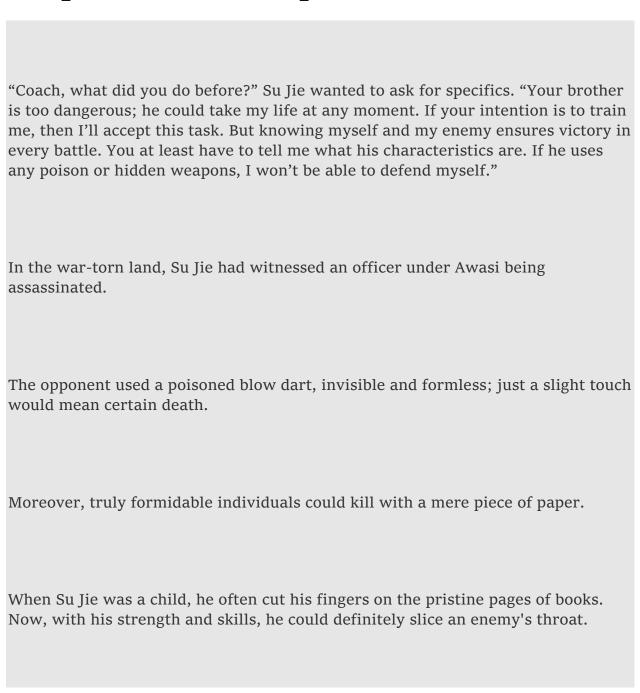
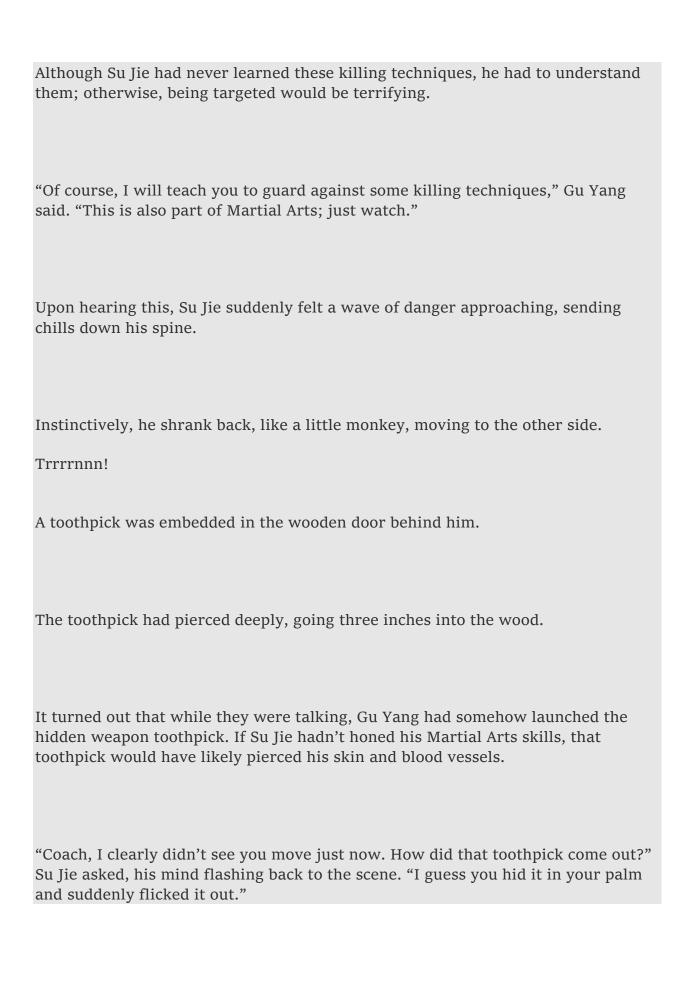
## THE WAY OF RESTRAINT

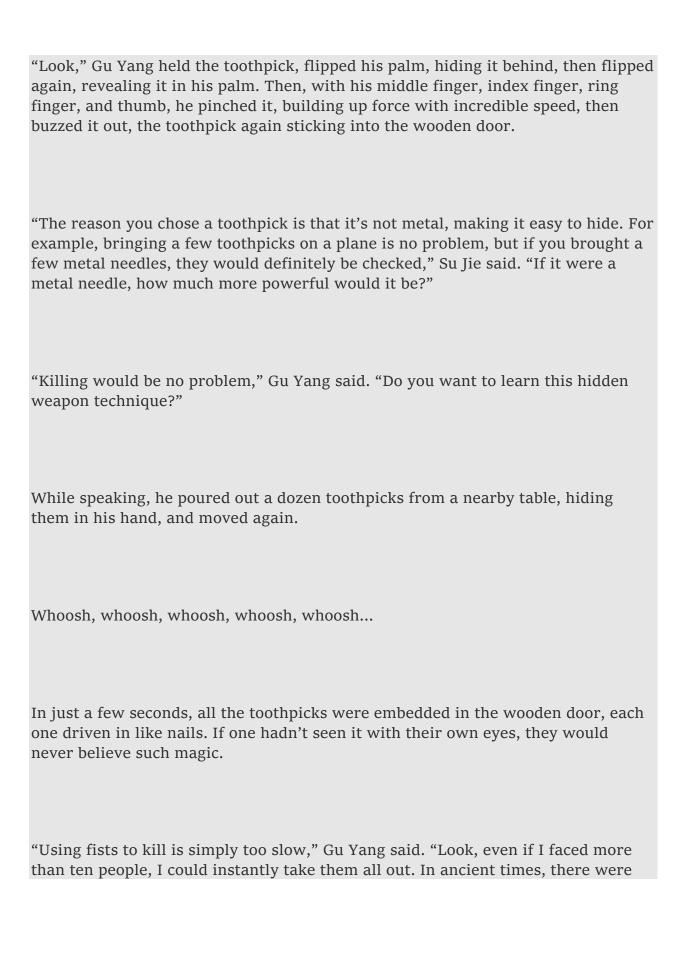
## Chapter 141: A Toothpick Can Take a Life





"Your observation skills are quite strong," Gu Yang stepped forward and pulled the toothpick from the door. "In fact, a true assassin can kill with anything around them; a toothpick is a lethal weapon."
"A wooden toothpick has such power? What if it were a metal needle?" Su Jie exclaimed. He picked up the toothpick, weighing it in his hand; it was just an ordinary toothpick, nothing special.
Bang!
He held it in his hand and mimicked Gu Yang, suddenly flicking it out.
Swoosh!
The toothpick hit the wooden door and bounced off, not piercing it.
"Your technique is right, but you didn't control the angle well," Gu Yang took the toothpick back and flicked it again, not even showing any movement in his hand. It was much faster than some magic tricks; only a high-speed camera slowed down could capture it.

Pfft!
The toothpick again pierced into the wooden door.
"This is actually an angle issue. Your strength is already sufficient; it's just that your technique and angle need refinement," Gu Yang said. "It's like in acrobatics, where a needle must be perfectly vertical to the glass to release energy at that point for an instant strike. An ordinary person can achieve this with long-term training and intuition, but using a toothpick to kill is different; it requires great personal strength and precision. Because a toothpick is lightweight, it will drift in air resistance."
"Your hand speed is really fast," Su Jie watched it twice before he had an impression in his mind.
"This is a technique of force application; you can think of it as a lethal magic trick," Gu Yang said. "Of course, hidden weapons also require the unity of spirit, energy, and essence. At the moment of flicking, all your focus must be on the hidden weapon itself, exploding suddenly, like gunpowder boiling inside, propelling your own launch. This is the principle of Martial Arts; you should understand."
Su Jie nodded.



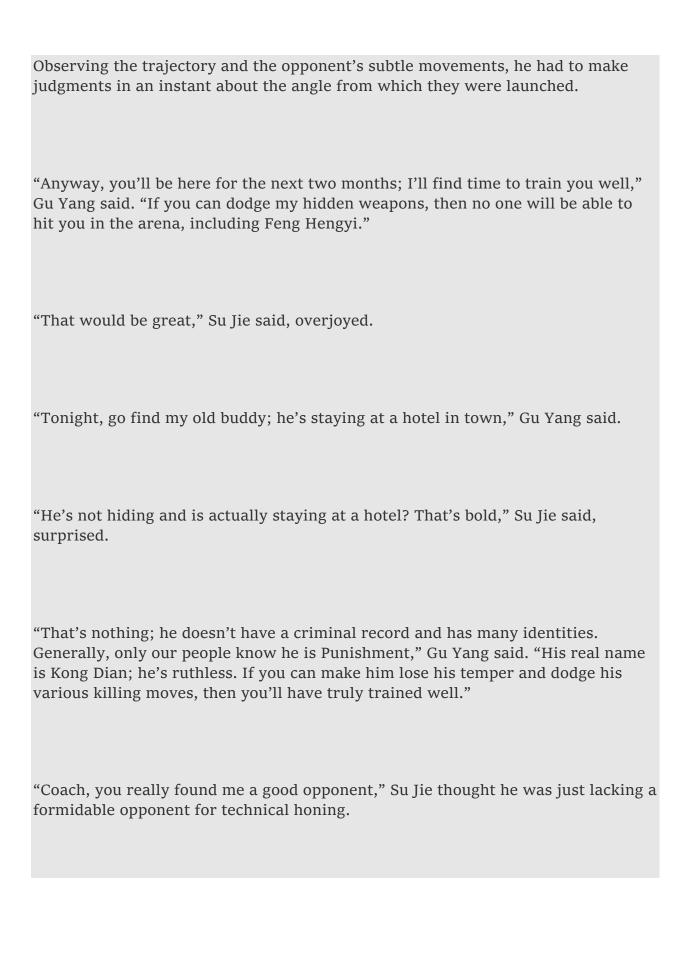
forest bandits known for their golden blades and three golden darts that overwhelmed countless heroes from both land and sea; it's not impossible."
Su Jie already knew that hidden weapons were the true kings of combat.
Zhang Jinchuan was good with hidden weapons, but compared to Gu Yang, he was just a small fry.
If even a toothpick could be wielded so skillfully, how much more powerful would flying knives or blades be?
"There's really too little teaching on hidden weapons; even searching online yields nothing," Su Jie said. "I could learn this; if I encounter a dangerous situation, it could come in handy."
Thinking about the war-torn land, unarmed, or facing thugs, a master of hidden weapons wouldn't fear being surrounded.
Of course, hidden weapons were just tools; to enhance one's own qualities, one still had to rely on physical training and mental fortitude. Su Jie wouldn't lose sight of the fundamentals.

"I can teach you," Gu Yang said. "It's hard for ordinary people to learn, but with your comprehension and physical quality, as long as you master the techniques and practice a bit, you can wield great power. In fact, there are countless hidden weapon techniques; how to hide hidden weapons, make hidden weapons, utilize hidden weapons, find angles, and master mechanics all require continuous exploration and thought."
Su Jie picked up a toothpick, learning Gu Yang's technique, repeatedly flicking it out, trying to pierce the wooden door. At first, he didn't succeed at all, but during practice, he gradually found the feeling.
"You should first practice with iron nails, then with sewing needles, and finally with toothpicks," Gu Yang said. "Even if you're talented and your Martial Arts are well-developed, mastering this technique won't happen in just a few days."
Gu Yang took iron nails out of a drawer.
The iron nails felt heavy in Su Jie's hand, much easier to use than the toothpick.
He flicked his finger, and the iron nail flew out, pfft!
It deeply embedded itself in the door.



weapons is far more powerful than using bare hands, and in close combat, it's even scarier than a gun."
"By the way, Coach, you need to tell me about your companion," Su Jie said. "His code name is 'Punishment,' right? What's his real name?"
"We belong to a multinational organization; you can think of us as elite agents, but we're not from the Typhon Training Camp," Gu Yang said. "My code name is 'Judgment,' his is 'Punishment,' and there are others like 'Crush,' 'Subvert,' 'Profane,' 'Tear,' and 'Destroy.' Our group has a total of seven members, with these code names. I'm their captain, but it's not that meaningful; I'm not doing it anymore. They're looking for me everywhere, wanting me to return to the team, that's all."
"Could it be the Honey Badger Training Camp?" Su Jie asked.
"You actually know about the Honey Badger?" Gu Yang was surprised. "But we're not from there; our influence is similar to the Honey Badger, second only to Typhon. We were originally on par with Typhon, but they somehow created virtual currency, harvesting the international financial market, and now they have a lot of money, surpassing us. But you don't need to know more about this; just help me straighten out my brother's thoughts."
As they chatted, Su Jie practiced and pondered the hidden weapon techniques while Gu Yang taught him how to dodge hidden weapons and even bullets.

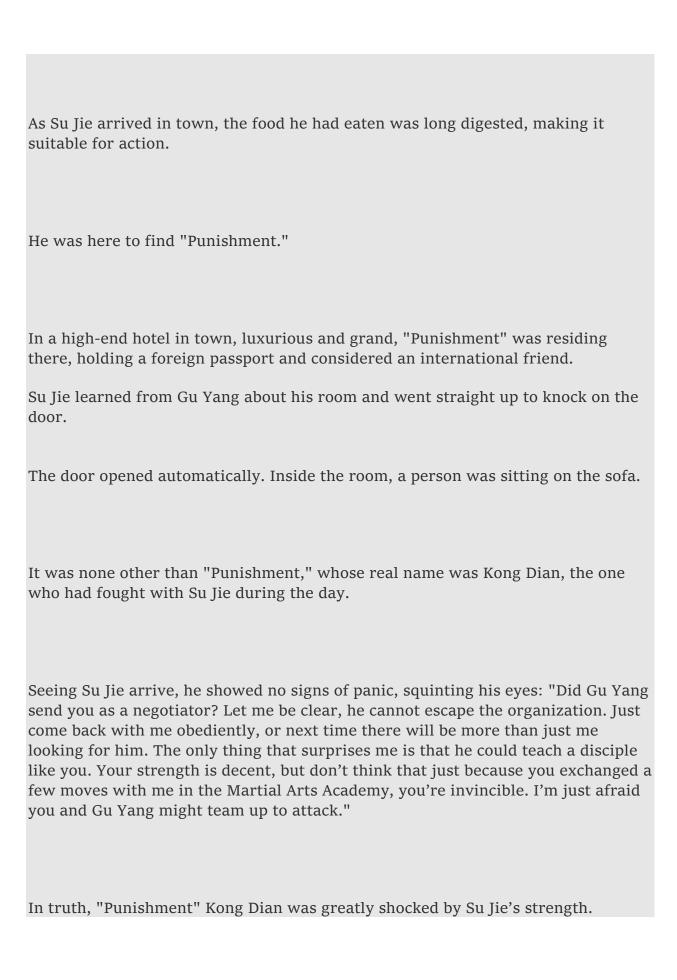
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Once his technique was perfected, his mental fortitude would surely improve again.

## Chapter 142: The Intent of Jeet Kune Do

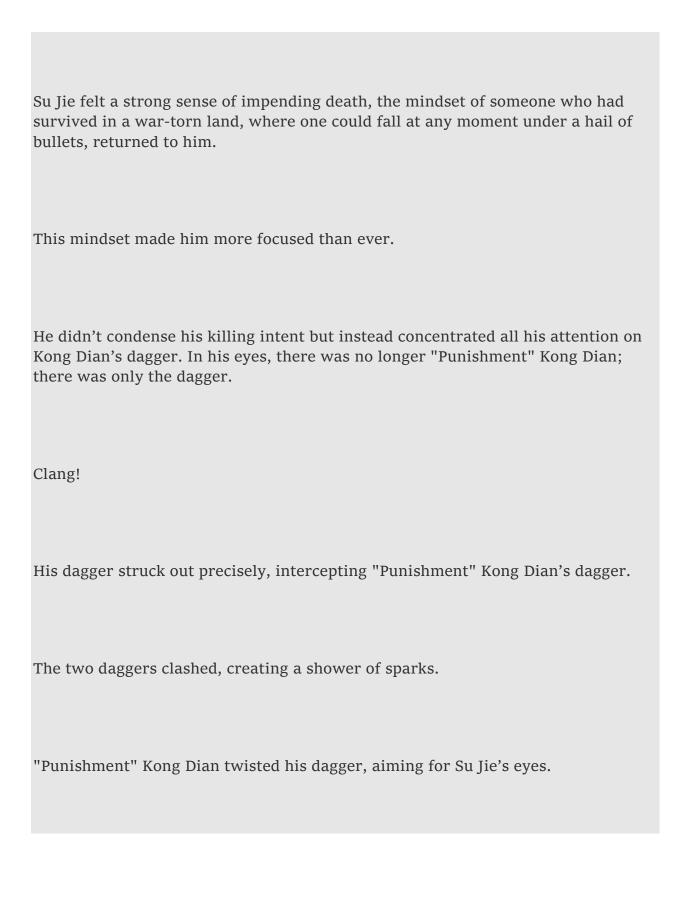
After dinner, Su Jie and Gu Yang took a short break before leaving the Minglun Martial Arts Academy to head into town.
The town was becoming increasingly lively and prosperous, filled with foreign tourists everywhere.
Some areas were built in an ancient style, with storefronts mimicking the charm of the past, and the tourism industry was booming. D City had the best Martial Arts atmosphere and resources, along with a thousand-year-old ancient temple, the roots of martial arts.
Countless foreigners who loved Martial Arts came here every year to "pilgrimage."
Haoyu was investing here, intending to create a Martial Arts town, buying land and starting large-scale construction.
Everywhere, one could see Haoyu's billboards.



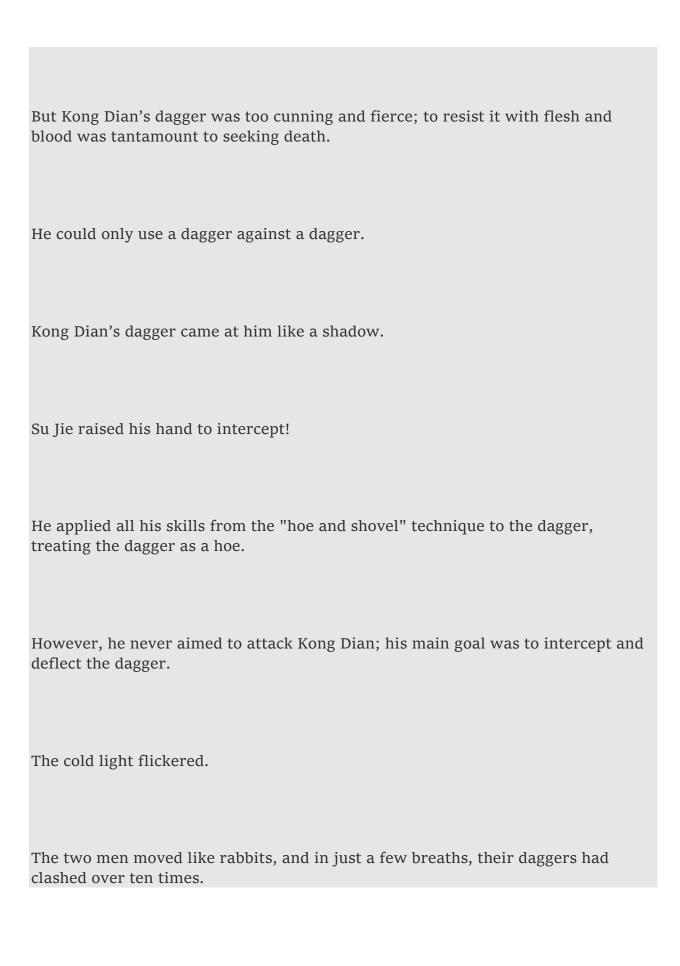
"Let's have another match," Su Jie said. "If you win, I'll leave immediately. If you lose, you'll join Gu Yang and turn over a new leaf. How about that? It's Gu Yang's wish; he doesn't want you brothers to keep fighting and killing."
"Nonsense." "Punishment" Kong Dian spat: "What am I even saying to a kid like you? You think you can just walk away after losing? In our world, there's no win or lose, only life and death."
"Fine," Su Jie replied. "Let's go find a quiet place outside."
"If you want to die, then I can't help it." "Punishment" Kong Dian knew that this hotel was not a place for fighting.
If it were abroad, he would act without restraint, but domestically, he still had some reservations.
Su Jie walked straight out to the outskirts of the town, into the wilderness.
It was summer, and the weather was hot; the fields were filled with the sounds of chirping insects and croaking frogs, with many mosquitoes buzzing around.

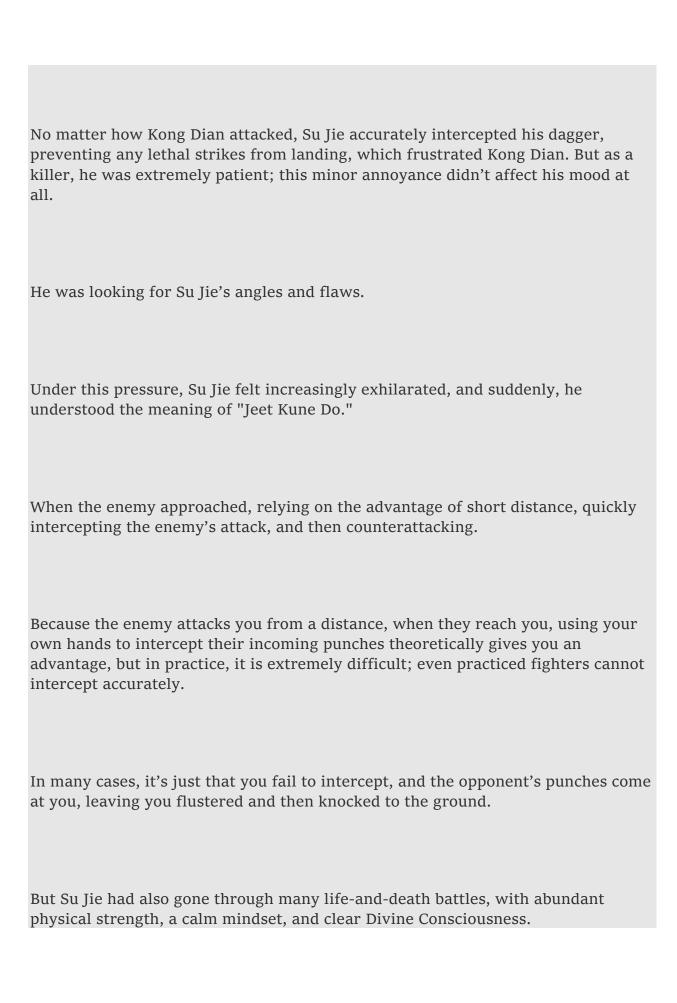
The wilderness wasn't completely dark; the light from the town allowed one to vaguely see faces.
Su Jie stopped on a ridge, watching "Punishment" Kong Dian approach from a distance.
Kong Dian had a dagger in his hand, sizing up Su Jie from five steps away: "Gu Yang sent you to find me, wanting to use my hands to train you. It's a good idea, but doesn't he fear that the seed he painstakingly nurtured might just be destroyed? Or does he believe I can't kill you?"
"No killing, please." Su Jie also drew a dagger, knowing that going unarmed against Kong Dian would be futile: "There are many things in this world worth fighting for. For example, this dagger in my hand will never kill you. In my heart if this dagger can lead you to turn over a new leaf, it's equivalent to saving many people."
Dagger against dagger, there was a significant opportunity.
However, he didn't intend to harm Kong Dian; he wanted him to realize that Gu Yang's disciples could surpass him, prompting a change in his mindset.
"The former Judgment, Gu Yang, I don't know how many people he has assassinated. Yet, his disciple is so naive?" Kong Dian let out a sharp laugh, his tone dripping with sarcasm: "Don't blame me if you die later."

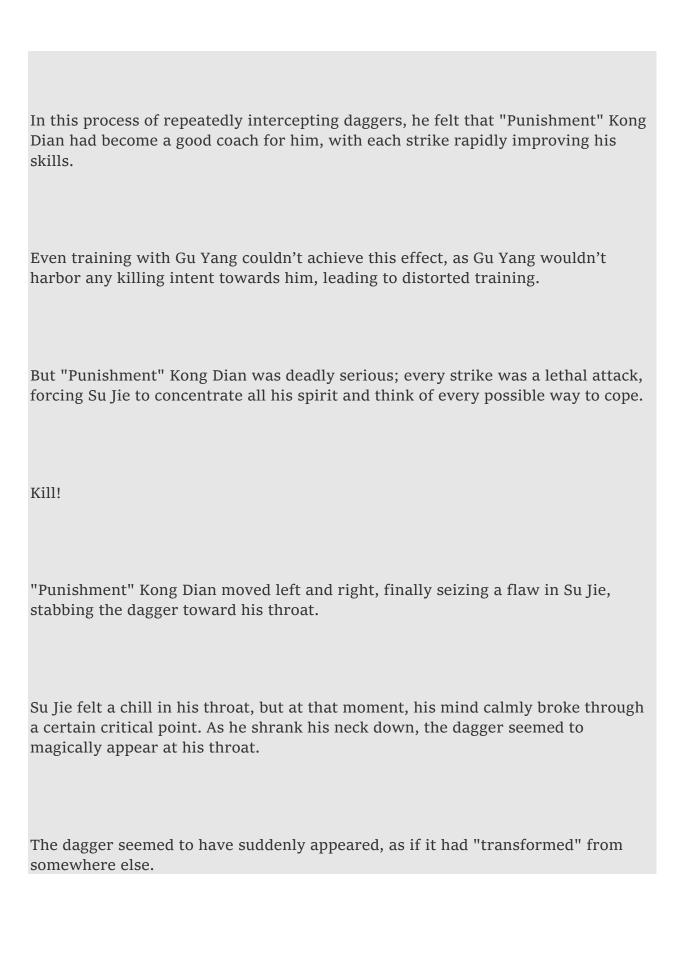
Whoosh!
He lunged forward.
The dagger sliced toward Su Jie's ribs at an awkward angle.
With his strength, if it struck, Su Jie's kidneys and intestines would likely spill out.
Kong Dian's strikes were ruthless and practiced; Su Jie felt that he attacked without any psychological barriers, like a butcher who had worked in a slaughterhouse for a lifetime, as if it were part of his job.
Any normal person would hesitate when picking up a knife to attack; even the most vicious criminals would only muster the courage to strike, losing their rationality in the process.
But Kong Dian's attacks were fluid and natural, even possessing an artist's mindset, terrifyingly calm.
He was a true world-class killer.

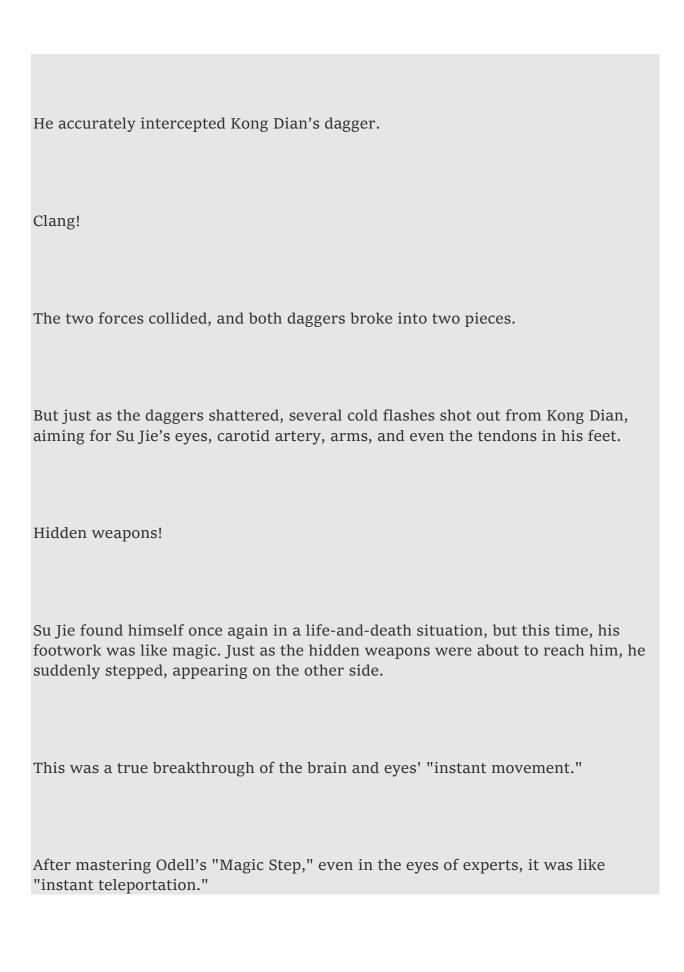


Su Jie barely glanced, raising his arm to block the dagger again. But Kong Dian's move was a feint; he withdrew his dagger like a mirage and suddenly launched a thrust, the dagger aimed directly at Su Jie's heart.
This method of using the dagger was akin to the "flying sword" from ancient myths, wielded at will, directed by intent rather than controlled by the arm.
It was this incredible technique with the dagger that made Su Jie deeply feel the terror of these super killers. If a fighting champion clashed with them on the street, they would be killed in one move without any suspense, and there would be no chance for any empty-handed disarm.
If Su Jie hadn't had a dagger in his hand, he would have likely fled in panic by now.
"Punishment" Kong Dian's strength surpassed even that of Dalu, and it was unclear how he had been trained.
In a moment of peril, Su Jie suddenly rolled and jumped out, dodging the lethal strike. After all, he had trained with the God Maker Odell in dagger techniques and had now mastered his own Martial Arts, but he still couldn't withstand Kong Dian's dagger.
If it were an ordinary person wielding a dagger, Su Jie could use various techniques, even directly pinning them down with muscle.









Six blades appeared on the ground.  These blades looked extremely sharp, and at high speed, cutting through human blood vessels was no problem at all.  But Su Jie still managed to dodge.  "Kong Dian, this ends here for today. You can't do anything to me, and I haven't gained anything either. I'll come find you again tomorrow." Su Jie smiled, exerting himself to run, already sprinting dozens of meters away. His speed in the hundred-meter dash was astonishing; if he were to compete, he could probably reach ten seconds in the hundred meters.  Seeing Su Jie run away, Kong Dian knew it would be hard to catch up, narrowing his eyes into a slit.  Chapter 143: Retreating in Disgrace  At night, Su Jie was sleeping in Odell's small courtyard room.	
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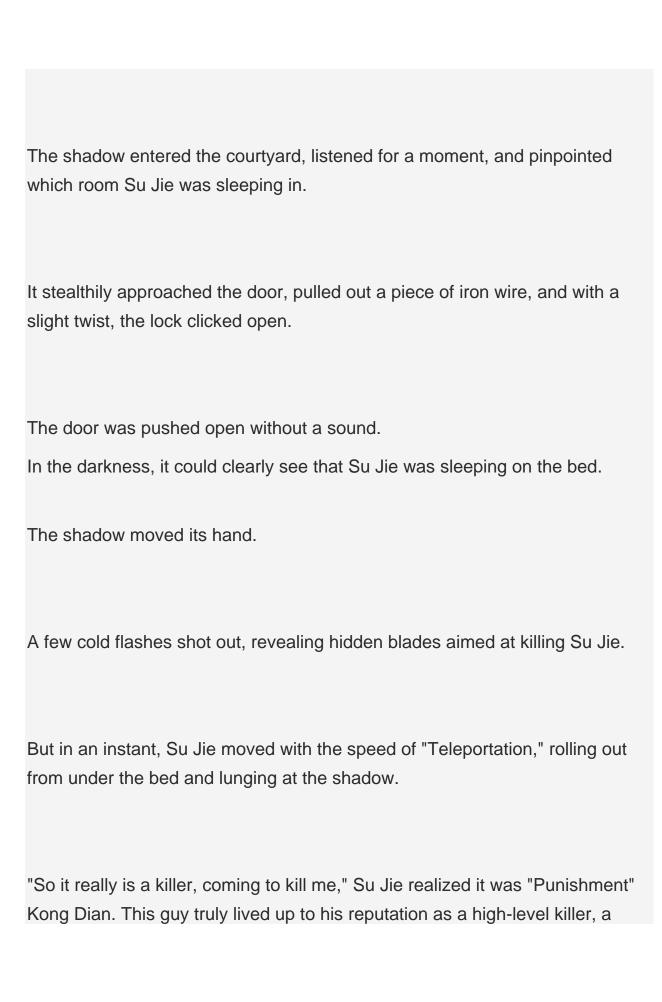
He had just fought against "Punishment" Kong Dian, facing numerous dangers, yet deep within, he felt as relaxed as if he were solving a simple problem. He was no longer afraid of life and death, not even a trace of worry crossed his mind.

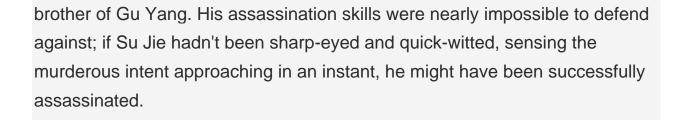
Offending a killer like this, one would expect even ordinary people, let alone the powerful and influential, to lose sleep over it. But Su Jie continued to eat and sleep as usual, showing no signs of discomfort.

His mental resilience had improved significantly compared to his experiences in war-torn areas, gradually approaching a state of perfection.

As he switched between the "Great Corpse State" and "Infant Curling" while sleeping, a shadow appeared outside the courtyard.

This shadow moved lightly, resembling a raccoon, and reached the base of the courtyard wall, effortlessly flipping over without any visible effort. If someone had recorded it, they would have exclaimed that it was indeed lightness skill in action.





## Clang!

A flash of cold light appeared in Kong Dian's hand, and a dagger reappeared, clashing against Su Jie.

The two daggers had already broken during their earlier confrontation, but as a killer, one could never have just one. Su Jie was also prepared, hiding a defensive weapon on him.

The two engaged in a dagger duel in the pitch-black room once again.

Su Jie became even more cautious, knowing that the opponent's dagger could cut through his veins at any moment. In their exchanges, he couldn't afford to show any weakness or distraction.

Swish, swish, swish!
The two wielded their daggers, each unleashing their full martial arts and techniques, pouring their Qi into the blades.
Su Jie utilized his skills from playing with the Crystal Ball, making the dagger in his hand transform like magic. With each battle, his technique improved a notch.
This was the benefit of real combat, unlike the "feeding moves" style of training.
Competing against a real killer was far more thrilling than the training Odell had put him through.
After all, being hunted down and undergoing simulated training were vastly different experiences.

'Fortunately, I played with the Crystal Ball for so long, integrating that agility into my dagger, allowing me to withstand Kong Dian's assassination attempts,' Su Jie thought at that moment, feeling as if the dagger in his hand had transformed into a Crystal Ball, translucent and seemingly glowing, illuminating the surroundings, making every movement of Kong Dian fall into his "sight."

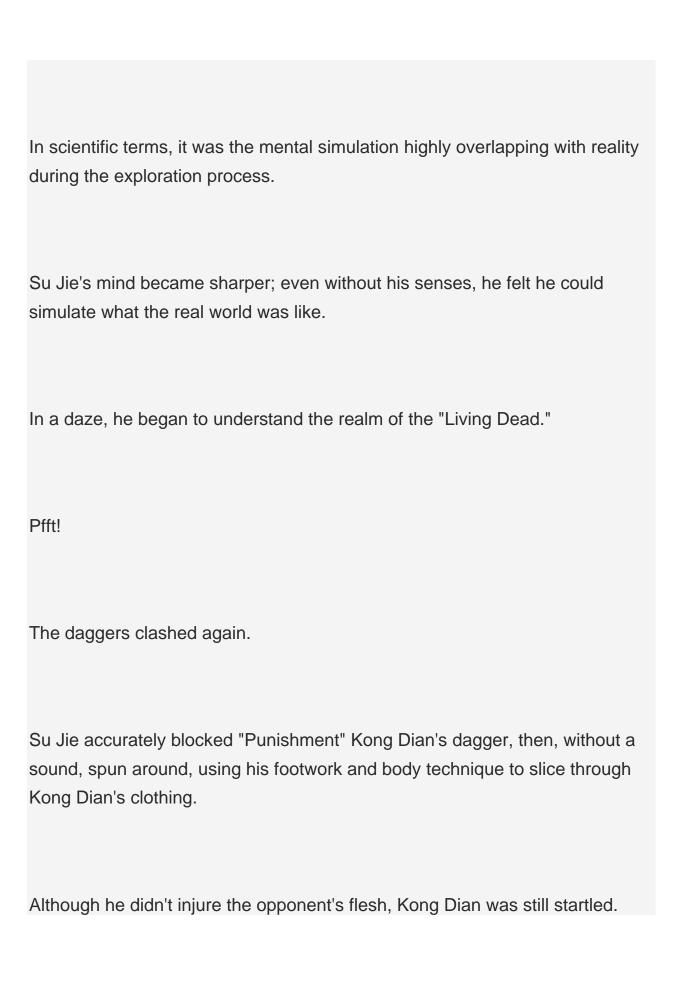
To be precise, it wasn't falling into his "sight" but into his "heart."

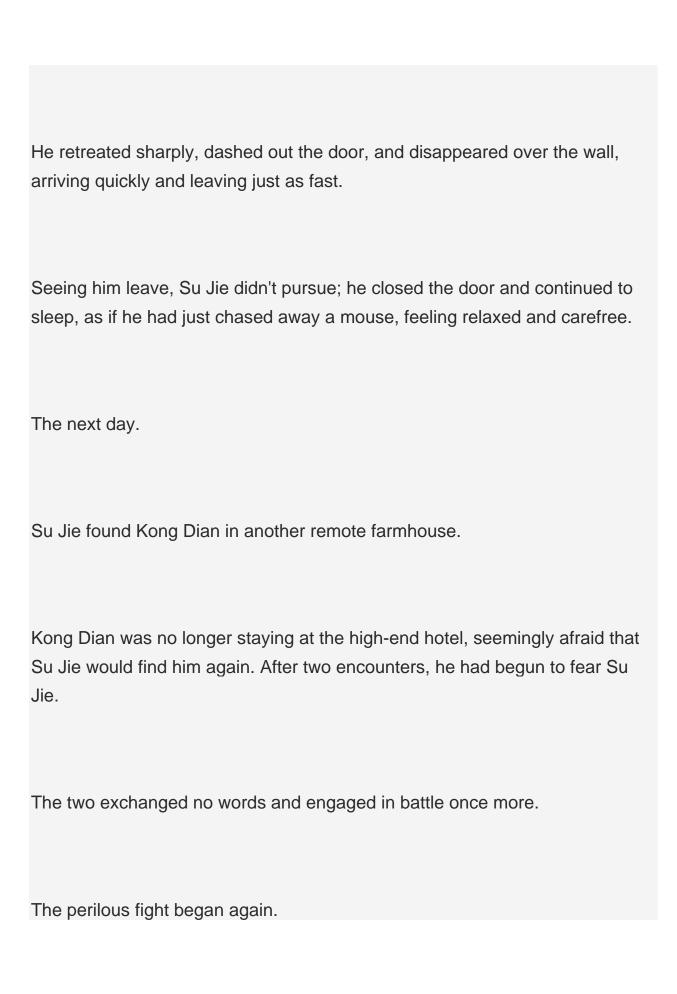
Even with his eyes closed, Su Jie could sense Kong Dian's movements, predicting where he would attack. It was a remarkably magical sensation.

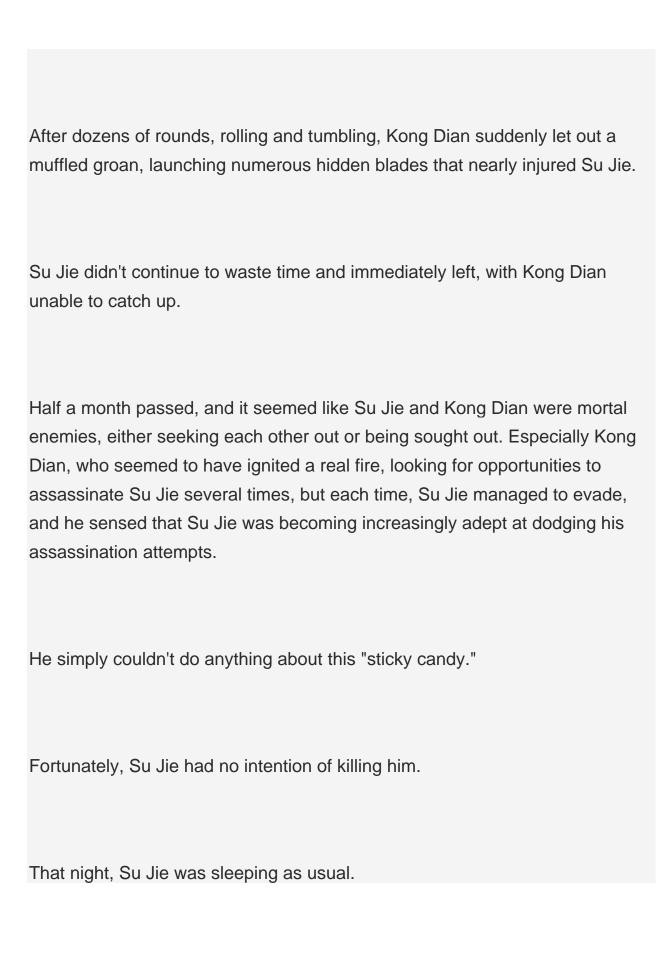
It was like someone who had been blind for a long time, eventually being able to simulate what the world looked like deep within their soul. Through continuous exploration, the world they simulated in their heart became increasingly close to the real world.

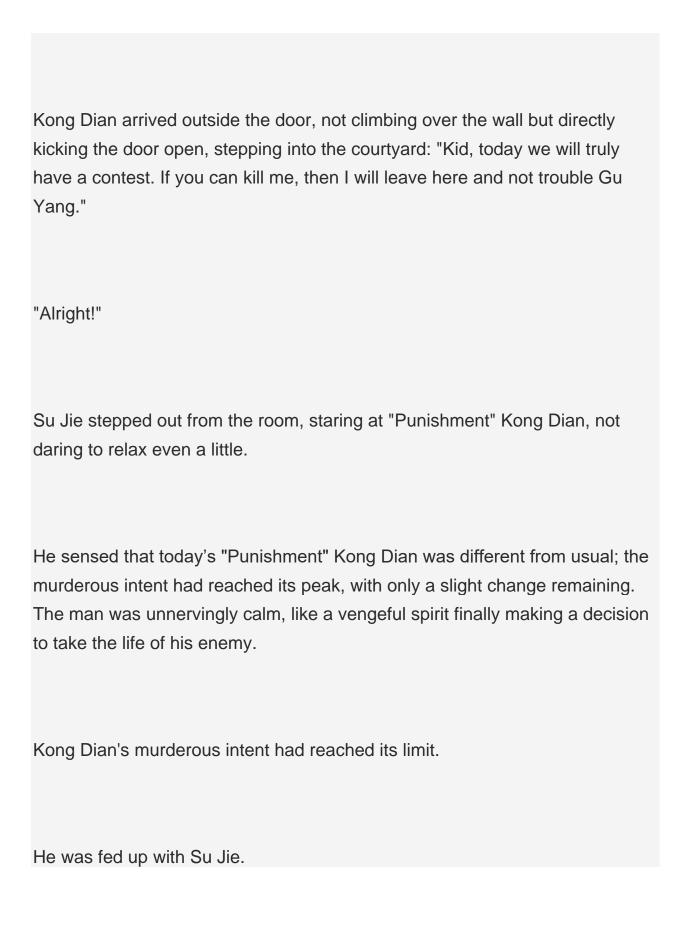
Uncle Mang was like this.

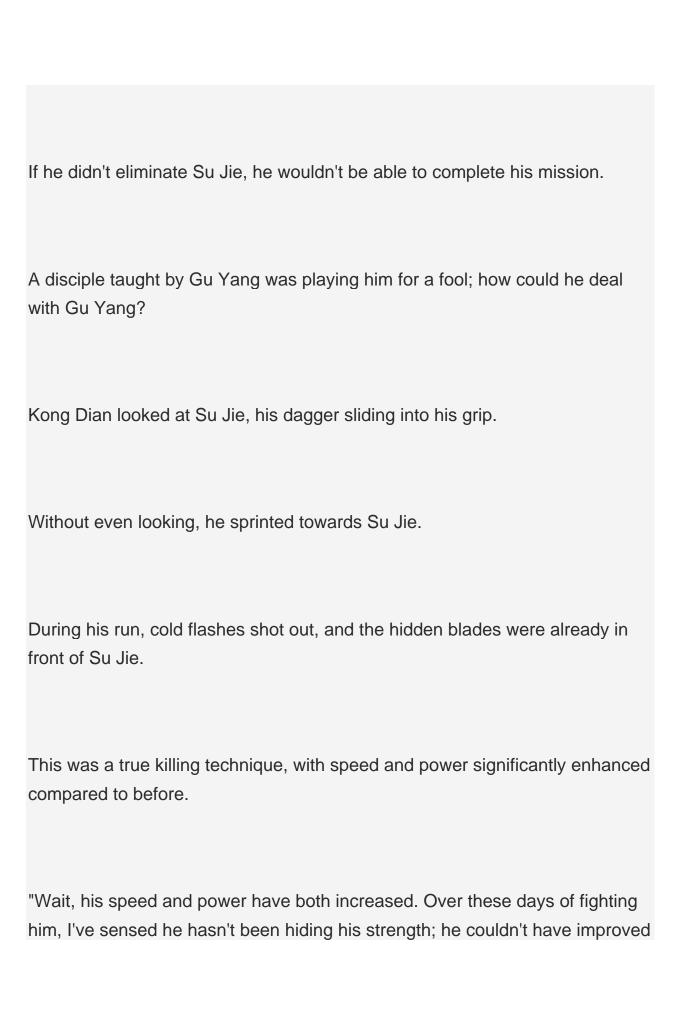
To put it in more mystical terms, it was about "seeing the world with the heart," becoming clearer and more aware.

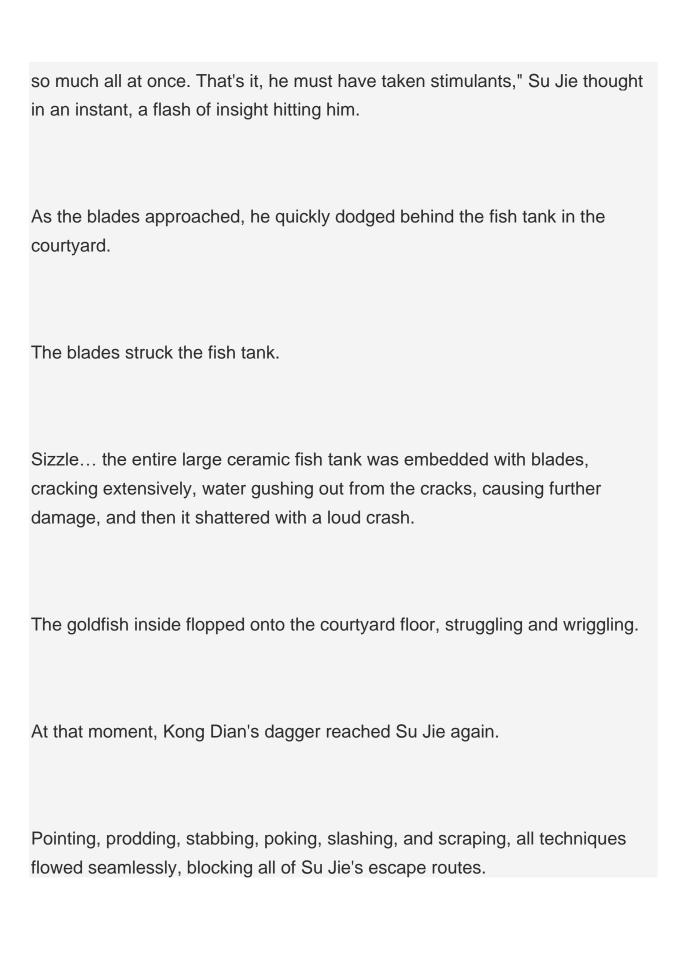












Su Jie's body surged, the dagger carrying a cold light, like a firefly, flashing and disappearing.

He accurately intercepted all of Kong Dian's dagger attack routes.

Through these days of combat and training, he had indeed improved a lot. The pressure from Kong Dian's assassination attempts had led to a genuine transformation. Before this, even if he had mastered his Martial Arts to the point where his body resembled the "Golden Body" described by Uncle Mang, he still had no confidence against Feng Hengyi.

But after half a month of "training" with Kong Dian, Su Jie felt that now, even facing Feng Hengyi, he had some confidence, though not in defeating him, but in having a chance to protect himself.

"Kill!" Kong Dian let out a long howl, his dagger shooting forth like a comet striking the moon, reminiscent of the legendary assassin Jing Ke attacking the Qin emperor, his momentum unyielding, forcing Su Jie to retreat fiercely.

As a killer, one should ideally kill silently, without making any noise; otherwise, if outsiders were alerted, even if the assassination succeeded, escaping would be difficult. But now he actually began to howl, indicating that even if he died here, he would take Su Jie with him.
Like Jing Ke, knowing that regardless of success or failure, death was inevitable.
Su Jie felt the intensity of it all.
Yet his heart was calm.
Like a frozen lake, without any ripples.
As the dagger approached.
He crouched, spiraled, and raised his hand.

Once again, he executed the "Hoe Technique."
The dagger spun like a lightning bolt, shooting through the air, silver snakes dancing, a thunderous crash.
Clang!
He knocked Kong Dian's dagger away, then swung down, pointing it at Kong Dian's eyes; with a gentle push, it could pierce deep into his eyeball.
But Su Jie did not stab down.
"Very good, very good!" Kong Dian's body retreated rapidly, leaving through the main door without saying a word.
He knew he couldn't kill Su Jie.

After Kong Dian left, Su Jie picked up the goldfish from the ground, filled a basin with water, and placed them back into the pond outside, allowing them to return to freedom, while he began to clean up the shattered fish tank.

At that moment, Gu Yang walked in, nodding with an appreciative look: "Kong Dian's assassination skills are exceptionally high, and his abilities are among the best of many killers, yet he couldn't kill you and was even counter-killed. He knows that if this continues, he won't be your match, and he finally left. However, I must admit that I've caused you a lot of trouble; in the future, there may be more people like Kong Dian or even stronger ones coming after you. You must be vigilant at all times."

"Coach, how strong are you really?" Su Jie asked curiously. "How do you compare to Zhang Hongqing and Odell?"

He understood that Coach Gu Yang must know about these two figures.

Chapter 144: Returning to the Fields

"Zhang Hongqing, Odell." Coach Gu Yang murmured these two names, "Zhang Hongqing is Zhang Manman's father, right? If I'm not mistaken, around this time last year, you should have been learning from Odell. Only he,

the 'God Maker,' could elevate you to such a level in such a short time. Both of these individuals are above my realm. In fact, in terms of mental state, you and I are about the same; it's just that my technical experience is richer than yours."

"Coach Gu Yang, you haven't broken through to the Living Dead realm yet?" Su Jie asked.

"Not so easily. This realm is akin to the road to heaven. Once you break through, both your physical and mental qualities will undergo a qualitative leap, equivalent to understanding the Dao." Gu Yang waved his hand dismissively, "You're still young, and your Martial Arts are already at a high level, with physical qualities surpassing mine. It's just that the killing techniques I possess make it hard for you to defend against them."

"So how does the coach compare to Uncle Mang?" Su Jie pondered the realms of Uncle Mang, Master Ma, Coach Gu Yang, and Master Luo. They all seemed similar, yet their strengths varied.

Having the same realm didn't mean their strengths were close.

"Uncle Mang is into research, while I'm into killing. Each has its specialization; it's hard to compare the two." Gu Yang explained, "I contribute nothing to human society, while Uncle Mang has made significant contributions."

Hearing the phrase "each has its specialization," Su Jie wanted to laugh, but for Gu Yang, killing had once been his profession.

"Starting today, we will train comprehensively," Gu Yang declared. "I will impart what I've understood to you while also enhancing your technical skills. I can't teach you about physical and psychological qualities; I can only guide you on various techniques. From tomorrow, you will accompany me to the countryside to do farm work."

"Farm work?" Su Jie was puzzled.

"Yes, the technique of wielding a hoe is something you can only truly grasp in the fields. You've already mastered it to perfection. It's time to return to simplicity and gain its true essence through labor, which is also an excellent training for your character," Gu Yang said.

"I understand." Although Su Jie had helped Gu Yang resolve the issue of 'punishing' Kong Dian, he still felt deep gratitude towards Gu Yang. If it weren't for the many days of sparring with Kong Dian, his skills wouldn't have reached this level.

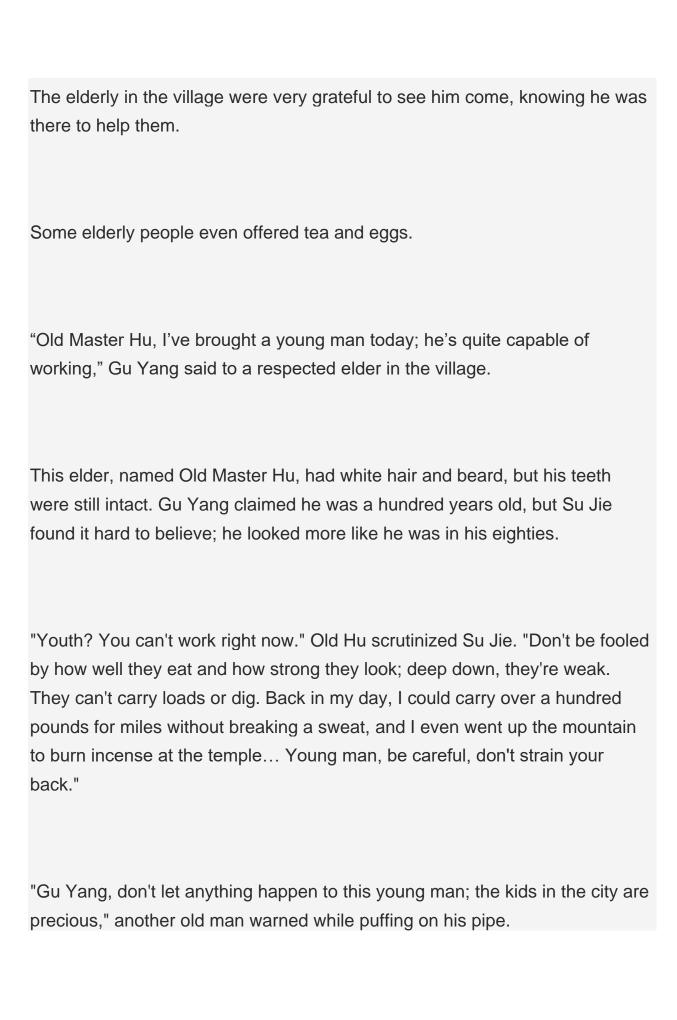
The next day, Su Jie and Gu Yang arrived in the countryside.

Some houses in the countryside were very dilapidated and uninhabited. However, there were also beautiful small villas, where every household had moved in, living in close proximity.

Su Jie knew this was part of the country's new rural construction.

However, much of the farmland had been abandoned, lacking labor to cultivate it. The young people living in the countryside had all gone to the cities, leaving only the elderly and children who couldn't handle the heavy farm work.

"Today, we will help the elderly in the village with their work, clearing the abandoned land, removing weeds, watering, and planting. I will teach you the specific methods of farming," Gu Yang said, carrying a hoe and some farming tools, greeting the elderly in the village.



Several old men gathered around, chattering away, but it was clear they meant well. They were simply advising Su Jie not to overexert himself. In their eyes, the children from the city were all well-nourished and tall, but they couldn't handle hard work.

Su Jie just smiled, finding their concern quite endearing.

"We need to turn over this piece of land, clear the weeds, and unblock that drainage ditch. Many of the irrigation channels in the village have fallen into disrepair. Later, we'll draw water from the well and help everyone water their vegetable patches," Gu Yang said.

Without a word, Su Jie picked up a hoe and got to work. The hoe flew through the air, and with each strike, large chunks of earth were turned over. Even the hardest soil felt as soft as tofu under his hoe. There were plenty of weeds on the ground, and he bent down effortlessly to pull them up, tossing them aside in a pile.

"We can bury these weeds in the soil, and after adding some dry branches and leaves to ignite, the ash can fertilize the fields," Gu Yang explained.

The old men were left dumbfounded. They had spent their entire lives as farmers, and they could tell at a glance whether someone was good at work. Su Jie was nothing short of a master at farming—his speed was astonishing, the soil was turned evenly, and the weeds were cleared thoroughly. He was far more capable than the old farmers they had known in the countryside.

Watching as large patches of hard ground were cultivated and the soil became loose, Old Hu shook his head. "This young man has incredible strength, stronger than an ox. I reckon ten strong laborers wouldn't match him alone; he isn't some reincarnation of Zhu Bajie, is he?"

"Indeed, the reason Zhu Bajie was welcomed into Gao Laozhuang in 'Journey to the West' was because he could work. One man with a rake could turn over thousands of acres," one old man seemed to be narrating a story.

"What are you talking about?" Su Jie felt both amused and exasperated. These old men compared him to Zhu Bajie just because he worked well. However, he understood that in the countryside, especially in the past, a strong laborer represented a family's livelihood. A household without labor power faced dire straits.

After two or three hours, they had turned over large areas of land and cleared the weeds. Then, he and Gu Yang worked on the drainage ditches, clearing away some weeds and shrubs.

"This is how you break branches with a hoe," Gu Yang snapped a branch and demonstrated how to work quickly without injuring oneself, showcasing the technique of using the hoe.

The two of them went to the well to draw water. The well had an old-fashioned pulley system, which they operated with a rope and handle. Gu Yang turned the "pulley," creaking as he pulled up a bucket of water.

"This is the intention behind the hoe's technique of using the pulley; you also need to know how to operate it," Gu Yang explained to Su Jie.

Su Jie nodded, grasping the concept, and began drawing bucket after bucket of water to water the vegetable patches. The village had running water, but it was meant for drinking; using it to water the fields was too extravagant.

Typically, the water for irrigation came from wells or ponds.

Thus, Su Jie and Gu Yang took on all the farming tasks in the village—digging, turning soil, pulling weeds, clearing ditches, drawing water, and watering the fields. Their speed left the village elders in awe.

At this moment, some of the elders no longer underestimated Su Jie; instead, they regarded him as a "hero." In the eyes of the village elders, knowing martial arts meant little; being able to work hard was what truly mattered. Working quickly and efficiently was crucial for a family's livelihood.

Life in the countryside was bustling with activity; there were chores to manage in front of and behind the house, fields to tend to, and the timing for planting and harvesting had to be meticulously observed. It was not a simple task at all. After a few days of hard work, Su Jie deeply understood that rural life was far busier than life in the city. Many city dwellers, with their romanticized notions of "pastoral living," would soon realize just how tough and exhausting it truly was once they arrived in the countryside.

However, he integrated the martial arts skills he had learned with the hoe and shovel into his farming tasks, completely forgetting about fighting and any thoughts of combat. Surprisingly, he found a precious sense of peace and fulfillment deep within himself. It was at this moment that he grasped the true essence of the "hoe and shovel." Over the course of the month, he had effectively become a farmer, taking on all sorts of dirty and laborious jobs, even clearing out septic tanks without a second thought. At times, he would sit

in the fields with a large bowl of noodles, looking every bit the part of a seasoned farmer.

A month passed quickly, and there was hardly any work left to do in the village. One day, Gu Yang asked, "Have you gained any insights?"

"Not really," Su Jie replied, brushing off the dirt from his clothes. "I just find that I'm getting better at farming. I've completely forgotten about fighting, and even how to brawl."

"That's good. Forgetting will lead to deeper understanding," Gu Yang chuckled. "If fighting requires too much thought, your speed will slow down significantly. Come on, for the next month, I will teach you various techniques for hidden weapons and how to defend against lethal skills. Lethal techniques are hard to guard against; even the strongest cannot escape their fate when faced with them."

Su Jie and Gu Yang returned to the Minglun Martial Arts Academy. It was now August. Gu Yang, once a top assassin, not only taught Su Jie the true techniques of hidden weapons but also how to make blow darts. A simple pen tube combined with a sewing needle became a deadly weapon. In addition, various everyday items like scissors, belts, chopsticks, paper, clothes, stones,

combs, glass shards, and even mobile phones could be used to kill without anyone noticing.

Of course, Su Jie viewed these techniques primarily as a means of understanding how to defend himself against potential attackers. His main focus remained on improving his physical abilities and mental resilience. Gu Yang's ultimate technique was not just any killing method but the heart-piercing needle. Using a toothpick to kill was Gu Yang's true specialty. Su Jie quickly learned this skill.

Now, he could confidently shout on the streets, "I can take on ten, even twenty at once!" As long as he had a toothpick in hand—preferably a nail or a sewing needle—he could strike swiftly and efficiently, taking down opponents one after another.

During this time, he also participated in a small-scale Arena Competition at the academy. It goes without saying that he was unstoppable; no one could defeat him, and he easily earned over two hundred thousand. His personal account now boasted around two million. The first million came from a bet with Zhou Chun, and the rest was accumulated through teaching. The additional million was sent by Zhang Manman, a reward for dealing with the "Hungry Wolf."

"Being a bounty hunter is surprisingly lucrative. If we split the three of us, does that mean the bounty for the Hungry Wolf was three million? That's quite expensive!" Su Jie realized that being a bounty hunter truly had a promising future.

## Chapter 145: The Talent Drain is a Serious Concern

During this holiday, Su Jie had a more fulfilling experience than the last time. On June 13th, he retreated into the mountains, practicing the "Thirteen Protectors' Golden Bell Iron Shirt Dragon-Tiger Vajra Qi Gong" and the "Magic Step." He roamed the forests alone, carefree and at ease, finally mastering the horizontal training and achieving a profound understanding of the Magic Step.

By July, he encountered the top assassin "Punishment" Kong Dian, engaging in a back-and-forth battle that lasted over half a month, pushing Su Jie to make even greater progress. Such opponents were rare and hard to come by. No one would provoke a top assassin to have them come and assassinate themselves for the sake of training. A single misstep could lead to one's demise.

After "Punishment" Kong Dian left, Su Jie followed Gu Yang to work in the countryside, completely forgetting about fighting. During this time, the martial arts he practiced were born from the labor of farming—plowing fields, digging soil, weeding, breaking branches, carrying loads, and so on—all of which allowed him to experience the true essence of his skills. He felt that the significance of martial arts applied to productive labor was far greater than that used for combat.

After working, his mind became increasingly calm and meticulous. Moreover, while working in the village, he received unanimous praise from the elderly villagers, and their admiration made him feel quite comfortable. Indeed, many elders discussed afterward how they had never seen such a capable young person working in the fields. With him alone, the village hardly needed any other labor.

Surprisingly, Su Jie had genuinely come to enjoy farming. First, he could help others. Second, he contributed to society through his labor. Third, it strengthened his body and deepened his understanding of martial arts. Fourth, the impurities in his mind dissipated with his sweat. If it weren't for the need to learn other things, Su Jie would have wanted to continue working indefinitely.

Practicing in the deep mountains, engaging in real combat, working in the countryside, learning from Gu Yang, and studying with Uncle Mang—these five major events constituted his summer schedule.

Uncle Mang conducted daily checks on his body, recording various data, especially through different tests to analyze how psychological quality affected physical quality. At the Minglun Martial Arts Academy, they also utilized some artificial intelligence in their computers for research, and Su Jie learned a lot from Uncle Mang.

"According to the latest research experiments, foreign scientists have discovered that using music to soothe mice with cancer cells affects their mood differently depending on the type of music, resulting in variations in the increase or decrease of cancer cells. In other words, music can regulate the mice's mindset, thereby influencing their immune system," Uncle Mang explained one day as he handed Su Jie a copy of some materials. (G: Not sure if it's true so better not to believe it. This is a fantasy story.)

These materials contained various clinical data on psychological and physical qualities: "I think this might help with your horizontal training. Your horizontal training simulates various animals, nature, thunder, and strong winds to create psychological suggestions. It's worth exploring which type of psychological suggestion enhances human immunity the most, or which combinations of suggestions are the most effective."

Uncle Mang approached everything with a scientific attitude. Su Jie had already provided him with videos of the "Thirteen Protectors' Golden Bell Iron Shirt Dragon-Tiger Vajra Qi Gong" for research. Uncle Mang searched through the vast database for scientific experiments, making comparisons and achieving some results. For example, when a person howls and expresses their emotions freely, what subtle substances are produced by the body's endocrine system, leading to changes in certain areas.

These were all precise scientific data. "My set of hard Qi Gong was reportedly first discovered by Coach Odell, who combined various horizontal training methods. It underwent many clinical trials and was then modified by the artificial intelligence at the Typhon Training Camp using big data," Su Jie asked Uncle Mang.

"It is precisely because of this that this set of martial arts can hardly be mastered by anyone other than a freak like you," Uncle Mang said. "I want to find a practice method suitable for all ages, one that can restore people's health functions, enhance immunity, and increase cancer survival rates." Su Jie thought about it, and indeed, that was the case. The first posture of this hard Qi Gong was to imagine oneself as a dragon, soaring up fiercely, letting out a long roar that reached the clouds. Then, as the winds rose and swirled, the dragon twisted and turned, conquering the universe.

The key to the movements, aside from the long roar originating from deep within the dantian, was that the entire body had to shoot upwards, continuously roaring. For those lacking sufficient Qi, it would be difficult to even manage the long roar. Besides that, the squatting, rising, and upward movements were extremely similar

to the action of a hoe. Achieving this upward and downward motion needed to be as flexible as a dragon stretching; without three to five years of practice, it was nearly impossible.

Even if one could perform the movements, the psychological suggestion posed a significant challenge. How could one imagine oneself as a giant dragon soaring into the sky, controlling the clouds and rain? This was a realm that only a few could comprehend. While there were standards for the movements to learn, there were no standards for psychological suggestion.

Moreover, after embodying the dragon, one had to suddenly imagine oneself landing on a mountain peak, transforming into a fierce tiger, roaring through the forest, with the winds rising and all beasts trembling in fear. To perfectly express this imagery, beyond the standard movements, one's expression had to be vivid, with an inner belief of being the king of beasts. This was the essence of the Dragon-Tiger Vajra Qi Gong.

Many other movements followed the same principle. They were complex and varied; psychological suggestion not only had to be convincing but also required constant switching, with physical movements keeping pace and the force of strikes needing to be precise. Even the most gifted individuals practicing this could have a high chance of experiencing nervous breakdowns.

Even if psychological suggestion could deceive oneself, if the suggestion was too deep and one failed to control the force of the strikes, it could harm one's body. In other words, to master the "Thirteen Protectors' Golden Bell Iron Shirt Dragon-Tiger Vajra Qi Gong," one's brain would need to rival certain functions of a supercomputer. Furthermore, one's movements had to be executed with mechanical precision.

Every strike's force and accuracy had to be nearly as precise as that of a surgical operation; otherwise, it could damage delicate blood vessels and nerves. In other words, when Su Jie practiced this horizontal training, each strike was akin to the best surgeon performing surgery on himself. The difficulty was extraordinary.

During the training, Uncle Mang felt that Su Jie was the top of the top, an unbeatable academic champion! "That Kang Gu has a pure heart; because he is deaf and mute, he is somewhat dull, but he learns very quickly. However, he is still far from Su Jie," Uncle Mang thought. "Su Jie has managed to elevate his physical fitness to this level in just one year for a reason. If a person's mindset can achieve this, then enhancing one's quality and potential in a short time is not a myth, but real science."

If he hadn't seen Su Jie's example, even with Uncle Mang's scientific mind, he wouldn't have believed that someone could become a martial arts master in just one year. "Kang Gu has signed with the Feng Lei Fighting Club." At that moment, Nie Shuang walked in again, announcing a shocking piece of news.

"The Feng Lei Fighting Club? That's the club invested and established by that kid Feng Hengyi, right?" Uncle Mang said. "Kang Gu didn't sign with our Minglun Martial Arts Academy but went to sign with this club? I don't see him as that kind of person."

"It's simple. Feng Hengyi found him and promised to cure his deafness, allowing him to hear sounds and speak, turning him into a normal person," Nie Shuang explained.

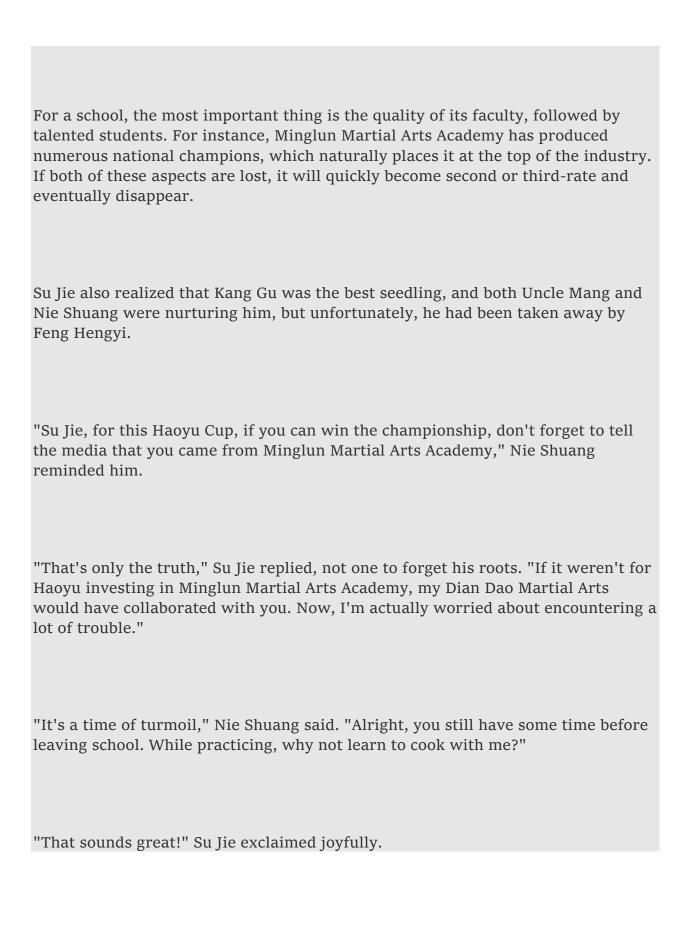
"His deafness is an incurable disease; no major hospital can do anything about it," Uncle Mang frowned. "No, perhaps the medical methods at the Typhon Training Camp could achieve this."

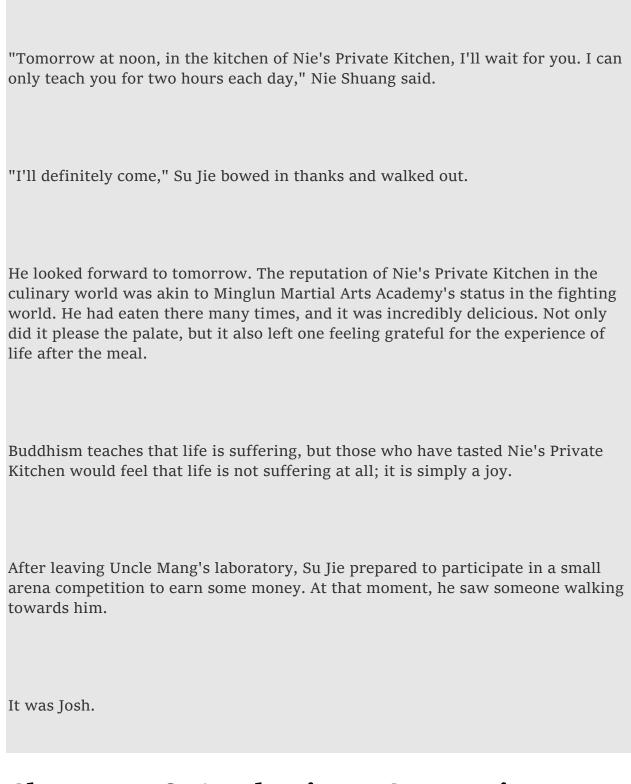
"That's right. If Feng Hengyi takes him to the Typhon Training Camp and successfully treats his deaf-mute condition, we could really recruit Kang Gu," Uncle Mang sighed. "Our Minglun Martial Arts Academy lacks talent. It's hard to come by a good seedling, and now someone else has snatched him away. Soon, we won't have anyone to hold up the fort. Are we going to become an empty shell of a school?"

"I've been thinking about this too," Nie Shuang said, looking at Su Jie. "Su Jie has also set up his own branch and developed Dian Dao Martial Arts. Zhang Jinchuan has established his own Li Kun Network and isn't focused on this. Now, Liu Long isn't even from our Minglun Martial Arts Academy. If this continues, what right do we have to call ourselves the best in the industry? Moreover, a lot of talent is being poached by Haoyu. If this goes on, we might really be swallowed whole by Haoyu."

Su Jie listened, contemplating Haoyu's schemes. Haoyu's investment in Minglun Martial Arts Academy for collaboration seemed mutually beneficial, but secretly, they were poaching talent, gathering formulas, and collecting data.

In a few years, when all the good coaches in the combat sports circle had signed contracts with Haoyu, and all the promising talents were under Haoyu's banner, every champion in the fighting competitions would be from Haoyu. What would be left of Minglun Martial Arts Academy then?





## Chapter 146: Awakening a Companion

Su Jie had very deep feelings for Josh. If it weren't for Josh, he wouldn't have realized that tilling the land and the hammering of tires during combat practice had similar principles, perhaps even surpassing them. His rapid progress was largely due to the enjoyment he found in daily sparring with Josh, which built his confidence to continue training under Odell later on. However, after Josh signed on to become a target for Feng Hengyi, the two lost contact. It wasn't that Su Jie didn't want to reach out to Josh; rather, all means of communication seemed to have been severed. Now, returning to the Martial Arts Academy and unexpectedly encountering Josh again filled Su Jie with joy.

"Hey!" Su Jie quickly greeted Josh, "What are you doing here?"

Josh walked over to Su Jie, but his expression showed little excitement; instead, he appeared somewhat indifferent. He stopped five steps away from Su Jie and said, "Su Jie, I want to challenge you. I specifically came to find you after seeing your performance in the small Arena Competition at Minglun Martial Arts Academy on the livestream. I wanted to have another match."

"Sure!" Su Jie understood that Josh had likely been influenced by Feng Hengyi's training; both his physique and temperament, even his aura, had changed significantly. Josh's body had become as solid as steel, and he walked with a steadiness akin to a nail driven into stone, almost unshakeable. He had found the centerline of his body, and in all his movements—whether standing, walking, or sitting—his body's central axis showed no deviation whatsoever. This was a frightening level of cultivation.

The Confucian principle of "standing upright and centered" and the Daoist saying "too many words lead to exhaustion; it's better to maintain the center" both

emphasize this concept. Traditional martial arts also stress the importance of the body's central axis; during punching practice, one must firmly protect this axis and avoid swaying. In Judo, this is known as the theory of "roots." The goal of any Judo technique is to destabilize the opponent's "foundation" while maintaining one's own.

Su Jie only grasped this principle after achieving some success in martial arts. Through gradual practice, he had long found his own "root," and over time, he had cultivated it to an astonishing level. In fact, one could assess a person's martial arts proficiency by examining whether they had a "root" and the solidity of that root.

For instance, now that Josh stood before him, an ordinary person might not notice anything unusual, but Su Jie, who was well-versed in Physiognomy and could observe auras, understood the profound principles of martial arts. He could "see" that within Josh, from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head, there seemed to be a "pillar" supporting him. This "pillar" represented his "root."

Of course, this did not mean that Josh had a literal pillar inside him; rather, it referred to his mental and physical qualities, which provided stability and support in every action. A person embodies the universe, and the pillar that supports the heavens is what martial arts refers to as the "root."

Chinese traditional martial arts first emphasize standing postures. There are many methods and theories for standing postures, but in Su Jie's view, the ultimate goal of all standing practices is to find a certain physical and mental support and then cultivate and strengthen it. The "root" is the internal strength, as well as Qi. Su Jie had previously only had a vague understanding of this, but after discussing the martial arts theory of Japan's top Judo practitioner, Daben Xianghua, with his senior brother Song Qiong, he began to comprehend the concept of "roots."

Since then, he had been pondering this idea, and upon seeing Josh today, he was finally able to discern a person's martial arts level by observing their "root" in conjunction with the internal observation of aura from Feng Shui and Physiognomy. Some people only begin to grasp their martial arts when they find their "root." In Su Jie's eyes, his own "root" felt like a thin thread that could snap at any moment.

Of course, most people lack "roots," which manifests in their erratic movements and an inherent lack of support; simply put, they lack Essence and spirit. Josh's "roots," on the other hand, were like an iron rod running through the axis of his body, making him fundamentally unshakeable. If Josh were a house, then his flesh and blood would be the concrete, while the "roots" would be the steel reinforcement within. The thicker the steel, the sturdier the house, making it harder to collapse.

Su Jie recalled the Josh of the past; although he had "roots," they were as flimsy as a wooden chopstick, easily destroyed by others. A year had passed, and Josh was now more than ten times stronger than he had been a year ago.

"Haha, Josh, you truly are my lucky star! Seeing you has made me understand the crucial principles of martial arts," Su Jie said as he stepped forward to pat Josh on the shoulder, but Josh slipped away, evading Su Jie's grasp.

"Follow me," Josh said, turning and walking away, his demeanor now completely different from the "overly dramatic" aura he once had; he had become taciturn. He exited the Minglun Martial Arts Academy and entered a small alley outside.

"Do you remember? Last year, in this very alley, you defeated me," Josh remarked. "That had a significant impact on me. Back then, you were a novice in Martial Arts; even with three layers of protective gear, you couldn't withstand a single

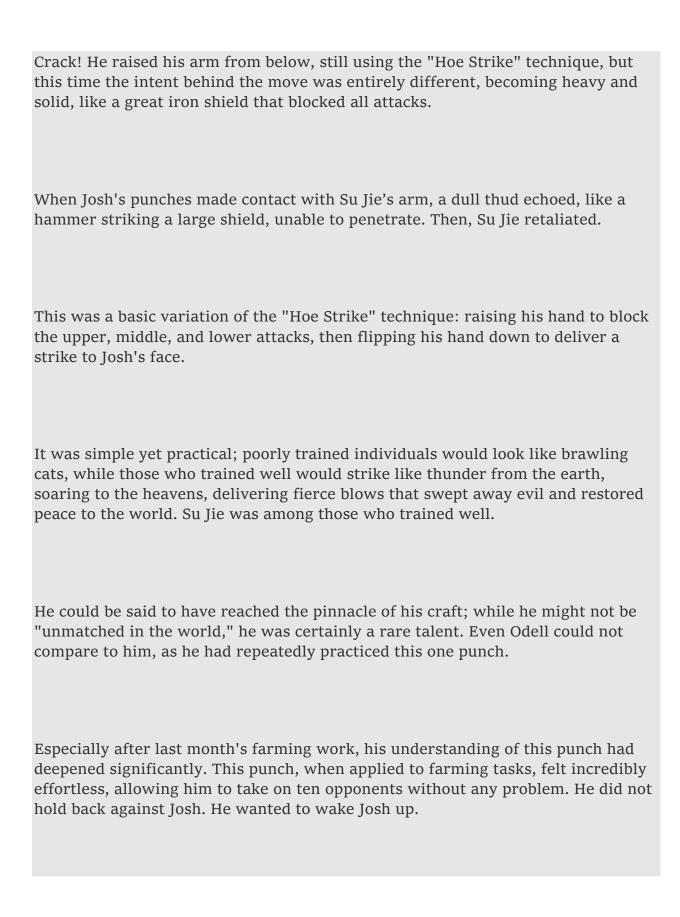
punch from me. Yet, in just over a month, you managed to defeat me. I had been training in combat for seven or eight years, having fought countless battles. At that moment, I realized there was something wrong with my pursuit. So, I signed a contract with Feng Hengyi and finally found the best training method in the world. Compared to my previous training, this was real training. I had thought of myself as a martial arts master who had practiced Tai Chi for decades, believing my skills were profound, but when I faced a beginner who had only trained for a month, I ended up with a bruised face. Today, I want to spar with you to see how far I've come."

"Sure," Su Jie replied, knowing that Josh had signed with Feng Hengyi, feeling a deep sense of regret inside. As a good friend, he actually wanted to advise him to reconsider, but he had never found the opportunity.

Boom! Josh crossed his feet, his fists arriving with explosive force, targeting Su Jie from all angles as if attacking from above, middle, and below. The impact was like cannon fire, shaking the ground violently, and his punches struck deep, instilling fear and awe.

Each of the three attacks was real, yet each could also be feigned; whichever route Su Jie chose to block could easily turn from real to fake, leaving him vulnerable. This style of punching was different from boxing and traditional martial arts; it was a brand new technique. Speed, power, and timing were all executed perfectly, making it nearly flawless. Even national-level athletes would find it hard to replicate such a technique.

Su Jie felt the pressure as he focused intently. But at the same time, he made his move.

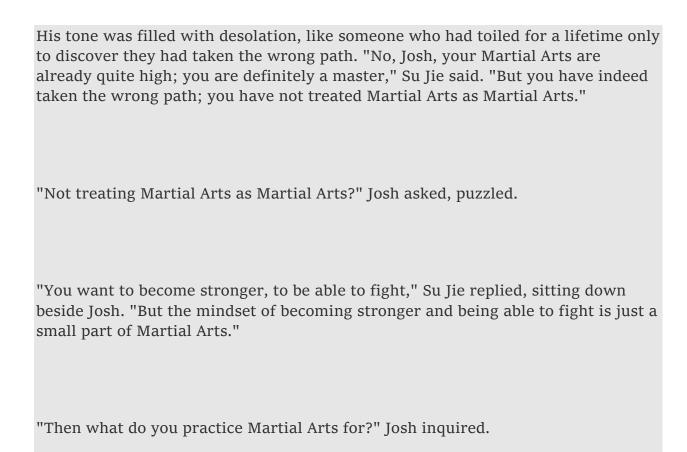


Boom! His palm came crashing down, and all Josh could see was a hand that seemed to cover the sky and earth, compressing everything around him before pressing down on him. The world was grasped in one hand, and the mountains and rivers bore down on him. Su Jie's current "hoe" had reached such a grand level. Only a master could feel this way when facing this punch; a novice wouldn't even see it coming before getting slapped down to the ground.

As Su Jie unleashed this punch, it was as if he had seized the very essence of the world, then slammed it down, compressing the mountains and rivers within the universe. What kind of artistic conception could anyone possibly withstand? In "Journey to the West," when the Monkey King faced the Silver-Horned King who wielded Mount Sumeru, he could still use his skills to carry the mountain, but when Mount Tai came crashing down, he was left with "blood spurting from seven orifices." If the Monkey King couldn't withstand it, neither could Josh. Even if he retreated rapidly, Su Jie's feet could always keep pace with him. He could only watch helplessly as the palm came crashing toward his face.

Then, the palm covered his face, pressing down. His knees creaked, unable to support him any longer, and he was struck down to his knees on the ground. Eventually, he couldn't hold on and collapsed flat on the ground. He wanted to get back up, but his whole body ached, and his head buzzed. This was a temporary shock; on the arena, it meant he had been knocked out, unable to rise for ten seconds.

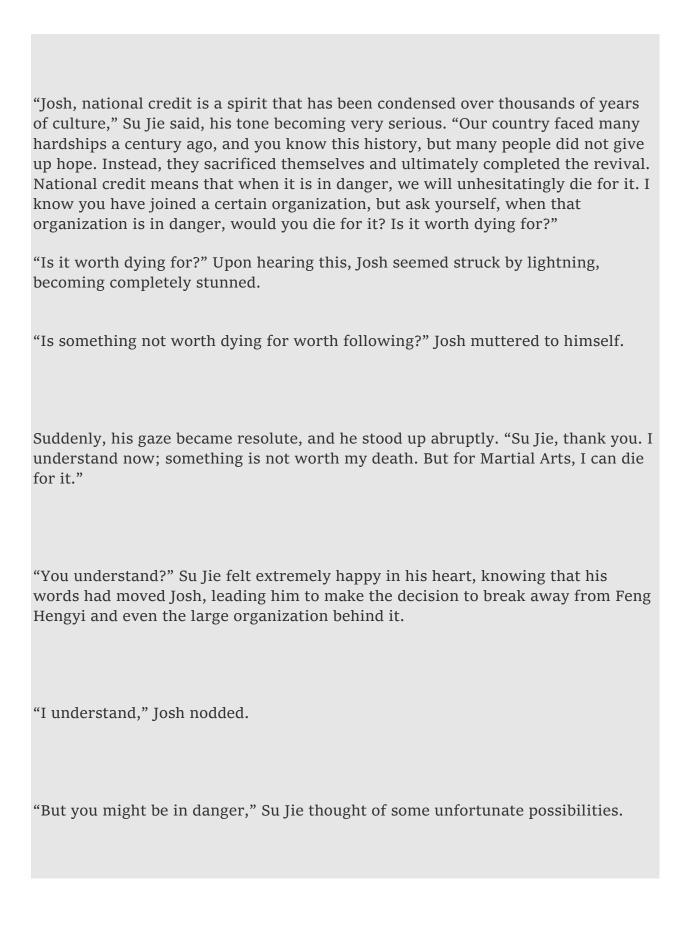
Su Jie looked at Josh, who was knocked down, and did not help him up, allowing him to regain his senses on his own. After a full minute, Josh came to his senses but did not stand to fight again; instead, he sat down heavily on the ground. "Why? Why is the gap between us getting wider? Have I been pursuing the wrong path? How can I become a master of Martial Arts?"

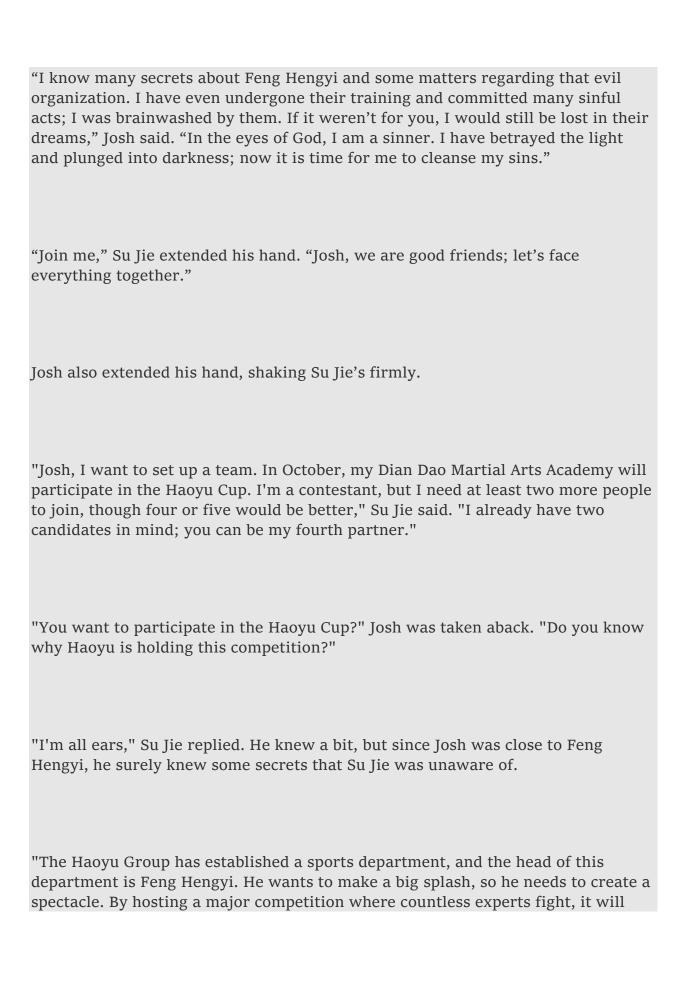


## Chapter 147: The True Essence of Martial Arts

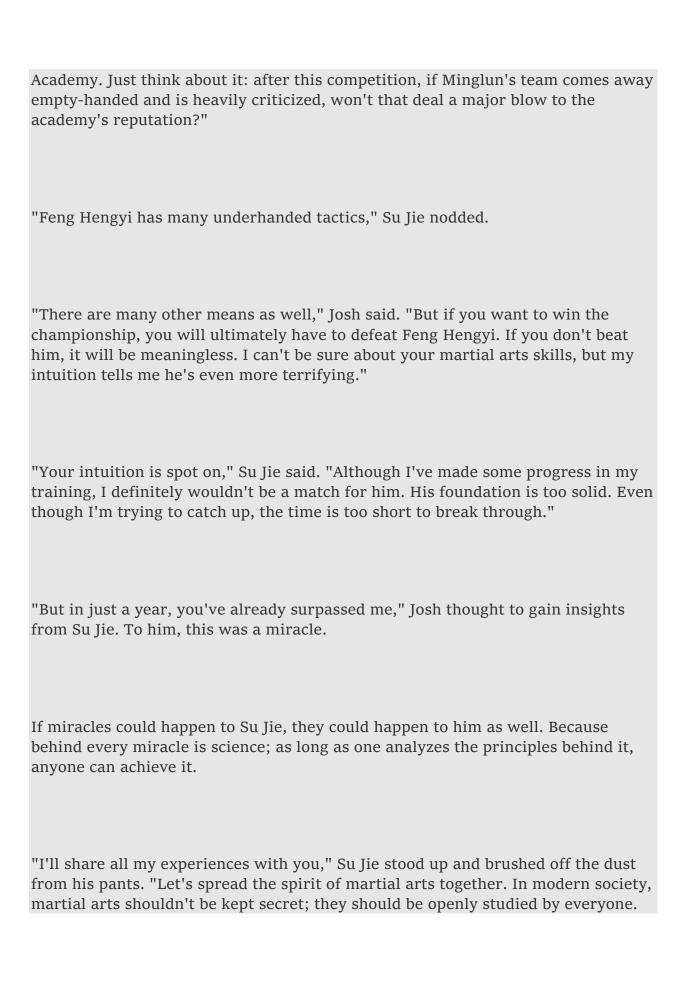
"At first, I wanted to become stronger to resolve certain issues. But later, I realized that no matter how strong my Martial Arts were, they couldn't solve everything. A person's power is quite insignificant in this society. No matter how well I practiced Martial Arts, I couldn't protect the things I wanted to safeguard. My mindset then changed. I wanted to explore and learn more knowledge, help more people, and also ensure that Martial Arts could be passed down. Most importantly, I hoped to find a spirit within Martial Arts that could truly bring peace to the heart, allowing everyone to benefit from it."

After returning from the war-torn lands, Su Jie had thought a lot. While helping the elderly in the village with farming using Martial Arts, he received their admiration and gratitude, which deepened his reflections.
As he worked the fields, watching the land being turned over and the weeds cleared away, he felt a sense of accomplishment from using the hoe that far surpassed the satisfaction of defeating a master with it. At that moment, he believed that even defeating the world's number one with Martial Arts was less meaningful than using it to till an acre of land.
At this moment, his mindset underwent a tremendous transformation.
"Alright, let's not talk about Martial Arts; everyone has their own purpose for learning it," Josh said. "Su Jie, I want to ask you another question."
"Go ahead," Su Jie nodded.
"What is national credit?" Josh asked. "Some countries in the world blindly issue currency, leading to inflation. But almost all countries face this issue. So does the nation still have credit? Why can't we break free from this credit and establish a mechanism that is not controlled by people, an absolutely neutral one?"
Hearing Josh's question, Su Jie immediately thought of Feng Hengyi and the organization behind him, as well as the dark web, virtual currency, and so on. Josh had certainly passively accepted their ideology.





generate significant influence. With high prize money as a lure, it becomes a massive hot event." Josh said, "Of course, that's not the most important part. The key point is that this competition is purely prepared for Feng Hengyi himself. He plans to defeat all the domestic and international experts in this event, including the current number one in the country, Liu Long. Once he wins, his fame will skyrocket, and the sports department he manages will explode. He can promote his martial arts philosophy and turn his style into a globally recognized martial art, even rivaling established combat arts like karate and judo, which have been around for centuries. The commercial value in this is enormous." Josh sighed, "He wants to keep this competition going, turning it into the largest event brand in the world. Even the top martial artist in the world would need to compete in his event to gain recognition. The more participants there are, the more data he can gather from the competition. Currently, Haoyu's short-term goal is to swallow up Minglun." "How can a single event swallow up Minglun Martial Arts Academy?" Su Jie asked. "It's simple. Minglun Martial Arts Academy will also have a team participating in this competition. He will suppress that team during the event, causing its members to embarrass themselves, which will significantly damage Minglun's reputation. The school relies entirely on its reputation; once that is tarnished, the school essentially loses its soul." Josh continued, "Moreover, Feng Hengyi will manipulate international media to further lower the price for acquiring a controlling stake in Minglun Martial Arts



But I'm curious, how have you been training under Feng Hengyi? Your progress is astonishingly fast!"
"First, there was physical training. Every day, I was given various health supplements produced by the Typhon Training Camp, followed by mechanical arm massages for relaxation, and a complete set of intelligent mechanical diagnostics to restore my physical strength, significantly increasing the training intensity. In addition, we practiced combat every day, engaging in life-and-death battles in underground boxing arenas in Southeast Asia, mimicking the gladiatorial training of ancient Rome. We had a group of fellow trainees, but during one chaotic slaughter in the arena, they all perished, leaving me as the sole survivor." Josh's brief words made Su Jie acutely aware of the brutality of the Typhon Training Camp. In this training camp, a large number of trainees would be eliminated through death, and those who survived were the elite. The mortality rate here was much higher than that of super agent training in various countries. It was a miracle that Josh managed to survive. No wonder he had improved so much.
"Do you practice a specific form of Martial Arts?" Su Jie asked.
"Yes, I have a set of joint exercises, breathing techniques, and meditation, which are meant to enhance physical fitness and cultivate the mind and body. Additionally, there is a specialized killing technique. Besides that, I have also taken courses on assassination methods like daggers and blow darts. Our curriculum basically includes physical training, practical combat, psychological training, assassination techniques, eavesdropping, and observation and reasoning classes," Josh enumerated.
"What is the observation and reasoning class?" Su Jie inquired.

"It involves inferring a person's lifestyle habits, past experiences, character, and preferences from their appearance, behavior, and speech, while also predicting their future development trends," Josh explained.

"Isn't that Physiognomy?" Su Jie realized. Students at police academies probably also had this course to identify criminals or to detect any latent criminal tendencies in people's psyches. Master Ma was sometimes invited by criminal police to share his expertise on judging criminals based on their facial features. The ancient art of physiognomy could also assist in solving cases.

"I need to return to my country for a while to settle various matters at home," Josh said. "Feng Hengyi still doesn't know that I have betrayed him. I need to feign compliance for a while, and at the last moment, bring him to justice. However, he is very shrewd and has left no evidence behind. If I want to gather evidence against him, I might have to stay undercover for a while."

"That's too dangerous," Su Jie thought. He wanted to take down the Feng Family but would never allow Josh to undertake such a risky 'undercover' mission.

"Feng Hengyi assigned me the task of getting close to you, earning your trust, and keeping track of your movements, then delivering a fatal blow at the most critical moment," Josh said. "So my purpose for coming today is also this. But deep down, I was still hesitating. Until you said that one sentence, I realized he wasn't worth my efforts. However, having betrayed him, he will definitely not let me go. This person is extremely ruthless, and he has a powerful backing; I must be cautious."

## Chapter 148: Mastering the Art of Cooking

After exchanging a few words with Josh, the two parted ways.

Su Jie had faith in Josh; he could see that Josh was an idealistic and opinionated young man, with a face that showed he had not completely fallen from grace. This was the principle of gaining support through righteousness and losing it through wrongdoing.

Once Josh left, Su Jie glanced at the date and organized his schedule. As soon as the holiday was over, he would be heading to B City for university. Given his exam results, he could choose any university and major he desired without any issues. He scored 745 points on the National College Entrance Examination, and while he could have achieved an even higher score, it seemed pointless since the regulations now discouraged the promotion of top scorers. Moreover, he did not want to draw attention to himself during the exam; otherwise, he might have been able to achieve a perfect score of 750.

In fact, the most challenging part of the exam was the essay section. However, Su Jie had no problem with that; he could analyze the mindset of the examiners and apply various analyses of the broader context to write an essay worthy of full marks. In his view, the writing skills of modern students paled in comparison to those of the scholars who had excelled in the historical imperial examination system. Especially the top scorers, second place, and third place from history, who had skillfully understood the examiners' psychology and analyzed the political situation, tailoring their writing style and calligraphy to suit the occasion—this was truly an art form.

With a little study of history, one could gain a wealth of information. Su Jie understood these principles, but 99% of high school students would not.

"B City's Q University, School of Life Sciences," Su Jie read from a text message on his phone. This was a congratulatory message from his homeroom teacher, Chen Juan, who had learned of his admission. It was the best university in the country, and Life Sciences was the subject Su Jie had long decided to pursue, encompassing genetics, heredity, cells, ecology, and various other disciplines. It held significant meaning for researching the mysteries of life, which Su Jie intended to use to explore the secrets of Martial Arts.

His current knowledge could surpass that of an average expert, but it was still far from enough. Besides Life Sciences, Su Jie also wanted to study computer artificial intelligence, as these would also be beneficial for his Martial Arts. He had already thought out his research topic, which was similar to those of Uncle Mang, Master Ma, and Master Luo, focusing on the connection between physical and psychological qualities. This was the relationship between intention and technique in Martial Arts.

Moreover, he was curious about how the three states of mind in cultivation—contemplation, non-contemplation, and the Living Dead—could enhance physical qualities and what scientific basis lay behind them. These were all things he was eager to understand.

His cultivation had gradually deepened, and he had begun to grasp Odell's true intentions. The impact of psychological quality on physical quality was immense; a positive mindset, combined with some scientific training methods, could lead to dramatic changes in a person's physical condition in a short time. Su Jie was a prime example of this.

Additionally, during his studies with Master Luo and Master Ma, he had encountered numerous medical cases. Some cancer patients, who maintained a relaxed and positive mindset while cooperating with their doctors, had a significantly higher survival rate compared to those who were psychologically

despairing.
Perhaps, once psychological quality reached an unattainable realm, a person's body could indeed generate some incredible power? These were all worthy subjects for research.
However, the immediate priority was to learn how to cook well from Nie Shuang.
The next day at noon, Su Jie arrived at the Nie family's private restaurant in town. This restaurant consisted of several courtyards and only accepted high-end clients requiring reservations in advance. Odell frequented this restaurant because he loved the food, and given the many experts in D City, he would often stay here for a while each year.
Nie Shuang was dressed in a white chef's uniform, complete with a chef's hat. Su Jie had also changed into a similar outfit.
The entire kitchen was spotless, filled with transparent glass, and not a speck of dust could be seen, making it resemble a laboratory. Numerous ingredients were neatly arranged on the table. Swish, swish
Nie Shuang picked up a kitchen knife, twirled it in her hand, and then with a flick, brought it down onto the cutting board.

"The people regard food as heaven; eating, drinking, relieving oneself, and sleeping are the major affairs of life. A person can go without clothes, can live without a house, can lack everything, but they cannot go without food. Practicing Martial Arts is similar; it's thirty percent about practice and seventy percent about eating," Nie Shuang said. "A Martial Arts expert should ideally learn how to cook; making food for oneself is the most comfortable. Just like one knows whether the water is cold or warm when drinking, I will now tell you the ten major cooking methods."

Su Jie listened quietly.

"Cooking methods include braising, simmering, stewing, blanching, steaming, frying, boiling, marinating, and deep-frying," Nie Shuang explained. "These cooking methods can be combined in various ways, just like the hexagrams in the Book of Changes, ever-changing, with sixty-four combinations evolving the myriad phenomena of the world, bringing both fortune and misfortune. However, the most important aspect of cooking is to retain the nutrition, followed by flavor and aroma, and finally, the presentation. Aroma and presentation can uplift a person's spirit and enhance their appetite. I will first teach you the most important cooking technique—frying."

She swiftly drew the knife, its blade flashing, and sliced a piece of fresh pork into thin slices. Then she added seasonings to the pan, turned on the heat, and stir-fried. As the spatula flew, flames roared, and in no time, a plate of stir-fried meat was ready.

Su Jie picked up his chopsticks and took a taste, feeling the freshness dance on his tongue, an indescribable sensation that stimulated his appetite and made him ravenous.

"The first impression of good food must stimulate the taste buds and enhance appetite," Nie Shuang said. "Moreover, before cooking, adjustments should be made according to a person's internal organs; everyone's taste varies. The so-called five flavors correspond to pungent, sour, sweet, bitter, and salty, which relate to the lungs, liver, spleen, heart, and kidneys respectively. In the theory of the five elements, they correspond to metal, wood, earth, fire, and water."

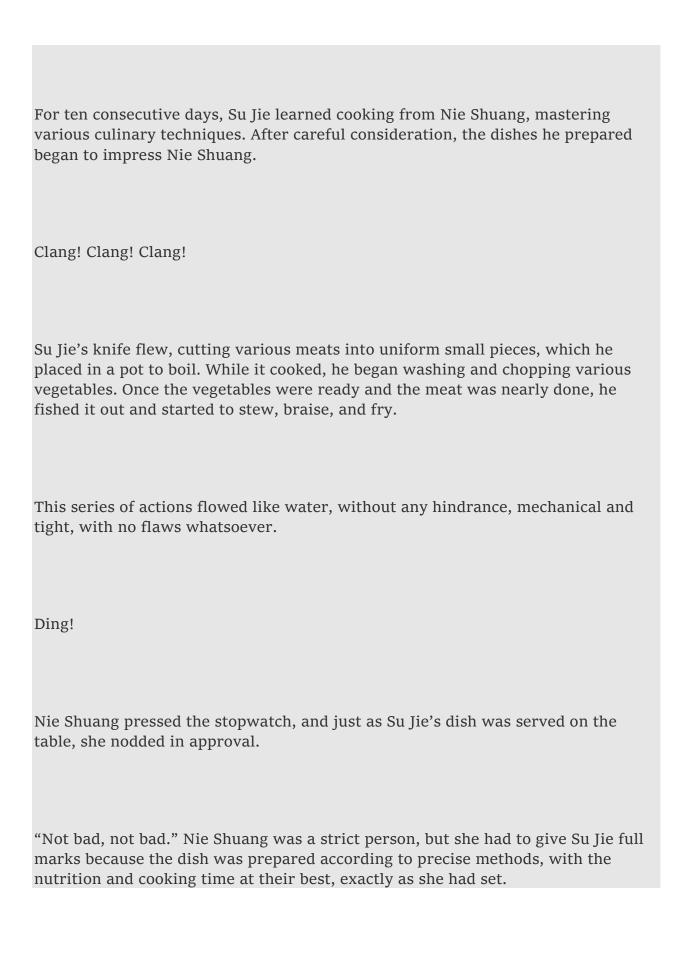
Nie Shuang first explained the theory to Su Jie, then discussed the heat control, knife skills, and colors.

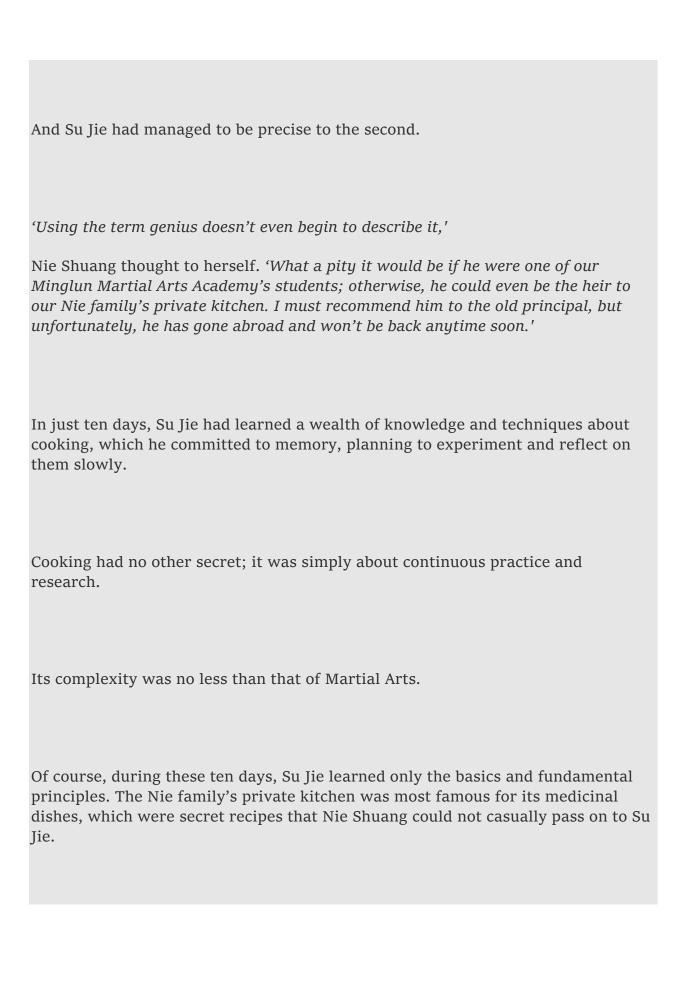
She spoke quickly, rarely repeating herself. If it were anyone else, even a gifted learner would struggle to grasp it, but Su Jie's capacity for understanding was terrifying; he even felt that Nie Shuang wasn't explaining enough.

In a typical culinary school, the concepts Nie Shuang was teaching would take at least a year to learn.

Su Jie had previously self-studied cooking, following online tutorial videos, and had managed to grasp the heat control well enough. However, after Nie Shuang's guidance, he felt his knowledge was riddled with gaps, like a child who had learned a few martial arts moves trying to join a national fighting team.

Fortunately, he was quick to absorb the information, and once pointed in the right direction, he understood the principles.





However, Su Jie had mastered the basic skills of cooking, and with careful study, he could create meals that were very beneficial to health. He could completely solve his daily meal problems.
Time quickly passed to August 25th, and Su Jie was set to leave Minglun Martial Arts Academy to return home and prepare for college.
He bid farewell to Gu Yang, Nie Shuang, and Uncle Mang, stayed one night in Odell's small courtyard, tidied up, locked the doors and windows, and then set off on his journey home.
While in the courtyard, he hoped Odell would return, as there were many things he wanted to ask and discuss with him. However, Odell did not come back this time, which left him feeling a bit disappointed.
During these nearly three months, Su Jie had gained a lot; his Martial Arts had progressed significantly, and in terms of physical fitness, he had achieved the "Golden Body." In terms of spiritual cultivation, he had thoroughly solidified his previous realm, and his inner peace was frighteningly profound.
If before, his heart was like still water, calm but capable of rippling when a stone was thrown, now his heart was like a frozen lake. Not only could the wind not stir up waves, but even if a stone were to fall, there would be no splash.

Chapter 149: Shadows Approaching
The young man, in this unnoticeable way, grew once more.
Many times, he felt he could step over this threshold at any moment, but with each advancement, he realized he was still far from it. Yet this time, it was so clear that with just a gentle blow, he could access the long-sealed treasure, but Su Jie's heart remained exceptionally calm, treating it as an ordinary matter.
Su Jie felt he was getting closer to the realm of the "Living Dead."
This feeling was incredibly wonderful, even more comforting than the changes in his body.
He remained calm at all times, maintaining clarity, unaffected by any external environmental factors, preserving independence and purity, without any impurities arising.
Moreover, he gradually felt that his inner self was advancing further, transforming into a sensation akin to ice jade.

Just as Su Jie completed his summer training and returned to S City, preparing to start university, the Feng Family was also gearing up for a series of business maneuvers.

In a secret office of Haoyu Group, three individuals were holding a meeting. These three were none other than the three powerhouses of the Feng Family: Feng Shoucheng's eldest son, Feng Yuxuan, his second son, Feng Qianzang, and his third son, Feng Hengyi. Each of them had distinct appearances, yet there was an indistinct aura of ambition about them; each could stand on their own and become a lord among lords.

"Third brother, all the mistakes our company made this time are because you failed to secure the shipment from the Xu Family, allowing Awasi to pass through smoothly. Not only that, but you also completely offended the local warlord, leaving us unable to establish a foothold there. This directly led to our failure in acquiring shares from the Xu Family, and we were counterattacked by that old man Xu Qiaomu, resulting in us being penalized by the higher-ups and forced to sell the Xu Family's stocks at a low price, withdrawing from the market. This has caused our Feng Family significant losses, and more importantly, this failure has diminished our credibility in the market; many companies no longer fear us as they once did."

Feng Yuxuan continuously blamed Feng Hengyi, as if he were kicking someone while they were down. After all, within the family, the only one who posed a threat to his position was his third brother, Feng Hengyi. The second son, Feng Qianzang, was naturally charming and flirtatious, and while he had a keen business mind, he lacked the authority to command respect in public, making it unlikely for the Feng Family to let him take over.

Meanwhile, the third son, Feng Hengyi, was actively plotting various matters, and each successful endeavor posed a threat to Feng Yuxuan, which made him quite uneasy.

"This matter has drawn the Zhang Family's attention," Feng Hengyi glanced at Feng Yuxuan and said, "Things are not that simple. You don't understand who Zhang Hongqing is, but our old man knows very well. Of course, he won't be able to bounce back for long; the forces behind me have already arranged for someone who can take him out. We just need to wait; sooner or later, news of his death will spread."

"Third brother," at this moment, Feng Qianzang spoke up, "It's best not to get too deeply involved with that organization behind you. I'm afraid it will bring trouble, which would be extremely detrimental to our Feng Family."

"Second brother, you can never imagine the immense power that exists behind me," Feng Hengyi replied. "In front of that force, our Feng Family and Haoyu are hardly stronger than ants. Feng Yuxuan, don't worry about me competing with you for assets; I tell you, my ambitions lie elsewhere. What I seek is the highest leadership of the organization; at that time, the Feng Family will become the dominant force in global commerce, not this ambiguous position we hold now, unable to even swallow the Xu Family."

Feng Yuxuan remained silent for a while before speaking, "Third brother, since you always boast about how great your backing is, then show it to us and let the Feng Family's influence expand once more."

"Rest assured, I will lay out a global strategy," Feng Hengyi said. "I will first take over Minglun Martial Arts Academy, then acquire Liu Zihao's film company. Minglun Martial Arts Academy may not have a large industry now, but combined with Liu Zihao's international influence and the operations of his film company,

its future value will far exceed that of the Xu Family. What do you think, second brother?"

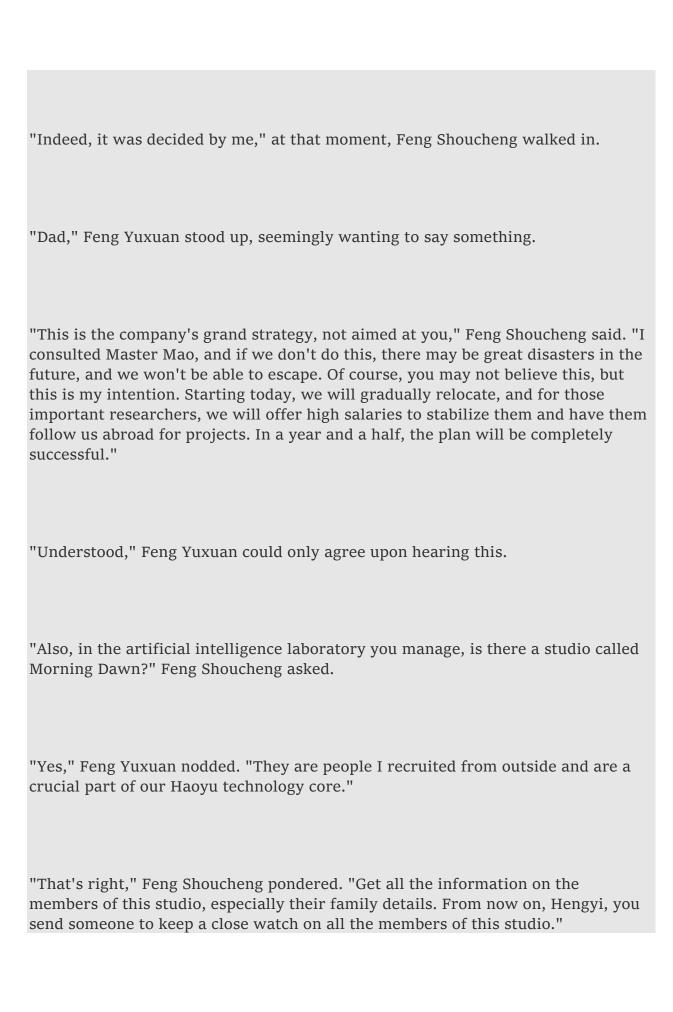
"I think so too. Minglun Martial Arts Academy has a tremendous faculty and training mechanism, along with some pharmaceutical intellectual property rights, but unfortunately, it hasn't been fully operational yet." Feng Qianzang nodded, "I've purchased many fitness products from their official website, and they are indeed very effective. That old guy Liu Guanglie is much more cunning than Liu Zihao. He has acquired several large pharmaceutical factories and is managing them slowly. If we swallow Minglun Martial Arts Academy, leveraging Liu Zihao's film effects and adding some hype from competitions, we can quickly open up markets for health products, clothing, film, education, and more globally. Not to mention, just selling the intellectual property rights of those martial arts videos could earn us a substantial profit abroad."

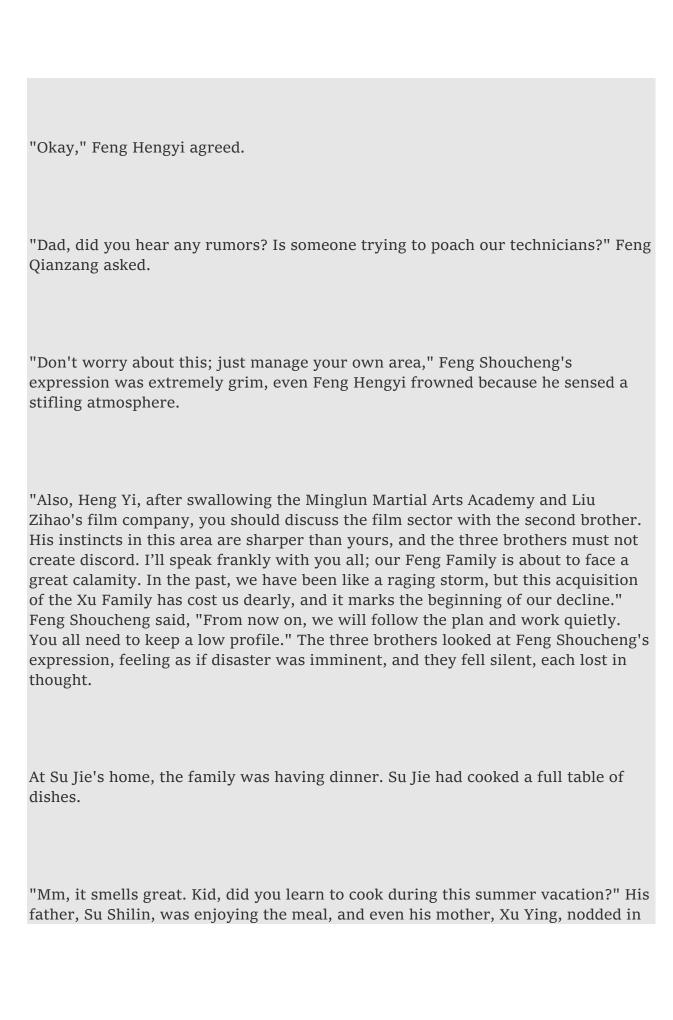
"Not bad," Feng Hengyi nodded. "What is the fastest way to become famous in this world? It's combat sports. Even if you're just a small fry, as long as you defeat the world champion, you can instantly become a superstar. Once you become a superstar, you can use your influence to market countless products."

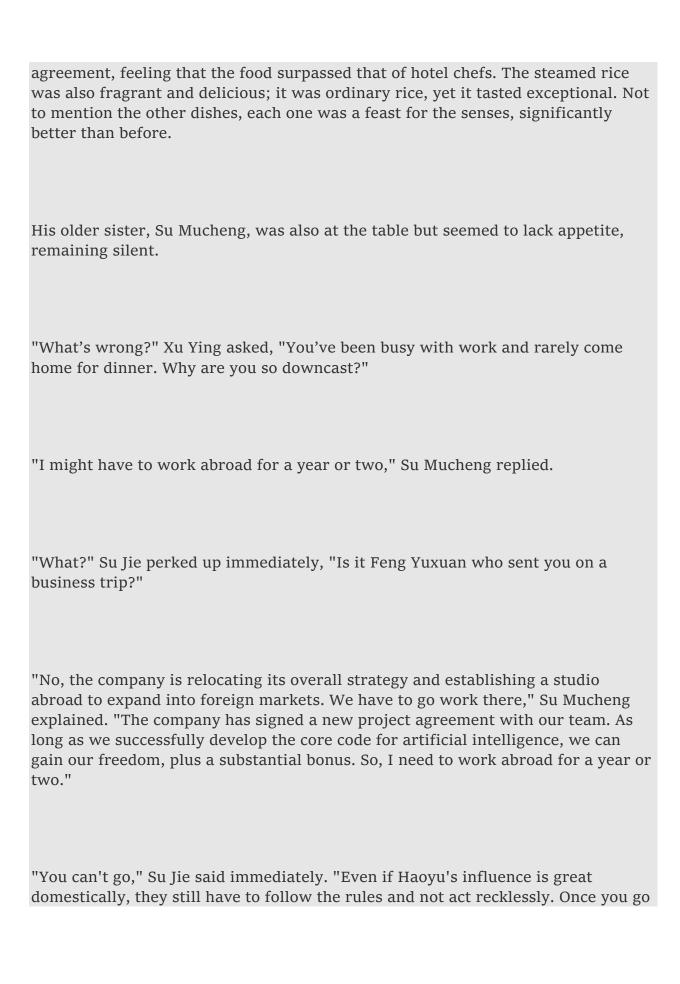
"Liu Zihao is not an easy character to deal with; he will definitely not give up control of the Minglun Martial Arts Academy," Feng Yuxuan said.

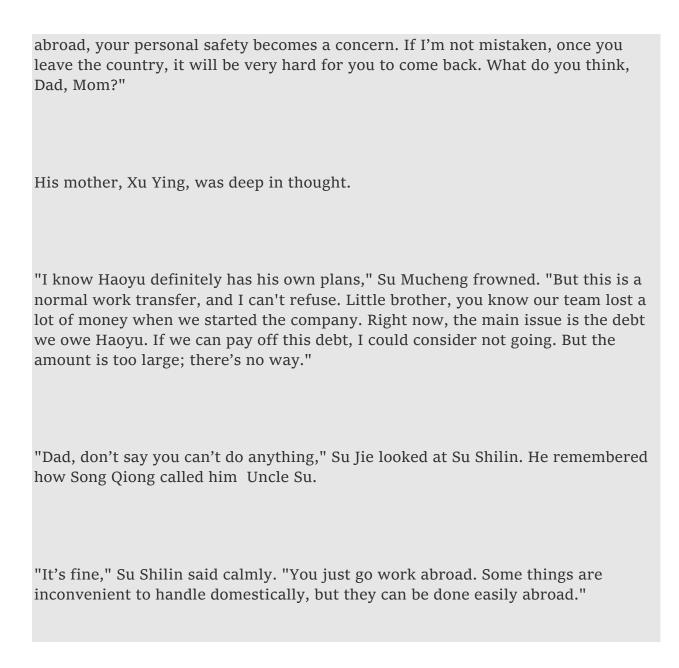
"That doesn't matter. If he doesn't give up, there will naturally be someone to make him give up. In my plan, he is merely a stumbling block. He won't abandon his pursuit of power and will eventually come under my command," Feng Hengyi replied. "Currently, what I care about most is our Haoyu Group's artificial intelligence laboratory. This is of utmost importance. We cannot afford any loopholes; this is the key to my future plans. My goal is to build our Feng Family into a colossal 'umbrella' company like those in movies."

"Third brother, you might be too fanciful," Feng Yuxuan scoffed.  "As long as you live long enough and gradually accumulate power, nothing is impossible to achieve. Just like me," Feng Hengyi said. "My physical condition allows me to live to one hundred and twenty without any problem. And I'm not even twenty yet. What will happen in a hundred years? Who can say for sure? As long as we stay at the forefront of the times and master the most advanced technology, anything is possible."  "Our artificial intelligence laboratory is managed by me, so you can rest assured. I've documented all the important researchers and signed hefty compensation agreements; there won't be any loopholes," Feng Yuxuan stated.  "I'm not at ease," Feng Hengyi replied. "I've decided to move our artificial intelligence laboratory abroad and continuously recruit various talents. After all, even if you sign various agreements with them domestically, it is of no use because you cannot restrict their personal freedom."  "I absolutely disagree with this," Feng Yuxuan knew this was Feng Hengyi trying to seize power from him.  "This is not up to your agreement; it was decided by the old man," Feng Hengyi said.  "I don't believe it," Feng Yuxuan frowned.	
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## Chapter 150: The Drowning Swimmer Turns the Tables

"Dad, what are you talking about?" Su Jie disagreed. He had been to the war zone and understood deeply that abroad, Feng Hengyi was linked to dark forces. Once he stepped out, it would be like a sheep entering a tiger's den.

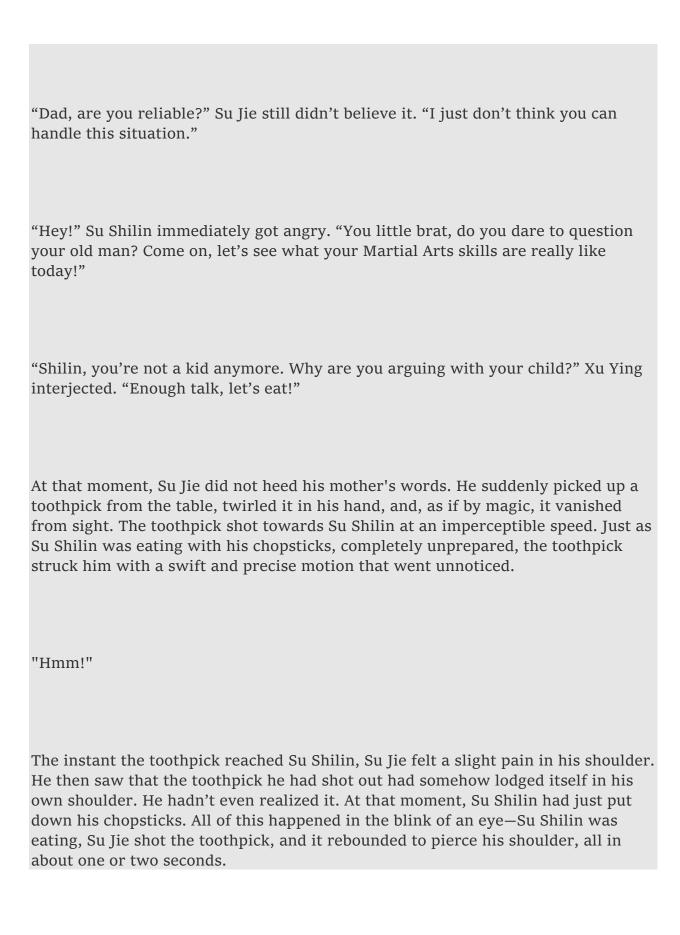
Although Su Jie had Martial Arts skills, he knew that the power of Martial Arts was not as formidable as it seemed; there were many situations where he would be powerless.

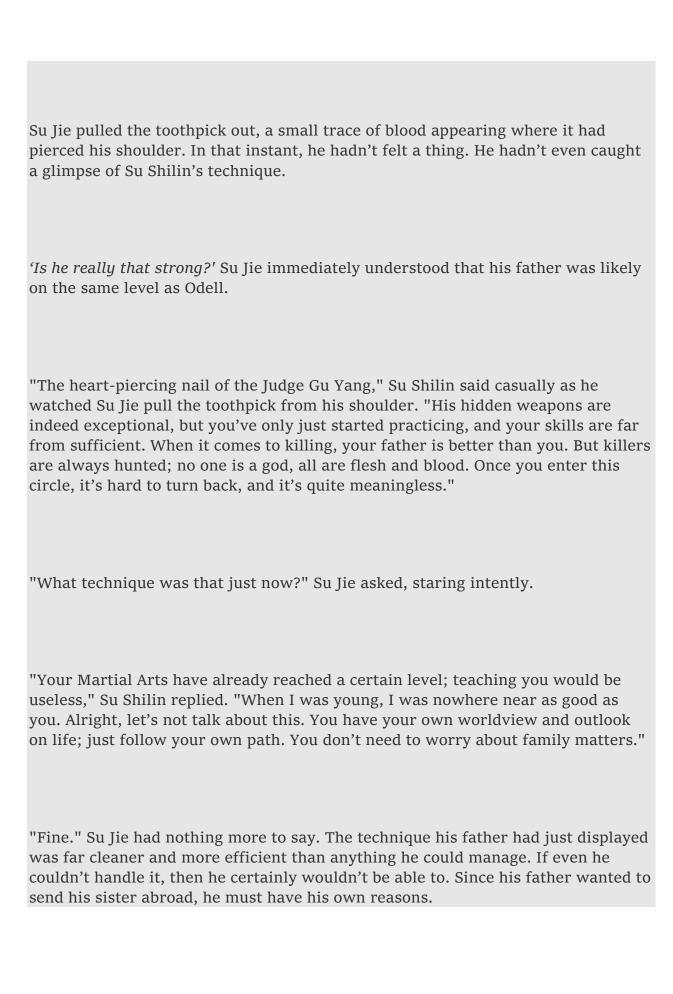
"Don't worry, maybe we can catch a big fish," Su Shilin said. "Your sister's ambition is to design a powerful artificial intelligence. Once abroad, she might leverage the Feng Family's connections to obtain truly confidential information. Sometimes, broadening one's horizons and seeing the world is beneficial. Just like you, I didn't want you to learn Martial Arts because I was afraid you would get into fights. But you didn't listen and chose this path, inevitably exposing yourself to many dangers. For instance, your trip to the war zone—wasn't it a brush with death? A stray bullet could take your life. Remember, those who drown are often good swimmers. Those who can't swim have the self-awareness not to go into the water, and thus, they will never drown."

"But it's too dangerous," Su Jie argued with his father. "If sister goes on an adventure, I definitely don't support it. I know you have a good relationship with the chairman of the Zhonglong Group, and sister's team could be very useful to them. They could easily recruit her team, compensate Haoyu, and handle the lawsuit. After all, the two major groups have been at odds before. It would be much safer for my sister to work at Zhonglong than to be on edge at Haoyu."

Su Jie had a point. If the Zhonglong Group recruited his sister's team, it would be a significant advantage. He had seen how the wealthy young masters like Lu Shu were willing to give away hundreds of millions in property just to recruit her. However, these young masters were not very reliable, but Su Jie believed the Zhonglong Group was trustworthy.







'It seems that only by reaching a mental state akin to the Living Dead can I truly spar with my father. Only then will I be able to withstand certain things,' Su Jie thought to himself. 'My skills with hidden weapons are still in their infancy; I'm far behind in that regard compared to my fist and foot techniques. I should be able to hold my own against my father in a few rounds with those.'

Hidden weapons were indeed a weak point for Su Jie. They were purely tools for killing, without any pretense. Practicing fist and foot techniques, even the most vicious moves, could be justified as a means of strengthening the body, but practicing hidden weapons was solely for the purpose of murder. Su Jie didn't want to invest too much time and energy into hidden weapons; the priority was still on physical and mental training. Becoming overly obsessed with hidden weapons would be a waste of time. As long as his physical abilities and mental resilience improved, a little practice with hidden weapons would suffice.

"Why are you arguing with the child?" Xu Ying suddenly slammed her chopsticks down.

Su Shilin flinched and lowered his head to eat. At that moment, his sister Su Mucheng seemed to be much happier. "It seems that the Haoyu Group has powerful technical support behind it. During my research, I vaguely grasped that connection. If I can further crack the secrets within, I could even master all the business secrets of Haoyu and find evidence of how Feng Yuxuan set me up. Little brother, this is also why I stayed at Haoyu; I'm not willing to accept failure in my entrepreneurial endeavors."

"The Feng Family is not that easy to deal with. You don't know Martial Arts; if anything goes wrong, a security guard could easily take you down," Su Jie still felt uneasy deep down.
"I still have my value, besides, you can't catch a tiger cub without entering the tiger's den," Su Mucheng said. "Little brother, you still don't understand the tricks of computers. A true expert can gather a lot of information without anyone noticing. Once I obtain all the criminal records of the Feng Family, it will be their end. Just like how the Feng Family brought down my company back then, I will do the same to theirs."
"It's not that simple," their mother Xu Ying interjected. "You must prioritize safety above all else."
"There's no need to worry about safety," Su Shilin chimed in. "On the Zhonglong side, I'll give them something to think about. There will indeed be times when we need them, but they are also the type that won't act until they see the rabbit. We can only leverage their power, not put all our bets on them."
"Got it," Su Jie nodded.
After the family finished their meal, father Su Shilin and older sister Su Mucheng left, and it was unclear what they were up to.

Su Jie stayed home to clean up the dishes. He felt much more at ease now; his sister seemed to have gained some insight and was no longer the stubborn blockhead who only focused on research.
His sister wasn't stupid or foolish; she was intelligent but lacked emotional intelligence. Perhaps she had spent too long in the ivory tower of academia, leading to some naivety and assumptions. After everything that had happened, she had undoubtedly grown to some extent.
Even Su Jie had matured significantly compared to last year; he could almost say he had undergone a transformation.
"At least I'm not fighting alone now," Su Jie thought of his father's technique of flicking toothpicks back. He hadn't seen it clearly in the moment, but now it vividly replayed in his mind. When his father flicked the toothpick, he did so with such speed that it changed trajectory in an instant and bounced back.
It was somewhat similar to a bullet rebounding off a hard surface. This kind of precision and perfectly measured force didn't seem so miraculous to Su Jie anymore. With some practice, he could achieve it too.
His Martial Arts had reached a certain level; as long as he calmed his mind, he could discern the essence of things.

'What unresolved deep-seated grudge could my father have with the Zhang Family?' Su Jie pondered another question. 'Zhang Manman is actually quite nice; without her, we might not have been able to deal with the Feng Family. The grievances of the previous generation shouldn't affect the next. In this competition, I still need her to thwart Feng Hengyi's schemes. It's better to resolve enmities than to deepen them. If we can eliminate this grudge, it would be a good thing. Otherwise, we would have to deal with both the Feng Family and the Zhang Family, and even my father wouldn't be able to handle it all.'