

Beautiful 661

Chapter 661: Why are you here?

Several days passed, and the time to fly with Mo Yunxi and Yin Jingfei had arrived. Before noon, Ling Qingyu was in a meeting at the newly established company responsible for CCTVs and a recent government network project.

She had been checking multiple times for any loopholes or issues before leaving the country. Otherwise, problems might arise in her absence.

Although she believed in her staff, who truly knew everything about the future?

"Alright, thank you, everyone, for the report. I see no problems with what you're doing. Please continue the good work," Ling Qingyu praised her subordinates.

Her passionate words concealed the fact that she hadn't really been listening much, and her joy almost overwhelmed her rationality.

If not for Athena's reports and summaries, she might have had no idea what her employees had been saying.

Of course, it was because of her daughter's presence that she relaxed her strictness and simply enjoyed the moment.

"Under President Ling's leadership, we've been able to overcome difficulties."

"Yeah, President. I used to dislike corporate culture. Before I came here, if not for the necessity of wealth, I faced psychological struggles. But here, it's the complete opposite—I enjoy my work."

"Glad to hear that," Ling Qingyu smiled. "You don't need to work until evening. Now that everything is settled, you can go home and spend time with your family."

"Oh no, President Ling. Overtime pay is also an income, right?"

Ling Qingyu rolled her eyes at the speaker. "For this month, I'm not paying anything. If you still want to insist, that's your choice."

Did they really think she couldn't cure them? Ling Qingyu thought.

In her opinion, productivity was indeed linked to diligence and discipline, but that didn't mean overindulgence would lead to outstanding work.

In fact, working too hard sometimes had counterproductive effects. It wasn't efficient and only wore people down. A balanced life was the true key to success.

Ling Qingyu had come to understand this simple concept more as time went by. Her predecessor had worked tirelessly and nearly destroyed her body.

If not for Tang Ziyi's treatment, the recovery period, and Miss System's cheats, Ling Qingyu wondered if she could even be as healthy as an average woman.

Many hidden diseases had been biding their time, waiting to erupt all at once. It was truly deadly.

Now, she didn't work as hard as she used to, yet she achieved more by delegating, trusting, and motivating her subordinates.

Direct control did work well, but who could bear such a burden for long? Not to mention, people tended to perform better when given trust.

Of course, the carrot-and-stick method was never outdated—it was necessary to prevent certain exceptions from occurring.

Laziness and procrastination were the biggest factors negatively impacting productivity.

In fact, after spending so much time in this world, Ling Qingyu realized something—people weren't truly lazy.

A more accurate description was that they were lost. No pursuits, no ideals, no ambition.

Without the right direction, people became 'lazy.'

She once thought she could afford to be lazy once she was filthy rich, free from the burdens of the world.

However, her inner hidden ambition proved otherwise. Even with so much wealth at her fingertips, she still pursued her dream world.

What did this prove? Once someone found their passion, productivity was never a question.

As long as people had desire, diligence and discipline came naturally.

Those who worked hard despite going against their wishes were truly admirable, but they wouldn't last long before they eventually burned out.

After all, who hadn't seen office workers, stressed and burdened, unable to enjoy their achievements—merely working to meet demands?

Ling Qingyu once read about a research study in which a town received funding every month—more than enough to cover daily needs.

Extra funds were also available for residents to use.

While researchers expected people to become lazy and unproductive, reality completely refuted their hypothesis.

Instead of laziness, people continued to work with smiles, free from worries about food and medicine.

Smiles and joy spread across the town as people became more united, willing to help one another instead of guarding themselves as if everyone had malicious intentions, as they had before.

No burden, no stress—more and more people spent time with their families and worked on what they enjoyed most. Happiness and relaxation bloomed.

Rather than decreasing productivity, the opposite occurred, stunning the researchers. Without worries, a creative mindset emerged among the crowd.

This research result was sealed and never made public. If not for her fortunate encounter, she wouldn't have even known it had happened.

Probably, some capitalists had their faces slapped and wanted to avoid future troubles. What if their ideological opponents exploited this research to attack them?

A world without worries—it seemed like paradise. Maybe, folks from her previous life would argue that this was communism and would tear apart the logic using various failed examples.

Because this experiment wasn't studied in detail or repeated, Ling Qingyu couldn't precisely conclude the relationship between welfare and productivity. Nonetheless, she was inclined to believe that the research shed light on common misconceptions used by the elite circle to mislead the public.

Not outright deception, but misleading them by withholding certain information and steering public opinion in the direction they desired.

"President Ling, is there anything else?" A pretty lady's voice interrupted Ling Qingyu's thoughts.

"No, I was just thinking about something else. The meeting is adjourned. See you in a few weeks." Ling Qingyu greeted her subordinates and was soon left alone.

She, Mo Yunxi, and Yin Jingfei would be flying out of the country that evening. She had tried to persuade others to join, but to no avail. Even Amorette and Denise rejected the trip, saying, "Next time."

Only Xiao Yue and a few dozen of her guards would accompany her. As for Tang Ziyi, that bastard had matters to settle with General Tang from Province T due to deep cooperation between their two parties.

For instance, a new large private airfield was being built to house several Y-20s, her extended Airbus A380, as well as Z-8 transport helicopters to serve as a cover.

Although the land was still under construction, meaning Ling Qingyu had to drive to the airport for her private jet, Tang Ziyi had yet to allow her to inspect it—wanting to keep it as a surprise.

Honestly, if not for concerns about registration and transactions, Ling Qingyu and Tang Ziyi would have manufactured the aircraft themselves, ensuring both quality and quantity. However, purchasing them in batches created detection issues for the former.

That evening, Ling Qingyu departed from her new office and greeted Yang Qingyue and Cai Ning, who were immersed in their work, before heading home.

The two policewomen simply waved their hands, unconcerned about the short separation, making Ling Qingyu sulk.

She thought Yang Qingyue might at least feel reluctant to part. It turned out her feelings were one-sided.

Unbeknownst to Ling Qingyu, Yang Qingyue smiled as she gazed at her departing figure with gentle eyes.

Cai Ning shook her head at her pretentious childhood sweetheart, clicking her tongue in envy.

Mo Yunxi and Yin Jingfei had already arrived, chatting with everyone. A group of girls enjoyed snacks, discussing a vast range of topics.

Doctor Mo had driven there and decided to leave her car in Ling Qingyu's care. After all, Ling Qingyu had both manpower and space, allowing her to study without worries.

Otherwise, she might have had to consider selling it or handing it over to friends, which would have been more complicated. With Ling Qingyu, there were zero problems.

Honestly, Mo Yunxi wasn't used to traveling without the slightest preparation. She and Yin Jingfei had only been busy with visa affairs.

The former felt uneasy, while the latter believed this was exactly how one should feel when traveling abroad.

Afterward, the convoy headed toward the airport. Ling Qingyu was thrilled to fly on her private jet for the first time—especially since it was a big one.

Xiao Yue sat in the co-pilot seat of a Bentley, with Mo Yunxi and Yin Jingfei seated behind. Ling Qingyu appeared to be driving, but Athena was doing all the work. The rest of the convoy was made up of her guards.

At the airport, the group wasted no time heading to the lounge reserved for her—exploiting benefits from her mother-in-law.

Skipping the daunting lines, Ling Qingyu sighed in relief. Fortunately, she owned a private jet and wouldn't have to endure such nuisances.

Swiping through customs, Ling Qingyu glanced around and almost tripped, prompting surprised reactions from the girls who had been paying attention to her.

Ling Qingyu's reaction seemed a little off—especially to Xiao Yue, who knew her best.

Of course, there was a perfectly valid reason for her behavior.

Who had she just seen?

A stallion god—Lin Fan—just a couple of meters ahead, dragging a light carry-on suitcase and a heavy camping backpack.

Shit! She was afraid of Murphy's Law. When something could go wrong, Lin Fan was sure to be present.

Why on earth was this bastard flying on the same date as her?

Ling Qingyu cursed inwardly but later comforted herself. At least, she was flying on her own jet.

She maliciously guessed that Lin Fan's flight might run into an accident—a hostage situation or a bomb threat.

Meanwhile, Lin Fan, feeling a stare from behind, looked back. His brow furrowed when he saw his ex-fiancée.

Damn it!

Although this woman was the most beautiful, any accidental encounter with her never led to anything good.

Hopefully, nothing would go wrong on this trip... but why was she keeping her distance?

Did she really think he was cursed?

Chapter 662: Luxury. Pure luxury, Evil Capitalist

"What's wrong?" Xiao Yue asked after a while.

Although the customs clearance was a private venue solely reserved for them, they could still see the public area.

Ling Qingyu's behavior had clearly changed after glancing outside. Obviously, something had affected her mindset.

As a close confidante who shared deep secrets, Xiao Yue understood the mystery of Ling Qingyu's sixth sense. Most of the time, this girl brought surprises.

To her question, Ling Qingyu shook her head. "Nothing, it's just a passing feeling."

"Alright," Xiao Yue nodded, not probing further since she understood that Ling Qingyu didn't want to say anything.

After all, Ling Qingyu was helpless in this situation. She couldn't just blurt out loud and curse someone else's misfortune, right?

What would people think if they heard Ling Qingyu say that someone's flight would encounter an accident?

Not to mention, anyone—including her girls—wouldn't feel good hearing such ominous words, especially right before flying.

Who knew whether Lin Fan's bad luck would spread to her group? Though Ling Qingyu wasn't overly superstitious, she still had a sense of awe for the mysterious laws of the universe—especially since she herself had benefited from them.

Gods, celestial beings, and immortals existed according to Miss System's answer. However, Ling Qingyu's awe remained within a reasonable range of respect rather than blind worship.

Based on Miss System's reply, this world didn't have any real gods, but that didn't rule out the will of the world's involvement.

Luck was a variable difficult to quantify, and Miss System always urged her to do good deeds to accumulate merits. Ling Qingyu hadn't forgotten this crucial point.

Soon, her group of girls boarded the shuttle buses and arrived near the parked A380, waiting for them to board.

Rows of stewardesses stood near the airstair. A red carpet was laid on the floor and steps to welcome a VIP.

At the top, near the aircraft's entrance, two pilots in sharp uniforms awaited them.

When the shuttle bus doors opened, Ling Qingyu and her group of girls looked around in amazement.

Xiao Yue had already flown once and didn't react much. Mo Yunxi showed a similar response. However, Yin Jingfei and the other girls gasped in wonder.

Seeing it up close, they felt the grandiose presence of the aircraft more than they did from afar.

Furthermore, this massive private jet belonged to their Miss, which also meant they could explore it freely and tweak it to their joy.

On the other hand, Ling Qingyu's attention was elsewhere, earning Xiao Yue's contemptuous gaze.

The stewardesses were beautiful, with excellent figures and delicate features. Their height and curves were eye-catching.

Ling Qingyu was delighted to see that her stewardesses were alluring. At least they weren't like the overly flashy yet unattractive flight attendants she'd seen in her previous life.

The combination of stylish uniforms and stockings that accentuated their legs made Ling Qingyu blink in admiration—almost melting with joy—until Xiao Yue's snort snapped her out of it.

Ling Qingyu coughed and expressed her dissatisfaction. "Hmph, you two took my private jet for so long, and I didn't even get to enjoy my first flight as the boss."

Xiao Yue rolled her eyes and ignored the scumbag president. The other women who overheard chuckled quietly.

They had heard how Tang Ziyi and Xiao Yue roamed around after hijacking Ling Qingyu's private jet, causing the latter to complain nonstop for an entire month—so much so that their ears practically grew calluses.

Noticing everyone's reactions, Ling Qingyu guiltily glanced at Mo Yunxi and Yin Jingfei, relieved that they didn't seem to mind.

In truth, Mo Yunxi and Yin Jingfei found Ling Qingyu's childish side endearing. The cold, distant aura she usually exuded had softened, making her seem cuter and more approachable.

It proved that they were truly friends—not just acquaintances pretending for appearances. They had taken a step into Ling Qingyu's world.

"Welcome, President Ling. We, the cabin crew and pilots, greet you," a stewardess stepped forward and bowed slightly, followed by the rest.

It was clear they had rehearsed this many times. Ling Qingyu smiled and patted the stewardess's shoulder. She figured this girl was the crew chief—the head flight attendant.

"Thank you. We appreciate your warm reception," Ling Qingyu responded politely, bridging the gap between employer and employees.

Sure enough, the flight attendants no longer exuded just formal politeness but reciprocated her warmth.

After all, today was the first time they were officially welcoming their true boss.

Even though Tang Ziyi and Xiao Yue—who had flown with them before—had reassured them multiple times that Ling Qingyu was a great boss who treated people well, psychological caution still existed.

Ling Qingyu, however, knew how to manage people and narrow such gaps.

Noticing her leadership style, the other girls sighed in relief. They had finally met their real boss.

No one wanted to offend Ling Qingyu or leave a bad impression.

The job was easy and paid handsomely. Aside from catering more to a private client—so long as no laws were broken—their responsibilities were no different from those of a conventional stewardess.

Initially, when the flight crews realized all the staff were female, they were a little apprehensive, especially upon discovering that the pilots were women too.

They wondered whether the real bosses were some unscrupulous male customers with peculiar desires. Nonetheless, money won the bet, no matter how 'risky' the job seemed.

Of course, the crews were assembled directly without proper introductions, except for the significant salary, location, and the boss's name.

However, the name alone meant nothing since some people merely served as white gloves.

In upper-class circles, they had heard similar stories. The messes were far more complicated than they appeared on the surface.

Even knowing their employer was a woman, suspicions remained high—though unlikely, what if this woman had purposely hired an all-female team to suit her own aspirations?

It wasn't the first or second time they had heard of women exploiting other women, even though they had read Ling Qingyu's files.

Fortunately, Ling Qingyu knew nothing about their internal debates and insecurities. Otherwise, she might have fumed and cursed out loud. Was her public image really that horrendous?

Where was her original aura of attracting like-minded women as a cold, professional CEO?

Ling Qingyu shook hands with her new employees before meeting and conversing with the two pilots, while her girls suited up and found their seats.

What could she do? These were her rare treasures. She had fulfilled the dream of incorporating pilots and stewardesses into her harem.

Afterward, Ling Qingyu also looked around the interior like the rest of the girls. Although they had found their seats, they still had to scramble around to take everything in.

It would be a pity to leave it unchecked out of politeness or moral restraint. Besides, Ling Qingyu wasn't a stingy person and treated them well.

The cabin was too spacious. She reckoned even first class paled in comparison to her A380's interior design. She was referring to the individual rooms, not just the overall space.

There were sleeping quarters resembling hotel rooms, each with its own toilet and bathroom. Meeting rooms with office desks ensured seamless business affairs during the flight if necessary—essentially, a conference room.

It was fully equipped with satellite communications, video conferencing, and office technology. Yes, Ling Qingyu could use the Internet and make phone calls mid-flight, connected to her private secure satellites.

Stepping in further, Ling Qingyu whistled at the glamorous bar, which even had a small pool—enough for a dozen people to take a short nap. The luxury lounge, complete with an entertainment system, nearly blinded her.

The world of wealth and capitalism—Ling Qingyu mentally flipped off this elite circle. Her existence was selectively neglected.

In addition to the lounges, private cinemas, spas, and wellness areas, a sauna and a mini gym were available. Ling Qingyu was at a loss for words.

Too much. Too much. She had thought the difference wouldn't be that drastic compared to business and first class.

It turned out those elite classes couldn't even match her private jet's standards. Not to mention, the pure design and stunning craftsmanship exuded the highest level of luxury.

It was no surprise her girls were murmuring non-stop in awe. Even so, Ling Qingyu still hadn't explored all the spaces and had to take a seat because the jet was about to taxi.

"President Ling, please remain seated. The plane will taxi shortly," a flight attendant said with a smile before sauntering off.

On the side, Xiao Yue was leisurely reading a newspaper, crossing her legs and leaning against the soft, spacious sofa. Her seat took up nearly the space of five in a commercial flight.

Please. Ling Qingyu huffed with some complaints. Why did Xiao Yue act like an old-timer? News spread faster on the Internet.

Well, as expected of a living antique—no matter how much technology washed over her, old habits never changed.

Behind her, Mo Yunxi and Yin Jingfei chirped excitedly, praising the aircraft. The latter captured everything with her phone. Both were eager for the trip.

Only Ling Qingyu stopped indulging in admiration and instead conversed with Athena. She was asking her daughter to investigate Lin Fan's flight and check for anything amiss.

She also remembered Lin Fan had yet to make connections with a stewardess harem member. Miss System's mission to cut off his opportunity had to be executed.

Although all the girls on her private jet were beautiful, it wouldn't hurt to snatch away another goddess, right?

Anyway, she was doing a good deed for Yang Qingyue. Really, it wasn't her own lust or desires clouding her judgment.

If a terrorist attack occurred mid-flight, Yang Qingyue might have to bear some responsibility.

Chapter 663: University reunion

Since Ling Qingyu was flying on a private jet, it received priority benefits, allowing it to take off ahead of the queue.

Normally, an ordinary private jet wouldn't deserve such privileges, but Ling Qingyu's connections were extraordinary.

The Minister of Justice, the Governor of Province N, military generals, and several officials in Province N had all received her donations, which helped them achieve merits—building roads, bridges, and social infrastructure.

Given these hidden ties, Ling Qingyu's flight was granted a rare right. Not to mention, among the elite circle, Ling Qingyu was considered the richest after Xia and Shen.

Of course, such designations weren't entirely accurate, but they reflected the realities of public opinion in Province N, based on unspoken accords among the wealthy families in the province.

During the taxi phase, Ling Qingyu listened to Athena's detailed explanation of Lin Fan's flight.

His plane was scheduled to take off three hours later, giving her a sense of security that her schedule wouldn't be disrupted by Lin Fan's unpredictable aura.

The destination was a country on the Elephant Continent. When she realized her journey followed a similar route, she panicked.

Both flights were heading toward the same country—hers would land on a private island she owned, while Lin Fan's would land in the capital.

Miss System had gifted Ling Qingyu an entire island chain surrounding the famous elite medical city.

When Mo Yunxi and Yin Jingfei first learned about the island, they were astounded. Ling Qingyu had told them beforehand that they would be visiting the renowned medical city, but they had never expected her to own the surrounding islands.

This wasn't just an ordinary hospital or a collection of medical facilities. The entire city was designed to serve the elite of the elite.

Its privacy, services, and treatment capabilities were beyond measure. Even with Ling Qingyu's immense wealth, she shouldn't have been able to buy the entire infrastructure.

However, reality painted a completely different picture, making Mo Yunxi and Yin Jingfei wonder if they were dreaming.

They began to realize that Sister Ling needed another thorough evaluation—what they had previously assumed had far exceeded their expectations.

Although the duo was very close to Ling Qingyu, everyone naturally measured each other's capabilities.

In any case, Mo Yunxi felt both dissatisfied and regretful. Life was always full of unexpected turns.

She complained that if Ling Qingyu had told her about this earlier, she wouldn't have chosen to study at Country A's university at all.

Ling Qingyu's medical facilities boasted state-of-the-art technology and elite research standards—exactly the kind of environment Mo Yunxi had been looking for to further her studies.

The reason she had chosen Country A's top medical university was to gain hands-on experience in a high-level research lab.

As for the academic circle, Ling Qingyu's medical city was filled with renowned experts and researchers.

Comparing the two, working and studying in Ling Qingyu's medical city clearly offered more advantages.

But since Mo Yunxi had already made her decision and established connections with the relevant faculty, it wouldn't be right to cancel her plans at the last minute without showing up.

Why not spend half a year or a full year there before making a final decision? That way, she could avoid offending her friends and mentors.

Ling Qingyu had only revealed her flight plans a few days before departure.

Mo Yunxi and Yin Jingfei had no issues hitching a ride, even if they couldn't get to Country A directly.

They were happy to have Ling Qingyu accompany them. Besides, the extra trip offered new opportunities for their careers and perspectives.

The plan was to fly to the medical city first, then head to the capital for discussions on city affairs, and finally continue to Country A.

Ling Qingyu still needed to meet with the country's leader to avoid future complications, even though the contract was ironclad.

She had to establish her stance and presence to deter any ambitious schemes.

After all, she had no idea what Miss System had done to persuade the government to relinquish ownership and give up the opportunity to collect massive tax revenues.

On the other hand, Lin Fan's landing in the capital seemed far from Ling Qingyu's first stop, but it aligned with her overall plan.

Wherever the protagonist went, trouble followed. Once bitten, twice shy—Ling Qingyu was wary of any potential complications. She'd had enough ever since the last bank robbery.

Hopefully, today's trip wouldn't bring any further problems.

Athena had answered her doubts regarding Lin Fan's objective—he was meeting up with his mercenary comrades.

As for whether he was planning to help his woman's situation in Province N or had an entirely different agenda, that remained a mystery.

For now, Ling Qingyu saw no immediate threat. Nothing seemed to confirm her uneasy premonition.

Soon, the plane picked up speed, lifted off the ground, and climbed rapidly.

Amazingly, the sound insulation was so effective that the roaring jet engines were reduced to a mere whisper.

Everyone remained seated until the plane leveled off and stabilized.

Once the seatbelt sign was turned off and the flight attendants began moving around, Mo Yunxi and Yin Jingfei were eager to explore the aircraft.

"Sister Ling, we'll walk around. Is that okay?" Yin Jingfei asked.

"Of course, my dear. Go ahead, be my guest," Ling Qingyu nodded. "You can ask the flight attendants if you need anything."

"That's great. I also want to see the difference between public and private jets," Mo Yunxi added.

"I won't be able to join for now. I want to check my email," Ling Qingyu replied.

"Ah, what a pity. Always busy, huh? That's the life of a businesswoman." Mo Yunxi sighed and patted Yin Jingfei's back. "Let's go. We two sisters will have fun."

"Enjoy your time," Ling Qingyu waved her hand and adjusted her seat, then reached out to take a laptop from her nearby bag.

The two left Ling Qingyu's sight, stepping into another chamber to explore. A stewardess sat nearby, seemingly responsible for this compartment.

"Tsk, pretentious," Xiao Yue clicked her tongue in contempt as soon as the stewardess disappeared for a moment. "What's with acting like a newbie on your own plane?"

"Image, sister. Image. Where would my momentum and precious aura go otherwise?" Ling Qingyu rolled her eyes as she opened the laptop's lid.

"It's your first time, so why act so much? Just be yourself," Xiao Yue shook her head, helpless against Ling Qingyu's behavior.

"Sister, if I didn't know better, I might suspect you were deliberately trying to mess with me," Ling Qingyu rubbed her forehead at Xiao Yue's choice of words.

This antique had learned to elicit schnatinken. Tang Ziyi must have led her astray.

"Quit it. Nothing good ever comes out of your mouth," Xiao Yue stretched, cracked some joints, and stood up.

"Where are you going?"

"Naturally, to play mahjong with the others." Xiao Yue snickered and left.

Ling Qingyu blinked, unable to believe Xiao Yue's carefree attitude since boarding the plane.

Cursing Xiao Yue's ancestors in her heart, Ling Qingyu focused on the screen. After all, it would take slightly more than 18 hours before the plane touched the ground.

Fortunately, her private jet was a flying five-star hotel, ensuring passengers wouldn't succumb to boredom.

She guessed that her guards were probably playing video games, watching movies, or shooting pool. Alas, she, too, would have to join in soon to avoid embarrassing herself.

Like her own massive manor, exploring was an essential trait for an owner, though she had stewardesses and Athena to guide her.

Pop!

A notification rang from her laptop. Since her private jet supported a strong internet connection mid-flight, Ling Qingyu felt peculiar, as if she weren't disconnected from the world at all.

With satellite coverage, strong connectivity, and secure privacy, no one could spy on her. And this service was available worldwide—exclusively hers.

After all, she had done nothing except accept Miss System's grace and Athena's experiments.

Ling Qingyu frowned as her eyes landed on the email's subject line.

Reunion Invitation.

What kind of crappy topic is this?

Reunion? Or some weird advertisement? Amused, Ling Qingyu paused her quick hand, which was about to press the delete button, and opened the email instead to satisfy her curiosity.

"Well," Ling Qingyu sighed in relief that she hadn't acted on impulse. "Which idiot likes to send weird emails?"

As the subject suggested, the email was about a class reunion, inviting alumni from Ling Qingyu's graduating class—her time at Country A's elite university.

She recalled a few friends and mentors. During university, most of her classmates had sidelined her, and only a couple had formed real connections with her.

Because she had been too cold and focused on her goals, she had missed out on university life. But her hard work hadn't been in vain.

This wasn't the first invitation. Ling Qingyu had received one every year but had been residing in Country C.

Now that she was heading to Country A with Doctor Mo and Nurse Yin, why not accept the invitation and experience it? She had nothing better to do, anyway.

Besides, Ling Qingyu wanted to reconnect with her 'besties' and see if she could help with anything.

Only, her memory made her lips twitch.

She probably realized why the former Ling Qingyu had never been keen on reconnecting with her alumni.

There was a freaking licker who had once made her ashamed. No, having a secret admirer was nothing, but if that secret admirer blatantly declared his ambition and chased her around, the mere thought almost made Ling Qingyu vomit.

Contemplating further, Ling Qingyu finally understood why her past self had refused to attend alumni gatherings and sighed heavily.

Deep friendship and love.

Alas.

Chapter 664: Arrival...aircraft's secrets?

No matter what, Ling Qingyu decided to enjoy her time in Country A, meeting her old classmates and a few close friends she had lost contact with due to different priorities.

For now, let's have some fun inside the A380 luxury hotel. Tang Ziyi and Xiao Yue must have indulged themselves long ago without telling her.

Hmph, the trip would take a long time, and Ling Qingyu had made up her mind to be reckless.

Roughly 18 hours later.

"Boss, your hands are steady and accurate."

"Cool shot, boss..."

"Boss looks very handsome and sexy at the same time. I'm even wondering if my sexual orientation is affected, looking from behind."

"Get out! Don't try to steal our boss's favor."

"This bitch flatterer..."

"Hey... Hey... What are you doing? I'm just praising Boss's beauty."

"No need to say anything more in front of the goddess."

Ling Qingyu won the billiards game with absolute control of the cue ball, earning applause from her subordinates.

As for the 'friendly' discussion behind her, Ling Qingyu laughed so hard that her chest trembled and shook her head.

She ignored the banter and smiled, gesturing for her girls to continue playing while she observed. It was really cool to put on a show in front of beautiful girls.

At least receiving a few words of praise from beauties and feeling cared for seemed like a peculiar kind of energy that sparked desire—completely different from the opposite sex.

She might not even play well if men flattered her too much. Not that it mattered. She had her girls to have fun with—why bother with male creatures?

A stewardess interrupted the fun and warned everyone that the plane was about to land. After all, regardless of whether it was a luxury flight or a conventional one, safety concerns always took precedence.

Ling Qingyu and the other girls complied without issue and returned to their seats, albeit reluctantly.

While fastening her seatbelt, Ling Qingyu glanced unhappily at Xiao Yue, whose lips were curved upward ever since she sat down.

It seemed she had won multiple bets and cheated her girls. Luckily, none of them took gambling seriously; they only raised the stakes for fun.

Mo Yunxi and Yin Jingfei returned from their adventure. The duo had also enjoyed themselves, playing alongside her before taking a nap.

Sure, there were safety features on the beds to accommodate emergencies during the flight, but it wasn't as comfortable as sitting with a seatbelt.

Ling Qingyu, Xiao Yue, and the other girls couldn't take a short nap due to their unfamiliarity with the environment and the heated excitement.

Furthermore, their bodies had been enhanced to a superhuman degree, so it didn't matter if they didn't sleep for a day or two.

She smiled at the duo and chatted with them for a bit as they all waited for the landing. Doctor Mo and Nurse Yin were eager to visit the prestigious medical city catered to the elite.

Though they were dissatisfied with the hierarchy and class distinctions, they couldn't deny the technological advancements and strength of the facility. They retained a necessary level of admiration and awe.

Meanwhile, Ling Qingyu listened to Miss System's narration. In the past, she had pestered her nonstop to uncover the hidden storyline—one that resembled the charming Policewoman Zhou Rong, whom she had saved before.

The messes that Gu Yi exploited to milk all the benefits weren't easily forgotten by Ling Qingyu.

She intended to learn the full story and its original course before her girls intervened. It turned out Dong Xi was merely a side character.

The main heroine was Wen Yalan.

Yes, someone who barely registered in her mind, but after seeing the figure uploaded by Athena, she clearly remembered the attractive, goddess-like beauty.

Too bad she also had a husband.

Why were all the attractive women already taken?

Ling Qingyu grumbled, only to receive an invisible smack on the back of her head from Miss System.

Tang Ziyi & the other girls: What about us? Sure enough, her taste for wild girls outside has never changed, no matter the gender.

Ling Qingyu expressed her grievance silently and pouted.

Miss System was really harsh, but she had a point.

Anyway, after sifting through Wen Yalan's future and the script, Ling Qingyu had zero complaints—not because she didn't want to, but because she was utterly speechless at the turn of events.

A similar plotline but a different scenario.

Dong Xi was merely cannon fodder in a promiscuous affair.

Wen Yalan was coerced, then forced against her will, only to fall into desire. Later, her craving for power and corruption grew as she climbed the ranks quickly—by sleeping with powerful men.

There were indeed cases where she had no choice, but her weakening moral boundaries further proved that there was a percentage of willingness.

Of course, it was difficult to endure poverty when her fate was in the hands—and mouths—of a handful of people who had desires for her. Where soft methods failed, hard ones would follow.

Besides, she sought protection by submitting to people she could trust and exploit. A win-win move.

Now that Ling Qingyu, Tang Ziyi, and Xiao Yue had laid out a better path—one without corruption, unspoken disturbances, and with a healthier environment and better pay—the fate of those women had changed entirely.

Ling Qingyu was also known throughout the country as one of its wealthiest women. Apart from being renowned for her ruthless business tactics, she was praised for her kindness toward her employees.

Why refuse a ludicrous offer that provided enormous benefits and a secure background to deter predators who preyed on their beauty? With Ling Qingyu's reputation for protecting her own, they had nothing to fear.

Yes, Ling Qingyu's fame soared when she fought against a capital force. Though outsiders had no idea which force it was, those within the inner circles could easily guess the stakes—it was a faction at the center of the nation.

However, what worried Ling Qingyu was whether the world's will would directly act against her and create obstacles.

Although Miss System had promised to protect her from unscientific means, what about those unreasonable interferences where the will of the world manipulated events?

[I have confirmed multiple times: if it moves, whether secretly or openly, I'll break its face. It doesn't matter if the will threatens to self-destruct—just switch to another one. In another million years, a new will shall be born.]

Ling Qingyu's lips twitched upon hearing the outrageous statement, straight out of an immortality cultivation novel. She knew her system wasn't simple, but to dare disregard the world's will entirely... it made her smile.

Her repeated apprehension wasn't without reason.

Sometimes, when faced with protagonists—those walking cheat codes—the world's will interfered constantly.

She had witnessed Lin Fan slapping faces left and right, trampling on men who threw dirt at him for no apparent reason.

Well, Ling Qingyu didn't have time to think further, as the plane started its descent following the captain's wifey announcement.

Ling Qingyu quickly became serious and focused on the plane's movements.

As a senior 'veteran pilot' with over '30–50 years of experience,' she had her own judgment regarding skills and capability.

Though Miss System assured her that the pilots and crew were top-notch, experiencing it firsthand would put her mind at ease.

She was extremely satisfied with the stewardesses' service. Now, only the pilots required her final evaluation.

Takeoff was the easiest phase of flying, so Ling Qingyu hadn't paid much attention despite the smooth initial stage.

The best—and most challenging—part came last.

Hopefully, her beautiful pilots wouldn't disappoint her.

As the altitude gradually dropped, Ling Qingyu shifted her gaze toward the windows. She could already see the surface of the ocean, small landmarks, and moonlight reflecting off the waves.

Soon, she spotted the entire medical city—brilliantly illuminated, decorated with lights, and boasting a grand network of roads and towering buildings. The plane circled around while continuing its descent.

By now, the aircraft had entered foreign airspace.

As the altitude reached just above 100 meters, Ling Qingyu could already see the runway and airport facilities.

When the landing gear touched the ground, the structure barely vibrated. The touchdown was so smooth that even the slightest whirling of wheels brushing against the runway didn't echo.

According to Ling Qingyu's knowledge, no matter how smooth a landing was, at least some sound should be transmitted.

Then, she remembered—her plane was modified by Miss System and was a luxury-class aircraft.

It wasn't surprising that the acoustic system was superb, isolating any disturbances to allow passengers to enjoy an undisturbed flight.

The touchdown was so flawless that Ling Qingyu found it hard to believe.

Even she herself might struggle to land this smoothly.

She would have to praise and reward the pilots well.

As expected of Miss System's selections—no one was useless.

What Ling Qingyu didn't realize was that, inside the cockpit, the two pilots exchanged glances and sighed in admiration.

"No matter how many times I fly this aircraft, I'm still amazed."

"Indeed. The new secret AI system and the entire structure of the aircraft are unbelievable. Except for the A380's exterior, the plane is on a completely different level," the other pilot expressed her doubts.

"You're right. The more I fly it, the more dumbfounded I become. Could this be a limited-edition A380?"

"I have no idea. But whatever the case, a huge salary, great benefits, and a kind boss—it's a rare opportunity for the two of us."

Since they had accepted the job and signed the NDA, they had read the aircraft's files.

Dumbfounded, they could hardly believe such an aircraft existed—so much so that they had the urge to share it with their friends.

Too bad they were already bound by contract.

They had once believed the A380 to be the pinnacle of passenger transport aircraft, but Ling Qingyu's private edition completely overturned their views.

Improved engines and increased thrust.

A modified wing structure.

Advanced avionics—perhaps even superior to military-grade systems.

And the sheer number of protective measures—both active and passive defenses designed to counter missiles—was staggering.

The airframe and exterior skin seemed to be composed of secret materials, capable of withstanding shrapnel and powerful projectiles.

Even Air Force One should pale in comparison to this aircraft... right?

The uncertainty came from the fact that the military always kept critical information classified to maintain absolute secrecy.

Regardless, this was the safest aircraft they had ever encountered.

Barring pilot errors or maintenance failures, it would never face a problem.

And that wasn't even the full extent of its capabilities.

Athena hadn't yet disclosed all the hidden weapons onboard.

Laser beams. Directed energy weapons.

Of course, Athena had yet to install such modifications—at least until Tang Ziyi's deal with General Tang was finalized and a military-class airport became available.

Chapter 665: Near head of state's treatment

Ling Qingyu had no idea that the modification spoken of by Miss System was on an entirely different spectrum and merely regarded it as a slight enhancement beyond the norm.

Otherwise, she would have felt honored to receive such treatment, akin to that of a head of state.

The aircraft was nothing short of an aerial fortress.

As it circled during taxiing before gradually coming to a stop, Xiao Yue unfastened her seatbelt, drawing Ling Qingyu's attention.

"Why are you preparing to leave so fast?" Ling Qingyu asked.

"No, I'm just taking care of your girls. You'll be in for a surprise," Xiao Yue replied.

"Oh." Ling Qingyu nodded and unfastened hers as well. She stood up and was about to reach for her belongings before remembering she had her girls to handle that.

Well, technically, nothing needed to be moved since they weren't planning to stay on the island for long.

The plan remained unchanged—first, the medical city, then the capital to meet with officials. Afterward, they would fly directly to the state of Country A, where Mo Yunxi and Yin Jingfei would study.

Through the window, Ling Qingyu caught a glimpse of vehicles and a group of people waiting for her.

She understood—they had to be top echelons welcoming her.

After all, their behavior and the reasons behind it were clear.

Given the outrageous buyout and complete ownership of an entire medical city—achieved without anyone noticing—these superiors had every reason to fear her identity.

One had to realize that the background of the medical city was heavily concealed, suppressing anyone aware of its true extent.

As an institute serving the global elite, its vast network and immeasurable resources were privileges that couldn't be acquired no matter how hard one tried. Those holding shares would never sell them, even for an outrageous price, due to the city's immense potential.

Under normal circumstances, sole ownership was impossible unless one was coerced or forced.

Yet, Ling Qingyu had achieved it effortlessly.

So, while she never liked blatant flattery, she held no negative first impression.

Or rather, it could be said that the officials' attempts to please her had succeeded.

First impressions mattered.

Moreover, it was a form of etiquette to welcome a significant figure, especially when their arrival had been announced in advance.

No one wanted ignorance or negligence to spiral into a massive misunderstanding that could ruin their careers.

A few Spirit Fox operatives accompanying her held her back, choosing to step ahead and assess the environment before deeming it safe for her to disembark.

Upon hearing their reasoning, Ling Qingyu was speechless.

Please—if someone had prepared well enough to kill her with a sniper, nothing in this situation could prevent it.

She appreciated their concern, but wasn't this treatment a bit too much?

It was on par with how top national officials were handled.

Not to mention, she was already wearing protective clothing and a talisman.

Yes, a talisman—an immortal life-saving artifact straight out of fantasy novels.

She had requested Tang Ziyi to research lost arts among the treasures they had won in the last auction.

While martial arts sutras were easily derived, techniques bordering on the supernatural—like the talisman—took much longer.

The talisman, embedded with a formation, was disguised as a simple necklace that would only activate in extreme danger—essentially, a life-and-death situation.

It could activate three times, with a two-day recovery period between uses.

Since everything depended on energy, Ling Qingyu had wondered—how had Tang Ziyi managed to achieve the talisman's effect without any spiritual aura?

Tang Ziyi's answer was simple: she had utilized starlight energy—either from the sun or the reflection of the moon.

In short, cosmic energy.

Unlike her previous successes, which had always amazed Ling Qingyu with their speed, this one had taken an extraordinary amount of time—despite the massive computational support from Athena—proving just how difficult the process had been.

Somehow, this talented goddess of war had managed to develop a replacement to supplement the missing spiritual aura.

In fact, the mechanism behind it had yet to be refined, and Athena was striving to improve it further—not just a shield that lasted mere seconds but one that could endure for minutes.

The product had not yet reached its maximum efficiency in energy utilization, nor had they fully grasped the mysteries of cosmic energy. There was still much potential to explore.

Of course, Ling Qingyu had not asked Athena and Tang Ziyi to dedicate too much of their efforts to mythical developments, as other sectors demanded practical advancements.

In any case, Ling Qingyu was safer than ever before, and the other girls also wore similar protective gear. The shield mechanism essentially granted each of them three lives.

Along with special clothing and top-tier military kits—yet to be fully equipped—everyone was practically a walking light-armored vehicle.

As her subordinates held her back, Ling Qingyu met the probing gazes of Mo Yunxi and Yin Jingfei.

She shrugged helplessly. She didn't like being placed on a pedestal, as it often led to unwanted attention, but her strength made it inevitable.

Fortunately, she wasn't explicitly speaking her thoughts. Else, everyone around would have the urge to smack someone's head.

She hadn't forgotten that her recent moves against the Qin family and others might have offended certain parties, possibly prompting them to place a bounty on her head.

On foreign soil, her political and business resources from Province N and her mother-in-law meant little. The only true protection she had was her powerful girls, armed to the teeth.

And perhaps Athena, acting as an intelligence agent—plus Elena, whose submarine's combat power was equivalent to one or two aircraft carrier groups.

"Elena, where are you right now?"

Mo Yunxi and Yin Jingfei didn't question who Ling Qingyu was talking to without a phone.

Having stayed in Ling Qingyu's residence and becoming more familiar with her world, they had discovered many technologies unknown to the outside world.

"Mom, just near the waters of the country you're in. I'm watching you from above through satellite connections," Elena replied. "Don't worry, I'll reduce any infrastructure to debris if you encounter danger. There are also other sisters, fully equipped to serve as a quick reaction force—Aegis vehicles and Virgin helicopters, enough to destroy the entire nation."

LING QINGYU: "..."

Ling Qingyu responded with a vague acknowledgment and thanked her "new daughter" for the concern.

Or perhaps she should be more grateful that Elena hadn't even considered the possibility of friendly fire while casually talking about leveling an entire nation.

Maybe sensing her mother's unease, Elena added, "Mom, you must trust our accuracy. It's pinpointed to a tolerance of less than one meter. We won't joke with your life."

"Sure, sure," Ling Qingyu muttered, pressing her fingers against her twitching forehead. She could feel Elena's eagerness for action.

She was now regretting whether she had stored too much firepower inside Elena.

What if her daughter suddenly unleashed everything?

Hearing about a small nation vanishing due to multiple asteroid strikes wouldn't be a good thing, right?

"Let's go. Everything is ready—safe and secure outside," Xiao Yue returned and nodded at Ling Qingyu, who rolled her eyes.

Safe and secure? What about two kilometers away? Could they see that far?

Xiao Yue understood the implication and responded, "There are reconnaissance tools to handle threats from a distance."

"Alas," Ling Qingyu sighed, lightly slapping her cheek in mild frustration. She still hadn't fully adapted to the rapid pace of technological advancements.

"Now, go meet the people," Xiao Yue cut off the chatter and practically pushed Ling Qingyu out.

Outside, a group of people lined up nervously, waiting for their visitor to step out of the aircraft.

Behind them, staff members, doctors, and nurses exchanged glances, silently communicating and gossiping about their future boss.

They had been dumbfounded when they first heard the news of a new boss practically parachuting in. Fortunately, their network had reached the executive level, allowing them to receive the rare firsthand information before their colleagues.

When Ling Qingyu declared her arrival by private jet, the executive leaders weren't too surprised—after all, nearly every wealthy individual they served owned an aircraft or chartered one.

In their perception, a private jet was merely a small one, with the largest being the smallest airliner.

However, when the jumbo Airbus A380 landed, their expectations were completely shattered.

The boss wasn't some wealthy royal family member from the Middle Kingdom, was she?

But according to their initial intelligence gathering, the boss was a young woman from an Eastern nation—someone they had assumed would be easy to deal with.

Now, Ling Qingyu's show of strength had frightened them into silence. No one dared to doubt that she had merely chartered a large aircraft because the plane bore the Spirit logo, imprinted on its skin.

After the aircraft's engines shut down and the ladder was set in place, the boss had yet to appear. Instead, several casually dressed women with strong, wild temperaments stepped out first, scanning the surroundings.

A few held devices in their hands, surveying the distance. The group had no idea what these women were doing.

Several of them approached closely, scanning the group and staying nearby.

The officials felt black lines forming over their foreheads.

Now they understood.

These weren't just attendants—they were security guards, monitoring them and searching for potential threats.

Although they knew that elites always traveled with personal security, this level of protection seemed excessive.

For those unaware of the visitor's identity, it would be easy to mistake this arrival for a head of state visiting their hospital.

Time passed until, finally, the true visitor descended the ladder.

They were all beautiful women.

However, everyone's attention remained fixed on the main protagonist.

They had seen her photos before coming here to welcome her, but in person, she was far more striking.

Compared to the other women, she strode down the stairs like a goddess, every step radiating the air of a superior.

Her blend of Eastern and Western features pleased their eyes and satisfied their aesthetic, and the waiting party's gazes gleamed with admiration.

Wow, working for a beautiful goddess didn't seem so bad—as long as their usual routines weren't disrupted.

Surely, doubts arose among a few who lacked foresight, wondering whose man was backing her.

After all, it was hard for a woman like Ling Qingyu to survive in her industries—especially one as extremely beautiful as her.

On the other hand, Ling Qingyu's sharp eyes locked onto the key figures.

Six individuals caught her attention at the forefront.

Doctor A, Doctor B, and Doctor C—all deans.

Manager A, Manager B, and Manager C—handling administrative matters.

Though she acknowledged the latter group, she much preferred the former.

Ling Qingyu: Why are all the names just A, B, and C?! You lazy author!

Author: Side characters have no human rights.

Passerby: Thank you very much. We know we're not human.

Author: Be satisfied with the treatment, hmph!

Ling Qingyu (pouting) : Baby feels wronged.

Chapter 666: You're not talking about this surprise, right?

In the waiting party's eyes, Ling Qingyu's features captivated them more. It wasn't that Mo Yunxi, Yin Jingfei, Xiao Yue, and the other girls lacked beauty.

It was the cultural aesthetic that defined one's perception of beauty. Ling Qingyu managed to fit all categories and reach perfection.

A cold and authoritative temperament. A beautiful face and an SSS+ figure ratio. Stoic, searing eyes that seemed to pierce through any lies and deception.

Usually, someone like her would invite disaster, misfortune, or threats, stirring desires of conquest. But her identity protected her.

Previously, the level of deterrence wasn't enough, but with Miss System's intervention and Ling Qingyu's persistent self-improvement, those malicious thoughts became suppressed.

Of course, among the waiting parties, there were also Orientals who preferred Xiao Yue's classical elegance, akin to a lady raised in a prestigious family; Mo Yunxi's soothing aura and confidence; or Yin Jingfei's gentle nature.

Once Ling Qingyu stepped off the airstairs and her feet touched the ground, six people approached her—four men and two women.

Leading the group was an older man, likely in his fifties or sixties, who greeted her with a smile. "Welcome, Miss Ling. It is a pleasure and an honor to have you here."

"The pleasure is mine, Dean A." Ling Qingyu extended her hand and was satisfied that the man behaved like a gentleman, avoiding any awkwardness. "I hope my presence doesn't disrupt your work."

No subtle pressure for a handshake. Just a simple, warm, and friendly gesture.

Of course, even if the man had made a mistake, Ling Qingyu wouldn't have minded.

She had been much more forgiving lately. She no longer avoided handshakes with men as she once did—so long as they refrained from lecherous behavior or inappropriate intentions.

Besides, if anyone dared to take advantage of her, her sheer superhuman strength would teach them a lesson.

"Not at all, milady. You're too polite. It is our responsibility to ensure your comfort," Dean A said, shaking Ling Qingyu's hand. "I hope your journey wasn't too tiring. I've made all the necessary arrangements to accommodate you and your friends."

"Thank you very much." Ling Qingyu nodded before twisting her waist slightly, gesturing towards her confidantes. "This is Xiao Yue, my secretary. Dr. Mo Yunxi and Nurse Yin Jingfei—they are my friends."

Xiao Yue: "..."

This bastard knew exactly when to take advantage, just like Tang Ziyi, Xiao Yue thought, pursing her lips.

Mo Yunxi and Yin Jingfei: "..."

"Welcome, welcome, miladies." Dean A smiled, noting that these women's identities might not be simple, especially since Ling Qingyu introduced them as friends—except for Xiao Yue.

"Right, this is..." It was now Dean A's turn to introduce his team and establish rapport. Flattery and polite exchanges went both ways.

Even a female dean was among them, catching Ling Qingyu's attention. She assumed the woman was from the managerial sector.

Ling Qingyu inwardly noted the difference between the three deans and the three managerial figures.

Their distinctions became evident in conversation. The deans carried an inner pride—those who had risen through their own achievements had no need to ingratiate themselves with others.

In contrast, the rest maneuvered carefully, eager to please her and establish a presence in her memory for the future. They possessed high social skills and eloquence, demonstrating a keen understanding of leadership psychology.

Surely, the deans exuded the appropriate elegance of their status, but they paled in comparison to the flatterers' skillful approach.

"Flattery" might have been too strong a word—it was subtle enough that Ling Qingyu had difficulty pinpointing when exactly they were doing it. But she always recognized it when her mood was subtly lifted.

After all, both sides engaged in some degree of flattery, at the very least, to express politeness and foster goodwill.

After greeting the six highest leaders of the hospital or medical city, Ling Qingyu spoke with those behind them, not differentiating in treatment in the slightest.

The bare minimum someone in Ling Qingyu's position could do was to avoid displaying emotions or weaknesses, preventing others from detecting loopholes to profile her later.

"It seems like we have a lot of company, Miss Ling," said Dean A, implying the number of girls Ling Qingyu had brought—pilots, stewardesses, and her guards.

The pilots and stewardesses were out of the equation since her trip here would last no more than six hours. They would remain inside the airbus, along with a few guards serving as security to prevent any attempts on the aircraft.

Ling Qingyu's only vulnerability was the possibility of someone tampering with her aircraft during maintenance or while it was stationary.

Fortunately, Athena had developed a comprehensive monitoring system to assess the aircraft's structural integrity and overall condition. Moreover, no part of the aircraft's exterior or most of its interior—except for areas respecting privacy, such as toilets and sleeping quarters—was free from Athena's advanced surveillance cameras.

In fact, Ling Qingyu didn't mind if Athena breached privacy since only she, her daughter, and a few confidantes had access to the recordings.

To Dean A's remark, Ling Qingyu naturally responded, "Forgive me for bringing extra burdens. I'm afraid your management departments will be busy soon."

"Not at all, Madam. We've already prepared refreshments for our guests. The more, the merrier, isn't it? I even arranged extra buses just in case of emergencies."

Ling Qingyu glanced at the queued vans and minibuses and gave a subtle nod. Thorough enough, she replied, "Then, let's proceed. Please, Dean A."

"Follow me, Miss Ling."

"I'm afraid that won't work," Xiao Yue interjected, stunning Dean A. "You'll be riding in our vehicles."

Ling Qingyu blinked several times before registering what she had just heard, not missing a single word. "When did we bring our own vehicles?"

"You don't actually think we'd rent vehicles for our travel, do you?" Xiao Yue asked rhetorically.

"So, this is what you meant by a surprise?" Ling Qingyu recalled the petite troublemaker's words.

"You wouldn't believe it," Xiao Yue smiled and radioed her command.

Dean A observed their interaction and reflected. This was far from how a secretary typically communicated with her superior. The girl, assumed to be just an assistant, was undoubtedly a close friend of Miss Ling and no ordinary person. Perhaps he should engage in conversation with the doctor and nurse accompanying Ling Qingyu.

He had subtly probed Ling Qingyu's background but was effortlessly deflected, with the topic swiftly redirected elsewhere.

Soon, a convoy of a dozen SUVs pulled up a few meters away in a straight line. Ling Qingyu's eyes twitched as she stared at Xiao Yue in disbelief. "Please don't tell me you transported these inside my airbus."

"Our airbus," Xiao Yue corrected sarcastically.

Ling Qingyu understood that these SUVs were definitely modified. If it were just about carrying basic weight, there was no reason to waste efficiency and complicate logistics by transporting them via aircraft.

She also recalled seeing these vehicles departing from her residence about a week ago. They had caught her attention because they were labeled as Country A—Chevrolet.

Back then, Athena had explained that the vehicles were manufactured in-house at Tang Ziyi's request. Except for their outward appearance and interior design, nothing about them resembled a Chevrolet.

Self-produced and heavily modified. At the time, Ling Qingyu had no idea what Tang Ziyi and Xiao Yue were preparing.

Now, it was clear. These SUVs were Chevrolet Suburbans, similar to those used for diplomatic security— heavily armored, equipped with powerful engines, and bulletproof as well as explosion-resistant to a certain extent.

Athena's version could only be superior, completely outclassing them.

Meanwhile, a few of her girls wore specialized camouflage and military gear, covered from head to toe. It was Spirit Fox's policing attire, except the label had been removed, and the camouflage was green.

Their presence sparked hushed murmurs among the welcoming personnel. The deans and department leaders exchanged glances, silently acknowledging that their guest was truly a ruthless character.

"..."

"..."

"I think your surprise is more than just a surprise," Ling Qingyu massaged her cheeks and spoke in a blaming tone.

Her new employees were now a little shaken. Who would have expected their boss to own soldiers?

Seeing a few female bodyguards in civilian clothing was understandable. But witnessing an entire unit, armed and ready for war, was on another level—especially in a place like STAR Hospital.

Of course, STAR Hospital had its own security teams. Beyond the potential reputational damage, it couldn't afford to risk even the slightest incident, as the facility catered to elite families and VVIPs.

The repercussions of any harm befalling them would be catastrophic, so those working here were accustomed to dealing with high-stakes situations.

Bringing a few bodyguards was one thing, but arriving with an entire force was a different matter altogether.

Ling Qingyu shook her head, ignoring the reactions around her.

Her guards' appearances were a blend of civilian and special operations personnel. She couldn't blame Tang Ziyi and Xiao Yue for their decision.

Continent Elephant was notorious for its daily chaos and bloodshed—a utopia for mercenaries and those with dark interests, or interests gained through dirty means.

Given that reality, such a grand level of protection seemed justified, even if STAR Hospital's security was already formidable.

Not to mention, in the eyes of others, this display of wealth and power only reinforced Ling Qingyu's influence.

Chapter 667: Something's up

"Let's go. I'll drive. We can talk in detail inside," said Ling Qingyu as she headed toward the center of the convoy.

"That's not appropriate," Dean A hesitated, conflicted about letting the boss drive them around.

"Don't say more. Just follow me." Ling Qingyu didn't listen and merely gestured at the six figures, who were still a bit hesitant.

In the end, Ling Qingyu chose a vehicle and shooed away the original driver and passenger, directing them to another SUV.

Xiao Yue took Mo Yunxi and Yin Jingfei with her. The latter two understood that Ling Qingyu had more to discuss and complied with Xiao Yue's direction.

Due to time constraints and strict security regulations, the pilots and most stewardesses remained on standby inside the Airbus, along with several guards positioned around the perimeter.

A few stewardesses, granted permission, took the opportunity to accompany Spirit Fox in the convoy.

After all, this was a rare chance to visit the infamous STAR Hospital in person. Within their circles, they had only heard gossip about the hospital after interacting with wealthy clientele.

No news or video streams had ever revealed the hospital's infrastructure, a testament to its strict confidentiality.

Soon, seven SUVs departed, following the lead of two vans in front. Two minibuses brought up the rear.

As the formation left the airport, the mercenaries responsible for airport security discussed the visitor's security details in awe.

"Who arms their bodyguards like special forces?"

"I feel like our weapons and equipment are inferior to theirs. Team leader, do you have any intel?"

"Quiet! Stay vigilant. I know the chances of danger are low, but do your job well. Don't bicker like ladies in the marketplace."

"Ouch, that's sexist!"

Ling Qingyu had no idea her presence had sparked a new topic. She was simply enjoying the ride. Who didn't love black-armored cavalries?

From time to time, she spoke with Dean A, who sat in the front passenger seat. Occasionally, someone from the back would steer the conversation.

Ling Qingyu had no concerns about the people inside her Chevrolet Suburban. They were incapable of harming her.

Hidden weapons were out of the question, as her guards had already handled such matters.

There was no need for old-fashioned pat-downs when Athena's devices could scan through disguises effortlessly, no different from a portable X-ray scanner.

Ling Qingyu had no idea how the technology worked, but she wasn't too surprised by James Bond-like gadgets. Athena was better than Q in that regard.

The moment Spirit Fox operators stepped out of the Airbus before her, they had already scanned everyone and declared them safe.

Disguised weapons couldn't escape detection. Even the slightest trace of gunpowder scent could trigger an alarm.

In fact, the Spirit Fox operators didn't like Ling Qingyu riding alone. But since Xiao Yue hadn't objected, and Ling Qingyu seemed determined, no one pressed the issue.

After crossing the checkpoint, the convoy passed by beautifully decorated bungalows and hotels, designed to accommodate visitors to the hospital.

Only family members and close loved ones were allowed to stay in the hospital dorms. In truth, the dormitories were no different from five-star hotel rooms.

However, wealthy figures had vast networks of relationships, and to accommodate such needs, it was impossible to allow too many visitors to flood the hospital and disrupt its peaceful environment.

Thus, the hospital had hotels nearby to house them, keeping them separate from patients and their families.

Of course, these venues were built with entertainment in mind.

Rarely did visitors who arrived in private jets stay overnight or for several days, though exceptions always existed.

Most of the time, the hotels and theme parks filled with beautiful vegetation were void of visitors. Nonetheless, the decorations were beautiful and pleasing to the eye.

There were vast green areas, creating a spacious feeling for any visitors. The blend of man-made structures and nature always showcased the best beauty.

"Don't tell me your shopping mall sells well," Ling Qingyu remarked, pointing toward a group of four-story buildings.

From the labels, she understood that this retail area housed luxury goods and supermarkets. Parking spaces were available, but Ling Qingyu found it hard to imagine visitors owning cars here.

"Customers rarely enter, but the mall is meant more for our employees," Dean A explained.

Ling Qingyu nodded noncommittally. Whenever her eyes landed on a particular spot, Dean A and the other leaders behind her were quick to provide brief explanations.

The group passed restaurants, malls, a children's venue, and a residential area, likely built for the staff.

Wow, the treatment for employees wasn't bad—except that, due to their contracts, they had to stay on the island longer and couldn't move around freely.

Fortunately, entertainment facilities like a cinema, theme park, swimming pool, sauna, and children's playground were available.

The revenue earned from wealthy clients, combined with money circulation among the staff, would generate enormous wealth.

Thinking of this, Ling Qingyu asked in a dangerous tone, "STAR Hospital must earn a huge income. Where do you spend most of the surplus?"

Dean A straightened his spine and explained, "To ensure we maintain the quality of treatment over time, staff salaries are extravagant, and their benefits are immeasurable, guaranteeing their mental well-being remains at its best. The entertainment facilities serve as a money dumper to help alleviate stress and create a relaxed environment here."

"Miss Ling wouldn't want to abolish that, right?" Dean A asked nervously. He had long known that businesspeople prioritized profits and liked to cut costs to maximize earnings.

In the past, he could manipulate shareholders into providing benefits and better conditions for his subordinates through his influence.

But this time, Ling Qingyu was the sole owner of the hospital. No matter what she said, he had to comply.

Noting his reaction, Ling Qingyu understood and continued questioning the hospital's financial flow. Where the six leaders hesitated, she filled in the gaps.

Six people wiped cold sweat from their foreheads, silently lamenting their luck—and their foresight in not embezzling funds.

Was this an inquiry from the boss? No, this was clearly a test of their competence, skills, and responsibility.

Their future depended on Ling Qingyu's next decision. They couldn't afford to disappoint her, could they?

Athena: "..."

It turned out most of the income was indeed spent on salaries, but the entertainment facilities were running at a loss.

The surplus, squeezed out from the wealthy, was used to compensate for these losses.

Of course, the most costly sector was medical research. As a renowned elite hospital catering to the world's wealthiest, STAR Hospital had its own research base and teams.

With so many research directions—cancer treatment, AIDS, genetic therapeutic cloning, etc.—it was no wonder that millions were burned so easily.

The latter wasn't heavily pursued due to ethical concerns. However, Ling Qingyu had different ideas, unbound by traditional ethical values.

Despite its many advantages, what worried most people was that this research could be weaponized, posing a threat to human civilization.

Setting aside religious and moral theories, the research had to continue.

Soon, the convoy reached the hospital sector—a true medical zone, resembling a university campus.

The emergency area was rarely active unless a disaster occurred. There was a patient zone, surgery rooms, and individual buildings for each department.

Compared to the private hospitals Ling Qingyu was familiar with, STAR Hospital shone like a diamond among grains of sand.

As the group toured the hospital after a brief refreshment—eating and drinking—Ling Qingyu, her confidantes, and the six leaders roamed around.

From hospital wards, apartments, teaching labs, research labs, and offices to the university itself, no area was left unvisited.

Yes, despite having a small pool of students, the university only accepted the best of the best—those talented enough to earn the opportunity to study here under the guidance of great mentors.

Ling Qingyu had to endure the nonstop whining of Mo Yunxi and Yin Jingfei, who regretted missing the opportunity to study here and had to settle elsewhere.

She comforted them multiple times and made promises after reaching a deal with the deans. Only then did Mo Yunxi finally stop, hugging Ling Qingyu with a smile—her eyes hinting at success.

Ling Qingyu laughed and shook her head, allowing them to run around the hospital. Anyway, they didn't have a tight schedule, even though the plan was to stay on the island for no more than three hours.

Currently, she was standing atop the tallest building along with the six leaders, who had nothing to do. Her gaze hovered over the seaport.

A world cruise trip was held each season, bringing wealthy passengers. Checkups and emergency treatments were always on standby since the cruise ships had to pass through STAR Hospital as part of their navigation route.

Honestly, the island was no different from a small country.

Ling Qingyu shared her plans with the deans.

"My deans, I plan to build schools—from primary to secondary—for the families of our staff and the surrounding community."

"That's a great idea," the deans praised her with relief. Their boss wasn't solely focused on capital; she also had a sense of humanity.

"In addition, don't hesitate to invest in the welfare of our community. This will benefit both the patients and us," Ling Qingyu added. "For energy independence, I intend to build a tidal power system around the island."

Ling Qingyu described her vision one after another. She aspired for the island to possess its own independent network, relying less on external support.

Of course, in today's modern era, total independence was nearly impossible. Even now, food, drinks, and other supplies had to be transported in.

Nevertheless, Ling Qingyu's goal was to sever ties with the former owner as soon as possible. Elephant Continent was notorious for chaos, wars, and crises. The country that originally owned the islands could leverage its control to pressure her and siphon away its wealth.

As for military threats, Ling Qingyu merely scoffed—Elena provided the ultimate backing.

She had reined in her daughter to prevent the nation's complete downfall. But if they pushed too far, she wouldn't hesitate to release the rope.

This was why she intended to visit the head of state after arriving on the island.

Speaking of which, when Ling Qingyu mentioned her next plan, one of the women, Carlos, a manager, stepped forward, pursing her lips.

"Ms. Ling, you must be careful when you go there. I'm afraid they're prepared to bully you."

"Thank you for your warning, but I'll be just fine," Ling Qingyu said with a reassuring smile.

The group returned from the highest pillar, and Ling Qingyu dismissed her six followers, sending them back to their posts.

After all, while they might not be busy, she found their constant presence an eyesore, as if they were monitoring her every move.

Ling Qingyu grasped Carlos's shoulder and pulled her into a private room. Seeing her actions, her guards immediately understood and locked down the vicinity.

"Tell me, you have more to say than you acted, am I wrong?" Ling Qingyu wall-banged Carlos with an intimidation tactics and lifted her chin frivolously.

Chapter 668: Carlos asked for a favor

"Hmm, Ms. Ling," Carlos stuttered uncomfortably, her body pressed against the wall.

Well, Carlos wasn't restrained, but Ling Qingyu's momentum was too overwhelming. Even though the latter merely held her chin in a teasing manner, she couldn't move.

However, she didn't expect to be molested by her boss on the first day. Here she thought that since the boss was a woman, the risk of sexual harassment cases should decrease.

Instead, she became the first victim? It wasn't that STAR Hospital was entirely clean of filth. The second-generation heirs and shareholders still subtly abused their power.

For instance, although there wouldn't be direct suppression, some female doctors and nurses—perhaps even a few male employees—must have experienced the power of favoritism and coercion.

Who knew how many times their butts and sensitive areas had been groped when no one was paying attention? Nobody dared to complain. Since men made up the majority—if not nearly all—of the board, the number of affected women was significant.

Due to the large number of players involved, the shareholders showed restraint, aiming to preserve their reputations and avoid being exploited or kicked out of the roundtable.

So, the effect wasn't excessive. Or who knew whether there were silent victims?

Carlos had been excited when she heard Ling Qingyu was the sole owner.

Hmm, women teasing women should be okay, right? She had no idea.

While her thoughts were running wild, Ling Qingyu noticed that her teasing had the opposite effect of what she intended.

Ling Qingyu withdrew her hand and coughed. "Ahem, you were struggling to say something. You can confess to me now that we're alone."

Carlos wondered why Ling Qingyu's words sounded more misleading the more she spoke, almost making her forget her original thought.

"I thought I was about to be harassed?" Carlos blurted out her true thought, darkening Ling Qingyu's face.

She admitted that she wanted to tease this serious woman, who seemed to mingle among the elite. Yet, she had no lustful thoughts at all.

"How could you say that? Please don't misunderstand. I was using an intimidation technique to get words out of you since you appeared so reluctant."

Gaslighting at its finest.

Carlos rolled her sparkling eyes and took a deep breath. Since Ling Qingyu was her superior, she had the final say.

She took out a pair of refined spectacles and put them on. "Alright, Ms. Ling. Someone wants to hurt you."

"I know. Since I own this place, I expected this day to come," Ling Qingyu said, turning around. "Do you have any clues about potential threats?"

Even though Ling Qingyu scoffed at these threats, she had no intention of ignoring them. She was in the safest place the world could afford, but she still had to protect her close friends and loved ones.

Preemptive strikes were the most viable option to eliminate any threats in the cradle.

To her expectation, Carlos shook her head.

"I have no idea, but it's unlikely to be one of us," Carlos answered. "Of course, they won't act directly and might test the waters first."

Ling Qingyu understood what she meant. It was impossible for the former shareholders and stakeholders to attack her directly—they should have some apprehension.

After all, not just anyone could take away their wealth so easily, kick them out of the roundtable, and leave them with little time to react.

What kind of identity could do that to them? Unimaginable.

However, that didn't mean they held no resentment or had no ideas about stumbling the person responsible—aka Ling Qingyu.

More than likely, Ling Qingyu was targeted by their opposition. Though business interests remained paramount, factional disputes were inevitable, with conflicts arising from even the simplest daily affairs, unrelated to the corporations or industries underneath.

At the same time, these former shareholders preferred to watch the two titans fight and take advantage of the situation, which didn't surprise Ling Qingyu, nor did she condescend to their actions.

Perhaps they had the idea of testing Ling Qingyu's limits. Yes, everyone had investigated her background and found nothing that caught their attention—except for her extensive coverage of different sectors, though none had yielded significant benefits yet.

Not to mention, she had yet to expand internationally, apart from a hotel chain—Imperial Resort—in Phoenix Continent.

Everyone thought the same, including Carlos and her colleagues, until they witnessed Ling Qingyu firsthand and spoke with her closely.

Ling Qingyu exuded an unimaginable aura of mystery and strength—enough to make anyone struggle to breathe. Despite her humble and approachable demeanor, Carlos dared not underestimate the figure before her.

"So, you're worried about me. How touching," Ling Qingyu teased.

"I just don't want to find another job," Carlos sighed in response.

Ling Qingyu somehow had a strange feeling, as if she had found her match in conversation—excluding Tang Ziyi, Xiao Yue, and Yang Qingyue.

The former two relied on their fists to shut her up. The latter drained all her strength just to hurt her. Love prevailed in the end.

"Thank you for the heads-up," said Ling Qingyu. "That's not all you wanted to say, right?"

"Of course not," Carlos replied. "In fact, I suspect you might have already been tracked the moment you landed on this island."

"Really? That's interesting." Ling Qingyu stared into Carlos's eyes. The latter held her gaze for a moment before looking away.

"If you don't believe me—"

"No, I trust you, Carlos. Can I call you that?"

"Yes."

"I believe your every word because I sense your sincerity. You have something to ask from me." Ling Qingyu paused. "It's just that I'm baffled—with the tight in-and-out control, how could the hospital be infiltrated?"

"Every wall has its holes and vulnerabilities. Most of the time, the source comes from the inside, Ms. Ling. Although I can guarantee the six of us are genuine, I can't say the same for those under us."

"Honestly, I suspect the mercenaries hired for security might have facilitated it. However, I don't think they would crudely resort to assassinating me, right?"

"That should be their backup plan," Carlos added. "Ms. Ling, you should be careful on your trip ahead. They will test you using the country's government power."

"Fret not. The island and the surrounding ones belong entirely to me," Ling Qingyu said. "STAR Hospital won't face any policy or military interference—I can guarantee that, apart from logistical issues, which can be resolved by seeking alternative sources."

Her statement left Carlos stunned, her beautiful red lips slightly parted.

Ling Qingyu brought her fingertip to seal them and smiled.

"I hear your concern, but it won't be necessary. As long as you and your team manage the hospital well and abide by all laws—moral, ethical, and regulatory—you will have my full support."

"But—"

"Now, how would you like to be rewarded? Do you want my kiss?" Ling Qingyu giggled, breaking the tense atmosphere.

She understood Carlos's concern and already had a remedy for it—one that Elena would love.

Fortunately, in her plan, she had already intended to fly to the capital to discuss matters with the head of state, nipping the problem in the bud once and for all.

As for cases involving pirates and terrorism threats, Ling Qingyu would have only smiled with joy. It would be the perfect opportunity to provide her girls with overseas combat experience. Plus, her shipgirls had been growing bored lately.

Carlos sighed helplessly and gave up on arguing with her new boss's teasing.

Regardless, her boss now completely owned everything, including the surrounding island chain.

How terrifying was her background? Even the former shareholders lacked the capacity and capability to do what she did.

Although Carlos felt a little taken advantage of by Ling Qingyu, she now envied her luck in narrowing their relationship.

Ling Qingyu leaned against the table nearby, her lower back resting against the wooden rail. Frankly, she hadn't paid much attention to the room since entering.

They were now in some kind of resting area for the workers—two small, comfortable beds, a coffee machine, and a refrigerator.

There were no personal belongings; the space was simply meant for employees to take a break.

The reason Ling Qingyu spoke so confidently about confidential matters was the small jamming device she held.

Athena controlled it and had turned it on the moment their conversation began—without needing Ling Qingyu to say a word.

Meanwhile, Carlos didn't think much of it and assumed she could speak more freely in private. A gap in awareness between the two emerged, and Ling Qingyu liked that.

Carlos seemed accustomed to dealing with 'ordinary' people and was open about everything. Athena's background check had given her a green flag.

"Ms. Ling, in that case, since you've already settled everything, I may have overstepped," Carlos apologized.

"No need. I'm grateful you made up your mind to tell me, even if your approach was initially transactional."

"Forgive my rudeness. I really need a favor, and I don't know who else to turn to. When you said you were flying to the capital, my hope became you, Ms. Ling."

"Manager Carlos, you can say it, but I can't make any promises," Ling Qingyu said, crossing her legs.

"Hours ago, my nephew called me in a panic, asking for help. He stressed that I must not inform the embassy. I don't know what he did, but I can vouch for his morals and behavior."

"Do you have any idea what happened?"

"I don't know. He sounded so afraid, and now I can't reach him anymore."

"What's he doing there?"

"He's a journalist."

Ling Qingyu's expression froze.

It couldn't be what she suspected, right?

"Did he uncover something he shouldn't have?"

"I have no idea," Carlos admitted and her face paled as she noticed Ling Qingyu's reaction. She also realized her nephew might be in deep shit.

Chapter 669: Nephew's predicament

"Let me ask someone." Ling Qingyu took out her phone and pretended to text a message. Athena had already moved before she even asked for it.

The act was merely to confirm that Ling Qingyu wanted her daughter to investigate further.

Hopefully, things wouldn't develop as she predicted. There must be an extremely frightening reason why the man had attempted to go off the radar.

"I've asked someone I know there to help me find him, but I dare not allocate more resources after hearing his warning," Carlos bit her lip and replied.

She hadn't panicked too much when she first heard her nephew's cry for help. However, after hearing Ling Qingyu's conclusion, she was nearly frightened to death.

What face would she have left to face her sister if something went wrong with her child?

Her network and capabilities were useless in helping her nephew if the situation was as drastic as Ling Qingyu said.

Ling Qingyu wasn't optimistic about how things would unfold, but it didn't hurt to befriend a key figure among the six heads managing the hospital.

Even though she had the power to veto, hire, and remove anyone in a managerial position, her reputation would suffer if she behaved unscrupulously, and morale among the employees would surely plummet.

Unless absolutely necessary, she should never interfere in sectors like medicine, where the slightest mismanagement could cost her dearly.

Besides, she was truly satisfied with all the department heads after speaking with them closely. Making Carlos owe her a favor was better than planting her own faction, which would only arouse contempt and dissatisfaction.

Soon, Ling Qingyu received Athena's update. While adjusting her special glasses, she read and listened to Athena's presentation.

"I've found his phone's location. The last known signal was when he contacted his aunt in front of you, Mom. He threw it away.

"Smart choice, honestly—makes him harder to track, even for me. So, I have no idea where he is now. Surveillance cameras nearby showed that he boarded a bus, and from then on, we're in the dark.

"My guess? There's a 70 percent chance he's preparing to buy a flight ticket out of the country. As for why he didn't try a border crossing, where hiding his identity would be easier, I suspect he believes flying out is the safer option. That suggests the enemies he's running from have influence across the land, making escape to a neighboring country pointless.

"In addition, he must know exactly who he's dealing with—enough to be too scared to even contact the embassy. We have no idea what secrets he's holding, but he needs a trusted channel to unveil everything."

Who were his pursuers? Ling Qingyu rubbed her chin in deep thought.

As if aware of her question, Athena answered. "I hacked into all intelligence services and investigated. I found Country A's military intelligence units have his photo in a lower-level group."

Ling Qingyu took a deep breath as she realized the opponent she would face if she took action had just grown bigger.

Although the level chasing him was low, once her name entered the system, problems would definitely follow.

Even though Athena couldn't confirm that the culprits were from Country A's military—the world's current biggest superpower—Ling Qingyu had no doubts about her daughter's analytical abilities.

No kidding, if Athena fully utilized her power to analyze data, any identity's location would be triangulated within seconds before pinpointing the exact spot as more information became available.

Somehow, this boy had managed to dodge Athena's eyes, exposing her vulnerabilities once someone truly went off the grid.

However, nearby CCTV could still track him. But if the internet connection disappeared or the devices were limited to intranet use, Athena would be helpless.

"Athena, can't you track him through other people's phone cameras?" Ling Qingyu whispered, turning her face away to avoid exposure.

Though her voice was quiet, Athena's special glasses could capture the meaning. Moreover, she understood her mother's mindset deeply.

"Mom, I'm helpless here too," Athena's projection shrugged. "If this had happened in real-time, I could have done as you said, but it's been several hours. Now that I'm tracking him, I'll inform you if any online-connected device captures his face. But don't expect too much—the target is disguising himself to stay hidden."

"Let me know once you have a lead."

"Okay, Mom. My conjecture still stands—he's heading for the airport."

"Understood. I'll talk with Carlos."

Carlos waited patiently. She had heard Ling Qingyu whispering but simply assumed her boss was thinking out loud.

"Carlos." Ling Qingyu turned back around.

"Yes?"

"I'm afraid we have both bad news and good news. Which one do you want to hear first?"

Carlos frowned, displeased with her new boss's attitude. This wasn't the time to joke around. "Boss, please."

"Alright, don't worry. Your nephew is safe for now. The good news is that the military hasn't caught him yet."

"For now?" Carlos' breathing quickened.

"Yes. I don't know what he did, but the intel I just received confirms our conjecture—he's being pursued."

"By who?"

"It's not just a person—it's a group." Ling Qingyu paused with a bad taste in her mouth. "Country A's military."

"That's impossible," Carlos blurted out in disbelief. "My nephew would never commit a crime."

"Who said he did?" Ling Qingyu rolled her eyes. "What if he witnessed and recorded something he shouldn't have? Just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time."

"It's the military... There's no hope, right? Ms. Ling, do you have any connections?"

"I'm afraid not, Carlos." Ling Qingyu's refusal made Carlos's eyes dim. "But I'll try my best. We'll keep an eye on him once we arrive in the capital. If my guess is correct, he's making his way to the airport incognito."

"Thank you so much, Ms. Ling. I owe you a lot. I know my request isn't reasonable." Carlos sighed.

"Cheer up, Carlos. It's not the whole military—just a black-ops unit." Ling Qingyu reassured her. "Alright, I should leave quickly before our beautiful Carlos gets too stressed and starts growing white hairs."

Carlos blushed and instinctively raised her hand to hit Ling Qingyu, only to realize at the last second that teasing her boss like a playmate was inappropriate.

Wow, she hadn't expected herself to relax so suddenly in front of Ling Qingyu, without the slightest guard.

At least with Ling Qingyu's assurance, Carlos no longer felt as helpless as before. There was someone to rely on.

Yet, something about Ling Qingyu's words regarding her nephew unsettled Carlos. The speed at which her boss had obtained such rare information and the level of infiltration into a national intelligence agency...

She had thought she had overestimated Ling Qingyu's influence, but reality had just slapped her hard.

What kind of apparatus could gather intelligence as swiftly as Ling Qingyu had?

She suspected even the renowned Mossad, MI6, or CIA wouldn't have reacted as fast as her boss.

Was Ling Qingyu really just a simple businesswoman from Country Cas, as she appeared to be in public?

Ling Qingyu was preparing to depart from STAR Hospital soon; otherwise, she would be collecting her new subordinate's relative's corpse.

The calm field trip she had anticipated had taken a dramatic turn. If her premonition was correct, she would be greeted by a symphony of gunfire once her airbus landed in the capital.

Mo Yunxi and Yin Jingfei should stay behind and focus on their studies. After all, the two had been quite energetic since landing.

It wasn't safe for them to follow her on this next trip. She had already been reluctant to bring them along to meet the officials.

Now that she knew she might clash with special forces in the worst-case scenario, bringing Mo Yunxi and Yin Jingfei would only be a burden.

Well, forget it. In fact, if she thought about it carefully, traveling with her might actually be the safest option. Mo Yunxi and Yin Jingfei should decide for themselves.

—

Thousands of kilometers away...

Capital of Country C – Presidential House

Inside the office of the head of state, Gu Yi entered and sat on the carved mahogany sofa, following the president's gesture.

"My Minister, what brings you here at this hour?" the president asked.

"Mr. President, I'm sorry to interrupt your rest, but I must seek your attention," Gu Yi said politely. "We all know that infighting never benefits our country. Even if we can't stop it entirely, we can at least limit it."

"A little healthy competition is fine," the president tried to downplay the situation.

"If we want the public to question our credibility, we can ignore the mess. I don't really care because it's not me who will be affected."

The president's face darkened as he glared at the minister, trying to suppress her with his presence.

Gu Yi sneered, calmly lifted a teacup to her lips, and took a gentle sip. "Good tea. A slight bitterness is something most people avoid, missing the rare quality of enjoyment. Too much bitterness, however, will ruin the drink. Don't you think so, Sir?"

Chapter 670: Gu Yi's action

"Madam's words are intriguing. I'm just following the guidelines in the book."

Gu Yi set down the cup and leaned against the wooden frame with her elbow in a lazy posture. "Although there's a loss, it's acceptable if my opponent loses more—provided I'm rational. But unfortunately, I'm not, and that'll cost us everything."

"Are you threatening me?"

"Of course not. I'm simply informing you because I'm very protective of my shortcomings. They are the ones who dare to bleed and risk everything to save our civilians. How could we play them like pawns in our political fight? Leave them alone, and we'll both be happy."

"Madam, rules are rules. General Tang must be held accountable for proceeding with the mission without approval from the cabinet," the president said knowingly.

His words no longer irritated Gu Yi, who couldn't outright admit that she had authorized the mission despite having every right to do so. This left her opponents an opening to attack her.

The president and others knew General Tang was Gu Yi's confidant. Without her approval, why would the general dare to risk his career?

"Well then, since you insist the laws are sacred," Gu Yi said, tossing a stack of papers onto the table. "Let the law decide, then."

"What do you mean?"

"Please read first before we discuss," Gu Yi said, a hint of amusement in her eyes, causing the president to gulp unconsciously.

He was familiar with this expression. Whenever it appeared, someone was about to have a very bad day.

In fact, Gu Yi fully understood the behind-the-scenes maneuvering against General Tang. She had fended off multiple attacks, but the final blow came from the last mission—rescuing people from scammers—becoming the most vulnerable point.

The opposition wanted Gu Yi to ease the pressure on the Qin family's descendants and others affected by Tang Ziyi's and Xiao Yue's flamboyant operation.

A few days in prison, followed by the lawsuit quietly fading from public attention, was all they needed. With Gu Yi's nod, they would be released soon.

Unfortunately for them, she had promised her future daughter-in-law that there was nothing to worry about, and she was determined to keep them behind bars.

Not to mention, the Qin family were Ling Qingyu's enemies. Their feud wouldn't end unless one side was completely eliminated.

For far too long, Qin Group had acted with unchecked arrogance, controlling the government's narrative and exploiting the nation by leveraging their technological resources.

They monopolized key industries, citing their breakthroughs in chip technology, aerospace, and materials science.

Previously, Gu Yi might have reluctantly tolerated them for the sake of Country C's development.

However, after meeting Ling Qingyu, she realized Qin Group's arrogance was laughable in comparison. They couldn't even follow in her daughter-in-law's footsteps. Ling Qingyu only needed the right environment to thrive.

The technologies coming from her hands would stun the world. Gu Yi felt fortunate to have met her through Yang Qingyue.

For instance, while Qin Group's chip technology was still struggling in its reported progress, Ling Qingyu had already reached near mass production. Many other collaborations were in the pipeline.

"You—how on earth—" The president gripped the papers tightly, staring at Gu Yi with fear.

On the other hand, Gu Yi was delighted to see his rare moment of panic. After all, as fellow veterans in politics, they had long mastered the art of remaining calm—even if the world collapsed around them.

She silently thanked Ling Qingyu for her intelligence support. Athena's existence was god-like assistance. Too bad she could never poach her.

The documents she had delivered to the president contained enough secrets to shake Country C's political landscape if used correctly.

She was subtly reminding him of the leverage she held, and the president understood her meaning very clearly.

"What stays behind closed doors will remain so—as long as you approve the operation General Tang participated in, Mr. President," Gu Yi said.

"So, you want me to sign a document ordering General Tang to commence the covert operation across the border?" the president asked.

"Not you, Sir. Us," Gu Yi corrected. "Let's settle this peacefully. It's not worth throwing the entire government into chaos over a few bastards, am I right?"

The president gritted his teeth at Gu Yi's remark. Little bastards? This was a battle of prestige. If the Qin Group couldn't protect their own people, their once-dominant reputation would crumble.

In truth, the president dared not offend the woman before him. At the same time, he didn't want to interfere and risk angering the Qin Group and its affiliates. He was in a tight position.

People knew Gu Yi had led the operation long ago when the mission was a success, but no one dared to speak out about the individual's decision without higher-up approval.

One, her reputation was too high to be soiled by others. Two, she had a strong enough background to retaliate with thunderous means. Three, because the mission was a success, the consequences dissipated.

In addition, the timing was on Gu Yi's side. As months passed, General Tang's role in this operation became a weakness for them to exploit as leverage, and Gu Yi didn't plan to give an inch.

Gu Yi's delivery of evidence also carried another meaning. Since she could find it, there was certainly more. Using it to ensnare officials into her faction or eliminate them would be easy, given her power.

The president suspected this woman might have some strings on him as well, though she hadn't revealed them yet.

But once they broke off unhappily, he would lose wealth and reputation. Although, as the head of state, he had power, it wasn't enough to overwhelm others.

A committee stood in his way—six people who shared similar authority with him. What if Gu Yi managed to persuade them?

No—what if they were already hers? He was about to retire and didn't want to lose at the final step.

"Usually, I don't care about little favors, selling and buying people. It's fine to raise lovers, but they must not break others' happiness and families," the president said righteously. "We must uphold our laws firmly and show others there's no quarter."

"The president is mighty. Under your leadership, it won't be long before the corrupt environment is cleansed." Gu Yi returned the compliment with a high hat.

The president rolled his eyes and cursed inwardly at the shameless Minister of Justice. He had no choice.

If it wasn't him, there would be others jumping to approve Gu Yi's request. Who knew whether this old lady would hold a grudge?

None of the people she had issues with survived unscathed. Of course, Gu Yi was somewhat scrupulous when taking advantage of the momentum to eliminate dissidents and political enemies.

However, she didn't take it too far. At most, they lost their positions and were only released due to a lack of evidence—provided they were truly innocent.

Nonetheless, whoever rose to power was stained with blood and crimes, more often than not. The difference lay in the severity. For the former, Gu Yi was forgiving, delivering only a slap on the wrist.

No need to talk about the latter. So, in front of Gu Yi, Ling Qingyu seemed more like a little white flower. Their levels of ruthlessness and acceptance weren't the same.

Surely, this was the former Ling Qingyu—not the current one, who resorted to killing if someone posed even the slightest threat to her loved ones.

"I know it's burdensome for you, but it's in our best interest to weaken Qin Group's influence," said Gu Yi.

"You talk as if we can remove them easily," the president sneered.

"It's difficult, but not impossible. After all, birds will fly away once the tree is no longer safe or beneficial," Gu Yi clicked her tongue. "Sir, you should know, the industry these bastards left behind is enough to make anyone envious."

"I'm a public servant, not an official seeking benefits."

"That's why I'm confident working with you, President." Gu Yi smiled without the slightest pretense, having grown accustomed to the corrupt atmosphere.

It was her greatest will that she managed to stay sane and didn't harm the public because of power and greed.

"Haha, General Tang is a patriot. We must give due respect and admiration for her merits. We must not disappoint our heroes."

"My deepest gratitude for your consideration."

"Well then, Minister Gu, what's the next plan?"

"Simple. In the next few days, MSS will uncover evidence of tax evasion, bribery, and the trafficking of artists. We'll shut them down and provide the public with an explanation."

"Won't that antagonize the Qin Group?"

"Don't worry, Mr. President. I'll handle everything. I just need your authorization."

The president laughed while shaking his head. He knew Gu Yi would proceed even without his approval—seeking him out was merely a formality.

Gu Yi and the president exchanged respectful tea culture and said, "For justice and peace."

"For justice and peace."

The irony of justice and righteousness buried beneath the mingling of interests and economic benefits.