

Beautiful 641

Chapter 641 Outnumbered? Quite the contrary

Well, perhaps Shotgun Girl's short stature led her to target the lower region first. Ling Qingyu had already stood up when her loli partner acted.

She almost winced at the sound as a loud crack shattered the tense atmosphere, followed by the man's excruciating scream.

The rest of the audience, as well as the victims, were dumbfounded by the sudden entry of another girl.

Even a few men, who had been hesitating on whether to intervene, paused in amazement. Shotgun Girl pounded her fists into the man, hammering his flesh with relentless blows that produced a series of heavy thuds.

There were many ways to quickly subdue him, even though he was bigger, but Shotgun Girl chose not to. There had to be a reason, and Ling Qingyu had her own suspicions.

No one noticed how the girl had managed to close the distance, as if she had blinked into their sight.

Three men nearby stood up after a brief hesitation, and Ling Qingyu designated them as some sort of bodyguards.

Oh, so that's why—the woman had tried to endure. If she and Shotgun Girl hadn't acted, the other woman who tried to help would have suffered greatly.

Hmph, since they liked to use force, it would be rude not to reciprocate. She swiftly hopped forward and stomped on the man who was about to lunge at her girl, sending him flying and crashing into the furniture.

Still, she had withheld a significant amount of strength. Otherwise, she would have kicked someone to death—just like last time.

While her girl continued bullying the poor scumbag, Ling Qingyu leaned back, effortlessly dodging an oncoming punch from a gangster. She sighed slightly, disappointed at the lack of skill.

She felt disgusted—there were so many openings and weak angles that she had lost interest in deciding where to strike.

In the end, she merely sidestepped, using his momentum to slam his head against the furniture. To ensure he was completely knocked out, she smashed his head three more times before turning her attention to another attacker.

This one was about to lunge at Shotgun Girl. Though she trusted that her loli partner could handle it, Ling Qingyu grasped his arm, locked the joint, and used precise pressure to twirl him around before throwing him over her shoulder.

Aside from the initial kick, which was a little too extraordinary for an average person, she barely used any real strength—replicating the combat ability of a normal girl.

These were techniques that exploited an opponent's own movements. Against trained fighters skilled in kickboxing or wrestling, more effort would have been required.

The more techniques one mastered, the more options they had—provided they trained relentlessly to embed them into muscle memory.

Ling Qingyu, however, didn't need to memorize. She had been deliberately beaten by Tang Ziyi so that everything she learned became ingrained in her very bones.

The crowd gasped in amazement as they witnessed a woman take down three men effortlessly, wasting neither time nor energy.

Where had they ever seen such a sight?

As for the scumbag, who had been beaten to the point of near-autism and was still groaning, nobody cared.

The victim and the woman who had tried to help, on the other hand, were frozen in place, stiffened by the brutal scene before them.

At the same time, they looked at the whining man on the floor—reduced to a pathetic mess—and realized he wasn't so strong after all. It had been their own fear and instinctive awe that had rendered them powerless.

Had they learned proper techniques, they could have escaped unscathed—or even defended themselves.

Yet, in stark contrast, the victim shuddered at the thought of being alone with the man again.

Why in the world did she still want to stay with him? The reasons could be many.

Sometimes, rescuing a victim of domestic abuse wasn't just about removing them from the situation—the problem also lay within themselves.

It was difficult to save someone who didn't want to be saved. The best approach was to sever their connection with the abuser and give them space to reflect deeply while undergoing psychological treatment.

Meanwhile, Shotgun Girl finally stopped her assault and took a deep breath. Her gaze swept across the room, and with a serious expression, she approached Ling Qingyu and poked her waist.

The latter nearly jumped from the ticklish sensation and glared at the culprit. She had just been assessing the situation—four men down, no more threats.

"What's the matter?" she asked knowingly, noticing the worry in Shotgun Girl's eyes.

"Boss, did I make a mistake?"

Ling Qingyu's lips twitched. A classic tsundere—mocking and cursing her one moment, then calling her Boss when she needed reassurance.

"What mistake?" Ling Qingyu probed, curious about what was on Shotgun Girl's mind.

"I hit him too hard and broke his bones and teeth," the shortie muttered, biting her lip and shrugging. "Maybe his nose... and his thinking ability."

Ling Qingyu furrowed her brows as she glanced at the poor "victim."

Well, he deserved it. This was the first time, she witnessed Shotgun girl losing control of her emotion.

This little loli was usually taciturn and quiet, seemingly emotionless regardless of disastrous events. Explosions and gore barely fazed her, yet the simple beating of a woman ignited her wrath? There must surely be more story to tell.

In any case, he wouldn't die from internal injuries. Flesh and broken bones could heal.

Ideally, the sooner medical treatment arrived, the better. Ling Qingyu disliked calling for help, but what Shotgun Girl did had gone beyond the category of self-defense or simple intervention.

Of course, a good lawyer could argue otherwise, but she disliked the complications that came with it and preferred to resolve matters crudely.

"Don't worry, I'll handle the rest," Ling Qingyu reassured her. If she couldn't cover for such a minor issue, her identity as a boss would be questionable.

"Athena, you know what to do."

"Got it, Mom." Athena acted promptly.

All video recordings and photos were deleted anonymously. Phone calls to emergency numbers were intercepted, while those that had already gone through received explanations to tone down the event, making it seem like the fight was over and peace had been restored.

At the same time, Athena dug 12 feet deep into the abuser's profile and discovered a trove of incriminating materials—connections to criminal organizations and drug sales.

There were several past instances of him beating women among his many girlfriends. One had even died, but the matter had been settled privately.

Although no direct links appeared on his profile, Athena, as an AI and a nearly omniscient existence on the planet, detected patterns and irregularities.

Such scenarios played out not only in syndicate gangs but also in government organizations like the military in various nations.

If people from all walks of life were involved, there would inevitably be unexpected cases—officials behaving no differently from criminals.

At least criminals declared their identity outright, whereas officials swore an oath to protect and did the opposite.

This guy was significant, yet perhaps his role had been too minor to attract the attention of Spirit Fox or the police in the past. But the connections he held brought considerable benefits.

With these files, Aunt Yang wouldn't mind overlooking Shotgun girl's actions. As for public opinion, under Athena's watch, not a single piece of news—except for oral rumors—would spread.

Ling Qingyu wasn't aware of any of this, but she trusted her daughter to handle everything brilliantly. By now, the entire venue had fallen silent.

Nobody spoke or wished to be involved. In fact, if not for public image and moral obligation, they would have already fled the crime scene.

While Ling Qingyu devised ways to handle the aftermath, including compensating the bar, the sudden appearance of numerous men and locked doors at the entrance disrupted everyone's thoughts.

"Huh," Shotgun girl muttered as she analyzed the situation. "Boss, it looks like this bar is up to no good."

"That's even better, isn't it?" Ling Qingyu cracked her fingers. "Now I don't have to waste brain cells. They just handed us the perfect solution to our problem. Shouldn't we thank them?"

Shotgun girl giggled, tossing away her worries completely. Wasn't this what umbrellas were for?

Call the boss when you can't solve a problem and beg for help!

"Outsiders, for what purpose are you causing chaos?" A figure stood on the bench near the bartender and spoke. "This area belongs to Vermillion."

"No purpose. But let me ask—why? Do you plan to detain us?" Ling Qingyu responded frivolously.

"That depends on your answer and sincerity," the man snorted, avoiding her question.

"Well, is it wrong to beat a man who abuses a woman? We were protecting her." Ling Qingyu noticed the victim trembling even more, lost in her own world of fear.

The woman who had stepped in to help had a livid expression, as if she hadn't expected the situation to escalate this drastically.

The proverb about only helping others if you could protect yourself had never rung truer.

"That doesn't give you the right to beat our men," the man quibbled.

"So, you want compensation, I see." Ling Qingyu chuckled. There was no need for further talk. She glanced at her partner and nodded.

The duo had no concerns. They also carried concealed firearms, ready to be drawn if the situation called for it.

Not to mention, Spirit Fox and the police had no leverage over the Vermillion gang, who were too clever to be caught off guard.

Now that she had an opportunity, why let it slip? Another win for her wife, Yang Qingyue.

"Give up. You're outnumbered and surrounded. I'll admit, you girls can fight, but you should know when to stop before you get hurt."

"Outnumbered?" Ling Qingyu scoffed, her voice laced with mockery, as if she had just heard the most ridiculous joke of the century.

Who was really locked in here? Who was actually surrounded?

Just the two of them—she and her little loli—were more than enough to tear through this entire place, reducing it to splinters and broken bodies. If she factored in the hidden operators stationed for her protection, then these fools weren't just outmatched—they were already doomed.

She wasn't reckless. She valued her life too much to walk around without precautions. With just a word, armed guards would emerge from the locked doors and breach in, turning this standoff into a massacre.

It would be boring if Spirit Fox's attire were revealed. With guns and armor, what was there to play as gangs except to sing "Conquered?"

Still, she was curious. What would the gang do if she played along? Could she put more charges later on based on their words? Well, noting more fear exhibited by the two women, Ling Qingyu stopped the idea of acting.

"You take the rear and protect them," Ling Qingyu gestured at the two frightened women. "I'll handle the rest. It's about time I collected the interest owed by Tang Ziyi's fist."

Shotgun girl nearly burst out laughing at her boss's words while silently lighting a candle of sympathy for the men who thought they had the situation under control.

With that, Ling Qingyu charged forward, and the fight erupted. Shotgun girl wasn't about to be outdone.

Pangs, booms, and shattering glass reverberated through the bar.

The violence was so intense it shook the floor—not even the fourth-dimension cameras were spared.

Chapter 642 Targeting Vermilion

"Big Sis, please have mercy... ouch." The man bent his knees and took a deep breath in pain.

Ling Qingyu kicked him in the knees and yanked his hair upward. "I heard you wanted to teach us girls what it means to be human. How about I give you a lesson in gender education?"

Eying his crotch, Ling Qingyu sneered, eliciting a frightened yelp. His hands instinctively covered the fragile area.

No matter how helpless his situation was or how impossible it was to protect himself, at least this act provided a false sense of security. Despite knowing it was meaningless, he felt slightly better having another barrier.

He gulped and looked around. All his men had fallen into a coma.

These two girls were definitely ruthless—far more than when they initially attacked the three men before stepping in to intervene. And that was ignoring the scumbag who had been beaten to the point of dementia.

Destroyed furniture, shattered glass, and spilled beverages on the floor told the background story.

The rest of the people were too afraid to move, frozen in their chairs. They couldn't believe how two young women had effortlessly thrown and kicked men who were heavier than them—with their small bodies.

Well, 1.7 meter and beyond wasn't small honestly but women were deemed as a weaker sex. Very rarely could there be situation that females utterly decimated male groups.

Some of the men had been punched and smashed so brutally that they coughed up blood. Numbers seemed like mere specks of dirt, barely affecting the duo's emotions.

The women who had been helped by Ling Qingyu and Shotgun Girl wore speechless expressions. Even the previously numb and frightened woman regained a bit of courage, as if the violence had somehow cured her fear.

The reason Ling Qingyu tortured and humiliated the man—who appeared to be a small leader among the group—was simple: retaliation.

"It was a slip of the tongue. I apologize for any mean words. I had no intention of offending you. Please show some mercy. I was only trying to threaten you, not actually hurt you," he stammered.

"Really? I was just kidding around too. Please tolerate my mistakes," Ling Qingyu said, delivering a punch to his solar plexus.

"Offffffttt..." The man nearly vomited.

This was pure torture—naked revenge. There was no sign that Ling Qingyu wanted to investigate anything.

"It seems like you're not the boss here, right?" Ling Qingyu smiled gently before lifting the man and throwing him into the corner. "Ladies and gentlemen, the show's over. I hope you enjoyed our entertainment. Now, please leave."

Without the slightest delay, furniture scraped against the floor as people raced toward the exit.

They dared not stay any longer, even if these girls seemed to be good people. Maybe they were kind, but that depended on their mood.

The moment an opportunity to escape appeared, nobody hesitated. Of course, this didn't include the two victims, as they believed they were somewhat responsible for the violence that had occurred.

Ling Qingyu asked Shotgun Girl to let them stay and take care of them before turning her attention back to the perpetrator.

The women Ling Qingyu had pointed at blinked in confusion. Despite not wanting to leave, another emotion sank in—they were being "requested to" stay.

They didn't know whether they were being forced or not, but they dared not question it.

After all, these two women had saved them from a dire situation, even though the escalation had spiraled out of control.

Well, although she was the sole culprit who turned a simple domestic abuse case into a near turf war, as the righteous party, how could she self-sabotage?

The blame had to fall on the ones who called themselves the Vermilion Bird gang. Not her, nor Spirit Fox for stepping in.

Speaking of which, Ling Qingyu ordered Athena to summon her guards outside, and they stepped in.

Although their attire wasn't uniform, their armored vests and helmets—marked with the label Special Police with CAITO underneath—said it all.

Perhaps Ling Qingyu's fashion industry had made a major breakthrough, or Athena's production line had caught up, but even normal daily clothing now had bullet-resistant technology. Although weaker, it still got the job done.

The people leaving the perimeter encountered them and gasped. The guards ignored them and followed Ling Qingyu.

When the man held by Ling Qingyu saw the operators, his expression said it all.

Total despair.

There was no way Spirit Fox had intervened this quickly and been so well-prepared by coincidence. He had foolishly led his men right into the perfect excuse.

Vermilion Bird had been keeping a low profile, avoiding direct conflict to survive Spirit Fox's onslaught.

Many gangs had already been eliminated or forced to relocate. Even the four major ones weren't spared.

Tiger was the first to buy a coffin, followed by Turtle and Azure Dragon, who were now suffering heavy losses.

Despite many attempts to dispose of evidence, they had been too slow.

Only Vermilion Bird, with its superior intelligence network and a leader with an actual brain, had managed to dodge several guillotines.

As soon as Spirit Fox announced its existence, the leader had cut all connections to contraband and gone into hiding.

All of that effort would be wasted if tonight's incident was intentionally escalated by the police in Province N.

"You two... you belong to Spirit Fox?" the man asked knowingly.

Ling Qingyu and Shotgun Girl shrugged while the two women nearby remained in deep shock at how these two had singlehandedly thwarted the gang. Clearly, Spirit Fox operators were a different breed. This was widely discussed online and in rumors.

So, the reason the two were detained might have been for further questioning. In contrast, the man huffed with resentment, but his wounded face—courtesy of Ling Qingyu—startled everyone.

"You should have declared yourself sooner. Did we really need to escalate our mess to this level?" the man complained. "You did this on purpose."

Had anyone ever seen a man expressing grievance like a little woman abandoned by her husband? Pitiful, right? But when that description came with bruises and lumps, everyone had the urge to vomit.

The two victims weren't pretentious. They directly retched and patted their chests. If they were alone, they might have restrained themselves, but Spirit Fox gave them confidence.

"Yeah, so what?" Ling Qingyu raised her brows and slapped the back of his head without mercy, speechless at the two bystanders.

She should have forced them out along with the others. Why were they vomiting so exaggeratedly? It nearly made her follow suit and embarrass herself.

"Shortie, you'll take care of the women until the matter is resolved," Ling Qingyu ordered Shotgun Girl. "I don't want to hear any news in the future about victims getting hurt by vengeance because we left them loopholes."

"So, boss, you want me to... Tsk." Shotgun Girl cleared her throat and gestured by dragging a finger across her neck. "It's easy to explain. He attempted to ambush the officer in a fight and accidentally knocked his head."

While the other operators secured the site and searched for weapons, completely unfazed by the conversation, the two women shuddered and gasped unconsciously before covering their lips.

They knew Spirit Fox deterred criminals through violence, but discussing it so blatantly in front of them—wouldn't that mean they could easily be silenced as civilians?

Ling Qingyu chuckled at their cute reaction and shook her head, especially when the two expressed support by zipping their mouths.

Even if Ling Qingyu and her subordinates wanted to kill, they wouldn't need to discuss it. Just an exchange of glances would be enough.

She never expected Shotgun Girl to have a sense of humor.

If the man being tortured right now could sense Ling Qingyu's thoughts, he would complain. Where was the humor in this? Spirit Fox was more evil and villainous than they were.

In fact, this man, who had remained completely awake throughout the fight and until now, had endured the most. Ling Qingyu punished him intentionally.

Who told him to draw his pistol against her? Why bring a firearm to a fistfight with no rules?

He deserved this treatment. Though Ling Qingyu and Shotgun Girl had easily disarmed him, they weren't about to let him go.

Fortunately, both had exercised caution, even in the chaos of the fight, with their attention on high alert.

If Tang Ziyi and her confidantes had known about Ling Qingyu's situation, they would have scolded her nonstop.

Of course, these were just extra precautions. Ling Qingyu wondered if she could dodge a bullet coming her way, given the enhancements she had obtained naturally, plus through sutras and her bracelet's functions.

No one had attempted bullet-dodging skills yet. Even if they couldn't outright dodge, in theory, they could predict the barrel's direction and evade.

Ling Qingyu made a mental note of this and decided to discuss it with Tang Ziyi later. Presumably, she might be rewarded with the icy Valkyrie's kiss.

After all, it wasn't the first or second time that Ling Qingyu and other newbies had suggested innovations in tactics and technology.

The hypothesis was quite possible, given Spirit Fox's potential and capabilities. Who knew whether they could withstand bullet projectiles without any equipment, even if it wasn't necessary?

After handing everything over, Ling Qingyu, along with a few guards, entered a restricted door off-limits to outsiders. More secrets awaited ahead.

Given the perfect excuse at hand, why waste an opportunity to unearth more evidence to support her wife?

The only male survivor who experienced tortured, gasped heavily before being thrown to the ground and handcuffed. Oh, let him live in prison from now on. He dared not imagine his fate being chased by Vermilion Bird if the gang managed to survive.

Chapter 643 A new tool perhaps?

Ling Qingyu and the guards entered the mysterious door and discovered the world behind it. It wasn't surprising. Life was filled with both light and darkness.

Although Vermilion Bird had transformed the current location into a high-end bar, based on the architecture, Ling Qingyu knew this used to be a nightclub, complete with private venues and small rooms.

Everyone understood the function of those rooms—drugs, prostitution, and other evils ran deep here.

Who knew how many drug victims had been brought here, forced into submission by their predators—both male and female?

Or how many times this place had been the site of drug exchanges and deals? There was no doubt that drug trading wouldn't stop, no matter how the law criminalized or legalized it.

The reason the 'bar' was so clean could be attributed to Spirit Fox's recent crackdown and Yang Qingyue's tough stance.

No compromises were made. Politically, she attacked the higher echelon while breaking their teeth through Spirit Fox.

Everyone understood the unspoken rules. How could the higher-ups not grasp the stakes and damages that drugs and gangs imposed?

All of Province N's chaos and misery had been deliberately created—to stabilize their regime and generate profit.

No one could resist lucrative offers. Even if, on the surface, politicians destroyed drugs for public image, who knew how many they had stored and sold elsewhere through their agents?

It wasn't as if the DEA from Country A hadn't conducted similar methods. Perhaps, at least from their moral standpoint, as long as they didn't sell contraband to their own countrymen, they weren't criminals.

As for other nations—what did their lives and conditions have to do with them? This was precisely why many knowledgeable people regarded the political arena as a complete gray zone.

Surely, her mother-in-law had seen all of this and would have turned a blind eye if there were no interests or gains involved.

Otherwise, it wasn't worth the risk to her life and career. In politics, a single mistake could lead to death.

Not to mention, she had no intention of changing the status quo unless she had the strength to overturn the table.

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Ignoring the baffled staff and waitresses, Ling Qingyu walked in the direction pointed out by the young man who had 'genuinely' confessed under her 'persuasion.'

Both men and women remained unaware of what had happened downstairs. Or perhaps they were too shocked to see Spirit Fox's presence.

A few gang members attempted to move but were instantly subdued. Not a single one escaped the fate of plastic cuffs.

Under these threats, more people stayed put, deciding to wait and watch. Finally, Ling Qingyu barged into a room—one purposely built to accommodate important people, such as a certain head of the Vermilion gang.

The hosts were surprised by her entry. Clearly, the soundproof system had isolated the commotion outside.

Ling Qingyu sneered as she assessed the situation.

Three people.

One man lounged leisurely on the sofa. Another, who seemed to be a subordinate reporting to his superior, stood nearby, his back still bent in deference as he relayed whatever news—none of which interested Ling Qingyu.

However, the final figure caught her attention.

Well, it would have been a feast for the eyes if not for the other disgusting elements.

A beautiful woman in a violet cheongsam—nothing unusual. The only exception was that she seemed to be the most stunning woman in the bar.

She was partially naked, undressed from top to bottom, with only the cheongsam's fabric weakly hanging around her waist. Bras and panties were strewn around.

With a sexy stature and perfect curves, the woman earned a rare, nearly perfect score in Ling Qingyu's eyes.

White skin, ample cleavage with supple weight, a mysteriously perfect ratio of long legs, and a face that could charm any creature—Ling Qingyu had to admit, this so-called prostitute was a stunner.

She was likely a waitress, treated differently and favored by the leader of this bar. Whether by force or with incentives, that was none of Ling Qingyu's concern.

A pity—she had been desecrated by a bastard and had fallen from the altar of godhood.

This motherf*cker was a waste, failing to recognize her potential. There were so many ways she could have been nurtured and utilized to generate far greater income.

Clearly, from the man's disheveled clothing and erratic breathing, the two had engaged in some 'vigorous exercise'—excluding the subordinate on foot.

There was no way he would let his subordinates watch his lovemaking process unless he had some special kinks.

However, no matter what, no man liked other men ogling at their women, even the ones they didn't care much about.

Yet, the current scenario painted a different story.

Although it was just for the briefest moment, Ling Qingyu noticed the woman's eyes flash with both hatred and helplessness.

Combining this with the situation, Ling Qingyu wondered if this bastard had sold the woman to his subordinate as a reward.

After all, the woman's expression, paired with her exposed state, nearly confirmed her conjecture.

For people in his position, women were nothing more than toys or accessories. If they were no longer useful, it was better to discard them—or, like now, squeeze out any remaining value by obtaining a general's loyalty.

Even if the goddess was played with by his boss, to the subordinate, it felt like an honor. Otherwise, how could he ever have had a chance to taste such a delicious meal?

Ling Qingyu had no idea what was going through his brain to willingly give away one of the most attractive women she had ever encountered.

She maliciously speculated that the woman was so charming and beautiful that a certain boss had surrendered within three strokes or so, hurting his ego.

For people at his level, no one was allowed to witness their embarrassment, whether in private or public. Not to mention, a prostitute he had toyed with was now riding on his neck.

Perhaps the woman had been coerced into his bed but later resigned herself to her fate, deciding to cater to the man for favor. Unfortunately, her fate wasn't taken seriously at all.

The hatred and helplessness shown in a mere matter of seconds might be possible if Ling Qingyu's guess was correct. Anyway, this was the destiny of those who relied on others for a living.

What Ling Qingyu didn't realize was that her guess was terribly close to the truth. Although she had an interest in the beautiful lady—not just for her financial potential but also for her beauty—she hesitated to ask her.

Without hesitation, she grabbed the boss and flung him like a toy to interrogate him. As for his subordinate, who was about to express his loyalty, the two operators nearby tossed him aside and smacked the back of his head with a plastic cuff, as if a grandparent were teaching a disobedient descendant.

From the two men's mouths, Ling Qingyu gained more tools and options that would add to Yang Qingyue's merit.

For her wife, she had worked really hard. Moreover, this place was highly suitable for businesses like bars and restaurants.

Since everything was already set up, why not confiscate it and purchase it from the authorities to resume business?

The infrastructure was in place, and the workers were available. No government would refuse her offer, right?

Everybody won—except the victims whose properties were robbed away.

Not to mention, she would provide a more secure and healthy entertainment venue, devoid of drugs and dangers.

When the two men were taken downstairs after revealing crucial intel, Ling Qingyu looked at the woman's beauty and hesitated.

Unrelated personnel meant there would be no further connection between them. Of course, she could hire the woman for her future bar, but that would be wasting this beauty's real potential and possible achievements.

First, Ling Qingyu coughed and asked, "Young lady, are you forced to be here?"

The woman nodded. "Sort of initially, but I figured to survive and enjoy some benefits, why not sacrifice a little? I work here as a waitress and attract their eyes."

"Well, that means you aren't currently coerced from a legal perspective," Ling Qingyu said in deep thought.

"You could say that. But the opposite is also true—how dare I resist and offend them?" the woman replied.

"Then, can you please dress up?" Ling Qingyu spoke with some speechlessness. This woman might have forgotten herself.

The woman shrieked and quickly adjusted her disheveled cheongsam. Afterward, she hesitantly asked, "Am I being detained?"

"Of course not," Ling Qingyu shook her head.

"Then, please allow me to clean myself."

"Sure, go ahead. I'll be waiting." Ling Qingyu nodded and left the room. There was no way in hell she would spend extra time where a man's dirty deeds had taken place.

Soon, the woman, now properly cleansed, exited the room and walked toward Ling Qingyu, causing the latter to beam with a smile.

She openly appreciated the stunner's display and recalled Fan Xi and Ling Yunxiang. With the right training, this woman could excel in the entertainment sector.

If not for temperament affecting the score, Ling Qingyu would have already grabbed this girl into her harem... Ahem.

As for virginity issues and whatnots... please. In the modern era, as long as the numbers weren't too outrageous or horrendous, Ling Qingyu didn't care.

In fact, Ling Qingyu just wanted to collect rare beauties from around the world and have some fun. She wasn't going to coerce or trick others into a relationship like some unscrupulous protagonist.

Furthermore, this woman had accompanied the man and likely possessed other important information they might have overlooked. So, she had to retain this asset, regardless of whether it was for profit potential or personal interest.

Chapter 644 Draft updating

An SUV crawled through the heavy traffic jam. Inside, Ling Qingyu impatiently blew at the strands of hair on her forehead as her hands idly caressed the steering wheel.

The copilot was a new face, while behind her sat the beautiful woman who had given her a headache to deal with.

She had no idea what went on in this woman's mind, leaving her speechless as she shamelessly hopped into the vehicle, insisting that Spirit Fox should escort her home safely.

Hell, even if Ling Qingyu left behind a mess, her subordinates would handle everything perfectly, but this girl should have realized she had more means at her disposal.

Even if she had been a toy played with by powerful bosses, Ling Qingyu had made the mistake of underestimating other parties based solely on their identities.

Once they saw an opportunity, they jumped in without the slightest hesitation to secure their future.

"What's wrong? Am I that bad in your eyes?" the woman asked.

Ling Qingyu sighed and shook her head. "No, you're definitely beautiful and have high potential. It's just a pity."

"A pity?" The woman chuckled. "Are you talking about the entertainment industry?"

"Yeah," Ling Qingyu admitted, intrigued and wanting to hear more.

"It's because that world is even messier, full of unspoken rules that limit growth. So I thought, why not find a job myself? I feel insecure knowing my salary would rely on popularity and the favor of big bosses."

"Hmm, so you work as a waitress?" Ling Qingyu was puzzled, curious about how this girl's mind worked. How was a waitress's situation any different, especially in a bar overseen by a gang?

"Part-time. I also write online novels," the woman explained after noticing Ling Qingyu's strange look. "Don't assume this is all I can do. I haven't even gotten my degree yet."

"How about your parents?"

"I grew up in an orphanage."

"Sorry..." Ling Qingyu had nothing else to say.

"It's alright. Life is tough, but at least it's not unbearable."

"What's your name?"

"Xiu Yanran."

"A beautiful name, to be honest," Ling Qingyu praised.

"How about yours?" Xiu Yanran asked, staring at her through the rearview mirror.

"Confidential. It's best not to know." Ling Qingyu smiled, secretly laughing to herself. She had always wanted to say that. Now, she finally had the chance.

"I understand," Xiu Yanran looked away.

Speaking of which, this girl had the same name as Nalan Yanran, Ling Qingyu thought. "So, you're working hard to study for the future?"

"Yes," Xiu Yanran nodded. "I'm not talented enough to survive on scholarships. To escape poverty, education is the only way."

Ling Qingyu didn't comment. She neither agreed nor disagreed. Everything depended on perspective.

For Xiu Yanran, education might be the only springboard available for survival and growth.

"Why don't you quit your job?" Ling Qingyu asked, understanding a few reasons why this girl had suffered unfairly.

"I can't," Xiu Yanran answered helplessly. "Financial reasons are one thing. But if I insist on quitting, I'll bring trouble to the dean and the orphanage. They know exactly where to target me.

"I started as a simple waitress. It was an act of desperation during the economic crisis. You don't really get to choose. And I don't think a bar and a restaurant are that different. My beauty caught the attention of malicious men, and you know what happened next."

Ling Qingyu sympathized and offered some comfort. "Would you mind describing it? Just out of curiosity. It's fine if you decline, but I insist you share more—it might help relieve some stress and burden from your heart."

"I don't mind. It's nothing more than a beauty who had no choice but to succumb while trying to gain benefits in the process. Since I was going to serve a man anyway, I thought, why not? But it turns out I was too naïve—relying on others' favor isn't reliable at all. If you hadn't intervened, I can't imagine what my fate would have been, forced to serve multiple people."

"Only self-sufficiency and having multiple alternatives is the true king's path. It applies to all walks of life—business, politics, everything," Ling Qingyu said.

In fact, this was the reason why no news ever surfaced. Most of the time, victims either accepted their fate and moved on or tried to gain something from it.

Sexual harassment cases in corporations and government offices only came to light when victims found solid backing to shield them from retaliation.

The logic of "why not report it earlier" didn't work here. If they offended someone powerful, their careers and lives would be completely ruined.

Like Xiu Yanran, women sought stability and security. They didn't dare gamble on resistance. There were surely many other hidden stories and experiences like hers.

Had the boss treated her well enough, Xiu Yanran might have continued with her plan and accepted her fate.

Perhaps she would have lain low, waiting for the right moment to take revenge. Of course, there were also those who fell into depression and ended their own lives, or were forced to do so.

Anyway, Xiu Yanran's original fate had completely changed the moment she met Ling Qingyu.

"Yanran, can I call you that?"

"Of course."

"Listen, I think you're already strong, and you don't need my comfort. You might be confused about your future, but I can offer you a choice," said Ling Qingyu. "I have connections with someone in the entertainment industry. Given your potential, you'll rise quickly as long as you have the heart to learn and work hard—and I have no doubt about your persistence."

"Then, wouldn't I have to suffer the same unspoken rules?"

"The bosses and the people I want to introduce you to are women," Ling Qingyu explained.

"That doesn't mean they're any less terrifying than men," Xiu Yanran replied, shutting her up. "Sometimes, women treat their own kind even worse. In my experience, they might even sell their artists to satisfy the desires of powerful men because they know exactly what women have to offer."

Ling Qingyu and the operator beside her were speechless because, despite its extremism, Yanran's words contained some truth.

After all, weren't female leaders sometimes even more unscrupulous in exploiting their own gender? There was no need to look far—just below Country C, a certain airline, whose boss was a woman, had introduced bikini stewardesses.

In Country A, a scandal involving a large prostitution network among politicians was headed by a woman.

Sometimes, having a female leader wasn't necessarily better for women than having a male one. As long as the person in power lacked morals and standards, nothing would change.

"Well, don't worry, I know her personally. What you're worried about will not happen!" Ling Qingyu declared solemnly.

"Okay, I believe you. I don't think you'd waste time on a nobody like me."

Ling Qingyu swallowed her original persuading words and wondered if this girl had done it on purpose.

Noticing the slight smile on Xiu Yanran's face, Ling Qingyu shook her head. It wasn't her loss. She believed Xiu Yanran would become another asset to Fan Xi and Ling Yunxiang.

"But I'm a newcomer, and my background isn't clean... what if..." Xiu Yanran blandly pointed out her shortcomings as a matter of fact.

"You don't need to worry about that. There are many ways to handle your concerns."

Afterward, Ling Qingyu exchanged contact information with Xiu Yanran. The intermediary was, of course, Athena, who would help the latter connect with Fan Xi.

She kept Fan Xi as a surprise for Xiu Yanran when the girl inevitably asked about her future boss.

By then, this girl might faint from overwhelming shock. From their conversation, which Ling Qingyu had subtly guided, she had learned about Xiu Yanran's hobbies and interests. Hmmph, who told Xiu Yanran to trick her?

In fact, regarding the concerns of some workers affected by Spirit Fox's confiscation, such outcomes would be avoided once another party, like Ling Qingyu, took over.

Although she was acting in the name of contributing merits to her wife, Ling Qingyu never played a game she would lose. The same logic applied to Xiu Yanran.

Xiu Yanran requested to be dropped off at the orphanage that had raised her, and Ling Qingyu gladly obliged.

Later, Ling Qingyu and another operator drove away in silence after seeing the girl returned to her former home with relief in the eyes. The former smiled bitterly after listening to Athena's investigation into Xiu Yanran.

It turned out this girl was also a spy. Well, gangs had factional disputes. Likewise, Vermilion wasn't safe from such dangers.

The opposition of the bar boss had its own insiders, one of whom had recruited Xiu Yanran as an informant.

Even without her involvement, Xiu Yanran would likely have thrived—and who knew how high she might have climbed?

According to Athena, the girl was in a dilemma, not wanting to betray the tree that had provided her shade, nor did she want to expose the spies.

Nonetheless, the boss's ruthlessness had ultimately pushed her to make a decision. With Spirit Fox's intervention, she seized the rarest of chances in a fleeting moment, shamelessly sticking with Ling Qingyu, whose behavior suggested some level of interest in her.

Ling Qingyu understood that if Xiu Yanran were given a platform and an opportunity, she would definitely be someone to be reckoned with.

Even now, Xiu Yanran had yet to reveal the identities of the spies to her, although Spirit Fox had already identified them through Athena's efforts.

Shaking her head, Ling Qingyu didn't feel much about a little girl's manipulative moves. People were merely trying to survive.

"Sofia, what do you think of her?" Ling Qingyu inquired of her sole passenger.

Chapter 645 Sofia joining

Yes, the operator accompanying Ling Qingyu, who remained silent in front of Xiu Yanran, was Sofia.

Wearing a hologram mask, it was extremely easy for her to disguise herself as a national of Country C, but her cover would be completely blown the moment she spoke, even if she knew the language.

She couldn't mimic the accent or achieve fluency. Languages with higher difficulty levels had tonal nuances that were hard for foreigners to distinguish unless they had spoken them daily for many years.

Although it wouldn't matter much if Xiu Yanran became suspicious, avoiding unnecessary risks was always the best approach.

If one forgot about Sofia, she was the only Interpol agent personally rescued by Ling Qingyu, who had princess-carried her throughout the battle.

So, their relationship was beyond ordinary. Sofia had immediately recognized the true identity of her rescuer through body contact and voice.

Ling Qingyu couldn't hide at all. Upon this discovery, she pushed Sofia into a corner and made her sign a contract, binding her as a full-time secretary.

Anyway, it felt good to hire an international policewoman as her personal slave... Ahem.

As for Sofia's opinion, Ling Qingyu neither cared nor asked. What? She had no rights? Please. In order to keep Spirit Fox's secret, Sofia had to stay by her side.

In reality, Sofia didn't bother rejecting at all, though she still staged a comical resistance and protested.

She knew for a fact that she wouldn't be able to return to her original post unharmed. She had suffered this tragedy precisely because she knew too much.

Without an appropriate background and strength, she was like a fish on a chopping board. Her words held little weight against her superiors. Not to mention, Ling Qingyu never intended to let her go back in the first place.

There was so much untapped potential in her that could aid Ling Qingyu's cause, especially Spirit Fox.

Tang Ziyi could train subordinates to a high tactical level, while Su Ruomei and Jiang Yu helped with organizational structuring. Xiao Yue and Athena handled strategic decision-making.

However, none of them could perfectly establish an organization that covered all aspects seamlessly. Even if Athena managed to solve these issues, identities mattered. It would never work completely.

It was only a matter of time before loopholes formed, creating unnecessary problems.

Nonetheless, Sofia's entry brought with it the expertise and benefits of a special intelligence network and a powerful organization. Besides, Sofia's rank wasn't insignificant either—an improvement toward perfection.

Interpol's management and systems could be adopted into Spirit Fox and possibly future projects.

When Ling Qingyu "invited" her, Sofia agreed without too much hesitation. She never expected a wealthy businesswoman to be an elite soldier who had saved her.

If not for her extraordinary memory and skills, she wouldn't have even recognized Ling Qingyu.

With Sofia's participation, Spirit Fox advanced another level in policing methodologies. No longer were they excessively aggressive against ordinary threats like before—there was now a touch of professional law enforcement.

After all, Province N had begun to stabilize, and the criminals Spirit Fox now faced had transformed into scheming scholars who sought to use the law against them.

Although no one cared about their legal threats, the image built with great effort shouldn't be tarnished due to inadequate skills. Sofia had helped immensely in this area and even made friends with the girls.

Of course, without her presence, how could the operators easily deal with culprits trying to instigate conflicts through legal loopholes?

Otherwise, there might have been news about the girls beating people up and using unauthorized force, which could overturn Yang Qingyue's plans through public opinion.

In other words, Sofia had led Spirit Fox's transformation into a more professional organization.

Actually, Sofia had completely become Ling Qingyu's assistant, handling all matters. For the first time, she truly opened her eyes as she familiarized herself with Ling Qingyu's plans and operations.

Heck, after understanding Ling Qingyu's background and mysteries, she even wondered if revenge was possible.

In public, she played the role of a beautiful foreign woman, but whenever Ling Qingyu let loose with the Spirit Fox operators, she simulated another identity.

Ling Qingyu also enjoyed the presence of a stunning Western agent and liked to tease her, eliciting flustered reactions.

Now, Sofia pondered for a moment before answering Ling Qingyu's question.

"I don't know, but she's hiding a lot of information and speaks very ambiguously."

"As expected of a senior Interpol agent," Ling Qingyu praised before explaining what Athena had uncovered.

Sofia pursed her lips, lamenting Ling Qingyu's power. She was with Ling Qingyu the entire time, yet she had no idea how her boss had obtained such valuable intelligence in such a short period.

How many more hidden cards did Ling Qingyu hold? Unless she truly entered the inner circle, she wouldn't even catch a glimpse of them.

However, the fact that Ling Qingyu was openly discussing this matter had significantly increased the probability of her being involved.

Sofia felt she would be indebted for a lifetime.

Having been humiliated and subjected to torture for so long had left her psychological state fragile, even as a trained agent.

Numerous traumas remained, and Ling Qingyu—who had shared the harrowing experience with her—became the only light in the darkness.

Sofia had undergone psychological treatment and had recovered well since then. The scars remained, but the existence of Spirit Fox and the promising future ahead eliminated her negativity.

After all, Ling Qingyu could converse closely with the minister of justice without any formality—a level Sofia would never reach without serving until her hair turned gray.

Furthermore, Ling Qingyu didn't conceal the emergence of new black technologies or the formation of a mercenary-like force, though the boss explicitly stated that the operators were primarily for protection.

Inexplicably, Sofia sensed that Ling Qingyu's goals were beyond her imagination, and a persistent premonition echoed within her—that she would never regret joining her.

"I didn't expect you to be kind enough to take care of everything, even if they become collateral damage," Sofia flattered.

"For me, it's just a simple gesture. So, why not make the world better?" Ling Qingyu replied with a smile. "Although I don't fully agree with the saying 'the stronger the ability, the greater the responsibility,' there is some truth in it."

Ling Qingyu understood what collateral damage meant in her case. The staff and workers might not be entirely innocent, but they were merely trying to survive.

There was no need to destroy others' hopes and block their only source of light. People sided with evil when they had no other options. Ling Qingyu had no interest in causing additional crime sprees in the future just because she hadn't considered everything carefully.

Ling Qingyu added, "Besides, I didn't lose anything. They will soon work for me and generate revenue."

"Evil capitalist!" Sofia cursed jokingly and shook her head.

"Hey, that's not called evil. That's called luck and insight—something your level will never comprehend," Ling Qingyu retorted without holding back.

Sofia suppressed her urge to snap back and merely huffed silently. She endured this humiliation and vowed to learn more to find ways to get back at her.

"So, what about that little girl? She's going to work somewhere you introduced. What do you gain from it?"

"My dear Sofia," Ling Qingyu chuckled. "I suppose you haven't fully read the reports related to my business. The entertainment company also belongs to me. So, technically, she will be my artist, and I'll squeeze her dry."

Sofia: "..."

The Interpol agent immediately took back her opinion of kind-hearted Ling Qingyu. At the very least, the version who had rescued her from hell was much more lovable.

Suddenly, Ling Qingyu stepped on the accelerator, slamming both of them back against the seat cushions.

Sofia swallowed hard and glanced at the dashboard in slight panic, watching the scenery outside retreat rapidly into the night. "Why are you speeding up?"

"Of course, I just had a sudden idea," Ling Qingyu answered excitedly. "Why don't we pay a night visit to the Vermilion gang leader and surprise her? You know, like those agents in movies—exuding an air of mystery and aloofness, just like your agency."

Sofia's forehead was covered in black lines. She regretted agreeing too easily. Her boss was still childish, and the future seemed bleak.

"Excuse me, boss. Forgive my bluntness, but we don't break into people's homes and frighten them into a fight. That's not our job."

"What?" Ling Qingyu whined. "Then don't the CIA, FBI, and NCIS do that?"

"I wouldn't know. I'm just an Interpol agent bound by countless restrictions and hierarchies," Sofia replied with exasperation.

"Come on, it'll definitely be fun. I assure you, I'll take care of your safety," Ling Qingyu patted her broad chest reassuringly. "Besides, we have our other sisters to accompany us."

Sofia looked utterly hopeless. Should I thank you for your absolute consideration?

Forget it, it wasn't once or twice, Ling Qingyu had weird chain of thoughts in seeking fun and leisure.

Anyway, the safety level of her boss's community was beyond outrageous. Why make a fuss because of worries.

Chapter 646 Ling Qingyu's evil taste (updated)

Inside a dark room somewhere, a door suddenly slammed open. Two intertwined bodies stumbled inside, eliciting gasps as they moved further in.

For a brief moment, the open door allowed electronic ambient lights from outside to spill in, casting fleeting shadows and contours that provided a momentary glimpse of the figures.

Not long after, the door closed, kicked shut and locked by the couple. Amidst the darkness, it was hard to see, but judging by the sounds, anyone could tell what they were up to.

One of them pinned the other against the wall, trying to assert dominance—only for the duo to rotate and switch roles moments later.

The man's heavy sighs and the woman's light, high-pitched gasps orchestrated a symphony, their bodies eager to meld into each other.

At last, the male figure seemed to have won the round as the sound of a helpless woman's moans filled the air.

Not long after, the two whispered and moved further inside, only to stumble over the large sofa. Laughter and giggles ensued.

Finally, in the faint glow of scattered light sources, the man's silhouette loomed over the other, pressing her down and locking her wrists above her head. Both lay on the cushions, savoring the moment.

Just as the man was about to kiss his lover's neck, a soft snap interrupted everything. Though barely perceptible compared to their snuggling, the sound was distinct—impossible to ignore.

Another snap.

This time, their eyes caught the source as a dim light, like a tiny sun, pushed away the darkness.

It was the sound of a match being struck, igniting a brief flare before fading into a glowing ember.

Though fleeting, the light was enough for the couple to see everything. They managed to capture the sharp yet feminine outline of a lower chin—and the burning tip of a cigarette.

As the lonely red dot flickered in the dark, the scene plunged back into murkiness.

Yet, though the fire of carnal desire had yet to be quenched, the couple reacted swiftly—there was an intruder!

The man pulled the woman behind him, shielding her in case of any hostile action.

The woman obeyed instinctively, then felt a surge of warmth in her chest. This was the man she had chosen. Flawed as he might be, at least in extreme circumstances, she could rely on him.

"Lan Xi, stand back. I'll handle this."

"I know. Don't worry, it's just a little scene."

The couple may have overreacted slightly, but they were used to a life of danger. While others would have screamed or panicked, they immediately formulated countermeasures and assessed the intruder's intent.

"Keep going. Why did you stop?" A woman's sneering voice cut through the tension. "The sounds and the view were beautiful—I was starting to enjoy the show."

The couple—Lin Fan and Lan Xi—were stunned to realize the intruder was a woman.

Particularly Lin Fan, who had assumed an old enemy had come to challenge him, now found himself wondering if he had ever offended a woman to the point of vengeance.

Hmm. Except for breaking a few hearts and parting on peaceful terms, the women he knew only longed for him. Surely, there was no tsundere among them.

So, the fault must lie with Lan Xi and her gang. After all, at his level, his enemies should be formidable and skilled.

Just like this woman.

Lin Fan's guard shot up to the highest level. He hadn't even noticed her presence until she deliberately revealed herself—this one was definitely a master.

Even in the heat of passion, consumed by lust and the urge to deepen his connection with Lan Xi, he had retained a degree of vigilance.

Yet, he had failed to detect this woman at all.

For the first time since arriving in Province N, Lin Fan felt true danger—his hair stood on end.

It seemed his smooth journey on his motherland had finally hit an obstacle. Up until now, he had moved freely, his only concern being the well-being of his women, even if he had beaten down scumbags and crushed gangs in other provinces.

On the other hand, Lan Xi wondered if a woman Lin Fan had messed with had come to cause trouble for her.

Gazing at Lin Fan with a complicated expression, she mentally prepared herself in case this was some absurd act of catching a mistress.

Fear of a fight? That wasn't a concern.

If the intruder had truly meant harm, she would have struck long ago.

Not to mention, she didn't believe for a second that she and Lin Fan would suffer under an ambush, given his skills and expertise.

She might not know all the details of Lin Fan's past, but after spending time with him, her sharp mind had pieced things together.

And so, she trusted—not a single hair on their heads would be harmed.

Besides, this place was hers.

Not just the building, but several surrounding blocks were under her control, manned by subordinates who obeyed her every command.

At a single word, she could summon them to crush this ridiculous intruder who thought herself so imposing.

Regardless, the visitor was undeniably unkind—even if she didn't radiate the usual malice of her enemies.

"Miss, how could I bear to leave you alone? The more, the merrier, right?" Lin Fan wasn't about to be outdone by the woman's teasing and joked back. "If you're enjoying this, I don't mind sharing. Lan Xi and I aren't selfish at all."

Lin Fan signaled Fan Xi behind him to retreat while he handled the woman. Although his instincts told him she was strong, how could he know for sure without testing?

Besides, the opponent was a woman. Based on her cold yet sultry voice, she couldn't be too unattractive.

As a practitioner, there was no way her body wouldn't be appealing. Exercise kept the body fit and enhanced one's temperament. No matter what, her beauty was practically guaranteed.

"As expected of a philanthropist," the woman sighed, feeling speechless. "I regret interrupting your moment. Instead, I should have just minded my own business and watched with relish—waiting until the peak moment to ensure you two were extremely uncomfortable. That should've been the plan."

She clicked her tongue with an evil smirk. Her words darkened Lin Fan and Lan Xi's expressions.

Imagining what the woman had just said, the two lamented their luck. Fortunately, this bastard hadn't done it.

Otherwise, who knew what nightmare would have unfolded? Lan Xi might have been fine apart from a little psychological trauma, but Lin Fan could have suffered kidney problems—like premature ejaculation or... hardening issues.

In fact, the woman was none other than the protagonist, Ling Qingyu. She hadn't expected to find Lin Fan here at first but realized the truth after Athena tracked them.

Of course, what she hadn't anticipated was that this unscrupulous couple would immediately jump into exercise mode the moment they arrived.

She understood that if she hadn't intervened, they would have dueled on the sofa right in front of her.

Her original plan had been to wait for them to sit and relax before scaring them. That plan had collapsed spectacularly.

Simply put, she had been force-fed a limited-edition serving of dog food.

Trying to resemble mafia bosses and demonic villains wasn't something she did out of pure hot-blooded passion.

Since she was going against the chosen one, she had to possess some villainous aura.

Acting like a villain, seeing it, hearing it—it truly exhilarated her.

Lighting a match and smoking in the dark to unnerve her targets? She applied every bit of classic villainy into reality.

The result was outstanding—a snap of a match lighting up the darkness, a laid-back attitude while smoking, all wrapped in an atmosphere thick with evil and horror.

She huffed lightly, blew several rings of smoke, and leaned back against the cushion.

The cigarette was from Athena's new product line—not a real one, but a candy stick infused with healthier vitamins.

There were no additives. This product was designed purely to help Spirit Fox operators and other subordinates quit unhealthy smoking habits while still looking stylish.

And it worked.

Tang Ziyi and Athena had even discovered it had a minor effect in treating addiction.

Noticing Lan Xi's subtle movements, Ling Qingyu raised an eyebrow with interest. Did they think she couldn't see them clearly?

The duo had no idea that Ling Qingyu's night vision was far superior to theirs.

She had transcended the limits of ordinary human physique in every attribute.

Like a cat toying with its prey, Ling Qingyu merely smiled and made a simple move—she pulled a Glock from her lady's purse.

A heavy mechanical cocking sound froze Lin Fan and Lan Xi in place.

Ling Qingyu smirked devilishly.

"I'm sure you two must be familiar with this sound, especially you, mister.

Don't make any unnecessary moves. If I wanted you two dead... you wouldn't have the slightest chance to resist."

Ling Qingyu's invitation wasn't warm at all, as her tone carried a slight chilling threat. Both Lin Fan and Lan Xi were unsure whether this woman actually had a gun or was merely bluffing, but they dared not test it.

Chapter 647 Threats

"What do you want?" Lin Fan asked calmly.

He and Lan Xi dared not gamble on whether the gun was real or aimed at them. It was better to feign obedience while looking for an opportunity.

Of course, Ling Qingyu knew what they were thinking based on their personalities. Neither of them was ready to surrender and offer their heads to someone else.

"Have a seat, please." Ling Qingyu acted like a host, making it seem as if she were the owner of the house treating her guests politely.

The corners of Lin Fan and Lan Xi's mouths twitched fiercely. Despite the darkness, the two managed to scurry over to the sofas.

Seeing their struggle, Ling Qingyu leaned forward and pulled the string of a nearby antique lamp, illuminating the darkness.

Although not as bright as a typical lit room at night, the lamp, which provided enough light to read, revealed Ling Qingyu's figure.

Due to the holographic mask, Lin Fan and Lan Xi couldn't recognize Ling Qingyu, but her full curves, gentle face, and cold eyes could easily place her among the beauties.

Now, Ling Qingyu was visible, sitting lazily on the sofa, her crossed legs slanted at a golden angle.

Her elbow rested on the sofa's arm, with her palm supporting her chin. Her other hand lay over her thigh, pressing the purse beneath it, while she grasped the Glock.

Her finger was off the trigger, the muzzle pointed at a slight angle away from the duo. A mere twitch was all it would take to land accurate shots.

Lin Fan knew the woman threatening them was highly capable. Even his countermeasures and defenses seemed vulnerable.

She didn't twirl or play around with the gun like most arrogant villains who assumed they had total control.

The muzzle was steady yet relaxed, ready to unleash projectiles accurately at their figures.

Facing such an opponent, Lin Fan realized they needed to lower her vigilance gradually before making a move.

Besides, he didn't sense any malice from her, and the unfriendly meeting seemed to be solely for the purpose of communication.

"I thought you would ask who I am," Ling Qingyu chuckled and looked toward Lan Xi.

"No matter how I ask, you won't answer, will you?" Lin Fan replied calmly, unfazed by the teasing.

Usually, he would joke around, especially when the enemy was a woman, making them blush and lose control.

However, for some reason, his gut told him he wouldn't succeed this time and might even worsen the situation.

Furthermore, he wasn't alone—Lan Xi was nearby. Hmm, the woman's target seemed to be his lover.

Good gracious, what on earth had Lan Xi done to attract a monster like this?

"You're right, I won't answer," Ling Qingyu stated plainly. "Now, let's get to the main topic, shall we?"

"Does your excellency need anything from us?" Lan Xi asked. She had already understood that the woman's primary target was her from the way she looked at her.

"Well, I really admire your ambition and your means of stabilizing the Vermilion Gang," Ling Qingyu praised. "It's a pity that we're destined to be on opposite sides, regardless of my personal feelings."

"I want your Vermilion Gang to move out of Province N. No gangs, from low to high level, should remain," Ling Qingyu stated her demand.

"Just by threatening us?" Lan Xi shot back.

"No, you can do whatever you want once you leave Province N, but here, you will meet no good end unless you disband your gang."

"The underground world and its rules exist because society requires it," Lan Xi argued.

"Society?" Ling Qingyu mocked. "I reckon it's more like greedy people who can't let go of their power and try to control ordinary people through fear."

"Let me guess. You're from Spirit Fox," Lin Fan interjected.

Ling Qingyu merely smiled, neither denying nor confirming his words. Lan Xi had also realized the woman's identity when she showed such determination to eradicate every last gang.

"You don't really think that removing us won't backfire on everyone, do you?"

"I think that phase is already over. It's just a matter of time before the downfall," Ling Qingyu replied with a scornful expression. "Besides, Spirit Fox is ready to handle any crisis immediately. It's just a brief moment of a rabbit jumping over the fence."

"I don't think we've done anything that constitutes a crime," Lan Xi remarked, avoiding discussions about laws and regulations.

Her intelligence network had already proven that Spirit Fox would go to extreme lengths to achieve its goals. They had no reservations or moral constraints.

There was no way to play politics with them since they were a completely independent organization. Plus, with Yang Qingyue's current thorough cleanup, corrupt officials at lower and intermediate levels had lost their heads.

"I dare you to swear a vicious oath that you haven't done anything in the past," Ling Qingyu waved her hand. "I'm not talking about killing rivals, collecting protection fees, or loan sharking. I'm asking—are you sure the Vermilion Gang has never harmed innocent people?"

"Every organization has its dirty deeds. Under my control, the Vermilion Gang promotes peace and security in our region," Lan Xi stood her ground. "There must be a group willing to serve the government in the underground world to prevent chaos."

"No need. Spirit Fox will gladly replace them," Ling Qingyu sneered. "I wouldn't bet on a gang whose conduct is always disorderly."

"There will be many deaths, young—"

"It's just trash that society needs to dispose of."

"Family members will be sad."

"That's why I suggest you prepare to leave Province N. I'm sure more families will rejoice and cherish the new reality."

Lan Xi pursed her lips. There was nothing to argue. Spirit Fox was issuing an ultimatum, not a suggestion.

"You're leaving us without any choice. Compared to others, Vermilion Gang—"

"Which is why I'm giving you a chance. Otherwise, do you really think Spirit Fox would sit down and discuss this politely at the table? Next time, it'll be with bullets."

Lin Fan and Lan Xi silently complained. Polite? Breaking into someone's house and holding them at gunpoint? If that was politeness, Spirit Fox redefined it.

"What if I don't listen?" Lan Xi refused to back down.

"Then be prepared for our crackdowns later." Ling Qingyu stared at the stunning charmer and sighed inwardly—if only Lin Fan hadn't overreach this gangster lady boss.

As a fellow harem member who should have been her sister—ahem—a beautiful woman, Ling Qingyu felt reluctant, but she knew her priorities when her wife was involved.

Dealing with the Vermilion Gang was only a matter of time, and she had already given them the best chance possible. Of course, Ling Qingyu was even more reluctant to deal with Lin Fan, the child of destiny.

She couldn't afford to offend or kill him yet. Not that she was afraid, but when it came to luck-based protagonists, it was best not to gamble without absolute certainty.

Additionally, Ling Qingyu hoped Miss System wouldn't intervene directly—not that she believed the tsundere system wanted to.

She had already received an enormous golden finger. If she still needed help, what was the point of living? She might as well reincarnate immediately to save herself from embarrassment.

Lin Fan gulped as he stood in the midst of the silent battlefield between the two women. He didn't particularly care about the Vermilion Gang, but he understood how much effort Lan Xi had put into it.

Having to retreat just because of someone's words—who would willingly accept that?

Moreover, Lin Fan knew they could never afford to provoke the authorities in broad daylight. Now, even the underground world was becoming more dangerous with Spirit Fox's involvement.

He had personally witnessed Spirit Fox's prowess during the bank robbery. Lan Xi's subordinates had compiled witness accounts of other battles between Spirit Fox and their enemies, showing skills comparable to special forces.

Though the Spirit Fox member was undeniably beautiful, Lin Fan had no mood for flirtation.

"Miss, do you know that knives in the dark are the sharpest?"

"Of course, I'm aware, Lin Fan." Ling Qingyu narrowed her eyes, her voice turning colder. Even though she knew Lin Fan wasn't truly threatening her but merely hinting, she was still infuriated.

Lin Fan was directly targeting Yang Qingyue. Other than her, who else could Spirit Fox truly be vulnerable through? Only Yang Qingyue and her confidantes had weaknesses.

As for Spirit Fox itself, they welcomed any challenge. With Athena's overwatch, their skills, and their cheats—heck, Ling Qingyu didn't even consider failure a possibility.

"You can try, but you'll only get one opportunity if you truly believe you can survive our hands later." Ling Qingyu snickered. "We welcome your challenge, anytime. But do keep in mind—actions have consequences. The best-case scenario? Death. The worst-case scenario... hahaha."

Each chuckle shrouded over Lin Fan and Lan Xi, who exchanged glances with a slight trepidation. Yang Qingyue seemed to be a dragon reverse scale of Spirit Fox.

Ling Qingyu adjusted her posture and leaned forward, her gaze locking onto Lin Fan's in a fierce contest of wills.

"Lin Fan, Spirit Fox overlooking your past deeds and negotiating is the greatest courtesy we can offer. Don't overstep your boundaries—or your worth."

Chapter 648 Lin Fan moved (edited)

Even though Lin Fan might have only intended to frighten Yang Qingyue as Ling Qingyu had done and persuaded, she wasn't going to accept such a move.

So, she expressed her strong and firm stance that she would not tolerate the slightest threat.

"Mr. Lin, we know you have ample experience and plan to retire here," Ling Qingyu began, systematically listing what Lin Fan had done in the past months.

Not a single detail was omitted—from saving a mother and daughter, traveling to another province to meet an aristocratic lady, and thoroughly eliminating a small gang, leaving no one alive.

While Lan Xi broke out in a cold sweat, Lin Fan's expression turned stern. "Are you investigating me?"

"Shouldn't we?" Ling Qingyu smiled. "Among the unstable factors, you rank first. The greatest courtesy we've extended is ignoring your past deeds, which are enough to land you in prison."

"And please, nothing personal—it is what it is. If you're not satisfied, I'm right here." Ling Qingyu sneered, taunting the male protagonist.

Holy shit, the feeling of kneading the protagonist as she pleased was extremely satisfying. Looking at his helpless yet restless expression, Ling Qingyu felt her anger dissipate.

Lin Fan turned his gaze away. The more he talked and listened, the angrier he became. Well, since the other party bore no malice, he wasn't going to act tough—but a small lesson should be fine, right?

"So, Spirit Fox's warning to us is a gesture of goodwill, am I correct?" Lan Xi sighed heavily and asked rhetorically.

"Indeed, you have plenty of time to relocate and transfer your assets. The other gangs won't receive such a gift from us. We'll be dealing with them—eradicating them entirely."

"I thought if we disagreed, you would kill us," Lan Xi joked. "Aren't you afraid that if I say the word, you'll be surrounded and killed?"

Ling Qingyu stood up, holstered the Glock inside her purse, and walked around the sofa before leaning on its back. "That depends on whether you have the ability to keep me here. Or are you willing to bet your lives against mine?"

Lin Fan and Lan Xi tensed at her sudden movement but soon relaxed, seeing that the pistol had been put away.

Lan Xi chuckled, no longer wanting to argue about courage. "I don't think you came alone. Your friends must be nearby."

"Of course," Ling Qingyu nodded. "My team has surrounded the building. To rescue a lone agent, Spirit Fox operators would rush in and kill everyone here. Since Vermilion challenges us, it would be impolite not to reciprocate. How do you like my script?"

Lan Xi frowned, believing the woman was telling the truth. Everyone feared death—it was how they dealt with it that distinguished the ordinary from the heroic.

The two sides had gambled, and she had lost.

Even if Spirit Fox killed the two of them here, they had a sufficient excuse to take down Vermilion Bird. Not to mention, gangs were already an eyesore in the eyes of law enforcement.

Especially now, with the new Commissioner determined to eliminate all disorderly elements and improve the policing image and standards.

The Tiger Gang had already become history, the first example of what awaited others. The other major gangs were in jeopardy.

As for the smaller gangs? They were the first echelon to suffer.

Ling Qingyu suddenly added, "Speaking of which, we've already eliminated one of your sites before I came here."

"Impossible!" Lan Xi immediately shouted. "I would have received the news if that had happened."

Ling Qingyu narrated everything, including the names and locations, before stopping Lan Xi from reaching for her phone.

"Don't bother calling. We isolated communications entirely when it happened. You'll receive the news in several hours."

"Just because of that?" Lan Xi was speechless. She had carefully rearranged and allocated resources within the gang to prevent any openings, yet her subordinates had practically delivered a reason for their downfall on a silver platter.

And all because the operators just happened to sit down for a drink together?

Lan Xi was truly reluctant to withdraw her forces and wanted to fight for a chance, but it seemed the decision was final.

She knew what she had to choose.

She could rise again as long as she had loyal subordinates and confidants.

But if she provoked Spirit Fox and lost her men in the process, her power and position would be worthless.

Ling Qingyu knew she had achieved her goal tonight after observing Lan Xi's expression.

Perhaps it was because she had put her firearm away, increasing her opponents' confidence, that Lin Fan suddenly sprang from the sofa in a lightning-fast movement, launching a powerful horse kick using the seat Ling Qingyu had occupied as leverage.

Surprised yet calm, Ling Qingyu's lips curled upward.

She had long wanted to teach this bastard a lesson.

How dare he steal women away?

Although Miss System wasn't particularly keen on her completing the task of preventing harem recruitment, Ling Qingyu simply saw him as a nuisance.

If she had known Lin Fan had never given up and had deep plans to attack her through routines and coincidences, she would have increased her petty means.

In fact, the task of stealing women away was far more difficult than she had envisioned. Once the women had even the slightest interaction with him, they already formed a good impression for some reason—due to unknown mysterious factors.

At that point, saying anything against him or opposing him only backfired, making the women bond with him even more. That was why Ling Qingyu made no moves despite helplessly monitoring the situation.

Well, Ling Qingyu didn't deny that some women weren't up to her standards, which led her to ignore the main task, but Miss System never prompted or forced her.

Besides, this task was more like a reward and an agreement between the two parties. Maybe Miss System also subtly acquiesced to some women joining the harem—except for those of her type.

After all, CEOs, doctors, police officers, military personnel, and so on were Lin Fan's real tools. Hey, there might still be a certain mayor or military officer left somewhere, maybe a queen and a princess, heaven forbid, and she had to find them quickly before it was too late.

Currently, Ling Qingyu seemed caught off guard as she parried Lin Fan's continuous combos and fell into his rhythm.

"Aren't you afraid that I'll call my friends here?"

"No worries," Lin Fan answered in a relaxed manner. "You won't have the energy or time to bother. But don't be afraid—I'll just beat you up. We wouldn't dare kill you. Who told you to point a gun at us?"

Ling Qingyu sneered and defended herself properly. She was merely pretending to be overwhelmed by her opponent's moves.

Who made her entire attributes transcend human limits? With inhuman and godlike reaction speed, Lin Fan's movements were as slow as a snail to her.

If not for wanting to test Lin Fan's depth and techniques, she would have used all her strength to knock this man out.

However, it seemed that toying with this bastard was a better option.

When Ling Qingyu saw Lin Fan closing in with a set of combos, she had to admit—in terms of skill and technique, she was far inferior to the protagonist.

It couldn't be helped, considering her pitiful amount of practice compared to someone who had honed his combat skills for so many years—granted, she was restricting her strength to an ordinary level.

Lin Fan was also shocked by Ling Qingyu's reactions, even under a surprise attack. He relied on momentum to keep the fight within his rhythm.

Yet every punch was either dodged or parried with ease. Apart from the first kick that barely made her flinch, all the others were useless.

Every feint and strike was efficiently executed. In other words, from Lan Xi's perspective, Ling Qingyu was being beaten badly by punches, elbows, and knees.

Collision of flesh and bones broke the room's silence and murky aura. Lan Xi smiled in relief, satisfied at the way her lover vented her anger.

Ling Qingyu couldn't afford the slightest energy to counterattack and had to focus entirely on defending against the relentless assault or so from the outsider's perspectives.

But only Lin Fan felt the pressure.

She wasn't an easy persimmon. He couldn't finish the fight as he had imagined—the opponent seemed to have a third eye, thoroughly understanding his every move.

This became even more obvious when Lin Fan closed in and tried to use his shoulder as a weapon, intending to knock Ling Qingyu out of her stance after distracting her with his merciless strikes.

In his mind, there was no way she would have time to react. Her hands and legs were occupied with defending against his attacks. This move should hurt her—it wouldn't end the fight, but it was enough to serve as the lesson he had declared.

Yes, Lin Fan had already given up on outright defeating this woman, knowing full well the difficulties that lay ahead.

Chapter 649 Beating up the protagonist

Contrary to Lin Fan's anticipation, the woman twisted her waist—not too much, not too little—but just enough to dodge his attack by a centimeter or two.

His solid shoulder missed by a mere distance. No more, no less—the defense was damn efficient.

Unwilling to believe it, Lin Fan pressed on and discovered that it wasn't a coincidence—the woman dodged by a margin every single time.

His punches landed just close enough to hurt her but never did. This didn't happen just once or twice. Such precision could only be achieved by warriors who had walked the path of bloodshed.

To attain such stunning success, she had to be far more skilled than a mere grandmaster in martial arts.

Against an ordinary novice, such movements were reasonable, but against him—a fighter who had honed his skills on the battlefield—Lin Fan found her unfathomable.

So, wasn't his early advantage just because the woman had decided to play along and cooperate?

However, he could no longer continue with his previous approach because every time he tried to land a blow, he got hurt instead.

A small impact was nothing, but taking repeated hits was no good. Lin Fan's fight transformed into a battle of endurance, testing who could last longer.

Nonetheless, he was always the one suffering. He hadn't achieved the slightest success. His opponent merely twisted or moved subtly, perfectly matching his attacks.

Her movements seemed minuscule, yet they repelled his strikes every time. Realizing this, Lin Fan created distance and launched a kick at her head.

Ling Qingyu raised her elbow to defend and took a step back, while Lin Fan reassessed the situation, trying to come up with a new plan.

He was doomed to fail if he insisted on relying on his previous surprise attack.

Miscalculation—Lin Fan realized he was far inferior.

In fact, Ling Qingyu openly cheated when she recognized her disadvantage in skill, technique, and experience.

As the Art of War stated, there was nothing wrong with using one's advantages to exploit an enemy's weaknesses—nothing was fair.

Since Ling Qingyu possessed faster reaction speed and thinking ability, she applied them without any shame.

Besides, she had conserved a significant amount of physical strength. Otherwise, Lin Fan would have already been left with broken knees and limbs.

She raised an eyebrow at Lin Fan's retreat and sneered. Now that she was cheating, she might as well continue the fight.

Lin Fan was instantly embarrassed. Whenever he thought she was about to strike from a certain angle, it turned out to be a feint, and the real attack came from another direction.

Later, when he assumed a move was a feint, it struck him hard instead.

He struggled to distinguish between illusion and reality. What was false became real and vice versa—he could never judge correctly.

Every move seemed real, yet it bluffed him each time.

What the heck?! Lin Fan almost collapsed.

His opponent's level was beyond his comprehension, and cold sweat seeped down his forehead. So skilled!

Exchanging blows didn't work. He couldn't see through her. Now, his only option was to exploit the fact that women were generally weaker than men in terms of raw strength.

So, he considered closing in and wrestling her down, using his physical advantage. Like it or not, in a physical fight with equal skill, a woman would inevitably lose if she relied on sheer strength.

A woman's advantage—or rather, her smaller build—was flexibility. Dodging and wearing down the opponent was the optimal strategy. In contrast, endurance against direct strikes would never match that of a muscular body.

Nonetheless, if both wielded cold weapons, luck would play a significant role in determining victory. Strength mattered, but not as much as luck and skill.

When armor and heavier weight came into play, men had the advantage again. Yet in formation battles, the dynamic changed entirely.

All in all, this was common sense in combat and the reason weight classes existed. Of course, same skills estimation were never accurate but relevant enough for comparison.

In real life, where could two people with similar skills be found. Luck, energy and other variables played a greater role.

But Lin Fan didn't realize that common sense never applied to Ling Qingyu and her group. His plan had already failed before it even started.

Lin Fan attempted jabs and testing moves to disrupt Ling Qingyu's guard, looking for an opening to tackle her once the opportunity arose.

Back and forth, Ling Qingyu happily played along—until she got bored. Deciding to end the fight, she deliberately displayed an opening.

Lin Fan immediately seized it, even though he knew it was a trap, confident that his raw strength would overwhelm hers.

Unfortunately, fate played a cruel joke—Lin Fan was sent flying. Then, the pained screams of a dying pig filled the air.

Ling Qingyu had beaten him black and blue.

Lan Xi lost her composure and panicked, preparing to call for help, but Ling Qingyu's piercing stare froze her in place.

After a while, Ling Qingyu sighed heavily as she cracked her joints.

Lin Fan, in contrast, lay on the ground in embarrassment, still unable to recover from the shock.

This can't be real... He had been beaten by a woman.

If his former colleagues ever found out about this, they would never let him live it down.

His title of Pluto or Hades—whatever—might just turn into a joke.

"Oh, right. Don't bother calling your friends here. If you do, prepare to be watched," Ling Qingyu warned. "Outside Province N, we wouldn't care. Alas, thanks for relaxing my muscles."

"How could you defeat me so easily?"

"Skills, of course. What do you expect?" Ling Qingyu rolled her eyes.

Lin Fan gave a blank look. Who would believe her words? Yeah, her expertise was indeed above his, but...

"Does every Spirit Fox possess skills like yours?"

"Hmm." Ling Qingyu tapped her chin, thinking about her subordinates. In terms of physique, they were inferior, but not by much. Their reaction speed should surpass Lin Fan's.

Maybe they couldn't defeat him outright like she did due to the lack of speed, but suppressing him wouldn't be a problem. So, she nodded. "Yeah, every girl can fight like me."

"Impossible!" Lin Fan blurted out. Who was this woman trying to deceive? If every operator possessed similar traits, his title and pride meant nothing.

"What's impossible? As long as you get beaten regularly every day and your devil instructor abuses you for hours, everyone will be like me." Ling Qingyu lied without blinking—secrets of martial arts shouldn't be spread, after all.

Lin Fan knew the woman was being noncommittal but didn't mind—everyone had their own secrets.

On the other hand, Lan Xi had yet to recover from witnessing her male god being utterly crushed in despair.

She felt like the invincible aura surrounding her lover had collapsed. Strangely, her admiration and love didn't decrease but increased instead.

In this way, Lin Fan seemed more like a person with weaknesses rather than a superior figure with unshakable sharpness.

If Ling Qingyu knew Lan Xi's love and care had deepened, she would have coughed up blood in disgust. She was accomplishing Miss System's task in the exact opposite direction.

When she saw Lan Xi hurrying over to check on Lin Fan with distress, Ling Qingyu clicked her tongue.

"By the way, I feel like I've heard your voice somewhere before," Lin Fan suddenly said after standing up with Lan Xi's help.

Ling Qingyu felt a lump in her throat. Indeed, the two had conversed and argued about their contract. If not for the current situation, Lin Fan might have picked up on his suspicion.

On the outside, however, Ling Qingyu simply snickered. "Oh, I know you're a philanthropist, but you don't need to flirt with me. Such a lame and old-fashioned excuse."

"You—!" Lin Fan stammered, both helpless and angry. He dared to flirt openly, but he would never use such a low-level excuse, okay?!

He controlled his irritation as he noticed the way Lan Xi was looking at him. Please, I'm not so masochistic that I'd fall for a woman who just beat me black and blue.

Well, he did like the idea of conquering and taming a wild queen, but only if he was victorious. Right now, the pain and soreness wouldn't even let him think about it.

"Alright, I've said what I needed to. I'll be leaving." Ling Qingyu clapped her hands in satisfaction and decided to evacuate quickly. If her cover was blown, it wouldn't be good.

With that, Ling Qingyu hopped out of the window under the astonished gazes of Lin Fan and Lan Xi.

Wait a minute—did this woman just drop down from the third floor?!

Lin Fan and Lan Xi dashed toward the window, only to spot a figure waving her hand with her back toward them.

"This woman..." Lin Fan shook his head and exchanged glances with the boss lady. "What do we do next? Are you going to listen to her? You know we can put up a fight if you want to stay here."

"No." Lan Xi refused her man's offer. She knew that with Lin Fan's background, his help would make things much easier, but she didn't want to be a mere decoration.

When Ling Qingyu defeated Lin Fan, she realized that she, too, could grow stronger and become useful.

"I'll ask for your help when I truly can't handle it, but let me train and improve myself first. Can you wait for me, my love?" Lan Xi caressed the man's cheek gently and kissed the sore spots on his injured face.

Chapter 650 Frightened Police

Fortunately, Ling Qingyu escaped early, avoiding the spillover of dog food. She shook her ankle slightly.

It was cool to jump from a great height and land safely, but during the process, Ling Qingyu had many thoughts. She instinctively knew that her body could withstand the load, yet in reality, fear still existed. At the very least, she had now overcome her fear of heights.

Anyway, her threat to the Vermilion Gang should have been successful. No one dared to go against the overall trend. They couldn't resist without paying a huge price.

Ling Qingyu loved Lin Fan's expression of self-doubt as he suffered a catastrophic defeat.

He was probably contemplating why he couldn't see through her moves, unable to distinguish true attacks from feints.

The answer was simple—every move she struck was intended to land. By exploiting her fast reactions and quick brain computations, Ling Qingyu adjusted her attacks accordingly.

Everything unfolded according to her plan, leaving Lin Fan powerless, completely unable to discern real from fake.

Based on his reactions—if his defense was too high, Ling Qingyu feinted. If the opposite happened, she struck.

Normally, she would have exhausted herself trying to achieve this level of precision, but with her superhuman endurance and stamina, that wasn't a concern.

Ling Qingyu returned to the SUV, hopping into the driver's seat and closing the door.

Sofia, sitting beside her, observed carefully before asking, "Are you satisfied now, Boss?"

"Very much. I finally got to beat up the guy I've wanted to since day one—to my heart's content. I've never felt so refreshed," Ling Qingyu giggled.

Afterward, she laughed while describing the scene, starting the engine and driving away.

A short distance behind, her guards followed suit.

Inside the SUV, Sofia listened with a helpless expression.

One question remained—what do you do when your boss acts this childish? Sofia had a headache.

From the very beginning, when Ling Qingyu decided to sneak in alone, Sofia had been against the idea.

However, Ling Qingyu proved her capability and cited her past rescue of Sofia as justification. In the end, Sofia could only wait in the car, listening to the others through an earpiece.

Not that she heard much, but hearing Ling Qingyu's voice gave her peace of mind.

In truth, Ling Qingyu hadn't brought Sofia because the moment Lin Fan and Lan Xi entered, they would have detected her presence and ruined her fun.

Unlike now, where Ling Qingyu held the upper hand from every angle—except for the fact that she had escaped a little too quickly and forgotten to make a proper villainous declaration to mock the protagonist.

Things had happened too fast.

Since Ling Qingyu had already made up her mind to beat up Lin Fan, she ignored the reasons behind his attack—why, and how he dared to strike first.

Maybe he wanted to vent his anger or prove that they were also a tough nut to crack. Perhaps.

If Lin Fan had brought his mercenary friends, things could have escalated unpredictably. That was why Ling Qingyu had settled for a mere warning.

Offending him too much might contradict her original intent. Now wasn't the time to go completely against the protagonists—a stallion and a cold-blooded prince.

It was fine to lay some traps and cause them to stumble, but if she fought too hard, she might have to rely on Miss System more than she wanted.

Sometimes, luck played a mysterious role—especially for children of destiny, the world's chosen ones. There might have been too many of them for the world's will to manage properly, but Ling Qingyu wasn't foolish enough to bet against them.

As Ling Qingyu explained the stakes behind the scenes to Sofia, the latter sighed at her boss's thoughtfulness.

Of course, Ling Qingyu didn't reveal her secrets or mysterious abilities. She only repeated the intel Athena had gathered and shared her conclusions and deductions.

"You wanna smoke this?" Ling Qingyu asked, pointing at her mouth.

"It's bad for your health, isn't it?" Sofia frowned. Though she knew a lot, there were still some things she didn't fully understand—like Ling Qingyu's cigarette sweets.

"It's not real. Not that lowly vape. This is just a sweet, like a lollipop," Ling Qingyu explained.

"Then why don't you just chew gum?" Sofia asked, curious.

But the response she received made the corner of her lips twitch.

"It's more stylish."

Yep, very simple.

There was something about smokers in a certain environment—they naturally exuded a mysterious aura.

Laid-back, boss-like, with the presence of someone who had everything under control.

Listening to Ling Qingyu's explanation, Sofia couldn't help but laugh.

But when she heard that the original purpose of these 'sweets' was to help Spirit Fox members fight addiction, her expression brightened.

"You could make a lot of money," Sofia remarked with an approving look, making Ling Qingyu feel amused.

"Yeah, but the real cigarette manufacturers would want to kill me. You have no idea how deep their influence runs. I don't want any trouble during my crucial development stage while I'm still laying the foundation," Ling Qingyu replied.

"It was my overreach. You've probably seen far more than I have."

"Come on, darling. Keep it up," Ling Qingyu said as she rubbed her new secretary's chin and teased. "It's good that you think a lot. With more experience, you'll know more. Chill."

Sofia pushed Ling Qingyu's finger away and looked around as the SUV sped past. "Can I try it?"

"Sure..."

Snap. Sofia lit a match and choked, coughing a few times. This drew Ling Qingyu's constipated gaze.

What the heck? How did you choke?

Reading her expression, Sofia answered while trying to soothe the soreness in her throat. "It's sweeter than expected. I just choked on my saliva."

"Well, that's much better." Ling Qingyu nodded in understanding. Please, she had seen plenty of people choking on water. Some of them had even died.

These incidents often left people unsure whether to laugh or feel saddened by such misfortune. The deaths occurred because there was no one around to help, and the golden hour had passed.

So, singles needed to be careful, Ling Qingyu thought inwardly. (The author wants to beat somebody now.)

The two ladies hummed a tune as they ate their 'lollipops.' Sofia straightened her posture and asked, her tone filled with curiosity, "Let's say this cigarette is a snack. How is the smoke formed?"

"How would I know? I'm a businesswoman, not a specialist or an expert," Ling Qingyu rolled her eyes.

"That's why I hate capitalists. They know almost nothing, yet they have money and time to enrich themselves." Sofia ground her teeth.

"Oi, you can't say that."

"Of course, I can. Look at doctors, researchers, and engineers who study hard for years," Sofia smacked her lips before continuing. "After all that effort, what happens? They just end up as someone's subordinate. And that 'someone' most of the time doesn't even understand their work properly."

"At least there are a few with real talent," Ling Qingyu replied, though she suspected Sofia was indirectly cursing at her. After all, she had no technical talents apart from foresight, management skills, and, well... money. Repeat, MONEY!

"I bother," Sofia cursed lightly. "I'm not talking about you..."

"Don't say it. The more you say it, the more I feel like you're talking about me." Ling Qingyu shot her a blank stare.

"Hehe..." Sofia chuckled and saluted with two fingers, trying to act cute. "Well, there seems to be a police checkpoint ahead. Are you switching roads?"

"Heck no. Why are you asking such a stupid question as an Interpol agent?" Ling Qingyu stared suspiciously at Sofia. "If we move now, we'll look even more suspicious and fit their stereotype."

"Oh yes, how stupid of me." Sofia slapped her forehead. "But our convoy formation might scare the officers."

"Well, you're right. It can't be helped." Ling Qingyu shrugged and glanced at the rearview mirror for a second.

Her guard units were behind them. The mighty convoy resembled a certain force—gangs, triads, mafia, you name it.

"Let me do the talking and stay quiet. Otherwise, with your accent..."

"I know," huffed Sofia, clearly unhappy with the judgment of her language competency.

As Ling Qingyu's vehicles approached the checkpoint, the officers, their bodies illuminated by red and blue flashing LEDs, scrambled into an alert stance, visibly nervous.

Especially when they spotted the glowing red embers through the windshield—signs of smoking behavior.

Ordinary people would usually put out their cigarettes and wipe away any evidence to avoid annoying police questions and get home faster.

And with these types of cars traveling in a group—the people inside weren't easy to deal with. Officers exchanged glances.

As the vehicle gradually rolled to a halt, the officer in charge of questioning broke into a sweat. It only worsened when both front windows rolled down.

Women? But then, these women seemed even scarier—especially their eyes. The young officer shot a glance at his senior, silently pleading for help.

Ling Qingyu eyed him up and down, dumbfounded by the officer's expression. These guys were too fragile, right?

She hadn't done anything. She checked her skin and—yep, still white.

Wait... in Country C? She almost forgot and started doubting her own life.