Divorce Only Makes a Son-in-Law Stronger

Chapter 131, even the old house is gone?

"Youwei, our stocks are up again! They're almost back to their original price!"

At that moment, in the old Su family house in the urban village, Su Mengqing pushed the door open with a vacant look in her eyes, only to hear Zhang Meili's cries of joy coming from the inner room.

"Mom, have you gone senile? Su Pharmaceutical has been taken by Lin Fan. It has nothing to do with us anymore..."

She took off her shoes and walked barefoot to Zhang Meili's bed, her mind a complete blank. After leaving the International Convention and Exhibition Center, she had wandered aimlessly, on and on, as if the road ahead stretched into infinity. But in the end, her feet had unconsciously carried her back to the old house.

"Who says it doesn't matter? As long as you refuse to divorce, you're entitled to half of Lin Fan's wealth!"

Zhang Meili cheerfully put down her phone and struggled to move her obese body.

"Mengqing, you have to be strong. You must relentlessly pester and nag Lin Fan until he gives in!"

"Mom, can you please stop daydreaming?" Su Mengqing hung her head low, clenching her teeth as she struggled to keep tears of humiliation and anger from falling.

"Do you really think that after how our family treated Lin Fan, a simple marriage certificate would be enough to make him forgive us?"

"Humph, why not? He used to like you so much, which means he really did have feelings for you!" Zhang Meili's smile faded, and her expression soured. "Everyone thinks our family has fallen from grace, that we've been knocked right back to where we started? But I'm Zhang Meili! Even the heavens wouldn't let me suffer!" she snorted, her eyes glinting with pride. Then, as if suddenly remembering something, her chubby face sank.

"Where are the bird's nest and sea cucumber I asked you to buy? Your mother is this sick, yet you don't seem to care at all! You came back empty-handed?"

"I... I don’t have any money left to buy you tonics," Su Mengqing said, feeling both angry and wretched.

Ever since they moved back to the old house, Zhang Meili had been making a scene nonstop. One moment, she’d demand to stay in a private luxury suite at the hospital. The next, she’d complain that Su Mengqing’s cooking was inedible, throwing a tantrum and demanding signature dishes from a fancy hotel. If Su Mengqing refused to give in, she would cry and scream incessantly. She even retaliated by defecating and urinating in the bed, then smearing the filth on the headboard and wall!

Su Mengqing was being tormented to the point of exhaustion, almost driven mad. Scolding her didn’t work, and she couldn’t bring herself to hit her mother. All she could do was grit her teeth and quickly spend the few tens of thousands she’d gotten from selling her jewelry. Now, the family was so destitute they could barely afford to eat. On top of that, she had just lost her temporary cleaning job. If Zhang Meili kept carrying on like this, they truly wouldn’t be able to survive!

"I don’t care! I’m your mother, you have to be filial and obey me!" Zhang Meili craned her neck and yelled furiously. "If things get tough, just go sell yourself! Go be an escort at a high-end club!

"I worked so hard to give you such a pretty face and raise you to be so beautiful. What’s wrong with you suffering a little so I can live more comfortably, huh?"

At these words, Su Mengqing’s entire body trembled. She clenched her fists so tightly that her nails dug deep into her palms, drawing trickles of crimson blood.

"Zhang Meili, do you even consider me your own daughter anymore?! What kind of mother pushes her child into prostitution?!" she shrieked, unable to hold back any longer. She lifted her swollen, tear-filled eyes and let out a piercing, choked sob.

"Do you have any idea how much I was humiliated today? How much I suffered? My face is still swollen from being slapped!

"Your precious son, Su Gang, stole your medical money to go gambling! Now he’s been caught by Lin Fan and is about to be sent to prison!

"Your husband, Su Guang, who ran off after swindling people, came back today. But he couldn’t care less if we live or die. He’s already disowned me as his daughter and plans to move to Sha Country to remarry and start a new family!"

Her heart-rending cries echoed throughout the room.

Zhang Meili’s eyes went wide, and she drew in a sharp, cold breath.

Su Gang is going to prison? And Su Guang, that old bastard, dares to dump me? He’s even planning on finding a new wife?!

"Damn it all! Why is my life, Zhang Meili’s life, so miserable?!"

It was like a bomb went off in her head. Zhang Meili let out a heart-wrenching scream as her vision swam and she began to weep uncontrollably.

"You’re all useless, every single one of you! It’s you people from the Su family who have ruined me!"

"You have the nerve to blame us? I’m the one who has suffered the most because of you!" Su Mengqing trembled with rage, tears streaming down her cheeks. "I don’t want to live anymore! If you push me any further, I’ll jump off a building and leave you here to rot in this bed alone!"

"Go on then! Hurry up and do it! I’m sick of the sight of you!" Zhang Meili was enraged now too, her chubby face twitching as she cursed loudly. "My only regret is marrying the wrong man and giving birth to the wrong children! That’s why my life is so miserable!"

Still seething, she yanked a used adult diaper out from under herself and hurled it straight at Su Mengqing’s forehead. SPLAT! It struck her squarely on the face, covering her in filth. The putrid stench of urine and feces was so overwhelming she nearly choked.

"Fine... fine! If you all want me dead, then I’ll go die for you to see!" Su Mengqing shot to her feet. She viciously wiped the filth from her face and rushed out of the room, crying her heart out.

"Go on, go die now! If you don’t die today, you’re not human, you’re an animal!" Zhang Meili screamed, pounding the bed furiously with her barely mobile left hand.

But then, she saw Su Mengqing, who had just rushed out, slowly backing her way into the room again.

"What are you doing back here? If you’re not going to die today, then get on your knees, apologize, and go buy me that bird’s nest and sea cucumber!" Seeing this, Zhang Meili stopped her wailing. A smug look flashed in her beady eyes, though her tone remained relentless.

Hmph. I knew it. You don’t have the heart to abandon your own mother, Su Mengqing!

"Well, well, if it isn’t Mrs. Zhang. It’s only been a few days. How did you end up bedridden?"

Before a pale-faced Su Mengqing could respond, a familiar voice dripping with sarcasm called out from the doorway. Then, several figures strode inside. They all wore unfriendly

expressions, looking around and sizing up the place as if they were picking vegetables at a market. The person in the lead was none other than Liu Fang, whom they hadn't seen in days.

"...So it's you, Xiao Liu. Did you hear that your Mrs. Zhang was sick and came especially to visit?" Zhang Meili's heart skipped a beat, and she forced a smile onto her chubby face. There's no way someone our family ruined would come here with good intentions.

"No need to bring so many people just for a visit. You're too polite, Xiao Liu, hehe..."

"If I hadn't brought enough people, how could I kick you out so easily?" Liu Fang's mouth twitched, her eyes filled with loathing.

She slammed a gambling IOU down on the bedside table. SLAP!

"Cut the crap! Zhang Meili, Su Mengqing, open your dog eyes and take a good, long look!" Liu Fang pointed to a crooked signature inside the red thumbprint on the IOU. "Su Gang took out a loan at a gambling den and put this old house in the urban village up as collateral. He can't pay back his debt, so I'm here to repossess the property!"

The words hit Su Mengqing like a physical blow. Her pupils constricted in shock, and her face went deathly pale.

On the bed, Zhang Meili's whole body trembled, and she nearly wet herself.

That damn mutt! A dog will always go back to eating shit! Our family is already in this mess... how could you, Su Gang, be so heartless as to gamble away our old house?!

Chapter 132, The law of nature runs in cycles, retribution is certain!

"Liu Fang... no, no, Miss Liu, look at how miserable we are. Can you please show us some mercy?"

Seeing the burly men Liu Fang had brought with her starting to roam upstairs and inspect the place, Zhang Meili swallowed hard, her chubby face tense with anxiety. Her smile was so forced it was uglier than a grimace as she began to plead humbly with Liu Fang.

"Yes, Liu Fang, aren't you Yang Tingting's best friend? Please, for her sake, help us!" Su Mengqing also began to panic, her voice tight with suppressed anger.

If Liu Fang takes this old house, she and Zhang Meili will be left homeless on the streets!

"Heh, you still have the nerve to mention that bitch Yang Tingting?" Liu Fang laughed, her face contorting with rage. She pointed at the two of them, spitting as she cursed loudly. "You asked me for help to pressure Lin Fan, and you ended up destroying my family!

"Not only did I lose my job, but it also caused my aunt so much stress that she had a heart attack and died! My family wishes they could beat me to death! You've completely destroyed my life, but did you ever care?

"After you were done with me, you tossed me aside like used toilet paper, not giving a damn whether I lived or died!"

As she spoke, Liu Fang's hatred intensified. Unable to contain her rage, she grabbed a water glass from the table and hurled it at Su Mengqing's feet.

CRASH!

The glass shattered into a thousand pieces. Startled, Su Mengqing jumped back, her face turning pale.

"H-How can you blame all this on us?" Zhang Meili's face burned with shame and anger. "Liu Fang, you need to have a conscience! The only one to blame is you, for always throwing your weight around and raising the rent whenever you felt like it!" She jutted out her chin and flatly denied everything.

"You have the nerve to speak of conscience?" Liu Fang laughed from pure anger, pointing a finger at Zhang Meili. "I think the Su Family's conscience was eaten by a dog! If I hadn't become Brother Zhilong's mistress and gotten some capital, how could I be standing before you today to vent this frustration?"

"Brother Zhilong... you mean... you mean Baldy Zhilong from the Black Tiger Hall?" Su Mengqing's eyes went blank, her heart giving a violent lurch. A wave of despair washed over her, and she suddenly felt pathetic.

She recalled how that man had run to the Yuan family's estate to inform Chen Heihu that Lin Fan had single-handedly destroyed the Black Tiger Building. The moment he turned around and saw Lin Fan, he was so scared that he wet himself and collapsed on the floor! And now this kind of trash dared to bully the Su Family? Even a nobody like Liu Fang could ride on someone else's coattails and act so smugly in front of her!

"Su Mengqing, do you think you're qualified to use Brother Zhilong's nickname? Take a good look in the mirror. What even are you now!"

"So what? Your precious Brother Zhilong is nothing but a fart in front of Lin Fan!" Su Mengqing's face flushed red as she forced herself to say it. "I am still legally married to Lin Fan! If you dare lay a hand on me, he... he will definitely not let you off!"

No matter how much she despised Lin Fan, in this situation, she had no choice but to use that bastard's name to intimidate Liu Fang.

"Hahaha, who are you kidding? Others might not know about the crap between you two, but you can't hide it from me! You've already completely fallen out!" Liu Fang rolled her eyes and snickered, looking at them as if they were idiots.

"Regardless, I... I am still Lin Fan's wife! If you take our house, outsiders will laugh at Lin Fan when they find out!" Su Mengqing felt her face burn as if it were on fire, but she clenched her teeth and continued her bluff.

"That's right! I'm still Lin Fan's mother-in-law, at least in name!" As if snapping out of a daze, Zhang Meili also started shouting, putting on a brave front to hide her fear. "That Brother Zhilong wouldn't dare act so arrogantly in front of my son-in-law!"

"You two are truly shameless. After looking down on Lin Fan for so long, now you're trying to use his name to feel important?" Liu Fang crossed her arms, her eyes filled with a disgust you'd reserve for filth.

"W-Well, we're still Lin Fan's family!" Su Mengqing turned her head away, too overwhelmed by shame and anger to meet Liu Fang's gaze. Zhang Meili, however, relied on her thick skin and continued to shriek.

"Tsk, tsk. I've never seen anyone so shameless! Since it's come to this, I might as well tell you the truth." A cold smile spread across Liu Fang's face, a deep, vengeful satisfaction gleaming in her eyes. "Su Gang was no longer qualified to borrow money from the casino. But what a coincidence that I happened to bump into him that day? Since we were acquaintances, I naturally had to help him out. So when Su Gang was crying and begging me for help, I let him use this old building as collateral."

What? So you were behind all of this, Liu Fang?

The words landed like a physical blow. The color drained from Su Mengqing and Zhang Meili's faces, and they were so angry they could have spit blood.

"Oh, and as for that trash Yang Tingting who stole your car, trying to sell it for cash to run away... I'm the one who sent people to rip her off." Before they could respond, Liu Fang added with leisurely, venomous laughter, "You should have seen it. That little slut's screams were pitiful. More than ten guys, taking turns for two days and two nights... Tsk, tsk, it almost made me feel sorry for her."

"Enough! Shut your mouth! Don't say another word!"

Su Mengqing's eyes were bloodshot as she trembled from head to toe. Zhang Meili's chubby face was a mask of fury, and she panted heavily. Mother and daughter stared at Liu Fang, wishing they could lunge forward and strangle her.

"Why should I stop? Don’t blame me for being cruel, Su Mengqing. Your Su Family brought all of this upon yourselves!" Liu Fang’s smile vanished, and she spat with loathing. "Back when you used me to maliciously raise his rent, trying to drive Lin Fan out of his clinic and force him to submit, did you ever imagine that you’d one day suffer the same fate? That I would be the one leading people to take your house and throw you out? Do you know what this is called? It’s called karma! What goes around, comes around! Now you finally know how it feels, hahaha!"

After her declaration, Liu Fang burst into maniacal laughter, completely ignoring Su Mengqing and Zhang Meili, whose faces were ashen as their lips trembled uncontrollably.

Just then, the burly men returned. "Sister-in-law," one said with a smile, "we’ve checked the house. It’s all good. We can take it."

"No! Please, don’t!"

THUMP!

Su Mengqing’s eyes twitched as she was jolted back to her senses. She clenched her jaw and knelt straight down before Liu Fang.

"Liu Fang, Miss Liu, I’m begging you, please?" she pleaded. "Please don’t take the house! Our family has no money left. If we lose our home, we’ll have to sleep on the streets!"

Zhang Meili burst into tears, wailing with snot and tears streaming down her face.

"Regretting it now? Where was this desperation before? Hmph, you cry a pathetic scene now, but who pitied me back then?" Liu Fang sneered, scolding them without mercy. "I called you and Yang Tingting so many times. Did you ever show an ounce of pity? You have no idea how many times I cried!"

"Sister-in-law, how about you let the brothers have some fun? This woman doesn’t look half bad," one of the thugs said, licking his lips as he brazenly ogled Su Mengqing. He sidled up to Liu Fang with a lecherous grin. The others exchanged excited glances.

"Are you not afraid of bad luck? Su Mengqing is a jinx. She bankrupted her massive family fortune in just a few days," Liu Fang scoffed, shaking her head. "Besides, everyone in Haicheng knows she’s Boss Lin Fan’s ex-wife. Even if she were willing to be an escort, no man would dare touch her. If you have a death wish, then by all means, I won’t stop you."

Her words made the men freeze. The lust in their eyes instantly faded, replaced by sullen disappointment.

She had a point. Even if Lin Fan didn’t want Su Mengqing anymore, she had still been his woman. Who had a death wish and would dare to embarrass Boss Lin Fan?

"Throw them out and change the lock," Liu Fang ordered, too lazy to waste any more words. She waved her hand and strode away. "Get an agent over in a couple of days to appraise it, then list it online and cash out."

She completely ignored the desperate, helpless wails of Su Mengqing and Zhang Meili.

THUD, THUD!

A moment later, the two women were grabbed by the back of their collars and thrown out of the old house. The front door slammed shut and was fitted with a new lock.

Chapter 133. Abandoned by the whole world!

"Liu Fang, you are a monster! How could you do this to us?"

"My family can barely survive, and you still want to stomp on us while we're down!"

Watching helplessly, Liu Fang had her men lock the main gate, sealing off everything familiar. Zhang Meili collapsed to the ground, sobbing and banging her head against the packed earth.

"Hmph, this is letting you off easy. The only reason I haven't had you two killed is that Boss Lin Fan hasn't decided to completely destroy you yet." Liu Fang tossed the keys in her hand as she approached, a cold smile plastered on her face. "But this is better anyway. Letting you two live on in misery and solitude is far more satisfying than just killing you outright!"

"You... you want to keep torturing us, to keep laughing at our misery?" Su Mengqing, who had also been thrown to the ground, lifted her head, the veins on her neck bulging with rage.

"That's right. I just want to watch you two live like a pair of wretched stray dogs." Liu Fang squatted down and patted Su Mengqing's twitching cheek. "Don't even think about breaking the lock or climbing through a window. Out of respect for Boss Lin Fan, I won't lay a hand on you."

She turned her head, her gaze landing on the trembling Zhang Meili. "But as for her... I wouldn't mind finding a few old beggars to come 'fertilize the soil' a bit. Hahaha!"

With a harsh, shrill laugh, Liu Fang and her entourage strode away, leaving Su Mengqing and her mother lying on the ground, weeping in silent despair and rage.

Nearby, neighbors peeked out from their doorways, craning their necks and whispering among themselves.

"Are the debt collectors after them again?"

"I bet so. Su Gang must have caused more trouble!"

"A leopard can’t change its spots. The family is in this state, and he’s still gambling?"

Yet not a single one of them came over to ask what was wrong. Instead, their faces were filled with hatred and disgust.

"Aunt Xu, please, help my mom and me!" Zhang Meili cried, hiding her face, too ashamed to look up.

Burning with shame, Su Mengqing wished she could find a hole to crawl into. Just then, she saw the exhausted-looking Aunt Xu walking down the alley. Scrambling to her feet, Su Mengqing looked at her with pleading eyes.

"...Su Mengqing, how else can I help you?" Aunt Xu gave a bitter smile, a flicker of pity in her eyes before she shook her head resolutely. "Do you have any idea that because of your little scene today, our entire team was almost fired by the corporation? I pleaded with you; I was practically on my knees begging. But you’re just so stubborn. You refused to listen, completely disregarding how it would affect the rest of us... Aigh."

After a long sigh, Aunt Xu turned and walked away without looking back. Her husband, Xu Shengli, pulled her inside their home.

"Everyone, don’t get involved with them!" Xu Shengli shouted to the other neighbors. "You heard my wife! Getting mixed up with scum like that is just asking for a lifetime of bad luck!" He spat a thick glob of phlegm onto the ground before slamming his door shut.

Face flushed with humiliation, Su Mengqing stood frozen before the Xus’ door. She turned to an old man a few steps away and begged, "Grandpa Gong, could you take us in for just one night? I... I promise I’ll take my mom and leave first thing in the morning!"

The man called Grandpa Gong just shook his head and sighed, slowly turning to leave. "Mengqing, my grandson has his college entrance exams soon. Ever since you moved back, your mother has been screaming and shouting day and night. Sometimes she even shrieks in the middle of the night, and my grandson can’t sleep... You won’t listen to reason. It’s better if you just leave."

"No, please don’t abandon us! I’m begging you! I’ll kowtow to you, isn’t that enough?!" Su Mengqing broke down completely and dropped to her knees. She began knocking her forehead against the hard ground, turning to face each of the neighboring houses. "It’s

almost dark; my mom and I can’t sleep on the street! Please, for old times’ sake, just take us in for one night!"

She cried out, but the people watching remained unmoved, their expressions only growing more resentful.

"So now you come crawling to us? When your family was rich, didn’t you look down on all us poor neighbors?"

"Hmph. Fate is a funny thing. The Su Family got rich but showed no kindness. You had your great rise and your great fall—I say you got what you deserved!"

"Begging is useless. When you moved into that luxury villa, you were too cheap to even invite us to a housewarming party. What ’old times’ are you even talking about?"

"My son couldn’t find a job after graduation. I wanted to ask your mom for help, just to arrange a simple internship, but your family wouldn’t even let him in the door!"

The crowd’s indignant voices rose one after another, their faces contorted with hatred.

CLANG! CLANG!

One by one, they returned to their homes, slamming and bolting their doors shut.

"Mom, what do I do? What do I do...?" Su Mengqing knelt on the ground, tears streaming down her face as she hung her head in shame.

Despair and loneliness enveloped her. Unnoticed, the sky had darkened. Lights flickered on in the houses around her, but the old Su residence remained shrouded in darkness. Su Mengqing continued to kneel in the shadows, the tear tracks on her face long since dried by the wind, leaving her skin stiff.

"Mengqing... I’m hungry. I want something good to eat... I want a cola..." Zhang Meili’s hoarse voice came from a few feet away. She had cried herself into a stupor and was only now groggily coming to.

"Mom, drink some tap water first. I’ll go get you something to eat." Su Mengqing rubbed her numb, swollen knees and staggered over to her mother. She cupped some water from the tap at the corner of the house and held it to her mother’s lips.

"I don’t want it! I want lobster! I want to drink champagne and red wine!"

SLAP!

Growing more lucid, Zhang Meili suddenly raised her hand and struck Su Mengqing hard across the face. "Go find Lin Fan! Go beg him to take us in, to get revenge for us!"

"Mom, have you still not accepted reality? Wake up! If you want to go, crawl there yourself! I am never going to Lin Fan again!"

SPLASH!

Stunned for a moment, Su Mengqing's own anger flared. She flung the water from her palm into Zhang Meili's face.

"You... you useless thing! You unfilial wretch! You're just like your father, that old bastard! The both of you are heartless and cruel!" Zhang Meili pointed a trembling finger at her daughter, screaming hysterically.

"Fine! Then live by yourself! I'm done caring for you!" Su Mengqing shot to her feet, her eyes filled with profound pain. Gritting her teeth, she prepared to turn and walk away, to finally abandon her ungrateful mother.

"You... you're abandoning me too? Su Mengqing, look into your heart! How dare you do this?" Zhang Meili was shocked. Her eyes immediately filled with panic, and her tone softened. "Mengqing, don't go, please don't go... If you leave, what will your mother do? I'll starve to death right here!"

Hearing this, Su Mengqing froze. With her back still to her mother, she closed her eyes tightly as hot, silent tears streamed down her cheeks.

"It's painful, isn't it? Being relentlessly bound by a mother like this... how could you ever hope to have a future?"

A moment later, a familiar, ice-cold voice emerged from the darkness of the alley. Then, a tall figure with deep blue hair emerged, her indifferent face wearing a sneer of undisguised mockery.

"M-Miss Iguchi Tama?" Su Mengqing's eyes flew open in shock. She never imagined that the woman who had fled the convention center would appear here.

"Don't be nervous. I've come to help you." Iguchi Tama's complexion was pale. She moved as silently as a black cat, approaching the two of them.

Seeing the look of astonishment on Zhang Meili's face as she was about to speak—

SWISH!

Iguchi Tama flicked her sleeve, and a gray, shadowy wisp shot toward Zhang Meili. The woman froze, her mouth agape, rendered immobile. Only her terrified, bewildered eyes could dart back and forth.

Chapter 134, Matricide

"What—what have you done to my mom?"

Seeing this, Su Mengqing's expression changed, and she warily took two steps back. The woman from the Sakura Country standing before her was no pushover. To escape earlier, she had released a great swarm of Poison Insects without any regard for the lives of others, blanketing the entire area!

If she wanted to harm Mom and me, we'd have no way to resist!

"Just a little trick to make your mother shut up."

Iguchi Tama's voice was slightly hoarse, laced with weariness. She coughed softly, a faint trace of blood appearing at the corner of her mouth. Previously forced into a desperate situation by Lin Fan, she'd had no choice but to exhaust all her strength to escape. It had seemed like a close call, narrowly dodging her opponent's attack, but in reality, the fierce, invisible Qi Force had already struck her from afar, penetrating her body.

At this moment, Iguchi Tama felt an unbearable, burning pain in her chest, as if a pair of giant claws had viciously slashed it. She silently marveled at Lin Fan's terrifying power. She had already planned to leave Haicheng immediately and flee back to the Sakura Country, but just before her departure, she suddenly changed her mind.

"Su Mengqing, we're actually two of a kind, and we even share a common enemy: Lin Fan." Iguchi Tama glanced at Zhang Meili, then stared straight into Su Mengqing's eyes. "What's more, we've both been deeply hurt by men..."

Lin Fan's face suddenly appeared before her, gradually overlapping with another younger, more immature face from deep within her memory.

It was an old memory from over a decade ago. Back then, Iguchi Tama was studying abroad. During a wilderness summer camp, she accidentally got separated from her companions and fell off a cliff. When she awoke after a long period of unconsciousness, she found herself face-to-face with a limping young soldier from the Xia Country.

She later learned that this grumpy soldier had also been separated from his unit during a wilderness training exercise near the northern border. As two souls who had fallen on hard times, they thought they could rely on each other. But as soon as the soldier heard Iguchi Tama's fluent Sakura Country dialect, he flew into a rage and stalked off alone. Although they could communicate fluently in a foreign language, they resorted to cursing each other out in their native tongues.

Iguchi Tama, pampered since childhood, was no match for the brutish young Xia Country soldier. She couldn't out-curse him, nor could she best him in a fight. In the end, overwhelmed by a seething, helpless rage, she fainted once again.

When she woke up, it was already dark. Yet the Xia Country soldier hadn't left. He was busy setting her fractured bone with branches, cursing under his breath the entire time. The man appeared extremely conflicted and irritated. In the following days, he still didn't give her a pleasant look. However, he always left her a share of the wild fruit and fresh water he'd painstakingly gathered.

And so, the two people who couldn't stand each other managed to survive in the deep mountains and ancient forests. Though Iguchi Tama was relentless with her words, she found his image taking root in her heart. Sometimes, when she was alone in the cave, she would eagerly await the return of that grumpy face.

Until one morning, the man went out to gather wild vegetables and fruits and never returned. Iguchi Tama waited until nightfall, but when he still didn't appear, she broke down and cried. Fortunately, her cries were heard by her companions who had come searching for her, and she was finally rescued. Like a madwoman, Iguchi Tama begged her companions to search the area, but they found no trace of the Xia Country soldier.

Obviously, the man had finally grown impatient. Feeling burdened by her, he had abandoned her and run off on his own. The faint glimmer of joy in her heart instantly turned into a deep, abiding hatred. Iguchi Tama subsequently made frequent trips to the borders of Northern Daxia, hoping to find him and force him to apologize. However, she never found any trace of him... until she came to Haicheng and inexplicably felt that Lin Fan was very similar to that man. It was why she had taken an intense dislike to Lin Fan at first sight.

But how could that proud and surly Xia Country soldier be anything like Lin Fan, who was willing to endure four full years of disdain from the Su Family?

"Miss Iguchi Tama, you... you mean you want to help me rise again and go against Lin Fan?"

The stream of memories was interrupted by Su Mengqing's astonished voice.

Iguchi Tama's gaze turned cold again as she nodded. "Exactly. I'm willing to support you, to have you replace my brother Iguchi Watanabe and take over as the vice president of Iguchi Pharmaceutical Group. The only condition is that you must join the Holy Poison Sect, like me, and pass my training and tests."

At this declaration, Su Mengqing's pupils trembled, her face flooding with ecstasy. This was truly a turn of fortune; her time had finally come!

"Thank you, thank you, Miss Iguchi Tama, for this opportunity! With four years of rich experience managing Su Pharmaceutical, I am more than capable of handling such a great responsibility!" Su Mengqing took a deep breath to suppress the excitement in her heart, her fists clenched tight.

Lin Fan, are you watching? Exceptional people never complain about their circumstances. I, Su Mengqing, will ultimately rise again and become an existence you can never hope to reach!

"Very good. Confidence is a good thing. I also admire your tenacity; you weren't crushed by Lin Fan." Iguchi Tama nodded in satisfaction, then turned her gaze to Zhang Meili, whose face was also alight with elation. "And now for my first test. I want to see if you're ruthless and decisive enough."

"May I ask... what you need me to do?" Su Mengqing's smile stiffened as a dreadful premonition surfaced in her mind.

"It's simple. Your mother has been controlled by my drugs. She's unable to move or speak, just like a lamb waiting to be slaughtered." Iguchi Tama turned to stare at Su Mengqing, the corners of her mouth curving into a cold smile. "I want you to personally dispose of this burden. Strangle her to death. Right now."

BOOM!

The words struck her like a physical blow, and Su Mengqing staggered backward as if she'd been punched. A few steps away, Zhang Meili's small eyes bulged in shock. The elation on her face froze, instantly draining away to be replaced by a ghastly, panicked pallor. She had thought her daughter, favored by this mysterious woman, was about to soar to great heights. She herself would escape this bitter life and once again enjoy wealth and luxury.

Who could have possibly thought the price for all of this would be her own life?!

No, don't agree, Mengqing, don't do it! I'm your mother, your own mother!

Zhang Meili wanted to scream with all her might, but the only sound that came out was a hoarse rasping in her throat. Tears streamed from her eyes as she frantically darted them about, trying to signal to the increasingly grim-faced Su Mengqing to calm down.

Silence. A deathly silence.

One second, two seconds, three seconds... A full minute passed. For Zhang Meili, who was on tenterhooks, each second stretched into an eternity.

Finally, Su Mengqing took a deep breath, and the conflict in her expression melted into one of resolved acceptance.

Mom, I’m sorry. For my future, I can only sacrifice you...

But before Zhang Meili could breathe a sigh of relief, her daughter’s soft words struck her like a thunderclap, sending a violent tremor through her heart.

No, no, don’t come over here!

Zhang Meili’s face was a mess of tears and snot, and she wet herself instantly. But no matter how pitifully she looked at Su Mengqing, her daughter’s footsteps didn’t stop. And so, with a bizarre, half-crying, half-laughing expression, Su Mengqing walked step by step until she stood directly in front of Zhang Meili.

CRACK! CRACK!

Su Mengqing suddenly bent down, her hands seizing Zhang Meili’s neck! The pressure on her throat tightened, and Zhang Meili gasped for breath, her chubby face turning crimson as she was starved of air. Feeling the oxygen being progressively squeezed from her windpipe, she was in extreme agony, desperately wanting to struggle. But her entire body was rigid; she couldn’t move at all.

In a flash of insight, Zhang Meili immediately held her breath. She rolled her eyes back, pretending to have died from suffocation. Still, Su Mengqing seemed unconvinced, relentlessly tightening her grip. Cold sweat dripped down Zhang Meili’s back as she struggled to hold her breath, terrified of giving herself away.

"Alright. Congratulations, Miss Su Mengqing. You have passed my first test."

Finally, Iguchi Tama’s cold voice came from above. Instantly, Zhang Meili felt the pressure on her throat release. Su Mengqing had let go, collapsing backward onto the ground, gasping for air.

In the gloomy night, the two devil-like figures finally departed.

"Hah... hah..."

Having endured the torturous ordeal, Zhang Meili’s eyes immediately refocused, and she gulped down mouthfuls of fresh air.

Evil spawn, evil spawn... you actually dared to strangle your own mother to death!

She bit her lip hard, covering her face with her hands, trying not to cry out loud. But then, Zhang Meili’s entire body trembled. She stared incredulously at her own hands. The right side of her body, paralyzed for days, had regained its mobility!

Could holding my breath for so long have somehow cleared the blocked blood vessels in my brain? This must be a blessing in disguise from the heavens... But now, I have nothing left. Even if I've miraculously recovered, what good is it?!

She had no home to return to; her husband and children didn't want her. On top of that, she was penniless, and her stomach was growling with hunger.

Wretchedly, Zhang Meili scrambled to her feet, sobbing silently. She looked around helplessly with tear-blurred eyes. In the end, hunger won out over reason. She dragged her feeble body out of the alley and stood beside a large trash bin on the street.

RUSTLE! RUSTLE!

Bending over, she frantically rummaged through the trash. Zhang Meili's face brightened. She was in luck—she'd found a sour bun with a few bites taken out of it.

She stared at it for a moment, swallowing hard. Then, ignoring the strange looks from passersby, she wolfed down the sour bun.

Chapter 135, Follow Brother Fan and eat till you're stuffed!

"Factory Chief Yuan, what the hell are you sleeping for? Get up, get up! Something huge has happened!"

In Southern City, outside the Third Ring Road, stood the Yuandao Furniture Carpentry Factory. In a small partitioned room within the factory chief's office, Yuan Tao was sprawled on the sofa, fast asleep. For the past few days, he had been helping Lin Fan rush the production of those special wooden boxes. Worried that others wouldn't be careful enough, he had personally overseen the work and hadn't slept for two consecutive nights.

Just then, the urgent shouts of Deputy Factory Manager Old Zhou echoed from right above him, accompanied by a vigorous shaking of his shoulders.

"...Piss off, Old Zhou. I'm so tired I can't even keep my eyes open. Whatever it is, it can wait until I wake up!" Yuan Tao grumbled with his eyes closed, sticking his butt out as he shifted into an even more comfortable position.

"It's good news! Monumental news!" Old Zhou exclaimed. "Just now, the finance department rushed over to tell me that Mr. Lin had Miss Yuan transfer two billion directly into our factory's account! They said it's our share of the profits from the procurement conference, to be used as start-up capital. On top of that, nine pharmaceutical giants, including Tianchuan Pharmaceuticals, are going to place continuous, large-volume orders with our factory for those custom-made wooden medicine boxes!"

Having said it all in one breath, Old Zhou's throat was parched. He grabbed the teapot from the coffee table and gulped down a couple of mouthfuls.

With a sudden jolt, Yuan Tao shot upright, his hair a disheveled bird's nest. His eyes, ringed with dark circles, were wide and staring at Old Zhou as if he'd just seen a ghost.

"My sister transferred two billion in dividends to our factory?"

Old Zhou grinned and nodded.

"And-and after this, there will be continuous, large-scale orders from those nine companies, including Tianchuan Pharmaceuticals?" Yuan Tao stammered, all traces of exhaustion vanishing from his face, replaced by pure excitement.

Old Zhou sucked in a sharp breath. "The orders are already coming in! Tianchuan Pharmaceuticals alone wants to preorder an initial batch of two million medicine boxes!"

Before Old Zhou could say more, the phone he was clutching vibrated. He glanced down at the screen, and his face instantly filled with shock as he let out a stream of complaints.

"Damn it, they're only giving us one month! How is that enough time?"

Though he was cursing, the corners of the old man's mouth were pulled up into an irrepressible grin.

"What's there to be afraid of? Don't you have a few friends in the wood decoration business? Outsource some of the orders to them! Let's all get rich together!"

Yuan Tao also laughed, his grin threatening to split his face.

That's Brother Fan for you. He doesn't make a move often, but when he does, he feeds you until you burst! Just landing the first batch of orders from Tianchuan Pharmaceuticals is enough to keep this small factory thriving for years!

Thinking back on all his past interactions with Lin Fan, Yuan Tao couldn't help but feel a swell of pride and secret relief.

Thank goodness my values are straight. Every time, I chose to draw a clear line between myself and my unreliable father, Yuan Ruohai. If I hadn't disowned him for the sake of righteousness so many times, how could I have ever earned Lin Fan's respect?

"Holy shit! The Fang family placed an order too! They want one and a half million medicine boxes, with the same one-month deadline!"

The next moment, Old Zhou's phone buzzed again, displaying another order. The old man trembled, utterly dumbfounded. He and Yuan Tao, whose smile had frozen on his face, stared at each other and gasped in unison.

DING!

Before they could even process it, another order notification arrived. It was from the Meng family, also for over a million boxes, and also due in one month!

DING! DING! DING-DING-DING...

A few moments later, Old Zhou's phone was chiming nonstop. The remaining six companies were all frantically placing their orders!

"Brother Fan! Are you trying to kill me!" Yuan Tao couldn't laugh anymore. He was on the verge of a breakdown, close to tears.

Old Zhou was a mess of laughter and tears, his whole body trembling with excitement.

Orders for tens of millions of medicine boxes! And this is just the first batch!

This small, half-dead Yuandao Furniture Carpentry Factory was about to soar. It was set to become the largest carpentry factory in all of Haicheng, perhaps even in all the Southwest provinces! The output from this quarter alone would rival the total from the past twenty years!

"Congratulations, Factory Chief Yuan! Congratulations! With such an impressive achievement, even President Yuan will have to look at you in a new light from now on!" Old Zhou said, steadying himself and happily congratulating Yuan Tao.

He had to admit, the kid had struck gold. His family had originally sent him here just to keep him busy with a respectable job so he wouldn't get into trouble. Who could have imagined that with a small boost from Lin Fan, he would ascend to such heights? Among the entire younger generation of the Yuan family, perhaps only Yuan Youwei was more outstanding and carried more weight than Yuan Tao did now!

"What's there to be happy about? I was ready to just lie flat and let the factory struggle along, as long as it didn't go bankrupt," Yuan Tao said, his face a mask of misery. He was completely overwhelmed. "Now I have to stare at those damn boxes being made all day. When will I have time to go out and have fun?"

"Well, uh... Factory Chief, there are just too many orders. We need to order the high-quality wood right away!" Old Zhou, not knowing whether to laugh or cry, quickly changed the subject. He put on a cheerful, coaxing smile, terrified that Yuan Tao would find the work too hard and just quit. After all, the only reason the great Mr. Lin was willing to help the factory was out of respect for Yuan Tao!

"Fine, let’s do it. I’ll have someone contact the lumber suppliers. You get in touch with our peers in the industry," Yuan Tao said, rubbing his tired eyes and nodding. "But let me be clear. I don’t care how many kickbacks you take or how many bribes you accept, Old Zhou. But I want you to keep a close eye on the quality of the medicine boxes from any factory we subcontract to!"

His eyes sharpened, and his expression grew stern. "If there are any quality issues, we’ll be letting Brother Fan’s efforts go to waste!"

"Of course not, of course not! Why would I take kickbacks or accept bribes? Factory Chief, Mr. Lin, please rest assured. You can leave it all to me!" Old Zhou’s eyes twitched as he waved his hands with a placating smile.

With such a massive volume of orders to distribute to his contacts, the benefits would naturally be significant. But who would be foolish enough to compromise on the quality of the medicine boxes? As long as the nine pharmaceutical giants’ new drugs sold well, the custom boxes would be a continuous river of wealth, just as Lin Fan had said.

The thought that his career could have such a renaissance right before retirement—and a vibrant, flourishing one at that—filled Old Zhou with an ecstatic joy. He felt so happy he could leap ten feet in the air!

"Sigh, I’m going to be so busy from now on... Farewell, my beloved supermodels at the club," Yuan Tao wailed, shaking his head. Then his expression turned serious, and he held a finger to his lips to shush Old Zhou.

His phone screen had lit up with an incoming call. It was none other than Lin Fan.

"Hello? Brother Fan?" Yuan Tao’s face immediately broke into a respectful, beaming smile as he answered.

"Taozi, did the money and orders arrive?" Lin Fan’s calm voice came from the other end, as if the two billion yuan and the massive orders for tens of millions of medicine boxes were nothing to him.

"Yes, they did! Thank you for your incredible generosity, Brother Fan! I’ll work so hard I’ll be able to find you a beautiful new sister-in-law by next year!" Yuan Tao nodded his head like a chicken pecking at grain.

"...Mr. Wang Sr. just asked me for a favor. If you don’t have any issues on your end, prioritize Tianchuan Pharmaceuticals’ order," Lin Fan said after a brief pause, then hung up.

"Quick! Get everyone moving! Get every single person in the factory on this! Call back everyone on vacation or off-duty! I want them back now!" After hanging up, Yuan Tao roared at Old Zhou, looking as if he’d just been shot full of adrenaline. "If we finish this

batch well, I’m making an executive decision! Everyone in the factory gets a year-end bonus twenty... no, thirty times the usual amount! And we’re holding the year-end celebration early!"

"Yes, yes! I’ll go make the calls right now!" Old Zhou’s pupils constricted in shock, and he nearly bit his tongue.

A thirty-fold year-end bonus! Who wouldn’t go absolutely wild for that? It would be a crime not to work your hardest after a blessing like this from the God of Wealth!

His face lit up with crazed joy as he scurried out the door, yelling at the top of his lungs. The factory, which had been winding down for the day, erupted into a chaotic, bustling hive of activity.

"Damn it all. Everyone used to look down on me, Yuan Tao. Did they really think I was content to just coast through life, waiting to die?" Yuan Tao muttered under his breath, rubbing his face. Beneath his tightly shut, trembling eyelids, a single, hot, bitter tear silently rolled down his cheek.

In this world, who is truly content to just lie flat and give up? It’s just a helpless choice born from bad luck, a way to console oneself. Still, I have to say, it’s best to follow Brother Fan. One meal with him is enough to leave you bursting at the seams!

Chapter 136, Welcome the God of Killing!

"That lad must be over the moon. He said he’ll strive to find me a pretty sister-in-law next year..."

Inside the black Bentley heading toward the Bay Villa District, Lin Fan’s mouth twitched slightly as he put down his phone.

"Aren’t you afraid Young Master Yuan Tao will screw this up?" Mrs. Xue, who was driving, glanced at Lin Fan through the rearview mirror with a hint of skepticism. "With the combined orders from those nine companies, forget a small workshop. Even the largest woodworking enterprise in Haicheng would struggle to handle it."

"Trust those you employ. Don’t employ those you distrust," Lin Fan said calmly. "Although Taozi is a bit of a playboy, his values are sound. Besides, I specifically had him oversee the production process for the wooden medicine box samples, and his level of dedication exceeded my expectations."

"So, my cousin, the one everyone in the family looks down on, has passed your test and caught your eye?" Yuan Youwei’s eyes lit up, and she couldn’t help but burst into a charming laugh.

I must say, Lin Fan is quite interesting. The Yuan family isn't lacking in talented young men. Of all people, why did he pick Yuan Tao, that good-for-nothing? If the family knew that he had soared to the top with just a little help from Lin Fan, taking control of a massive woodworking factory with an output worth tens of billions... anyone would be green with envy, half-dead from frustration!

"I suppose so... Even if Taozi messes it up, those nine pharmaceutical companies wouldn't dare say much." Lin Fan looked at Yuan Youwei and shook his head. "As long as I'm the only one who can provide the specialized medicine boxes, I essentially hold their lifeline. And I owe him for what he did at my mother's memorial hall. He stood his ground with you, gritting his teeth to stop those thugs who wanted to trash the place. I don't care how others see him. All I know is that I, Lin Fan, always repay my debts."

His voice was calm and not loud, but it thundered in the ears of Mrs. Xue and Yuan Youwei like a great bell.

Yuan Youwei was stunned into silence. She never would have imagined that Yuan Tao's incredible stroke of luck was simply because he had stood up for Lin Fan that one time.

Mrs. Xue was also quite moved. She pulled her gaze away from the rearview mirror and focused on driving.

Not long after, the black Bentley entered the courtyard of the standalone villa at Bay Number One, where it was stopped at the guardhouse.

"Hello, we've come specifically to visit Mr. Huang Sr. Could you please announce us?" Yuan Youwei rolled down the window and explained with a smile to the wary-looking guard.

"Please wait a moment," the guard said emotionlessly before quickly relaying the visitor information to the Huang family's butler.

A moment later, the man put down his phone and shook his head at Yuan Youwei. "I'm sorry, Mr. Huang Sr. said he doesn't want to see you. Please leave."

"This..." Yuan Youwei's smile froze. She and Mrs. Xue exchanged a look, their expressions turning sour.

It had to be said, Huang Jiacheng carried himself with immense authority, and he had the credentials to back it up. Although his status in Haicheng wasn't on par with Mr. Yuan Sr. or Wang Tianchuan, he was still one of the four great magnates and had earned the title "Land King." That was more than enough for the old man to look down on everyone with imperious disdain.

"Please tell Mr. Huang Sr. that Lin Fan has come seeking medicine. If he's willing to part with the Green Phoenix Vine in his possession, he can name any price," Lin Fan said, frowning slightly.

Seeing the clue to the long-sought Green Phoenix Vine so close, how could he possibly give up so easily?

"Who do you think you are, talking so big? Mr. Huang Sr. is the Land King of Haicheng, with assets in the hundreds of billions. Do you really think he cares about your measly offer?" the first guard hesitated, not immediately agreeing. After all, these visitors are all distinguished, clearly not ordinary people. And this black Bentley is a top-of-the-line model with signs of customization. It must be worth at least ten million. Is that something an ordinary person can afford?

But before the guard could speak again, another, plumper guard grew impatient. He strode over, his hands behind his back, and rolled his eyes at Lin Fan. "Hmph, don't think you can get through the Huang family's gates just because you're driving a luxury car with two beautiful women. I've seen plenty of your type. Don't you know what kind of place this is? It's not somewhere any Tom, Dick, or Harry can just waltz into."

The plump guard's gaze lingered on Yuan Youwei and Mrs. Xue, and he was momentarily stunned by their beauty. When he turned back to Lin Fan, his expression soured as he began to mock him.

We're the same age, so what gives you the right to be so impressive? Of course, I'm not too shabby myself. Even a gatekeeper for a powerful family has some clout! I've stopped countless people just like you. In the end, don't they all have to kiss up to me and hope I'm in a good mood?

"Hiss... Wait, did you say you're Lin Fan?"

The next moment, before Lin Fan could respond, the first guard's eyes flew open, and he sucked in a sharp, cold breath. "Fatso, you don't even know who he is? This is the man who single-handedly crushed Black Tiger Hall! They say he even killed Lord Hu's only son, Chen Biao! Afterwards, Lord Hu didn't dare to cause him any trouble. In fact, he's vanished, hiding somewhere and not daring to even make a peep. He hasn't been seen in a long time!"

As realization dawned, the first guard was terrified. He quickly pulled the fat guard aside, whispering frantically.

W-what? That ordinary-looking guy... is the number one powerhouse of Haicheng's underworld, the God of Killing, Lin Fan?!

The fat guard's knees went weak, and his mind exploded. His beady eyes bulged, and he nearly collapsed.

What have I just done? I just mocked a man that ferocious? Even the notorious Black Tiger Hall, which terrorized Haicheng for years, was destroyed by him. I must have a death wish!

"Brother Fan, Grandpa Fan! It was I, Fatty, I was blind and didn't recognize a great man! This worthless mouth of mine... I deserve a beating!"

THUD!

Trembling, the fat guard forced a smile that was uglier than a grimace. He rushed to Lin Fan's car window and dropped to his knees.

SMACK!

Without a moment's hesitation, he slapped himself hard across the face.

"A misunderstanding, Mr. Lin! You're our number one idol! Who doesn't know your name around here?" the first guard explained as he scurried over, his face plastered with an eager, beaming smile.

"Everyone, get out here! Get out here and pay your respects to our idol, Brother Lin!" the fat guard bellowed toward the guardhouse, ignoring the twitch at the corner of Lin Fan's mouth.

WHOOSH!

Instantly, a dozen guards in security uniforms poured out of the building. They stared at Lin Fan, their eyes wide with unrestrained awe, as if they were marveling at some priceless treasure.

"...Do I really look that intimidating?" Lin Fan asked Yuan Youwei and Mrs. Xue, his expression utterly exasperated.

Both women snickered, burying their faces as they tried to stifle their laughter.

"Brother Lin, please! I'll take responsibility. Just drive on in. If there's any trouble, it's on me!" Seeing that Lin Fan wasn't angry, the fat guard let out a quiet sigh of relief. He then waddled back into the guardhouse and pressed the button to open the gate.

"There's no need, especially if it's going to cause you trouble." Facing the guard's fawning smile, Lin Fan shook his head, declining the offer to drive straight into the Huang family's villa courtyard. "Just remember this for the future: don't look down on people. Not everyone will be as patient as I am."

"Yes, yes! I'll take our idol's teachings to heart! Heh heh, but don't you worry. My uncle is our supervisor, so he won't give me any trouble," the fat guard replied, his body

shuddering as his face burned with shame. He gave an embarrassed little laugh and again gestured for Lin Fan and the others to proceed.

"...Alright. Thank you, then." Lin Fan hesitated for a moment before accepting. After all, a clue to the miraculous Green Phoenix Vine was at stake. He had to find a way to get it from the Land King, Huang Jiacheng.

As the dozen guards stood at attention in a respectful farewell salute, the black Bentley's engine roared to life. It sped through the checkpoint and onto the tree-lined avenue leading to the Huang family estate.

Chapter 137: Is the Green Phoenix Vine in the Imperial Capital?

"Mr. Huang Sr., Mr. Lin Fan and Miss Yuan are not who they used to be. According to rumors, they've already partnered with the Wang and Fang families, along with the other nine major pharmaceutical companies."

At this moment, in the courtyard of the Huang family's luxurious standalone villa, a tall, thin middle-aged steward stood in the living room. Looking perplexed, he tried to persuade Huang Jiacheng.

"Although they are young, they've already achieved extraordinary things. It's not worth it for our Huang family to have a public falling-out with them."

"Hmph, what do you know? Their visit is just a pretense. They really want that rare Green Phoenix Vine," Huang Jiacheng snorted, his expression grim.

"That old coot, Wang Tianchuan, sold me the Green Phoenix Vine for a sky-high price years ago, and he promised he'd never reveal my identity as the buyer to another soul." As he spoke, the old man grew visibly angrier, downing a large gulp from his teacup. "In any case, my family's business is completely unrelated to them. Even if we have a falling out, what can they possibly do to me?"

Recalling the scenes from that morning at the International Convention and Exhibition Center, Huang Jiacheng's face burned with shame, and his heart churned with vexation. At the time, he had been planning to stay neutral and just watch the tigers fight from the mountain. Who would have thought that Wen Zheyang and Iguchi Tama would step forward to openly support Wang Tianchuan, clearly siding with Su Mengqing? After a brief hesitation, he was somehow bewitched and chose their side. The result was that Su Mengqing, that worthless oaf, was utterly crushed by Lin Fan, powerless to fight back! He even staged a drama of being deserted by everyone in front of a crowd of high-society figures! Not only did it leave Wang Tianchuan and the others completely disgraced, but he

also lost a great deal of face and was nearly left in an impossible situation. To top it off, that old bastard Yuan Tianguang seized the opportunity to mock him relentlessly!

Now, with Lin Fan and the others at his door, Huang Jiacheng felt a mix of dislike and embarrassment at the thought of facing them.

Back then, he couldn't even stand to watch the entire new drug launch conference and had to slip away quietly. As a result, when rumors later spread about Lin Fan's battle with Iguchi Tama and his annihilation of dozens of martial arts experts from the Sakura Country, Huang Jiacheng had dismissed them with scorn.

"This is bad! The guards at the gate have lost their minds—they let Lin Fan's group through!"

Just then, the middle-aged steward stared at his phone, his face draining of color.

What? Lin Fan and his group broke through?

CRASH!

Huang Jiacheng's eyes flew open. He violently slammed his teacup onto the floor, shattering it to pieces.

"Quick! Activate the estate's security system! You must stop them!" The old man was on the verge of a frenzy, grinding his teeth so hard they audibly clicked.

I'd already given them the cold shoulder, yet they still managed to force their way in. If word of this gets out, the Huang family's prestige will become a laughingstock!

"Mr. Huang Sr., we... we probably can't stop them!" a lean man in a black suit with a wireless Bluetooth earpiece said as he walked over, his expression pained.

His name was Ah Qiang, and he was the head of the Huang family villa's security team. Having survived years of life-and-death combat as a mercenary, he was an ultra-powerful soldier king who had crawled out of a mountain of corpses and a sea of blood. However, even this fierce individual was so intimidated by Lin Fan's fearsome reputation as the "God of Killing" that he didn't dare to stand in their way.

"Ah Qiang, what are you talking about? The Huang family spends over a hundred million on security every year, and this is how you repay me?" Seeing this, Huang Jiacheng's eyes twitched, so furious he felt his nose was crooked.

Damn it! We haven't even made a move, and you lot, who are usually so unbearably arrogant, have already chickened out?

"Mr. Huang Sr., I have a friend who was on duty at the convention center. He just showed me a video of Lin Fan's fight with those dozens of martial arts experts from the Sakura Country," Ah Qiang explained, swallowing hard as a look of deep reverence filled his eyes. "With his bare fists, Lin Fan moved through them as if they weren't even there, unleashing an overwhelming slaughter upon the group from the Sakura Country. He is undoubtedly a peak martial arts expert, the likes of which are rarely seen in this world! Forget about us! Even a squad of a hundred elite soldiers wouldn't be enough for him to chew on!"

HISS...

At these words, the middle-aged steward stared, utterly dumbfounded. Huang Jiacheng's expression flickered between pale and grim, and he quietly sucked in a breath of cold air.

That son of a bitch is really that ferocious? If I truly enrage Lin Fan, who in this entire estate could protect my old life?

"...Forget it. After all, we're all part of the Haicheng Business Community, constantly bumping into each other. It's not good to completely tear things apart." After a long moment of hesitation, Huang Jiacheng took a deep breath, forcing down his anger and unease. He turned away and, steeling himself, waved his hand, signaling the steward to show them in.

A moment later, with a conflicted expression, the steward led Lin Fan and his two companions into the living room.

"Mr. Huang Sr., my apologies for the unannounced visit," Yuan Youwei said with a smile, greeting Huang Jiacheng, who was seated on the sofa. When she noticed the old man's sour expression, the curve of her red lips deepened, and her smile widened.

"I know why you're here. There's no need for pleasantries," Huang Jiacheng said. He picked up a fresh cup of tea and leisurely blew on the scalding surface, speaking without even looking up. "Director Lin, it's not that I'm unwilling to part with it, but... my little granddaughter has already consumed that Green Phoenix Vine."

What? It's already been consumed?

Yuan Youwei's smile froze. She exchanged a look with Mrs. Xue, both of them clearly skeptical.

"Mr. Huang Sr., I heard you bought that Green Phoenix Vine for feng shui purposes," Lin Fan said, silently frowning as he patiently tried to persuade him. "If you are willing to part with it, I, Lin Fan, may not have much else, but my medical skills are respectable. I will treat members of the Huang family three times."

"I appreciate the offer, but you're a step too late. The herb has been used, and I don't have another." Huang Jiacheng took a sip of tea, a flash of vengeful satisfaction in his eyes.

Hmph, so what if you're the great Lin Fan? I, Huang Jiacheng, the land king of Haicheng, am no pushover. I can send you packing with just a few casual words!

"It's getting late. I won't keep you. Lai Fu, see our guests out!"

"You... you...!" Yuan Youwei's lovely face turned ugly. Just as she was about to speak, Lin Fan raised a hand to stop her.

If the other party refuses to show any respect, there's no point in forcing it. Staying any longer would just be more humiliating...

Lin Fan's eyes flickered. He took one last, deep look at the secretly smug Huang Jiacheng, then turned to leave.

"The three of you, this way please," the middle-aged steward known as Lai Fu said, forcing a smile as he gestured toward the door.

After they left the living room, Yuan Youwei caught up to Lin Fan, her beautiful eyes filled with resentment and unwillingness. "Are we just leaving like this? What about the poison in your body?"

"We'll find a way to make Mr. Huang Sr. talk," Lin Fan said, then looked at Yuan Youwei with some surprise. "Why do I feel like you're more anxious than I am?"

"You... Get away from me! I'm just... I'm worried about your health!" Yuan Youwei's face flushed red as she gave him an adorable eye-roll.

How could I not be anxious? The situation in Sha Country is about to stabilize, which means that Crown Princess Adele might be back soon. By that time, if I still haven't managed to get Lin Fan into bed...

Yuan Youwei bit her red lip. Flustered and annoyed, she couldn't stop herself from giving Lin Fan a light punch.

"Ahem! Miss, where are we heading now?" Mrs. Xue coughed pointedly, indicating that the Huang family's steward was still following them. She wanted Yuan Youwei to be more mindful of her actions and not flirt so openly with Lin Fan.

Before Yuan Youwei could respond, the middle-aged Huang family steward stepped forward, a hesitant look on his face. "...Mr. Lin, could we talk alone?" he whispered.

Seeing the man's expression, Lin Fan's mind stirred. "You two go wait in the car," he told Yuan Youwei and Mrs. Xue.

After watching the two women walk away with puzzled expressions, the steward led Lin Fan behind a rockery and fountain. He glanced around nervously to make sure they weren't being watched, then gritted his teeth and continued in a low voice.

"Mr. Lin, in truth, the Green Phoenix Vine is still alive and well. The old master's granddaughter didn't consume it! I'm sure of it. The Green Phoenix Vine was taken to the Imperial Capital. It's planted in the Third Miss's private chambers!"

Chapter 138, then die once more!

"Green Phoenix Vine, Imperial Capital..."

At those words, Lin Fan's gaze became distant for a moment. The very mention of the Imperial Capital sent his thoughts surging, and memories of the past flashed rapidly through his mind.

Could this be the destiny that fate has arranged?

He had fled his homeland for a full seven years. And now, because of a Green Phoenix Vine, was he to go against his mother's dying wish?

"You're betraying the Huang family like this. Aren't you afraid of being punished later?" Regaining his composure, Lin Fan stared at the middle-aged steward and asked calmly. "Or is this Mr. Huang Sr.'s idea, deliberately setting a trap for me?"

The man was a complete stranger. Why would he suddenly be so kind as to divulge such top-secret information? Lin Fan was no fool; he wouldn't be so easily deceived.

"No, no, Mr. Lin, you misunderstand me..." The middle-aged steward hastily waved his hands with a bitter laugh. "I happened to overhear that you urgently need the Green Phoenix Vine as an antidote, so I steeled myself to tell you, even at the risk of my own life."

"I know this is a betrayal of the Huang family... but a man has to live by his conscience. I can't just stand by and watch you succumb to the poison, Mr. Lin."

"You might not know this, but at the International Convention and Exhibition Center today, my daughter was the 'lucky audience member' chosen by the Fang family." At this, the middle-aged steward's eyes filled with gratitude, and he bowed deeply to Lin Fan. "If it weren't for your timely help, using that medicinal powder to reduce the swelling and neutralize the corrosion on my daughter's face... The hospital said that if we had been just a few minutes later, her face would have been ruined. Her entire life would have been over!"

"...So that was your daughter." Hearing this, Lin Fan's brow relaxed, and he nodded. He had a faint impression of the female audience member. Thinking back carefully, her features did bear some resemblance to the man before him. He was probably telling the truth.

"Alright. I, Lin Fan, owe you a favor. If you ever run into trouble, you can come directly to me," Lin Fan said solemnly, giving the man his mobile number.

"Thank you, Mr. Lin! I just couldn't bear to see a good person like you be manipulated." The middle-aged steward's eyes lit up, and he thanked Lin Fan profusely once more.

"The Third Miss is named Huang Xiaoya. She's a fourth-year student at the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine. Frail and sickly since childhood, she dreams of returning after her studies to save others who are tormented by illness."

"That Green Phoenix Vine was acquired by Mr. Huang Sr. after a great deal of effort, following the guidance of a sage. It's said that if Miss Xiaoya keeps it by her side every night, absorbing its spiritual energy and plant essence, her constitution can improve."

"Because of her health, she doesn't live in the school dormitory but resides alone in a courtyard house near the university. Here is the address." The middle-aged steward spoke quickly, handing over a slip of paper. "Mr. Lin, Miss Xiaoya is a kind person, and she is very polite to us servants. If you can help cure her, she would absolutely hand over the Green Phoenix Vine."

"Alright, I've got it. As it happens, I'll be heading to the Imperial Capital in a couple of days on business," Lin Fan said, taking the note and nodding. He couldn't help but think of what Yuan Youwei had mentioned before: that she and Mr. Yuan Sr. would be going to the Wen family in the Imperial Capital to personally call off the engagement.

"Then I wish you complete success on your trip to the Imperial Capital, Mr. Lin!" the middle-aged steward said, nodding happily. He bowed deeply to Lin Fan one last time before hurrying away.

***

"Did that man want something from you? Is Mr. Huang Sr. up to his old tricks again?"

After leaving the courtyard gate, Lin Fan returned to the black Bentley. The car started and sped away. Yuan Youwei, who had been holding her tongue for a while, finally couldn't resist her curiosity and asked. Even Mrs. Xue, who was driving, silently watched the backseat through the rearview mirror.

"Yes. The man told me the Green Phoenix Vine is with the Third Miss, Huang Xiaoya. It's in the Imperial Capital," Lin Fan replied candidly, not hiding anything. "If I can cure Huang Xiaoya, I should be able to get the vine."

He turned his head and stared blankly through the window at the dark, heavy sky in the direction of the Imperial Capital.

It seemed this trip to the Imperial Capital was unavoidable.

Seven years had passed; things and people had changed. How was he to face those old acquaintances... and the Ying family, those beasts who had inflicted upon him such deep-seated hatred?

「At this moment, in the Second Ring Area of the Imperial Capital.」

In the spacious and bright Wuyi Alley, deep within a sprawling former Royal Mansion, lights blazed. Servants of the Ying family moved in a line, carrying platters of various delicacies to a long dining table.

"Mom, it’s really Xiao Fan and Sister Suxin! To think the two of them actually managed to survive for seven years!"

At the head of the table, a beautiful woman in a moon-white cheongsam smiled and chatted, her captivating, clear eyes shifting away from the screen of a tablet computer. Her name was Shen Yueli, the second wife of Ying Wenyuan, the Family Head, and the current powerful mistress of the Ying family.

On the screen, a high-definition video was still playing. It was, in fact, the grand funeral procession where Lin Fan held Lin Suxin’s memorial portrait.

"It seems Sister Suxin and Xiao Fan are truly fortunate. What a pity they couldn’t have a family reunion. If Wen Yuan knew, he would be quite sad, wouldn’t he?" Shen Yueli sighed, tossing the tablet to a steward and turning to a dignified old woman beside her.

"Hmph. A scheming seductress with ulterior motives, and an unfilial spawn who rebelliously betrayed his family. They faked their deaths to escape, but they couldn’t evade the judgment of heaven," the dignified woman sneered, a flash of intense hatred in her gloomy, triangular eyes.

She was Ying Wenyuan’s biological mother, the powerful Old Dowager of the Ying family. In the Imperial Capital, she was a renowned Iron Lady with an iron grip. On the surface, Ying Wenyuan was the Family Head, but in reality, all the power in the family was still held tightly in the hands of Mrs. Ying Sr.

"Shameless wretches, the both of them. Good riddance! I’m glad they’re dead and gone!" Mrs. Ying Sr. raised her wine glass, gesturing to a man in a black suit across the table. "Please forgive the display, Mr. Kim Soohwan. It’s rather distasteful to air our family’s old scandals at the dinner table."

"Old Dowager, you jest," the man known as Kim Soohwan replied, quickly raising his glass. He spoke fluent Xia language with a distinctive Goryeo accent. "Your family is the foremost noble house in the Imperial Capital. Any little stir here is major news that would shock the entire Xia Country!"

"Alas, Xiao Fan really is something," Shen Yueli said, a smile on her lips but a hint of resentment in her eyes. "It would have been better if he had simply stayed dead back then. The state even gave him a national funeral, which everyone knew about."

"And now he deliberately makes Sister Suxin's funeral a grand affair, causing a sensation throughout the Southwest provinces. Isn't he just trying to attract everyone's attention and embarrass the Da Xia Military?"

Having said her piece, she chuckled and shook her head, then casually instructed the steward waiting nearby, "The Young Master intends to reveal himself publicly. As his family, we can't allow him to make such a foolish mistake."

"Shall we send someone to Haicheng to have the Young Master... die a second time?" Shen Yueli's confidant immediately understood, bowing with a smile. "Please rest assured, Madam and Old Dowager. I will handle it beautifully and ensure the Family Head faces no criticism!"

"By the way, the Hai City Yuan Family and the Yun City Shen Family seem to hold Xiao Fan in high regard," Shen Yueli said, her beautiful eyes narrowing as she smiled at Kim Soohwan.

This man's status was extraordinary. He was the second son of the patriarch of the Kim family, a giant chaebol in modern Goryeo. His visit to the Ying family was to negotiate a partnership. The fact that he was being honored with a family banquet attended by the two most powerful women of the Ying household was enough to show the importance the Ying family placed on him.

"Mr. Kim, isn't your family's Guxin Group also planning to enter the Traditional Chinese Medicine market?"

"Is Mrs. Shen willing to help?" Kim Soohwan asked, momentarily stunned before his face lit up with eager anticipation.

"I vaguely recall that the Yun City Shen Family is a distant, collateral branch of my Imperial Capital Shen Family," Shen Yueli said, raising her glass with a smile. "It's just that so many generations have passed that we lost contact long ago."

"Since they are a branch of my Shen family, they must acknowledge the main branch in the Imperial Capital as their superior. I shall take the liberty, on my father's behalf, of offering the Yun City Shen Family's Yunhai Pharmaceuticals to you, Mr. Kim. Consider it a small token for you to play with, a gift to mark our first meeting."

Turning her head, Shen Yueli and Mrs. Ying Sr. exchanged a knowing smile.

"Mother, although Sister Suxin has been struck from the Ying family's genealogy, she was still Wen Yuan's first wife. How can we allow her to be buried in a remote place like Haicheng?"

"Send someone to Haicheng tonight! Bring my Sister Suxin's remains back!"

(End of Volume One, "Returning to Oneself." Please look forward to Volume Two, "I Am Not a Deserter.")

Chapter 139. Good son-in-law, save me quickly!

The black Bentley left the Bay Villa District and drove under the bustling city lights.

Inside the car, Yuan Youwei held a tablet, reporting to Lin Fan with a serious expression. "By the way, all of Yuan Ruoshan's assets have been tallied, along with those of the other guys who bet against you... All told, it's just over three hundred million. Yuan Ruoshan was quite the big catch; he alone contributed about two hundred million."

Lin Fan shook his head. "Money is just a number to me now. What I want is complete control over Yuandao Pharmaceuticals so I can change the atmosphere of Haicheng's pharmaceutical industry. From now on, Su Pharmaceutical will be responsible for procuring top-quality medicinal materials, while Yuandao Pharmaceuticals will deal with those nine companies."

Hearing this, Yuan Youwei tilted her head thoughtfully. "How about we change Su Pharmaceutical's name? What about... Fan Wei Pharmaceutical? It sounds smooth and nice, don't you think?"

"Miss, I think it would be better to call it Aifan Pharmaceutical. That's a bit more direct and easier for people to understand," Mrs. Xue chimed in from the driver's seat, her tone laced with sarcasm as she glanced at them in the rearview mirror.

Yuan Youwei's fair face flushed slightly. "That... isn't a bad idea, either," she murmured, yet she brazenly stared right at Lin Fan.

"I never actually intended to take Su Pharmaceutical for myself," Lin Fan said, his body stiffening slightly as he turned to look out the window at the nightscape. "Mr. Su Sr. was kind to my mother and me. I can't usurp his life's work."

Yuan Youwei froze, her beautiful eyes filling with undisguised resentment. "You're not thinking of giving Su Pharmaceutical back to Su Mengqing, are you? I don't care! I absolutely forbid it!"

Lin Fan's mouth twitched, his expression one of exasperation. "Who said I was giving it back to Su Mengqing? The Su Family still has Stubborn Su Gang, don't they? When he returns from Sha Country, I'll transfer the position of legal representative to him."

"...That's a clever little scheme. Are you trying to copy Su Mengqing's methods and make Stubborn Su Gang take the fall for you?" Mrs. Xue said without turning around, secretly rolling her eyes.

"Transferring the legal representative is just the first step," Lin Fan said calmly. "When the time is right, I will return all of Su Pharmaceutical. But if he still proves that a leopard can't change its spots, then I'll have no choice but to continue safeguarding Mr. Su Sr.'s life's work for him."

"Hmph. You talk a big game, but you're just..." Mrs. Xue huffed, still clearly annoyed with Lin Fan and looking for an argument.

SCREECH!

Suddenly, her eyes flew wide open and she slammed on the brakes.

A burly figure suddenly darted out from across the street, which was lined with snack stalls. Hot on her heels were several cursing stall owners.

"I don't think I hit anyone..." Mrs. Xue murmured, her voice uncertain. She released the steering wheel, preparing to get out and check.

"I'll go with you," Lin Fan said, also pushing his door open. "If we really did hit her, I might be able to keep her stable until we can get her to a hospital for emergency treatment."

That fleeting glimpse of the figure felt strangely familiar... Like someone who shouldn't be here.

"It's her! That's her! The damned old hag ate without paying and even spat in my mala tang pot!"

"She stole a takeout order from my shop, too! She's damn fast!"

"She snatched the milk tea right out of my daughter's hands after she only had two sips! It scared my daughter to tears!"

The men and women who had given chase were now gathered around the front of the black Bentley, punching and kicking a pathetic figure whimpering on the ground.

Lin Fan pushed through the crowd, his brow furrowing as he stared at the disheveled, obese woman's back. "...Zhang Meili?"

According to Su Mengqing, shouldn't Zhang Meili be paralyzed and bedridden in the Su family's old house? How did she end up here, scrounging for food and drink like a street rat everyone wants to beat?

Yuan Youwei, who had followed him, was stunned for a moment before letting out a wry laugh and shaking her head. "Looks like it really is Su Mengqing's mother... Tsk tsk. She looks like a beggar. Has Su Mengqing completely abandoned her?"

"I say she deserves it," Mrs. Xue said with disgust, scanning Zhang Meili's large frame from top to bottom. "She suddenly bolted across the street just now and nearly scared me to death!" Seeing no signs that she'd actually been hit by the car, Mrs. Xue let out a long sigh of relief.

Just then, one of the stall owners noticed Lin Fan's group. "Hey, are you three with her?" he demanded with a scowl. The others who had been beating Zhang Meili also stopped, turning to look at them with hostile expressions.

Before Lin Fan could respond, Zhang Meili, who had been wailing and sobbing from the beating, suddenly shrieked, "No, I'm not Zhang Meili! I... I don't know them!" She curled into a ball, clutching her head like a frightened hedgehog, clearly unwilling to let the three of them see her in such a miserable state.

After a moment of silence, a complex expression flickered across Lin Fan's face. "Seems we've made a mistake," he said, turning to leave. "Please, continue. In fact, give her a few kicks for me."

Yuan Youwei and Mrs. Xue exchanged a look, nodding with undisguised glee. "That's right, our mistake. Hope you have a good time beating her. Heh."

What the hell is going on? They obviously recognized that crazy woman, yet they want us to beat her harder?

The group of stall owners stared at each other, utterly baffled. They had thought someone had finally shown up to pay for the damages. But this?

The man who had spoken first noticed the trio's luxury car and couldn't hold back any longer. "Hey! Stop right there! If you don't compensate us, I'll... I'll really beat this crazy woman to a pulp!"

"That’s right!" the others chimed in, realizing their opportunity. "If you don’t pay us at least a hundred thousand, this isn’t over!"

"My mala tang stall is a time-honored brand, decades old! Its reputation is completely ruined because of that woman’s spit!"

The others quickly caught on and started yelling at the top of their lungs, as if trying to make sure the entire snack street could hear them. The commotion attracted a crowd of passersby, who gradually gathered around and blocked the street completely.

Amid the strange stares of the crowd, Lin Fan stopped and turned around. With a blank expression, he jerked his chin toward Zhang Meili’s back. "Fine. You do it. If you beat her to death, I’ll take responsibility for the cremation and burial."

Holy hell, what kind of monstrous words are those? She just stole a little food, and you’re acting like you want her beaten to death?

Hearing this, the stall owners grew even more bewildered, exchanging incredulous glances. The man who had spoken first, however, was unwilling to back down. He craned his neck and yelled defiantly, "Fine! Then I’m really going to do it!" He still thought Lin Fan was speaking in reverse, deliberately trying to provoke him.

"Here, use this," Lin Fan said, looking around. He hooked his toe under a dark red brick that was propping up a table leg, flicking it into the air as if it were alive. He casually caught it, took two steps forward, and offered it to the man. "One hit with this, and I guarantee you’ll crack her head open."

"You... You’re fucking sick! Fuck!" the man snarled, his face flushing crimson. Jeers, taunts, and boos erupted from the crowd as he snatched the brick from Lin Fan. Thoroughly enraged by the humiliation, he started walking. One step, two steps, three... He ignored his companions, whose faces had drained of color as they desperately tried to signal him with their eyes. He just kept walking until he stood behind the trembling Zhang Meili, the brick raised high.

"Aaah! Don’t hit me! Don’t hit me! Lin Fan! Lin Fan, my dear son-in-law, save me! Save me!" Zhang Meili began to tremble more and more violently. Finally, just as the man grit his teeth and swung his arm back to smash the brick down on her, she let out a scream like a stuck pig.

She scrambled over to Lin Fan and threw herself at his feet. "My dear son-in-law! Oh, my dear son-in-law! You’re the only one who can save your mother now!" she shrieked, clinging desperately to his pant leg, sobbing wretchedly as if she were in unbearable agony.

Chapter 140, realize your mistake now?

"Who are you? We don’t even know you!" Lin Fan’s eyebrows furrowed in disgust as he forcefully pulled his arm away from Zhang Meili’s filthy hand.

Yuan Youwei smirked and deliberately raised her voice. "I-I’m Zhang Meili! I’m Su Mengqing’s mom!"

Sobbing hysterically, Zhang Meili tried to grab the leg of Lin Fan’s crisp, tailored trousers. However, before she could get close, Mrs. Xue stepped in her way with a cold expression.

"Didn’t you just say you weren’t Zhang Meili?"

Lin Fan glanced down at the two greasy handprints on his trousers, feeling a pang of annoyance. Yuan Youwei had this suit custom-made for me. It’s ruined after only one day.

"I... I... my dear son-in-law, you can’t be like those heartless beasts and abandon your own mother!" Zhang Meili’s plump body trembled, her face flushing crimson as she began to wail even louder and more pitifully.

"That’s enough," Lin Fan cut her off, his expression growing icy. "I’ve already divorced Su Mengqing. There’s nothing between us anymore."

He was so angry he could only laugh. She used to find fault with everything, nitpicking constantly. She was always pushing Su Mengqing to divorce me. Worse, she was an ungrateful wretch who had completely ignored my mother, Lin Suxin, turning a blind eye to whether she lived or died. Now, she’s finally been abandoned by everyone, reduced to a beggar fighting for scraps on the street. And ridiculously, she has the nerve to call herself ’Mom’? The audacity! Where does she get the gall? She’s utterly shameless!

Ignoring Zhang Meili’s desperate, pleading gaze, Lin Fan turned to the small crowd that had gathered. "Don’t look at me. If you want to hit her, go ahead. She deserves it even if you beat her to death." With that, he glanced at the onlookers with their mixed expressions before turning to leave.

"No, don’t go! Please don’t abandon me! Lin Fan, I was wrong! I’m not human! I, Zhang Meili, am an ungrateful wretch, an old beast!"

THUD!

The expression on Zhang Meili’s fat face changed dramatically. She scrambled to her feet and dropped to her knees, facing Lin Fan’s departing back. She began banging her head frantically on the pavement, wailing with regret. As if afraid Lin Fan’s anger wasn’t appeased, she lifted her swollen forehead and began slapping her own face with both hands, hitting herself with incredible force.

"What’s going on?" one bystander whispered. "Isn’t she that young man’s mother-in-law? Why is she kneeling and kowtowing to her son-in-law?"

"What's so strange about that? Didn't you see them get out of that black Bentley? She probably saw that her son-in-law is rich now and wants to suck up to him."

"Hmph, showing up looking like a beggar... If it were me, I wouldn't acknowledge such a filthy mother-in-law in public either!"

The surrounding crowd pointed and gossiped, their gazes filled with disgust and contempt. Zhang Meili's eyes burned with humiliation and grief, her face a fiery red, though it was hard to tell if it was from the slaps or from the unbearable shame.

SLAP! SLAP! SLAP!

Her hands never stopped. In just a moment, she had slapped her own fat face until her mouth and nose were bleeding and it was swollen like a pig's head.

"Lin Fan, my good son-in-law, I truly know I was wrong! I'll kowtow to your mother in apology! I deserve to be beaten, I deserve to die! Please, please have mercy on me!"

While still slapping herself, Zhang Meili crawled on her knees to block the black Bentley's path.

"I can't lose you again! That beast, Su Mengqing, was tricked by some blue-haired woman who appeared out of nowhere! She only said a few words and completely bewitched Su Mengqing into thinking I was a burden holding back her future! She even wanted to strangle me to death! Luckily, I was clever and played dead to survive. Now I'm homeless and wandering the streets! This must be my just deserts!"

The more she spoke, the more tragically she cried, her tears carving clean streaks down her disheveled, filthy cheeks.

"...So now you admit you were wrong? Where were you before?" Lin Fan stared coldly at the sobbing woman from inside the car, his gaze like he was looking at a corpse. "If you had visited my mother even once while she was in the hospital, I might have found it in my heart to forgive you."

"Ignore her," he commanded Mrs. Xue. "Drive."

Mrs. Xue remained silent, her expression just as icy as she started the car without hesitation. The engine roared to life, and two powerful beams from the headlights cut through the darkness, shining right in Zhang Meili's eyes and forcing her to squint and stumble out of the way.

"No, don't go! Don't abandon me! Lin Fan, whatever you want, I... I'll agree to anything!" Zhang Meili scrambled forward again, desperately clinging to the window as it began to roll up. She jogged alongside the moving car, pleading with him.

"Fine," Lin Fan said, suppressing his rage as he pushed the car door open. "Get in. Go to my mother's grave and kneel for three days and three nights. If you do that, I'll give you a chance to live."

The blue-haired woman who convinced Su Mengqing to commit matricide must be Iguchi Tama. Clearly, with Chen Heihu dead and Wen Zheyang being useless and incompetent, not to mention Wang Tianchuan and the others defecting at the crucial moment, my enemies are desperate to prop up a new pawn to compete for the high-quality medicinal materials in the Southwest provinces. Otherwise, the renowned Iguchi Pharmaceutical Group from the Sakura Country would find itself in the awkward position of a brilliant chef with no ingredients. Without a doubt, Su Mengqing, who is at the end of her rope, is the perfect candidate. And keeping Zhang Meili under my thumb could be useful later...

"What, you're not willing?" Seeing Zhang Meili hesitate, Lin Fan's lips twisted into a self-mocking sneer. He shook his head and reached to pull the door shut. "Fine, then wait for those guys to beat the shit out of you."

"No, I'm willing! I'm a hundred percent willing!" Her plump body shuddered, and she scrambled to block the door, her smile more hideous than a grimace.

"Tsk, tsk, you're disgusting," Yuan Youwei said, pinching her nose as Zhang Meili squeezed into the car. "You were once the mistress of the Su Family. How did you end up in this state?"

A foul stench immediately filled the vehicle. Yuan Youwei recoiled in disgust, while Mrs. Xue in the driver's seat hurriedly opened all the windows, afraid she might suffocate.

Lin Fan tossed the group of people five hundred yuan as compensation for the trouble Zhang Meili had caused. Ignoring their dissatisfied expressions, he had Mrs. Xue drive to a small supermarket down the road. There, he bought several bottles of mineral water and packs of biscuits, stuffing them all into a large black plastic bag.

The car started again, heading toward Haicheng's People's Cemetery under the night sky.

"You'd better not get any funny ideas," Lin Fan said coldly, tossing the bag to the grimacing Zhang Meili. "Kneel properly and guard my mother's grave. You can't be a minute or even a second short!"

"I want to eat lobster... and I want to drink Coke..." Zhang Meili whined, looking at Lin Fan with pleading eyes, trying to appear pitiful and frail.

"Eat my ass!" Lin Fan's lip twitched, practically fuming. He gestured for Mrs. Xue to stop the car. "Get out if you're not happy with this!"

I have to admit, her skin is astonishingly thick. Give her an inch, and she'll take a mile.

"I won’t eat! I won’t! I’ll kneel obediently before Sister Suxin’s grave for three full days and nights!" Her plump body shook as she frantically shook her head, her smile once again uglier than a grimace.

SCREECH!

A short while later, the black Bentley came to a sharp halt on a deserted roadside at the foot of the mountain where the People’s Cemetery was located.

"Go on," Lin Fan said. "My patience is limited. Don’t make me change my mind."

He saw Zhang Meili clutching the bulging plastic bag, dragging her feet and looking back every few steps, her reluctance obvious.

Lin Fan rolled down the window, his voice chilling. "If you keep dilly-dallying, I’ll break your arms and legs and throw you in front of my mother’s grave myself."

"No, no, no, please don’t! I’m going right now! I won’t have any second thoughts, I promise!"

WHOOSH!

Zhang Meili’s face went pale with terror. Her fat face twitched, and then she took off, sprinting towards the top of the cemetery mountain. She ran faster than a rabbit.

"A medical miracle... a living, breathing medical miracle..." Yuan Youwei murmured, a smile spreading across her red lips. She and Mrs. Xue burst into laughter, tears welling in their eyes. "A supposedly paralyzed old woman sprinting up a mountain in a cemetery at midnight... that story’s enough to scare anyone to death!"