

Middle Age 141

Chapter 141: The Slicked-Back Guy and Qiu Jiahao _2

After speaking, he led Qi Yun and Cao Yufei to the warehouse.

The warehouse was located in a large courtyard not far from the shop, with rows of bungalows and color steel houses inside.

Depending on the characteristics of the medicinal herbs, the storage methods varied; some required dry and ventilated environments, while others needed to avoid sunlight.

In one corner of the warehouse, there were quite a few Tufuling stacked up.

Cao Yufei walked up, squatted down to inspect them carefully. He picked up a piece, weighed it in his hand, sniffed the scent, and then broke it apart to check the powdery texture inside.

Afterward, he randomly selected a few pieces and examined them in the same manner.

"The quality is okay, barely making it to grade two, but some parts still need to be picked through,"

said Cao Yufei as he stood up, looking at Boss Li and asking, "What's the price for this batch?"

Boss Li rubbed his hands together, a sly smile appearing on his face: "Boss Cao, you know the current market for Tufuling; this grade two goods are not cheap."

"The cost price of this batch was high, so, it's 180 yuan per kilogram, which is already the lowest I can offer."

Cao Yufei frowned upon hearing this: "Boss Li, although Tufuling has been in high demand, your price is a bit inflated, we're long-time acquaintances, give a fair price."

Boss Li flashed a moment of embarrassment, but quickly returned to his shrewd appearance, apologetically saying: "Boss Cao, this really is the actual price. I had to go through great efforts to get this batch; the cost speaks for itself."

"150 yuan, and I won't argue more, you can still make a profit at this price, if not, we'll look elsewhere," Cao Yufei said, crossing his arms and shaking his head.

Boss Li, hearing this, felt a bit conflicted. At 150 yuan, he still had some profit, but much less than retail profit in the store.

However, the advantage was clearing out last year's stock in one go, then bringing in new goods from Guangxi Province.

Although it would take about half a month, the store still had dozens of kilograms left, which should suffice.

He quickly calculated in his mind, finally gritting his teeth with a forced smile, saying: "Boss Cao, you really are something, pressing my price until there's almost no profit."

"Alright, as you say, 150 yuan per kilogram, but I need cash."

Cao Yufei laughed, patting his shoulder: "Don't worry, deliver the goods to my factory, and I'll pay you on the spot after weighing."

Boss Li nodded at this: "Boss Cao, you're straightforward! With your word, I'm reassured."

"Additionally, the other two tons of goods came with this batch, they are of good quality, I'll deliver them to your factory together tomorrow."

Cao Yufei replied: "Alright, let's leave it at that for now, I still need to inquire elsewhere."

"..."

After returning to the car, the two continued to head to the next location.

By the time it got dark, they had received a total of 11 tons of Tufuling, with varying prices, costing around 1.6 million yuan altogether.

Qi Yun took out a cigarette, handed one to Cao Yufei, and said: "Do you know any larger herbal traders? We should try to receive the goods by tomorrow."

With the internet being so advanced, information spreads quickly, and perhaps in one or two days, market fluctuations in Southeast Asia could affect the domestic market.

Cao Yufei could sense his urgency, thought for a bit, and said: "This kind of thing can't be rushed. I'm wary of doing business with unfamiliar people, as it's hard to guarantee the quality, and with larger quantities, it's not unlikely to adulterate the goods."

He paused, continuing: "I do know a big herbal trader over in Fukang, shall I give him a call now and we can visit him?"

Qi Yun nodded: "Sure, you arrange it."

Cao Yufei took out his phone and started making contact. Two minutes later, he hung up and drove towards Fukang.

This visit was fruitful, as they received 7 tons of top-quality Tufuling from just one place.

The provider even arranged for the herbs to be loaded onto the truck and sent to Cao Yufei's pharmaceutical factory that very night.

By the time Qi Yun and his companion returned to Bird City, it was nearly midnight.

The factory was pitch dark, the employees had long since left, and there was no one in the guardroom at the gate.

Cao Yufei led Qi Yun to his dorm, where each of them made a bowl of instant noodles, treating it as dinner.

Qi Yun glanced around the room, which contained only a bunk bed made of iron, a desk and chair, and some daily necessities.

"Do you usually live here?"

Cao Yufei smiled and nodded: "A bit simple, right? Can't help it, the factory hasn't been able to pay salaries for a while, even the security guard left, staying here at night lets me keep an eye on the warehouse."

Upon hearing this, Qi Yun couldn't help but feel a sense of empathy, as the situation was strikingly similar to his own past circumstances.

After finishing the instant noodles, they chatted for a while, until they heard the sound of a car horn from the factory gate – the truck delivering the herbs had arrived.

Cao Yufei and Qi Yun quickly got up and headed towards the factory gate.

Outside, the night was deep, with only the headlights illuminating a small area at the entrance of the pharmaceutical factory.

Cao Yufei directed the vehicle to the entrance of a newly cleared warehouse, then personally drove the only small forklift in the factory to start unloading.

Qi Yun didn't idle either, helping with the weighing and tallying on the side, and only after unloading all 7 tons of goods, did Cao Yufei open every bag to randomly check the quality of the Tufuling.

...

After everything was settled, Qi Yun returned home, already past 2 am.

Upon entering, he saw Zhao Qing sitting on the living room sofa, looking weary but trying to stay alert, which stirred a warm feeling inside him.

Returning home to a light left on for you, and someone who loves you still waiting, is a humble wish for many men.

"Why aren't you asleep this late?" Qi Yun asked softly.

Zhao Qing stood up and approached him: "I was worried about you. You were so late getting home, and I didn't want to disturb your work by calling."

She looked him over, seeing his dusty appearance, and asked in confusion: "What have you been up to?"

Qi Yun smiled at her: "I went to collect a batch of herbs, just finished unloading them."

Zhao Qing frowned slightly, her heart full of empathy: "Why did it take so long? Are you hungry? Go take a bath, and I'll heat up some food for you."

Qi Yun gently shook his head, holding her hand: "No need to trouble yourself, I ate instant noodles at the factory."

Upon hearing this, Zhao Qing felt even more distressed.

At the same time, she also reflected internally, wondering if she was being immature for suspecting him despite how hard he was working?

Thinking about this, she gently hugged Qi Yun, resting her face against his chest.

"What's wrong?" Qi Yun noticed her low spirits and gently stroked her hair with concern.

Zhao Qing shook her head without speaking, just holding him quietly.

After a long moment, she finally composed herself, smiling at Qi Yun.

"Alright, go take a bath and rest early."

"You're so tired; you can sleep in my bed tonight. I'll sleep with Nuannuan."

After saying this, she stood on tiptoe to give him a peck on the cheek, then turned and headed to the bedroom.

Qi Yun didn't think much of it, quickly took a shower, then went to the balcony of the opposite room, lit a cigarette, and began reviewing the intelligence for today.

[Intelligence of the Day 1 (red): Qiu Jiahao was deceived into an opportunity by a trusted brother to make big money in the Myanmar North Park, where he suffered inhumane tortures, and is now planning an escape]

"Tsk~ that idiot."

Qi Yun had long expected that without his father's protection, this guy would eventually revert to his old self, and now he's even ventured to the Myanmar North Park.

Hopefully, he can manage to escape...

[Intelligence of the Day 2 (red): Zhang Dayong received a hint from an upper-level person; someone took a fancy to a bronze wine jar in the current bronze smuggling case, and he is troubled over how to handle it]

[Intelligence of the Day 3 (red): Re Lijiang from Kashi contacted his friend in Bird City yesterday to investigate your background]

After seeing the content of the third intelligence, Qi Yun frowned.

"Re Lijiang?"

The guy with the flashy hairstyle?

The only person he had interacted with in Kashi was the owner of that pigeon with the flashy do.

It seems that after being thwarted by him last time, the other party is clearly preparing a counterattack.

As he finished his cigarette, he was about to go to sleep when the phone suddenly rang. Looking at the screen, it displayed Cao Yufei's name.

Qi Yun's heart skipped a beat; calling so late at night, could there be trouble?

He quickly answered the phone: "Hey, what happened, Cao Yufei?"

Chapter 142: Fire Disaster

"It's bad, the factory is on fire!" On the other end of the phone, Cao Yufei's voice was noticeably anxious.

"On fire?" Qi Yun's heart tightened suddenly, and his eye twitched involuntarily. He quickly asked, "Is it serious? Are you alright?"

"I'm fine. The warehouse... the warehouse caught fire. The fire trucks have arrived, but we don't know the extent of the damage to the herbs yet. You should come over if you can." Cao Yufei replied quickly.

"Alright, I'll come over right now!"

After hanging up the phone, Qi Yun's expression instantly became grave.

He quickly threw on his clothes, not even bothering to say goodbye to Zhao Qing, and hurried out the door, started the car, and drove towards the pharmaceutical factory.

Half an hour later, just as the car turned the corner, he saw lights flashing in the direction of the pharmaceutical factory, accompanied by billowing thick smoke rising into the sky.

Qi Yun quickly parked the car by the roadside and ran anxiously toward the factory gate.

There stood Cao Yufei, looking anxiously around, his face full of unease.

Inside the factory area, the water jets from the fire trucks continually sprayed towards the warehouse. The fire seemed to be under some degree of control, but there were still visible flames, and thick smoke filled the air, making it hard to breathe due to the acrid smell.

"How's the situation?" Qi Yun shouted, his voice drowned by the roar of the firetrucks and the surrounding crowd's noise.

Cao Yufei turned his head, seeing it was Qi Yun, and shouted back: "The fire's not completely out yet, and we still don't know the damage to the herbs in the warehouse."

Qi Yun nodded slightly and gently patted his shoulder; this was not the time to ask more questions.

After waiting for over ten minutes, finally, a weary firefighter walked out from inside the factory.

Cao Yufei hurried to meet him and asked anxiously, "Thank you for your hard work, comrade. I am the person in charge of the pharmaceutical factory; what's the situation inside?"

The firefighter took off his helmet, wiped the sweat from his forehead, and his expression was slightly grave: "The fire in the two burning warehouses has been put out, but the situation inside is not promising. The fire area is large, and the things inside are likely hard to preserve."

"You can wait a while to check it yourself after confirming it's safe inside."

Upon hearing this, Cao Yufei's face turned pale, and he trembled slightly.

The pharmaceutical factory has a total of three large warehouses. The one on the left stored the leftover herbs from the factory, which is the last asset of the factory.

The right warehouse was just cleared out this afternoon, holding the 7 tons of Tufuling worth over a hundred thousand.

No matter which warehouse caught fire, it means a huge loss.

The middle warehouse was used for storing some miscellaneous items.

He was sleeping in the dormitory facing the middle warehouse.

When the fire broke out, he was about to fall asleep but suddenly smelled a thick smoke. As he got up to check, he saw smoke billowing from the top of the warehouse storing miscellaneous items.

He quickly ran to the warehouse, grabbing a fire extinguisher, ready to go in and put out the fire. But as he got closer, he saw the fire was already blazing, and a small fire extinguisher was of no use, so he hurriedly called the fire department.

"Alright, thank you, comrade, for your hard work." The sentence almost exhausted all of Cao Yufei's energy.

The firefighter patted his shoulder and comforted him: "Don't be too anxious. Go in and take a careful look; maybe it's not as bad as imagined." After saying that, the firefighter turned to attend to other tasks.

Seeing Cao Yufei's demeanor, Qi Yun felt a pang in his heart and comforted him: "Lao Cao, as long as we're alright, we'll check inside first before considering further."

Cao Yufei nodded bitterly, said no more, and anxiously paced back and forth in the same place, waiting for the situation in the warehouse to be confirmed safe.

Finally, a firefighter came out to inform them they could go in and check.

The two quickly walked into the factory; the two warehouses on the right had been burned beyond recognition, with a pungent smell of combustion and moisture hitting them, making it hard to keep their eyes open.

"You can take a look from outside; we need to conduct further inspections inside." A firefighter stopped them in their tracks.

The two nodded, standing at the entrance, looking inside. The warehouse was a complete mess; the neatly stacked Tufuling was now either burned to ashes or soaked beyond recognition by water.

The air was filled with a pungent mix of scorched scent and Tufuling's unique medicinal smell.

Looking at the devastation inside the warehouse, Cao Yufei's legs went weak, almost collapsing to the ground, but fortunately, Qi Yun was quick-eyed and quick-handed, supporting him upright.

Cao Yufei's eyes turned red instantly, his voice trembling as he said, "What are we going to do?"

Goods worth over a hundred and sixty thousand were almost entirely gone.

In this already difficult situation, it was now a double blow. He didn't know how to explain himself to Qi Yun.

Qi Yun pulled him up, patted his shoulder, and said, "Stay strong, this is not the time to fall. Let's go check the other warehouse."

Cao Yufei nodded with difficulty, regained his composure, and the two headed toward the left warehouses.

The middle warehouse storing miscellaneous items was completely burned to the ground, with only a steel frame left standing.

The situation in the leftmost warehouse was much better; the herbs inside were mostly unaffected.

After coming out of the warehouse, Qi Yun looked at Cao Yufei with a solemn expression and asked: "Do you know the cause of the fire?"

Cao Yufei stared blankly and shook his head: "I'm not sure. I was about to fall asleep when I suddenly smelled the pungent smoke, got up to look, and realized it was on fire."

Chapter 143: Fire Disaster

Qi Yun nodded, thought for a moment, then once again approached a firefighter and politely asked, "Hello, comrade. I'd like to ask if it's possible to deduce the cause of the fire now?"

"We don't know yet. There will be a specialized team coming to investigate on-site later."

No sooner had the firefighter finished speaking than a group of people in uniforms approached, led by a middle-aged man with a stern expression.

"May I ask who is responsible for the drug factory?" the middle-aged man asked coldly.

Cao Yufei quickly stepped forward two steps, "I am."

"Hello, we are investigators from the fire department, here to further understand the situation of the fire." The middle-aged man said as he showed his credentials.

Then he scanned the warehouse with his eyes before asking, "Can you tell us if there were any unusual circumstances before the fire, such as old wiring or electrical safety issues?"

Cao Yufei recounted the discovery of the fire in detail and added, "We always pay attention to safety, and the warehouse's fire-fighting facilities are regularly inspected. I really don't know how it suddenly caught fire."

The investigators took notes while nodding, then examined the warehouse with flashlights, occasionally taking photos.

They inspected carefully, not missing a single ash mark on the floor or a soot stain on the walls.

After a long time, an investigator straightened up and told Cao Yufei, "The scene is severely destroyed. Our preliminary judgment is that the fire was likely caused by an electrical issue, but further testing is needed to confirm."

"How frequently do you inspect the electrical circuits here?"

Cao Yufei frowned, trying to recall, "We hire a professional electrician for inspections every year. The last check was just last month, and everything was normal then."

The investigator nodded and recorded the information in his notebook.

At this moment, another investigator spotted a severely burned electrical box in the corner of the warehouse and called his colleagues over for inspection.

Qi Yun also moved closer, seeing the casing of the electrical box already deformed by fire, with its copper wires tangled messily, emitting a burned smell.

"It looks like there is a problem with this electrical box. It is likely the source of the fire," one of the investigators said.

Cao Yufei's face turned even more grim, "This electrical box has always been fine. How could it suddenly start a fire?"

The investigator did not immediately reply but continued to inspect around the electrical box.

After a while, when they had finished taking photos and notes, they finally said to Cao Yufei, "We need to analyze further to determine the specific cause. We will take this electrical box with us."

Cao Yufei nodded weakly, "Alright, thank you for your hard work."

At this point, Qi Yun stepped forward and asked, "Comrade, could you tell me when the investigation results might be available?"

"It depends on the specifics of the investigation. If we're quick, it might take three to five days, but if slow, it could take about a week. The scene is severely damaged, and many key clues have been burned. We must carefully identify them," the investigator replied.

"Got it, thank you."

"..."

After they left, Cao Yufei squatted down on the ground with his head lowered, looking somewhat distraught.

"Old Qi, I'm sorry. I didn't expect it to turn out like this."

Qi Yun squatted down as well, comforting, "It's not your fault. No one could have predicted this situation."

Cao Yufei sighed and continued, "Don't worry, I will compensate you for the loss of this batch of Tufuling. I have other herbs that could sell for about seven to eight hundred thousand, plus I have a small apartment to sell..."

Qi Yun waved his hand and interrupted him, "Let's talk about these things later. Let's finish this business first."

"I don't think we can use this warehouse temporarily. Where will tomorrow's shipment go?"

Cao Yufei looked up and thought for a moment, pointing to the two-story office building opposite, "There are a few empty rooms on the first floor. I can clean them up tomorrow. It shouldn't be a problem to store things there for a while."

"Alright." Qi Yun nodded and patted him on the shoulder, "Stay positive. As long as the people are safe, everything is fine. Money can be earned again."

"Get some rest quickly. We need to find medicinal materials tomorrow."

Cao Yufei gave him a grateful glance, "Yes, you should also rest. It's been a whole night."

...

When he got home, Qi Yun tossed and turned in bed, not knowing what he was thinking.

The next day, after breakfast, he did not go straight to the drug factory but first went to Liu Meng's house.

Liu Meng was a little surprised to see him, "Why did you come without calling?"

Qi Yun handed him a cigarette, joking, "What? Do I need to make an appointment to see you now?"

Liu Meng chuckled sincerely and took the cigarette, lighting it.

"Are you home alone?" Qi Yun asked, looking around the room.

"Yes, there's no work at the construction site today," Liu Meng explained, "My wife went to set up a stall to sell clothes early in the morning, and my daughter is boarding at school and only comes back on weekends."

Qi Yun nodded, put out the cigarette, and continued to ask, "Do you have anything urgent these days? If not, can you help me with something?"

Upon hearing this, Liu Meng immediately patted his chest and said cheerfully, "Why are you being so polite with me? Just let me know what you need. As long as I can help, I definitely won't hesitate."

"Alright, let's talk in the car."

The car started quickly, and Qi Yun told Liu Meng about gathering medicinal herbs and also informed him about last night's fire.

After listening, Liu Meng frowned slightly and took a while before asking, "Do you want me to keep watch over the medicinal herbs these days?"

"Indeed. No matter how last night's fire occurred, we can't have any more issues with the subsequent medicinal herbs. I've invested almost everything I have into them," Qi Yun replied.

Chapter 144: Fire (Part 3)

Liu Meng nodded solemnly, "Old Qi, don't worry, as long as I'm around, I won't let anything go wrong with the medicinal herbs."

"..."

The car drove into the pharmaceutical factory again, and as Qi Yun got off, he saw Cao Yufei with two factory employees cleaning up the ruins of two warehouses.

Upon seeing Qi Yun, Cao Yufei put down his work, came out, and said, "You've arrived. Let me change my clothes and we'll head out."

"Alright." Qi Yun responded, patting Liu Meng on the arm to introduce him, "This is my friend Liu Meng. I brought him here to help you for a couple of days."

Cao Yufei nodded, didn't think much of it, and squeezed out a brief smile, "Hello, Brother Liu Meng, just call me Old Cao."

Liu Meng nodded slightly in greeting.

After Cao Yufei tidied up over there, Qi Yun went along with him to the medicinal merchant to collect Tufuling.

They ran all day from morning till evening and finally collected over two million worth of goods. Qi Yun specifically requested the goods be delivered to the factory tonight.

When the two returned tiredly to the factory, the batch of Tufuling received yesterday was already neatly stacked in the room.

With the remaining herbs yet to be delivered, Qi Yun went to the street next door to buy some food, and the three gathered in Cao Yufei's dormitory to fill their stomachs.

After dinner, Cao Yufei went off to attend to other matters, leaving only Qi Yun and Liu Meng in the room.

Qi Yun exhaled a smoke ring and said slowly, "Once this deal is done, I'm planning to buy an iron mine. I want you to help manage it, would you be willing?"

"An iron mine?" Liu Meng quickly shook his head upon hearing this, "Old Qi, you know I'm just a simple man, not well-educated. I can't handle managing something as big as a mine."

Qi Yun smiled, flicked his cigarette ash, and said, "Don't rush to refuse. I don't need you to manage everything, just two things."

"Number one is keeping a close eye on safety."

"Secondly, handle the record keeping well. These two aspects are most important to me and must be entrusted to someone reliable."

"Don't worry, I'll find a professional to help you manage everything else. If there's something you don't understand, they can teach you. I just wanted to touch base with you today, think about it. It'll be a few days before it gets finalized."

Upon hearing this, Liu Meng frowned slightly, falling into brief contemplation.

After a while, he scratched his head, seeming a bit troubled, "Old Qi, I'm truly moved by your trust, but I'm worried I won't do a good job and end up causing trouble for you."

Qi Yun patted Liu Meng's shoulder with a determined look in his eyes, "Brother Meng, I know you well. You're someone who works steadily and responsibly."

"On safety, just keep a close eye, and as for the accounts, proceed carefully; gradually learning isn't difficult. I believe you'll do well, plus with professional assistance, nothing major will go wrong."

"There's no rush to answer me now, wait until the factory's business is concluded."

In the midst of their conversation, the sound of a car horn rang out from not far away at the gate—the delivery truck for the herbs had arrived.

It was still Cao Yufei driving the small forklift, unloading the cargo, but this time it needed to be moved inside the building.

The three of them, along with two factory workers, worked until past three in the morning before finally finishing moving all the herbs.

After completing the tasks there, Qi Yun drove back home.

He opened the door to a silent room, where Zhao Qing, utterly exhausted, was curled up asleep on the sofa.

Seeing her, warmth filled Qi Yun's heart as he quietly walked over to carry her to bed.

"You're back," Zhao Qing murmured, opening her sleepy eyes in his arms.

"Yes, I'm carrying you up to bed," Qi Yun replied softly.

Zhao Qing leaned in his arms and closed her eyes again.

...

The next day, Qi Yun slept until nearly noon.

After a quick freshening up, he ate breakfast while checking today's intelligence reports.

[Today's Report 1 (Red): Recently, the antique market has seen a batch of counterfeit bronze artifacts with such exquisite craftsmanship that even experts find it hard to tell them apart from genuine ones. They were made by a master craftsman who recently got out of prison, currently residing in Xialing Villagexxxx]

"I can't believe it, did he not have enough sewing machine time?"

Qi Yun paused for a moment, not paying much attention as he continued to the next report.

[Today's Report 2 (Red): Qiu Jiahao has successfully escaped from the park area and is currently hiding at a farmhouse near the border, while the park's personnel continue searching for him]

"Ah Hao, good luck to you..."

[Today's Report 3 (Blue): Tobruk Village in Tobruk Town, the Uighur old lady's courtyard where you searched for pigeons, the chicken feeding trough is actually a piece of Tang Dynasty Western Regions silverware, engraved on the bottom with the emblem of the Kingdom of Yutian]

"Another blue report!"

Qi Yun's eyes sharpened as he instantly became excited.

Although it's silverware, it's still from the Tang Dynasty, and it belongs to royalty, its value should be significant.

Thinking of this, he quickly finished his breakfast and drove straight to Tobruk Village in Tobruk Town.

Passing by the ATM, he especially withdrew 20,000 yuan in cash.

He then headed effortlessly to the small shop from last time, intending to find the young man for translation.

Instead, the shop only had a little girl around ten years old who couldn't speak Mandarin, and Qi Yun couldn't communicate with her despite gesturing for a long time.

Left with no choice, he sat on the earthen kang at the door waiting.

Over an hour later, a young man urged a donkey cart leisurely in his direction—it was the little translator from last time.

Qi Yun's eyes lit up and he immediately went to greet him.

"I've been waiting for you half the day. You're finally back."

The young man was surprised to see him again, asking suspiciously, "Are you here for me?"

Qi Yun nodded, "Yes, give me another round of translation help, I'll pay you two hundred yuan, will you do it?"

Upon hearing this, the young man's face beamed with joy and he quickly replied, "Okay, wait for me!"

With that, he hastily parked the donkey cart inside the yard and hurried back excitedly.

Chapter 145: Any Apartment Under 200 Square Meters, Pick Freely

Qi Yun pulled a brand new hundred-yuan bill from his pocket and handed it to the young man, "Same old rules, when the job's done, there's another hundred for you."

The young man nodded excitedly and pocketed the money.

"Follow me," Qi Yun smiled, leading the youth back to the house of the Uighur old woman.

Soon, the old woman opened the door and, seeing him again, showed a puzzled expression.

Qi Yun turned to the young man, saying, "Tell her I saw the chickens she keeps in her yard last time and want to choose a couple to take back."

The youth immediately translated this into Uighur for the old woman, who nodded slightly and stepped aside to let them into the yard, muttering something incomprehensible.

Translating for Qi Yun, the young man said, "She says the chickens are in the coop over there, you're free to pick any."

Qi Yun followed the direction indicated and saw a simple wooden chicken coop in the corner of the yard.

At the entrance of the coop was a pitch-black, feed-stained trough filled with corn.

Without delay, he walked towards the chicken coop.

Once he got there, Qi Yun casually picked out a chicken, then glanced at the trough.

The thing, which hadn't been cleaned for years, didn't look anything like silverware at all. If not for the faint gleam confirming this was indeed the Tang Dynasty Western Regions silverware described in intelligence, he would've doubted it.

After some thought, he stood up and addressed the young man, "Tell the old woman I want this chicken and ask her to calculate the price for me."

The young man nodded, took the chicken from Qi Yun's hands, and gave it to the Uighur old woman.

Turning back inside, the old woman fetched a scale with weights, tied the chicken's legs together, and hung it on the hook to weigh.

After a good while, she reported a number to the young man.

The young man turned to Qi Yun and translated, "She says it costs thirty-five bucks."

"Okay," Qi Yun nodded, pointed at the trough, and continued, "Ask her if I want to buy this thing to feed chickens, how much would it cost."

The young man looked at him, puzzled but didn't question further, translating the request to the Uighur old woman.

The old woman looked at the trough, then at Qi Yun, muttered a few words.

The young man translated, "She says this thing has been used for ages, it's worthless, if you want it, you can take it for free."

Qi Yun paused, then smiled at the Uighur old woman, "Thank you."

The old woman seemed to understand these two words and nodded slightly at Qi Yun.

"By the way, I'm a bit thirsty, can I come inside for some water?" Qi Yun turned to the young man, signaling him to translate this for the old woman.

After the youth translated, the old woman nodded and stepped aside to let them into the house.

The interior was simple, with some old furniture arranged in a reasonably neat manner despite being plain.

The old woman brought out a teapot and a few bowls, pouring sheep milk tea for Qi Yun and the young man.

Qi Yun lifted the bowl, took a sip; the rich milk fragrance mixed with faint saltiness was surprisingly good.

After finishing a bowl of sheep milk tea, he pulled a hundred yuan from his pocket and handed it to the Uighur old woman, who accepted it and turned to the inner house to find change.

Seeing this, Qi Yun said to the youth, "Take the chicken and the trough to the shop entrance for me, I'll add another hundred yuan for you."

Upon hearing this, the young man was overjoyed, "Alright!" and ran out enthusiastically.

During this interval, Qi Yun quickly took out the twenty-thousand cash from his pocket and placed it under the wool blanket on the kang.

When the old woman returned with the change, he was casually looking at the old photos on the wall.

The old woman handed over the change while muttering something unintelligible.

Qi Yun accepted the change, smiled and waved to her, then left.

At the store entrance, he paid the youth, then asked for a urea sack, put the trough in the bag, tossed it into the car trunk, waved his hand, and drove away.

After driving a short distance, spotting a drainage ditch by the roadside, Qi Yun stopped the car, retrieved the trough, and washed it in the ditch, finally removing the feed.

Nonetheless, it was still black and couldn't show its original appearance. He dared not scrape it, fearing damage to the precious silverware, so he packed it back in the bag.

Half an hour later, Qi Yun arrived at Shi Feng's shop on Antique Street.

Seeing him with the urea sack, Shi Feng showed a trace of doubt, jokingly said, "Old Qi, what are you up to? Haven't brought some country specialty for me, have you?"

Qi Yun chuckled, placed the urea sack on the table, "Test your vision." Then he pulled out the trough from the bag, handing it to Shi Feng.

"What is this thing?" Shi Feng paused, looking at the pitch-black and smelly object in front of him, full of doubt.

He reluctantly put on a pair of gloves and began examining the trough carefully.

"Huh, so light?"

Shi Feng weighed the trough, then fetched a soft cloth to gently wipe the surface, trying to remove the thick layer of grime.

Gradually, as the grime cleared away, a dim silver color was revealed.

"Made of silver? It's not worth much, is it?"

Chapter 146: Any Apartment Under 200 Square Meters—Take Your Pick _2

Qi Yun took a sip from his teacup and smiled at him, "What if it's Tang Dynasty silverware?"

Shi Feng's hand suddenly shook, and he looked at Qi Yun in disbelief, "Tang Dynasty silverware?"

"That's right, and its origin is quite unique. You'll understand when it returns to its original state," Qi Yun replied.

Upon hearing this, Shi Feng's eyes instantly brightened. He picked up the trough again and examined it more closely.

After a while, he put down the trough and frowned, saying, "This work still requires a professional. Come with me."

After speaking, he led Qi Yun to a shop at the corner of the street.

Shi Feng placed the trough on the counter and said to an old man in the back, "Master Qin, please help remove the grime from this silverware."

Master Qin looked at Shi Feng, then turned his gaze to the trough on the counter, pushed his glasses, and said, "One Quanjude roast duck."

Shi Feng chuckled, "No problem, I'll send it over later."

"Just wait," Master Qin said no more, picked up the trough, and went into the back room.

Qi Yun looked at Shi Feng with some confusion. Shi Feng smiled and explained, "Old Qin has a soft spot for roast duck. Every time he helps, we have to 'bribe' him with it. But his skills are genuinely good. In this area, no one is better at handling such items."

They sat in the shop, waiting patiently.

About an hour later, Master Qin finally emerged from the back room, holding the newly transformed trough.

The previously dark surface had become bright and silvery, with intricate floral engravings on it.

"It's good stuff," Master Qin said lightly, placing the silverware on the counter.

Shi Feng's eyes lit up, eagerly taking it in his hands and examining it carefully.

After a long while, he couldn't find a conclusive point, staring at an emblem on the silverware's base with a frown.

"I think I saw this emblem in a book somewhere. Let's go, I need to check some documents," he said as he led Qi Yun out the door.

Returning to the shop, Shi Feng placed the silverware on the table, then turned to fetch a thick book from inside, which recorded features and illustrations of various antiques from different periods.

Finally, Shi Feng paused in his page-flipping, pointing to a page with a joyful expression on his face.

"Found it!"

He turned the book around so Qi Yun could see as well.

The illustration in the book showed silverware very similar to this one, with the same emblem at the bottom.

"This is a Tang Dynasty wine vessel! This emblem is the unique symbol of the Kingdom of Yutian's royal family!"

Though Qi Yun already knew, he still feigned surprise, "Royal family items? How much is it worth?"

Shi Feng took a deep breath, trying to remain calm, and slowly said, "During the Tang Dynasty, the Kingdom of Yutian was famous for its beautiful jade and exquisite crafts, especially those used by the royal family."

"The value of this item can no longer be measured by money." He pointed to the illustration in the book and continued, "This piece is now the prized treasure of Tian City Museum."

Qi Yun was slightly startled. He knew things obtained through blue intelligence were certainly valuable, but he hadn't expected this piece to be so extraordinary.

Yet Shi Feng's next words felt like a cold splash of water over him.

"Moreover, artifacts with high historical value like these are protected cultural relics, and their sale and trade are prohibited. It might constitute a crime of selling cultural relics."

Qi Yun's face suddenly turned a bit gloomy. He had initially thought he had gotten a priceless treasure, but unexpectedly, it was a protected relic that couldn't be traded.

Should he just display it at home?

Or submit it again?

He frowned, pondering for a long time before suddenly asking, "If it can't be sold, there shouldn't be a problem with giving it away, right?"

Shi Feng laughed, "You're quick on the uptake, indeed, gifting isn't prohibited in this regard."

Qi Yun took out a cigarette and handed one over, saying lightly, "What's the value?"

Shi Feng took the cigarette, put it in his mouth, lit it, took a long drag, and slowly exhaled a smoke ring: "Any apartment under two hundred square meters in the city center, take your pick."

Qi Yun nodded, took a drag from his cigarette, and continued to ask, "Any risk?"

Shi Feng pondered for a moment before answering, "You need someone you can trust, maybe ask President Bi if he's interested."

"Alright." Qi Yun immediately took out his phone, ready to call President Bi.

At this moment, Cao Yufei's call came in first.

"Qi Yun, I just got the news, now it's impossible to order Tufuling over in Guangxi Province, and other provinces are in the same situation. I estimate that prices will start to rise today."

As expected, Qi Yun replied, "Yeah, I saw the news saying a large-scale flu outbreak broke out in Southeast Asia, and the Tufuling from the main producing areas has already been pre-booked completely. It's only a matter of time before it affects domestic supplies."

"That's right, I noticed it myself this morning. No wonder you were so anxious last night to complete those order transactions, your instincts are sharp." Cao Yufei praised.

"Haha, it was told to me by my foreign friend." Qi Yun paused and then asked, "According to you, to what extent can the price rise?"

Cao Yufei thought for a moment and replied, "It's hard to say, but judging by the current situation, the shortage cycle won't be short."

Qi Yun nodded, "Alright, then please keep an eye on the market changes for me and call me if there are any developments."

"Okay."

After hanging up the phone, Shi Feng looked at him in surprise, "What business are you engaged in now?"

Qi Yun smiled at him and explained, "Stored some medicinal materials the past couple of days."

"Tsk tsk, you're dealing in quite a wide range of trades now, share any profitable business with your brother next time?" Shi Feng said, sipping his tea.

Chapter 147: Any Apartment Under 200 Square Meters—Take Your Pick _3

Qi Yun, upon hearing this, looked at him: "Sure, which area of business are you interested in? I'll call you next time there's a good opportunity, but don't blame me if we lose money."

Shi Feng waved his hand: "The specific area doesn't matter, I'm mainly investing in you as a person. I find that we've got good financial synergy."

"Hahaha, alright."

After chatting a bit, Qi Yun called Mr. Bi, inviting him to visit Shi Feng's shop for tea and subtly mentioned the silverware.

On the other end of the phone, Mr. Bi's interest was piqued and he wanted to come over immediately.

Soon, a BMW 7 Series stopped at the shop's entrance, and Mr. Bi hurriedly walked in.

As soon as he entered, his eyes were drawn to the shiny Tang Dynasty silverware on the table.

"Is this the silverware you mentioned on the phone?" Mr. Bi walked quickly over, carefully picked up the silverware, and examined it closely.

Qi Yun smiled and nodded: "That's right, how does Mr. Bi feel about it?"

Mr. Bi caressed the patterns on the body, clicking his tongue in wonder: "The craftsmanship is excellent, silverware of this quality is very rare."

As he spoke, he turned the silverware over, frowning as he studied the marking on the bottom.

"What's the origin? I couldn't recognize it."

Shi Feng, standing nearby, smiled and handed over the book he had before: "Take a look."

Mr. Bi took the book, carefully comparing the illustrations with the markings on the silverware, his eyes widening and an incredulous look appearing on his face.

"It's actually from the Tang Dynasty's Kingdom of Yutian. No wonder the craftsmanship is like this."

Qi Yun poured a cup of tea, pushed it in front of him, and said: "Is Mr. Bi interested in collecting it?"

"Of course, I'm interested." Mr. Bi took a small sip from the teacup, his eyes never leaving the silverware.

Qi Yun laughed and said: "How about I give it to you as a gift?"

"Give it to me?" Mr. Bi was taken aback, but quickly responded, smiling: "That's great, just in time for my birthday, I like this gift."

"But I can't just take your gift for free." Saying this, he lit a cigarette and began to ponder.

Qi Yun wasn't in a hurry, quietly waiting for him to continue.

After a long while, Mr. Bi stubbed out the cigarette and said: "I have a small villa over in the New District, it's been sitting there empty since I bought it and haven't had the time to renovate it. How about I give it to you, brother?"

Qi Yun was stunned for a moment, a villa like that must be worth around three million, right? That's much more valuable than what Shi Feng told him.

He hesitated a bit, frowning as he asked: "Mr. Bi, isn't this gift a bit too valuable?"

Mr. Bi shook his head with a hearty laugh: "We're friends, what's valuable or not valuable?"

Shi Feng also patted his shoulder in agreement: "Since it's Mr. Bi's goodwill, Qi, just accept it without overthinking."

Seeing this, Qi Yun didn't say much more, nodded and thanked: "Thank you, Mr. Bi."

"No need to thank." Mr. Bi waved his hand, "This afternoon I'll arrange for someone to accompany you to handle the transfer procedures."

The three of them chatted for a while before Mr. Bi, having other matters to attend to, rose to say goodbye.

He took the silverware with him as well.

Qi Yun didn't linger either. After saying goodbye to Shi Feng, he first drove home, then took a cab to the freight department; his BMW 5 Series with the smashed window had just been shipped back.

Although the glass was broken, at least it didn't obscure vision.

It's a second-hand car anyway, so there's no need to go to a 4S shop. He searched on the map and randomly picked a repair shop for the fixes.

The two glass pieces, along with the pried-open trunk, cost a total of eighteen hundred yuan. It would have been unlikely to get out of a 4S shop for less than four or five thousand.

After dealing with the car, Qi Yun was about to head home when a woman claiming to be Mr. Bi's assistant called to ask if he had time to handle the title transfer.

With nothing else to do at the moment, Qi Yun agreed to meet at the administrative service hall.

Half an hour later, on the second floor of the service hall, a well-dressed woman with a smartphone descended the escalator.

Qi Yun waved to her, and she nodded, walking over briskly.

With a polite smile on her face, she extended her hand to introduce herself: "Hello, Mr. Qi, I'm Mr. Bi's assistant, Jiang Yue."

Can't deny, Mr. Bi certainly has an eye for hiring assistants.

The woman before him looked to be about twenty-four or twenty-five, with looks, temperament, and figure comparable to that of Wang Fei.

Qi Yun shook Jiang Yue's hand, responding politely: "Hello, sorry for the trouble."

Jiang Yue lightly shook her head, her smile becoming even more charming: "Mr. Qi, there's no need for such courtesy, this is my job. Mr. Bi specifically instructed me to ensure you complete everything smoothly."

Saying this, she took out a stack of documents from her exquisite handbag, explaining clearly: "Mr. Qi, these are all the documents required for the transfer, they're ready. We can go to the window for processing now."

Qi Yun nodded, accompanied her to the window to handle the procedures.

Ten minutes later, the procedures were completed. In a few business days, the new property title certificate would be mailed to Qi Yun's current home.

Exiting the hall, the two parted ways. Jiang Yue headed for an Infiniti in the parking lot, while Qi Yun approached the roadside to hail a cab.

After waiting for quite a while and finding no vacant taxi, Jiang Yue drove up and stopped in front of him. She rolled down the window and leaned over to ask: "Mr. Qi, didn't you drive? Would you like a lift?"

Qi Yun waved his hand, declining: "Haha, no need to bother you, I'll just get a cab."

Uncertain of the relationship between this woman and Mr. Bi, he thought it best to have less interaction.

Jiang Yue didn't insist, laughing as she nodded: "Okay, goodbye then, Mr. Qi."

Chapter 148: Qingnang Book on the Silk Road

In the kitchen, Zhao Qing is preparing dinner.

She hears the sound of the door opening, peeks her head out from the kitchen, and a trace of surprise flashes in her eyes: "Huh, how come you're back so early today?"

"Well, things are done." Qi Yun puts down his coat, walks into the kitchen, and hugs her from behind, "Where's Nuannuan?"

"Studying vocabulary in the room." Zhao Qing tilts her head slightly, snuggling against Qi Yun's chest, "You take a break first, dinner will be ready soon."

Qi Yun paused for a moment: "Kids start learning English in kindergarten now?"

Zhao Qing turns around, wraps her arms around Qi Yun's neck, and rolls her eyes at him: "You think kids are the same as before? They have English introduction courses in kindergarten too."

Qi Yun smiles: "Let me show you something nice." With that, he takes out a bunch of keys from his pocket.

Zhao Qing's gaze falls on the keys, noticing a small, exquisite metallic nameplate hanging on the keychain.

She is momentarily stunned, then a trace of doubt flashes in her eyes, and she looks up at Qi Yun: "This is...?"

Qi Yun's lips curve up with a hint of pride: "These are the keys to our new home."

"New home?" Zhao Qing's voice unconsciously raises, her face full of surprise, "When did you buy it? It's so sudden..."

"Yeah, it is a bit sudden." Qi Yun briefly explains, "But I didn't buy it, it was given to me by someone. After dinner, I'll take you to see it. If you don't like it, we can buy another one later."

"Someone gave you a house?" Zhao Qing finds it hard to believe and questions suspiciously, "Why would someone give you something so valuable?"

"It's a bit complicated. You can think of it as I gave him something very valuable, and then he returned the favor with this house." Qi Yun continues to explain.

Zhao Qing thinks for a moment and says: "Isn't that a transaction then?"

"How can it be a transaction? It's clearly a gift between friends." Qi Yun quickly shakes his head, trying to dispel Zhao Qing's concerns, "My friend isn't short on money. This house has been vacant, so he gave it to me."

"Oh." Zhao Qing nods thoughtfully, not asking further.

The small villa is located in Golden Collar Villa, with a small hill behind it, not far from Vanke Mansion, just two streets away, surrounded by all necessary facilities like supermarkets, schools, and hospitals, making it a very good location.

After dinner, Qi Yun drives Zhao Qing and their daughter to the community.

As soon as they reach the entrance, the security guard politely inquires, learns that they are new owners, and promptly salutes to let them pass, showing great respect.

The car proceeds slowly, flanked by lush greenery, with a faint floral fragrance in the air.

The little girl leans against the car window, her eyes wide open and her little mouth muttering, "Wow, it's so beautiful here!"

Qi Yun parks the car in front of the villa, and Zhao Qing looks up at the house in front of her—a two-story small villa with beige outer walls and a red roof, simple yet elegant.

Opening the garden gate, there is a small garden at the entrance, with two small saplings planted by the property management.

Qi Yun takes out the keys and opens the door, revealing a spacious living room. The high ceilings make the space feel exceptionally open, and there are four rooms on each of the two floors, totaling approximately two hundred square meters.

Zhao Qing looks around happily. Although the house is not yet decorated, with bare cement floors and white walls that seem a bit empty, she has already envisioned a cozy future in her mind.

As she walks around, she plans, "A set of soft sofas can go here, a big TV over there, and a beautiful carpet in the center of the living room..."

The little girl, acting like a little tagalong, clutches her leg and says crisply, "I want a slide, and also..."

Seeing the happiness on their faces, Qi Yun's lips form a smile.

After viewing the house and returning home, Nuannuan, who has school tomorrow, washes up and obediently goes to sleep on her own.

Qi Yun, meanwhile, hugs Zhao Qing, accompanying her as they watch TV.

"Once the weekend comes and you have a day off, let's find an interior design company to plan the decoration."

Zhao Qing leans against Qi Yun, nodding gently, her eyes full of anticipation: "Yes, but decorating such a large house must cost quite a bit, right? I still have some savings..."

Before she finishes speaking, Qi Yun interrupts her: "The card I gave you last time has over six hundred thousand yuan. It should be enough for the initial expenses. My batch of medicinal herbs will be sold in a few days, bringing in millions more, so money's not an issue. You can decorate however you want."

"Six... six hundred thousand?" Zhao Qing is stunned. She hasn't used the card Qi Yun gave her, and hearing that it has so much money surprises her greatly, "Aren't you afraid I'll run off with your money?"

Qi Yun laughs heartily and kisses her cheek: "Then you absolutely mustn't run, or Nuannuan will cry."

He can trust her with their precious daughter, let alone the six hundred thousand.

Apart from emotions, he also fully trusts Zhao Qing's character.

"You're impossible!" Zhao Qing, a bit shy, pushes his face away, "Hurry and take a shower!"

...

[Today's Intelligence 1 (White): Golden Collar Villa is conducting a pre-paid property fee activity: prepay two years and get a 10% discount]

[Today's Intelligence 2 (Red): Mendelejev's business in the big goose market is facing competition. He plans to invite you to the big goose for an inspection to establish a deeper collaborative relationship and reclaim the local market]

[Today's Intelligence 3 (Green): Three hundred kilometers north of where you previously discovered a meteorite, beneath a sand dune, lies a buried caravan from the Tang Dynasty.

This caravan was sent by the king of the Toxara Kingdom as a tribute to Chang'an, and it carried a chest containing a precious scroll of the Qingnang Book, coordinates: N****]

Chapter 149: Qingnang Book on the Silk Road (Part 2)

The next day, Qi Yun was brushing his teeth in the bathroom when he saw the intelligence content in front of him, and his hand holding the toothbrush stopped abruptly.

"Camel caravan?"

"Toxara Kingdom?"

"Qingnang Book! Such a familiar name!"

He could no longer worry about brushing his teeth and immediately pulled out his phone from his pocket to start searching for information.

The Qingnang Book was written by Hua Tuo, a famous doctor in China's history. It is said that some pharmacological and clinical knowledge recorded in the book still hasn't reached that level, even in today's technologically advanced age.

According to online rumors, Cao Cao suffered from a strange illness, often had splitting headaches, and thus asked Hua Tuo to treat him.

At that time, Hua Tuo diagnosed that Cao Cao's headaches were caused by winds and phlegm growing in his head. To cure this illness, a craniotomy was needed to remove the winds and phlegm.

However, Cao Cao mistakenly believed Hua Tuo intended to harm him, so he imprisoned Hua Tuo.

Later, knowing he couldn't escape his fate, Hua Tuo passed down the Qingnang Book, which accumulated his life's efforts, to a jailer, and then the trail was lost.

"So it eventually ended up in the hands of the king from Toxara Kingdom? He intended to offer it to the Emperor of the Tang Dynasty, but unfortunately, the camel caravan met with an accident on the Silk Road?"

After understanding the origins of the matter, Qi Yun immediately opened the map and entered the coordinate location.

The map showed that the area was located in the desert wasteland, with the nearest city being Shanshan County.

He frowned slightly, pondering to himself that reaching this place would not be easy; it was in the depths of the vast desert, quite different from finding a meteorite at the desert's edge.

In the past two years, he had seen news about accidents and disappearances in the desert numerous times.

Therefore, wanting to head to this area to search for the camel caravan could be extremely dangerous.

This matter needs careful planning...

As he was thinking, the phone in his hand suddenly rang, displaying Zhang Dayong's name on the screen.

Qi Yun was slightly startled and pressed the answer button.

"Qi Yun, do you have time now?" On the other end, Zhang Dayong's voice remained just as loud.

"Yes, Director Zhang, is there something you need?" Qi Yun said as he walked out of the bathroom and sat on the sofa in the living room.

"Let's meet up somewhere." Zhang Dayong paused and continued, "I have a favor to ask you."

A slight confusion arose in Qi Yun's mind, wondering what simple matter could make someone of his status seek help.

"Alright, Director Zhang, just tell me where, and I'll come right away."

"There's a tea house near the G Bureau; let's go there." Zhang Dayong said.

After hanging up the phone, Qi Yun quickly washed his face, put on his jacket, and hurriedly left.

Upon arriving at the tea house, Zhang Dayong was already waiting in the private room.

"Director Zhang, you called me so urgently, is there something troublesome?" Qi Yun asked directly as he sat down.

Zhang Dayong picked up the teapot and poured him a cup of tea, then sighed and said, "This time it's indeed a tricky matter. I've got friends in the system, but they can't help, so I brought you here to see if there's any way."

"Director Zhang, you're too courteous; if there's a place I can help, I'll definitely do my best. Tell me, what exactly is going on?" Qi Yun took the teacup, lightly sipped a bit, and looked at Zhang Dayong.

Zhang Dayong took out a cigarette to hand to Qi Yun, then lit his own, taking a deep drag before gradually speaking, "The favor I need is personal. This matter is very important to me, and no third person can know."

Qi Yun nodded seriously, took the cigarette without lighting it, and quietly waited for the rest.

"How is your relationship with that antique store owner?"

"Are you talking about Shi Feng?" Qi Yun was a bit surprised and replied, "It's quite good, trustworthy."

Zhang Dayong nodded, furrowed his brows, and took two more deep breaths, seemingly making a great effort to reach a decision.

"Does he know anyone who specializes in replicas? I need to have something replicated."

Qi Yun was slightly stunned, a hint of confusion rising in his heart. Why would someone like him in position want a replica?

But considering Zhang Dayong's serious expression, Qi Yun knew there was more to the situation and refrained from asking directly, instead pondering carefully.

"Director Zhang, Shi Feng knows many people, he can likely connect with someone who specializes in replicas, but I need to ask him first, and you need to tell me what exactly needs replicating so I can pass the details to him properly." Qi Yun said.

Zhang Dayong didn't answer immediately but dipped his finger into the teacup, writing three characters on the table.

After reading them, Qi Yun was shocked, a storm raging in his heart as he realized why the man wanted the replica.

However, he kept his composure, held the cigarette between his lips, and took a deep drag.

Despite wanting to maintain a good relationship with Zhang Dayong, the matter was too significant; Qi Yun didn't want to get involved, nor involve Shi Feng.

He was contemplating how to tactfully refuse, not leaving a negative impression, when suddenly he recalled some intelligence content from two days prior.

Isn't that recently released old Deng good at forging bronze artifacts?

Thinking of this, he had an idea and lifted his head to say, "I heard recently that a batch of replicas has flowed into the antique market, even experts find it hard to distinguish the real from the fake."

"The person who made them reportedly lives in Xialing Village xxxx, though I'm not sure if it's true, so I haven't had time to report it."

With this, Qi Yun stopped his words.

Upon hearing this, Zhang Dayong's eyes lit up.

He picked up the teacup, took a small sip, and finally, the tension in his brows relaxed.

"Alright, I'll arrange for someone to investigate this; thanks a lot."

Qi Yun smiled and waved his hand, "No need to thank me, it's my duty."

Zhang Dayong nodded and said no more, "I have another task in a bit, so I'll take my leave. Let's gather again once things settle down."

Qi Yun didn't hold him back, watching his departing figure and exhaling a long breath.

The phone on the table finally restored its signal at this moment.

...

After leaving the tea house, Qi Yun drove to the pharmaceutical factory.

Cao Yufei was in the warehouse leading others to check his remaining batch of medicinal materials, so Qi Yun didn't disturb him, heading straight to Liu Meng's room.

He's been holding up here almost 24/7, while the adjacent rooms are storing the batch of Tufuling valued at 3.5 million.

"Nothing unusual, right?" Qi Yun asked.

Liu Meng replied with a smile, "Everything's normal, rest assured with me watching."

Qi Yun nodded, indeed he might have overthought things.

"Once things here are done, come accompany me to the desert."

"Alright." Liu Meng agreed without asking why, straightforwardly accepting.

The camel caravan is buried under the dunes; they might need to dig it out, so relying on just Qi Yun alone is certainly not enough.

"Add myself, Liu Meng, and bring along Zhong Rui; three people should be enough."

Then there's the need for a professional guide and preparation of various supplies.

Thinking of this, Qi Yun took out his phone and dialed Mamati's number. Mamati had led him and Zhong Rui into the desert to find a meteorite last time, clearly experienced and generally reliable.

On the other end, Mamati's cheerful voice came through, "Hello, Mr. Qi."

Qi Yun responded with a smile, "Mamati, are you free recently?"

"I just led a self-driving team out of the desert yesterday; planning to rest these two days. Is there something you need, Mr. Qi?" Mamati asked.

"Yes." Qi Yun organized his words and said, "I'm planning to go deep into the desert; about 300 kilometers north from where we looked for the meteorite last time, and I'd like to invite you as a guide."

Mamati was silent for a moment, then said, "Mr. Qi, that area is tricky; it's much more dangerous than where we found the meteorite last time. Are you sure you want to go?"

"Yes, I'm sure." Qi Yun replied firmly, without hesitation.

Mamati sighed and said, "Mr. Qi, since you've already decided, I won't persuade you otherwise."

"I have no issues myself, but going there is very risky; thorough preparations must be made. Besides me, you'll need to find others familiar with the desert's depths; they have a better understanding of the climate and terrain there and can be very helpful in critical moments."

"You also need to inform me of how many people are going from your side for us to report in advance to the relevant departments."

"Regarding other necessities like vehicles and supplies, I'll have to discuss further with my companions."

Qi Yun responded quickly, "No problem, I'll follow your arrangements; I'll send you the information on personnel later."

Chapter 150: Expert Predictions

After hanging up the phone, Qi Yun called Zhong Rui again. Zhong Rui was quite excited to hear about going to the desert again.

"Boss, when are we leaving? Is there anything I should prepare in advance?"

"This time is different from the last; we're going deep into the desert, and there could be danger. Think it over before you decide." Qi Yun's tone was serious.

Zhong Rui paused for a moment on the other end and quickly replied, "Boss, I've thought it over. I'm not afraid of danger."

"Alright then." Qi Yun said no more after hearing that. "Take a photo of your ID card and send it over. I'll let you know later what other supplies we need to prepare."

After hanging up, he sent the identity information of the three people to their guide, Mamati.

With things settled, Cao Yufei had finished entertaining clients and came into the room.

There was a hint of joy on his face, indicating he'd sold quite a bit of their stock of medicinal herbs.

"Old Qi, today several large pharmaceutical factories from around the city and neighboring cities are sending people to buy Tufuling, and the price has gone crazy."

"Is that so?" Qi Yun asked with a smile, "How much has it increased?"

Cao Yufei's eyes lit up, gesturing with three fingers, he said excitedly, "The fair-quality ones have increased by almost 30%! The top-tier goods have almost gone up by fifty percent! If we sell this batch of Tufuling now, we can make an additional million at least."

"A pharmaceutical factory contacted me before, wanting to take all our stock. Shouldn't we strike while the iron is hot and sell it off?"

Qi Yun shook his head slightly, rubbed his chin thoughtfully for a moment, and said, "Let's not rush. The prices are rising fast now and should keep going up."

Calculating with a 30% increase, even with 3.5 million worth of goods, the profit is just over a million, which isn't much more than the fire loss.

Upon hearing this, although a bit anxious, Cao Yufei understood Qi Yun's point and had no choice but to suppress his eagerness, nodding in agreement, "Alright, I'll listen to you."

Qi Yun patted his shoulder, reassuring him, "Don't worry, I know what I'm doing. Keep an eye on the market trends these days, and let me know of any updates immediately."

"Okay," Cao Yufei replied.

...

After leaving the pharmaceutical factory, Qi Yun went home to park the car and then took a taxi to the repair shop.

He circled the black BMW 5 Series, carefully inspecting all parts of the car body.

The windows and trunk were already repaired, the windows opened and closed smoothly, and the trunk fit snugly. They even changed the oil, all for just two thousand, which was economical.

"Thanks a lot, sir."

"You're welcome, and if there's any problem with the car in the future, feel free to come to us." The technician responded with a smile.

After paying, Qi Yun drove to Golden Collar Villa, intending to prepay for two years of property fees. Even free intel shouldn't go to waste.

The saying goes, 'Ride a shared bike to the bar, save where you can, spend where you should.'

But when he arrived at the property's office and heard them quoting a fee of eight bucks per square meter, he was almost floored.

Forget about saving, his villa was 220 square meters, and just the annual property fee would be over 20,000, more than the yearly rent of a normal apartment complex.

The property manager had a professional smile and patiently explained, "Sir, our community is equipped with a high-end security system with 24-hour patrol."

"The landscaping is meticulously maintained by a professional team, and there are various high-end public facilities like gyms and heated swimming pools to provide a high-quality living experience, hence the higher property fee."

Qi Yun nodded and said no more, gritting his teeth and preparing to pay for two years in advance.

The original price was 42,000, discounted to about 38,000, saving around 4,000.

Back in the day, he would have to deliver takeout for half a month to earn that 4,000.

He pulled out his phone, ready to pay, when suddenly footsteps were heard at the door.

The property manager turned to look, immediately putting on a big smile and extending a hand in greeting, "Oh, Director Ma, why are you here in person?"

Qi Yun looked over toward the sound and saw a middle-aged man coming in. He was slightly chubby and wearing a police uniform.

"Hmm." Director Ma responded with a grunt, expressionless as he approached.

When his gaze swept over Qi Yun, he paused and redirected his outstretched hand, smiling as he walked towards Qi Yun, "Oh, you're here too, what a coincidence."

Qi Yun was also taken aback, studying Director Ma carefully. He seemed familiar, but Qi Yun couldn't recall where he'd seen him before.

Director Ma didn't appear awkward about it and explained proactively, "We met last time at the hot pot place; I'm Ma Baoguo from Red Star Street's branch office."

"Oh~" Only then did Qi Yun remember, last time when he was with Zhang Dayong at the Old Sichuan Flavor Hot Pot Restaurant, this man had approached Zhang Dayong to say hello.

"Ah, Director Ma, forgive my memory, I couldn't place you immediately. Please excuse my rudeness." Qi Yun extended his hand and shook hands with him.

Ma Baoguo laughed heartily and waved it off. Anyone who could dine with his direct superior was someone he would rather please than take offense with.

"Haha, no problem, no problem, I deal with a lot of people regularly, so it's normal to not remember everyone right away. I didn't expect to run into you here. Do you live in this community too?"

Qi Yun nodded and responded, "Yes, I happen to have some time today to pay the property fee."

"I see." Ma Baoguo said, pulling out his phone from his pocket, "Why don't you take down my number? This community is part of our police precinct, so if you need anything in the future, you can call me directly."

"Haha, sure, then I'll trouble Director Ma to take care of things." Qi Yun exchanged contact information with him and added, "By the way, my name is Qi Yun."

"No problem, no problem, Mr. Qi, feel free to reach out if you have any issues in the future." Ma Baoguo smiled and saved Qi Yun's phone number in his cell.

After finishing all this, he put his phone back in his pocket, turned to the property manager, and said, "Why are you still standing there? Hurry and handle Mr. Qi's business first; we'll talk about the inspection later."

The property manager snapped back to reality and quickly replied, "Yes, yes, yes, Director Ma, I'll handle it right away."

Then he jogged over to the computer and swiftly began to process the paperwork. In no time, the fee payment was completed.

After Qi Yun paid, he took the payment receipt and thanked the other party.

Then he looked at Ma Baoguo again and said with a smile, "Director Ma, I'll be leaving now, so I don't interrupt your work."

Ma Baoguo smiled and nodded, "Alright, keep in touch, and let me know if there's anything."

"Haha, sure, thanks a lot." Qi Yun exchanged a few more pleasantries and turned around to leave the property office.

He could sense that the other party seemed to want to befriend him, but it wasn't because he was particularly capable; it was entirely because of Zhang Dayong's influence.

Still, having a friend working at the precinct isn't a bad thing; if he ever runs into trouble, he'll have support.

Back home, Qi Yun cleaned the house inside and out. Usually, he's not home during the day, so Zhao Qing handles these chores.

She actually works quite hard every day, not only teaching kids at the kindergarten but also cooking and cleaning at home for the little girl.

After mopping the floor, Qi Yun leaned against the sofa and was just about to take a break when his phone in his pocket suddenly rang.

He took a look at the phone and saw it was Mendeleyev calling.

Combining the intelligence from this morning, he already guessed the reason for the call.

"Hey, old friend, how's it going lately?" Mendeleyev's loud voice came through the receiver.

Qi Yun raised the corners of his mouth and responded casually, "I'm the same as always. How about you lately?"

Mendeleyev heard this and sighed heavily, his voice full of helplessness, "Ugh, things have been really frustrating for me lately. Since we sold out that batch of cotton cloth last time, my business has been declining rapidly."

"Oh? What's going on?" Qi Yun feigned ignorance and asked.

Mendeleyev sighed and continued, "There are two competitors who've been targeting me recently, trying to push me out of the Tashtagol market by engaging in a price war."

"Although I've made some money over the years, if this continues long-term, it's going to be hard to sustain."

During lunch before, Qi Yun heard him mention that Tashtagol is a small city in the Da E Federation, Tuva Republic, not too far north from Jiang Province.

"Price wars are indeed a tricky issue, so what's your reason for calling me?" Qi Yun asked further.

"I want to seek your help. Can you come over and take a look at the market situation here? We can ship over more competitive products and monopolize the market," Mendeleyev said in an anxious tone.

Qi Yun pondered for a moment and then slowly said, "Going to your place is not a problem, but I have some important matters to deal with recently. I might not have time until next month."

On the other end of the phone, Mendeleyev was somewhat disappointed upon hearing it would take until next month, but he understood and said, "Well, next month it is. I hope you can come as soon as possible—otherwise, I'm really struggling."

Qi Yun nodded and said, "Don't worry. As soon as I finish my business here, I'll head over."

After hanging up the phone, he let out a long sigh. Seems like doing business is tough everywhere...

...

At night, Qi Yun had just downed half a bottle of Liuwei Dihuang pills and walked to the balcony, lit a cigarette, took a deep puff, and started reviewing today's intelligence messages.

[Today's Intelligence 1 (Red): Influenced by the Southeast Asian market, domestic Tufuling prices continue to rise steadily, with experts predicting it might reach up to three times the original price.]

"Pah!" Qi Yun spat.

He was initially quite confident about the Tufuling prices, but after hearing the experts, he was scared to be too greedy.

This bunch talks nonsense eight times out of ten.

He quickly pulled out his phone and sent a message to Cao Yufei, 'Sell when it doubles!'

[Today's Intelligence 2 (Red): A teenager who dropped out from the computer science department at Fudan University has developed a turn-based card mobile game and is seeking investors, contact number 189xxxx]

[Today's Intelligence 3 (Red): The boss of Juyuan Hot Pot Restaurant is jealous of the business across the street at Old Sichuan Flavor Hot Pot Restaurant and secretly hired some tough guys planning to cause trouble there today.]