

The Beauty 411

Chapter 411 Qu Jinxian

The crowd looked in the direction of the voice, only to see a young man of similar age, with an upright posture, striding forward, his handsome face with chiseled features filled with a stern coldness. Especially those icy-cold eyes gave a chilling sensation.

Seeing the appearance of the young man, the struggling woman in white froze, staring blankly at the youth as if forgetting everything around her.

Ling Chen... it was him!

"Kid, don't meddle in other people's business, get lost as far as you can," a young man cursed loudly, blatantly ignoring Ling Chen's presence, dragging the woman in white towards the cabin.

Ling Chen frowned and said coldly, "Out of respect for us being fellow martial artists, I'm giving you one more chance, let her go!"

"Go to hell, who do you think you are, trying to play the hero in front of us brothers. Third Junior Brother, Fourth Junior Brother, teach this brat a lesson, let him know there are some people he can't afford to provoke."

When Brother spoke, two young men immediately stepped forward quickly, swinging the wine bottles in their hands to smash down onto Ling Chen's head.

Seeing this, Ling Chen's eyes turned cold, and without hesitation, he moved in close to the two young men, his fists like dragons emerging from the sea, slamming hard into their chests.

Bang! Bang!

With two muffled sounds, the young men's wine bottles hadn't yet fallen, and their bodies had already been sent flying out, landing heavily on the ground.

Witnessing Ling Chen's move, that Brother's pupils shrunk as he cursed, "Two useless pieces of trash, can't even handle this little thing, watch me." After speaking, the young man pushed the woman in white towards another companion and stepped forward to confront Ling Chen.

"Kid, I'm Xu Song from Qingyang Sect, state your name."

Ling Chen replied with an indifferent expression, "You're not worthy to know my name."

Hearing this, a fierce look flashed across Xu Song's eyes, and he sneered, "Good, I want to see what you're capable of. Take this!"

With a shout, Xu Song bent and sprung his legs, leaping up rapidly towards Ling Chen, his fist aimed straight at Ling Chen's brow.

Seeing the opponent's attack, Ling Chen bent his body backward, lifting a leg high, his toe kicking precisely onto Xu Song's wrist, deflecting his attack. Seizing this opportunity, Ling Chen spun around, his leg whipping out forcefully, its speed rapid, aimed straight towards Xu Song's neck.

If this leg hit, Xu Song wouldn't be standing up again.

Sensing the fierce wind of the kick approaching, Xu Song's expression changed, his eyes showing alarm, not expecting Ling Chen's agility and speed to be far superior to his own.

With no time to think further, he gritted his teeth, his eyes filled with a fierce light, and swung his fist towards Ling Chen's whipping leg.

Seeing Xu Song's action, Ling Chen sneered silently, thinking him foolish to meet his leg with a fist.

However, just as their fist and leg were about to connect, Ling Chen's face suddenly changed, his eyes widened with fury.

During their exchange, a short sleeve sword had unexpectedly extended from Xu Song's cuff, stabbing towards Ling Chen's calf. If that sleeve sword had pierced through, Ling Chen's journey would likely have ended there.

In a flash of thought, Ling Chen reacted rapidly, urgently pushing down his right leg, narrowly avoiding the sleeve sword, merely cutting the fabric of his trousers without hitting any vital parts.

"You're asking for death!"

Anger flourishing within him, Ling Chen shouted, in an instant closing the distance to Xu Song, his iron fist blasting out, intending to break his ribs.

But at that moment, a gust of powerful wind suddenly arrived, pushing Xu Song aside. Following that, an unknown fist lashed out, clashing hard with Ling Chen's iron fist.

Feeling the Inner Strength contained in the fist, Ling Chen was startled, and before he could react, that burst of Inner Strength suddenly exploded, immense and heavy, forcibly pushing him back two steps.

Looking up, Ling Chen saw a strange young man had appeared before him.

The young man was tall and lean, reaching a height of 1.8 meters, with an ordinary visage, sporting a crew cut, his eyes sharp as if he were an unsheathed sword, intimidating, making one dare not look directly.

Ling Chen squinted his eyes at the other party and asked in a deep voice, "Who are you?"

"The eldest disciple of Qingyang Sect, Qu Jinxian."

Hearing this name, Ling Chen's pupils involuntarily constricted.

Qu Jinxian, ranked third on the Newcomer List, even more formidable than Yi Shuiyan. So this was Xu Song's Senior Brother.

"The Qingyang Sect truly has a way with instruction, one hides weapons in secret, and another takes advantage of an ambush. Are there none amongst your Qingyang Sect disciples who are upright and honorable?" Ling Chen said sarcastically.

"Bullshit!" Xu Song cursed angrily: "It was clearly you who meddled in others' business first."

Ling Chen pointed to the woman in white and said indifferently, "She is my friend. Your Qingyang Sect members are bullying my friend, am I not allowed to help? I really don't know who your master is, teaching such a bunch of scum."

"How dare you!"

Qu Jinxian said coldly: "Do not disrespect my master, you'd better apologize right now."

"Fine, but the Qingyang Sect must apologize to my friend first." Ling Chen stared directly at Qu Jinxian's chilling gaze, without a trace of retreat in his eyes.

"Good, I would like to see how capable you are to speak to me like this." The moment his words fell, Qu Jinxian lightly tapped with the tip of his foot, ready to charge forward.

"I'm not afraid of you!" Ling Chen's fists readied, without a hint of fear in his eyes.

"Stop!"

"Stop!"

Just then, two different voices came simultaneously.

Ling Chen and Qu Jinxian stopped in their tracks and turned to look, only to see two groups of people walking briskly towards them. One group was led by Qiu Yong, the eight eccentrics, and Ye Liangyong.

The other group was led by an old man, about the same age as Qiu Yong, dressed in an old-fashioned Zhongshan suit, with white hair and a youthful face, exuding an aura of calm and commanding presence.

"Big Brother."

"Master."

After hearing Qu Jinxian's address, Ling Chen realized that the old man was the Sect Leader of Qingyang Sect.

The old man glanced at Xu Song and Qu Jinxian, then at Ling Chen, and snorted coldly: "Qiu Yong, you're quite audacious, bringing trouble to our Qingyang Sect."

Qiu Yong said coldly: "Qu Yuan, it's not certain who's causing trouble for whom, don't try to pin the blame on us. Even if my Junior Brother Ling Cheng has a problem with your Qingyang Sect, if you dare, then come at us. We eight eccentrics have never feared anyone."

Qu Yuan's expression grew gloomy as he said: "Good, I've heard much about the extraordinary martial arts of the eight eccentrics. Today, I shall see for myself whether your reputation is deserved."

As tensions rose to the point where swords might be drawn at any moment, Zhong Yang, followed by several subordinates, hurried over from the cabin, slightly frowning as he said: "Gentlemen, you all should be aware of the rules. Before the Heavenly Mechanism Great Ceremony begins, whoever dares to engage in a private skirmish, do not blame us at Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion for being ruthless."

Ling Chen spoke up: "Mr. Zhong, we don't have to fight. Since the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion is the organizer, why don't you come and judge for yourselves and clarify right from wrong. My friend was bullied by the people of Qingyang Sect, and I helped out. Is that not appropriate?"

"You're talking nonsense," Xu Song immediately protested.

"The person involved is right there, how can you still deny it?"

Zhong Yang looked at the woman in white not far away and gave a fist salute: "Miss, may I ask your name?"

The woman in white slightly lifted her face, her eyes gentle as autumn waters as she looked towards Ling Chen, and said softly, "My name is Zhu Xiaozhu."

Chapter 412 Shi Su

"Mr. Ye, why didn't you tell me that Xiaozhu also came to attend the Heavenly Mechanism Great Ceremony?" Ling Chen asked Ye Liangyong beside him.

"You wrong me, it's not that I didn't tell you, I didn't even know she was here until I saw her just now."

"Zhu Xiaozhu?" Zhong Yang turned to the man beside him and asked, "Is there this name among the guests? Why don't I remember it?"

The man took out a tablet, checked the guest invitation list, and shook his head, "Mr. Zhong, there's no one by that name on the list."

"I was not invited," Zhu Xiaozhu took the initiative to say, "It was my master who brought me here."

Hearing this, Zhong Yang instantly understood. Among those invited were not lacking members of sects, just like Xu Song, they all came with their masters to see the world. In this regard, the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion was quite generous.

Ling Chen nodded secretly, so Zhu Xiaozhu came here with her master. He had heard from He Ziyun before; Zhu Xiaozhu's master was skilled in medicine and had a deep friendship with He Ziyun, hence Zhu Xiaozhu always stayed at the Qingyun Martial Arts Hall whenever she was in East Sea City.

"Miss Zhu, may I ask who your master is?" Zhong Yang inquired.

"My master..."

"It's me!"

Before Zhu Xiaoxhu could finish speaking, a cold and distant voice slowly came from outside the crowd, making everyone turn their heads to look. Immediately, they saw a woman gracefully walking toward them.

The woman, about forty or fifty years old, had a dignified appearance with well-maintained, smooth, and fair skin tinged with a hint of pink, resembling an eighteen-year-old girl. However, the faint crow's feet at the corners of her eyes betrayed her real age.

Her graceful figure and a temperament cold as the moon, noble and haughty, almost perfectly displayed the charm of a woman to the extreme.

Seeing the woman appear, both Qiu Yong and Qu Yuan's expressions changed at the same time. The former was surprised, while the latter was frightened, eyes filled with disbelief.

Qu Yuan had never expected Zhu Xiaozhu's master to be this woman.

"Master."

Zhu Xiaozhu hurriedly went over, affectionately holding the woman's arm, and said with embarrassment, "Master, I'm sorry for causing you trouble."

"It has nothing to do with you, don't blame yourself," the woman's expression was indifferent, and she glanced at Qu Yuan beside her, seemingly talking to herself sarcastically, "There are always some who overestimate themselves, thinking being a sect leader means they can do whatever they want."

Hearing this, Qu Yuan's old face immediately turned ugly.

At this moment, Zhong Yang came up with a smile, his words tinged with respect, "So Zhu Xiaozhu is your disciple, we were disrespectful earlier, I hope Ms. Shi won't take offense."

At this point, Ling Chen gently touched Qiu Yong's forearm and asked softly, "Big brother, what's the story with this Ms. Shi? Seeing Old Man Qu's expression, he seems quite afraid of her."

Qiu Yong responded with surprise, "She is your friend, don't you know who her master is?"

Ling Chen touched his nose. He truly didn't know as he had never discussed Zhu Xiaozhu's master with her before.

"That woman is named Shi Su, born into a family of traditional Chinese medicine practitioners. Her medical skills are exceptionally brilliant. In terms of traditional Chinese medicine skills alone, looking throughout Huaxia domestically, if she claims to be the second, probably no one dares to claim the first. Not only that, even the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion Master once invited Shi Su to help treat illnesses. The Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion Master even publicly declared Shi Su as a friend of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, stating that anyone who dared to harm Shi Su would be opposing the entire Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. Think about it, with the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion as her backer, who would dare provoke her?"

So powerful!

Ling Chen was secretly amazed, not expecting Zhu Xiaozhu's master to have such a profound background. No wonder the people of Qingyang Sect feared her. With the Heavenly Mechanism Great Ceremony currently ongoing, if Shi Su wanted to make life difficult for the people from Qingyang Sect, the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion would certainly cooperate.

"My disciple, who was bullying you just now? Tell me, I will stand up for you."

Hearing Shi Su speak up, Zhu Xiaozhu immediately directed her gaze towards the people from Qingyang Sect, preparing to speak, but then saw the Sect Leader Qu Yuan stride over, cupping his fists and saying: "Ms. Shi, the youngsters are ignorant, it is my Qingyang Sect's failure in teaching. I apologize on their behalf to Miss Zhu and ask you to give me, Qu, a face, and let this matter rest. I assure that such things will not happen again."

"You assure?" Facing Qu Yuan who was admitting his fault, Shi Su seemed unappeased and coldly said: "My disciple doesn't know martial arts. If it weren't for someone stepping in to help just now, your disciples might have already succeeded in their attempt. For scum like them, not only do you not punish them severely, but you also speak on their behalf, which fits the old saying perfectly: 'A crooked beam makes a crooked rafter.' Sect Leader Qu, it's apparent that your character isn't that great either."

Being publicly questioned about his character, Qu Yuan's old face couldn't hold. However, thinking of Shi Su's status, Qu Yuan had to suppress his anger, speaking sternly: "Then what should I do to satisfy Ms. Shi?"

"The Heavenly Mechanism Great Ceremony has its rules. Zhong Yang, this matter should be handled by the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion."

"Yes, Ms. Shi," Zhong Yang instantly understood, turning to face Qu Yuan and said: "Sect Leader Qu, according to the rules of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, anyone who violates regulations, given the severity of the situation, will be convicted. Your several disciples behaved improperly, endangering others' safety. On behalf of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, I sentence each of them to fifty lashes and ten days imprisonment, do you have any objections?"

After hearing Zhong Yang's verdict, Qu Yuan's face darkened, his eyes gloomy, suppressing the fury in his heart, he coldly said: "The Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion has spoken, how dare I object?"

Upon hearing this, Xu Song and others' expressions changed drastically, and they hastily pleaded: "Master, you can't just stand by and watch us die. Fifty heavy lashes will take half of our lives, Master..."

"Shut up!" Qu Yuan yelled angrily: "You brought this upon yourselves, who can you blame?" After speaking, Qu Yuan's gaze shifted, his expression turned icy as he stared at Ling Chen, gritting his teeth: "What a freak, we shall see."

Shi Su he dared not offend, thus he could only vent his anger on Ling Chen and the eight eccentrics.

Qiu Yong snorted coldly, fearlessly saying: "You're welcome to bring trouble from Qingyang Sect; we, the eight eccentrics, are always ready to entertain."

After Qu Yuan left with his subordinates, Zhong Yang immediately ordered men to take Xu Song and others away.

At this time, Shi Su, followed by Zhu Xiaozhu, walked up to Ling Chen, sizing him up, and lightly said: "Are you Ling Chen?"

"Yes." Facing Zhu Xiaozhu's master, Ling Chen dared not be rude, greeting her respectfully: "I have seen Ms. Shi."

"My disciple often mentioned you to me before, saying you are young and handsome, with good skills and talented."

Ling Chen replied modestly, feeling embarrassed: "Not at all, Xiaozhu is exaggerating."

"Not bad."

Ling Chen was just being modest, but Shi Su nodded: "It seems you are self-aware. Indeed, you are not that outstanding, compared to the top five in the Newcomer List, you are far behind. I brought Xiaozhu here to introduce a promising young man to her. As her friend, if you really have her best interests at heart, I hope you will keep your distance from her in future to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings."

Chapter 413 Estrangement

Shi Su's words suddenly made Ling Chen stunned; he didn't expect the other party to be so direct and disregard his feelings.

Looking at the flabbergasted Ling Chen, Zhu Xiaozhu's beautiful eyes carried a hint of apology. She hadn't expected her Master to speak such words in front of Ling Chen. Not just Ling Chen, even she felt somewhat uncomfortable after hearing these words.

"Master..."

"Enough, no more words. I've said all I need to say. Xiaozhu, let's go."

As Shi Su turned to leave with Zhu Xiaozhu, Xia Yue, who had been standing beside Ling Chen, could not suppress her anger and indignantly said, "You think my brother Ling Cheng is not good enough for your disciple, but your disciple might not necessarily be worthy of my brother Ling Cheng either."

Hearing this, Shi Su turned back and said indifferently, "I've heard enough of such self-deceiving words. Say whatever you want. In short, I don't want to see him hinder my disciple's future."

"You..." Xia Yue became very agitated.

"Sister Five." Ling Chen pulled Xia Yue back and shook his head at her, saying, "Why bother arguing with her kind of people."

Xia Yue slightly frowned and said, "She spoke about you like that, aren't you angry?"

Ling Chen shrugged and said, "What's the use of being angry? Besides, what she said is the truth; I indeed am not as good as the top five on the Newcomer List."

"Ling Cheng is right," Qiu Yong patted Ling Chen's shoulder and said, "Instead of having the upper hand in words, it's better to speak with facts. Strength is everything, that has been the unchanging rule in Martial Arts for a thousand years. Let's go, let's head back."

Back in his room, Ling Chen sat alone on the sofa, legs crossed, idly fiddling with the teacup in his hands. Although he outwardly claimed not to care in front of Qiu Yong and the others, internally, he was quite troubled.

Nothing frightens a man more than being looked down upon. Shi Su's words undoubtedly dealt a heavy blow to his self-esteem.

Ling Chen scratched his head, his expression somewhat helpless. Now in a good situation, had one Yi Shuiyan to deal with, and now another Qu Jinxian had emerged. What was worse, both individuals were ranked fourth and third on the Newcomer List, respectively, both difficult adversaries.

Just then, the telephone in the guest room rang.

Ling Chen picked up the receiver and greeted, "Who is it?"

"Brother Ling Cheng, it's me." Wei Jiahao's voice came through the phone, "I just saw the Dangyang Sect people boarding the ship. Both Yi Shuiyan and Qin Wu have arrived. Big brother asked me to remind

you, before the Heavenly Mechanism Great Ceremony officially starts, try to avoid conflicts with the Dangyang Sect to not offend the rules of Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion."

"Don't worry, I know."

After hanging up the phone, Ling Chen immediately felt a sense of crisis. The gap between him and Yi Shuiyan was evident; even after nearly two months of special training, it would still be difficult to close this gap.

On this point, Ling Chen was very clear. To win, he needed a lot of luck. Although it frustrated him, he had to admit, luck was the key to his victory.

Sighing, Ling Chen put aside the distracting thoughts in his mind, and prepared to take advantage of the time to diligently practice the Prajnaparamita Sutra.

Polishing the gun before battle, even if not sharp, it would shine, always serving a purpose.

But at that moment, someone gently knocked on the room door. Ling Chen walked to the door and pulled it open. Instantly, a faint fragrance wafted in.

Looking at the visitor outside the door, Ling Chen was slightly stunned. He had thought it would be Qiu Yong or someone else, but he had never expected it to be Zhu Xiaozhu.

Coming back to his senses, Ling Chen smiled, "What brings you here?"

Zhu Xiaozhu bit her thin lips, glanced left and right down the hallway, and asked softly, "Can I come in?"

Without any hesitation, Ling Chen stepped aside to welcome Zhu Xiaozhu into the room. After she had taken a seat, Ling Chen brewed a cup of tea, brought it to Zhu Xiaozhu, and asked with a smile, "Aren't you afraid of what your master might say by coming to see me?"

"I'm sorry!" Zhu Xiaozhu bowed her head, holding the teacup with both hands. The steam rising up blurred her delicate features, reminiscent of a silver moon reflecting in the lake, exuding a hazy beauty.

Hearing Zhu Xiaozhu's apology, Ling Chen generously waved his hand and said, "It's alright, no need to apologize. I'm not that sensitive."

"But I feel guilty. Master is usually very gentle and takes great care of me, but I didn't expect her to say those words to you, maybe it's because..." At this point, Zhu Xiaozhu unconsciously stopped talking, her face blushing slightly, her beautiful eyes shy, not daring to continue.

Ling Chen, who hadn't noticed the shyness in Zhu Xiaozhu's eyes, asked curiously, "Because of what?"

Zhu Xiaozhu's face turned redder, unable to meet Ling Chen's gaze, staring at the faintly rippling tea in the cup, she remained silent for a long time.

Her childhood was unlike other girls; while other little girls had dolls, her only toys were silver needles and ancient medical books. She spent almost ten years under Shi Su's guidance, learning from her. It was only after she turned fifteen and had made some accomplishments in medicine that she was allowed to leave.

Therefore, in her childhood memories, it was not her parents who were important but her master, Shi Su. In her eyes, Shi Su was both a mentor and a friend. She confided everything to Shi Su, including her feelings for Ling Chen, especially after learning that Ling Chen was with Nanrong Wanqing, which left her heartbroken and urgently needing someone to talk to, making Shi Su the perfect confidant.

Thus, Shi Su knew everything about her and Ling Chen.

The unkind words Shi Su had to Ling Chen were largely out of a desire to defend her. For this, she felt very guilty, which was why she came to apologize to Ling Chen.

However, this was not something she could tell Ling Chen, as it would only make their relationship more awkward.

Seeing that Zhu Xiaozhu was still not speaking, the somewhat slow Ling Chen finally realized that she was uncomfortable answering, so he decided not to press further and tried to change the subject. Yet, as he opened his mouth, he found himself at a loss for words, unsure of what to say.

In the past, he and Zhu Xiaozhu could talk about anything and everything. However, since Zhu Hong appeared, there had been a subtle barrier between them, and their relationship gradually faded.

A significant reason might be his deliberate avoidance.

He did this because he wanted to avoid hurting Zhu Xiaozhu. He knew very well that there was no possibility of reconciliation with Zhu Hong unless one of them died in battle. As Zhu Hong's sister, if Zhu Xiaozhu ever found out that he had killed Zhu Hong, she would probably never forgive him.

It was better to cut off their camaraderie early, so if Zhu Xiaozhu ever learned the truth in the future, it wouldn't be as painful; at most, she would see him as an enemy.

He'd rather have Zhu Xiaozhu hate him than see her suffer through tremendous pain.

Lost in thought, neither of them spoke, both silently sitting there like two quiet statues.

Boom!

Just then, a thunderous explosion suddenly erupted.

Chapter 414 Unexpected Injury

Accompanied by a loud bang, the luxury cruise ship suddenly rocked. Sitting on the sofa, Ling Chen and Zhu Xiaozhu were affected by the shaking of the ship, their bodies immediately leaning to one side.

However, Ling Chen was okay as he leaned backwards, but Zhu Xiaozhu, who was sitting opposite him, leaned forward, immediately losing her balance and lunging into Ling Chen's arms.

Seeing this, Ling Chen, fearing that Zhu Xiaozhu might get hurt, didn't dare to dodge and quickly opened his arms to embrace the lunging Zhu Xiaozhu. The fragrant and delicate body entering his arms, Zhu Xiaozhu's soft chest happened to hit Ling Chen's face.

Instantly, Ling Chen felt his face enveloped by two soft and full mounds, the faint fragrance caused his heart to flutter.

At this moment, the startled Zhu Xiaozhu came to her senses and saw the embarrassing posture between her and Ling Chen. Her pretty face instantly turned red, like the red glow on the horizon, radiantly beautiful.

Suppressing the shyness in her heart, Zhu Xiaozhu quickly moved backwards, freeing Ling Chen's face from her bosom. However, just as she moved back, the ship shook again.

This time, the direction of the ship's shaking was different, exactly opposite to before. As Zhu Xiaozhu moved backward, her feet slipped, and with a soft cry, she fell backward.

Seeing Zhu Xiaozhu's head about to hit the corner of the rosewood sofa, Ling Chen panicked, without thinking too much, immediately reached out to encircle her slender waist. However, at this moment, Zhu Xiaozhu was off balance, her body almost tilted at a forty-degree angle, and even though Ling Chen embraced her, he couldn't help her up.

In a flash of thought, Ling Chen didn't think twice, quickly holding Zhu Xiaozhu's delicate body and turning, moving Zhu Xiaozhu above his own body.

Bang!

Protected by Ling Chen, Zhu Xiaozhu was safe, but Ling Chen's back heavily hit the sofa, his waist exactly against the corner of a rosewood sofa.

This collision caused Ling Chen's face to instantly change, his entire face almost twisted, intense pain emanating from his waist, his whole body seemingly numbed, unable to move.

Seeing Ling Chen's pained expression, Zhu Xiaozhu was startled and quickly reached out her hand to his arm, trying to pull him up.

"Don't... don't move..." Ling Chen immediately stopped Zhu Xiaozhu's action.

After taking a few deep breaths, Ling Chen's forehead began to sweat heavily. Once the pain slightly ebbed, with Zhu Xiaozhu's help, Ling Chen slowly walked back to the sofa.

At this time, the ship was still rocking from side to side, but not as severely as before. Through the window, the thunderous sound of thunder and the torrential rain were clearly audible.

On the sea, a storm is a terrifying existence. If it weren't for the sturdy construction of the luxury cruise ship to withstand the impact, it would probably have been flipped over by the waves in the storm.

"Ling Chen, is your injury severe?" In the room, Zhu Xiaozhu looked at Ling Chen with concern.

Ling Chen slightly lifted his lips, barely squeezing out a smile: "It's nothing, just need to rest a bit."

Although he was saying it was nothing, he knew in his heart that the injury to his waist was very severe. He could only sit, fearing to walk around. He intentionally concealed his injury, to prevent Zhu Xiaozhu from feeling guilty.

However, being a doctor, Zhu Xiaozhu is deeply skilled in diagnosis, how could she fail to notice the severity of Ling Chen's condition.

"I'll take a look for you."

After saying that, disregarding Ling Chen's refusal, Zhu Xiaozhu gently lifted Ling Chen's outer garment, revealing his lower back. Suddenly, a palm-sized bruise was visible.

Seeing the injury on his body, Zhu Xiaozhu softly asked, "Does it hurt?"

Ling Chen grinned and said, "Not at all."

Hearing this, Zhu Xiaozhu gently pressed on the wound with her finger. Although Zhu Xiaozhu was very gentle, Ling Chen still gasped in pain, his body slightly trembling.

"So severe, yet you say it doesn't hurt," Zhu Xiaozhu reproached him.

"It's really fine, with my physical condition, a sleep will do," Ling Chen reassured.

"How could that be okay? I'll treat your wound first, just wait." With that, Zhu Xiaozhu quickly ran into the bathroom. Soon after, she returned to Ling Chen's side with a first aid kit from the guest room.

After about ten minutes, Ling Chen's bruised waist was treated with ointment, and a cooling sensation through his skin significantly reduced the pain.

"Are you feeling better?" Zhu Xiaozhu looked up at Ling Chen and asked with concern.

"Much better, thank you."

"If it weren't for trying to save me, you wouldn't have gotten hurt, I should be the one thanking you. Alright, you should rest early, I will come again in the morning to help you change your bandages."

After sending Zhu Xiaozhu off, Ling Chen supported himself with the armrest of the sofa, slowly stood up, and then walked towards the bedroom.

However, just after taking two steps, a sharp pain suddenly shot through his spine, and his legs felt as if they had lost all sensation, his body immediately collapsed onto the floor.

This sudden mishap caused Ling Chen's injured waist to be impacted again, the pain was so severe he almost crushed his teeth.

This is bad!

Ling Chen furrowed his brows, a sense of foreboding arose in his heart; the injury he suffered seemed to be more severe than he had anticipated, even normal walking had become so difficult.

In a couple of days, it will be the Heavenly Mechanism Great Ceremony, and he has to compete in martial arts with Yi Shuiyan. With his current condition, how can he fight against Yi Shuiyan? He probably can't even make it onto the stage.

Meanwhile, his legs gradually began to regain sensation.

It's okay, just need to sleep it off, Ling Chen comforted himself.

...

The next day.

After a night of stormy weather, the sky finally cleared up. A sliver of faint sunlight shone through the window, landing right on Ling Chen.

Thud thud thud!

"Ling Cheng."

The sound of knocking accompanied by Wei Jiahao's voice came from outside the door. Ling Chen, who was in deep sleep, immediately woke up. He rubbed his sleepy eyes and got ready to open the door. However, he discovered in horror that his lower body was completely unresponsive, numb. Except for his upper body, which could still move, nearly the whole body was limp on the bed.

How... how could this be? Ling Chen was terrified.

One night had passed, and instead of alleviating, his injury seemed to have worsened.

Thud thud thud!

The knocking continued.

Ling Chen tried several times, but his lower body continued to be unresponsive, as if paralyzed. Reluctantly, Ling Chen had to use the bedside telephone to call Qiu Yong's room.

In less than two minutes, Qiu Yong and others, with the help of the staff, opened the door and entered.

"Ling Cheng, what happened to you?"

Looking at Ling Chen who was confined to his bed, Qiu Yong asked.

Ling Chen smiled bitterly and said, "Big brother, it seems like my legs are ruined."

"What?"

Hearing this, everyone present was shocked, looking at him in disbelief.

Yuan Yun said solemnly, "Last night when we parted, you were fine, how did it turn into this so quickly?"

Ling Chen did not dare to conceal and recounted the event that happened in the room last night.

Chapter 415 Han Yu

"What should we do?" Xia Yue said with a worried heart: "The Heavenly Mechanism Great Ceremony is about to begin in one day. With you in this condition, how can you compete in martial arts with others?"

Xu Ming indifferently said: "If we can't compete, then we won't. Health is the most important. What we should be concerned about right now is not the Heavenly Mechanism Great Ceremony, but Ling Cheng's injuries."

Ling Chen looked at his own legs, his eyebrows slightly furrowed, his eyes shining with a Mo Che-like glint.

"I must participate in this Heavenly Mechanism Great Ceremony."

"No way!" Qiu Yong immediately refused: "How can you participate looking like this? Do you really want to end up with a lifelong disability?"

Ling Chen shook his head, with a determined tone: "Big brother, I know you are worried about my injuries. However, now that we're here, we can't just drop out halfway. That would only turn us into a laughing stock in the eyes of others." As soon as he finished speaking, without waiting for others to respond, Ling Chen continued: "My current injury should be temporary, not yet severe enough to cause paralysis. Eight younger brother, go get me a set of silver needles, I'll try to stimulate my legs using the Acupuncture Technique."

"Alright." Wei Jiahao agreed, and immediately set about doing as asked. Soon after, he brought over a set of silver needles to Ling Chen.

Half an hour passed.

Thud, thud, thud!

A clear knocking sounded.

The door opened, and Zhu Xiaozhu came in carrying a medicine chest. Looking at Ling Chen who appeared in front of her, she asked, "Did I disturb your rest?"

Ling Chen smiled and replied: "I've been up for a while."

"How's the recovery from your injury?" Zhu Xiaozhu's bright, beautiful eyes were filled with concern.

"Much better." As he spoke, Ling Chen hopped around on the spot and said with a smile: "See, I told you, didn't I? It's all good after a night's sleep."

Seeing his unruffled demeanor, Zhu Xiaozhu was greatly relieved. She had been worried about Ling Chen's injuries the prior night, and did not sleep well. As soon as it was light, she hurried over to find Ling Chen, wanting to know how he was.

"It's good that you're alright, let me help you change the ointment."

"No need to bother, I've already changed it." As soon as he finished speaking, Qiu Yong's voice came from inside the room: "Ling Cheng, who's there?"

Zhu Xiaozhu glanced at Ling Chen's back, nodded lightly, and said: "Alright then, I won't disturb you. You rest more and take care of your health."

"I will."

After sending Zhu Xiaozhu away, Ling Chen closed the door. As soon as he did, he leaned against the wall, his face twisted in pain, sweat streaming down his forehead.

"Ling Cheng!"

Yuan Yun and Xia Yue hurriedly ran over, supporting Ling Chen's arms, easing the weight on his legs, and moved him back to lying down on the bed.

"What am I to do with you..." Seeing Ling Chen endure the torment of pain, Xia Yue shook her head helplessly, admonishing: "You've obviously been seriously injured, yet you insist on putting up a front. Do you care that much about her feelings?"

"I owe her too much, I don't want to make her worried." After a pause, Ling Chen changed the subject, smiled lopsidedly, and said: "Sister Five, didn't you also see? After the acupuncture just now, my legs have gone back to normal. Don't worry, I'm fine. I'm still waiting to properly take care of Yi Shuiyan."

Qiu Yong nodded and said: "Okay then, as long as you feel there's no problem, that's fine. I'll have Sister Five stay and take care of you. If you need help with something, just give us a shout."

"You just lie there, I'll go get you breakfast."

After speaking, Xia Yue left the room with Qiu Yong and others.

Once everyone had left, Ling Chen lay alone on the bed, the smile on his face gradually fading. He was very clear about his own condition. Last night's accident clearly injured the nerves in his spine, otherwise he wouldn't have experienced this kind of situation.

The reason he was able to regain sensation earlier was because he stimulated several unconventional points with the Acupuncture Technique, forcibly restoring his legs. However, doing so came with severe consequences. If those points were stimulated for a long time, it might very well lead to actual paralysis.

Two days...

Ling Chen muttered to himself, as long as he persisted for two more days, it would be fine once he finished handling the affairs.

At this moment.

Miss Zhu, carrying a medicine box, returned to the outside of her room.

Just as she was about to enter, suddenly, a series of footsteps sounded near her ears, approaching from afar. Zhu Xiaozhu turned her head to look, only to see a young man, handsome and with an extraordinary temperament, walking towards her.

The young man was about twenty-five or twenty-six years old, with handsome features, eyebrows sharp as swords and eyes bright as stars, with a standard height of one meter seventy-eight, hair cut evenly across his forehead, wearing a sunny smile on his face, exuding an energetic aura.

"Xiaozhu."

The young man greeted Zhu Xiaozhu with a smile.

Zhu Xiaozhu responded politely, "Mr. Han, hello."

"Xiaozhu, there's no need to be so formal, just call me Han Yu, you don't need to add 'Mr.' in front," said Han Yu, glancing at the medicine box in Zhu Xiaozhu's hands, he asked, "Where did you just go? I was looking for you to have breakfast together but you weren't in your room."

"A friend got injured, I went to help take a look," Zhu Xiaozhu said indifferently.

"Your friend? Introduce me someday."

"We'll see if there's a chance, Han..." Zhu Xiaozhu initially wanted to say Mr. Han, but after a moment's thought, she instead said, "Han Yu, if there's nothing else, I'm going back to my room."

"Don't go!" Han Yu spoke up, "Xiaozhu, your Master introduced us, hoping we could get to know each other better. The weather is nice today, how about we take a walk on the deck?"

Zhu Xiaozhu hesitated for a moment then declined politely, "I'm sorry, I didn't rest well last night and would like to catch up on some sleep. We can chat another time."

Having said that, before Han Yu could respond, Zhu Xiaozhu had already pushed the door and entered her room.

Having been turned down by Zhu Xiaozhu, Han Yu appeared somewhat dejected.

Last night, through the introduction by Shi Su, when he first laid eyes on Zhu Xiaozhu, he was taken aback by her beauty. This woman, gentle as water, completely captivated him, rendering him helplessly smitten.

He made up his mind then and there that he had to win over this woman by any means necessary.

As he watched the tightly closed door, Han Yu stood at the doorstep for a moment before he had no choice but to leave reluctantly.

Just then, a young man walked towards him in the corridor.

Seeing the other person, Han Yu's gaze slightly narrowed, revealing a sharp edge.

"Yi Shuiyan, long time no see."

"Han Yu, your room doesn't seem to be on this floor."

"That's none of your business."

Yi Shuiyan was indifferent to Han Yu's tone, his eyes briefly swept over the room number beside Han Yu and the corner of his mouth immediately curved into an amused smile.

"If I remember correctly, this room is occupied by Ms. Shi's disciple, Miss Zhu. Do you have an interest in her?"

Han Yu responded unceremoniously, "That's my business, mind your own."

"I didn't mean anything by it, just a word of caution. If you have designs on Miss Zhu, you'd better give up sooner rather than later to avoid bringing trouble upon yourself."

Hearing this, Han Yu immediately asked, "What do you mean?"

"Just now when I went out, I happened to see Miss Zhu enter a man's room."

"A man?" Han Yu's expression changed, his gaze turning cold in an instant, as he pressed, "Which man?"

Chapter 416 Grand Ceremony Begins

"Ling Chen." Yi Shuiyan said with a smirk, "She went to find Ling Chen early in the morning on her own, yet you were turned away at the door. Han Yu, as a man, you should clearly understand what this means."

"No, impossible!" Thinking of what Zhu Xiaozhu had just said, Han Yu argued, "She told me that she was just helping a friend seek medical treatment. Which woman doesn't have a few male friends? There's nothing strange about that."

"If that's how you want to think, then I can't help you. But it's not just this morning; Miss Zhu also went to Ling Chen's room last night and stayed for quite a while. Han Yu, a man and a woman alone together in a room, do you think it's just a simple friendship?"

Last night...

Han Yu raised an eyebrow; he had only just met Zhu Xiaozhu last night. Could it be that after meeting him, she went to see another man?

Yi Shuiyan fanned the flames from the side, "Han Yu, you better be careful. As far as I know, that Ling Chen is not simple; he has a way with women. In East Sea City, he has connections with many women. Han Yu, a big man like you, don't end up picking up leftovers."

"Shut up!" Han Yu's face darkened as he scolded, "Don't you insult Xiaozhu! She's not that kind of person, I believe her. As for that Ling Chen you mentioned..." Han Yu snorted softly, coldly saying, "I will make him back off."

"I'm just kindly reminding you. What you do about it is your business, it has nothing to do with me. I have other things to attend to, we'll talk another day." Having said that, Yi Shuiyan stepped past Han Yu and walked into the guest room next to Zhu Xiaozhu's.

Seeing that Yi Shuiyan was staying next door to Zhu Xiaozhu, Han Yu believed Yi Shuiyan's words a bit more.

Ling Chen... Humph! I want to see what you are capable of, daring to compete with me for a woman.

...

The next day.

The long-awaited Heavenly Mechanism Great Ceremony finally commenced.

After breakfast, Ling Chen, accompanied by Qiu Yong and others, went straight to the luxurious top-floor banquet hall of the cruise ship.

The banquet hall was very spacious, capable of accommodating four or five hundred people without feeling crowded. For this Heavenly Mechanism Great Ceremony, the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion had redesigned the entire banquet hall, similar to ancient Roman amphitheaters, surrounded by a giant circular arena with tiered seating. In the very center was a square platform, over thirty meters wide.

The venue was covered entirely in red carpets, and hanging from the ceiling were more than a dozen crystal lamps, the lights dazzling. Over forty members of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, dressed in uniform attire, stood in line respectfully, ushering guests to their seats one by one.

Although it was merely a simple seat assignment, it also contained great significance. Major sects in the Martial Arts community had seats at the front, then according to status and influence within Martial Arts, the arrangement followed in succession, down to the very last row.

To Ling Chen's surprise, he was assigned a seat in the very front row.

Sitting in his seat, Ling Chen looked around with interest, observing the attendees entering, among them some familiar faces.

Such as Tiger List masters he had previously clashed with, the brothers Qiu Wen and Qiu Wu, and even Jiang Family's Jiang Hanlin was there. However, they weren't as lucky as Ling Chen to get front row seats and were sitting in the third row.

Just in terms of ranking on the Tiger List, Ling Chen was not higher than Jiang Hanlin. This showed that the special treatment he was enjoying was thanks to the reputation of the "Eight Eccentrics."

Through this, Ling Chen gained a more direct understanding of the status of the "Eight Eccentrics" in the Martial Arts community, being on par with those major sects with substantial influence.

When Ling Chen noticed Jiang Hanlin, the latter also took notice of him. However, compared to Ling Chen's calmness, Jiang Hanlin's eyes revealed a chilling coldness and resentment.

Initially, when Ling Chen went to rescue Nanrong Wanqing from the Jiang Family, he punched Jiang Hanlin's son, Jiang Han, to the ground out of anger, leaving him as a nearly dead vegetative person. Such a deep-rooted enmity was not something Jiang Hanlin would easily let go of.

Feeling the harsh gaze from behind, Ling Chen completely ignored it. At this moment, his attention was caught by Yi Shuiyan who had just entered.

Yi Shuiyan was the same as when they last met, unchanged, holding a steel knife with his head held high and chest out, elegant and towering. By his side was a remarkably beautiful woman, his junior martial sister, Qin Wu.

Besides these two, Ling Chen also saw Liu Yunsong from the Dangyang Sect and another middle-aged man with a distinguished presence. As the four walked in, Liu Yunsong and Qin Wu closely followed behind, highlighting the status of the middle-aged man.

"Who is that man, Elder Qiu?"

"That's Zhu Jin, the Sect Leader of the Dangyang Sect," Qiu Yong replied.

Meanwhile, the Sect Leader of Qingyang Sect, Qu Yuan, entered the venue with his disciples and Qu Jinxian.

As the two Sects took their seats, almost simultaneously, both Sect Leaders' gazes sharply turned towards the eight eccentrics, their eyes fierce with a hint of chill.

Feeling those eyes wandering over him, Ling Chen couldn't help but touch his nose, pretending not to see it.

By 9 a.m., the spacious venue was filled with people.

With everyone present, the Heavenly Mechanism Great Ceremony officially began.

Accompanied by a loud gong sound, the noisy venue gradually quieted down, and everyone's gaze converged on the central platform.

At this moment, a man about sixty years old, dressed in traditional Tang attire and full of energy, stepped onto the platform, greeted everyone with a fist salute and cheerfully said, "My name is Zhou Qi. I have the honor to be the host of this session of the Heavenly Mechanism Great Ceremony as entrusted by the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion Master. If there are any shortcomings in our hospitality, please be forgiving."

Ling Chen originally thought that the Heavenly Mechanism Great Ceremony would have an elaborate opening ceremony, being a major event in the martial arts world. Instead, Zhou Qi briefly exchanged pleasantries and directly announced the start of the ceremony.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this year's rules are the same as usual, with two rounds: the Heavenly Mechanism Chaos Battle and the competition for new talents. Everyone is presumably familiar with the rules of the Heavenly Mechanism Chaos Battle. Whoever can last five unbeaten matches on the platform can choose from abundant rewards, be it martial arts heart methods or elixirs."

After listening to Zhou Qi's introduction, Ling Chen quietly asked, "Big brother, what exactly is an elixir?"

"There are many types of elixirs, some for curing diseases and healing injuries, and others for enhancing inner strength. They are all quite effective."

Ling Chen clicked his tongue, "I always thought elixirs were just fictional things from martial arts novels. I didn't expect they really existed."

"That's because you're uninformed." Xia Yue, walking beside Ling Chen, said, "Elixirs are actually the essence of ancient Chinese medicine. Simply put, they are a type of medicine. However, the elixirs from Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion are special, specifically designed for martial artists."

Ling Chen, intrigued, asked, "So taking an elixir occasionally can increase one's martial prowess by ten years?"

Xia Yue gave him a look and said unenthusiastically, "You've been reading too many martial arts novels. There's no such miraculous effect."

Chapter 417 Heavenly Mechanism Chaos Battle

"The effects of the pills are indeed good, but not as magical as you described," Qiu Yong said. "The pills crafted by Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion are different from ordinary ones; each batch takes years to perfect. They greatly aid those practicing martial arts by improving physique and speeding up the cultivation of their skills. However, while the pills are beneficial, one can at most consume one. Overconsumption will only lead to the body developing resistance and nullifying their effects."

After listening to Qiu Yong's explanation, Ling Chen nodded, and with curiosity, he asked, "Big brother, those novels often mention Shaolin's Great Rejuvenation Pill. Is that real?"

Qiu Yong affirmed, "The Great Rejuvenation Pill truly exists, but its effects are not as astonishing as the books claim. Across the Martial Arts circles today, there are only two kinds of pills with the most significant effects—one being the Heavenly Mechanism Pill crafted by Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, and the other is the Xiangrun Pill from the Shi Family."

"Shi Family?"

"That's Shi Su's family; they hail from a lineage of traditional Chinese medicine, profoundly knowledgeable about ancient Chinese medical practices. Throughout Huaxia's history of thousands of

years, much of the essence of traditional Chinese medicine has been lost, only the Shi Family has preserved it completely. The Xiangrun Pill they craft is even slightly superior to the ordinary Heavenly Mechanism Pill. However, I've heard that the ingredients required for the Xiangrun Pill are extremely precious, making them very scarce, and the Shi Family only has two or three pills in stock."

"Big brother, you just mentioned the ordinary Heavenly Mechanism Pill, does that mean there are different kinds?"

"Indeed. There are three types of Heavenly Mechanism Pills crafted by Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. Although they share the same name, their effects vary. There's the ordinary, the premium, and the top grade—each corresponding to different groups: the Tiger List, the Dragon List, and the Earthly List. Otherwise, why do you think the Heavenly Mechanism Great Ceremony attracts so many participants? It's because of the Heavenly Mechanism Pill."

During the conversation, Zhou Qi, who was in charge, announced loudly, "Ladies and gentlemen, today is the first day, and Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion has specially prepared six prizes, plus a grand prize that includes a premium Heavenly Mechanism Pill. So if you're interested, don't hesitate, or you might miss out on something good. Now, who would like to be the first on stage?"

"I'll give it a try."

As soon as Zhou Qi finished speaking, a middle-aged man stood up from the crowd and walked up to the stage with firm strides, greeting everyone with a fist and palm salute.

"Is there anyone who would like to come up and offer guidance?"

"I'll take you on." Someone immediately responded, ready to challenge.

The rules of the Heavenly Mechanism Chaos Battle were simple—anyone who could maintain five consecutive victories on the platform could take home a prize. As simple as it sounds, fulfilling it was not easy.

Witnessing the back-and-forth between the two men on the stage, Ling Chen was secretly astounded. As expected of the Heavenly Mechanism Great Ceremony, none of those invited by Heavenly Mechanism

Pavilion were weak, including these two seemingly obscure men whose strength was not less than those on the Tiger List.

"Ling Cheng, watch closely; you might learn some experience," Qiu Yong reminded.

"Got it."

While Ling Chen was enjoying the competition on the stage, he felt an intermittent gaze sweeping over from the opposite side.

Ling Chen looked up to see someone seated at the other end of the platform—it was Zhu Xiaozhu. As their gazes met, Zhu Xiaozhu turned her head away bashfully, her cheeks slightly flushed as she watched the contest on the stage absent-mindedly.

Neither Ling Chen nor Zhu Xiaozhu noticed that their inadvertent actions had been observed by someone nearby.

At that moment, a clear gong sound resonated, and the contenders on the stage had concluded their match, determining the victor by point scoring. The middle-aged man who went up first succeeded in holding the stage.

Half an hour passed, and the middle-aged man won four rounds in a row, but unfortunately lost in the last match, narrowly missing out on Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion's generous reward.

By noon, no one had succeeded in claiming a prize.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this morning's Heavenly Mechanism Chaos Battle has come to an end. Please take a break; we will continue at two o'clock in the afternoon."

Hearing Zhou Qi's words, everyone stood up and walked in groups toward the restaurant on the magnificent cruise ship. After watching the battles all morning, they were famished.

The restaurant offered a buffet with a wide variety of food, both Chinese and Western, and even the chefs were top-tier chefs from star-rated hotels. In terms of food and accommodation, Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion was far from stingy, aiming to provide everyone with the best service.

"Ling Cheng, eat more, the main event is in the afternoon," Qiu Yong patted Ling Chen's shoulder and said.

Ling Chen grinned and said, "Big brother, I never treat myself poorly when it comes to eating." After saying that, he picked up two plates piled with food and sat down at a dining table.

Just as he was about to start eating, Ling Chen suddenly felt a sharp gaze staring right at him, very close by.

He slowly lifted his head and looked across the table, only to see a young man leaning on the table, looking down at him with displeasure.

Ling Chen put down the salt and pepper shrimp in his hand and smiled, "My friend, if you want to eat, go get your own. What are you looking at me for?"

"The surname is Ling, cut the crap with me," the young man said coldly. "I'm warning you, stay away from Xiaozhu. If you dare to so much as glance at her again, I'll gouge out your eyes."

Hearing the young man's threat, the smile on Ling Chen's face gradually faded and he replied indifferently, "Who are you?"

"Han Yu! If you want to leave this ship in one piece, remember what I've said." After speaking, Han Yu glanced at Qiu Yong and the others coming over and turned to leave.

Watching Han Yu's retreating back, Ling Chen slightly furrowed his brows.

Han Yu? The Han Yu who's ranked second on the Newcomer List?

Damn it! Who have I offended? Why does everyone from the Newcomer List find trouble with me? I've never even interacted with Han Yu.

Xiaozhu?

That's right!

Thinking of Han Yu's words just now, Ling Chen instantly realized that it was all because of Zhu Xiaozhu.

He vaguely remembered that the night he met with Shi Su, he was told that there was a young prodigy a thousand times better than him being introduced to his disciple. Could that person be Han Yu?

Darn!

Ling Chen couldn't help but want to curse. Why was his luck so terrible, to be inexplicably making enemies and being threatened like this? Did he look like someone who was easy to bully?

"Ling Cheng, what are you thinking about?"

Wei Jiahao's voice reached him, and Ling Chen looked down and fiddled with the pepper salt shrimp on his plate, casually saying, "It's nothing."

After lunch, everyone returned to their rooms for a rest. At two o'clock in the afternoon, they gathered at the venue once again.

The host, Zhou Qi, walked up to the center of the arena with a smile and said, "To save everyone's time, make up your minds. If you want to come up, just come up. I won't bother with any more talk."

As soon as the voice fell, Ling Chen saw Yuan Yun, who was sitting next to Xia Yue, get up and walk towards the ring.

"Third brother?"

Ling Chen paused, then quickly turned his gaze to Qiu Yong and the others, only to see them all with calm expressions, not at all surprised by Yuan Yun's move.

"Big brother, did you all know that third brother was going up?"

Qiu Yong nodded and said, "Your third brother is worried about your injury, so he wants to win a Heavenly Mechanism Pill for you, to give you a better chance when you face Yi Shuiyan."

Hearing this, Ling Chen felt warmth in his eyes and a touch of emotion welled up in his heart.

Chapter 418 Yuan Yun Goes into Battle

As Yuan Yun entered the arena, a considerable stir arose in the venue, with everyone discussing animatedly and showing surprise on their faces. No one expected Yuan Yun to make a move at this time.

From their perspective, even if Yuan Yun were to act, it would be to vie for the grand prize, because only the grand prize contained a high-quality Heavenly Mechanism Pill. But what they didn't know was that Yuan Yun was not doing this for himself, but for Ling Chen.

Only a Dragon List expert could consume a high-quality Heavenly Mechanism Pill, and Ling Chen's current strength was still in the Tiger List; even if he were given a high-quality Heavenly Mechanism Pill, he wouldn't be able to fully absorb its potency. Hence, it would be more cost-effective to go for a regular Heavenly Mechanism Pill, without expending so much effort in the contest.

Seeing Yuan Yun standing proudly in the center of the arena, blade in hand, looking around with a daunting gaze, no one came down to challenge him.

Zhou Qi, standing beside the stage, looked at the time and reminded everyone, "Ladies and gentlemen, there are two minutes left. If no one comes onto the stage within five minutes, the contestant will automatically win."

Hearing this, some started to grow restless. However, considering Yuan Yun's identity, the crowd hesitated.

The Eight Eccentrics, each with their unique extraordinary skills, were recognized in the Martial Arts world for their impressive strength. Anyone thinking of taking the stage would have to first weigh whether they were truly qualified.

Moreover, the most crucial rule of the Heavenly Mechanism Chaos Battle was that each person had only one chance. Once defeated, they could not take the stage again. As a result, everyone wanted to save their opportunity for a moment when they were most confident.

"Does no one wish to take the stage?" Zhou Qi called out again, unwilling to accept the silence.

Everyone looked at each other, without a single response.

"I've long heard of the formidable strength of the Eight Eccentrics. I shall experience it myself, then."

A snarky voice rang out, drawing everyone's gaze to the Qingyang Sect's seating area. A man in his thirties stood up from his seat and walked up to the stage.

The middle-aged man was tall and thin, with a sickly pallor that completely lacked the vigorous energy typical of men.

Upon seeing this middle-aged man, a surprised murmur rose from the crowd, and even Qiu Yong and others turned serious. Ling Chen, concerned, asked, "Big brother, who is that man?"

Qiu Yong frowned and replied, "Zhu Xi, Qu Yuan's Junior Brother, a Dragon List expert."

Ling Chen's expression changed. It was a Dragon List expert. The Qingyang Sect's interference at this time was probably in retaliation for the incident that night. As he pondered, Zhu Xi had already approached Yuan Yun, smiling ominously, "Yuan Yun, fighting may lead to accidental injuries. Don't blame me if you get hurt later."

Yuan Yun responded indifferently, "We'll see if you're capable enough."

As soon as he finished speaking, Zhu Xi's eyes sharpened, and his hands rapidly reached for his waist. With just a flash of cold light, Zhu Xi had already moved close to Yuan Yun, with both glimmers of cold steel aiming for Yuan Yun's neck.

Faced with Zhu Xi's assault, Yuan Yun remained composed, moving swiftly at the feet, constantly changing position, dodging Zhu Xi's attacks. In his hands, the steel blade remained unengaged, as he patiently waited for the right moment.

In the blink of an eye, the two had exchanged more than a dozen moves. Zhu Xi maintained the initiative throughout, relentless after more than a dozen attacks, becoming increasingly fierce.

Ling Chen noticed that Zhu Xi held a short curved blade in each hand, employing tricky techniques specially targeting those spots hard to defend against. Not only that, Zhu Xi had extensive combat experience. He knew well the advantage of greater reach, thus he kept to close-quarter combat, limiting the efficacy of Yuan Yun's steel blade.

At this point, Yuan Yun, who had been on the defensive, started to lose patience. With a flick of his wrist, the steel blade swung up rapidly, spinning like a windmill and pushing Zhu Xi back several steps. Without hesitation, Yuan Yun's toe tapped the ground, the steel blade raised high overhead, swinging down directly towards Zhu Xi's head.

Faced with the fierce blade wind, Zhu Xi immediately raised the two short curved blades, crossing them against each other to form an 'X', managing to brace against the steel blade forcibly.

Before Yuan Yun could draw back his broadsword, Zhu Xi's lips curved in a sneer, a chilly gleam in his eyes. He forcefully clamped his twin hook swords around the blade, effectively locking it in place.

Taking advantage of the moment, the two hook swords slid along the broadsword, sparking brilliant fire as they went. In an instant, they were pushed up to the hilt of the broadsword.

"Let go!"

Zhu Xi shouted coldly, his hook swords raised high, showing no mercy as he aimed a chop at Yuan Yun's wrist.

Seeing this, Yuan Yun's face darkened. He immediately released his right hand from the grip of the sword, evading Zhu Xi's strike.

Onlookers of the battle couldn't help but shake their heads as they saw Yuan Yun's broadsword slip from his grasp.

The outcome of the battle was now determined.

Everyone knew that Yuan Yun's greatest strength lay in his sword technique. Without his sword, he was like a gunman without a gun, incapable of demonstrating his true abilities.

In the spectator seats, Ling Chen couldn't help but clench his fists, anxiously watching Yuan Yun, his face etched with tension.

"Don't worry." Qiu Yong, who noticed Ling Chen's restlessness, reassured him, "With your third brother's skill, he won't be defeated so easily."

As they spoke, the fight on the stage took another turn.

Before the broadsword even touched the ground, Yuan Yun twisted his body, avoiding Zhu Xi's attack. With one quick movement, his left hand grabbed the floating broadsword securely.

Zhu Xi pressed on step by step, his hook swords cleaving from left and right, aiming straight for Yuan Yun's shoulders. Pressed for time and unable to switch his sword hand, Yuan Yun could only wield his left arm, directing the broadsword backward in a slash.

Clang! Clang!

With two crisp sounds, the blades of the hook swords were instantly struck by the broadsword, deflecting off course and missing Yuan Yun's shoulders.

With his offense thwarted, Zhu Xi frowned inwardly, not content to admit defeat and advanced again. But before he could close the distance, a fierce gust of blade wind suddenly bore down on him.

Watching the broadsword descend upon his head, Zhu Xi smirked coldly.

The same move again? Had he forgotten the lesson from before?

Without overthinking, Zhu Xi swiftly raised his hook swords above his head, crossed them into an 'X', ready to block the incoming blade.

However, as the broadsword came down, Zhu Xi only felt his arms sink heavily. The fierce power instantly broke through his defense; his hook swords didn't stand against the broadsword for even a second before it penetrated through, crashing harshly onto his left shoulder.

Feeling the pain in his left shoulder, Zhu Xi's face drastically changed. Simultaneously, members of the Qingyang Sect stood up, glaring at Yuan Yun with fury, exclaiming, "Audacious! Yuan Yun, how dare you injure someone from our Qingyang Sect."

"Combat comes with the risk of injury. Stepping into the arena means being prepared for it. Sect Leader Qu, is the Qingyang Sect trying to use its influence to pressure others?"

The speaker wasn't Yuan Yun, but Zhou Qi. He swept a glance over the people of the Qingyang Sect and said in a detached tone, "Everyone, please sit down and don't block those behind you."

Chapter 419 Heavenly Mechanism Pill

Qu Yuan looked grimly at Yuan Yun, not daring to defy Zhou Qi's words, and sat back down obediently.

After scolding the members of the Qingyang Sect, Qu Yuan turned his head to look at Yuan Yun and Zhu Xi on the stage, smiling as he said, "Brother Yuan is truly an expert with the blade. Zhu Xi, you should thank him quickly for showing mercy. If Brother Yuan had not held back, you'd be disabled by now."

Hearing this, Zhu Xi suddenly realized that it was the back of the blade, not the cutting edge, that had landed on his left shoulder. Otherwise, his left arm would likely have been ruined.

Zhu Xi secretly sighed in relief, looked at Yuan Yun in front of him, and said in a deep voice, "The Eight Eccentrics truly live up to their reputation." After saying this, without even voicing a word of thanks, he turned around and went back to the seats of the Qingyang Sect.

Zhou Qi shook his head. Zhu Xi was too narrow-minded. Even as a Dragon List expert, it would be difficult for him to achieve anything great in the future.

"Alright! The first stage duel is over, Yuan Yun wins. Is there anyone else who wishes to challenge?"

Zhou Qi looked around at the audience, but no one responded.

At this moment, Ling Chen, sitting below the stage, watched Yuan Yun holding his blade, his expression one of contemplation.

"Big Brother."

"What is it?"

"Third Brother, he..."

"You've noticed?" Qiu Yong smiled slightly and said, "The real power of your Third Brother lies in his left-handed blade, not his right hand. The same move has an entirely different effect when executed with the left hand compared to the right—this is his true strength."

So that was it!

It wasn't until this moment that Ling Chen realized Yuan Yun had always kept his skill hidden. Without the element of surprise, he probably wouldn't have won so easily.

"Is there no one else?" Zhou Qi stood on the stage, calling out several times, but still no one came forward to challenge. It was a joke; even a Dragon List expert was no match for Yuan Yun, who else would dare to go up? Although there were quite a few experts present, they didn't want to waste their chances on Yuan Yun—what they were targeting was the grand prize from the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion.

Five minutes passed, and seeing that no one challenged, according to the rules, Yuan Yun automatically won and received a generous prize.

Back at his seat, Yuan Yun passed the newly acquired wooden box to Ling Chen and said, "Try the effect when you get back later."

Ling Chen didn't put on any airs; he carefully stowed the wooden box away, keeping all his gratitude in his heart, waiting for an opportunity to repay the favor in the future.

The afternoon quickly passed, and after Yuan Yun, another twenty or thirty people participated in the Heavenly Mechanism Chaos Battle, but only three of the prepared prizes were given out, showing the fierce level of competition.

...

After having dinner, Ling Chen couldn't wait to return to his room, locked the door, then sat cross-legged on the bed and took out that wooden box. He opened the lid, and inside lay a pure white medicinal pill, about the size of a lychee, emitting a faint fragrance.

Ling Chen carefully held the pill in his hand and placed it directly into his mouth.

The pill melted upon entering his mouth, immediately turning into a sweet liquid that flowed down his throat, reminiscent of sugary water.

After consuming the pill, Ling Chen cleared his mind of distractions, sat quietly on the bed, eyes slightly closed, feeling the changes within himself. However, minutes passed, and there was no reaction in his body.

Ling Chen opened his eyes, feeling puzzled. Could there be a problem with the pill, seeing as there was no sensation even after all this time?

Just as he was thinking, Ling Chen suddenly felt a warmth spreading through his body, as if a blazing flame had risen in his abdomen, burning his body, with sweat continuously seeping out from his pores. In no time, his skin was covered in beads of sweat, even soaking his clothes.

After another half an hour, Ling Chen felt uncomfortable all over, especially on the surface of his skin where a layer of sticky substance had formed, giving off an irritating odor, making him badly want to wash it off immediately.

Considering it might be the effect of the Heavenly Mechanism Pill, Ling Chen held his breath in concentration, quietly sitting cross-legged.

He didn't know how long had passed, but when Ling Chen woke up again, it was pitch black outside the window, and the waves were raging—it was already midnight. Ling Chen was secretly shocked; he hadn't realized so much time had passed.

At this moment, his skin was covered with a layer of gray powdery substance, seemingly hardened from that sticky material.

Seeing that his body had returned to normal, Ling Chen immediately got up and ran into the bathroom, washing away the filth from his body with hot water.

After everything was done, for some reason, Ling Chen felt an overwhelming sleepiness, utterly devoid of energy, his whole body weary, only wanting to fall asleep.

He had wanted to persevere, to see the changes in himself. But Ling Chen simply couldn't resist and laid straight down on the bed. In less than ten seconds, his snoring started up immediately.

...

Knock knock knock!

The clear knocking sound entered his ears and Ling Chen, groggy, opened his eyes, yawning and sitting up from the bed.

"Coming!"

Stretching, Ling Chen rubbed his sleepy eyes and walked towards the door. Not far out, Ling Chen suddenly stopped in his tracks, looking at his body with a face full of surprise.

Just now, he had felt different from before; his body had become lighter and more effortless to move, that indescribable feeling was wonderful.

Knock knock knock! Knock knock knock!

Hearing the persistent knocking, Ling Chen snapped back to reality and quickly ran to the door, opening it to see Qiu Yong and the others all standing outside.

"Big Brother, Second Brother..." Ling Chen welcomed them in, greeting everyone in turn.

Qiu Yong sized up Ling Chen and said with a smile, "Did everyone notice that something seems different about Ling Cheng?"

Xia Yue nodded and agreed, "It must be the effect of the Heavenly Mechanism Pill." After speaking, Xia Yue curiously asked, "Ling Cheng, how do you feel?"

"Fantastic!" Ling Chen grinned and said, "Like I've received a younger body."

"The main effect of the Heavenly Mechanism Pill is to change your physique; it won't do much for power enhancement, but if we go to the martial arts practice field later, we'll see the real effects," Yuan Yun interjected.

"Enough talk, let's go and witness it already," Xia Yue said eagerly, hastening Ling Chen out the door.

The luxurious cruise ship was fully equipped, including an independent martial arts training ground.

After everyone arrived, Yuan Yun drew out his steel saber and walked to the center of the field, throwing Ling Chen a look, signaling him to attack.

Ling Chen did not hold back, approaching barehanded.

"Third Brother, be careful."

As he spoke, Ling Chen took in a deep breath, his legs kicked forcefully, like an arrow off the string, he quickly rushed in front of Yuan Yun and threw a punch.

Watching the sparring and Ling Chen's performance, Qiu Yong, and the others nodded continuously from the sidelines.

"Not bad, faster than before, and the reaction is much more sensitive. Third Brother's hard work has not been in vain; the Heavenly Mechanism Pill is indeed good stuff."

Hearing Qiu Yong's comment, Xia Yue said with a smile, "Big Brother, I think you should try and compete for that grand prize. If an ordinary Heavenly Mechanism Pill has such good effects, a high-quality Heavenly Mechanism Pill must be extraordinary, it might greatly help in enhancing your strength."

Chapter 420 Accidentally Entering the Boudoir

"Let's see when the time comes."

During the conversation, Ling Chen, who was practicing with Yuan Yun, suddenly lost his balance and stumbled forward. Thankfully, Yuan Yun reacted quickly and caught his arm, preventing him from falling to the ground.

Seeing this, Qiu Yong and the others rushed over to the sitting, pained-faced Ling Chen and asked with concern, "Junior Brother, what happened?"

Ling Chen stretched his hand to rub his lower back and said with a bitter smile, "The injury acted up again."

Upon hearing this, everyone's expressions instantly turned grave.

"Big Brother, can't the Heavenly Mechanism Pill cure Junior Brother's injury?" Xia Yue asked.

Before Qiu Yong could speak, Xu Ming shook his head and said, "If it was an internal injury, the Heavenly Mechanism Pill might be somewhat effective, but Junior Brother has sustained external injuries; we can only treat it through recuperation."

"What should we do then?" Xia Yue's tone was filled with urgency and worry, "The competition is tomorrow, and with his current condition, even if he goes on the stage, he won't be able to compete."

"It's okay." Ling Chen forced a smile and said, "I can endure it. Big Brother, please take me back to my room to rest."

Qiu Yong nodded, and Wei Jiahao along with Xia Yue supported Ling Chen as they left the training ground.

As the group was leaving the training ground, heading back to the rooms, a group of people approached from the opposite direction, led by Yi Shuiyan, followed by Qin Wu and others.

Seeing Ling Chen being assisted in his walk, a hardly perceptible cold glint flashed in Yi Shuiyan's eyes. He sneered as he walked by without saying a word.

"Senior Brother, looking at Ling Chen, it seems like he's seriously injured," Qin Wu said.

"That's not my concern," Yi Shuiyan said coldly. "Whether he's injured or not, I must get the Tianling Blade."

"What if he withdraws from the competition at the last minute?" Qin Wu expressed her concern, "With the eight odd characters protecting him, we might not be able to snatch the Tianling Blade back."

Hearing this, Yi Shuiyan stopped in his tracks, his eyebrows frowning into a line. Qin Wu's speculation forced him to be cautious. After pondering for a while, a cold smile curled the corners of Yi Shuiyan's mouth, and his brows slightly relaxed.

"If he wants to withdraw, I'll force him to fight." Saying so, Yi Shuiyan called a Junior Brother over and whispered a few instructions in his ear.

"Go, don't mess this up."

"Yes, Senior Brother."

...

Back in his room after resting for a while, Ling Chen felt the pain lessen significantly and wanted to join Qiu Yong and others at the venue. However, considering his injury, Qiu Yong denied his request and asked him to rest in his room.

Watching everyone leave, Ling Chen lay on the bed, bored, staring at the ceiling and lost in thought. He had thought taking the Heavenly Mechanism Pill would give him a more solid chance against Yi Shuiyan, but the injury in his waist became his biggest issue.

During his earlier practice with Yuan Yun, he had already felt how the injury seriously affected his movement.

What to do?

Should he choose to give up?

No, that's not acceptable!

Ling Chen shook his head silently. No matter what, he couldn't give up. Even if not for himself, he couldn't let porridge girl feel disappointed.

He clearly remembered that night when Yi Shuiyan appeared, it was porridge girl who saved him at the critical moment. Although his consciousness was hazy at the time, he recognized porridge girl's voice.

Even after so long, the words of Porridge Girl still echoed in his ears.

He did not want to be the weaker one; even if he lost in strength, he could not lose in momentum.

After resting in the room for two hours, Ling Chen sat up, preparing to take a walk on the deck, feel the sea breeze, and relax his mood.

Leaving the room, Ling Chen went straight to the deck. At this moment, only he was around, everyone else had gone to the venue to watch the martial arts competition.

That's good, a rare moment of quiet.

Standing at the edge of the ship's rail, Ling Chen looked out with raised eyes, watching the azure sea and the clear blue sky, his gloomy mood suddenly brightened a lot.

At that moment, the corner of Ling Chen's eye suddenly caught a glimpse of a white figure. However, when he turned his head to chase the figure, it had already disappeared.

Strange!

Ling Chen muttered to himself; he had clearly seen someone, but how did they vanish in the blink of an eye? With that thought, he walked over to where the figure had appeared, his gaze searching around for the other party's whereabouts.

However, although he didn't find the person, Ling Chen found a cabin door nearby. The figure must have gone in there; otherwise, they wouldn't have disappeared.

A yellow sign was posted outside the cabin door, indicating that this area was off-limits, and unauthorized personnel were not allowed to enter. Ling Chen looked around, saw that no one on the deck noticed him, and driven by curiosity, he opened the cabin door and quickly stepped inside.

Behind the cabin door was a corridor. Ling Chen walked along the corridor for over ten meters, and a faint fragrance immediately hit his face. Guided by the fragrance, Ling Chen soon found himself outside a room.

The door was slightly ajar, and through the crack, the fragrance inside the room was even more intense, subtle and intoxicating.

Ling Chen reached out to push the door open and peeked inside, only to see the room was empty, not a person in sight.

Could it be the wrong place?

Ling Chen muttered to himself, hesitating for a moment, he stepped into the room.

The room's decor was simple, with an antique feel, the floor was pure wood, and the wall surfaces were decorated with bamboo strips. In the middle of the room, four thin curtains hung down to the floor. Through the curtains, the items inside were hazy and unclear.

Ling Chen walked forward, lifted the curtains, and saw inside the curtains there was a tea table with a complete set of Kung Fu tea utensils, and a bamboo mat was spread beside it.

Whose place is this?

Ling Chen was somewhat puzzled; the location of this guest room was not only remote but also very hidden. Most importantly, there was a no-entry sign posted outside.

This luxurious giant ship belongs to Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, and the people who could live here must also be from Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion.

With that thought, Ling Chen immediately retreated towards the doorway. After all, he was just a guest; it would be bad if he was found intruding on private quarters without permission.

However, just as Ling Chen was about to leave, the door next to the room leading to the bedroom was suddenly opened by someone. Following that, a woman walked out of the bedroom.

Seeing that woman, Ling Chen's face instantly changed, and his eyes widened.

At that moment, the woman was only wearing a thin bralette, with a white skirt wrapped around her lower body, her fair skin completely visible.

As their eyes met, the woman was immediately stunned in place, staring dazedly at Ling Chen and seemed unable to react for a moment.

The first to regain his composure was Ling Chen, he quickly turned around, feeling embarrassed and said, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to, I... I'll leave right now." Speaking, Ling Chen hastened his steps towards the door.

"Stop!"

At this moment, the woman's voice came from behind, soft and clean like the lingering fragrance in the room, subtle and pleasing to the ears.