

New Era 691

Chapter 691 - Winter Night

In this more than minus forty degrees winter night, the military tent does not keep warm.

The current logistics support is not even comparable to before the mutation, and even then, Great Xia Country was far behind the armed to the teeth riches like the United States. These officers naturally understand the situation; in fact, within just two days, many people have already suffered frostbite.

Half an hour later, most of the soldiers began to retreat, but about a hundred thousand soldiers remained stationed to prevent the barbarians from coming down the mountains and breaking through the encirclement to escape everywhere.

The night was getting deeper.

Chen Shouyi floated quietly in the sky at a kilometer altitude, snowflakes dancing all around, as he overlooked below like a sculpture.

The Faith Value was burning rapidly, astronomical amounts of information flowed into his mind through his eyes and ears and were processed quickly.

He frowned slightly.

Below in the mountainous snowy land, footprints were everywhere.

Chaotic and disordered, like a tangled ball of yarn, and the worst part is, as it snows, these footprints are gradually getting covered, and even after watching for a long time, he couldn't find the location of the spatial passage.

He found a few suspicious places, went to check, but still didn't discover anything.

On the other hand, he did eliminate quite a few barbarians.

Half an hour later, seeing the snow getting heavier, he finally gave up helplessly. He initially thought to follow the spatial passage and resolve the mastermind once and for all, then go home to sleep that night, but now it seems like he can only wait for the other side to reveal themselves.

This is not arrogance.

Confidence is built from repeated successes in battles. He has resisted the powerful divine power of the God of Lightning, killed two barbarian gods of medium divine power, and several other barbarian gods of varying strength.

His hands are stained with divine blood.

As long as it isn't a barbarian god of powerful divine power, it's a matter of normalcy for him, just a difference between one punch and a few punches.

Moreover, barbarian gods of powerful divine power aren't easily encountered; even in other worlds, they are as rare as hen's teeth, each a top-level powerhouse and at the pinnacle of the pyramid.

Many barbarians have come to Earth (including the dead and the living), but in terms of powerful divine power, there's only the God of Lightning, not counting that mysterious person, of course.

...

The snow continued to fall heavily, and Chen Shouyi descended.

The soldiers on duty in the camp had turned into snowmen. Tonight is bound to be a difficult night for these soldiers. He withdrew his gaze, returned to the tent arranged for him by the military, and lit the gasoline lamp.

Since the two little ones have been rather sleepy and listless lately, he left them at home, as this task is relatively dangerous. Coming out this time, Chen Shouyi felt a bit lonely, missing them quite dearly.

"Leader, I've come to change the new hot water for you!" Shortly after returning, a voice came from outside the door.

Chen Shouyi unzipped the military tent, and a young female service soldier with a red, frost-bitten face and covered in snow seized the chance to secretly glance at him.

"I don't need anything, it's so cold, go to sleep early!"

"Thank you for the concern, Leader. Let me change the hot water for you; by now, it must have cooled!" The female service soldier entered with a smile, bringing with her the warmth and straightforwardness of Heijiang Province. She swiftly placed the two new bottles of hot water on the table, and took the old ones, then remembered President Chen was from the south and asked, "By the way, General Manager Chen, would you like a bath?"

"No need." Chen Shouyi replied helplessly.

After the female service soldier left, he zipped up, turned off the gasoline lamp, and began to sleep.

Today is not the time to act as the surrounding civilians have not been completely evacuated yet. If a fight breaks out, it could easily involve them. There's no rush,

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Tam World.

In the ice cave atop the snow mountain in the Divine Country of the God of Cold Winter, a hideous and terrifying monster was coiled, its icy-blue scales emitting a cold enchanting divine light.

Like most barbarian gods, it too accidentally discovered the spatial passage and couldn't resist the temptation, beginning to stir, yet it knew nothing of the current situation on Earth.

Apart from the territories already occupied by the barbarian gods, the rest were either major powerful countries or within their sphere of influence.

None of which are easy to conquer.

Information in Tam World is isolated and circulates poorly.

On one hand, Tam World is vast, on the other hand, gods are competitors with each other, no social order has been formed, still in the barbaric bloody period of big fish eating small fishes and small fishes eating shrimps.

Like a food chain, but at a higher level.

In Tam World, to survive and live well, there's only one way, that is to be powerful enough.

Gods with weak divine power are like at the bottom of the food chain, most miserable.

They need to hide themselves while developing secretly, with many hiding spots, seldom wandering around apart from their own territory.

Losing an avatar is nothing major, could always recuperate, still a hero afterwards. But if a powerful enemy finds the Divine Country through the avatar, there's truly no turning back.

As for demigods and divine creatures, they go without mention, totally the prey of prey, shrimp level.

Only by becoming a deity of weak divine power can one slightly catch a breath. At this level, within the top 20%, even as mighty as gods of medium divine power, they wouldn't dare attack their Divine Country recklessly. Small, yet able to form a small stronghold.

Advance when it's favorable, retreat when it's strategic, as long as one is cautious, doesn't act recklessly, opening a few sub-bases, survival ability greatly enhances. Many can survive to grow into medium divine power,

The God of Cold Winter is at this level, otherwise wouldn't be so bold, not much probing or intelligence gathering before betting heavily upfront.

Once reaching medium divine power, one is already a regional overlord, apart from needing to be wary of a few powerful divine presences, there's virtually no threat. In fact, even those with powerful divine power seldom provoke deities of such might, afraid of either mutual destruction, massacring their worldly territories.

The ice cave was silent, with only occasional cracking sounds from the ice walls.

Its eyes half-closed as if asleep. Suddenly, it opened them, revealing a pair of entirely black eyes, like two black holes: "Useless!"

...

Before dawn the next day, Chen Shouyi washed his face and opened the tent.

He found the snow outside had piled up to waist height.

He glanced at the sky, which was dark with leaden clouds blanketing the sky, and large goose feather snowflakes were pouring down from above. Since last night, the snow hasn't stopped and seems to be getting heavier.

A squad of soldiers carrying bundles of entrenching tools jogged past. In the distance, the road was bustling with activity, as a large number of soldiers were clearing snow and working on traffic removal.

He felt quite heavy in his heart. He didn't know how many barbarians starved or froze to death overnight, certainly not a small number, but continuing like this would make the encirclement difficult.

With such heavy snow, the army simply couldn't enter the mountains.

Chapter 692 - Like a Dog

For some reason, Chen Shouyi suddenly thought of Zhang Xiaoyue, his first love.

Ever since the first mutation, she had vanished without a trace, as if she disappeared from this world. But a few days ago during a sensing, he faintly felt her presence. At that time, he instinctively ignored it, not wanting to think further.

But now, as a whim struck him, memories surged in, leaving him with inexplicable melancholy.

To say she doesn't know of his existence, he absolutely wouldn't believe it.

The People's Daily, newspapers in Zhonghai, and various other places have never stopped publicizing about him, and the images of his three Chen Clan cultivation lectures are still being shown for free in cinemas.

Although his appearance has changed dramatically now, it's not like he had plastic surgery, those who know him can always find a familiar feel.

Back in Shankui Province, when he ran into a high school classmate who was in the army, that person recognized him after just a brief look. He doesn't believe that Zhang Xiaoyue wouldn't recognize him.

Perhaps she simply doesn't want to see him again, or maybe she already has a new boyfriend...

Snowflakes danced, and when they landed on his head, they automatically curved away, leaving him spotless and sacred. At that moment, he felt something and began to walk along the path cleared by soldiers, crossing the military camp and continuing forward.

His body was so light it seemed to have no weight, leaving no trace on the thick snow he treaded.

A soldier shoveling snow noticed this scene, the shovel dropping with a thud, yet he seemed unaware, body petrified, unmoving.

More and more people stopped, and the originally noisy military camp gradually fell silent.

Chen Shouyi walked step by step towards the mountains, like a Saint walking on earth.

The snow fell heavier, from the initial feather-like snow to crashing down in snow clusters. He vaguely felt a faint power in the air, influencing the weather here.

This kind of influence doesn't require much Divine Power, it's merely about having the corresponding Divine Position, guiding the course according to the trend.

Just like the Divine Position of fertility, to make someone pregnant, first and foremost the couple needs to be a normal man and woman. No matter how strong It is, It couldn't make one party in a homosexual relationship pregnant. Perhaps directly changing one's gender would be easier for It.

In the distance, a few Barbarians saw Chen Shouyi walking on snow, terrified, their hair standing on end, bodies turning cold, and the next moment, they collapsed simultaneously, their souls dispersing.

Chen Shouyi remained expressionless, not even bothering to glance at them, as if they were mere ants crushed underfoot.

He followed the source of the Divine Power and continued forward.

This Divine Power seemed to sense the presence of Chen Shouyi and started to rage, suddenly rolling up the accumulated snow, transforming into icy balls, two to three meters in diameter, emitting chills and whistling towards Chen Shouyi.

He tapped lightly with his feet, nimbly avoiding the icy balls.

"A mere ant with a slight bit of power dares to challenge the great God of Cold Winter..." A thunderous voice echoed through the mountains, causing the snow surface to tremble.

"Hehehehe..." Chen Shouyi let out a low chuckle.

"Ant, what are you laughing at?" The God of Cold Winter restrained Its anger and asked.

"I heard you gods are immortal, not sure what kind of immortality that is?" Chen Shouyi asked.

"Immortality is eternity; rivers change course, mountains and rivers shift, oceans turn to land, yet gods remain." The God of Cold Winter, for some reason, unconsciously said, this tiny divine creature of an ant causing It to feel a slight unease, intensified Its attack immediately.

"Boom boom boom..."

In an instant, countless icy balls rained down like meteors, covering the sky.

He kept dodging, suddenly leaping forward, smashing an ice ball with a fierce punch: "That so-called immortality, do you know how to spell death?"

Then his body erupted with a sonic boom, leaving a sonic cone cloud in the air. He flew close to the ground like a beam of light, tearing the accumulated snow to pieces as he passed.

...

"Everyone, get ready, prepare for battle." A commander shouted at the top of his lungs, veins bulging on his neck.

The war between General Manager Chen and the Barbarian God, the outcome unpredictable, just in case... being prepared is best.

In the three years of war, Great Xia Country has cultivated battle-hardened troops amidst huge losses, countless soldiers suddenly awakened from their stupor, swiftly throwing down their shovels, running quickly to their respective positions.

...

"Ant, seeking death!" A furious shout rang out from afar.

Accompanied by a thunderous crash, a giant wolf-like figure, draped in blue scales, suddenly leaped onto a mountain peak. The aurora danced across the sky, the chill was biting, countless snowflakes froze into ice crystals, falling down.

Been waiting for you, Chen Shouyi immediately accelerated to the limit, becoming a streak of lightning, traveling kilometers in an instant.

The Giant Wolf watched as he rapidly approached.

It felt something ominous.

At this moment, It didn't have time to consider much, seeing Chen Shouyi almost at hand, It opened its mouth and spewed a stream of blue chill. It wasn't the color of the chill itself, but the air frozen into pale blue ice crystals.

Caught off guard, Chen Shouyi was hit dead on.

His body instantly frosted, transforming into a chunk of ice, plummeting straight towards the ground.

"Looks like I overthought it, just a slightly stronger ant, but still an ant." The God of Cold Winter thought to Itself, breathed a sigh of relief, springing lithely over a hundred meters, landing nimbly in front of the ice block.

"Crack!" Suddenly, a sharp sound abruptly reached Its ears.

The God of Cold Winter was startled, and the whole ice block instantly shattered. At the same time, a massive figure stood where it was, its descending shadow fully covering It.

What??

Impossible, how could a tiny ant transform into a giant even more colossal than It?

"The cold air, blowing nicely, wasn't it?"

The God of Cold Winter listened to the giant's mocking words, Its hair stood on end. It finally understood where this uneasiness stemmed from, this was not some divine creature, but a downright abomination.

Perhaps merely appearing powerful, It steeled Its heart, taking advantage of the opponent being unguarded, suddenly accelerating from stillness, raising a snow fog, and transforming into a white streak flashing towards Chen Shouyi. Mid-air, It bared Its teeth, savagely biting at Chen Shouyi's neck with a gaping maw.

Chen Shouyi's lips curled slightly, sinking his weight as his right fist exploded, landing a heavy punch right on the Giant Wolf's lower jaw. With terrifying force, the Giant Wolf's mouth was shattered, with flesh and broken teeth spraying like cannonballs. Its body was sent flying, yet just after a few meters, it was caught up by a massive figure, its colossal hand clutching its neck.

After igniting belief, his mental speed reached 26.1 points, nearing intermediate Divine Power, able to capture any movement of a lesser Divine Power effortlessly.

"Awooo!"

The God of Cold Winter erupted, its terrifying chill rapidly spread along Chen Shouyi's arm. Simultaneously, its claws, gleaming with icy light, raked rapidly across his chest, struggling intensely, leaving trail after trail of blood marks.

"You kinda look like a dog, you know."

"Awooo!"

His grip, as if a steel vice, suddenly tightened, unleashing power of tens of thousands of tons, a snap, breaking the Giant Wolf's neck entirely.

Chapter 693 - Path of Martial Arts

The God of Cold Winter was still not dead, struggling desperately, its whole body exploded with divine power, a ring of pale blue light swiftly spread out, turning the accumulated snow into a glacier, and the air was rapidly frozen.

Chen Shouyi didn't even look at his frost-covered body, glanced at it, and stretched out his left hand to grab its head.

"Puff!"

The head shattered.

He then tossed the huge corpse onto the ground, stepped on it again, a ring of shockwaves exploded, accompanied by the crisp and dense sound of bones breaking, everything quieted down.

He looked up at the sky and sighed.

Just warming up, and it's already over.

Ordinary barbarian gods were really too weak to withstand a fight.

Chen Shouyi sighed, shrank his body, took out a set of clothes from his space, changed, and then turned back without looking back.

The corpse of an ordinary barbarian god no longer caught his eye, there was still the body of an intermediate divine power God of Flames in his space, and in this great winter, nothing was more delightful than eating the God of Flames rich in flame divine power, paired with hotpot ingredients, it was even better.

...

In the temporary communication station not far from the military camp.

Everyone inside was already in a frenzy of activity.

"Hello, hello, hello, position 476 calling command, position 476 calling command, barbarian god appeared on the front line, barbarian god appeared on the front line..." shouted Brigade Commander Zhou Chenglong at the top of his lungs.

He put down the phone, only to see everyone stopped, motionless, even holding their breath, as if... afraid to disturb something?

"What's going on?" he said in a deep voice, his face darkening, barely containing his anger.

"Chief, there's no sound anymore!" a staff officer reminded.

"What do you mean no sound..."

Is this the time to talk about sound?

Wait a minute! Sound?

His expression froze, then suddenly realized it was too quiet outside. Just now, when he was on the phone, the loud thunderous noises were still erupting intermittently, but now they had completely disappeared.

"Could it be that President Chen has already killed the barbarian god?" the political commissar said softly.

Everyone suddenly quieted down.

That's indeed possible, the military district had invited President Chen to the front line just to deal with the barbarian god, but it might also...

"Don't get careless, Hao Wenqiang!" Zhou Chenglong said solemnly.

"Here!"

"Go out and check the situation!"

"Yes, Chief." A soldier quickly ran to the communication station.

The person had just gone out not long before cheers from the soldiers were heard outside. Zhou Chenglong held back for a while before he couldn't help but put on his helmet and quickly walked outside, with the atmosphere in the distance as lively as a pot of boiling, bouncing water.

A military martial artist ran over excitedly, babbling, "Chief, we won, the war is won, the barbarian god is dead."

"Good, good, good!" Zhou Chenglong said repeatedly.

But it was too fast, this was a barbarian god, and it was over in just over ten seconds? Nowadays, he didn't quite understand the way wars worked anymore. Then he remembered something and asked, "By the way, where's President Chen?"

"President Chen said he had something to do and left first!" The military martial artist spoke with a face full of reverent admiration.

"How could we let him leave, this is really... How far has he gone, I'll go after him!" Zhou Chenglong said quickly, they didn't even host him after he worked so hard, which really wasn't how guests should be treated.

The military martial artist shook his head, looking blankly at the sky, "Chief, I don't know either, maybe he's already left the province."

...

When Chen Shouyi returned to Zhonghai, it was just nine in the morning.

He returned home, finding it empty.

As soon as he opened the bedroom door, two little ones flew over quickly like homing swallows.

Chen Shouyi grabbed one with each hand, giving each of them a couple of hard kisses, he had been worrying about these two adorable little kids for the past few days, afraid something might happen, and now he could finally be at ease.

"Have you two been good at home?"

"Little Shell Lady has been very good, just kept thinking about the good giant in her heart," Shell Lady said, wiping her saliva carelessly, feeling a little aggrieved.

"I also thought about the good giant," Red Little One said.

"Both are very good, there are rewards for both!" Chen Shouyi was delighted in his heart, both were his good treasures.

"Good giant, what is the reward?" Shell Lady couldn't help but ask.

"Math books, more difficult math books," Chen Shouyi said, the two little ones learned quickly, first grade had already become too easy for them, even though... doing exercises was still quite strenuous for them.

"Wow!" Shell Lady's mouth formed an "O" shape, her face flushed with excitement.

As a smart little one, she loved doing math problems, especially since she now had a competitor, it made her even more enthusiastic: "Good giant, give me the little book, give me the little book!"

"I want it too, I want it too," Red Little One was not to be outdone.

"There is one for each, everyone has one." Chen Shouyi smiled and took out two second-grade math books he had bought on the road from his space.

...

In the evening.

The study room of Zhonghai University of Technology was full of people, the noise was everywhere.

Even now, the power shortage was still severe, with priority only given to the industrial zone.

Even a university like Zhonghai University of Technology, apart from limited self-study rooms in the experiment and teaching buildings, still hadn't restored electricity to the rest.

Gasoline lamps were expensive and not bright enough, so if you wanted to study at night, you could only go to the self-study room.

"Xiaoyue, what book are you reading?" a female classmate asked softly, "Finished your homework?"

"Yeah!" Zhang Xiaoyue responded, showing the book cover: "It's 'Path of Martial Arts'."

"Haven't you already read it?" the female classmate asked softly.

"Just looking because I'm bored," Zhang Xiaoyue said.

"Path of Martial Arts" was also known as the "Martial Arts Bible," in a sense, it was an autobiography of Chen Shouyi, but not entirely, it contained several of his interviews and the text and annotations of three of his speeches. As soon as this book was published, not only did it sell well in Great Xia, but it was also translated into several languages, becoming popular worldwide. Anyone practicing martial arts, though might not own a copy, has at least read it out of curiosity.

"By the way, you really don't know General Manager Chen, you're from Dongning too," the female classmate asked curiously.

"I've said it many times, there are over a million people in Dongning, how could I possibly know everyone. If I knew, then great, I would have tried to get close to him when he was unknown," Zhang Xiaoyue pretended to sigh, speaking in a playful tone.

Her origins from Dongning were no secret, in these three years of university living together, such things weren't hidden among dorm mates.

"Wishful thinking!" the female classmate chuckled.

"Who can say for sure, back then, he wasn't the General Manager Chen of today," Zhang Xiaoyue said softly, her heart slightly saddened. Back then, he still called her class president, not the high and mighty, as if on the clouds, General Manager Chen of today...

Perhaps, he had long forgotten about her.

Chapter 694 Assessment Center

New Year's Day.

After deliberation and consideration from the higher-ups, the second martial arts examination point in Great Xia Country was established in Zhonghai.

This was a significant event for Zhonghai, attracting not only many civilian and military martial artists, but also the official representatives: the mayor of Zhonghai City, the garrison commander, and the director of the Martial Arts Bureau of Great Xia Country, who came to participate in the opening ceremony.

In the main hall of the martial arts examination center.

"I heard that he is coming too." A young martial artist said with some awe. In recent years, the number of martial artists in Great Xia Country has been booming, with more than a dozen civilian martial artists in Zhonghai alone, and even more in the military.

However, even as martial artists, they are not much different from ordinary people when faced with the legendary figure, the God of Martial Arts.

"Yes, I've heard he might come, but President Chen is always busy and doesn't like mundane affairs, so he might not come if something comes up last minute," a martial artist nearby nodded and said.

"That's true, Elder Chen is rarely seen."

While they were chatting, there was a commotion at the entrance.

"He's here, he's here!"

A group of people exchanged glances, shivered with excitement, and rushed to the entrance simultaneously.

A luxury black car slowly drove up and stopped at the entrance under the security's directive, causing everyone to subconsciously hold their breath.

The car door opened, and soon a handsome, dashing young man in sportswear emerged from the car.

Many women's eyes couldn't move away, almost sticking to him.

In the animal kingdom, males feel awe and submission to more powerful males, but with the opposite sex, a strong male appears more attractive, which is also true for humans, especially if the man is so handsome...

Zhang Anlu, the director of the Martial Arts Bureau and part of one of the central ministries, quickly approached, enthusiastically extending his hand from a distance: "President Chen, it's been a tough journey."

Chen Shouyi smiled appropriately and shook hands with him: "Not at all... sorry, you are?"

The scene became slightly awkward for a moment.

"Uh!" Zhang Anlu opened his mouth but quickly recovered, maintaining a smile: "Oh, my memory, I'm Zhang Anlu from the Martial Arts Bureau."

He felt shy about calling himself the director since the God of Martial Arts in Great Xia Country didn't recognize the bureau director, clearly a lapse in his duties, making him feel very embarrassed.

Chen Shouyi also realized he had been a bit blunt but didn't mind since Zhang Anlu hadn't introduced himself first. How was he supposed to know who he was?

He then continued shaking hands with others. Although he usually stayed secluded and rarely accepted invitations to various events, there were still some matters a martial artist must support.

After shaking hands with the leaders, he also shook hands with a group of martial artists.

Each person's face was filled with excitement and thrill as they shook hands with him.

Cameras faithfully documented this moment, undoubtedly making tomorrow's front page headline of Zhonghai Daily.

The unveiling ceremony was quite grand.

Chen Shouyi, the mayor of Zhonghai City, and Zhang Anlu, director of the Martial Arts Bureau, jointly hosted the ribbon-cutting ceremony and delivered speeches. Fortunately, someone had already prepared a speech script for him, so he only needed to read it without any improvisation.

After the unveiling ceremony, Chen Shouyi returned to the car.

...

"Such ceremonies are quite boring." Chen Shouyi said while sitting in the car.

"I think it's okay." Bai Xiaoling cautiously said: "Sitting in the audience is boring, but you were on the stage."

Chen Shouyi chuckled, "That's true. Stop the car, I'll walk back. You can go, it's New Year's Day, take a good day off."

For him, the car was just for appearance, riding a bicycle was much more comfortable.

"Well... okay, thank you, President Chen." Bai Xiaoling hesitated for a moment before saying, serving a leader like Chen Shouyi, besides his good looks, the biggest advantage was never worrying about his safety.

Chen Shouyi got out of the car.

Today is New Year's Day. Even though it's wartime now, many institutions, like schools, have a day off. Both sides of the street are filled with discount ads, with bustling crowds everywhere.

Chen Shouyi passed by a tailoring shop, and on a whim, he went inside.

"Hello sir, would you like to order some clothes? We can customize the trendy clothes of the past here!" A middle-aged man, who was cutting clothes, looked up and asked politely.

The shop was filled with various sample clothes. Compared to the boring clothes outside, these looked more bright and beautiful. This era suppresses individuality, but the appreciation for beauty is universal. Now, such tailoring shops are quite abundant.

"Can you make smaller clothes?" Chen Shouyi asked after glancing around, noticing the quality of the clothing.

"How small, could you provide the specific measurements?"

"One about sixteen centimeters tall, and the other about fifteen centimeters tall," Chen Shouyi said. The Barbie Doll clothes he previously bought were now worn out and torn, especially as the fights between Xiao Red and the Little Notch became frequent, making the clothes easily torn.

The middle-aged man froze for a moment, looking confused, "Maybe I heard wrong, did you say..."

"You heard right!" Chen Shouyi said expressionlessly, "I'm making clothes for figurines. Use the best materials, and make a hundred sets of various styles, according to standard female proportions of sixteen centimeters and fifteen centimeters."

"I'm afraid I cannot do that here, you should try other tailoring shops," the tailor politely declined.

As a skilled tailor, he was never short of business, and naturally had his pride; making clothes for figurines was beneath him, something laughable if spread around.

"I can pay more!"

"Sir, it's not about the money, it's simply unfeasible," the middle-aged man still politely said, "I'm a tailor, not a toy maker."

"How about five hundred?" Chen Shouyi said, then added, "per set. If you really can't do it, I'll find someone else."

Wha... what?

"Is it really five hundred?"

The middle-aged man could no longer stay calm. Although inflation was high, labor was cheap at the time. If the client provided materials, a set of clothes would net him about a hundred yuan, which was already considered a high rate. Although the five hundred apparently included materials, how much material could a figurine use, moreover, the workload was smaller.

"Five hundred a set, one hundred sets each, can you do it?"

"Yes, of course, I can," the middle-aged man said, beaming, hurriedly guaranteeing. With a substantial business like this, he could buy two apartments in Zhonghai City once completed.

Chen Shouyi pretended to reach into his pocket, pulled out two wads of money, and handed them over, saying patiently: "Here are twenty thousand as a deposit, the materials must be good, the styles diverse, and the craftsmanship fine. Additionally, prepare for all seasons: spring, summer, autumn, and winter. No shortcuts."

"Boss, rest assured, you'll get value for every money spent; if you're not satisfied, feel free to tarnish my reputation," the middle-aged man earnestly patted his chest, making it sound loudly.

After agreeing on the delivery time with the tailor, Chen Shouyi left the shop. Suddenly sensing something, he instinctively looked into the distance, where a familiar figure quickly disappeared into the crowd.

Chapter 695 - Reunion

The warm winter sunlight sprinkled down, emitting colorful brilliance in his eyes. With his strength at this level, his thoughts moved and his heart sensed, making him nearly omniscient within a certain range.

Sensing the images flashing through his mind, Chen Shouyi's expression slightly stalled, appearing somewhat lost, then he stepped forward to walk.

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University is a time when hormones are flying high, but unfortunately in a science and technology university like Zhonghai University of Technology, there are many wolves and few sheep, and even fewer beauties. Wu Wenbin went to great lengths to get on good terms with the roommate and managed to ask Zhang Xiaoyue out.

"I don't think I'll pass the martial arts exam this semester; my swordsmanship has always been weak," said Zhang Xiaoyue's roommate Zhou Min.

"I'm on thin ice too," Zhang Xiaoyue also expressed some distress. Her high school didn't emphasize martial arts and she had little interest in it. She only started cramming in the past few years.

"We can all exchange ideas when we have time. My dad says I already have the strength of a martial artist now, and I'm planning to test for a Martial Artist Certificate during the winter break." He said with a light smile, the pimples on his face glowing with confident oiliness in the sunlight.

"Wow, that's awesome. So why didn't you apply to the Martial Arts Academy back then?" Zhou Min exaggerated.

Wu Wenbin glanced at Zhang Xiaoyue, noticing she was merely pursing her lips and smiling, causing him to feel slightly deflated: "I wanted to, but my dad wouldn't let me, worried I'd get into trouble."

"Is your dad a martial artist too?" Zhou Min asked curiously.

"He's a great martial artist," Wu Wenbin said casually.

Zhou Min was genuinely shocked, originally having the intention to matchmake the two, now completely leaning towards him.

Despite the current explosion in the number of martial artists, their proportion is still pathetically small. Great martial artists, especially civilian ones, remain as rare as phoenix feathers and unicorn horns; the whole Zhonghai might not have over a hundred of them, each being a big figure to ordinary people.

Having finished flaunting, Wu Wenbin habitually checked Zhang Xiaoyue's reaction, only to find she already stopped and was staring dazedly at a handsome young man, lost in mutual gaze.

He immediately sensed a threat, stepped forward, and asked with a frown of displeasure: "Who are you?"

Chen Shouyi glanced at him.

Wu Wenbin's heart suddenly skipped a beat, a stagnant pressure washed over him, his legs went weak, nearly kneeling to the ground. His spirit was frantically warning him, as if facing not a person, but a primordial giant beast.

"This has nothing to do with you, you can leave!" Chen Shouyi said.

"Oh." Wu Wenbin responded instinctively, then hurriedly said respectfully, "Yes, senior."

He then turned around and left without looking back, cleanly and efficiently, without any hesitation. Although he often sparred with his father and had seen his father explode, even at full burst, his father's aura couldn't match this individual's one part in eleven, even one part in a hundred.

This is definitely a Martial Master Level presence.

Such a presence is someone even his father would not dare offend, let alone himself.

Just why does he look somewhat familiar, like he's seen him somewhere before?

...

It was obvious the two knew each other, and Zhou Min curiously gazed at the handsome youth opposite, unable to take her eyes off him, her heart thumping wildly: "Xiaoyue, who is this?"

He's really so handsome, how could anyone be this handsome?

"I'm her boyfriend. Let me introduce myself; I'm Chen Shouyi," Chen Shouyi said with a smile.

"Oh, I'm Zhou Min, Zhang Xiaoyue's classmate. Xiaoyue, you're really not being fair, having a boyfriend and not mentioning it earlier." Zhou Min said under irresistible charm, thinking if she had known Zhang Xiaoyue had such a handsome boyfriend, she wouldn't have tried to matchmake. Just as she spoke, her body felt like it had been struck by lightning, her eyes widened: "Chen... Chen Shouyi?"

Chen Shouyi nodded and then ignored her, looking at Zhang Xiaoyue, noticing she seemed thinner, her face no longer had the innocence from before.

"You... have you been alright these years?"

She lowered her head in silence, her eyes fixed on the ground, unable to raise her head, tears falling uncontrollably, speaking softly: "Why are you still looking for me?"

"That year, my family got involved with a cult and left in a hurry; I didn't know your address, so I didn't get to inform you before leaving. You can't blame me for that." Chen Shouyi explained, thinking she held resentment for his sudden departure.

Zhang Xiaoyue couldn't help asking, "Your family didn't get into trouble, did they?"

"No, I was already a martial artist then, those cults couldn't do anything to me."

Zhou Min stared wide-eyed at the two, speechless with shock. She had already recognized who he was.

This is simply breaking news!

Her mouth was incredibly tight.

The two chatted a few sentences, and the atmosphere turned somewhat silent, unsure of what to say next. They hadn't seen each other in three years, and both had become somewhat unfamiliar, no longer harmonious as before.

"I should go." Zhang Xiaoyue said with her head down, looking at her feet, having some self-esteem issues. She was just an ordinary woman, how could she match the now lofty General Manager Chen?

"Why leave, I just saw a cinema down the street, let's go sit together." Chen Shouyi stepped forward and grabbed Zhang Xiaoyue's hand, assertively.

Zhang Xiaoyue panicked, instinctively trying to break free, but found his grip was like steel, completely unyielding. She hurriedly held onto Zhou Min's clothes next to her for help: "Zhou Min, come along."

Chen Shouyi glanced at her classmate, causing Zhou Min to panic and break away. She also wanted to go but being the third wheel for General Manager Chen brought immense pressure, her heart couldn't handle it: "Ah, I... I just remembered I need to revise for exams, they're coming up soon, you... you two go ahead."

After Zhou Min left, Zhang Xiaoyue felt like a lamb about to fall into a tiger's maw, looking helpless and weak, not daring to meet Chen Shouyi's eyes, her face flushing like a fever.

"Where are you studying now?"

"Zhonghai University of Technology." Zhang Xiaoyue said weakly.

"Why choose this school?" Chen Shouyi asked, a girl attending such a school seemed incongruous.

"I didn't have enough scores." Zhang Xiaoyue lowered her head again.

Chen Shouyi realized he asked a foolish question, quickly comforting: "It's good. I wouldn't be able to get in myself."

Zhang Xiaoyue said nothing more, lowering her head in silence.

The cinema was not far, a few steps and they arrived. There were quite a few people waiting inside. Chen Shouyi inquired about the tickets and found out all were sold out for the next three hours; only the free screenings had seats. He didn't mind, as long as there was a movie to watch.

Zhang Xiaoyue hesitated, but finally said nothing.

Chen Shouyi bought a bag of popcorn, headed to the screening room. It hadn't started yet, and people inside were sparse. He pulled Zhang Xiaoyue to find a seat at the back and sat down.

"I haven't watched a movie in over three years!" Chen Shouyi said with a smile.

"Movies nowadays aren't very good." Zhang Xiaoyue whispered.

They didn't wait long before the movie started. As Chen Shouyi watched, his smile gradually faded.

...

"And now, let's welcome General Manager Chen, everyone."

"Hi, hi, hi... thank you all for taking the time to listen to my speech..."

...

"This really isn't very good." Chen Shouyi said with an embarrassed smile.

"Pfft," Zhang Xiaoyue couldn't help but laugh: "Actually, it's okay. Our school has watched the martial arts class several times."

Chapter 696 - Reliving the Past

The two walked out of the cinema, chatting as they strolled.

They talked about many high school classmates and events, and what originally was a somewhat awkward atmosphere gradually became more harmonious.

Zhang Xiaoyue said, "When I first saw you in the newspaper, I thought it was just someone with the same name. It wasn't until I saw footage of your speech that I recognized you."

Chen Shouyi laughed and asked Zhang Xiaoyue, "Oh, how did that feel?"

Zhang Xiaoyue was silent for a moment and then shook her head, "It didn't feel like anything; just like a distant stranger."

Chen Shouyi paused, pretending not to see the trace of sadness on her face. "Ha, so heartless."

Zhang Xiaoyue pursed her lips, hummed twice without speaking, carrying a tinge of little temper, like a stubborn little lamb displeased with everyone, which made Chen Shouyi find it amusing.

The two talked, sentence by sentence.

The sun gradually set to the west. Chen Shouyi checked the time and realized it was almost four o'clock.

"I'll walk you back," Chen Shouyi said, preparing to find a corner to fetch his bicycle.

"No need for the trouble, you've spent so much time with me already. You should head back early; the stop ahead is the bus to the school," Zhang Xiaoyue said.

"It won't be a delay," Chen Shouyi replied.

The bus soon arrived, already packed with people inside.

The two squeezed onto the bus, surrounded by a crush of people. Zhang Xiaoyue had no choice but to huddle close to Chen Shouyi, her face flushed red.

"You're so hard!" Zhang Xiaoyue said softly, her hand on Chen Shouyi's chest, feeling like it was a warm iron block.

"Is it uncomfortable?" Chen Shouyi asked.

People around them glanced over with curiosity, looking them up and down with expressions of surprise, oddness, and scrutiny.

Zhang Xiaoyue's face flushed as if on fire, almost steaming, wishing she could disappear underground.
"What are you babbling about?"

Chen Shouyi felt wrongly accused, "I didn't say anything."

Zhang Xiaoyue, having thin skin, didn't speak again.

Half an hour later, they stopped at the University of Technology entrance.

"I'll head back now," Zhang Xiaoyue said, biting her lip.

"Then I won't walk you in. I'll see you tomorrow; don't overthink," Chen Shouyi gently held her hand, "By the way, which building and room is your dorm?"

Zhang Xiaoyue hesitated but ended up giving the address.

After chatting a while longer, Chen Shouyi left. She watched him fade away into the crowd, feeling a mix of sweetness, gratitude, and melancholy. The whole day felt like a dream, strongly unreal.

Does he really still like me?

Maybe with a mere beckon, scores of prettier, better-off women would flock to him.

She felt a bit inferior, indulging in a moment of self-pity, and sighed lightly.

On her way back, she realized many were secretly noticing her, whispering among themselves. She quickly lowered her head and walked briskly.

Back at the dorm, she found it crowded, not only with her roommates but a large group from other rooms too. Everyone looked at her with odd, amazed glances, as if she were an alien. Zhang Xiaoyue blushed, already guessing that Zhou Min had leaked the news:

"What are you all looking at me for?"

"Xiaoyue, don't you have anything to say?" Zhou Min asked excitedly.

"What's there to say? We're just regular classmates, met in high school," Zhang Xiaoyue rolled her eyes, awkwardly saying, "Don't overthink it."

"Yes, yes, regular classmates."

"We didn't overthink, but we heard you two even held hands."

"Must you exaggerate?"

"Wow, my General Manager Chen, just got snatched away like that. Lucky we're all good sisters. You better cover us in the future."

A group of women chattered, their expressions excited. Who would have thought after three years of university that she'd hide it so deeply without leaking a word? This news was earth-shattering and probably would alert the school before long.

...

Returning home, Chen Shouyi received good news.

The Great Xia Country had successful negotiations with various countries, and Powerful Divine Power's flesh had finally arrived. Though Chen Shouyi didn't know what price Great Xia Country paid, seeing as it took this long, it clearly wasn't small.

In a military warehouse.

"General Manager Chen, hello, I'm the captain responsible for escorting this batch. Here's the receiving document, please verify and sign," said an officer who had come last time, handing over the document bag with reverence.

"Thank you, appreciate your trouble," Chen Shouyi replied.

"Not at all, not at all," the officer hurriedly said.

Chen Shouyi took the document bag, tore open the seal, pulled out the receiving document and pen, glanced quickly, and noted the total was six tons, almost double the last delivery of three and a half tons.

It probably will last about a year.

Joy swelling in his heart, he swiftly signed his name and handed the document to the officer.

This delivery again was preserved meat mush of over twenty years, but unlike other zombie-type flesh, these meats didn't spoil at all. From the smell, he could determine these mashed meats came from two powerful Divine Power existences.

Apparently... if he got tired of one, he could switch to the other.

He wondered how these two would taste.

Being aware that different Divine Positions of Barbarian Gods had completely different flavors, for example, the Sea God had a moistness and briny freshness that hinted at the ocean's scent.

Similarly, the God of Flames was fierce, hot, with the corpse temperature exceeding a hundred degrees even after death. Eating it felt like swallowing a burning coal, and afterward, it gave a warm sensation throughout the body.

Hopefully, they aren't too terrible.

...

The following days flew by. Every few days, Chen Shouyi would visit the University of Technology to find Zhang Xiaoyue.

Sometimes they would eat, other times just take strolls.

Often, a first love might not be the prettiest, but it is the one you adore most and who makes your heart skip a beat. That feeling wasn't present with Song Tingting. With Zhang Xiaoyue, Chen Shouyi felt as if he was reliving the days of romance.

"Our principal wants to invite you to give a talk at our school," Zhang Xiaoyue said.

"I'd rather not. I've already shared everything I have," Chen Shouyi thought for a moment, saying—going for a talk means you need to share insights, and so far, perhaps not many have mastered the Chen Clan's cultivation method 2.0. Revealing what he currently practices, no one would likely be able to train in it.

"Suit yourself," Zhang Xiaoyue said softly, sweetly leaning against Chen Shouyi's chest.

They exchanged sweet nothings.

"Oh, here is something for you," he said, taking out a small sealed container with a few small doses of Divine Marrow and Divine Blood.

"What is this?"

"Good stuff, take one every few days, your body is too weak now!" Chen Shouyi said.

"What are you planning?" Zhang Xiaoyue blushed at his words, playfully chiding.

"No, am I that kind of person?" Chen Shouyi said quickly.

Chapter 697 - Bad News

As mid-January approached, the New Year's atmosphere grew day by day.

The humans struggled through the fourth year after the mutation, and by the solar calendar, Chen Shouyi had turned 20.

This period was undoubtedly his happiest and most peaceful time.

Ever since reuniting with Zhang Xiaoyue, his monotonous and tedious life seemed to be infused with a touch of brightness, and everything became vividly alive.

But he knew in his heart that the current calmness was merely a castle built on sand, liable to be washed away at any moment. The God of Lightning would inevitably return one day, and the other Barbarian Gods with powerful divine powers in the other world wouldn't allow Earth, such a vast and fertile resource of faith, to be monopolized by the God of Lightning. They could descend at any moment.

The human situation remained dire.

He looked out the window, where long icicles hung from the sill, reflecting a gem-like cold light under the dim yellow light of the night:

"With the violent power of my Giant Transformation, a Barbarian God of moderate divine power is dead if I catch an opportunity. But compared to the powerful divine powers, I'm still far from enough," he thought to himself.

His progress had significantly slowed, and over a full month, his strength, agility, and physique each increased by only 0.1 points, while intelligence improved slightly more, increasing by 0.2 points.

All four main attributes reaching 23.5, fairly balanced.

As for perception and will, the improvement margin was relatively large, increasing by 0.3 and 0.2 respectively, reaching 22.8 and 22.5 points.

But for Chen Shouyi, it was still too slow. At this rate, if he encountered the God of Lightning again or another powerful divine power, death would be the only outcome.

In truth, aside from strength, he still had a significant gap compared to a Barbarian God of moderate divine power.

For example, in intelligence, even after burning faith value, his intelligence attribute was only 26.3, with a gap of more than one point compared to the intelligence of 27 or 28 points in moderate divine power. His agility was even weaker, with no means of cleverness, unchanged whether transformed or not, standing only at 23.5 points, a much greater disparity.

But the unmatched power of the Giant Transformation compensated for everything.

Breaking through misconceptions with strength, destroying everything.

With one punch, the world changes colors, and the clouds part.

That physical directional attack, often in kiloton magnitude, even if a powerful divine power were hit solidly, it would be severely damaged.

Chen Shouyi glanced at the attribute panel, displaying a faith value as high as 30146.5 points and an energy accumulation of 80.15.

This was the most significant progress during these days.

With a thought, he distributed ten thousand points each among the three super talent abilities.

As soon as the faith value disappeared, a hot and surging current erupted from within him like volcanic lava, turning his skin crimson, with steam rising. The original force in the air stirred violently while the table, bed, and window all made cracking sounds.

The entire room seemed to be trembling.

Chen Shouyi couldn't help but open his mouth, exhaling a faint red airflow filled with scorching heat.

After more than ten seconds, the heat flow gradually subsided.

All his talent abilities had transformed into:

Self-Healing (Super): 30.01%; Giant Battle Body (Super): 60.01%; Atmospheric Manipulation: 40.01%.

"Sometimes, faith is indeed a wonderful thing. This effortless gain is truly satisfying," Chen Shouyi mused as he felt the subtle changes in his body.

...

The next morning, Bai Xiaoling hurried over with a somewhat serious expression, bringing bad news.

"General Manager Chen, there's news, Elder Qin Liuyuan died during a mission; they asked me to inform you if you'd like to attend Elder Qin's memorial service?"

He paused for a moment before speaking, "How did he die?"

"Reportedly encountered a terrible monster, but I don't know the specifics," Bai Xiaoling said quickly. To the Great Xia Country now, anything short of a Barbarian God's invasion was considered a small ripple, not much of a storm.

Chen Shouyi couldn't help but feel a bit sad, as fewer and fewer familiar faces remained: "Arrange a helicopter for me."

"Yes, General Manager Chen," Bai Xiaoling replied.

...

Qin Liuyuan was not in Zhonghai.

After the abandonment of Hedong, the millions of Hedong's population partially relocated to various places in Jiangnan Province, while another part flowed into nearby provinces and cities. As the only remaining seasoned folk martial artist in Jiangnan Province, Qin Liuyuan was allocated to Ningzhou, now the seat of the provincial government.

Setting foot on the ground in Ningzhou again, Chen Shouyi had a sense of being in a different life.

Just after getting off the helicopter, provincial leader Zhao Zize quickly walked over, enthusiastically extending his hand from afar: "General Manager Chen, it's been a hard journey, welcome to Ningzhou."

"You're too kind," Chen Shouyi shook his hand. "In a way, this place is also my hometown."

Dongning is a county-level city under Ningzhou, so this wasn't inaccurate.

"I almost forgot that you're halfway a Ningzhou man, General Manager Chen," Zhao Zize laughed. "But you're not just Ningzhou's pride; you're the pride of the southern province and the entire Great Xia. This time in Ningzhou, you must take a good look around."

Naturally, he hadn't forgotten that General Manager Chen was from Dongning. It's just that Dongning had been destroyed by a nuclear bomb, with countless deaths and injuries. It was unknown how many old acquaintances and friends died there. Bringing it up might stir General Manager Chen's emotions, which was undesirable.

This visit by General Manager Chen to Ningzhou for Qin Liuyuan's memorial service was taken very seriously by the province, even raising the memorial's specifications by a level.

Initially, the assignment of Chen Shouyi to Zhonghai City wasn't the southern province's choice, merely compliance with the higher authorities' grand scheme.

Moreover, for strategic safety, a significant portion of East City's industries relocated to nearby Zhonghai City, making the entire southern province suffer immensely and painfully.

Now that the safety threat in East City has disappeared, the reconstruction of East City has been reintroduced into the province's agenda, and the idea of bringing General Manager Chen back has become quite pressing.

Whether Zhonghai City agrees isn't the issue; as long as General Manager Chen is willing to return, it's acceptable. After all, from the national perspective, where isn't General Manager Chen useful?

Chen Shouyi nodded faintly. He had heard similar words many times before and was completely immune: "Maybe, where is Elder Qin's memorial service being held?"

"The body has been placed at the funeral home. We are deeply saddened by the sacrifice of Comrade Qin Liuyuan. Please accept our condolences," Zhao Zize said solemnly.

The car was already waiting outside.

As soon as Chen Shouyi and Bai Xiaoling got in the car, they set off quickly.

He quietly looked out the window.

Ningzhou's recovery was remarkable. The last time he came here, it was under the occupation of the God of Hunting. In just two short years, the desolation and decay of the past were nowhere to be seen, and with Hedong's abolishment and the provincial government's relocation here, Ningzhou had become more bustling and lively.

Only the occasional remnants of broken buildings hinted at what the place had once suffered.

Chapter 698 - Fifth Optimization

The convoy didn't go to the provincial government; it headed straight to the funeral home.

Chen Shouyi stared blankly out of the window. Coming back to his senses, he asked Bai Xiaoling, "Do you have a white envelope?"

"Yes! Yes!" Bai Xiaoling quickly took out a prepared white envelope from her small bag, the black character "奠" on it was particularly striking.

Chen Shouyi took it, realizing it was already stuffed with some money. He didn't mind, glanced at it, and put it in his pocket.

The funeral home arrived quickly, and a large crowd was already there to greet them at the door.

"Zzi!"

The convoy stopped.

Chen Shouyi, dressed in a black suit, got out of the car, his expression stern.

Qin Liuyuan's wife, Wang Suzhen, wearing white mourning clothes, appeared sorrowful and haggard, her eyes swollen from crying. Yet, seeing Chen Shouyi, she was still a bit excited and quickly approached, "General Manager Chen, I didn't expect you to come too. If Lao Qin knows this in the afterlife, he will be able to smile with peace."

Chen Shouyi was silent, "Lao Qin was my friend. Something happened to him, so I naturally had to come to see him one last time. Sister-in-law, please take care."

Wang Suzhen covered her mouth tightly, turned her head slightly, suppressing her emotions, then called her two sons, "Jiale, Lingjie, greet your uncle!"

"Hello, Uncle Chen." Qin Jiale and Qin Lingjie were both senior martial artists, prominent figures in Ningzhou, but facing General Manager Chen, who was about their age, they felt no resistance calling him uncle and showed respect.

He nodded, patted their shoulders, "You two are doing well. If you have any difficulties, you can come to Zhonghai to find me."

Everyone watched quietly as this scene unfolded. Among those attending the memorial were city leaders, provincial leaders, and some colleagues paying respects. Everyone understood the weight and meaning behind these words.

...

Inside the funeral home's memorial hall, two rows of wreaths were lined on both sides, creating a solemn atmosphere.

The body in the coffin had been stitched and made up, but the tragic state was still evident. Chen Shouyi took the flowers handed over by the master of ceremonies, stepped forward to bow, and placed the flowers.

"Dear friends, leaders, and guests,

We gather with heavy hearts to deeply mourn Comrade Qin Liuyuan.

On January 14, 2018, Comrade Qin Liuyuan bravely sacrificed his life during a mission, passing away at the age of 42.

His sacrifice caused us to lose a good comrade and a close friend. His sacrifice is a huge loss to Ningzhou City and Jiangnan Province, and we are deeply grieved..." The funeral home's host, a provincial leader, wore a sorrowful expression.

While the number of martial artists has greatly increased, in reality, the number of martial artists in the country does not exceed 30,000, with most in frontline units; their presence among civilians remains rare.

In a city like Ningzhou, the number of civilian martial artists does not exceed ten.

The loss of a martial artist, especially a veteran senior martial artist, in peaceful times, is a significant event.

...

Chen Shouyi listened quietly, but his heart grew increasingly calm.

The world is unpredictable. The last time he attended a memorial was for Xiao Changming, back then Qin Liuyuan was also present, but now it was for Qin Liuyuan himself.

After attending the memorial, he offered a few words of comfort to Qin Liuyuan's family, didn't converse much with Jiangnan Province's leaders, and hurried back to Zhonghai.

...

Several days later, late at night.

Under the streetlights, snow danced in the wind. It was unclear how many times it had snowed this year. Seeing that the snow had accumulated over a foot high on the ground, Chen Shouyi estimated he wouldn't be able to ride his bicycle the next day.

He watched for a while, then drew the curtains.

"One-one-one-one..."

The Shell Lady and Little Red, each with a math book, were on the bed seriously doing math problems, competing as they shouted louder than the other, making quite a raucous.

Second-grade math problems were much harder than first-grade ones, with each question taking a long time to solve.

He glanced at the attribute panel and found the energy value had reached 81. His heart felt like it was being scratched by a cat, but after hesitating for a long time, he decided to wait until the next day to go to another world.

As his strength grew, he became increasingly cautious. The evolution of dreams during cultivation technique optimization could likely reflect on reality.

His momentum, fueled by his own will, now matched that of a demigod's divine power, nearly reaching weak divine power. At such a time, it would undoubtedly be disastrous.

He took away the math books in front of the two little ones, "Stop doing the questions. Go to bed early."

"Okay, Giant, isn't Little Red weaker than me?" asked the Shell Lady, pointing at Little Red.

"You're not weaker. I'm stronger, and I solve questions faster," Little Red quickly responded.

"You made a mistake once, adding an extra one!" the Shell Lady refuted loudly.

"I didn't make a mistake; you remembered wrong," Little Red stubbornly replied.

"Alright, stop arguing. Both of you are strong!" Chen Shouyi said, trying to smooth things over.

So neither of them was happy.

Chen Shouyi didn't care about them, thinking, what's worth comparing every day?

They're both just weaklings, wasting such high memory and intelligence.

He turned off the light, lay on the bed, and was asleep within seconds.

...

The next day before dawn, the sky was still dark.

Chen Shouyi dressed warmly, took the two little ones downstairs. Outside, it was still snowing, the thick snow nearly reaching his thighs. With a thought, under an unseen force, the snow in the yard quickly parted to both sides, forming a straight and wide path.

He quickly took off, flying straight into the sky.

A half-hour later, he entered the spatial passage, settled the two little ones in the ice cave, then surveyed the surroundings, effortlessly killing a passing "White Dragon."

The "White Dragon" was at the top of the food chain in this area, but it seemed forgetful, often venturing here by mistake. Over the past six months, more than a dozen have died at his hands.

After finishing everything, he returned to the ice cave, sitting cross-legged on a thick fur rug.

He opened the attribute panel, took several deep breaths, and chose "Horizontal Training Thirty-Six Styles" for optimization.

This time, unlike before, he didn't fall unconscious. Instead, he was in a trance but still had a clear sense of the outside world and maintained conscious thought. He even felt that he could wake up forcefully anytime, breaking free from the power of the Book of Knowledge.

Obviously, as his power grew, the influence of the Book of Knowledge on him weakened.

Of course, acting on such impulsive behavior would be foolish.

He offered no resistance to the Book of Knowledge's power, allowing it to influence his mind. The next moment, the familiar dream swiftly enveloped him, and he began practicing the "Horizontal Training Thirty-Six Styles" over and over.

The passage of time in the dream felt like fleeting light.

A thousand times...

Ten thousand times...

One hundred thousand times...

Countless minute changes and adjustments accumulated continuously.

During this process, the rough edges became refined, the defects were progressively completed, moving toward perfection...

An unknown amount of time passed before he suddenly opened his eyes, drenched in sweat. A salty metallic taste rose from the depth of his throat and as he opened his mouth, he spat a mouthful of fresh blood.

The blood sizzled on the ice, with the surrounding air distorting, clearly exuding high heat.

Yet Chen Shouyi's eyes were incomparably bright, "Truly an abnormal cultivation technique!"

Chapter 699 - Selection

The cultivation technique optimized this time still follows the original system.

But it's more complete, and judging from the dream, the training effect is better, almost terrifying.

At least last time in the dream evolution, he wasn't injured at all.

"However, with my self-healing ability, as long as I don't die on the spot, I can reverse it." He thought to himself, somewhat exhilarated.

Feeling the damaged body rapidly self-healing, it returned to normal in a moment.

Chen Shouyi stood up, took off his shirt and shoes, revealing a body of well-defined strong muscles, then walked out of the ice cave barefoot and began to practice the five-times optimized cultivation technique.

...

His whole body was fiery red, densely covered with blood spots seeping from the skin, with steaming vapor mixed with blood, carrying a faint tint.

He suddenly spat out a mouthful of blood, abruptly interrupting his movement.

The blood was faint but very viscous, seemingly mixed with something else, not pure blood, but also the viscera and muscles self-destructing unable to bear the annihilation information.

Most terrifyingly, his brain was the same.

His eyes, nostrils, ears, all seeping blood, making him look like a ghost crawling out of hell.

He could feel his thinking become sluggish, as if rusted, and his brain seemed to be dissolving.

For ordinary people, at this point, they'd be either barely breathing or turned into idiots, but at this moment he was still standing fine, without even a wobble.

"Truly terrifying... but..." Chen Shouyi closed his eyes, feeling he could still think normally, albeit somewhat stalled.

"Perhaps, my mind has already been able to exist like those powerful Natural Spirits, independent of the physical body."

Natural Spirits have no physical form and no memories from life, most muddled and driven by instinct. Their intelligence isn't much stronger than single-celled organisms, but there are powerful spirits beyond the ordinary ones, possessing considerable wisdom, and he was obviously the same.

The body was rapidly self-healing, the sluggishness of his mind lasted only a few seconds before becoming sharp and clear. Chen Shouyi took out a preservation box filled with mashed Powerful Divine Power from space and devoured it ravenously.

...

In the following days, Chen Shouyi began to train madly.

Except for going home once on the first day to explain the situation, he remained in isolation in the otherworld afterwards.

Despite the nourishment of the Powerful Divine Power, he grew thinner by the day, yet his attributes only increased instead of declining.

His skin grew tougher, muscles stronger, filled with terrifying power.

Under this kind of Demonic Path-like cultivation technique.

Weak cells self-destructed under annihilation information, leaving only the strong cells. These remaining cells quickly divided, undergoing selection in the next round, leaving only stronger cells...

Round after round, time and time again.

Survival of the fittest, eliminating the unfit.

The body was crazily evolving.

The whole process was like selective breeding, artificial interference in evolution, like how grain's ancestor was just the common grass, and rice's ancestor was just the weed accompanying it in the field.

No cultivation method is more efficient than this pure selective evolution.

As long as he doesn't die.

Fortunately, his powerful self-healing ability was tailored for such a cultivation technique.

Of course, that's indeed the case.

On the third day, he could already perform eighteen forms.

Strength, agility, constitution, and intelligence each increased by 0.2 points, even willpower increased by 0.2 points.

After the sixth day.

He could already perform twenty-nine forms.

His physical attributes increased by 0.2 points again, willpower still increased by 0.1 point.

...

On the fifteenth day.

The sky was swirling with auroras, with white clouds rapidly shifting and fleeting.

"Crack!"

"Crack!"

The ice layers of the snow mountain kept cracking, with fissures snaking like dragons and serpents on the ground.

Within a dozen kilometers around, invisible forces filled the area.

Chen Shouyi was enveloped in a blood mist, the high temperatures it emitted melting the ice underfoot into a small pit.

The thirty-fifth form.

He felt his body burning.

"Bang, bang, bang!"

Chen Shouyi could distinctly hear the sound of tough cells popping inside his body, he could even feel the desperation and wails transmitted by the cells on the verge of death.

Eerie and chilling.

An indescribable fear, like a great hand clutching at the heart.

Death was breathing down his neck.

This optimization of the thirty-six forms of Horizontal Training was countless times more terrifying than the previous one.

He let out an unconscious low growl, his face full of blood.

"Rumble..."

Some ice layers began to collapse, mixed with his roars, like muffled thunder rolling.

He clenched his teeth and immediately launched the thirty-sixth form, the final form.

An immense power scattered, countless ice blocks floated up, detached from gravity, and began to shatter.

A giant beast slumbering underground was awoken by the fear. After a tremor and rockfall, it burrowed out of the snow mountain, glanced from afar, and turned to flee without looking back.

The palpitation in its heart was telling it.

This tiny creature was extremely dangerous.

At this moment, Chen Shouyi also reached the final juncture.

His body seemed to begin melting, eyes became cloudy, skin ulcerated massively, revealing decayed muscles, sliding off like cream.

Through the gaps, one could vaguely see the internal organs, where the same thing was happening, even worse.

His body was rapidly collapsing, self-destructing.

Life was like a candle flame, seemingly about to extinguish at any moment.

His movements became slower and more laborious, yet Chen Shouyi seemed oblivious, his mind almost blank, relying on sheer willpower, he struggled through the last form.

The next moment, a turn for the better, all self-destruct information instantly dissipated, at the same time, endless Original Force surged in like a tide.

He opened his pus-seeping eyes, his body tottering.

"That's all it is!"

He clenched his fist hard, with a "pop" several finger bones cracked and fell off.

He glanced down

Perception revealed that apart from a few patches of skin and flesh, the entire hand was almost reduced to bone.

He willed it.

The fallen finger bones quickly flew up and rejoined with the hand, while the scattered flesh also exploded, with intact cells flying back like a blood fog, returning to their original positions.

Although these cells could heal quickly even if abandoned, with new cells replacing them.

But having accompanied him for so long, Chen Shouyi felt compelled to salvage them.

Moreover, who knows, some may be particularly strong and unique individuals.

He had to ensure cellular diversity for the next round of selection and elimination.

Due to the severe injuries this time, his body's nutrients were hard-pressed to support such massive consumption, making this self-healing process substantially long. It took more than a minute, and the body finally completed self-healing, leaving the whole person emaciated to skin and bones.

"Huh!"

He let out a slight exclamation, suddenly looking at the skin on his hand.

"Is this mutation?!!"

Chapter 700 - Baffling

Chen Shouyi keenly noticed that his skin was covered with layers upon layers of tiny scales, exceptionally dense, carrying a sinister beauty.

These scales are very small, indistinguishable to the naked eye.

Each is only about a dozen micrometers in diameter, roughly the size of a cell.

In fact, upon closer inspection, these scales are actually cells, each undergoing specialization, flattened, stacked like fish scales.

"Ordinary people shouldn't be able to see scales this small, right?" he thought to himself.

He touched them, and the sensation was tender and smooth, like a freshly peeled egg, without the slightest numbness, with a more sensitive touch than before.

This is because these scales are not purely a layer of keratin, but are filled with nerve clusters far more robust and dense than ordinary people.

"The difference between myself and humans is getting bigger and bigger!" Chen Shouyi muttered to himself.

Even without experimentation, he could feel the strong defense of this peculiar skin layer. This is just the epidermis; inside his body, unimaginable changes have likely occurred.

Now he can no longer be described as human. Besides the similarity in appearance, the two are entirely different species.

At this moment, a strong hunger surged in his heart, and he quickly retrieved some powerful Divine Power mush from his spatial passage and began to devour it.

...

In the following days, he didn't practice anymore, continuously recuperating his weakened body in the alien world. Even someone as powerful as him, the half-month of hellish training left his body weak and emaciated, resembling a skeleton.

Fortunately, it was fine as long as he had sufficient food.

With unrestricted binge eating every day, his body swelled rapidly like a balloon.

Three days later, when Chen Shouyi walked out of the spatial passage, his body had slightly gained weight, making him look full of energy.

...

The time had reached February, just a few days before the New Year, and the festive atmosphere on the streets was increasingly strong.

Passing by a park, Chen Shouyi saw many ice sculptures carved inside, featuring all kinds of animals, attracting a large number of citizens. With the phased large-scale military downsizing of Great Xia Country and the implementation of a strategy of elite troops, the market had become much livelier.

He checked his attribute panel.

Strength: 24.2

Agility: 24.2

Constitution: 24.2

Intelligence: 24.2

Perception: 23.0

Will: 23.1

Energy Accumulation: 6.25

Faith Value: 9667.6

Talents: Self-Healing (Super): 30.01%; Giant Battle Body (Super): 60.01%; Control Atmosphere: 40.01%.

In just half a month, his strength, agility, constitution, and intelligence each increased by 0.7 points, while his willpower progressed slightly slower, but still rose by 0.6 points. It was quite an astonishing improvement.

Equivalent to a 30-40% increase in each attribute.

And this was just the beginning. In the following month or two, his strength would enter a period of rapid growth.

Chen Shouyi exhaled, relaxing his mood, even dispelling some of the lingering gloom in his heart.

Seeing it was still early, he decided not to go home immediately and planned to visit Zhang Xiaoyue at the University of Technology.

However, upon arriving at the school gate, he discovered that the school was already on winter break.

He reluctantly returned, thinking of something, and went to a tailor shop, paid the remaining balance, and picked up clothes for the two little ones.

...

In the evening, after having dinner with his family.

Chen Shouyi lay on the bed reading a book.

The Shell Lady sat on the bed, picked up a piece of clothing, and then put it down beside her. She excitedly counted her clothes, while also mindfully keeping an eye on the Red Little Dot counting hers.

Two minutes later, the two little ones simultaneously finished counting.

They glanced at each other.

One had a happy face, the other looked dejected.

The Shell Lady pouted her lips and suddenly cried out loud.

Chen Shouyi, who was reading beside them, was puzzled, quickly putting down the book: "What's wrong now?"

"She...she has one more than me...waaaah...good giant, why?" The Shell Lady cried in grievance, feeling extremely sad:

"Little Dot realizes I'm no longer the good giant's favorite little dot anymore...waaaah..."

Chen Shouyi felt awkward, the words were...

He scratched his head: "Wait, don't cry yet, maybe you counted wrong, let me count!"

"Little Dot didn't count wrong." The Shell Lady said, insisting she was a smart little dot and never counted wrong.

"I didn't count wrong either." Red Little Dot said immediately, with a hint of pride: "I just have one more."

The Shell Lady cried even louder.

"Don't argue for now."

Chen Shouyi said with a headache, raising two little ones is indeed troublesome when seeking fairness, whether one has more or less is not acceptable.

He counted the two piles of little clothes separately.

He initially thought the tailor shop owner made one less, but it turned out he wrongly blamed him; not only none were missing, but even a few extra were given.

It was just one pile had 105 pieces, and the other had 106 pieces.

Red Little Dot had one extra.

He looked at the Shell Lady, then at Red Little Dot.

"Good giant, did Little Dot really miss one?" The Shell Lady sniffled.

Looking at the sad Little Dot, Chen Shouyi nodded with difficulty, feeling a bit resentful towards the tailor shop owner, wouldn't even numbers be better?

Why make the two numbers different.

Then regretted his own convenience of not counting them first before taking them.

Chen Shouyi took one from Red Little Dot's pile, adhering to the principle of fairness, and said to the two little ones: "This piece is mine, now everyone's the same."

"Waaaah!"

This time it was Red Little Dot's turn to cry.

...

His return from seclusion couldn't be hidden from people at all.

Early the next morning, Zhang Miaomiao represented the City Government and brought a truckload of New Year's goods, along with several workers.

"Why is there an air conditioner, this should be an air conditioner, right?" Chen Shouyi queried uncertainly.

"General Manager Chen, this is indeed an air conditioner. Nowadays the weather is quite harsh; too cold in winter and too hot in summer, so air conditioners are necessary!" Zhang Miaomiao responded, smiling at Chen Shouyi.

Currently, electricity supply is still quite tight, not even enough for industrial production, many factories are still using steam engines, and air conditioners are major power consumers, no doubt a specialty item.

However, Chen Shouyi didn't refuse: "Install them in my parents' and sister's rooms, I don't need it."

"Alright, given General Manager Chen's strength, I suppose you don't need it." Zhang Miaomiao replied with a blossoming smile, flattering him.

Chen Shouyi walked upstairs, openly opening his parents' and sister's rooms: "The doors are open, I'm about to head to the other world, so I'll leave it to you here. Oh, place the New Year's goods in the storage room."

"Rest assured, General Manager Chen, I'll make sure it's all neat and clean." Zhang Miaomiao said, then her face reddened with embarrassment, hesitating: "General Manager Chen, about last time's incident..."

Chen Shouyi felt puzzled, queried: "What incident?"

"Ah, nothing...nothing!" Zhang Miaomiao hurriedly said, flustered.

Chen Shouyi felt inexplicable, most disliked conversations that were left incomplete, what exactly did she want to say?

And what incident from last time?