

The Beauty 731

Chapter 731 Battle of the Top Four (4)

At this moment, everyone was watching Ling Chen and Yang Zhe on stage, patiently waiting for the outcome.

The recent bout of fighting had clearly put Ling Chen at a disadvantage; now, everyone was anticipating and wanting to know whether Ling Chen had any other tricks up his sleeve. A disciple of the esteemed Elder Su should not only be capable of this much.

In a moment of thought, Ling Chen tightened his grip on the shield in his hand and reached toward his waist to draw the Tianling Blade, resembling an ancient warrior as he held the shield in front of him, assuming a defensive posture.

Observing Ling Chen's actions, Yang Zhe lifted his broad-backed saber and slightly shook his head. He had expected Ling Chen to have some new tricks, but it turned out to be the same old techniques, which was somewhat disappointing.

Seeing Yang Zhe stepping forward with his saber in hand, Ling Chen fearlessly pushed his shield forward. It appeared as if he had forgotten the embarrassments of being attacked just before.

"Rise!"

With a light shout, Yang Zhe leaped high off the ground, raising the saber above his head with both hands, with a fierce momentum he executed the Powerful Slash, aiming directly at Ling Chen's head.

The blade edge was not yet close, but the chilling Sword Force had already swept over, like a strong gale blowing past, causing a stinging pain on one's cheeks.

Ling Chen squinted his eyes slightly, lifting the shield in his left hand a bit while bending his knees, ready to bear the brunt of Yang Zhe's heavy blow.

Clang!

In the midst of a crisp sound, Ling Chen's body abruptly sank downward, feeling as if the weight on the shield was immense, nearly causing him to sit down on the ground. Fortunately, he used the Tianling Blade in his right hand to prop against the floor just in time to barely stabilize his body, preventing a fall.

Although he had managed to block the attack, it was not an easy feat for Ling Chen. Anyone who had to withstand such a heavy hit would not find it easy, let alone when the difference in strength between Ling Chen and Yang Zhe was so significant. At this moment, as the blade came crashing down, Ling Chen's left arm was nearly numb, trembling slightly, and even holding up the shield seemed strenuous.

Seeing Ling Chen's awkward state, the onlookers shook their heads in silence; clashing head-on with Yang Zhe was simply seeking death.

From the current state of the battle, as long as nothing unexpected happened, the ultimate victor of this duel should be Wang Hao.

As long as Yang Zhe wins this match, he would advance to the top four, where there would be two experts from the Earthly List and two from the Tiger List. The final winner would undoubtedly be chosen from among the two Earthly List experts. Although both Wang Hao and Yang Zhe were among the top three disciples in the Yangxin Pavilion, Wang Hao was recognized as the first, while Yang Zhe was only in the third place. Moreover, Wang Hao had secluded himself for two years and his strength had greatly increased, probably surpassing both Yang Tao and Yang Zhe by a wide margin.

Based on this reasoning, it was likely that no one among the Yangxin Pavilion disciples could defeat Wang Hao.

However, nothing in this world is absolute.

In terms of strength, Wang Hao's prowess was unquestionable. But for this reason, the Yangxin Pavilion had an unwritten rule: apart from the comparison of strength, competitors' tactics were also to be considered. On the platform, perhaps no one could match Wang Hao, but off the platform, it was another story. Maybe someone would play dirty, injuring or crippling Wang Hao, preventing him from competing. Then, the ultimate victor would definitely be someone else.

Therefore, even though they saw that Ling Chen's strength was not on par with Yang Zhe's, everyone still surrounded the platform, eagerly watching without any intention of leaving.

For everyone understood that the outcome of this kind of duel was full of variables; no one knew what would happen next.

Clang!

At this moment, another crisp sound echoed.

With the sound, everyone immediately turned their gaze toward the stage. Under the heavy strike from Yang Zhe, Ling Chen, holding his shield aloft, took several steps back, nearly tumbling off the edge of the platform.

Two consecutive strikes had almost shattered Ling Chen's defenses. Not only that, but even the surface of the shield bore two deep marks from the slashes of the broad-backed saber. If the shield hadn't been sturdy enough, it could have been split in two by Yang Zhe's Sword Force.

At this moment, Ling Chen took a deep breath, slowly straightened up and looked at Yang Zhe, his eyebrows furrowing slightly.

It seemed he had somewhat underestimated Yang Zhe's strength. Before coming, Su He had advised him that if he faced an opponent stronger than himself, he should try to use stillness to control movement and deplete the opponent's physical strength. Sooner or later, the opponent would reveal a weak spot. That's when his chance to counterattack would come.

However, it's been so long, and not only had Yang Zhe's stamina not declined in the slightest, but he also seemed to be getting stronger as the battle went on. On the contrary, it was he who, after continuous fighting, found his physical strength rapidly depleting. If this continued, he would eventually be defeated without any chance of turning defeat into victory.

In the midst of his contemplation, Yang Zhe charged forward with a broadsword in hand once again.

Seeing this, Ling Chen, without thinking, swung his arm violently, and the shield in his hand flew out like a frisbee, striking straight towards Yang Zhe's forehead.

As the shield neared, Yang Zhe's wrist flicked and with a heavy slash of the broadsword, which weighed a hundred catties, he instantly knocked the shield to the ground.

Then, without slowing down, Yang Zhe dashed in a straight line and quickly closed in on Ling Chen. The broadsword was raised high, the blade sharp as lightning, aiming to cleave Ling Chen's head.

The great sword moved with incredible speed, almost reaching its peak. Ling Chen didn't even have time to lift his head and only saw a blur flash by as the fierce sword force nearly skinned his face raw.

At that moment, without enough time for his brain to react, Ling Chen instinctively raised the Tianling Blade to forcefully block the attack of the great sword.

Clang!

Sword and broadsword collided, and Ling Chen felt a weakness in his arm and numbness in his tiger's mouth, as the Tianling Blade fell to the ground with a clatter.

However, Yang Zhe's broadsword continued its relentless trajectory, plunging straight for Ling Chen's chest.

The decisive moment had arrived!

Witnessing this scene, everyone held their breath, silently awaiting the outcome.

Under the watchful eyes of the crowd, the edge of the great sword finally fell, steadily bracing against Ling Chen's right shoulder.

Eh?

The onlookers below the stage were momentarily stunned; they had thought the battle was decided, but didn't expect such a turn of events.

Although Yang Zhe's great sword had fallen, it didn't strike Ling Chen's vital points. Instead, Ling Chen caught the blade of the broadsword between his hands.

Only then did everyone remember that Ling Chen wore a pair of silk gloves, tough in texture, capable of withstanding the damage of blades and swords. It was also thanks to those silk gloves that Ling Chen managed to turn danger into safety, withstanding Yang Zhe's attack at the very last moment.

Looking at the blade in Ling Chen's hands, Yang Zhe's face darkened slightly, his toes tapped lightly, and his right leg shot up instantaneously, delivering a fierce kick toward Ling Chen.

Bang!

Taking the blow of Yang Zhe's flying kick, Ling Chen's body immediately soared into the air, crashing heavily onto the floor.

Puh!

Ling Chen opened his mouth, spitting out a mouthful of fresh blood, and his body seemed to lose all its strength, lying limply on the ground, not getting up for a long while.

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"Ling Chen!"

"Ling Cheng!"

Seeing Ling Chen injured and lying on the ground, Qiu Yong, along with porridge girl, all stood up from their chairs, their faces filled with worry and concern as they watched Ling Chen, their brows slightly furrowed.

"Big brother, Ling Cheng seems to be in critical condition, we should let him step down," Xia Yue said anxiously.

Qiu Yong nodded, quickly walked over to Su Mei, and whispered in her ear. After he finished speaking, Su Mei acknowledged with a nod and then looked up to give a signal to the referee on the stage.

The latter immediately understood and raised his right arm high, declaring loudly, "I announce that this duel..."

"Wait!" Before the referee could finish, Ling Chen's voice rose from the ground: "... I can still go on." As he spoke, Ling Chen slowly stood up from the ground. However, his legs were weak, and his body was wobbly, as if he might fall at any moment.

Seeing this, Yang Zhe put down the broad-backed saber he was holding and said, "Don't stand up, you're already hurt. Just admit defeat and go get treated. Considering that you helped me last time, I don't want to hurt you."

Ling Chen shook his head and said, "Thank you for your kindness, but I can still hold on."

Hold on?

Yang Zhe frowned and said, "How can you hold on like this? Ling Chen, let me be clear, I will not go easy on you. If you insist, don't blame me for being ruthless."

Ling Chen forced a slight smile and said faintly, "No need to hold back, I wouldn't want to win unfairly."

With that, Ling Chen took a deep breath to ease his body's pain. Then, he raised his fists and nodded at Yang Zhe, saying, "Come on!"

Ah!

Seeing Ling Chen prepare to continue fighting, Qiu Yong couldn't help but sigh softly.

"Forget it! Since he still wants to continue, let him persist a while longer. Pavilion Master, if..."

Before Qiu Yong could finish, Su Mei interrupted, "Don't worry, I know what to do. If Ling Chen can't hold on, I'll have the referee announce the result. Besides, Yang Zhe knows Ling Chen, he won't go too hard."

Bang! Bang!

Just as the two were talking, suddenly two loud noises came from the stage. When Qiu Yong and Su Mei looked over, they saw Ling Chen lying on the floor, clutching his chest, his body writhing, his face full of pain.

Seeing Ling Chen in such agony, porridge girl felt the most unbearable. Biting her thin lips, her gaze hesitant, she stepped forward a little, intending to go to the stage to rescue Ling Chen.

However, before she could move, Su Mei seemed to see through her intentions, stepping in front of her to block her path.

"What are you doing?"

"Don't do anything foolish. The rules of Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion can't be broken arbitrarily. Bringing you here was already an exception; don't make it difficult for me."

Hearing this, porridge girl sighed helplessly and had to suppress her urge to intervene, quietly watching Ling Chen on the stage.

At this moment, under the watchful and sighing eyes of the crowd, Ling Chen struggled to his feet, looked straight at Yang Zhe, and said in a weak voice, "Again, I can still hold on."

"Ling Chen!" the referee said sternly, "You're already like this, don't keep acting tough. Just admit defeat and don't delay the treatment."

"No." Ling Chen gently shook his head, his hands once again clenched into fists.

"I..." Yang Zhe lowered the broad sword in his hands, just about to try and persuade him, but before he could say anything, Ling Chen suddenly sped up, charging towards Yang Zhe. He closed the distance in an instant and was immediately in front of Yang Zhe.

Throwing a steel fist, Yang Zhe slightly sidestepped, effortlessly dodging Ling Chen's attack. At this moment, after a round of exchanges, Yang Zhe still maintained a full spirit in contrast to the repeatedly injured Ling Chen, whose speed and strength were far inferior to Yang Zhe's.

Ling Chen threw several punches in quick succession, but each one was deftly dodged by Yang Zhe, posing no threat at all.

Just as Ling Chen was about to throw another punch, the nimble and quick Yang Zhe swiftly made his move, accurately locking onto Ling Chen's wrist. Without waiting for Ling Chen to react, Yang Zhe violently flung him, and Ling Chen's body immediately soared into the air, heavily crashing onto the floor.

Pu!

Blood spurted out, and Ling Chen's face instantly turned pale, losing the strength even to stand.

"Declare him defeated immediately!" Porridge girl and Qiu Yong said almost in unison.

Su Mei nodded, making a gesture to the referee on the platform.

However, the keen Ling Chen noticed the small exchange between Su Mei and the referee and immediately, enduring the pain, got up from the floor. Next, Ling Chen gathered his breath and quickly rushed towards Yang Zhe.

At this moment, even the referee couldn't declare Ling Chen defeated. As long as the martial contest hadn't ended, he had no authority to intervene in the match between Ling Chen and Yang Zhe.

Seeing Ling Chen running swiftly towards him, Yang Zhe sighed. Although he admired Ling Chen's perseverance, admiration aside, he felt no sympathy and also had no interest in wasting more time on the platform.

At that moment, Yang Zhe flipped his wrist, turning the blade of the broadsword towards the handle, striking directly at Ling Chen's chest.

However, just then, Ling Chen noticed Yang Zhe's sagging eyebrows and eyes, his own gaze suddenly brightened, bursting with an unmistakable sharpness.

Feeling the sparkling sharpness in Ling Chen's eyes, Yang Zhe instantly felt a pang in his heart, a bad premonition.

But it was too late, just as the handle was about to hit Ling Chen, Ling Chen's feet suddenly turned, swiftly rotating his body, and moved to Yang Zhe's left side.

So fast!

Yang Zhe's face showed shock, and before he could react, Ling Chen's iron fist fiercely struck out, targeting Yang Zhe's waist.

The punch of iron met flesh, and Yang Zhe's face immediately changed, his steps shuffling back several times in pain, his face contorted in agony, cold sweat dripping from his forehead onto the ground.

Seizing this moment, Ling Chen bent down, his right hand scooping up the Tianling Blade that had fallen onto the floor, and stabbed towards Yang Zhe.

By the time Yang Zhe reacted, the sharp tip of the sword was already at his front, unavoidable.

Seeing such a result, everyone was stunned, and it took a while for them to regain their senses.

Ling Chen had actually turned the tables.

This was something that nobody had anticipated.

Yang Zhe was clearly at an advantage, yet just by taking a punch from Ling Chen, he ended up in this state, which was really baffling.

Could it be that Yang Zhe was deliberately losing?

Considering this, everyone felt that this possibility was very high. Apart from this explanation, they couldn't find any other.

"Brother Yang, admit defeat!"

Ling Chen retracted the Tianling Blade and cupped his fists towards Yang Zhe.

Yang Zhe wiped the cold sweat from his forehead and, with furrowed brows, asked, "How did you know?"

"I..."

"Forget it! You don't need to say it, I know already, it must be him who told you." Saying this, Yang Zhe gave a bitter smile and shook his head, "It's not your fault, I only have myself to blame for being so careless."

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As Yang Zhe stepped off the arena, the referee finally came to his senses and announced, "Ling Chen wins this match!"

"Now that all four semi-final spots have been taken, everyone please go back and rest well. We'll have the final matches in three days."

After the referee's words, Ling Chen breathed a sigh of relief and began to walk down from the stage. However, just as he stepped off, he felt dizzy and collapsed to the ground.

It's unknown how long passed before the groggy Ling Chen finally woke up.

"Ling Cheng, you're finally awake." Hearing Xia Yue's voice beside his ear, Ling Chen slowly turned his head to see a concerned Xia Yue and smiled weakly: "Sister Xia."

Seeing that Ling Chen was not in serious trouble, Xia Yue scolded him lightly, "You, I don't even know what to say to you. Clearly unable to hold on, yet you were stubbornly resisting. Do you know how worried we were?"

Ling Chen replied sheepishly, "Well... Sister Xia, I did win, didn't I?"

"You did win, but you almost lost your life. Alright, rest up now; you need to heal. In a couple of days, you still have to fight in the final."

While they were talking, Qiu Yong and others walked in from outside. Seeing Ling Chen awake, Qiu Yong hurried to the bedside to ask about his condition.

Upon hearing that Ling Chen's injuries were not severe, Qiu Yong breathed a sigh of relief and said, "Ling Cheng, I must say, you were too careless yesterday. If it wasn't for your good luck, how could you have won so easily?"

Hearing this, Wei Jiahao at the side laughed, "Ling Cheng, you're too cunning. Pretending to be injured in front of Yang Zhe and then ambushing him when he was off guard. You should hear the rumors outside; they're all saying you're too deceitful."

Ling Chen touched his nose and gave a wry smile.

He had no choice yesterday. He knew his skills were far inferior to Yang Zhe's. If he hadn't employed some strategy, there was no way he could have defeated Yang Zhe. Moreover, before the match, Yang Tao had told Ling Chen about Yang Zhe's weak spot—his waist. Previously, Yang Zhe had injured his waist by accident, resulting in a lingering weakness.

All along, aside from Yang Tao, hardly anyone knew about this weakness of Yang Zhe.

Yang Tao telling this to Ling Chen was essentially handing him a chance at victory.

Thus, during the match with Yang Zhe, Ling Chen had pretended to be seriously injured to lower Yang Zhe's guard. When Yang Zhe became less cautious, Ling Chen seized the moment to strike his weak spot severely.

That was the reason he managed to win by a fluke.

However, his body wasn't completely without injuries. After all, Yang Zhe, a top contender of the Earthly List, didn't hold back his blows. If not for that, Ling Chen wouldn't have passed out after stepping down from the stage.

"Big Brother, is Yang Zhe's injury serious?" Ling Chen asked, "Although I won against Yang Zhe, it was an unorthodox victory. To be honest, I even feel quite embarrassed. Big Brother, I'm not in a position to visit him right now. Could you help me pay him a visit?"

"Sure, no problem. I'll take everyone to see him later. You just rest at home." As Qiu Yong spoke, he suddenly changed the subject, "Ling Cheng, have you considered it? In a few days, you'll have to fight in the last match. Besides you, there will also be Wang Hao. We've inquired about him; he's not easy to deal with. He's the strongest amongst the disciples of Yangxin Pavilion. Even Elder Du's disciple, Yang Tao, wasn't his match, let alone you. Your victory over Yang Zhe was mainly due to luck, but Wang Hao is different. If you can't defeat him, don't even think about obtaining the Nine Elements Pill. I've discussed it with the others, and our decision is to forfeit this match."

"Forfeit?" Ling Chen sat up in bed abruptly, looking at Qiu Yong, "Big Brother, I've come so far, how can you ask me to give up?"

Qiu Yong responded, "Ling Cheng, I've thought it through carefully. Instead of facing Wang Hao, it might be better to steal the Nine Elements Pill."

"Steal?" Ling Chen was taken aback, not expecting Qiu Yong to make such a suggestion.

"Exactly," Yuan Yun nodded and said, "I've checked; the box containing the Nine Elements Pill is placed in the valley, unguarded. As long as we're careful, we can definitely steal it. Then, we can plan carefully and take the pill out to save your father."

Ling Chen immediately shook his head, "No, absolutely not. Big Brother, if we do this, even if we can temporarily deceive the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, they will eventually find out. They'd definitely cause trouble for us. Moreover, we have such a good relationship with Miss Su; it wouldn't be right to do this to her."

After a pause, without waiting for Qiu Yong to say anything more, Ling Chen continued, "Big Brother, let's drop it. Don't think too much. Besides, if we are to win, let's win fair and square. I don't want to do things stealthily."

"Alright." Seeing that Ling Chen was unwilling, Qiu Yong didn't insist and nodded, "Since you've decided, I won't say more. Xia Yue, please take good care of Ling Cheng. We're going to see Yang Zhe."

Having slept for a day and night, Ling Chen really couldn't sleep anymore. He half-sat on the bed, looking at the martial arts training field outside the window, deep in thought.

Just then, Porridge Girl entered the room from outside. Seeing Ling Chen lost in thought, she parted her lips gently and asked, "What are you thinking about?"

Hearing Porridge Girl's voice, Ling Chen came back to his senses, turned his head to look at her delicate face, and smiled faintly, "Nothing much, just thinking about the upcoming match in a few days."

"Are you worried about your opponent?"

Ling Chen nodded lightly, "Wang Hao is a formidable figure. I'm considering how to defeat him."

"Stop thinking about it, you can't beat him."

Ling Chen gave a bitter smile, "Why do you have no confidence in me at all?"

"It's not that I don't have confidence, but I know Wang Hao well. Although I've never fought with him, I've seen his strength firsthand. Among his peers, there's hardly anyone as formidable as he is. I, myself, am not weak and advanced to the Earthly List at a young age. However, compared to Wang Hao, I still fall far short. Previously, I considered Wang Hao a rival, hoping to surpass him one day. But later, I realized that the gap between me and him is too great; it's unlikely I'll surpass him anytime soon."

Hearing this, Porridge Girl looked seriously at Ling Chen and advised, "Take my advice, don't take the risk. If you face him, you won't stand a chance."

"But if I don't get the Nine Elements Pill, how can I save my father?" Without waiting for Porridge Girl to say more, Ling Chen suddenly smiled and said, "Alright, don't mention my worries. Regardless, I have to try."

Chapter 734 Forbidden Area of Heavenly Secrets

The final competition is only three days away, and since Ling Chen was unconscious for a day, he only has two days left to recover from his injuries. Although the injuries are not severe, it is clearly impossible to recover to the best condition within two days. Even with Shi Su here, who is reputed to be the best in medical skills, it probably cannot be done.

In order to maintain the best condition on the day of the competition, Ling Chen didn't go anywhere, and he lay in bed peacefully under the care of Xia Yue and porridge girl, quietly recuperating for the upcoming competition.

Having stayed in the room for two days, Ling Chen felt a bit stuffy and wanted to go out for a walk, but porridge girl and Qiu Yong wouldn't let him, insisting he stay in bed and not even set foot on the floor. Fortunately, he had porridge girl by his side; otherwise, he would be truly bored.

"One more day until the competition, just bear with it," porridge girl said.

Ling Chen, leaning on the pillow helplessly, held a bowl of clear porridge, along with a few snacks from Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, and casually had his dinner.

After Ling Chen finished eating, porridge girl took the empty bowl from his hand and asked while cleaning up, "How do you feel about your recovery, can you perform the day after tomorrow?"

"I can perform, but it might be difficult to recover one hundred percent," Ling Chen said truthfully.

Actually, Ling Chen was more worried about his physical condition than anyone else. After all, his opponent was Wang Hao, and if he couldn't maintain his best condition, even with many tricks up his sleeve, he wouldn't be able to defeat Wang Hao.

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Nightfall.

The night is deep, the area outside the room is silent, only the mountain wind breezes through the woods, bringing a rustling sound of the branches.

Ling Chen opened his eyes, yawned, and then sat up in bed. Turning on the light, he looked around and found that there was no one else in the room, not even porridge girl.

No one around, perfect!

Ling Chen smiled to himself, got out of bed, changed into clean clothes, and walked out of the room alone.

These two days were either spent eating or sleeping, making up for a week's worth of sleep, and now at eleven o'clock at night, Ling Chen wasn't sleepy at all. He hadn't left the house in two days, taking the chance while unmonitored to go out for a walk and breathe some fresh air.

Although Xu Ming and Su Mei had warned him to be careful outside, Ling Chen wasn't overly worried. Everyone knew he was recuperating in his room with specialized care; sneaking out now, he guessed no one would know, and he believed being cautious wouldn't attract trouble.

Besides, if anyone dared try anything, he wouldn't mind teaching them a lesson. In his eyes, except for Wang Hao, the other two opponents were not worth mentioning.

Additionally, Wang Hao's presence was a very important reason. Even if those people covertly used means against him, they would be useless as long as Wang Hao, the strongest, was still around. So, if they really wanted to target someone, it would definitely be against Wang Hao, not him.

Walking on a dim and unlighted path, Ling Chen strolled leisurely with his hands behind his back, the slightly cool mountain breeze brushing by, dispelling some of the stiffness from lying down too long.

It was nearly midnight now, many of the buildings at Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion had turned off their lights, dark as pitch, only a few street lamps by the road were still on, providing Ling Chen with some light.

While walking, Ling Chen suddenly noticed a light appearing in the distant woods.

Strange!

At this time, why was there light in the woods? Could there be someone there?

Ling Chen thought to himself. Even the patrol members of Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion wouldn't light such bright lamps in the woods. Reaching the edge of the woods, Ling Chen looked into it for a while, but due to the dense foliage, he could only see faint lights projecting through the leaves and could not see the situation clearly.

After looking around outside the woods for a few moments, driven by curiosity, Ling Chen stepped toward the woods.

When Ling Chen entered the forest, a gentle mountain breeze brushed past, moving the branches and leaves in the forest. Suddenly, a stone stele appeared at the edge of the forest, engraved with the words 'Forbidden Area'. Because it had been obscured by branches and leaves, Ling Chen hadn't noticed it earlier.

Walking deeper into the forest, Ling Chen carefully moved forward. Before long, he was surprised to find that the temperature increased the further he walked inward. Not only that, there seemed to be streams of steam wafting through the woods.

What place is this?

Ling Chen murmured to himself. As he quickened his pace, an elegant wooden hut appeared in his sight.

The billowing steam was rising from outside the wooden hut. Approaching it, Ling Chen looked up and realized that there was actually a hot spring outside the wooden house.

Wow!

Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion is indeed impressive, to have created a hot spring in this place. Clearly, given the location and surroundings of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, it was unlikely to have natural hot springs; this one must have been artificially made.

He also didn't know what was added to that hot spring, but there was a faint fragrance in the steam, making one feel refreshed all over.

At that moment, Ling Chen heard the sound of splashing water coming to his ears.

There's the sound of water?

Could someone be bathing in the hot spring?

Unable to suppress his curiosity, Ling Chen couldn't help but walk a few steps forward. Due to the dense branches and leaves ahead, his line of sight was obstructed, so he had to stand on tiptoe and peek in the direction of the hot spring.

Suddenly, he saw a fair body soaking in the steaming hot spring.

That is... Ling Chen froze, his eyes widening several times.

Su Mei?

It was actually Su Mei!

At this moment, Su Mei was completely naked in the hot spring, her smooth shoulders covered by a thin silk scarf. Within the rising steam, Su Mei's pretty face blushed slightly, exuding an alluring charm.

Ling Chen swallowed his saliva, his eyes fixated on Su Mei, unwilling to look away for even a moment.

In the warm hot spring water, Su Mei stretched out her fair arms, picked up the silk scarf on her shoulders, and gently wiped her body. As the scarf left her body, the round and full contours of her breasts immediately became visible.

Usually, Ling Chen saw Su Mei in clothes, but this was the first time he had seen her bare in the hot spring. It must be said, Su Mei's body was absolutely top-notch, with well-defined curves, as fair as snow.

At that time, Su Mei stood up from the hot spring water, like a goddess emerging, incomparably beautiful.

Seeing Su Mei's beautiful body fully revealed, Ling Chen was instantly mesmerized, his eyes unable to blink as he admired her full breasts and her waist as slender as willow.

This girl really has an incredible figure.

While pondering, Su Mei, draped in the silk scarf, walked out of the hot spring water and headed straight for the wooden hut.

Watching Su Mei enter the house, Ling Chen immediately followed. However, as the door was closed, Ling Chen could only get close to the window and gently pushed open a crack in the window.

Chapter 735 Fortune Arrives

At this moment, inside the wooden hut, Su Mei, with her back to the window, had her smooth, pink back facing the slit in the window where Ling Chen was peeping.

Su Mei stretched out her hand to pick up an intimate garment from the bed and put it on, thus hiding the splendid view.

Ah! What a pity.

Ling Chen shook his head secretly, wishing he could have enjoyed the view a little longer, but it seemed that opportunity was gone.

Seeing Su Mei dressed, turning toward the door to leave, Ling Chen dared not linger any longer and hurriedly ran towards the woods behind him, quickly escaping and returning to the edge of the woods.

Shortly after Ling Chen left, Su Mei walked out of the woods, heading straight to her residence.

It was only then that he noticed a stone stele standing outside the woods, inscribed with the words 'Forbidden Area'.

So that place was Su Mei's hot springs, no wonder it was declared a forbidden area. Ling Chen remembered Su Mei once said that there was a Heavenly List expert secretly protecting her nearby, which is probably why the expert didn't follow her due to inconvenience. This, in turn, gave Ling Chen the chance to peep.

However, even though he saw, Ling Chen felt extremely uncomfortable. His whole body felt heated and restless.

Damn it! Ling Chen cursed silently; it was that Prajnaparamita Sutra again, this mental method was too troublesome.

Forget it... Ling Chen shook his head and turned towards his room. Better to rush home and take a cold shower to cool down.

Back in his room, as soon as Ling Chen entered, he saw porridge girl sitting at the head of the bed, one hand supporting her forehead and her beautiful eyes slightly closed, as if she had fallen asleep.

Seeing porridge girl's tired appearance, Ling Chen felt a heartache. These past few days, she had been bustling about to take care of him, hardly resting at all. She had worked hard.

Immediately, Ling Chen lightened his footsteps, walked behind porridge girl, gently picked up her delicate body, and prepared to lay her on the bed.

But as soon as Ling Chen lifted porridge girl, the slumbering girl instantly woke up, her face wary, her whole body's strength gathered. However, once she recognized it was Ling Chen, she immediately relaxed her grip and reprimanded him, "Where did you go just now? I've been looking for you for ages."

"I... it's nothing," Ling Chen smiled bitterly and turned to see porridge girl's stunningly beautiful face, and the small flame that had just died in his heart was instantly reignited. He embraced porridge girl in one swoop, and her complexion changed, her cheeks flushing a deep red, but she did not resist. In her heart, this man had long become her own.

The night passed without a word.

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Early the next morning.

Knock knock knock! Knock knock knock!

"Little Sixth Brother."

The knocking sound arose, accompanied by Xia Yue's calling.

Lying on the bed, Ling Chen suddenly opened his eyes and quickly sat up.

"Little Sixth Brother, are you up yet? Open the door."

Hearing Xia Yue's voice, Ling Chen quickly replied, "Fifth Sister, wait a moment, I'll be right there." As he spoke, Ling Chen turned his head to look at porridge girl under the covers, whispering, "Quick, get up, my Fifth Sister is here."

Porridge girl, her face red, covered her chest with the quilt, fumbling around with one hand for her clothes, and asked, "My... my clothes?"

"How would I know."

"How could you not know?" Porridge girl gave Ling Chen an annoyed glare and said, "Last night... was it not you who threw them all?" Her voice unintentionally softened as she spoke, her face turning red like it was on fire.

Ling Chen picked up a few pieces of clothing from the ground and handed them to porridge girl, touching his nose and said, "Forget about it for now, just put on a couple of pieces and we'll deal with Fifth Sister first."

In less than a minute, the two were dressed in outer garments. Then, Ling Chen lay back on the bed as usual with the quilt covering him, while porridge girl stood up and walked towards the door.

Opening the door, Xia Yue who was standing at the doorway saw porridge girl, and seemed somewhat surprised, saying, "I thought Little Sixth Brother was alone in the room; it turns out you are here too. Just now, you guys..."

"Sorry, I was just in the restroom, and Ling Chen was lying in bed, so it took a bit of time. Sister Yue, please come in!"

Xia Yue nodded, did not continue to inquire, and walked straight into the room.

However, once inside the room, Xia Yue sniffed with her nose as if she sensed something unusual and looked at Ling Chen and porridge girl with a strange gaze.

Ling Chen smiled and sat up from the bed, asking, "Fifth Sister, looking for me so early, is there something?"

Xia Yue gave Ling Chen a look and said, "There's not really anything, it's just that I wanted to tell you, there was a bit of an accident last night."

"Accident?" Ling Chen asked curiously, "What accident?"

"I just heard while I was outside, some people were talking that there was trouble at Yangxin Pavilion. Someone tried to use underhand methods against Wang Hao, but not only did they fail, they got a taste of their own medicine. There were originally four people in the semifinals, but because two of them were injured last night, there will only be you and Wang Hao left for tomorrow's martial competition. Little Sixth Brother, congratulations, you've advanced directly to the finals."

Hearing this, Ling Chen couldn't help but grin, not expecting such good fortune. The less competitors, the better—less time and hassle.

It seemed his guess was correct. If someone wanted to play dirty, they would definitely target Wang Hao, not him.

"Ling Chen, Sister Yue, you two chat, I'm going to prepare breakfast for Ling Chen," said porridge girl from the side, then she left the room.

Once porridge girl had gone, Xia Yue poked Ling Chen on the forehead with her finger, chiding without good humor, "You really do have quite the romantic luck."

Chapter 736 The Astute Xia Yue

Blessings of beauty?

Ling Chen's heart skipped a beat. Could it be that Xia Yue had discovered something? No, he couldn't admit it. With that thought, Ling Chen feigned ignorance and said, "Sister Five, what are you talking about? I don't understand what you mean."

Xia Yue snorted lightly, "You're still pretending? Don't think I don't know, this room is full of scents. Can't you open a window and let it air out? Lucky for you, it's me who came; if someone else had walked in, how embarrassed would you be."

Scents? Ling Chen was startled and looked at Xia Yue in surprise, murmuring, "Sister Five, how could you..."

Xia Yue smiled smugly and said, "You really think Sister Five knows nothing? Alright, you don't need to be embarrassed in front of me. Love between a man and a woman is normal. However, you should take care of your body. Your injuries haven't fully healed yet, and if you continue indulging without restraint, beware that your condition will worsen. Ok! I won't tease you anymore. You must be tired from staying up all night without much rest. I'll leave now and come back with Brother Song and the others to see you in the afternoon."

Watching Xia Yue leave, Ling Chen touched his nose and let out a wry smile to himself.

He had always thought of Xia Yue as a very innocent person, but he hadn't expected her to be so open, actually discerning what had taken place last night from the room's scents.

However, even though he had visitors five times last night, Ling Chen didn't feel tired at all; on the contrary, he was brimming with vitality. Both his injuries and his spirit had returned to peak condition.

The Prajnaparamita Sutra truly deserved its reputation as a top-notch mental method, actually being able to improve one's constitution through acts of intimacy.

Back during the Heavenly Mechanism Great Ceremony, the porridge girl had taken the initiative to offer herself to him, enabling him to defeat Han Yu and take the top spot on the Newcomer List. This time, it was the porridge girl again. After giving it some thought, Ling Chen always felt that he owed her too much.

Lost in thought, he saw the porridge girl enter with a rich breakfast.

"Come, eat something."

Taking the bowl of clear porridge handed over by the porridge girl, Ling Chen spoke, "I remember, the first time I met you, you also made a bowl of clear porridge for me."

"That happened so long ago, why bring it up?" The porridge girl seemed indifferent.

Ling Chen looked up at her delicate face and said, "It's just that I feel sorry for you. You... you give so much for me, but I have nothing to offer you, I..."

Before Ling Chen could finish speaking, the porridge girl suddenly put her hand over his lips and said, "You don't need to say these things. I told you once before that I've had a fiancé for a long time. Actually, that fiancé I mentioned was you. This marriage was arranged by the Master from the beginning, from when I was very young. The Master told me that in the future, I would marry his son. So, ever since then, I've kept the Master's words in mind. No matter what happens, I am your woman for life."

After a pause, the porridge girl continued, "Actually, you don't need to feel too troubled. We are both from the Martial Arts world; we don't have so many constraints and formalities. As long as you treat me well, that's enough for me, without needing an official status."

Hearing this, Ling Chen felt a touch of emotion stirring within him.

If there was a woman willing to give everything for him without wanting anything in return, what reason would he have not to treat her well?

"Porridge girl, I..."

"Alright, stop there," the porridge girl interrupted Ling Chen, smiling and saying, "Hurry up and eat your breakfast. It won't taste good when it's cold."

With less than a day left before the fight with Wang Hao, Ling Chen dared not slack off. He spent the entire day sitting in his room, keeping himself in the best possible condition.

The next day.

Early in the morning, as Ling Chen and the porridge girl, along with Qiu Yong and others, just arrived at the valley of Yangxin Pavilion, they saw a huge crowd. The area around the platform was packed with nearly a hundred people.

"Ling."

At that moment, a familiar voice was heard. Ling Chen looked up and saw Song Ge running out from amongst the crowd and quickly approaching him.

"Brother Song?" Ling Chen looked at Song Ge in surprise, asking, "Brother Song, what brings you here?"

To his knowledge, the battle at Yangxin Pavilion was only open to its disciples and the high-ranking members of Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, yet Song Ge had made an unexpected appearance.

Song Ge said with a smile, "It was the Pavilion Master's decision. She made an exception and allowed the elite disciples of Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion to come and observe your fight with Wang Hao. You know as well as I do, a duel between experts is a rare occurrence. The Pavilion Master wanted us to broaden our horizons and learn some experience from it."

At this point, Song Ge patted Ling Chen on the shoulder and asked, "Ling, how are you feeling about today's fight? Any confidence?"

"Brother Song, you know what kind of person that Wang Hao is—he's recognized as the number one at Yangxin Pavilion, with powerful strength and also a master on the Earthly List. What do you think my chances are of winning against him?"

"Not big," Song Ge said honestly.

Ling Chen shrugged helplessly, "Then why do you ask if I'm confident?"

Song Ge laughed heartily, "Ling, I might not know others well, but I have faith in you. Go for it, aim to beat Wang Hao. In the future, you should not only be the first on the Newcomer List but also aim to be the top at Yangxin Pavilion. I believe in you, brother."

While speaking, everyone arrived at the seats.

After exchanging greetings with Su Mei, they all took their seats, quietly waiting for the martial contest to begin.

"Ling Chen."

A voice called out, and Ling Chen looked back to see Yang Tao and Yang Zhe had appeared behind him at some point.

"Brother Yang!"

Ling Chen greeted him with a smile, then turned to Yang Zhe with a cupped-fist salute, saying with an apologetic face, "Brother Yang, I'm really sorry about the other day. I hope you won't take it to heart."

Yang Zhe waved his hand and said, "No worries, I was too careless that day, it wasn't your fault." Then, changing the subject, Yang Zhe asked, "Ling Chen, can you give us an insight? How confident are you in today's match against Wang Hao?"

Ling Chen shook his head and said, "Honestly, I don't even have a ten percent chance. The difference between Wang Hao and me is clear, it's not something that can be compensated for with just tactics."

"Knowing that, are you still planning to continue?"

"There's no choice, I've come this far, I can't back out at the last minute; it's not my style. Besides, I really want to see just how powerful that Wang Hao is."

"Alright, in any case, just be careful."

"Wang Hao, it's Wang Hao who has arrived!"

With a burst of excited shouting in the crowd, everyone's attention was drawn to the approaching Wang Hao.

Under everyone's gaze, Wang Hao, hands behind his back, walked with his head held high and a steady gait, not glancing aside and seemingly oblivious to the surrounding chatter.

Watching Wang Hao step onto the platform, Ling Chen withdrew his gaze and turned to Yang Tao and Yang Zhe with a smile, "Gentlemen, I'll go first."

"Wait!"

Yang Tao stopped Ling Chen, who was about to leave, and handed him something, saying, "Take this with you, it might be of use to you."

Chapter 737 The Number One Disciple of Yangxin Pavilion

After securing the items handed by Yang Tao, Ling Chen looked up at Wang Hao on the stage, took a deep breath, and then walked towards the stage.

Today's martial arts competition was the final match, and the winner would be the ultimate victor, receiving the Nine Elements Pill as a prize.

Therefore, this match was not arranged with a referee; the numerous onlooking audience members sufficed as watchers. Besides, as long as no lives were taken, there were hardly any strict rules and limitations.

Upon reaching the stage, Ling Chen stood at a corner and directly faced Wang Hao, cupping his hands in a greeting.

However, Wang Hao paid him no heed and said indifferently, "If I were you, I would surrender proactively. This match is meaningless, why waste everyone's time?"

Hearing this, Ling Chen smiled and was not angered. He knew that Wang Hao was stating a fact, not mocking or despising him; after all, there was a vast disparity in strength between them. From Wang Hao's perspective, he had little interest in this match.

"Wang, everyone says you're the top disciple in Yangxin Pavilion. Regardless of winning or losing, I'd like to learn from you."

"If you want to learn from me, that's fine, but I have a condition. As long as you can agree to it, even if you have other conditions, I can satisfy them."

"Oh?" Ling Chen looked at Wang Hao skeptically, could there really be such a good deal?

In a swift moment of thought, Ling Chen asked, "What is your condition?"

"Simple. After this match, I want you to introduce me to Elder Su, and also, I'd like to present the Nine Elements Pill to Elder Su as a token of meeting."

"Elder Su?" Ling Chen's heart stirred, a trace of astonishment flashing in his eyes. Wang Hao was quite generous, easily willing to give away the Nine Elements Pill. Could it be that he's seeking Elder Su's help for something?

While he pondered, Wang Hao followed up saying, "My master died early, and all these years, I've cultivated alone with no guidance, which has slowed my progress."

Hearing this, Ling Chen understood Wang Hao's intention—he wanted Su He to take him as a disciple.

"Wang, there are so many experts in Yangxin Pavilion; surely, someone can teach you?"

Wang Hao's expression remained untouched as he said, "There are indeed many masters in Yangxin Pavilion, but not a single one qualifies to be my master."

These words caused an uproar in the crowd, everyone gaped at Wang Hao, shocked that he would dare to say such a thing and offend all the elders of Yangxin Pavilion.

From the nearby stands, Huang Zheng, staring at Wang Hao on the stage, snorted coldly, "This Wang Hao truly doesn't know the immensity of heaven and earth, to speak such words."

Liang Tian, standing next to him, chimed in, "This kid is too arrogant. Confidence is good, but overconfidence turns into arrogance."

"What do you think, Elder Du?" someone asked.

Leaning back in his chair and holding a gourd of wine, Du Kang shook the liquid gently, squinted his eyes, and spoke with a smile that was not quite a smile, "Wang Hao's words may be boastful, but he's not wrong. How many of you here dare to take him as a disciple? Huang Zheng, your strength is ranked in the top three on the Earthly List; but Wang Hao's strength is at least around sixth on the Earthly List, not much less than yours. He's under thirty this year; you're over eighty. If you take him as your disciple, it won't be long before he surpasses you. So, I think he's right, you really aren't qualified to be his master, and neither are the rest of us."

An old man chuckled, "Elder Du, you are a master on the Heavenly List, do you also lack the qualification to be his master?"

"I truly am not qualified," Du Kang replied. "Have you thought about who Wang Hao's former master was? In Yangxin Pavilion, only Old Man Wei was second to Su He, and even stronger than me. Wang Hao has already obtained the true transmission from Old Man Wei, and learned skills superior to mine; what qualifications do I have left to teach him? Now that Old Man Wei is gone, Wang Hao, seeking a master, would naturally seek those who are even stronger. I suppose only Elder Su from Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion qualifies."

During the conversation, Liang Tian intervened, "What do you guys think, how long can Ling Chen last against Wang Hao?"

"It's hard to say. From the match with Yang Zhe on the other side, it's apparent that Ling Chen's abilities are average, but he is very cunning and good at employing strategies. Plus, he's skilled in archery, which might stall for some time."

"Archery?" Huang Zheng snorted coldly, "How effective can his archery be, no matter how skilled? Is Wang Hao really that easy to handle? Just wait and see, Ling Chen's archery will be effortlessly countered by Wang Hao. Once Wang Hao executes the Shattered Leaf Step, he can easily defeat Ling Chen and take first place."

Now, on the spacious arena, Ling Chen stood quietly, gazing straight ahead. Wang Hao's recent words had truly startled him.

Wang Hao was indeed a man of bold talent and courage, daring to utter such words in front of so many elders from Yangxin Pavilion. Did he not fear offending those elders?

During his contemplation, Wang Hao opposite him spoke, "Ling Chen, I've made my request, what do you think?"

Ling Chen touched his nose and said, "Wang, after thinking it over, it seems I'm at a disadvantage."

"No!" Wang Hao shook his head and said, "Don't you want to witness my skills? As long as you meet my demand, I can play with you for a bit and broaden your horizons."

"What if I refuse?"

Upon hearing this, Wang Hao raised a finger and proudly stated, "One move! I will defeat you in one move."

Heh!

Ling Chen couldn't help but laugh. Wang Hao's confidence was indeed swollen to the extreme, bordering on arrogance. It seemed as if having the opportunity to duel with him was a great honor.

Forget it!

Half a sentence more is wasted when there's no interest in conversation. Ling Chen had no interest in further talk with Wang Hao.

"Wang, with so many onlookers below, let's not waste time. Let's decide it quickly. I'm curious to see how you plan to defeat me within one move."

"Alright." Wang Hao nodded, "Since you're looking for trouble, don't blame me for being unkind."

As his words fell, Wang Hao turned and walked back, stopping only when he reached the edge of the arena. Then he turned back around, locking his gaze firmly on Ling Chen.

"Begin!"

With Wang Hao's voice, Ling Chen's eyes instantly sharpened, like a hungry wolf, fixating disastrously on Wang Hao, watching his every move.

At that moment, the stationary Wang Hao suddenly leaned forward. Then, his footsteps spread out in an odd pattern, swiftly approaching Ling Chen.

Wang Hao's footsteps were extremely bizarre, seemingly not even touching the ground, like a leaf lightly drifting over the surface, moving at a rapid pace, and in a blink, he was close in front of Ling Chen.

Chapter 738 Nine Yang Qiankun Step

Shattered Leaf Step!

Seeing Wang Hao deploy the Shattered Leaf Step once again, several elders in the stands stood up, looked on intently, watching Wang Hao's footwork without even blinking, afraid of missing any detail.

The Shattered Leaf Step was once the Absolute Skill of Wang Hao's Master in the Martial Arts world, and his movement technique was extremely formidable. Anyone who mastered the Shattered Leaf Step moved as lightly as a leaf, as if a gentle breeze was passing by, with great speed. It was highly effective both in offense and defense.

Now, with Wang Hao's Master having passed away, he was probably the only one in the whole world who was proficient in the Shattered Leaf Step.

At this moment, Wang Hao displayed the exquisite Shattered Leaf Step in its entirety, moving so swiftly that he seemed like a falling leaf carried by the light wind, closing in on Ling Chen in an instant.

Noticing the racing shadow in front of him, Ling Chen didn't even have time to think, and almost instinctively threw a punch, targeting that figure.

However, before Ling Chen's fist could make contact with Wang Hao, the figure swayed again and disappeared right in front of Ling Chen. By the time Ling Chen realized what was happening, the figure had already appeared on his left side.

Feeling the sharp breeze of the approaching strike, Ling Chen's complexion immediately changed, with no opportunity to dodge or defend.

Seeing this, everyone sighed for Ling Chen. They had thought Ling Chen could at least hold on for a minute or two, but from the current situation, it seemed he couldn't even withstand one move from Wang Hao.

It appeared that the difference in strength between the two was too vast; Ling Chen just couldn't afford to drag on the fight.

Sitting in the stands, Du Kang shook his head slightly, sighing inwardly. He had done all he could to help, but strength was not something that could be easily compensated for. Although he had lost the match, Du Kang felt that Ling Chen making it this far was already quite impressive.

"Look quickly!"

Just when everyone thought that Ling Chen was certain to lose, a sudden exclamation erupted from the crowd.

People looked intently and saw Ling Chen had stepped aside, about a meter away from where Wang Hao was, perfectly evading Wang Hao's attack.

How did this happen?

Everyone stared at Ling Chen, their faces filled with disbelief.

They all clearly saw that Ling Chen was close to Wang Hao, with no chance to dodge and no way to counterattack; he had to withstand Wang Hao's attack with his body. Thus, at the moment Wang Hao made his move, they were all convinced Ling Chen was done for. Yet, the situation before them defied everyone's expectations.

Not only was Ling Chen unharmed, he had calmly avoided Wang Hao's attack.

How on earth did he manage to do that? Just now, everyone was only watching Wang Hao and not a single person paid attention to Ling Chen's actions.

At this very moment, Wang Hao on the stage, just like everyone else, seemed somewhat stunned. The battle he thought he was sure to win had somehow been dodged by Ling Chen.

Of course, this wasn't the most important thing—the most critical part was that he hadn't seen clearly how Ling Chen had managed to evade.

In the stands, an elder rubbed his eyes, staring at Ling Chen on the stage, and asked, "Did anyone see clearly just now? How did that Ling Chen dodge the attack?"

Hearing this, several elders shook their heads in turn, indicating they didn't see it.

"You..."

"Wang, what happened to the promised 'one move'?"

Before Wang Hao could finish, Ling Chen had already taken over the conversation.

Hmph!

Wang Hao's eyes turned icy, as he once again moved his feet and quickly pressed towards Ling Chen, his heavy palm violently shooting out with the intention of knocking Ling Chen to the ground.

However, as with the earlier situation, before Wang Hao's attack could land, Ling Chen had already vanished from his original position. By the time Wang Hao realized it, Ling Chen had reappeared a meter away, watching him with an amused smile.

If one could say that the first time was a coincidence, then the recurrence of the same situation definitely ruled out coincidence. Ling Chen must have used some technique to evade his attack.

"So that's how it is."

At this moment, up in the stands, Du Kang shifted his gaze away from Ling Chen and leaned back in his seat, taking a sip of wine. His wrinkled face bore a meaningful smile.

Seeing this, a group of elders couldn't help but inquire, "Elder Du, have you discerned something? Please share with us."

Swirling the wine gourd in his hand, Du Kang replied with a laugh, "Actually... it's very simple. While Old Man Wei's Shattered Leaf Step is indeed an Absolute Skill, there are countless Martial Arts in this world, and it's not limited to just the Shattered Leaf Step. Gentlemen, surely you must have heard of the Nine Yang Qiankun Step."

Nine Yang Qiankun Step?

At these words, the elders in the stands were astounded.

Liang Tian stared blankly at Du Kang and said, "Elder Du, you're not joking, are you? Is that really the Nine Yang Qiankun Step? To my knowledge, wasn't that Martial Art lost? How did Ling Chen manage to learn it?"

"Previously, no one had discovered it, so it was considered lost, but Elder Su was fortunate enough to find the cultivation manual for the Nine Yang Qiankun Step. I've watched him practice it before, which is why the memory is so vivid. It's not strange for Ling Chen, being Apprentice to Elder Su, to know the Nine Yang Qiankun Step."

Tsk Tsk!

Everyone couldn't help but marvel in admiration, not expecting Ling Chen to have learned the Nine Yang Qiankun Step.

Within the Martial Arts world, notable movement techniques can be counted on one's fingers, and the Shattered Leaf Step is one of them. However, the fame of the Nine Yang Qiankun Step is even greater than that of the Shattered Leaf Step, said to be a very ancient Martial Art.

Watching Ling Chen freely moving around on the stage, Huang Zheng snorted coldly, his tone filled with envy, "That kid's luck is really good, even managing to learn such a lost Martial Art."

At this moment, Wang Hao's expression grew uglier. Not only had Ling Chen evaded his attacks time and again, but he hadn't even grazed the hem of Ling Chen's clothing.

As a prominent figure on the Earthly List whose strength far surpassed that of Ling Chen, it was truly humiliating for him to not even touch a corner of Ling Chen's clothes. Especially since he had claimed earlier that he would finish Ling Chen off with one strike, and yet after so many attempts, Ling Chen remained active on the arena.

Under the watchful eyes of the public, he was on the verge of losing face completely.

"Wang, why don't you continue?" Seeing Wang Hao come to a halt, his face ashen, Ling Chen couldn't help but speak up.

Wang Hao glanced at Ling Chen's feet and asked in a deep voice, "What technique did you use just now?"

"Just a movement technique. Why, is it only you, Wang, who is allowed to be skilled at movement techniques, and not me?"

"Good, I really want to see if it's your skill that's formidable, or if mine is superior." As soon as he finished speaking, Wang Hao's feet subtly shifted, and his body chased after Ling Chen once again.

As Wang Hao closed in, Ling Chen dared not hesitate and immediately ran backwards. His steps were small, but with every stride, the directions were different, unpredictable left and right, seemingly random yet full of profound mysteries.

Furthermore, every step he took perfectly avoided Wang Hao's pursuit.

For a while, Ling Chen and Wang Hao continued a cat-and-mouse chase on the stage, neither able to gain the upper hand over the other.

Chapter 739 The Terrifying Wang Hao

"I didn't expect that Ling Chen actually had some skills."

"Yes! Even Wang Hao couldn't catch up to him, it seems he had been hiding his true strength in the previous two matches."

"That's right, if he had used this movement technique earlier, dealing with Tong Nan and Yang Zhe would have been much easier."

Watching the changes on the stage, the crowd beneath was abuzz with conversation.

"It's just a movement technique, what's so great about that?" someone in the crowd said: "Even if Ling Chen's movement technique is formidable, the strength difference is still there. Just wait and see, Ling Chen won't last long."

At this moment, Ling Chen was swiftly moving across the stage, dodging Wang Hao's pursuit. The two ran around the ring for tens of meters, and Ling Chen started feeling his breath becoming unsteady.

Although Su He had taught him the Nine Yang Qiankun Step, his strength was after all much weaker than Wang Hao's; it was difficult to keep it up for long.

The most important thing was that the Nine Yang Qiankun Step was powerful, but it also consumed a great deal of Inner Strength, each step draining a significant amount of it. In this regard, Ling Chen was at an even greater disadvantage.

Therefore, if this continued, once he ran out of stamina, Ling Chen's defeat was inevitable.

No, he had to find a way to turn the tables.

In a flash of thought, Ling Chen, who was charging forward, came to a sudden halt. Then twisting his waist, his right hand brushed over his waist. As the Tianling Blade came into his hand, Ling Chen turned and thrust backward, directly towards Wang Hao's forehead.

Seeing the sharp point of the sword thrusting towards him, Wang Hao hastily stopped, lightly tapped on the floor with his foot, and immediately retreated, avoiding the sword thrust.

After the missed strike, Ling Chen did not continue to pursue but retreated backward, widening the distance between them.

Retreating to the weapons rack, Ling Chen put away the Tianling Blade, and took down a bow and arrows from the rack.

Seeing Ling Chen's actions, the crowd nodded silently. As expected, Ling Chen had chosen the bow and arrows. However, it was uncertain whether Ling Chen's archery would pose a threat to Wang Hao.

Just as the crowd was pondering, Ling Chen raised the longbow in his hands, and placed a sharp arrow on the bowstring.

"You think you can deal with me using archery?" Wang Hao's mouth curled slightly, clearly not taking Ling Chen's tactics seriously.

At that moment, Ling Chen raised the longbow, aiming the arrowhead at Wang Hao's forehead, following the movement of his body's direction.

Suddenly, Ling Chen's arrowhead sharply turned to the side, and the arrow was shot instantly.

Seeing this, the crowd was taken aback for a moment. Ling Chen didn't aim at Wang Hao but shot the arrow next to him.

Everyone had seen Ling Chen's archery before, he wouldn't make such a rudimentary mistake.

But then, why did he do that?

As everyone was filled with doubt, Ling Chen fired several more arrows, all of them flying past Wang Hao's body and sticking into the floor.

Wang Hao frowned slightly, looking at the few arrows in the floor with a flicker of confusion in his eyes. Like everyone else, he didn't understand what Ling Chen was trying to do.

Under the watchful eyes of the crowd, Ling Chen suddenly put down the bow and arrows, then sped up, running rapidly around Wang Hao.

As Ling Chen ran, Wang Hao, standing in the middle of the ring, suddenly felt his whole body tighten, as if his hands and feet were bound, unable to move.

What...

Seeing this, everyone was shocked.

Wang Hao looked down and realized that there was a fine thread on his body. He had only been concerned with watching the arrows before, and hadn't noticed that the ends of the arrows were connected to fine threads.

At this moment, entangled by silk threads, Wang Hao's body was tightly restrained, standing motionless there.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, Ling Chen once again drew out the Tianling Blade from his waist and thrust it towards the trapped Wang Hao.

As the tip of the sword approached, Wang Hao's brow furrowed, and he suddenly stomped on the floor with both feet. Instantly, Wang Hao's body leapt upward. As he jumped, the silk threads were all stretched taut. Not only that, but the arrows that were embedded in the floor were also pulled out, springing up with his body.

With a thrust into the air, Ling Chen, without hesitation, tapped the ground with the tips of his toes, and instantly changed the direction of his sword strike, pursuing Wang Hao above him.

However, before the sword tip could pierce Wang Hao's body, Ling Chen felt the Tianling Blade in his hand tighten. Looking up, Ling Chen was surprised to find that the tip of the Tianling Blade was actually caught between Wang Hao's two feet.

Before Ling Chen could react, Wang Hao twisted his waist and lightly stepped twice on the blade with his toes.

Suddenly, Ling Chen felt a strong force transmitted through the blade, and the Tianling Blade was immediately knocked aside.

With the threat of the Tianling Blade gone, Wang Hao finally landed on the ground, hastily retreated a few steps, all the way to the edge of the arena.

"Not bad!" Wang Hao looked at Ling Chen and said: "It's a good move, but such a low-level trick is useless against me." With these words, Wang Hao swayed his body, and his entire Hua Realm strength burst forth, instantly breaking the silk threads that were entwined around him.

Impressive!

Ling Chen's heart sank. He thought he could catch him off guard, but he did not expect Wang Hao's strength to be so formidable that he could not be trapped.

This move was devised by him, because he was clear in his mind that it would be very difficult to threaten Wang Hao with just archery. Therefore, only through special means could Wang Hao be restrained. Unfortunately, he still underestimated Wang Hao's strength.

Those silk threads were obtained with great difficulty, and they were very strong, able to withstand hundreds of kilograms in weight despite their fineness. However, under the powerful Hua Realm force of Wang Hao, those silk threads broke in an instant, showing how formidable Wang Hao's strength was.

"Your tricks must be exhausted by now, now it's my turn."

As soon as these words fell, Wang Hao tapped the ground with his toes, and the Shattered Leaf Step was unfolded again, like a gust of wind, pressing down on Ling Chen instantly.

Seeing Wang Hao rushing at him, Ling Chen, without even thinking, raised the Tianling Blade horizontally and stabbed it towards Wang Hao's chest. If Wang Hao continued to approach at the same speed, his body would eventually be penetrated by the Tianling Blade.

However, just as Wang Hao was about to come close, he bent his knees sharply and leaped high, instantly clearing over Ling Chen's head.

Not good!

Ling Chen was secretly alarmed, and he hurriedly executed the Nine Yang Qiankun Step to stay far away, not giving Wang Hao the chance to get close.

But just as Ling Chen's body moved away and before he could stabilize his stance, he felt a gust of wind hitting him.

Eh?

With a quick glance from the corner of his eye, Ling Chen only saw a figure flashing by. Before he could react, a strong force suddenly pounded down, directly sending his body flying.

Thud!

A mouthful of fresh blood spurted out, and Ling Chen fell heavily on the floor, feeling extremely painful all over.

So fast!

Ling Chen clenched his teeth tightly, his face pale, looking at Wang Hao with a hint of shock in his eyes.

This guy... had actually been holding back his true strength.

From Wang Hao's previous move, it was clear that his strength had increased by thirty percent compared to before. Of course, part of the reason was himself.

The continuous battles had exhausted his strength too much, and he couldn't keep up with Wang Hao's pace any longer.

What should be done now?

Chapter 740 The Final Showdown (1)

"Give up."

Wang Hao advanced step by step, his expression indifferent, as he spoke to Ling Chen.

Ling Chen frowned slightly, his pupils sparkling with a sharp light like Mo Che's. The full force of Wang Hao's power was immense, and Ling Chen even wondered if Wang Hao's strength had already reached the fifth rank of the Earthly List.

If that were true, no matter how determined Ling Chen was, he couldn't possibly defeat Wang Hao.

"Elder Du, considering the strength Wang Hao has just displayed, could it be he has already...?"

"Not yet," Du Kang shook his head and said: "Wang Hao's strength might be very close to the fifth rank of the Earthly List, but he hasn't crossed that step. Otherwise, once his realm reached the fifth of the Earthly List, with Ling Chen's current strength, even if he had the Nine Yang Qiankun Step to protect him, he wouldn't have been able to hold on for this long. However, no matter what, with Wang Hao's hidden strength emerging, Ling Chen's situation is likely to become very dangerous."

During this conversation, Ling Chen on the stage locked his brows tightly, rapidly pondering strategies in his mind.

This won't do!

At this rate, he would be defeated by Wang Hao within a minute. He had to think of a way to turn the situation around.

As he was considering his options, Wang Hao, seeing that Ling Chen had yet to react, simply ceased talking and, with a tip of his toe, his body immediately surged forward.

With the Shattered Leaf Step unfolded, Wang Hao's feet seemed to tread on air, his speed lightning-fast, as if blown by the wind, he instantly closed in on Ling Chen.

He unleashed a palm strike that appeared light and breezy, yet contained immensely powerful force.

In that moment, Ling Chen felt the fierce wind against his face, the power carried by the meaty palm was like an imposing mountain standing before him, exerting a great pressure that made even breathing difficult.

With no time to think, Ling Chen quickly crossed his arms in front of his chest, forcefully blocking Wang Hao's attack.

As soon as Wang Hao's palm made contact with Ling Chen, the robust Hua Realm force erupted violently, condensing into a strong burst of energy that instantly sent Ling Chen flying backward.

Wang Hao's blow was nearly full force with no restraint.

Reeling from the attack, Ling Chen was flung several meters away, plummeting towards the edge of the stage.

Seeing Ling Chen's body about to leave the bounds of the stage, the crowd around involuntarily sighed.

Lost!

As long as Ling Chen's body hit the ground outside the stage, this duel would be completely lost. Indeed, Wang Hao is still Wang Hao, the strongest among the disciples of Yangxin Pavilion, and not even the disciple of Su He could defeat him.

However, it was no easy feat for Ling Chen, with the strength of someone on the Dragon List, to last so long against Wang Hao.

Yet, just when everyone thought Ling Chen was certain to lose, they suddenly saw him in mid-air taking a deep breath, twisting his waist, shooting downwards with a fierce glint of cold light flashing in his hand.

It was the Tianling Blade!

Realizing the weapon in Ling Chen's hand, the crowd immediately gasped.

At that moment, Ling Chen holding the Tianling Blade, raised his arm high, the tip of the blade gently touching the ground. The blade, bearing his entire body weight, immediately bent. Using the flexibility of the blade, Ling Chen's falling body finally came to a halt.

Following that, Ling Chen flicked his wrist, and the bent blade sprang back in an instant, propelling his body upwards over two meters high. In mid-air, Ling Chen swiftly turned his body, flying back towards the stage.

However, Wang Hao had already noticed Ling Chen's movement. Seeing him attempting to get back on stage, Wang Hao didn't utter another word. He immediately stepped forward, lifted his leg high, and kicked fiercely at Ling Chen.

Bang!

Amidst the muffled sound, Ling Chen's body lost control once again, flying off the stage.

Seeing this, Ling Chen bore the pain from the kick, and with a flick of his hand, the Tianling Blade transformed in an instant from a sword tip into a steel rod.

As the steel rod hit the ground, Ling Chen grabbed it with both hands, twisted his waist, and spun in the air, flying over Wang Hao's head and landed firmly on the stage.

The onlookers all breathed a sigh of relief at this sight.

That was close!

Had it not been for Ling Chen's skills, he would have been defeated already. However, even though Ling Chen had dodged this disaster, the crowd still didn't have high hopes for him. At this point, Ling Chen had completely fallen into a disadvantage and had lost the qualification to continue the fight against Wang Hao.

Even if Ling Chen forcibly stayed on the stage, it would only be lingering on in defeat, merely delaying the inevitable, which wouldn't benefit him at all. In the end, he would not only be defeated by Wang Hao but also end up wounded all over. It really wasn't worth it.

"No way!" Yuan Yun said with a frown: "Ling Cheng can't get any advantage if this continues. Big Brother, I think we should quickly get Ling Cheng down from there. If this goes on, something bad will happen sooner or later."

"Right." Xia Yue echoed with worry on her face: "Let's concede the match voluntarily."

Qiu Yong shook his head and said in a deep voice: "Ling Cheng has his own perseverance, and besides, it's him who's fighting on the stage; he knows his situation best. We shouldn't make decisions for him without his consent. Moreover, there are rules in the competition that forbid deliberate harm to someone else's life, so at most, Ling Cheng will only get injured and won't be in life-threatening danger. Let's just wait and see the situation before we act."

In the midst of speaking, the situation on the stage underwent another change.

Under Wang Hao's fierce assault, Ling Chen was completely unable to defend himself, several times knocked down to the ground, even his Tianling Blade was struck away.

Without the assistance of the Tianling Blade, Ling Chen, armed only with his bare hands, was even more powerless. In less than half a minute, Ling Chen had already spewed out two mouthfuls of blood, his face pale as paper, panting heavily, his legs trembled slightly, as if his body was about to give out.

Below the stage, porridge girl bit her thin lips, her beautiful eyes shifting away, unwilling to watch Ling Chen getting hurt any longer.

Her gaze flickered, and porridge girl quickly locked her sight onto a stone platform not far away. An exquisite wooden box was placed there; the Nine Elements Pill was inside that box.

As long as she could get her hands on that Nine Elements Pill, she could save her master.

Thinking of this, porridge girl clenched her fists, a hint of hesitation flashing in her beautiful eyes.

Now that everyone's attention was focused on Ling Chen and Wang Hao, if she played her cards right, she could take the Nine Elements Pill while no one was paying attention. But getting hold of it was the easy part; getting the pill out was going to be extremely difficult.

Especially those old men in the stands, if they made a move, she definitely wouldn't be able to escape. She had to think of a way to distract them.

Boom!

While porridge girl was contemplating, another loud noise came from the stage. Ling Chen's body was seen falling heavily from over two meters in the air, his mouth vomiting blood incessantly, his handsome features twisted in pain.

"Ling Chen!"

"Ling Cheng!"

Seeing Ling Chen lying on the ground, struggling in pain, porridge girl, Su Mei, and others like Qiu Yong all changed their expressions, their eyes full of concern as they watched Ling Chen.

Wang Hao stood with one hand behind him, body straight, looking down at Ling Chen, and spoke indifferently: "Give up. You're no match for me!"