

DC: The Making of a God #Chapter 12: Maintain a High Posture - Read DC: The Making of a God Chapter 12: Maintain a High Posture

Chapter 12: Maintain a High Posture

Luke didn't return until most of the guests had left the side hall.

"How did the talk go?"

"Very well. About 90% completion."

Philip sighed. "I don't know if this is a good thing or a bad thing you're doing. The political arena is a huge quagmire; once you get stuck, it's hard to pull yourself out."

"It's precisely *because* it's a quagmire that the sapling can draw sufficient nutrients, and the company can have ample room to grow."

"That's true, but you chose the wrong person. **Donald** is a businessman, not a politician. The chances of him moving into the White House are extremely low."

"Who told you a businessman can't be president? Just wait and see. That guy is going to surprise everyone."

Philip chuckled and shook his head, clearly unconvinced.

Emily walked over. "What were you two talking about?"

"The future President of the United States. Emily, do you support Donald moving into the White House?"

"I don't support him. I support **Hillary**."

"Why?"

"Because Hillary is a woman."

Luke paused. "You have a point."

The Bait and the Bankers

As the elegant music started, it was time for the dance.

All sorts of men and women entered the ballroom, enjoying the delights of high society.

Luke led Emily onto the floor. After two rounds of ballroom dancing, they returned to the lounge. **Robert Downs** was waiting there. When he saw the stunning purple-haired girl in her formal attire, a flicker of admiration crossed his eyes before he quickly regained his composure.

"Boss, the bank people have arrived. They're in the conference room on the second floor."

Luke nodded. "Proceed with the plan."

"Understood."

Robert nodded to the girl and left.

As an FBI agent, Emily was never short on curiosity.

"What plan are you talking about?"

"The fundraising matter."

"Fundraising?" Emily was surprised. "Is ShowMe running low on money?"

"No."

"Why raise funds if you're not short on money?"

"Some things aren't up to you to decide."

Luke took a sip of champagne, saying calmly, "It's like when you're ravenously hungry, and you see a big, fragrant grilled lamb chop hanging in a roadside window. You know it belongs to someone else, but you can't resist the urge to eat it."

"Right now, **ShowMe is that lamb chop**. Some people want to take a bite of the fat meat to satisfy their craving, and others want to swallow it whole—meat and bone."

"It can't be that bad! Your company has only been around for a few days."

"The value of an internet company is not in its age, but in its future. Do you know how many users ShowMe has?"

Emily hesitated. "Eight million?"

Luke smiled and shook his head. "That's a vague, inflated number for show. The actual user base is **5.2 million**, with about **4.8 million** daily active users. That's the result of the first two months. Think about it: how many users will ShowMe have in a year?"

Five million in two months means over thirty million in a year, and double that in two years...

Emily's breathing quickened.

Luke continued,

"There's a famous quote in *Das Kapital*:

'With adequate profit, capital becomes very bold. A certain **10 percent** will ensure its employment anywhere; **20 percent** will bring it eagerness; **50 percent** will cause positive audacity; **100 percent** will make it ready to trample on all human laws; **300 percent**

will breed every crime, and devils are born.'

"ShowMe is currently valued at about eighty million. In a year, it could reach two billion. That's a 250-fold profit. Who wouldn't be tempted?"

"Then aren't you very dangerous?"

"Not really dangerous."

Luke waved his hand dismissively. If any blind fool tried to cause him trouble, he wouldn't mind showing them what **Phantom Fire** was.

"By the way, I need your help with something."

Luke called Emily closer and whispered instructions in her ear. She shook her head repeatedly at whatever he said.

"No way, I'm not playing the role of a maid."

"It's just acting!"

"I won't even act."

Luke stared at her, pleading, "Just this once."

Emily was speechless. After a long pause, she reluctantly nodded.

Luke smugly raised his eyebrows.

The first time is the hardest. Once you have a first time, you'll have a second, and after that, countless times.

Little girl, you wore my clothes, and now you want to run?

Playing Hard to Get

In the easternmost conference room on the second floor of the Hilton Hotel, the managers from various banks sat around aimlessly. Some were smoking, some drinking, and some resting their eyes. They had been in this state for a long time, and the main player was nowhere to be seen.

Bob Jack of Citibank looked at his watch and said with displeasure,

"It's been half an hour. Is he coming or not? Don't waste our time."

Robert quickly apologized. "Hold on, just a moment. The boss will be here shortly."

Regan Conner of Chase Bank sneered,

"I heard the founder of ShowMe is a seventeen-year-old kid. Robert, you've really hit rock bottom, working for a kid."

Robert offered a forced smile.

"It doesn't matter who you work for. The important thing is whether the boss has the ability."

The person next to him chimed in,

"So, your boss is very capable?"

"Naturally. Otherwise, you wouldn't all be waiting for him for half an hour."

Bob Jack took a drag from his cigar and said flatly,

"We're sitting here purely out of courtesy."

"I understand. I get it."

Robert maintained his smile the entire time, but a hint of coldness flashed in the depths of his eyes.

A few more minutes passed, and the conference room door finally opened. A dazzling **Emily** walked in, went straight to the main seat, and sat down. Suppressing her inner restlessness, she said,

"The young master had a sudden commitment and sent me to talk to you. You can tell me any requests you have, and I will relay them to the young master."

At her words, the conference room instantly erupted.

The bank managers were furious. They had waited patiently for dozens of minutes, only to be greeted by a messenger. Who did that kid think he was? Hitler?

Bob Jack angrily put out his cigar in the ashtray, his face dark.

"Where is Luke Shaw? I demand to see him."

Emily glanced at him and said with indifference,

"The young master said: If you want shares in ShowMe, sit down and talk to me. If you don't want any, you may leave now."

Bob was rebuffed, and his already bad temper instantly blew up. Without another word, he stood up and walked out.

Emily didn't try to stop him. She looked around at the others.

"You are all welcome to leave, too."

The remaining managers looked at each other, their eyes shifting, but **none of them left**.

Seeing their reaction, Emily couldn't help but recall what Luke had instructed on the way: *The people in that conference room are a pack of untamed hounds. If you are cautious, they'll bare their teeth. If you brandish the whip, they'll become subservient. Maintain a high posture, and the hounds will yield to you.*

That statement was perfectly accurate. Suddenly, Emily's confidence surged, and her voice became more assertive.

"We can talk now."

"Who wants to go first?"

Robert cleared his throat and placed a draft contract on the table.

"This is Chase Bank's acquisition plan."

Emily flipped to the last two pages of the contract, glanced at them, and casually tossed the document into the trash can.

"Next."

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Chapter 13: The Value of a Woman!

The moment the contract dropped into the trash can, **Regan Conner** felt like he'd been slapped, his right cheek burning. Anger accumulated in his chest, but he forcibly swallowed it down.

Damn Luke Shaw! Damn ShowMe!

Emily haughtily glanced at him.

"The young master said that anyone who mentions acquisition will be kicked out. Since you were the first, I won't hold it against you."

"Does anyone else have a contract? Bring it out."

The managers exchanged puzzled looks, and for a moment, no one spoke. Business is typically about mutual exchange and polite discussion, but they had run into someone who refused to play by the rules and immediately threw down the gauntlet.

They realized the other party had no intention of negotiating on their terms. With this in mind, they turned their attention to the organizer of the meeting—**Robert Downs**.

Robert's head was spinning. The plan was originally for Luke to play the bad cop and him the good cop, working together to give the major banks a firm warning so they wouldn't underestimate ShowMe's strength.

Instead, a purple-haired beauty had shown up and completely bewildered everyone with her aggressive posture. However, judging by the result, things seemed to be going well.

Robert cleared his throat. "What are the boss's requirements?"

"A ceiling of **20% shares** and a floor of **30 million US dollars** in funding. If you can't meet that, there's no need to talk."

Brent Quincy, the manager of Wells Fargo Bank, frowned. "Miss, the numbers you are quoting are far too excessive. According to the latest market research reports, your company's valuation is less than eighty million US dollars. If we agree to your terms, we would essentially be paying double the commission."

"Double is already cheap. The young master is aiming for **five times**."

"Such arrogance!"

Regan Conner, twitching his neat mustache, said coldly, "A company that hasn't earned a single cent wants a valuation of four hundred million? What a joke."

Emily said expressionlessly,

"I will relay that comment to the boss."

"Suit yourself!"

Regan Conner smirked dismissively. A seventeen-year-old kid was not worth paying attention to.

The only woman present, **Wendy Bronwen**, Financial Director of Queen Investment, spoke gently.

"May I know your name?"

Emily turned around. Seeing a white-haired, elegant lady speaking, she quickly replied,

"Hello, my name is **Emily Song**."

"Hello, Emily. I am Wendy Bronwen, Financial Director of Queen Investment. You may call me Mrs. Bronwen. I have a question: When does your company plan to start being profitable? What are the specific measures? Do you have a contingency plan?"

"I apologize, Madam. I am not privy to those details. The young master only told me that he won't consider profitability until the total user count reaches **twenty million**."

Twenty million!

Hearing that number, everyone was shaken.

Mrs. Bronwen smiled.

"The total population of the fifty states in the US is only two hundred and fifty million. That means to meet that standard, one out of every ten Americans would have to be a ShowMe user..." She paused deliberately.

"I'm not doubting your company's ability, but the number you mentioned is simply shocking. Even if you manage to achieve it, how long will it take? Five years? Or ten? Investing is about returns, and we can't wait ten years."

This question was sharp and hit the nail on the head. The reason ShowMe, with millions of users, was only valued at eighty million was its **lack of profit**.

No matter how excellent, promising, or future-oriented a company is, if it can't make a profit, it's all meaningless.

Emily chuckled lightly.

"The timeframe the Madam mentioned is too long. It won't take five years, nor ten. It will only take **five months** for ShowMe's user base to reach twenty million."

Five months?

Everyone shook their heads, completely disbelieving her.

Emily continued, "This is what the young master told me. You don't know the young master's capabilities. He is most adept at creating miracles. Look at ShowMe: not long ago, it was a newly registered small company. Now, it's an industry leader with eight million users. It took two months to go from zero to eight million. How long will it take to go from eight to twenty million?"

Silence fell over the conference room once again.

Everyone was deep in thought. **Wendy Bronwen's** eyes showed a look of approval.

Neither servile nor overbearing, composed and steady. This girl is very impressive.

Luke's Calculation and a Newcomer

In the brilliantly lit main hall, Luke leaned back on a sofa, drinking wine and enjoying a Broadway song and dance performance.

Charlie rushed over frantically, his voice urgent.

"It's bad, boss! Something's happened."

"What is it?"

Charlie glanced around and whispered,

"The bank just called. Eleven thousand dollars is missing from the account."

"Oh, that's what this is about." Luke pushed him aside. "Don't bother looking for it. I spent the money."

"But that's eleven thousand dollars! How did you spend it?"

"I bought a dress, a pair of bracelets, a pair of high-heeled boots, a pendant, and a pair of earrings. That's how it's gone."

Charlie realized what he meant and hesitated.

"The purple-haired girl."

"Exactly, her." Luke raised his eyebrows proudly. "What do you think? Pretty, right?"

Charlie's face was strained. "Is this really the time to be focused on chasing women? Even if you are, you shouldn't be pursuing her! Have you forgotten? She's FBI, an agent under **Roger Consius**."

"Of course I know she's FBI. I also know she's here tonight specifically to get close to me."

"Then why are you still..."

Luke sighed, frustrated.

"Charlie, you're only twenty-four. Why are you acting like a fussy old woman? Whether she's a spy or not is irrelevant. The key is her **inherent value**."

Charlie grew more confused.

"What value? She's just a twenty-year-old girl. Besides being pretty, what value could she possibly have?"

Luke instantly lost interest in the conversation. Charlie was good in every way—loyal, reliable, never fought back, never complained, hardworking, and never grumbled—but his only issue was his intelligence. He was missing a screw somewhere; nothing could fix it.

"Alright, alright, stop bothering me here. Go upstairs and check on the meeting. Bring the person down after it's over."

"Okay!"

Charlie answered and left.

As soon as he left, the dance performance ended. Bored, Luke stretched out on the sofa, lying flat, contemplating ShowMe's future development.

The first phase goal had been achieved; next was all-around expansion.

The video and picture sections had a lot of potential. The '**Black Coffin Dance**' concept should also be put on the agenda. Of course, the most important thing was the superheroes. Superheroes meant hype. To develop rapidly, he needed their endorsement.

Just as he was thinking, a scent of fresh perfume wafted over his nose.

"Luke Shaw?"

Luke stared blankly at the sudden appearance of a young woman. She looked about seventeen or eighteen, blonde and blue-eyed, with a great figure—especially her substantial chest, which looked heavy and clearly a rare specimen.

"You are..."

"I'm **Ivanka Trump**. Donald Trump is my father."

"Oh!!!! I see."

Luke suddenly understood. He looked her up and down and complimented her.

"You are truly beautiful, like a world-class supermodel."

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Chapter 14: Bluffing! Keep Bluffing!

Over a dozen years since his rebirth, Luke had gained a deep understanding of the differences in aesthetic taste between China and the West.

In China, what's considered handsome? Simply put, looking somewhat feminine. As long as you have a face that makes other guys look away, you can win over a large number of female fans.

It's different in America. If you dare to look like that, believe me, it won't be long before a group of muscular men drag you into an alley.

The rest of the story doesn't need describing.

That pain—those who know, know. Those who don't, only dare to imagine it in the dead of night, while swearing they'd spit in the face of anyone who tried to pull that on them.

To prevent his handsome face from becoming a target for gay men's fantasies, Luke decided long ago to go down the path of the scoundrel and never look back.

The Journalist's Trap

Perhaps due to her family background, **Ivanka** was not as flamboyant as girls her age; rather, she was a bit reserved. Facing Luke's praise, she simply said flatly, "**Thank you for the compliment.**"

Her voice was calm and gentle, maintaining proper etiquette without seeming overly enthusiastic.

As expected of an elite trained by a powerful family, she's definitely not ordinary, Luke thought, nodding inwardly. "May I call you Ivanka?"

"Of course."

"Alright, beautiful Miss Ivanka, thank you for bringing some excitement to my dull evening. However, I have a few important guests shortly..." He glanced at his wrist. "I have ten minutes left."

Ivanka smiled. "May I borrow those ten minutes?"

"I never refuse a lady's request, especially one from such an outstanding peer like yourself."

"Thank you very much."

Ivanka gathered her long dress and sat on the sofa. She opened her LV bag and took out a prepared note card.

Luke's keen eyes immediately spotted the **Ingric** logo on the top right corner of the card. As one of Metropolis's famous publishing houses, Ingric had many best-selling publications, especially *Ingric Weekly*, which focused on successful people under the age of 25 and had high sales.

He had thought she was approaching him out of admiration for his unparalleled looks, but it turned out she was a **reporter**.

Luke was slightly disappointed, but then quickly became excited.

Ivanka Trump was different from the girls he had met before. She was talented, beautiful, proud, and self-assured. Despite her young age, her mind was mature, as evidenced by her mentioning her father right at the start.

Undoubtedly, she was one of the most challenging types to win over. Clothes and jewelry meant little to her; sweet talk had been heard ad nauseam; and handsome faces were common... To successfully conquer her, he had to take a different approach.

Luke lowered his head in thought and quickly came up with an idea. He smiled.

"Miss Trump, don't speak yet. Let me guess what questions you are going to ask."

Ivanka looked at him strangely. "Are you sure?"

"Why not?"

Luke spread his hands. "Do you really want to do a question-and-answer session like a police interrogation? Come on, I'm not your prisoner, and you're not my captor. Let's not do anything so boring. As young people, why don't we try something new?"

"Alright."

Ivanka closed her note card. "I hope your guess is accurate."

"Naturally. I have never lost since I was a child."

Luke smiled faintly, raising his eyebrows, his powerful confidence effortlessly emerging.

"You have a dozen cards in your hand. It's impossible to guess them all, but I know you definitely plan to ask three questions." He raised his index finger.

"First: Are you really only seventeen years old?"

A hint of surprise flashed across Ivanka's face, but she quickly calmed down.

"And the second?"

"Why didn't you go to university and chose to start a business instead?"

Ivanka, unwilling to concede, continued,

"And the third?"

"Why did you create ShowMe, and what does ShowMe mean to you?"

After he spoke, he smiled at her astonished expression.

"Was I right?"

The girl was speechless. After a moment, she forced a retort.

"I don't know if you peeked at my cards, but..."

"But what?"

Luke interrupted her, his eyes blazing.

"You don't want to admit it, or are you secretly resentful? In your eyes, I see not only confusion but also scrutiny and suspicion. You think I'm just a puppet propped up by family wealth and that I'm nothing special, right?"

Ivanka was dumbfounded. Did he have mind-reading abilities? How did he know her inner thoughts?

Luke folded his arms across his chest and said proudly,

"You are probably thinking right now about why I guessed your thoughts. It's because you are fundamentally ordinary. The level of those three questions is very low; any reporter would think of them, yet you felt the need to write them down on a card."

"Stuck in a rut, adhering to convention, a pretty doll manufactured by a machine. That's the first impression you gave me. Take what just happened: if it were me, I absolutely wouldn't have said, 'Luke Shaw, can I ask you a few questions?' That stiff opening line is no different from clothes produced by ZARA. I would prefer to hear: *'Young sir, why are you sitting here? Are you waiting for a beautiful chance encounter?'*"

Luke shrugged. "That's an interesting opening. But you're completely incapable of it."

Ivanka Trump was stunned. She sat there motionless for a long time, unable to recover. Words like *adhering to convention*, *stuck in a rut*, and *doll* hammered into her brain like a pitchfork wielded by a little devil.

Am I really that kind of person?

Ivanka asked herself, a trace of confusion in her eyes.

Luke continued,

"I stopped going to school when I was fifteen. Why? Simple. I didn't want to go to the same place every day, deal with silly classmates, and read useless textbooks. The thought of that terrifying, day-in, day-out life was despairing. So, I dropped out, started studying electronics, left home at seventeen, came to the far-off Metropolis, and founded a company that is changing the world."

"That was my choice: a future full of infinite possibilities. What about you? **Where is your future?**"

"I..."

Ivanka was completely lost. Her mind was a mess, and she didn't know how to answer. Her father had always taught her to plan her future, and for this, she had written a two-page life plan:

High school, university, joining her father's company, working hard, proving herself, becoming president, taking over the family business, becoming an admired businesswoman... That future was perfect, but compared to Luke's, it seemed insignificant, like dirt beneath the stars.

Luke stood up and offered his hand.

"Beautiful Ivanka, may I have this dance?"

Ivanka subconsciously nodded. Before she could fully process it, Luke pulled her onto the dance floor.

The two stood close, swaying gently to the music.

Luke lowered his voice. "**Don't take what I said just now seriously.**"

"What?"

"Everyone has their own future. You have yours, and I have mine. There's no need to repeat someone else's life."

"But..."

Luke raised his index finger and gently shook it.

"You're a smart girl. Don't get stuck in a dead end. If you feel confused, why not change the subject? For example, guess: **What is the handsome guy dancing with you thinking right now?**"

Ivanka froze, her expression instantly becoming strange.

The boy's hand on her waist was getting a little too familiar, and his eyes kept darting toward her chest.

A blush crept onto her beautiful face. In her mental confusion, her thoughts became tangled.

"You... you want to pursue me?"

"No."

Luke shook his head. "I just want **one kiss!**"

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Chapter 15: Revenge

The dance ended, and Luke walked away completely satisfied.

Ivanka stood there in a daze, reaching up to touch her lips. In that instant, she understood everything.

I think, perhaps, that guy took advantage of me.

"That hateful **Luke Shaw!** How dare he manipulate me with words!"

Ivanka cursed angrily, but as she cursed, she burst into laughter.

He's quite interesting.

Disappearing Act

The kiss with the young woman was something to savor. Feeling pleased, Luke actually hummed a tune as he returned to the main hall, where he ran into Charlie and Robert.

"Where's Emily? I don't see her."

Charlie looked at his boss with an extremely complicated gaze, a mixture of envy, jealousy, and resentment.

"Speak up! Where did Emily go?"

Robert answered, "She went home."

"Home?"

A hundred question marks popped up in Luke's mind. "Who allowed her to go home?"

Charlie curled his lip, half-mocking and half-helpless. "When she came downstairs just now, you were embracing and kissing the girl in the white dress. She saw it, and then she left. And here's this..." He pulled out the amethyst pendant and the crescent earrings from his pocket.

"She asked me to give these back to you."

Luke: "..."

He had a feeling of being caught in the act. Fortunately, his skin was thick enough; he brushed it off with a cough.

"Let her go, then. How did the meeting go?"

"Miss Emily performed superbly. She successfully intimidated the major banks and even connected with **Wendy Bronwen** from Queen Investment. Mrs. Bronwen was very impressed with her and invited Miss Emily to dinner."

"Is that so?"

Luke was slightly surprised. Choosing that girl was just a spur-of-the-moment decision; he had no other motives. As for the meeting, truthfully, whether it succeeded or failed made absolutely no difference.

"Since the first phase of the plan succeeded, the fundraising proposal should be put on the agenda. Robert, it's in your hands."

"I won't let you down."

Luke patted his shoulder, smiling.

"Don't be so serious. Work is work, and life is life. Have fun tonight. All expenses are on my tab."

Robert declined. "No need, boss. The proposal isn't finished yet. I need to go back and revise it."

"Alright then, see you tomorrow."

Luke didn't force him, watching him leave the hall until his tall, thin figure disappeared into the crowd. He then turned back, his brows slightly furrowed, and a flicker of a strange emotion passed through his pale-green eyes.

Charlie asked curiously, "What are you thinking about?"

Luke ordered a glass of red wine and spoke as he drank, "How has Robert been performing at the company?"

"He's great!"

"In what way?"

"Hardworking, diligent, never complains. He organized the finance department perfectly just a few days after arriving."

"Is that all?"

Charlie looked confused. "Isn't that enough?"

Luke pinched the bridge of his nose. He really wanted to kick this dimwit back to Coast City. He honestly didn't know what they were teaching at the University of Southern California to let him graduate. Did the old man bribe the Chancellor's office?

As soon as the financing matter is settled, I absolutely need to find a smart and beautiful assistant—someone who can handle high society, cook, write code, and fight off thugs, like Natasha Romanoff.

As for this guy, he could just go drive.

"Has he made any friends at the company?" Luke asked again.

Charlie thought back, then shook his head.

"Robert doesn't talk much. He goes straight home after work every day. I haven't heard of him attending any colleague gatherings. By the way, why are you asking this? Are you suspecting him?"

Luke didn't answer. He sat on the sofa, lost in thought. After a moment, he called Charlie over and whispered instructions to him. Whatever he said, Charlie's face turned bitter, full of reluctance.

"Why do I have to go? I'm not going."

"Should I go instead?"

"I don't even know him!"

Luke reached into his pocket and took out a copper token inscribed with ancient Chinese characters, tossing it to Charlie. "Show him this, and he'll know you."

"But..."

Luke snapped, "I'm not asking you to commit murder or arson. It's just a meeting. What? Are you unwilling?"

"Fi-fine."

Charlie sighed and left with the copper token.

A Knock in the Night

It was eleven o'clock at night in a run-down building in Queens.

A drunken Robert lay on the sofa, staring listlessly at the night view outside the window.

His head was dizzy and uncontrollable, and his thoughts began to wander. Many memories he wished to suppress resurfaced.

Carmine Falcone!

The name made Robert instinctively tremble. He hugged his shoulders, shivering uncontrollably. His eyes were wide with resentment and unconcealed fear deep in his pupils.

He hated that man; he wished he could cut him into a thousand pieces.

The business he had worked hard for years to build, his promising future, and his beautiful girlfriend—all gone, simply because of a small financial dispute. Robert had become a sacrifice used by Falcone to establish his authority.

He was thrown into the sewers like a stray dog, eating moldy food and drinking foul water, living like a zombie.

Many times, Robert had imagined wrapping his body in dynamite and dying with Falcone.

Unfortunately, he lacked the courage. He was terrified of death; he preferred to live, even as a stray dog.

He smoked cigarette after cigarette, the smoke filling the room. Robert hid within the haze, like a viper waiting to strike.

To get revenge, he first needed money—lots of money. Three million was far from enough. Multiply that by ten, and it would be closer.

Thirty million dollars was no small sum!

"What should I do?"

Robert exhaled a puff of smoke, his eyes becoming clouded. A dangerous thought briefly surfaced in his mind, but he quickly dismissed it.

Luke Shaw had been good to him. Robert truly didn't want to betray him unless it was absolutely necessary.

Just as he was thinking, there was a loud knock on the door behind him.

Robert immediately snapped awake. He grabbed the handgun hidden under the sofa and cautiously looked at the door.

"Who is it? Who's knocking?"

"It's me, **Warren Austin**, your old friend."

Warren?

A figure came to mind—a former colleague and friend from his time at Wells Fargo. After Robert resigned to develop his career in Gotham, they had lost touch.

"How did you know I live here?"

"Can you open the door first? You can't expect me to talk to a steel door, can you?"

"Wait a minute."

Robert padded softly to the door and peered through the peephole. Seeing no one other than Warren, he unlatched the deadbolt and opened the door.

Warren opened his arms and smiled.

"Long time no see, old friend. How are you?"

Robert nodded blankly. He glanced outside and his face instantly changed when he spotted a man in a dark suit standing near the wall.

"Who is he?"

"Don't be nervous. We mean no harm."

Warren waved his hand, smiling, then gestured to the burly white man in the dark suit wearing gold-rimmed glasses.

"This is **Thomas Elliot**, the heir to the Elliot family. You've probably heard of him. He wants to talk business with you."

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Chapter 16: An Offer from the Elliots?

Elliot!

The founders of Gotham City, a powerful family dynasty stretching back a hundred years, an object of reverence for countless people...

There was so much to say about their story.

Robert had never dreamed that the heir to the Elliot family would seek him out.

Warren nudged him with his elbow.

"Well, aren't you going to invite us in!"

Robert snapped out of his shock and quickly extended his right hand.

"Hello, Mr. Elliot!"

Thomas Elliot didn't even look at him, walking straight into the house.

Robert's face froze for a second. He turned around as if nothing had happened and followed him.

"Mr. Elliot, may I ask why you are looking for me?"

As an honor graduate of Harvard Medical School, Thomas strictly adhered to his graduation oath: no smoking, no drinking, no drugs, maintaining a proper lifestyle, and never touching anything dirty.

Consequently, the moment he stepped into the room, his body registered intense rejection. He was highly uncomfortable with the air thick with the smell of smoke and alcohol, as well as the furniture and carpet covered in grime.

Since he disliked it, there was no need to stay. Thomas merely left a command: "**We'll talk on the roof**

," and turned to leave.

The atmosphere instantly became incredibly awkward.

Robert stood there motionless, his face dark enough to drip water.

Warren quickly apologized, placating his old friend while pulling him outside.

A Cold Offer

When they reached the roof, Thomas was standing right on the edge of the wall. One step forward was a precipitous drop, yet he paced back and forth carelessly. His black suit rustled loudly in the night wind, making him look as if he were about to float away.

"I've reviewed your personal file. You have a deep feud with **Falcone**. Coincidentally, I dislike that arrogant man who calls himself a Roman. Do one thing for me, and I'll give you a chance at revenge."

Robert said coldly, "I'm sorry, Mr. Elliot, but I'm afraid you'll be disappointed. My feud with Falcone is in the past. All I want now is to start over."

"Is that so?"

Thomas smiled faintly, pulling a stack of photos from his coat and tossing them at Robert's feet. The photos showed a young woman with a beautiful face, chained to a wooden stake, her body covered in scars.

Despite the dim lighting, Robert recognized the woman. Memories buried deep inside resurfaced. His somewhat handsome face instantly contorted, and his body trembled, his eyes flickering with deep, unconcealed hatred.

"Some hatreds never disappear. They only grow stronger with time."

Thomas stepped down from the edge of the wall and said expressionlessly, "Falcone's men are everywhere in Gotham. He's always surrounded by a dozen bodyguards when he goes out, and he has high-ranking political officials acting as his shield. How can you possibly kill him? By strapping yourself with explosives for a joint suicide? Do you have the courage for that?"

Thomas leaned closer and whispered in his ear,

"Without my help, you will never get your revenge."

The statement was like a searing steel needle, piercing deep into Robert's heart. After a long period of silence, he finally roared,

"I don't trust you."

"You can only trust me."

Robert lowered his head without a word. There was no such thing as a free lunch. The other party certainly wanted something, and after thinking it over, it could only be **ShowMe**.

Seeing his old friend remain silent, Warren quickly urged him,

"Mr. Elliot is a trustworthy man. He never goes back on his word. I can stake my life on that. Besides, who else in this world can help you get revenge besides Elliot? Are you counting on your young boss? What can he do besides chase women?"

"We aren't asking you to betray him. We just need you to leak some inside information and **take one step back at a critical moment.**"

With that, Warren took out a check and placed it on the ground. The check had the number 5 followed by six zeroes.

Five million dollars!

Robert gasped, looking at his old friend with complex emotions.

"This is the deposit. After the job is done, there will be another check for the same amount. Furthermore, the position of **CFO of Sequoia Group** is yours."

Sequoia Group?

Robert's heart stirred. He seemed to understand something. Eight years ago, Sequoia Group went through a major equity change when CEO Lambert Kahn sold all his shares to a mysterious wealthy investor.

Since then, Sequoia Group had been completely revitalized, becoming an internet industry giant in just a few years.

Could that mysterious wealthy investor be the Elliot family?

"I won't keep it a secret. The real owner of Sequoia Group is Mr. Elliot, right here. Following him is better than following your current boss."

Robert still chose silence. Warren wanted to continue persuading him, but he saw his boss shake his head and closed his mouth, standing to the side.

Time passed slowly in the strange atmosphere.

Half a minute later, Robert looked up and said, one word at a time,

"With the deep financial resources of the Elliot family, acquiring ShowMe shouldn't be difficult. **Why do you need me?**"

"That's a question you should ask your young boss. Why is he so stubbornly unwilling to sell his shares."

Thomas grimaced, recalling the events of the past few days.

"Three days ago, I offered to acquire ShowMe for **100 million dollars** in the name of the Sequoia Group, and he hung up the phone without hesitation. Subsequently, the offer was raised to **150 million dollars**, yet still no result. This is only the second time in over twenty years that I have been continuously rejected."

"The day before yesterday, I commissioned one of my subsidiary companies to submit a financing proposal to ShowMe, hoping to purchase fifty percent of ShowMe's shares for eighty million dollars."

Thomas curled the corner of his lip, his eyes showing a trace of a strange emotion.

"Guess how that turned out?"

Robert wasn't a fool; he dared not answer. After a long silence, he said bitterly, "I don't understand. ShowMe is just a social networking company that offers a free service. Its appreciation potential is limited. Why are you putting so much effort into acquiring it?"

"I don't want ShowMe; I want its **database**."

"Database?"

Robert frowned, unable to comprehend.

The names and phone numbers recorded in the database could be found through other channels. They weren't very useful!

"You have three minutes to consider. After three minutes, I expect a definitive answer."

With that, Thomas turned and left, quickly disappearing into the stairwell.

Warren patted his old friend on the shoulder and followed him out.

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Chapter 17: Who's Stronger, Who's Weaker

The first phase of the financing plan was even more successful than expected.

Early the next morning, Luke received private calls from the **President of Chase Bank**, the **General Manager of Wells Fargo**, and the **CEO of Queen Investment**. All three showed immense interest, repeatedly asking about the company's future plans, especially concerning business operations. It was clear they were very worried about the profitability of a social networking company.

ShowMe started as a free service. Free products always grab attention, but if they were to forcibly change the existing model mid-way—adding paid services like memberships and privileges—it could easily lead to a mass exodus of existing users.

Luke didn't offer a lengthy explanation for their concerns, simply presenting a few creative ideas he had for monetization.

After the calls ended, Luke stepped out of his office and instructed Charlie, who was waiting by the door.

"Tell Robert to come to my office."

"He hasn't come to work."

"It's 9:30, and he's not here?"

Charlie shrugged, indicating he didn't know why.

"Have **Cindy** come see me, and call Robert."

The Internal Competition

When Cindy walked into the office, Luke was finishing a call with the Vice President of Citibank. Seeing this, she quietly sat on the sofa, her right hand gripping a folder, looking somewhat tense.

She had heard about the company's planned financing, but as the Accounting Manager, she was completely sidelined, feeling like an irrelevant outsider.

Compared to her, the boss clearly trusted **Robert Downs** more.

Competition is brutal. If you're not up to scratch, you'll quickly be replaced. Having been laid off before, Cindy knew this deeply. For her future, she decided to take a gamble.

"Boss, this is a strategic proposal I prepared, related to the financing."

"Oh?"

Luke's interest was piqued. He opened the file and quickly scanned through it. Cindy stood tensely at his side, nervously clenching the hem of her clothes, her eyes glued to his unusually handsome face, trying not to miss any change in expression.

After a while, Luke closed the document and smiled.

"This is a **very good plan**. Excellent, in fact."

Cindy immediately breathed a sigh of relief. Then Luke continued,

"I happen to have a task for you. This afternoon, the business departments of Wells Fargo and Citibank are coming to the office to negotiate. You will be responsible for

hosting them. Remember, don't show any impatience, but don't be too cold either. This negotiation will last several days, and we have plenty of time to maneuver with them."

"Understood, Boss. I'll make the arrangements right away."

Cindy turned to leave, but hesitated at the door.

"What about the proposal?"

"Keep it here for now. I want to look over it a few more times."

"Alright."

Cindy managed a strained smile. A flicker of reluctance crossed her bloodshot eyes, but she said no more.

Luke understood her thoughts and how much effort she had put in, but some things can't be achieved by effort alone.

If Robert's financing proposal was rated at 90 points, Cindy's was only 70. There was a gap in both her control of the pace and her overall strategic vision. As for the details, there was no comparison.

For an internet company to grow big and strong, **strategic investment** is a necessary hurdle. To clear this hurdle, you need top financial talent to guide you. Look at any internet company that started from scratch and grew to be world-class—Alibaba had **Joe Tsai**, Tencent had **Martin Lau**, Facebook had **David Ebersman**, and so on.

ShowMe needed talent like that, too.

A Bruised Financial Mind

Just then, the person he was thinking about arrived.

Robert, his left arm in a sling, limped into the office. The left side of his face was swollen and red, and the right side was covered in bruises, where the faint outline of a handprint was visible upon close inspection.

Seeing his appearance, Luke immediately frowned.

"What happened? Who did this?"

"It's nothing!"

Robert forced a smile. "I ran into a few street thugs this morning on the way out."

"Did you call the police?"

"I've already notified the police, but I don't think it'll do any good."

Luke stood up to help him, complaining, "You're this badly hurt and you didn't call ahead? Come on, don't stay here. Let's go to the hospital first!"

"No need. They're all external injuries. They won't affect my work."

"No matter how busy work is, your health is more important."

"I know my body well. I'll take time off if there's a problem. I hope the boss will approve it then."

With that, Robert opened his satchel and took out a dirt-smudged document.

"This is the proposal I organized overnight. Take a look and see if anything needs to be revised."

Luke gave him a long, searching look. He opened the document and carefully read it. The proposal was exceptionally detailed. Not only did it describe all the possible mishaps and solutions during the equity transfer process, but it also provided a detailed analysis of the potential shareholder companies and consortiums, listing all their pros and cons.

After reading the proposal, Luke felt like a fog had cleared.

"Hiring you was truly the right decision."

Robert smiled faintly. "This is just me doing my job."

"Alright, if you don't want to go home, you can recover at the company. I'll have Charlie find you a quiet room to rest in a bit."

"What about the afternoon negotiation..."

"The negotiation will be handled by someone else. Your job is to supervise and sign off."

"Okay, I'll be going then."

"Mhm."

Luke nodded. After watching him leave, he reopened the document, reviewing every single word line by line. After three complete readings, satisfied that nothing was missed, he closed the file and locked it in his drawer.

"Charlie!"

Charlie hurried in. "Boss, you called?"

"Go to the Queens Police Department. Check if there was any brawl reported around the Sterling community this morning."

"Got it."

Luke then called in the heads of the other departments, assigning their tasks, before dedicating all his attention to coding.

Superhero Showdown

Gotham City suburbs, **Wayne Manor**.

Alfred pushed open the master bedroom door and said to his young master, who was yawning on the bed,

"Master Wayne, I must remind you that it's only half an hour until noon. Will you be having breakfast, lunch, or a combination of both?"

"Alfred, don't always tease me about that."

"Very well. Let's change the subject. This morning, Blair sent an email. That social networking application you're following is starting a financing plan."

"Oh?"

Bruce's interest was piqued. "What's the situation?"

"The asking price is quite steep. They're only selling **20% of the shares** but demand an offer of no less than **40 million dollars**."

Bruce didn't care about money; he cared about the plan.

"20% is too little."

"Indeed, not enough. If you truly plan to use public opinion to combat organized crime, you'll need at least 50%."

Bruce got dressed and said gravely,

"I suppose I need to have a good talk with Blair."

Alfred pulled back the curtains, letting the sunlight chase away the darkness in the room.

"One more thing: ShowMe has created a 'Hero' column on its homepage. They've centralized all videos and pictures related to **Superman** and **Batman** into their respective sections. The users are showing immense enthusiasm, particularly for the fierce debate over **who is stronger and who is weaker.**"

Bruce looked exasperated.

"Alfred, don't talk about such meaningless things."

"I find it quite amusing. Aren't you curious who's more powerful: you, or that hairy-chested muscle freak?"

Bruce: "..."

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Chapter 18: The Onslaught of Public Opinion

The debate between **Batman** and **Superman** was entirely manufactured by Luke, intended to spark discussion and maintain hype.

He proved to be full of cunning tricks. Whenever he had a spare moment, he'd use an alt account to sneak into a Superman fan chat, declaring Batman the superior hero. After receiving a wave of "FUCK YOU!" replies, he'd slip into a Batman fan group and quietly drop a single line: *Batman's a wimp and can't compare to Superman!*

Once the chaos was successfully ignited, Luke would step away, pour a cup of coffee, and watch the storm rage from his computer.

It wasn't a sophisticated tactic, but the results were surprisingly good.

Young people love a fight. Since real life is frustrating enough, why shouldn't they vent online? *If you dare displease me, I'll insult your whole family without a second thought.*

You insult me, I insult you, and everyone gangs up. That's how a topic blows up. With topics come hype, and **Batman** and **Superman** deserve the primary credit for ShowMe's rapid spread among young people.

The two heroes, unsurprisingly, became the first batch of internet celebrities in the DC world. **Batman**, in particular, saw his follower count soar past **300,000** in just a few days, leaving Superman far behind.

Luke genuinely couldn't understand this. *Isn't Superman awesome? Tall, handsome, muscular, and hairy-chested—clearly a real man. Who doesn't like a real man?*

A later data analysis revealed the reason: among Batman's hardcore fans, **80% were male**, 18% were female, and 2% were non-binary; among Superman's fans, **60% were female**, 25% were male, and 15% were non-binary.

It must be admitted that American culture is heavily influenced by British culture.

Crisis on the Third of August

Since the video function went live, miscellaneous problems had multiplied.

After several incidents, Luke had to call an emergency meeting, tasking some technical staff to temporarily handle video moderation.

Unfortunately, it was already too late.

On the third day of August, a user named "**Black Metal**" posted a video depicting the **murder of a woman** to their ShowMe account. By the time the company noticed and ordered the video taken down, three hours had passed.

The video's spread online created an extremely toxic environment. Major news media covered the story, and all the attention was focused squarely on **ShowMe**.

In just one morning, Luke received dozens of calls from various government agencies, their words full of accusations and distrust. The **FBI** and local police demanded the company unconditionally provide all identity information for "**Black Metal**."

Competitors seized the opportunity to attack, publishing long articles online detailing the various unsavory tactics ShowMe allegedly used during its growth.

Suddenly, panic spread. The overwhelming pressure from public opinion was suffocating the company's employees.

In the conference room, Luke stood at the front, arms crossed, his face expressionless. His eyes scanned the room, and silence followed his gaze.

The atmosphere was one of palpable tension, dead silence, and creeping despair.

"Why is no one talking! Are you shocked into silence, or just scared?"

"You let a small public opinion crisis make you bury your heads like ostriches. Aren't you ashamed?"

"Rowan, tell me, how many users does ShowMe have?"

The young man with the increasingly thick glasses quickly stood up. "We've reached **six million.**"

"Six million users in a little over two months. This achievement is the result of your late nights and hard work. You know better than I how much effort went into this. What? You're just giving up without a fight?"

Cindy stood up and loudly said,

"No one is giving up, but **we don't know what to do.**"

Her statement reflected the feelings of most people there. ShowMe's employees were mostly tech-heads; few had proper university degrees, and even fewer had relevant work experience. After Luke hired them, they focused solely on technology, oblivious to other matters.

These people might be devastating in the hacking world, but when facing real-world difficulties, they were helpless, unsure how to proceed. In short, they were like children immersed in their own world.

"There are many ways to solve a problem. The most important thing is to **get your attitude right.**"

"ShowMe has over six million users. We have to review tens of thousands of videos and images daily, and we only have six moderators, and that's just temporary. Six people versus tens of thousands..."

Luke shrugged and suggested to the burliest man there.

"Massey, interested in being a content auditor? I'll **double your salary.**"

"I wouldn't do it for ten times the salary! What's so great about looking at that stuff? Who here hasn't seen it already?"

Everyone laughed. Luke also shook his head.

"You don't want to do it, and I don't want to do it, but we have to. To prevent similar incidents from happening again, I am now announcing that all ShowMe employees, **including myself**, will work in the moderation department in rotating groups of nine, until we hire new full-time auditors."

A collective groan went up.

Philip Arthur said, pained,

"I'm almost fifty. Do I have to be a content auditor too?"

"Think of it as life experience! Besides, not all videos and images are of men; some are of women. Some female users have pretty nice figures."

Philip looked at Luke with a speechless expression, unable to describe his current feelings.

After this exchange, the atmosphere in the conference room started to lighten.

Luke continued,

"In fact, this incident is a fantastic opportunity to establish our corporate image. We are a young company, and we must have the courage to own our mistakes. If we were wrong, we apologize. We shoulder the responsibility. As for all those demands for 'rectification' and 'suggestions' online, they can go to hell. This is our platform, and they don't get to decide what we do. And as for that 'Black Metal'..."

At this point, Luke took a deep breath and said with a cold expression,

"Zac, take your team and **dig up everything about that guy, all the way to his ancestors.** I want to know exactly where that video was filmed."

Zac nodded forcefully.

"Don't worry, Boss. He won't get away."

The other technical employees also chimed in, expressing their intense hatred for the perpetrator.

Luke looked at his watch.

"The meeting is over. Cindy, stay behind. Everyone else can go."

The Standoff with Investors

The crowd gradually left. Soon, only Cindy and Luke remained. Cindy knew why the boss had kept her. Before he could speak, she immediately said,

"After the news broke, the contacts from all the institutions called to ask what happened. Although they didn't explicitly say so, they all indicated they would **postpone the negotiations.** I'm very worried they'll use this incident to drive down the price."

"They won't 'might,' they **will.**"

Luke knew the nature of those banks and venture capital firms well because he used to work in that sector in his past life.

"If we can't agree, we won't negotiate. Don't make a single call. If they call you, remember two words: **Remain silent.**"

Cindy frowned. "Is that appropriate? Our relationship with them..."

"A relationship is one thing, and profit is another. When the situation is unclear, **maintaining silence** is the most correct course of action."

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Chapter 19: Meeting Again

Crisis management was urgent.

As soon as the meeting ended, Luke set about organizing the relevant personnel. Unfortunately, the company completely lacked talent in this area, so the boss had to personally step up. A thousand-word-long declaration was published on the official website. The language wasn't particularly elegant, but it was highly logical.

The first half outlined the course of events. The apology and reflection were in the middle, quickly addressed in a few lines, followed by the future plan and the remedial measures being implemented to prevent such incidents from recurring.

The content was solid and seemed completely sincere at first glance, but a closer reading revealed the central theme: **avoiding the core issue.**

This was the essence of the whole thing.

What is crisis management?

Simply put, it's turning black into grey and erasing the grey until it's invisible. If you just kept painting it black, afraid people wouldn't know what wrong you had done, that wouldn't be crisis management; that would be a public relations crisis.

After the statement was released, many ShowMe users spontaneously shared it across various channels, implicitly forming a wave of organic support. Upon hearing this news, the entire company was abuzz, and employee morale soared.

It is a wonderful feeling when the result of your hard work is affirmed by the public.

With users providing cover, the public opinion crisis eased slightly.

Luke could finally spare time to deal with the FBI.

A Cold Confrontation

At 2:00 p.m., the FBI agents, led by **Roger Consius**, arrived at the ShowMe headquarters on time.

"Hello, we meet again."

"Yes, we do. It hasn't even been a week since our last meeting, and your company has run into trouble again. Last time it was metahumans; this time it's terrorists. Who knows what it will be in the future?"

Luke said with a forced smile,

"Mr. Consius certainly has a sense of humor. ShowMe is a legal company, and its employees are law-abiding citizens. We would never do anything illegal."

"The employees might be law-abiding citizens, but the boss might not be."

Roger Consius seemed to hint at something, taking a few steps closer to whisper, "No matter what your background is or what your agenda is, I will find out this time. Don't think you can get away with anything."

With that, he walked toward the conference room. **Emily** followed behind him, passing Luke without even glancing at him, as if the two had never met.

Women, they're all fickle!

"Boss, I think the FBI is targeting us," Charlie said worriedly.

"Not the FBI—**Roger Consius** is targeting us."

"We haven't done anything wrong. Why is that guy harassing us?"

"You should ask the Old Man that question."

Charlie paused. "You mean he knows about our connection to the Hongmen?"

Luke looked up at the ceiling, his eyes filled with the suffering of loving an idiot. "Do you think the FBI are all morons? How could they not have files on someone like the Old Man? It's not just him; the files of all Hongmen higher-ups and their families are registered with the FBI."

"What about me? Do they have my file too?"

Luke genuinely didn't want to answer such a stupid question.

"How are things going in Chinatown?"

"I just received a text message. The person has been settled. However, Elder Qi said that next time you need his help, you need to go in person." Charlie paused, then quietly suggested, "I think you should visit Elder Qi sometime. Metropolis is his jurisdiction; you can't keep avoiding him."

"You go if you want to."

Luke snorted, tidied his suit, and strode toward the conference room.

Cindy and the others had finished the preparations. Luke wasted no time, walking directly to the computer and projecting a photo of a young man with obvious Middle Eastern features onto the large screen.

"**Ibn Abdul Sanji Rahman Shalim**, the owner of the social media account 'Black Metal.' He is an Arab-American, 25 years old. He registered a ShowMe account a month ago and has since published a total of twenty-three posts, including text, pictures, and videos, mostly related to food. Oh, I forgot to mention, his job is a chef."

"Due to confidentiality agreements, I cannot disclose more information here. If you wish to know more, you can contact him personally. Of course, if you require technical assistance, I can send employees to help, free of charge."

"I've said my piece, Mr. Consius. Do you have any other requests?"

Roger Consius let out a cold, hard laugh, his face twisted with undisguised mockery.

"Is this your idea of... help? One picture! Dozens of useless pieces of information! Luke Shaw, let me remind you of something: Ibn Abdul Sanji Rahman Shalim is from the Middle East and is a member of an extreme terrorist organization involved in the murder of a woman. Do you know what your actions mean right now?"

"You are **harboring him**, covering for him, all to prevent your company from being implicated. I know your type too well. There's nothing you won't do for money!"

At those words, the faces of the ShowMe employees present instantly changed. In America, one thing must never be touched: **terrorism**. Once that label is slapped on you, you can forget about ever recovering.

Cindy immediately stood up.

"Sir, please watch your language. ShowMe will never become a tool for spreading terrorism, nor will we shield any criminal."

Roger Consius ignored her, staring only at Luke.

"If you don't want to be an accomplice, hand over the files on him, his family, and his friends. **That is an order.**"

Luke's brow twitched. He said firmly,

"I apologize, Mr. Consius, but the company does not have the files you want. Even if we did, I would not hand them over. Ibn Abdul Sanji Rahman Shalim is only a suspect. There is no evidence to show he committed a crime. Until actual criminal activity is confirmed, he is protected by the Constitution, and you have no right to deprive him of his personal rights."

Roger sneered. "Good oratory skills. You should apply to be his defense lawyer. He certainly wouldn't object."

After being repeatedly provoked, Luke's temper flared up.

"I'm sorry, I have neither the interest nor the time for that."

"There's one more thing I need to remind you of. Ibn's first twenty-three posts were all published from **Brooklyn**, using the same computer. The video posted this morning, however, came from **Gotham**, using a different computer. Is there no suspicion in that? Don't wrongly accuse good people, and certainly don't miss the bad ones."

He paused, then mocked,

"Although you people do that often."

Pfft!

Charlie nearly burst out laughing. Rowan and Cindy also smiled secretly, thinking, *The boss is truly the boss, daring to mock the FBI to their faces. Doesn't he worry about them getting angry?*

Luke gestured to Charlie, who pulled out a USB drive and placed it on the table.

"The data is all inside. This is everything ShowMe can provide. If you feel it's insufficient, please present a document authorized by the White House, and we will provide appropriate assistance according to its contents."

"If there's nothing else, this meeting is adjourned. Charlie, see them out!"

Charlie stood up and opened the conference room door.

Roger gave Luke a deep, intense look, then rose to leave. At the doorway, he turned back.

"Luke Shaw, don't think you can do whatever you want. This is Metropolis, not Coast City. I will investigate this matter thoroughly. I won't wrongly accuse good people, and I won't let any bad people go, no matter what their identity or background is!"

With that threat delivered, the atmosphere immediately grew tense. Luke ground his teeth but said nothing, waving his employees back to work.

A Secret Location

After leaving ShowMe, Roger Consius drove straight to Ibn's residence in Brooklyn, but the place was empty. A neighbor informed him that Ibn had left with several unfamiliar men wearing sunglasses two hours earlier.

Upon hearing this news, Roger angrily kicked the wall, muttering unspeakable curses.

Emily opened her mouth several times, but ultimately chose silence. She had just received a text message from Luke, asking her to meet at a bar to discuss something. She had planned to mention the message, but seeing her Captain's state, she decided against it.

At 6:00 p.m., as soon as her workday ended, Emily drove to Brooklyn and stopped in front of a bar called the **Red Devil**.

Since it wasn't late yet, the bar was relatively empty. Emily immediately spotted the young man by the bar counter.

Today, Luke was dressed differently than before. He wasn't in a suit, opting for casual wear: white sneakers, dark casual trousers, and a purple shirt. A silver Vacheron Constantin watch was on his left wrist, and a gold Bulgari bracelet was on his right. His entire outfit made him look handsome, fashionable, and luxurious, contrasting sharply with the run-down bar.

Seeing Emily, Luke smiled and walked over.

"Sweetheart, thank you for not making me drink alone for two hours here."

"Don't call me sweetheart. Your sweetheart is Ivanka Trump, not me."

As soon as she said that, Emily immediately regretted it. She glared at him irritably, found an empty chair, sat down, and snapped,

"What do you want to talk about?"

"I have a business matter and a personal matter. Which first?"

"Business!"

Luke sighed in disappointment, took a photo from his pocket, and placed it on the table.

"Ibn Abdul Sanji Rahman Shalim, you haven't forgotten him, have you?"

Emily gasped, horrified. "You..."

Luke said calmly, "That's right. **I had someone take him.**"

Emily immediately stood up, angrily hissing,

"What exactly are you trying to do? Do you know that's illegal?"

"I had to do this."

Luke looked her directly in the eye and said, word for word, "I don't trust Roger Consius. You know better than I what kind of person he is. If he gets Ibn, who knows what terrible things he might do. Of the entire FBI, **I only trust you**, and only you can find the truth."

Emily's expression was incredibly complex. For a moment, she didn't know what to say. Something deep inside was swinging back and forth. After a while, she calmed down, sighed with resignation, and asked,

"Where is he?"

"Come with me."

The two left the bar through the back door and navigated dark, damp streets until they reached a dilapidated building.

"When we get inside, don't say anything. Just do as I say."

Pushing open the heavy iron door of the basement, the two entered a dimly lit room.

Ibn Abdul Sanji Rahman Shalim was there, anxiously waiting.

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Chapter 20: Interrogation

Charlie was in the basement, accompanied by two local Hongmen disciples Luke hadn't met before.

"Boss, everything's ready."

Luke nodded, pulled an envelope stuffed with cash from his pocket, and tossed it to the older Hongmen disciple. "Thanks for your hard work, guys. Take this money for drinks."

The man felt the thickness of the envelope, and a satisfied smile immediately appeared on his face.

"The Young Master is generous, as expected. No wonder the brothers in Coast City all say that following you means there's wine, meat, and women—better than heaven, surpassing King Zhou."

"It's just the brothers giving me credit. I'll have to trouble you two for the next few days."

"No trouble at all, no trouble at all!"

The two bowed their hands and left the basement to stand guard outside.

Emily shot Luke a look and sneered. "Wine, meat, and women! Ha!"

Luke quickly changed the subject. "Charlie, how is he doing?"

"His emotions are relatively stable, but he keeps yelling to be let out."

"Did you lay a hand on him?"

"No."

"Good, don't use force."

Luke walked to the iron window and peered through the bars at **Ibn Abdul Sanji Rahman Shalim**, who was pacing back and forth. He was a typical Arab man: brown skin, slightly curly hair, and a full beard. He was decent-looking, but overly sloppy. If cleaned up, he'd be a good-looking guy.

"When we meet him, no matter what I do, don't say anything."

Emily retorted sharply, "I know what to do, you don't need to instruct me."

Luke shrugged and pushed the room door open, walking inside.

The moment someone entered, Ibn reacted like an overly startled wild monkey, immediately taking a defensive posture.

"Who are you? What do you want? Why did you bring me here?"

Luke picked up a chair and sat under the flickering overhead lamp, watching him expressionlessly.

"Who do you think I am?"

Ibn froze, cautiously examining the person: black hair, light green eyes, and an overly delicate face. A figure surfaced in his mind.

"You... you're ShowMe's..."

"That's right. I'm **Luke Shaw**, the founder of ShowMe, the unlucky guy you ruined. Ibn, you're really something. One video made me lose **thirty million dollars**. The company I worked so hard to build nearly went bankrupt, all thanks to your damn work."

Luke pulled out a handgun he had prepared, racked the slide, and screwed on a silencer. He said calmly under Ibn's horrified gaze,

"Owe money, pay money. Owe a life, pay a life. Since you had the guts to mess with me, don't blame me for being ruthless."

"No!"

Ibn instantly collapsed to his knees. "Don't kill me! It wasn't me! I didn't upload that video, really, it wasn't me! I was working at the restaurant this morning. I didn't even turn on a computer."

Emily frowned deeply. She wanted to speak up, but recalling her promise, she remained silent.

Luke lowered his voice, the hoarse sound grating like wood scraping the floor, sending chills down the spine.

"The account is yours, and the password is yours. If not you, then who?"

Bang!

The gunshot exploded. Ibn's pupils constricted to pinpoints. His heart seemed to be gripped by something, unmoving. His mouth hung half-open, his terrified face frozen like a photograph. After a moment, he gasped for air like a fish brought back to life.

Luke cursed angrily,

"Damn Italians, what a crappy piece of junk. It misfired! You got lucky the last time. You won't get a chance this time."

"It wasn't me! It really wasn't me! I swear, I never uploaded the video!"

Ibn yelled, tears and snot mixing together in a miserable sight. His courage had been shattered by that gunshot.

"Please believe me! The video wasn't uploaded by me. I have no idea what happened."

"Lies. I checked your account before I came. There were no anomalies like hacking or a missing password. That means the account was logged into normally. Who else could it have been but you?"

The muzzle was raised again.

It was a black, ominous hole, like the scythe of the Grim Reaper. Ibn felt his heart was about to stop. His mind raced frantically in his state of terror. Suddenly, a figure popped up.

"Adousan! Yes, Adousan..."

"I remember now! It was him, Adousan! He uploaded the video."

Then, he repeated to himself,

"Yes, it must be him. It has to be him."

Luke didn't lower the gun, his tone still severe.

"Trying to pull a fast one by just giving me a random name? Do you take me for a fool?"

"I'm not lying! It really is Adousan! Only he knows my account password. He... he..."

"He what? Speak!"

Ibn gritted his teeth and said spitefully, "**He's in the drug business.** He has operations in the Bay Area and Miller Port in Gotham City, and in Brooklyn in Metropolis. His subordinates are mainly Arabs and West Asians. They are ruthless and dare to do anything. He must have had someone upload the video."

"You know so much about him. Are you one of his subordinates?"

Ibn: "..."

His eyes flickered violently, neither denying nor admitting it.

Luke curled his lip. "I thought you were a chef. Turns out you're a **drug dealer!**" He turned to Emily. "Anything you want to ask?"

Emily remained silent. Seeing him like this initially evoked some pity, but upon hearing the word "drug dealer," that sympathy instantly vanished.

Luke continued, "Where does Adousan live?"

Having already confessed everything, Ibn decided to give up completely.

"78 West Ocean Park in the Bay Area. His bedroom is on the far east side of the third floor. He usually stays there. If not, he's in the small building behind the Logger Bar in Miller Port."

Luke memorized the address, left a single statement: "I will find out the truth," and then turned to leave.

A Favor for the Hongmen

Outside the basement, the two Hongmen disciples were waiting. The older one laughed.

"Young Master, how did the interrogation go? Did you need our brothers' help?"

"Don't call me Young Master; it sounds too formal. We're all brothers, just call me A-Lin. By the way, what are your names?"

"We dare not accept the title 'A-Lin' (a reference to 'Little Lin,' Luke's likely family name). The older man waved his hands repeatedly. "My surname is Lian, single name Cheng. Just call me **Old Lian**. His surname is Zhao, and he's just recently joined. You can call him **Little Zhao**."

"So it's Brother Lian and Brother Zhao." Luke cupped his hands. "Thank you for your help today."

"We're family; don't mention it."

Since they started talking, the smile hadn't left Lian Cheng's face. While standing guard, he had opened the envelope and checked the contents—a whopping **eight thousand US dollars**. No wonder the brothers in Coast City spoke so highly of the Young Master. Seeing him today, he was indeed generous. Not only was he open-handed with money, but his manner and charisma made people feel comfortable. No wonder the former Chairman thought so highly of him!

"Young Master, do you have any other instructions? If so, just say the word. Your brothers will get it done."

"Brother Lian, you're a straightforward man. Actually, there is one more thing I need help with. The Arab man inside is involved in the drug trade. If Brother Lian has the time, please help me **get a confession**."

Drugs!

Hearing that word, Lian Cheng's expression changed instantly. When the Hongmen first came to America, they suffered greatly because of the drug trade. That hatred was

deeply etched in the hearts of the older generation. When the situation improved, the Chairman at the time immediately issued a death warrant: all Hongmen members were forbidden from touching any drug-related business. Anyone who violated the rule, regardless of their identity, would not be spared.

"Young Master, rest assured, I will get to the bottom of this."

"Thank you."

Luke bowed slightly, bade farewell to the two men, and left with Charlie and Emily.

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