

## The Beauty 641

### Chapter 641 Action Exposed

"Little brother, I should be the one asking you this. Sneaking into Yangxin Pavilion in the dead of night and poisoning the drinking water in the kitchen—what exactly are you trying to do?"

The counter question left Ling Chen speechless, unsure of how to respond.

Since he had been caught red-handed, there was no use in trying to escape. With this thought, Ling Chen gritted his teeth and decided to make a move, leaping towards the elderly man. As he drew near, Ling Chen clenched his steel fist, ready to strike.

However, just as their bodies were about to collide, Ling Chen suddenly changed his tactic. His fist abruptly opened, scattering a handful of white powder straight towards the old man's face. At such a close distance, there was no way the old man could evade it.

Seeing this, the corners of Ling Chen's mouth lifted slightly, with a sly smile. The white powder had a potent sedative effect; just a small whiff was enough to knock out an elephant for over ten hours. Surely, no person could withstand its power.

Yet, Ling Chen had underestimated the old man's abilities. Faced with the oncoming white powder, the old man showed no intention of dodging; instead, he gently blew a breath of air in front of him. In an instant, the white powder that was supposed to hit the old man changed its course, flying back towards Ling Chen.

Caught off guard, Ling Chen was engulfed by the white powder in a flash. Before he could react, he had already inhaled a small amount of the powder.

Instantly, a heavy drowsiness overwhelmed him. Ling Chen didn't manage to speak a word before he passed out.

...

It was unclear how much time had passed when a groggy Ling Chen finally woke from his slumber.

He rubbed his throbbing forehead, sat up from the damp ground, and looked around with a bitter smile on his face.

It was the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion's prison.

He had been here once before, to see Zhu Hong, but had never imagined that one day he would be the one locked up.

"Ling Chen, bet you didn't see this coming. Humph!"

At that moment, a cold snort sounded. Turning his head, Ling Chen saw that across from his cell was the one holding Zhu Hong. Having not seen him for a long time, the once handsome and devil-may-care Zhu Hong now looked like a beggar, disheveled with dirt all over his face, barely recognizable compared to before.

Unfazed by Zhu Hong's mockery, Ling Chen responded carelessly, "Everyone has their down times. Don't worry, it won't be long before I leave. As for you... Don't even dream of seeing the sunlight outside ever again."

"No!" Zhu Hong clutched the iron bars, his face twisted ferociously as he yelled at Ling Chen, "You just wait, I will get out of this damned place one day, and when I do, I swear I'll kill you myself. I won't spare a single person related to you."

"Are you even willing to not spare Wanqing?"

"Wanqing... Wanqing..." Hearing Ling Chen mention Nanrong Wanqing, Zhu Hong's face instantly went blank. But it lasted only for a moment before his eyes were again filled with deep hatred.

"If it weren't for you, Wanqing would have been with me by now."

"Give me a break! Even without me, Wanqing wouldn't choose you."

"Shut up!" Zhu Hong shouted in anger: "You have no right to judge me."

"I say, have you had enough of arguing? Can you keep it down and not disturb the other prisoners?"

The voice rang out, and Ling Chen immediately turned his gaze towards the entrance of the cell. He saw Zhou Jun and Song Ge walking in side by side.

When they reached the cells, Ling Chen touched his nose and said with a face full of apology, "I'm sorry!"

"That's enough, don't apologize to us." Zhou Jun waved his hand and said, "I believe in your character and that you wouldn't do such a thing without reason. Since you've decided to do it, there must be your own difficulties."

Hearing this, Ling Chen curiously asked, "Do you know what I did?"

Song Ge continued, "Last night, you sneaked into Yangxin Pavilion, and secretly poisoned the kitchen there. The news has spread; there are hardly a few in Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion who don't know."

With that, Song Ge handed a food container to Ling Chen, "You've been unconscious so long, you must be starving. Eat something quickly to fill your stomach, you'll have a tough time later."

Ling Chen took out a bowl of white rice from the food container and devoured it with a few dishes of appetizers. It had been hours since he had eaten anything, and the white powder had made him extremely hungry.

Having finished the bowl of rice, Ling Chen looked up at Song Ge and Zhou Jun and asked, "How are they planning to deal with me?"

Zhou Jun shrugged and said, "How would we know, but the Pavilion Master will probably interrogate you later. You better prepare in advance and think about how to respond. Although you and the Pavilion Master are friends, you are suspected of plotting against the people of Yangxin Pavilion this time, the

crime is too serious. Even if the Pavilion Master wants to protect you, she must consider Yangxin Pavilion. After all, as Pavilion Master, her primary concern is how to command respect."

Ling Chen nodded and said, "I understand. Zhou Jun, have you asked Elder Zhou whether he has revealed any news to you?"

"No, my old man is tight-lipped. I specifically went to ask him when I came, but I didn't get any news. However, I heard him say that the Pavilion Master is very angry because of this affair."

It was to be expected; after all, he had deceived her.

After the meal, not long after Song Ge and Zhou Jun left, several Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion Disciples led by Zhou Qi came to the cell and took Ling Chen out.

On the way, Zhou Qi kept a stern face and didn't say a word, which gave Ling Chen a bad premonition.

Soon, the group arrived at a spacious room. As soon as he entered, Ling Chen saw that the room was filled with people. In addition to Su Mei, Huang Zheng and Liang Tian from Yangxin Pavilion, as well as Song Yi and Liang Zheng, were all there, each one staring coldly at Ling Chen.

Standing in the center of everyone, Ling Chen clasped his fists and bowed to everyone.

Huh?

At that moment, Ling Chen suddenly noticed that the old man who had caught him last night was not there.

"Ling Chen, do you admit your guilt?" Su Mei spoke sharply, glaring at Ling Chen.

"I stand by my actions; there's nothing more to say."

"You..." Su Mei's brows furrowed deep, filled with ire. This guy, he won't even defend himself, at least giving her a reason to mitigate his sentence.

"Speak, why did you do this?" Huang Zheng asked coldly.

Ling Chen replied indifferently, "I have already told Miss Su the reason, and she must have mentioned it to you; there's no need to ask again."

Huang Zheng snorted, "Ling Chen, mind your attitude. Since the Pavilion Master has agreed to help you, why did you still resort to poisoning in secret? You claim to be a friend of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, but do your actions honor the word 'friend'?"

"Elder Huang, don't waste your breath. I've said everything I have to say, and here I am. Whatever you decide to do with me, I won't complain," Ling Chen stated resolutely.

#### Chapter 642 Caning Punishment

"Hmph!" Huang Zheng sneered and said, "Ling Chen, don't think that just because you saved the Pavilion Master you can avoid punishment. Let me tell you, Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion has always been clear about rewards and punishments. Your actions have already violated the major taboos of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. Not killing you would hardly quell the anger of the Pavilion."

"Kill me?" Ling Chen was taken aback and looked towards Huang Zheng with a hint of sternness in his eyes. He hadn't offended him, so why target him? Could it be because he refused his request to become his disciple yesterday? If so, Huang Zheng is certainly narrow-minded.

"Huang Zheng, stop always shouting about fighting and killing. The Pavilion Master hasn't even spoken, what are you rushing for?" Liang Tian spoke unhurriedly: "Although Ling Chen is at fault, he was also pushed to the brink. If anyone else were in his situation, I believe they would find it hard to make a choice."

Hearing this, Su Mei asked, "So, what does Elder Liang suggest we do with Ling Chen?"

"Mercy beyond the law. Ling Chen's mistake isn't a major one. Haven't you all checked? The poison he used isn't lethal. It's evident that he didn't intend to harm us, and considering his reasons, I think lenient treatment is possible."

Huang Zheng frowned and said, "Liang Tian, just letting him off like this, isn't it too frivolous? Don't think I don't know what you're scheming, I'm telling you, don't even think about it!"

"Old Huang, you're at this age, yet so petty, just because Ling Chen refused you. Over such a trivial matter, you actually hold a grudge and seek to put him to death, you've lived all these years in vain," Liang Tian unhesitatingly fired back.

"Enough, Liang Tian, stop making excuses for him. Don't forget, you're also from Yangxin Pavilion, since when did Yangxin Pavilion's people start speaking for outsiders?"

"I'm just speaking based on the facts, stop being unreasonable."

As their argument grew louder, Su Mei began to speak with a headache, "Both of you, please say less."

Seeing the Pavilion Master had spoken, Huang Zheng and Liang Tian both obediently shut their mouths.

"Ling Chen, I consider you a friend, but what you did has disappointed me. Considering you've once helped Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, I won't make things difficult for you. Fifty lashings and expel from Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, don't come back here again, you're not welcome."

Upon hearing Su Mei's judgment, Liang Tian was visibly disappointed. He shook his head with a sigh and then stood up and left.

Watching Liang Tian's departing figure, Huang Zheng's mouth curled into a smirk of triumph, saying, "Pavilion Master, do you want Song Yi to help you execute?"

"No need to trouble Elder Huang, let Zhou Jun and Song Ge handle this matter."

"How could that be?" Song Yi interjected. "Zhou Jun and Song Ge are friends of Ling Chen. What if they go easy on him?"

Su Mei swept a glance at Song Yi, clearly displeased. She had appointed Zhou Jun to carry out the punishment hoping that Ling Chen would suffer less pain, anyone smart should understand her intentions and give her some respect. But the disciples of Huang Zheng were being deliberately contrary, which naturally upset her.

"In that case... Zhou Qi, just pick someone to execute the punishment." As she spoke, and seeing Song Yi about to protest again, Su Mei immediately said, "Take Ling Chen to the martial training ground for the punishment, if anyone is concerned, they can go and see." After speaking, without waiting for Huang Zheng and Song Yi to say anything else, Su Mei had already gotten up and left.

"Ling Chen, let's go!"

Under Zhou Qi's escort, Ling Chen was taken to the martial training ground by several Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion Disciples.

At this time, the training ground was crowded with many people busy practicing martial arts. Seeing Ling Chen being escorted over, they were instantly drawn over, whispering to each other, their gazes towards Ling Chen filled with peculiar expressions.

"Kneel down!" a Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion Disciple barked, and pushed Ling Chen, signaling him to immediately kneel on the ground.

Ling Chen frowned, turned his head to look at the disciple, his gaze sharp and chilling.

"You..." sensing the chill in Ling Chen's eyes, the words of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion Disciple were immediately swallowed back, not daring to scold any further.

"Enough!" Zhou Qi waved his hand and said, "Don't make it hard for him, he's not from the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, there's no need to adhere to so many rules, just let him stand."

As he finished speaking, Zhou Qi extended a hand and pointed into the crowd, saying, "You, come out."

Although puzzled, the man dutifully walked up to Zhou Qi and respectfully asked, "Elder Zhou, what are your instructions?"

Zhou Qi casually threw a wooden staff as thick as an arm into the man's hands, then pointed at Ling Chen's back and said, "You will carry out the flogging."

"Yes."

Without another word, the man took the command, immediately went behind Ling Chen, and swung the wooden staff up high, whipping it fiercely down on Ling Chen's back.

Thwack!

With a muffled thud, Ling Chen's body slightly shuddered, and his fists clenched involuntarily.

Thwack! Thwack! Thwack!

After several blows, the veins on Ling Chen's forehead were exposed and his entire face twisted in agony and ferocity, his legs beginning to tremble uncontrollably.

Watching Ling Chen's agonized expression, Zhou Jun and Song Ge felt pity and turned their heads away, unable to continue watching.

Su Mei had sentenced Ling Chen to fifty lashes; now, not even ten had passed and the pain was already unbearable. If all fifty lashes were completed, even if Ling Chen survived, severe injuries were inevitable.

"Hmph!" In the crowd, Huang Zheng coldly smiled and said while watching the punished Ling Chen, "I kindly wanted to take you as my disciple, but alas... you bring it upon yourself. Disciple, keep a close watch, I'm heading back now."

"Yes, Master," Song Yi nodded, respectfully seeing Huang Zheng off.



Thwack...!

In the blink of an eye, half of the flogging was done. Ling Chen gritted his teeth, forcing himself not to cry out in pain. Nevertheless, blood still trickled from the corner of his mouth, dripping drop by drop onto the ground.

At this moment, Ling Chen felt as if his back was almost numb, the pain unbearable, his legs nearly unable to support his body any longer. If he wasn't holding his breath, he would have already collapsed.

So cruel!

Ling Chen cursed inwardly, not knowing where Zhou Qi found such a person who exerted that much strength in his blows. After this beating, he feared half his life might be gone.

On the eastern side of the practice field, Su Mei stood quietly by the window, watching Ling Chen being punished, her delicate teeth biting lightly, and her eyes filled with concern.

Sigh!

With a soft sigh, Su Mei withdrew her gaze and closed the window gently.

Pfft!

When the flogging reached its end, Ling Chen's body could no longer bear it, a mouthful of fresh blood spurted out, and his entire body fell limp to the ground, motionless as if dead.

Seeing this, Zhou Jun and Song Ge were greatly alarmed and rushed over, calling out Ling Chen's name loudly.

Chapter 643 Desiring to Impute Guilt

"Ling Chen."

Zhou Jun called out as he and Song Ge helped Ling Chen to his feet. Looking at Ling Chen, who was spitting blood and pale as a sheet, Zhou Jun turned his head back and glared fiercely at the executioner, saying sternly, "He's on his last legs. I need to take him for treatment."

"The punishment isn't over; how can it just end like this?" Song Yi spoke up from the crowd.

Zhou Jun snorted coldly: "If we continue, he'll nearly be beaten to death." As he spoke, Zhou Jun looked at his grandfather, calling out in dissatisfaction, "Old man, do you really want to kill him?"

Zhou Qi waved his hand and said, "Take him away."

Hearing this, Song Ge quickly lifted Ling Chen and hurried toward the room.

With the punishment over, the onlookers on the training ground also gradually dispersed. Song Yi shook his head and returned alone to the Yangxin Pavilion to report the situation to Huang Zheng.

...

"It hurts... it hurts, gently, gently..."

Come nightfall, Ling Chen lay sprawled on the bed, crying out as if possessed, his handsome face contorted with pain.

Beside the bed, Zhou Jun and Song Ge held disinfectant alcohol, gently wiping the wounds on Ling Chen's back, then applying ointment and wrapping them with bandages.

Although the fifty strokes were not completed, the forty-odd strokes had left Ling Chen in very bad shape. His back was a mass of scars, and the bedsheet was stained red with blood – an unbearable sight.

"Bear with it," Zhou Jun said.

"Dammit! It's not you feeling the pain, you're speaking too lightly," Ling Chen retorted in dissatisfaction.

"Who can you blame other than yourself? You went looking for trouble, so you deserve to be hurt."

Ling Chen turned his head back and asked Zhou Jun and Song Ge, "Didn't Miss Su order to kick me out of Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion? Why am I still here?"

Song Ge replied, "You were injured like this, if we didn't bring you back, you would have died out there already. Besides, the Pavilion Master was just talking; do you really think she would be so heartless as to throw you out into the forests alone?"

Ling Chen grinned, "I knew it. You guys really are friends."

After bandaging the wound, Zhou Jun put down the alcohol cotton and said seriously, "Ling Chen, don't blame us for speaking out, but what you did this time was indeed wrong. Even the people of Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion wouldn't dare to intrude into Yangxin Pavilion like you did. The Pavilion Master has already shown you a great deal of face by sparing your life."

"I know."

As they were speaking, the door to the room was suddenly kicked open. Immediately afterward, Zhou Qi burst in furiously with several people.

Seeing Zhou Qi's murderous expression, Ling Chen and the others were taken aback, not knowing what had happened.

"Old man, what's going on?" Zhou Jun stepped forward quickly, wanting to find out what the trouble was.

"Get out of the way!" Zhou Qi pushed Zhou Jun aside without any sympathy, walking straight to the bedside and glaring angrily at Ling Chen who lay on the bed, demanding in a deep voice, "Ling Chen, confess honestly! Where did you hide that item?"

"Item?" Ling Chen asked, puzzled. "What item?"

Zhou Qi said coldly, "You're still trying to play dumb with me? You should know best what that thing is. That item has always been kept in Yangxin Pavilion; it was there just yesterday, but today it's gone. Besides you, the outsider, no one else has entered Yangxin Pavilion. Tell me, if not you, then who could it be?"

"This..." Ling Chen was at a loss for words. Although he had sneaked into Yangxin Pavilion last night, he did nothing but poison the food in the kitchen; he didn't go anywhere else, let alone knew what thing Zhou Qi was referring to.

However, seeing how anxious Zhou Qi looked, that thing must be very important. Otherwise, it wouldn't have been stored in Yangxin Pavilion, guarded by so many experts.

"Ling Chen, I'll ask you one last time—will you hand it over or not?" Zhou Qi demanded sternly.

With a bitter smile, Ling Chen said, "Elder Zhou, I really didn't lie to you. I don't even know what that thing you mentioned is. What's more, after I was captured last night, I was locked up in a cell, and since coming out, I've always been surrounded by people. If that thing were on me, you would have found and taken it by now."

"Enough!" Zhou Qi waved his hand in impatience, "Quit making excuses. Since you refuse to hand it over, don't blame me for what comes next. Guards, lock him up."

"Elder..."

Seeing several Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion Disciples forcibly dragging the injured Ling Chen off the bed, Zhou Jun couldn't help but become anxious, opening his mouth to plead with Zhou Qi. But before he could finish, Zhou Qi swept a sharp glance over him, instantly causing Zhou Jun to swallow his words.

"Zhou Jun, you two listen to me, this is not a trivial matter. From now on, without my permission, you are not allowed to see Ling Chen. Take him away!"

As Ling Chen was dragged out of the room, Zhou Jun and Song Ge stood by helplessly, completely at a loss. They had thought everything was over, but who could have expected such a turn of events? Although they didn't understand what Ling Chen had taken from Yangxin Pavilion, from Zhou Qi's expression, it was evident that the matter was much more serious than just trespassing into Yangxin Pavilion.

After a moment's hesitation, Zhou Jun and Song Ge finally gave up any thoughts of helping. With Zhou Qi in a fury, it was wiser not to provoke him any further.

And so, Ling Chen, who had just had his wounds bandaged, was once again thrown into the cell.

Due to his injuries, Ling Chen lay on the bed, immobilized. He wanted to rest, but Zhou Qi did not give him the chance; several guards stationed themselves in the cell, interrogating him non-stop about the whereabouts of the item.

With no other choice, Ling Chen let out a wry smile and simply closed his eyes, ignoring whatever they were saying as if he hadn't heard it at all.

After over ten hours of interrogation, not only was Ling Chen exhausted, but Zhou Qi and the others were tired as well. Eventually, they left a few men to watch over Ling Chen and the rest went to rest.

"Ling Chen, what exactly did you do to bring such anger from heaven and resentment from people?"

Zhu Hong's mocking voice came from the opposite cell, carrying a schadenfreude chuckle.

Ling Chen glanced at Zhu Hong and couldn't be bothered to even acknowledge him, simply laying down on the bed and falling asleep.

For two consecutive days, except for eating and less than three to four hours of sleep each day, Ling Chen spent almost all his time facing a barrage of interrogations.

During this time, Zhou Jun and Song Ge never showed up.

Finally, after two days of interrogation, Zhou Qi seemed to have tired as well and began to relent in his pressing of Ling Chen. Weighed down by the exhaustion of the past days, combined with his own injuries, it didn't take long for Ling Chen to fall into a deep sleep.

...

"Ling Chen, Ling Chen... wake up!"

After an indeterminate amount of time, upon hearing the familiar voice in his ears, Ling Chen drowsily opened his eyes and instantly became alert, quickly sitting up on the bed at the sight of Zhou Jun and Song Ge standing outside the cell.

However, his sudden movement was too intense and aggravated his wounds, causing him pain and making him grimace.

"You should stay lying down," said Song Ge concernedly. "Your injuries haven't healed; don't get up."

Chapter 644 Lure the Snake out of the Hole (1)

"No problem." Despite saying this, Ling Chen still obediently lay on the bed and asked Zhou Jun and his companion, "How did you guys get here? Didn't Elder Zhou restrict you from visiting me?"

Zhou Jun opened the prison door and followed Song Ge inside, saying, "It's already been two days. Song Ge and I have begged many times, but the old man flatly refused us. Today, I got the idea to say that your wound needed changing, so he finally let us come to see you. Hey, don't move, let Song Ge check your injury."

Ling Chen nodded. Resting his head on his hands, he asked, "How has Miss Su reacted?"

"I'm not sure. I haven't seen the Pavilion Master in a few days; everyone has been busy searching for something."

Hearing this, Ling Chen asked with a puzzled expression, "Searching for something?"

"Yes. They suspect you stole something very important from the Yangxin Pavilion, but you had nothing on you and never left the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. So, the Pavilion Master and others speculate you must have hidden it somewhere. These last two days, every corner of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion has been searched, but nothing has been found. Well, just between us, can you tell me where you hid it?"

Ling Chen replied helplessly, "Asking me is no use, I truly don't know. Besides, do I look like the type who would do something and not admit it? Hey, tell me, what exactly did the Yangxin Pavilion lose?"

Song Ge and Zhou Jun looked at each other and both shook their heads, saying, "We don't know. It must be very important to the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. I've tried to indirectly ask Elder Zhou, although he never said directly, from his few words, I suspect it's an old artifact from the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, possibly hundreds of years old. There's been a lot of rumors these days about it. Some say it's related to the survival of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, but that seems exaggerated; there aren't many reliable sources."

After thinking for a while, Ling Chen said, "Could you two do me a favor and tell Miss Su that I really didn't steal anything from the Yangxin Pavilion, it must have been someone else who framed me?"

"That... Alright, I'll pass the message, but whether the Pavilion Master believes it or not is up to her; I can't guarantee anything," Zhou Jun replied.

Night fell.

The gloomy cell was silent, all the prisoners were in deep sleep.

Bang!

Suddenly, a light noise echoed. Alert, Ling Chen immediately looked up towards the entrance of the prison cell. Instantly, he saw two guards at the entrance collapse to the ground without making a sound.

Looking at the blood holes remaining on the necks of the two guards, Ling Chen's brow furrowed immediately.

Such ruthless tactics, they didn't leave anyone alive!

In his thoughts, several dark figures quickly rushed in from outside, heading straight for Ling Chen's cell.

Clang!

Accompanied by a crisp sound and sparks flying, the lock of the cell was instantly chopped open. Immediately after, those figures walked into the cell in a few strides, lifting Ling Chen from the bed.

"What are you doing?"

Ling Chen struggled fiercely, but his severe back wound made him too weak to resist. Soon, he was easily subdued by those men.

Taking this opportunity, Ling Chen observed these people; their faces were unfamiliar, he had never seen them before.

"Mr. Ling, I want to ask you about something, and I hope you will tell me the truth," a man asked.

Ling Chen calmly responded, "What is it?"

"Where is the item you stole from the Yangxin Pavilion? Tell me the location. As long as I find that item, I will immediately take you away from here."

"So, it's about that item."

"Who are you?"

At this time, prisoners incarcerated in other cells had been awoken by the noise, each of them pleading, "Friend, please, let us go."



Frowning, the man glanced at them and said coldly, "So noisy. Kill them all, leave no survivors, lest they expose our identities later."

"Yes!"

Two subordinates responded, casually pulling out two daggers and throwing them fiercely.

Accompanied by two screams, the neighboring cell's prisoners were instantly killed on the spot.

Seeing a man with a dagger approaching, Zhu Hong's face changed drastically, and he hastily backed away, leaning against the wall and begging bitterly, "Don't, don't kill me, please... I... I'm from the God Organization, I'll pay whatever it takes just to get out."

Hearing the words 'God Organization', the man's movements slowed, and he looked at Zhu Hong skeptically, "You are from the God Organization?"

"Yes, yes," Zhu Hong hurriedly responded, "please don't kill me."

"Boss, this kid says he's from the God Organization, should we..."

Hearing his subordinate's report, the man pondered for a few seconds and said, "Let him go. Let him fend for himself. At least we would have helped him. Whether he can escape or not is up to his own fate."

Having said that, the man turned to Ling Chen and pressed, "Mr. Ling, we don't have much time, you'd better answer my question quickly."

"I..."

Ling Chen was about to speak, but before he could, he heard a rush of footsteps suddenly coming from the entrance of the cell.

"Boss, it's bad, Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion's people are coming!"

"Take the people and leave."

As he spoke, the man, regardless of the injuries on Ling Chen's body, grabbed his arm and rushed towards the exit.

However, after taking only a few steps, the man suddenly felt a surge of strength in Ling Chen's arm, making him unable to pull. Surprised, the man turned around and saw Ling Chen's mouth slightly curved up, carrying a faint mocking smile.

"What are you..."

A sense of foreboding sank in the man's heart instantly.

"After so much effort and waiting for so long, I finally lured you out," Ling Chen said with a proud smile.

In the midst of his speaking, Zhou Qi had already led people rushing into the cell from outside.

"Break out."

The man calmly issued the order. The hand that held Ling Chen's arm casually loosened, and he pulled out a dagger from his waist, aiming to strike Ling Chen's head.

As the blade approached, Ling Chen leaned back at the waist, nimbly dodging the dagger's attack. Then, he stepped forward rapidly, closing the distance to the man, and his steel fist thundered out, smashing heavily into the opponent and sending him flying.

At this moment, the two factions clashed together, the scene was extremely chaotic.

Ling Chen moved to the side, quietly watching the battle. With Zhou Qi and his men intervening, these people had no chance to retaliate. In less than three minutes, the men who had infiltrated the cell were all subdued, kneeling in a row on the ground.

Chapter 645 Luring the Snake out of Its Hole (2)

"Mr. Ling, are you alright?"

Zhou Qi walked up to Ling Chen, asking with concern.

Ling Chen grinned: "I'm fine. Elder Zhou, you guys arrived quite timely."

"I was waiting outside the whole time for them to appear. After receiving the message, I immediately brought people over."

Ling Chen nodded, looked at those men who had been captured and said, "These should all be members of the God Organization. Interrogate them well; there might be other accomplices."

"You don't need to worry about that. The Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion has a legacy of hundreds of years; we have ways to make them talk." Mentioning this, Zhou Qi was brimming with confidence.

"Bring them! Take them all away, I'll conduct the interrogation personally." After that, Zhou Qi looked at Ling Chen and said, "Mr. Ling, you've also worked hard, go back and rest for a bit. I've already talked to Zhou Jun, that lad, to prepare fine wine and dishes in your room."

"Alright." Ling Chen smiled. The food in the cell these past few days really wasn't great, so an improvement wasn't bad. However, as he walked towards the exit, his expression suddenly changed, and he quickly turned back to look at the cell.

"Mr. Ling, what's going on?" Noticing the change in Ling Chen's expression, Zhou Qi asked.

"Where's Zhu Hong? Did anyone see him just now?"

"Zhu Hong?" Zhou Qi shook his head: "I didn't notice him. Wait, let me call someone to look around."

However, after several minutes passed, they had searched the entire prison and still hadn't found Zhu Hong; the man seemed to have vanished.

Not good!

Ling Chen frowned inwardly. Surely during the melee just now, because the scene was too chaotic, Zhu Hong must have taken the opportunity to escape.

"Mr. Ling, don't worry. This is the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. Even if Zhu Hong has escaped, it's impossible for him to get out of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. Give me some time; I will definitely catch him again."

"Alright, thank you for your effort."

Since Zhou Qi had given his assurance, Ling Chen wasn't so worried anymore. After all, this was the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, heavily guarded, and Zhu Hong had no martial skills, so he wouldn't have much chance to escape.

Leaving the cell, Ling Chen returned to the guest room where he had previously stayed.

Upon entering, a fragrant aroma of wine wafted into Ling Chen's nose. Looking at the wine and dishes on the table, Ling Chen said with a smile, "Thank you for the hard work."

Zhou Jun waved his hand: "What hard work did we have? The kitchen prepared this. However, you did wrong this time; you even fooled us. Come on, nothing else said, first punish yourself with three cups of wine."

Ling Chen didn't refuse, and gulped down three cups of wine in succession. Wiping the wine stains from his mouth corner, Ling Chen said, "Both of you don't blame me, I had no choice this time. The fewer people who know, the less likely to reveal any flaws."

Hearing this, Song Ge curiously asked, "Ling, what exactly happened? Tell us about it."

"Actually, it's nothing much. It was just a plan agreed upon with Miss Su. Not many people knew about this plan, other than me and Miss Su, just Elder Zhou knew."

Thereupon, Ling Chen recounted the execution of the plan.

That evening, when he sneaked into the Yangxin Pavilion to drug the food, it had all been planned. Including the items reported missing from the Yangxin Pavilion, all were fabricated lies. The purpose of this scheme was to draw out the moles of the God Organization.

Before coming to the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, Lin Jiawei had said that the Pavilion was very careful in its affairs, hence the God Organization could not infiltrate it. Ling Chen never believed such words. So he knew clearly that if he did not resolve the moles hidden inside the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, whatever he did would be inconvenient. Most importantly, if someone secretly informed Lin Jiawei, then he would have been working in vain.

Therefore, he came up with this plan to invent an item of great importance to the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion and then spread it internally. In this way, the God Organization would certainly be interested in the item he "stole". As for what happened afterward, it all unfolded step by step, exactly as planned.

After listening to Ling Chen's explanation, Zhou Jun asked, "Does that mean your injuries were also fake?"

Ling Chen shook his head: "The injuries are real; they're just not that severe. Even though it's a play, it still needs to look convincing to be believed."

"Regardless, we owe you a great deal this time. Without you, we wouldn't have realized that the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion actually harbored so many moles from the God Organization."

Song Ge agreed, "This just provided the opportunity to catch all those spies in one swoop. Ling, you became a hero of our Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion again; I wonder how the Pavilion Master will reward you."

"Ah! What a pity." Zhou Jun looked at Ling Chen and sighed.

Holding his wine cup, Ling Chen asked, "Pity what?"

"If you were single, I could've introduced you to the Pavilion Master by my old man. Look, the two of you aren't far apart in age and both are outstanding; it would be 'talented man and beautiful lady', a match made in heaven. Song Ge, don't you think I'm right?"

"Absolutely right!" Song Ge laughed heartily. "Ling, why don't you reconsider?"

"Enough! You two, stop teasing me. Come on, drink!"

After the wine feast ended, it was already past one in the morning.

A drunken Ling Chen saw Zhou Jun and Song Ge out, then directly collapsed onto the bed and fell asleep.

The next day.

Early in the morning, having taken a shower, Ling Chen changed into clean clothes and left the room on his own.

Just after he closed the room door, Ling Chen saw Zhou Qi approaching from not far away.

"Elder Zhou, good morning!" Ling Chen waved and greeted.

"Mr. Ling, some troubling matter has come up." Zhou Qi's face looked somewhat serious.

Ling Chen withdrew his smile and quickly asked, "What happened?"

"I had people search all night and still couldn't find any trace of Zhu Hong. I have no idea where he might have escaped to."

"Did you search the entire Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion?"

Zhou Qi nodded, "We've searched every possible place."

Having searched everywhere... Ling Chen's eyes darted and asked, "Did you check the Yangxin Pavilion?"

"Yangxin Pavilion? He shouldn't have escaped there. There are guards at the entrance to the Yangxin Pavilion; with his abilities, it's simply impossible for him to enter that place."

"Nothing is absolutely certain in this world. Regardless, it's best to check."

"Well, I'll go ask the Pavilion Master for instructions, see what she thinks. Without the Pavilion Master's nod, I can't take people to the Yangxin Pavilion. By the way! Mr. Ling, if you're free, why don't you accompany me? The Pavilion Master wishes to see you too."

"Alright."

Following Zhou Qi, soon, Ling Chen arrived at the room where Su Mei resided.

As they entered, a faint aroma of tea immediately greeted them.

Zhou Qi strode forward, bowed with fist in hand beyond the curtain, "I pay respects to the Pavilion Master!"

"Miss Su."

"Mr. Ling, please have a seat!"

Once Ling Chen sat down, a cup of fragrant tea was passed from beneath the curtain and placed in front of him.

"Mr. Ling, please enjoy the tea."

"Thank you!"

Chapter 646 Zhu Hong Missing (1)

"Ling Chen, thanks to your help this time, we from the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion have resolved a looming crisis. On behalf of everyone here, I thank you," Su Mei sincerely expressed her gratitude.

"Don't mention it; helping you means helping myself. Since we are friends, we should indeed help each other." As he said this, Ling Chen raised his head and looked at Zhou Qi next to him, asking, "Elder Zhou, have those people confessed yet? Besides them, are there any other spies?"

"I interrogated them all night using various methods and finally forced them to reveal the identities of all the spies and their contact codes with the outsiders."

"That's good." Ling Chen smiled and nodded, then asked, "By the way, Miss Su, last time I told you that outside the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, there is a contact person from the God Organization assigned to connect with me. Have you found them?"

"I found them a long time ago. However, following your advice, I've had someone secretly monitor them without making a move."

"Good, once we've handled everything, it will be their turn."

"Pavilion Master," Zhou Qi began, "there's one more thing. Last night during the chaos, Zhu Hong managed to escape, and so far, we haven't located him. Mr. Ling suggested we should check the Yangxin Pavilion, what do you think?"

"Yangxin Pavilion? Zhu Hong is just an ordinary person; he shouldn't have the capability to enter Yangxin Pavilion. Ling Chen, aren't you overestimating him?"



"Better safe than sorry. Since Zhu Hong hasn't left the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, he must still be here. Besides, Yangxin Pavilion isn't very big; it won't take much time."

After pondering for a moment, Su Mei agreed, "Alright then. Zhou Qi, take a few men and check Yangxin Pavilion."

"Miss Su, if it's convenient, how about I go instead? Elder Zhou was busy all night and hasn't rested yet; I'm worried about him. How about letting Zhou Jun and Song go with me?"

"Alright, try not to cause any trouble."

Ling Chen grinned, "Don't worry, a straight shooter like me would never stir up trouble."

"I'm not worried about you, but the people at Yangxin Pavilion. You saw last time, Huang Zheng was very hostile towards you."

"No worries, he's not the one in charge here, he can't possibly kill me." After saying that, Ling Chen stood up and said, "Miss Su, if there's nothing else, I'll get going."

Leaving the room, Ling Chen met up with Zhou Jun and Song Ge, and Zhou Qi assigned ten more people to their group. They immediately headed towards Yangxin Pavilion.

With Su Mei's clearance pass, Ling Chen and his companions faced no obstacles and entered Yangxin Pavilion with ease.

At that moment, in the spacious courtyard of Yangxin Pavilion, Song Yi and Liang Zheng were practicing martial arts routines to loosen up their bodies. Seeing Ling Chen appear at the entrance of the courtyard, Song Yi's expression darkened immediately and he stepped forward, saying, "Ling Chen, this is Yangxin Pavilion; you can't just come and go as you please, get out now."

Song Ge furrowed his brows and spoke in a low voice, "Song Yi, watch your language."

"What does my language have to do with you? What right do you have to lecture me?" Song Yi snorted lightly, "If you consider Ling Chen a friend but not us, why should I give you face? Get lost, I get annoyed just by seeing you."

"You..."

Song Ge's face turned angry, and just as he was about to retort, Ling Chen put a hand on his shoulder and shook his head at him, signaling him not to be impulsive.

"Song, let's go back."

"Go back?" Song Ge and Zhou Jun were puzzled and asked, "Ling Chen, aren't we supposed to..."

Ling Chen spread his hands, a look of helplessness on his face, "What other choice do we have? If the Pavilion Master asks later, we'll say that Song Yi blocked us and even told us to get out. Alright, let's move quickly and not linger here to annoy anyone."

After saying that, Ling Chen turned to leave.

Song Ge and Zhou Jun exchanged a glance, clearly understanding Ling Chen's intention. The two smiled secretly and quickly followed Ling Chen's steps.

Seeing Ling Chen and the others about to leave, Song Yi's expression changed and he hurriedly called out, "Wait... wait a minute!"

Ling Chen turned back, looking at Song Yi, "What is it now?"

Song Yi awkwardly asked, "You just said that you were here on the Pavilion Master's orders?"

"Yes, any problem with that? You know the rules of Yangxin Pavilion better than anyone. Without the Pavilion Master's orders, do you think we could just waltz in here?" As he finished speaking, Ling Chen took his gaze off Song Yi and continued to walk away.

"Stop right there!"

Ling Chen stopped in his tracks, impatiently saying, "Look, what do you want? You just told us to get out, and now you're not letting us leave. What are you thinking? Do you think we're easy to bully? Damn it, get a grip."

Faced with Ling Chen's scolding, Song Yi immediately felt uncomfortable and his expression turned very sour. If it were any other time, he would have already started a fight. But remembering that Ling Chen carried a command from Su Mei, he had to suppress his anger and said coldly, "Since it's the Pavilion Master's command, then you may enter."

"Heh!" Ling Chen sneered, "Song Yi, you just told us to get out, and now you're telling us to stay. Do you really think we're that easily bullied, at your beck and call? Do you think I, Ling Chen, am that kind of person?"

Song Yi held back his anger, each word punctuated with effort: "Then what do you want?"

Ling Chen looked up at the sky, talking to himself, "I wonder who it was that just told us to get out, and now won't even apologize. Sigh! These days, there are too many proud people, always thinking they're above everyone else."

"Ling Chen, you..."

"Alright, everyone, let's say less."

At that moment, Liang Zheng came over to mediate.

"Ling Chen, Song Yi didn't mean to trouble you; he was just joking. Don't take it to heart. If it really won't do, I'll apologize on his behalf."

Ling Chen glanced at Song Yi, who was barely concealing his anger, and shrugged, "Fine, since Liang has spoken, I must give this face."

Liang Zheng gave a slight smile, "Thank you! The Pavilion Master's business is urgent, gentlemen, don't delay any longer, please come in."

Walking into the spacious courtyard, Ling Chen looked around and instructed, "Search every room. Remember, keep your eyes wide open."

Hearing this, Liang Zheng's expression changed and he quickly said, "Ling Chen, what are you doing? Elder Huang and Elder Liang live here. You dare to search their rooms?"

"Oh!"

Ling Chen slapped his forehead and apologized with an embarrassed smile, "Sorry, thanks for reminding me. Don't worry, I won't disturb the two elders, at most we'll check the other rooms. Liang, would you please inform the two elders, so there won't be any unnecessary misunderstandings later."

"Wait! You can search if you want, I won't stop you, but you should at least tell me the reason. How am I supposed to explain to Elder Huang and the others?"

Chapter 647 Zhu Hong Missing (2)

"Last night, a prisoner escaped from his cell. We've searched everywhere outside and haven't found any trace of him. We suspect he must have fled to the Yangxin Pavilion."

After hearing this, Liang Zheng hadn't spoken yet when Song Yi already sneered, "Ling Chen, do you know where you are? This is the Yangxin Pavilion. There are experts everywhere. Isn't it suicide for that prisoner to run here?"

Zhou Jun then interjected, "This is the Pavilion Master's order. If you have any objections, go find the Pavilion Master instead of wasting words with us." As he finished speaking, Zhou Jun directed his men, saying, "Don't just stand there wasting time, go and search quickly."

Song Yi frowned, wanting to say something else, but before he could, he was stopped by Liang Zheng. The two stepped aside, watching Zhou Jun's team search everywhere. More than ten minutes passed, and different voices emerged from the rooms: "Nothing found!"

Nothing found?

Ling Chen was surprised, his face showing a hint of confusion. Could it be that Zhu Hong really just vanished into thin air? Impossible! Zhu Hong didn't even know basic fighting skills, let alone have the ability to escape.

While pondering, Zhou Jun came up close to Ling Chen and pointed not far away, whispering, "Should we check over there?"

Following the direction of Zhou Jun's pointing, Ling Chen glanced over and saw a door in the middle of the surrounding wall of the courtyard, its destination unknown.

"Where does that lead?"

"You don't think this courtyard is all there is to the Yangxin Pavilion, do you?" Zhou Jun said, "Yangxin Pavilion is much bigger than you think. This courtyard is only a small part of it. Past that door, there's a valley and Lin Zi connected to it. That area all belongs to Yangxin Pavilion."

"Is that so?" On hearing this, Ling Chen's eyes lit up. He had thought this courtyard was all there was to the Yangxin Pavilion, but he remembered now. That day when he came to visit Huang Zheng, he had encountered a mysterious young man here. Although the young man was young, he was highly regarded by Huang Zheng and Liang Tian.

If he remembered correctly, that young man had walked towards that door when he left.

With this thought, Ling Chen nodded and said, "Don't leave any stone unturned." With that, he took the lead and strode towards the door.

Seeing Ling Chen leading everyone towards the door, Liang Zheng's expression finally changed. He quickly stepped forward, blocking their path.

Ling Chen stopped and asked, "What are you doing?"

Liang Zheng spoke sternly, "Ling Chen, you'd better stop while you're ahead. Not just anyone can enter that door."

"Why? You need to give us a reason. Otherwise, you're interfering with the Pavilion Master's orders."

"Behind that door is a crucial area of the Yangxin Pavilion, which even we don't dare enter lightly, let alone you. Ling Chen, don't blame me for not warning you; if you stir up any trouble, we won't take responsibility."

Hearing this, Ling Chen turned to Zhou Jun and asked, "What do you think?"

After all, he was an outsider, and Zhou Jun was from the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. It was still necessary to seek his opinion on this matter.

Zhou Jun replied indifferently, "The Pavilion Master said to thoroughly search the Yangxin Pavilion. Liang Zheng, should I explain to you what 'thoroughly' means?"

"You..." Liang Zheng was momentarily speechless, unsure how to proceed.

"Alright!" Liang Zheng huffed and moved aside, saying, "Since you are determined to search, then go ahead, but remember, whatever you stir up has nothing to do with us. Song Yi, let's go!"

After Liang Zheng and Song Yi left, Zhou Jun quickly accelerated his steps to the door and pushed it open.

"Ling Chen, hurry!"

Prompted by Zhou Jun, Ling Chen and Song Ge, along with their group, approached the door, ready to step inside.

"Wait!" Suddenly, Zhou Jun seemed to remember something and pointed at the more than ten followers trailing behind, instructing, "Wait here at the door; the three of us will go in."

As they passed through the door, Ling Chen spoke, "Why not bring them along?"

Zhou Jun chuckled, "Not to hide it from you, but the chance of Zhu Hong coming here is very low, almost none."

Ling Chen and Song Ge, confused, asked, "Then why persist?"

"Didn't Liang Zheng just say? Behind that door is the real crucial area of the Yangxin Pavilion. I've been in the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion for so many years, I've always known this place existed, but never had the chance to visit it. It's a rare opportunity, so I must take a look."

"You, rascal..." Song Ge smiled helplessly and said, "Taking advantage of your position for personal gain, if your granddad finds out, he's probably going to lecture you again."

"What is there to be afraid of." Zhou Jun said nonchalantly, "Isn't it just following the Pavilion Master's order? At most, I'll get scolded a few times."

While talking, the three men crossed a narrow mountain path and arrived at a lush grassland. Ling Chen looked around, feeling an instant sense of openness, surrounded by lush green trees and a clear lake.

Around the lake, several thatched cottages were covered, with many potted plants planted outside, all fenced in.

Ling Chen looked around and hesitantly said, "Maybe we should go back, so as not to disturb others."

"No worries, if anyone asks, we'll just say we are acting under the Pavilion Master's orders." Zhou Jun said and marched towards the thatched cottages.

Reaching the front of the cottages, Zhou Jun was just about to knock when, before his hand could touch the door, he saw it being opened from the inside.

Following this, a seventeen- or eighteen-year-old boy walked out, looking warily at Ling Chen and the others, and asked in a displeased tone, "Who are you?"

Zhou Jun, with a placating smile, said, "We are from the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, here under the Pavilion Master's orders to search for an escapee. Young fellow, have you seen any strangers around here recently?"

Pointing at Zhou Jun, the boy said, "Except for you few strangers, no one else has been here." After a pause, the boy continued, "You should hurry back. The people here don't like being disturbed, and if you run into some of those with foul tempers, you're going to be in trouble."

With that, the boy turned and went back inside the house.

Watching the door close again, Ling Chen shrugged and said, "Let's go back, then, before we stir up trouble and cause problems for Miss Su."

"Just..." Zhou Jun's mouth opened, just about to speak, but before he could finish, all three heard a loud 'bang.'

Ling Chen's gaze shifted, following the direction of the sound. He frowned slightly. Judging by the sound, it shouldn't be too far from them.

Just then, the boy who had just gone inside suddenly rushed out of the house, not sparing them a glance, and quickly headed towards the source of the sound.

#### Chapter 648 The Oddball

Watching the youth walk away, Ling Chen glanced at Zhou Jun and Song Ge beside him, and curiosity gleamed in all three pairs of eyes in unison.

"Let's go and see." Zhou Jun was the first to speak. As soon as he said this, he immediately started moving his legs, following closely behind the youth.



Immediately, the three men sprinted in the direction the youth had left. In no time, they charged into a dense forest.

"There he is!" With keen eyes, Song Ge pointed, and the youth's figure immediately appeared in their sight.

After pursuing for over a hundred meters, Ling Chen and his companions finally stopped, their eyes widened in astonishment at the scene before them.

In the middle of the forest, there was a mountain peak over twenty meters high. At the foot of the mountain, stood a disheveled and unkempt figure. The person was covered in ragged clothes that made him look worse off than a beggar, his face filthy, as if it hadn't been washed in ages.

However, what was most astonishing wasn't this, but the fact that his limbs were bound with chains as thick as arms, the other ends of the four chains each connected to the mountain.

A prisoner!

Upon seeing this, the word immediately came to Ling Chen's mind. However, what he didn't understand was what serious crimes this strange person must have committed to be treated in such a way.

"That chain looks like it's about to break."

Hearing Song Ge's words, Ling Chen fixed his gaze and indeed! One of the chains, where it connected to the mountain, was full of cracks and could break away from the mountain at any moment.

At this moment, the strange person seemed to go into a frenzy, roaring desperately and constantly moving his limbs, pulling hard on the chains.

"Keep it down."

The youth by the side uttered a soft command, his wrist flicking gently, and several steel needles flew out in an instant, closing in on the strange person. However, at that moment, the strange person's right arm suddenly exerted force, violently pulling the chain out from the mountain.

Subsequently, he swung the chains, knocking all of the incoming steel needles away.

How impressive!

Seeing this, Ling Chen's expression changed slightly, shock coloring his pupils like Mo Che's.

Seeing the chains on the strange man's right arm break free, the youth's face instantly turned solemn, and he immediately moved back. Because the chain was ten meters long, it posed a threat to the youth. He didn't stop retreating until he was out of the chain's range, then he stared coldly at the strange person.

"If you don't want to die, you'd better step back."

Hearing the youth's warning, Ling Chen and his companions hastily backed away.

At this moment, the strange person swung the chain in his hand, smashing it forcefully against the mountain surface, trying to crack the parts of the mountain where the chains were embedded and free his left hand and both legs.

Seeing more and more cracks forming on the mountain surface, the youth became anxious. He pulled from his bosom with both hands, and ten steel needles immediately appeared at his fingertips.

Accompanied by a whistling sound, the ten steel needles shot out in an instant.

However, the ten steel needles did not pose any threat to the strange person. With a swing of the chains, all the needles were knocked down, falling to the ground.

"What you're doing is useless," Ling Chen offered helpfully.

"What's your bright idea then?" the youth retorted with irritability.

"We'll help you."

"Help me?" Upon hearing this, the youth gave Ling Chen a strange look and said, "He's no ordinary person. You'd better stay back, lest you end up losing your lives."

Seeing the youth speak so dismissively, Zhou Jun felt irritated and snorted, "If a brat like you dares to confront him, what should we be afraid of?" With that said, and without waiting for the youth to respond, Zhou Jun lightly tapped the ground with his toes and charged straight at the monster.

As Zhou Jun approached, the monster let out a fierce roar and swung a chain as thick as an arm violently towards Zhou Jun. Watching the chain coming at him, Zhou Jun's face instantly turned pale. Although the chain hadn't hit yet, just the strong wind it created was enough to tell Zhou Jun that the force behind it was beyond his ability to contend with.

For a moment, Zhou Jun's forward momentum slowed as he instinctively started to back away. But he had already come within five meters of the monster, and with the chain coming in close, there was no chance to escape.

"Be careful!"

Ling Chen and Song Ge, seeing that the situation was dire, didn't dare to delay any longer and rushed over to provide assistance.

With a jingling sword-cry, Song Ge reached to his waist and drew out a soft sword with a chilling glint.

Just as the chain was about to hit, Song Ge suddenly increased his speed, thrusting his hand forward and entangling the chain with the body of the soft sword, halting its momentum.

However, even though Zhou Jun was saved, the monster took advantage of the situation and swung the chain again. Before Song Ge could extricate himself, the chain wound around his arm, pulling his body over.

Seeing this, Ling Chen didn't hesitate. He instantly increased his speed to the maximum, took three steps as if they were two, and quickly reached Song Ge's side, grabbing the chain and pulling it back with all his might.

"What are you waiting for, come and help!"

Hearing Ling Chen's shout, the stunned Zhou Jun finally snapped out of it and urgently grabbed the chain, joining the efforts of the three of them to withstand the monster's force.

"Hold on!"

Seeing Ling Chen and the others restraining the chain, the youth's eyes lit up. Once again, he pulled out several steel needles from within his clothes and flung them at the monster.

But as the youth made his move, Ling Chen felt the force on the chain suddenly surge. Before they could react, an immense force traveled through the chain, pulling all three of them over.

At that moment, the chain was still wound around Song Ge's right arm. As the monster swung its arm, it used the chain to control Song Ge's body in a sweeping motion. In an instant, the steel needles the youth had thrown were all blocked by Song Ge's body.

Not good!

"Brother Song!" Ling Chen's expression changed as he caught a glimpse of the steel needles that had fallen to the ground out of the corner of his eye.

In midair, Ling Chen flipped his body and reached down with his hand, tightly grasping the steel needles. Then, he glanced at Zhou Jun behind him, pushed off from his shoulders for leverage, and with increased speed, hurled himself directly towards the monster.

At that time, the monster's attention was still on Song Ge, not expecting Ling Chen to suddenly speed up. By the time it realized, Ling Chen was already close, wrapping his arms around the monster's head.

Before the monster could resist, Ling Chen raised his right arm high and forcefully thrust the steel needles in his fingertips into the creature's body.

Ah!

As the steel needles penetrated the body, the monster let out a loud scream. Suddenly, Ling Chen felt a powerful burst of Inner Strength exploding from inside out, knocking his body flying away and making him crash heavily to the ground. The pain was so intense that he grimaced and was unable to stand up for quite some time.

"Ling Chen!"

Zhou Jun hurried over, asking with concern, "Are you alright?"

Chapter 649 Yang Zhe

Ling Chen spat out a mouthful of blood-stained saliva and, with Zhou Jun's help, he stood up again.

Gasping for breath, Ling Chen once again fixed his gaze on the strange man. By now, the strange man seemed to have lost his strength and suddenly knelt on the ground, his head weakly tilting to one side. After a while, his body leaned forward and he fell to the ground, motionless.

Seeing this, the few people present all breathed a sigh of relief simultaneously.

"Song, how are you? Are you hurt?" Ling Chen and Zhou Jun hurried to Song Ge's side, attempting to help him up. However, Song Ge lay on the ground, eyes tightly shut, as if he had fallen into a coma.

"Don't worry about him; he's just been struck by steel needles and passed out. He'll be fine once he wakes up."

At that moment, the voice of a young man came over, bringing a sense of calm to Ling Chen's tense mood.

Looking at the motionless strange man, Ling Chen curiously asked, "Who is this person, and why was he locked up here?"

The young man replied indifferently, "It's better not to ask about things that you shouldn't know." Pausing for a moment, the young man looked at Ling Chen and said, "Anyway, thanks for your help this time. If you hadn't stabbed the steel needles into him in time, things would probably have gotten out of hand. My name is Yang Zhe, and yours?"

"Ling Chen."

"Ling Chen?" Yang Zhe thought for a moment, then said, "That name sounds familiar; I seem to have heard it somewhere."

"He is the top-ranked newcomer on the Newcomer List this year. You must have heard about him," Zhou Jun reminded.

"Oh, right!" Yang Zhe nodded and added, "Now that you mention it, I remember. Tong Nan mentioned you to me a few days ago. Not bad, looks like you're not as incompetent as Tong Nan described."

Incompetent?

Ling Chen touched his nose, guessing that Tong Nan must have spoken very poorly of him, otherwise Yang Zhe wouldn't have described him as incompetent.

"Come on, let's go to my place and treat your injuries first."

Returning to the thatched cottage by the lake, Ling Chen sat on a wooden chair, observing the interior decorations.

The decor inside the house was simple, exuding a rustic charm. On the way back earlier, Ling Chen had talked with Yang Zhe and gained a preliminary understanding of him.

Yang Zhe's identity was the same as Tong Nan's; they were both disciples of high-ranking elders from Yangxin Pavilion. However, Yang Zhe was more low-key and spent most of his time in secluded cultivation in Yangxin Pavilion, rarely appearing in others' sight. Therefore, even Zhou Jun didn't know about him.

After treating the wounds, Ling Chen casually asked, "Yang Zhe, where is your master?"

"My master has traveled far away and it will probably be a while before he returns," Yang Zhe said, looking at Ling Chen. "This time, I owe you a favor. When my master returns, I will definitely tell him everything."

"No need to be so polite; I am also a friend of Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, and it was only right for me to help." Ling Chen then remembered the strange man he had seen earlier and couldn't help asking, "Who exactly is that person? Can you share a bit of information to satisfy my curiosity?"

"Well..." Yang Zhe hesitated for a moment and then said, "I can't reveal his identity. What I can tell you is, he is a criminal from Yangxin Pavilion who has made a grave mistake."

After hearing this, Ling Chen was somewhat speechless. This statement was as good as saying nothing.

Forget it! Since it's a secret of Yangxin Pavilion, as an outsider, it's better not to inquire too deeply to avoid resentment.

After resting for a while, Ling Chen got up and bid his farewell. Since Song Ge had been struck by steel needles dipped in a strong anesthetic, it would be a while before he woke up, so Zhou Jun had to carry him back.

Following the same path back to the courtyard, Ling Chen didn't stay long and left Yangxin Pavilion directly with his companions.

Having checked all the places he could, and given Zhu Hong was nowhere to be found, he likely had hidden somewhere else. However, as big as Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion was, the place had been thoroughly searched by Zhou Qi's men, yet Zhu Hong's whereabouts were still undetected. Where exactly could that guy be hiding?

...

In the room.

Ling Chen calculated the time; there were still three days left until the deadline set by Lin Jiawei. Currently, the whereabouts of Xia Mutong were unknown, and moreover, she had been transformed by experiments conducted by God Organization, which might make it quite difficult to rescue her in the short term. As for Xia Mutong's safety, Ling Chen was not too worried. Since she had undergone experimental transformations, she surely held research value for God Organization. Before that, God Organization would definitely not harm her.

So right now, there was only one person he needed to rescue, and that was porridge girl.

According to the information提供 provided by Hu Fei, Lin Jiawei and his group had always been staying in a manor on the outskirts of East Sea City and hadn't left yet. Therefore, as long as he could find a master strong enough to contend with Ji Gang, he should be able to rescue porridge girl.

While he was pondering, there came a 'dong dong dong' knocking at the door.

Ling Chen got up and opened the door, only to see Su Mei and Zhou Qi standing outside.

"Miss Su, Elder Zhou, what brings you both here?" he invited warmly.

Once the three of them were seated, Zhou Qi spoke, "Mr. Ling, we have received a message from God Organization."

"A message?"



"God Organization's spies infiltrated within Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion have been cleared out by us, including their means of contact with God Organization. Last night, after I had finished interrogating them, I sent out a message using their unique method of contact. Just a moment ago, God Organization finally responded."

"Really?" Ling Chen perked up and eagerly asked, "What's the message?"

"I told the people from God Organization that they have obtained that item from you. The message from God Organization stated that they would send someone to meet outside Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. I am thinking about seizing this opportunity to trace the vine to find the melon."

Ling Chen nodded and said, "We can do that. However, I probably won't be able to help with this, as porridge girl is still in Lin Jiawei's hands. I must find a way to rescue her."

"By yourself?" Su Mei interjected, "You've also said that porridge girl is guarded by Ji Gang, and there is a master from Heavenly List watching over; what do you have to contend with him?"

"No worries, I have my ways. Moreover, I am currently pressed for time. Although Lin Jiawei gave me ten days, he must already be aware of my capture, and I estimate that he won't continue to waste time on me. So, the longer it drags on, the less secure her safety becomes."

"This..." Su Mei pondered for a moment before speaking, "Should I ask someone to help you?"

Hearing this, Ling Chen laughed and said, "What, are you planning to ask a master from the Heavenly List to assist me?"

"A few days ago, a respected elder just returned from traveling abroad; perhaps I can ask for his help. How about this: you go back to East Sea City first, and I'll have him meet up with you there."

Ling Chen's eyes lit up as he gratefully looked at Su Mei and said, "Then I'll have to trouble you, Miss Su."

Chapter 650 Zhu Xiaozhu's Transformation

Initially, Ling Chen intended to ask Su He to deal with Ji Gang, but now that Su Mei was willing to offer her help, he was naturally happy to accept it. Of course, he was well aware that Su Mei's willingness to provide assistance this time mainly stemmed from his help in resolving a potential crisis for the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. Otherwise, even if their relationship was good, Su Mei would not have gone out of her way to seek the help of a master from the Heavenly List.

"Right!" Ling Chen changed the subject and said: "Miss Su, regarding Zhu Hong..."

Before Ling Chen could finish his sentence, Zhou Qi, who stood beside him, chimed in: "Mr. Ling, rest assured, I will keep this matter in mind. As long as Zhu Hong is still in the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, I will make sure to capture him."

"Alright, I'll leave it to you."

After seeing off Su Mei and Zhou Qi, Ling Chen immediately started packing his luggage, preparing to return to East Sea City.

Upon hearing that Ling Chen was leaving, Zhou Jun rushed over with the newly awakened Song Ge, accompanying Ling Chen to the gate of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion.

"Ling, do visit us whenever you have the time in the future."

"Don't worry, there will be plenty of opportunities."

After bidding farewell to Song Ge and the other, Ling Chen shouldered his backpack and walked towards the woods outside the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion.

Passing through the woods, a vehicle arranged by Su Mei was already waiting to take Ling Chen to the airport.

By the time Ling Chen returned to East Sea City, it was already evening. After leaving the airport, Jiang Hao, who had received a call, was already waiting outside in his car.

Once in the car, Ling Chen, massaging his sore arm, asked: "How's everything been recently? All good?"

"Not bad, just that..." Jiang Hao hesitated, seeming to be holding something back.

"Just what?" Ling Chen pressed: "Speak up, don't beat around the bush, why are you acting like a woman?"

"The base is more or less normal, it's just that Miss Zhu's medical laboratory has had a few accidents, fortunately without any casualties."

A sense of concern weighed on Ling Chen's heart as he asked: "What kind of accidents?"

"I'm not sure about that; I don't know much about their lab. I've only heard they were mistakes made by Miss Zhu herself. Luckily, they were discovered in time each time, preventing major damage."

Zhu Xiaozhu...

Ling Chen furrowed his brows. He had noticed during his last visit to the research base that Zhu Xiaozhu seemed distracted while working, but he had not realized the situation was so serious that it even impacted her job. It seemed he would need to find some time to have a good talk with her after going back.

Upon arriving at the research base, Ling Chen set down his luggage and first went to see Hu Fei to inquire about the situation, then he headed alone to the medical laboratory. However, he was told by others that Zhu Xiaozhu hadn't been working for the past few days and was recuperating in her room due to an illness.

"Sick?"

Ling Chen hurried to the door of Zhu Xiaozhu's room and knocked.

"Who is it?"

Upon hearing Zhu Xiaozhu's voice from inside the room, Ling Chen opened his mouth and replied: "It's me. Xiaozhu, I heard you're not feeling well, I came to see you. Can you open the door?"

After a few seconds of silence, Zhu Xiaozhu's voice rose again: "I'm sorry, I'm not really in a state to meet anyone right now, you... you should come back another day."

Not in a state to meet? Could it be because... that time of the month arrived?

Realizing this, Ling Chen promptly understood and responded: "Alright then, you get some rest. Call me if you need anything."

Hearing the retreating footsteps outside, Zhu Xiaozhu, sitting on her bed, bit her thin lips, holding a photo in her hands that she looked at over and over again. Shining tears shimmered in her eyes, finally converging into a stream that trickled down from her eyes.

"What should I do... What exactly should I do..." Zhu Xiaozhu murmured to herself, sobbing softly with tears falling drop by drop, soaking the bedsheet.

At this moment, Ling Chen was completely unaware of Zhu Xiaozhu's situation. After leaving Zhu Xiaozhu's room, he had returned to Hu Fei's office to work on the strategy for rescuing porridge girl.

"Fatty, are you sure they haven't left that manor?"

"Our people are all around the manor, under uninterrupted surveillance twenty-four hours a day. Since you left, no one has entered or left the manor."

"What if there's a secret passage inside the manor, considering how cunning the people from God Organization are?"

Hu Fei spread his hands and said, "If that's the case, then there's nothing I can do about it. However, I don't think it's very likely." As he spoke, Hu Fei tapped a few keys on the keyboard and pulled up a map.

"Look, this is the layout of the buildings around the manor. There are only three houses within a hundred meters of the manor. When I arranged for the surveillance, I considered your concern, so I included the nearby houses as surveillance targets, and no suspicious individuals have appeared so far."

"That's good then." Ling Chen nodded his head. He was quite confident in Hu Fei's work.

"Oh, right!"

During the conversation, Hu Fei seemed to think of something, his face lit up with excitement as he jumped out of his chair.

"Quick, come with me, I'll show you something."

Ling Chen looked at Hu Fei, puzzled, wondering what had made him so excited.

Following Hu Fei to the technical production workshop of the research base, upon entering, Ling Chen was immediately captivated by the equipment neatly lined up along the wall.

Exoskeleton armor!

No wonder Hu Fei was so excited; it turned out that the exoskeleton armor had been produced.

Hu Fei proudly said, "See that? While you were away these past few days, I had the team work overtime to produce twenty sets of exoskeleton armor. Hey! Don't underestimate these exoskeleton armors. They are different from previous ones; I had them modified to include a number of weapon devices."

Ling Chen asked curiously, "What kind of weapons?"

Hu Fei chuckled and said mysteriously, "You'll find out when the time comes. I have already picked twenty people from the candidates you recommended and had them start training in advance. Just give

me another day or two, and I will get them accustomed to the performance of the exoskeleton armor, forming combat capability."

Saying this, Hu Fei couldn't help but get sentimental, "Having put in so much effort, we finally have our own armed force."

Ling Chen clapped Hu Fei on the shoulder and smiled, "That's largely thanks to you; you deserve the most credit."

His words were sincere - without Hu Fei's connections to bring in production equipment and so many scientific researchers, Ling Chen alone could never have managed all this.

In the midst of their conversation, a pleasant ringtone from a phone came from Ling Chen's pocket.

He took out his phone, glanced at the caller ID, and instructed, "Fatty, train them quickly. I will need to put them to use in the next couple of days."

After speaking, he walked away to answer the phone by himself.

"Ling Chen."

"Miss Su, do you need me for something?"

"The expert from Heavenly List has already set off for East Sea City. He is expected to arrive tonight. I'll trouble you to meet him at the airport."

That was quick!

Ling Chen silently smiled to himself and promised, "No problem, I will make sure to give our distinguished guest the proper welcome."