

The Beauty 1561

Chapter 1561: Karma (3)

"Speak, who exactly are you?" Tong Zhentian suddenly stood up, staring at the man and said, "Why did you do such a vicious thing? As someone who practices martial arts, if you cause so many deaths and injuries, can your conscience rest easy?"

The man replied coldly, "This kind of poison won't take lives. If I were really vicious, I wouldn't have used this thing."

"You..."

Tong Zhentian's face turned angry, and he wanted to speak, but Ling Chen stopped him. "Elder Tong, please don't get agitated yet. I think we still need to ask Master Su about this."

"Ask me?" Su Mei looked puzzled at Ling Chen and asked, "Ask me what?"

"Master Su, if I'm not mistaken, I think you should know some inside information. At this point, do you still intend to hide it?" Ling Chen pointed at the man and said, "Earlier I talked with him, and he said that he did all this to take revenge on your Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. So, I'm very curious, what on earth did your Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion do to make them hold such a grudge?"

Upon hearing this, Su Mei couldn't help but exchange a glance with Du Kang. After hesitating for a moment, Su Mei said, "Elder Du, perhaps it's better if you explain."

Du Kang nodded and said, "Alright. Since everyone wants to know, I might as well tell you. Since the Martial Arts Tournament started, we've been attacked by three people: one is Xie Qian, another is the man who injured staff at the venue that day, and the third is this man today. The martial arts they used are the Meridian Soul Stealing Needle, Blood Phoenix Fist, and Sword Yang Finger. Some of you present might have heard of these martial arts, some may not have, but they are all martial arts that have long since disappeared."

After pausing for a moment, Du Kang continued, "The Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion has been established for hundreds of years, always helping to eliminate threats in the Martial Arts world. Some masters use their powerful abilities to commit all sorts of evil, and these people are the main targets the

Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion strikes against. The original masters of the Meridian Soul Stealing Needle, Blood Phoenix Fist, and Sword Yang Finger were all villains in the martial arts world, each with several lives on their hands. At that time, the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion dispatched Heavenly List experts to lead teams to exterminate these villains. Over the years, there have been many actions like this, always successful, and those villains who wreaked havoc in the martial arts world never had a good end."

"Humph!" After listening to Du Kang's account, the man sneered and said coldly, "Sounds so nice. If you only eliminated villains, I believe no one would seek revenge on you. But why do you have to eradicate even their families?"

Hearing this, everyone's face in the room changed slightly.

Eradicate even the roots! Such a ruthless approach.

Du Kang responded, "The Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion must prevent future trouble and cannot allow potential enemies and threats to form. Actually, while we were exterminating those villains, we discovered some issues. It seems that someone secretly helped these villains, secretly saving their descendants. Over the years, since nothing happened, we all chose to ignore it and didn't conduct further investigation. Now it appears that those who were saved were likely taken in by a certain force, secretly trained, and then sought an opportunity for revenge."

"How many people like this are there?" Tong Zhentian asked.

"I'm not sure, maybe a dozen, maybe more than twenty. However, what I'm more curious about is where they learned these martial arts from. Those villains were all eliminated by the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion; it's impossible for each one to leave behind their martial arts manuals before they died." As he said this, Du Kang cast his gaze on the man in front of him, seemingly hoping for an answer.

"That's because someone approached them back then and made a pact with them. One day, if they were killed, those people would take care of their families and then pass on their skills, and then find people to seek revenge. Because of this pact, they handed their martial arts to those people, which is how we were able to learn these things."

After listening to the man's explanation, everyone suddenly understood; so that's the reason.

"Who exactly are those people you mentioned?" Ling Chen asked.

"There's no need to ask, even if you asked I wouldn't tell you, and besides, I don't even know who they are, so there's no need to waste your effort on me."

Su Mei spoke calmly, "Back then, those villains committed all sorts of evil, and who knows how many innocent people died at their hands. If everyone were like you, seeking revenge for their families, you'd all be dead by now. If you do something wrong, you should pay the price. Don't you understand such a simple truth?"

"No!" At this point, Du Kang seemed to think of something and said, "The martial art you're using is the Sword Yang Finger. If I remember correctly, the owner of this martial art was named Li Chongqing. Back then, he did a lot of bad things but didn't take any lives. Therefore, the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion only punished him with some penalties, but did not kill him. Why are you seeking revenge on the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion?"

"Nonsense," the man angrily shouted, "It's clear that you killed him, even my innocent mother was killed by you, and you still want to argue?"

Tong Zhentian cleared his throat and said, "Mr. Du, since the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion acted, don't deny it."

Du Kang shook his head and said, "If it were truly done by the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, we wouldn't argue, but Li Chongqing was indeed not killed by us."

"How can you guarantee what you say?"

"Because the person sent to find Li Chongqing back then was me," Du Kang said. "I can be one hundred percent sure that at the time I did not kill Li Chongqing; I just crippled his martial arts, so he could no longer continue his misdeeds. When I left, he and his wife were both fine, nothing happened to them."

"You're lying, you killed my father, and even hung his body on a tree and whipped it. Only people like you from the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion could do such cruel things."

"I think I've got it figured out." Ling Chen slowly stood up from his seat and said, "I trust Elder Du's character, so I do not doubt his words." With that, Ling Chen turned his gaze toward the man and said, "If I'm not mistaken, someone impersonated the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, killed your parents, and then cruelly treated them to frame the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion and invoke your sense of hatred. Tell me, what did the people who found you say at the time?"

The man, full of resentment, said, "They told me that the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion killed my parents. As long as I followed them, I would have the chance to take my revenge. Over the years, I've trained tirelessly, just so that one day I could destroy the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion and avenge my parents."

"Do you know how many people like you there are?"

"Many, very many, at least I know of dozens."

Chapter 1562: Li Haibin (1)

"I ask you, were the families of those people brutally tortured?" Ling Chen continued to ask.

"That's right!" The man nodded and said, "All of this was done by the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion."

"You've been deceived." Du Kang sighed softly and said, "The Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion only ordered the elimination of a little more than twenty evildoers. There's no way it's as many as you claim."

"Elder Du is correct." Ling Chen chimed in, "Think about it yourself. If your father committed crimes and he died, it would be his own fault. I think even if you're grieving inside, you wouldn't think of revenge. Because you know in your heart, your father brought it upon himself, to blame no one. But if your father was not only killed but his body was cruelly abused, any person with filial piety would be incredibly angry and thus fuel the hatred in their heart. Indeed, the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion may have acted improperly, but I believe the people of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion wouldn't be so idle to kill someone and then torture their bodies. Besides, if they really wanted to cover up, they could have burned the body, leaving you nothing to see. So, I think someone deliberately did this and persuaded you to seek revenge."

"For years, your eyes have been clouded by hatred. If you think carefully, you should find many flaws."

After listening to Ling Chen's words, everyone nodded. Looking at the man again, his eyes flickered as if he was lost in thought.

Ling Chen observed the man's expression, then walked behind him and untied the ropes on his body.

"You can go."

The man looked up, his gaze complex as he looked at Ling Chen and asked, "You want me to leave?"

"That's right! You're also a pitiful person, just misled by others, so I won't kill you. If possible, I'd like to know more about the people behind you. Of course, that's up to you. If you still choose to trust them, you can continue to assist your father's murderers. But if you have even a shred of reason left, I hope you can make a different choice."

The man hesitated for a moment, but ultimately said nothing and walked straight to the door. As he was about to reach the door, Du Kang suddenly said, "If I'm not mistaken, Li Chongqing had a son back then, named Li Haibin, should be you."

The man's footsteps paused slightly, then he left without looking back.

With Li Haibin's departure, everyone's faces were not very good. They had intended for Li Haibin to talk about those people, and after all, it was like drawing water with a bamboo basket, getting no useful information.

Seeing the disappointed expressions on everyone's faces, Ling Chen smiled slightly and said, "Don't get discouraged, folks. Although we got no other information, we can at least confirm there is indeed a powerful force in the shadows. I believe this force will surface sooner or later."

"Alright, this matter can't be solved in a short time. Everyone stop thinking about it and go back to rest early." After speaking, Tong Zhentian stood up and walked out with Ling Chen and He Ziyun.

In the car, Tong Zhentian looked at Ling Chen and asked, "Did you send someone to follow him?"

Ling Chen replied with a smile, "Elder Tong, the way you say it, do I still need you to worry about such things? I've already arranged it." Earlier, he let Li Haibin leave specifically to send someone to follow him and see where Li Haibin would go. Since Li Haibin's task failed, he will definitely have a contact person. As long as we follow the clues, it's only a matter of time before we find those hidden people.

"That's good." Tong Zhentian nodded and said, "Although I don't know what purpose this force has, it's very terrifying. Being able to hide for decades without exposing themselves is not something anyone can do."

Returning to the Dragon Tiger Hall's branch, Ling Chen hadn't yet had dinner when he received a call from Jiang Yunkai.

"Hello! Chen, that person just entered a hotel, I'm watching from outside."

"Send me the hotel address, I'm coming over right now." With that, Ling Chen hung up the phone and called Chen Junfeng and Zhu Qing. The three of them headed straight to Jiang Yunkai's location.

Not long after, Ling Chen met Jiang Yunkai outside a five-star hotel. Looking at the dozen-or-so-story hotel in front of him, Ling Chen asked, "Do you know what floor that person went to?"

"Eleventh floor, room number 1108. Chen, should we go up and watch?"

"Have you prepared everything?"

Jiang Yunkai pointed to the two large bags in his hand and nodded, "Everything is ready."

"Then let's go." Immediately, the four walked into the hotel, planning to book a room next to Li Haibin's room. However, the lady at the front desk informed them that all rooms were fully booked. Because of the Martial Arts Tournament, all rooms were completely filled, with no vacancy at all.

Ling Chen scratched his head and said, "Looks like we need to think of another plan. Kai, go talk to the owner of that room and see if he'll let us have the room."

"Okay."

A little over ten minutes later, Jiang Yunkai called from upstairs, saying it was settled. Upon reaching the eleventh floor, Ling Chen brought Chen Junfeng and Zhu Qing into the guest room. The room was a mess, as though it hadn't been tidied yet.

"The owner of this room is reasonable. Gave him a few thousand bucks, and he moved out right away." While speaking, Jiang Yunkai took out the equipment from his backpack and set it on the table in the guest room.

Ling Chen was well-versed in this, having dealt with it often when he was with the Phantom. He installed the bug on the wall, adjusted the equipment, and then put on the headphones. Soon, the sound from the next room appeared in the headphones.

At this moment, Li Haibin seemed to be on a phone call, shouting hysterically. Even without eavesdropping, his voice could be heard. After a few minutes, the room next door fell into silence, with no sound coming for a long time.

Ling Chen sat in the guest room patiently waiting. He was confident that sooner or later someone would come to find Li Haibin.

"Chen, the hotel's surveillance system is connected," Jiang Yunkai said.

Ling Chen looked at the notebook on the table, which displayed the surveillance footage of the corridor on the eleventh floor. "Kai, order some takeout, haven't had dinner yet, stomach's starving."

Unknowingly, three hours had passed, and the room next door remained silent. At this point, Jiang Yunkai, who had been watching the surveillance footage, shouted: "Chen, someone's coming."

Upon hearing this, Ling Chen and the others urgently gathered around the computer screen. At this moment, a middle-aged man in a Zhongshan suit emerged from the elevator and headed directly to Li Haibin's guest room. Upon reaching the door, the middle-aged man gently knocked on it. Soon, the door opened, and without pause, the middle-aged man walked straight in.

Seeing both of them enter the room, Ling Chen immediately put on his headphones to monitor the commotion next door.

Chapter 1563: Li Haibin (2)

"Haibin, what's going on?" The middle-aged man's voice came through the eavesdropper: "You know the rules, if unnecessary, it's best not to meet."

"I know the rules, but I want to ask you something, and you must tell me the truth."

"Tell me, how did my father die all those years ago."

"Haibin, haven't we told you? It was people from the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion who killed your father. Although your father did some bad things, the Pavilion's behavior was truly outrageous. Not only did they kill your father, but they also insulted his corpse. As his son, you should avenge him."

"I don't want to hear those words, you've been telling me the same thing for years, and I'm tired of it. Didn't you say my father was an assassin under the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion? Fine, then tell me, who in the Pavilion killed my father?"

"Du Kang. He's a veteran of the Pavilion, an elder of Yangxin Pavilion, very powerful. He was the one ordered to kill your father."

"Then why didn't they just burn my father's corpse? Instead, they hung him on a tree."

"The Pavilion did it as a demonstration."

"A demonstration? Guo Hong, don't you think that's ridiculous? What is the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion? They maintain an aloof status in the martial arts world because they uphold justice and earn people's trust. Do you think they'd use such cruel methods to demonstrate? Unless the Pavilion Master has lost his mind, he'd ruin their reputation with such actions."

"Haibin, what's going on with you? Weren't you supposed to infiltrate the Martial Arts Tournament and detonate that gas bomb? Where are all these questions coming from? Come clean with me, did someone say something to you?"

"No one said anything to me, just tell me if there's more to my father's death than it seems."

"I'm not very clear on this, but if you want to know, you can find the Chief after completing the mission; he'll tell you the truth." After a pause, the man named Guo Hong continued: "Haibin, don't say I didn't warn you, if you don't complete the mission, you know the consequences. You know what happened to Xie Qian, don't follow in his footsteps."

"I won't do anything until this is clear," Li Haibin's tone was resolute.

"You... what can I say to you." Guo Hong's words carried a hint of anger. After a moment of silence, Guo Hong spoke again: "Stay put in the room, I'm going out to make a call, I'll get back to you later." With that, a door closing sound echoed.

Watching the monitoring screen on the computer, Guo Hong stood outside for a while before walking back into the room, saying: "I just contacted the Chief. Since you want to know the truth, alright, in an hour, he'll tell you where to meet him. You go and talk to him."

"Is the Chief also in Beijing?"

"Of course! Such an important operation, the Chief has to command it personally. Alright! Stop overthinking it, once you meet the Chief, everything will be clear; have a good rest, and complete the mission quickly, don't let us down." After speaking, Guo Hong left the room directly.

As he watched Guo Hong enter the elevator via the surveillance, Jiang Yunkai asked, "Chen, should I follow him?"

"No need for you to go, Zhu Qing, this one is yours, find out where he lives, don't let him notice," Ling Chen said. Jiang Yunkai's skills were somewhat lacking; if his identity were exposed, it would be troublesome. Zhu Qing had an assassin background, adept at hiding. In the right environment, even Heavenly List experts could not necessarily spot her.

Half an hour after Zhu Qing left, Ling Chen received a phone call from her.

"Okay, I got it, be careful," After hanging up, Jiang Yunkai said, "Chen, Li Haibin is leaving, should we follow him?"

"No need, I know where he's going." As Li Haibin left the guest room, Ling Chen took Chen Junfeng and Jiang Yunkai out of the hotel, proceeded to their car, and drove to the destination. Over ten minutes later, the trio arrived outside a secluded alley.

After parking, Ling Chen glanced at the surroundings and instructed: "Kai, you stay in the car and keep an eye on the area. Sir Chen, let's go!"

The two walked through the alley to an abandoned residential building opposite. The surrounding buildings were many, all slated for demolition, and the residents had moved out. At that moment, the whole area was in darkness, not a soul around.

Before long, a person appeared on the open ground between residential buildings, it was Li Haibin. At this moment, a car slowly approached, stopping beside Li Haibin. The car door opened, and a middle-aged man stepped out from the driver's seat.

Seeing the newcomer, Li Haibin's face changed slightly, he frowned and said, "Why is it you? Didn't you say the Chief wanted to see me?"

Guo Hong shook his head and sighed softly, saying, "Haibin, you disappoint me so much. I initially saw you as my right-hand man, but unfortunately, you're too unambitious. You're suspicious, questioning us where you shouldn't. What we need is absolute loyalty, and you lack that, so... I'm sorry."

"You..." Li Haibin opened his mouth, wanting to say more. But before he could speak, there was a 'swish' sound, followed by an arrow piercing through Guo Hong's body.

Watching the sharp arrowhead protruding from his chest, Guo Hong froze momentarily, turned his head in disbelief. About five meters away, a shadow slowly rose from the ground, holding a crossbow.

"What's going on?" Seeing the scene unfold before him, Li Haibin was completely stunned, standing there at a loss.

"You still don't understand? He wanted to kill you." A voice came, Li Haibin quickly turned his head, only to see Ling Chen stepping out from the darkened building.

"It's you!"

"Ling... Ling Chen..." Guo Hong's face changed slightly, he urgently said: "Haibin, hurry, kill them." As soon as he spoke, his face suddenly turned pale, he spat out a mouthful of blood and collapsed to the ground.

Li Haibin shielded Guo Hong, glaring coldly at Ling Chen and crossbow-wielding Zhu Qing, saying, "How did you know I was here?"

"Ever since you left the venue, I've had someone tail you. Maybe you were too flustered to notice at the time," Ling Chen approached, saying: "At this point, haven't you realized? Guo Hong invited you out with the intent to kill you, because you've become suspicious."

"No, I... I haven't, Haibin, don't listen to his nonsense, quick... kill him..." Guo Hong weakly uttered.

Chapter 1564 Li Haibin (3)

Looking at Guo Hong's weak appearance, Li Haibin said sternly, "What's wrong with you?"

"He's been poisoned. The poison was originally meant for you." As Ling Chen's words fell, Chen Junfeng walked out from behind, carrying a corpse in each hand. At the same time, Zhu Qing dragged a body in front of Li Haibin.

"You see, these people are all ambushes arranged by Guo Hong. If we hadn't arrived in time to eliminate these threats for you, that poison arrow would have been aimed at you. Although you're very skilled, at such a close range, you wouldn't have been able to dodge it."

"No... That's impossible. Why would he want to kill me?"

"I just said, because you've started to doubt about your parents' death, he wants to silence you. Before, at the hotel, didn't he say he was going to consult some big leader? Look! See for yourself." Ling Chen handed over the phone to Li Haibin, which was playing the hotel's surveillance footage.

"You see, Guo Hong didn't make any phone call after he left your room. Everything is just his conspiracy."

After watching the surveillance video on the phone, Li Haibin suddenly turned his head, looking at Guo Hong lying on the ground, and said coldly, "Why? Why did you deceive me? Is it really like they said, that my parents were killed by you?"

"No, don't listen to their nonsense, it's not like that..." Guo Hong gritted his teeth, suppressing his trembling body, stuttered.

"Still won't tell the truth?" Ling Chen took out a bottle of medicine and said, "This is the antidote. As long as you tell the truth, I'll hand it over to you immediately. You should know how potent this toxin is. If you don't start talking, it may be too late for anything."

"I... I..." Seeing the antidote in Ling Chen's hand, Guo Hong hesitated. Seeing Guo Hong's reaction, Li Haibin snatched the antidote from Ling Chen's hand, opened the lid, and began to pour it out slowly.

"Haibin, you... what are you doing?" Guo Hong was shocked by Li Haibin's actions.

"If you still don't speak, even if you want to say it later, no antidote will be able to save your life."

"Okay, okay, I'll talk, I'll say everything." Guo Hong finally panicked and hurriedly said, "Yes, it's true. Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion didn't kill your parents. It was all done by the big leader and his people. Haibin, these things have nothing to do with me. I'm just a small figure, responsible for running errands for them. If you want revenge, go after the big leader."

"Bastard!" After hearing Guo Hong's words, Li Haibin's face turned extremely red, eyes blazing with fury, uncontrollably roaring, "I trusted you so much, and you deceived me, making me work for my parents' murderer. I... I want to kill you!" With that, Li Haibin swung his fist, aiming straight at Guo Hong's head.

"Stop!" Chen Junfeng gave a light shout and rushed forward, blocking Li Haibin's attack.

"What are you doing?" Li Haibin glared at Chen Junfeng.

"Now is not the time to kill him." Ling Chen said from the side, "He's about your age, so it's impossible for him to have participated in killing your father. All the guilt belongs to that big leader. If you want to avenge your parents, it's best to interrogate him first, maybe you can get a lot of intelligence from his mouth."

Hearing this, Li Haibin reluctantly retracted his fist and slowly calmed his anger.

"I'm asking you, who is the big leader you mentioned?"

Faced with Ling Chen's inquiry, Guo Hong shook his head and said, "I don't know. We communicate through phone calls. Even when we met, he wore a mask, so it's impossible to see his true face."

Ling Chen continued to ask, "Where do you usually meet?"

"The meeting place is always notified by the big leader in advance. Every time he would take the initiative to call me out to meet. In all these years, I've met him only twice."

"Don't you have his number? Call him and arrange a meeting."

"It's useless. I just said, unless the big leader takes the initiative to bring up the meeting, no one can meet him. If you mention meeting on the phone, it would only make him suspicious." Pausing, Guo Hong continued, "The big leader is a very cautious person. Honestly, even though we've met twice, I'm not sure if that was really the big leader himself. Perhaps he just found someone to wear the mask. Among us, the identity of the big leader is always a secret, no one has ever seen his true face."

Ling Chen nodded secretly, Guo Hong's expression didn't seem like he was lying, "Then I ask you, what is your organization called, how long has it been established?"

"We don't have an official name, usually referred to as the Dark Pavilion. As far as I know, the Dark Pavilion has a history of about a hundred years." As soon as he finished speaking, Guo Hong suddenly coughed up blood, the vitality in his eyes slowly fading away.

Seeing Guo Hong's dying state, Ling Chen patted Li Haibin on the shoulder, and the latter handed over the antidote, allowing him to take it.

After drinking the antidote, Guo Hong lay on the ground, closed his eyes, and seemed to enter a state of slumber.

"Ling Chen, should we take him back first?" Zhu Qing asked from the side.

"Don't rush." With this, Ling Chen walked to Guo Hong, lifting his upper body, and opened Guo Hong's mouth. After a while of searching, Ling Chen quickly discovered the poison sac hidden within his teeth. Due to Xie Qian's incident last time, Ling Chen was cautious this time. However, this Guo Hong was different from Xie Qian, the latter was loyal, while the former was cowardly, otherwise, he wouldn't have begged them for the antidote.

After removing the poison sac, Ling Chen then carried Guo Hong's body straight to the car.

"Thank you!"

Sitting in the car, Li Haibin, who had been silent all this time, suddenly uttered these three words.

Ling Chen smiled slightly and said, "No need to thank me. Actually, my purpose is quite similar to yours, both of us want to uncover the truth." After a pause, Ling Chen changed the topic, asking, "By the way, what's your relationship with Guo Hong?"

"He's my supervisor. All my tasks are conveyed by him. If I need anything, I reach out to him directly."

"You mean... besides Guo Hong, you have no contact with anyone else?"

Li Haibin shook his head, "No. Although I know others exist, I can't contact them. In this regard, the Dark Pavilion is very cautious."

"So, the only breakthrough lies with Guo Hong." Ling Chen stroked his chin, pondering internally. Nevertheless, they finally had some understanding of this mysterious force.

The big leader... thinking of the title Guo Hong constantly mentioned, this big leader should be the head of the Dark Pavilion. However, that guy is quite cautious, actually wearing a mask, so no one knows his true identity.

Chapter 1565 Dark Pavilion (1)

Back at the Beijing branch of the Dragon Tiger Hall, Ling Chen brought Guo Hong into a room and tossed him onto the bed. Although he had taken the antidote and cleared the toxins from his body, he was still weak, pale, and completely devoid of strength.

After a while, when Guo Hong gradually regained consciousness, Ling Chen found a chair, placed it beside the bed, and asked, "Feeling better?"

Guo Hong slowly sat up in bed and asked weakly, "What more do you want?"

"I'm very interested in the Dark Pavilion. You're the one who knows it best, so I hope you can tell me about it. In return, I can help you change your identity and escape the Dark Pavilion to live a better life. How about it?"

Upon hearing Ling Chen's proposal, Guo Hong hesitated for a moment, then slowly nodded and said, "Okay. But don't have too high hopes for me. Although I'm part of the Dark Pavilion, I don't know much about it. The Dark Pavilion has existed for over a hundred years, yet nobody knows who founded it. The hierarchy is clear; people like Li Haibin and Xie Qian are at the lowest level. I am slightly above them as a messenger of the Dark Pavilion, tasked with transmitting orders and monitoring those beneath us. If any of them act suspiciously, we must immediately take action, just like Li Haibin. Once he showed any doubt towards the Dark Pavilion, he had to be dealt with immediately."

"The leader of the Dark Pavilion is called the Great Leader, and beneath him are the Second Leader and Third Leader—these three are the high-ranking members of the Dark Pavilion. Apart from meeting the Great Leader twice, I've never seen the Second or Third Leader. In sum, their identities are very mysterious."

"Where is the headquarters of the Dark Pavilion?" Ling Chen asked.

"I don't know," Guo Hong shook his head and said. "To be precise, the Dark Pavilion doesn't have a fixed location; everyone communicates by phone."

"By phone? What if someone wants to escape the Dark Pavilion? Wouldn't the Dark Pavilion suffer greatly?"

"No, if anyone even thinks of escaping the Dark Pavilion, they're sure to die. All members have ingested a slow-acting poison, which requires periodic antidotes to alleviate the effects. If they go more than three days without it, they die from the poison. So, no one dares to betray the Dark Pavilion."

So that's how it is! Ling Chen nodded silently. The Dark Pavilion's methods are age-old, yet remarkably effective. After pondering for a moment, Ling Chen asked, "Do you only handle Li Haibin, or are there others?"

"I oversee three people in total: Xie Qian, Li Haibin, and another named Wang Dong. If you want to catch Wang Dong, I can tell you where to find him."

"Go ahead."

Upon obtaining Wang Dong's address, Ling Chen immediately notified Chen Junfeng to head there with Zhu Qing to bring Wang Dong over. Back in the room, Ling Chen had just sat down when a pleasant ringtone suddenly sounded from his pocket.

Hearing the ringtone, Ling Chen glanced at Chen Junfeng, then retrieved a phone from his pocket. Seeing 'Unknown Caller' displayed, Ling Chen handed the phone to Guo Hong and asked, "Whose call is this?"

He had previously found the phone on Guo Hong, so this call was undoubtedly for Guo Hong.

"It should be the Great Leader; his calls never display a number."

Ling Chen nodded, then pressed the answer and speakerphone buttons. Soon, a somewhat raspy voice emerged: "Guo Hong, how did things go? Why wasn't it reported in today's news?"

Guo Hong quickly replied, "Great Leader, the task encountered some issues and couldn't proceed as planned. May I ask for an extension?"

"I have no interest in your issues; I only want to know when you will complete the task."

"Well... I'm still unsure, as the situation is a bit tricky."

"Guo Hong, you've worked for me long enough to know I dislike uncertainty. Tomorrow! That's your final deadline. If by tomorrow night I don't see the report in the news, you won't be serving as a messenger any longer; I'll find someone to replace you." With that said, the caller abruptly hung up.

"You heard him." Guo Hong looked at Ling Chen and said, "Tomorrow is the last deadline. If the task isn't completed, the Great Leader will definitely grow suspicious."

"Don't worry, since I've promised, you won't face any trouble." After pausing, Ling Chen asked, "How many messengers like you are there in the Dark Pavilion?"

"Probably around a dozen, but I'm not certain of the exact number. Due to the Dark Pavilion's rules, messengers seldom interact."

"I have one last question, and I hope you can tell me. The Dark Pavilion consistently targets the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, suggesting the founder of the Dark Pavilion holds an unresolvable grudge against it. But you just mentioned the Dark Pavilion has been around for a century. If that's the case, why haven't they acted against the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion until now?"

"The answer is fairly simple: the Dark Pavilion hesitated because they lack assurance. Previously, the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion was extremely powerful, dominating the Martial Arts world, and few forces dared to openly confront it. The Dark Pavilion didn't want to engage in full-scale war with the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion at its peak, lest they win at a great cost. Such a mutually damaging scenario isn't something they're keen on."

After pausing, Guo Hong continued, "Plus, cultivating personnel takes considerable time. Although the Dark Pavilion's members are few, each is an elite, strong in power. You might not be aware, but the Dark Pavilion has expended significant resources and finances in personnel training. Compared to the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, the Dark Pavilion's spending is about four or five times more. As a result, despite Xie Qian, Wang Dong, and Li Haibin being only in their forties or fifties, their capabilities are top-notch within the Martial Arts world."

Hearing this, Ling Chen asked curiously, "How many Heavenly List experts does the Dark Pavilion have?"

"Heavenly List experts?" Guo Hong seemed to guess Ling Chen's thoughts and shook his head, saying, "I'm not sure exactly how many Heavenly List experts are in this organization, but likely not many. I know what you're thinking. To you, it might seem intimidating that the Dark Pavilion can just send out a few Heavenly List experts like Xie Qian and Li Haibin."

"Hm?" Ling Chen's expression shifted slightly, "What are you implying? Aren't they Heavenly List experts?"

"Of course not. Their actual abilities are only Earthly List level. However, for this mission, a dreadful technique called 'Soul Burning Skills' was forcibly employed, allowing them to boost their strength fivefold within three days. Like Li Haibin now, after the boost, he has reached the Heavenly List level. However, despite the potency of this technique, the cost is also unbearable, costing at least ten years of cultivation."

Ling Chen was slightly astonished and said, "There exist such self-destructive methods in this world? No wonder you can suddenly dispatch so many Heavenly List level experts. That's how it is. But, is it truly worth it?" Indeed, ten years of a cultivator's hardship only in exchange for three days of immense power—unless absolutely necessary, few would willingly choose this path.

Chapter 1566 - 1871: Dark Pavilion (2)

Guo Hong shook his head with a bitter smile, "Who says it isn't? However, for people like us, many times destiny is not something we can control. Especially someone like Li Haibin, who devoted himself wholeheartedly to his cultivation just to take revenge on the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion for that deep-seated hatred. This mission previously seemed that if successful, it could strike the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. For the sake of vengeance, these sacrifices seem worthy to him."

Ling Chen nodded, the methods of this Dark Pavilion truly demand caution. After all, with such methods, they can conjure many destructive experts. Although time is short, just a few days are enough for them to do many things they want. But, what exactly is their aim?

"I understand." After learning some other things, Ling Chen stood up and said, "Thank you for your cooperation, rest assured, I won't go back on my word." With that, Ling Chen turned and walked out of the room.

At this moment, Li Haibin was sitting in the courtyard, staring at the dark night overhead, lost in thought. Ling Chen walked over straight and said, "I have gathered some information from Guo Hong's mouth."

"Probably nothing too important," Li Haibin replied faintly, "I just recalled the past and indeed found many doubts. I was taken away by the Dark Pavilion when I was very young. They took me to a very remote village where there were many children my age with similar experiences. We underwent unified training, it was very strenuous every day. Besides training, nothing was allowed for us. Also, the Dark Pavilion set rules; if we didn't meet their requirements within the deadline, we would face severe punishment. At that time, I witnessed several peers who couldn't endure the punishment and died from pain."

"But at that time, my eyes were already blinded by hatred. I was indifferent to everything. In my heart, it was revenge and nothing but revenge; it was my only motive to live." At that point, Li Haibin seemed to remember something and said, "Back then, someone would come to talk to me every once in a while. At that time, I was clueless, now thinking back, I understand their intentions."

"What happened?"

Li Haibin chuckled mockingly, "Their purpose in speaking with me was simple: brainwashing, to incite hatred within us, to keep us in such a state. Reflecting on it now, it seems my past decades have passed this way. Besides hatred, I had nothing."

Upon hearing that, Ling Chen asked, "Do you still remember the location of that village?"

Li Haibin shook his head and said, "How could I remember? I was only a few years old when I entered, and only left that ghastly place when I was over thirty. Back then, Dark Pavilion arranged a car and hooded me, I couldn't see anything, didn't even know where I was."

"Over thirty... Where did they take you?"

"To a more brutal training site. Those who had breakthrough strengths on the Earthly List were sent there. For over a decade, I stayed there until my ability reached the peak of the Earthly List. They then arranged a place for me to train alone. Though I lived alone, there was a dedicated guard outside, even going out required reporting. Of course, I wasn't always confined to the house; sometimes they would assign tasks to me. If I completed them successfully, they would take me to a place called 'Paradise,' where food, wine, women, everything was available, allowing you to enjoy an emperor-like treatment."

"Some gradually became obsessed with such a life, eager to perform tasks every day just for more and better enjoyment. For this, Dark Pavilion set a rule: if you complete a hundred tasks, you can stay in Paradise forever, indulge without any need for work."

Ling Chen asked, "Has anyone truly achieved this?"

"Indeed!" Li Haibin nodded, "Some have indeed done it, living in Paradise every day, possessing everything. Countless people in Dark Pavilion envy them, working desperately to complete tasks with hopes of enjoying like them. Dark Pavilion releases a list every few intervals, marking various tasks. Initially, people still had a conscience, abandoning inhumane massacre tasks. But later, for enough task completion, regardless of how brutal the tasks were, people scrambled to do them. With all this mentioned, I suppose you understand what kind of organization Dark Pavilion is."

"Very cruel and very realistic," Ling Chen said.

"Ling Chen, I can't do anything now; dealing with Dark Pavilion rests on you."

"You..." Ling Chen opened his mouth, ready to speak, but was stopped by Li Haibin's gaze, "We've all taken the slow poison of Dark Pavilion, and without the antidote within the deadline, I will surely die. The last time I received the antidote was a month ago, and if I calculated correctly, the day after tomorrow is the day to receive the antidote. If I fail the task, the leader surely won't give us the antidote, so Guo Hong and I will not survive more than two days."

"Uncle Li, don't worry, I'll find some skilled people in medicine to help you later; maybe they'll manage to cure you."

Li Haibin smiled faintly, seemingly disregarding Ling Chen's words.

"By the way, I've already asked Sir Chen to look for Wang Dong. At that time, I hope you can explain to him."

"No problem, I'll do my best."

About an hour later, Chen Junfeng and Zhu Qing finally returned to the pavilion, accompanied by a forty-something middle-aged man, precisely Wang Dong mentioned by Guo Hong.

Looking at Wang Dong, who was bound with ropes, Ling Chen did not say much but directly had Chen Junfeng take him to see Guo Hong and Li Haibin. With these two explaining in person, Wang Dong should believe them.

Outside the room, Zhu Qing led someone over after waiting for a moment.

"Brat, what do you want with me?" As soon as Ling Gengqiu saw Ling Chen, he immediately called out.

Ling Chen greeted with a smile and said, "Big brother, isn't your medical skill excellent? I'd like to ask for your help."

Entering the room, Wang Dong was sitting in a chair with his head down, expressionless, lost in thought. Looking again at Li Haibin and Guo Hong, both gently nodded, they seemed to have settled Wang Dong.

"Uncle Li, this is my big brother, his medical skills are very formidable, let him take a look at you; maybe he can cure your poison."

Without a word, Li Haibin took a seat and placed his hands on the table. Ling Gengqiu extended two fingers, placed them on the other's pulse, and checked earnestly. After a while, Ling Gengqiu released his fingers, a thoughtful look on his face.

Chapter 1567 - 1872: Dark Pavilion (Part 3)

"Brother, how is it, can the poison in his body be neutralized?" Ling Chen asked impatiently.

Ling Gengqiu didn't answer, but instead borrowed a dagger from Zhu Qing.

"Is that alright?"

Li Haibin nodded and said, "Go ahead."

Ling Gengqiu responded, then unceremoniously picked up the dagger, sliced open a cut on Li Haibin's arm, and used a cup to collect Li Haibin's fresh blood.

Staring at the blood in the cup, Ling Gengqiu brought it to his nose and sniffed it, then actually took a small sip of the blood. Seeing this, everyone present couldn't help but change expression. Li Haibin said anxiously, "Spit it out, quickly, or you'll die."

"Uncle Li, don't worry, my brother knows what he's doing." Ling Chen said. He of course knew Ling Gengqiu's abilities; with his immortal body he was practically immune to all poisons, this bit of toxin was nothing.

After a few minutes, Ling Gengqiu put down the cup in his hand and said, "Unless the person who made this poison brings out the antidote, there is absolutely no way to cure it."

Hearing this, Ling Chen's heart jolted, and he hurriedly asked, "Brother, your medical skills are so good, you mean even you can't do anything?"

"No matter how good medical skills are, they're not omnipotent. Do you know what kind of poison he took? If I'm not mistaken, the poison he swallowed is a mixture of eighty-one different toxins. After these poisons are mixed together, all their medicinal properties condense, forming a special balance that won't erupt in a short time. I can only identify forty-one of the poisons; the other forty I can't

recognize. If I knew all the poisons, maybe I could find a way to develop an antidote. But in his current condition I don't dare use medicine casually—if I get even one of the poisons wrong, he will die without a doubt."

"Brother, you mean there's no way at all?"

Ling Gengqiu shook his head and said very firmly, "No. My suggestion is, while there's still some time, hurry and arrange your affairs."

"Forget it." Li Haibin said calmly, "I never counted on continuing to live. These years, I've done plenty of heinous things for the Dark Pavilion, maybe this is my retribution."

"No, I don't want to die yet." At this moment, Wang Dong, who was at the side, suddenly roared, "If you want to die no one's stopping you, but I don't want to die."

"Wang Dong, none of us want to die. Haibin is right, our retribution has come."

"No, there's still hope. As long as we complete the mission, the Big Leader will definitely give us the antidote." Wang Dong shouted hysterically.

"Enough!" Li Haibin said with a low shout, "What's the point of living like a puppet? Do you still want to keep helping tyrants do evil? Think about it, how many people have you killed for the Dark Pavilion over the years. With the two days we have left, we'd best think about how to take revenge."

"Revenge?"

"Yes. The Dark Pavilion killed my parents, and has deceived us for so many years. Are you really willing to accept that?" Li Haibin said coldly, "I'm going to make them pay."

"How are you going to take revenge?" Guo Hong, who was sitting on the bed, followed up, "We have no contact with the other people in the Dark Pavilion. If the Big Leader doesn't call us, we can't even find them."

Li Haibin thought for a moment and said, "Since we failed this mission, the Big Leader will definitely hold someone accountable. Maybe that will be our chance."

"It's useless. At most the Big Leader will abandon a few of us and then send another messenger to take my place. Even if you managed to catch the person replacing me, so what? He still wouldn't know anything. And the Big Leader isn't an idiot, he'll suspect something sooner or later." At this point, Guo Hong seemed to think of something and said, "The Big Leader attaches great importance to this operation. As far as I know, besides me there are at least three messengers on standby in Beijing. If you really want revenge, the only feasible way is to sabotage their operation."

"Three messengers..." Ling Chen said, "You told me before that each messenger commands three members. So that means we're up against nine experts."

"More or less. Except the messengers don't contact each other and don't even know who the others are. Beijing is so big, finding those three would be like looking for a needle in a haystack. Two days won't be enough."

"What's your ultimate objective?" Ling Chen asked.

"To sabotage the Martial Arts Tournament and cause sufficient casualties. Once something happens at the Martial Arts Tournament, as one of the organizers the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion will definitely have to bear responsibility. This is the first step of the Big Leader's plan—to first crush the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion's reputation."

After hearing Guo Hong's words, Ling Chen asked with some puzzlement, "I don't get it. Since the Dark Pavilion has such powerful strength, why don't they just strike directly? With the number of experts they have, they're more than enough to crush the current Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion."

"Crush?" Guo Hong said meaningfully, "Is it really a crush? I think maybe you still don't know—the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion has a very special expert. That's not something sheer numbers can beat."

Special... Ling Chen's heart stirred. Could the person Guo Hong was referring to be... Su Cheng'en? It made sense: the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion didn't have that many Heavenly List experts right now—only two if you included Su He. They had quite a few Earthly List experts, but the Dark Pavilion had methods to forcibly raise strength, so they didn't need to fear that. However, a monstrous existence like

Su Cheng'en wasn't something numbers alone could contend with, and the Heavenly List Pavilion had been the number one force in the Martial Arts world for so many years; who knew what other hidden strength they had?

So the Dark Pavilion had already known about Su Cheng'en's existence? Thinking of this, Ling Chen couldn't help but develop a deep interest in the founder of the Dark Pavilion. Just what kind of person could have such a thorough grasp of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, knowing even such secret matters inside out?

While he was musing, he heard Guo Hong say, "The Big Leader's idea is to slowly torment the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion—that's the fun of it. But right now we only know the first step of his plan. As for the follow-up steps, he never told us."

Ling Chen nodded and said, "None of that matters. Since the Dark Pavilion's goal is to sabotage the Martial Arts Tournament, all we need to do is prepare our defenses. As the saying goes, when soldiers come we block them, when water floods we earth it up. I don't believe they can break through our defenses."

After they left the room, Chen Junfeng, who was following behind, asked, "Ling Chen, you're not planning to tell the people of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion about this?"

"Of course I am. They were the ones who brought the Dark Pavilion people in, they'll have to pull their weight. But that's not what I'm thinking about right now."

"Then what is?"

"I got word from Hu Fei today that Su Cheng'en and Su He have already arrived in Beijing. For them to come at this time, it's almost certainly to participate in the Martial Arts Tournament. Also, Zhu Hong and Chen Quan have arrived too. Add in the Dark Pavilion people... Hmph! Sir Chen, don't you think this Martial Arts Tournament is getting more and more lively?"

Chen Junfeng shook his head and said, "If it were me, I'd never use the word 'lively' to describe it. Ling Chen, with the situation this chaotic, are you sure you can keep it under control? Don't let a huge disaster break out."

"I know."

Chapter 1568 - 1873: Individual Competition

The next day.

Ling Chen got up early, and then followed the main group to the venue by car. Many people were heading to the venue today, including his own people, Guo Hong, Li Haibin, and Wang Dong. Furthermore, to be on the safe side, Ling Chen specially called up Ling Gengqiu.

There was no choice; until the threat of the Dark Pavilion was eliminated, he would have difficulty relaxing.

Upon arriving at the venue, Ling Chen led everyone to the lounge, preparing to have Chen Junfeng and Ling Gengqiu stay with them. After all, he didn't trust Guo Hong and Wang Dong very much, so it was safer to leave someone beside them.

However, as soon as Ling Gengqiu arrived at the venue, he was immediately attracted by the lively atmosphere. After greeting Ling Chen, he disappeared. Ling Chen couldn't help but chuckle, wondering what excitement could be found, other than flirting. With so many spectators at this Martial Arts Tournament, there were plenty of beauties around.

Forget it! He didn't hold much hope for Ling Gengqiu anyway; ever since the revival of this ancestor, he hadn't been idle.

Checking the time, it was already half past morning. Ling Chen picked up his phone, called Tong Zhentian and Su Mei, and invited them to the command center. Currently, only he knew about the Dark Pavilion's affairs, so he had to inform others to prepare them mentally.

In an instant, another hour had passed. To prove his point, Ling Chen specially took Tong Zhentian and Su Mei to meet Guo Hong and the others.

Soon, security for the entire venue was declared to be on level one alert.

"Since this matter started because of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, naturally the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion must take full responsibility," said Su Mei, facing Ling Chen and Tong Zhentian. "Later, if anyone from the Dark Pavilion shows up, the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion will be responsible for taking action. You only need to ensure the safety of the audience."

Hearing this, Ling Chen couldn't help but speak up, "Master Su, are you certain the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion has the ability to deal with the experts of the Dark Pavilion alone? I believe I made it clear before, the experts of the Dark Pavilion are not just any ordinary people."

Su Mei smiled confidently, "Thank you for your concern. I assure you, the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion will not let you down." After speaking, she walked out before Ling Chen could ask anything further.

"Elder Tong, what do you think?" With Su Mei gone, Ling Chen and Tong Zhentian had fewer reservations between them.

Tong Zhentian gave a bitter smile, "Had I known hosting a Martial Arts Tournament would bring so much trouble, I truly shouldn't have made that decision back then. Now, with things as they are, there's nothing to do but grit our teeth and push through. Since the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion is actively taking on the responsibility, let's not worry and focus on our own duties."

Though this was said, not worrying was a lie. The Martial Arts Tournament lasted five days; today was only the third day, and the experts of the Dark Pavilion were all hidden in the shadows. Who knew when they would make a move.

While sitting in the command center for a while, Ling Chen suddenly received a call from Tang Shiyun.

"Hello! Ling, where are you?"

"Beijing. Why, did you come to Beijing too?"

Tang Shiyun giggled, "The company gave me a few days off, so I specifically came to Beijing to participate in the Martial Arts Tournament. Ling, if I remember correctly, you seem to know martial arts too, right? Is there a spot for you in this Martial Arts Tournament? I've come specifically to see you."

"See me? I fear you'll be disappointed. Your Ling isn't good enough for a grand stage, only as a handyman. Where are you now?"

"I'm here with Hong at the Martial Arts Tournament venue."

"So quick? Alright, give me your location and I'll come over to pick you up right away."

After hanging up the phone, Ling Chen greeted the staff, then headed over to Tang Shiyun's location. Shortly, Ling Chen saw Tang Shiyun, wearing a mask, standing among the crowd with Xu Hong, looking around.

"Girl!" Ling Chen waved his hand, shouting loudly.

Hearing Ling Chen's shout, Tang Shiyun immediately turned her gaze over. Seeing Ling Chen not far away, her beautiful eyes lit up, and she ran over quickly, directly throwing herself into Ling Chen's arms.

"Ling, it's been so long, I've missed you so much," Tang Shiyun said coquettishly, making Ling Chen quite embarrassed. It would be fine if there were no one around, but with Xu Hong beside them, it was a bit awkward.

Touching Tang Shiyun's smooth long hair, Ling Chen smiled and said, "Since you're out to play, I'll take you around once we're done."

"Ling, what's fun around here?"

"There's acrobatics over there, local snacks everywhere, and that's the fight ring. What do you want to see?"

Tang Shiyun's eyes turned, smiling sweetly, "I don't want to see anything; I just want to see you, Ling." As soon as she finished speaking, a sudden 'thump thump thump' of war drums echoed through the venue.

"Ling, what's happening over there?"

"That's the individual match arena, a one-on-one fight." Ling Chen asked, "Are you interested in taking a look?"

"Sure!"

The team competition had already concluded yesterday, and unsurprisingly, the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion had won first place. Today was the individual competition, also lasting two days, with the last day being the invitational.

The individual competition's system was similar, but without any faction limitation; even members from Dragon Tiger Hall could participate simultaneously. This is because the individual competition represents oneself, not the faction behind them.

With the rumbling sound of war drums, many spectators were attracted over, gathering around the arena. Having arrived fairly early, Ling Chen and the others secured a relatively good spot.

"Everyone, today is the individual competition. Let me first announce the rules of the competition. Anyone can step onto this stage, and as long as you remain undefeated for three consecutive rounds, you can advance to the next round. Now, let's invite the first contestant onto the stage." After announcing the rules, the referee quickly retreated to the side of the arena, waiting for the contestants to make their entrance.

There was no compulsion; as long as you wish, you can step into the arena at any time. If you don't want to, no one can force you.

Soon, a middle-aged man walked up the stairs to the arena and cupped his fist towards the audience below.

"My name is Wei Yexian; is there anyone willing to come up and teach me?"

Tang Shiyun said excitedly, "Ling, aren't you going up?"

Ling Chen shook his head and said, "Let's skip it; I can't compare to these experts." As he was speaking, a young man suddenly stepped out from the crowd and slowly ascended the arena.

Seeing the appearance of that young man, Ling Chen's eyes couldn't help but brighten. It was him!

During the challenge match a few days ago, a foreign blonde man insulted Huaxia martial arts, only to be severely taught a lesson by this young man before him. At the time, Ling Chen admired this young man greatly and wanted to make friends with him, but the young man was too aloof, not even giving him the chance to speak. Unexpectedly, he would see him again on the individual match arena today.

"Xiao Dan." The young man calmly uttered two words.

"Both of you, please be mindful, and stop at the point; absolutely must not harm the other party," the referee stated after explaining the rules, then retreated to the side, signaling the start of the fight.

Chapter 1569 - 1874: Xiao Dan

As the referee's voice fell, the middle-aged man named Wei Yexian took the lead and rushed in front of Xiao Dan. As he got closer, Wei Yexian reached toward his waist, and a flash of light suddenly swept past everyone's eyes.

Upon closer inspection, Wei Yexian was now holding a silver whip over two meters long.

The silver whip broke through the air, instantly closing the distance between the two, aiming straight at Xiao Dan's body. As the silver whip approached, Xiao Dan, who had been standing still, suddenly closed his eyes. In the next moment, like lightning, he used two fingers to catch the silver whip.

Seeing this, Wei Yexian's expression changed, and he quickly tugged the silver whip, trying to escape Xiao Dan's hold. However, no matter how hard he tried, the silver whip remained clamped between Xiao Dan's fingers. Xiao Dan, still calm and relaxed, showed no expression, as if he didn't take Wei Yexian seriously.

After a moment of stalemate, Wei Yexian suddenly withdrew his hands, clasped his fists, and said, "Little brother is truly formidable, I concede."

Hearing this, Xiao Dan finally let go of the silver whip and allowed Wei Yexian to step down.

"The first round, Xiao Dan wins." The referee immediately announced, "Is there another expert willing to take the stage?"

Looking at Xiao Dan standing on the stage with his hands behind his back, Tang Shiyun tugged on Ling Chen's sleeve and curiously asked, "Ling, is that Xiao Dan really so powerful? It didn't seem like they even fought, yet there's a winner and a loser."

Ling Chen smiled and explained, "When masters exchange blows, it's not about techniques, but Inner Strength."

The middle-aged man named Wei Yexian just now was no slouch; he must be a Dragon List expert. But that Xiao Dan was even more formidable. He was calm and composed throughout, and it seemed like he hadn't even used his full strength. If I'm not mistaken, this young man Xiao Dan must be an Earthly List expert; I just don't know what rank he's reached.

At this time, members of various factions had gathered around the stage. However, no one stepped up to challenge Xiao Dan.

Seeing this situation, the referee loudly asked, "Is there really no one else coming up? If no one steps up, Xiao Dan will advance to the next round automatically."

"Does the Huaxia martial arts community really not have a single brave expert?" Xiao Dan murmured calmly at this moment, "I wanted to meet the world's heroes here, but you all disappoint me too much. Knowing this, I might as well have stayed in the mountains."

Though Xiao Dan's words reeked of provocation, they were quite effective. Soon, a man in his thirties leaped onto the stage and clasped his fists, saying, "My name is Chen Cheng. Little brother, I'll show you that the world's heroes are not ones you can mock."

As soon as the words fell, Chen Cheng lightly pointed his toes and rushed towards Xiao Dan like a gust of wind. In an instant, countless fist shadows filled the air, making it impossible to distinguish which was real. Faced with Chen Cheng's assault, Xiao Dan's eyes finally lit up.

With a slide of his foot, Xiao Dan used a peculiar movement technique, constantly shifting positions at high speed. In the blink of an eye, Chen Cheng had swung dozens of punches, but Xiao Dan, with his agile movement technique, dodged them all without a single punch landing.

So fast!

Chen Cheng's face sank, and he stomped hard, his body flying up and spiraling above Xiao Dan's head. The force of his punches was fierce, enveloping Xiao Dan's body in a flurry of fist shadows. The audience below could only see silhouettes and fist shadows intertwining, seeing nothing else clearly.

"Wow! Ling, they're amazing, are they even human?" Tang Shiyun couldn't help but exclaim.

Ling Chen patted Tang Shiyun's head and said with a smile, "These are real masters."

"Ling, what about you? Who's more formidable compared to them?"

"I can't compare to them," Ling Chen casually replied, then shifted his attention back to the stage, continuing to watch the battle between Xiao Dan and Chen Cheng.

I must say, that Chen Cheng is very strong; he's also an Earthly List expert, with an impressive command of fist techniques. Ling Chen was well-traveled, yet seldom had he seen such powerful fist techniques.

Just then, Chen Cheng, unable to break through, suddenly withdrew. As soon as his feet hit the ground, he suddenly burst forward like a cannonball, rushing back in front of Xiao Dan.

One punch, nine shadows!

With a loud shout, Chen Cheng launched a punch, instantly transforming into nine afterimages, surrounding Xiao Dan. Despite the strong sense of danger flooding his heart, Xiao Dan showed not the slightest fear, but instead a tremendous excitement.

Roar!

In an instant, a powerful Inner Strength burst forth as Xiao Dan extended his hands, tracing a circle in front of him. His movements were slow, yet he managed to block all of Chen Cheng's attacks. Witnessing this, Ling Chen couldn't help but silently praise him; this Xiao Dan was really impressive.

In truth, Xiao Dan's movements were not slow. It was simply that when speed reached its peak, what one saw resembled slow motion. Indeed! All of Chen Cheng's nine-shadow punch was blocked, not harming Xiao Dan in the slightest.

Seeing that his attack had no effect, Chen Cheng immediately withdrew, clasping his fists, "Little brother, I take back what I said earlier. To reach such a level at such a young age is truly remarkable. I concede."

The always stoic Xiao Dan suddenly smiled and said, "I was just lucky to win. I underestimated the heroes of the world. The Huaxia martial arts community indeed has many masters." With that, Xiao Dan turned to the onlookers, asking, "Who else is willing to give me a lesson?"

At this moment, the audience below began to chatter, yet no one stepped forward. It was then that Chen Cheng, still on stage, spoke up, "I heard that Ling Chen from Dragon Tiger Hall is also a young hero, having already ascended the Earthly List at a young age. If you two could have a match, it would surely be spectacular."

"Ling Chen?" Xiao Dan's lips curled into a slightly amused smile.

"Ling, is that person he's talking about you?" Tang Shiyun asked, holding Ling Chen's arm. Even Xu Hong beside them was intrigued, his face full of curiosity.

Ling Chen cleared his throat and said, "Maybe it's just someone with the same name."

However, just as Ling Chen finished speaking, a hearty laugh came from nearby: "Oh! Isn't this little brother Ling? Haha, what a coincidence, you're here too. Just in time, everyone would like to see you two compete. Why not step up and put on a show?"

Looking at the middle-aged man who spoke, Ling Chen helplessly rubbed his nose. Honestly, he had participated in such competitions before and didn't find them particularly interesting.

"Um... I'm still responsible for the venue's security, so I probably won't have time to compete. You should find someone else." Ling Chen politely declined.

"Is Mr. Ling looking down on me, is that why you're unwilling to spar with me?" Xiao Dan suddenly spoke from the stage, a hint of challenge in his words.

"This..."

"Ling, Shiyun supports you, go ahead," Tang Shiyun encouraged from the sidelines.

Chapter 1570 - 1875: Ling Xiao Duel

Fine! Ling Chen sighed silently. At this moment, he had no choice but to go on stage. Under everyone's gaze, if he fled, not only would it affect the reputation of the Dragon Tiger Hall, but he would also be ridiculed as a coward. In any case, he was interested in befriending Xiao Dan, so having a match first wouldn't be bad.

At the moment, amid Tang Shiyun's cheers, Ling Chen slowly ascended the stage, looked at the audience below, clasped his hands in salute, and said, "My name is Ling Chen."

"Have we met before?" Xiao Dan sized up Ling Chen and asked.

"Yes, that day on the challenge arena."

"Although I've always lived in the mountains, I've heard your name, the founder of the Dragon Tiger Hall. It's impressive that someone so young can build such a powerful force. However, I wonder if your ability matches your reputation."

Ling Chen smiled slightly, "You'll know if you try." With that, Ling Chen slightly turned his body and gave Xiao Dan a sidelong glance.

Xiao Dan carefully examined Ling Chen's stance. Suddenly, he swiftly leaped up and took the initiative to attack. Ling Chen had already witnessed Xiao Dan's speed when they were below the stage. Undeniably, Xiao Dan was very fast, clearly having put in a lot of effort in this aspect.

As the saying goes, in martial arts, only speed is unbreakable. Reaching the extreme of speed ensures one's invincibility. Watching Xiao Dan rapidly approach, Ling Chen suddenly formed a hand knife, slashing directly towards the incoming Xiao Dan.

Seeing Ling Chen's move, Xiao Dan seemed to sense something. His eyes sharpened, and he immediately dodged from the front, avoiding Ling Chen's attack. Having missed one strike, Ling Chen was not discouraged and continued to intensify his offensive, one slash after another. Throughout, his hand never touched Xiao Dan's body, yet the latter kept dodging, seemingly very wary of Ling Chen's attacks.

"Is this... Qi Force?" An expert in the audience exclaimed in surprise.

As the name implies, Qi Force is released from within. At a glance, it seemed Ling Chen's hand was weaponless, but through the concentration of Qi Force, it was as if there was an invisible steel blade in his hand, full of fierce power. Xiao Dan would never dare to meet such an attack head-on unless he had a death wish.

"Impressive! Just this move alone puts you among the top experts in the world."

Hearing Xiao Dan's praise, Ling Chen smiled faintly, "There are many experts in the world; I'm just a drop in the ocean, not worth mentioning." As he spoke, his sword force suddenly changed, moving with agility like a Spirit Snake—deft and fierce.

Swordsmanship!

Xiao Dan's expression shifted slightly. From Ling Chen's moves, he could feel that at first, it was swordsmanship, but now it had transformed into swordplay, less ferocious than before yet much sharper.

Ling Chen's continuous change of moves was indeed impressive, but Xiao Dan was no easy opponent. Relying on his foot speed, he moved flexibly on the stage, dodging Ling Chen's attacks each time. For a moment, the two on the stage were evenly matched in skill exchange.

"Go, Ling!" Tang Shiyun stood below the stage, raising her hands high, cheering loudly for Ling Chen, her small face flushed with excitement.

She knew Ling Chen could fight, but she had never seen it before. Watching Ling Chen float back and forth like a leaf on the stage, his graceful figure etched in her memory. As for Xu Hong beside her, she was already dumbfounded. When Tang Shiyun suggested coming to the Martial Arts Tournament, she had little interest, thinking martial arts were just flashy moves. But seeing the skills displayed by the contestants on stage, she was utterly amazed.

Are these still ordinary people?

At this moment, Ling Chen completely dominated the stage, unleashing an array of sword techniques and swordsmanship attacks towards Xiao Dan. Facing Ling Chen's ferocious assault, Xiao Dan maneuvered left and right, like a gust of wind passing by, creating whooshing sounds.

After a series of attacks, Ling Chen suddenly stopped, standing still, smiling as he looked at Xiao Dan.

"Do you want to continue?"

Xiao Dan slowly exhaled, looking directly at Ling Chen and said, "You're a worthy opponent. Looks like I'll have to go all out." As he spoke, Xiao Dan slowly raised his right foot, touched the ground with his toes, slightly lowered his waist, and spread his arms wide open, like a hawk spreading its wings.

Seeing Xiao Dan's actions, Ling Chen's smile gradually faded. Although Xiao Dan hadn't made a move yet, he could already feel the powerful aura emanating slowly from Xiao Dan's body.

This aura... the Heavenly List? Ling Chen raised an eyebrow slightly, secretly shaking his head. No! Although this aura was close to the Heavenly List, it had not truly entered it. If he guessed correctly, Xiao

Dan's realm should be similar to that of his second brother Xu Ming, both having touched the threshold of the Heavenly List, just a step away from entering the hall of fame.

Amazing! Ling Chen sighed in admiration, truly worthy of being a master hidden in the deep mountains. At such a young age, he had reached this level of strength. Though he and Xiao Dan were about the same age and he had already stepped into the Heavenly List, his entry was due to many fortuitous opportunities and dangerous experiences, as well as the help of the Nine Elements Pill and a lot of luck.

Soon, Xiao Dan's aura had reached its peak. Even the audience around the stage could feel the oppressive atmosphere in the air. At this moment, everyone held their breath, focusing their gaze on the two protagonists.

They knew the outcome would be decided in the next second.

Whoosh!

The sound of something cutting through the air suddenly arose. Xiao Dan's body, like an arrow leaving the string, abruptly shot up, charging directly at Ling Chen with unstoppable momentum.

Without any flashy moves or defenses, just like that, using his body as a weapon to confront the enemy.

Seeing the rapidly approaching figure, Ling Chen stepped forward, slightly turning his body, sending his right shoulder rushing forward. Instantly, the two figures collided fiercely.

However, before the surrounding audience could see clearly what had happened, they heard a 'bang,' and a muffled sound came from underneath the stage.

Upon closer inspection, they saw Xiao Dan slowly get up from the ground, wiping the blood from the corner of his mouth, clasping his hands in salute towards Ling Chen on the stage and saying, "My master always says there is always someone better, and I always thought I was quite talented and unparalleled among my peers. Today's battle made me understand that underestimating the heroes of the world would surely lead to a big loss. Thank you for the lesson!"

Ling Chen smiled slightly, "You're too kind, Xiao. I was merely lucky to win. To be honest, I admire you a lot. If you don't mind, I'd like to become friends with you; would you be willing?"

"Please don't say that; I'm the one who would be honored."