

The Beauty 1551

Chapter 1551 - Guests from All Directions (1)

The next day.

Early in the morning, before dawn, Ling Chen got up from bed, finished washing up quickly, and went to the hall of the branch. By then, everyone was already gathered. Today was the opening ceremony of the Martial Arts Tournament, and no one could slack off. After breakfast, it was precisely six in the morning, and two buses were waiting at the entrance.

Boarding the bus, the group headed straight to the venue of the Martial Arts Tournament. After a forty-minute drive, the two buses finally arrived at the destination. Alighting from the bus, Ling Chen looked up at the slightly bright sky and took a deep breath of fresh air.

Though it was still early, there were already quite a few people at the venue. In addition to the several hundred security personnel from the three major factions, two thousand soldiers supported by the military had all arrived, all in orderly rows maintaining the venue's order.

Around the venue, yellow lines were drawn up everywhere. Originally, it was planned to set up simple iron railings. However, that would have been too cumbersome and costly. After some deliberation, it was found more convenient to use yellow lines. Every twenty meters or so, a soldier stood guard to prevent any spectators from crossing the yellow line into the venue.

The Martial Arts Tournament does not charge admission fees, as money is not an issue for everyone. The main reason for not allowing spectators to enter at will is safety. Imagine tens of thousands of people entering the venue; it would be chaotic. If someone were to bring dangerous items and blend into the crowd, the results could be disastrous. Therefore, to ensure everyone's safety, there are a total of twenty entrances to the venue, and everyone entering must pass through security checks.

At the main command center of the venue, Su Mei and Du Kang had already arrived. Inside the massive venue, nearly a hundred surveillance cameras had been installed, each operated by twenty staff members, with a total of forty people staffing the command center.

Ling Chen exchanged greetings with Su Mei and others, then wandered around the command center to ensure all equipment was functioning properly.

"Mr. Ling, the fire department is here; they are waiting outside for instructions." Dong Ying, holding a tablet, quickly walked over and reported. Dong Ying was very capable; Ling Chen brought over several hundred security personnel, all of whom were managed and deployed by Dong Ying and Jiang Yunkai.

"Got it." Ling Chen nodded. Hosting such a large event definitely required the assistance of the fire department to prevent any incidents. Looking around, Ling Chen asked, "Where's Kai? I haven't seen him."

"Manager Jiang is leading a team outside on patrol, ensuring everything is in place."

"Very good. It might be tiring these few days; everyone should work hard. I won't treat you poorly."

"Rest assured, Chairman, we will do our utmost and uphold Falcon's reputation."

"Ling Chen." As they spoke, Su Mei walked over, accompanied by a middle-aged man in military uniform, "Let me introduce you, this is He Zhang, Major He, who is in charge of leading the military personnel."

"Major He, hello, pleased to meet you," Ling Chen smiled, extending his hand to the man for a handshake.

He Zhang beamed, "Mr. Ling, feel free to instruct me on anything. Instructor Tang told me to follow your orders."

Instructor Tang? Ling Chen was slightly taken aback, but quickly understood. The person referred to must be Tang Yuan! After Lonely Wolf disbanded some time ago, Tang Yuan became an instructor in the military. It seems Tang Yuan specifically communicated with He Zhang. This arrangement is good, as it allows for easier action if anything happens, with command in his hands.

After some polite conversation, Ling Chen went outside the command center alone, where he saw Jiang Yunkai leading a team toward him.

"Kai." Ling Chen waved and nodded as he observed the team following Jiang Yunkai. Jiang Yunkai's primary task was to lead a security team of twenty elite members, ready to respond first to any sudden situations and control the scene.

"Chen, on my way over, I saw spectators beginning to arrive one after another."

Upon hearing this, Ling Chen checked the time, noting it was only seven in the morning, quite early. The spectators likely wanted to secure a good spot by arriving early.

"By the way!" Jiang Yunkai took a small box out of his pocket and handed it to Ling Chen, "This is for you."

Opening the box, inside was an earpiece and a wireless walkie-talkie for communication with other team members. After equipping the gear, Ling Chen patted Jiang Yunkai's shoulder, gave some instructions, and then patrolled the venue alone for a while.

The opening ceremony of the Martial Arts Tournament was about to commence, and no oversight could be allowed at such a time.

Around seven-thirty, there were already over a hundred cars parked outside the venue, with everyone driving directly from Beijing to watch the Martial Arts Tournament. Watching the crowd gradually enter the venue, Ling Chen made his way to the north side, where there was a special VIP channel. The VIP channel was arranged not for anything else but because many invited guests were martial artists themselves, the true stars of the Martial Arts Tournament. The organizers certainly needed to treat them differently.

The invited martial artists started entering the venue around eight o'clock, greeted by Ling Chen, Tong Zhentian, Su Mei, Du Kang, and key figures from the Martial Arts Association.

"Chen!" At this moment, a familiar voice came through. Ling Chen looked over and saw Nanrong Hao and Nanrong Wanqing quickly approaching through the crowd. Ah? As Ling Chen was about to meet them, he noticed that it wasn't just Nanrong Hao; Jiang Hao and Zhao Zhengxiong were also there.

"Why are you all here?" Ling Chen asked with a smile, "You should have told me in advance, so I could arrange a hotel for you."

Zhao Zhengxiong waved his hand, "No need to trouble you with such trivial matters, Haozi arranged everything. Upon hearing that Beijing was hosting a Martial Arts Tournament, Jiang Hao and I found it interesting and decided to check it out as we were idle in East Sea City."

"Jiang Hao, where's your girlfriend? Why didn't she come?" Ling Chen asked.

Jiang Hao replied a bit awkwardly, "I wanted to bring her, but when she heard it was a Martial Arts Tournament, she immediately lost interest. Maybe she thought it was all fanciful moves, not very appealing. Her friends invited her on a trip, so I came to Beijing alone to relax."

"I expect to be quite busy these few days, so I might not be able to accompany you throughout."

"That's okay, we'll entertain ourselves, no worries."

"Alright, contact me if you need anything. By the way, Kai is over there; you can find him, and I'll have him arrange a good spot for you."

Chapter 1552 - 1857: Guests from All Directions (2)

After sending off Nanrong Wanqing and the others, before long, Ling Kun, Ling Tao, and Yang Qingling appeared at the VIP entrance.

"Dad, Mom, Uncle Ling." Ling Chen quickly walked over. At the same time, Su Mei and Tong Zhentian followed behind, welcoming the arrival of the three. Ling Kun, as the Ling Family Patriarch and a Heavenly List expert, was a special guest at this Martial Arts Tournament and naturally deserved proper reception.

Ling Kun smiled and nodded at Ling Chen, then exchanged pleasantries with Su Mei and Tong Zhentian. Yang Qingling, concerned for her son, pulled Ling Chen aside and asked quietly, "I heard Wanqing is here too; where is she?"

"Mom, Wanqing just went inside. You can call her later."

"Okay, I..." Yang Qingling was about to speak when Ling Kun walked over and patted Ling Chen on the shoulder. Seeing Ling Kun's meaningful gaze, Ling Chen immediately understood and quickly followed Ling Kun to join the others.

"Dad, is there something wrong?"

"I heard the Martial Arts Tournament isn't going smoothly. Is there any danger?"

Ling Chen smiled slightly and said, "Dad, you sure are well-informed. There are indeed threats, but don't worry, we're fully prepared, and whatever happens, we have the ability to handle it."

"That's best, I'd rather not have any accidents. Alright, keep busy, we won't disturb you."

"Ling Chen, we have enough people here already, you don't have to stay here. Go explore with your mom and dad." Tong Zhentian suggested.

"Alright." Ling Chen nodded and said, "Dad, Mom, Uncle Ling, let's go."

At this moment, a large crowd had already flooded the venue, with approximately twenty thousand people. The entrance was packed with people, countless heads as far as the eye could see. In the center stage of the venue, more than a dozen Dragon Tiger Hall disciples were performing, drawing everyone's attention.

Soon, Ling Chen and the three reached the VIP seats beside the stage. Ling Kun, as an invited guest of the Martial Arts Tournament, naturally had a seat allocated. "Dad, Mom, you sit here; if anything comes up, feel free to call me." With that, Ling Chen glanced at the other end of the VIP seats and strode over.

At this moment, it seemed a few guests in the front row of the VIP seats were in a dispute, faces flushed and necks tensed, drawing quite a bit of attention. The staff tried to mediate but with little effect. Ling Chen stepped forward and asked, "What's going on?"

"Mr. Ling, you've arrived just in time," a staff member said with relief as if seeing a lifesaver, "the VIP seats are arranged randomly without ranking, but these guests insist on sitting in the front row, claiming it matches their status." Saying this, the staff member leaned closer to Ling Chen's ear and whispered, "They already have a grudge against each other, seeing the other sitting in front naturally makes them unhappy, hence the commotion, and no amount of persuasion works. Mr. Ling, what do you suggest?"

Ling Chen nodded slightly and said, "Alright, understood. You may leave now, I'll handle this."

As the staff left, Ling Chen approached the two guests still arguing fervently and said with a smile, "Calm down, let's talk this over. Today is a grand event for Martial Arts; let's not ruin the harmony here."

"Who are you?" A middle-aged man glared, snapping displeased, "None of your business, get lost."

Despite the rude outburst, Ling Chen kept his smile and responded courteously, "I'm from Dragon Tiger Hall, responsible for maintaining order. If you have any issues, feel free to tell me, and I'll help resolve them."

"Someone from Dragon Tiger Hall?" Upon hearing this, the two seemed to mellow out. After all, the reputation of Dragon Tiger Hall was well established, and they wouldn't dare disregard it.

"Alright, since you're from Dragon Tiger Hall, explain why both of us being Earthly List experts, he gets to sit in front of me. Does it mean I'm inferior?"

"You're inherently not as good as me," the other middle-aged man retorted, "I rank seventh on the Earthly List while you're eighth, so by ranking, I should be sitting in front."

"That's nonsense, I've long surpassed you in skill; let's settle this with a duel if you dare."

"Today is a Martial Arts Tournament, not a brawl. I wouldn't stoop to your level, making a spectacle publicly."

"You—"

Listening to their bickering back and forth, Ling Chen gestured for them to stop.

"Gentlemen, the seating is randomly arranged; it doesn't imply anything. Furthermore, if you wish to duel, you'll have a chance later on stage. This Martial Arts Tournament includes a challenge match, where you can challenge anyone present, provided they dare accept."

"Really? Great, that's wonderful," said the middle-aged man excitedly, "Qin, you better not run away; see how I deal with you then." He paused, then turned to Ling Chen, "Hey, I'm Zhou Hongyan, when the challenge match starts, notify me first."

Ling Chen smiled and nodded, "Of course."

Speaking of which, Ling Chen suddenly noticed Su Mei leading a group toward them from the other side of the VIP seats. Behind Su Mei were monks and Taoists, along with several elderly figures with white hair who walked effortlessly, barely leaving traces on the ground. Witnessing this, Ling Chen was utterly astounded.

Wow! Experts, all experts; they must be the reclusive masters Su Mei invited.

Before these masters, Su Mei, the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion Master, appeared very respectful, always leaning slightly. After those people were seated, Ling Chen swiftly approached Su Mei, curiously asking, "Master Su, who are these people?"

Su Mei responded with a mysterious smile, "They are reclusive experts from the Martial Arts world. As for their identities, keeping it confidential for now is best. I made significant efforts to invite them."

Hearing this, Ling Chen immediately understood. Su Mei was likely worried he might poach them, hence the secrecy about their identities. However, the more mysterious Su Mei seemed, the more curious Ling Chen became.

If she won't say, I can still inquire myself!

Before long, the number of spectators in the venue had reached tens of thousands, packed like sardines, bustling with excitement. Checking the time, it was already half-past ten, and all the hundred-plus VIP seats were filled.

At this point, a young man in a suit walked onto the stage, holding a microphone and announcing, "May I have your attention, please. The opening ceremony of this year's Martial Arts Tournament is about to begin."

Chapter 1553 - 1858: Opening Ceremony (1)

As the crowd in the venue quieted down, the man in a suit moved to the side of the stage and loudly proclaimed, "Next, please welcome Elder Tong Zhentian, the president of the Martial Arts Association, to speak to us." Accompanied by the man's words, Tong Zhentian, dressed in a meticulously tailored Zhongshan suit, slowly walked onto the stage from one side. Upon reaching the center of the stage, Tong Zhentian cupped his fists in salute to everyone present.

"Elder Tong," the man in a suit quickly handed over a microphone. Tong Zhentian smiled and shook his head, declining the offer.

Clearing his throat, Tong Zhentian said loudly, "Today is an important and memorable day. The convening of the Martial Arts Tournament once again signifies the progress and prosperity of the Huaxia martial arts community. Here, on behalf of the organizers, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for your presence."

Although he didn't use a microphone, Tong Zhentian's voice clearly reached everyone's ears. This Inner Strength moved many martial artists present. As for the laymen, the spectators attending the Martial Arts Tournament found it incredibly magical.

"This Martial Arts Tournament is divided into four events: Invitational, Individual, Team, and Challenge." Tong Zhentian continued, "As you can see, there are four large stages in the venue, and the four events will be held on these different stages. We, the organizers, will arrange the time for the martial arts matches, and everyone can attend and watch on time. The four events will last five days, and the final winner will receive rich prizes prepared by the organizers."

After describing the arrangements for the Martial Arts Tournament, Tong Zhentian also emphasized the rules and safety issues of the venue. There's no choice; with so many spectators, safety is of utmost importance.

The brief speech ended, and Tong Zhentian left the stage amidst applause from the audience. With the opening ceremony of the Martial Arts Tournament concluded, the next step was to watch the events. Starting first with the Team Competition, followed by the Individual and Invitational competitions. If you are a martial artist, you already know that the Team and Individual competitions are the focus, while the Invitational is more like an exhibition, just a visual indulgence with nothing much to see. As for the Challenge Competition... the Challenge is not limited by time and can be held at any moment. As long as someone challenges and someone accepts, it can start anytime.

Before everyone dispersed from the stage, a deep voice came from a nearby stage, "Qin, weren't you very cocky just now? I am challenging you now. If you have the guts, come up here and let me see how you've progressed over these years."

Ling Chen looked up and observed a person standing on the Challenge Competition stage, none other than Zhou Hongyan, who had clashed earlier. This person really had an explosive temper; no sooner had Tong Zhentian finished speaking than he couldn't wait to challenge. But it's just as well; the opening presence of two Earthly List experts was enough to elevate the venue's atmosphere.

Sure enough, upon hearing a challenge, most of the audience gathered around the Challenge Competition stage.

However, the stage wasn't large, and the venue had too many spectators, making it difficult to see clearly if you were too far away. Fortunately, Su Mei and the others had prepared in advance. There was a giant LCD screen next to each stage so you could clearly see the martial arts contests happening onstage.

"Qin, you were just so impressive, how come now you don't even dare to step onto the stage?" Zhou Hongyan continued to shout from the stage, his voice relayed through the microphones around the stage and broadcast through the speakers, echoing throughout the venue.

Ling Chen's gaze swept over to the seats in the VIP section and noticed that the middle-aged man named Qin had already disappeared. Ha! This guy... really got cold feet and actually ran away. In the eyes of everyone, not accepting the challenge would greatly affect his reputation. It's believed that for a long time to come, this Qin gentleman will be quite embarrassed.

Ling Chen smiled and shook his head; he was initially hoping Zhou Hongyan could set a good example, but now it seems this idea is bound to fall short.

Though he couldn't witness the Challenge Competition, the Team Competition stage had already started. There were many teams participating this year, including Huaxia's major Martial Arts Academies and various sect forces. Roughly estimated, there are more than forty participating teams.

Dragon Tiger Hall, known as the most prestigious force in martial arts, naturally had to participate. However, after internal discussions, no master fighters were dispatched for the Team Competition, only some young members. It's not that Dragon Tiger Hall lacks experts, but there's no need; the Team Competition is just a formality with the focus on participation, not on necessarily taking first place.

Initially, Ling Chen and the others organized the Martial Arts Tournament to expel Qi Yong and others from the Martial Arts Association. Now, Qi Yong is seriously injured and still lying in the hospital. Therefore, their goal hasn't been achieved.

Ling Chen glanced around, then headed to the Command Center. He wasn't the main character of this Martial Arts Tournament, no need to show himself publicly. His main task now was to maintain the venue's safety and order. Moreover, he was uneasy since Xie Qian and his people hadn't shown up yet. Sitting on a chair, Ling Chen crossed his legs, occasionally glancing at the dozens of surveillance screens in the command center.

A staff member in the command center made a cup of coffee and handed it to Ling Chen, giving him a flirtatious glance in passing.

Ling Chen smiled and touched his nose; today's women were indeed bold. However, such women don't catch his eye. After resting for a while, Ling Chen checked the time; it was already past eleven, time to eat. Although there were tens of thousands of spectators, Ling Chen wasn't worried about their eating problems.

Well before the Martial Arts Tournament began, the venue had been surrounded by various snack stalls. Additionally, several large dining halls inside the venue were designated to provide meals.

Before long, someone delivered boxed meals to the staff. Just as Ling Chen was about to have lunch, the command center's phone suddenly rang. A staff member picked up the phone and greeted the caller. It's unclear what was said, but the staff's complexion changed suddenly, quickly calling Ling Chen over.

"What's wrong?"

"Mr. Ling, someone called to extort money."

"Extort?" Ling Chen was slightly taken aback, reached for the phone, and asked, "Who are you?"

"Are you the person in charge?" A processed voice came from the other end.

"Yes, what do you want?"

"Let's make a deal. I'll give you an account later, within half an hour, you transfer fifty million into it."

Ling Chen chuckled slightly and said, "What if I say no?"

"Then I'm sorry, half an hour later, a bomb will explode at the venue. Sir, fifty million for safety is quite a good deal, don't you think?"

"I think it's a bad deal. Buddy, I don't care who you are, I think... You probably don't know who we are."

Chapter 1554 - 1859: Opening Ceremony (Part 2)

"What do you mean?"

"Fifty million... huh! Are you serious? Buddy, if you're trying to con us, at least be professional. You didn't even bother to find out who we are. If you knew our background, you wouldn't just ask for fifty million. If you want to live a few days longer, you'd better stop playing with fire." With that, Ling Chen hung up the phone before the other party could respond.

Damn! Do they really take us for fools, thinking our money is that easy to swindle?

"There will be more of these incidents, you don't need to be too afraid." Ling Chen said to the staff present.

One staff member anxiously asked, "Mr. Ling, how do you know they're conning us?"

Ling Chen patiently explained, "There are plenty of people like this. They see us as easy targets, making up some reason to scare us. They think we'll settle things quietly for the sake of the venue's safety, so they don't ask for much, make a quick buck, and leave. You could call them opportunists. After encountering them more, you naturally gain experience."

After speaking, Ling Chen started eating his boxed meal heartily.

After finishing his meal, a staff member approached and said, "Mr. Ling, there's someone looking for you outside, claiming to be your friend."

"Okay, I know." As he stepped out of the command center, he saw Nanrong Wanqing, Nanrong Hao, and Jiang Hao all there.

"Chen, hanging out here alone is boring. Come, let's go for a walk together."

"Where do you want to go?"

"Anywhere lively."

Ling Chen asked, "Didn't you just watch the match?"

"We did," Jiang Hao chimed in, "But now it's break time; the next one won't start for another half hour. Chen, you missed it earlier. Some guys were really strong, taking down their opponents with one move."

"Among martial artists, it's normal to have a few experts." Ling Chen replied with a smile.

"Hey! Did you hear something? It seems like someone got hurt over there."

"Really? Where?"

"Right at the duel ring, someone's almost beaten to death."

At this moment, a sudden exclamation arose from the crowd, and soon, a large number of spectators rushed towards the duel ring to see the spectacle.

"Chen, what's going on?" Zhao Zhengxiong asked, "Isn't it supposed to be a civilized competition? How could someone get hurt?"

Ling Chen frowned slightly and shook his head, "I'm not sure, let's go take a look together."

Immediately, the group followed the flow of people towards the duel ring. In no time, when they arrived, they found the area surrounded by tens of thousands of spectators. Ling Chen looked closely and saw that the contestants in the ring were a Huaxia man and a foreign man.

The foreign man had blond hair and blue eyes, wearing a tight vest, with bulging muscles all over, exuding a powerful presence. In comparison, his opponent was much more petite. The fight was nearing its end, with the blond man holding an overwhelming advantage, while the other had no ability to fight back and was already covered in bruises and bleeding from the mouth, a pitiful sight.

Seeing this bloody scene, Ling Chen's expression turned grim. The blond man had clearly won but was relentless, seemingly intent on killing his opponent.

Unable to bear watching any further, Ling Chen squeezed through the crowd.

"Chen!" Everyone followed closely behind Ling Chen. Quickly, they reached the ring.

"Stop!" Ling Chen shouted, rushing onto the ring, dragging the barely conscious man aside, stopping the blond man from further action.

"He's almost dead. Why won't you spare him?" Ling Chen questioned coldly, staring at the blond man.

The blond man sneered, "We agreed before the match: no retreat, no surrender. If I die, it's my own lack of skill. If he dies... huh! It just shows that your Huaxia martial arts are all show and no substance." Saying this, the blond man casually walked to the side of the ring, looked at the audience below, and loudly declared in clumsy Chinese, "See that? Your so-called martial arts are just flowery and useless. If anyone else here is not convinced, feel free to challenge me. I'll show you what the world's best martial arts really are."

Hearing the blond man's words, the beaten man struggled to stand, gritting his teeth, "Let me go, I can still continue."

Ling Chen sternly said, "Are you crazy! Are you not afraid of dying?"

The man shook his head, "My life means nothing, but I won't allow him to insult our Huaxia martial arts."

Hearing this, Ling Chen was taken aback for a moment, seeming to understand something. For some, martial arts are merely for self-defense or comparing strengths. But for others, Huaxia martial arts represent a belief. Like this man before him, in his eyes, the reputation of Huaxia martial arts is more important than his own life.

Seeing the man's determined expression, Ling Chen patted his shoulder gently and smiled, "Thank you for being a supporter of Huaxia martial arts. Go rest, I'll show that guy what real Huaxia martial arts are."

"Really?"

Ling Chen nodded heavily, waving to some staff to help the man off the ring to rest.

"Hey, buddy, weren't you eager to see the true power of Huaxia martial arts? Come, let me play with you."

Just as Ling Chen was about to step up to the challenge, he heard a strange voice from the crowd. Subsequently, a young man in his twenties leapt high, stepping on a spectator's shoulder, and landed directly on the ring.

Ha! Someone's eager to step up. Well, he really didn't have the desire to deal with such a minor character himself.

"You want to challenge me?" The blond man eyed the young man, shaking his head dismissively, "I advise you to back down. With your stature, I doubt you could withstand even one punch from me."

Unfazed by the blond man's disdain, the young man calmly replied, "If you can land one punch on me, I'll kill myself right here." With that, the young man flicked his wrist, launching a shiny dagger onto the ring's floor.

Upon seeing the sharp dagger, Ling Chen's eyes flickered with interest, gaining some insight into the young man's identity. The venue entrances are equipped with security and staff; every audience member undergoes strict checking, and no prohibited weapons are allowed inside. So, this young man must have entered through the VIP access, where his weapon wasn't confiscated.

Anyone coming through the VIP access is no ordinary person, thus Ling Chen felt confident and intrigued about this young man before him.

Chapter 1555 - 1860: Opening Ceremony (Part 3)

Hearing the young man's resounding promise, the blond man nodded, laughed wildly, and said, "Alright, since you're courting death, don't blame me for being ruthless."

As soon as he finished speaking, the blond man swung his fist straight at the young man's head. Seeing the fist approaching, the young man's expression remained unchanged, still as calm as a gentle breeze. Just as the fist was about to strike, the young man's feet suddenly moved, like a breeze brushing by, and his body instantly disappeared from where he stood.

Huh?

The blond man was slightly stunned, quickly turning his head to look around, searching for the young man's whereabouts.

"Are you looking for me?"

The voice came, and the blond man's eyes immediately turned toward it, only to see the young man had somehow appeared behind him. Without thinking, the blond man swung a fist, sweeping towards his rear. But, even though the young man was right in front of him, the fist failed to connect with his body, as if the young man's body turned to air, passing right through.

Watching the battle on the stage, Ling Chen nodded secretly in approval.

Impressive! This young man may be young, but his strength is extraordinary, definitely worthy of ranking in the top three of the Earthly List. Others might not have seen clearly what happened just now, but Ling Chen understood it.

The young man moved incredibly fast, so fast that even the naked eye struggled to keep up. When the blond man swung his punch, the young man took a slight step back and returned to the original spot after the punch passed. Only, because of his incredible speed, everyone thought he hadn't moved from his spot.

No one knows which school this young disciple belongs to, being so formidable. If there's a chance, it would be worth getting acquainted with him.

While pondering, a loud 'thump' echoed from the stage. Looking up, the blond man had fallen headfirst to the ground, looking disgraced. From start to finish, the young man hadn't really made a move, only using his foot to hook the opponent lightly.

Seeing the blond man slowly get up, the young man coldly said, "Will you roll off yourself, or do I need to kick you down?"

Hearing this, the blond man roared, his face turning red, and charged towards the young man like a human bulldozer, fierce and powerful.

Hmph!

The young man sneered, not paying any heed to the blond man's actions. As the opponent was about to get close, the young man turned his head, not even looking at him, and delivered a direct kick. Instantly, the blond man's body shot forth like a cannonball, flying over the stage's protective barrier, and landed heavily on the ground three meters below.

Ugh!

A mouthful of fresh blood spewed out, and the blond man trembled, fainting immediately.

"Worthless, how dare you insult Huaxia martial arts." The young man coldly remarked, then walked straight off the stage.

As the young man passed by, Ling Chen smiled and said, "Thank you for defending the honor of Huaxia martial arts."

The young man turned his head, giving Ling Chen a long look, and said, "Even if I didn't, someone else would have, like you."

Ling Chen grinned, "I'm Ling Chen, hope we can be friends."

"Ling Chen?" The young man squinted slightly, eyeing Ling Chen with interest, asking, "Founder of Dragon Tiger Hall?"

"Sort of. From your tone, it seems you know me?"

"Heard of you. Let's chat another time." With that said, the young man didn't speak further and walked into the crowd on his own. Watching him leave, Ling Chen shook his head helplessly. He had intended to get to know him, but the young man didn't even leave his name.

"Chen, do you know that young man?" At this point, Zhao Zhengxiong and Jiang Hao gathered around, eagerly asking.

"Don't know him."

"Watching that spectacle was really satisfying. That foreigner didn't even consider whose territory this is, daring to cause trouble here—he's tired of living." Nanrong Hao said excitedly, "It's a pity my skills are lacking, otherwise I'd have gone up to teach that bastard a lesson."

Jiang Hao laughed and chimed in, "Don't worry, there's plenty of opportunity. Look over there."

Following Jiang Hao's point, everyone looked carefully and saw a crowd of people dressed in exotic attire, including warriors from the Great Sun Empire, and foreigners wearing karate and Muay Thai outfits. Presumably, these people came to showcase their skills and suppress Huaxia martial arts, seeking a sense of presence.

Hmph! A bunch who don't know what 'death' means, they're quite bold.

"Ling Chen, when I passed by earlier, I saw a lot of registration points, what's that about?" Nanrong Wanqing curiously asked.

"You saw that?" Ling Chen explained, "Those are registration points for the Dragon Tiger Hall, Heavenly Mechanism Arts Hall, and other Martial Arts Academies and sects. The purpose of the Martial Arts Tournament is not only to promote Huaxia martial arts but also to ensure its legacy."

Hearing this, Nanrong Hao enthusiastically asked, "Chen, can I sign up too?"

"I'm afraid not. Martial Arts Academies and sects only accept disciples under fifteen, so you're already over the age limit."

The group chatted and laughed as they quickly arrived at the team competition stage. At this moment, the next match was in the preparation phase and about to start. On the LCD screen behind the stage, the opposing sides were displayed: Dragon Tiger Hall and Jinyao Martial Arts Hall.

Seeing his people competing, Ling Chen immediately stopped and watched the disciples from both sides enter the stage. The team competition stage was very large, twice the size of other stages, and at this moment, at one end of the stage were three members from Dragon Tiger Hall, each around twenty years old, all looking energetic and in good shape.

Ling Chen smiled slightly; these three members were personally selected by He Ziyun and are the elite of Dragon Tiger Hall. Despite their young age, they are exceptionally skilled, key figures in the Hall's training.

Looking at the contestants from Jinyao Martial Arts Hall, Ling Chen's face darkened.

Jinyao Martial Arts Hall had sent three members, all around forty or fifty years old. At this age, their experience and internal cultivation couldn't be underestimated.

"Chen, isn't this bullying from Jinyao Martial Arts Hall, with such an age gap? What's the point?" Nanrong Hao complained, "Can't the organizers do something about it?"

Ling Chen shrugged and said, "The team competition rules are clear, there are no age limits, so they're not violating any rules. This kind of thing relies entirely on self-discipline. To put it simply, it's a reflection of martial arts ethics."

"So Dragon Tiger Hall is sure to lose?"

"The match hasn't started yet, so let's not jump to conclusions. Let's watch first." While Ling Chen said this, he still felt disgruntled inside.

Shortly after, under the referee's announcement, the first round of competition began. The team competition's system was simple: best of three wins. If either side won two consecutive matches, the last round wouldn't continue.

Soon, the contestants from Dragon Tiger Hall and Jinyao Martial Arts Hall slowly entered the venue, exchanged fist salutes, and the match officially began.

Chapter 1556 - 1861: Shameless Scoundrel

Ling Chen had a good understanding of the three members on stage. The first to appear was called Yang Shaojun, who was just twenty years old this year. He had learned some martial arts from a master in his youth, and his foundation was quite solid. Later, he joined the Dragon Tiger Hall, and due to his talent and the guidance from Tong Zhentian and He Ziyun, his progress was very rapid. At a young age, he already possessed strength comparable to the Tiger List.

Back in the day, Ling Chen also made it to the Tiger List at the age of twenty-something.

"Please enlighten me." On the stage, Yang Shaojun politely greeted his opponent and then assumed a stance, charging straight towards the opponent.

The competitor from Jinyao Martial Arts Hall was shown on the large screen, named Liu Ji. Seeing Yang Shaojun charging aggressively, Liu Ji did not hesitate and instantly met him head-on, with his bare palms aimed directly at Yang Shaojun's face.

"Get down!" As the two approached, Liu Ji let out a soft shout, his whole body's Inner Strength bursting forth, converging on his palms.

Facing such a powerful opponent, Yang Shaojun remained very calm, showing no sign of retreat. Watching as the palms approached, Yang Shaojun's gaze was exceptionally firm, and he directly punched forward. At the moment of fist and palm colliding, a burst of dark force erupted from between them, pushing both their bodies backward.

Liu Ji only took two steps back before stabilizing his body. In contrast, Yang Shaojun suffered more, retreating to the edge of the stage before barely standing firm. If the earlier Inner Strength had been a bit more fierce, he might have fallen off the stage entirely.

Anyone with sharp eyes could see the considerable gap between Yang Shaojun and Liu Ji.

"Is this all the strength the Dragon Tiger Hall has?" Liu Ji spoke slowly, his tone carrying a hint of mockery.

Hearing this, the people below the stage widened their eyes. They've seen shamelessness before, but not as shameless as this—mocking your opponent's strength despite being much older. Truly shameless and disgraceful.

Yang Shaojun furrowed his brows slightly, not bothering to argue; saying anything now would be useless.

"Shaojun, don't push yourself too hard, just do your best."

The voice came from below the stage, and Yang Shaojun lowered his head, meeting Ling Chen's gaze. Seeing Ling Chen's smiling face, Yang Shaojun nodded lightly and refocused on Liu Ji.

"Come." Liu Ji extended a hand, provocatively gesturing with his finger for Yang Shaojun to come forward.

Yang Shaojun let out a faint snort, his speed suddenly increasing, rushing swiftly towards Liu Ji. As he neared, Yang Shaojun's legs suddenly exerted force, jumping straight into the air, and from above, his fists aimed at Liu Ji's head.

Liu Ji snickered, not taking Yang Shaojun's attack seriously. After more than a dozen moves, all of Yang Shaojun's attacks were neutralized. With his Power exhausted, Yang Shaojun lacked the momentum to continue and had to fall from the air. However, Liu Ji seized the opportunity, quickly approaching as Yang Shaojun descended.

Just as Yang Shaojun's feet touched the ground, Liu Ji's attack was already coming. Caught off guard, Yang Shaojun's body was struck by a palm, sent flying, landing outside the stage. Seeing this, Ling Chen, who had been watching from the side, hurried over to catch Yang Shaojun's body.

"Are you okay?"

"I'm fine." Yang Shaojun shook his head, saying somewhat ashamedly, "Deputy Hall Master, I'm sorry, I embarrassed the Dragon Tiger Hall."

Ling Chen smiled and patted his shoulder, saying, "Don't say that, you did very well. If you lost anything, it was to just one thing."

"What?"

"Shamelessness." Ling Chen grinned and said, "They are clearly shameless, why compete with them on that? Our Dragon Tiger Hall cares about dignity."

Ling Chen spoke loudly on purpose, so everyone around could hear, especially those on stage like Liu Ji. Instantly, his words drew agreement from many. Although many were just spectators there for excitement, Jinyao Martial Arts Hall's actions were indeed displeasing.

No matter what, the duel still had to continue, but the audience around the stage all aimed their animosity at Jinyao Martial Arts Hall, unanimously supporting the Dragon Tiger Hall.

Hearing the crowd below chanting 'Get out', the people from Jinyao Martial Arts Hall looked very upset, only venting their anger on the Dragon Tiger Hall.

The Dragon Tiger Hall member participating in the second round was smart, seeing the opponent fight viciously, he quickly found an opportunity to admit defeat. With two wins out of three, Jinyao Martial Arts Hall successfully advanced, while the Dragon Tiger Hall, as one of the organizers, was eliminated in the first round.

Though somewhat unfortunate, Ling Chen wasn't very concerned. From the beginning, he never intended to win first place; he just wanted the disciples of Dragon Tiger Hall to gain experience and more practical experience.

"It's so infuriating." Nanrong Hao said indignantly, "The people from Jinyao Martial Arts Hall are truly shameless."

"There are many such people, don't take it to heart." Ling Chen said casually.

As he spoke, Ling Chen suddenly saw Su Mei walking nearby. Accompanied by several elders, who were previously seen reclusive masters. Su Mei led them, stopping occasionally, pointing and introducing things.

"Ling Chen, did you hear me?"

At this moment, He Ziyun's voice came through the earpiece.

"Mr. He, I'm here, what's up?"

"Come to the command center, I need to talk to you."

"Alright." Ling Chen responded, then turned to Nanrong Wanqing and said, "I need to go to the command center; you guys go ahead, I'll find you later."

Back at the main command center, as Ling Chen entered, he saw He Ziyun standing behind the staff, watching the surveillance on the screen.

"Mr. He, what's up?" Ling Chen quickly walked over and asked.

"I think I just saw an old acquaintance of yours."

"Old acquaintance?" Ling Chen was slightly taken aback and curiously asked, "Who?"

He Ziyun slowly uttered two words, "Zhu Hong."

"Zhu Hong!" Ling Chen's expression changed slightly, "Mr. He, are you sure you weren't mistaken?"

"I should be correct, but I can't find his whereabouts now."

"Use facial recognition software to search for him; if Zhu Hong is really here, we must find him." Ling Chen said with some concern. The fact that Zhu Hong had come to the Martial Arts Tournament was unexpected. That guy was wanted by the military and dared to show up, wasn't he afraid of being caught? Moreover, the venue of the Martial Arts Tournament was filled with masters, even if he had incredible skills, he wouldn't escape easily.

In no time, more than ten minutes passed, but despite using facial recognition, Zhu Hong's whereabouts were not found. Ling Chen pondered for a moment and instructed a staff member, "Print out Zhu Hong's photo and distribute a copy to all security personnel."

Chapter 1557 - 1862: Outsider Experts (1)

"Yes."

The staff worked efficiently, and within an hour, thousands of security personnel at the venue each had a photo of Zhu Hong. As long as he appeared at the venue, he could definitely be tracked down.

"Hey! Ling Chen, did you know that our Dragon Tiger Hall has been eliminated in the team competition?" During the chat, He Ziyun mentioned the previously concluded team match.

Ling Chen nodded and said, "I watched the entire match at the venue, the people from Jinyao Martial Arts Hall were too shameless. The gap between us was clear, we had no chance of winning."

He Ziyun smiled and said, "You can't blame the people from Jinyao Martial Arts Hall for being shameless. This Martial Arts Tournament is highly anticipated, who doesn't want to make a name for themselves? The smaller factions especially want to prove themselves through the competition."

"Mr. He, how did the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion perform?"

"They smoothly advanced. In terms of talented disciples, our Dragon Tiger Hall really can't compare to Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. This time, the three contestants from Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion were selected from Yangxin Pavilion. Although they're only in their twenties, their strength is formidable. If nothing unexpected happens, the first place should be theirs." Speaking of this, He Ziyun couldn't help but laugh, "Actually, this was all expected. Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion wants to revive its reputation through the Martial Arts Tournament, so naturally, they aim for first in everything."

Ling Chen nodded inwardly, having interacted with the disciples from Yangxin Pavilion, he was naturally aware of their prowess. However, he was more interested in the reclusive masters invited by Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion.

"Mr. He, how much do you know about the guests invited by Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion?"

"I don't know much, Master Su keeps their identities very secretive, probably even Elder Tong doesn't know." He Ziyun sighed and said, "Even though Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion has encountered so many issues, it's not what it used to be, but no one should underestimate it. Their hidden connections far exceed ours."

Just then, Ling Chen's phone suddenly rang. Taking out his phone, he glanced at the caller ID and immediately answered, asking, "Fatty, what's up?"

"It's quite lively over there, isn't it?" Hu Fei asked with a laugh, "I saw the news on TV, it's quite a big scene."

"It's alright, why, are you interested in coming to see?"

"Forget it! I have no interest, I'd rather spend my time with two beautiful women. I just wanted to tell you, Su Cheng'en and Su He are making moves." Hearing this, Ling Chen's heart couldn't help but tremble. Su Cheng'en and the others were at the seaside villa in Jin Hai City, and Hu Fei had been secretly monitoring their movements.

"Where did they go?"

"Guess?"

"You... you're not trying to tell me they all came to Beijing, are you?"

"Today's morning flight, they're already here, and my people have been following them secretly. They're heading to the Martial Arts Tournament venue now, you'd better be careful, those guys are troublemakers, don't let them stir things up."

"Alright, got it, inform me immediately if there's any news." After saying that, Ling Chen hung up the phone.

Beside him, He Ziyun asked, "What's wrong?"

Ling Chen replied with a wry smile, "Looks like the Martial Arts Tournament is getting more lively. First it was Zhu Hong, now even Su Cheng'en and the others have come."

Hearing this, He Ziyun's expression changed slightly, and he said solemnly, "What do we do then?"

"First notify Elder Tong and Master Su, let them be mentally prepared." After pausing, Ling Chen continued, "I'm not worried about Su Cheng'en and Su He, Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion is one of the hosts of the Martial Arts Tournament, Su Cheng'en and Su He shouldn't go against their own people. Rather, it's Zhu Hong who's the biggest trouble. My personal grudge with Zhu Hong is no secret, you all know that. Also, some time ago Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion cooperated with the military to capture Zhu Hong, capturing Zhu Hong's parents to make him comply, and they haven't been released yet. So Zhu Hong is likely to use this opportunity to cause trouble, we must be careful."

"Alright, I'll go talk to Elder Tong first, you keep watching and see if you can find Zhu Hong's whereabouts."

Before they knew it, it was already five o'clock in the afternoon, and the audience who came to watch were gradually leaving to go home. Although many didn't want to leave, there were no hotels or inns around the venue, so they couldn't stay on the streets and had to return to the city, planning to come back early tomorrow morning.

By evening, most of the audience had left, and all the martial arts practitioners were sent back to the hotel by buses arranged by the hosts. Ling Chen frowned slightly and asked, "Still no discovery?"

"No, that person seems to have vanished into thin air, none of the surveillance caught them."

"Forget it!" Ling Chen said helplessly, "I guess he's already gone." Zhu Hong is clever and cunning, he must have noticed the surveillance installed at the venue, so he's been hiding in blind spots. With so

many people at the venue, once he blends into the crowd, it's like searching for a needle in the haystack.

Watching as the audience at the venue dispersed, Ling Chen finally left the command center and met up with He Ziyun waiting outside.

"Mr. He, shall we go directly back to the Hall or..."

"To the hotel." He Ziyun said, "Elder Tong just called, he's arranged a dinner and invited us to join the fun."

Ling Chen rubbed his nose and said, "Mr. He, everyone's been tired for a day, how about I go back to rest first?"

"That won't do, Elder Tong specifically asked for you to come. Come on! Don't think too much, get in the car quickly so we don't keep them waiting for too long."

After a forty-minute drive, Ling Chen and He Ziyun finally arrived at the hotel where Tong Zhentian was. It was already past eight o'clock at night. The two went to the restaurant on the hotel's second floor, and led by a waiter, Ling Chen pushed open the door to a private room. Before entering, the strong smell of alcohol wafted out.

Inside the private room, Ling Chen glanced around and saw besides Tong Zhentian, there were four other guests, all older, two middle-aged men in their fifties, and two with gray hair and wrinkled faces, seemingly in their eighties and nineties.

Seeing Ling Chen and He Ziyun enter, Tong Zhentian quickly stood up from his seat and smiled, "You finally arrived. Everyone, let me introduce you, these two are the deputy hall masters of Dragon Tiger Hall, Ling Chen and He Ziyun."

Ling Chen cupped his fists at everyone seated and greeted them.

"Please take a seat." Tong Zhentian pointed to two seats nearby.

Once Ling Chen and He Ziyun were seated, Tong Zhentian continued, "Let me introduce you, these two elders are masters from the southern Yunshan, Golden Dragon and Wang Teng, who have traveled from afar to Beijing for this Martial Arts Tournament." After pausing, Tong Zhentian then turned his gaze to the other two middle-aged men, saying, "They are the distinguished disciples of Elder Huang and Elder Wang, Wu Qiong and Yu Hao."

After listening to Tong Zhentian's introduction, Ling Chen and He Ziyun quickly stood up from their seats, politely greeting them. Ling Chen knew in his heart that Tong Zhentian had specifically asked them over and introduced them with emphasis, indicating these people were not ordinary. Otherwise, judging by Tong Zhentian's status and position in the martial arts world, he wouldn't have shown such warmth.

Chapter 1558 - 1863: Outsiders and Recluses (2)

The old man named Golden Dragon sized up Ling Chen and nodded approvingly, "I've been hearing Tong talk about you, saying you're a young talent, founding the Dragon Tiger Hall at such a young age, injecting vitality into the entire Martial Arts. Not bad! Truly a hero emerges from youth."

Ling Chen smiled humbly, "Elder Huang, you're praising me too much. I'm just doing what I can within my abilities. Moreover, without the strong support of Elder Tong and Mr. He, the Dragon Tiger Hall wouldn't have developed to its current state."

"There's no need for modesty." Wang Teng, standing nearby, chimed in, "Though we two old fellows have been reclusive in the mountains, never meddling in the Martial Arts, we've always paid attention to its changes. Over the years, the entire Martial Arts has been controlled by the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, like stagnant water, without any vitality. Honestly, I'm quite disappointed, it seems like the Martial Arts has truly declined. However, with the establishment and development of the Dragon Tiger Hall, it's as if fresh water has been injected, giving many people hope for the future. In this regard, you've done very well."

Tong Zhentian nodded and said, "We hope you all continue to support our Dragon Tiger Hall, and we will certainly live up to expectations, revitalizing the Martial Arts."

"That's for the best, or it would have been a waste for us two old guys to come all this way."

"Alright, we've met, and the wine has been drunk. Tong, let's go rest now." Golden Dragon slowly stood up, "At this age, the body can't handle much hassle, sitting on a train all day has almost shaken my old bones apart."

"I'll show the two elders to the guest room."

"No need." Wang Teng waved his hand, "Having disciples attend to us is enough, you've all been busy for a day, go rest."

"Then safe travels, we won't see you off."

After watching Golden Dragon and the others leave, Ling Chen slowly exhaled, picked up a bottle of Moutai, and poured himself a glass. After downing the drink, he licked his somewhat dry lips and asked, "Elder Tong, who exactly are these people?"

"They are truly hidden masters." Tong Zhentian said, "Golden Dragon and Wang Teng are veterans who made their names decades ago, but later grew weary of the stagnant Martial Arts and retreated to the mountains to cultivate disciples. Ling Chen, do you know how old these two elders are?"

Ling Chen thought for a moment, "They must be over ninety, at least."

Tong Zhentian shook his head, "They withdrew from the Martial Arts when they were already over sixty, and I was just over twenty back then."

Upon hearing this, Ling Chen was taken aback, full of surprise, "So they're over a hundred years old?"

"Indeed. I've always told you, Huaxia is vast and full of hidden talents. Those living secluded in the mountains are the true masters."

He Ziyun curiously asked, "Elder Tong, why have you never mentioned them before?"

"They've been reclusive for decades, I thought they were all dead, who knew they would suddenly come knocking today. To be honest, when I first saw them, I was quite startled myself."

Upon hearing this, Ling Chen felt a stir within and asked, "Elder Tong, you say they came to us on their own initiative?"

"Yes."

"Then what do they want? They wouldn't come here for no reason, traveling from afar to Beijing must have some purpose."

"Didn't we just say? They came to support the Dragon Tiger Hall."

"Elder Tong, you're a man of the world, do you really believe what they're saying?" Ling Chen said, "The Dragon Tiger Hall has no relationship with them, nor have we ever interacted. Now, these people suddenly come over, claiming they want to support us, don't you find that strange?"

"You're right, it's indeed strange. However, I haven't figured out their true intentions yet. Anyway, they're senior figures in the Martial Arts, and we juniors should give them some respect. Besides, they won't leave anytime soon, so I'll interact with them more and try to figure out their motives."

At this point, Tong Zhentian shifted the topic, "Today was the first day of the Martial Arts Tournament. Although it went smoothly, we cannot afford to be complacent. Earlier, while walking around the venue, I saw many masters who rarely appear in the Martial Arts world, you all need to be extra vigilant."

Ling Chen touched his nose and smiled wryly, "It seems like this Martial Arts Tournament has gathered all sorts of characters, I wonder if that's a blessing or a curse."

"If you put it that way, it shows you don't fully understand the current situation of the Martial Arts world." Tong Zhentian said solemnly, "Hundreds of years ago, the Martial Arts was very prosperous, with tens of thousands of martial artists roaming the Jianghu. Within this, many families and sects rose up. After hundreds of years, these families and sects have had descendants. However, they don't wander the Martial Arts world, but live in major cities like ordinary people. Since their ancestors were in the Martial Arts, why have they all faded away this generation? Tired of it?"

Tong Zhentian shook his head to himself, "No! They're not tired of the Martial Arts, it's because there's no benefit in it anymore. Martial artists seek nothing but fame and fortune. If the Martial Arts can't

bring fame or fortune, who would want to join? However, once the Martial Arts rises again, fame and fortune will naturally follow. Then, many will surely step into the Martial Arts world, vying for fame and fortune. In fact, the reason this Martial Arts Tournament has attracted so many reclusive masters is because those people want to see the development trend of the entire Martial Arts world firsthand, to see if there's sufficient profit. Just wait and see, after the Martial Arts Tournament ends, many factions will surely reopen their doors."

"In that case, it's a good thing." Ling Chen said with a smile.

"You can't say it like that; everything has two sides. As for what the future holds, no one can say for sure. What we can do now is to do our jobs well. Alright! You've all worked hard today, go rest."

After leaving the hotel, Ling Chen went straight to a branch of the Dragon Tiger Hall. Upon returning to his bedroom, Ling Chen took a shower and then lay on the bed. Perhaps due to the day's busyness, he soon fell into a deep sleep.

Early the next morning.

Rubbing his sleepy eyes, Ling Chen looked at the time displayed on his phone, precisely five-thirty. Yawning, Ling Chen opened the door and looked outside into the darkness, shaking his head helplessly. With the Martial Arts Tournament ongoing, sleeping in was out of the question.

Arriving at the dining room, the chef had already prepared breakfast. Ling Chen glanced at the empty dining room, feeling a bit puzzled as to why Mr. He hadn't gotten up yet. He usually woke up the earliest. After finishing breakfast, Ling Chen checked the time; it was time to head to the venue, but He Ziyun still hadn't appeared.

Chapter 1559 - 1864: Karma (1)

Not long after, Ling Chen arrived at He Ziyun's room, gently knocked on the door, and called out, "Mr. He, it's time to go."

"Come in first." Hearing He Ziyun's voice from inside, Ling Chen immediately pushed the door open and went in. However, as soon as he entered, he was stunned by the scene before him. In the spacious room, He Ziyun was sitting on a chair, and behind him stood a stranger. That man held a dagger to He Ziyun's neck, coldly staring at Ling Chen.

"Who are you?" After a momentary daze, Ling Chen quickly regained his composure and said in a deep voice, "Let Mr. He go."

The man shook his head and said, "I can let him go, but not now. Ling Chen, if you don't want him dead, you'd better cooperate with me."

"What do you want?"

"Aren't you going to the venue? Take me in with you."

Upon hearing this, Ling Chen glanced at He Ziyun, who slightly shook his head, indicating not to comply. The man seemed to notice He Ziyun's small gesture and sneered, "Don't try any tricks on me, or I won't hesitate to kill you both."

Ling Chen frowned slightly, trying to find an opportunity to rescue He Ziyun. However, the dagger remained at He Ziyun's throat. Moreover, if Ling Chen guessed correctly, the strength of this mysterious man should not be weak. It's important to note that He Ziyun was an Earthly List expert, yet the man easily subdued him without a sound, meaning He Ziyun hadn't resisted much before being controlled.

As his thoughts raced, Ling Chen nodded and said, "Fine, I'll take you to the venue, but you must promise not to harm a single hair on Mr. He."

"Don't worry, as long as you follow orders, I won't kill. It's getting late; we should get moving."

After leaving the room, Ling Chen drove his car to the entrance. Before long, the man emerged with He Ziyun, directly seating him in the back compartment. The man concealed the dagger well, making it seem like he was He Ziyun's follower, not giving away that He Ziyun was being held hostage.

Once in the car, Ling Chen slowly merged onto the road, looking at the man in the rearview mirror, and asked, "Who are you?"

"That's none of your concern. Just take me to the venue and your job is done." After speaking, the man pointed at the intersection ahead and said, "Turn left up ahead, I need to pick something up."

After driving for about ten minutes, the man looked out the car window and suddenly shouted to stop. Meanwhile, a young man hurriedly approached from the roadside, handing a briefcase to the man through the window.

"Alright, we can go now."

However, Ling Chen didn't start the car. Instead, he turned off the engine and parked by the roadside. Seeing this, the man's expression darkened, and he said coldly, "What are you doing? I told you to drive. Didn't you understand?"

Ling Chen remained unfazed and said, "I can drive, but I must know what's inside the briefcase. While I don't know what you intend to do, if you're planning to use us to conduct sabotage at the venue, I'm sorry, I can't allow that."

"Really?" The man raised the dagger to He Ziyun's throat and said coldly, "Do you want to watch him die?"

"If sacrificing one person can save hundreds or thousands from danger, I'd do it. I believe Mr. He would support my decision as well. As for you..." Ling Chen turned his head, looking into the man's eyes and said, "Killing him means you'll die too. Is a life for a life worth it? I'd say, while no one has lost anything yet, you should call it off."

"Call it off? You're dreaming." The man snorted coldly, "I'm telling you, I'm not afraid to die. Xie Qian is an example; each of us is willing to sacrifice. If our goals aren't met, then living holds no meaning for us."

Xie Qian! Hearing the mention of this name, Ling Chen's gaze hardened. So, this man is in cahoots with Xie Qian.

"Who's behind you? Why oppose us?"

"Let me tell you, it's not you we're after; you're just collateral. You're paying the price for aligning with the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. Since this is the case, don't blame us for not being courteous."

Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion? Ling Chen suddenly realized, so these people are ultimately targeting the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. What has the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion done to incur such enmity from so many experts?

"Take me into the venue, and I guarantee you won't be harmed. Also, let me give you a piece of advice: cut ties with the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion soon to avoid trouble."

"Sorry." After pondering for a moment, Ling Chen shook his head and said, "I can't fulfill your request. I'm not protecting the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion; I'm protecting the innocent audience at the venue. In any case, I won't let them be in danger. So, you'd best give up."

"Ling Chen, aren't you afraid to die?"

"Afraid? Of course, I'm afraid to die, but I won't harm innocent people to save my own skin. Isn't that right, Mr. He?"

He Ziyun chimed in, "Friend, threatening us won't work. I've lived long enough; if you want to kill, just do it, I won't even frown. However, if you have a shred of conscience, you'd better stop immediately and not harm the innocent."

"Innocent?" The man chuckled coldly and said, "Back then, we were innocent too, but what did the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion do to us? Since they were ruthless, don't blame me for being unjust." Without waiting for Ling Chen and He Ziyun to respond, the man suddenly delivered a karate chop to He Ziyun's neck. With a muffled groan, He Ziyun immediately passed out. Seeing this, Ling Chen's expression changed, but before he could speak, the man's fist had already struck.

Instantly, Ling Chen's vision went dark, and he was knocked unconscious.

After a while, Ling Chen slowly opened his eyes, scanning the surroundings. At this moment, both he and He Ziyun were placed in the car's trunk, their hands and feet bound with ropes. It was probably the man driving, as the road was a bit bumpy, swaying back and forth.

"Mr. He, Mr. He." Ling Chen gently called out to He Ziyun. Before long, He Ziyun regained consciousness.

"How are you?"

"I'm fine. How did you wake up so quickly?"

Ling Chen smiled faintly. His strength had long entered the Heavenly List. Although the man was ruthless earlier, it was nothing to Ling Chen, who quickly recovered. As his mind whirled, he switched topics, saying, "Mr. He, where do you think he's taking us?"

"How could I guess that?"

"All the way, he's been stopping and going, at a not so fast pace, indicating there are plenty of vehicles around. If I'm not mistaken, he should be heading towards the venue."

"To the venue?" He Ziyun said in a deep voice, "Is he still not giving up?"

Chapter 1560 - 1865: Karma (2)

"Who knows what he's thinking, maybe he's got other plans."

After more than ten minutes, the car seemed to arrive outside the venue and slowly came to a stop. Hearing the sound of the car door opening, Ling Chen gave He Ziyun a brief instruction, and the two immediately closed their eyes again, pretending to still be unconscious.

Soon, the trunk was opened from outside. The man took a look at the unconscious Ling Chen and He Ziyun, hesitated slightly, then untied the ropes on their bodies and slung them over his shoulders one by one, running toward the VIP passage of the venue.

As he ran, Ling Chen opened his eyes and glanced around, seeing the VIP passage not far ahead. At the same time, he heard the man shouting anxiously at the top of his lungs, "Quick, someone come help!"

Hearing his shout, the staff guarding beside the VIP passage immediately rushed over. Everyone was familiar with Ling Chen and He Ziyun and recognized them at a glance. "What happened to them?" one staff member asked urgently.

"I don't know. When I found them just now, they were already unconscious." As he spoke, the man handed He Ziyun over to the other staff members and himself carried Ling Chen at a quick pace toward the passage. At this moment, everyone's attention was focused on Ling Chen and He Ziyun; no one thought to ask about the man's identity.

Once inside the venue, a few people could be seen hurrying over from the direction of the main command center. It was Su Mei, Du Kang, and Tong Zhentian. After receiving notice from the staff, they had rushed over immediately.

Seeing the three of them, the man quickly put Ling Chen down on the ground, preparing to slip away while no one was paying attention. However, just then, Ling Chen, who had been feigning unconsciousness the whole time, suddenly snapped his eyes open and grabbed the man's wrist in one move. At the same time, He Ziyun sprang up from the ground, dashed in front of the man, and launched a punch.

This sudden turn of events caught the man completely off guard, and unprepared, he was forced back several steps by He Ziyun.

By now, Su Mei and the other two had already arrived. Seeing what was happening before them, the three had looks of shock and confusion on their faces, not understanding what was going on.

"Elder Du, Elder Tong, grab him, don't let him escape!"

At Ling Chen's reminder, Du Kang and Tong Zhentian rushed forward without a word, flanking the man from left and right.

Catching his breath, He Ziyun said, "Elder Tong, be careful, this guy's skills are really strong."

Seeing Du Kang and Tong Zhentian slowly closing in on him, the man clenched his teeth, his sharp gaze locking directly onto Su Mei. Then, with a light tap of his toes, his speed exploded, like a flash of lightning, and he rushed to Su Mei in an instant, his palm slapping toward her forehead. Although Su Mei was the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion Master, she had never practiced martial arts. Watching the man attack, she stood there in a daze, as if stunned. At this critical moment, Du Kang and Tong Zhentian rushed in from both sides, blocking the man's strike.

"You've got some nerve, daring to harm our Pavilion Master." Du Kang said coldly. Both his fists shot out together, like dragons probing the sea, swallowing mountains and rivers, with a ferocious momentum. Seeing this, the man actually did not dodge. Joining his fingers into a sword hand, he lightly pointed, and a thin strand of Qi Force instantly shot out like electricity, straight toward Du Kang.

Watching that Qi Force shoot over so quickly, Du Kang's expression changed, and he hastily twisted his waist, dodging its attack. As the Qi Force struck the ground, a finger-sized hole was blasted into the floor.

"What a Sword Yang Finger!" Du Kang's feet tapped rapidly as he closed in again, his fierce fists thundering out one after another, leaving the opponent only able to parry.

At this moment, Tong Zhentian suddenly circled to the side and launched an attack from behind. With two Heavenly List experts striking at once, even though the man's strength was not weak, he was no match for the two of them. Very soon, Du Kang spotted an opening and sent a punch crashing out, landing squarely on the man's body.

As soon as the man hit the ground, Tong Zhentian rushed up, seized both his hands, and immobilized him. "Someone, take him!"

Soon, several Dragon Tiger Hall Disciples rushed over and used ropes to bind the man tightly.

"Elder Tong, could you hand this person over to our Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion to deal with?" Su Mei said.

"Oh?" Tong Zhentian asked. "The Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion wants to interrogate him separately?"

Su Mei nodded and said, "Elder Tong, don't worry. Once we have results, we'll definitely inform you."

"No." Beside them, Ling Chen shook his head. "Master Su, I'm sorry, but this man is with Xie Qian. Earlier, he kidnapped Mr. He and tried to use us to infiltrate the venue. If you want to interrogate him, fine—but we all need to be present. Besides that, there are some things I'd like to ask Master Su."

With Ling Chen speaking up, Tong Zhentian immediately said, "Master Su, I also think that would be best."

Su Mei glanced at Du Kang beside her, her expression slightly hesitant. After a moment, Du Kang stepped up to her, leaned in, and whispered a few words. No one knew what he said, but Su Mei gave a small nod and said, "All right then, since everyone's interested, we'll do it together."

"Mr. He, take this man down first. Watch him closely and don't let him escape under any circumstances."

It was the second day of the Martial Arts Tournament, and everyone still had many things to handle. They had no time to interrogate the man and could only wait until night.

By a little after nine, the venue was gradually growing lively. The audience coming to attend the tournament outnumbered even yesterday; heads stretched as far as the eye could see, a dense black mass of people. For the entire day, Ling Chen stayed in the main command center, monitoring the situation in the venue through the surveillance feeds. To his relief, although there were a few minor incidents throughout the day, there were no major problems.

Around seven in the evening, Ling Chen finally relaxed, sitting alone in a chair in the command center to rest. After a while, when all the audience had left the venue, Su Mei, Du Kang, Tong Zhentian, and the others arrived at the main command center one after another.

After everyone had taken a short break, He Ziyun led the man in from outside.

Looking at the people seated in front of him, the man showed no fear and said coldly, "If you want to kill me, then do it. Don't dream of getting any information out of me."

"No rush." Ling Chen smiled faintly and brought out the briefcase the man had been carrying. Opening it, they saw a device inside, along with two bottles of dark green liquid.

"Ling Chen, what is that?" Tong Zhentian asked.

"Poison gas," Ling Chen explained. "Once these two liquids are mixed, they produce a high-intensity toxic gas. In mild cases, the victim will be bedridden for half a month; in severe cases, they'll be completely paralyzed. The dose in here is enough to cover a radius of a hundred meters. If it were detonated inside the venue, the victims would number in the thousands."

Hearing this, everyone's expressions changed. Thankfully, they had thwarted the man's plot in time; otherwise, the consequences would have been unimaginable.