

The Beauty 841

Chapter 841 - 846: Martial Arts Symposium (3)

Lei Jiang is in danger!

Ling Chen thought to himself. Ling Chen had already witnessed Lei Jiang's skills earlier. Although impressive, they were still somewhat lacking compared to the masters on the Dragon List. No matter how formidable Lei Jiang's methods were, they couldn't make up for the disparity in strength between them.

After all, not everyone can be like Ling Chen, possessing so many advanced techniques. With just the Nine Yang Qiankun Step, Ling Chen can surpass many masters.

At this moment, facing Qin Dong's attack, Lei Jiang's eyes narrowed, and he retreated rapidly, trying to distance himself from Qin Dong.

But just as Lei Jiang prepared to step back, a bright flash streaked by. By the time he reacted, a soft sword had already wrapped around his waist.

Oh no!

Lei Jiang's expression changed, but before he could respond, he saw Qin Dong's lips curl into a smug smile, and his wrist jerked sharply. Under the pull of the soft sword, Lei Jiang's body instantly spun 360 degrees in mid-air, then landed heavily on the floor, making a 'bang' sound.

Looking at Lei Jiang on the ground, Qin Dong withdrew the soft sword into his belt, shook his head disdainfully, and said, "I thought you were formidable, turns out you're so vulnerable. You'd better go home and train for a few more years and stop embarrassing yourself."

"You're despicable!"

Several men who had come with Lei Jiang shouted angrily.

"Despicable?" Qin Dong laughed indifferently, "Where am I despicable? As a person of the Martial Arts, don't you know the dangerous nature of the Martial Arts World? Alright! I'm lazy to talk nonsense with you, hurry and release the person, don't force me to act."

"Did you all hear that." Tong Ye said proudly, "Release me quickly, or you'll regret it?"

Hearing this, the men looked at each other and, unwillingly, released Tong Ye. Among them, Lei Jiang was the strongest, and since Lei Jiang couldn't stand against Qin Dong, let alone the others.

Once free, Tong Ye immediately rushed toward Qin Dong, directly embracing him with affection and said, "Qin Dong, I knew you wouldn't abandon me; you would definitely appear when I need you the most."

Qin Dong lightly tapped Tong Ye's nose, smiled, and said, "I promised to protect you well. It's a promise I won't break."

Tong Ye nodded, her eyes glowing with happiness.

"Let's go."

After speaking, Tong Ye held Qin Dong's hand, and they walked into the crowd side by side.

At this time, a few men hurried to Lei Jiang's side and helped him up from the ground.

"Jiang, are you okay?"

"I..." Lei Jiang opened his mouth, ready to respond. But before he could speak, his legs suddenly gave way, and he collapsed directly on the ground, his face full of pain.

"Jiang! Jiang!" The men became anxious and asked him with concern, "How are you?"

Lei Jiang didn't speak but pointed to his legs. Only then did they notice that Lei Jiang's ankles were stained with blood. At this moment, the blood was seeping through his shoes and socks, trickling onto the floor.

"Jiang, I'll help you up first." One of the men grabbed Lei Jiang's arm, trying to lift him.

"Don't move him."

Upon hearing this voice, the men looked up, seeing a handsome young man walking over. They had noticed the young man's presence when Tong Ye arrived, but had dismissed him.

"Why can't we move him?" Lei Jiang's companion asked.

Ling Chen didn't reply but squatted down and examined Lei Jiang's injuries. Seeing the conspicuous wounds, Ling Chen's eyes flashed with severity.

So ruthless!

These wounds were all caused by Qin Dong. Just when Lei Jiang landed, Qin Dong quickly struck, slashing twice across Lei Jiang's ankles. The speed was so fast that no one noticed Qin Dong's subtle action; even Lei Jiang probably didn't feel it.

A soft sword is very thin, with a blade about the thickness of paper, and if the speed is fast enough, even when injured, one might not immediately feel it.

Qin Dong had already defeated Lei Jiang and still used such despicable means to injure him. Fortunately, Ling Chen was present; otherwise, trying to help Lei Jiang sit up could accelerate the blood loss and endanger his life.

"Fortunately." After inspecting the injuries, Ling Chen nodded, "You're quite lucky. If it had been a bit deeper, it would have injured your tendons. Then, you'd never be able to practice martial arts in your life."

Upon hearing this, Lei Jiang looked pale and quickly asked, "Friend, now then..."

Ling Chen smiled slightly, "Don't worry, it's not serious, just rest for a while, and you'll be fine." Saying this, Ling Chen tore two pieces of cloth from his clothes and wrapped them around Lei Jiang's wounds.

"Alright, take him back." Ling Chen stood up.

Lei Jiang looked at Ling Chen gratefully and said, "Friend, thank you for saving me. How may I address you?"

"It's just a fleeting encounter, no need to ask so much. Hurry home and rest, I should be going." After speaking, Ling Chen waved at Lei Jiang, and then walked toward the crowd.

After strolling in the hall for a while, Ling Chen drank a few glasses of champagne and ate some of the host's sumptuous food to fill his stomach.

Sated, Ling Chen was considering finding a quiet place to sit, but at this moment, a group of about ten people walked into the hall entrance, mostly elderly men in their sixties and seventies, with only one or two middle-aged men.

However, the most surprising thing was that among them, there was actually a young man about twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old.

Ling Chen saw the noisy hall suddenly quiet down, couldn't help but look over at the hall entrance. When he noticed the young man trailing the group, his expression changed slightly, showing a hint of surprise.

It's him!

Unexpectedly meeting him here.

As he pondered this, the young man at the back of the group seemed to sense Ling Chen's gaze and glanced in his direction.

As their eyes met, the young man's expression clearly showed a hint of surprise. Then, he called a staff member to his side, whispered a few words, and detached himself from the group, heading straight towards Ling Chen's position.

Seeing the other approaching, Ling Chen immediately stood up to greet him, smiling, saying, "What a coincidence, I didn't expect to meet you here."

"I didn't expect it either." The young man replied coolly, "What are you doing here?"

"Didn't you see? I'm here for the conference."

"With your skills, you should be on the host's VIP list, why are you in such a place? It's full of low-level masters, unworthy of your status."

Ling Chen shrugged, smiling indifferently, "I don't think my status is that remarkable. I'm just here to join the fun, it doesn't matter."

Chapter 842 - 847: Wang Hao's Hostility

The young man said, "Do you want me to talk to the organizers and let you go in with me?"

Ling Chen waved his hand and said, "That won't be necessary. I'm just here to take a look, broaden my horizons, and I'll leave after wandering around for a bit."

"Alright then." The young man nodded and said, "Since you don't want to come with me, I won't force you. However, I must remind you, if you want to broaden your horizons, you can only go inside. Outside are just some low-level martial arts practitioners; following them won't teach you much. Also, you're an Earthly List expert, so instead of wasting time here, you'd be better off befriending other Earthly List experts, which will greatly benefit your martial arts progress."

"No problem, you go ahead. I'll just look around." After saying that, Ling Chen changed his tone and asked with a smile, "Honestly, I didn't expect to see you here. I thought people from the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion wouldn't lower themselves to attend such gatherings."

The appearance of Wang Hao indeed surprised Ling Chen. Wang Hao is considered the top of the younger generation in the Yangxin Pavilion. Although he lost to Ling Chen in the last competition, Ling Chen had a lot of tricks up his sleeve. In terms of real strength, Wang Hao is much stronger than Ling Chen.

"If it were another gathering, I certainly wouldn't attend. But the martial arts seminar is different. The initiator of this gathering is quite influential and is regarded as a senior figure with high esteem and prestige in the martial arts world. In terms of seniority, he is on par with your Master Elder Su. Moreover, the martial arts seminar is an open gathering, attended by figures from all walks of life. Of course, the most important point is that many Earthly List experts will come to attend the martial arts seminar. Over time, the martial arts seminar has become synonymous with a gathering of Earthly List experts." Wang Hao explained.

"I see. Alright, since you have other things to do, you should go ahead. Let's meet up later if there's time."

Wang Hao glanced at Ling Chen and asked again, "Are you sure you don't want to come with me?"

"No." Ling Chen shook his head.

Although Ling Chen had crossed paths with Wang Hao, they weren't exactly friends, so he didn't want to follow Wang Hao. Moreover, he could sense Wang Hao's hostility towards him. As for why Wang Hao was hostile, Ling Chen was aware of some reasons, mostly related to Su He.

Back at the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, Du Kang had mentioned Wang Hao to Ling Chen. Among the young disciples in the Yangxin Pavilion, Wang Hao was the most gifted, becoming an Earthly List expert before the age of thirty. Moreover, Wang Hao's rank hovered between fifth and sixth on the Earthly List. Few could achieve this at such an age.

Of course, a wise mentor produces outstanding pupils. Wang Hao's achievements were inseparable from his master's guidance. According to Du Kang, Wang Hao's master was of the same generation as Su

He, and their strengths were nearly equal, both being Heavenly List experts. However, Wang Hao's master passed away a few years ago due to health issues.

Therefore, to continue improving himself, Wang Hao needed guidance from a master. Throughout the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, besides Su He, no one else qualified to be his master. However, Su He took Ling Chen as a disciple, which undoubtedly unsettled Wang Hao. This is why Wang Hao harbored hostility towards Ling Chen.

"Alright. Since you don't want to come with me, I won't force you." After saying that, Wang Hao turned around and left the hall with his group.

After seeing Wang Hao and his group leave, Ling Chen looked around, hesitating about where to go. Wang Hao had made it clear that the focus of this martial arts seminar was the interaction and communication among the Earthly List experts. But, without connections, one could only follow these low-level martial arts practitioners.

Should I just forget about it? Ling Chen thought to himself.

Just as Ling Chen was about to leave, a hand suddenly reached out from behind and landed on Ling Chen's shoulder.

Ling Chen quickly turned around, only to see an old face appearing in front of him.

"Mr. He?" Ling Chen was slightly startled, looking at He Ziyun in surprise, not expecting to encounter him here.

This is bad. I originally wanted to avoid He Ziyun, but ended up meeting him here. In a flash of thought, Ling Chen scratched his head and said with an embarrassed smile, "Mr. He, what brings you here?"

He Ziyun kept a stern face and said, "If you can come here, why can't I? Don't forget, I hold an invitation." After saying that, He Ziyun pointed to a corner not far away and said, "Come with me; I have something to tell you."

Ling Chen had no choice but to obediently follow behind He Ziyun. Once they reached the corner, He Ziyun turned to Ling Chen and said, "I know all about Yu Peng's incident. Although your actions this time weren't quite right, you did a good job with Yu Peng's matter, at least helping to silence those above. Jiulin has already presented Yu Peng's evidence to the higher-ups. After seeing it, they collectively chose to stay silent and decided to deal with this escape incident lightly without making it public. However, although the higher-ups won't hold Lonely Wolf accountable, your charges are still not cleared. Jiulin tried to plead on your behalf, hoping for leniency from the higher-ups, but they are very clear: you must be detained."

Upon hearing this, Ling Chen said with a wry smile, "So I still have to carry the label of a criminal?"

"A criminal, indeed, but at least you're not in any danger now. Moreover, the task of capturing you is entirely up to Lonely Wolf. They can act whenever they want."

"Is that so?" Ling Chen's mouth curled into a smile, and he nodded, "That's good."

The implication from He Ziyun was clear: Lonely Wolf would catch him if they wanted, or leave him be if not. Therefore, he was safe for now.

"Also, those who broke out of prison with you, the higher-ups have clearly instructed that they must be apprehended again. I don't care what deals you have with them. In any case, tell them to be cautious and not roam around freely. They need to stay put."

"Mr. He, rest assured, I guarantee they won't cause any more trouble. If they do, you don't need to get involved; I'll personally take them back to prison." Speaking up to here, Ling Chen changed the subject and asked, "Mr. He, what brought you here today?"

"Because of your matter, these past few days have been hectic. I originally didn't plan to attend this martial arts seminar, but Yu Peng's confession turned the situation around, coupled with the organizers' persistent invitations, so I decided to come and take a look." Pausing for a moment, He Ziyun continued, "Didn't you say last time that you wanted to gain experience by following me? Since you're here, come along with me."

"Alright!" Ling Chen replied with a smile.

"Let's go, over there."

Under He Ziyun's guidance, Ling Chen reached the entrance on one side of the hall. After showing their invitation, the reception staff immediately welcomed He Ziyun and Ling Chen in and arranged for someone to transport them by electric cart to their temporary residence.

Chapter 843 - 848: The Qin Brothers

The organizers were undeniably extravagant, arranging high-end villas for the guests. Not only were these spaces large and lavishly furnished, but they were also fully equipped with everything one could possibly need. Moreover, each villa's exterior was complemented by two maids and a private chef.

Sitting in the spacious and commanding living room, Ling Chen crossed his legs, munching on sunflower seeds, and asked, "Mr. He, can I ask you something? Do you know someone named Tong Ye?"

"Tong Ye?" He Ziyun thought for a moment and shook his head, saying, "I don't know her. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, it's nothing, I'm just a bit curious about her identity." With that, Ling Chen recounted the events that took place in the hall earlier.

After listening, He Ziyun said, "If that's the case, I think I know who you're talking about. In the Martial Arts world, there's only one family with the last name Tong that holds significant influence. The Tong Ye you mentioned, her father should be Tong Jian, an eminent figure in the Martial Arts world. However, the reason the Tong family is so renowned is mainly because of Tong Ye's grandfather, who is a senior figure in the Martial Arts world, not any less esteemed than your Master Su He. The Martial Arts conference was his initiative."

"So that's how it is." Ling Chen finally understood. No wonder everyone was in awe of Tong Ye; it turns out she has such a prestigious background.

About an hour into their stay at the villa, event staff arrived to invite He Ziyun and Ling Chen to the venue.

The venue was at the center of a cluster of villas. After chatting with the welcoming staff, Ling Chen gained an initial understanding of the Martial Arts conference.

The Martial Arts conference was divided into two venues: a main venue, dedicated specifically to experts on the Earthly List, and a secondary venue for other martial arts enthusiasts.

Upon arrival, Ling Chen accompanied He Ziyun through the main entrance, where over twenty people were seated inside. Everyone was quietly sitting in their seats, either meditating with closed eyes, looking at their phones, or savoring fragrant tea, without any interaction throughout.

This quiet atmosphere created an oppressive feeling, making one feel very uneasy.

At this moment, the arrival of Ling Chen and He Ziyun caught the attention of many. However, everyone just glanced at them briefly and then diverted their eyes back to what they were doing, except for Wang Hao, who took another look at Ling Chen.

He Ziyun silently pointed to a nearby sofa, and Ling Chen immediately understood, following and sitting down. Soon, a staff member of the event brought fruit and fragrant tea, then respectfully stepped aside, waiting for any requests from the guests.

A few minutes passed, and the restless Ling Chen glanced around, couldn't help but lower his voice, and asked He Ziyun beside him, "Mr. He, why is no one talking? Is there some rule about this?"

He Ziyun smiled faintly, "It's not about rules; it's just that everyone prefers a place of quiet and stillness."

Just then, a few more people appeared at the entrance of the venue, walked in chatting and laughing, their loud voices breaking the tranquility of the place instantly.

Ling Chen looked closely and recognized Tong Ye among them, whom he had met once before. In addition to Tong Ye, there was also a young man named Qin Dong. The two were holding hands, looking intimate, with happy smiles on their faces. Behind them followed another young man.

Seeing the young man's appearance, Ling Chen's expression slightly tensed. Then, a smile with an underlying meaning appeared on his lips.

It was actually him!

Ling Chen thought to himself. That young man was none other than Qin Gang, the one Tang Guoxiong had summoned to deal with him. At that time, Tang Guoxiong wanted to use Qin Gang to kill him, but he was easily dealt with by Ling Chen.

Considering that Qin Gang was a martial arts practitioner, Ling Chen had spared his life and let him go, not expecting him to know Qin Dong. Qin Dong, Qin Gang... They didn't seem far apart in age; could they be brothers?

With that thought, Ling Chen's gaze alternated between Qin Gang and Qin Dong. The two bore some resemblance to each other; they must be brothers.

While Ling Chen was observing Qin Gang, the latter seemed to feel Ling Chen's gaze on him and couldn't help but look back at Ling Chen. Seeing Ling Chen's amused expression, Qin Gang's pupils slightly contracted, his face immediately turning cold.

Retracting his gaze, Qin Gang patted Qin Dong on the shoulder in front of him. When Qin Dong turned back, Qin Gang pointed to the place where Ling Chen was and whispered a few words. No one knew what Qin Gang said, but Qin Dong instantly locked his eyes on Ling Chen.

Soon afterwards, Qin Dong, accompanied by Qin Gang and Tong Ye, began to stride towards Ling Chen.

Standing in front, Qin Dong looked down on the seated Ling Chen and spoke, "Are you Ling Chen?"

"That's me. Do you need something from me?"

"I've heard that you and my brother have a bit of a grudge. As his elder brother, I'd like to help mediate."

"Mediate?" Ling Chen asked with a smirk, "How do you plan to mediate? Also, let me clarify, I have no grudge against your brother. He was hired to bother me and was defeated because he couldn't match my skills. If anyone should call it to account, it should be me against him."

"Is that so?" Qin Dong replied with a cold smile, "Do you think you're in a position to call us to account?"

"Why not?" Ling Chen countered, "Is it because the girl you're with has a significant background that you think you can disregard anyone?" He shook his head and said with a tone of teaching, "Young man, don't be too arrogant; it's better to be a bit lower profile, just in case you offend someone you shouldn't."

Hearing this, Qin Dong laughed haughtily, "Unfortunately, there's no one here I don't dare offend. Even if there were, it definitely wouldn't include you."

"If that's the case, then try to mess with me." Ling Chen looked Qin Dong straight in the eye, showing no fear of the provocation.

A Dragon List expert actually dared to provoke him so brazenly, truly ignorant of his own fortune.

"Qin Dong, that's enough. This is a public place, be mindful of the impact, don't go too far."

At this moment, a hoarse voice came from nearby. Upon hearing it, Qin Dong immediately retracted the sinister look in his eyes and nodded with a smile, "Master, rest assured, I'm just teasing this brother a bit, no harm intended. Let's go, younger brother!"

"Brother, this guy..."

Before Qin Gang finished his words, Qin Dong shot him a glance and softly scolded, "What's the rush? It's not like there's no opportunity." With that, Qin Dong turned to Ling Chen and raised his middle finger, "Kid, mark my words; I'll settle this score with you later."

Ling Chen shrugged, pretending not to hear the threat.

When Qin Dong and Qin Gang had walked away, Ling Chen's gaze followed them, observing as the three of them sat beside an old man, the very one who had just verbally restrained Qin Dong.

Chapter 844 - 849: Unity of Heaven and Man

"Mr. He, do you recognize the old man over there?" Ling Chen asked curiously.

He Ziyun glanced over and said, "I know him. That person is Heavenly Mechanism Jijiang, a top martial artist ranked in the top five on the Earthly List. He's very powerful. From what I overheard of your conversation with his disciple, do you have a grudge against them?"

"Not really." Ling Chen recounted the incident where Tang Guoxiong tried to sabotage him, saying, "He's a defeated opponent yet still dares to cause me trouble. If they really dare to come, just watch how I'll deal with them."

"It's better to be cautious. Although I haven't had dealings with Heavenly Mechanism Jijiang, I know he's very protective and indulges his disciples a lot. This has led to his disciples developing arrogant and overbearing attitudes."

Ling Chen confidently smiled, "That's because he hasn't faced a tough opponent." At this point, Ling Chen changed the topic, "Hey, Mr. He, what exactly does this Martial Arts Conference do? Are we just supposed to sit here?"

"Don't worry, you'll find out soon enough. In short, the focus of the Martial Arts Conference is not on 'discussion,' but on 'martial arts.'"

As they spoke, a sharply dressed man with slicked-back hair entered from the entrance and walked straight to the center of the venue. Once the middle-aged man stood still, he cupped his fists with both hands and bowed to the surrounding guests, his face full of amiable smiles.

"Ladies and gentlemen, it's time again for the triennial Martial Arts Conference. Besides some familiar faces, we also have many new faces, especially the arrival of Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion's Wang Hao. As the youngest top talent on the Earthly List, I'm thrilled to have invited him to attend. Young talents like Wang Hao are beneficial to martial arts in Huaxia, ensuring the future of martial arts. We old-timers no longer need to worry about the decline of martial arts."

Upon hearing the host's praise for Wang Hao, Qin Dong, sitting next to Heavenly Mechanism Jijiang, snorted disdainfully, "What's so great about it? When I reach his age, my achievements will surely surpass his."

Qin Dong's words immediately attracted the attention of many. Heavenly Mechanism Jijiang glanced at the silent Wang Hao and slightly frowned, then signaled his disciple to keep quiet with his eyes. In such a setting, some words could be spoken, while others couldn't. Wang Hao is from Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, with a background so vast that no one present could rival it.

Although Heavenly Mechanism Jijiang spoils his disciples, he knows the importance of not offending Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, as it is not a trifling matter.

Sensing his master's discontent, Qin Dong obediently closed his mouth and said no more. The host in the center pretended not to hear Qin Dong's words, laughed heartily, and continued, "Since there are many new faces participating in this conference, I'll reiterate the rules. First, no private fights are allowed during the conference. However, as martial artists, it's understandable to itch to test one's skills. So, both parties can spar, but they cannot engage in duels to the death, nor can they deliberately injure one another under the guise of sparring. Anyone found violating will be immediately disqualified and blacklisted. Our organizers will have no further dealings with them."

Pausing briefly, the middle-aged man continued, "Second, as fellow martial artists, having enmities and grievances is normal. Therefore, if there's some score to settle, you can go to the underground arena where there are no rule restrictions. Once you're in the ring, anything goes. Everyone present should be well aware of this, so I won't elaborate further."

"Third, as usual, you'll have five days to prepare. After five days, I will send you to the designated location. So, use these five days to prepare well and recharge so as not to miss the opportunity when the time comes. That's all I have to say. If anyone has any questions, feel free to ask now, and I will help clarify."

"No questions. Since there's nothing else, can I leave?" a middle-aged man asked.

"Of course. If everyone has no more questions, you can head back to your villas. When the time comes, I'll send someone to notify you."

Hearing this, the crowd stood up one after another and began to walk out of the venue.

Leaving the venue, Ling Chen and He Ziyun walked shoulder to shoulder on the tree-lined street.

"Mr. He, the man mentioned a five-day deadline. What does that mean?"

"Five days later, there will be a competition. But instead of calling it a competition, it's more of a gamble."

"A gamble?" Ling Chen was puzzled and asked, "What do you mean?"

"You won't understand even if I explain now. You'll naturally understand when the time comes." Finishing, He Ziyun asked, "What do you plan to do in these few days?"

Ling Chen shook his head and said, "I'm not sure yet. I originally planned to return to East Sea City, but since there's a turn for the better in Beijing, I don't need to be so anxious. I'll stay for a few days and return to East Sea City after the Martial Arts Conference ends."

At this point, Ling Chen glanced around and said seriously, "Mr. He, no news of Little Hua yet?"

"No." Mentioning Little Hua, He Ziyun's expression immediately turned grave.

"I've already asked them to help look, but there's no clue yet. The only thing that can be confirmed is that Little Hua is in the hands of the God Organization."

"Since she's with the God Organization, Little Hua shouldn't be in any mortal danger," Ling Chen said. The God Organization's desire for Little Hua isn't new; they had tried to capture her many times before, only to be thwarted by Ling Chen.

Therefore, Little Hua has significant value to the God Organization, and due to this value, the God Organization wouldn't harm her lightly.

However, the God Organization is known for its unscrupulous ways, so for Little Hua's safety, it's best to rescue her as soon as possible.

As they spoke, the two had already returned to the villa.

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One night passed.

The next morning, Ling Chen opened his eyes, rubbed his sleepy eyes, got out of bed, and walked to the window ledge of the third-floor bedroom, pushing open the window.

Looking at the green plants outside, Ling Chen took a few deep breaths of fresh air and prepared to go to the bathroom. But at that moment, Ling Chen's gaze was drawn to a figure on the roof of the opposite villa.

An old man lived in the villa opposite, frail and about eighty or ninety years old. At this moment, the old man stood on the rooftop, squatting in a horse stance and slowly moving his hands as if drawing circles in the air.

Although the old man's movements were very slow, Ling Chen's eyes were wide open, his eyes filled with envy.

Unity of Heaven and Man!

It was surprisingly the realm of Unity of Heaven and Man.

Ling Chen had only ever heard people mention the realm of Unity of Heaven and Man but had never seen it with his own eyes. And now, what the old man was displaying was precisely the highest realm of Unity of Heaven and Man.

Chapter 845 - 850: Overestimating Oneself

Unity of Heaven and Man!

A realm that countless martial arts practitioners dream of, yet the old man had reached it.

A Heavenly List expert! Ling Chen looked at the other party in astonishment. Anyone who could achieve this was definitely a Heavenly List expert.

Tsk tsk, I really didn't expect to see a Heavenly List expert in a place like this. Ling Chen thought about the Earthly List experts he saw at the venue yesterday; none seemed to be the old man opposite.

Ling Chen couldn't help but feel curious. As a dignified Heavenly List expert, why would the old man come here? Is he also here to attend the martial arts seminar? No, the seminar is a gathering for Earthly List experts, isn't it?

In thought, Ling Chen suddenly sensed a sharp gaze upon him. Looking up, he saw the old man on the terrace had already retracted his stance, his old eyes fixed on the window where Ling Chen was.

Uh... Ling Chen scratched his head a bit embarrassedly, smiled apologetically at the old man, and hurriedly closed the window.

After all, spying on someone practicing is a major taboo.

The main purpose of attending the martial arts seminar this time was to expand his horizons and gain knowledge, and he didn't expect to achieve this goal so quickly. All along, he had only heard of the Unity of Heaven and Man from Du Kang and others, but had never seen it. This time, he was truly enlightened.

Unity of Heaven and Man!

Leaning against the wall, Ling Chen recalled the realm of that old man. However, he quickly realized that the naturally formed realm was indescribable and impossible to recreate in his mind.

Coming out of the bedroom, Ling Chen found He Ziyun, who had already gotten up, and said urgently, "Mr. He, I just saw a Heavenly List expert."

"A Heavenly List expert?" He Ziyun was taken aback and asked, "Where?"

"Right in the villa opposite. That person has reached the realm of Unity of Heaven and Man. No one but a Heavenly List expert can do that."

Hearing this, He Ziyun quickly walked to the window, pulled open the heavy curtains, and looked at the villa opposite. Unfortunately, the doors and windows of that villa were tightly closed, and nothing could be seen.

"Mr. He, why don't we go pay a visit?" Ling Chen suggested.

He Ziyun hesitated for a while, then shook his head and said, "Better not. Since they are a Heavenly List expert, it might not be appropriate for us to bother them. Besides, if that Heavenly List expert is here, they will definitely appear at the seminar's venue if they wish to reveal themselves."

"Alright then." Ling Chen felt a bit disappointed. Originally wanting to meet the Heavenly List expert, he now had to give up.

After breakfast, Ling Chen and He Ziyun did not leave but stayed in the villa, quietly enjoying peaceful moments.

At noon, Ling Chen received a call from Hu Fei, saying that Tang Guolun and others had arrived in East Sea City and checked into the base smoothly.

"Fatty, treat them well. They're all here to help you..."

"Alright!" Hu Fei chuckled. "You don't need to tell me that. Tang Guolun is a genius in the crime world, and I've heard of his name for a long time, just never had the chance to meet. And the people he brought are truly impressive, top talents in various crime industries, versed in many skills. With their help, the work at the base has improved several times over."

"That's good! There's still some business left unhandled here in Beijing, so it'll be a few days before I can return. Let everyone know not to worry about me."

"Got it. Take care of yourself out there."

Hanging up the phone, Ling Chen returned to his bedroom alone, cracked open the window slightly, placed a chair in front of it, held tea in one hand and a newspaper in the other, and relaxedly enjoyed the afternoon. Occasionally, he glanced at the villa opposite, checking if that mysterious Heavenly List expert would appear again.

Unfortunately, the mysterious expert did not show up all afternoon.

After enjoying a seafood feast, Ling Chen greeted He Ziyun, then left the villa alone and strolled along the quiet garden path.

Now, it was early spring, with a gentle and slightly cool evening breeze.

Amidst the swaying branches, Ling Chen walked through the woods, enjoying the faint floral fragrance, feeling incredibly comfortable.

But then, a discordant voice suddenly came from the woods: "Ling Chen, you finally came out. I thought you'd keep hiding in the villa."

Hearing the voice, Ling Chen looked up, only to see Qin Dong, Qin Gang, and Tong Ye emerging from the trees.

Seeing the playful smile on Qin Dong's face, Ling Chen shook his head helplessly. This guy really just wouldn't let it go, even secretly watching him.

"Qin Dong, are you here to cause trouble?"

"No, no, you've got it wrong. I'm not here to cause trouble, but to teach you a lesson. Of course, if you're scared, I might consider letting you off, but... it'll depend on your performance."

"A word of advice: you'd better not block my way. I'm in a good mood today and don't want any trouble," Ling Chen said expressionlessly, then started walking forward.

Seeing Ling Chen was about to leave, Qin Gang immediately reached out to block his way, sneering, "Ling Chen, where do you think you're going? What, are you scared?"

Ling Chen nodded earnestly and said, "You're right, I am scared—scared I won't be able to hold back and might end up killing you all."

"Just you?" Qin Dong looked at Ling Chen with disdain, snorted, and said, "Not to belittle you, but while you may have bested my brother, in my eyes, you amount to this." Qin Dong raised a little finger and said, "I don't even need to use full force. I can easily take you down with one hand. If you don't believe it, feel free to try."

"Alright." Ling Chen sighed. He originally didn't want to clash with Qin Dong and his group, but since they were relentless, there was no need for courtesy.

"Come!" Ling Chen beckoned with his finger towards Qin Dong, saying, "If you're going to make a move, hurry up. I don't have time to waste with you guys."

"Hmph! Courting death."

Qin Dong snorted coldly, lightly tapped the ground with his foot, and his body shot towards Ling Chen.

Bang!

Before Qin Dong could get close to Ling Chen, there was a muffled sound, and Qin Dong's body was immediately sent flying back, hitting a big tree heavily, causing the branches and leaves to shake and fall.

Pfft!

Spitting out a mouthful of blood, Qin Dong's face turned deathly pale, unable to even stand.

"Brother Qin."

"Brother!"

Qin Gang and Tong Ye were shocked, rushing to Qin Dong's side, supporting him from the ground. Tong Ye asked worriedly, "Brother Qin, are you alright?"

"I'm fine." Qin Dong gritted his teeth, enduring the pain in his body, and with Qin Gang's support, barely stood up. If Tong Ye weren't present, he would've preferred not to move. But now he couldn't help it; he couldn't lose face in front of his woman.

Chapter 846 - 851: Shameless

"Ling Chen!" Qin Dong frowned, looking coldly at Ling Chen across from him, and said, "Your strength is not bad, I underestimated it earlier. But don't be too happy too soon; I was only using fifty percent of my strength. If I use my full strength, you wouldn't be my match at all."

"Is that so?" Ling Chen looked at Qin Dong with a half-smile. He had seen shameless people before, but never someone so shameless. Clearly defeated, yet still clinging to pride. Ling Chen clapped his hands and said, "Qin Dong, if you're not convinced, then let's go again. Come!" Ling Chen beckoned provocatively with a finger.

Seeing this, Qin Dong couldn't help but feel a bit intimidated. During their exchange just now, he hadn't even touched Ling Chen's body before being blasted away by a strong force. This showed that Ling Chen's strength was formidable. Qin Dong was a Dragon List expert and ranked within the top five, yet Ling Chen could easily defeat him, indicating that Ling Chen's strength could rank in the top three of the Dragon List, or perhaps even higher.

Damn! Truly a troublesome opponent.

While thinking, Qin Dong glanced at Qin Gang beside him and gestured with his eyes. As Qin Dong's biological brother, Qin Gang naturally understood his brother's meaning. His heart stirred, and he immediately said, "Big brother, didn't Master say he had something important to discuss with you? Let's let him off today and not delay Master's important matters."

Qin Dong nodded and said in a deep voice, "Ling Chen, if it weren't for other matters today, I would certainly compete with you. You just wait; sooner or later, I'll deal with you. Tong Ye, Qin Gang, let's go!"

Watching Qin Dong and the others swiftly leave, Ling Chen chuckled lightly. This Qin Dong truly is a shameless person. Oh well, just a petty person, no need to waste energy on him.

However, Qin Dong's appearance made Ling Chen lose interest in continuing to stroll around, so he simply returned to the villa alone.

Three days passed in the blink of an eye.

During these days, Ling Chen stayed within the villa complex and didn't go out. Every morning, he would wake up on time and stand by the window, watching the rooftop of the villa across the way. Just as he expected, in the early morning, the mysterious Heavenly List expert would practice martial arts on the rooftop.

However, what Ling Chen felt regret about was that since that day, the elderly man had not displayed the Unity of Heaven and Man realm again. Originally, Ling Chen wanted to experience more of the Unity of Heaven and Man realm to gain some inspiration and understanding, but now he could only give up.

That morning, after seven o'clock, the old man stopped practicing martial arts and returned to the villa alone.

Seeing the person leave, Ling Chen also prepared to go downstairs for breakfast. But just as he was drawing the curtains, he suddenly saw someone approaching the villa across the street.

Wang Hao?

Ling Chen was taken aback. Why is he here?

Even more surprising to Ling Chen was that Wang Hao actually knocked on the door of the opposite villa. Not only that, the person who greeted Wang Hao was the old man who had just been practicing martial arts on the rooftop.

Seeing Wang Hao respectfully greet the other, Ling Chen couldn't help but be curious. Could Wang Hao know that old man?

After Wang Hao met with the old man, the two entered the room. Although Ling Chen desperately wanted to know what they were talking about, eavesdropping was something he couldn't bring himself to do. Moreover, with a formidable Heavenly List expert inside, he likely couldn't keep his presence hidden from them.

Thinking it over, Ling Chen had no choice but to give up on the idea.

During breakfast, Ling Chen was still thinking about the meeting between Wang Hao and the old man. For some reason, he felt the purpose of Wang Hao visiting the old man wasn't simple.

Unfortunately, his relationship with Wang Hao was mediocre, not even enough to call them friends; otherwise, he might have asked more about it.

He Ziyun, sitting nearby, seemed to sense Ling Chen's thoughts and asked, "What are you thinking? Not a word from you early in the morning, it doesn't seem like your style."

"It's nothing." Ling Chen paused and then described what he had just seen.

"Wang Hao? The disciple from Yangxin Pavilion you mentioned?" He Ziyun asked curiously, "Could he know that old man? Right! Didn't you say Wang Hao's Master is a Heavenly List expert? Maybe the old man is an old friend of his Master, and he's simply visiting a senior this time. Come on, don't think too much about it; it's just a trivial matter."

"No!" Ling Chen shook his head. He always felt that the matter wasn't simple.

Oh well, it's useless to overthink it; I should wait for an opportunity to figure it out in the future.

During the martial arts seminar, the host had clearly said that everyone had only five days for preparation.

Those five days passed quickly, almost in a blink of an eye.

Tomorrow is the highlight of the martial arts seminar. Yet, until now, Ling Chen still doesn't know what the main event will be.

The next morning, Ling Chen came to the rooftop, standing alone on the edge, eyes sharply watching the mountains in the distance.

"What are you looking at?"

Suddenly, an old voice reached Ling Chen's ears.

Ling Chen turned and saw that it was the old man from the villa across the way who spoke. At this moment, the old man stood on the rooftop, wearing a loose-fitting white practice suit, with kind brows and eyes, a faint smile on his face, giving off a peaceful feeling.

The words reached Ling Chen's ears, and he couldn't help but be amazed. The distance between the two villas was about thirty meters, yet the old man's voice came through clearly, as if they were speaking face to face.

As expected of someone who has reached the Unity of Heaven and Man realm, truly impressive!

"Senior." Ling Chen clasped his fists in a polite gesture.

"You're the one who's been secretly watching my martial arts practice these days, aren't you?"

Hearing this, Ling Chen felt his face heat up and embarrassedly scratched his head. For these past few days, he had been hiding behind the window watching the old man practice, thinking that with the window and curtain as cover, he wouldn't be discovered. Little did he expect he was unable to hide it.

"Senior, I didn't mean any harm, just... just that I've never seen the Unity of Heaven and Man realm before, and I was curious, so I couldn't help but take a few more looks. I hope you don't mind."

The old man smiled slightly, "Don't worry, I'm not that petty. Watching a few times won't lose anything. However, with your current strength, even if you see the Unity of Heaven and Man realm, you won't be able to grasp its mysteries. You need to rank at the top three of the Earthly List to touch the threshold of Unity of Heaven and Man. But remember, such a profound realm can only be achieved through destiny and opportunity."

"Destiny and opportunity?"

"Indeed." The old man nodded, "After reaching the Heavenly List, it's no longer about talent and aptitude; it's destiny that plays the crucial role. Young man, being so young and already among the ranks of Earthly List experts shows your great talent. In another decade or so, you might have the chance to encounter the Unity of Heaven and Man realm."

Chapter 847 - 852: High-Stakes Gamble

"Hopefully so." Ling Chen smiled and asked, "Elder, I haven't had the chance to ask your name, how should I address you?"

The elder said casually, "You and I haven't even been acquaintances, why bother asking names? Besides, once the martial arts symposium is over, you'll leave here, and we won't have another chance to meet."

Ling Chen felt a bit helpless; he had hoped to get acquainted with the elder and build some rapport, but was directly rejected.

Thinking for a moment, Ling Chen changed the topic and asked, "Elder, do you know Wang Hao?"

Upon hearing Ling Chen mention Wang Hao's name, the elder looked at Ling Chen in surprise and asked, "Do you know him?"

"I know him, we met once when I was at the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion."

"I'm an old friend of Wang Hao's Master, he came specifically to visit me this time."

Indeed!

It seems He Ziyun guessed right; Wang Hao's Master is indeed old acquaintances with the elder.

"Alright, young man, I have other matters to attend to later, so I won't chat more with you." With that, the elder turned around and walked back into the villa.

Just as the elder left, He Ziyun appeared on the rooftop.

"What are you doing here? I've called you several times."

"I didn't hear earlier. Mr. He, are you looking for me?"

"It's about time, the organizers' staff have arrived, let's go, don't waste time."

"Alright."

Coming down from the rooftop, they saw two staff members in suits already waiting at the door. Upon seeing Ling Chen and He Ziyun approaching, one staff member extended his hand in a 'please' gesture, then led them towards the villa's center.

Soon, Ling Chen and He Ziyun arrived outside the venue as before. At this moment, several electric cars were parked outside, each carrying a few people.

Under the staff's arrangement, He Ziyun and Ling Chen got into the last electric car.

As minutes passed, the experts attending the martial arts symposium arrived one after another, boarded the electric cars, all in complete silence, none spoke, their expressions a bit solemn.

Once everyone was there, the electric cars began to move slowly, heading straight out of the villa. However, after a few minutes, Ling Chen noticed that the direction the electric cars were driving was not towards the villa's main entrance but another exit. To be precise, it wasn't considered an exit, but rather a road leading to the back mountain.

Idle chatting with He Ziyun, Ling Chen learned that the group of mountains he saw in the morning was the private property of the villa group, essentially their back garden. However, it was the first time Ling Chen had seen such a large back garden.

He couldn't help but acknowledge that the villa group's owner was very wealthy. Otherwise, they wouldn't have been able to buy such a vast land in the prime real estate of Beijing.

After about twenty minutes of driving, the electric cars finally reached their destination.

Getting off, Ling Chen scanned his surroundings, noticing not far away was a large forest, the trees towering, some even reaching over twenty meters tall. The branches and leaves intertwined densely, like a thick canopy, covering the forest's top completely.

"Alright! Everyone, please gather over here."

Hearing the supervisor's words, Ling Chen followed He Ziyun to where everyone was congregating.

"Everyone, some of you have attended the martial arts symposium before, and some are participating for the first time; therefore, let me clarify the rules first. Each of you must submit an item to the organizers before the beginning, as this symposium's victory token. The winner will receive the prize offered by everyone. In addition to that, we'll offer the winner generous rewards. We ask everyone to strive for first place."

"Rewards?" Ling Chen was slightly startled and immediately understood the organizer's meaning. No wonder He Ziyun said earlier, the true essence of the martial arts symposium was essentially a gamble.

Using the term gamble to describe the martial arts symposium was very accurate. Before it starts, everyone puts up chips, and the ultimate winner takes all.

"Alright, if no one has objections, please present your prepared tokens and hand them to our organizers for safekeeping."

"Mr. He." Ling Chen quietly asked, "Does everyone have to participate?"

"No need," He Ziyun said, "only those on the Earthly List have the qualification to participate. Of course, the organizers do not compel you to participate, it's entirely up to you." As he spoke, He Ziyun pulled out a silk bag from his pocket and handed it to Ling Chen, "Here, take it."

"What's this?" Ling Chen asked, puzzled.

"This is for you," He Ziyun said, "I won't participate in this martial arts symposium, I've attended several times before. To be honest, the process is very tough; at my age, these old bones aren't suitable for this high-intensity activity anymore. So it's more fitting for you. You just got promoted on the Earthly List not long ago, consider it a challenge."

"Me?" Ling Chen was startled, not expecting He Ziyun to propose such a request.

"Well..." Ling Chen rubbed his nose, appearing somewhat hesitant. Before coming here, he thought it was a simple gathering, not realizing it would involve sparring, and with Earthly List experts no less.

"Alright, stop hesitating, go ahead. As I said, it's just a challenge, don't be too pressured."

Hearing this, Ling Chen nodded, "Fine then, I'll give it a try." With that, Ling Chen picked up the silk bag and asked, "Mr. He, what's inside?"

"Naturally something good. If it's not valuable, even if you dare to present it, the organizers wouldn't accept it. There's a long-standing rule that each participant's token must hold a certain value. If what

you bring is insufficient, you won't qualify to compete. What I'm giving you isn't very precious, but it's decent, and there won't be any issue."

Ling Chen acknowledged, walked to the event supervisor, and handed over the silk bag.

The supervisor didn't even glance at it, passing it directly to the few people behind, who Ling Chen had noticed were specifically evaluating and assessing the items provided by everyone.

When the item from the silk bag was taken out, Ling Chen's expression turned a bit puzzled. He had to admit, he had never seen what was inside the silk bag before; it looked quite unique, resembling a stamp, and seemed to have some age.

Could it be an antique?

With this thought, Ling Chen looked at the items others offered, almost everything was there—paintings, antiques, jade, and even martial arts mental methods and martial arts manuals.

Moreover, some people provided multiple items because the value wasn't enough, compensating with quantity for the lack of quality.

Chapter 848 - 853: Earthly List Showdown (1)

Once everyone's belongings were provided, the organizer immediately tallied the participants. Nearly twenty Earthly List experts arrived at the seminar this time, but only thirteen decided to partake in the contest. Among them, the youngest was Ling Chen, followed by Wang Hao. Besides these two, the rest were either in their fifties or sixties.

"I thought you really weren't interested," Wang Hao spoke coldly, looking at Ling Chen passing by.

Ling Chen stopped, shrugged, and said, "I initially didn't want to join the fun, but Mr. He insisted. When an elder speaks, I can't refuse, right? Wang Hao, I ask for your mercy later."

"If you've chosen to compete, then let's rely on our skills," Wang Hao said, walking away.

Watching Wang Hao's departing figure, Ling Chen shook his head helplessly. If Wang Hao had hidden his hostility well before, he was now blatantly showing it.

Ling Chen sighed lightly; Wang Hao's hostility was undoubtedly a big trouble.

Returning to He Ziyun's side, Ling Chen stood for a while, watching the organizer approach and announce, "Sorry to keep everyone waiting. The number of participants is confirmed at thirteen. These thirteen will compete for the championship of this Martial Arts seminar. Before we start the contest, let me say something upfront. You can fight during the match, but do not take lives. Remember, that's the most crucial point. If anyone breaks this rule, we won't spare them. Alright! Enough talking, let me announce the rules."

"The contest lasts three days, with the range limited to this back mountain. We've hidden an object somewhere in the back mountain, a jade artifact. Whoever brings it out after three days will be the final winner. Again, no matter what means you use, make sure not to take lives. If there are no objections, let's begin."

With that, the organizer pointed to the forest entrance.

Immediately, seven or eight Earthly List experts started running into the forest, eager not to fall behind.

"Mr. He."

"Go ahead, be careful. Winning isn't crucial, just take it as training."

"Got it, I understand." Ling Chen nodded, then dashed towards the forest without another word.

Once inside the forest, Ling Chen chose a path that differed from the others and ventured deeper into the forest.

The aim of this contest was clear: protect oneself and find the hidden object. Surviving for three days with the item means victory.

Forest warfare wasn't unfamiliar to Ling Chen. As a former agent, he held extensive field experience. However, the opponents this time differed greatly, being top experts, not elite soldiers.

Thus, Ling Chen had to be extremely cautious.

Deep in the forest, Ling Chen surveyed the surroundings. Besides trees, there were tall, tangled grasses good for hiding. After assessing the area, Ling Chen made a decision.

To confront Earthly List experts, he must act unexpectedly. Sadly, among the thirteen experts, his skill ranked poorest and was at the bottom. Despite having the Nine Yang Qiankun Step, surrounded by experts, thorough preparation was essential.

Spending two hours preparing alone, near noon, feeling hungry, Ling Chen picked a few wild fruits from nearby trees. Fortunately, the forest was vast, with abundant fruits. The sweet taste meant no worry about hunger for three days. A pond nearby provided water, albeit not very clean, but drinkable.

At this moment, Ling Chen lay on a tree branch ten meters high, resting his head on one hand while eating fruit with the other.

After a while, hurried footsteps approached from the north. Hearing them, Ling Chen sat up, using dense leaves to hide his spot while looking down.

Soon, he spotted a middle-aged man in his forties running swiftly, panting. Moreover, the man seemed injured, with one arm bleeding, staining his sleeve.

Ling Chen was silently amazed by how intense their conflicts were, to be wounded so soon.

Ling Chen didn't understand why it had to be so serious; losing wasn't a big deal. Was it worth being so miserable for the reward?

As he pondered, the middle-aged man suddenly shouted 'Ah'. His body flipped, legs up, head down, flying off the ground, suspended in mid-air.

Observing closely, his ankle was tied with a grass rope, swinging like a pendulum.

Seeing the trapped man, Ling Chen smirked, chuckling. Luck was on his side as someone fell into his trap so quickly. He had spent several hours setting traps around him; any close approach would trigger them.

Regaining composure, the trapped man twisted his wrist slightly, severing the rope with Hua Realm in an instant. Yet, as he landed, thick wood logs suddenly fell from surrounding trees, hitting his body heavily.

Caught off guard, the wood struck the man's back, making him vomit blood and fall, unable to rise for a long time.

Seizing the opportunity, Ling Chen jumped off the tree, rushing to the man's side.

With Ling Chen nearing, the man struggled but couldn't rise, his severe back injury causing immobility. He could only lie down.

Ling Chen apologized with a smile, "Sorry about that."

Defeated, the man replied dejectedly, "I lost."

Chapter 849 - 854: Earthly List Showdown (Part 2)

When he heard the middle-aged man say these three words, Ling Chen smiled slightly and nodded: "You should hurry back and heal your injuries." Saying this, Ling Chen took out his cell phone and dialed a pre-stored number.

After Ling Chen left, within ten minutes, a helicopter flew overhead. Several medical personnel quickly arrived at the scene and transported the injured middle-aged man away with the helicopter.

Ling Chen watched all of this quietly from a nearby spot. Before entering the forest, everyone was informed of a phone number, the emergency contact number. Naturally, in this region, apart from that number, no other numbers could be dialed. Previously, the organizers had already implemented a signal block over this area, and everything was strictly controlled.

Thirteen people, now one is settled, leaving twelve... Ling Chen lay on the tree trunk, secretly contemplating.

No, there should be eleven left, can't count himself in there.

Three days to defeat the others, and then find that object to achieve victory. Or, directly find the item hidden by the organizers, guard it well for three days, to prevent it from being stolen by others, and still easily claim victory. Comparatively, the latter is easier. Although Ling Chen is confident, he's not arrogant enough to defeat the other eleven Earthly List masters. So, after contemplating, the option that suits him best is the latter - find the object.

Ling Chen's idea is simple: since he has participated in the competition, he should go all out, aiming for the final victory. If he's just here to play and broaden his knowledge, why spend so much effort.

Thinking of this, Ling Chen silently made a decision in his heart.

Resting for a moment at noon, Ling Chen began to get busy. The first task was to understand the surrounding environment and terrain, then divide the area. This forest is vast, and even walking there for a day might not cover it all. To search for the item more efficiently, he must first divide the area to avoid trouble later.

With a bit of preparation, Ling Chen set off alone. When moving within the forest, the most feared thing is getting the direction wrong, because the branches and leaves are too dense, covering the top completely, blocking the view of the sun, making it hard to distinguish direction if one lacks experience.

Luckily, Ling Chen is experienced in such matters, and soon enough, he returned to the route he had initially entered.

Following his pre-determined plan, Ling Chen rushed along the edge of the forest, marking the routes and areas, and mapped them onto his clothes.

To draw a rough map of the forest, Ling Chen spent almost half a day. When everything was finished, it was already evening.

Night fell, and the forest was pitch dark, stretching out a hand would render one unable to see fingers. Returning to the initial area, Ling Chen climbed onto a tree trunk and lay sideways. Though faint moonlight filtered through the branches and leaves, the light was too dim, making it impossible to see the surrounding environment, let alone the map drawn on his clothes.

"Seven people..." Ling Chen murmured. This afternoon, while examining the surrounding terrain, Ling Chen encountered seven Earthly List masters along the way. For safety's sake, he didn't disturb them but quietly slipped away past them.

However, Ling Chen still marked their approximate locations on the map to avoid meeting them later.

In such a dark and lightless environment, no actions could be taken, so he had to wait for daylight. Thus, Ling Chen ate a few wild fruits and, with both hands resting behind his head, fell into a deep sleep on the tree trunk.

The night was dense, and Ling Chen didn't know how long he'd been asleep when he suddenly heard a rustling sound nearby.

Opening his eyes, Ling Chen carefully observed the surroundings, ears pricked up, listening intently to nearby sounds. Soon, he detected the footsteps of three people.

Three people?

Ling Chen slightly frowned. Judging from the footsteps, those three seemed to be together. Isn't this competition supposed to be a solo battle?

While pondering, the footsteps came closer, judging from the sound, they were less than twenty meters from his position.

Not good!

Ling Chen realized something was wrong and quickly sat up from the tree trunk. Due to the darkness, nothing below could be seen; he could only predict their position by sound.

As the footsteps approached, Ling Chen's heart involuntarily jumped.

Suddenly, a scream pierced through the night's silence, followed by shouts from several men: "Who's there? Come out!"

"Old Gong, be careful, we're coming to save you."

Indeed!

Ling Chen smiled bitterly; those people fell into his trap. If the opponent were just one person, he wouldn't be worried, one person dealt with one person. But the problem is there are three of them; even if someone steps into the trap, he can't handle them. Furthermore, once they find the trap, they'll certainly suspect someone nearby.

"Wu Yue, you help Old Gong, I'll scout nearby to see who's up to tricks."

Hearing their conversation, Ling Chen couldn't help worrying. He was right above them, hoping not to be discovered.

At this moment, Ling Chen didn't dare to move at all. No choice, they're all Earthly List masters; at such a close distance, any sound he makes will be discovered by them. So what he can do now is silently pray.

As time ticked away, the three Earthly List masters thoroughly searched the surroundings, finding nothing.

Ling Chen sat on the tree trunk, listening closely to their conversations. After a while, he realized their voices were getting smaller and fainter, like a mosquito's hum, unable to be heard clearly.

What are they talking about? Ling Chen frowned secretly; he had a bad premonition.

Suddenly, the sound of swaying leaves was heard, surprising Ling Chen. Looking attentively, he saw two figures swiftly climbing up the tree trunk, reaching the top in the blink of an eye.

Not good!

Without time to think, Ling Chen immediately got up from the branches and jumped down.

"Where are you running to!"

The man named Wu Yue shouted, moving as fast as a rabbit, aiming at the direction Ling Chen fled, and immediately chased after him.

At once, four people, three chasing one, ran rapidly through the forest.

Hearing the footsteps behind getting closer, Ling Chen inwardly cursed. What can he do now? The skills of the three were evidently no worse, otherwise, he wouldn't be unable to shake them off with his Nine Yang Qiankun Step.

No way!

If things continue like this, he'll inevitably be surrounded by them eventually. Thinking of this, Ling Chen tapped his toes lightly, legs springing up, and in a blink, he climbed onto a tree.

Standing on a sturdy branch, Ling Chen was as light as a swallow, running swiftly. With dense foliage blocking, the distance from the three behind was temporarily extended a bit.

Chapter 850 - 855: Earthly List Showdown (Part 3)

However, Ling Chen didn't dare to take it lightly, carefully stepping on the branches as he moved forward, leaping from one tree to another.

Because it was nighttime, the light in the forest was too dim, and nothing could be seen clearly, so Ling Chen walked very cautiously with each step.

After a few minutes had passed, Ling Chen suddenly felt his footing soften; because he couldn't see clearly, he had stepped on a fragile branch. In an instant, he heard a 'crack', and the branch broke instantly, causing Ling Chen's body to plummet down.

Bam!

Falling from a height of seven or eight meters, Ling Chen's back landed heavily on the ground with a dull thud.

Damn! Feeling the pain in his back, Ling Chen cursed under his breath, hurriedly climbing up from the ground and running quickly forward. At this moment, he couldn't afford any delay. Once those three people caught up, he would be in trouble.

As he thought about it, the sound of footsteps behind him came again. Ling Chen gritted his teeth, enduring the pain in his back, and rushed forward swiftly.

Just then, a voice suddenly rang out not far ahead: "Who? Come out!"

Upon hearing that sudden voice, Ling Chen was slightly startled. He had unexpectedly encountered another person. Without time to think, Ling Chen leapt into the nearby bushes and instantly disappeared.

Ling Chen had just hidden himself when he heard the footsteps of those three people approaching.

"Stop!" A soft shout rang out, Wu Yue voiced coldly: "Let's see where you think you can escape to now."

"Who are you?" The man replying had a voice full of vigor, showing no intention of fleeing.

"It's me." When that old voice sounded, there was immediately a gasp from the opposite side: "Gong Xiong, is it you?"

As the words fell, the other party didn't even think and turned to flee. Clearly, the man was well aware of Gong Xiong's prowess. Judging from his panicked behavior, it was clear he had a great deal of fear toward Gong Xiong.

"Hmph! Still want to run?" Gong Xiong sneered, his foot slipped, and his body vanished like a phantom.

In just a few breaths, a 'bang' sounded from ahead. Following closely, the man's pleading voice was heard: "Old Gong, I have no grievance with you, please let me go."

"Let you go? Don't forget, we are opponents now, why should I let you go?"

Upon hearing this, the man said unwillingly: "If that's the case, then I'll concede."

"It's not up to you." Gong Xiong replied with a sneer.

"Gong Xiong, what do you want? Do you intend to kill me? Don't forget, the organizers have rules, you can't take someone's life."

"Shut up! Stop using the organizers' rules against me. I don't follow them." After a pause, Gong Xiong continued: "If you want to survive, I can give you a chance. Follow me and when I win, I'll set you free. At that time, I won't skimp on your benefits. How about it?"

"This..."

"What, unwilling?" Gong Xiong's tone carried a hint of coldness.

"Alright then, I'll help you this once. But I hope you keep your word."

"Very good. A wise man knows when to give in. You're a smart one. So now, take this thing."

"What is it?"

"Don't worry, this won't take your life, it's just an additional guarantee. Although you promised to help me, how do I know you won't run away halfway? I don't have time to build trust with you now, so it's better to use unorthodox means."

Because Gong Xiong and the others were quite far away, plus the light was too dim, Ling Chen couldn't see anything, he could only hear their conversation. The man obviously followed Gong Xiong's suggestion, and before long, Gong Xiong said: "Alright, let's go."

Listening to the footsteps gradually fade away, Ling Chen secretly let out a sigh of relief. Fortunately, due to the sudden appearance of that person, he hadn't been discovered. However, after this incident, Ling Chen realized that the competition between the Earthly List masters was even more cruel than he had imagined.

Actually using unorthodox means to compel someone to work for them.

Yet, Ling Chen clearly remembered that before entering Lin Zi, the organizer's representative had said that as long as you don't harm someone's life, any means could be used.

Indeed!

If they could recruit others to join, it would surely be much more convenient.

It's just that among the Earthly List masters in this competition, he didn't know anyone besides Wang Hao. And even for Wang Hao, he didn't have any trust at all, so how could he collaborate with them?

After pondering for a while, Ling Chen shook his head. Forget it! Let's not think about it now, better find a safe place to rest for a while, and wait until daylight.

The next morning.

Ling Chen was awakened by the chirping of birds in the forest. Rubbing his sleepy eyes, Ling Chen stretched out, and jumped down from the branch.

After finding a few wild fruits nearby to fill his stomach, Ling Chen began searching for the items hidden by the organizers. Yesterday, he spent most of the day drawing a rough map of Lin Zi. Today, he would investigate area by area.

Looking at the map he had drawn, Ling Chen locked onto one of the areas. That place was not too far from him, only a half-hour walk away.

Worried that someone might suddenly appear around him, Ling Chen moved very cautiously, stepping lightly to avoid making any noise.

After forty minutes, Ling Chen finally reached the area. Looking around, it was surrounded by lush trees, one after another, a thick layer of branches and leaves covered the ground, creaking underfoot.

Surveying the surroundings, Ling Chen suddenly noticed a very sturdy tree not far away, the trunk diameter was nearly a meter, even two of him couldn't wrap around it.

Once beside the tree, Ling Chen scrutinized it for a few moments. Suddenly, his gaze was drawn to a crack at the top of the tree.

The crack was about a meter long, with the midpoint being half a meter wide.

Apart from this, Ling Chen also found some fine scratches on the bark surface.

This is...

Ling Chen squinted his eyes, a glimmer of light flashed in them. These traces left on the bark were very new, likely made within the last two days. Moreover, those marks seemed to have been ground out by something.

Could it be such a coincidence?

At that thought, Ling Chen embraced the tree trunk and rapidly climbed upwards. Soon, he reached the vicinity of the crack. Looking inside from the outside, Ling Chen's gaze brightened instantly.

Within the crack, there was a yellow cloth package, half a meter high.

Haha!

Ling Chen couldn't help but laugh with delight; he truly found what he was seeking effortlessly, never expecting that the item was hidden right here.

Coincidence!

Such a stroke of luck.

The others spent so much effort searching, but he obtained it without lifting a finger.

Wasting no time, Ling Chen promptly retrieved the yellow cloth package from the crack.