

## THE WAY OF RESTRAINT

# Chapter 11: Mastery of Martial Arts More Than Just Combat

[July 16th, a very meaningful day. I spent the entire day training with Coach Odell and decided on my future training focus: prioritizing foundational work and shaping my body. Tomorrow, Coach Gu Yang will teach us something new. I wonder what it will be?]

Upon returning home, Su Jie continued his habit of journaling.

In the early hours of July 17th, at three in the morning, Su Jie arrived at Odell's courtyard to practice conditioning exercises, focusing on shaping and refining his martial arts foundation. He then worked on perfecting the move called “Hoe Strike”, striving to achieve absolute mastery in its power and precision.

Using this move, he attacked Coach Odell, who effortlessly countered it. In turn, Odell used the same move to attack him. This back-and-forth exchange allowed Su Jie to deepen his understanding and proficiency with the technique.

After finishing his training, Su Jie joined the others on the training ground.

Gu Yang, seeing the training class assembled, began to speak. "Today, I will teach you the true forms of martial arts. Once you learn this set, you'll not only move gracefully but also improve your flexibility. For instance, this—continuous backflips."

As he spoke, Gu Yang demonstrated a series of smooth backflips, followed by a few whirlwind kicks. He landed firmly, calm and composed.

"Wow!"

The foreign members of the training group, amazed by Gu Yang's performance, felt as though they were finally going to learn real Chinese martial arts, akin to something out of a movie.

However, a few individuals, including Su Jie, saw through the display, knowing it was more for show than practicality.

Josh stepped forward and addressed Gu Yang boldly, "Coach, I don't want to learn these flashy routines. I came here to learn real martial arts. Can you teach us techniques like digging and carrying loads instead?"

*'Seems like Josh has realized something,'* Su Jie thought to himself.

Josh, having experienced numerous street fights, surely understood that flashy flips and whirlwind kicks were useless in real combat and would only lead to defeat.

"Do you all want to learn?" Gu Yang asked the entire group.

"We do!"

Nearly 90% of the trainees, exhausted from half a month of labor-intensive training, eagerly believed that backflips and whirlwind kicks were true martial arts, unlike digging and carrying loads.

"Training forms without building a foundation will leave you empty-handed in the end," Gu Yang replied to Josh. "But there's another saying: training the foundation without learning forms leaves you penniless. The digging and load-carrying exercises earlier were foundational. Now, I'm teaching you forms. Martial arts have never been just about combat; they're also about life. Everyone here in this program must leave with skills they can use to make a living. If you don't want to learn, feel free to train on your own."

Josh frowned, said nothing, and walked away to focus on his own training, unwilling to learn the flashy routines.

Seeing Josh leave, Su Jie also requested leave from Gu Yang. It wasn't that he thought the forms were useless, but rather, he had more pressing matters to focus on.

Coach Odell was leaving soon, and Su Jie needed to seize every moment for foundational training. The forms could be learned at any time, but training under Odell was a rare opportunity.

Gu Yang watched Su Jie leave without expression, not stopping him. At least Su Jie had taken the time to request leave, citing family matters as his reason.

After leaving Gu Yang, Su Jie returned to Odell's courtyard.

"You made the right choice. Forms aren't unimportant, but they can be learned anytime. There are plenty of teachers for that," Odell praised Su Jie's decision.

"I've decided that until you leave, I will dedicate myself entirely to training here. There's about half a month left, and I'll give it my all," Su Jie declared resolutely.

"Good, then let's not waste a single moment. Cherish every second," Odell said with a wide smile. "With your attitude, I'll increase the intensity of your training, pushing you to your limits to see just how much potential you have."

"Don't worry, I can handle it," Su Jie replied confidently. However, he soon regretted his words.

What followed was truly devilish training.

[July 17th: Suffering! Suffering! Suffering! Suffering! Suffering! Suffering! Suffering!] Su Jie wrote in his journal that day, repeating the word "suffering" seven times before noting, [No strength left to reflect on today. I just want to sleep.]

[July 18th: Suffering!]

[July 19th: Suffering!]

[July 20th: Exhausting!]

[July 21st. After five consecutive days of grueling training, I finally started to adapt and catch my breath. The first five days were a blur; I don't even know how I managed to endure it. The torment felt like being in hell itself. Every morning at 3 a.m., the routine began with warm-ups, joint exercises, physical conditioning, muscle abuse, weight training, stretching, and flexibility balance drills. Every part of my body was in pain, fatigued, and exhausted. Yet somehow, after sleeping, I'd wake up refreshed. I attribute it all to the coach's medications, massages, and nutrition. The massage oil he used was evidently of much higher quality than what the academy provided. Besides hearty meals, he also gave me supplements used by

professional athletes—vitamins, calcium, and endocrine-balancing pills. These things must be expensive; I've never seen them on the market. But now, the training feels easier, and my physical fitness has significantly improved.]

On July 22nd, at 3 a.m., Su Jie got up as usual for training.

After finishing the routine of warm-ups, physical conditioning, and sculpting, Odell called a stop.

"Starting today, I'll teach you real psychological training."

"Psychological training?" Su Jie asked, puzzled.

"Whether it's martial arts or combat techniques from any country, it boils down to dual training: physical and psychological. This aligns with the Chinese martial arts concept of 'courage, strength, and skill.' Courage represents psychological resilience. Without strong psychological qualities, neither technique nor strength can be fully utilized," Odell explained, taking out a weapon and tossing it to Su Jie. "Strength represents physical fitness, while skill represents technique. If your physical fitness can't keep up, having technique is meaningless. Training physical fitness takes time—what we call 'tempering the body' in Chinese martial arts. But courage can be quickly developed. A coward can transform overnight into someone fierce after a significant event."

Su Jie looked at the weapon in his hand. It was a dagger.

Clang!

Su Jie drew the blade sharply, and the chilling gleam of the dagger made his hair stand on end. The blood groove on the blade was enough to send shivers down his spine; a mere swing could leave someone fatally wounded.

A deadly weapon, without a doubt.

"This is a military combat dagger," Odell said. "It's adept at concealment and offers unpredictable angles of attack. It's standard equipment for special forces on assassination missions. The saying 'short weapons are dangerous' is apt here. In ancient China, daggers were tools for piercing meat but evolved into deadly instruments. You Chinese even have the saying 'revealing the dagger when the map is at its end,' originating from Jing Ke's assassination attempt on Qin Shi Huang. Swords are visible weapons, not suited for assassination, but daggers are unparalleled in their lethality." (G: Jing Ke presented a map to the Qin King, and only at the very end of unrolling the map did a hidden dagger emerge, signaling the deadly intent behind the seemingly innocent offering.)

Odell continued, "Daggers are versatile—effective for close combat and throwable at long range. The simplest techniques involve slashing and stabbing, not unlike how you swing a hoe. Now, let's spar with daggers!" Odell picked up an identical dagger.

"Isn't that a bit risky?" Su Jie hesitated, lightly scraping the dagger against his arm. Even the light touch made his sweat hairs fall off, sending a chill down his spine. "This thing could be fatal with the slightest contact. Didn't you say we must avoid injuries during training?"

Josh had emphasized the importance of avoiding injuries in training, and Odell had repeatedly stressed the same point later.

"Don't worry," Odell reassured him. "You won't get hurt sparring with me. This is just to let you experience the brutality of cold weapons. In combat, fear of punches is a major hindrance. When attacked, most people panic, retreat, and cover their heads instead of staying calm and analyzing the situation. That's a sign of weak psychological resilience. Overcoming fear of punches is a critical milestone for fighters. Once you conquer that, you can stay calm in a fight and pinpoint weaknesses. Usually, frequent fighting helps reduce this fear, but that's not a quick solution. In ancient battles, soldiers desensitized to blood and death after prolonged combat. We lack those conditions today, but luckily, I can help you. I've taught martial arts to special forces worldwide and adapted their methods. By sparring with daggers, I'll guide the rhythm to make you feel the proximity of death. Once you stop fearing the dagger, facing an opponent's fists will feel like child's play."

Indeed, the psychological pressure of a dagger far exceeded that of a fist.

Most people would prefer facing an unarmed, muscular man than a skinny person wielding a dagger—especially one as sharp and lethal as this military dagger. It seemed designed solely to take lives.



"Use the techniques you've practiced with the hoe to attack me. They apply to dagger combat," Odell instructed.

Su Jie gripped the dagger in one hand, pondered for a moment, and then mimicked holding a hoe. He suddenly lunged, raising the dagger and slashing downward in an arc. Remarkably, it carried a faint sense of momentum.

Clang!

As Su Jie's blade neared Odell, Odell sidestepped, dodging the slash. Then, swish, swish, swish! Three swift counterattacks followed. The dagger danced like a venomous snake, ready to stab or slash at any moment.

The close-range combat with the dagger was incredibly dangerous—far more terrifying than facing someone wielding a long blade.

The dagger's gleam flickered as it cut through the air. Under the relentless assault, Su Jie felt a deep fear. Panic consumed him, leaving him unable to stay calm or execute any techniques.

This state is often referred to in combat as being "stunned by wild punches."

Su Jie had grown accustomed to being Josh's sparring partner at night, enduring combinations of punches and kicks. His fear of punches had diminished.

But daggers? He was truly terrified.

And these weren't fake daggers—they were genuine military combat daggers. One slash could sever a limb or leave a gaping wound.

Clatter!

Su Jie's dagger fell to the ground, and the blade was already pressed against his neck, right at the carotid artery. Blood trickled from a shallow cut, staining his neck. When he wiped it with his hand, the sight was shocking.

For the first time, Su Jie felt how close he had come to death.

Odell stepped forward, wiping away the blood with a towel. It was just a minor cut, nothing serious. A bandage later, Su Jie was back on his feet.

Odell's blade control was precise. Otherwise, the cut could have severed Su Jie's artery and trachea, ending his life.

## Chapter 12: The Spirit of Martial Arts

### Mastery of Blade and Spear

"The technique of using a dagger focuses on close combat. Speed, agility, and precision are key—swift strikes that are as sharp as they are decisive. Your move with the hoe and pickaxe resembles the instinct of a tiger pouncing on prey. While human claws lack the lethality of a tiger's, adding a dagger changes the game entirely," Odell explained, gesturing for Su Jie to pick up the dagger. "What did you feel earlier?"

"Fear, hesitation, complete helplessness, like a lamb to the slaughter," Su Jie answered honestly.

"The pressure of a dagger is ten times greater than that of a fist. A gun, in turn, exerts ten times the pressure of a dagger. Of course, guns are far too dangerous, and only maniacs train with them," Odell remarked, as if lost in memory. "Come, let's go again."

With a swift motion, Su Jie gathered his courage and attacked once more.

For an entire day, Su Jie sparred with Odell using daggers. Gradually, he began to overcome his fear.

"This is the dagger technique for close-range combat. Next is long-distance throwing." During their sparring, Odell suddenly switched tactics. He sprinted with the ferocity of a leopard, quickly creating distance, then bent low and hurled the dagger.

Caught off guard, Su Jie froze. All he saw was a flash of white light streaking toward him, grazing his hair. The experience left him trembling, feeling as though he might lose control of his bowels.

"This is the dagger's advantage—it doubles as a throwing weapon. This trait, sinister and deadly, captures the essence of ancient assassination techniques. In traditional martial arts, fists, staves, swords, and blades don't rival the speed of a concealed weapon. Hidden weapons are king," Odell explained. "In modern times, guns render such techniques obsolete, but training with daggers hones your reflexes and agility."

The training resumed.

Throughout the practice, Su Jie found himself unable to even graze Odell. The latter's dagger skills were ghostly and unpredictable, as if possessed by some otherworldly being. Su Jie imagined that even if dozens of people pursued Odell, they would all meet their demise.

In movies and television, martial arts masters are often shown fighting off twenty or more adversaries alone. Su Jie had always thought this was impossible.

But with weapons? Maybe not.

Daggers were terrifying. A light slash could sever a head or limb. Thrown from a distance, a glint of cold steel could pierce a throat.

"I've read tales of spear-wielding masters who could kill with a single thrust. It's no wonder ancient generals favored spears. Thinking about Zhao Yun of Changshan, charging into armies alone with his spear and armor, seven times in and out—perhaps such feats weren't impossible after all," Su Jie mused. He realized that if a simple dagger could intimidate him, the sight of a spear-wielding warrior charging on horseback would scatter hundreds of poorly trained soldiers.

In this moment, Su Jie began to grasp the concept of momentum in martial arts.

"To defeat someone, strike their courage first," Odell said. "First comes momentum, then courage. But courage alone isn't enough—you need calm analysis. Martial arts, like warfare, can allow the weak to defeat the strong. History has countless examples of small armies defeating large ones by channeling their unity into a decisive charge, causing panic and chaos among the enemy. The Japanese combined martial arts with strategy, distilling the essence of The Art of War into the four-character motto: 'Wind, Forest, Fire, Mountain.' Of course, these philosophical ideas require deep study. To reach the pinnacle of martial arts, one must ultimately embrace philosophy, not mere physical prowess or competitive fighting."

Su Jie listened quietly, absorbing the knowledge.

Bare-chested and covered in bandages, Su Jie bore numerous small cuts from the dagger. Odell had remarkable control, causing only superficial wounds to let Su Jie feel the sharpness of a blade without inflicting real harm.

This was the hallmark of a top-tier coach.

Such training was beyond the capability of ordinary instructors.

Su Jie had already researched Odell online and found that he was one of the world's most renowned coaches, having trained several world champions. In the country, no coach surpassed him.

Odell himself was also a martial arts master of the highest caliber, though Su Jie had no idea just how skilled he truly was.

After all, Su Jie was still a beginner, with only about twenty days of training.

However, those twenty days were far more effective than ordinary training, thanks to his world-class coach. Even professional athletes in national teams didn't receive this level of instruction.

The training was intense and fulfilling.

Since Odell would soon leave, he planned the most meaningful lessons for Su Jie's final days, focusing not only on physical conditioning but also on dagger combat.

To an outsider, their sparring sessions might have seemed reckless and dangerous. Both wielded sharp daggers, slashing and stabbing without any protective gear.

Su Jie's dagger technique improved significantly. However, his go-to move remained a single one—raising the dagger in a spiraling arc before slashing or thrusting forward. It was the “hoe and pickaxe” move.

He had refined this technique to perfection, practicing it repeatedly with advances, retreats, dodges, and lunges.

Under Odell's guidance, Su Jie deeply understood the intricacies of this move. He learned that mastering this foundational technique would allow him to branch out into countless variations.

The move mimicked the instincts of animals during an attack. Whether leaping like a monkey, crouching like a tiger, coiling like a snake, or circling like an eagle, even a mantis readies its pincers before striking.

"When humans walk, their hands dangle at their sides. When faced with an attack, they instinctively raise their hands to defend themselves. This move refines and amplifies that instinct, training the entire body—hands, eyes, posture, and

footwork. No wonder people say that the countless variations in martial arts stem from this 'hoe and pickaxe' move."

Through daily dagger training, Su Jie felt that the essence of this technique had been etched deeply into his mind.

As he sparred with the dagger each day, his fear of its sharp edge gradually dissipated. His confidence surged, and he couldn't help but fantasize about testing Josh's punches.

If he wasn't afraid of a dagger, why fear fists?

But he reminded himself that this confidence was deceptive. Though his courage had grown, his physical condition hadn't caught up yet. Charging headfirst into a punch would likely leave him battered and bruised.

Courage alone wasn't enough. Without strength to back it up, it was all for naught.

Odell also told him that growing bolder could easily lead to an illusion of invincibility, thinking you fear nothing, only to suffer losses. He advised that courage should be tempered with caution; only then could one truly progress.



In any case, after seven days of practicing with daggers, his courage had grown, and his agility and physical fitness had improved significantly.

Furthermore, Su Jie found that his body had become much sturdier and taller. He was almost growing by the day, now nearing 1.8 meters in height. This was because he was currently seventeen years old, the critical age for physical development. Odell's nutritional meals were rich and packed with foods that strengthened bones and replenished calcium. In addition, the daily physical training and stretching were designed to promote growth, a process referred to as "stretching the tendons and pulling the bones."

Su Jie's body now had faintly visible muscles, well-proportioned and balanced. His arm span had also increased, resembling the "ape arms and wasp waist" often described in novels—an ideal build for combat, with no extra fat and exceptional explosive power.

[July 22: In addition to the usual training, dagger practice was added today. At first, I was so flustered by the daggers that I didn't know what to do, but after enough practice, my courage grew. Now, when I see someone's fists, it feels like a child playing house. When I practice with Josh, I think I can do it without protective gear.]

[July 23: I now relish the daily training. Missing even one day makes me uncomfortable, and the initial pain is long gone. The training still requires full concentration, especially against the sharp edges of a dagger. This, even when I know the instructor won't hurt me. How intense must the training have been for ancient warriors, fighting life-or-death battles on the battlefield? It's beyond imagination.]

[July 24: The more frequent my dagger combat training, the more I feel that weapons are the soul of martial arts. Modern combat techniques are merely sports; without weapons, martial arts lose their essence. Every thrust I make with the dagger deepens my understanding of the 'hoe and pick' technique.]

Su Jie's journal continued.

On July 25, after completing his usual training, Odell did not spar with daggers but instead brought out two long spears with wooden shafts about as thick as an egg and sharp steel tips.

"Today's sparring weapon is the spear," Odell said. "Dagger training was about close-quarters combat, while spear thrusting focuses on long-range strikes, which are even more dangerous."

Holding the spear, Su Jie looked at the gleaming tip, knowing that even a light thrust could pierce a human body and create a massive wound. Facing such a weapon from a distance was indeed more terrifying than a dagger.

"A longer weapon offers greater strength, while a shorter one brings higher risk. The dagger is the most practical short weapon of ancient times, while the spear is the most practical long weapon. Now, follow my lead: hold the spear, stand firm, draw an inward arc, then an outward arc, and finally thrust forward. Spear techniques are simple: block, redirect, and thrust, using your entire body's strength to create momentum. Drawing an inward arc is called 'block,' drawing an outward arc is called 'redirect,' and the straight thrust is called 'stab.'"

Odell demonstrated three moves: inward and outward arcs, followed by a forward thrust.

Su Jie imitated him, repeatedly practicing the movements.

After a while, Su Jie noticed that the steel-tipped spear seemed alive in Odell's hands, able to strike at any moment. In contrast, his own spear felt rigid and lifeless.

During practice, Odell observed Su Jie's movements, offering corrections to his posture.

This monotonous training continued for two full hours. Su Jie felt he had reached his limit before Odell finally called for a break.

After a half-hour rest, Odell asked, "What insights have you gained about the three spear techniques?"

"It's still the 'hoe and pick' technique at its core," Su Jie said with increasing proficiency. "Blocking is like raising the hoe, twisting the body to draw an upward arc. Redirecting is like chopping downward, while thrusting resembles the motion of driving the hoe forward. They're essentially the same thing."

“Excellent!” Odell’s eyes lit up again. “Now you understand why hoeing and digging are the most fundamental training methods. Whether it’s the knife or spear, they all stem from this single principle. Ancient warfare relied primarily on knives and spears. Beyond that were bows and arrows, which fall under projectile weapons, relying not on physical strength but mechanical force.”

“What about staffs? I’ve read that many ancient fighters were skilled with staffs, as described in *Water Margin*,” Su Jie asked, having done his homework.

“Staffs were a civilian weapon, often used when no other option was available. A staff could double as a carrying pole for travel, but walking around with a knife or spear would draw the authorities’ attention. Of course, a spear could be used like a staff, but the reverse isn’t true. However, what I want to teach you isn’t about staffs. It’s still about courage training. Now, thrust the spear at me,” Odell instructed.

“Here I go!” Su Jie gave a vigorous thrust toward Odell’s chest.

Odell’s steel-tipped spear moved in a flash, drawing an outward arc and striking Su Jie’s spear away. Then, with a smooth motion, his spear tip reached Su Jie’s face.

Seeing the spearhead so close to his eyes, Su Jie froze, unable to react. Fortunately, the spear stopped just short of making contact.

“Feel it carefully. Let’s go again,” Odell said without further explanation, resuming the training.

Su Jie took a moment to adjust his state of mind. He realized that spear techniques shared similarities with the hoe: both used the body as a lever, applying coordinated strength for greater speed, efficiency, and power.

Spear techniques were more versatile, while the hoe emphasized stability. Yet the core principles were the same.

Instead of acting immediately, Su Jie focused on steadying his breathing, entering a calm state. Then, with a flick of his wrist, he raised the spear as if lifting a hoe.

The spear shot forward.

“Hm?” Odell appeared slightly surprised. But just as the spear reached him, he drew an arc with his own weapon. Despite Su Jie’s firm grip, his spear was knocked away, and the steel tip once again stopped in front of his eyes.

Anyone facing a sharp spear tip so close to their eyes would feel a profound panic—more so than when facing fists.

This was a long spear with a deadly tip, capable of causing massive injuries with a single thrust. It was far more intimidating than a knife.

Although Su Jie had trained to overcome fear, he found himself frozen in the moment, unsure how to react.

Facing the spear was a completely different experience from facing a dagger—one was a short weapon, the other a long weapon.

## Chapter 13: The Final Day The Dao Aligns with the Path of Heaven

Diary Entries:

[July 25: Today's daily training shifted from dagger sparring to spear sparring. The intimidation factor of long weapons is indeed much greater than that of short weapons. However, this is incredibly effective for building courage. My body has undergone a transformation, and my courage has reached a qualitative breakthrough and refinement.]

[July 26: During today's horizontal training and endurance exercises, I noticed that the pain significantly lessened. When the instructor struck me, I could

instinctively relax the targeted area just before the impact. At the moment the rubber rod touched my body, that part of me would tense up like porcelain, and I wouldn't feel any pain. The instructor said my Iron Shirt and Golden Bell Shield martial arts training had reached a small achievement. I could now perform public demonstrations, though it's still impractical for real combat since you can't predict your opponent's moves in a fight, making it impossible to react in time. For now, I can only designate a specific area for the opponent to strike. In ancient times, street performers used this technique to draw crowds and earn money.]

[July 27: Throughout the endurance training, I could feel my physical fitness improving steadily. My spear techniques have also become increasingly proficient. But what stands out most is the sense of courage I've developed during weapon sparring. I feel like my entire body exudes bravery! In Romance of the Three Kingdoms, it's said that Zhao Zilong was courage incarnate—I feel like I'd be just as fearless if I were transported to that era! Calm down, calm down, Su Jie. This is just an illusion. The dopamine from physical activity is overstimulating my brain's pleasure center. You're still far from being a master. If you were to fight someone now, you'd likely end up like those so-called Taichi masters who get beaten up miserably. Stay grounded.]

[July 28: During today's training, I experienced a new sense of clarity. My mind settled completely, and I no longer harbored grand hopes for the future. I only wish for the simplicity of training daily and living a straightforward life.]

[July 29: At night, I continued to use the corpse relaxation method while sleeping. The sensation is completely different from how I used to sleep. It feels like I can perceive everything around me even in my dreams, yet my spirit remains entirely unaffected. The quality of my sleep has significantly improved. Also, my eating habits—chewing thoroughly, staying mindful, and swallowing saliva post-meal—have started showing benefits. My digestion is so robust now that it feels like my stomach could even handle stones.]

[July 30: After today's training, Coach Odell told me he would teach me something new tomorrow before leaving for the Tibetan region and India to seek supernatural powers. I feel reluctant to see him go but am curious about what he'll teach me tomorrow.]

[July 31: Today is the last day.]

Coach Odell didn't have Su Jie train further but instead sat down with him for a heart-to-heart conversation.

Su Jie felt a surge of melancholy in his heart. He was reluctant to part ways. After spending so much time together, all his achievements were thanks to Odell's training.

Although Odell had only trained him for 22 days, what Su Jie learned in this short time would have taken over a decade to learn elsewhere.

More importantly, Odell opened the door to martial arts for him, showing him the difference between right and wrong. With Su Jie's eagerness to learn, he would no longer tread the wrong path.

"You Chinese have a saying: 'All good things must come to an end.' Such is the nature of life." Seeing Su Jie's expression, Odell chuckled. "Today, I will teach you the source of the most ancient wisdom. With this, you will be able to walk much further down the path ahead."

He took out a book.



Su Jie saw the words The Book of Changes (周易 – Zhou Yi) written on its cover. (G: The book contains a divination system comparable to Western geomancy or the West African Ifá system.)

"Isn't this a book for fortune-telling?" Su Jie recognized it as one of the Four Books and Five Classics that Confucian scholars had to study in ancient times, with Book of Changes leading the list, also known as the "I Ching".

"This is not a fortune-telling book; it is a book for changing one's destiny," Odell said with a wave of his hand. "The ancient wisdom contained within is far beyond the comprehension of ordinary people. You should know the saying, 'When observing the mountains, one's emotions fill with their grandeur; when observing the seas, one's emotions overflow with their vastness.' In your language classes, when writing essays, the key is to express your innermost feelings. Without passion, you can't write well. This principle applies to martial arts as well. The 'Book of Changes' teaches us to observe heaven and earth, to understand the ways of the world, and to guide human behavior to align with the workings of the universe."

As he spoke, Odell flipped open the first chapter of the book and pointed to a line:

"As heaven's movement is strong, a gentleman must strive ceaselessly to improve."

"Ancient people observed the heavens. Some concluded that destiny is ruthless, treating all things as sacrificial offerings. Others believed that good deeds are rewarded and evil deeds are punished, showcasing the heavens' benevolence. The 'Book of Changes', however, observes that the heavens are perpetually in motion, embodying relentless self-improvement. Humans must emulate this spirit to constantly strive forward."

Then he pointed to another line:

"The earth's condition is receptive devotion. A gentleman must hold vast virtue to bear all things."

"Observing the earth teaches us to emulate its honesty and resilience—to carry all things and embrace everything."

Odell then flipped to the middle of the book and pointed to a specific passage.

"Look here, this is the best hexagram in the entire book—the Modesty Hexagram. This hexagram depicts the earth above and the mountain below. It means that a person with mountain-like virtues hides them within the vast earth, making everything auspicious. If someone possesses awe-inspiring abilities yet knows how to conceal them, they will be invincible. Conversely, if the mountain is above and the earth below, it forms the Stripping Hexagram. This means that if someone shows off their mountain-like virtues by standing out conspicuously, they will gradually be worn down by the wind and rain, eventually crumbling."

Odell did not spend much time explaining the "Book of Changes" to Su Jie. Instead, he closed the book and asked, "Su Jie, what do you think is the most important thing for a person to achieve success?"

Su Jie thought for a moment before replying, "It should be perseverance. Just like practicing martial arts, as long as you persevere, you can achieve something."

"That's only part of it," Odell said. "Courage, determination, wisdom, tolerance, perception, and cleverness are all part of a person's virtues. For example, you have determination. The training I gave you was intense, yet you managed to endure it. That is one criterion for success. But that's not enough—you must eventually come to genuinely enjoy the training. Instead of seeing it as a hardship, you must take pleasure in it. That is a higher realm.

"You also fear going astray, so you make careful choices and seek opportunities for yourself. That's cleverness. But there are many opportunists who pride themselves on cleverness, thinking it alone can lead to success. That is shortsighted. The Book of Changes is a book designed to cultivate virtues, observing the world and forming the most perfect moral character. Martial arts, in fact, mostly stem from the natural life around us. People must learn to draw knowledge from all things."

"I will study and read it carefully," Su Jie said, putting the Book of Changes away.

"Alright, I'm leaving today, but I've left something for you." Odell handed him a piece of paper with a website address, along with a login ID and password. "When you have time, log into this website. After entering the credentials, you'll find some items unavailable on the market that will be very helpful for your martial

arts training. You should know that in martial arts practice, nutritional supplements and auxiliary medicines are crucial."

"I understand." Su Jie nodded.

"Good. I'm off now." Odell had already packed his belongings into a large backpack. A car was waiting outside the door. He waved to Su Jie and said, "We'll meet again someday."

"Coach!" Su Jie called out as Odell turned away.

"Don't call me 'coach.' I am your trainer. I hope you'll become the best fighter I've ever trained. Remember, you promised me to compete in a few matches for me. When you're qualified, I'll come find you." Odell squinted with a smile and made a farewell gesture.

"Alright, Trainer." Su Jie nodded firmly. Although he had learned a lot over the past days, making significant progress, he still felt weak. After all, no martial art could turn someone into a master within a month.

From Odell, however, he had mastered the most scientific training methods and the most advanced combat knowledge. Now, he could continue exploring and improving on his own.

He watched as Odell left with a carefree demeanor, heading off to pursue the supernatural power he dreamed of, while Su Jie returned to the martial arts academy to continue his studies and training.

"You're finally back!" Josh said as he saw Su Jie return to the dormitory. He couldn't resist punching Su Jie in the chest. Normally, this would have made Su Jie stagger, but now, out of habit, Su Jie tensed and relaxed his chest muscles in coordination with his breathing, neutralizing the force so his body didn't move an inch.

This was part of Odell's training.

During Su Jie's stance practice, Odell had constantly slapped, pinched, and struck various parts of his body with a stick, training him to develop a natural reflex of tensing and relaxing his muscles upon impact, synchronized with his breathing. This was a form of external martial arts practice.

Josh was astonished. "Your physical strength has improved so quickly. You've even learned how to take hits! And it seems like you've grown taller too?"

"That's because I've been eating well with you every day," Su Jie replied with a smile. "By the way, while I was home these past days, what did Trainer Gu Yang teach?"

He wasn't deliberately hiding anything—Odell had strictly forbidden him from sharing any details.

Gu Yang's training was interesting. During the first week, he made everyone dig trenches, which many people didn't understand.

In reality, he was teaching the most advanced martial arts.

The second week involved carrying loads, which significantly improved coordination, stability, and core strength. This was also a fundamental part of advanced martial arts.

The third week was spent teaching martial arts routines to enhance flexibility. These routines also helped calm one's mind, enabling practitioners to remain steady and composed while naturally regulating their breathing. Additionally, the routines improved the aesthetics of martial arts movements, which could be a way to make a living in the future.

Josh didn't see the value in routines, believing they were impractical.

Su Jie, however, thought highly of Gu Yang and considered him an excellent trainer.

## Chapter 14: Tradition Meets Modernity in Martial Arts

"Still the same routines—flips, kicks, and flashy martial arts moves. Plus, a set of Tai Chi and Long Fist techniques," Josh shook his head. "I occasionally join the lessons, but the other trainees are far more enthusiastic. Let's go! I've participated in plenty of sparring matches at school recently and gained some real combat experience. Enough talk, let's start training."

"I've improved too. Today, I've decided not to wear any protective gear," Su Jie said. Under Coach Odell's training, he had become fearless in sparring with weapons, making bare-handed combat seem trivial.

He wanted to truly understand the gap between his fighting techniques and Josh's skills.

Over the past month, though he and Josh had sparred frequently, Su Jie had mostly been evading attacks without truly engaging. Even when he tried to counter, he couldn't land a hit on Josh.

"No protective gear? Are you sure?" Josh looked skeptical but nodded when he saw Su Jie's resolute expression. "There comes a point when we must take off the gear for real combat. It seems you're confident. Let's do this."

The two stood on the platform.

Suddenly, Su Jie felt immense pressure.

Josh was taller, more robust, and had a longer reach—clear advantages.

Su Jie took a deep breath to steady himself, focusing intently on Josh's every move. In his eyes, the world faded away, leaving only his opponent. He concentrated fully, like an eagle circling high in the sky, fixated on its prey. This was a combat technique taught by Coach Odell.

Swish! Swish!

Josh assumed a classic fighting stance, his hands guarding his head. His footwork shifted unpredictably—forward, backward, and side to side—making it impossible to discern where his attack might come from. His constant movement also made it hard for Su Jie to take the initiative.

Su Jie wanted to attack but couldn't find a good opening.

His approach to offense was straightforward: one technique—"Hoe Strike." Beyond that, he didn't rely on any other methods.

He believed in the saying, "Don't fear a thousand techniques; fear the one mastered technique." Having too many moves was often futile.



Moreover, the "Hoe Strike" could evolve into various other forms. Almost all martial arts and weapon techniques originated from this one move.

Suddenly, Josh attacked! His speed was far greater than during their usual training sessions—he was taking this sparring match seriously, treating it like a real fight.

He weaved like a venomous cobra, swaying left and right before finding an angle to launch his ferocious assault.

His moves were straightforward: rapid straight punches followed by hook punches.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Josh's punches were sharp, cutting through the air with audible force.

Su Jie dodged repeatedly. Though he wanted to counterattack, he couldn't find any flaws in Josh's defense—his opponent was too fast.

However, Su Jie remained calm, growing even more composed under pressure.

"In a standoff with the enemy, if you're unsure of landing a hit, never attack recklessly. Be patient, dodge, and wait for the best opportunity. When you're not eager to attack, it becomes equally hard for the enemy to land a hit on you." This was one of Coach Odell's key combat principles.

It was a universal truth.

Su Jie thought of tigers in the wild. They lay still, waiting for the perfect moment to pounce and deliver a fatal strike.

In combat, patience was paramount.

Patience came naturally to Su Jie, and Coach Odell had trained him extensively in this regard. During their last few sessions, they focused on knife and sword duels, where patience was critical.

In bare-handed combat, a landed punch might not be fatal, but in weapon-based fighting, even a minor hit could mean losing a limb or worse.

Through weapon sparring, Su Jie had honed both his patience and his agility.

Josh kept attacking, while Su Jie kept dodging. He focused entirely on spotting an opening, refusing to retaliate prematurely. Unsurprisingly, Josh struggled to land a decisive hit.

In a formal match, Su Jie's approach would likely be criticized as overly passive, potentially leading to disqualification for lack of action.

Professional matches required spectacle; prolonged evasion without counterattacks wouldn't fly.

But Su Jie wasn't in a match. For him, it was about survival—he disregarded notions of victory or defeat.

Occasionally, Josh's sweeping kicks struck Su Jie's thighs, calves, or arms, leaving bruises. Su Jie didn't mind.

In a formal match, those strikes would earn Josh points. Most matches were won by points, with knockouts being rare.

As things stood, Su Jie hadn't scored a single point, while Josh had racked up dozens.

But Su Jie knew he hadn't truly lost. In real combat, points didn't matter—only survival did. As long as one side wasn't incapacitated, the fight wasn't over.

Coach Odell's mantra echoed in his mind: "Seize the opportunity and fight until the end—never retreat until the enemy bleeds."

In the heat of battle, psychological resilience was most critical.

"These two are hilarious—just circling each other like roosters in a ring. Is this what passes for traditional martial arts training?"

Josh and Su Jie had been sparring for a long time, with Josh attacking and Su Jie evading. Su Jie wasn't unwilling to strike back; he simply hadn't found the right opportunity. Josh's defense was impeccable—a testament to his experience as a seasoned fighter.

Still, their back-and-forth lacked excitement, looking unimpressive to onlookers.

By now, a small crowd had gathered around the platform.

The training hall spanned the size of five or six basketball courts. It housed over a dozen platforms, punching bags, tires, and various workout equipment, resembling a large gym.

Trainees needed memberships and fees to use the facilities and protective gear.

Though the hall was mostly empty during summer break, students were starting to return as the holiday season ended. This led to a scattering of trainees, each focusing on their routines without interfering with others.

There were also members of short-term training programs.

Hearing the taunts, Josh and Su Jie paused to look at the five or six shirtless trainees below. Each wore fingerless gloves, displaying well-defined muscles.

"They're MMA fighters," Josh muttered, frowning.

Su Jie was familiar with Mixed Martial Arts (MMA), a combat sport that closely mimicked real-world fighting scenarios. It allowed ground combat, submissions, and locks to immobilize opponents.

Mixed martial arts also have rules. For example, kicking is not allowed after the opponent falls; only punches can be used. Additionally, certain areas of the body are off-limits for striking.

In the martial arts community, many believe that mixed martial arts are the most practical for real combat. Other combat sports are often deemed inferior when faced with mixed martial arts.

Although mixed martial artists have strong combat abilities, their salaries and influence are far below those of boxers. Currently, boxing remains the most popular combat sport globally. Great boxers can earn tens of millions or even hundreds of millions of dollars from a single match. In contrast, even the most popular mixed martial artists earn at most a few million dollars.

However, with the sport's development and promotion, the value of the athletes has gradually increased.

"What's wrong? Think we're not good enough? Come on, let's have some fun!" Josh was extremely combative.

Whenever there was a chance to fight, he would never miss it.

"Oh? Foreigner, you want to fight us? Under what rules? Perhaps the rules of Tai Chi pushing hands?" One of the trainees below, who was at least 185 cm tall,

weighed at least 90 kilograms, and had muscles like slabs of stone, laughed. “We can fight, but shouldn’t we place a bet on it?”

“A bet? I like that,” Josh grinned, clearly accustomed to these types of wagered fights. He held up one finger. “How about this amount?”

“One hundred bucks?” The tall young man frowned.

Josh shook his head.

“One thousand bucks?”

Josh still shook his head.

“Don’t tell me it’s ten thousand?” The tall trainee’s expression changed slightly.

“Exactly! That kind of amount makes it exciting and ensures everyone takes it seriously.” Josh’s tone was fiery. “Are you in? If not, stop yapping and get out of here.”

“What an arrogant foreigner,” the trainees muttered, their faces darkening. However, judging by Josh’s physique and his fierce demeanor, they knew he wouldn’t be easy to deal with.

“Alright!” The tall trainee refused to back down and pointed at Su Jie. “But we’ll have two rounds. First, I’ll fight you. Then we’ll have another member fight him, with each match carrying a ten-thousand-yuan wager! Your group practices traditional martial arts, and we practice mixed martial arts. Our two classes are scheduled to have a sparring session soon, so why not warm up in advance?”

“Su Jie, what do you think?” Josh turned to ask.

Su Jie didn’t immediately agree but instead contemplated for a moment.

“The mixed martial artists are tough and resilient; they’re not easy to deal with. But you can give it a try. To become a true expert, you need to engage in real combat. If you don’t have the money, I’ll cover it for you,” Josh encouraged Su Jie to join the fight.

“Alright, I’ll do it! But if I lose, I’ll pay for it myself,” Su Jie nodded.

“Then it’s settled.” The tall young man clapped his hands. “Song Li, you’ll fight him. I’ll handle this foreigner!”



“No problem.” Another sturdy young man stepped forward. He was about 178 cm tall and built like a tank.

Su Jie immediately recognized him as someone with a solid foundation, capable of withstanding blows and delivering heavy punches and kicks. Fighters like this were often considered tanks in boxing matches.

“Brother Li Hu, that foreigner is tough. Be careful; he’s brimming with killing intent,” Song Li warned Li Hu after a brief exchange.

“I’ll be cautious,” Li Hu, evidently the leader of the group, replied. “You shouldn’t have any issues handling that kid. Just win the first round.”

As they argued, the surrounding trainees were drawn to the scene.

All of them were young martial artists, naturally competitive and eager to fight. Hearing about a match, they quickly gathered to watch.

“I’ll be the referee,” a passing woman stepped forward at that moment.

She was dressed in sportswear and appeared to be around twenty-five or twenty-six years old. On her sportswear was a small image of Confucius, signifying her role as a coach rather than a trainee.

Minglun Martial Arts Academy, while focused on martial arts, also taught cultural and traditional studies, including Confucianism and rituals honoring Confucius.

The name “Minglun” embodied the core values of Confucianism.

In ancient times, the main halls of Confucian temples, academies, and imperial schools were often called “Minglun Halls.” Similarly, the central structure of any Buddhist temple is known as the “Mahavira Hall,” dedicated to the Buddha Shakyamuni.

## **Chapter 15: True Combat The Ever-Changing Hoe Technique**

"Sister Nie acting as the referee is perfect," Li Hu and Song Li, along with their group, seemed to know this female coach well and respected her greatly.

"Let's begin," Josh had no objections.

"Don't lose to a foreigner," the female coach, known as Sister Nie, whispered to Li Hu. "For the first match, let Song Li compete against this student. What's your name?"

"Su Jie," Su Jie replied calmly.

"Hold back a little," Sister Nie advised Song Li as he stepped into the ring.

"I know. This kid won't last more than a few punches," Song Li remarked confidently as he vaulted gracefully over the ropes into the ring.

Having Song Li face Su Jie first was actually a clever strategy. It was clear that Su Jie seemed like an easy opponent. Winning the first round would boost their morale.

"Let's clarify the rules first," Josh said as Su Jie entered the ring. "Are we using mixed martial arts rules, kickboxing rules, or no-holds-barred?"

Mixed martial arts rules allow ground grappling, while kickboxing focuses on standing strikes. No-holds-barred, however, is completely unrestricted and often popular in underground matches, especially for betting purposes.

"Whatever you say," Song Li narrowed his eyes.

"Then no-holds-barred it is," Josh shrugged nonchalantly. "Other formats can't fully showcase our combat skills."

"The academy doesn't allow no-holds-barred combat," Sister Nie snapped. "Do you think this is some street brawl? What if something goes wrong? Mixed martial arts rules are the closest to real combat. Use those." She stepped into the ring as well.

"Let's go," Song Li stretched his body and assumed a fighting stance. As soon as Sister Nie signaled the start, he began pressing toward Su Jie with steady steps.

His fighting style was indeed steady and calculated. He didn't attack first but advanced like an unstoppable tank, creating an intimidating aura that could unnerve his opponent.

This style suited his robust build. Like a mountain or a forest, he advanced relentlessly.

*'You can hit me a hundred times, but I only need one punch to take you down.'*

Step by step, Song Li closed in. His presence was like a spider ensnaring its prey, designed to instill psychological pressure.

Anyone facing such a relentless approach would inevitably feel panic, and panic leads to openings. Once he found an opening, Song Li would launch a ferocious attack to overwhelm his opponent.

However, this tactic didn't work on Su Jie.

Whenever he was about to be cornered, Su Jie would suddenly dart away like a monkey, evading to another corner of the ring.

In his sparring with Odell, Su Jie often found himself cornered but would rely on his movement techniques to escape. This was a core aspect of the "Hoe Technique" – its agility and unpredictability.

[Swift as a monkey, fierce as a tiger, never retreat until the enemy bleeds.]

Song Li grew frustrated. Every time he closed in and was ready to strike, Su Jie would evade to the opposite side, leaving Song Li unable to land a blow.

After several failed attempts, Song Li's patience wore thin.

He felt uncomfortable under Su Jie's steady gaze and was infuriated by his hit-and-run tactics.

Swoosh!

Song Li threw a jab. It was a feint to test Su Jie's reaction, intending to follow up with a combination attack.

But just as his jab extended forward, Su Jie moved. He seized the opportunity with absolute confidence.

Boom!

In Su Jie's mind, Song Li was no longer an opponent but a target for the "Hoe Technique." Only its mantra filled his thoughts.

[Anger fills the chest, hair rises with rage; flesh as firm as iron, bones like steel. Swift as a monkey, fierce as a tiger, never retreat until the enemy bleeds.]

This was the essence of the technique. During practice, one visualizes an opponent in front of them. In combat, one disregards the opponent entirely, treating them as if they don't exist.

The "Hoe Technique" was born of hate – hate that the sky has no handle, hate that the earth has no ring.

It was executed with ferocity.

Fueled by rage, even the bones became as hard as steel!

Smack!

With a swift motion, Su Jie blocked the jab with one hand, then advanced and delivered a downward strike. His entire body moved like a tiger descending a mountain, channeling all his strength into the attack aimed directly at Song Li's centerline.

It was an all-out strike, a perfect fusion of intent, will, and power – vicious and ruthless.

No matter how adaptable you are, I'll crush you with one strike.

This was the farmer's way of combat with the "Hoe Technique."

Bang!

Song Li hadn't even reacted before Su Jie's heavy blow landed on his chest. The impact sent him flying into the ropes, where he tumbled down onto the ground, unconscious.

"What?" Sister Nie, acting as the referee, was stunned. She hadn't expected Su Jie to act so decisively – as fierce as a wolf, as savage as a tiger.

She quickly rushed to Song Li's side, pressing acupuncture points and massaging his chest.

After a while, Song Li finally regained consciousness.

Meanwhile, Su Jie stood motionless in the ring, seemingly snapping back to reality. To be honest, he had put every ounce of his strength into that blow. After knocking Song Li down, he didn't even realize what had happened.

Seeing his opponent collapse off the ring, Su Jie finally came to his senses.

*'I actually won,'* he thought, feeling a surge of excitement. This was the first time he had defeated an opponent, instantly boosting his confidence.

Before this, he only acted as Josh's punching bag during training or was on the receiving end of Odell's moves. He never experienced actual combat.



Odell's skills and physical condition were far superior to his. In the presence of this world's top coach, he wasn't much stronger than a small child. Thus, he never experienced the mental and physical challenge of an evenly matched confrontation.

Winning his first official match against someone as sturdy as Song Li made Su Jie feel that his efforts had paid off. It strengthened his resolve to continue practicing diligently.

"That was impressive." Josh was thrilled. He hadn't expected Su Jie to defeat Song Li so cleanly and decisively. He beckoned with his finger, "We won the first match. Now for the second round. Li Hu, it's your turn."

Li Hu stepped onto the stage without saying much and squared off against Josh.

"Come on." Josh didn't even adopt a formal stance. With his hands behind his back, he leaned forward provocatively, signaling, "Come at me."

This kind of behavior is common in many professional martial arts competitions. It's a strategy to lure opponents into attacking, deliberately exposing a weakness. However, it requires both skill and courage; otherwise, leaning your head forward is just offering it up as a target.

Li Hu didn't rush to attack. He appeared cautious, bouncing slightly to adjust his stance and prepare for an opening.

Seeing Li Hu remain still, Josh suddenly twisted his waist and hips, launching a sweeping kick aimed at Li Hu's inner thigh. This was a typical Muay Thai technique. A single successful hit could cramp the opponent's muscle, causing them to collapse instantly.

Li Hu quickly dodged. Josh's kick was so fast and fierce that there was barely any time to react.

In the moment Li Hu dodged, Josh's sweeping kick changed trajectory mid-motion, targeting Li Hu's head instead.

Bang!

Li Hu was struck on the head and immediately fell to the ground.

Knockout!

"Josh's kicking technique is truly fierce—Jeet Kune Do's three-step kick. Not only is it fast, but the angle is unpredictable and changes constantly. It looks like it's

aimed at your lower body, but in the blink of an eye, it targets your head instead." Su Jie had suffered enough from this three-step kick during training with Josh.

"Yeah! Ten thousand bucks in the bag." Josh waited for Li Hu to get up before demanding his winnings. It was part of the bet they had agreed on.

"Bank transfer." Li Hu didn't try to renege and promptly transferred ten thousand yuan to Josh.

By this time, Song Li had also regained consciousness. His expression was grim—not only because he lost to Su Jie but also because he now owed ten thousand yuan. It was a hefty sum, and he clearly couldn't afford it.

"I'll cover it for you," Li Hu said, preparing to transfer the money again.

"Forget it," Su Jie waved his hand, signaling he didn't want the money.

"Huh? Su Jie, why don't you want it?" Josh was puzzled.

"Forget it." Su Jie replied to Josh in English, "A match is just a match. Gambling on fights doesn't feel right to me."

"Suit yourself then." Josh didn't try to persuade him further.

Hearing Su Jie speak such fluent English, Sister Nie's eyes lit up.

"Let's go," Li Hu said, casting a meaningful glance at Su Jie. Since Su Jie didn't want the money, he didn't insist. "I consider you a friend now."

As they left, he gave Su Jie a kind smile.

"Let's train together sometime," Su Jie nodded in response. "Sometimes you have to fight to get to know someone. Let's exchange contact information."

Training in martial arts alone in isolation would never lead to success. Collaboration and sparring with others were essential. For example, hitting a sandbag with gloves every day was far less effective than sparring with a living opponent in the ring. Su Jie hoped to have more people to practice and exchange techniques with in the future to improve faster.

"Let's exchange contacts too," Sister Nie said, actively asking Su Jie for his information.

Su Jie naturally didn't refuse. He could tell Sister Nie held a significant position in the academy.

"Could we talk privately?" After adding his contact information, Sister Nie asked Su Jie.

"Sure," Su Jie nodded and followed Sister Nie to a nearby café beside the training ground. The café offered cakes, bread, and various snacks.

"Did you learn your techniques from Coach Gu Yang?" Sister Nie asked seriously.

"I figured them out on my own. Coach Gu Yang only had us dig soil for seven days and carry loads for another seven," Su Jie replied. He knew that in such traditional martial arts training courses, the coach wasn't planning to teach the students actual fighting techniques, only various routines.

"It seems Coach Gu Yang didn't violate the academy's regulations." Sister Nie nodded. "Did you really only study for a month to reach this level?"

"Yes," Su Jie answered honestly. "I've taken PE classes at academy and regularly exercised—running, doing push-ups, pull-ups, high jumps, long jumps, shot put, skipping rope, and playing basketball. Do those count?"

"Of course not." Sister Nie pulled out her phone, seemingly accessing the academy's database. After a quick search, she retrieved video footage of Su Jie from when he first joined the academy's training program.

Looking at the footage of Su Jie back then compared to now, even though only a month had passed, the difference was striking.

When Su Jie first entered the training program, he was a frail high academy student. Now, every move he made exuded an indescribable aura.

In two words: lean and tough.

---

This chapter was released on [goblinslate.com](https://goblinslate.com) by translator Goblin. Your support makes Goblin translate more. So, do the right thing please.

**Goblin:** Want to read more? Become a **The Way of Restraint (\$5 per month)** member at [Goblinslate Patreon](https://goblinslate.com) and get **Five or More Advance Chapters** immediately, then stay 5 or more chapter ahead of the regular release for the month! Or, become a **CN WN Bundle (\$10 per month)** member and have access to all the CN NovelBin advance chapters on [Goblinslate](https://goblinslate.com). Get more chapters by sponsoring at [Buymeacoffee](https://buymeacoffee.com/goblin) or [Patreon Shop](https://goblinslate.com).

## Chapter 16: Confidence Boosted A Mysterious Blind Master of Massage

Su Jie's current physique appeared agile rather than bulky. Agility represented precision and essence, while strength signified ferocity.

His muscles weren't overly developed; in fact, he seemed a bit thin when clothed. However, touching his body was like feeling tough cowhide and sinew, the result of training guided by Odell's world-class body-shaping techniques.

Sister Nie, with her discerning eyes, immediately noticed this.

Even Su Jie himself was surprised when he watched the videos from a month ago. He hadn't realized he had undergone such a significant transformation.

The words "reborn" surfaced in his mind.

All the hardship, blood, and tears over the past month were now worth it—more than worth it.

This bolstered his determination to continue training with unwavering faith, even turning it into a lifelong pursuit.

“This is indeed your achievement after a month of training.” Sister Nie studied Su Jie repeatedly, seemingly trying to uncover some hidden secret behind this miracle. “Song Li is a fitness coach. Although he doesn’t practice martial arts, his physical fitness is excellent. He came to the academy to learn mixed martial arts and has improved rapidly, yet you defeated him so easily. Can you tell me how you trained?”

“Everyone has their little secrets.” Su Jie smiled, knowing that crediting his progress to Gu Yang’s training would clearly be a lie.

“Training is a personal matter; I shouldn’t pry,” Sister Nie said with a wave of her hand. “Have you ever considered competing in professional martial arts matches?”

“Professional martial arts matches?” Su Jie shook his head. “Right now, my focus is on academy and preparing for college entrance exams. Practicing martial arts is just a hobby for me.”

“A hobby?” Sister Nie frowned, seemingly regretful. “Studying, going to college, finding a job... I can tell from your movements that you’ve already grasped some true martial arts essence. Don’t you think it’s worth pursuing? If you enter professional matches, now is the time. A few years later, it’ll be too late to start on a professional path. Have you thought about your future plans?”

“I’ll think about it after getting into a good university.” Su Jie had many ideas, but martial arts had opened up a whole new world to him. Yet, committing to a



professional martial arts career wasn't something he was ready to decide on impulsively.

"If you agree, Minglun Martial Arts Academy will provide you with the best resources, hire the best coaches, and even supply top-notch nutritionists. You can still pursue your academics. I'd hate to see such potential go to waste." Sister Nie's sharp eye for talent was evident.

"I'll think it over," Su Jie replied, his mind suddenly filled with thoughts he needed to organize later.

"We've exchanged contact details. Reach out if you're interested." Sister Nie stood up to leave. "By the way, the academy's small arena competition starts tomorrow. Both academy members and outside enthusiasts can participate, and there's a decent prize. If you want to gain practical experience, consider joining to get a few matches under your belt."

Ah!

Suddenly, a blood-curdling scream echoed from somewhere nearby, resembling the cry of a pig being slaughtered.

The sound was so chilling that it brought to mind the torturous punishment of death by a thousand cuts.

The shock made Su Jie spring to his feet like a startled tiger.

Snap!

The chair beneath him broke, its legs splitting under the sudden force.

“Hm?” Sister Nie noticed Su Jie’s reaction. When he sprang up, his body bent slightly, his hands moved with the strength to tear cotton, and his feet exuded the energy to crush stone.

In that instant, Su Jie’s alertness and explosive strength left Sister Nie with a renewed understanding of this young student.

*‘His physical fitness needs improvement, but his reflexes and explosive power have already reached an advanced level of martial arts mastery. And to think he’s only been practicing martial arts for a month! What would he become after three or five years of training?’*

Suppressing her inner shock, Sister Nie patted Su Jie’s shoulder. “That’s the massage center. The scream must’ve come from Uncle Mang’s heavy-handed massage. The person couldn’t handle it. You should give it a try.”

“Heavy-handed massage?” Su Jie exhaled deeply.

The adrenaline rush had left him tense, but as he relaxed, it felt like all his energy had been drained.

Yet, a sudden flash of insight struck him, as if he had grasped some profound truth about martial arts.

“Uncle Mang is the master of our academy’s massage center. Although he’s blind, he’s exceptionally skilled. He’s proficient in massage, acupuncture, and overall physical conditioning. He’s even adept at bone-setting and detoxification. If you can endure his heavy-handed techniques, he offers free massages.” Sister Nie explained.

Su Jie understood well that during training, muscle strains, joint dislocations, and lactic acid buildup in soft tissues were inevitable. Massage was essential to address these issues.

For instance, after a day of training, one might feel sore all over. Without massage, it would be impossible to train again the next day, no matter how strong one’s willpower was. Forced training under such conditions could lead to injuries, which would be counterproductive.

However, with the aid of medicinal massage to enhance circulation and disperse lactic acid buildup, one could not only recover from fatigue quickly but also improve muscle vitality.

Of course, having a skilled massage therapist is also very important. If the massage is not done properly, the accumulated lactic acid will be difficult to disperse.

A proper massage can thoroughly relax the body, making the process much more effective. Coach Odell's massage techniques were top-notch, and combined with the use of massage oil, it was precisely why Su Jie was able to handle such high-intensity training. Otherwise, he wouldn't have lasted even a day.

He had learned the basics of it, but unfortunately, the time was too short. Plus, he was focused on improving his physical fitness, so he didn't master much. Coach Odell possessed a wealth of knowledge; even following him for three to five years wouldn't be enough to learn everything.

At Minglun Martial Arts Academy, there was a dedicated massage center with several therapists specifically catering to the students. These massages helped relieve fatigue and promote blood circulation. Of course, it came at a cost: a session could range from several hundred to several thousand yuan, depending on the skill of the therapist.

Josh often came here. Although Su Jie had heard of it, he had never been due to his training with Coach Odell. Besides, even if he came, he couldn't afford the expense.

“I’ll go take a look.” Su Jie grew interested.

Sister Nie, intrigued herself, led him into the massage center next door.

*‘Coach Odell mentioned that there are quite a few remarkable individuals at Minglun Martial Arts Academy. He thought he might find a way to further his horizontal training techniques here. Maybe this Uncle Mang is one of them,’* Su Jie thought to himself.

“This is it,” Sister Nie said, leading him to a spacious massage room. The room was decorated in an antique style, with a lit incense burner emitting a subtle, pleasant fragrance. The air was filled with the scent of orchids.

Next to the massage bed sat a blind man.

The blind man appeared to be in his early forties. He wore loose white clothing, and his eye sockets were hollow, with no eyeballs, which was quite startling.

On a nearby massage bed lay a shirtless man, breathing heavily. It was clear that the earlier screams had come from him.

This man had a streamlined, muscular physique, like a feline predator conditioned for years of hunting. He looked lean but had muscles that clung tightly to his bones, giving him an impressive appearance.

His build was somewhat similar to Su Jie's, indicating he had undergone professional training.

Hearing someone enter, the man got up from the massage bed and put on a sanda vest. "Nie Shuang, what are you doing here?"

While others called the female coach "Sister Nie," this man addressed her directly by name, which suggested his status at the academy was quite high.

"Zhou Chun, are you hoping for a free massage from Uncle Mang? Unfortunately, you still can't handle his intense techniques, can you?" Sister Nie's expression lost its usual warmth, suggesting she didn't get along with Zhou Chun. She turned to Su Jie and said, "This is Coach Zhou Chun from our academy. He teaches mixed martial arts and is a professional athlete who placed fifth in the National Sanda King Championship."

"Is this your student?" Zhou Chun asked, looking at Su Jie.

"A professional athlete!" Su Jie was taken aback.

In the world of combat sports, the gap between professionals and amateurs was immense.

Although he had defeated Song Li today, that man was just an enthusiast, incomparable to a professional. Even county- or city-level professionals were incredibly skilled due to their years of training, daily dedication, and scientifically backed methods. Their accumulated experience made them exceptionally formidable.

Josh, despite his seven or eight years of training, could only rival city-level professionals at best. Against provincial-level competitors, he would likely be beaten.

And Zhou Chun was on the national level.

National-level athletes represented the best fighters in the country, with superior physical conditioning, psychological resilience, and technical mastery.

“He’s a short-term trainee in Gu Yang’s program. He wants to try Uncle Mang’s intense massage techniques,” Sister Nie said with a playful smile, as though enjoying the show.

“Kid, go play somewhere else,” Zhou Chun said impatiently, waving his hand. “What a joke. I’m discussing something with Uncle Mang; don’t cause trouble here.”

Su Jie frowned but chose not to retort. He didn't want to offend an academy coach, especially a national-level professional.

"Uncle Mang, this student wants to try your intense massage techniques," Sister Nie ignored Zhou Chun and addressed Uncle Mang directly. "Zhou Chun, I know you want Uncle Mang to condition your body for free, but he has his rules. If you can endure his techniques, he'll waive the fee. You couldn't handle it, but maybe this student can."

"This kid can handle it?" Zhou Chun seemed to have a grudge against Nie Shuang, and seeing Su Jie irritated him even more. His gaze darkened, but then a sly smile appeared on his face. "Nie Shuang, how about we make a bet? If this kid can endure it, I'll give you that jar of internal-strength wine brewed by the principal. If he can't, you give me your jar."

"That's quite a gamble," Nie Shuang said, visibly surprised. "It seems you're still bitter about last time and want to take advantage of me."

"Do you dare to bet?" Zhou Chun waved dismissively. "Don't bother with excuses. If you're scared, just take the kid and leave."

"I have nothing to be afraid of," Nie Shuang replied. "Uncle Mang will bear witness to this."

---



This chapter was released on goblinslate.com by translator Goblin. Your support makes Goblin translate more. So, do the right thing please.

**Goblin:** Want to read more? Become a **The Way of Restraint (\$5 per month)** member at Goblinslate Patreon and get **Five or More Advance Chapters** immediately, then stay 5 or more chapter ahead of the regular release for the month! Or, become a **CN WN Bundle (\$10 per month)** member and have access to all the CN NovelBin advance chapters on Goblinslate. Get more chapters by sponsoring at Buymeacoffee or Patreon Shop.

## Chapter 17: Traditional Medicine and Inner Strength Enduring the Pain of Childbirth

"Alright, I'll be the witness. You all can gamble, but it has nothing to do with my experiment," Uncle Mang said in a mechanical tone. "Young man, take off your shirt and lie on the bed. But before that, you need to pay 3,000 upfront. If you can endure it, the money will be refunded, and future massages will be free."

"I'll transfer it to your account," Sister Nie said, taking a seat nearby.

Zhou Chun, standing on the side, smirked coldly.

He didn't believe for a second that this kid could endure the massage.

"Face up," Uncle Mang said, seemingly perceiving Su Jie lying facedown on the massage bed. Somehow, with a single motion, he flipped Su Jie over effortlessly.

Under Uncle Mang's hands, Su Jie felt like a pancake—turned over with the flick of a wrist.

Then Uncle Mang's thumb and forefinger pressed into a spot three inches below Su Jie's navel with considerable force.

"Ah!"

It felt as if a knife stabbed into Su Jie's abdomen, twisting his intestines. To make it worse, it was as if salt and chili were being rubbed into the wound.

Su Jie nearly cried out and bolted for the door. But when the scream reached his throat, he suppressed it, utilizing the relaxation techniques taught by Odell to tighten his entire body against the pain.

Sure enough, the pain lessened significantly.

"Hmm?" Uncle Mang nodded slightly, intrigued. His technique shifted, and he suddenly flipped Su Jie over again, pressing firmly on his lower back.

"Arrghr!"

Su Jie clenched his teeth so hard he nearly ground them to dust.

His body tensed to its utmost, experiencing an intensity of pain he had never known before.

However, he realized this was an excellent training method.

Since Odell left, no one had been there to help him hone his martial arts practice.

The principle of hard-body martial arts was simple: use external stimuli to strengthen muscles and nerves to their maximum potential. Under conscious control, the body could become as soft as water or as hard as steel.

However, mastering this skill required precise control of external force, or it could lead to injury and significant harm to the body.

Soft martial arts focused on aerobic exercise and were the safest, but progress was slow, and they lacked combat effectiveness. Hard martial arts, on the other hand,

involved anaerobic exercise, which was popular in global combat sports. They were highly effective and deadly but came with high risks of injury.

According to Odell's research, mastering hard-body martial arts properly could enhance metabolism, boost cellular vitality, and make the skin more resilient and sensitive—achieving cat-like agility.

Many professional athletes incorporated elements of hard-body training. The most typical example was Muay Thai fighters, whose harsh training often led to debilitating injuries at a young age, even forcing some world champions to retire early.

*'Relax, tense, relax, tense...'* Su Jie had no other thoughts in his mind, focusing solely on rhythmically controlling his body. This reduced the pain significantly.

He never cried out.

This surprised Sister Nie more and more.

Even Uncle Mang's expression shifted slightly.

Zhou Chun was stunned.

He had experienced Uncle Mang's massage methods—it was pure agony, like dying and coming back to life.

*'Could Uncle Mang be faking it? Did he go easy on this kid? Impossible! Uncle Mang wouldn't pull his punches,' Zhou Chun thought, knowing Uncle Mang's character. 'I refuse to believe this kid can endure it.'*

Uncle Mang's massage became faster and more intense. Each press brought searing pain, yet Su Jie endured it, despite sweating profusely.

Finally, Uncle Mang pressed on Su Jie's neck.

Su Jie felt as if his head had been severed, with the pain shooting through his entire body. On top of that, a strong sense of fear washed over him—like standing on the brink of death.

Uncle Mang continued to massage Su Jie's neck. Each press felt like another death, the pain and fear indescribable.

Fortunately, Su Jie had been practicing the "Great Corpse State" meditation nightly, training himself to simulate the sensation of death and rebirth. Without this mental preparation, he wouldn't have lasted.

Uncle Mang and Sister Nie's astonishment grew stronger with each moment.

Finally, after a series of precise techniques, Uncle Mang stopped.

A full round of his heavy-handed massage was something few could endure. Yet, Su Jie had made it through.

"Impossible!" Zhou Chun exclaimed.

"Zhou Chun, are you trying to back out of the bet? Or do you think Uncle Mang went easy on him?" Sister Nie said, exhaling in relief. The wager involved a rare jar of wine—more valuable than a house.

"Where did you learn your hard-body martial arts? And you've even practiced the advanced meditation of the Great Corpse State to perfection?" Uncle Mang suddenly asked.

Su Jie snapped back to reality, feeling utterly drained.

Yet his bones, muscles, and spirit felt as if they were soaking in warm water—comfortable beyond words. The experience was euphoric, almost like ascending to heaven.

Uncle Mang's massage was akin to hellish torture, but afterward, the sense of relief was unmatched. This was the hallmark of a skilled masseur.

Sweetness after suffering.

Su Jie didn't want to speak; he just wanted to enjoy the moment. His entire body was so relaxed that even talking felt like a chore.

This single massage had elevated his martial arts to a new level.

No wonder Odell had stayed here for so long—there truly were extraordinary people in this place.

"I won't renege on the bet," Zhou Chun muttered darkly, leaving with a stormy expression. As he exited, he glared at Su Jie. "Kid, you've got some nerve."

"I knew he had mastered hard-body martial arts," Sister Nie said, pulling Uncle Mang outside so Su Jie could rest.

Once outside, she whispered, "Hard-body martial arts demand a lot from both the trainer and the trainee. The trainer must precisely control the intensity, while the trainee needs extraordinary talent—single-minded focus, pain tolerance, and the ability to alternate between tension and relaxation. The Great Corpse State seems simple—just lying down in a spread-eagle position—but the simpler something is, the harder it is to master. Few succeed, yet this student has only trained for a month."

"His bones and muscles are exceptionally well-formed. Whoever trained him is remarkable," Uncle Mang commented, based on his expert understanding of the human body. "At sixteen or seventeen, he's at the optimal stage for development—he's a promising talent."

"Your heavy-handed massage is hellish at first but ultimately builds resilience. It's an extreme method of strengthening mental toughness. But be careful—it's risky. If anything goes wrong, it could be disastrous," Sister Nie warned.

"I know my limits," Uncle Mang replied dismissively. "This student is interesting. Since you handle personnel at the academy, why not cultivate him? With two or three years of training, he'd excel as a professional fighter or stunt performer."

"I already suggested it, but he said he'd think about it. He'll probably return for more massages. If you can convince him to join my mixed martial arts class, I'll share half the wine I just won," Sister Nie offered temptingly.



"You mean it?" Uncle Mang seemed intrigued by the mention of the rare wine.

After lying down for half an hour, the euphoric sensation finally subsided. Su Jie got up, his heart brimming with joy.

*'This massage method can significantly improve my hard-body martial arts,' Su Jie thought. 'I was worried about training after trainer Odell left, but now I've found the perfect solution.'*

"Are you planning to use my heavy-handed massage to enhance your martial arts?" Uncle Mang entered, his empty eyes staring straight at Su Jie.

"Uncle Mang, I'm just a beginner. Is there even room for improvement?" Su Jie asked sincerely. He treated everyone as a teacher and remained humble despite his progress.

Uncle Mang nodded approvingly at Su Jie's humility and thirst for knowledge. "At your age, understanding the principles of hard-body martial arts and mastering the Great Corpse State meditation speaks to your exceptional mental toughness. You've achieved what Wang Yangming called 'unity of knowledge and action.'"

"Unity of knowledge and action," Su Jie repeated. "I've heard that before—it means doing what you know is beneficial. It's hard for most people, even when they know it's good to exercise or study. They still waste time on games and laziness. My teacher explained this, and I forced myself to follow it until it became a habit."

Su Jie's daily habit of journaling was born during that period.

"I won't ask who trained you," Uncle Mang said. "According to my rules, since you endured my heavy-handed massage, I'll provide it for free in the future. Come here every night before bed for a 30-minute session."

"Thank you, Uncle Mang," Su Jie said, bowing before getting ready to leave.

"Wait," Uncle Mang stopped him. "Let's chat a bit, shall we?"

"Alright," Su Jie said, sitting obediently with his hands on his knees like a diligent student, ready to listen.

---

This chapter was released on goblinslate by translator Goblin. Your support makes Goblin translate more. So, do the right thing please.

**Goblin:** Want to read more? Become a **The Way of Restraint (\$5 per month)** member at Goblinslate Patreon and get **Five or More Advance Chapters** immediately, then stay 5 or more chapter ahead of the regular release for the month! Or, become a **CN WN Bundle (\$10 per month)** member and have access to all the CN NovelBin advance chapters on Goblinslate. Get more chapters by sponsoring at Buymeacoffee or Patreon Shop.

## Chapter 18: Subtle Perception The Blind Man Sees with His Heart

"You may not realize it, but your martial arts have reached a critical juncture. If you take one more step forward, you'll master the fundamentals. However, if you slack off now, all your efforts will go to waste," the blind man, Uncle Mang, analyzed for Su Jie.

"I know the person training you is someone extraordinary, and it's definitely not Gu Yang. Gu Yang is a bit rigid. While his martial arts skills are solid, he lacks flexibility. Moreover, you're attending a temporary martial arts class, so what Gu Yang can teach you is limited. Still, even if your trainer is a top-tier expert, you must understand that 'even a skillful cook cannot prepare a meal without good ingredients.' In the training process, the coach is important, but what's more crucial are nutrition, medicine, equipment, and communication."

Uncle Mang continued, "I just checked your physical condition. Your form has been shaped perfectly during training. However, it seems you didn't have access to the best supplements or nutrition; otherwise, your physical fitness could have been even better. If you want to go further, the Minglun Martial Arts Academy currently offers the best resources in the country. Even with a world-class trainer behind you, they can't compare to the full support of an entire organization."

"Uncle Mang, I understand what you mean. I'll think about it carefully," Su Jie nodded, aware that Uncle Mang, like Sister Nie, hoped he would enter professional combat sports and abandon his academic pursuits. It was a significant life decision he couldn't take lightly.

"I'm just bringing it up," Uncle Mang waved his hand dismissively. "I'm not interested in who's training you or what they've taught you. But I am curious—what exactly have you learned? And if you want to learn more, what would you like to focus on?"

"I've mainly learned a move called 'digging and turning soil,' along with a relaxation technique for sleeping. When lying in a spread-eagle position, I stretch as much as I can, imagining being drawn and quartered. Oh, and I've also learned a set of joint exercises..." Su Jie admitted, hoping to gain guidance from the skilled Uncle Mang. He figured their conversation might provide valuable insights.

"The digging and turning soil move—using a hoe—is considered the mother of all punches. Its rise and fall, twisting and turning, wrapping, horizontal strikes, sudden leaps, and evasions encompass all sorts of power dynamics. Once mastered, all martial arts techniques become second nature. Gu Yang must have been the one to teach you this secret method. It's like a fundamental formula in academics—it can evolve into countless variations," Uncle Mang nodded in approval. "However, in martial arts, the most crucial aspects are mental fortitude, physical fitness, and technical skills."

"First comes courage, second comes strength, and third comes skill," Su Jie repeated thoughtfully. "Courage is mental fortitude, strength is physical fitness, and skill is technical expertise. I'll focus on sharpening my bravery and physical endurance next."

"Now use the digging and turning soil move to attack me," Uncle Mang suddenly instructed.

"Are you sure this is okay?" Su Jie hesitated.

"Don't let my blindness fool you—my heart sees clearly," Uncle Mang stood with his hands behind his back. "Attack me with full force. If you hold back, I won't be able to give you proper guidance."

"Alright, here I go!" Su Jie moved swiftly, stepping forward, raising his hand, and striking downward. His speed was impressive, but just as he was about to hit Uncle Mang, the latter seemingly vanished.

The next moment, Su Jie noticed Uncle Mang had maneuvered into one of his blind spots. With the same move, Uncle Mang struck back, causing Su Jie to fall to the ground. Though Su Jie was knocked down, Uncle Mang's control was precise, ensuring he felt weightless but sustained no injuries.

Su Jie got up and refrained from attacking immediately. Instead, he reflected, noticing that Uncle Mang's execution of the same move was far superior. The blind man's control was intricate, and his ability to identify blind spots and shift power seamlessly offered plenty to ponder.

"Again."

Determined to learn, Su Jie lunged at Uncle Mang once more.

But the result was the same—Uncle Mang evaded effortlessly, exploiting a blind spot to push Su Jie down.

This pattern repeated dozens of times. Finally, Su Jie stopped, closed his eyes, and delved into deep thought, replaying the scenes in his mind.

"Any insights?" Uncle Mang asked after a while.

"Your movements are deliberate and seamless. It feels as though..." Su Jie struggled for the right words, "your power is entirely under your control. You can make it as strong or as light as you wish, wasting no energy. Yes, precision control—that's what I can't achieve yet. And then there's your ability to identify blind spots with ease—how do you manage that?"

"Every defensive stance has a weakness. That weakness is the blind spot. Humans instinctively move to cover their vulnerabilities, constantly shifting to compensate. This concept comes from the philosophy of the Great Expansion—the number 50, reduced by 1 to 49, creates infinite variations. Our weakness is that '1,' which we must continually adjust to cover. Philosophically speaking, it's about fixing one flaw while creating another—like robbing Peter to pay Paul. But let's not delve too deeply into theory," Uncle Mang explained.

"How do you train to identify weaknesses in others?" Su Jie pressed, sensing he had grasped a vital element of martial arts.

"It's simple. Study the flaws in various moves, then practice agility drills. Spar with others to train your eye and your reflexes in critical moments. Most importantly, gain precise control over your strength. The amount of force doesn't matter as much as the precision. Whether it's 100 pounds or 500 pounds, a strike to a vital area is equally lethal. For the human body, bullets, missiles, and even atomic weapons have the same effect—destruction. Martial arts are all about control. Let me teach you a training method," Uncle Mang offered.

"How should I train?" Su Jie asked eagerly.

"Follow me," Uncle Mang said, leading Su Jie out of the massage parlor. They navigated familiar paths to a secluded spot on a small hill behind the school.

At the location, there were two stacks of bricks supporting a large sheet of glass. The glass had been smeared with chicken blood, attracting swarms of mosquitoes and flies. It was summer, and the forest was teeming with insects, especially those drawn to the stench.

Nearby, there was a demolition sledgehammer. It appeared to weigh around 20-30 pounds and was designed to break through reinforced concrete walls.

Despite his blindness, Uncle Mang effortlessly picked up the hammer, swung it with precision, and slammed it down. A fly sucking blood on the glass was instantly killed. However, the glass remained completely intact.

The level of control over his strength was nothing short of extraordinary.

"Your turn," Uncle Mang handed the hammer to Su Jie.

"Uncle Mang, how is your hearing this sharp?" Su Jie was amazed at how Uncle Mang, despite lacking sight, seemed even more perceptive than an ordinary person.

"Blind people have their own way of seeing the world," Uncle Mang replied. "This will train your control. If you can use this hammer to kill flies on the glass without damaging it, and do it consistently, your mastery over strength will reach perfection."

"So heavy," Su Jie remarked as he picked up the hammer. He noticed that the handle was soft, made of plastic tubing, and difficult to control due to its constant wobbling.

"A small hammer needs a hard handle, but a large hammer requires a soft one to absorb the shock," Uncle Mang explained. "Construction workers use this kind of hammer to smash reinforced concrete. If it had a rigid handle, the recoil would break the capillaries in their hands after just a few swings. The principle is similar to handling a long spear. Beginners need a flexible white wax wood pole to practice control. Once they master it and become one with the weapon, they can switch to an iron spear."



Bang!

Su Jie swung the heavy hammer with all his might, aiming for a fly on the glass. He tried to be gentle, but the hammer's soft handle made it almost impossible to control. As expected, the glass shattered under the impact.

The sound of the breaking glass made Su Jie wince. Such a large piece of glass was now reduced to shards.

"This is such a wasteful way to train," Su Jie complained.

"From now on, train like this," Uncle Mang instructed. "Smear chicken blood on the glass to attract flies and use the hammer to kill them. You can also practice with a spear to stab the flies. If you can consistently kill the flies without breaking the glass, you'll have achieved mastery. But be prepared to waste a lot of glass during the process. It's an expensive skill to learn."

"Such a waste," Su Jie said, shaking his head.

"Have you ever heard the story of Mi Fu learning calligraphy?" Uncle Mang asked.

"It was in my language class," Su Jie replied quickly. "The story goes that Mi Fu couldn't write well as a child. He heard about a scholar who excelled at calligraphy

and sought his guidance. The scholar agreed but insisted Mi Fu buy his special paper, which cost five taels of silver per sheet. Mi Fu borrowed money to buy the paper and, because it was so expensive, hesitated to write on it. He studied the characters carefully for three days before finally writing the character for 'eternity.' The result was a masterpiece, written with great care and dedication." (G: Mi Fu (1051–1107), originally named Mi Fei, was a Chinese painter, poet, and calligrapher born in Taiyuan during the Song dynasty. He became known for his style of painting misty landscapes. This style would be deemed the "Mi Fu" style and involved the use of large wet dots of ink applied with a flat brush.)

"Do you understand the lesson?" Uncle Mang asked.

"I understand," Su Jie nodded.

"Then go buy your own glass. It's summer, and there are plenty of flies and mosquitoes. Practice with the most fragile and expensive glass you can find," Uncle Mang said before walking away, leaving Su Jie to ponder.

"Mi Fu's calligraphy training..." Su Jie sat down, replaying the scene of Uncle Mang wielding the hammer in his mind. His strikes, along with the way he dodged attacks, were vastly different from the styles of Gu Yang or Odell.

"Combat blind spots?" Su Jie was intrigued by Uncle Mang's combat techniques. If he could master them, it would allow him to pinpoint an opponent's weaknesses and strike decisively.

---

This chapter was released on goblinslate by translator Goblin. Your support makes Goblin translate more. So, do the right thing please.

**Goblin:** Want to read more? Become a **The Way of Restraint (\$5 per month)** member at Goblinslate Patreon and get **Five or More Advance Chapters** immediately, then stay 5 or more chapter ahead of the regular release for the month! Or, become a **CN WN Bundle (\$10 per month)** member and have access to all the CN NovelBin advance chapters on Goblinslate. Get more chapters by sponsoring at Buymeacoffee or Patreon Shop.

## Chapter 19: Hope Amid Struggles

Diary entries:

[July 31st, Coach Odell left. Although I've mastered the basics of body sculpting techniques, my progress in martial arts has stalled. Thankfully, Uncle Mang's massage techniques have proven immensely helpful for my training. In terms of massage alone, his expertise surpasses Coach Odell's, as his specialization lies in this area. If I want to continue improving, I'll need better resources and a coach on par with Odell. The Minglun Martial Arts Academy can indeed help me, but pursuing professional competitions as a career fighter is a pivotal life choice. I need to be cautious. For now, I'll focus on improving my martial arts and broadening my knowledge over the next two months. This place is teeming with extraordinary individuals, each with unique skills. I'll try to learn as much as possible, uncovering life-changing knowledge along the way.]

[After a month of training here, my outlook on life and values have undergone a profound transformation. Everyone harbors dreams of becoming a martial arts master, but I used to believe it was impossible. The gravity-defying feats in martial arts novels defy the laws of physics; concepts like internal energy and True Qi were merely fictional. However, after encountering genuine martial arts here, I've found many incredible aspects, though they remain within the realm of science. With proper psychological conditioning, mental focus, and scientific training, coupled with attention to detail, one can develop power beyond the comprehension of ordinary people. Take planking, for instance. Students who spend their days gaming struggle to last thirty seconds, while professional athletes and special forces can endure for hours.]

[July is over. The decision to come all this way to study at a martial arts academy was absolutely right. Had I stuck to regular studies and cram schools, I'd never have been exposed to such an exciting world. When it comes to physical fitness, there's a vast gap between those who exercise daily and those who don't. Similarly, athletes who follow core training principles are leagues apart from those who train haphazardly. I'm grateful to have met Coach Odell. With another month ahead, I look forward to encountering more new experiences.]

Today, Su Jie wrote extensively in his journal. It was his way of summarizing the month's achievements, reflecting on whether he had used his time wisely, and setting goals for the next month. This was one of his habits.

August 1st.

Su Jie stuck to his routine. At 3 a.m., he began with joint exercises to warm up, followed by various physical training drills like running, jumping, and push-ups. Afterward, he grabbed a hoe and headed to the barren land outside the academy to dig, honing the strength and precision behind the technique.

Previously, this time would have been reserved for Odell's sparring sessions. Now, with Odell gone, he trained independently, seeking out Uncle Mang in the evenings for free massages. From Uncle Mang, he learned the art of controlling power with precision and the sharp instincts required to spot vulnerabilities in combat. This reminded him of the technique for swatting flies on glass with a hammer. While wielding the hoe to till the soil, he meticulously practiced, perfecting his movements until they became lighter yet more stable.

Like Mi Fu, who repeatedly practiced calligraphy without wasting fine paper, Su Jie diligently refined his movements.

"Ha!"

With each rise and fall of the hoe, he alternated between straight lines and zigzags. Gradually, the heavy hoe felt as light as a feather in his hands, and every strike landed precisely where he intended. He could even control how deep it penetrated the soil with each dig.

*'My martial arts have improved,'* he thought with excitement.

"Not bad."

A voice came from behind him.

Startled, he turned to see a figure—it was Coach Gu Yang.

"Coach, why are you here?" Su Jie quickly put away the hoe, his calm movements embodying an aura of steadiness and composure.

"You've captured the essence of this technique," Gu Yang nodded approvingly.

"Is there anything I need to improve on?" Su Jie seized the opportunity to ask.

"Your posture, strength application, and even your energy and spirit have all reached a high level," Gu Yang replied. "It's evident that you've been guided by an expert. Your form is nearly flawless. Now, what you lack is practice—endless practice. Only by engraving the variations of this technique into your soul and bones can it become second nature. But that usually takes a decade or more."

"I'll make this technique a lifelong practice," Su Jie said without hesitation. He wasn't intimidated by the idea of practicing one move for ten or more years. The more he trained, the more he uncovered its nuances, finding something new every day.

"It seems you've truly grasped it—from the heart. You're genuine, grounded, and unpretentious, qualities that mark a person of great depth and stability," Gu Yang remarked with admiration. "I've had my eye on you for a while. But as a short-term student, we didn't have much of a connection. However, after Nie Shuang spoke to me, I decided to observe you this morning—and you didn't disappoint."

"Coach, your understanding of this technique far surpasses mine. I hope to gain deeper insights from you," Su Jie said earnestly. He knew that no matter where he was, good students always earned favor. Back at school, he was a star pupil, well-regarded by both teachers and the principal, which allowed him to thrive. The same held true here at the Minglun Martial Arts Academy's training program.

Su Jie had long understood that being valued was simple: study hard and excel, and opportunities would follow.

Many students spend their days complaining, saying they are discriminated against by their peers or targeted by their teachers. The root cause is their unwillingness to study seriously.

Some students know they must study hard, but they feel dizzy as soon as they open a book. Yet, when playing games or indulging in entertainment, they feel energized. This reflects their inability to achieve the unity of knowledge and action.

Su Jie, however, was someone who could achieve this unity, allowing him to stand out and achieve some small successes.

"I've already told you just now, your movements, exertion of strength, and even the essence of the technique are already in place. What remains is relentless practice, and more practice. Of course, if you can elevate this move to a philosophical level, it will greatly benefit your training," said Gu Yang. He seemed

to have newfound patience in teaching Su Jie. Previously, he wouldn't bother saying much—just demonstrate a move and let the student practice and ponder it themselves.

"What kind of philosophical level?" Su Jie asked eagerly.

"What is the ultimate purpose of martial arts?" Gu Yang countered.

"Survival," Su Jie replied, having contemplated this question repeatedly.

"Exactly. It's survival. In its early days, martial arts were invented for hunting and battling wild beasts. Then, as humans established dominance in the world, martial arts became tools of war and killing, still ultimately for survival. What I teach you—this martial art rooted in digging and farming—is also a form of survival." Gu Yang's tone carried a profound sense of compassion. "In ancient times, and even today, for 99% of people, farming, digging, and laboring in the fields were essential daily activities. Therefore, integrating martial arts into agricultural work is the most ordinary and practical survival skill that can be used every day. Do you know what the most powerful martial art in traditional systems is called?"

Su Jie shook his head.

"In traditional martial arts, there are hundreds of schools of boxing, too numerous to cover in detail. But there's one martial art, considered 'the fiercest and most ruthless' in the martial world, called 'Xinyi Ba.' This martial art is also known as



‘Hoe Boxing.’ Generations of warrior monks, while farming and observing the hardships of farmers, incorporated Zen meditation, martial energy techniques, yoga principles, and health-focused elements into farming movements, ultimately creating this technique. It combines human instincts, animal hunting techniques, and the integration of various yoga and martial techniques, earning it the title of the ‘mother of all punches.’” Gu Yang continued, “If I’m not mistaken, many techniques in the martial art you practice, including its mental focus, were taught by foreigners. When you train, your mindset harbors resentment—resentment against the heavens and earth—and you fight with the determination to spill blood. That’s not wrong. Initially, such mental conditioning helps develop skills quickly. To some extent, this is a method of hardening. But hardening isn’t just physical; mental fortitude is even more crucial. Practicing with hatred, ruthlessness, and cruelty yields rapid results, but that isn’t true mastery.”

"Then what is true mastery? And how do you know a foreigner taught me?" Su Jie was stunned.

Although he knew Gu Yang was a formidable expert, he now realized he had underestimated him.

"True mastery isn’t narrow-minded or extreme; it requires a broad and ambitious heart." Gu Yang stared at the hoe and the soil. "When practicing this move, you need to understand its true origin. Since ancient times, farmers have toiled diligently, sustaining themselves by plowing the land, sowing seeds, and reaping abundant harvests in autumn. This represents joy and hope, making all the hard work worthwhile. That is the essence of survival. Relying on war, combat, and killing for survival is not true mastery. You’re still young and may not fully grasp this principle. But I fear you might stray down the wrong path. When practicing this move, you must cultivate gratitude and hope. Be grateful to the earth that nurtures you and hope to reap rewards through your own labor. The same move can be used to kill and descend into evil, or to cultivate and walk a righteous path. Only someone with a vast heart, as steadfast as a mountain and as expansive as the ocean, can reach the highest peak."

"Practice with gratitude and hope, feeling the diligence and hardships of farmers over the centuries, yet embracing life with passion, finding fulfillment and satisfaction in their efforts," Su Jie thought, suddenly recalling the "Book of Changes" that Odell had given him before leaving. The book encouraged him to reflect on the principles of life.

"Your various exercises are very precise and standard, without a single mistake. I watched you perform aerobic exercises, resembling Tai Chi, but with Western scientific principles of muscle and bone integrated into it. That's how I knew you were trained by top foreign coaches," Gu Yang replied to Su Jie's second question, a conclusion he had drawn from careful observation.

"Coach Gu Yang, are you also trying to persuade me to pursue professional combat?" Su Jie asked.

"I've said it before—martial arts are for survival, a means of living," Gu Yang explained. "But real combat-oriented martial arts no longer suit modern survival. In today's world, there are only two ways to live through martial arts: either enter professional combat competitions and become a combat star, or become an action movie actor and a martial arts superstar. Both paths are viable. Of course, if you have a better way to live without relying on martial arts, that's fine too. Everyone chooses their own life path. Many people dismiss fancy techniques as useless, but in today's society, it's precisely these aesthetic martial arts that allow you to thrive better."

---

This chapter was released on goblinslate by translator Goblin. Your support makes Goblin translate more. So, do the right thing please.

**Goblin:** Want to read more? Become a **The Way of Restraint (\$5 per month)** member at Goblinslate Patreon and get **Five or More Advance Chapters** immediately, then stay 5 or more chapter ahead of the regular release for the month! Or, become a **CN WN Bundle (\$10 per month)** member and have access to all the CN NovelBin advance chapters on Goblinslate. Get more chapters by sponsoring at Buymeacoffee or Patreon Shop.

## Chapter 20: The Philosophy of Martial Arts in Relaxation

"Coach Gu Yang, can you demonstrate your understanding of this move for me? Use your own approach," Su Jie asked, eager to see Gu Yang's interpretation of the "Hoe Strike" technique.

Gu Yang didn't decline. He picked up a hoe, raised and lowered it repeatedly, turning over the entire patch of ground in a dozen strokes. The movements were identical to those he'd taught before, yet the essence felt profoundly different.

Su Jie sensed something peculiar. Each of Gu Yang's strikes lacked any frustration or anger. Instead, it felt as though he was uncovering buried treasures in the soil—extracting wealth with genuine focus, finding satisfaction both physically and spiritually.

It embodied a sense of self-reliance.

"Did you understand?" Gu Yang gently set down the hoe.

"I grasped a bit but still need to reflect," Su Jie replied earnestly.

"Good. For the next month, I'll keep teaching you various martial arts routines. If you don't want to practice them, that's fine. What you've already learned is enough to keep you improving for the next ten years or so," Gu Yang said before walking away.

"This 'Hoe Strike' technique truly can be practiced for a lifetime," Su Jie nodded in agreement.

*'Coach Odell taught me the 'Hoe Strike' as a technique akin to a finely tuned machine—every movement precise and flawless. Uncle Mang's version, however, was unpredictable, attacking from unseen angles. Meanwhile, Gu Yang's interpretation exuded a sense of fulfillment.'*

As Su Jie followed Gu Yang, he continued contemplating.

This move was indeed fascinating.

Even though it was the same action, every master had their unique understanding, intent, and style, which influenced the power, effectiveness, and physical benefits derived from it.

Physical improvement, however, wasn't limited to bodily training—it also depended on one's mindset.

A person who lives in constant gloom and negativity will inevitably suffer from hormonal imbalances, affecting their health. On the other hand, someone who maintains a joyful and positive outlook is bound to enjoy better health and longevity.

This is a fundamental principle.

Coach Odell's philosophy emphasized "hatred" and "ruthlessness," while Gu Yang's approach centered on the satisfaction of self-reliance. Though the techniques might involve identical force, the outcomes stemming from their differing mindsets could vary drastically.

To Su Jie, Gu Yang's philosophy was ideal for physical well-being and mental relaxation, while Odell's philosophy was designed for combat and survival.

Both were essential and needed to be alternated in practice.

Suddenly, the concept of "Yin and Yang" surfaced in Su Jie's mind.

At his age, he wouldn't have comprehended the ancient Chinese philosophies of Yin-Yang and the Five Elements. Yet, through practicing the "Hoe Strike" and its underlying philosophies, he discovered that Yin and Yang—the positive and negative aspects—were indispensable.

*'Ancient Chinese wisdom and the concept of Yin-Yang are embedded in everyday life. When faced with tough choices, one can find solutions through them. For example, should I adopt Gu Yang's philosophy or Coach Odell's? From the perspective of Yin-Yang balance, both are necessary. However, I must remain scientific about it. For instance, when I practice with hatred and ruthlessness, how does my body react hormonally? Conversely, when I practice with satisfaction and self-reliance, how do my hormones behave?'*

Su Jie's mind overflowed with thoughts. He felt compelled to delve deeper into texts like the Book of Changes to learn more about Yin-Yang and the Five Elements, as well as ancient Chinese philosophy. At the same time, he wanted to study cutting-edge life sciences, human anatomy, neuroscience, and endocrinology.

*'Practicing martial arts is, in essence, exploring the mysteries of life. But martial artists rarely engage in systematic research. To truly unravel life's secrets, one must rely on scientific analysis. I've decided—I'll pursue medicine and life sciences in college. Professional combat sports cannot genuinely unlock human potential. Only science can.'*

Su Jie's resolve solidified.

*'Of course, I won't slack off in martial arts. A strong body is the foundation of all endeavors. Plus, if I'm to study life sciences, I can use myself as a research subject. As for Gu Yang's martial arts routines, I'll pass on learning them for now—not because they aren't good, but because I need to perfect the fundamentals of the 'Hoe Strike' first. Otherwise, spreading myself too thin will yield no results. Mastering this one move will make all other techniques effortless.'*

After Gu Yang left, Su Jie continued practicing.

By the time dawn broke, he headed to the academy for breakfast, then started his self-imposed training regimen for the day.

Immersed in focused training, the day flew by.

At dusk, he arrived at the small forest. For an hour, he swung a sledgehammer, aiming to strike flies perched on glass panes. While he managed to smash three flies, his lack of control shattered the glass completely.

He didn't break more glass than necessary, limiting himself to smashing only three pieces daily.

Like Mi Fu practicing calligraphy on five-tael silver sheets of paper, he carefully contemplated his strokes before making a move.

He adopted the same approach, brewing the strength and precision of his technique to its peak in his mind.

After three sessions, he went to the academy's massage center to find Uncle Mang for a deep-tissue massage.

"You've done a lot of training today. Your spine shows slight micro-deformations—nothing serious, but it could become problematic over time. I can tell you've been repeating the 'Hoe and Pick' move over and over," Uncle Mang said as he pinched Su Jie's spine, causing him such pain that he almost fainted. However, Su Jie had become increasingly adept at managing relaxation and tension rhythms, so he quickly endured it and continued the conversation.

"Did I mess up my posture while practicing?" Su Jie asked nervously. Practicing incorrectly could be a serious issue, especially since it was his first time training without a coach to supervise, leaving him prone to overexertion.

"Rest assured, your posture is fine. It's just that the volume of training was too much, pushing your spine to its limit, causing slight deformation—similar to muscle soreness after overexertion. Moving forward, pay more attention to moderation. When you used to train under a coach, didn't they give you massages periodically?"

"That's true," Su Jie nodded.



“That’s why solo training can be risky. It’s easy to develop bad habits, even for seasoned practitioners, as it’s hard to see your own flaws. Observers always have a clearer view,” Uncle Mang explained. “Since you’re still growing, you need to be extra cautious with your training. Luckily, you have me to help correct any issues daily; otherwise, it would be challenging to fix once your bones develop improperly. Of course, once your form is perfected and your skeletal structure solidifies, there won’t be any issues.”

“I understand,” Su Jie said, fully aware of Uncle Mang’s deep expertise in skeletal studies. Curious, he asked, “Uncle Mang, what did you do before this?”

“I earned a PhD in Medicine from Cambridge, specializing in studying hormonal responses generated by biomechanical interactions between cells, bones, and muscles,” Uncle Mang replied. “You and I get along well. My heavy-handed massage technique is a recent innovation. After extensive clinical trials, you’re the only subject who can handle it. If you continue coming daily, allowing me to refine my method, I’ll share martial arts insights with you.”

“Am I a good test subject?” Su Jie recalled Odell also mentioning something similar.

“Exceptionally rare,” Uncle Mang said, continuing his massage. Each motion brought pain that felt bone-deep for Su Jie.

“By the way, when I practice the ‘Hoe and Pick’ move, I stretch and contract my spine, feeling its elasticity. Why does it dislocate so easily?” Su Jie asked.

“Precisely because you’re training your spine. This kind of exercise makes it prone to dislocation. Unlike a machine, even if your posture appears perfect to the naked eye, errors might exist on a microscopic or even nanoscopic level,” Uncle Mang explained.

He continued his lesson: “‘Hoe and Pick’ focuses on spinal extension and contraction, thrusting upward and plunging downward. In martial arts, there’s a saying: ‘Forward and backward are instinct; side-to-side is skill; up and down is mastery.’ It means retreating when attacked or advancing when striking are instinctual. Dodging side-to-side requires hard-earned techniques, which is why it’s considered skill. But managing vertical movement during combat demonstrates incredible mastery, almost supernatural, hence called mastery. Techniques like ducking, weaving, and grappling in boxing or mixed martial arts are the hardest to perfect but can decisively overpower an opponent when executed well.

“Another martial arts proverb says, ‘Rise like a lifting load, move like a locust.’ It means that when engaging an opponent, you should rise with the power of lifting a yoke while maintaining balance. Inexperienced practitioners lose balance, stumble, or even fall.”

Su Jie thought of his classmates struggling to balance while practicing with a yoke. Indeed, maintaining balance while carrying two baskets on a yoke—whether on flat ground, rugged mountain paths, or muddy roads—was a remarkable skill. Applying such balance and power in combat would be terrifying.

“Kid, you seem quite relaxed during this massage session. Your iron-body technique is improving quickly,” Uncle Mang said, noting Su Jie’s ability to chat during the painful massage, which left him amazed.

Su Jie’s martial arts progress seemed to grow daily.

After the massage session, Su Jie felt utterly relaxed, his body and mind rejuvenated. He lay still for half an hour, his mind blank, completely free of fatigue.

“This state is medically known as deep neuro-cortical relaxation. In this state, recovery happens quickly, endocrine functions stabilize perfectly, and cellular metabolism adjusts, potentially extending lifespan. The best medical treatment is relaxation therapy. I’ve researched this for years, but achieving total relaxation independently is nearly impossible. It requires advanced massage techniques to stimulate the body into such a state,” Uncle Mang explained. “The Great Corpse State you practice is also a form of relaxation therapy. Although you sleep only six hours a day, it’s equivalent to twelve hours of rest. However, even my techniques can’t achieve the ultimate state of relaxation.”

“What is the ultimate state of relaxation?” Su Jie eagerly asked.

---

This chapter was released on goblinslate by translator Goblin. Your support makes Goblin translate more. So, do the right thing please.

**Goblin:** Want to read more? Become a **The Way of Restraint (\$5 per month)** member at Goblinslate Patreon and get **Five or More Advance Chapters** immediately, then stay 5 or more chapter ahead of the regular release for the month! Or, become a **CN WN Bundle (\$10 per month)** member and have access to all the CN NovelBin advance chapters on Goblinslate. Get more chapters by sponsoring at Buymeacoffee or Patreon Shop.