

The Beauty 1571

Chapter 1571 Antidote (1)

After stepping down from the ring, the martial arts enthusiasts watching the match around Ling Chen came forward one after another to greet him with cupped fists, offering their congratulations. Ling Chen returned the gesture to each of them, maintaining a polite smile on his face.

"Ling!" At this moment, Tang Shiyun squeezed out from the crowd, ran over, and leapt into Ling Chen's arms, laughing joyfully, "You're amazing! I knew you wouldn't let me down, Ling!"

Feeling the suggestive glances from those around them, Ling Chen touched his nose, smiled awkwardly, and quickly pulled Tang Shiyun away from the ring.

"Ling, aren't you continuing?" Tang Shiyun asked curiously, "You only need to win two more rounds to advance easily."

Ling Chen shook his head and said, "Forget it! I have no interest in such competitions, besides, I have other responsibilities and no time to engage in matches." With that, Ling Chen pointed to a spot not far away and said, "There's an acrobatics show over there, let's go have a look."

Although it's a Martial Arts Tournament, besides the official matches, there are many other performances like tea ceremonies, acrobatics, and weaponry appreciation. The organizers arranged these activities mainly to prevent the audience from losing interest due to monotonous martial arts duels.

Among these activities, the most lively is the storyteller. The storyteller was specially invited by the organizers, dressed in a long gown, standing on a small round stage, with a portable microphone, narrating the events and history of martial arts over the centuries. The reason for arranging this project is to provide the audience attending the Martial Arts Tournament with more insights into martial arts. Often, only when you have a deeper understanding can you develop a strong interest.

At this moment, the storyteller was surrounded by a crowd of spectators, around thousands of people, all listening intently, as if entranced.

"A few hundred years ago, a top-ranked power rose in the martial arts world, the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, founded by Su Cheng'en. Ever since the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion was established, the conflicts in the entire martial arts world gradually calmed. To thank the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion for their contributions, all martial artists regarded the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion as the leader of the martial arts world. From then on, the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion maintained an aloof position, upholding order in the martial arts world, and hosting justice for everyone..."

Listening to the storyteller, Ling Chen couldn't help but touch his nose. Was this guy specially invited by the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion? Why is he only saying good things about the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion? Judging by his words, it seems like he's trying to depict the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion as a powerful force full of positive energy.

"Come on girl, let's get out of here, this is boring." Ling Chen said. The Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion playing little tricks is understandable, but this kind of talk only deceives the audience; as for him, he somewhat despises this behavior.

"Ling, where are we going?" Tang Shiyun didn't mind whether to listen or not, as long as she could be with Ling Chen, she'd be happy anywhere.

"Shiyun." At this moment, Xu Hong, who was following behind, spoke up, "I have a few friends over there, you guys go ahead and have fun, I'll catch up with you later."

"Okay, Sister Hong."

Watching Xu Hong leave, Ling Chen couldn't help but smile. Xu Hong didn't really have friends here, just found an excuse to let the two of them spend time alone. Without Xu Hong around, Tang Shiyun seemed much more relaxed, intimately holding onto Ling Chen's arm, like a sweet couple.

After wandering around the venue for a while, Ling Chen was about to take Tang Shiyun to get something to eat when he received a call from Chen Junfeng.

"Hello! Sir Chen, what's the matter?"

"The head of the Dark Pavilion just contacted Guo Hong again, asking about the progress of the task."

"Did you track his signal?" Ling Chen asked. He had anticipated that the head would contact Guo Hong, so he had prepared in advance. As soon as that person called, they would immediately track the other party's cell signal to pinpoint their location.

"No, the other party used anti-tracking technology, and our technicians couldn't lock onto his signal." After a pause, Chen Junfeng continued, "That guy gave Guo Hong the final instructions; if the task is not completed within two hours, he will send someone else as a substitute."

"That means if there's danger, it will also be in two hours. Alright, I got it. I'll notify Elder Tong and Master Su later, and let them be cautious." Finished speaking, Ling Chen hung up the phone and turned to Tang Shiyun beside him and said, "Girl, I have some matters to attend to, I'm afraid I can't accompany you. How about you wander around with Sister Hong, and after I'm done, we'll have dinner together tonight, how does that sound?"

Upon hearing this, although slightly disappointed, Tang Shiyun still smiled and nodded, "Ling, since you have things to do, go ahead, don't worry about me."

Not long after, Ling Chen tracked down Xu Hong with Tang Shiyun and called Jiang Yunkai to arrange for someone to ensure the safety of the two women. Tang Shiyun is now a nationwide superstar singer; if people find out she's here, it would cause quite a stir. So, to be safe, it's more reassuring to have a few people for close protection.

Returning to the rest area, Ling Chen went straight to the room where Guo Hong, Li Haibin, and Wang Dong were.

As soon as he entered the room, he saw Wang Dong lying on the bed, his body trembling slightly, with Chen Junfeng and the others around him holding a cup of water, seemingly trying to get Wang Dong to drink it. But Wang Dong had his teeth clenched tight, nothing could be fed into his mouth. Seeing his pale, bloodless face, Ling Chen's heart sank, and he asked, "What's going on?"

Li Haibin, standing by the side, spoke up, "He's poisoned. He took the antidote a day earlier than us. If we can't get the antidote within two hours, he'll certainly die. The head knows this well, that's why we have time limits."

"I... I... don't... want... to die..." Wang Dong pleaded with his eyes, struggling to utter a few words. Seeing his painful appearance, Ling Chen sighed secretly, not knowing what to do.

Ling Gengqiu already said, apart from the person who concocted the poison, no one else can create the antidote. So, nobody can save Wang Dong's life; they can only watch him suffer and then slowly die.

While pondering, Ling Chen suddenly thought of a question, glanced at Guo Hong beside him, and asked, "How does the head usually get you the antidote?"

"A designated person would contact us and then direct me to a specific location to pick it up. After I get the antidote, I distribute it to the others."

"So, the person with the antidote is in Beijing? Or maybe... they're already inside the venue."

Guo Hong nodded, "It's possible. But with so many spectators at the venue, how do we find that person?"

Ling Chen thought for a moment, then asked, "When you go to pick up the antidote, is it always the same person handing it to you?"

"Yes."

"Then you must know what they look like, come with me!" With that, Ling Chen took Guo Hong straight to the command center.

Chapter 1572 Antidote (2)

With Guo Hong's description and the help of the technicians, a synthesized male face quickly appeared on the computer screen.

"Are you sure it's him?"

"That's right, it's him," Guo Hong said with certainty.

"From now on, use face recognition software to search the entire venue. Whether we find that person or not will depend on luck," Ling Chen commanded the technicians.

Watching the frames on the screen automatically reading faces for recognition, Guo Hong couldn't help but ask, "Will this method really work?"

Ling Chen smiled and said, "Don't worry, this is the most advanced recognition system available, and there will be no problems. Moreover, we have a big advantage now. The person delivering the antidote doesn't know you've betrayed the Dark Pavilion, so he won't be on guard. As long as he's not suspicious of us, there's a good chance we'll find him."

Just as he finished speaking, a technician monitoring the screens suddenly shouted, "Mr. Ling, we've found the target."

Upon hearing this, Ling Chen and Guo Hong rushed over. They saw a man in his thirties appear on the surveillance screen, dressed in casual clothes, with a cigarette in his hand, sitting on a bench, occasionally glancing around.

"Is that him?"

Guo Hong nodded and said, "Yes, that's him. The guy is indeed at the venue."

"You go back first and tell Uncle Li and the others about this," Ling Chen said, pulling out his phone from his pocket to dial Tong Zhentian's number. Minutes later, Ling Chen and Tong Zhentian appeared in the crowd on the east side of the venue. To avoid alerting the target, they did not approach directly but observed from the shadows.

Although the target was identified, Ling Chen was unsure of his background. If the person was a master, acting rashly might startle him and lead to more trouble. After all, with so many people at the venue, if he took someone hostage, they'd be at a disadvantage.

After observing from afar for a while, the man remained on the bench, playing with his phone, occasionally looking around. A backpack was beside him, and he seemed to value it greatly, keeping one hand on it at all times.

At this moment, a young and beautiful woman in high heels, carrying a handbag in one hand and leading a teddy dog with the other, approached. As she passed by the man, she paused slightly and then sat down on the bench.

The bench could seat three people. Smelling the perfume wafting over, the man glanced at the beauty beside him from the corner of his eye, then shifted the backpack between them to his other side, seemingly wary of her contact with it.

"Excuse me, could you help me hold him for a moment? I need to use the restroom and will be right back."

Hearing the woman's voice, the man turned his head, seeing her gaze focused on him. Sensing her plea, he hesitated for a moment, then nodded, "Okay, but be quick, I'm leaving soon."

"Thank you! Thank you so much!" The woman said gratefully, quickly handing him the dog's leash. The man reached out, took the leash, and said, "You..." But just as he spoke, a sharp dagger suddenly shot out from the woman's sleeve, aiming directly at his throat. The sudden change made the man's face instantly change, stunned, forgetting to evade. However, at this close distance, unless he was a Heavenly List master, it was almost impossible to dodge such a sudden attack.

When the dagger was just a millimeter from the man's neck, it suddenly stopped, and at the same time, a cold voice came from nearby, "Better not move if you don't want to die."

At this moment, the man finally came to his senses, looking at the woman in panic and asking, "Who... who are you?"

"You'll find out soon," Ling Chen and Tong Zhentian walked over from a short distance away. Seeing the woman nearby, Ling Chen smiled slightly, giving a thumbs up and praising, "Zhu Qing, well done."

Beautiful women easily lower a man's guard, so Ling Chen had Zhu Qing dress up slightly and approach the man alone. The three then escorted the man straight to the command center.

Once there, Ling Chen, without a word, grabbed the man's backpack and unzipped it. Inside were a few changes of clothes, a tablet, and a small medicine bottle.

Just as expected! Ling Chen's eyes lit up, immediately taking out the medicine.

"Don't... don't touch that!" Seeing Ling Chen's actions, the man grew anxious, hurriedly speaking to stop him.

Ling Chen ignored him, opened the bottle, and saw over ten pills inside. "Elder Tong, you keep an eye on him," Ling Chen said, then moved alone to a lounge, poured a pill from the bottle, and handed it to Guo Hong, asking, "Is this the antidote?"

"Yes."

"Quickly give it to him," Ling Chen said, gesturing to the barely conscious Wang Dong. Guo Hong nodded, hurriedly placing the pill into Wang Dong's mouth. Shortly after taking the pill, Wang Dong's condition gradually improved, no longer trembling, though still somewhat pale.

"There are sixteen pills in the bottle. I think, along with you four, there are sixteen members of the Dark Pavilion in Beijing, just as you speculated. Besides you, there are three other teams," Ling Chen said.

"What are you planning to do?"

Hearing Guo Hong's query, Ling Chen replied, "I'll keep the antidote for now. I'll give each of you a pill when the crisis is over. Until then, I hope you all cooperate. As long as everyone is safe, I promise to fulfill what I agreed to."

Back at the command center, the man obediently sat on a chair, with Tong Zhentian and Zhu Qing guarding him nearby.

"Elder Tong, did you get anything out of him?"

Tong Zhentian shook his head, "This guy is tight-lipped, refusing to say anything."

"Won't talk, huh?" Ling Chen studied the man before him, speaking, "At this point, do you still want to keep secrets for the Dark Pavilion? While I admire your loyalty, have you thought about yourself?"

"Enough nonsense," the man said coldly. "If you're going to kill me, just do it. I will never betray my organization."

"No need to rush your decision," Ling Chen smiled nonchalantly. "To be honest, once the antidote is ours, your value to me isn't significant, so whether you talk or not doesn't matter. But if you cooperate, I might consider sparing your life."

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Upon hearing this, the man looked up at Ling Chen and said, "I'm only curious about one thing. Where did you learn about the Dark Pavilion? And how do you know the antidote is on me?"

"Friend, you haven't answered my question and instead ask me a bunch of questions. Do you think that's appropriate?"

The man sneered, "Actually, even if you don't say it, I can guess. There's a traitor among us, isn't it Guo Hong and the others? If I remember correctly, today is the last day of Wang Dong's monthly deadline; if he doesn't take the antidote, he'll certainly die. You just hurriedly left with the antidote, must be going to deliver it to him, huh. Humph! A bunch of traitors, having the guts to betray the leader. Even if they got the antidote, so what? They still can't escape death, just barely survive a while longer."

"You're quite clever. Yes, you're right. However, nothing is absolute; perhaps they won't die. You're the one handling the antidote, so I think you should know where to find more."

"I've already said, I know nothing. Just kill me directly, don't waste time on me."

"Friend, are you really not reconsidering? I believe no one desires death. If it were me, as long as there's a glimmer of hope for survival, I'd certainly seize it."

Upon hearing this, the man snorted softly, seemingly ignoring Ling Chen's persuasion.

Seeing the man refusing to confess, Zhu Qing drew a dagger from her waist and pressed it against the man's neck, saying coldly, "Since he's worthless, why not let me kill him directly."

Feeling the chill from the dagger, the man's expression changed slightly but soon returned to calmness. Seeing the man's expression, Ling Chen suddenly smiled and gestured to Zhu Qing to withdraw the dagger.

"Rest assured, I won't let you die so easily," Ling Chen said. "What I said before was merely to scare you."

Upon hearing this, not only did the man look surprised, but even Tong Zhentian and Zhu Qing were taken aback. What was this situation? Was the threat just now fake? Even if it was, shouldn't it remain unspoken?

As their minds raced, Tong Zhentian and Zhu Qing looked at Ling Chen with puzzlement, seemingly wanting to understand his thoughts. "Everyone, don't worry, my people are coming shortly," Ling Chen said. Just as his words fell, someone entered the command center — it was Ling Gengqiu.

Drawing near, Ling Gengqiu glared at Ling Chen irritably, saying in a low voice, "Hurry up and say what you need to; I just struck up a conversation with a beauty and it was going well."

Ling Chen pointed at the man before him and said, "Old brother, help me check if he's been poisoned."

Without another word, Ling Gengqiu went straight to the man and checked his pulse. After a moment, he shook his head, saying, "This guy's body is quite healthy; nothing's wrong."

"I know." Ling Chen nodded, saying, "Old brother, I won't hold you up from your business. Go ahead and carry on."

As Ling Gengqiu left, Tong Zhentian said with some surprise, "He didn't take poison?"

"I found it odd earlier — why were there only sixteen pills in the bottle? So I suspected either he had taken the antidote in advance, or... never was poisoned at all, which is why I invited the old brother to examine him. As it appears now, this friend's identity in the Dark Pavilion is quite unusual. Guo Hong told me that the Dark Pavilion's leader likes to use poison to control his subordinates, forcing them to act." Ling Chen scrutinized the man before him, saying, "You haven't been poisoned, suggesting your position in the Dark Pavilion is special, at least trustworthy to the leader. Otherwise, he wouldn't entrust you with distributing such an important antidote. What do you think, am I right?"

After Ling Chen's analysis, a subtle change finally appeared in the man's expression.

"I've just said, I won't kill you, so even if you wish to die, I won't let you have your way. The only thing you can do is cooperate and tell us everything we want to know."

"Impossible!" The man's tone was firm, leaving no room for negotiation.

"Alright, you have guts, I appreciate that," Ling Chen said, extending his hand towards Zhu Qing, who understood and immediately handed him the dagger. Without hesitation, Ling Chen raised the dagger and thrust it fiercely into the man's thigh.

A painful howl echoed as blood instantly stained the man's pants red.

"What are you doing?" The man yelled at Ling Chen angrily.

"This is just the beginning," Ling Chen said flatly, drawing the dagger out from the man's thigh. Blood gushed from the wound, dripping onto the floor.

"Zhu Qing, take him away, keep him under strict watch, and most importantly, don't let him die."

Zhu Qing responded and immediately took the man out of the command center.

"Ling Chen, what's your plan?" Tong Zhentian asked.

"It's troublesome since he won't cooperate. Since he's responsible for distributing the antidote, he definitely knows others. As long as he cooperates, finding those Dark Pavilion people won't be a problem." Ling Chen then shifted his topic, asking, "By the way, Elder Tong, why haven't I seen Master Su and Elder Du, where have they gone?"

Tong Zhentian shook his head, saying, "I'm not sure either. Why, do you have business with them?"

"I..." Ling Chen was about to reply when hurried footsteps suddenly echoed from the doorway. Looking closely, Jiang Yunkai had hurriedly arrived at the command center, urgently saying, "Chen, something's wrong outside."

"What happened?"

"A participant just entered the individual competition arena; who knew that guy was vicious and has already disabled several people. The referee tried to stop him but ended up injured too. You better go take a look quickly!"

Upon hearing this, Ling Chen didn't hesitate, immediately rushing with Tong Zhentian towards the individual competition arena. By then, many spectators had gathered around to watch the spectacle. On the arena stood a lean middle-aged man with a severe look, with several heavily injured people lying around him.

Tong Zhentian said gravely, "Is this guy deliberately here to cause trouble?"

Ling Chen pondered for a moment, seeing more and more spectators, nodding, "I'm worried he's from the Dark Pavilion attempting to create chaos deliberately. Elder Tong, better stop him while you still can."

"Alright, I'll go!"

"Be careful, these people are bold enough to expose themselves; they likely have backup plans."

Tong Zhentian responded and prepared to step onto the arena. However, at that moment, a blurred figure suddenly darted across the crowd's heads. Ling Chen rubbed his eyes, thinking he might have seen wrong. Upon focusing again, there was an unexpected figure on the arena — accurately, an old Taoist.

Chapter 1574 Poison Gas (1)

This person... Ling Chen's heart was stirred, and he immediately recognized the old Taoist. This person was a distinguished guest invited by the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, who had been close to Su Mei these past few days, personally hosted by her. It was a surprise to see him take action himself.

Interesting! Ling Chen's lips curled slightly; for Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion to value him so highly indicated that the old Taoist on the stage was extraordinary. It was a perfect chance to see what skills this old Taoist possessed.

At this moment, the two opponents on the stage exchanged glances, and the middle-aged man coldly spoke: "You're just a stinking Taoist; why aren't you staying peacefully in your sanctuary? What are you doing in a place like this? Get down! Don't bring trouble upon yourself."

Faced with the man's reprimand, the old Taoist remained unmoved, embodying a sense of tranquility, like a serene pool of water, maintaining calm amidst any storm, without a ripple.

"Please enlighten me!" The old Taoist slightly bowed, slowly uttering three words.

"Looking for death!" The middle-aged man shouted coldly, lightly tapping his toe, his body instantly vanished from its original spot. The next second, the middle-aged man appeared behind the old Taoist, aiming a punch straight at the back of his head.

However, the old Taoist remained standing there, seemingly unaware of the middle-aged man's punch aimed at him. Just when everyone thought the old Taoist would undoubtedly lose, his body suddenly disappeared.

Witnessing this scene, everyone was greatly shocked, Ling Chen and Tong Zhentian included.

Ling Chen and Tong Zhentian were both masters on the Heavenly List, with Tong Zhentian being a martial arts icon, renowned for years, ranking among the top three in Huaxia's martial arts community. Yet, the old Taoist's displayed skills left even Tong Zhentian aghast.

Despite standing still, the old Taoist suddenly switched positions; what level of skill was required for such an act? Even Tong Zhentian himself, though capable of reaching extreme speed in a short time, would still have to move his legs. However, the old Taoist remained motionless, seemingly teleporting from one point to another.

Missing the punch, the middle-aged man was momentarily stunned. Expecting a sure hit, he was surprised to find the old Taoist had evaded it. Without much thought, the middle-aged man continued his assault on the old Taoist. However, as he approached the old Taoist's body, an invisible force seemed to burst out from the old Taoist's form.

In an instant, the middle-aged man's body flew out like a kite with a broken string, sharply falling out of the stage onto the ground.

Pfft!

Blood spurted, and the middle-aged man's face turned pale as he lay on the ground, unable to get up for a long time. Meanwhile, several Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion disciples quickly arrived, pulling the middle-aged man from the ground and dragging him out of the crowd.

As the middle-aged man was taken away, the old Taoist slowly walked down the stage, following behind the pavilion disciples, disappearing from everyone's sight.

"Elder Tong, let's go over and take a look." Saying this, Ling Chen quickly pursued in the direction of the old Taoist's departure.

Soon, the two arrived at the VIP lounge of the venue. As they were about to enter, several Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion disciples guarding the door suddenly blocked Ling Chen and Tong Zhentian.

The action made Ling Chen furrow his brows slightly, and he asked, "What's the meaning of this?"

"Sorry, Mr. Ling, Elder Tong, the Pavilion Master has instructed not to be disturbed at the moment."

"Are we not allowed to enter either? Go notify your Pavilion Master, and say we're waiting outside to see if she wants us to come in." Ling Chen said.

As soon as he finished speaking, a person suddenly emerged at the door of the VIP lounge. Seeing the person, Ling Chen was slightly surprised and smiled, "Xiao, we meet again."

"Ah, it's you, Ling." Xiao Dan nodded politely and asked, "Are you two here to see Master Su?"

"Indeed!"

"Then come in, Master Su is inside."

Hearing this, the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion disciples guarding the door quickly said, "Mr. Xiao, the Pavilion Master has ordered not to..."

Xiao Dan, sounding impatient, interrupted, "If Master Su has any blame to place, I'll take full responsibility." With that, Xiao Dan stepped aside and invited Ling Chen and Tong Zhentian into the VIP lounge.

Entering the lounge, Ling Chen immediately heard Du Kang and Su Mei's voices coming from the adjacent room. Pushing the door open, he saw seven or eight people inside, including the old Taoist who had displayed his skills on the stage earlier.

In the corner of the room sat a middle-aged man, the same person defeated on the stage by the old Taoist. At this moment, Du Kang was interrogating the middle-aged man.

Seeing Ling Chen and Tong Zhentian enter, Su Mei seemed startled and asked, "Elder Tong, why are you here?"

"We saw you capture this man, so we wanted to come and take a look." Tong Zhentian said, "How's it going, have you got anything out of him?"

Du Kang replied, "This guy's mouth is tight; he hasn't said a word since he came in. However, I suspect he might be a member of the Dark Pavilion."

"Elder Du, have you searched him?"

"We've searched, but found nothing."

Ling Chen's eyes twinkled, and he immediately had an idea, saying, "Elder Du, if you don't mind, let me have a try."

Du Kang nodded and gestured 'please.' At that, Ling Chen approached the middle-aged man, without a word, took out a bottle of medicine from his pocket, poured out a pill, and presented it to him.

"I don't need to say what this is; I'm sure you recognize it."

Seeing the pill in Ling Chen's hand, the middle-aged man's expression finally showed a slight change. Noticing his reaction, Ling Chen smiled gently. This detail alone was enough to confirm that the middle-aged man before him was definitely a member of the Dark Pavilion.

"I know your time is almost up. Without the antidote, you're bound to die. So, now you have a chance to live. If you cooperate with me, I'll give you an antidote, and you'll live for another month."

Upon hearing this, the middle-aged man snorted coldly, "Living an extra month, what good will that do? I'll die anyway."

"No." Ling Chen shook his head, "I will give you a way out; then you can find people from the Dark Pavilion, and they'll continue to provide you with the antidote. But first, you must tell me, aside from yourself, where are the others? You deliberately attracted everyone's attention to the stage, so you must have a purpose. Right?"

Watching Ling Chen play with the antidote in his hand, the middle-aged man seemed to fall into contemplation, with his head down, his eyes flickering, showing a hesitant expression.

Seeing the middle-aged man's hesitation, Ling Chen laughed and said, "Don't hesitate; I know inside you've already agreed, you just can't say it."

Chapter 1575 - 1880: Poison Gas (2)

"How did you know?"

"All the members of your Dark Pavilion have a poison capsule hidden in their teeth. If you were truly loyal to the Dark Pavilion, you'd have bitten it and ended your life by now, wouldn't you?"

Ling Chen's words took everyone by surprise. They were so focused on capturing the man that they overlooked this detail. If the middle-aged man poisoned himself, they'd be at a loss.

After a moment of silence, the middle-aged man spoke, "They had me draw attention to the ring so others could find a way to the control room, seize control, and then issue orders directly to divert the security personnel around the venue."

The moment he said this, everyone's expression changed dramatically.

Damn it!

Ling Chen's heart sank. Without a second thought, he dashed out of the lounge, and the others, realizing the gravity of the situation, quickly headed to the control room.

Upon reaching the control room, as soon as Ling Chen entered, he was hit by a strong scent of blood. Looking closely, he saw over twenty staff members lying in pools of blood, not a single one left alive.

Bastards! Seeing this scene, a fire of anger surged in Ling Chen's heart. These Dark Pavilion people were truly ruthless, having killed them all.

At this moment, those who followed behind were all stunned by the sight.

Ling Chen didn't have time to check the bodies; he rushed straight to the main screen, hoping to bring up surveillance footage. However, he quickly found that the control room's main equipment had been sabotaged, with all communications and monitoring cut off.

"Hey! Kai, can you hear me?" Ling Chen picked up the walkie-talkie he carried with him, trying to contact Jiang Yunkai. But all he got through the walkie-talkie was static, unable to reach anyone.

"Ling Chen, what do we do now?" Tong Zhentian, Su Mei, and Du Kang all came over, their faces full of concern under such circumstances.

"Alert the fire department and other security personnel to evacuate the audience immediately," Ling Chen swiftly arranged. "Remember, maintain order, prevent any chaos. Master Su, you oversee with your team. Once the evacuation begins, the Dark Pavilion will surely make a move, and it will be up to you to handle them."

Su Mei nodded, saying, "Don't worry, I won't let them succeed." With that, Su Mei left the control room with a group of skilled individuals.

"Elder Tong, even though things are chaotic, we cannot panic ourselves. You stay here and manage the overall situation. I'll find a way to restore communication."

"Alright, be careful."

Leaving the control room, Ling Chen quickly headed toward the venue entrance. Soon, he observed that none of the fifteen entrances to the venue had any security guards. Just as suspected, Ling Chen frowned. The security personnel originally stationed here had been redirected by the Dark Pavilion. By now, it's likely that the Dark Pavilion members have entered the venue.

However, this wasn't Ling Chen's main concern. The members of the Dark Pavilion blending into the venue wasn't difficult since the Martial Arts Tournament was open to the public. But the reason for moving the security personnel was surely to smuggle dangerous items into the venue, just like Li Haibin did before. Had Ling Chen not stopped Li Haibin in time, the gas bomb would have caused catastrophic casualties.

Meanwhile, firefighters and security personnel, having been notified, were working hard to evacuate the audience. Fortunately, the venue was open on all sides, only cordoned off with yellow tape. To avoid chaos due to the large crowd, the venue's security was handling the evacuation from four directions.

"Hey! Chen, did you get that?" At this moment, Jiang Yunkai's voice came through the earpiece.

"Kai, I can hear you. Is communication fully restored?"

"Our tech team has sorted it out. Chen, we've got a problem now."

"What's the issue?"

"The security team assigned to protect Miss Tang reports they got separated from her and don't know her whereabouts. Perhaps you should call Miss Tang."

Shiyun? Ling Chen's heart skipped a beat. "I got it, I'll handle it." Saying this, Ling Chen quickly pulled out his phone and dialed Tang Shiyun's number. Soon, the call connected, and hearing Tang Shiyun's voice, Ling Chen breathed a slight sigh of relief.

"Missy, where are you?"

"I'm on the north side of the venue, following the crowd evacuating. Ling, what's happening? Why are the audience being evacuated suddenly?"

"It's nothing, just a minor incident. By the way, where's Sister Hong, is she with you?"

"She's with me."

"You two stay together, don't get separated. Call me when you reach a safe area..."

Boom!

Ling Chen was mid-sentence when a loud explosion erupted from the venue. Turning around, he saw a plume of blue-green smoke rising over the crowd, gradually spreading outwards.

This is bad! Ling Chen's expression changed. The explosion happened right where Tang Shiyun was. "Hey! Missy, can you hear me?" he shouted into the phone.

However, even though the call hadn't disconnected, there was only silence from Tang Shiyun's side. Suddenly, Ling Chen's mind went into chaos. He couldn't focus on anything else and raced toward the explosion site.

Missy, please be safe!

Ling Chewn clenched his teeth, praying silently. As he reached the scene, a strong acrid odor immediately hit him. Ling Chen held his breath and surveyed the surroundings.

The earlier explosion was loud, but without fire, the impact wasn't significant. However, the toxic gas overhead posed a serious threat. Some spectators, caught off guard and inhaling the gas, immediately collapsed, feeling weak all over.

"Missy! Missy, where are you?" Ling Chen called out loud as he ran.

"Mr. Ling, we're over here." Xu Hong's voice came from a distance. Ling Chen felt a surge of relief and quickly headed in her direction. As he approached, he saw Tang Shiyun lying in Xu Hong's arms, her face pale and body appearing frail. A short distance away from them lay the remnants of the explosive device.

Due to the close proximity, Tang Shiyun had inhaled a large amount of the toxic gas when it erupted, leaving her in this weakened state.

After checking Tang Shiyun's condition, Ling Chen immediately picked her up. Looking at Xu Hong beside him, he asked with concern, "Sister Hong, are you alright?"

Xu Hong shook her head, "I'm fine."

Hearing this, Ling Chen was a bit puzzled. From Li Haibin's description, the gas's potency was significant. Since Xu Hong and Tang Shiyun were together, Xu Hong must have inhaled it too. Yet Tang Shiyun was incapacitated, while Xu Hong seemed unaffected by the gas.

Such thoughts had no time to dwell on. Ling Chen carried the two women toward an area not yet covered by the gas.

Chapter 1576 - 1881: Poison Gas (Part 3)

After bringing the two of them to a safe place, Ling Chen didn't stay; he turned around and went back the way he came. There were still many people poisoned; he had to get them out as soon as possible.

When Ling Chen returned to the blast site, he saw an old man in a Kasaya arrive a step before him. Once there, the old man said nothing, directly took off his Kasaya, and began waving it with both hands like a huge fan, stirring the poison gas hanging in midair.

In an instant, the originally scattered poison gas actually began to slowly gather above the old man's head, as if wrapped up by some invisible force.

Seeing this, Ling Chen couldn't help letting out a breath of relief. A master was indeed a master; with just his own strength he could actually keep all this poison gas under Control. That kind of power was truly astonishing.

Not long after, under the old man's Control, the poison gas in midair gradually moved to an uninhabited area. Seizing the opportunity, Ling Chen immediately had the security personnel rescue the poisoned spectators who were lying paralyzed on the ground.

After more than ten minutes of busy work, all the spectators at the venue were evacuated. The once lively arena instantly became cold and deserted, a complete mess.

"Ling Chen."

Once the poisoned injured were arranged, Tong Zhentian came quickly striding over.

"Elder Tong, how's the situation?"

Tong Zhentian let out a breath and said with a face full of relief, "This time we really have those experts from the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion to thank; it's only because of their help that the crisis didn't escalate."

After listening to Tong Zhentian's account, Ling Chen suddenly understood. While the crowd was being evacuated, the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion had already sent people to blend into the crowd to search for the members of the Dark Pavilion. In fact, finding them wasn't hard; since they wanted to detonate poison gas bombs in the crowd, they would definitely be carrying briefcases. Based on that alone, their positions could be accurately locked in.

When the first explosion sounded, the experts of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion had already successfully captured the other two Dark Pavilion members and brought the scene under control in time, preventing more casualties.

"Elder Tong, go and bring the old brother over. These people are all poisoned; we still have to ask him to help treat them."

"Alright."

After Tong Zhentian left, Ling Chen immediately returned to Tang Shiyun's side and led her to the lounge. After being poisoned, Tang Shiyun's body temperature was slowly dropping; her skin felt like it was covered with a layer of frost, extremely cold.

"How could this happen?" Ling Chen looked at Tang Shiyun with a worried face, a bit frightened inside. Tang Shiyun's breathing was getting weaker and weaker; he was really afraid something might go wrong.

Just then, Jiang Yunkai hurried in from outside.

"Chen."

"Are all the injured outside taken care of?"

"They've all been arranged. The ambulances are on their way. I just took a quick look—there aren't many people poisoned, only a bit more than forty, but their condition is not optimistic. Some people's body temperature is dropping sharply, their whole bodies ice-cold. I'm afraid they won't hold on for long."

"Don't panic yet. Have the medical staff at the venue help take care of them and try to stabilize their condition as much as possible."

"Got it."

Just as Jiang Yunkai left, Tong Zhentian arrived with Ling Gengqiu.

"Old brother, hurry and take a look at her. Can the poison she's taken be cured?" Ling Chen asked anxiously.

Ling Gengqiu nodded and placed his hand on Tang Shiyun's pulse. After checking her body, he examined Tang Shiyun's symptoms and said somewhat awkwardly, "This should be a mixed poison, similar to the poison those Dark Pavilion members were hit with before, just not as potent."

"Will her life be in danger?"

"It won't go as far as a life-threatening situation, but this kind of poison will make a person's body turn cold, as if frozen, entering a strange dormant state. In modern terms, it's a vegetative state."

"So there's no way to concoct an antidote?"

Ling Gengqiu shook his head and said, "You're thinking too simply. The person who made this poison gas is a master. From the fact that he used eighty-one different toxins to refine this mixed poison, you can

tell he's extremely familiar with the toxicity of each poison and can Control their balance very well. Even I can't做到 that."

Hearing this, Ling Chen felt his mood sink straight into a valley.

"So... so Shiyun can't be saved?" Xu Hong, standing to the side, asked, her eyes unable to hide her worry.

Glancing at the questioning Xu Hong, Ling Chen's gaze suddenly lit up. "Right! Old brother, earlier both Hong and Shiyun inhaled the poison gas, so why did Shiyun get poisoned while Hong is perfectly fine?"

"Oh?" Ling Gengqiu looked at Xu Hong in curiosity. "There's something like that? Come over and let me examine you."

After taking Xu Hong's pulse, Ling Gengqiu smiled and said, "This is really interesting. You actually aren't affected by the poison gas."

"Old brother, why is that?"

"Because there are some people in this world whose constitution is different from ordinary people. They have a special kind of antibody in their bodies that can give them immunity to many diseases or toxins. She's one of those people. You brat, your luck's not bad—so long as we use the antibodies in her blood as a sample, we can develop an antidote."

"Really?" Ling Chen's face lit up with joy and he quickly said, "I'll go make arrangements right now."

Finding the antidote wouldn't just save Tang Shiyun; more importantly, all the other poisoned victims could be treated. As long as everyone came through safely, the organizers of the Martial Arts Tournament would have much less responsibility, and their reputation could also be preserved.

"Hong, I'm going to have to trouble you in a bit."

"Don't say that. As long as Shiyun is alright, I'm willing to do anything."

Before long, the ambulances from the hospital arrived and transported all the poisoned victims to the hospital. Ling Chen had originally wanted to accompany Tang Shiyun to the hospital, but there were still other matters he needed to handle, so he had no choice but to stay.

Back at the main command center, the dead staff members had already been carried out. Jiang Yunkai and several security personnel were cleaning the bloodstains on the floor.

After exchanging a few words with Jiang Yunkai, Ling Chen went straight to the lounge. At this moment, there were four middle-aged men tied up with ropes in the lounge. Su Mei, Du Kang, Tong Zhentian and a group of experts were all present.

"Ling Chen, you came at the right time," Su Mei said. "How do you think we should deal with these people?"

"A life for a life. If we don't kill them, who's going to answer for the dead?"

Su Mei nodded. "Alright, I'll arrange for them to be sent to the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion later."

"Don't!" At this moment, one of the middle-aged men said anxiously, "You promised me before that you would leave me a way out."

Ling Chen swept him with a cold glance. "Before is before, now is now. Don't you have to answer for those more than twenty lives?"

"I... I can trade information. Anything I know, I'll tell you."

"It's too late to say that now. Besides, I'm not interested in your information." With that, Ling Chen waved his hand, signaling Su Mei to have them all taken away.

Chapter 1577 - 1882: Monk and Taoist

After several middle-aged men were taken away, Ling Chen cupped his fists towards the masters of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion and said, "Today, thanks to all the seniors, the losses were minimized. Thank you!"

The old Taoist smiled faintly and said, "No need to be polite, young brother. As members of the Martial Arts world, it is our duty to uphold justice. This is what we ought to do."

"Ling, let me introduce you." Xiao Dan pointed to the old Taoist next to him and said, "This is my master, known as Dan Xu, the Temple Master of Hongmeng Daoist Temple."

"So it's Daoist Danxu." Ling Chen quickly saluted.

After introducing Dan Xu, Xiao Dan turned his gaze to the monk wearing a kasaya beside him and said with a smile, "This is Master Hui Yun from Hongshan Temple. He is a close friend of my master and a truly enlightened monk."

"Greetings, Master Hui Yun."

"Amitabha." Master Hui Yun chanted a Buddhist phrase in return.

Seeing Xiao Dan was about to continue introducing others, Su Mei suddenly interjected, "Ling Chen, didn't you say before that the Dark Pavilion sent four envoys to Beijing this time, each with three members, meaning each small team has four people? We've now only captured two teams, and two teams are still hidden in the shadows. With such happenings, we should strengthen our defenses, and most importantly, reassure the audience. We can't afford to damage the reputation of the Martial Arts Association because of this incident."

Ling Chen thought for a moment and said, "In that case, let's hold a press conference later to inform the media about today's events. I believe everyone will understand."

"Alright." Su Mei nodded and looked at Tong Zhentian, saying, "Elder Tong, since you are the president of the Martial Arts Association, we'll need your presence for this matter."

"It's no problem, it is my duty. Ling Chen, let's get ready first."

Leaving the lounge, Ling Chen curiously asked, "Elder Tong, do you know both Dan Xuzi and Master Hui Yun?"

"I haven't heard of Dan Xuzi, but the name of Master Hui Yun is familiar to me. He is the abbot of Hongshan Temple and was a master in the Martial Arts world in his early years, with good relations with the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, possessing great fame and prestige. Later, for unknown reasons, he suddenly became a monk, and later the abbot of Hongshan Temple. Speaking of Master Hui Yun, he is quite a legendary figure in the Martial Arts world."

"Seeing him in action today, his strength is indeed extraordinary."

"Master Hui Yun gained prominence many years ago and is senior to me, so his skills are undoubtedly profound. Didn't I tell you earlier that holding the Martial Arts Tournament would surely attract many reclusive masters? Was I wrong?"

Ling Chen nodded and said, "You're not wrong, but being able to invite them shows that the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion truly has a lot of influence."

"Dan Xuzi and Master Hui Yun have good relationships with the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. For such masters, even if they have retired, the Pavilion will find ways to maintain contact. Therefore, while the Dragon Tiger Hall may seem not weaker than the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion on the surface, we lose in terms of heritage, which can only be accumulated over time."

"Elder Tong, your words reminded me of those two seniors."

"Are you referring to Golden Dragon and Wang Teng from the last meal?"

"Yes, aren't you curious why they would approach us proactively and support us unconditionally?"

"Asking me is useless as they didn't tell me. I've been too busy lately to chat with them. I think this matter is best discussed later."

Following that, Ling Chen arranged matters for the press conference and then drove to the hospital by himself.

Upon arriving at the special care ward where Tang Shiyun lived, he saw Tang Shiyun sitting on the bed, drinking porridge as he entered. Seeing Ling Chen come in, Tang Shiyun's delicate little face was filled with delight.

"Ling!"

"Girl, how are you feeling, any better?" Ling Chen asked with concern.

"Much better, the doctor just said that the toxins in my body have been cleared, and I'll be fine after some rest for a few days."

Ling Chen smiled and touched Tang Shiyun's small head, saying, "I'm sorry, dear, it's my fault for not taking good care of you this time."

"Ling, don't say that. No one could foresee such things, you can't be blamed. I heard from Sister Hong that when you found me, your eyes were red." As she spoke, Tang Shiyun put down the porridge bowl and held Ling Chen's hand, saying, "Ling, knowing that you care about me is all that matters to me."

"Silly girl, how could I not care about you? As long as you're okay, I'm willing to give up everything." Finishing, Ling Chen asked, "Where is Sister Hong? I don't see her."

"Sister Hong just finished a check-up, and the doctor is drawing her blood samples. Ling, wasn't I lucky this time? Sister Hong has antibodies to the poison in her body, I'm so fortunate."

Ling Chen nodded with a smile, saying, "Good people get rewarded."

As they spoke, the ringtone of Ling Chen's phone rang. He took it out and glanced at the caller ID on the screen; it was Nanrong Wanqing calling. Today, Nanrong Wanqing and Nanrong Hao didn't attend the Martial Arts Tournament due to company matters, perhaps they heard about it and called to inquire.

"Ling, whose call is it?"

"It's Wanqing. Let me take this call first."

After chatting for a while, Ling Chen hung up the phone and said, "Wanqing heard about what happened to you and is planning to visit you."

"No need, Sister Wanqing is so busy, and it's nothing serious with me."

"Wanqing has good intentions. I'll have to hold a press conference later and might not stay at the hospital. Let Wanqing come to chat with you."

"Ling, if you have work, go ahead. Don't let me delay your important matters." Tang Shiyun was very understanding.

Ling Chen smiled slightly, just about to speak when the ward door was pushed open from the outside. Then, two policemen walked in.

Upon seeing the officer leading, a hint of surprise appeared on Ling Chen's face.

"Officer Xia, what brings you here?" Ling Chen quickly stood up from the chair and greeted him warmly.

"We are aware of what happened at the Martial Arts Tournament. It seems someone used weapons of mass destruction at the venue. The authorities are very concerned about this matter and ordered me to investigate thoroughly. You were present at the scene, and I hope you can tell me what happened."

"So Officer Xia is here about this issue." Ling Chen said with a smile, "To be honest, I don't know who the mastermind behind this event is, and the Martial Arts Association is also investigating. If there is any news, I'll inform you immediately."

Chapter 1578 - 1883: Dark Pavilion Assassin (1)

Hearing Ling Chen's words, Xia Mutong frowned slightly and said, "Ling Chen, you'd better not brush me off. I heard people say you've already caught the culprit."

"Is that so?" Ling Chen shrugged innocently and said, "Officer Xia, I really don't know about this. The scene was too chaotic at the time, and we were only focused on everyone's safety. Who would have had the mind to find the culprit? Besides, with tens of thousands of spectators at the venue, it's impossible to find the perpetrator who hid among them."

"You..." Xia Mutong glared fiercely at Ling Chen, seemingly wanting to say something, but refrained as colleagues were present.

"Ling Chen, don't mess around. This matter is not like ordinary affairs. The higher-ups gave a strict order to investigate thoroughly. If you don't cooperate, it will be difficult for me," Xia Mutong said in a low voice.

Ling Chen said helplessly, "Officer Xia, I really don't know. Pressuring me won't help."

Although he was well aware of the incident, he didn't want to tell Xia Mutong, nor did he want the police involved. The state has its laws, but the martial arts world also has its own rules. As the saying goes, martial arts matters should be resolved within the martial arts world. The people from the Dark Pavilion are ruthless, so they must be retaliated and counterattacked with similar methods. However, once government departments get involved, not only will things become complicated, but their hands will also be tied.

Seeing that Ling Chen refused to say more, Xia Mutong had no way to deal with him.

"Remember, if you have any news, notify me immediately." With that, Xia Mutong walked to the hospital bed and chatted with Tang Shiyun for a while. The two had known each other since being in East Sea City, and Xia Mutong was even a fan of Tang Shiyun's, so they had a good relationship.

After staying at the hospital for a while, Ling Chen checked the time. The press conference was starting in an hour, and he had to rush back to oversee the situation.

Ling Chen was busy until three in the afternoon before he had time to rest.

Although the press conference was over, many reporters from the news media still gathered at the venue, all wanting more insider information.

"Chen, it's been hard on you. Have some tea first." Jiang Yunkai walked over with a cup of hot tea.

"Were you exhausted today?"

"It was manageable," Jiang Yunkai said with relief. "Thankfully, we managed to control the casualties in time, otherwise things wouldn't have been this easy."

"We just got lucky."

"Chen, with such an incident today, will tomorrow's Martial Arts Tournament continue?"

"Of course, it will continue." Ling Chen nodded, his tone firm, "The more things are like this, the less we should stop. Otherwise, it will only make others think we're afraid. Besides, leveraging this incident, the Martial Arts Tournament can serve to rally people together. Currently, the martial arts community is fragmented, with everyone only considering their own interests. In fact, the appearance of the Dark Pavilion might be a good thing. With a common adversarial target, people can unite."

"Even so, with such an occurrence, there might not be many willing to attend the Martial Arts Tournament," Jiang Yunkai was worried.

"That is indeed a problem." Ling Chen rubbed his temples, pondering how to solve this issue.

Night fell.

After returning to the Dragon Tiger Hall, Ling Chen took a shower, changed into fresh clothes, and then went to Li Haibin's room.

"Uncle Li, are you asleep?"

"Not yet. Why, do you need something?"

Ling Chen nodded and said, "I have something to discuss with you. I know you serve the Dark Pavilion, partly because the Dark Pavilion deceived you, and partly because they used various means to control you. So, even if you want to betray the Dark Pavilion, you dare not. But if I can help neutralize the poison in your bodies, can you help me dismantle the Dark Pavilion?"

Hearing this, Li Haibin impatiently asked, "Can you really do that?"

"My brother's medical skills are superb. Right now, we can develop a true antidote based on the ones we have on hand."

"If that is the case, I believe many will want to break free from the Dark Pavilion's control." Pausing, Li Haibin continued, "Of course, I can only guarantee a small portion. The majority still prefer to stay with the Dark Pavilion. While some were trapped by the Dark Pavilion's tactics, quite a few have families killed by the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion and seek revenge. Moreover, you can't tell who's been deceived and who genuinely seeks vengeance."

"Did the Grand Leader contact Guo Hong today?"

"That's right! But Guo Hong didn't answer the phone, and both emissaries are out of touch. The Grand Leader should know that something happened. However, since he accomplished half of his mission by successfully detonating the gas bomb, he likely won't take more risks and will withdraw his forces."

"Even so, it's better to be cautious. The Grand Leader of the Dark Pavilion wouldn't hesitate to harm innocent people to suppress the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. Honestly, I can't rest easy; who knows if he'll do something even more terrifying."

"That's true."

Saying this, Ling Chen stood up and said, "Uncle Li, you had a long day today; rest early. I won't disturb you anymore." With these words, Ling Chen turned and left the room.

After closing the door, Li Haibin returned to bed, not even bothering to take off his clothes, lying directly on it. He closed his eyes slightly, appearing asleep but staying alert to his surroundings. Over the years in the Dark Pavilion, he constantly faced assassination attempts. The Dark Pavilion would occasionally send people to attack them to cultivate their alertness.

At the time, many who trained alongside him died at the hands of their companions. Therefore, they remained on edge at all times, not daring to be lax.

Time passed second by second; it's unclear how long went by when a sudden 'knock, knock, knock' came from outside the room.

Li Haibin quickly got up from the bed, looking at the door as he asked, "Who is it?"

"It's me."

The voice... sounded unfamiliar yet somewhat familiar. Li Haibin didn't think much of it, knowing he'd been interacting with many people from the Dragon Tiger Hall and the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion these days. Though currently treated well, he hadn't forgotten his status as a captive. At that moment, he got up and walked to the door, opening it.

Seeing the person standing outside, Li Haibin promptly stepped aside to let them in, asking, "Do you need something from me?"

The person nodded, eyes fixed on Li Haibin, whose gaze made him uncomfortable. However, thinking of the other's identity, he didn't show his dissatisfaction. As a captive, he was aware of such behavior.

But before the other could speak, Li Haibin suddenly realized something. He looked at the other in confusion and said, "This is the Dragon Tiger Hall, you aren't..."

Chapter 1579 - 1884: Dark Pavilion Assassin (2)

Before the words were finished, the other party interrupted Li Haibin, interjecting, "I've come to give you a message from someone."

"Who?"

"The chief. He wants me to tell you that no good fate awaits those who betray the Dark Pavilion."

Upon hearing this, Li Haibin's face suddenly changed, and he swung his fist towards the other person. However, the moment he made his move, a cold flash suddenly shot over, drawing a thin line of blood. Immediately afterward, Li Haibin's pupils contracted slightly, his body tilted backward, and he fell to the ground with a thud, lifeless.

Looking at Li Haibin's body, the attacker snorted coldly, muttering to himself, "To betray the chief is sheer stupidity!"

...

The next day.

Ling Chen stretched comfortably in bed and then got up to walk into the bathroom. After a tiring day, he slept soundly. Once dressed, Ling Chen pushed open the door and prepared to head to the dining room. Just then, he saw Tian Hanzhong rushing over hurriedly from the other side, shouting as he ran, "Ling, hurry, something big has happened!"

"Brother Tian." Ling Chen asked, "What's with the yelling early in the morning?"

"So... something big." Tian Hanzhong panted and said urgently, "Don't ask too many questions now, just follow me, the Martial Arts Hall Master and the deputy master have already gone over."

Upon hearing this, Ling Chen couldn't help but feel a sinking feeling in his heart. What happened overnight? Without time to think further, he hurriedly followed Tian Hanzhong to the scene. Soon, they arrived outside Li Haibin's room.

Before entering, Ling Chen already smelled the scent of blood from outside. Not good! Ling Chen thought to himself and rushed into the room anxiously.

"Uncle Li!" As soon as he spoke, Ling Chen was met with the sight of Li Haibin's body pinned to the wall by several daggers, forming a 'big' shape. Moreover, there was a deep wound on his throat, and his shirt was stained red with blood.

Beside Li Haibin's body, on the wall, several large words were written in blood: Traitor, Die!

At that moment, Tong Zhentian, Chen Junfeng, He Ziyun, and Qiu Yong were all gathered in front of the body, their expressions grim.

"Elder Tong, what's going on, who did this?" Ling Chen quickly stepped forward, asking seriously.

"I don't know either." Tong Zhentian shook his head, saying, "This morning, a disciple passed by and found the door open, with blood stains on the floor. After checking inside, they discovered Li Haibin's body. I just examined it; his body is already stiff, and he has been dead for at least ten hours."

Ten hours? Ling Chen's expression changed; he had visited Li Haibin the night before. If Tong Zhentian's timing was correct, Li Haibin was killed shortly after he left.

"Mr. He, did anyone enter the martial arts hall last night?"

He Ziyun replied, "I've already asked. The disciple on duty last night didn't notice anyone entering. Additionally, we checked the scene and found a few suspicious details. Li Haibin was an Earthly List expert, very powerful, but there were no signs of struggle in the room. Also, Li Haibin was killed with a single blow, his throat cut, without even a chance to struggle. This means Li Haibin should have known his killer, and besides, that person's strength was exceedingly formidable, even surpassing Li Haibin."

After listening to He Ziyun's analysis, Ling Chen nodded, then turned his gaze to the three blood words on the wall. After thinking for a moment, Ling Chen spoke, "Isn't there something strange? Since the other party left the words 'traitor,' it indicates the killer is surely from the Dark Pavilion. However, as someone who betrayed the organization, upon seeing someone from the Dark Pavilion, what do you think his first reaction would be? If it were us, we would definitely strike first."

"That may not be necessarily so. The chief might still be unaware that Li Haibin and his group betrayed him..." Just as He Ziyun finished speaking, Ling Chen interjected, "If the person could precisely find Li Haibin's residence, do you think he wouldn't know?"

These words left He Ziyun speechless and unable to explain. Chen Junfeng, standing nearby, said, "Perhaps the person sent by the Dark Pavilion was a friend of Li Haibin. Even though he betrayed the Dark Pavilion, upon seeing his friend, he might not have attacked immediately."

"Sir Chen's analysis seems plausible, but..." Ling Chen changed his tone, "You all seem to have forgotten Guo Hong and Li Haibin's previous evaluation of the Dark Pavilion. In the Dark Pavilion, there are no true friends. Moreover, the Dark Pavilion frequently trains them to be vigilant at all times. So, even upon seeing a friend appear, Li Haibin would remain alert. When an Earthly List expert is on guard, I think even if the person is strong, it wouldn't be possible to kill Li Haibin instantly. There must be something amiss here. My guess is that Li Haibin might have known the person but didn't know he was from the Dark Pavilion."

Comparing He Ziyun's and Ling Chen's analyses, everyone agreed that Ling Chen's logic was more reasonable. Otherwise, an Earthly List peak-stage expert couldn't have been killed so easily.

"Ling Cheng, according to your analysis, the killer is someone Li Haibin knew, but whose background was unclear, then... could the killer be hiding among us?" As Qiu Yong finished his sentence, everyone instinctively glanced at those around them.

Seeing this, Ling Chen quickly said, "Elder brother's suspicion is quite possible, but surely there wouldn't be any suspicion among us. We've gone through so much together and know each other well, so there shouldn't be a problem among us. All in all, from now on, everyone should be more vigilant. It might be that someone from the Dark Pavilion has infiltrated the martial arts hall."

At this point, Ling Chen seemed to recall something and said, "Elder Tong, since something happened to Li Haibin, what about Guo Hong and the others? If the killer killed Li Haibin, there's no reason they would spare the others."

Upon hearing this, everyone looked at each other and quickly ran towards Guo Hong and Wang Dong's rooms.

Their rooms were not far apart, and shortly after, the group arrived at Guo Hong's room. As they entered, they found Guo Hong in the same condition as Li Haibin, with his body pinned to the wall by daggers. The difference was that Guo Hong had been stabbed in the heart.

Furthermore, beside his body was a line in blood: Offenders of the Dark Pavilion, Slaughter without Mercy!

How cruel! Ling Chen frowned slightly. Although he had anticipated Guo Hong's fate, seeing Guo Hong's body with his own eyes still made Ling Chen feel uncomfortable.

Quickly, the group moved on to Wang Dong's room, and as expected, the results were the same; all three people were killed. However, compared to Li Haibin and Guo Hong, Wang Dong's death was even more gruesome, with his whole head cut off and hanging from the ceiling.

Chapter 1580 - 1885: Dark Pavilion Assassin (Part 3)

"These utterly heartless people are so vicious." Seeing this scene, everyone gained a deeper understanding of the ruthlessness of the Dark Pavilion.

At this moment, a disciple from the Dragon Tiger Hall hurriedly ran inside, shouting in panic, "Master, Master, something bad... ugh!" Before he could finish his words, the disciple saw the head hanging from the ceiling, turned pale, and gagged immediately.

"What happened again?" Tong Zhentian's tone was a bit sharp; waking up to such an event early in the morning would put anyone in a bad mood.

The disciple took several deep breaths to steady himself, "Master, something happened over there, several people are dead."

How many died? Upon hearing this, everyone was shocked.

"Lead the way!" Tong Zhentian spat out the order with a dark face, then followed the disciple out of the room. In no time, the group arrived at a house in the northeast corner of the hall.

Seeing this house, Ling Chen's eyes narrowed slightly as he said, "Isn't this the room where the person delivering the antidote is held?"

Tong Zhentian didn't respond, instead, he rushed directly inside. This was the small dark room the Dragon Tiger Hall used specially for disciplining disciples, completely enclosed. After capturing that middle-aged man distributing the antidote yesterday, Ling Chen had him locked here and specifically assigned a disciple to guard it. That middle-aged man was likely to know a lot about the inner workings of the Dark Pavilion, so nothing could go wrong.

Inside, the middle-aged man was lying in a pool of blood, long dead. Beside him, two disciples of the Dragon Tiger Hall were also killed. Ling Chen stepped forward to check the wounds on the bodies; they were all killed with a single slash, clearly the work of the same assassin.

All dead!

Ling Chen bit his lip in frustration; anyone connected to the Dark Pavilion was dead, not a single one was left.

"Didn't the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion capture four people? I wonder if anything happened to them," Chen Junfeng said.

"Master Su sent them back to the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, planning to execute them there." Pausing for a moment, Ling Chen continued, "I'll ask her when I see her later."

"First, get these corpses cleaned up. Today's Martial Arts Tournament still has to proceed as usual; we don't have time to waste here," Tong Zhentian immediately made arrangements.

After a quick breakfast, the group drove to the venue.

As everyone expected, due to yesterday's sudden incident, the Martial Arts Tournament was heavily affected. The massive venue had only a few thousand attendees, mostly martial artists, sparse and lifeless, unlike the bustling scenes of the prior two days.

With such a small audience, no one had the enthusiasm to continue holding the Martial Arts Tournament. Even if they persisted, it was with a lack of focus, merely going through the motions.

At the main command center, Su Mei and Du Kang were already there, talking about something. Ling Chen and his group entered and greeted Su Mei.

"Master Su, may I have a word?"

Su Mei responded softly, following Ling Chen to a corner, and asked, "What's up?"

"I wanted to ask, where are the four people caught yesterday?"

"I've already sent them back to the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. Rest assured, blood for blood, I won't spare their lives."

"You misunderstand, that's not what I was asking, rather..." Ling Chen's words were cut off by the sudden ringing of Su Mei's phone.

"Sorry, let me take this call first." With that, Su Mei took out her phone and stepped aside. Whatever was said on the other end caused a noticeable change in her expression.

"Master Su, is everything alright?" Ling Chen couldn't help but ask when he saw Su Mei standing there in a daze.

Su Mei turned back, looking into Ling Chen's eyes, which were as deep as ink, and asked, "You were asking about those people just now, do you know something?"

Hearing this, Ling Chen was a bit confused and asked rhetorically, "Master Su, what do you mean by that?"

"My people just told me that all four prisoners are dead, but it wasn't us who did it, they were secretly killed by someone." Pausing for a moment, Su Mei hesitated, then continued, "To be honest, after we

sent the four prisoners to the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, I didn't execute them immediately. I had them imprisoned instead, as I wanted to extract more information about the Dark Pavilion from them. Unexpectedly, someone secretly infiltrated the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion and brutally killed them."

"Just as I thought!" Ling Chen nodded and said, "I thought we were the only ones who encountered such an incident. This morning, Li Haibin and the others were all killed right under our noses, which is why I asked about those four people's situation. Now it seems, the Dark Pavilion is even more terrifying than we imagined."

"Now the only lead we had is broken, and with the Dark Pavilion on guard, they definitely won't act rashly. This is bad news for us."

Ling Chen sighed softly and said, "Forget it! Let's not talk about this right now. The most important thing at the moment is to successfully continue the Martial Arts Tournament."

Saying this, the two returned to the group and discussed the current predicament.

"There are only a few thousand people at the venue now, most of them martial artists. There are just a handful of spectators genuinely there for the spectacle. Besides, I checked the comments online; people are still anxious about yesterday's events, with some even criticizing the Martial Arts Association for failing to protect everyone. Some even comment online saying we're just a bunch of performers, not real martial arts experts."

Hearing these remarks, Tong Zhentian's expression wasn't pleasant. Understandably so, being the president of the Martial Arts Association, seeing people openly insulting the association and belittling their value would make anyone uncomfortable.

Looking at everyone present, Tong Zhentian said, "There are no outsiders here, so feel free to speak your minds. Let's see if there's any effective method to restore the Martial Arts Association's public image."

Su Mei pondered for a moment and said, "Didn't we hold a press conference yesterday? The media explained things for us in their reports. I believe most of the public is rational and should understand. I think we should increase our publicity efforts..."

"It's useless," He Ziyun interjected, "Master Su, if we had enough time, you could try that method, but the Martial Arts Tournament is already halfway through, with only two days left. Do we have any spare time for publicity? If it can't have an immediate effect, then no method will work."

He Ziyun's words made everyone fall into deep thought. Indeed, with only two days left for the Martial Arts Tournament, they didn't have any time to waste.