

MARVEL MANIFESTOR

Marvel Manifestor

Clearly, the livestream couldn't pick up what the woman was saying. But while the two of them were talking, a towering man over two meters tall suddenly stood up from the back of the bus, built like an iron tower.

He shrugged off his coat, revealing a tight tactical vest underneath. The bulging muscles nearly tore the vest apart.

Most eye-catching of all was his right arm—he had no hand. Instead, a metal ring-like device was fitted over his entire forearm.

The man slowly walked toward the Asian young man. Meanwhile, the chubby streamer, completely unbothered, even started cheering him on.

With a sharp whoosh, a blade shot out from the metal ring on the man's severed arm. The edge glowed red, radiating intense heat.

The moment he saw that blade, the streamer instantly shut up. No more nonstop commentary—he obediently held his phone and stayed quiet like a good boy.

"This guy..."

Karl's lips twitched downward as he recalled that heavily criticized mess of a movie from his previous life—Shang-Chi. The Asian young man in the video didn't look exactly the same, but he was at least ninety percent similar, especially that broad face and small eyes.

"You know him?"

Gwen and the other two turned to look at Karl.

"Uh... no. Just looks familiar."

Gwen glanced at the three "ladies," then back at Gwen—who was still hanging upside down.

"Gwen, aren't you worried about blood rushing to your head hanging like that?"

Karl genuinely didn't get it. Was this some kind of Spider-Person habit? Peter did it, Gwen did it—didn't they worry about circulation? Or did hanging upside down somehow make them smarter?

"Does it? I think it's pretty comfortable."

The moment Gwen said that, Karl, Skye, and Wanda all looked at her like she'd lost her mind. A normal person hanging like that for hours? That was basically torture.

"Maybe everyone who gets bitten by a spider ends up like this? I've seen Peter hanging upside down from rooftops all the time—even eats sandwiches like that."

Wanda thought about it. She often saw Peter swinging around New York when she went out, sometimes even hanging upside down to wave at her.

While the four of them bantered, the fight in the video had already begun.

The big man slashed at Shang-Chi with his blade, but Shang-Chi nimbly ducked. Unexpectedly, the man changed moves mid-swing and stabbed downward instead.

Shang-Chi had no choice but to drop flat to the ground. The blade pierced the floor beside him, slicing open the metal surface with a massive gash, the edges glowing as if melted.

That strike severed the bus's brake line.

The driver had intended to stop and call the police, but now the brakes were gone—and to make matters worse, they were on a downhill slope.

The bus shot forward like a runaway horse, picking up speed.

Inside the bus, Shang-Chi and the big man kept fighting. A few swings from the blade chopped the handrails into pieces.

Shang-Chi grabbed a passenger's laptop and hurled it at the man, who easily sliced it in half—but the distraction worked. Shang-Chi followed up with a powerful uppercut that landed squarely in the man's stomach, sending him flying from the front to the back of the bus, crashing into the rear steps.

At that moment, the out-of-control bus slammed into a car. The impact sent Shang-Chi tumbling, and the driver knocked his head against the steering wheel and passed out.

With no one controlling it, the bus began swerving wildly across the road, smashing into multiple vehicles along the way.

Meanwhile, the streamer remained oddly calm and started narrating again:

"Current situation is critical. The driver's down—faceplanted into the wheel and now lying there like a corpse. I will not be taking over driving, by the way. People always yell at me when I drive..."

He kept rambling as the bus sped faster and faster.

Shang-Chi wanted to take control of the bus, but the big man attacked again, completely ignoring the speeding vehicle and the terrified passengers.

Shang-Chi was tied up, while his companion—the woman—stumbled her way to the driver's seat and plopped down, trying to steer.

But a bus wasn't easy to control, especially without brakes. All she could do was try to keep it going straight.

Just then, several strands of webbing shot in from different directions, sticking to both sides of the bus and anchoring to nearby buildings.

A red-and-blue figure dropped from above—none other than Spider-Man, Peter Parker.

Peter clung to the front windshield and peeked inside, startling the woman driving.

"Hey! Don't panic—just keep it straight. I'll handle the rest!"

He waved at her, then flattened himself against the front of the bus, rapidly firing webs to both sides and gripping them tightly.

Sure enough, with the strength of his webs and his own power, the bus gradually slowed down and finally came to a stop sideways in the middle of the road.

Inside, Shang-Chi and the big man were still fighting. Shang-Chi relied on agility to dodge, while the big man relentlessly attacked, practically dismantling the bus. The interior was a mess, and the passengers huddled together in fear.

"Wow—it's Spider-Man! Guys, I'm a huge fan! He's an Avenger now too! Besides Spider-Man, I also really like Iron Man—"

The streamer kept babbling, even jumping excitedly.

Peter kicked through the already shattered windshield and entered the bus in an instant. He fired webbing and immediately pinned Shang-Chi to the wall.

Stuck fast to the interior, Shang-Chi couldn't move. Seeing his chance, the big man swung his blade to finish him off.

But Peter suddenly leaped in and kicked the man flying, then webbed him up and stuck him to the ceiling.

"Hey, man, that's dirty! Sneak attacking? Not cool!"

Peter pointed and started ranting. He'd wanted them to stop fighting—but that guy had clearly gone for the kill.

With a slash, the man's blade cut through Peter's webbing. Even though Tony had upgraded the webbing to be heat-resistant, this blade's temperature clearly exceeded its limits.

The man flipped down and immediately slashed at Peter again.

But in Peter's perspective, the attack moved like slow motion. He easily dodged, then countered with a punch straight to the man's face.

Crack!

The man's nose shattered instantly, teeth flying out as he was sent crashing into the back of the bus. Before he could even react, his head lolled to the side—he was out cold.

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"Uh... did I hit a little too hard?"

Peter pulled back his fist and looked at Shang-Chi, who stood there completely dumbfounded.

Shang-Chi nodded stiffly in agreement.

At that moment, sirens wailed in the distance—police had arrived.

Peter didn't bother with Shang-Chi. He fired a web and swung away immediately.

By the time Shang-Chi got out of the police station, it was already dark.

He quickly realized his necklace was missing.

It had been left to him by his mother, who had told him to always keep it safe. She said that if he ever got lost, the necklace would help him find his way home.

It was a simple pendant strung on a green cord, with a green gemstone hanging from it—beautiful, almost like a dragon's eye.

Shang-Chi had never understood what his mother meant, but he had always treasured it.

Now that it was gone, even though he didn't know exactly when he lost it, he was certain of one thing—the men in black had come for that pendant.

Back home, he immediately began packing.

His female companion still had no idea what was going on. She could only watch as Shang-Chi rummaged through things and packed his suitcase.

"Where are you going?"

"Macau. I need to find my sister."

"Macau? Wait... you have a sister? Since when?!"

"I know this is confusing. I'll explain when I get back."

Shang-Chi didn't want to say more. The situation was urgent—he had to find his sister as soon as possible. He already had a good idea who had sent people to take the necklace.

Ignoring her attempts to stop him, he pushed the door open—

Only to find people already waiting outside.

Aside from Peter, there were two others: Natasha Romanoff and Sam Wilson, the Falcon.

"You... you're Avengers?!"

Before Shang-Chi could speak, his friend Katy blurted out excitedly.

Natasha and Sam both frowned slightly. Their operation wasn't exactly classified, but showing up at night like this, they still preferred to keep a low profile. Katy was... a bit too loud.

"Mind if we come in and talk?"

Natasha tilted her chin up slightly. Without waiting for permission, she stepped inside.

Sam said nothing, glanced at Katy, and followed.

"Hey man, don't worry—they're always this cold. I'm easy to talk to. I'm Spider-Man—we met earlier today."

Peter patted Shang-Chi's arm and walked in as well, trying to imitate Natasha and Sam's cool demeanor.

It didn't suit him at all—being a goofball was clearly more his lane.

In New York, everyone knew the Avengers. Shang-Chi and Katy were no exception.

But Shang-Chi hadn't expected them to come looking for him.

Looks like his identity could no longer stay hidden.

With a sigh, he turned and went inside. Katy, still clueless but excited, followed right behind him.

In the living room, Natasha sat down on the couch as if she owned the place.

Sam wandered around, quietly observing everything.

Peter stood beside Natasha.

"Shang-Chi, you know why we're here. We've found that your father, Wenwu, has been... active again lately. I assume you know why."

Natasha watched him closely, reading every subtle change in his expression.

"Shang-Chi, who's Wenwu? Didn't your dad die?"

Katy's loud interruption instantly grated on everyone's nerves. Even Peter felt the urge to web her mouth shut.

Shang-Chi nodded. He didn't try to hide it anymore.

He wasn't stupid—if the Avengers had come, it meant they already knew.

"I know. He took my necklace. It was my mother's."

"What does the necklace do?"

Natasha immediately caught the key point. If it were just an ordinary necklace, Wenwu wouldn't have sent people after it.

Shang-Chi shook his head.

"I don't know. My mother just told me to always keep it with me."

Natasha stared at him for a moment, confirming he wasn't lying—but he was definitely holding something back.

"Shang-Chi, you know what Wenwu is like. He's been quiet for years, and now he's suddenly active again. What do you think he's planning?"

The intel from Coulson wasn't detailed—just that Wenwu was making moves again. Otherwise, Natasha wouldn't be here asking his son.

"I don't know. Ever since I escaped from him, I've been living in New York. I stopped paying attention to anything related to him. I just need to find my sister—she's in danger. They'll go after her too."

Shang-Chi's voice grew urgent.

"You think your sister is his next target?"

"Definitely. I have to find her."

"Do you know where she is?"

Shang-Chi nodded and took out a postcard.

On the front was a drawing of a dragon—somewhat abstract, but recognizable. On the back was an address.

"Take our ride. It'll be faster."

Natasha handed the postcard back and stood up, heading for the door.

"Our ride?"

Shang-Chi looked confused.

They stepped outside.

As Shang-Chi opened the door, a Quinjet sat silently right in front of his house.

His eyes widened instantly.

"A Quinjet?!"

Katy shrieked again, running out to inspect it up close. Inside the cockpit, Clint Barton heard her and frowned slightly.

Natasha and Sam ignored her completely, signaling Clint to open the hatch.

"This is a lot faster than a commercial flight."

Sam patted Shang-Chi on the shoulder and boarded first.

Shang-Chi hesitated.

He didn't want to involve the Avengers.

But with his sister in danger, he couldn't afford to worry about that now.

Grabbing his luggage, he stepped onto the Quinjet.

"Shang-Chi! I'm coming with you!"

Katy shouted as she rushed forward—

Only to be stopped by Natasha.

"Sorry, miss. There's no seat for you."

"Why not? I'm his friend! I'm going with him!"

Katy continued shouting, completely ignoring the situation.

"Katy, stay here. Wait for me to come back."

Even Shang-Chi could tell she was being inappropriate and stepped in quickly.

"You're not letting me go either? What's wrong with you, Shang-Chi? Ever since we left the police station, you've been acting like a completely different person!"

Katy snapped, clearly upset.

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Chapter 423 423 - The Information Sent by Natasha

Shang-Chi couldn't be bothered to explain further. His mind was entirely occupied with his sister's safety, leaving no room to deal with Katy's tantrums.

In the past, no matter how unreasonable Katy acted, he would just let it slide and never felt anything was wrong. But now, he suddenly realized how inappropriate her behavior was.

He was heading into something dangerous—possibly facing Wenwu himself. Precisely because he was worried about Katy, he didn't want her coming along. Yet instead of understanding, she complained.

"Just wait for me to come back."

Shang-Chi didn't say anything more. He tossed out that line and turned to board the Quinjet.

"Peter, go find Tony. I'll send him everything we've gathered."

Just before boarding, Natasha leaned in and spoke quietly.

"Got it. I'll head over now."

Peter was about to shoot out a web when Katy suddenly stepped in front of him—his web almost splattered across her face.

"Spider-Man! Can I get your autograph?"

Katy, completely oblivious, blocked his way.

"...No."

Peter looked exhausted. He gave a flat reply and quickly slipped past her, swinging away.

The Quinjet slowly lifted off, shooting into the sky, leaving Katy standing there alone, looking dazed.

Peter quickly arrived at Avengers Tower.

Tony had just finished a long day and was about to head home when Peter showed up and stopped him.

"What's wrong? You look like you're in a rush."

Tony asked, puzzled.

"Natasha told me to come find you. Said she sent you something."

Tony paused, about to respond—

But JARVIS spoke first.

"Sir, Agent Natasha has sent you a video."

"You mean this?"

Tony raised a hand, and a holographic projection appeared instantly.

"Probably?"

Peter wasn't entirely sure either.

Tony opened the file.

Inside was a long audio recording, along with numerous documents, files, and even some blurry black-and-white photographs.

"JARVIS, analyze everything immediately."

"Yes, sir. Estimated time: five minutes."

JARVIS began processing—breaking the video into frames, extracting files, audio, and images.

Meanwhile, Tony and Peter sat down and started chatting.

Mostly, it was Tony asking questions and Peter answering—almost like an exam. It was clear Tony genuinely intended to train him.

"Sir, analysis complete. All data has been organized."

Five minutes later, JARVIS spoke again.

The projection displayed all files and photos, while the audio was separated.

Tony and Peter both focused on the images first—they were the most intuitive source of information.

Most of the photos featured a Chinese man.

But something immediately puzzled Peter.

The photos clearly came from different eras—some old, some modern—but the man in them hadn't changed at all.

Not his face. Not his age.

"...JARVIS, are those black-and-white photos artificially aged?"

Peter asked, confused.

"No, sir. These photographs span several hundred years."

As JARVIS spoke, he enlarged one old black-and-white photo and one high-definition modern image.

Aside from hairstyle differences, the man looked identical in both.

Humans age—it shows most clearly in the skin. Wrinkles, sagging, changes in facial structure—these are unavoidable marks of time.

But this man defied all of that.

Across centuries, there was no change. Even his skin condition was exactly the same.

"What the hell is this?!"

Peter stared at Tony, hoping for an answer.

Tony frowned in thought.

From a scientific standpoint, this was impossible.

Unless the photos were fake—but with JARVIS's capabilities, any technological forgery would be detected instantly.

If science couldn't explain it, then only one possibility remained—

Magic.

"Let's focus on the content first. We'll deal with the rest later."

Tony decided not to dwell on it. Among the people he knew, only Karl and his group—and now Doctor Strange—had anything to do with magic.

He could ask them later.

Yes—the Avengers had already made contact with Strange.

And Strange didn't reject them. Even before becoming the Sorcerer Supreme, he knew of the Avengers' reputation.

He might not join them, but cooperation was entirely possible. After all, both sides fought to protect Earth.

As they went through the documents, the more they read, the more shocked they became.

The records spanned over a thousand years—from medieval Europe, through modern history, all the way to the present day.

A man named Wenwu had lived for an entire millennium.

Setting aside his unchanged appearance, what was more terrifying was that he had participated in nearly every major conflict throughout those thousand years—and always came out on top.

According to the files, Wenwu not only commanded powerful forces, but also possessed a set of ring-like weapons.

No one had ever clearly seen them—because anyone who had... was dead.

That only added to his mystique.

"That Shang-Chi... are we sure he's Wenwu's son?"

Tony frowned.

A man like Wenwu was an unstable variable—someone with immense ambition, possibly even capable of conquering the world.

Before Peter could answer, Tony suddenly froze.

His eyes locked onto a symbol.

A symbol deeply etched into his past.

Two crossed blades, surrounded by ten rings.

Tony knew it all too well.

From the moment he was ambushed and nearly killed—left with a hole in his chest—to dealing with Aldrich Killian, that symbol had followed him.

It had, in a way, created Iron Man.

But it had also been a lingering nightmare.

Tony raised a hand, stopping Peter from speaking.

"JARVIS, check the connection between Wenwu and the Mandarin."

He tapped the projection, enlarging the symbol.

"Peter... does this look familiar?"

Peter initially didn't connect the dots—but after Tony's reminder, memories clicked.

The bombings across the U.S. The arrogant terrorist who called himself the Mandarin.

"...That symbol... it's that terrorist who claimed to be the Mandarin?!"

Peter's eyes widened.

"If I'm not mistaken," Tony said coldly, "this Wenwu is likely the real mastermind behind that organization."

His eyes narrowed, sharp as blades.

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Chapter 424 424: The Real Mandarin

"Sir, based on my findings, this Wenwu is very likely the real Mandarin."

J.A.R.V.I.S.'s voice sounded at just the right moment, answering the doubts in both Tony and Peter's minds.

"Just as I thought. Looks like it's finally time to settle things with this Wenwu once and for all."

Tony lightly pressed a hand to his chest. The wound had long since been healed in Wakanda, but phantom pain still struck from time to time. Deep down, there was always a knot he had never spoken of—not even to Pepper. That knot was the Mandarin.

In the past, every "Mandarin" he encountered had been fake. From Obadiah, whom he first suspected, to the hired actor, and then Aldrich Killian.

He had once believed Killian to be the real Mandarin, but deep down, he never accepted it. Killian didn't carry himself like the true leader of a terrorist organization. But now, seeing that symbol again—the real Mandarin had finally surfaced.

Peter could clearly feel the shift in Tony's aura. Normally, Tony carried a carefree, almost playful attitude, much like Karl—spending his days enjoying life. But just now, that changed completely. The surge of battle intent made one thing unmistakably clear—

Iron Man was back.

Since the Sokovia incident, Tony hadn't worn the Iron Man suit again. Even during the Dark Dimension invasion, he hadn't shown up. It had seemed like he had fully returned to his playboy lifestyle.

But now... Iron Man had returned.

At the agency, Karl continued living his laid-back life—eating, drinking, and fooling around with the three girls. Every day was leisurely and carefree.

Inside the Chocobo Space, Karl was soaking in a hot spring with them. Onion ran around nearby, occasionally stopping to nibble on flowers and plants in the yard.

Even while soaking, Skye kept her eyes on her laptop. Wanda and Gwen sat beside her, eating fruit while also watching the screen.

"What are you watching?"

Karl casually slipped over, wrapping his arms around the three of them from behind as he leaned in toward the screen.

It was still the same Shang-Chi video from a few days ago. But now, the internet was full of different interpretations—some claiming it was staged, others saying it was part of a movie shoot, with Spider-Man making a cameo. Every kind of theory was floating around.

"What's so interesting about this? Didn't we already watch it?"

Karl didn't get it. They had already watched the livestream together—what was the point of watching it again?

Just as Skye was about to respond, a notification suddenly popped up on the screen—a message icon.

"Huh?"

Skye froze for a moment, then quickly opened it. She hadn't expected it to be a video call.

Given that they were currently soaking in a hot spring—and not wearing anything—the timing couldn't have been worse.

A chorus of startled screams erupted as Skye tossed the laptop aside and ran off with Wanda and Gwen. None of them wanted to be seen like this.

"Karl! Throw that damn laptop away right now! I'm going to find Tony and settle this!!"

Skye roared like an enraged lioness.

This laptop was Stark Industries' latest product—the best in the world, developed in collaboration with Wakanda. And yet it couldn't even distinguish between a video call and a message.

Karl shook his head helplessly. Tony was definitely in trouble this time. Skye might not personally go after him, but reporting it to Pepper? That was guaranteed. Once Pepper heard about this, the system would be updated overnight—and Tony getting a beating would be just as certain.

Seeing that the caller was Tony, Karl didn't really care. It was just guys on the call—nothing to be embarrassed about. Without hesitation, he accepted it.

"Tony, you just ruined a perfectly good moment. So, how are you going to compensate me? ...Huh? Peter's there too?"

Even though he picked up, Karl wasn't about to let it slide.

On the other end, Tony and Peter both had dark circles under their eyes, making them look like a pair of pandas.

"Forget that for now. Take a look at this."

Tony immediately shared a file. The cover showed the symbol of the Mandarin.

Karl paused. He thought the Ten Rings organization had already been wiped out. But then it clicked—Killian had never been the real Mandarin. The true one was Shang-Chi's father, Wenwu.

Karl's expression turned serious as he carefully reviewed the materials. These had been compiled overnight by Tony and Peter, combining Natasha's intel with everything J.A.R.V.I.S. could gather.

Compared to what Karl remembered from his past life, these records were far more detailed. After all, movies only glossed over things—real data was much richer.

He had already guessed that Shang-Chi's storyline had begun when he saw the livestream. But he hadn't expected the Avengers to catch wind of Wenwu so early.

In truth, everyone—including Tony—had misunderstood. Wenwu hadn't resurfaced to conquer the world. He was already the king of the underworld. His real goal... was to revive his wife.

The real danger lay in whatever creature he might unleash in the process.

"What are you planning to do?"

Karl asked directly. He knew Tony had never let go of the Mandarin.

"I'm going to completely wipe out the Mandarin and the Ten Rings."

Tony didn't hold anything back.

"Alright then."

Karl didn't argue. There was no way he was staying out of this—Tony had already come knocking.

Meanwhile, the Quinjet landed in a secluded area. Shang-Chi and the others stepped out one after another. Once everyone had disembarked, the jet activated its cloaking system and vanished from sight.

"Where to next?"

Natasha glanced around at the forested surroundings.

Shang-Chi pulled out the postcard.

"Here. This is my sister's address."

"Alright. Let's go 'borrow' a car."

Natasha said it casually—and true to form, she didn't mean anything legal.

Sure enough, she swiftly acquired a vehicle and drove them toward their destination.

Along the way, neon lights flickered and the streets buzzed with life. For a brief moment, the tension eased as they took in the night scenery of Macau.

Before long, the car stopped in front of a high-rise building covered in scaffolding.

This was the address written on the postcard.

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Chapter 425 425: Underground Fight Club

"Your sister is here? This place looks like an unfinished building."

Sam looked up at the structure. The scaffolding was wrapped in mesh—no matter how you looked at it, it was still under construction. People could live here?

His complaint went unanswered. Even Shang-Chi himself didn't understand what was going on.

At the entrance, they found security guards stationed there. That confirmed it—they were in the right place. Shang-Chi stepped into the elevator first, with the others following behind.

Barton, who had been silent the whole time, scanned his surroundings. The elevator was small—more like a construction lift—but his habits were ingrained. In any unfamiliar place, he instinctively searched for advantageous terrain or anything that could be used.

No one spoke as the elevator ascended.

At that moment, a guard handed Shang-Chi a tablet.

"Sign."

Shang-Chi paused, confused—until he read the contents. It was an agreement, mostly filled with confidentiality clauses. Not bothering to read it in detail, he signed it directly.

"I'm looking for my sister. Her name is Xu Xialing. Do you know her?"

He returned the tablet and asked.

The guard ignored him, murmuring something into his earpiece.

"This is the address she gave me."

Still no response. Aside from saying "sign," the guard hadn't spoken another word.

Ding.

The elevator reached the top floor. As soon as the doors opened, blasting music and pounding beats flooded their ears. A young man was already waiting outside.

"Whoa~~~ You're the bus guy?!"

The guy rushed forward and hugged Shang-Chi enthusiastically.

Behind him, Natasha and the others immediately wore expressions of amused spectators.

"Damn! That video of yours hit three million views in a single day!!"

The young man excitedly showed Shang-Chi the livestream clip recorded by the chubby streamer.

Shang-Chi felt a chill. He had been trying to avoid his father's pursuit—but now, with this video circulating, there was no way to stay hidden.

"Damn!!"

The young man suddenly looked up and spotted Natasha and the others. He jumped in shock.

"The Avengers!! You're actually here?! Holy—this is insane, I'm seeing you in real life! My life is complete!!"

He immediately raised his phone for a selfie, only to be stopped by Sam.

"Kid, we're here to find someone."

Sam spoke calmly. They didn't know whether this guy was friend or foe, but he didn't put on the distant, untouchable attitude of a superhero either.

"Oh, got it! By the way, I'm Zhuang. Welcome to my club!"

Zhuang led them inside. The place was packed with noise—young people everywhere.

"Let me introduce it—we operate across multiple global platforms. Every fight is streamed on the dark web. As we speak, tens of millions of viewers are placing bets."

He rambled on proudly about his club.

"Fights?"

Barton finally spoke, immediately picking up on the key point.

"Yeah!"

Zhuang replied instinctively—then suddenly realized something and turned back nervously.

"Uh... you're not here to shut my place down, right? I'm not doing anything illegal—they all fight voluntarily!"

As he spoke, they passed rows of compartments. Each one was enclosed in reinforced glass, and inside were people fighting—some one-on-one, others in chaotic brawls.

It was an underground fight club.

Natasha and Barton exchanged a glance and smiled. They were no strangers to places like this—had even participated before.

"Relax. Your club isn't our target today."

Natasha casually observed the fights, even nodding in appreciation at some of the more skilled bouts.

Zhuang visibly relaxed. As long as they weren't here to shut him down, everything was fine. Maybe he could even use the Avengers as publicity.

"Thanks!"

Quick on his feet, he expressed gratitude—while pulling Shang-Chi over.

"By the rules, you'd have to fight your way up from the lower rings to the central arena. But for a viral star like you, I'll make an exception—you go straight to the top."

Everyone froze. Shang-Chi looked completely confused.

"I'm not here to fight. I'm here to find my sister—Xu Xialing."

He quickly explained.

Zhuang didn't care.

"Never heard of her. We just lost a fighter—you're filling in. And you already signed the agreement, didn't you?"

Shang-Chi suddenly recalled the document he signed in the elevator.

That wasn't a confidentiality agreement—it was a fight contract.

"Wait, I—"

He tried to explain, but Zhuang cut him off.

"You signed it, so you fight. You're up next."

Still grinning, Zhuang slung an arm around him.

"But the opponent's not here—he's upstairs."

He pointed upward. Everyone looked.

In an open space above, a massive suspended cage hung in the air—a giant arena. Two figures were fighting inside.

"That's—!!"

Natasha and the others instantly went on alert. Sam and Barton drew their weapons.

Natasha grabbed Zhuang by the throat, her face darkening.

"You're harboring Abomination? Today's your last day in business."

Abomination—the monster who had caused even the Hulk serious trouble, who had nearly destroyed Chinatown in New York.

And indeed, one of the fighters in the cage was Abomination.

The other wore a dark red sorcerer's robe—

Wong of Kamar-Taj.

"Wait, Natasha—wasn't Abomination killed by Karl? Why is he here?"

Barton stayed level-headed. They had reacted instinctively, but his reminder snapped them back to reason.

"We'll need to go up and ask."

Natasha released Zhuang and looked at him coldly.

"Stop the match. Open the arena."

Her commanding tone left no room for refusal. Zhuang hurriedly pressed an emergency button on his phone.

A shrill alarm blared. The crowd immediately panicked and scattered. Even Abomination and Wong in the arena stopped fighting.

"Trying something funny?"

Natasha instantly dislocated Zhuang's arm, snatched the phone, and shut off the alarm.

The chaos in the crowd finally subsided.

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Chapter 426 426: Xu Xialing

You had to admit—young people really feared nothing. The moment the alarm stopped, the crowd of youths rushed right back to the arena, completely forgetting the blaring siren from moments ago.

Zhuang's scream—his arm still dislocated—drew everyone's attention, including Abomination and Wong in the ring.

"I think we should leave."

Seeing Natasha and the others, Abomination turned to Wong and said in a rather simple, honest tone.

"Agreed."

Wong opened a portal and stepped through first. Abomination followed right behind.

So the two had been throwing the fight. They'd already agreed beforehand who would win and lose—just a way to make some extra cash. Who would've thought that Wong, protector of Hong Kong, would be short on money? If Karl were here, he'd definitely mock him for it.

Natasha and the others could only watch as the two escaped. Barton and Sam were just a step too late.

"Damn it!"

Sam kicked a can away in frustration.

"It's fine. We'll track down that sorcerer later."

Barton remained calm. He didn't know Wong personally, but he recognized the portal spell—clearly a mage from Kamar-Taj.

As soon as they stepped away from the arena, the interrupted matches resumed. The crowd acted as if nothing had happened.

"Woohoo!!!"

The atmosphere exploded with excitement again.

At that moment, a staff member walked up to Shang-Chi.

"You're up. Get backstage and get ready... and take off your shirt."

Before Shang-Chi could react, he was dragged toward the back.

Meanwhile, Zhuang stood there sweating profusely, his arm still dangling awkwardly. Natasha had let him go—but hadn't fixed it. That was his punishment.

He looked at Barton and Sam with pleading eyes, while the two simply watched with amused expressions.

Then the bell rang.

The host grabbed the mic and shouted excitedly:

"Ladies and gentlemen!! The fight you've all been waiting for is about to begin! In the blue corner—going viral across the internet, all the way from New York—the Bus Boy!!!"

"What kind of trash nickname is that?"

Natasha glanced at Zhuang.

"I... might've come up with it..."

Zhuang winced in pain.

The host continued:

"And tonight, his opponent... in the red corner... Macau's most feared fighter—Xu Xialing!!"

A girl about Shang-Chi's age stepped out from the other side, her face cold and expressionless.

Shang-Chi froze—then turned sharply toward Zhuang, anger flashing in his eyes. So this guy had known Xialing all along.

"Xialing..."

Before he could finish—

She attacked.

A flying knee came straight at him.

"Wait—Xialing—!"

Shang-Chi barely dodged, but she followed up instantly with a spinning kick that slammed into his shoulder.

He raised his arms to block, but the force still sent him sliding back. Then came a downward elbow strike that drove him to one knee.

"What's wrong with you?!"

He couldn't understand—this wasn't the gentle sister he remembered.

Xialing said nothing. She just kept attacking—fast, ruthless, relentless.

Shang-Chi could only defend.

Suddenly, she kicked him square in the chest, sending him crashing to the ground. But instead of pressing the attack, she stepped back.

"Xialing, I know you're angry—but I really need to talk to you."

He stood up, his bare torso already marked with bruises.

She didn't care. She charged again, even fiercer this time.

"I don't have time for this!"

Shang-Chi blocked and countered, finally catching an opening and throwing her to the ground.

But she grabbed his arm mid-fall, kicked him in the head, then spun and struck between his legs.

Shang-Chi's face went green as he staggered back, clutching himself.

Xialing closed in, locking his neck—but she was still weaker in strength.

He countered, tripping her and pinning her down. His fist came down toward her face—

—but stopped just an inch away.

"Can you stop hitting me?"

he asked helplessly.

Her response?

A punch straight to his face.

She broke free and leapt onto him, raining punches down like a storm.

They weren't heavy—more like she was venting.

Shang-Chi realized it... and stopped resisting.

"Stop! I really have something important to tell you!"

He grabbed her wrists, forced her off, and jumped back.

"Dad is coming for you."

He stood at the edge of the arena.

Xialing rushed up to him.

"I'm not fighting you anymore," he said.

"You shouldn't have come back."

Her voice was cold. She turned away, as if lost in thought.

Just as Shang-Chi turned—

BAM!

A sudden kick landed square on his face, knocking him flat.

"Arena rules. The fight only ends when there's a winner."

She spoke blankly—then walked off.

"WOOO!!! Xu Xialing wins again! What a match!!"

The host launched into excited commentary.

Shang-Chi got up, rubbing his face. She hadn't used full force—otherwise he'd be seriously hurt.

Looking down, he saw Natasha and the others happily counting money.

They'd bet on him losing.

Natasha even gave him a thumbs-up—thanks for the winnings.

In an office room—

Shang-Chi was still rubbing his face.

Zhuang lay sprawled on the couch, his dislocated arm hanging off the side.

Suddenly—

Bang!

The door flew open. Xu Xialing walked in.

Before Shang-Chi could speak, Zhuang shot upright like a spring.

"Sister Xialing!! I'm injured—hurry and fix me!!"

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Chapter 427 427: Danger Approaches

"Xialing! I'm hurt—help me fix it!!"

Zhuang rushed forward with a pitiful expression, clutching his dislocated arm as he pleaded with Xialing.

She rolled her eyes helplessly. She already knew what had happened, but still reached out and snapped his arm back into place.

"When did you start running with the Avengers, Xu Shangqi?"

People like Xialing, who operated in the gray areas, disliked so-called superheroes the most. In her eyes, they were hypocrites—fighting for justice on the surface while hiding plenty of ugliness underneath.

"It's not that I joined them—they came to me. Because of Dad."

Shangqi pressed an ice pack against his face. Even though Xialing had held back that last kick, it still left a red mark.

"This place is yours?"

Natasha sat on the sofa while Barton casually scanned the room. Sam, meanwhile, was sipping a large cup of cola he had grabbed while watching the fight earlier.

"That's right. I run this place."

Xialing glanced at Natasha, a spark of battle intent flashing in her eyes. As a fellow fighter, she naturally wanted to test herself against her.

"What do you want?"

Suppressing that urge, she turned back to Shangqi—her brother who had disappeared for years.

"The Ten Rings ambushed me in New York."

"I saw the video."

Her tone was indifferent.

"They took my necklace..."

Xialing's gaze immediately dropped to his neck. Sure enough, the green pendant was gone.

Instinctively, she touched the identical pendant hanging around her own neck. Their mother had given them one each.

"I think... their next target is you."

Shangqi looked worried. "I don't know what Dad is planning, but knowing him—it can't be anything good."

Xialing sat down slowly, ignoring him, and instead spoke to Natasha.

"Do you know the last thing he said to me?"

Natasha raised an eyebrow. According to SHIELD's intel, Wenwu had two children. The son left early, while the daughter stayed with him until she grew up.

"He said, 'Wait three days. I'll come back for you.'"

Xialing let out a self-mocking laugh.

"So I waited. Three days became a week, a week became a month... and that month turned into six years. Every day, I thought he'd come back for me—until I realized I didn't need him anymore."

Shangqi lowered his head, guilt written all over his face. He had promised to escape with her... but left alone.

He had no right to say anything.

Natasha glanced at him and understood immediately. It reminded her of her own past—of the sister she had left behind.

"I didn't need you then. I definitely don't need you now."

Her voice was ice-cold.

"Then why did you send me that postcard?"

"What postcard?"

Xialing frowned. She had never sent him anything—she didn't even know where he had been all these years.

Shangqi froze, then pulled out the postcard with the crude drawing of a dragon and handed it to her.

She examined it carefully.

"I didn't send this."

They looked at each other, confusion mirrored in their eyes.

"Watch out!"

Barton suddenly shouted, grabbing a metal tray and hurling it toward the window.

Bang!

The tray exploded midair as a bullet pierced through, slamming into the wall behind them.

Instantly, alarms blared throughout the arena. Screams erupted outside as people fled in panic.

"Is there a back exit?!"

Shangqi shouted, scanning the room.

But Xialing had already grabbed Zhuang and slipped through a hidden door. Natasha tried to follow, but a barrage of bullets forced her to take cover. By the time she reacted, the door had already sealed shut.

Outside, dozens of heavily armed men in black stormed in.

Leading them... was the same towering brute from the bus.

"Sam, deal with the ones outside. Barton, with me."

Natasha drew her pistols. Barton pulled out his bow and a quiver of arrows.

"Got it."

Sam took out a palm-sized pack, pressed a button—and it expanded instantly into his Falcon flight gear, powered by Pym technology.

He leapt out the shattered window and charged toward the shooters outside.

Inside, Natasha and Barton moved in perfect sync. Years of partnership showed as they cleared enemies with ruthless efficiency—within minutes, over a dozen attackers were down.

Barton engaged the brute directly, the two clashing head-on.

Meanwhile, Xialing suddenly reappeared.

At that moment, Shangqi was fighting three opponents at once when a dagger suddenly shot toward his back.

Xialing kicked a metal ornament midair, knocking the dagger off course—it veered and stabbed straight into another attacker's chest.

"Spent too long in America? Your skills got worse."

She snapped a man's neck with a scissor kick, still finding time to mock him.

Then—

A figure stepped in through the broken window.

Dressed in tight clothing, wearing a mask resembling a Peking opera face, he moved slowly... yet impossibly fast.

In an instant, he appeared before Xialing, ripped the pendant from her neck, and flipped back out the window.

"My necklace!"

Xialing immediately gave chase, though fear crept into her heart.

Because that man...

Was no ordinary enemy.

He was Wenwu's most trusted lieutenant—

And the martial arts master who had trained both her and Shangqi.

"I'll go after him!"

Shangqi didn't jump out the window. Instead, he sprinted down the stairs.

Just as he expected—the masked man was already two floors below.

By the time Shangqi arrived, the man had blasted open a window. A helicopter hovered outside, ready for extraction.

As he prepared to leap aboard—

Shangqi lunged forward, tackling him midair and stopping his escape.

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Chapter 428 428: Wenwu

The two rolled apart. The masked man wasted no time—he drew two daggers from his waist. Their cold gleam reflected Shangqi's face.

Shangqi steadied himself, not daring to relax for even a moment. The man before him was his master—the one who had taught him everything. If he wanted any chance of winning, he had to go all out.

They circled each other, neither making the first move, both searching for an opening. Fine beads of sweat formed on Shangqi's forehead. He knew all too well—everything he had learned was insignificant in his master's eyes.

Suddenly, Shangqi lunged forward.

At the same time, the masked man charged as well.

The instant they met, a dagger flashed before Shangqi's eyes.

He ducked low to evade it—but the second dagger had already sealed off his retreat. With no way out, Shangqi used a deft motion, deflecting the blade with a technique of redirecting force.

Short weapons were dangerous not only to the opponent—but to the wielder as well. The moment Shangqi knocked the dagger aside, the masked man's guard opened ever so slightly.

That tiny flaw was enough.

Shangqi stepped in with a powerful straight punch, his whole body moving as one.

The blow sent the masked man staggering back six or seven steps—but he showed no sign of injury. At most, there was only a faint mark on his chest.

The masked man glanced down, then looked back at Shangqi. There was... a hint of approval in his eyes.

Of course he knew the weakness he had shown—he had done it deliberately, just to test how far his student had come.

In the next instant, his aura shifted.

He attacked again—this time flawless.

Shangqi quickly fell on the defensive, eventually knocked to the ground by a sharp elbow strike.

Clang!

The masked man tossed one of the daggers at Shangqi's feet.

The meaning was clear: if fists weren't enough—use a blade.

Shangqi picked it up, spun it smoothly, and charged again. This time, he abandoned defense and went on the offensive, matching his master with equally dangerous, unpredictable attacks.

Their movements grew faster and faster.

Knife combat thrived on speed, risk, and surprise—so their strikes became increasingly ruthless.

Then—

Shangqi deliberately exposed an opening.

It worked.

He knocked the dagger from the masked man's hand, followed with a back throw, slamming him to the ground—and in one motion, drove his blade toward the man's throat.

But at the last moment—

He stopped.

The tip of the dagger hovered less than an inch away.

Memories flooded his mind—training as a child under this man. Though strict and merciless, his master had shown care in his own way—treating Shangqi's wounds, teaching him without holding anything back.

Shangqi couldn't do it.

Suddenly—

A whip formed of several rings lashed out, binding his wrist. A massive force yanked him off his feet and hurled him away.

An Asian man approached slowly, surrounded by black-clad subordinates.

Behind him, they held Xialing captive.

It was their father—

Wenwu, the true leader of the Ten Rings.

The rings recoiled back onto his arms as he walked up to Shangqi. The masked man rose and handed over Xialing's necklace.

"I told them," Wenwu said calmly, helping Shangqi to his feet, "if you fought seriously, no one here could beat you. They didn't believe me."

Now, his tone was gentle—almost like a kind father.

"You didn't disappoint me."

"I've missed you, son. Let's go home."

But Shangqi knew better.

This "father" was a ruthless warlord.

With Xialing in his hands, Shangqi had no choice but to comply. Surrounded by armed men, they boarded the helicopter.

Unnoticed—

Xialing pressed a small black device in her hand. It instantly shrank to the size of a grain of rice and slipped into her sleeve like a tiny insect.

At the same time, hidden inside the building, Natasha and Barton stared at a phone.

The moment Xialing activated the device, a red dot appeared on the screen.

"The signal's live. Looks like Xu Xialing has been taken by Wenwu."

Natasha frowned.

Moments earlier, while they were fighting, Sam had warned them: a large group had arrived with a man descending from a helicopter.

Facial recognition confirmed it—

Wenwu.

Natasha had made a quick decision and found Xialing.

"Your father's on the roof. He's coming this way."

Xialing froze instinctively, but Barton covered them, holding off the attackers.

"I need your help."

Natasha pressed a small black device into her hand.

"It's a tracker. Wenwu came for you and Shangqi—he won't kill you easily. I need you to activate this when you're taken."

Xialing understood immediately.

They wanted to use her... to find Wenwu's base.

"Why should I trust you?"

No matter what, Wenwu was still her father.

Natasha met her gaze. "You don't have to trust me. Next time, Captain America will lead the team. You can trust him."

Xialing fell silent.

Captain America's name carried weight. Others might fall—but he wouldn't. He stood for something unshakable.

"Then I have one condition," she said at last. "Capture him—but don't kill him."

Natasha nodded. "We have facilities for detaining super-criminals. He won't be executed. I promise."

Xialing waved her off. "I don't trust you. I'll hear it from Captain America himself. If he refuses... I'll side with my father and destroy you."

Harsh—but honest.

Still, she agreed. Because she knew what Wenwu was.

Maybe prison... was the best outcome.

"Thirty seconds," Sam's voice came through. "Wenwu's almost there."

"Time to go."

Natasha and Barton exchanged one last look with Xialing.

Then—

They leapt out through the shattered window—

Just as Wenwu entered.

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Chapter 429 429: The Sacred Land of Ta Lo

The helicopter passed over a towering mountain, revealing an unknown valley below. Nestled against the rugged terrain stood a heavily fortified stronghold, its defenses tight, with anti-aircraft guns lining the perimeter.

Inside the helicopter, Shang-Chi and Xia Ling remained silent. Both of them instinctively looked down at the place below—it was where they had grown up, and also the one place they never wanted to return to.

The helicopter landed. A group of black-clad men stood neatly assembled in the plaza. As soon as Wenwu and the others stepped out, they bowed in unison.

"My son has returned!"

Wenwu announced loudly.

The black-clad men bowed again.

"Take Xia Ling back to her room," Wenwu ordered one of the men beside him.

Xia Ling was led away, while Wenwu wrapped an arm around Shang-Chi's shoulders and brought him into the fortress.

At dinner, the three of them sat together. Wenwu appeared to be in high spirits, but Shang-Chi and Xia Ling both kept cold expressions, leaving the atmosphere at the table stiff and awkward.

"How did you find me?" Shang-Chi finally asked. He had always believed he had hidden himself well over the years—taking on different jobs, never revealing his martial arts skills—all to avoid Wenwu's pursuit.

"I have always known where my children are. That is a father's responsibility."

Wenwu smiled and continued,

"I gave you ten years to live the life you wanted. What did you gain from it? Now, it's time to return to my side."

Shang-Chi shot him a sideways glance. "Not a chance."

His answer was firm and without hesitation. Wenwu merely chuckled, lifting his teacup and taking a sip without responding further.

"I have an interesting story to tell you both."

Setting down his cup, Wenwu suddenly spoke again.

"A few years ago, an American terrorist tried to destroy his own country. He stole the name of my Ten Rings—my Ten Rings. But since he didn't know my real name, he made one up... the 'Mandarin.' Surprisingly, it worked. The entire United States fell into panic."

The terrorist Wenwu referred to was Killian. In his eyes, Killian's actions were nothing more than a trivial farce—an idiotic fool playing at something far beyond him.

Shang-Chi and Xia Ling said nothing. Of course, they had heard of Killian—he had been defeated by Iron Man of the Avengers and that so-called "monster."

"In truth, I have had many names in my life, but all of them were tied to destruction and slaughter. For a long time, I thought that was the meaning of my existence. But after I met your mother, everything changed."

Wenwu let out a sigh, his eyes filled with memories. That had been the happiest time of his life. Though his initial intentions had been impure, he had gradually fallen in love with her—the woman named Ying Li.

Ying Li had been a guardian of the sacred land of Ta Lo. She had stopped Wenwu when he first came searching for it. Through repeated encounters, the two fell in love. In the end, Ying Li broke the rules of Ta Lo and left with Wenwu. It was a cliché story, perhaps—but for her, Wenwu sealed away the Ten Rings and swore to live an ordinary life.

After their marriage, they lived in this very fortress. Back then, it was just the two of them and a few servants. They had been truly happy.

Later, Shang-Chi and Xia Ling were born, and their life became that of a family of four. Wenwu and Ying Li taught their children martial arts, played games with them, and spent evenings curled up on the couch watching television. For the first time, Wenwu felt he had found someone worth growing old for.

But in the end, Ying Li still died.

"Come with me."

Wenwu tossed down his napkin and stood up, heading outside. Having little appetite to begin with, Shang-Chi and Xia Ling followed.

The three entered a study filled with ancient books, even stacks of bamboo scrolls.

"I was lost for a long time," Wenwu said. "But not anymore."

He walked to a large desk and opened an old book, revealing a piece of parchment tucked inside.

"At that time, the two of you had already run away from home. I was desperate to communicate with your mother's spirit, so I devoted myself entirely to researching her homeland."

He removed the parchment. On the page was a drawing of a towering mountain.

"Your mother's homeland is called Ta Lo. I couldn't find its entrance—but I did discover what it truly hides."

Wenwu handed the book to Shang-Chi and continued,

"In the mountain where Ta Lo lies, there is a gate. Your mother is waiting for us there."

He looked at his children, but both Shang-Chi and Xia Ling wore expressions of disbelief.

"I know this is hard to accept. If she hadn't told me herself, I wouldn't believe it either."

"What are you talking about? That's impossible."

Xia Ling didn't believe a word—she thought their father had gone mad.

"I was sitting right here."

Wenwu pointed to a wooden chair by the desk.

"I was completely absorbed in my research. Then your mother spoke to me—just as if she were really in this room. I could feel her breath against my face, her hand resting on my back."

Wenwu smiled faintly, as though reliving the moment.

"She told me she needs our help."

"Help? What kind of help?"

Shang-Chi frowned. The story still sounded utterly absurd to him.

"To rescue her from her own people."

Wenwu's gaze was unwavering.

"After we fell in love, your mother wanted us to live in Ta Lo. She went to ask the elders for permission. But they refused. They said I was unworthy of remaining in the sacred land. If they hadn't rejected us, your mother wouldn't have died—we would have lived there together. And now, they've imprisoned her behind that gate as punishment."

Hearing this, Shang-Chi and Xia Ling exchanged a glance, both seeing the same disbelief in each other's eyes.

"Don't you understand? She left us clues. She wants us to find her, to save her, so our family can be reunited."

Wenwu's voice grew more impassioned. For years, he had been searching for the entrance to Ta Lo. The first time, he had stumbled upon it by chance—but afterward, it had vanished.

"Dad, Mom is gone. She's not behind some gate talking to you. She didn't leave us any clues."

Shang-Chi tried to persuade him to let go of his obsession and stop clinging to the past.

Without a word, Wenwu opened a brocade box and took out two pendants—Shang-Chi's and Xia Ling's.

"Then what are these?"

The two were confused. They were just pendants—given to them by their mother. Did they hold some deeper meaning?

"Come with me."

Holding the necklaces, Wenwu left the study. Shang-Chi and Xia Ling hurried after him.

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Chapter 430 430: Hundun (Chaos)

The two followed Wenwu into the ancestral hall where a memorial tablet bearing Ying Li's portrait was enshrined. At the far end, a lifelike carving of a coiling dragon adorned the wall, with mountains and rivers etched behind it.

Wenwu crouched down and placed the two pendants into the dragon's left and right eyes. Instantly, the dragon seemed to come alive—the pendants gleamed like real dragon eyes, shimmering with flowing light.

Suddenly, droplets began seeping from the surrounding walls, quickly surging forth like crashing waves, bearing down on Wenwu, Shang-Chi, and Xia Ling.

In the next instant, it was as if time had been frozen—the waves halted midair. Curious, Shang-Chi reached out and brushed the water. At once, it all collapsed to the ground, then gathered together to form a map of a maze. A beam of light slowly traced a path across it, advancing as though marking a route.

"The path to Ta Lo is guarded by a shifting maze," Wenwu explained. "But there is a direct route through the forest that opens once a year—during the Qingming Festival."

As he spoke, the beam continued to move along a precise path, shifting with the maze as it changed, guiding them toward the end like a living map.

"To pass through, one must know both the correct route and the exact time it opens."

At last, the beam reached its endpoint—beneath the wall carved with the coiling dragon, where a circular door was etched.

"Now we know."

Wenwu smiled.

As the light faded, the water that had formed the maze seeped back into the ground and vanished, leaving the floor completely dry, without a single trace of moisture.

Wenwu stepped out of the ancestral hall. Outside, a crowd of black-clad men had already gathered.

"Three days from now is Qingming. We depart for Ta Lo."

The men responded in perfect unison.

At that moment, Shang-Chi and Xia Ling also exited the hall. Seeing the scene, they were both stunned.

"This is why I brought you back. We're going to Ta Lo together to rescue your mother."

Wenwu turned to Shang-Chi.

"What if they refuse to let you open that gate?" Xia Ling suddenly asked. She had already contacted the Avengers—the tracker's signal wouldn't cut off. She needed to know Wenwu's true intentions.

"I'll level the entire sacred land."

Wenwu answered without hesitation, not even furrowing his brow.

"What?"

Both Shang-Chi and Xia Ling frowned. They knew their father was ruthless, but they hadn't expected him to be willing to slaughter everyone in the sacred land—that was their mother's home.

"You can't just lead an army to attack Mom's homeland. That's insane."

Shang-Chi immediately objected. Even if he had never been there, it was still their mother's birthplace—how could it be destroyed so casually?

When no one else spoke, Shang-Chi grew even angrier and shouted at the black-clad men,

"Do you even realize how crazy this decision is—"

Before he could finish, Wenwu grabbed his shoulder and hurled him aside. Xia Ling tried to intervene, but neither of them was a match for Wenwu. She was thrown as well, and the two tumbled together.

The surrounding men instantly leveled their weapons at them, but Shang-Chi and Xia Ling ignored it, glaring furiously at Wenwu.

Disappointment was written all over Wenwu's face. He could not understand why his children had become so indecisive, so lacking in resolve.

"Lock them up. Let them think carefully about what they should do."

He gave the order, and immediately, several men seized Shang-Chi and Xia Ling and dragged them away.

Back in his room, Wenwu sat on the bed in deep thought. Then, Ying Li's voice suddenly appeared, whispering softly by his ear. His expression grew vacant.

In the cell, one stood while the other sat. Though called a cell, it looked more like a storage room, neatly stacked with supplies.

"Do you think what he said about Mom's homeland is true?" Xia Ling asked.

Shang-Chi shook his head. "Mom told us that story when we were kids. I always thought it was just a story. You didn't?"

Xia Ling didn't reply. She subconsciously touched her wrist—the tracker's location.

"What if Dad's telling the truth?"

"You mean Mom really was imprisoned behind some gate by her own people?"

"I know it sounds crazy, but we've seen crazier things."

By "crazier things," Xia Ling meant everything that had happened in New York in recent years—alien invasions, mechanical armies bent on destroying humanity, incursions from other dimensions. Was any of that less absurd than their mother being alive?

"I don't know. But I do know we have to escape as soon as possible. If we don't reach Ta Lo before Dad does, he'll kill everyone there."

Shang-Chi was certain—if Wenwu found Ta Lo, he would do exactly as he said and raze it to the ground.

"I might have a plan..." Xia Ling said suddenly. Since the tracker was still active, the Avengers would eventually find this place. Maybe they could stop Wenwu's madness.

Just as Xia Ling was about to continue, strange animal-like sounds suddenly echoed from a dark corner of the storage room—but it didn't resemble any known creature.

Then, a small, round, fleshy creature with two pairs of wings waddled out of the shadows. Even stranger, it had no head—just a body and four legs. It was unclear how it was even making those sounds.

If Carl were here, he would instantly recognize the little creature from the movie—it was that goofy Hundun.

"What the hell is that?!"

Shang-Chi saw it too and immediately stepped in front of Xia Ling, taking a defensive stance in case it attacked.

"What did you say?"

Xia Ling froze for a moment, then spoke again.

"You said you know us?"

She pushed Shang-Chi aside and crouched in front of the creature. To her surprise, Hundun leaped straight into her arms and let out a contented hum.

"Hey—!"

Shang-Chi immediately tried to pull it away. The thing was completely unknown—it could be dangerous.

But Xia Ling slapped his hand away.

"He says he knows us."

She looked at Shang-Chi.

"You can understand that thing?"

Shang-Chi was baffled. It was just making odd noises—it hadn't spoken a single real word.

Xia Ling herself was astonished. She didn't understand why she could comprehend it—they hadn't exchanged any actual words.

"Yeah... it's like telepathy. I just know what he's saying."

Curiosity lit up her eyes. She tried asking,

"How do you know us?"

Sure enough, Hundun made a few more sounds—and Xia Ling immediately understood.

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