

Genius 117

Chapter 117 Protection Fee_1

In the early morning.

Qin Fang, as usual, got up early and went out with Fang Dacheng for their morning exercise, and took the opportunity to practice the simple ancient fist technique Fang Dacheng had taught him, working on his proficiency.

Qin Fang hadn't mentioned the fight from last night to anyone, mainly because he didn't want everyone to worry about him, but it did make him realize the usefulness of the fist technique.

Or rather, the applications of some routines from the fist technique in combat were endlessly brilliant. If not for that, Qin Fang wouldn't have been able to easily take down those three guys yesterday.

"Hey, Fourth Brother, how come I feel like you've become a different person today? You can even spar with me for many more rounds now!"

Not only that, but when Qin Fang was sparring with Fang Dacheng like they always did, Fang Dacheng immediately sensed Qin Fang's significant improvement. Even as recently as yesterday morning, Fang Dacheng could defeat Qin Fang with ease, without much effort.

But today, they had sparred for more than thirty moves before Fang Dacheng finally caught a break in Qin Fang's defense and brought him down, clearly feeling much more pressure than before.

"Heh heh, Sister Ning gave me some private training yesterday. I got some insights!"

While others were unaware of the reasons, Qin Fang certainly knew. After advancing to Level 2, his attributes increased by 10 across the board, whether it was strength, agility, or others, which had doubled, reducing the gap between him and Fang Dacheng from Level 2 to Level 1—naturally, it was a huge leap forward.

Fang Dacheng just smiled and didn't probe further when he heard this.

Last night, he had seen Ning Yumo for the first time but could feel she seemed stronger than him and practiced fighting techniques. So, it wasn't surprising to see Qin Fang making such progress.

"By the way, Fourth Brother, when you were sending Sister Ning home last night, Tang Feifei told us to remind you that your class is having a new student orientation meeting this afternoon. Make sure you don't miss it!"

After their morning exercise, Qin Fang prepared to go to Fang Feixue Noodle Shop in Lanyuan, just like always, to check in and prepare some fresh sauces. Fang Dacheng walked a few steps before he remembered and reminded him.

"Oh, got it! I won't forget..."

Qin Fang nodded. He had run into some classmates last night and had already been told, so naturally, he wouldn't forget.

The military training had officially ended, and Qin Fang was about to start his real university life. Unfortunately, none of the brothers from his dorm were in the same class as him. Only Xiao Nan was in the same department and major but not in the same class.

Of course, what surprised Qin Fang was that of the six classes in the business management major that year, he, Tang Feifei, and Li Feng happened to be assigned to the same class. It wasn't clear if it was destined fate or the narrow road of an enemy.

The new student orientation meeting was simply a session before official classes started, to introduce classmates to each other and select some temporary class leaders. Qin Fang had always been indifferent to these roles, typically just a nominee and voting party member.

Fang Feixue Noodle Shop had transformed significantly, with three storefronts combined into a scaled operation, although slightly small. However, it still had its specialties.

Congee, soup dumplings, various types of noodles—almost everything was available. What really made the customers rave was the top-notch sauces here; many even came especially for them, insisting on dipping everything in sauce before eating it.

And because of this, the most consumed item in the shop each day wasn't the various ingredients but the delicious sauces. Even if Qin Fang prepared a three to five-day supply in advance, it usually ran out within two days.

"Boss, you're here!"

When Qin Fang arrived at the shop, both the manager and the servers greeted him very politely.

They all knew that while the shop was somewhat famous in Lanyuan, it had only been opened for just over half a month, and the actual boss was the young man in his twenties before them. The shop had already invested several hundred thousand yuan. Although it was no match for big hotels, for a snack shop, it was considered quite noteworthy.

The young servers in the shop had once fantasized that the young boss would take a liking to one of them, allowing them to become the boss's wife. However, ever since they had seen Tang Feifei and Xiao Muxue, the rumored boss's wives, they immediately discarded such thoughts.

The current person in charge of Fang Feixue was Uncle Fang, who Qin Fang had known earlier as the one who made the secret recipe soup dumplings. His dumpling stand had been handed over to his son and daughter-in-law to run, and feeling somewhat indebted to him, Qin Fang hired him as the manager with a considerable monthly salary.

As usual, upon arriving at the shop, Qin Fang didn't bother with checking the accounts or anything like that. He left those matters to others. Xiao Nan had found someone specifically to manage the shop's accounts; Qin Fang only needed to collect the money.

If it were someone else, Qin Fang might worry about them embezzling his money, but Xiao Nan? The cost of a meal for him could account for two months of revenue for the shop; why would he care about such a small sum?

"Uncle Fang, what's wrong? Why are you hemming and hawing?"

Just as Qin Fang was about to go to the kitchen to make sauces, he noticed Uncle Fang looking as if he had something to say but was hesitating, so he couldn't help but ask curiously.

"Boss..."

"Uncle Fang, we're old friends now, you don't need to call me boss all the time, just call me Xiao Qin as before! If there's any difficulty, just tell me, and if I can help, I definitely will!"

Qin Fang immediately interrupted Uncle Fang's formality, feeling that it only served to distance them, and now that he himself was worth millions, even saying so felt more assertive.

"That... Someone came to collect protection money, asking us to pay five thousand yuan a month! At first, I refused to pay, but they threatened to smash the shop and scare away all the customers, so I had no choice but to give them two thousand yuan. They said they would come back in a couple of days to collect the other three thousand!"

Uncle Fang hesitated briefly, but he realized he couldn't cover this up any longer and decided to be completely honest with Qin Fang.

"Protection money?"

Hearing this, Qin Fang's previously good mood instantly cooled.

In fact, he had heard of this kind of extortion, also known as a 'safety management fee'. Typically aimed at businesses with storefronts, it required them to pay a set fee each month to ensure they wouldn't be harassed.

But if they didn't pay, then it was a different story—smashing shops, picking faults, and even splashing feces or paint; the average business owner couldn't contend with these thugs and had to reluctantly fork over the money, unless they didn't plan on staying in business.

Qin Fang's restaurant hadn't been open for very long, so these thugs collecting protection money hadn't set their eyes on it until now. But as the place had grown and business was booming, it had become impossible to ignore.

"I understand, Uncle Fang! Next time they come, give me a call. If they press you, give them the money first..."

Qin Fang understood Uncle Fang's predicament: although he managed the restaurant, he wasn't the owner. To casually use the store's funds could lead to problems at the end of the month during account checking. Yet he didn't dare provoke those collecting protection money. If they did something outrageous, he would feel even more guilty for betraying Qin Fang's trust.

Thus, after much hesitation, he still decided to clarify things with Qin Fang, to prevent any significant trouble from arising.

"Alright, I get it!"

Uncle Fang nodded, feeling reassured by Qin Fang's words.

Qin Fang continued into the kitchen to prepare the sauces, his mind still contemplating the situation. "Seems like Brother Hu mentioned last time that this part of the university town belongs to Brother Dong. Protection money... hmph, whatever they've taken, they'll have to cough it up double!"

Having had a few drinks with Brother Hu and the others, their relationship wasn't exactly close, but he had learned some street smarts. For instance, Brother Hu and his lot had long since given up on petty shakedowns like protection money, now running places like amusement cities, bath centers, KTV nightclubs, and bars, which brought in much more money.

Those who still indulged in such low-level thuggery were usually insignificant gangs—bunches of several or dozens—employing petty tricks to coerce business owners into submission.

For Qin Fang, this issue wasn't really a big deal; probably just a phone call would settle it.

This was Li Dong's turf, and those small-time gangsters wouldn't dare cross him, even if they had the nerve of a bear and the audacity of a leopard. So when Qin Fang said they would have to double return what they had taken, it wasn't an empty boast.

For this reason, Qin Fang wasn't worried at all; he focused on preparing sauces that could be used over several days. Then, after informing Uncle Fang, he left the restaurant and headed to the bank.

"Mom, I deposited some money in your account. You don't need to go to the factory to work anymore—it's too hard! Yes, the money is honestly earned. Remember I told you about the store I opened with a classmate last time? We make tens of thousands every month, and just my share of the profits is over fifty thousand... Mom, don't worry, your son can make his own money now. You can spend this as you like, don't save it for me..."

He had transferred fifty thousand yuan into his mother's account and called to inform her. After a brief chat between mother and son, he hung up.

It wasn't that Qin Fang was reluctant to give all his money to his mother; it was just that the amount was too large, and his mother detested gambling, the one thing Qin Fang couldn't tell her about. So he used the restaurant as a pretext and planned to send money back every month for safety.

Although Qin Fang had become rich overnight, his mother, who had struggled to raise him, remained his foremost concern. Now that he had money, the first person he wanted to honor was her.

Besides that, Qin Fang opened a few anonymous bank cards, each containing ten thousand yuan. This was what Qin Fang intended as red packets for his dormitory brothers.

The amount of money shouldn't be too much, nor too little, as it could easily lead to discontent or resentment among his friends. After pondering over the matter the previous night, Qin Fang decided to set it at this figure.