

Fan Meiqin shivered. The cold blade frightened her, turning her face ghostly pale, and she immediately collapsed back down, too scared to speak.

However, Ding Yan suddenly spoke up from the side, "Liu Erlong has rooms on the eleventh, fourteenth, twenty-first, and twenty-eighth floors. He changes rooms irregularly."

Liang Yuan was instantly surprised and looked at Ding Yan, asking, "So many vacant rooms? The people on the rooftop and in the corridor haven't moved in?"

Ding Yan replied, "Ever since the heavy rain, no one has dared to stay on the rooftop anymore. Only some old, weak, sick, and disabled people were driven to the top, responsible for collecting rainwater and such. Most people are in the corridor."

"There's still a lot of vacant rooms below, but they're all controlled by Liu Erlong and his gang. If they don't allow someone to live there, no one can."

Liang Yuan raised an eyebrow, "No one resists?"

"They have more people."

Liang Yuan's gaze flickered slightly, and he asked, "How much food do they still have?"

"Not much left. Right now, they're planning to go door to door to loot. You've been hiding at home all this time, right? Be careful; they'll come looking for you soon."

Hearing this, Liang Yuan couldn't help but take another look at Ding Yan.

This woman's appearance was not bad, but she was clearly malnourished, her face pale and lips chapped, far less vibrant than Fan Meiqin, who was standing next to her.

Liang Yuan asked, "Are there many people downstairs?"

"Quite a few. Those who have some skills managed to cozy up to Liu Erlong and got a room. Those who didn't fare as well are living in the stairwell. The worst off are in the corridor, where the ground is wet, and the wind and rain can blow in. Still, it's better than the rooftop."

Liang Yuan asked a few more questions and had a rough understanding of the surrounding situation.

He didn't go downstairs further. According to the other's account, most of the people downstairs were with Liu Erlong. As an outsider, he would easily be beaten up if he went down.

He chose to take a walk around the corridor and indeed found quite a few people hiding there.

Since the corridor had no shelter, many used plastic bags or other materials to make tents to block the rain, barely making it livable.

Fortunately, each corridor was large enough, with most people living as a family unit.

Generally, two or three families lived together in one corridor, seemingly huddling together for warmth.

Liang Yuan's appearance caught the attention of a man in that corridor, who immediately stood up warily and grabbed a kitchen knife next to him.

"Old Ma!"

He shouted in a low voice, and a bald man in his fifties with a fruit knife in his hand emerged from the rain tarp next door, looking at Liang Yuan cautiously.

"Who are you?" the man with the kitchen knife asked coldly.

Liang Yuan glanced at the two of them. The man with the kitchen knife was probably in his forties, with some muscle definition, although he looked a bit thin from hunger.

He had seen the middle-aged bald man before, in the elevator. Compared to half a year ago, he was clearly thinner, with his once big belly now reduced to a small bulge.

After thinking for a moment, Liang Yuan said, "I'm from 3201 upstairs."

Both men were taken aback, especially Old Ma, who was surprised, "So you're the tough guy from 3201?"

Liang Yuan was puzzled, "What do you mean?"

Old Ma didn't speak, but the man with the kitchen knife said, "Liu Erlong's men came looking for you this morning, right? We heard the commotion. You injured Wu Hua and his men; Liu Erlong won't let you off."

Liang Yuan frowned, "I've injured them before; we've been enemies for a long time."

The man with the kitchen knife shook his head, "It's different this time. Liu Erlong and his men have started sweeping the building. They cleared up to the twenty-seventh floor yesterday, and they'll probably clear up to the thirty-second floor today. Staying home won't help you."

"If I were you, I'd hurry back and hide any food I have."

Liang Yuan's heart sank, and he couldn't help but ask, "Liu Erlong has a lot of people?"

Old Ma spoke up, "More than twenty, mostly young and strong tenants of this building."

"You haven't joined him?" Liang Yuan asked.

Old Ma remained silent, just looking at the tent.

The man with the kitchen knife explained, "Liu Erlong's core members are all strong and healthy; he won't take in the old, weak, sick, or disabled."

"You don't count as strong?" Liang Yuan asked.

The man with the kitchen knife replied calmly, "I have a wife and children."

With that explanation, Liang Yuan understood.

Liu Erlong wanted to recruit people but not just anyone. His first criterion was that they had to be young and strong.

The second was that they couldn't have family burdens. He probably wanted to save on food this way.

Feeding one person and feeding a whole family are very different.

"Brother, let's make friends. In these times, it's tough to go it alone. I'm Cai Zhi."

Cai Zhi put away his kitchen knife and extended his hand to Liang Yuan.

Old Ma nodded, "I'm Ma Guocai. Young man, Xiao Cai is right. If we don't stick together, Liu Erlong's gang can really do anything."

Liang Yuan didn't shake their hands but quietly retreated to the stairwell, "I'll wait for Liu Erlong."

Turning to go upstairs, he was very calm. These two weren't lifelong friends, so who knew how much of their words could be trusted.

He obviously couldn't just believe everything they said.

But it was true that those two tried to forcefully enter his home this morning, so he couldn't be complacent.

"Looks like I can't go out today. Liu Erlong..."

A cold gleam flashed in Liang Yuan's eyes.

He quickly went up to his floor and suddenly saw a skinny figure suspiciously peeking through his door's peephole.

"Li Zhiqiang!"

The figure at the door shuddered, quickly turned around, and upon seeing the fully armed Liang Yuan, broke into a cold sweat. He didn't dare say a word and rushed into his own apartment.

Before Liang Yuan could ask, there was a bang, and Li Zhiqiang had already locked himself inside his place.

Liang Yuan's face turned grim. He approached his door and saw a piece of wire stuck in the peephole.

He pulled out the wire, finding it bent into a hook inside.

Anger flashed in Liang Yuan's eyes. This bastard was trying to pick the lock and sneak into his home!

Bang!

In his fury, Liang Yuan turned around and kicked the opposite door hard.

"Ah—"

A woman's scream came from inside, clearly startled.

Liang Yuan cursed, "Li Zhiqiang, you son of a bitch, I lent you a bag of rice before, and now you dare to target me?"

The person inside didn't dare make a sound. If Liang Yuan had x-ray vision, he would see Li Zhiqiang trembling behind the door, desperately holding onto the doorknob.

Yang Mei had fallen to the ground in fright, her face pale and bloodless.

Liang Yuan, enraged, kicked the security door several more times.

Inside, Li Zhiqiang didn't dare make a sound.

Liang Yuan's eyes were icy. Thankfully, he hadn't left for real, or his home would have been robbed.

Li Zhiqiang, this scum, deserved some punishment. Liang Yuan couldn't swallow his anger.

Staring at the security door, an idea came to his mind.

Suddenly, he sneered and said, "Li Zhiqiang, you and your wife are out of food, aren't you?"

"Hehe, if you need food, why sneak around?"

"How about this, open the door, and I can share some food with you."

Li Zhiqiang's face changed drastically inside. Excited and surprised, forgetting his fear, he shouted through the door, "Liang Yuan, are you for real? Are you really willing to share food with us?"

Liang Yuan smiled, "We're neighbors, aren't we? If we don't unite, outsiders will bully us."