

Eternal Heart 21

Chapter 21: Honghu Three Killers

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Half-precious Artifact?

Chen Yu remembered Le Feng's broken treasure artifact. Even though it was an incomplete treasure artifact, the enhancement in combat power was quite astonishing.

"Half-precious artifacts, in the secular world, are the top divine weapons, only that some master craftsmen might be able to forge. Their power and quality are close to that of treasure artifacts and, in some aspects, not even inferior to them!" the Family Head explained.

These words made Chen Yu's heart stir.

Having an additional half-precious artifact equated to having an extra means of attack, and it would make future missions much more convenient.

Though Chen Yu practiced fist and foot cultivation techniques, not all environments would be suitable for fist and foot combat.

Moreover.

The reward of a fertile territory also held some allure for Chen Yu.

After returning to Xiangyang City, the family's attitude left him disappointed, a bit bitter even, that he found himself not holding much hope for the family at all.

If he could have a piece of land, he could establish his own estate or manor, making future cultivation and travel freer.

In the audience, it wasn't just Chen Yu who was tempted.

Chen Yu stood rooted in the sect, but he was a bit tempted as well, especially considering the family's higher-ups present.

Even the ten thousand gold pieces, which Chen Yu didn't care much for, could arouse the envy of quite a few people.

"Hehehe, I always wanted to get a treasure artifact, and although it's just a half-precious artifact, I guess I could trade it for some primordial stones back at the sect," Chen Ying'er said gleefully, as if the bounty was already certain for her.

"You think the 'Honghu Three Killers' are so easy to deal with?" Family Head Chen Tianwei shook his head with a bitter smile.

According to the information he had, the Honghu Three Killers were not just vicious but also cunning and adept at joint strikes to overcome the strong with the weak.

"It's rather odd. Why would the City Lord Mansion put up a bounty on the Three Killers?" a first elder expressed doubt.

Logically speaking, the Honghu Three Killers were evil people wanted by the Court, not much related to Xiangyang City.

However, Xiangyang City offered a bounty exceeding that of the Court, only requiring the leader among the Three Killers to be killed to claim the additional bounty.

It must be said, this matter was indeed peculiar.

"Because—the Honghu Three Killers once visited the City Lord Mansion and murdered the City Lord's elderly mother. Rumor has it, they even kidnapped the City Lord's daughter!" Chen Tianwei said coldly.

As soon as he said those words, the crowd fell into a brief silence before gasping collectively.

"How is that possible! The City Lord Mansion has over a dozen Meridian Passage Stage experts alone."

"The City Lord of Xiangyang City, 'Yan Fengyun,' is said to have a cultivation nearing the Organ Refining Stage. There are rumors that even an Organ Refining Stage expert is stationed at the mansion, so how did the Three Killers succeed?"

The crowd engaged in heated discussions, their faces grave.

If the "Honghu Three Killers" truly had such strength, this bounty wasn't something just anyone could meddle with.

At the very least, it would be hard for the family's senior leaders present to accomplish such a highly challenging task.

"Perhaps at that time, the Organ Refining Stage expert at the City Lord Mansion hadn't yet had the chance to intervene. Besides, the Honghu Three Killers have faced the 'Organ Refining Stage' before and never suffered a loss," Chen Tianwei remarked nonchalantly.

Everyone nodded slightly, agreeing with Chen Tianwei's words.

However, no one in the crowd volunteered to take part in the hunt for the "Honghu Three Killers."

Even though the bounty was high, one needed to be alive to enjoy it.

"What of the cultivation of the Honghu Three Killers?" Chen Yu finally asked.

"The Honghu Three Killers, their talents aren't considered high; even the strongest, the leader among the Three Killers, 'Life-taking Hand,' hasn't reached the Organ Refining Stage, likely at the Peak of the Meridian Passage Stage. But these three have roamed for over a decade, with extensive means and strategies; their strength cannot be measured logically. Their peers slain by them are countless. There's even a rumor that the Three Killers once teamed up to seriously injure and defeat an Organ Refining Stage practitioner," Chen Tianwei solemnly stated.

Regarding the rumors about the Three Killers' strength, he dared not withhold too much.

"Excellent! I'm decided to take part in this bounty," Chen Yu said with a smile.

Just recently, his "Copper Statue Technique" advanced to "Copper Skin Great Success," and he was getting eager, wanting to find a worthy opponent for a great battle.

Moreover, the City Lord Mansion's offered bounty tempted him.

"I'll join in too," Chen Ying'er added with a giggle.

Upon hearing this, the Family Head Chen Tianwei frowned.

Having Chen Yu take part was in line with his desires, for the young man's defense was remarkably strong.

But Chen Ying'er taking part made him a bit uneasy. The main reason wasn't her capability but rather the high hopes placed on her by the family, entailing great sacrifices.

"Father, relax. With Brother Yu and me teaming up, what harm could a few petty thieves pose?" Chen Ying'er assured with full confidence.

After a round of discussion, Chen Tianwei agreed to the requests of Chen Yu and Chen Ying'er.

However, Chen Tianwei had a few stipulations:

First, Chen Yu and Chen Ying'er were not to separate; they must stay together!

With two disciples of prominent sects working together, as long as they didn't act alone, even if they failed to kill the Three Killers, there would surely be no problem ensuring their safety.

Second, the family would dispatch a team of experts to assist them, and this couldn't be refused.

Third, if they found themselves outmatched, they must not force the matter and should promptly retreat.

Chen Yu and Chen Ying'er agreed to these three points.

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That night, Chen Yu and Chen Ying'er began making arrangements within the family.

Chen Tianwei assigned two Meridian Passage Stage experts to them: one was the protector leader of the Chen Family; the other was a senior elder of the Chen Family, with both having attained the Mid-stage Meridian Passage.

Chen Yu sized up the two experts.

The protector leader, surnamed Fang, was a burly, square-faced man clad in leather armor, wielding a shield and sword.

The senior elder was a young swordsman, with sword-like brows and starry eyes, a senior relative to the two.

"Uncle Fang, Uncle Chen," Chen Yu and Chen Ying'er greeted the two Meridian Passage Stage experts.

Uncle Fang, being the protector leader, was seasoned with iron-blooded combat experience, having strong ties with the Family Head.

Uncle Chen, the young swordsman, was one of the few masters from an older generation within, having traveled across Chu Country.

Besides these two, below them were eighteen protectors all at the Body Refining Stage.

"Not bad," Chen Yu nodded secretly; this lineup far surpassed the one they had for killing the Bear King, in both numbers and strength quality.

In the dead of night, a group of four great Meridian Passage Stage experts and eighteen protectors quietly left Xiangyang City.

"According to reliable information, the Honghu Three Killers, carrying 'the City Lord's daughter' hostage, headed toward the suburbs north of Xiangyang City," Protector Uncle Fang noted, tightening his grip on the shield.

"Hehe, with a hostage in hand, the Three Killers would want to coerce the City Lord to yield and wouldn't stray too far from the city. If I were the Three Killers, I would certainly occupy a strategically high ground, allowing easy advance and retreat," Uncle Chen, garbed as a young swordsman, spoke with a smile.

"Uncle is vastly experienced; I agree with that," Chen Yu nodded in agreement.

The Honghu Three Killers, having kidnapped the City Lord's daughter, must have had a purpose. In the short term, they wouldn't stray far from Xiangyang City and would likely be hiding somewhere nearby.

Upon leaving the city and entering the city outskirts, everyone became vigilant.

The eighteen protectors dispersed within a mile or two, searching for any clue.

After a short while.

A protector exclaimed, "There's a corpse here."

The crowd hurried over to find a leather-armored man's corpse within a pile of grass.

Upon closer inspection, a "Three-Edged Dart" was embedded in the person's throat.

This type of dart was slender and long, having three ridged blades.

At that moment, blood trailed down the blood grooves between the edges of the dart, staining the earth red.

"I know this person; it's the Mu Family's protector leader, a noted Meridian Passage Stage expert in Xiangyang City," Protector Uncle Fang gasped in shock.

After all, the deceased bore a status and capability quite similar to his own.

Chen Yu's face also showed a hint of caution.

The Mu Family belonged to "Mu Xueqing's" family, one of the three major families in Xiangyang City.

For this bounty, experts were dispatched from all three major families in Xiangyang City, and encountering someone from the Mu Family or Wang Family was quite normal.

"Judging by the wound, this was a one-hit kill. The attacker should be the Second Evil 'Blood Poison Dart' of the 'Honghu Three Killers.' This person's mastery of hidden weapons is at an extraordinary level, renowned for never missing," Uncle Fang said as he took a deep breath, alertly scanning the surroundings.

Second Evil Blood Poison Dart!

Chen Yu also became wary. This person could, from a distance, use hidden weapons to instantly kill a Meridian Passage Stage presence.

Which meant any of those present could potentially be eliminated by a single strike from the Second Evil.

"The Second Evil 'Blood Poison Dart' had his Three-Edged Dart coated with a deadly peculiar poison. But this particular dart didn't kill the Mu Family's protector with poison; it was the sheer force of the hidden weapon itself," Protector Uncle Fang added.

The Poison Dart, without relying on its poison, could kill a Meridian Passage Stage expert with sheer force.

Even if one managed to dodge the vital spots, they likely couldn't evade the lethal peculiar poison.

This Second Evil was truly alarming!

In their vigilance, the group followed leads to press onward.

As a result, along the way, every so often they'd encounter a corpse or two.

These corpses perished in a manner similar to the first one, each being killed with a single dart.

Additionally, in almost ninety percent of cases, death didn't occur from poison but was due to the penetrative power of the hidden weapon itself.

"Corpses from the Mu Family, the Wang Family, and even more from the City Lord Mansion..." Protector Uncle Fang noted with a chill down his spine.

Judging by the scene, the City Lord Mansion deployed the most people, and consequently, they suffered the most casualties.

And thus far, only the Second Evil from the Three Killers had made a move. The most potent leader of the Three Killers, the 'Life-taking Hand,' hadn't even stepped in.

"Report, there's a pile of corpses over there!" One protector came running in fright.

Chen Yu and the other four Meridian Passage experts rushed over, their expressions growing more serious.

In the dim night, seven or eight corpses could be seen, collectively dead at one spot, with an extinguished bonfire amid them.

Evidently.

These people gathered together, attempting to counteract the Second Evil, "Blood Poison Dart's," ambush.

"Something's wrong! These people weren't killed by the Second Evil," Protector Fang's face changed dramatically.

In the next instant, a sudden mutation occurred.

Thud! Thud!

Two Chen Family protectors that followed suddenly fainted, collapsing to the ground.

"Not good!"

"This is the Three Killers' 'Soul Scattering Fragrance'..."

Protector Uncle Fang and Uncle Chen wobbled unsteadily, looking aghast.

A strong sense of drowsiness... assailed their minds!

Chen Yu and Chen Ying'er also felt a twinge of sleepiness and discomfort, their faces changing dramatically.

"Hee hee..." An eerie, haunting female giggle echoed in their ears.

Swish!

Before them, a ghostly woman suddenly rose from the pile of corpses, leaping out as if resurrected!