

New Era 341

Chapter 341: Critical Strike

Looking at the mystical long sword, Chen Shouyi's hands were itching to try it. He glanced at the Shell Lady, who was sleeping soundly on the bed, and cautiously began to test the sword.

He couldn't tell if it was an illusion, but as his will brushed over it repeatedly, the long sword, initially awkward, became increasingly comfortable, gradually feeling like a part of his body, merging seamlessly together.

A few minutes later, he stopped:

"From now on, I'll use this sword!" he thought to himself.

As for the Black Sword, he decided that he would give it to his sister once her strength grew a bit more.

The Black Sword wasn't light either, weighing at least ten kilograms, which is still on the heavier side for a Martial Artist.

He walked to the bathroom, took a never-used towel, wiped off non-existent dust from the blade, and then inserted it into the sword scabbard with great care and importance.

...

At the crack of dawn, Tang Shaoquan, along with two other Martial Artists, got off the troop transport and, dragging their weary bodies, walked into the logistics base with the soldiers.

They had battled all night, mostly defending against Barbarian assaults with the occasional bow pull; close combat was rare. Yet, even so, after several consecutive days, this young prestigious warrior was feeling the strain, his figure noticeably thinner.

"Brother Quan, that shot earlier was amazing, you were incredible! How did you know the Barbarian was hiding behind the wall?" a fairly attractive female Martial Artist asked in admiration.

"Experience, observation, and intuition, it's hard to explain. You'll understand once you've fought enough!" Tang Shaoquan responded with a slight smile, calmly.

He enjoyed being a mentor, especially to female Martial Artists who admired him, which always filled him with joy.

At just twenty-six years old, he was the newly appointed prestigious warrior of Pingzhou City, following the relaxed examination standards over the past year.

This did not undermine his strength and talent.

Even at the age of twenty-six, he wasn't considered old amongst new Martial Artists, and among prestigious warriors, he was extremely young. He might even have a chance to become a Martial Artist in the future.

"Brother Quan speaks the truth, but he's too modest. Without talent, no amount of battle experience would matter. People like me, no matter how much we fight, stand no chance," another middle-aged Martial Artist flattered him.

Tang Shaoquan was pleased with the compliment, a slight smile appearing at the corner of his mouth.

"General Tang!"

"Brother Quan!"

Along the way, Martial Artists who knew him occasionally greeted him, and Tang Shaoquan reciprocated with nods and gestures.

He was the sole prestigious warrior in Pingzhou, and over the past year, he had steadily built his reputation. Although he didn't know many Martial Artists personally, there were few who didn't recognize him.

The group was both exhausted and hungry, and without bothering to shower, they headed directly to the first underground floor's cafeteria. It was bustling and crowded, filled with noisy chatter, and the air was thick with the pungent smell of sweat.

"Brother Quan, why don't you save us a spot; we'll go get the food," the middle-aged Martial Artist suggested with a smile.

Tang Shaoquan nodded, fished out his Martial Artist Certificate, handed it over, and found an empty spot to sit down.

In times of war, even as a prestigious warrior, he couldn't enjoy any particular privileges. He had to dine with the officers and soldiers in the cafeteria, though with his Martial Artist Certificate, he could get slightly larger portions of food.

During that time, he nodded greetings to several more Martial Artists. Within ten minutes, the food was brought over.

Besides a large bowl of pork, everything else was vegetables, along with a big bucket of rice.

"The Martial Artist Certificate is really useful!" the female Martial Artist said with a smile, "The cooking soldier didn't even notice at first, mistaking it for three Martial Artist Certificates. I felt the portions were off and immediately pointed out there was a Martial Artist Certificate among them. As a result, they added two more scoops of braised pork and increased the portions of other dishes as well."

Now, with the entire city's paralysis, the suburban and rural areas were unsafe. Except for ample grain reserves, the supply of other meats and vegetables was quite tight.

"Of course. Brother Quan is the only prestigious warrior in Pingzhou, and how many are there across Jiangnan Province? I'd guess less than twenty in total, with none younger than Brother Quan," the middle-aged Martial Artist quickly added, laughing.

"Alright, enough," Tang Shaoquan playfully chided, "There are plenty better than me, I heard there's even a Martial Artist in Hedong!"

Although he didn't elaborate, he tacitly acknowledged the other's comments.

He knew his abilities couldn't match those veteran prestigious warriors, but he was definitely the youngest among them, at least in Jiangnan Province.

"Wow, he's so handsome!" the female Martial Artist whispered.

Tang Shaoquan had just lifted a piece of braised pork, thinking it was about him, and glanced at her with puzzled eyes, only to find she wasn't looking at him at all.

He felt a sense of deflation and immediately followed her gaze.

A dashing young man, with a bow case slung over his shoulder and a long sword at his waist, walked into the cafeteria with the stride of a dragon and a tiger. Next to him, a middle-aged man was chattering enthusiastically, and the young man occasionally responded with a faint smile, nodding slightly.

Tang Shaoquan couldn't help but furrow his brows slightly—who was this young man?

He recognized the middle-aged man; he was the logistics minister of the military district, one of the high-ranking officials.

Those uninformed might see it as a spectacle; the informed see the subtleties.

The man's steps were light and smooth, like a leisurely walking leopard, exuding a sharp aura yet bearing an air of detachment, as if none of the people here mattered to him.

"...We've prepared meals in the VIP room; the conditions are simple, I hope you don't mind, General Consultant."

"Minister Wang, you're too kind, anything will do."

...

The two passed nearby, and Tang Shaoquan's group overheard a snippet.

After the two walked away.

The middle-aged Martial Artist withdrew his gaze and asked curiously, "General Consultant? Could it be that this person is a prestigious warrior from another place here to support us? That treatment is incredible!"

"Well, after all, they're here to support us from afar; it's understandable to treat them well," rebutted the female Martial Artist.

Tang Shaoquan said nothing, feeling somewhat displeased.

Although he understood that someone coming all the way to Pingzhou to support them deserved better treatment, the disparity was too great.

He, too, was a prestigious warrior, yet he could only sit in a foul-smelling cafeteria, and already considered a bowl of braised pork a delicacy. Meanwhile, others could enjoy a private room, possibly with lavishly cooked gourmet meals.

After a few bites of food, the logistics minister returned.

Tang Shaoquan quickly waved him over: "Minister Wang, come chat with me."

Minister Wang, seeing Tang Shaoquan, walked over with a smile: "General Tang, I didn't notice you earlier. Are you satisfied with the food? If it's not enough, just let the cook know."

"Haha, that's what you said, so I'll be sure to mention your name," Tang Shaoquan joked before casually asking, "By the way, who was that person you were with earlier?"

"I knew you'd ask; that fellow is incredible! We finally managed to invite a Martial Artist from Hedong!" remarked Minister Wang, genuinely enthused about chatting: "You've heard of the God of Hunting, right? Just yesterday, he killed the God of Hunting's avatar, and I heard the entire street looked like it had been hit by artillery fire."

Everyone was astonished, left speechless with surprise.

Tang Shaoquan's smile also froze: "God... God of Hunting, he's a Martial Artist?"

"Of course, and he's said to be only eighteen years old. Probably the youngest Martial Artist not just in the country, but globally," Minister Wang replied with a look of awe. "The commander even issued special instructions yesterday for us to warmly welcome him."

There were immediately gasping sounds all around.

Afterwards, Tang Shaoquan completely lost track of when Minister Wang left or when he sat down.

Chapter 342: Light of Civilization

In the parking lot of a building.

A thick layer of dust has accumulated on the numerous abandoned cars here, and the air is filled with a strong bloody scent.

"Clang!"

Chen Shouyi wiped his sword and sheathed it, gripping the hilt, his face cold as he quickly walked out of the parking lot.

Behind him, five barbarian corpses were still twitching incessantly.

Five days had already passed.

Now, fewer and fewer barbarians were coming out, the stupid and bold ones had died early on, and the remaining barbarians began to hide.

Parking lots, buildings, woods in parks, sewers, even lakes—wherever you can think of, all became their hiding places.

Many barbarians, in order to avoid human extermination, even resorted to feeding on rotten corpses, not just human corpses but also those of their kind.

In the past five days, the number of barbarians that died at the hands of Chen Shouyi had exceeded two hundred.

Even mighty warriors at the Martial Master Level had just killed five.

It's not that the proportion of strong individuals among the barbarians was that high, but rather that the strong ones survived wars more easily.

Chen Shouyi had just reached the entrance.

At this moment, the air shook, and a figure wielding a long spear suddenly charged at Chen Shouyi with a roar.

Chen Shouyi seemed to have expected it, his expression unchanged, merely tilting his body backward. A bright flash of sword-light flickered by in an instant. His body paused slightly, but his steps did not stop as he continued walking forward.

Two steps later, a body split in two fell to the ground, one after the other.

The barbarian wasn't dead yet, black water gurgled from his mouth, roaring hoarsely: "Human... I curse you."

A hint of mockery flashed at the corner of Chen Shouyi's mouth as he quickly left.

As he walked, he checked his attribute panel.

Strength: 16.7

Agility: 17.6

Constitution: 16.7

Intelligence: 15.9

Perception: 14.3+3.1

Will: 16.0

Energy Accumulation: 7.01

There had been no progress in his attributes these days, except for a 0.1 point increase in Will, everything else remained static.

This was quite unaccustomed for Chen Shouyi, who progressed rapidly in Hedong City as if flying by airplane.

He somewhat regretted not bringing the Divine Blood Soil along.

Otherwise, he could have added a few attributes.

He loosened his grip on the sword hilt, and his perception range instantly shrank. He felt his brain, as if relieved of a heavy burden, quickly relaxed.

During the past days of battle, he discovered that this sword had both advantages and disadvantages.

While amplifying perception, it also increased the burden on the brain.

Combined with the amplification, perception reached 17.4, far exceeding the 15.9 intelligence. Holding the sword, an overwhelming amount of detailed information within a dozen meters around him flooded into his brain.

Although this information was somewhat screened and weakened, it was still a heavy burden, bearable for a short period, but over time, it made him feel dizzy, with slow thinking.

Fortunately, it didn't affect him much in battle.

After all, reaching Chen Shouyi's level of strength, each battle took only one or two seconds, at most a dozen seconds, half a minute, quite short.

But if he practiced, it obviously couldn't be used.

...

Chen Shouyi stayed in Pingzhou for a full fourteen days before the war was nearing its end.

Although barbarians could still be occasionally found, things had generally settled down.

...

Safe Zone.

When Chen Shouyi got off the helicopter and walked out of the building, looking at the bustling and lively street, he couldn't help but feel a sense of life as if a lifetime had passed. Nearly half a month had gone by, and the Safe Zone seemed to have undergone new changes.

The gasoline lamps on the street were gone.

They had been replaced by light bulbs from before the mutation.

The shops on both sides also seemed to have become more numerous, more bustling.

"Are you lost?" Perhaps because Chen Shouyi had been standing by the roadside for a while, a kind-hearted young girl blushed and asked.

"Oh, no, I just returned from outside and things seem to have changed quite a bit. Has this place been electrified?" Chen Shouyi snapped back and replied with a smile.

"No wonder, the electricity was turned on here just a week ago. It's a pity you missed it; there was even a special lifting of the curfew that day, and the streets were very lively!" The young girl said, very naturally.

"That's really nice!" Chen Shouyi replied happily.

"That's not all, now even the telephone is connected, although for now only street lights are operational, and only government offices have phones. But according to the newspapers, it won't be long before we can return to the pre-mutation state," the girl said optimistically.

Actually, it's not going to be that fast, just the chip issue alone can't be resolved quickly.

Before the mutation, nearly all chips were low-voltage, with most operating at 5V, some as low as 3V, or even 1.5V or lower. The lower the voltage, the smaller the line width of the chip could be made, allowing more elements and circuits to be integrated, while also reducing discharge issues.

But at fifteen hundred volts, these chips would immediately explode.

(Using a transformer to lower the voltage would prevent circuit interference from working.)

To recover to the past essentially means rebuilding an industrial system.

...

Chen Shouyi hurriedly returned home to find it empty.

His sister seemed to still be at school, and his parents were at the store.

He took out his key and opened the bedroom door, immediately realizing it had been tampered with.

The ceiling lamp that he had shattered before had been replaced with a new one, even the broken floor was repaired, and there was a clunky wooden-framed telephone on the desk—had it not been for the receiver, he might have thought it was a wooden box.

Chen Shouyi didn't mind it.

It was evident that during his absence, the City Government had sent someone to install it and repair the floor on the side.

Eagerly, he put down his luggage, found the switch on the wall, and pressed it.

The dazzling light bulb instantly lit up.

Staring at the long-lost light, he became somewhat dazed, filled with a complex emotion.

Although he had heard news of the electrification on the way, seeing it with his own eyes was different.

Electricity is almost the cornerstone of human civilization. Since its disappearance after the mutation, human civilization had regressed by at least a century overnight; communications, electronics, computing industries all collapsed, along with chemical and metallurgy, all paralyzed.

The power of humanity was reduced by a hundredfold; within a year, human civilization was already on the verge.

Thankfully, everything held together.

Gazing at this light of civilization, Chen Shouyi suddenly realized that the darkest days had passed!

The future will surely get better!

He turned off the light and lay down on the bed, inhaling the familiar scent, as a tense string inside him slowly loosened.

Having been on the move outside for nearly half a month, accompanied daily by killing and death, seeing nothing but corpses—both barbarians' and even more humans',—even with his strong will, he felt mentally exhausted. Now, he could finally relax.

Lying down for a good ten minutes, he finally got up and released the Shell Lady.

"We are finally back, Great Giant!" she exclaimed excitedly, jumping off Chen Shouyi's palm and then onto the bed, bouncing up and down.

Chapter 343: Two Baldies (Double-Length)

After resting for a while, Chen Shouyi headed to the restaurant.

Father Chen and Mrs. Chen were overjoyed to see Chen Shouyi return, and immediately started questioning him.

Was it dangerous? Were you hurt?

How was the food and accommodation?

"I just followed behind the army every day, pulling arrows, doing minor tasks, nothing dangerous at all. They were quite warm over there, with the best food and housing, and they even arranged a serviceman to take special care of me!" Chen Shouyi laughed and downplayed, as every time he went out, it was the time his parents worried most.

If he were to boast saying, "I swung my blade every day, killing Barbarians till rivers of blood flowed, and even killed the host body of the God of Hunting," it would only invite unnecessary trouble.

"That's good, that's good! Don't try to stand out in everything, don't get hot-headed and play the hero, we don't want you to be a hero!" Mrs. Chen said with reddened eyes.

"You haven't been home for half a month, your mom hasn't slept well for several nights, constantly worrying about you." Father Chen added.

"It's like you weren't worried yourself; who was it that anxiously went to ask Officer Bai?"

"Dad, Mom, don't worry, I'm quite clever! People run towards me, but I don't. When facing danger, I'm the first to run, and no one can run faster than me!" Chen Shouyi quickly patted his chest to assure them:

"Besides, as a Martial Artist, as long as I'm not facing a Barbarian God, there's nothing to worry about, really." Chen Shouyi was clear,

"What Martial Artist!?" Father Chen curiously said, "Aren't you a Great Martial Artist?"

"Uh!" Only then did Chen Shouyi realize he had accidentally let it slip.

Oh well, he decided not to hide it any longer.

Chen Shouyi chuckled awkwardly: "Becoming a Martial Artist is a recent thing, I just forgot to tell you."

"You sure have a big heart, forgetting such a major thing!" Mrs. Chen lightly complained with disbelief on her face: "Doesn't that make you like that Colonel?"

"Colonel Xiao!" Father Chen quickly reminded.

"Yes, yes, the same as Colonel Xiao?" Mrs. Chen asked somewhat dazedly.

Regarding Xiao Changming, the authorities didn't categorize it clearly, and announcing his death could dampen public morale, so the newspapers had always kept silent. The two elders didn't know that the combat hero Xiao Changming, who was extensively publicized not long ago, had already died.

"Almost!" Chen Shouyi said.

"The certificate, quickly, let me see it!" Mrs. Chen urged.

Chen Shouyi helplessly took out his wallet and pulled out the certificate. Just as Father Chen was about to take it, Mrs. Chen snatched it away quickly and opened it up.

The certificate bore the stamp of the Provincial Government.

Several gilded characters.

Appearing quite prominent.

"Master-level Martial Artist, it really is a Martial Artist. This can't be fake, can it?" Mrs. Chen muttered.

Thanks to last time's newspaper report on Xiao Changming, her concept of a Martial Artist was no longer vague, knowing it was the highest level of Martial Artist.

It's just, how could her own son be a Martial Artist?

Shouldn't a Martial Artist be someone who looks solemn and dignified, high above, instilling awe?

Whereas her own son, he doesn't look like it at all.

Where's the semblance of a Martial Artist? Where's the majesty?

Never mind a Martial Artist, even her son's previous Great Martial Artist status, sometimes she doubted had a lot of exaggeration; he hasn't been a Martial Artist for long, just about a year, if it's so simple to become a Martial Artist, the whole of Hedong would be full of them.

Chen Shouyi felt speechless at his mom's doubt, quickly saying, "Of course it's real, I gain nothing from faking it. Would I?"

"Really?" Mrs. Chen still doubted.

"Really!" Chen Shouyi confirmed without a doubt.

"Alright, you've looked for a minute, let me see now!" Chen Dawei said eagerly.

"Here, here, what's the rush?"

Father Chen took it and examined it repeatedly, then noticed something amiss: "Hey, why is the date in May!"

Mrs. Chen immediately looked at Chen Shouyi.

Even though Chen Shouyi was a Martial Artist who killed countless Barbarians, he still felt nervous facing his mom. He gave an awkward laugh: "I just forgot to mention it!"

"Always dealing with such unreliable stuff!" Mrs. Chen softly scolded, but there was a smile on her face.

Chen Shouyi could only awkwardly scratch his head.

The two elders looked for quite a while before Chen Shouyi could take back the certificate and suddenly remembered something, reminding them: "Oh right, don't tell my sister that I'm a Martial Artist now."

"Isn't this great news? Why can't we say it?" Chen Dawei asked puzzledly.

"Right, better not say it, Xing Yue isn't a Martial Artist yet, and her character is strong, she might not take it well." Mrs. Chen realized and said.

"Agreed, then let's not mention it." Chen Dawei thought it made sense.

Chen Shouyi initially wanted to explain, but seeing the two elders already had it figured out in their minds, he gladly saved his breath.

...

By now, it was almost evening, the two elders closed the shop early, letting Chen Shouyi head back first. Shortly after, they wheeled out the tricycle to go buy groceries at the market.

"Boss Chen, not doing business today?" asked the neighboring BBQ shop owner with a smile as he saw the scene.

"Our son returned from out of town!" Chen Dawei responded cheerfully.

"Then it's definitely time to head back." The BBQ shop owner replied politely.

From his observations over this period, he found that this couple had an unbelievably deep background. Even though they ran a small fast-food restaurant and seemed as busy as ordinary people, there were clearly people protecting them both openly and secretly nearby.

The most obvious indicator was the post across from their shop.

Of course, posts aren't rare.

Chapter 344: Two Bald Heads (Double-Length)

These are not peaceful times; the situation around here is tense, with soldiers standing guard almost every hundred or two hundred meters. Normal posts generally have only two soldiers, but this one spot has as many as five.

He didn't notice this abnormality at first.

Until one time there was a conflict at a nearby restaurant.

It wasn't a big conflict, just that during the lunch rush, someone forgot to bring a customer's food, and the other party got a little fiery, standing up and cursing.

Normally, such disputes wouldn't involve the police, let alone soldiers.

As it turned out, just when the lady of the couple was about to come over to apologize, the soldiers opposite rushed into the shop. Two soldiers pinned the customer to the ground, and the other three pointed guns at him.

The customer had never seen such a scene and was scared pale on the spot, his body going limp. After being dragged away by the soldiers and interrogated for a while, he was finally released.

Afterward, he understood that this family was not to be offended.

...

Chen Shouyi had just returned home when Chen Xingyue came in, exclaiming joyfully at the sight of him, "Brother, you're back?"

"Yes! Just got back this afternoon."

"What task did you do? Why were you gone for so long this time?"

"What other tasks could it be, hunting Barbarians!" Chen Shouyi stretched lazily, enjoying a moment of relaxation.

"Barbarians... are they easy to kill?" Chen Xingyue asked curiously.

"What do you think? If you're lucky, you meet ordinary Barbarians, and a Martial Artist's skill might barely suffice. But if you're unlucky and encounter the strong ones, Martial Artists are no match, only Great Martial Artists have any real chance of survival." Chen Shouyi habitually emphasized the dangers of becoming a Martial Artist.

"Isn't that exaggerating? When it comes to the use of power, Barbarians are far inferior to humans, and a Martial Artist can handle a Barbarian with the physical qualities of a Great Martial Artist!" Chen Xingyue was somewhat skeptical.

"Do you know how many Martial Artists have died in Hedong City this year?"

"How many?"

Chen Shouyi held up one finger: "Just from what I've seen or heard of, there are already fifty, and it's likely several times that number. Even a few Great Martial Artists have died, and many people I used to know are now nowhere to be seen."

"So many!" Chen Xingyue was shocked upon hearing this. These facts are never mentioned in class, nor is there a way to learn about them.

"Don't tell our parents about this, to avoid them worrying."

"I understand, brother!" Chen Xingyue said solemnly after a moment of silence.

...

In the evening, the restaurant was illuminated by bright incandescent lights.

Father Chen and Mrs. Chen were beaming with joy, constantly urging Chen Shouyi to eat more.

Meanwhile, Chen Xingyue seemed a bit absent-minded.

The instigator, Chen Shouyi, felt secretly satisfied.

A little harsh education is good, otherwise she'd think that becoming a Martial Artist is so glorious and romantic.

This is a path of blood and death. He couldn't care less about others, but he couldn't watch his sister step onto this dangerous path.

Safety is more important than anything.

During the meal, Mrs. Chen reminded Chen Shouyi that his hair was getting long and that he should get a haircut.

He agreed readily.

After dinner.

Chen Shouyi returned to his bedroom.

After helping the Shell Lady with her bath, Chen Shouyi also took a shower.

As he dried his body and looked in the mirror, he noticed that his hair had indeed grown quite long, almost covering his ears.

He ran his hand through his hair, feeling troubled. As his physique improved, his hair became increasingly tough.

Three months ago, he went to a barbershop for a buzz cut.

But the barber had to change the blade three times and took a full two hours.

If it weren't for the money.

The barber might have gone crazy.

Now, three months later, his physique had improved again, and no amount of money would help if he went for a haircut again.

"Looks like I have to do it myself, it's more self-sufficient!" Chen Shouyi thought to himself.

He gave it some thought, picked up a sword, stood in front of the mirror, carefully pinched a tuft of hair, and cut it off.

The sword was very sharp, and the hair hadn't been subjected to the Thirty-six Horizontal Training Techniques, so it was easily cut off.

In no time, he had cut off a large section of hair from his forehead.

He messed up his hair, glanced at the mirror, and his face turned dark.

He had clearly overestimated his barbering skills, with uneven sections on his forehead.

"It should still be salvageable!" Chen Shouyi thought to himself.

He immediately began careful trimming, but after ten minutes, he completely gave up.

The more he tried to repair it, the worse it got.

"Damn it, might as well shave it all off." He looked at his chewed-up forehead and grew determined.

He didn't believe he couldn't shave a bald head properly.

A bald head was much simpler.

He held the sword gently and scraped, and large clumps of hair began to fall.

A few minutes later, a shiny bald head appeared in the mirror.

He touched his smooth scalp, feeling a tinge of melancholy.

But still as handsome!

Of course, he never cared about that.

...

He gathered the fallen hair with his will, tossed it into the trash, and then walked out of the bathroom.

The Shell Lady, who had been playing with the glass bead, took one look at him and immediately jumped, tossing the bead and diving under the bed in a panic.

Chen Shouyi couldn't help but laugh at the Shell Lady's intense reaction.

"Alright, no need to hide, it's me." Chen Shouyi said with good humor.

It took a while before the Shell Lady timidly peeked out from under the bed, her eyes evading and hesitating. After recognizing him, she relaxed and emerged:

"Scared Little One to death, I thought the bad giant had come." She patted her chest with lingering fear and complained:

"Good giant, why has your hair disappeared!"

"I cut it off!" Chen Shouyi said.

The Shell Lady widened her eyes, touched her long hair, and asked in confusion: "Why cut it, isn't having hair good?"

She had never cut her hair.

"When hair gets too long, it doesn't look good." Chen Shouyi sheathed his sword and placed it on the table, replying casually.

Hearing this, the Shell Lady couldn't help but worry and asked urgently, "Good giant, take a look at Little One's hair, is it too long and doesn't look good?"

Chen Shouyi glanced at her; her hair almost reached her waist: "It is a bit long."

"Then help me cut it off too!"

So vain!

"Alright!" He showed a mischievous smile.

Sharing the joy is better than enjoying it alone; how can only he have a bald head.

...

Several minutes later, the Shell Lady looked in the mirror at her bald head, feeling as if she didn't recognize herself. The more she looked, the less she liked it. She stared at the gloating Chen Shouyi and finally couldn't hold back, bursting into tears.

"You liar... boohoo... it's not pretty at all, bad giant, give back my hair."

Chen Shouyi smiled and comforted, "Don't worry, your hair will grow back."

"Boohoo... Little One isn't cute at all now."

"Still very cute!" Chen Shouyi laughed and said, "Without hair, isn't it refreshing? Don't you feel much lighter now?"

The Shell Lady, with teary eyes, instinctively nodded and then quickly shook her head: "You're lying again... boohoo... you always lie to Little One."

Seeing the Shell Lady crying with grievance, Chen Shouyi couldn't help but want to laugh again; her shaved bald head was just too funny.

Like a little nun.

Adorably small.

"Alright, my fault!" Standing, he took a mirror from the drawer: "Stop crying, your hair will grow back in a while.

The Shell Lady took the mirror, sobbing and wiping her tears: "Boohoo... I want one."

"Alright, alright! Here!"

Chen Shouyi, left with no choice after creating this trouble, took out another mirror: "No more after this."

The Shell Lady immediately took it, huffed, and turned her back, ignoring him.

She opened the newly acquired mirror, looked at her prominent bald head, and tears silently flowed again.

The bad giant is so bad!

Chapter 345: Optimizing Stillness and Self-Refinement

Chen Shouyi walked to the window, opened it, and found the streetlights had become brightly lit after changing the bulbs. This scene, which used to be quite commonplace, now seemed like the light before dawn, carrying a unique charm.

He noticed that even in the villa area, not many residents had installed electric lights; most were still using dim gasoline lamps.

As for ordinary residential areas, it goes without saying—they were mostly pitch black, with even gasoline lamps being a rare sight.

At present, electric lights were clearly still a luxury item.

Even in this era, ordinary people couldn't enjoy the convenience brought by electricity for quite a long time.

Nowadays, it's not even a time of peace where industrial electricity is stopped to ensure residential use.

With limited power supply, after satisfying the electricity needs for communication and streetlights, next comes industry, especially military industry. Residential electricity comes last.

Then, Chen Shouyi practiced the thirty-six moves of Horizontal Training for a while, took another shower, and prepared to sleep.

He stirred a tablespoon of honey and said to the Shell Lady, who was turned away from him, sullenly, "Come on, time for honey."

The Shell Lady was silent for a moment, clutching a Glass Bead, sulking, "I don't want honey!"

"Aren't you hungry?" Chen Shouyi asked.

"Hungry!" She silently opened the mirror, glanced at her bald head, looking utterly despondent!

"Then why not eat?" Chen Shouyi said amusingly.

"I don't want to eat!"

"If you don't eat, never mind. I heard eating more makes your hair grow faster!"

The Shell Lady's body moved, she turned around, and said aggrievedly, "Bad Giant, are you lying to little one again?"

"No, absolutely not." Chen Shouyi immediately said.

"Then give me!"

Chen Shouyi quickly handed over the spoon, and the Shell Lady immediately hugged it, drinking large mouthfuls.

She quickly finished it, and Chen Shouyi took back the spoon, planning to wash it clean in the bathroom.

"I'm so hungry, I want more!" the Shell Lady shouted loudly.

Chen Shouyi helplessly made another half spoon for her.

...

"I'm still very hungry!" the Shell Lady said loudly, touching her bloated belly.

"You can't drink any more, go to sleep!"

...

The next morning, Chen Xingyue was surprised to see Chen Shouyi's bald head, then burst into uncontrollable laughter.

She even tried to touch Chen Shouyi's bald head, but he quickly dodged with an annoyed expression.

Can a man's head be touched just like that?

"Bro, haha... you're killing me with laughter, why did you shave your head bald, like a monk, so funny."
Chen Xingyue clutched her belly, tears rolling down her eyes from laughing.

"What's so funny, it's so hot, isn't it normal to shave bald?" Chen Shouyi said expressionlessly.

Laugh yourself to death.

"Bro, have you been hit by something?" Chen Xingyue asked with a smile.

"What do you mean?" Chen Shouyi asked puzzledly.

"Like you've been dumped!"

"Boring!"

Faced with a dark expression, Chen Shouyi walked out.

"Bro, aren't you having breakfast?"

"I'll eat outside!"

Staying here just to be ridiculed?

Chen Shouyi took out his bicycle, stopped by a breakfast shop for breakfast, passed a clothing store, touched his bald head, hesitated for a moment, then went in and bought a baseball cap to wear.

Then, without going to the alternate world, he directly bicycled to Jiangnan University's library, where he spent the whole day reading.

When his parents returned at night, he was teased again.

"I told you to get a haircut, not shave your head bald, it looks awful!" Mrs. Chen laughed disdainfully.

"Haha, I almost didn't recognize you." Chen Dawei chuckled.

...

In fact, the look is something you get used to after seeing it enough.

For example, the Shell Lady was still unhappy when she got a bald head on the first day, but by the second day, she only occasionally sighed.

By the third day, looking in the mirror, she hardly cared anymore.

Time gradually entered September.

During these ten days, he either absorbed the Divine Blood of the Divine Blood Soil while the Shell Lady was asleep or went to the library to read.

During this time, he received another task, to go to a crematorium in the city to clear the gradually rampaging spirits there.

For others, spirits were something they were helpless against, but for him, it was no difficulty. Spending one night wandering around, the task was easily completed, nowhere near dangerous.

This time, the Divine Blood from the Divine Blood Soil had been completely absorbed.

In total, it increased his Intelligence by 0.4, Constitution by 0.1, and Strength by 0.1, plus 0.1 Perception increased through normal practice, the attributes now became:

Strength: 16.8

Agility: 17.6

Constitution: 16.8

Intelligence: 16.3

Perception: 14.4

Willpower: 16.0

Energy Accumulation: 8.92

Unfortunately, these days, there's been no progress with the cultivation technique to boost Intelligence, leaving Chen Shouyi quite disappointed.

Although an Intelligence of 16.3 has greatly compensated for his severely imbalanced attributes, there is still a significant gap of 1.3 points compared to his highest Agility. Now that the Divine Blood is depleted, unless more is obtained, any chance to improve is completely cut off.

...

At night.

The Shell Lady hugged a block even bigger than herself, building haphazardly.

Her head had started growing a bit of fuzz, looking fluffy.

As if a newly hatched chick.

These days, Chen Shouyi hadn't gone to the alternate world, often going out alone. To keep her from getting bored, he bought her a set of children's building blocks.

It was clear that Chen Shouyi made the right decision.

Ever since having the building blocks, the Shell Lady completely immersed herself in this low-intelligence game.

Playing joyously every day.

At first, she tried building the models from the drawings, but the blocks were really too big for her size, so she had to "climb hills and cross ridges" each time.

Often, before even reaching halfway, the blocks would collapse with a clang, so she simply ignored the model drawings altogether.

Now, her building block play was entirely freeform and carefree.

Completely haphazard.

"Good Giant, does my building look nice?" the Shell Lady asked.

"Nice!" Chen Shouyi glanced at the disorderly blocks, lying through his teeth.

Finally getting over the bald head's shadow, he didn't want to upset her.

...

At three in the morning, lying in bed, Chen Shouyi was not sleepy at all, watching the Energy Accumulation on the attribute panel gradually nearing nine points.

A few minutes later, he let out a long breath.

Finally, he could optimize again.

Without hesitation, he chose to enter a meditative state to refine his body, immediately proceeding with the optimization.

The dream quickly came.

...

It was unclear how long it was before he opened his eyes.

His face showed a trace of disappointment. This optimization, besides deepening his Meditation, didn't have much change, the same steps, and the same method.

A loss!

A huge loss!

Completely a blood loss!

It was a full nine Energy Points.

If he had known, he would have saved these Energy Points for the fourth optimization of the thirty-six moves of Horizontal Training.

Chapter 346: Severed Arm

Chen Shouyi immediately tried it.

Entering tranquility became more proficient, as simple as eating and drinking.

In just a breath, he settled into meditation, falling into a deep state.

Half an hour later, he opened his eyes.

"Can't see any obvious effects in the short term!" Chen Shouyi thought to himself.

Since completing the marrow refining phase and moving to brain refinement, the progress had been exceptionally slow, seemingly stuck, unable to advance further. Now, a whole month had passed, and the brain remained a dark shadow in perception.

The brain is the most complex and mysterious part of the human body, the core of life.

All human memories originate from here.

Just as the human eye cannot see the back of one's own head, perception from the brain cannot easily sense everything within the brain.

This refinement can only slowly and indirectly infiltrate through perception, requiring long-term effort.

"But this time the meditation was deeper and more focused. It should be more effective than the second optimization." Chen Shouyi rubbed his throbbing temples, calming his mind.

He got up, picked up a water cup, and took a sip.

Then he lay down on the bed, eyes closed, and sleepiness overwhelmed him. He quickly fell into a deep sleep.

...

"I've heard Anzhong Province has fallen?"

"How is that possible?"

"Seems like it. A friend of mine is a train station attendant. He said the railway to Anzhong Province is indeed shut down."

"This is big news. Anzhong Province is right next to Jiangnan Province."

"What's there to worry about? It's far from here. How threatening is a Barbarian God anyway? A nuke would still kill them."

In front of the newsstand, the crowd was buzzing with discussion.

In the morning, Chen Shouyi rode his bicycle past here and overheard the conversations.

With communication restricted, rumors were rampant, some were true, some were false, and some exaggerated, not to be taken seriously.

Like Jiangnan Province—is it peaceful?

Naturally not very peaceful. It hasn't been since the mutations began.

The God of Courage, God of Hunting, and the God of Fury have all invaded Jiangnan Province successively, and the warfare is almost constant. Particularly the God of Hunting, which remains unresolved.

But to say it is extremely precarious would be an exaggeration. Apart from a few regions, most areas are still under human control, with general stability maintained.

Such is the situation in Jiangnan Province; other places are likely similar.

Chen Shouyi was about to leave when he saw Liu Jie on the road, stunned to see her disfigured left arm. Since the last exploration of the insect nest, he hadn't seen her, assuming she was outside the Safe Zone. Yet she was actually disabled.

Her face was dignified and serene, devoid of the flirtatious charm and shrewdness of the past.

Chen Shouyi stopped his bicycle and walked over: "What's wrong with your arm?"

Upon hearing the voice, Liu Jie looked up, her face bright with a smile: "Oh, it's you, Chen Shouyi. It's been a while. As you can see, my left arm is gone."

"Shall we sit over there in the park?" Chen Shouyi suggested.

Liu Jie said openly: "Sure!"

The two reached a nearby small park.

It was still early morning, with a gentle breeze, lots of people exercising, most practicing either the thirty-six body refining techniques or swordplay.

Chen Shouyi glanced at them, returned his gaze, and asked: "What happened?"

"It's nothing serious; just got my arm broken by a barbarian during a mission." Liu Jie said with a confident laugh, seemingly unbothered.

Though losing an arm isn't trivial for a Martial Artist, even if it's the less dominant left arm, it significantly weakens one's overall strength.

And that's just strength; the psychological impact is more profound, especially for a young, pretty woman.

Chen Shouyi remained silent for a while and asked, "What about the barbarian?"

"Killed him; otherwise, I'd be dead. It's actually good; my parents opposed my martial pursuits, worrying constantly after I became a Martial Artist. Now they needn't worry." She said with a relaxed smile.

"What do you do now? Any arrangements by the city?"

"Yes, I'm a Martial Arts Teacher now." Liu Jie replied.

"Teaching's nice; peaceful and safe." Chen Shouyi remarked.

Nowadays, Martial Arts classes are mandatory from elementary to university level, there is a huge demand for Martial Artist level teachers, eagerly sought after.

"Yes, I'm quite content. Compared to those sacrificed warriors, losing one arm is very fortunate." Liu Jie adjusted her hair, revealing a subtle charm.

"By the way, you must be a Great Martial Artist by now?"

"Yes!" Chen Shouyi replied.

Actually, he was a Martial Artist.

But there's nothing to boast about.

"Impressive! Had I possessed your prowess, I might still have my arm." Liu Jie self-mockingly chuckled.

Clearly, she cared deeply about it. Who wouldn't, especially a woman who values beauty?

But even being a Great Martial Artist wouldn't make a difference; even Xiao Changming and Lei Ruiyang—the two Martial Artists—died.

"The alternate world is so mysterious, even harboring Barbarian Gods. Perhaps someday your arm could regrow?" Chen Shouyi comforted.

"Thanks for the good words, though I doubt it'll happen. I have classes in the morning, so I'll have to stop here. I'm teaching at the Martial Arts Academy if you ever want to visit; anything is fun!" Liu Jie laughed sweetly, getting up to leave.

Fun?

Fun with what?

Watching her long legs and graceful silhouette, countless chaotic scenes flashed in Chen Shouyi's mind. He quickly shook his head, dispelling these impure thoughts.

Such indecent thinking, disrespectful to women! How could he think like that?

She simply meant it literally.

Like dining, chatting, playing games.

And she was probably just being polite; they've only worked together once on a mission, barely acquainted.

Chen Shouyi refocused his mind, preparing to head to the alternate world for training.

Arriving at the bicycle parking spot, he found his bike missing; he hadn't locked it earlier, leaving it on the roadside, gone in such a short time.

He scanned the area.

With peak commute time, the streets teemed with cyclists, obliterating any trace of his bike.

"Damn, even dared steal a Martial Artist's bicycle?"

It was unlikely he'd retrieve it now!

Standing on the street corner, he looked dejected, holding insufficient currency, compelling him to return home for more cash to buy another. Then he headed downtown.

Chapter 347: Crisis

Remote island in the otherworld.

Since the small snowstorm over ten days ago announced the arrival of harsh winter here.

Animals on the island are becoming scarce.

Many have already started hibernating early.

Winter in Tam World is tough, a cruel elimination and selection process, many old, weak, sick barbarians either can't get enough food or can't endure the heart-chilling cold and will die in winter, leaving behind the stronger barbarians to survive.

Though the true harsh winter is still far away, the tribe used to be frantically scavenging for any food they could find.

But now, the tribe has already moved their entire family into the winter-resistant cellar early.

The construction era of this cellar is beyond tracing, it's a precious relic left behind expanded by generations of ancestors, it's large, covering tens of thousands of square feet, with graffiti left on the surrounding rock walls.

This graffiti is the work of many bored barbarians.

A large part of it was left by their ancestors.

The howling of the cold wind, sharp as ghostly cries and wolf howls.

But here, it's lively and bustling.

The tribe hasn't invented how to use fire, the inside is dark, but the barbarians who are accustomed to it feel no discomfort, moreover, some things don't need light.

Inside the cellar, pairs of men and women are entangled together.

Panting and screaming sounds merge into one.

The air is filled with the scent of hormones.

Winter is not a season suited for reproduction.

However, the abundant fish harvest last time, along with the protein and fat brought by the fish, is enough for them to endure a warm winter, the spring when everything sprouts, and even the arrival of the prey-rich summer.

Two scrawny barbarians without mating rights, filled with irritability, snuck out of the cellar.

The more primitive the tribe, the more it follows the animal-like racial survival of the fittest approach, even though there are more women than men in the tribe now, only the strong barbarians have mating rights to procreate and leave offspring.

The outside weather is gloomy, the giant tree originally in the tribe has been felled, its massive trunk stretches like a tall wall lying on the ground, extending beyond sight.

The remaining stump has been carved into a simple divine statue about seven to eight meters tall.

Of course, it's hard for outsiders to discern what exactly this carving depicts.

It not only lacks facial features but also lacks hands and feet, only the head and torso's distinction is visible, carving work is exceedingly difficult for these primitive tribes.

However, this doesn't affect anything.

The divine statue emits a sacred and mysterious aura, insects and mosquitoes scatter around it.

The two barbarians looked at the statue with reverence and then quickly avoided its sight.

"Let's go to the tree hole by the sea, the place we went last time." A limping barbarian said sneakily in a low voice, looking excited.

"I feel that doing this isn't right, maybe... we shouldn't go." Blown by the cold wind outside, the other scrawny barbarian's irritability subsided a bit, hesitantly said.

"Many people do it this way, it's fine, didn't you say last time it felt great?" the limping barbarian tempted.

"But my butt hurts!" the scrawny barbarian seemed slightly moved.

"Then this time, you do it!"

"Alright, it's your suggestion!" the scrawny barbarian couldn't resist the temptation, quickly said.

Snow had accumulated thinly on the ground, crunching underfoot, the two barbarians, with inner fire, couldn't help but quicken their steps.

The forest was quiet, only the piercing cold wind emitted a moaning sound.

Soon, the two barbarians arrived at the seaside.

The ocean roared with angry waves, the tide rushed to the beach wave after wave, making huge tidal sounds.

"It's so cold here, let's go to the tree hole." The limping barbarian tightly wrapped his body with animal skin, urged.

He then found his companion's body stiff, not responding for a long time, eyes fixed on the sea.

He promptly followed the gaze and saw a huge dugout canoe sailing towards them, figures flickering atop, his expression froze for a moment, and then his hair stood on end.

"Enemy attack!"

...

Chen Shouyi rubbed his goosebumped arm.

"Why is it so cold, I knew I should have brought a jacket!"

It's just been slightly over a month since he last came, and the temperature in the otherworld has sharply dropped.

He looked at icicles hanging on tree branches and the hard ground; evidently, the temperature was below zero.

Even with his physique, in this kind of weather, wearing a T-shirt and shorts, he felt a slight chill.

Fortunately, he could still barely handle it.

The forest was desolate and quiet, the previously common sounds of insects chirping and birds singing had vanished, his steps were quick, it didn't take long for him to reach his foothold here—Firefly Cave.

But found the cave already occupied by another creature.

It was a giant beast resembling a bear, its huge body lying on the ground stood two meters tall, to survive winter, it ate until plump, under its white and fluffy fur, fat layers rolled constantly like waves with its breath.

"So fat!"

He couldn't help but swallow his saliva.

If roast it, the oil would surely overflow.

He gently placed the briefcase containing Shell Lady to one side.

Then opened his bow bag, quickly assembled the war bow.

Though with his strength, using a sword could easily resolve this, ultimately it would get him all bloody, relatively speaking, using a bow was more convenient.

Chapter 348: Crisis

A few seconds later, the war bow was assembled. He picked up a few arrows and stealthily approached.

It had entered hibernation, but its sleep was shallow. Seemingly sensing danger approaching, the giant beast's breathing became heavy, its eyelids trembled, and it was about to awaken.

However, it hadn't opened its eyes yet.

Then there was a "boom".

Its body shook violently, an arrow shot into its eye, even its eye socket exploded into a bowl-sized hole, blood and brain matter flowed out. It struggled to stand up, swayed, and its massive body crashed down, limbs twitching continuously.

Chen Shouyi spent all his strength to drag the giant beast out of the cave to an open space tens of meters away, gasping for breath. Then he drew his sword and sliced open its belly. Its fur was quite soft, feeling like silk, with a thick layer of fat underneath.

"Such a giant, it's so big!" Shell Lady squatted to the side, a little scared yet curious and excited: "Are you going to eat it all?"

"No!" Chen Shouyi said.

This giant beast weighed several tons. Even if he ate for half a year, he wouldn't be able to finish it. In total, he would only take tens of pounds of meat home.

Don't be fooled by the fact it's winter now, with many animals hibernating. If left out in the open, by the next day nothing would be left.

He was too lazy to bother hiding it in the cave.

He took out the giant beast's heart and tossed it onto the ground.

It was a heart as big as an adult's head, still thumping. He was planning to have it for breakfast today.

At this time, rustling sounds came from a distance. Shell Lady swiftly flew onto Chen Shouyi's shoulder, nervously grabbing his ear. He didn't mind and continued to tend to his prey.

As they say, a skilled person is bold. With his strength, there were now few creatures here that could pose a danger to him.

He skinned the entire hide, the sharp tip of his sword slicing along the spine, cutting open the back instantly. Then he quickly stripped away the strip of muscle inside the spine—this was the tenderloin, the most delicious part of all meat.

The quantity was small, but combined with the giant beast's size, it was still tens of pounds.

Chen Shouyi took out a large plastic bag from his backpack, packed the meat inside, tied it and set it aside to take home later.

At this moment, the branches shook, and Chen Shouyi looked up.

A few seconds later, he saw a group of four young men and one woman, a total of five young martial artists carefully emerge from the woods.

His face showed a hint of surprise. Few martial artists came to this passageway, since he started training here, he hadn't seen any. After all, for ordinary martial artists, this passageway was somewhat too dangerous.

Upon seeing the giant beast on the ground, the other party instinctively drew their bows in caution. Only when they saw Chen Shouyi, a human, did their expressions slightly relax.

"You gave me a scare, brother, you're amazing, such a big giant beast..." A young martial artist greeted familiarly.

Before he finished speaking, a companion beside him pulled his arm forcefully, face changing drastically, whispering a warning: "Don't talk nonsense, this is a Martial Artist, apologize quickly."

Then, with a respectful face, he said:

"Greetings, Chief Adviser!"

All of them were instantly scared silent, not daring to breathe heavily.

They were just ordinary martial artists. To them, a Martial Artist was a figure on the clouds.

Perhaps with just a raise of a hand, he could easily kill them all.

In this lawless land, no rules could confine him. Only personal morality restrained the strong, making the status and hierarchy brought by power extraordinarily pronounced.

Offending someone significantly stronger than themselves was undoubtedly dangerous and unwise.

"I-I'm sorry, Chief Adviser, I just have... a foul mouth." The young martial artist who spoke earlier stammered in apology.

"Don't be nervous, what brings you here?" Chen Shouyi smiled and asked.

"Completing an exploration mission!" The opposing martial artist replied respectfully.

Was it the impact of the spatial passage problem in Pingzhou City last time?

Chen Shouyi thought, seeing them look restrained, he waved his hand: "You guys carry on!"

The group of martial artists were like receiving a pardon, hastily leaving as if escaping.

After they walked far away.

Chen Shouyi's chest wriggled, Shell Lady grabbed his T-shirt collar, peeked her head out, her eyes warily scanning the surroundings before flying back onto Chen Shouyi's shoulder, pulling on his ear, she coquettishly complained:

"Such a giant, can you not talk to bad giants for so long next time?"

"Okay, got it!" Chen Shouyi said.

"Mwah mwah mwah!"

Hearing this, Shell Lady happily kissed him several times.

Chen Shouyi scratched his face, stood up, planning to fetch some firewood to prepare for a barbecue.

Freshly slaughtered meat was undoubtedly the best tasting. Once it cooled down, the flavor would greatly diminish.

Just then, his steps suddenly paused.

A series of blurry images flashed through his mind, while a faint sense of joy arose in his heart.

His barbarian believers were holding a ceremony again.

"Great and merciful God of Calamity, bless us to stop the invading enemy." A priest lay prostrate on the ground, praying loudly. Behind him were hundreds of elderly and young barbarians.

"Being able to make these barbarians so focused, clearly they've encountered a strong enemy, but it's a pity, how am I of any use!" Chen Shouyi thought sarcastically.

Ever since a series of slaughters a year ago, this tribe had been left with only the elderly and children, with few young and strong remaining.

Of course, even at their peak, this almost primitive tribe's strength was insignificant.

"They won't be annihilated, will they?" Chen Shouyi mused, his face becoming serious.

Although he didn't care much about these believers, they were at least his worshippers, it felt somewhat regrettable if they were wiped out.

Watching the scene, perhaps his mind was too focused.

Suddenly, his spirit felt a jolt, and the scene in front of his eyes seemed to overlap, with many barbarians kneeling not far from his feet.

"What's happening? Could my spirit have traversed to the island?"

Only a few barbarians had relatively clear facial features, most were blurry, shrouded lightly in mist, with some even just shadows.

...

At this time on Barbarian Island.

The Divine Statue suddenly emitted a faint glow.

Wherever the light reached, the fatigue on all the barbarians vanished, their bodies felt light, filled with strength. The young priest felt the changes in his body, looked up at the statue, first in shock, then ecstatically flushed with excitement, as if on stimulants, shouting hoarsely:

"The great and merciful God of Calamity has descended."

...

It's unclear how much time passed before Chen Shouyi's mind jolted, returning to his senses, the overlapping images in front of him slowly dissipating.

A lingering shock remained on his face.

The earlier scene was truly incredible, entirely beyond his comprehension.

"It seems something flowed out of my body!"

He pondered: "Could it be the Power of Faith!"

He immediately turned back to the cave, sealing the entrance with a rock.

After instructing Shell Lady to be careful, Chen Shouyi sat down, closed his eyes, and quickly entered the Book of Knowledge Space.

Now the entire Book of Knowledge Space had reached a radius of forty meters, extremely vast.

He looked up at the sky.

"Indeed..." Chen Shouyi thought to himself.

Over two hundred stars representing believers dotted the sky, glowing brightly or dimly, yet the power of faith that enveloped the sky was completely gone.

When the Power of Faith had filled this space, he never thought much of it. However, at this moment, with the power of faith gone, he felt as if his soul had lost a layer of protection, leaving a hidden sense of insecurity.

Since becoming a Divine Creature, Chen Shouyi never paid much attention to the power of faith, let alone tried exploiting its abilities. The accumulated power of faith to him was merely a decoration in the Book of Knowledge Space.

More didn't cause joy, and less didn't bother him.

Only now did he realize this power of faith wasn't useless.

Suddenly, he became worried about those barbarians.

He wondered if they would survive this disaster.

Chapter 349: Plea for Help

Unfortunately, despite the worry, Chen Shouyi had no way to help.

The distance from here to the island was unknown—countless kilometers away!

Even if he wanted to save those believers, he was utterly powerless.

He gazed at the brightest star in the sky, and in a daze, he saw a figure kneeling and praying devoutly,

she wasn't a priest from the tribe, nor the clan leader, but an inconspicuous, aged barbarian woman, whose dry face was etched with the wrinkles of time.

As an old and frail woman who could no longer bear children, her status in the tribe was nearly at the lowest level.

Yet, she was the most devout of his believers.

...

As soon as the ritual ended, preparations for battle quickly began.

The young and able in the tribe picked up long spears and swiftly hid in the cellar, ready to rely on the cellar for defense.

Unfortunately, the invading barbarians this time came not in one canoe but with more than thirty, bringing eight to nine hundred people, each canoe packed full.

Children, women, and the able-bodied, except for elders; these barbarians were unmistakably migrating with their families in tow.

In fact, this was indeed the case.

This tribe came from another small island hundreds of kilometers away, drifting in search of a new place to settle.

After all, the sea, unlike the land, does not allow for a migration on a whim by the entire tribe.

Sea monsters, storms, and huge waves could engulf the entire tribe at any moment, and even if they're fortunate enough not to encounter these, finding a small island to migrate to amid the vast sea is a matter of slim chance.

Not to mention in this bleak winter season.

The tribe would not have migrated unless they had reached a desperate situation.

Since more than a decade ago, when the tribe's totem tried to provoke a stranded giant sea beast and was bitten to death in retaliation,

the tribe's situation had been deteriorating.

The natural spirits on the island began to run rampant and havoc.

The entire small island became eerie, with even a minor illness capable of taking a tribesman's life.

Of course, if it was just this, they wouldn't risk the entire tribe being wiped out to escape to the sea for a slim chance of survival.

As long as life could barely continue, they would just endure it.

However, a year ago, a powerful natural spirit, having devoured countless souls, finally broke through a certain boundary, becoming a terrifying entity, and it even began to devour life directly.

First, the insects were wiped out, followed by the somewhat weaker animals.

The small island, with its small and fragile ecosystem, was interconnected and indispensable.

The saying goes, big fish eat little fish, little fish eat shrimp; as shrimp became extinct, the entire ecosystem completely collapsed.

Soon, the tribe couldn't find much food anymore, relying only on the limited fish they caught to survive, but it was far from enough.

In just one year, the tribe of over thirteen hundred dwindled to just over nine hundred, comprised of only the able-bodied and children.

Not a single elder remained!

The reason for their deaths was self-explanatory.

As the harsh winter was approaching and food remained scarce, the clan leader finally took a desperate stand and began to flee the island in search of that slim chance of survival.

...

One after another, the canoes stranded on the beach, and the barbarians enthusiastically landed on the island.

Before long, this group discovered traces of barbarian activity on the island and quickly found their hiding place. Just as a battle for control of the island seemed imminent, they discovered a divine statue.

All the invading barbarians suddenly hesitated, not daring to move forward.

The reason a statue is considered divine is because it naturally possesses a domain of faith; otherwise, it would just be an ordinary statue.

The strength of the domain of faith is quite weak, merely driving away some weak natural spirits and making the believers within it subtly more devout, hardly noticeable by the average person.

But for non-believers, especially heretics, they could feel the implicit majesty and repulsion emanating from the domain of faith.

In this world filled with mysterious powers, reverencing gods and fearing them had already been ingrained into the bones of the barbarians.

Gods and tribes had an interdependent relationship to a certain extent, with gods (including divine creatures or powerful extraordinary beings) protecting the tribe's development and reproduction, driving away natural spirits and formidable enemies, while the tribe offered sacrifices to the gods.

Invading a tribe protected by a god or a powerful creature was a path to self-destruction.

And then came the dramatic development.

After some probing, threats, and negotiation,

the two tribes quickly integrated and chose a new clan leader based on strength.

The original island tribe's leader was unsurprisingly dismissed, faced with the opponent's overwhelmingly strong physique, he was afraid to even challenge.

The entire tribe had long been decimated by Chen Shouyi, leaving hardly any formidable warriors, and the new clan leader was just a tall figure among the short ones, an ordinary barbarian at best.

The barbarians had long been accustomed to respecting strength, having no concept of racial pride or humiliation, leading to an exceptionally smooth transition of power that stirred not a single ripple.

For the ordinary barbarians of the original tribe, life continued as usual. In fact, the emergence of a strong new clan leader even brought them a bit of happiness.

Amid this power transition, the only aspect unchanged was the priest.

As the priest communicated with the gods and served as the spokesperson of divine power, not everyone could be a substitute.

...

Chen Shouyi blankly watched as a grander ceremony than before unfolded in full swing.

The previously depleted power of faith was gradually becoming rich again.

The stars in the sky, representing believers, increased from over two hundred to more than three hundred, then over four hundred...

For a moment, he couldn't wrap his head around it.

Weren't they facing a formidable enemy?

Wasn't the tribe about to be annihilated?

How could it be that in just half a day, the number of believers had not only not decreased but doubled?

And this was just the beginning.

As faith spread, the number of believers would rapidly increase.

Chen Shouyi watched for quite a while, speechless as he withdrew his gaze.

He realized that spreading faith in this otherworld was astoundingly easy, seemingly requiring no effort at all. It flourished wildly on its own.

Soon, he exited the Book of Knowledge Space.

"Good giant, you finally woke up?" The Shell Lady jumped off his shoulder and shouted loudly.

"Just now, there was a bug trying to eat you. Luckily, I bravely killed it." She said in a coquettish tone, showing a face expecting praise.

"Where?" Chen Shouyi asked.

"Here!" The Shell Lady quickly pointed with her tiny hand.

He identified it for a long time before he saw a small bug, the size of an ant, crushed to pieces by the Shell Lady at his feet.

"I really have to thank you!" Chen Shouyi raised his eyebrows and said.

The Shell Lady beamed with joy at his words, saying in a sweet voice, "Because you are a good giant, and I need to protect you."

Chen Shouyi was speechless.

Didn't she get the tone in my words?

How did such a dumb creature survive? He suspected that if she hadn't been born on a desolate island without natural enemies, she couldn't have survived a day before dying prematurely.

He ignored her, patted his bottom, and stood up.

After pushing aside the rock blocking the cave entrance,

He gathered some dry firewood and started preparing the delayed breakfast.

However, today was destined to be anything but peaceful. Just as the heart of the giant beast was roasting to half-cooked, a female martial artist who had passed by earlier came running over in a fluster; her clothes were torn by brambles along the way, body covered in bloodstains, and her face full of panic.

Upon seeing Chen Shouyi, she relaxed slightly, tumbled without realizing it, quickly stood up, and breathlessly and excitedly shouted, "General... General Advisor, please... save my... companion!"

Chapter 350: River God (Double-Length)

Chen Shouyi had already stood up: "Take your time, what happened?"

Influenced by Chen Shouyi's calmness, the anxiety in the female martial artist's heart slightly retreated. She swallowed and quickly said: "We discovered a Barbarian Tribe; we originally intended to approach for reconnaissance but accidentally alarmed the barbarians... They sent me back to inform you, please hurry and save them."

The martial artist's physical constitution is comparable to the most ordinary barbarian. Although their explosive power is stronger in the short term, their endurance is limited; they cannot undertake long-distance raids. Once discovered, it becomes very difficult to escape.

"How large is the tribe?" Chen Shouyi asked.

"I didn't see clearly! But it's very large, I estimate the population to be in the thousands!" Facing a martial artist, she dared not hide anything and truthfully replied.

His heart skipped a beat; this tribe is not small, much larger than any he has encountered before.

Although he had long suspected that there should be a Barbarian Tribe nearby, he didn't expect it to be this large.

"Did you see any Totem Beasts?" Chen Shouyi inquired urgently, as typically Barbarian Tribes choose to foster powerful creatures in exchange for the tribe's safety.

"I didn't see any!" the female martial artist said, her face anxious.

Chen Shouyi furrowed his brow at her words; not seeing anything is more dangerous than seeing something. The latter might simply be powerful divine creatures, like the mountain-like giant he encountered last time retrieving the nuclear bomb. With his current strength, using transformation, he

could barely handle it, at worst, escape; but the former could very likely be the earthly domain of a Barbarian God.

Perhaps sensing Chen Shouyi's hesitation.

The female martial artist bit her lip, her face flushed with shame: "Chief Advisor, as long as you agree, I'm willing to do whatever you want!"

Whatever I want?

Chen Shouyi couldn't help but glance at her upon hearing this, feeling a sudden warmth in his heart. Her face was fair and delicate, clothes tattered, with beauty partly revealed, especially around the pants, almost torn to scraps, exuding a strong allure.

But he decided against it.

Does he want to take responsibility?

What if he gets entangled with this older female youth?

He is the most afraid of trouble.

If it's purely for desire, he might as well go into the Memory Space—simple, effortless, and leaves no trace or aftereffects, it won't even make you aware.

The sole issue is that it consumes valuable energy points.

Ah, if only it didn't consume energy, he could do whatever he wishes, anything he desires!

He quickly pulled back his drifting thoughts and steadied his mind, saying earnestly: "I am not that kind of person!"

Then continued to ask:

"How far is it from here?"

"I don't know, I ran for over ten minutes!" the female martial artist responded hurriedly, not knowing whether she felt disappointed or relieved.

Chen Shouyi thought to himself, estimating it to be just a few kilometers away.

"Wait for me a moment."

With that, he quickly headed toward the cave.

Being so close, regardless of whether to rescue or not, he must go and have a look. If it truly is the earthly domain of a True God, this place must never be visited again.

Upon entering the cave, he took out the Shell Lady hidden in his chest.

After explaining briefly that he was going out for a while, he stepped out of the cave, then sealed the entrance with large rocks.

He walked a few steps and glanced back, in the dark crevice, a pair of tiny eyes were staring at him intently.

Feeling both amused and heartbroken, he resolutely turned away.

Next, he took out arrows from the backpack, wore three quivers on his back, picked up the War Bow and sword, and after readying himself, he approached the female martial artist:

"Lead the way!"

"Okay!" Though puzzled by Chen Shouyi's actions, the female martial artist did not dare ask more questions, responding with a sentence before promptly running ahead.

After only a few steps, Chen Shouyi frowned slightly; the speed was really too slow, not much faster than a normal person running, it was unbearable.

"Hold my hand, you point the direction." He took a step forward and said.

The female martial artist had just grabbed his hand when she was suddenly pulled with immense force, causing her feet to leave the ground and fly upwards.

The scenery rushed by with a whistling wind, numerous tree branches whipped at her body like lashes, carving bloodstains; she could only barely shield her face with her hand and endure the rest with gritted teeth.

Soon, he seemed to realize the problem and began intentionally avoiding low-hanging branches and roadside thorny bushes.

However, this did little to ease her discomfort; with each leap he would rise four or five meters high, and eight or nine meters far, the roller-coaster-like jolts made her stomach churn, almost throwing up yesterday's meal, her arm nearly pulling out of its socket.

"Point the direction!" Chen Shouyi commanded; the place was full of animal tracks and could easily be confused if not careful.

"Oh, oh!" The female martial artist came to her senses, forcibly suppressing the nausea in her stomach, identifying a direction ahead and then quickly saying: "This is the path, we marked the trees here."

"Is it the cross-arrow marker?" Chen Shouyi confirmed, having seen it.

"Yes!"

Confident they wouldn't get lost, Chen Shouyi increased his speed once more.

To him, in the threefold-gravity alien world, he moves faster than on Earth.

With agility equivalent to twenty times a normal human, if he chooses, he can even take forty or fifty steps every second.

But in reality, that's impossible. Even on flat Earth terrain, even if each step is taken with a low center of gravity and minimal foot height, at most, he can barely make ten steps a second.

This is the limit.