs. Chen said with discontent upon seeing him return.

As her son's strength and status improved, she wasn't as strict as before. But disappearing silently for ten days still made her somewhat unhappy.

"Just wandered around casually to relax." Chen Shouyi knew he was at fault and laughed dryly, "It was a spur of the moment decision, didn't have time to inform you."

"Next time you are going out, tell us properly first, let us be prepared, not that we're stopping you!" Chen Dawei remarked.

Chen Xingyue covered her mouth, snickering mischievously.

"Got it!" Chen Shouyi honestly lowered his head and admitted his mistake.

He then silently glared at Chen Xingyue, feeling like he wasted his money, before changing the topic: "Are you all going out?"

"Jiangnan Martial Arts Academy is expanding enrollment. Today, anyone under twenty-five can sign up if they are a Martial Arts Apprentice. Your sister should have been guaranteed admission to the Capital City, but things have been delayed. Moreover, the Capital City is far from Hedong, and being uninformed about incidents is not ideal. It's better to study close to home. Since you're here, accompany her there, would you?" Chen Dawei said.

Chen Shouyi's heart skipped a beat hearing this.

Once she's at the Martial Arts Academy, it's hard to hide his sister's strength.

Ah, forget it.

He sighed inwardly slightly, realizing one shouldn't be so selfish. He couldn't control his sister's life, "Alright! Go ahead with your plans."

Chen Shouyi put the luggage and Shell Lady in the bedroom, took a shower, and changed clothes.

The two rode their bicycles out the door.

"Brother, do you think there'll be an interview to enroll?"

"Probably!" Chen Shouyi replied nonchalantly.

"Do you have connections at the Martial Arts Academy?"

"Not sure!"

"How can you be unsure? Either you know someone or you don't!" Chen Xingyue said excitedly, pestering him nonstop.

"Then no, I don't know anyone." Chen Shouyi said helplessly.

Is it really that exciting?

Is it really that thrilling?

Passing by a recruiting office, there was a long queue outside, consisting of people his age and some in their twenties or thirties. Chen Shouyi glanced at them and then asked Chen Xingyue:

"Heard any news lately?"

Chen Xingyue replied, "The newspaper said they're planning to reclaim Ningzhou and Dongning soon!"

Chen Shouyi nodded, remaining silent.

...

Ten minutes later, the two reached the Martial Arts Academy.

The area was bustling with people, all here to register.

"So many people?"

Chen Shouyi was slightly surprised at the sight; everywhere he looked, there were crowds.

"Since the release of the revised Body Refinement 36 Styles six months ago, the number of Martial Arts Apprentices has evidently started exploding."

Following the signs, the two soon arrived at the registration point.

Each of the five registration points had long queues.

"Brother, I'll go queue up first," Chen Xingyue said.

"Okay!" Chen Shouyi nodded, then walked to a nearby flower bed, squatting down casually with a bored expression.

A Martial Arts Teacher in charge of maintaining order occasionally glanced at Chen Shouyi, growing increasingly familiar.

The stare from the older man made Chen Shouyi somewhat uncomfortable. He looked up and glanced quickly at him, "Can I help you with something?"

Suddenly, a pressure washed over. The teacher instinctively swallowed, convinced it was him. He hastily approached, respectfully asking, "Are you General Manager Chen?"

"You know me?" Chen Shouyi asked, puzzled.

"When the academy was sealed last time, I saw you from a distance," the Martial Arts Teacher hurriedly explained.

Chen Shouyi instantly understood.

"What's your visit about?" the Martial Arts Teacher probed.

"I'm here accompanying my sister to register,"

"Such a matter, a word would suffice. You shouldn't have to visit personally; allow me to arrange it for you."

"That would be greatly appreciated!" Chen Shouyi stood up and said.

"It's my pleasure, absolutely!"

"Let's step aside to chat," Chen Shouyi proposed, struck by an idea.

The two moved to a corner, where Chen Shouyi expressed, "My sister's quite strong, capable of Martial Artist level at least. But she's young, lacks a solid foundation, and needs more experience. I personally hope for slow testing for Martial Artist status.

Becoming a Martial Artist is quite risky, with deadly fights, not suitable for a girl of her age."

"Your sister is fortunate to have such a brother!" the Martial Arts Teacher praised, "Rest assured, General Manager Chen, I understand now. Even as a Martial Artist, she can undertake teaching roles, which is much safer."

Chen Shouyi felt satisfied with this reply, then called Chen Xingyue, "Xing Yue, don't queue, come over!"

...

On the way back.

"Brother, didn't you say you didn't know anyone at the Martial Arts Academy?" Chen Xingyue asked, feeling her brother's appeal was particularly endearing today.

"I really don't know anyone; what can I do if others know me," Chen Shouyi replied indifferently.

"Brother, can you stop showing off!"

Chen Shouyi snorted coldly, that's considered showing off? I haven't actually started bragging yet!

If you knew I was a Martial Artist, your jaw would definitely drop.