

The Tower 207

Chapter 207

In the Chinese Challengers Association conference room, the Deputy Chairman and Zhuge Yun sat deep in thought as they watched TV.

"What should we do?" the Deputy Chairman asked Zhuge Yun.

"We shouldn't meddle with the citizens. We shouldn't act like the Chinese government, given our stance against them," replied Zhuge Yun.

"But the citizens are causing riots. With the government controlling the media, we're losing financial support and facing difficulties managing public opinion," the Deputy Chairman said.

Zhuce Yun tapped the table with his fan, lost in thought. His phone was on the table, and when it vibrated, he suddenly changed the TV channel.

"Why are you watching 'Stargram' all of a sudden?" the Deputy Chairman asked.

"It seems like Tang Zihao is in trouble," Zhuge Yun replied.

Tang Zihao's feed appeared on the TV screen, displaying photos of him with Lee Shin, implying that they were close friends. And the hashtags below the picture were even more problematic.

"Respected Mr. Lee Shin..." the Deputy Chairman muttered.

The Deputy Chairman couldn't help but chuckle, finding the situation ridiculous. Zhuge Yun just stared at the screen.

"And he even did a live broadcast?" the Deputy Chairman asked Lee Shin, looking confused.

The Deputy Chairman switched to another channel to check the latest breaking news.

- Hello! This is Tang Zihao. I'm here to talk to you because I've made an important decision.

Tang Zihao relayed his official position through the broadcast, showing support for the Challengers Association despite his prominent role in the Chinese government. The Deputy Chairman of the Challengers Association was taken aback, and he wondered how the Chinese government would react.

"Did you hear about this?" the Deputy Chairman asked.

"No, Sir. I didn't hear anything," Zhuge Yun replied.

Zhuge Yun sighed in disappointment and frowned.

"If he was this serious about joining us, he should've talked it over with me in secret," Zhuge Yun muttered.

Zhuge Yun thought that it would have given him and the Challengers Association a chance to strike back at the government properly.

"That fool did it again," the Deputy Chairman said.

"What do you think is his motive?" Zhuge Yun asked.

"I know Tang Zihao a bit, and the picture of him and Lee Shin on his feed tells me he admires Lee Shin. Maybe it's because of that admiration," explained the Deputy Chairman.

"What Zihao did... It will likely worsen the public riots," Zhuge Yun said.

"Ha... That guy is thoughtless, as always," muttered the Deputy Chairman with a sigh.

Zhuge Yun shook his head as he looked at Tang Zihao.

"How did he even manage to become a ranker?" Zhuge Yun asked with a smirk.

"Honestly, I don't even know," said the Deputy Chairman.

Zhuge Yun spread his fan open, covered his mouth, and raised his eyebrows in thought.

"This might actually be a good opportunity for us," Zhuge Yun said.

"Huh? What do you mean?" the Deputy Chairman asked.

"As someone to protect Zihao now that he is on our side. We don't know what the enraged government might do," Zhuge Yun said.

"There he is," Ethan muttered, looking at Tang Zihao.

"I don't know what he's up to," Vuela muttered.

Ethan and Vuela sat by the window, wearing masks, hats pulled low, and with their hoods up, looking at something.

"What a shameless guy. He got in trouble like that, but then he's doing fan meetings as if nothing happened?" Ethan said. "He is really thoughtless," Vuela replied.

Ethan, who had been sipping his coffee in the cafe, suddenly looked at Vuela, seated in front of him.

"W-what's up?" The strange look from Ethan puzzled Vuela.

"But really, isn't it amazing? How can anyone think you're a guy just by looking at that face?" said Ethan with a laugh.

Ethan was laughing because Vuela had chosen to dress like a woman. He wasn't wearing any heavy makeup, but his hair was neatly styled like a woman's, and his clothes made him look like a stunning beauty, rivaling most celebrities.

"Stop talking about that... unless you also want to get in trouble," Vuela warned Ethan.

"All right, all right. But seriously, you are really pretty. Even with your face mostly covered, people are still sneaking glances at you. This undercover investigation will be tough," Ethan said, laughing again.

"If you say one more word about how pretty I am, then be prepared to get it!" Vuela said seriously.

"All right, okay. You've got a short fuse!" Ethan replied.

In response to Ethan's teasing, Vuela quaffed his Americano in one gulp.

"And you know what? People are staring at us because of you. Your huge build is too conspicuous, even if you try to hide it with clothes. Plus, your clothes can't even cover you up," Vuela said.

Indeed, Ethan's bulky muscles and size were very noticeable among ordinary people.

"Ahem..." Ethan could not say anything.

Vuela and Ethan had come to protect Tang Zihao at Lee Shin's request, but both stood out too much, making things a bit awkward.

"Um... Hello. Would you like to try our cafe's new cookie?" A server placed the cookies before them and looked at them individually.

"It seems like you guys are a couple," the server said, smiling.

"Um... N-no, we're not couples, actually," Ethan replied.

Vuela trembled, and just when he was about to blurt something, Ethan covered his mouth.

"Oh, you guys are not a couple? Oh, these cookies are from that gentleman over there. He asked me to tell you, madam, that you are gorgeous," the server said, looking at Vuela.

Snap!

As Vuela silently listened to the server, the cookie in his hand turned into crumbs and fell onto the table. The server took a step back in surprise.

"Oh, haha. I'll get going then." The server left with that.

"Hahaha! You are quite popular. It seems like we are getting all this attention because of you, not me." Ethan made fun of Vuela.

"Will you please shut up?" Vuela said.

As Vuela struggled to contain his anger with remarkable patience, the tacky man described by the server as a "gentleman," who occupied a neighboring table, stood and approached them.

"He's coming," Ethan whispered to Vuela softly.

Crunch—

Vuela gritted his teeth and clenched his fist. His anger was evident.

"Oh, haha! Hello—"

As the man with the cheesy appearance prepared to address Vuela, Ethan abruptly stood up, his gaze shifting outside.

"Huh? Where did that guy go?" Ethan said with a confused look.

"What's going on?" Vuela also stood up.

As Vuela got up, he hit the man's chin with his shoulder, and the man fell to the ground.

"Ugh!" the man groaned in pain.

"Darn it! Chase after him quickly!" Ethan shouted.

"What the hell? Who's this ugly guy?" Vuela looked at the man disdainfully and followed Ethan out of the cafe.

"Where did he go?" Ethan muttered.

"Ugh, we lost him because of that cockroach," Vuela replied, thinking about that weird guy he had encountered.

While sighing and scratching their heads, they saw the man with the injured jaw exiting the coffee shop.

"You damn bastards! How dare you just leave like that after hitting me! Do you even know who I am! My older brother is a low ranker!" The man started angrily shouting at them, but his pronunciation was not precise.

"Ugh, this is bad," Ethan muttered.

"Indeed," Vuela replied.

The man noticed the worry on the duo's face and thought that his threat had worked, so he tipped his face a bit up and looked down at them, all confident.

"I guess you two can tell you are in big trouble. But guess what? You guys will meet your ends today. There he is! Hey, it's over here!" The man called over his older brother.

From across the street, a man with spiky hair approached them, looking arrogant. His name was Xiao Wu, a low ranker in the 48,896th position in the integrated rankings.

"Weihan? What's wrong with your face?" Xiao Wu asked.

"Those damn bastards did this to me!" Weihan replied.

Xiao Wu angrily grabbed Vuela's shoulder.

"Did you guys do this to my brother's face?" Xiao Wu yelled at the two.

"Who's this ugly freak?" Vuela said, looking at Xiao Wu.

"Did you just call me ugly?" Xiao Wu replied with anger.

"What did I tell you earlier? Your mere presence always complicates stuff," Ethan muttered.

Ethan scratched his head, embarrassed, while Vuela treated Xiao Wu like air and searched for Tang Zihao on his phone.

"You bastards...!" Infuriated, Xiao Wu swung his fist at Vuela, but he skillfully leaned back to avoid it.

"Did you just avoid my attack!" Xiao Wu shouted.

"Hmm... Nope, he is not here either," Vuela ignored Xiao Wu and continued to search for Tang Zihao.

"Keep searching! I really don't want to contact the headquarters for a matter like this," Ethan said.

"Geez, are you guys really ignoring me?" Xiao Wu shouted.

Noticing the ease with which Vuela had dodged his punch, Xiao Wu realized that his opponents were challengers; he activated his mana.

"Try dodging this—"

Boom! Thud!

Xiao Wu couldn't finish his sentence because Ethan's sudden attack had landed squarely on his face, sending him crashing into the coffee shop wall. With eyes wide open, Xiao Wu slid down the wall, finally understanding the gravity of the situation.

'W-what... is going on?'

Although Xiao Wu was conscious, he could not move his body. His mana and body were refusing his call.

"Hey, brother!" Weihang called him from far away.

As the stiffness gradually subsided, he lifted his head to see his younger brother approaching him. Looking at it again, he realized the crooked chin rather suited his brother.

'Thinking about this whole situation again, picking fights with innocent people is a terrible thing, isn't it?'

"Hey! What are you doing! You gotta kill them right away!" Weihan said to his brother.

Xiao Wu looked at the cockeyed chin and felt certain that it had a certain charm. It didn't even look that different. He wondered if his brother had actually always been like that. Maybe he had just failed to notice the peculiarity until now.

Xiao Wu got up, dusted himself off, and looked at his younger brother.

"Xiao Wu...!" Weihan called him.

Punch—!

Xiao Wu punched his younger brother's face, and, lo and behold, his brother's chin was back to "normal." Xiao Wu grinned satisfactorily, ignoring the white scraps falling from his brother's mouth.

"Ahem, I just realized my younger brother was in the wrong here and caused you trouble. I'll apologize on his behalf," Xiao Wu apologized to Vuela and Ethan.

"Is this the right place?" Ethan asked Vuela.

"There's a rumor this place is next on his schedule," Vuela replied.

"Hmm... then should we go here first? It's about 3 kilometers away from this place, so we'll get there quickly if we run," Ethan asked.

"That's a good idea," Vuela replied.

Xiao Wu observed the two individuals, who had seemingly already forgotten the earlier confrontation and were now engaged in a lively conversation while frequently glancing at their phones. Then, suddenly, the two ran off somewhere and disappeared.

"..." Xiao Wu was left speechless.

Xiao Wu knew it was good that the fight ended this way, but it still made him uneasy and irritated for some reason.

"Ugh... Little brother, you should have just told me if you were tired. Why did you fall asleep on the ground? Your kind-hearted big brother will take you home." Xiao Wu tried to ignore the glances of those around him and left the scene.

Night had fallen, and the two of them, still unable to find Tang Zihao, waited outside his accommodation.

"Hmm? Who's that coming out over there?" Vuela squinted when he saw someone leaving Tang Zihao's building in the distance.

"Is that a fan of Tang Zihao?" Ethan pointed out to Vuela.

"Do fans usually leave through the window?" Vuela asked.

"Hmm... That is suspicious," Ethan said.

"Should we try catching him?" Vuela asked.

"Nah... Let's just ignore him. He is probably one of those obsessive fans." Ethan waved his hand dismissively.

Vuela looked a bit troubled, and his lips were pursed. In the distance, a familiar-looking man was heading toward Tang Zihao's house.

"There he is," Ethan muttered.

"Thankfully, he's in one piece," Vuela replied.

"But isn't he being too careless? Is he just gonna walk into his house? No precautions?" Ethan said.

"Well, he's a ranker, right? So he should be fine. It's not like his angry fans would set up a bomb or something. Besides, even if they did set up a bomb, how much harm can it really do?" Vuela said.

Ethan found Vuela's words strange, but he soon nodded in agreement.

"Hmm... But you know what?" Vuela said.

"What is it?" Ethan asked.

"Have an obsessive fan ever set up a bomb?" Vuela asked.

"I'm not too sure... I am not from around here," Ethan replied.

Unsure, Ethan scratched his head and tilted his head curiously. Somehow, through their conversation, they both had assumed an obsessive fan had infiltrated the building and planted a bomb.

"But how would an ordinary person even get a bomb, let alone set it up?" Vuela asked.

"..." Ethan did not reply.

"..." Vuela remained silent too.

The duo suddenly sensed something, so they exchanged glances.

"Could it be the government?" Ethan asked.

"The government probably wouldn't do something like this openly," Vuela replied.

"They can always say it was a fan with a grudge?" Ethan said.

"Oh... Yeah, that makes sense," Vuela replied.

Their eyes, confirming each other's thoughts, returned to Tang Zihao's building.

"No way..."

Sensing the growing unease, they hurriedly rushed toward the place.

"What's this? Is this a mana barrier?" Ethan looked surprised.

"Was this always here? Move aside! I'll break it," Vuela said.

Clang, clang, clang, clang!

Vuela shattered the mana barrier with his strength and barged inside. Everything they had accepted as normal before now seemed bizarre. How had that guy come and gone so casually earlier?

"This is just as I expected! My deduction was correct!" Ethan shouted.

Thud, thud!

Windows shattered, echoing throughout the building as Ethan and Vuela materialized in front of a completely drunk Tang Zihao. Startled, he gazed at the two.

"What are you guys doing here?" Tang Zihao asked, looking at the two.

"Ugh, you idiot! Are you seriously drunk right now?" Ethan shouted at Tang Zihao.

"Damn it! Let's get out quickly—"

Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom!

A massive vibration spread from the bottom of the building, accompanied by a deafening explosion noise as a burst of heat arose.