

## I! Cleaner 64

Chapter 64 Cotton-padded jacket with lining\_1

"Hope you all can follow through this time!"

After reaching up to pinch his brow again, the somewhat fatigued old Charl hesitated briefly before sighing,

"And also, he did save my wife. When you find him, try to be gentle, make sure not to hurt anyone."

"Okay, we remember!"

"Hmm, if you remember, then go, get the stuff back for me!"

Once the detectives left with their new task, the old man, filled with exhaustion, relaxed his body, leaning back against the thickly padded office chair. He joined his index and middle fingers from both hands, continuously rubbing his throbbing temples.

\*I really am getting old...\*

With Charl Department Store growing ever stronger, these good years had dulled his alertness significantly. If it were twenty years ago, even ten, he wouldn't have let things spiral to this point.

Even if I couldn't bring myself to be ruthless enough to forcefully halt the hydroelectric company's project from the start, I wouldn't have become so lax as to not even demand control, allowing those bastards to use the name "Charl" for their company...

Just as old Charl was holding his aching head, contemplating grooming a successor while he could still manage, there was a knock at the office door.

"Knock, knock, knock."

Hearing the knock, the old man tensed up, as if switching a flip, instantly reverting to a smart, capable demeanor. Straightening his slightly stooped back, he looked over the papers and responded loudly,

"Come in!"

"Dad, it's us!"

Accompanied by a somewhat helpless voice, a baby-faced girl in a business suit supported a red-faced Mrs. Charl into the office.

"Charl!"

Once the office door closed, ensuring the voices inside couldn't be heard outside, the middle-aged woman, who had clearly reached her breaking point, screamed,

"What's going on with the company shares? You've suddenly given away forty percent, is Charl Department Store even Charl Department Store anymore?"

"You've got the nerve to come find me?"

Before the middle-aged woman could open her mouth, old Charl already knew what she wanted to say. He slapped the desk forcefully, his brows furrowing as he angrily demanded,

"What about the hydroelectric company? Did the problems I worried about happen in the end? If I hadn't reacted quickly and relied entirely on you for negotiations, Charl Department Store would be gone now!"

"..."

When old Charl brought up the hydroelectric company, the middle-aged woman's momentum faltered, but she still struggled to press on,

"But you can't just give away forty percent of the shares like that, and most of it is from my family side..."

"If we hadn't given away forty percent, could you still be standing here yelling at me?"

Not bothering to hide his fatigue in front of his family, old Charl leaned back into his chair, rubbing his temples with a weary face,

"Have you forgotten? Fifteen years ago, when Charl Department Store was almost brought down, I didn't give up a single share. I was more opposed than you to splitting the shares, but this time it really couldn't be avoided. Now it seems the problem is resolved, but the solution was too crude. We can make big money, but we've hurt the interests of all our peers in one fell swoop.

Do you know? The price standards for fifteen whole industries were driven to rock bottom by us. The Business Association already has significant objections. If we don't share the wealth, letting them at least sip some soup, take a guess at what will happen?"

Seeing his wife suddenly shudder, seemingly realizing something, old Charl said expressionlessly,

"Though Charl Department Store can grow big this year, once the end of the year passes, when things cool down and compensations are paid, it will no longer belong to Charl. Without the support of the Business Association and the legislators, I can't hold onto this company by myself, can't even guarantee basic safety, and then our whole family can only reunite in jail, understand?"

Seeing his wife break into a sweat like rain, finally sobered from the stimulus of immense wealth, old Charl didn't seem satisfied. He knocked on the table, raising his voice,

"Do you know what your biggest stupidity is? If you don't, I'll tell you! Your biggest stupidity is always assuming everything will follow the rules!

You think the veto power in the contract can keep the Old Nobility from messing around? You think because we've cornered the factory and retail channels, we can force everyone to concede? You think once the company is large enough, we can ignore the Business Association's opinion? That's completely stupid!"

Seeing his wife's complexion turn ash-white, nearly collapsing to the floor without their daughter's support, a hint of reluctance crossed old Charl's eyes. Yet, he hardened his heart and delivered a final blow,

"In peacetime, they're willing to play by the rules because outside of the rules, they're not confident of winning against me! But now we've started dumping, breaking the rules everyone tacitly agreed to, driving others to desperate straits, and you still expect them not to resort to underhanded tactics, continuing to play by the rules with you? In times like this, if we don't quickly give up shares and pull competent people to bear the burden together, are we supposed to just sit foolishly on the heap of money waiting for death?"

"Dad! You... you don't have to say that. Mom meant well to help you, just lacked some insight. But Dad, think about it, how many people have the ability to nearly start from scratch, rising from being a small vendor to becoming a top-three businessman in the Capital City in over twenty years? How could ordinary people's vision compare to yours?"

After worriedly glancing at her mother, trembling incessantly, the baby-faced girl quickly threw meaningful glances while earnestly trying to smooth things over,

"Dad! Mom was once just a pampered noble lady. After eloping with you, she learned to wash clothes and cook, helped you inventory and account late into the night, all the way fighting alongside you until today, how difficult it was! Through these years, aside from this mistake in judgment, she has helped

you manage company affairs neatly, never made any trouble, and while I was still young, you were always so busy. She had to take care of me while learning how..."

"Don't talk."

Releasing her daughter's supportive hand, a woman with features and a demeanor six-tenths akin to her daughter, reflecting a bit of her youthful, innocent image, pursed her lips, turned her head stubbornly, and said,

"Wrong is wrong. Why bring up the past? I willingly eloped with him. Now I've made a mistake. It's my own choice. No need to use past stories to seek sympathy!"

Also, look at your dad; no one controlling him might drive him to death in the office. You stay here and watch over him! Now, with so many customers, the company staff may not be able to keep up. I need to go oversee things!"

"Mom, you just recovered a bit from illness, let me at least..."

"I don't need you!"

"..."

Watching his wife storm out the door, old Charl remained silent for a moment, then waved his hand at his daughter, who seemed to want to say something,

"You don't need to persuade, I didn't mean to blame her, I spoke so harshly to help impress the loss from this time into her memory. As for those past things, I actually remember them even clearer than you.

Do you know? Because your dad was so poor, he couldn't afford nutriment for your mom. After you were born, her health wasn't great; she hardly had any milk. Back then, I had to earn a living, left early and came back late, unable to help. Spoiled and pampered, she wore a shabby apron, lugging you who cried from hunger through the frigid winter, eventually having to kneel before someone to beg a little milk..."

Recalling those hard times, old Charl lamented darkly,

"Seeing that scene early when I rushed home from worrying about our circumstances, I resolved that even if I had to sell my soul to a demon and become a villain, I'd let you two live a good life! Sigh... Thinking back now, really...

In my life, I was never afraid of anyone except I could never win against your mom. When the hydroelectric company was being set up, if only I had held firm a bit longer, maybe things wouldn't have escalated to this... Forget it, I better not say more."

Caressing the four metal boxes stacked on the right, confirming the locks were still intact, old Charl slightly shook his head and said,

"Let's go, your mom's health is frail. We should go..."

"Not good!"

Just as the father and daughter prepared to get up, the office door was suddenly yanked open by an employee in a store uniform who rushed in, panic written all over,

"Boss! In the shopping plaza's money box, there was a..."

"Croak! Croak!"

Two deafening frog chirps from outside interrupted the employee's unfinished words, and a gentle, clear male voice resonated simultaneously in the hearts of over fifty thousand people around Charl Department Store.

"People seeking wealth, let me ask you."

After climbing, somewhat laboriously, out of the giant money box, a huge toad covered in various currencies puffed out its glittering golden cheek sacs, croaked, and spat out enough gold wheels to form a stream, before squinting its eyes with a benevolent smile.

"Will the gold I spit out be enough to buy your life?"



