

The Beauty 461

Chapter 461 Master Swordsmith

Sigh!

Ling Chen sighed lightly, not knowing how to express his feelings, as he thought of the ordeal Qin Wu might have gone through. Even though Qin Wu hadn't said it, Ling Chen could guess who that man was.

From the looks of Qin Wu just now, it obviously wasn't her willing choice. He never would have imagined that guy would do something so despicable.

Although Ling Chen felt indignant, this was ultimately a private matter of the Dangyang Sect, and he knew he couldn't intervene.

Returning to his room, Ling Chen prepared to rest and wait for the afternoon's martial arts competition to begin.

At that moment, a knock on the door was heard. Ling Chen stood up to open the door and saw a waiter holding a letter, which he handed over to Ling Chen with a smile, saying, "Mr. Ling, this is your letter."

Ling Chen took the letter and casually asked, "Who's it from?"

"Sorry, I'm not sure. The person didn't show themselves, just left a message for me to pass this on to you."

"Okay, I got it, thanks!"

After closing the door, Ling Chen tore open the envelope curiously and pulled out the letter. There wasn't much written on it, just one sentence.

Someone is after you!

"Someone is after me?" Ling Chen frowned to himself, unsure who had sent the letter and why they hadn't made themselves clear.

On this luxurious cruise ship, there were plenty of people who might wish him harm: Jiang Family's Jiang Hanlin, Dangyang Sect's Zhu Jin, Qingyang Sect's Qu Yuan, and Han Yu. All of them would be more than happy to see him dead.

With so many enemies, what good is a simple warning? He needed to know who it was to take precautions.

After muttering a few complaints, Ling Chen tossed the letter in the trash bin and then sat on the couch, crossing his legs, a look of seriousness in his eyes.

Regardless of who wished him harm, the fact that this mysterious person sent a warning meant that those individuals would act soon. It could be today, or perhaps tomorrow.

Jiang Hanlin? Han Yu?... Who could it be? Ling Chen pondered seriously. To him, Jiang Hanlin seemed the most likely. After all, during his time at the Jiang Family, he had left Jiang Hanlin's son, Jiang Han, in a vegetative state—a grievance not easily forgiven.

Next would be Han Yu. Due to Ling Chen, Han Yu had suffered a major blow to his dignity, and the reputation of the Han Family was impacted. Ye Liangyong had said that the Han Family was a major clan with considerable influence. After such an incident, it's also possible that the Han Family might come after him.

Thinking of this, Ling Chen suddenly felt an immense headache.

Coming to the Heavenly Mechanism Great Ceremony with much effort, he hadn't gained much benefit, but he had certainly made quite a few enemies.

However, more curious to Ling Chen than those who might seek trouble was the person who sent the warning. He knew very few people on this ship, and whether it's the eight eccentrics or Ye Liangyong and others, they definitely wouldn't choose such a secretive way to warn him.

Who could it be?

Ling Chen was at a complete loss.

Two o'clock in the afternoon.

Ling Chen followed Qiu Yong and others to the venue.

There was only one match this afternoon, Song Ge against Qu Jinxian, competing for the last spot in the top three. The real highlight was tomorrow when the owners of the top three positions would be decided.

To be honest, Ling Chen was not very concerned about the ownership of the top three spots now. His main goal for the trip had already been achieved, and besides, even if he suffered two consecutive losses tomorrow, he could still be assured of a place in the top three. Though the rewards weren't too generous, he wasn't the type to be insatiable.

At this moment, Zhou Qi and a man in his seventies with silvery white hair and beard walked side by side into the venue from the outside.

The appearance of the old man caused the entire audience to exclaim in surprise, as they got up to pay their respects.

"Big brother, who is that? He seems to be quite famous." Ling Chen asked curiously.

"That's Guo Liang, a master blacksmith. The weapons he forges are all top-notch; no one compares."

Guo Liang?

Upon hearing this name, Ling Chen immediately had an impression. Last time, Zhou Qi mentioned when announcing the prize for the rookie competition that one of the rich rewards for the first place was a weapon personally forged by Master Guo Liang.

"Guo Liang once pledged that he would only forge ten weapons in his lifetime. Thus, obtaining a weapon personally made by him is an ultimate honor," Yuan Yun said. "As far as I know, including this time's prize, Guo Liang has already forged seven pieces."

Ling Chen smacked his lips, "What's so amazing about him?"

Qiu Yong nodded and said, "Guo Liang's craftsmanship is indeed extraordinary, unmatched throughout Huaxia in the crafting of weapons. Of course, aside from his skills, what's even more famous is his heritage. It's said that an ancestor of Guo Liang once obtained a manuscript handed down from the great sword forging master, Ou Yezi, which details the art of sword making. Since then, the Guo Family has focused on forging and has achieved great accomplishments. Guo Liang is a descendant of the Guo Family, and he has truly inherited the essence of their craft."

Ling Chen marveled to himself. As they say, you can't judge a book by its cover, nor can you measure the sea's depth. He hadn't expected that old man to be so formidable.

Just as he was thinking, Ling Chen suddenly felt a gaze upon him. Turning his head, he saw Mr. Guo looking at him with a beaming smile, nodding kindly.

Uh...

Ling Chen was slightly stunned. What did this old gentleman mean? If it weren't for Qiu Yong's introduction just now, he wouldn't even recognize this person. Now, Guo Liang was greeting him, leaving him as confused as a monk unable to touch his own head, a look of bewilderment on his face.

Puzzled as he was, adhering to a sense of politeness, Ling Chen smiled back at the man, in a manner of response.

At this moment, Guo Liang said something to Zhou Qi and walked straight towards the seats of the eight eccentrics, with a friendly smile creasing his wrinkled face.

"Brother Qiu, I've long admired your reputation, hello."

Guo Liang actively greeted each of the eight eccentrics. When his eyes landed on Zhang Zhongfeng, his laughter grew even more hearty.

"Mr. Zhang, it's been a long time."

"Mr. Guo, you're still as hearty as ever," Zhang Zhongfeng's face rarely revealed a hint of a smile.

Curiously, Qiu Yong glanced at Zhang Zhongfeng and asked, "Fourth brother, you know Mr. Guo?"

"More than just knowing. The bow used by Mr. Zhang was personally crafted by me."

Upon this declaration, the entire assembly was shocked.

Everyone looked at Zhang Zhongfeng with surprise; all this time, Zhang Zhongfeng had never mentioned this.

Facing the astonished gazes of everyone, Zhang Zhongfeng said in a mild tone, "Thank you, Mr. Guo."

"Ha ha!" Guo Liang laughed and waved his hand, "No need to thank me. I only craft weapons for those who are worthy. Mr. Zhang's archery is unparalleled in the world, making a weapon for you is my honor."

With that, Guo Liang turned his gaze, smiling at Ling Chen, "Mr. Ling, hello."

"Mr. Guo is too kind." Ling Chen quickly responded.

"Mr. Ling, if you don't mind, could we have a chat separately?"

Ling Chen was somewhat surprised by the request from Guo Liang, unsure what the old man wanted with him.

"Mr. Guo, please have a seat, take your time to speak."

Seeing Guo Liang sitting beside Ling Chen, a look of joy on his face, everyone at the venue couldn't help feeling envious and curious. The people around all pricked up their ears, trying to listen in on what they were talking about.

Chapter 462 The Secret of the Tianling Blade

"Mr. Ling..."

"Mr. Guo, you are many generations older than me, just call me Ling Chen."

Mr. Guo smiled and said, "Alright then. Ling Chen, I'll get straight to the point. I heard you have a weapon that can transform at will."

"Correct." Ling Chen nodded, this wasn't a secret, everyone knew.

Mr. Guo, suppressing the excitement in his eyes, asked, "Can I take a look at it?"

"Of course, no problem." Having said that, Ling Chen took out the Tianling Blade he carried with him and handed it to Mr. Guo.

Mr. Guo held it with both hands, not sure if it was because of his age or his emotions, he shakily took the Tianling Blade, gently stroked the engraved patterns on the surface, and a compelling brilliance burst from his cloudy old eyes, showing no signs of being a man in his seventies.

"Tianling... so you really do exist." Mr. Guo murmured to himself, his tone carrying a trace of emotion.

"Mr. Guo, you know about it?"

Mr. Guo raised his head and explained to Ling Chen, "This weapon was forged by an ancestor of the Guo Family several hundred years ago. His name was Guo Tianling, therefore, the name 'Tianling' was engraved on it."

Hearing this, Ling Chen was shocked. Mr. Guo mentioned this—could it be that he wanted to take the Tianling Blade back?

Mr. Guo seemed to see through Ling Chen's thoughts, gave him a reassuring smile, and said, "Don't worry, I have no intention of taking it back. I just wanted to see the object made by my ancestor. Besides, this weapon is not owned by the Guo Family. Back then, my ancestor forged this weapon at someone else's request, putting all his effort and skill into it. Ling Chen, you must take good care of it in the future and not lose it."

"I understand."

"Moreover..." Mr. Guo changed the topic and said, "According to the records passed down by the ancestors of the Guo Family, this weapon seems to be more than just a simple weapon."

Ling Chen asked curiously, "What do you mean?"

"I'm not very clear on the specifics, the records about this weapon are fragmentary and not very detailed. However, one thing I can be sure of is that there is a secret hidden within this weapon."

"Secret?" Ling Chen seemed to think of something, his gaze unconsciously swept toward the Dangyang Sect's seat. It might be because Yi Shuiyan was defeated, no one from the Dangyang Sect had come to watch the afternoon events, and the seats were empty.

Qin Wu once told him that the Tianling Blade was very important to the Dangyang Sect and they sought to seize it, but they never succeeded.

Could it be... that the people from the Dangyang Sect knew about the secret hidden inside the Tianling Blade, and that's why they were so desperate to obtain it?

Thinking of this, Ling Chen felt this was very likely.

While he pondered, Mr. Guo handed the Tianling Blade back to Ling Chen, saying, "Ling Chen, there is a long story about this weapon. If you're interested, you might want to visit my house sometime, and I can tell you all about it."

Mr. Guo took the initiative to invite him; naturally, Ling Chen wouldn't refuse and readily agreed, "If I have the chance, I will definitely visit."

"Alright, my purpose for this visit was to see this weapon. Since my wish is fulfilled, I won't stay any longer. Until next time."

"Mr. Guo, take care."

After watching Mr. Guo leave, Ling Chen played with the Tianling Blade in his hands, his curiosity piqued, wondering what secret this weapon hid. After the Heavenly Mechanism Great Ceremony ends, he must find the opportunity to thoroughly investigate it.

Before long, the afternoon's martial arts contest officially began.

However, unexpectedly, when Song Ge took to the stage, Qu Jinxian failed to appear, and nobody from the Qingyang Sect came either. As the crowd speculated wildly with various conjectures, a disciple from the Qingyang Sect hurriedly arrived at the venue, whispering a few words into Zhou Qi's ear.

After that person left, Zhou Qi stepped onto the stage, saying loudly, "Ladies and gentlemen, I'm afraid I have to disappoint you this afternoon. We just received word from the Qingyang Sect that Qu Jinxian has relinquished his qualification to compete. Therefore, this fight directly advances Song Ge to the top three."

Hearing this, the commotion in the crowd grew louder.

To willingly give up at this crucial moment, what exactly is the Qingyang Sect thinking?

Nevertheless, some understood Qu Jinxian's decision. After all, his opponent was Song Ge, ranked first on the Newcomer List. Everyone had seen Song Ge's strength; even top fighters from the Dragon List seemed like weaklings before him, his power profoundly inscrutable. If Qu Jinxian were to face Song Ge, his chances of winning were utterly slim.

Ling Chen was speechless. Although he knew Song Ge was highly likely to win, he didn't expect it to be so easy. Could Song Ge's intimidating force be so great that it made Qu Jinxian admit defeat without a fight?

In any case, with Song Ge smoothly advancing to the top three, Ling Chen, as a friend, did not forget to congratulate him.

"Alright, the top three contenders of the newcomers challenge has been decided. Now, we'll draw lots to determine tomorrow's top three battle. As usual, one will have a bye, while the other two will determine the winner, and then the final battle will occur. Ling Chen, Han Yu, Song Ge, please come to the stage."

"No need to draw." Han Yu spoke up from the seat, "Ling Chen, since you're so powerful, even defeating Yi Shuiyan, I would like to have a proper challenge with you. How about this, tomorrow it'll be you and me, same rules, fight to death. If I lose, I don't want the third-place prize, it'll all go to you. What do you say, dare or not?"

Zhou Qi frowned slightly and said, "Han Yu..."

"Elder Zhou, don't talk to me about rules, rules are made by people. Since you made an exception for Yi Shuiyan, why can't you make one for me?" Han Yu interrupted Zhou Qi's words.

Zhou Qi was momentarily speechless.

"Ling Chen, one word, do you dare?"

Ling Chen touched his nose, a faint smile on his face, "With such a gracious invitation, it'd be too rude of me to refuse. Alright, since you want a life-and-death battle, I'm with you all the way."

Seeing Ling Chen agree, Han Yu's eyebrows relaxed, and a cold smile appeared on his handsome face.

"Very well, you haven't disappointed me. Enjoy tonight well, I'm afraid you might not survive tomorrow." Having said that, Han Yu left the venue with several middle-aged men.

Qiu Yong looked worried and said, "Ling, wasn't your acceptance a bit rash?"

Ling Chen replied helplessly, "Brother, faced with so many people, could I show weakness? Besides, who wins tomorrow is still uncertain."

"Alright, when the time comes, just give it your all. If it really gets out of hand, your brothers won't sit idly by; we'll definitely keep you safe."

As they were talking, Song Ge came over.

"Ling."

"Song."

Ling Chen asked with a smile, "Did you need something?"

"Do you have time to go out and talk for a bit? I have something I want to discuss."

"You're asking, how could I refuse. Let's go!"

Chapter 463 The True Face of Han Yu

Walking on the deck, Ling Chen looked at the silent Song Ge beside him and asked with a smile, "Song, you told me to come out because you had something to tell me. Why haven't you said anything for so long?"

Song Ge stopped walking, opened his mouth and said, "The decision you made just now was wrong."

"What?" Ling Chen didn't grasp what was said at first.

"You shouldn't have agreed to Han Yu's challenge."

"Song, isn't it too late to say that now?"

Song Ge sighed helplessly, "I thought you would refuse, so I didn't remind you at the meeting. I didn't expect you to accept his request."

Ling Chen shrugged it off with a smile: "Song, there's no need to worry about me. Although I'm not confident I will definitely beat Han Yu, he'll have to pay a price to defeat me."

"You're thinking too simply," Song Ge shook his head, looking at the gradually darkening sky and said, "Han Yu is by no means as easy to handle as you imagine. I know him too well. You may not know that our Song Family and Han Family are both Martial Arts clans with a hundred years of feud. Even now, the underground and open battles never stopped. Ten years ago, I fought with Han Yu and lost, and over the following years, I've lost to him every single time."

"But two years ago, I finally beat him once. Since then, every time we sparred, he lost to me." Having said this, Song Ge looked at Ling Chen, "You might think my improvement was greater than his, but that's not actually the case. I've said, I know Han Yu very well. It's hard not to, after being old rivals for so many years. He is very calculating and never easily reveals his inner thoughts. But this time, you forced him to show his true face. More precisely, you pressured him into it."

"The Han Family cares a lot about their reputation. Because of you, not only has the Han Family's face been lost, but their reputation has been damaged. With Han Yu's personality, he will not let you go. Actually, Zhou Jun and I are involved in this matter too. However, with the Song Family's background and being lifelong enemies with the Han Family, it's not so easy for Han Yu to touch me. Zhou Jun is from the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, and Han Yu wouldn't dare to move against him either. Therefore, you became the only option for Han Yu's revenge."

Ling Chen frowned and said, "Even if he kills me, isn't he afraid of retaliation from the eight eccentrics?"

"I don't deny the strength of the eight eccentrics, but as long as Han Yu successfully joins the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, with the Pavilion backing the Han Family, do you think he would be scared?"

"Song, is it possible that you're overestimating Han Yu? Maybe he really isn't as good as you."

Song Ge smiled bitterly, "I hope that's the case. You might not know, but Han Yu has lost to me seven times, each time on the thirtieth move without exception. You should understand what that means."

Hearing this, Ling Chen's face changed color.

Clearly, Han Yu intentionally lost to Song Ge.

"Why would he do that?" Ling Chen asked, puzzled.

"These days, being number one isn't necessarily a good thing. A wise person who is good at hiding will position himself neither too high nor too low, ready to advance or retreat. That is the best choice."

Ling Chen nodded in strong agreement.

"Song, how strong is Han Yu really?"

"I'm not sure, but definitely no weaker than me. My strength is probably around the sixth place on the Dragon List, like Yi Shuiyan and Qu Jinxian, their strength is between the eighth and ninth on the Dragon List. You know, after entering the Dragon List, each rank difference corresponds to a significant difference in strength. Especially those who enter the top five, these masters have reached another realm in Martial Arts. Of course, I hope it's just my guess, maybe Han Yu hasn't reached that level yet. In any case, you must be extremely careful when you face him, don't be reckless."

After a pause, Song Ge continued, "Given Han Yu's temperament, if you lose, he will definitely not accept your surrender, so you have to prepare in advance."

"What preparation?"

"The crisis on this ship earned you a lot of merit, and the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion is immensely grateful to you. I suggest you seek out Elder Zhou; if something goes wrong during the duel, have him intervene at a critical moment to prevent Han Yu from killing you."

Hearing Song Ge's suggestion, Ling Chen seemed distressed, "Your words make me afraid to even go on stage."

Song Ge's expression became grave, "I'm not joking, this concerns your life, you better take it seriously."

"Alright, I understand."

Song Ge sharing so much was out of kindness; Ling Chen appreciated his concern. However, the thought of tomorrow's life-and-death battle gave Ling Chen a headache. If only he had known, he wouldn't have casually agreed to Han Yu's request; wasn't this jumping into a pit of fire?

Returning to his room, Ling Chen lay sloppily on the couch, propping his head with one hand, and then pulled out a satellite phone from the drawer of the tea table and dialed Nanrong Wanqing's number.

Having been away from East Sea City for so long, Ling Chen missed Nanrong Wanqing and hoped to finish the Heavenly Mechanism Great Ceremony soon and return to meet her.

After the usual half-hour long phone call, Ling Chen reluctantly hung up. This was all thanks to Hu Fei, who secretly hacked the luxury cruise ship's blocking equipment, allowing him to contact people outside anytime, anywhere.

"Ling Chen, open the door quickly."

At this moment, Hu Fei's voice came from outside the door.

Ling Chen got up to open the door and looked at Hu Fei who came in holding a laptop, joked, "I thought you were having a great time with Zhou Jun, how come you have time to come and find me?"

"Come on, do you think I came to see you willingly? I've encountered a problem."

"What happened?"

Hu Fei opened his laptop, tapping on the keyboard as he spoke, "Didn't I hack the ship's firewall? Today, I was bored and checking the system when I discovered a problem. Apart from me, someone else has invaded the ship's system. Fortunately, they haven't tampered with anything, but they've stealthily left a backdoor in the system."

Hearing this, Ling Chen trusted Hu Fei's computer skills implicitly and asked, "Do you know who did it?"

"How would I know that? There are so many people on the ship; I can't possibly check every one of them. The only thing certain is that the person is on this ship. To access the ship's control system, one must go through the ship's network, otherwise it's impossible to do so. However, I've written a program in the system, so as soon as that person logs into the system again, I will get a notification here. Once we lock onto that person's signal, we can pinpoint their location."

"Have you told Zhou Jun about this?"

"Not yet. We haven't found the person, so there's no point in saying anything. We'll tell him when we have results."

Chapter 464 The Mysterious Masked Woman

"Hey! Ling Chen, I heard from Zhou Jun that you have a duel to the death tomorrow?"

Ling Chen nodded.

"Are you up for it, man? Don't make me bring your corpse back. What am I supposed to tell your future wife if she asks?"

Annoyed, Ling Chen cursed: "To hell with you, shut your damn mouth." After speaking, Ling Chen glanced at the laptop in front of Hu Fei, a thought suddenly striking him, and asked: "Fatty, is your computer connected to the ship's system?"

"Yeah."

"So you can pull up the ship's surveillance, right?"

"Nonsense, of course I can."

"Fine, leave the computer behind, and you can piss off." Saying that, Ling Chen grabbed Hu Fei and gave him a kick on the butt, shoving him towards the door.

"Hey! What are you doing?" Hu Fei yelled while covering his butt: "Damn it! You're not planning to spy on the beauties on the ship, are you? Just wait, I'll definitely tell your future wife when we get back."

"Get lost." Ling Chen laughed and scolded.

After Hu Fei left, Ling Chen sat alone on the sofa, switched on the laptop, and pulled up all the surveillance from the ship.

Although Hu Fei's parting words were a joke, Ling Chen was indeed looking for a beautiful woman. After pulling up the deck's surveillance, it didn't take long for Ling Chen to find the cabin door with the warning sign.

Initially, it was there he had met Tea Girl. He was very curious about this woman. He clearly remembered seeing her, but could not recall her face at all, simply unable to remember what she looked like. When he was alone with Tea Girl, she had made him a cup of tea. He suspected that it was due to that cup of tea that he had forgotten Tea Girl's appearance.

Thus, he became very interested in Tea Girl's identity. He was eager to know what role this woman played within the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion.

Unfortunately, Ling Chen only found a camera pointing at the cabin door, and since there were no cameras inside the cabin, it was impossible to know what was happening there.

At that moment, someone appeared on the surveillance screen, more precisely, a masked woman.

As the sky was dark and the woman was facing sideways to the camera, Ling Chen could only see the side profile of her face. However, he vaguely felt a sense of familiarity towards this woman.

If he remembered correctly, he had never seen this woman during his many days on the ship. As there were fewer women attending the Heavenly Mechanism Great Ceremony, Ling Chen would have a strong impression of any woman appearing on the ship.

As he watched the masked woman enter the cabin door, Ling Chen's eyes glued to the surveillance screen, waiting for her to reappear.

As expected, a few minutes later, the cabin door opened, and the masked woman walked out alone, standing outside the door, looking around as if observing something. Ling Chen watched her intently, trying to figure out her destination.

But then, something incredible happened.

The masked woman lightly touched her toes to the ground and, light as a feather, quickly swept upwards along the side of the ship, disappearing in a blink.

After a brief moment of shock, Ling Chen quickly recovered and began frantically typing on the keyboard, pulling up the other surveillance cameras. Soon, he caught a glimpse of a dark shadow.

However, that shadow moved very fast, and Ling Chen's eyes meticulously searched through the dozens of minimized surveillance screens. Finally, he locked onto that shadow in one of the screens. However, the shadow only remained in his view for two seconds before disappearing through a window.

"Where do you think you can run to!"

Ling Chen tapped the keyboard methodically, bringing up the location of the surveillance.

Sixth floor?

Ling Chen held his chin with one hand, a thoughtful expression on his face.

As far as he knew, the sixth floor of this luxury behemoth seemed to be the engine room, uninhabited. After some thought, Ling Chen decided to go there himself and investigate.

Leaving the room, Ling Chen exited the floor and then took the elevator to the fifth floor. Since the sixth floor was the engine room, only the ship's staff could access it with a card. Outsiders couldn't get in.

Standing by the window on the fifth floor, Ling Chen looked around to make sure no one was around, then he instantly climbed out of the window, grabbed onto the outer side of the ship, and rapidly ascended using the protrusions on the surface. Soon, he arrived in front of the sixth floor window.

Looking at the surveillance camera less than ten meters from the window, Ling Chen's lips curled up slightly. The masked woman had just climbed in through this window.

Seizing the moment, Ling Chen glanced at the bottom, from the deck to the sixth-floor window was about sixteen or seventeen meters — that masked woman must be extremely skilled to climb up so effortlessly.

With this thought, Ling Chen couldn't help but worry. If a conflict arose later, what if he couldn't defeat his opponent?

Hesitating for a moment, Ling Chen slapped his forehead, shook off the distracting thoughts, and directly climbed through the window.

Inside the sixth floor engine room were various types of equipment. Although the lights weren't on, the built-in lights of the equipment were enough for Ling Chen to see his surroundings clearly.

Walking through the quiet engine room, Ling Chen was very careful with his steps, afraid of being discovered by the masked woman.

Passing equipment arranged along the wall, a door appeared in Ling Chen's view. The door was located in the northeast corner of the engine room, and the light seeping from under the door indicated that someone was inside.

So, the masked woman lives here.

Ling Chen tiptoed to the door, body pressed against the wall, then he placed his ear against the door to eavesdrop on any sounds inside.

After more than ten seconds, the room remained eerily silent, not sounding like someone was living there.

At that moment, Ling Chen mustered his courage, grabbed the doorknob, and gently pushed open the door. As a sliver of a gap appeared, he stealthily peeked inside, only seeing a few simple decorations.

No one?

Ling Chen pushed the door slightly wider and then peeked his head through the gap. However, as he did, a force suddenly came from behind the door. Caught off guard, before Ling Chen could retract his head, it was trapped in the gap, his neck jammed by the doorframe, making it impossible for him to move forward or backward.

Only then did Ling Chen realize, the masked woman had already discovered him and had been hiding behind the door all along.

"Is it you?"

Seeing Ling Chen, the masked woman was taken aback and quickly released her hand from the door, freeing Ling Chen's head from the gap.

"What are you doing here?"

At this moment, Ling Chen, rubbing his sore neck, heard the slightly angry voice of the masked woman. His expression stunned, he stared into the eyes of the masked woman and exclaimed in surprise, "You are... porridge girl?"

Chapter 465 Ling Chen Falls into a Trap (Part 1)

Looking at the woman in front of him, Ling Chen was very surprised. He had never expected to encounter the porridge girl here. After so many days on the ship, he had never seen the porridge girl appear, and here she was, hiding away by herself. Recalling the scene he had just witnessed, Ling Chen's heart harbored an additional trace of confusion.

The porridge girl went to see that mysterious tea girl; did they know each other? Or could it be that the porridge girl was related to the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion?

In a flash, many questions surfaced in Ling Chen's mind, and he couldn't wait to hear the answers from the porridge girl's own lips.

"Have a seat," said the porridge girl, pointing to a chair in the room and speaking indifferently.

Ling Chen asked, "When did you board the ship? Why didn't you say anything to me?"

"Why should I tell you?" The porridge girl replied offhandedly, turning her back to him.

"As friends, why be so distant?" Ling Chen grinned. "Last time Yi Shuiyan came to East Sea City to trouble me, I was fortunate that you stepped in to help. I haven't properly thanked you yet."

Upon hearing this, the porridge girl turned back to look at Ling Chen, her clear eyes shimmering lightly, showing gratification, admiration, and a hint of confusion.

"I've heard about your competition with Yi Shuiyan; congratulations to you."

Ling Chen smiled modestly, "It was pure luck."

"Your progress is significant after two months apart; how did you achieve this?" asked the porridge girl curiously, "As far as I know, no matter how exceptional one's talent is, it's impossible to make such a qualitative leap in such a short time. Especially with Inner Strength cultivation, which requires time to accumulate. It can't be achieved overnight. But as of now, your strength has more than doubled compared to two months ago."

"This..." Ling Chen shrugged his shoulders, looking bemused, "To be honest, I really don't know. It felt like my Inner Strength just increased inexplicably, without any signs."

The porridge girl looked at Ling Chen skeptically and said, "Extend your hand."

Without suspicion, Ling Chen obediently placed his hand on the tea table. Seeing the porridge girl's fair and delicate fingers resting on his pulse, a hint of surprise flashed in Ling Chen's eyes.

"Do you know medicine?"

The porridge girl said nothing and ignored his question, her eyes softly closed, her fingertips gently dancing on his pulse. After a while, she withdrew her fingers and opened her eyes to tell Ling Chen, "Your inner breath is normal but not stable."

"What does that mean?"

"It means your foundation is weak. The reason your Inner Strength has improved so rapidly is that you've used external forces."

Ling Chen honestly admitted, "I've taken an ordinary Heavenly Mechanism Pill."

"An ordinary Heavenly Mechanism Pill wouldn't have such an effect; you must have taken other medicinal pills as well. However, you're lucky; both pills' effects are neutral and mild, and they've integrated perfectly in your body without causing side effects. Instead, they've greatly enhanced your Inner Strength." The porridge girl paused before continuing, "Regardless, Inner Strength cultivation relies on a solid foundation. Without a solid foundation and reliance on external substances, it will be difficult for you to go far in the future. After the Heavenly Mechanism Great Ceremony, it would be beneficial for you to focus on cultivation for a while."

"I'll keep that in mind."

Having said that, Ling Chen changed the subject and asked, "What's your relationship with the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion? And who's the woman you went to see just now?"

The porridge girl frowned, displeased, and asked, "How do you know these things? Were you following me?"

Ling Chen quickly waved his hands, denying fervently, "Don't get me wrong, I just happened to see."

"That's my private affair; you don't need to know." With that, the porridge girl stood up and spoke indifferently, "I need to rest now."

Although Ling Chen still had a bellyful of questions, once the porridge girl issued the eviction order, he felt it would be rude to continue hanging around.

"I'll head back first then. You should know where I live, come find me when you're free."

As the sound of the door closing reached her, the porridge girl slowly turned her head and reached up to remove the veil covering her face, revealing delicate features. A shade of slight concern appeared on her soft, pale cheeks.

"Master, what should I do with him?"

Her murmur, accompanied by a soft sigh, echoed in the room for a long time.

Back in his room, it was still early, not even ten o'clock yet. Thinking about tomorrow's fight with Han Yu, Ling Chen's brow immediately furrowed with concern. He remembered the words Song Ge said to him today; if it's as Song Ge suggested, tomorrow's martial arts competition would undoubtedly be a tough battle. A moment's carelessness could mean life-threatening danger.

After much contemplation, Ling Chen sighed helplessly, climbed into bed to lie down, conserving energy and preparing for tomorrow's fight.

The next day.

Before dawn, Ling Chen was already out of bed.

He couldn't help it, the thought of today's coming fight made it impossible for him to sleep.

Staying awake until sunrise, Ling Chen yawned and rubbed his grumbling stomach. Not waiting for Qiu Yong and the others, he went to the dining room alone and ordered a hearty breakfast.

As Ling Chen was wolfing down his meal, a barely perceptible gaze from not too far away caught his attention. He looked up to see a fair-faced woman sitting alone at a dining table across from him, eating breakfast nonchalantly.

Perhaps feeling Ling Chen's gaze, the woman blinked her beautiful eyes and met his look for a moment before turning to look around.

At this time, since it was still early, there were few people eating in the restaurant. Besides the two of them, there were several strangers, all busily eating their meal in silence.

Seeing that no one noticed her, the woman picked up her plate and gracefully walked over to Ling Chen's table, politely asking with a smile, "May I sit here?"

"Of course." Ling Chen grinned, gestured to the seat beside him, and said courteously, "Please, have a seat."

Xiao Wan.

The only woman on the Newcomer List.

Ling Chen had a profound impression of her. She took the initiative to greet him, and he wouldn't refuse even out of politeness. Besides, he was keen on making acquaintance with these outstanding peers of his age.

The two of them chatted aimlessly about this and that, passing the time during their meal. Suddenly, Xiao Wan blurted out, "Did you receive my letter?"

A letter?

Ling Chen was stunned for a moment, then suddenly realized, looking at Xiao Wan with a surprised expression, "The letter was from you?"

He had received a letter yesterday warning him that someone was out to get him and to be extra cautious. He had always been puzzled about who sent the letter, never expecting it to be this woman in front of him.

No wonder Xiao Wan had seemed so cautious earlier; it was because of this reason.

With this thought, Ling Chen leaned closer to Xiao Wan and asked softly, "Who are you referring to?"

Xiao Wan glanced at the other guests dining around them and whispered, "Come to my room in five minutes, 403." With that, she picked up her plate and walked away on her own.

Chapter 466 Ling Chen Is Trapped (Part 2)

After Xiao Wan left the restaurant, Ling Chen waited for about two minutes before he followed her.

Room 403, it wasn't long before Ling Chen arrived outside Xiao Wan's room and gently knocked on the door.

The door opened, Xiao Wan peeked out, cautiously looking left and right down the corridor. Seeing her cautious demeanor, Ling Chen said with a smile, "Don't worry, I observed carefully on my way here; nobody noticed me."

Xiao Wan gave a slight nod, then stepped aside to let Ling Chen into the room.

"Please, have a seat!"

Once Ling Chen was seated, Xiao Wan brought over a freshly brewed cup of green tea and handed it to Ling Chen.

"Thank you." Ling Chen smiled and then steered the conversation to the main topic, asking, "Miss Xiao, you mentioned that someone is out to harm me; could you be more specific? Don't worry, no one will know that you've shared this information with me."

Xiao Wan smiled faintly, "Don't rush, try the tea I made first. It's our family's own plantation; normally, you can't buy this outside."

Holding the teacup, Ling Chen gently blew away the floating leaves and took a small sip. As the tea went down his throat, he felt a warmth in his abdomen, and the taste lingered in his mouth—it indeed was a rare good tea.

"Excellent." Ling Chen did not skimp on his praise. After speaking, he looked up at Xiao Wan and quietly waited for her to continue.

"Yesterday, as I was taking a walk on the deck, I stumbled upon a few people who were gathered and whispering, discussing something. I was too far away to hear their conversation, but I faintly heard them mention your name."

"That's it?" Ling Chen appeared momentarily stunned.

"Their tone was very unusual when they mentioned your name. Based on my experience, I think they might be planning to harm you."

"Thank you for your concern. That... do you know who they are?"

"I only know they are from the Jiang Family, but I can't name them."

The Jiang Family?

Ling Chen inwardly nodded; since Xiao Wan mentioned the Jiang Family, it was undoubtedly Jiang Hanlin. He had already anticipated that Jiang Hanlin would not let things slide so easily. Hmph! If Jiang Hanlin dared to make a move against him on the ship, it would be a good opportunity to settle things once and for all.

Now, backed by the Eight Eccentrics and his own progress, he no longer needed to fear the Jiang Family.

Collecting his thoughts, Ling Chen said to Xiao Wan with a smile, "Miss Xiao, thank you for the information... and your tea. If there's nothing else, I'll be on my way—I have a duel scheduled for this morning, and I need to prepare."

"I'll walk you out."

"No need to be so polite." Ling Chen thanked her again and then turned towards the door to leave.

However, at that moment, as Xiao Wan's footsteps came from behind him, Ling Chen's vision was suddenly blurred by a moving object. Before he could react, he felt his neck tighten, as if it were being strangled by a thin thread, and he struggled to breathe.

The thread was very fine, nearly cutting into his flesh. Moreover, the strength of the thread was increasing, quickly drawing a line of blood across his neck.

After an initial shock of anger, Ling Chen swiftly regained his composure, stepped backward, and leaned his back tightly against Xiao Wan, forcing her against the wall.

With no decrease in the strength of the thread, Ling Chen hesitated no further and used the back of his head to smash backward, hitting Xiao Wan squarely on the forehead. Under the impact, Xiao Wan's head tilted backward and hit the wall behind her again.

Feeling the thread on his neck loosen slightly, Ling Chen promptly extended both arms behind his shoulders and firmly grasped Xiao Wan's wrists, yanking them forward forcefully.

In terms of strength, Xiao Wan was no match for Ling Chen.

At that moment, the bedroom door in the room opened, and Jiang Hanlin along with the brothers Qiu Wen and Qiu Wu rushed out quickly.

Seeing Ling Chen escape from the deadly thread, Jiang Hanlin's complexion subtly changed.

"Go!"

Along with Jiang Hanlin's light shout, Qiu Wen and Qiu Wu charged at Ling Chen without another word, one to the left and one to the right, hoping to team up with Xiao Wan in trapping Ling Chen.

Seeing the two men coming at him, Ling Chen's mouth curled into a slight cold smile. Gripping Xiao Wan's wrists tightly, he leaned forward, thrusting his hips against Xiao Wan and forcefully pushed his arms upward. In an instant, Xiao Wan's body flew over Ling Chen's head and crashed right onto the tea table.

Bang!

Amid Xiao Wan's cries of pain, the wooden tea table shattered instantly.

Having dealt with Xiao Wan, Ling Chen cast a glance, his face displaying a chilling smile as he looked at the approaching Qiu Wen and Qiu Wu.

"You guys are really capable, setting such a nice trap for me to fall into."

Jiang Hanlin said coldly: "Ling Chen, don't expect to leave this place alive today."

"Oh, really?" Ling Chen narrowed his eyes, a cold light shooting out from his dark pupils, "Then let's see if you really have the ability to back that up."

As he finished speaking, Ling Chen tapped the ground with the tip of his foot, his legs bounced forcefully, and he leaped high, charging towards Qiu Wen and Qiu Wu. Back when he had just advanced to the Tiger List, the two Qiu brothers were already no match for him, let alone now.

Two punches thundered out, and the Cross Training of Qiu Wen and Qiu Wu disintegrated in an instant. They were directly blasted away by the fierce punch, hitting the wall.

Seeing Ling Chen deal with Xiao Wan and the Qiu brothers with mere punches and kicks, Jiang Hanlin's face suddenly showed a hint of terror.

Impossible!

As Ling Chen's gaze turned towards him, Jiang Hanlin couldn't help but step back, frowning and saying, "This can't be possible!"

"What can't be possible?"

"You've been drugged with the tea you just had, you shouldn't be this strong."

"Drugged?"

Hearing this, Ling Chen secretly activated his Inner Strength, feeling everything to be normal, with no discomfort. Feeling reassured, Ling Chen looked at Jiang Hanlin with an amused smile: "Was the drug you used expired? Jiang, I originally had no interest in quarreling with the Jiang Family. But since you're being unwise and asking for trouble, don't blame me for being unmerciful."

"You..."

"Enough talk!"

Before Jiang Hanlin could finish speaking, Ling Chen gave a light shout, his feet suddenly propelled him forward with force, and he quickly rushed towards Jiang Hanlin. Jiang Hanlin hadn't had the time to draw the silver whip from his waist, and Ling Chen was already upon him, punching straight towards his face.

One move!

Jiang Hanlin, whom Ling Chen could not tackle with all his might in the past, was now knocked to the ground in just one move.

The Tiger List and the Dragon List are only a word apart, but the difference between them is like that between the clouds and the mud.

Looking at Jiang Hanlin who couldn't get up, Ling Chen shook his head and glanced at the painfully groaning Xiao Wan, speaking coldly, "Tell me, why would you help the Jiang Family against me?"

Enduring the pain, Xiao Wan replied with a pale face: "The Jiang Family once helped us at our most desperate time, we had to repay that kindness."

"Hmph! To repay a kindness, you go as far as murder? I thought about making friends with you, but it seems I was just being sentimental."

"I'm sorry, I..."

"That's enough, no need to explain. You should be grateful, I never kill women, but... they won't be so lucky."

Chapter 467 Battle of the Top Three

Jiang Hanlin's complexion changed as he struggled to stand up and said, "You... what do you want to do? Ling Chen, this is Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion's territory. If you dare to kill at will, Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion won't let you off easily."

Ling Chen sneered and said, "Now you think to use Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion as a shield? When you plotted to kill me, why didn't you think of this? Don't worry, I won't kill you. A person like you is not worth dirtying my hands."

Hearing this, Jiang Hanlin's tense face slightly relaxed.

"However... your life might be spared, but a little punishment is unavoidable."

One minute later.

Ling Chen clapped his hands, looking at the unconscious Jiang Hanlin and the brothers Qiu Wen and Qiu Wu, his lips curling into a smile, then turned to Xiao Wan and said, "If you're smart, you'll know what to say. Also, it's best if I never see you again."

After finishing his words, Ling Chen turned around, leaving behind Xiao Wan with a pale face, still in shock, and walked out of the room.

Although he spared Jiang Hanlin's life, Ling Chen had disabled their arms and legs, shattering all their bones—they would never recover in this lifetime.

In dealing with his enemies, Ling Chen never showed mercy.

Back in his room, Ling Chen stood in front of the mirror, looking at the clear line of blood on his neck, and he sighed with a bitter smile.

This time, he only blamed himself for being too careless, for easily trusting Xiao Wan and going to her room. He could guess what Jiang Hanlin and the others were planning.

Once he entered Xiao Wan's room, they joined forces to try and kill him, then they would claim he attempted to harm Xiao Wan. With a well-arranged scene, even if anyone doubted, it would be useless since he would already be dead, with no proof to the contrary.

Thinking back on the recent events, Ling Chen was rather curious about one thing. Jiang Hanlin confessed to drugging the tea, and indeed, he had drunk it, but it had no effect. Jiang Hanlin, with all his meticulous planning, certainly wouldn't use expired drugs.

Could it be due to his unique physique being resistant to poison?

Thinking this, Ling Chen shook his head and laughed, feeling that his luck hadn't reached such a level yet—there must be a reason.

While he pondered, a series of knocks came from the door. Judging by the time, it should be Qiu Yong and the others.

The door opened.

Qiu Yong stepped inside, about to speak. Yet, before he could say anything, his gaze was drawn to the bloodstain on Ling Chen's neck.

"Ling Cheng, what happened here? Who did this?" Qiu Yong's tone carried a hint of chill.

"It's nothing, just a minor injury; I've already handled it." Regarding the recent incidents, Ling Chen didn't wish to elaborate further.

Looking at the time, it was already half-past seven. Ling Chen collected his emotions and smiled, saying, "The martial arts contest starts in half an hour, big brother, let's head to the venue first."

Once at the venue, Ling Chen noticed that today's audience had arrived earlier than usual. By just past seven-thirty, the place was already fully packed, with everyone eagerly awaiting this morning's life-or-death contest.

As one of the key figures, Ling Chen naturally attracted quite a lot of attention.

"Ling."

Seeing Song Ge approaching, Ling Chen greeted him with a smile, "Song, you're early."

"I didn't sleep well last night, thinking about today's martial arts contest, I really couldn't calm down," Song Ge's voice was filled with worry.

"Song needn't worry too much, Yi Shuiyan and Han Yu are closely matched in strength. If Ling Cheng could defeat Yi Shuiyan, perhaps he could also defeat Han Yu."

Hearing Yuan Yun's words, Song Ge looked puzzledly at Ling Chen. The latter smiled, shaking his head at him.

Song Ge's words to himself, Ling Chen didn't mention them to Qiu Yong and the others, for fear of making them worry.

After taking his seat, it wasn't long before Zhou Jun and Hu Fei walked into the venue side by side and came directly to Ling Chen's side.

"Fatty, why are you here?"

Hu Fei, with a laptop in hand, touched the loose fat on his face and said with a grin, "I'm planning to record the entire martial arts competition. If you die, I'll send the footage to your future wife so she'll know whom to seek revenge from."

"Go to hell, not a single good word from you." Ling Chen cursed irritably, "If I really have an accident, it will definitely be because of your curse. If that happens, I won't spare you even as a ghost."

"Ling Chen, that Han Yu is not simple, you have to be careful." Zhou Jun kindly reminded.

"I know."

Seven fifty.

Escorted by several middle-aged men, Han Yu entered the venue with his head held high.

As he passed by the seats of the eight eccentrics, Han Yu glanced at Ling Chen, his gaze cold and sinister with a hint of ferocity, and his slightly upturned lips carried a chilling coldness.

At that moment, in an inconspicuous corner of the venue, stood two masked women, silently watching the stage, without saying a word.

At eight o'clock sharp, the host Zhou Qi strode onto the stage, looked around at the spectators and said loudly, "Ladies and gentlemen, I believe everyone is clear about the details of this morning's martial arts competition, so I won't repeat them. This is a fight to the death, it won't end until we see life or death. Han Yu, Ling Chen, you have three minutes to prepare."

Seeing Ling Chen stand up and leave his seat, Qiu Yong and the others advised anxiously, "Ling, be very careful."

Ling Chen smiled and nodded, then headed straight to the stage. Facing Han Yu coming towards him, Ling Chen took a deep breath. The competition hadn't even started, yet his palms were already covered in sweat. He tried hard to adjust his mood, but couldn't quell the anxiety in his heart.

At this moment, the audience in the stands noticed the weapon carried by Ling Chen and were simultaneously surprised.

Today, Ling Chen was not using the Tianling Blade, but instead he had a bow.

Using a bow and arrow as a weapon in a martial arts arena was unprecedented, never having occurred before. Furthermore, sharp-eyed people noticed that the bow was the weapon of the Archer God, Zhang Zhongfeng.

"If Ling Chen's archery is one-third as good as Zhang Zhongfeng's, he might actually defeat Han Yu."

"That's not necessarily true, the edge of the stage is only twenty meters, it's hard for a bow and arrow to be effective. I don't know what Ling Chen was thinking, using a bow and arrow as his weapon."

"..."

"The competition, officially begins!"

Amidst the crowd's discussions, Zhou Qi's booming voice rang out. Instantly, the whole venue fell silent, all eyes focused on Ling Chen and Han Yu.

Han Yu glanced at the bow and arrow in Ling Chen's hands, sneered coldly, and made no effort to hide his disdain.

"Using a bow and arrow to fight, huh... Ling Chen, are you giving up on yourself? Even if it were Zhang Zhongfeng himself on stage, his archery couldn't threaten me."

Upon hearing this, the entire venue was shocked.

Such arrogant words, completely disregarding the title of Archer God.

Ignoring the uproar around him, Han Yu kept his focus on Ling Chen and said with a sneering smile, "Today is a life-and-death fight, but before we start, I'll give you a chance to live. If you kneel down and kowtow three times before everyone here, I can spare your life and accept your surrender."

Ling Chen chuckled, "How about this, you kneel and kowtow three times to me, and then call me grandpa. Considering you are my good grandson, I'll spare your life, how about that?"

Chapter 468 Desperate Fight to the Death (Part 1)

"Fine, I want to see if you will still be able to say that later." Han Yu sneered, his wrist flicking lightly and the scabbard immediately shot out, nailing into a pillar outside the arena, penetrating three inches deep.

This single move alone elicited exclamations from the audience on site.

At a distance of nearly twenty meters, Han Yu was actually able to shoot the scabbard into the pillar. This was no longer just a display of wrist strength, but a mastery of Inner Strength that was nothing short of perfection.

Looking at the Longquan Sword in Han Yu's hands, Ling Chen's brows furrowed slightly, as his gaze slowly shifted onto Han Yu.

"Prepare to die!"

With eyes wide open in anger, Han Yu let out a fierce shout, without the slightest hint of warning, instantly sprung from the spot, flying more than a meter into the air, his sharp Longquan Sword pointing straight at Ling Chen's brow, the sword momentum swift and unstoppable.

Seeing Han Yu make his move, Ling Chen, without a second thought, immediately turned and ran towards the edge of the arena. When Ling Chen was about two meters away from the corner of the arena, he leapt with his legs, suspending his body mid-air.

Immediately after, he twisted his waist, fiercely correcting his body's position, raising his longbow high in hand, a sharp arrow swiftly nocked onto the bowstring.

Nocking the arrow, all in one fluid motion.

Whoosh!

With a release of his finger, the sharp arrow immediately flew out, shooting towards Han Yu, who had yet to land.

At this moment, there was less than ten meters between them. The arrow's speed was as fast as lightning, and in the blink of an eye, it was upon Han Yu. However, Han Yu's eyes were locked firmly on Ling Chen, completely disregarding the arrow hurtling through the air.

Suddenly, Han Yu raised his arm, the agile Longquan Sword like a Spirit Snake lightly flicked.

Clang!

Before the spectators could even react, a clear ring resounded. Subsequently, an arrow was seen deflecting off in mid-air, falling onto the arena.

Seeing Han Yu effortlessly deflect the arrow, Ling Chen was taken aback, disbelief evident in his eyes.

Han Yu had been staring at him all along, not even glancing at the position of the arrow, yet he was able to defend so accurately... Could it be... Yes! A thought struck Ling Chen, the Han Yu before him must possess the same ability to discern position by sound, just like himself.

This is bad!

With a solemn face, Ling Chen inwardly cursed, not expecting Han Yu to possess such a skill. Had he known earlier, he would not have chosen the bow and arrow as his weapon.

After his conversation with Song Ge last night, Ling Chen, after much deliberation, decided to take a risk and forego the Tianling Blade in favor of using the bow and arrow for the duel. Firstly, to catch his opponent off guard, and secondly... he knew Han Yu was highly skilled; using a bow and arrow could greatly prevent Han Yu from getting close.

However, facing Han Yu, who had the ability to discern position by sound, Ling Chen's archery was greatly hindered. Although his archery skills were personally taught by Archery God Zhang Zhongfeng, he had not practiced for long and was probably less than a tenth as skilled as Zhang Zhongfeng.

While his thoughts raced, Han Yu somersaulted in mid-air, his Longquan Sword gently touching the ground, using the bounce from the sword's blade, Han Yu's body soared upwards once again. From the moment he made his move until now, his feet had never touched the ground, soaring in mid-air all this while.

This display of skill stunned everyone watching.

At this moment, Ling Chen, holding his bow and arrow, kept moving around the edge of the arena, trying his best to maintain a distance from Han Yu.

Whoosh!

The arrow tore through the air.

Sadly, it was slightly off the mark, not hitting Han Yu but flying past him instead.

Ling Chen didn't utter a word and once again drew an arrow and nocked it on the bowstring, with the arrowhead following Han Yu's body, seeking an opportunity to release.

To speak truthfully, Ling Chen's archery was not at all subpar. During his time at the Ghost Organization, he was known as a sharpshooter with a hit rate nearing one hundred percent on a good day. However, there are subtle differences between marksmanship and archery.

The velocity of a bullet far surpasses that of an arrow. For firearms, it's sufficient to simply aim and pull the trigger, but archery is different.

Because arrows travel slower through the air, it's necessary to predict the trajectory of the target before releasing. Compared to firearms, archery demands more technical skill.

Moreover, this longbow, personally crafted by Guo Liang, exuded a sense of steadiness inside and out, was heavy to the touch, and required significant strength to fully draw. Fortunately, Ling Chen had practiced using Zhang Zhongfeng's bow and arrow for some time and had grown accustomed to it.

At that moment, Han Yu found an opportunity, his Longquan Sword's tip tapped on the ground and his body somersaulted mid-air, rapidly closing in on Ling Chen.

Seeing the situation worsen, Ling Chen immediately retreated and simultaneously released the bowstring.

However, just like before, Han Yu effortlessly deflected the arrow, posing no threat whatsoever.

Watching the distance between himself and Han Yu rapidly close, a sense of crisis crept into Ling Chen's heart. Glancing at the quiver of arrows he carried, Ling Chen gritted his teeth and pulled out three arrows at once, nocking them all together on the bowstring.

He released one arrow and without checking if it hit the target, he released the second... and then the third arrows in quick succession.

The three arrows formed a '品' character formation, coming at Han Yu with a sharp wind.

Faced with three distinct sharp arrows, Han Yu let out a cold snort. His somersaulting body paused slightly mid-air as he gently flicked his wrist, weaving the Longquan Sword in front of him into a sword flower. The pliable blade moved like a Spirit Snake extending its tongue, swiftly and accurately deflecting each of the three arrows and sending them plummeting to the ground.

"Ling Chen, with your archery, you think you can hurt me? Hmph! Go back and train for a few more decades," Han Yu sneered condescendingly.

Ling Chen remained silent, ignoring Han Yu's sarcasm, and continued to run around the edge of the arena, occasionally firing arrows, but all in vain.

Seeing the dwindling number of arrows in Ling Chen's quiver, the spectators began to shake their heads.

At this rate, once Ling Chen's arrows ran out, he would likely become lamb to the slaughter, with little chance of turning the tide.

"Big brother."

Yuan Yun turned his head, looking worriedly at Qiu Yong beside him.

Qiu Yong spoke in a deep voice: "Don't panic; just watch and wait. It's not time for us to intervene yet."

"Big brother... look over there." At that moment, Xia Yue signaled everyone with her eyes.

The crowd looked up and saw several middle-aged men on the opposite seats always watching them, unconcerned with the ongoing fight on the stage.

"They are from the Han Family," Yuan Yun said, furrowing his brow slightly. "They're watching to prevent us from intervening."

"Second brother," Qiu Yong glanced at Xu Ming and instructed, "If anything unexpected happens later, you'll be responsible for protecting Ling Cheng. We'll handle the Han Family's people."

"Understood," Xu Ming nodded.

As they spoke, the situation on the stage was changing rapidly. Only five arrows were left in Ling Chen's quiver while Han Yu was ever closer, pressing within ten meters and on the verge of breaking through Ling Chen's defenses.

Seeing this, Ling Chen turned and ran backward.

"Trying to run?"

Han Yu let out a cold laugh, instantly picking up speed, chasing right behind Ling Chen.

Eight meters... six meters... four meters...

As the distance between Han Yu and Ling Chen narrowed, everyone's hearts leapt to their throats.

Is it going to end now?

Chapter 469 Desperate Fight to the Death (Part 2)

However, just as everyone was worrying for Ling Chen, he suddenly stopped in his tracks while running, leaned back, and aimed his bow and arrow at the approaching Han Yu.

Faced with this sudden change, Han Yu's complexion immediately shifted, not expecting Ling Chen to pull such a move.

At this moment, there was less than three meters between the two, and at such a close distance, even Han Yu's quick reflexes couldn't outspeed the arrow.

Whoosh!

Hearing the sound of the bowstring, Han Yu forcibly controlled his body, hastily dodging to the side, narrowly brushing past the arrow. The arrow, missing its target, continued with undiminished force, embedding itself into a pillar outside the arena, the shaft vibrating intensely and buzzing loudly.

What a pity!

The crowd sighed; it was such a good opportunity, almost a perfect kill. Besides regret, everyone was full of admiration for Ling Chen's unexpected attack. Had Han Yu not been lucky, Zhou Qi would have already declared the winner.

"Look."

At that moment, someone with sharp eyes pointed at the arrow lodged in the pillar, calling out a reminder.

Everyone focused their look, and upon close inspection, noticed a trace of fresh blood on the shaft of the arrow.

It turned out that the arrow had not missed.

Does this mean Han Yu was injured?

In an instant, everyone's eyes focused on Han Yu. Indeed, at that moment, Han Yu landed on his feet, with blood streaming down his left arm, instantly staining his sleeves red.

However, the arrow did not penetrate through Han Yu's arm; it merely grazed the flesh, and the injury was far less severe than the blood made it appear.

At this point, Han Yu, with a grim expression, stared intensely at Ling Chen, his eyes clearly filled with resentment. He had thought he would easily defeat Ling Chen, but he didn't expect to be the first to get injured.

Under everyone's gaze, Han Yu tore off a strip of cloth from his clothes to bandage the wound on his arm, then picked up the Longquan Sword with his right hand again.

"This is the first and last time; you won't have another chance to strike." Han Yu coldly stared at Ling Chen, speaking emphatically.

This is bad!

Song Ge, watching from the stands, his face darkened, and his brows filled with worry.

He knew Han Yu too well; with Han Yu's temperament, Ling Chen might be in danger.

As he thought this, Han Yu on the arena held his sword with one hand, his legs bursting from the spot, charging towards Ling Chen.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

Accompanied by a whooshing sound, two arrows were shot one after the other, aiming to stop the approaching Han Yu.

Watching the two arrows coming straight at him, Han Yu showed no intention of dodging, and with a light swing of the Longquan Sword in his hand, he split the two arrows in midair.

So fast!

Ling Chen was shocked, his right hand quickly reaching for the quiver. However, after shooting so many arrows, there were only two left in the quiver, causing Ling Chen to hesitate slightly in his movements.

The battle had just started not long ago, and the arrows were being used up faster than he had anticipated. If he couldn't make the last two arrows count, he would be facing a significant crisis.

In an instant, Ling Chen's brief hesitation provided Han Yu an opportunity to close in. By the time he reacted, Han Yu was already within two meters.

Seeing this, Ling Chen dared not hesitate any longer, quickly drew one last arrow and mounted it on the bowstring, pulling the bow fully, aiming the arrow straight at Han Yu's face. At such close range, he didn't believe Han Yu could dodge. Despite risking injury, he was determined to inflict a serious wound on Han Yu, to fight for a glimmer of hope for himself.

However, just as Ling Chen was about to release his fingers and let the arrow fly, Han Yu's Longquan Sword suddenly quivered. At the same time, Ling Chen felt as if his longbow had been struck by something and it slightly shifted to the side.

With the angle of the longbow shifted, the arrow flew past Han Yu's shoulder and missed again.

What happened?

Ling Chen frowned secretly, unsure why his longbow seemed to be influenced by an external force, even though Han Yu was a meter away and couldn't possibly have touched him.

As Ling Chen blamed himself for the error that just occurred, Qiu Yong and others in the stands, including Song Ge and Zhou Qi, along with two women in the corner, were all shocked, staring at Han Yu in the arena with disbelief.

Perhaps Ling Chen didn't realize what had just happened, but they saw it clearly.

Release of Inner Strength!

Han Yu's Martial Arts cultivation had actually reached this realm, and at such a young age too, it was incredible.

On the Dragon List, only those who have reached the realm of releasing Inner Strength externally qualify to enter the top five. Even Song Ge, who ranks first on the Newcomer List, has his strength at most positioned at sixth on the Dragon List because he hasn't reached that realm.

"Ling Chen, you're in danger."

In an unnoticeable corner of the venue, a masked woman spoke up: "Unless there's an exception, Ling Chen is undoubtedly doomed in this fight to death."

"You are the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion Master, you must save his life at all costs."

"Although I am the Pavilion Master, the rules of this duel were agreed upon by them, recognized by both sides, and witnessed by many. Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion has always pursued justice; we can only try to uphold their rules and cannot deliberately break them. If I let the people of Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion intervene, how would others view us and how can we maintain our reputation for fairness?"

"Fine, since you refuse to act, I will do it myself."

"No matter what you plan to do, I must remind you that if you intend to break the rules, I will not allow it."

"Then try and see if you have the power to stop me."

...

Bang!

At that moment, Ling Chen, who was standing at the edge of the arena, suddenly leapt up and flew out of the ring, landing heavily on the ground.

In the past, falling out of the arena would mean Ling Chen had lost, but today was different. Today was a fight to the death, and this battle would not stop unless one perished.

"Don't lie there and pretend to be dead, get up quickly."

Han Yu's cold voice came through, and Ling Chen clenched his teeth, enduring the pain in his body as he slowly stood up and stepped back into the arena.

"Now do you see the gap between us? In my eyes, you are nothing more than a dog at my mercy."

Han Yu, with one hand behind his back, pointed the Longquan Sword obliquely at the ground, standing upright with a proud look on his face, his disdain for Ling Chen clearly evident in his eyes.

Ling Chen took a deep breath to alleviate the pain in his body. It seemed Song Ge's guess was right, Han Yu's strength was indeed unfathomable, rightfully placing him at the top of the Newcomer List.

Inner Strength released externally... Ling Chen hadn't expected that Han Yu had indeed reached the realm Song Ge mentioned.

At this moment, Ling Chen felt a deep sense of powerlessness wash over him. Although his own strength had improved significantly recently, it seemed so trivial in front of Han Yu.

Hovering on the edge of life and death for so many years, having experienced countless battles, none felt like today, where he couldn't see even a glimmer of hope.

Chapter 470 Desperate Fight to the Death (Part 3)

A battle without hope is the most despair-inducing.

Ling Chen is now engulfed in such despair. If courage, perseverance, and boldness could make up for everything, Ling Chen would certainly not be stingy. The problem is, in the face of absolute power, everything can be rendered irrelevant.

Looking at the silent Ling Chen, the smile on Han Yu's face grew even more smug, as if relishing the feeling of being the center of attention once again.

In the gaze of everyone present, Han Yu took steps towards Ling Chen, the tip of the Longquan Sword scraping faint sparks from the ground, emitting a crisp clanging sound reverberating across the entire venue.

"Tell me, how do you wish to die? This is your last choice to make; I advise you to treasure it."

Hearing Han Yu's voice rise above the arena, Qiu Yong and others in the seated area were restlessly poised, eyes fixated on Han Yu, ready to leap in for a rescue at any moment. Beside them, Song Ge gripped his sword hilt, his eyes sharp and ready to strike.

Ling Chen had once aided him, and now that Ling Chen was in danger, he would definitely not stand by and watch him perish.

"Han Yu," Zhou Qi, standing at the edge of the arena, open his mouth to say: "Mercy to the merciful; there are some things you shouldn't take to extremes."

Han Yu turned to glance at Zhou Qi, sneering as he said, "Elder Zhou, I don't need you to teach me how to conduct my affairs."

With these words, Han Yu's gaze returned to Ling Chen, his steps closing in once more.

Feeling the oppressive force approaching him, Ling Chen tightened his grip on his longbow, his flickering gaze gradually becoming steely and fearless.

Having seen life and death, Ling Chen had long since put concerns of mortality aside. He was not afraid of death; he just loathed a pathetic end. At this juncture, other than fighting to the death, there were no other options left.

In the blink of a thought, Ling Chen, having made his resolve, slowly raised his head, staring directly at Han Yu's cold gaze, striding forward without any hint of retreat.

"Humph!" His action caught in Han Yu's eyes, instantly turning into a disdainful sneer.

"Impatient to die, are you? Fine, I'll oblige!"

In a flash, the sword light burst forth, with Han Yu's wrist propelling the Longquan Sword to resonate sharply, its piercing wail enveloping the entire arena, aiming straight for Ling Chen's neck.

As the sword tip rapidly enlarged in his pupils, Ling Chen lightly tapped his toe, placing the last sharp arrow on the bowstring, facing the thrust of the Longquan Sword without flinching.

What is he trying to do?

Is he courting death?

At this sight, everyone stood up from their seats, eyes glued to Ling Chen, expressions of shock on their faces.

At that moment, the edge of the Longquan Sword was less than a foot away from Ling Chen's body, its speed blazing fast, potentially piercing through Ling Chen's throat at any moment. At such a close distance, even if Ling Chen wanted to dodge, he couldn't.

Suddenly, Ling Chen spread his arms wide, raising the longbow in his hands, the bow fully drawn in a semicircle shape, pointing directly at Han Yu, his Mo Che-like pupils devoid of fear.

So that's how it is!

At this moment, the crowd understood Ling Chen's intentions.

He knew he was no match for Han Yu and it was unlikely that he would leave the arena alive, so he chose the most extreme course of action.

Either mutual destruction or a shared demise.

Within a distance of less than two meters, even if Han Yu's Longquan Sword pierced through Ling Chen's body, he wouldn't be able to avoid that sharp arrow's lethal blow.

Seeing Ling Chen charging straight at him, the cold smile on Han Yu's face stiffened. All the things that everyone else could understand, how could he not? For a moment, a flicker of hesitation appeared in his eyes.

Concerning his own life, he dared not gamble; it was too risky. What's more, he held a significant advantage and could have toyed with Ling Chen until death—there was no need to take such a risk.

Thinking this, Han Yu's advancing footsteps paused slightly, and he shifted to the side, avoiding Ling Chen's head-on approach.

He actually gave up!

Everyone breathed a sigh of relief in unison, relieved that Ling Chen had narrowly escaped disaster for the time being.

Sometime along the way, everyone began to worry about Ling Chen's safety. As for Han Yu, although the strength he demonstrated was astonishing, there were few who genuinely wanted to applaud and cheer for him.

At this moment, Ling Chen stood motionless in the center of the arena, his gaze following Han Yu's steps, constantly changing positions.

By comparison, Han Yu seemed much more relaxed, wandering around Ling Chen as if strolling leisurely in a garden. Suddenly, Han Yu explosively accelerated mid-stride, like a gust of wind, and instantly closed the distance to Ling Chen.

Seeing the flickering figure before him, Ling Chen didn't even think; he immediately aimed his arrow at the target. However, at that moment, the figure in front of him vanished with a swift shift, disappearing from sight. Before Ling Chen could react, a searing pain suddenly emanated from his arm.

He turned to look and saw a new sword mark on his left arm, blood seeping through the sleeve and streaming down profusely.

Turning back to Han Yu, he was already standing three meters away, his face cold, and a mocking smile playing on his lips.

"I initially wanted to finish this quickly, but since you want to play, I'll keep you company till the end." With that said, Han Yu launched another attack, pressing forward.

Watching Han Yu's non-stop movement and shifting positions, a heavy feeling settled in Ling Chen's heart, a tinge of urgency showing on his otherwise calm face. Han Yu was fast, with nimble footing and movements swift as the wind. Every time Ling Chen locked onto a position, Han Yu was already at the next spot, making it impossible to predict his actions.

When Han Yu approached again, Ling Chen hadn't yet pinpointed his direction when he felt another pang of pain in his right arm, and another blood mark appeared before his eyes.

In an instant—

In less than two minutes, Ling Chen was covered in lacerations and bloodstains. Facing the ghost-like Han Yu, Ling Chen had no ability to resist, like a fish on a cutting board, completely at the mercy of another.

Blood flowed from Ling Chen's arms and legs, dripping down onto the stage, stark and glaring, wrenching at the hearts of onlookers.

As the duel progressed to this point, many people no longer wished to witness it. In everyone's minds, this had become a battle with no suspense.

"Han Yu, if you want to kill him, then kill him. What's the point of this?"

Han Yu glanced at the person speaking in the stands and nodded, "Since everyone is impatient, let's end this here." Then, turning to look at Ling Chen in the center of the arena, he said with a mocking laugh, "Do you still have the strength to draw your bow?"

Ling Chen remained silent, his face paling from excessive blood loss. His limbs trembled slightly under the intense sting of his wounds, blood seeping through his fingertips, staining the bow's grip red.

As Han Yu took steps toward Ling Chen, Qiu Yong and others in the audience rose from their seats.

If they didn't intervene now, Ling Chen would truly be beyond saving.

However, just as everyone was prepared to rescue Ling Chen from Han Yu's clutches, a piece of bright red cloth one meter wide, with unknown origins, suddenly appeared in everyone's line of sight.

The red cloth flew directly onto the stage, passing between Ling Chen and Han Yu, acting as a distinct boundary separating the two.

What's going on?

Faced with this sudden turn of events, everyone was stunned, their faces full of confusion.