

The Beauty 1541

Chapter 1541 - Potential Threat

Entering the sterile room, Ling Gengqiu was wearing a pair of large shorts, walking around, moving his legs.

"Brother, how do you feel? Any discomfort?" Ling Chen stepped forward and asked.

"Not bad." Ling Gengqiu replied with a smile: "It's been a long time since I've felt so comfortable."

"Are you sure the poison from that Arrow Frog didn't affect you?" Ling Chen was a bit skeptical. After all, it's a deadly poison lurking in Ling Gengqiu's body, and it might explode anytime.

Ling Gengqiu seemed to have read Ling Chen's thoughts and said with a smile: "No need to worry about me. Although the poison from the Arrow Frog is in my body, it doesn't affect me. Not only that, I discovered some uses."

"Uses?" Ling Chen asked in confusion: "What do you mean?"

"Watch closely." As soon as he said that, Ling Gengqiu suddenly sped up, instantly rushing to a wall, and gently slapped it with his palm, right in the middle of the wall. Seeing Ling Gengqiu's inexplicable action, Ling Chen couldn't help but be puzzled. What was this for?

When he put down his arm, sharp-eyed Ling Chen immediately noticed a green handprint left on the wall.

This... Ling Chen asked curiously: "Brother, how did you do that?"

"I just discovered this. After the Arrow Frog's poison merged with my blood, even my Inner Strength transformed. What you see as that patch of green is the Arrow Frog's poison that can channel through my Inner Strength. Anyone daring to clash palms with me or gets hit by me will certainly die." At this point, Ling Gengqiu looked particularly excited.

"Brother, is this considered a good thing?"

"Of course it's a good thing, this poison's presence invisibly boosts my power quite a bit. If I run into Su Cheng'en again, I'll definitely give him something to think about. Alright! Everything has been handled, we should head back."

"Brother, I think you should stay around for observation for a few more days. After all, this isn't something to joke about lightly."

"No need, let's go." With that, not waiting for Ling Chen to speak again, Ling Gengqiu was already urging him to leave. Leaving the Guo Family, Ling Chen got in the car with Ling Gengqiu and asked: "Brother, where are we going back to?"

"Nightclub." Without thinking, Ling Gengqiu blurted out.

Uh... Ling Chen touched his nose, and said with a bitter smile: "Brother, can't you stay in line for a few days?"

"Go, I finally became a whole person, I'm definitely going to a nightclub to celebrate."

Celebrate? Ling Chen murmured to himself: "Celebrating is just an excuse; the real desire is for women." He knew well, although Ling Gengqiu is a master in the field of love, he hasn't had much success recently. Whenever he has time, Ling Gengqiu would chat up beautiful women on social media, inviting them out after one or two days of chatting. However, due to Ling Gengqiu's missing leg, women often enter the hotel, see him disabled, and leave without a word, leaving Ling Gengqiu alone in the room.

Now, Ling Gengqiu has finally returned to normal, naturally wanting to vent his inner frustrations.

Sigh... Forget it! After all, he is the elder in my family. With no choice, Ling Chen had to drive Ling Gengqiu to a luxurious nightclub and let him enjoy himself alone.

Three days passed in the blink of an eye.

On this day, Ling Chen drove early to the Martial Arts Tournament venue. Five days remain before the official commencement of the Martial Arts Tournament, and starting today, a lot of things need to be arranged. After the construction team's overtime work, the venue was completely set up. Because there will be many participants, the organizer canceled seats, leaving only one hundred VIP seats. This not only frees up space but also saves a lot of expenses.

Around the venue, many triangular flags were hung, inscribed with a huge 'Martial' word, fluttering in the wind, imposing.

Ling Chen took a walk around the venue perimeter, and it wasn't long before Su Mei, Tong Zhentian, and Qi Yong arrived at the venue one after another.

"Hey there! Mr. Ling, it's been a while." Seeing Ling Chen, Qi Yong quickened his steps and approached, courteously clasping his fist.

"Mr. Qi, hello." Ling Chen responded with a smile, and greeted Su Mei and Tong Zhentian.

"Ling Chen, what do you think of this venue?" Su Mei asked.

Ling Chen smiled slightly and said: "Master Su's personal efforts, naturally all aspects are taken care of. To build such a large venue in such a short time truly makes the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion impressive."

"Not at all, it's all thanks to your support. Let's go, I brought everyone here today to discuss something." With that said, Su Mei walked ahead, leading everyone to tour the venue.

Ling Chen and Tong Zhentian lagged behind, occasionally exchanging a few whispers.

"Elder Tong, what does Master Su want with us?"

"I heard the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion intercepted some intelligence, someone is plotting chaos at the Martial Arts Tournament."

"Is that so?" Ling Chen was greatly surprised. This was no joking matter, if true, the Martial Arts Tournament would face major issues. Calming down a bit, Ling Chen softly asked: "Elder Tong, is the intelligence accurate?"

"Not sure, the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion is fully verifying this intelligence's accuracy, and there's no news yet." Pausing, Tong Zhentian continued: "The Martial Arts Tournament is a rare event in a century, but a pot of soup left too long inevitably attracts a few mouse droppings. Whether it's Dragon Tiger Hall or the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, both have enemies in Martial Arts. This Martial Arts Tournament is nominally hosted by the Martial Arts Association, but everyone is aware that the Martial Arts Association consists of Dragon Tiger Hall, Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, Danyang Sect. If an issue arises, no one among the three forces can escape responsibility."

"What are we going to do then?"

Tong Zhentian shook his head and said: "We have no real plan at the moment, so that's why you're called here. You will be responsible for the venue's security, which makes your role pivotal."

Upon hearing this, Ling Chen couldn't help but chuckle bitterly, looking gloomy: "Elder Tong, is it too late for me to quit now?"

Tong Zhentian patted Ling Chen's shoulder: "My mistake, I thought it was a simple task, didn't realize this could happen."

"Elder Tong, I was joking, don't take it seriously." With this, Ling Chen changed his tone, seriously saying: "If this intelligence proves true, we should cancel or postpone the event. With so many people attending the Martial Arts Tournament, should an issue arise, handling it will be very difficult."

"We've considered what you said, but the Martial Arts Tournament has been promoted for so long that almost everyone knows about it. Abruptly canceling it will surely have a huge impact on the reputation of the Martial Arts Association, a consequence we cannot bear."

Chapter 1542 - Qi Yong Ambushed

"What if there are casualties?" Ling Chen retorted, "Elder Tong, have you considered this problem? Once there are casualties, we definitely can't shoulder such responsibility. By that time, the Martial Arts Association will be condemned by everyone."

Before Tong Zhentian could speak, Su Mei and Qi Yong, who were walking ahead, had already stopped in their tracks.

"Mr. Ling, Elder Tong should have mentioned this to you, right?" Qi Yong said, "We are between a rock and a hard place now. Whether we cancel the Martial Arts Tournament or continue, we will have to bear the losses. However, troublesome as it may be, it's not without a solution."

"So, Mr. Qi has thought of a solution?"

Qi Yong nodded and said, "The Martial Arts Tournament is in five days. As long as we can confirm the accuracy of the intelligence within these five days and eliminate the threat, the tournament can proceed smoothly. You're in charge of the venue's security, so this matter will be hard on you. Rest assured, no matter who those people are, we will unconditionally support you."

After hearing this, Ling Chen didn't immediately respond but turned his gaze to Su Mei and asked, "Master Su, what do you think?"

"I agree with Sect Leader Qi; eliminate all threats before the Martial Arts Tournament. If you need any assistance, just say the word, and the hundreds of people in Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion are at your disposal."

Ling Chen glanced at Tong Zhentian beside him, thought for a moment, and nodded slightly, "Alright. Since you all say so, I'll do my best."

Returning to his place, Ling Chen sat on the sofa with a phone in his hand, momentarily dazed, unsure where to begin. Su Mei and the others meant for him to investigate and identify the potential threat. However, all he had was one uncertain piece of intelligence, without any material to work from, which left him at a loss. Thinking of this, Ling Chen couldn't help but feel a headache coming on.

If he had known it would be like this, he would have cited a health issue and pulled out early, not getting involved in this mess.

Night fell.

Nanrong Wanqing came back from the company, bringing some takeout along as their dinner. During the meal, seeing Ling Chen looking troubled, Nanrong Wanqing couldn't help but ask, "What's wrong? Did you encounter some problem?"

"It's nothing." Ling Chen forced a smile, diverting the topic, "Is everything going well?"

"I'm fine, everything is going smoothly. Changlong Technology has already moved into a new building, and the laboratories will reboot in the coming days to catch up on the lost progress."

"How about Qu Guanying, the one you mentioned to me before, how's his tech company doing? Are you still going to acquire it?"

Nanrong Wanqing shook her head, lightly sighing, "Qu Guanying has already received investment from a foreign venture capital firm, so acquisition is hopeless. We can only compete with them directly."

Upon hearing this, Ling Chen couldn't help thinking of the intel provided by Zhu Hong, "Do you know who invested in Qu Guanying?"

"I'm not sure, only know it's a foreign venture capital firm. Such matters will be dealt with by Changlong Technology, and there's no need for me to meddle." With that, Nanrong Wanqing glanced at Ling Chen, curiously asking, "Why are you suddenly interested in this?"

"Just asking casually."

Right then, the phone on the dining table suddenly rang. Glancing at the caller ID, Ling Chen answered, asking, "Elder Tong, what's up?"

"Half an hour ago, Qi Yong was ambushed on his way home and is seriously injured. He's at the hospital now."

"What?" Ling Chen's expression changed, and he stood up abruptly, asking in a deep voice, "Do you know who did it?"

"Not sure. Apart from Qi Yong being seriously injured, all the personnel accompanying him were killed; there's not a single survivor. Qi Yong is a master ranked on the Earthly List, and for him to be seriously injured, those people must not be simple. If you have time, it's best for you to get to the hospital immediately; now only Qi Yong knows who those people are."

"Alright, I know." Hanging up the call, Ling Chen couldn't bother to finish his dinner, grabbing a coat and rushing out.

Sitting in the car, Ling Chen recalled his conversation with Tong Zhentian. Just today they mentioned a potential threat, and by night Qi Yong got attacked, this clearly wasn't a coincidence. It seems the intelligence intercepted by the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion was real; someone intends to cause trouble at the Martial Arts Tournament.

Not long after, Ling Chen arrived at the hospital. At this moment, outside the intensive care unit, Tong Zhentian and Su Mei were already there, sitting on the bench in the corridor, patiently waiting.

"Master Su, Elder Tong, how is Sect Leader Qi?"

"Still unclear, the doctor is conducting an examination inside." Just as Tong Zhentian finished speaking, Su Mei interjected, "Elder Tong, Sect Leader Qi's results won't be out for a while, why don't you take Ling Chen to the mortuary to have a look first."

"Alright."

The mortuary? Ling Chen blinked, feeling puzzled, yet he still followed Tong Zhentian's footsteps. Shortly, the two arrived at the hospital's basement mortuary. As the door opened, a wave of cold air rushed out.

"These were the people accompanying Qi Yong, all dead when we arrived." Speaking, Tong Zhentian pulled back the white cloth, revealing four male corpses.

Ling Chen examined them carefully and noticed each corpse had a very fine needle mark. If it was one, it might be a coincidence, but all four bodies having needle marks was evidently abnormal. Moreover, the skin around the needle marks was a bluish-black color, seemingly poisoned.

"Elder Tong, did they all die from poisoning?"

Tong Zhentian nodded, "Correct." With that, Tong Zhentian retrieved a small cloth bag from his pocket and handed it to Ling Chen.

Upon opening the bag, there were four needles, each about the length of a finger, with blood on the tips.

"These murder weapons seem nothing special," said Ling Chen. In the martial arts world, using needles with poison to kill was not unheard of, so this method was not surprising.

"At a cursory glance, indeed nothing special. However, these needles are anything but ordinary, something the naked eye struggles to see clearly."

Hearing this, Ling Chen's interest was piqued. He was eager to know what was special about these needles. Leaving the mortuary, Ling Chen found a bottle of mineral water, then placed it over the needle, using it as a magnifying glass to examine closely.

Soon, Ling Chen discovered the needle's unique aspect, noticing many patterns and texts on its surface.

This is... rice carving!

Ling Chen was secretly astonished. Rice carving is an intricate craft, carving patterns and texts on grains of rice. Evidently, someone had applied rice carving techniques to the needle. It must be said, the maker of these needles was truly remarkable, with patterns and texts impressively clear.

Chapter 1543 - 1848: Meridian Soul Stealing Needle (1)

"Elder Tong, how much do you know about this needle?"

"I know a little, but that was many years ago," said Tong Zhentian. "The martial arts world is divided between good and evil, a distinction that has persisted for centuries. Nowadays, people seldom differentiate between good and evil; they use terms like 'good people' and 'bad people.' There was once a master in the martial arts world who used the weapon you are holding—the Meridian Soul Stealing

Needle. This needle is highly poisonous and difficult to guard against because of its small size. If hit by it, death is inevitable within five steps, a truly vicious weapon. Because of this, that master was feared by many martial artists."

"Elder Tong, what was this person's name?"

"His name was Xie Quan, a man of unrestrained character who acted according to his own desires. In his view, there was no such thing as good or bad, only what he liked or was willing to do. Thus, he did many good deeds but also committed many bad ones. To martial artists with a sense of justice, he was a scourge to the martial arts community and was later besieged by the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion; his fate remains unknown."

"His fate remains unknown?" Ling Chen asked, puzzled. "Even though the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion sent people to besiege him, why is his fate unknown? There should be a conclusion."

Tong Zhentian nodded and said, "Back then, Xie Quan was gravely injured, on the verge of death. To escape the pursuit of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, he jumped off a large bridge. The Pavilion searched for two days and nights but never found his body. Since then, Xie Quan vanished from the martial arts world, and no one has seen him ever since. So, no one knows whether he is dead or alive."

"In that case, with the Meridian Soul Stealing Needle reappearing in the martial arts world, Xie Quan should still be alive."

"No, he must be dead," Tong Zhentian said. "When Xie Quan was besieged, he was already over forty years old. If he's alive now, he would be over a hundred, so he couldn't possibly be alive. Master Su and I believe that Xie Quan didn't die back then but chose to retire from the martial arts world. As for this Meridian Soul Stealing Needle... it might belong to Xie Quan's apprentice."

Ling Chen pondered for a moment and said, "Elder Tong, if it's truly Xie Quan's apprentice, why appear at this time? Based on what you said, Xie Quan's enemies are the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, and his apprentice should seek revenge against them. Over the past two years, the Pavilion faced numerous crises, ideal times for revenge; why didn't he strike then? Moreover, Sect Leader Qi is the leader of the Dangyang Sect and has no connection to the Pavilion—why not directly target the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion?"

"I'm not too sure either. In any case, this martial arts tournament has attracted much attention, drawing many hidden masters out. The Meridian Soul Stealing Needle is only one example; more lost secret weapons may emerge." Tong Zhentian sighed softly and said, "Honestly, seeing the Meridian Soul Stealing Needle reappear in the martial arts world, I have doubts about whether hosting this martial arts tournament was the right decision."

"Elder Tong, please don't say that," Ling Chen interjected. "The martial arts tournament is a grand event for martial artists, and our intentions were good. In this world, some people can't stand to see you succeed and will try to sabotage you from the shadows. Rest assured, I will do everything in my power to find the person attacking Sect Leader Qi."

As they spoke, the two arrived outside the intensive care ward.

Seeing them return, Su Mei stood up and said, "You're just in time. I just spoke with the doctor, and although Sect Leader Qi's injuries are severe, they are not life-threatening. However, he won't be able to participate in the martial arts tournament and must stay hospitalized for recovery."

Tong Zhentian nodded and said, "Let him rest well then. Dragon Tiger Hall and the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion will lend a hand."

"Master Su, with Sect Leader Qi remaining in the hospital, his safety..." Before Ling Chen could finish, Su Mei interrupted, "You don't need to worry about that. Our Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion will ensure his safety. Ling Chen, we have confirmed the accuracy of the intelligence; hopefully, you can uncover more leads through the Meridian Soul Stealing Needle and promptly find the perpetrator."

"I understand. I will send someone to investigate shortly."

"Good, thank you for your efforts."

Leaving the hospital, Ling Chen sat in the driver's seat, driving slowly onto the road. Not long after, he arrived at the scene where Qi Yong was attacked. After parking, Ling Chen walked around, observing the surroundings. According to Tong Zhentian, Qi Yong was in a car passing through here when an ambush occurred; the driver was killed by the Meridian Soul Stealing Needle, causing the vehicle to lose control and crash into a power pole.

On the spacious roadway, brake marks remained. The damaged car had been towed away, but many traces were left at the scene. Truth be told, Ling Chen was surprised by the strength of the ambusher. From the driver's wounds, it was clear he was hit in the chest by the Meridian Soul Stealing Needle, which means the ambusher was in front of the car. Such a slender long needle could penetrate the car window glass and pierce the driver's body, demonstrating formidable prowess not to be underestimated.

Following the road adjacent to the scene, Ling Chen walked northward. After walking about thirty meters, he finally found a surveillance camera. Based on the camera's position, everything that happened should have been recorded.

"Hey! Fatty, do me a favor, go to the traffic department and find a surveillance video, send it to my email; it's urgent."

In less than five minutes, Hu Fei sent the video. Ling Chen took out his phone and played the surveillance footage, soon seeing the car Qi Yong was riding—a Mercedes—slowly approaching from across the street. Just as the Mercedes car was nearing the scene, a person suddenly jumped out from behind a roadside trash can, flinging their arm. Instantly, the Mercedes lost control and crashed fiercely against the roadside power pole.

After the Mercedes stopped, besides the already deceased driver, several others jumped out of the car and charged directly at the ambusher.

However, Qi Yong's three subordinates were struck down by the Meridian Soul Stealing Needle before they could get close. Seeing the unfavorable situation, Qi Yong turned and tried to flee. Yet, the ambusher's speed was incredibly fast, intercepting Qi Yong's escape route in the blink of an eye.

Finding no escape, Qi Yong launched into a desperate fight, attempting to force the opponent back. But after just two or three moves, Qi Yong was struck by the opponent's palm and fell to the ground. After a fierce struggle, Qi Yong was bruised all over, unable to resist further. Just as the ambusher prepared to deliver a fatal blow, a bright light suddenly shone from across the road. An instant later, a patrolling police car appeared in the surveillance footage.

It was the timely arrival of that police car that saved Qi Yong's life. Otherwise, he would have been killed by the attacker.

Hmph! That guy really is lucky.

Chapter 1544 - 1849: Meridian Soul Stealing Needle (Part 2)

After watching the surveillance footage, Ling Chen drove straight home, uploaded the video to his computer, and searched for the ambusher. Due to the long-distance shots taken at night and the dim lighting, the ambusher appeared blurry on screen, even when magnified.

However, based on Ling Chen's judgment and experience, the person was approximately 1.75 meters tall, male, and had a well-built physique. Unfortunately, this ambusher seemed to be very experienced, keeping his back to the camera the entire time, making it impossible to capture his face. Sadly, Qi Yong was still in a coma; otherwise, he could have described the killer's appearance.

Shutting down the computer, Ling Chen got up and went to the living room, where he saw Nanrong Wanqing sitting alone on the sofa, watching TV.

"Wanqing, how long do you plan to stay in Beijing?"

"I'm not sure yet. I'm almost done with work-related matters, but I want to stay for the Martial Arts Tournament before heading back. Oh right! I almost forgot to tell you, Nanrong Hao will be coming in a few days. He's very interested in the Martial Arts Tournament and insists on watching it."

Ling Chen nodded with a smile and said, "Alright, I'll show you both around when the time comes."

As they spoke, the sound from the TV abruptly stopped, and the entire villa was plunged into darkness.

"Power outage?" Standing up, Ling Chen took his phone out of his pocket, turned on the built-in flashlight, and said, "You sit here while I find the emergency lights." With that, Ling Chen headed upstairs, remembering that there were two emergency lights in his bedroom.

Finding the emergency lights, Ling Chen switched on one lamp, instantly illuminating the whole bedroom.

The suburbs of Beijing might be peaceful, but power outages are frequent — it's quite inconvenient. Ling Chen shook his head silently and headed downstairs with the emergency lamp in hand.

"Wanqing, Wanqing, where did you go?" Upon reaching the living room, Ling Chen scanned the room and found Nanrong Wanqing was no longer on the living room sofa. Odd, she was just here, how could she disappear in the blink of an eye?

Thinking deeply, Ling Chen went to the first-floor bathroom and knocked on the door. However, there was no response from inside. Unable to find Nanrong Wanqing, Ling Chen realized something was wrong. The power outage earlier might not have been a coincidence but rather orchestrated by someone.

With this thought, Ling Chen dashed out of the villa. As he pushed the door open, he stepped out, ready to search for Nanrong Wanqing's whereabouts. But he suddenly found someone lying outside the door.

"Wanqing?" Ling Chen's face changed slightly, he hurriedly turned the person's body over. Upon closer inspection, he saw a man lying on the ground, already dead, with a long needle embedded in his forehead.

Meridian Soul Stealing Needle?

Ling Chen's pupils contracted slightly; he quickly stood up, his sharp eyes scanning the surroundings. The villa only housed him and Nanrong Wanqing; Zhong Wei and Liang Zhao Hui were residing within the city, and Ling Chen was responsible for picking them up for work daily. Hence, the identity of this man raised suspicions.

As he thought, the sound of an engine suddenly roared from the back of the villa. Ling Chen hurried over, only to see a business vehicle's lights illuminating, preparing to leave. "Stop!" Ling Chen shouted, his feet moved swiftly as he rushed over. At that moment, an ear-piercing car horn blared, sounding endlessly.

Taking advantage, Ling Chen quickly reached the driver's seat, only to find the driver's body slumped over the steering wheel, already dead.

Without time to think, Ling Chen quickly opened the door and crawled into the rear compartment of the business vehicle. As expected, Nanrong Wanqing was lying inside, presumably drugged and completely unconscious.

Two groups? Ling Chen squinted, instantly understanding. The driver and the previously killed man were together, their target was likely Nanrong Wanqing. However, besides these two, there was another — the seriously injured Qi Yong and the person using the Meridian Soul Stealing Needle. Two groups came simultaneously, leading to a conflict.

This was interesting, Ling Chen silently chuckled. Fortunately, that person killed these two; otherwise, Nanrong Wanqing might have been taken away by them.

Hiding in the rear compartment, Ling Chen carefully raised his head, looking out the window. This person could kill the driver, indicating his position was near the business vehicle. But outside, it was pitch black; it was impossible to tell where the person was hiding.

To stay safe, Ling Chen didn't dare to go out randomly. He had experienced the formidable Meridian Soul Stealing Needle firsthand; if it accidentally hit him, he'd lose his life.

Time ticked away slowly, Ling Chen remained still, and the person outside didn't move either. That guy sure knows how to stay calm! Ling Chen thought. He had already sent a text message to Tong Zhentian, who dispatched people to rush over. If the person continued to linger here, he would eventually be surrounded; at that point, there would be no escape.

In the blink of an eye, twenty minutes passed. Ling Chen then saw two beam lights approaching from afar. When the two cars got close, a familiar voice immediately asked, "Ling Chen, where are you?"

"Sir Chen, I'm here. Be careful, the person might still be nearby."

Upon hearing this, Chen Junfeng instructed those around him, and everyone immediately scattered to search the surroundings thoroughly. But after inspecting the entire villa meticulously, they found no trace — the person evidently escaped.

"Ling Chen, are you alright?"

"I'm fine. It's brave of that man, injuring Qi Yong earlier and now coming to cause me trouble. Does he really fear nothing?"

"How much do you know about that person's strength?"

Ling Chen shook his head and replied, "I can't say for certain, but judging from his encounter with Qi Yong, it's highly probable his strength has reached the Heavenly List level." Qi Yong's strength was among the top three of the Earthly List, but he stood no chance against the adversary. This suggests the person's proficiency as a Heavenly List expert.

He stayed inside the car earlier, not because he feared the adversary, but due to concerns for Nanrong Wanqing's safety.

"Elder Tong told me that until we find the murderer, I'm responsible for your safety."

"I appreciate your concern, sir."

"It's no trouble. If he's indeed Xie Quan's disciple, I wouldn't mind witnessing that person's skills."

Hearing this, Ling Chen asked with interest, "Why? Sir Chen, do you know Xie Quan?"

"I wouldn't say know, but I've met him once," Chen Junfeng said. "I was very young then, only in my teens, traveling with my master for training. During a gathering of Martial Arts figures, I had the privilege of meeting Xie Quan. At the time, a few individuals spoke disrespectfully to Xie Quan and got killed outright with the Meridian Soul Stealing Needle. Due to this incident, that gathering ended prematurely. Shortly after, I heard the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion sent people to hunt down Xie Quan."

Chapter 1545 - 1850: Yihai Technology (1)

"Regardless of whether this person is Xie Quan's apprentice or not, in short, he committed six murders in one day. Such a ruthless person should not be allowed to live." Ling Chen's face appeared somewhat grave as he spoke.

The situation left him with no choice but to worry; that person had no intention of holding back, aiming for complete annihilation. If such a person appears in the Martial Arts Tournament, the consequences would be unimaginable.

Returning to the villa, the power lines were reconnected shortly, and the house was bright once again. Ling Chen picked up his phone and called Hu Fei, asking him to help retrieve nearby surveillance footage to see if they could find the person's whereabouts.

"Ling Chen, what's happening to me?" At this moment, Nanrong Wanqing rubbed her forehead and slowly sat up from the bed.

"Are you okay?" Ling Chen asked with concern, "Someone came in to cause trouble, and you were drugged, which is why you passed out."

"What about those people?"

"I dealt with them. You should rest well. Sir Chen and the others have arrived; I need to arrange accommodations for them."

Hu Fei was efficient; surveillance footage near the villa was retrieved. Unfortunately, even after watching all the footage, Ling Chen did not find any useful clues.

"Ling Chen, do you think that person will continue to commit crimes?" Chen Junfeng asked.

Ling Chen nodded and said, "He definitely will. He won't stop until his goal is achieved." Ling Chen suddenly smiled, "That guy is quite smart. He went after Qi Yong first and then me. We're both Earthly List experts, so he probably thinks we're easy to deal with, making us his priority targets."

"Who do you think his next target will be?"

"Most likely Master Su," Ling Chen said. "His actions have been exposed, and he knows there will be people around me protecting me, so he won't target me again. Although Master Su is the Pavilion Master of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, she knows nothing about Martial Arts, similar to an ordinary person. So, that person is likely to target her. I have already spoken with Master Su on the phone, advising her to be extra careful."

"What I'm worried about is not just that. The audacity of that person, not fearing to oppose our three major forces, makes it hard to believe that he doesn't have support from someone behind him."

Hearing Chen Junfeng's words, Ling Chen couldn't help but be moved, "Sir Chen, you've been in the Martial Arts world for decades. Besides us, do other hidden forces exist?"

Chen Junfeng confidently said, "Of course. Huaxia is vast and full of talents. Would you believe me if I told you there are only a few experts in the entire Huaxia? Elder Tong and I have discussed this issue. There are many hidden experts in Huaxia who view fame and fortune as dirt and never get involved in the Martial Arts disputes. Moreover, Elder Tong should have told you that the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion has a list that records many hidden experts and some concealed forces. For this Martial Arts Tournament, the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion has sent invitations to everyone on that list. If even half of them attend, you'll witness the true Martial Arts."

"Is that so?" Ling Chen touched his nose and said with a smile, "Sir Chen, hearing you speak like this, I am filled with anticipation for this Martial Arts Tournament."

"Don't talk about anticipation; finding the murderer should be a priority. It's getting late; go and rest."

The next day.

After dropping off Nanrong Wanqing at the company, Ling Chen drove to an office building in the city center by himself. Alighting from the car, Ling Chen looked up, seeing a huge sign at the top of the office building with the words 'Yihai Technology' written on it.

"Chen," a voice came from the side at this moment.

Ling Chen turned his head and saw Jiang Yunkai approaching with a few bodyguards in suits. They greeted each other and then walked into the office building. Upon seeing customers, the receptionist immediately came forward with a smile, "Gentlemen, whom are you here to meet?"

"Is Chairman Qu available?"

"Chairman Qu is in his office. Do you have an appointment?"

"No. Please tell Chairman Qu that Ling Chen is here to see him and would like a meeting."

"This..." The receptionist hesitated for a moment, then nodded, "Alright, please wait a moment." With that, she returned to the front desk and picked up the internal phone to make a call.

Shortly, the receptionist returned with a smile and politely said, "I'm very sorry, Mr. Chen. Chairman Qu is currently busy and can't receive guests right now. If you could leave a phone number, we will notify you when Chairman Qu is available."

"Not available?" Ling Chen smirked slightly and said, "When he's available, I might not be. Tell him that I, Ling Chen, personally coming to see him is already giving him face. If he continues to decline, don't blame me for being impolite." With that, Ling Chen led Jiang Yunkai and the bodyguards to sit on the sofa in the lobby.

After five minutes, a woman with glasses and a business skirt walked over from the elevator and politely asked, "Are you Mr. Ling Chen? Hello, I am Chairman Qu's secretary. Chairman Qu is waiting for you in the meeting room."

"He knows what he's doing."

Arriving at the top floor of the office building, Ling Chen and his group followed the secretary directly to the meeting room. Upon entering, Ling Chen immediately saw Yihai Technology's Chairman, Qu Guanying. Ling Chen had met him once before at Hongyu United Investment Company, so he was not unfamiliar.

"Hello, Mr. Ling!" Qu Guanying stood up with a smile, extending his hand, "I was just in a meeting with a major client and couldn't greet you earlier. I hope Mr. Ling doesn't mind."

Ling Chen glanced at Qu Guanying's extended right hand but did not intend to shake it. Instead, he sat down by himself.

"Chairman Qu, we don't know each other, nor do we have any business dealings. Do you know why I came to see you today?"

"This..." Qu Guanying smiled awkwardly, "Mr. Ling, I can't guess. Please enlighten me."

"I heard Yihai Technology received investment from an overseas company and is preparing to expand. To be honest, I'm interested in your investor; could you introduce me?"

"Mr. Ling, I'm afraid you'll be disappointed. This is a company secret of Yihai Technology and cannot be disclosed to outsiders. If you're looking for investment, I know some acquaintances and can recommend them to you."

Ling Chen waved his hand and said, "I'm not interested in anyone else. I'm only interested in the investor behind you. So? I've personally come to ask, and you wouldn't want to share, Chairman Qu?"

Chapter 1546 - 1851: Yihai Technology (2)

"Mr. Ling, these are all trade secrets. How can you ask me to share them with you? We're all businessmen, we must abide by certain rules."

"Rules?" Ling Chen chuckled, "Chairman Qu, you're talking to me about rules? Fine! I'm someone who likes rules the most; no rules, no boundaries. Let me ask you, how did that fire at Changlong Technology's branch last time happen?"

Upon hearing this, Qu Guanying's expression subtly changed, and the smile on his face quickly disappeared.

"Mr. Ling, I don't understand what you're talking about. That fire was just an accident; what's it got to do with me?"

Ling Chen shook his head and said: "Chairman Qu, you're really asking for trouble refusing to cooperate. You should know well who I, Ling Chen, am. Do you really want to force me to use means before you tell the truth? To save you from complaints that I'm bullying you, I'll give you one chance to explain the whole story clearly. Regardless of the role you played, I won't blame you. But remember, you only get one chance. If you don't cherish it, I won't offer a second. You'd better think carefully."

Qu Guanying frowned and said: "Mr. Ling, I think you have it wrong; I completely don't know what you're talking about. If you think I have something to do with that fire, you're welcome to call the police and have them investigate. If there's nothing else, you're free to leave with your people; I have other matters to deal with."

"Chen, what's up with this guy?" Jiang Yunkai asked quietly from the side. He had received a call from Ling Chen early in the morning, asking him to bring some people to Yihai Technology, but nothing beyond that, leaving him unclear about the situation.

"This guy is making trouble for Wanqing," Ling Chen casually explained. He understood the specifics but saw no need to inform Jiang Yunkai too much. According to the intelligence from Zhu Hong, Yihai Technology should be backed by Yingtai Group. To eliminate competitors, the group orchestrated the fire, aiming to get rid of Leng Feifei and Nanrong Wanqing, including the two who snuck into the villa last night.

Initially, Ling Chen had no intention of poking into such messy affairs as long as they didn't provoke him. Yet, they repeatedly took action. Had it not been for that person intervening last night, the kidnappers would likely have killed Nanrong Wanqing. Hence, he wanted to settle the matter today while in town.

Since Yingtai Group is the investor behind Yihai Technology, he didn't believe Qu Guanying was unaware of the situation.

"Chairman Qu, earlier I wondered whether you were truly innocent. Now, it seems you're definitely involved."

Upon hearing Ling Chen's words, Qu Guanying said deeply: "What do you mean by that?"

"You should be well aware of who I, Ling Chen, am. The entire underground world of Beijing is under my control. In this big city, who isn't respectful when they see me, fearing to offend me? But from your tone just now, I can tell you didn't take me seriously. So, either you're a brave man with no fear, or you have a strong support. I think you belong to the latter. Do you think that clinging to Yingtai Group as a big tree allows you to act with impunity?"

The mention of Yingtai Group visibly caused a twitch in Qu Guanying's eye. Seeing his expression change confirmed Ling Chen's speculation.

"Kai!" Ling Chen made a gesture.

Jiang Yunkai immediately understood, stepping forward and delivering a swift kick. Instantly, Qu Guanying's legs gave way, and he knelt down with a thud.

"You... what are you doing?"

Ling Chen smirked, leaned forward and said: "I just wanted to inform you that not only Yingtai Group can kill, but I can too. You tell me, if I throw you from here, would you die?"

Qu Guanying turned pale, urgently saying: "Ling Chen, I...I warn you, you better leave immediately, otherwise I'll call the police."

"Alright." Ling Chen pulled out his phone and tossed it in front of Qu Guanying, saying: "Go ahead and call, make it quick. Once you're done, I'll throw you out, anyway it won't take much time." Pausing, Ling Chen stared into Qu Guanying's eyes and said slowly, word-by-word: "Let me tell you, don't hope for luck. If I don't get what I want today, I definitely won't let you live. If you doubt it, feel free to try."

After hearing this, Qu Guanying glanced at the phone on the floor, hesitating to pick it up. After a long moment, he gradually lifted his head and asked: "What exactly do you want to know?"

"Is Yingtai Group your backer?"

Qu Guanying hesitated, his eyes flickering as though he was struggling intensely within himself. "Still not willing to speak?" Ling Chen narrowed his eyes, with a hint of menace in his voice. Feeling the fierce gaze, Qu Guanying trembled slightly, hurriedly nodded: "Yes. You're right, they are connected to me through an overseas venture capital company. They said they're optimistic about Yihai Technology's prospects and wanted to increase investment. However, Changlong Technology is a troublesome competitor, it must be dealt with."

"So they orchestrated that fire?"

"Yes. It was all their planning; I wasn't involved."

"What exactly did you do?"

"I...I just arranged accommodation for the people sent by Yingtai Group, and didn't inquire about anything else."

"Give me their numbers and addresses. If you don't want to be implicated, then after I leave, go to Hongyu United Investment Company and accept their acquisition proposal. Understand?"

"I..." Qu Guanying wanted to say something but swallowed his words as he met Ling Chen's sharp gaze, not daring to utter another word.

Leaving Yihai Technology, Ling Chen took out his phone and called Xia Mutong. He had already obtained the addresses from Qu Guanying, and now there was no need for him to personally handle the rest. Xia Mutong had just arrived in Beijing, and handing her this case would not only solidify her position but also enhance her reputation.

"Kai, you guys head back first, I'll contact you if anything comes up."

"Okay."

Returning to his car, Ling Chen started the engine, planning to make a trip to the hospital. Su Mei had just sent a message saying that Qi Yong had woken up. The whereabouts of the perpetrator are unknown, so it's a good time to ask Qi Yong; hopefully, he'll reveal the assailant's identity.

While driving halfway, Ling Chen suddenly slowed the car, glancing at the rearview mirror with a playful smile on his face.

Relentless, from Yihai Technology all the way here, do they really think he's easy to bully?

Chapter 1547 - 1852: The Hunter Becomes the Hunted

Ling Chen drove at a steady pace, not accelerating, pretending not to notice the tailing car behind him, slowly moving forward. Passing by a hospital, he arrived at an intersection, watching the red light ahead, waited for over ten seconds, then followed the traffic in front to turn left.

He timed it perfectly; when the car behind caught up, it coincided with the red light, and they didn't dare to rush through, so they had to stop and wait.

Watching the car disappear from the rearview mirror, Ling Chen slightly raised a corner of his mouth, chuckling softly. Tail him? Hmph! Do they even know who he is? No one could outplay him in the game of tracking and counter-tracking. Finding an inconspicuous spot, Ling Chen parked his car, then went to the roadside and hailed a taxi.

"Sir, where to?" the driver asked enthusiastically.

Ling Chen pointed to the car ahead, "Mister, follow that car for me."

The car ahead roamed around the area, perhaps unable to find Ling Chen's car, finally returning without success. After more than twenty minutes, it slowly drove into an underground parking lot of a hotel.

The car door opened, and two young men got out, heading straight for the elevator.

It wasn't until those two entered the elevator that Ling Chen emerged from between the two cars. Watching the elevator's floor display, soon, it stopped on the sixth floor.

Finally found you!

For safety's sake, Ling Chen didn't enter via the elevator but went up the fire escape stairs, arriving on the sixth floor of the hotel. The sixth floor was large, with over thirty guest rooms. Being a bit late, the two young men were nowhere to be seen, leaving him unsure of which room they entered.

Glancing at the surveillance camera in the corridor, Ling Chen had a thought and called Hu Fei. This kind of thing was Hu Fei's specialty, and he could surely handle it. After waiting for about ten minutes, Hu Fei sent over the surveillance footage to Ling Chen's phone.

Opening the video, Ling Chen quickly located the two young men's whereabouts. After arriving on the sixth floor, they had entered room 603.

Room 603! Ling Chen put down the phone, swept his gaze, and quickly pinpointed the location of the room. At the door, he listened for a while, though he could hear sounds from inside the room, they weren't clear, and he couldn't determine how many people were inside.

As his thoughts raced, a cleaner came down the corridor pushing a cart. Upon seeing the cleaning lady, an idea popped into Ling Chen's mind. He walked straight toward her.

"Ma'am, could you please clean room 603?"

"Sure." The cleaner nodded, assuming Ling Chen was a guest from room 603, and had no suspicions at all.

Watching her head to room 603, Ling Chen quickly hid around the corner, observing the room's activity. The cleaning lady, thinking the room was empty, did not knock, instead she took a key from her pocket, and opened the door to room 603.

However, the moment the door opened, a young man appeared, blocking the cleaning lady from entering.

"What are you doing?" the young man asked coldly, glaring at the cleaning lady.

"Sorry, someone asked me to clean room 603, thinking it was unoccupied..." the cleaning lady hastily apologized.

The young man frowned, "Who told you to clean room 603?"

"A young fellow, maybe he got the room number wrong. Sir, do you need your room cleaned?"

"No need."

"Then I won't bother you anymore, sorry for the inconvenience," said the cleaning lady, hurriedly pushing her cart away.

Seeing the room door close again, Ling Chen couldn't help but smile at the cleaning lady's quick reflexes. After waiting a few minutes at the corner, the door to room 603 opened again, and the two young men led the way, carrying two suitcases as they emerged. Following them was a burly man, about five-foot-nine, wearing a baseball cap, and his face wrapped in a scarf, obscuring his features.

Judging by the build and height, this man fit the profile of the assailant.

It must be him! Ling Chen thought to himself. His intention of sending the cleaning lady to room 603 was to arouse their suspicion, making them believe someone was investigating them. Consequently, they would relocate, and by doing so, Ling Chen could ascertain their numbers.

Seeing the three enter the hotel's emergency exit, Ling Chen hesitated for a moment, then immediately took the elevator down to the underground parking lot, assuming they would drive away.

After waiting for a few minutes in the underground parking lot, the three men finally appeared in Ling Chen's field of vision. As expected, they got into the car they arrived in and drove straight towards the exit. He watched until the car disappeared from his sight, then turned around and walked out himself.

Back home, Ling Chen took out a new phone and called Hu Fei.

"Fatty, track my phone signal and see if you can lock onto a location." The reason he didn't pursue the three earlier was that he had hidden his phone in their car beforehand. Using the phone's location service, he could accurately find their whereabouts.

Soon, Hu Fei got back to him. The phone signal was locked onto a location in a rented house south of Beijing.

Let's see how you escape now! Ling Chen grinned and immediately called Tong Zhentian, informing him of the development.

"Do you need me to send someone over to assist?"

"No need, with Sir Chen around, there shouldn't be any issues." After a pause, Ling Chen added, "By the way, Elder Tong, isn't Sect Leader Qi awake now? Have you visited him?"

"I just came back from the hospital. I chatted with him briefly. He needs plenty of rest given the severity of his injuries, so I didn't stay long."

"Did he mention the person who attacked him?"

"I asked, but he said it was too dark and the assailant was disguised, so he couldn't see clearly. Haven't you already found that person? Why do you ask?"

"It's nothing, just want to confirm the identity. I'll handle this matter swiftly and nip any threat in the bud." With that, Ling Chen hung up the phone.

After some preparations, Ling Chen knocked on Chen Junfeng's room and said, "Sir Chen, we should head out."

"Alright." Chen Junfeng nodded, holding his silver gun, "Ling Chen, that person is quite formidable. Maybe you should stay here and rest, and I'll bring him to you."

Ling Chen smiled and said, "Sir Chen, no need to worry about me, I'm not that fragile. Besides, I'd like to see how formidable this person is. Let's go!"

Chapter 1548 - 1853: Suicide by Poison (1)

About breaking through the Heavenly List, Ling Chen has temporarily kept it a secret. Now everyone thinks of him as an ordinary person who has lost his strength, not only his friends but also his enemies. Therefore, he must conceal his strength as much as possible and only strike unexpectedly to achieve the best effect.

The team for this operation is not large, with only ten people including Ling Chen. Besides him and Chen Junfeng, there are Zhu Qing and a few disciples from Dragon Tiger Hall.

The group drove two vans, and after spending more than twenty minutes on the road, they arrived at the hiding place of those three men. Hu Fei's tracking indicated the three were hiding in a rented flat. Now, in front of Ling Chen is a five-story apartment building with ten rental units on each floor. According to the phone signal, their location is the northernmost room on the fifth floor.

Ling Chen observed the surroundings and pointed to an apartment directly opposite the building, instructing, "You guys go up there and take the advantageous position, the rest follow me to the fifth floor."

Among the Dragon Tiger Hall disciples brought along this time, some are members of the Divine Arrow Team. Trained by the Arrow God Zhang Zhongfeng, although their archery skills have not reached the peak, their accuracy is reliable.

Shortly, several members of the Divine Arrow Team took the high positions, while Ling Chen and others slowly moved toward the rented flat on the fifth floor.

Outside the flat, Chen Junfeng extended his hand, signaling Ling Chen not to get too close.

Once everyone was ready, Chen Junfeng gestured and then suddenly kicked the door open, rushing inside. At this moment, the people inside hadn't reacted. When they realized someone had entered, Chen Junfeng was already at close range.

In the blink of an eye, the two young men at the front were knocked down by Chen Junfeng. The man inside the room was stunned for a second, but immediately reacted, his wrist flicked rapidly, and with the sound of 'whoosh whoosh,' several silver needles shot towards Chen Junfeng.

At this moment, their distance was very close. Without thinking, Chen Junfeng swung the silver spear in his hand, instantly with the sound of 'clang clang,' the spear shaft blocked all the silver needles.

Without waiting for the opponent to make another move, Chen Junfeng lightly tapped his toe, the silver spear swiftly attacked, stabbing towards the man's upper body. As a Heavenly List expert, Chen

Junfeng's strength was undeniable. However, the man wasn't weak either. Seeing the silver spear coming at him, he quickly turned aside and dodged Chen Junfeng's attack.

Next, the man leaped up, breaking the flat's window with a palm strike, and jumped out from inside. Being on the fifth floor and more than ten meters from the ground, as long as he controlled his body well, a Heavenly List expert would easily disperse the impact and avoid danger.

Seeing the man's move, Ling Chen rushed to the window and looked down, seeing the man land steadily on the ground, swiftly running away. However, before the man could run far, arrows suddenly shot by overhead, blocking his path.

Taking advantage of the opportunity, Chen Junfeng leaped out of the window. Having finally found the opponent's trail, they couldn't let him escape.

"We'll surround him from the back," Ling Chen said.

Zhu Qing nodded in agreement, quickly rushing to the bottom of the apartment building to block the opponent's retreat and trap him in place.

Seeing the man entangled by Chen Junfeng, Ling Chen nodded to himself. As expected, the man's strength has indeed reached the Heavenly List. Facing Chen Junfeng's fierce assault, the opponent seemed unphased, resolving each move calmly.

Nevertheless, Chen Junfeng is a renowned Heavenly List expert. Failing several attacks in succession, he couldn't help but roar furiously, swiftly closing in on the man and the silver spear instantly turned into countless shadows, enveloping the man's body.

Facing Chen Junfeng's frenzy, the man dared not resist directly, hurriedly retreating to escape the silver spear's range.

Seeing the opponent retreat, Chen Junfeng didn't continue the assault but stood his ground, coldly staring at the man across.

Their eyes met, the man opened his mouth, wanting to say something. But before he could speak, his eyes suddenly narrowed, looking down at his chest. The originally white jacket was now noticeably stained with blood seeping from inside.

Just moments ago, when Chen Junfeng turned into countless spear shadows with extreme speed, the man's body was pierced without him feeling it, only now stopping to realize the intense pain from his body.

Three spear strikes!

In that split second, his body was struck by the silver spear three times.

Clenching his teeth, the man's wrist flicked, drawing a handful of silver needles, tossing them directly at Chen Junfeng. Then, turning rapidly, he fled in the opposite direction. But just as he turned, Zhu Qing, who had been lying in wait, made his move.

Whoosh whoosh!

Amidst the sound of slicing air, several throwing knives glided along the ground, aiming directly at the man's lower body. The man paused slightly, unexpected that there was an intercept from behind. In this moment of distraction, sharp throwing knives had already pierced his legs.

Bang!

Seeing the man fall to the ground, Chen Junfeng and Zhu Qing slowly approached from both front and back. After all, the opponent is a Heavenly List expert; even seriously injured, who knows if he might make a desperate counterattack.

Upon nearing, for caution, Chen Junfeng gently flicked his wrist, the silver spearhead traced over the man's hands and feet, drawing a thread of blood, instantly disabling the tendons in his hands and feet. Thus, no matter how strong the man's skills were, he could no longer get up.

"Zhu Qing, take off his scarf, let everyone see his true face."

Upon hearing Ling Chen's order, Zhu Qing nodded, quickly stepped in front of the man, and tore off the scarf from his face. Instantly, an unfamiliar face appeared before everyone's eyes.

Ling Chen examined him for a moment and asked, "Who are you?"

The man coldly stared at Ling Chen, as if not hearing his words. Beside him, Chen Junfeng spoke, "Is Xie Quan your master?"

However, no matter what Ling Chen and Chen Junfeng asked, the man showed no intention of answering. Seeing this, Ling Chen gestured, saying, "Take him to the car."

Since the man wouldn't speak, they would take their time; once at the Dragon Tiger Hall, he would have ways to make him talk.

Watching the Dragon Tiger Hall disciples approaching him, the man suddenly said, "Ling Chen, don't think that capturing me solves everything."

Hearing this, Ling Chen asked, "What do you mean? Do you have other accomplices?"

The man sneered, "This is just the beginning. Even if I die, there are many others like me."

Chapter 1549 - 1854: Suicide by Poison (2)

Are there more? Ling Chen's expression changed slightly, ready to ask more questions, but at that moment, he saw blood suddenly trickle from the man's lips. Not good! Ling Chen's heart jolted in shock, and he hurried to the man's side, opening his mouth.

Immediately, a strange odor emanated from the man's mouth. Could it be... poisoning? Looking again at the man, he was already pale, close to death, the light in his eyes gradually dimming.

In just ten seconds, the man completely lost all vitality.

Dead... Ling Chen looked at the man's corpse, shock etched across his face. This wasn't an ordinary person; he was a Heavenly List expert, yet he had committed suicide. This... Ling Chen found it hard to comprehend who could be so ruthless to even themselves.

"Sir Chen." Ling Chen looked over to Chen Junfeng, who had a similar reaction, unable to believe such a renowned Heavenly List expert would so easily opt for death.

"First, take his corpse back for a thorough investigation; I'm afraid this situation isn't as simple as we think."

Ling Chen nodded, gesturing for everyone to help move the man's body to the car. In addition to this, the two youths who had been knocked down in the rental room were also taken away. The main target was dead; these two were their only breakthrough.

Back at the Dragon Tiger Hall's branch, Ling Chen had the man's corpse moved inside, then took the two youths to a quiet room.

"Speak up, what's your relationship with that person, and what do you know?"

The two youths exchanged looks and shook their heads, saying, "We don't know anything. He hired us; we just run errands for him."

"And how much do you know about that person?"

"We don't know a thing." One of the youths replied, "He paid us a hundred thousand a day, but said nothing about his identity. We're people who understand rules; if the boss doesn't say, we naturally don't ask."

As they spoke, the door opened, and He Ziyun walked in from outside.

"Did you get anything from them?"

Ling Chen shook his head, "By the looks of them, they truly don't know anything. Mr. He, has the identity of that person been discovered?"

"Just now, Hu Fei sent me a message; the person who poisoned himself is Xie Qian, forty-eight years old, previously a martial arts instructor at a Northern city's school. From the data Hu Fei gave me, Xie Qian was dutiful, never committing any misconduct. Not only that, I contacted the school's principal and he said Xie Qian was diligent, achieving the school's best staff award for five consecutive years. Honestly, having read this data, it's hard to reconcile such a person with being Xie Qian, as they're vastly different. One is a diligent individual, the other heartlessly ruthless assassin; don't you find it puzzling?"

"Indeed." Ling Chen mused, "Generally, only death warriors have poison implants in their teeth. I can hardly imagine what kind of organization could afford to have Heavenly List experts as death warriors; even the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion at its peak couldn't manage that."

Ling Chen's voice shifted, asking, "By the way! Mr. He, given this person is surnamed Xie, what is his relationship with Xie Quan?"

"From Hu Fei's data, he is Xie Quan's nephew. Xie Quan had no children, so before dying, he passed the Meridian Soul Stealing Needle to Xie Qian."

"With Xie Qian dead, this line of inquiry is lost." Ling Chen expressed his headache, saying, "Mr. He, it seems this martial arts tournament has caused serious issues. Xie Qian committed suicide to clearly protect the people behind him. It's imaginable that a powerful force backs him, otherwise, who would sacrifice a Heavenly List expert so easily?"

"These urgent matters should be reported to Elder Tong and the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion; if no measures are taken promptly, the martial arts tournament could turn disastrous."

"I know."

Half an hour later, Tong Zhentian, Su Mei, and Du Kang arrived at the Dragon Tiger Hall's Beijing branch. Having seen Xie Qian's corpse, everyone's face looked somber. After hearing Ling Chen's account, everyone inhaled sharply.

A Heavenly List expert committing suicide with poison — such an event was utterly unheard of.

"Elder Tong, Elder Du, Master Su, clearly someone supports Xie Qian, and unless we uncover them, the upcoming martial arts tournament will face huge risks."

"Elder Tong, what's your view?" Su Mei asked.

"In all my years, I've never encountered such a situation. Right now, with the martial arts tournament's opening imminent, preparations are complete. Furthermore, spectators nationwide have gathered in Beijing for the opening ceremony. Halting the tournament now would have unimaginable consequences. Thus, the tournament must proceed as planned, and what we can do now is enhance venue security and identify those behind Xie Qian."

Su Mei nodded in agreement, "Elder Tong is right; with the bow drawn, there's no choice but to release the arrow — the martial arts tournament must go ahead. I'll bring all Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion disciples to assist with venue security."

"Alright then."

As they spoke, a few Dragon Tiger Hall disciples approached swiftly, saying urgently, "Martial Arts Hall Master, there's been an incident!"

He Ziyun furrowed his brows slightly, saying sternly, "Why the panic? Speak, what's happened."

"The martial arts tournament venue was attacked, many staff have been injured and are now being rushed to the hospital for emergency treatment."

Hearing this, the expressions of everyone changed drastically.

"Quickly prepare cars; we're going to the hospital."

Before long, the group arrived at the City People's Hospital. Upon entering, they saw the hospital hall filled with over twenty injured individuals awaiting treatment.

"These are all workers responsible for setting up the venue," Su Mei explained.

The group approached a lightly injured worker, inquiring about the incident to gain a preliminary understanding. Previously, while everyone was working at the venue, a middle-aged man suddenly appeared, remaining silent while he attacked indiscriminately. Some workers fled in fear, barely escaping.

"Ling Chen, I just checked with the doctor; a few workers are gravely injured and undergoing emergency treatment."

After waiting over half an hour, a wounded patient was pushed out of the emergency room by a nurse into a special care unit.

As the organizers, they naturally visited the injured employees to offer their concern.

Arriving at the ward, they exchanged a few brief words. Following this, Du Kang spoke, "May I see your injuries?"

The injured worker nodded, slowly lifting his shirt to reveal a bright red fist imprint on his chest.

This... Seeing that vivid fist imprint, Du Kang's expression shifted a bit.

Chapter 1550 - 1855: Hidden Forces

Noticing the change in Du Kang's expression, Ling Chen asked, "Elder Du, did you notice something?"

Upon hearing this, Du Kang's expression quickly returned to normal. He shook his head and said, "I didn't see anything." After staying in the ward for a while, everyone turned and left together.

In the hospital lobby, Su Mei chatted with the hospital director for a few moments before everyone returned to the Dragon Tiger Hall. Sitting inside the car, Du Kang looked at Su Mei beside him and said in a deep voice, "Pavilion Master, did you notice?"

Su Mei gently nodded and asked, "Elder Du, are you sure you didn't see wrong, could it really be...?"

"I can't be wrong, only the Blood Phoenix Fist can leave such marks," Du Kang muttered, "Meridian Soul Stealing Needle, Blood Phoenix Fist... Pavilion Master, it seems the opponent we're facing this time is..."

"Don't say that yet," Su Mei interrupted Du Kang, "Perhaps it's all a coincidence. Elder Du, please investigate this thoroughly."

"I understand."

Meanwhile, in another car, Ling Chen was talking with Tong Zhentian.

"Elder Tong, from Elder Du's expression earlier, it seemed like he knew something, but didn't want to tell us."

"I saw it too," Tong Zhentian replied.

"Elder Tong, does that scar remind you of anything?"

"In the Huaxia martial arts world, there are countless techniques. Even though I've lived for many years, I don't know everything." At this point, Tong Zhentian suggested, "I have an idea, doesn't the Dragon Tiger Hall have many manuals? You can send someone to investigate, maybe we'll find some clues."

"Alright, I'll have someone handle it soon."

Back at the Dragon Tiger Hall, Ling Chen received a call from Su Mei, who said she had other matters to attend to and wouldn't come to the Dragon Tiger Hall.

Due to an unexpected incident at the Martial Arts Tournament venue, Ling Chen, being the main person in charge of venue security, naturally had many tasks to handle. After calling Dong Ying and setting a time, Ling Chen drove to the venue.

An hour later, a convoy slowly approached and stopped outside the venue. Seeing the buses parked by the roadside, Ling Chen quickly went over to greet them.

"Assistant Dong." Ling Chen greeted with a smile.

"Chairman, I've brought the people you wanted, a total of two hundred security personnel."

Seeing the men in suits getting off the buses one after another, Ling Chen couldn't help but nod. Not bad! This new batch of security personnel is of good quality, and the short-term intensive training has shown excellent results. Because of the sudden incident at the venue, Ling Chen and Tong Zhentian had discussed early deployment to take charge of the venue's entire security.

Three more days... Ling Chen looked at the large electronic screen in the center of the venue and slowly exhaled. The electronic screen displayed the countdown to the opening ceremony, and currently, three days and ten hours remained until the event.

After arranging the security personnel's tasks, Ling Chen received a call from Xia Mutong. "Hello! Officer Xia, do you need something from me?"

"No, I called specifically to thank you."

"Thank me?" Ling Chen asked, puzzled, "For what?"

"Didn't you give me an address two days ago? I took people to check it out, and sure enough, we caught quite a few people. They were a group of professional assassins, and I just received a praise order from above. If it weren't for the intel you provided, it wouldn't have been so easy for me to achieve this."

So that's what it was!

Ling Chen laughed and said, "We're all friends, no need to be polite. If you really want to thank me, just treat me to a meal sometime."

"Alright, I'll set up a time when I'm free."

After hanging up the phone, Dong Ying quickly approached and said, "Chairman, our people found a suspicious SUV outside the venue and wanted to ask how you would like to handle it."

"Where is it?"

Dong Ying gestured towards the south side of the venue, and Ling Chen glanced over and immediately went over. Soon, the SUV parked by the roadside came into Ling Chen's view.

At that moment, a few security personnel in suits had drawn a defensive line, slowly approaching the SUV. Ling Chen directly went to one of the security personnel and asked, "What's going on?"

"Chairman, that SUV arrived not long ago, and the person inside has been watching us while also taking a few photos with their phone."

Photos? Ling Chen nodded, acknowledging that these security personnel had good vigilance, able to judge and prevent issues from small details. With the Martial Arts Tournament approaching, it's expected that reporters will come to gather information. In the past, Ling Chen wouldn't have found it surprising. But with so many incidents happening recently, he couldn't afford to let his guard down at all.

"You two, come with me to check it out." Ling Chen pointed at two security personnel before striding towards the SUV.

As Ling Chen and the two security personnel were approaching, the SUV's engine suddenly started, and it began reversing slowly. Seeing the driver's actions inside the car, Ling Chen frowned, and his expression darkened immediately. If there weren't something fishy, why was that person trying to flee?

Thinking of this, Ling Chen gestured, and the two security personnel following him immediately quickened their pace and rushed towards the SUV.

However, just as the two security personnel were about to reach it, the SUV, initially reversing slowly, suddenly accelerated and charged directly toward the venue. Coincidentally, Ling Chen was right along its path. As the SUV came speeding towards him, Ling Chen leapt up, stepping onto the hood and swiftly jumping over the roof.

Looking back, the SUV showed no signs of slowing down and kept charging forward. Thankfully, everyone reacted in time, scattering to both sides to avoid its path.

Soon, the SUV reached the center of the venue, but it didn't stop, instead going straight through the middle of the venue. Watching the SUV gradually moving away, Ling Chen shook his head silently. The people in that car were likely associated with Xie Qian, aiming to gather intelligence.

"Chairman, should we send people after them?" A security personnel asked.

Ling Chen waved his hand and said, "No need. It's too late to chase them now." As for the license plate, Ling Chen wasn't interested in checking. It was easy to guess that the SUV was likely stolen. People as cautious as those wouldn't leave traces on such trivial matters.

After arranging the venue's security, Ling Chen drove back alone to the Dragon Tiger Hall. He hadn't had the time to return home these days, with a plethora of things to deal with for the Martial Arts Tournament, leaving little to no leisure to go home.

In the blink of an eye, three days passed.

During these three days, the disciples from the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion and Dragon Tiger Hall gradually arrived in Beijing, consolidating at the venue. Excluding the two thousand military personnel provided by the military, the combined security personnel from the three major factions amounted to eight hundred people, deploying almost every available hand. The crisis surrounding the Martial Arts Tournament kept everyone on edge.

The opening ceremony of the Martial Arts Tournament is tomorrow. Ling Chen sat alone in his room, eyes closed, recuperating. Over the past few days, there had been no attacks on the venue, likely due to the full deployment of security personnel, deterring those hidden in the shadows from making rash moves. Yet, the calmer things seemed, the less Ling Chen dared to relax. He knew all too well that greater dangers lay ahead.