

Middle Age 161

Chapter 161: The Complexity of Human Nature (Part 2)

The two exchanged a glance, secretly relieved that this made things easier.

Ai Shan was just about to reach out, when in the next second, Liu Meng, who had been sleeping, suddenly sat upright, his eyes as big as copper bells staring fiercely at him.

"What are you up to?"

Ai Shan was frightened out of his wits by this sudden movement, his heart constricting sharply.

His hand froze in mid-air, the smile on his face instantly became rigid, turning as pale as paper.

He opened his mouth, wanting to say something, but felt like his throat was blocked by something, unable to make a sound.

Beck was also badly scared, his body trembling unconsciously, the towel in his hand almost slipping away.

He looked at Liu Meng in terror, his brain working swiftly, trying to come up with a plausible excuse to explain their actions.

"I... I..." Ai Shan stammered, cold sweat dripping down from his forehead, rolling down his cheeks.

"Beck's here, his car got stuck up front, I was just coming to call you for help." He spoke while stealthily hiding the ether-soaked towel behind him.

Liu Meng snorted coldly, a hint of chill in his gaze, "Do you take me for a fool?"

With those words, he swiftly reached out one hand and grabbed Ai Shan's arm, while his other hand went straight to his neck, exerting force abruptly.

Ai Shan, being small in stature, was easily pinned down on the ground.

Meanwhile, Liu Meng quickly stood up, delivering a kick to Beck's calf.

"Ouch!"

Beck let out a scream, his body losing balance and crashing heavily to the ground, the ether-soaked towel flying out of his hand.

He curled up in pain, clutching his injured leg, his face full of agony.

Ai Shan was held firmly on the ground by Liu Meng, his cheek pressed against the cold sand, choking on a few mouthfuls, coughing repeatedly.

He struggled desperately, flailing his arms and legs, but felt like he was being crushed under a mountain, unable to move at all.

"Liu Meng, let me go!" Ai Shan shouted desperately in terror.

Liu Meng remained unmoved; instead, he increased the pressure, his knee digging into Ai Shan's back, causing Ai Shan to scream in pain.

"Hmph, playing this game with me? Do you know what I did before I retired?" Liu Meng shouted in anger, his eyes full of disdain.

At this moment, Qi Yun lifted the tent flap and came inside, exhaling a smoke ring without expression, looking at the two lying on the ground.

"Alright Meng, tie them up."

Liu Meng responded, not pausing in his actions, one hand continuing to hold Ai Shan tightly, the other reaching for a rope.

With skilled movements, in just a moment, he had Ai Shan's hands bound behind his back, purposely tightening the knot, making Ai Shan gasp in pain.

After dealing with Ai Shan, Liu Meng quickly walked over to Beck, who was still rolling in pain on the ground.

Liu Meng grabbed his collar, lifting him off the ground, Beck grimacing in pain, "Stop... stop hitting!"

"Now you know fear? Too late!" Liu Meng snorted coldly, saying this as he bound Beck's hands securely with the rope.

Qi Yun stood to the side, silently watching all this, as he crushed the cigarette butt under his shoe, bending down to pick up the towel and ether bottle, examining them momentarily, his expression growing colder.

"Boss Qi, I was wrong! I shouldn't have been greedy, I don't want this reward, please let me go!" Ai Shan pleaded for mercy.

"Right, right! We don't want the reward! Boss Qi, please forgive us!"

Qi Yun gave them a cold glance without saying a word.

Outside the tent, Mamati stood quietly, not entering, his eyes full of disappointment.

Hearing the commotion, Ah Li ran over, scratching his head, confused, and asked Mamati: "What's going on?"

Mamati shook his head at him, "Don't go in."

Ah Li was stunned but heeded his words, standing aside.

At this moment, Qi Yun came out of the tent and handed the items over.

Mamati took them and glanced at them, anger flashing in his eyes, "I never thought they dared to do such a thing, and to think I regarded them as brothers."

Earlier by the campfire, after speaking with Ai Shan, Mamati had already noticed something amiss with him, and after returning to the tent, he informed Qi Yun of everything.

Including the circumstances at the dunes yesterday when the items were first dug out, he didn't hide anything.

The response he got was very calm, as if Qi Yun had already known everything.

This left him quite surprised, knowing he made the right choice; otherwise, they might never hire him again.

In their line of work, reputation was crucial, and if clients no longer trusted you, no amount of experience would be useful.

Then, Ai Shan's voice rang out from inside the tent, "Mamati, I really know my mistake! Please speak to Boss Qi, spare me this time! I was just foolish for a moment!"

Ai Shan's voice had a sobbing tone, filled with fear.

Beck also pleaded bitterly on the side, "Boss Qi, we really know our wrongs, we shouldn't have been greedy. For Mamati's sake, spare us! We vow to be good people in the future and never dare again."

Qi Yun looked at Mamati and asked, "What do you say?"

Mamati furrowed his brow, his eyes full of complex emotions, disappointment, anger, and a touch of reluctance.

He was silent for a moment before saying slowly, "Boss Qi, I'm sorry, I didn't recognize their true character and nearly endangered everyone by bringing them in."

Chapter 162: The Complexity of Human Nature (Part 3)

"They betrayed everyone's trust and tarnished the profession of guiding. I have nothing more to say, I'll follow your decision."

Beside him, Ah Li listened to those earlier conversations, glanced at the things in Mamati's hands, and looked dazed, opening his mouth but saying nothing.

Qi Yun nodded, turned to Liu Meng and Zhong Rui, who had just awakened from sleep, and said, "Keep a good watch over them."

Liu Meng sneered and looked at the two people lying on the ground with disdainful eyes: "Relax."

"Okay, boss." Zhong Rui was stunned for a moment and then quickly nodded.

Having dealt with this, Qi Yun turned around and said to Mamati, "Alright, it's been a long night, hurry and get some sleep, we'll talk when it's light."

Mamati and Ah Li responded, glanced at the tent again, and then turned and left.

...

The next day, after breakfast, Zhong Rui came over and said, "Boss, Beck said his vehicle carrying supplies is parked just two kilometers ahead."

Qi Yun nodded upon hearing this, saying nothing.

Next to him, Mamati inquired, "Boss Qi, should I go bring the car over? If there are supplies on board, we won't have to wait for someone to rescue us."

Qi Yun did not immediately reply, checked the time on his watch, lit a cigarette, and slowly said, "No rush, the rescue party is coming soon."

Mamati was momentarily stunned, wondering how there could be a rescue team since he hadn't called them.

At that moment, a sudden roar rose from afar, growing clearer by the minute.

Everyone turned their heads, only to see a convoy of off-road vehicles racing toward the camp, kicking up a storm of sand.

Mamati looked shocked, turning to Qi Yun, and asked, "Boss Qi, is this...?"

Qi Yun's lips curled slightly, exhaling a ring of smoke, "This is the rescue team."

Ah Li beside him asked in confusion, "Boss Qi, when did you contact them, how are they here so fast?"

Qi Yun smiled without answering, quietly watching the approaching off-road vehicles.

In no time, the convoy stopped outside the camp, and several people disembarked—aside from a guide, the others were dressed in police uniforms.

A person who appeared to be the captain approached and asked, "Which one of you is Mr. Qi Yun?"

Qi Yun stepped forward, extinguished his cigarette, and nodded to indicate, "I am Qi Yun."

The captain saluted Qi Yun and said, "Mr. Qi, I'm Zhou Hongchang. We received orders from Director Zhang last night to come and escort you."

Qi Yun showed a hint of gratitude, "Hmm, thank you all for your hard work."

Zhou Hongchang chuckled, "You're too kind, Mr. Qi. It's our duty. Director Zhang cares a lot about your safety. Upon receiving your information, he immediately arranged for us to set off."

Qi Yun nodded and turned to Zhong Rui, "Go tell Meng to bring the people over."

Zhong Rui acknowledged, turned around, and hurried into the tent.

Soon, Liu Meng emerged, escorting Ai Shan and Beck.

Upon seeing the people in police uniforms, the two looked ashen-faced, knowing they were certainly caught this time.

Zhou Hongchang looked hesitantly to Qi Yun, "Mr. Qi, is this?"

"These two are the guides I hired. Last night, while we were asleep, they planned to steal my belongings."

"These are their tools for the crime." With this, Qi Yun took out a plastic bag from his pocket and handed it to Zhou Hongchang; inside were the two towels and the bottle of ether.

Zhou Hongchang froze for a moment, took the plastic bag, and examined its contents, his expression becoming stern.

He cast a sharp glance at Ai Shan and Beck and then signaled to the officer beside him, who promptly stepped forward, took Ai Shan and Beck from Liu Meng, and escorted them to the vehicle.

"Mr. Qi, could you tell me what they intended to steal?" Zhou Hongchang asked quietly.

Qi Yun smiled at him, "Something very valuable."

Zhou Hongchang paused slightly, understanding that the other party didn't wish to divulge further but inferred the implication.

Last night, Zhang Dayong had mentioned on the phone, ensuring that trustworthy individuals would come. Qi Yun trusted that Zhou Hongchang wouldn't spread whatever he might hear from Ai Shan.

"If Mr. Qi doesn't have other matters, shall we head back now? Hopefully, we'll reach Shanshan County Town by night."

"Alright." Qi Yun nodded, calling out to Mamati not far away, "Mamati, go fetch the car."

"Okay, Boss Qi." Mamati responded and quickly walked toward Beck's concealed vehicle.

...

Around 1 AM, the convoy finally arrived at Shanshan County Town.

Zhou Hongchang parted ways with Qi Yun and the others, promising to contact them the next day, and then took Ai Shan and Beck directly back to the station.

Qi Yun and his companions found a hotel to stay for the night.

After a night of rest, everyone felt rejuvenated. Qi Yun initially intended to invite Mamati and Ah Li to stay another day to properly host them.

However, due to the matter involving Ai Shan, they seemed disinterested.

Without pressing further, Qi Yun paid their guiding fees in full, including Ai Shan and Beck's share, transferring it to Mamati.

"This money is for their families, or whatever you'd like, you decide."

Mamati was emotionally stirred, looking at Qi Yun with gratitude in his eyes, "Boss Qi, I'm sorry for involving you this time. I will handle the money properly."

Qi Yun patted him on the shoulder, "It's not your fault. People are unpredictable. Let's cooperate again if the opportunity arises."

Mamati and Ah Li packed their things to leave.

At the doorway, Mamati turned back, saying, "Boss Qi, if you need a guide in the future, remember to contact me. I assure, this won't happen again."

Chapter 163: The Complexity of Human Nature (Part 4)

Qi Yun nodded, watching them leave.

After the two walked away, he took out his phone and called Zhou Hongchang, inviting him and a few officers for lunch.

The location was chosen at a restaurant not far from the police department, one of the better ones in the county town.

Qi Yun arrived first with Liu Meng and Zhong Rui.

After arriving at the private room, he instructed Zhong Rui, "Go load a membership card with ten thousand yuan, then buy two cases of Yuxi cigarettes from the next-door liquor store."

"Okay, boss." Zhong Rui responded and quickly left the room to handle it.

Once he left, Qi Yun handed a cigarette to Liu Meng and said with a smile, "Brother Meng, you've seen those jewels; they're worth quite a bit. How about I give you fifty thousand yuan? Just a small token of my appreciation."

Liu Meng was taken aback, accepted the cigarette, and a hint of displeasure flickered across his face.

"Last time we returned from Kashi, I already said I followed to help you. You don't need to do this; I won't take it."

Qi Yun wasn't surprised, lit a cigarette, and continued, "Brothers are brothers, but you haven't earned anything these days with me. What will your wife and child eat and drink?"

Hearing this, Liu Meng frowned slightly and slowly exhaled a smoke ring: "I know you want to help me, but having this much money makes me uncomfortable."

"Working at the construction site, I only earn three hundred yuan a day. The money you gave last time is enough for me to work there for two months."

Qi Yun knew this guy was a bit stubborn, so he said no more and decided to compensate him in other ways.

After a while, Zhou Hongchang arrived with a few officers to the private room.

As soon as he entered, he had a cheerful smile on his face, "Mr. Qi, sorry to keep you waiting!"

Qi Yun quickly stood up to welcome them, warmly saying, "Please come in, everyone. It hasn't been long at all. Today, I really have to thank you all. If it weren't for you, we wouldn't have come out of the desert smoothly."

They exchanged pleasantries and took their seats, with Qi Yun personally pouring tea for everyone.

A table full of sumptuous dishes was quickly laid out since everyone had to work in the afternoon, so no alcohol was served.

After eating and drinking, Zhou Hongchang handed a cigarette to Qi Yun, leaned over, and whispered, "The two have been interrogated. Is there anything else you want to say?"

Qi Yun smiled and patted his shoulder, "You just follow the normal procedures."

"Understood." Zhou Hongchang nodded in understanding.

After some conversation, their relationship grew increasingly familiar.

Seeing it was getting late, Qi Yun took out the membership card that Zhong Rui gave him earlier and handed it to Zhou Hongchang.

"This restaurant has good food. Bring the guys over when you have time, and share these cigarettes with them. Consider it my gratitude for saving my life."

"They're not worth much, don't refuse them."

Zhou Hongchang was slightly taken aback and instinctively wanted to refuse, but when he met Qi Yun's "sincere" gaze, the refusal died on his lips.

"Mr. Qi, you're too kind. It's not a life-saving grace, we were just doing our duty. Since it's your token of kindness, I'll accept it on everyone's behalf, thank you!"

Qi Yun laughed heartily, "Captain Zhou, don't say that. If it weren't for your timely arrival, we would have been in big trouble in the desert. If you ever need my help in the future, just ask."

"..."

When they parted, Zhou Hongchang held Qi Yun's hand and whispered, "Mr. Qi, actually, my home is also in Bird City. It's been a long time since I've been back. Next time I go, I'll visit you and Director Zhang."

Chapter 164: How to Handle It

After parting ways with Zhou Hongchang and the others, the three of them drove the van back to Bird City.

Upon returning to the city center, it was just past six o'clock. Qi Yun took out his phone and sent a message to Zhao Qing, informing her that he had arrived safely and would head back after handling some matters.

He then instructed Zhong Rui to take Liu Meng home, while he drove the BMW 5 Series, carrying those treasures directly to find Wei Xueming at Xinda.

In the office, Wei Xueming was originally preparing to attend a lecture. But upon hearing that the person on the phone had something important to discuss, he canceled the lecture to wait there specifically.

"What urgent matter do you have for me? Can you tell me now?" Wei Xueming poured a cup of tea for Qi Yun, pushed his heavy glasses up, and asked.

Qi Yun didn't waste any words and directly placed the bag on the table, then carefully took out the ancient manuscript wrapped in clothing.

Wei Xueming's eyes were instantly drawn to the ancient manuscript on the table. He put down his teacup, leaned forward, and stared at the cover of the manuscript, asking, "What is this?"

Qi Yun didn't answer his question but instead smiled and said, "Let's be petty before being noble."

"Before I tell you, I need you to promise that you won't tell anyone about this book's existence without my permission."

Wei Xueming was slightly stunned, knowing that the other party was afraid of a repeat of last time. This indirectly proved the book's extraordinariness, arousing his curiosity further.

He nodded solemnly, "Alright, I won't disclose a word about this book to anyone before you allow me."

"Can you tell me what this is now?"

Receiving the satisfactory response, Qi Yun replied deliberately and clearly, "The Qingnang Book!"

Upon hearing the words Qingnang Book, Wei Xueming's body jolted, and an expression of disbelief appeared on his face.

His eyes widened roundly, filled with shock behind the glasses, and his lips trembled slightly, "You... what did you say? The Qingnang Book?"

"The Qingnang Book that legend says was burned by Hua Tuo, with only one remaining volume, recording countless miraculous medical techniques?"

Qi Yun nodded slowly, "There's an eighty to ninety percent chance it is."

"That's why I came to you. I dare not easily flip through it in its current condition and need a professional like you to verify it."

Wei Xueming took a deep breath, trying to calm himself down, but his gaze remained locked onto the ancient manuscript, as if magnetized.

"You're doing the right thing. This kind of ancient manuscript, existing for thousands of years, is very fragile. Even a slight carelessness could damage the precious contents recorded inside."

"Qi Yun, if this truly is the Qingnang Book, it could be considered a miracle in the history of medicine and might even rewrite many medical understandings."

He spoke while pacing around the desk, revealing his inner excitement.

"How did you obtain this book, and is there any other evidence?"

Qi Yun nodded, taking out another piece of clothing from the bag, wrapped around the Passage Document.

"This Qingnang Book actually ended up in the hands of the king of the Toxara Kingdom during the Tang Dynasty. He planned to offer it as a tribute to the Emperor of the Tang Dynasty, but the caravan sent out encountered a sandstorm on a section of the Ancient Silk Road and was buried for over a thousand years."

"This Passage Document should provide evidence, but as for the exact details, forgive me for not being able to disclose them."

Listening to this, Wei Xueming's expression became even more vivid, and he said excitedly, "The Toxara Kingdom? No wonder it's been lost for so long..."

His eyes fixated on the Qingnang Book and the Passage Document on the table, filled with uncontrollable shock.

"Qi Yun, if it's really as you say, this is simply an earth-shattering discovery!"

Seeing his state, Qi Yun was genuinely a bit worried that the old man might faint, so he quickly reassured, "Mr. Wei, please calm down."

Wei Xueming waved his hand, "Can I keep these two items here? I'll start on the restoration right away and inform you as soon as I have results."

Since Qi Yun brought the items to him, he naturally trusted the other party and agreed, "Alright, I'll leave it to you, I..."

"I know what you're worried about." Wei Xueming interrupted before Qi Yun could finish, "Don't worry, I won't ask others for help this time. I'll handle it personally and keep it strictly confidential for you."

"Alright then, if there's nothing else, hurry up and leave so you don't waste my time."

Qi Yun pursed his lips but wasn't offended, picked up his bag, and left.

Back in the car, he called Zhang Dayong, inviting him to dinner later to express his gratitude in person.

Zhang Dayong readily agreed, and they arranged to meet at Lao Feng's hotpot restaurant.

Checking his watch, Qi Yun saw that there was still some time before the end of Zhang's shift, so he called Lao Feng to reserve a spot and then drove to the pharmaceutical factory.

Earlier that morning, he had contacted Hong Weize, who informed him that Cao Yufei hadn't shown any signs of fleeing recently, which put Qi Yun's mind at ease, especially since it involved six to seven million.

This also proved that he judged the person correctly, as Cao Yufei was indeed trustworthy.

In the pharmaceutical factory office, as soon as Cao Yufei saw Qi Yun, he came forward with delight on his face, "Old Qi, you finally decided to show up. I've been unable to reach you these past few days."

"Didn't I tell you before leaving? I went where there's no signal." Qi Yun replied with a smile, sitting down on the sofa with him, "Did you sell that batch of Tufuling?"

"Sold it a few days ago." Cao Yufei nodded, his expression excited, "The whole batch sold for 7.4 million! The money is in the account, and you can transfer it anytime."

Chapter 165: How to Handle It

"Alright." Qi Yun nodded with satisfaction, pulled out a cigarette from his pocket, handed one to the other, and after lighting it, continued, "Then let's split the money."

"7.4 million, after deducting the 5 million cost, this time the profit is 2.4 million. According to our initial agreement, your share is 30 percent, which is 720,000. The remaining 6.68 million, you can transfer directly to my account. If there are any tax issues, I'll have the finance team liaise with you."

Cao Yufei hurriedly shook his head upon hearing this, "No, you forgot about that batch of Tufuling that got burned. The cost of those medicinal materials alone was 1.5 million; the responsibility lies with me. I should compensate you. If we sell at that batch's price, it should be..."

"Okay, enough." Qi Yun interrupted with a wave, "Nobody wants to see a fire incident; it's an uncontrollable factor, and you shouldn't bear the loss alone. Let's not talk about the past."

"Moreover, I've not been around recently, and you've been handling all of this alone; you deserve this money."

After hearing this, Cao Yunfei took a deep drag on his cigarette, glanced at Qi Yun with a trace of gratitude in his eyes, and said slowly, "Old Qi, you're a man of feelings, but as your older brother, I have my principles. Our friendship is one thing, business is another."

"When we made the initial agreement, the responsibilities of each were clearly defined. The issue with the goods happened under my watch, so I should bear the responsibility. No reason to only take the benefits, right?"

Upon hearing this, Qi Yun sighed, suddenly thinking this guy seemed a bit like Liu Meng, stubbornly principled.

He pondered for a moment before suggesting a compromise, "Alright, then let's do as you say, but consider that batch of medicinal materials as just 1.5 million. Just act like you owe me 1.5 million and give me an IOU."

"The 720,000 is your deserved share. Take it first to keep the factory running; pay me back once you earn the money."

"That's it; don't say any more. Be a man!"

Cao Yufei's eyes slightly reddened, his heart filled with emotion, and he nodded vigorously, "Thanks. I'll remember this in my heart. In the future, if there's anything you need me for, just say the word."

Qi Yun blew out a smoke ring, patted his shoulder, and said with a smile, "Alright, you've made money, cheer up a bit. What's with the emotional scenes?"

...

After leaving the pharmaceutical factory, noting the time was about right, Qi Yun drove to Old Feng's hotpot restaurant.

After being away for a few days, the neighboring shop had already been renovated and started operating.

In the usual spot in the corner, Old Feng brought over a pot of hot tea, and the two sat down for a chat.

"Has anything happened at the store recently?" Qi Yun sipped a bit of tea from his cup.

Old Feng shook his head, "The owner of the opposite hotpot restaurant came over the next day to apologize, bringing 20,000 yuan. I didn't take it, but he wouldn't leave, so I put it on his membership card."

Qi Yun chuckled upon hearing this, and after thinking for a moment, understood what was going on.

This guy got wind of it and was afraid of retaliation.

"He's quite perceptive then, huh?"

Old Feng, rarely joking, showed a smile, "Witnessed the influence of Director Qi."

As they were chatting, Zhang Dayong pushed the door open and came in.

Qi Yun quickly stepped forward to greet him, "Director Zhang is here, have a seat, please."

Old Feng also greeted and then went to the front desk to work.

Zhang Dayong smiled and waved, sitting opposite Qi Yun, "Sorry I'm late; traffic was heavy."

Qi Yun picked up the teapot, poured a cup of tea for him, and replied, "I just got here as well, chatted with Old Feng for a bit."

"Shall we eat something? The usual dish?"

"Sure, the usual." Zhang Dayong nodded.

"Are we drinking a bit today?" Qi Yun continued to ask.

Zhang Dayong furrowed his brow, showing a bit of a dilemma, "I probably can't drink with you today. There are many tasks at the bureau, and I may have missions at any time. Drinking might cause issues, I need to stay alert."

Qi Yun didn't insist and nodded understandingly, "Alright, then let's just have some tea."

The waiter quickly brought over a big table of dishes, and the two enjoyed hotpot while chatting.

"Why did you head into the desert in the no-man's land?"

Qi Yun chuckled, "Didn't I donate that meteorite I found to the museum before? This time, I had nothing to do and decided to try my luck again. In the end, I didn't find a meteorite but dug up something else."

"It's all in my car; let's take a look after lunch."

Zhang Dayong raised his eyebrows slightly, showing curiosity, "Oh? Dug up something else? Sounds like you made quite a haul."

"Sure, after eating, I'll go check it out and see what treasure you've discovered."

Qi Yun added a chopstick of food to the pot and said with a smile, "Honestly, this time in the desert, I had quite an adventurous experience. If it weren't for you sending someone out to meet me, my life might've been left there."

"So, great kindness expresses no thanks!"

Upon hearing this, Zhang Dayong waved his hand, "We're friends; you've helped me plenty of times too. No need for such formal words."

"As long as you're alright, it's fine. Be careful from now on."

Qi Yun nodded, "Mm, learned my lesson this time."

After finishing their hotpot, the two went to the parking lot in front of the restaurant and got into Qi Yun's BMW 5 Series.

"Take a look, see if there's anything you fancy. If you're not too formal, pick a couple of pieces for your wife." Qi Yun handed over the package from the back seat, opened it on the armrest, and said.

Zhang Dayong leaned over curiously, his gaze resting on the open package filled with jewelry.

His gaze lingered on a string of vivid green necklace for a while, then he lifted his head and said, "These things are too precious; I can't accept them."

Qi Yun chuckled and didn't insist further.

Chapter 166: How to Handle (3)

"By the way, Captain Zhou should have reported to you about those two thieves, right?"

Zhang Dayong handed over a cigarette and, after lighting it, said, "Yeah, you don't have to worry about it; he'll handle it for you."

"Alright." Qi Yun took the cigarette and continued, "By the way, Director Zhang, where do you live? A friend of mine gave me some Qamagou recently; I'll have someone bring you some later."

"Qamagou? Sure, that's good stuff. I live at xxxxx..."

"..."

After seeing the other party's car leave, Qi Yun took out the string of emerald necklace from the bag, returned to the hotpot restaurant, and whispered something to Old Feng.

...

After dealing with these matters, it was already past ten o'clock when Qi Yun got home.

Zhao Qing heard the commotion at the door and immediately ran happily to open it, quickly throwing herself into Qi Yun's arms without a word.

Qi Yun gently hugged her, patted her back, and said softly, "What's up? Missing me, huh?"

Zhao Qing looked up, her eyes a little red, and complained, "You've been gone for several days, and I couldn't reach you. I've been worried every day, afraid something might happen to you."

A warm current surged in Qi Yun's heart; he lowered his head and gently kissed her forehead, reassuring her, "I'm sorry for making you worry. But see, I'm back safe and sound."

Zhao Qing broke into a smile, holding Qi Yun's hand, as they walked into the house and sat down on the sofa.

"Where's the little one?"

"In the bedroom, fell asleep waiting for you." Zhao Qing nestled closely next to Qi Yun, muttering discontentedly.

"Haha, I'll go take a look at her." Qi Yun stood up lightly, tiptoed into the bedroom.

In the dim light, he saw the little one lying quietly on the bed, her little face rosy, with a hint of a sweet smile at the corners of her mouth.

Tenderness filled Qi Yun's heart as he kissed his daughter's forehead before turning to leave the room and returning to the living room.

"I'll take a shower first and then keep you company," Qi Yun said as he walked toward the bathroom; he suddenly returned midway, took out his wallet from his pocket, and placed a stack of receipts on the coffee table, "Since you're free, check if any of these receipts have won a prize."

Zhao Qing looked at the stack of receipts on the coffee table suspiciously, "Can these really win? I've never scratched off a winning one."

Qi Yun smiled mysteriously, "Well, you give it a try; if you win, it's all yours."

"Cut it off, I don't believe it." Zhao Qing glanced over skeptically, yet she reached out to pick up the receipts and began to scrutinize them one by one.

Without saying more, Qi Yun turned around and entered the bathroom.

With the intent to pass the time, Zhao Qing started scratching off the receipts one by one; about ten of them just said, "Thanks for participating."

Until she scratched off the last one, her eyes widened instantly, and her casual expression was suddenly replaced by excitement.

"Wow!" Zhao Qing couldn't help but shout, but quickly realized the sound was too loud, worrying about waking the already asleep little one.

She hurriedly ran to the bathroom holding the receipt, excitedly whispered, "Qi Yun, I won! I really won!" She waved the receipt in her hand energetically, her voice full of disbelief.

Qi Yun was drying his hair, turned to see her excitement, and pretended to be surprised, "Really? How much did you win?"

Zhao Qing's cheeks reddened with excitement as she handed the receipt to Qi Yun, "Look! Ten thousand dollars! I never thought I'd win such a big prize." She smiled, her eyes turning into slits.

Qi Yun took the receipt and looked at it, "Awesome! You must buy a couple of lottery tickets tomorrow." Saying this, he gently pinched Zhao Qing's cheek, his eyes full of affection.

Zhao Qing happily spun around in the bathroom, then suddenly remembered something, "By the way, once the new house is renovated, I'll use this money to buy you a massage chair!"

Qi Yun laughed as he pulled her into his arms, greedily inhaling the fragrance of her hair, "No need to buy me anything; just buy whatever you want. I'll transfer a million to you later, and tomorrow we'll find a renovation company."

"A million!" Zhao Qing paused, looking earnestly at Qi Yun, then said nothing, hugging him tightly.

After a long-awaited kiss, Qi Yun supported his waist and walked to the balcony, lighting a cigarette as he began checking the intelligence system he hadn't focused on for a while.

[Current intelligence points: 9]

[Today's Intelligence 1 (Red): A businessman from Lebanon is buying gas tanks expensively everywhere, currently staying in room 601 at the Pudong Holiday Hotel]

"Lebanon? Gas tanks?"

If I remember correctly, Lebanon appears to be experiencing turmoil; is this guy planning to use them as bombs?

Qi Yun shook his head; the risk's too high; it's not something to get involved with.

Moreover, the regulation of gas tanks is too strict, making them difficult to manage.

[Today's Intelligence 2 (Blue): New District G Security Bureau plans to upgrade a data collection system, Zhang Dayong intends to involve you in the bidding process]

"A favor returned?"

Projects like this, Qi Yun knows, usually cost upwards of three to five million.

As for the technical difficulty, there is some, but not much.

There are heaps of mature products in the market; they're just not open-sourced, basically adding some customized requirements on top of them.

But the profits are extremely high; if secured, a simple operation and handover can easily net one to two million.

[Today's Intelligence 3 (Red): The coordinates you gave to Spanish history expert—Ignacio for decryption have made a breakthrough]

...

The next day, Qi Yun got up early to prepare breakfast for Zhao Qing and their daughter.

Chapter 167: How to Handle (4)

The little girl hasn't been seen for a few days, and it seems like she's grown taller. As soon as she gets up, she clings to Qi Yun's leg and won't let go.

Qi Yun bends down with a smile, gently picks up the little girl, kisses her rosy cheek, and softly says, "Daddy made something delicious for you. Shall we go eat first?"

The little girl hugs Qi Yun's neck, tilts her head, and replies, "Okay, but I don't want to go to kindergarten today. I want to be with Daddy."

Zhao Qing finishes washing up and comes out of the bathroom, pats Nuannuan's little head, and says, "Not going to school isn't an option, you know. If you don't go to kindergarten, your little buddies will worry about you."

The little girl pouts, a bit reluctant: "But I really want to spend more time with Daddy."

"Be good, Nuannuan. Daddy will come back early today to pick you up from school and take you to eat pizza, alright?" Qi Yun smiles and comforts her.

The little girl's eyes brighten, and she perks up at the mention of pizza, but she still hesitantly asks, "Daddy, you can't lie to me, okay? Are you really going to come early to pick me up?"

Qi Yun nods seriously, taps the little girl's nose, "Of course, when has Daddy ever lied to you? Be good at kindergarten, and wait for Daddy to pick you up."

Only then does the little girl show a happy smile and lets Zhao Qing take her to brush her hair.

After the big one and the small one finish breakfast and go to kindergarten, Qi Yun tidies up the kitchen, comes to sit on the sofa, and picks up his phone to call Zhong Rui.

"I need you to help me register a new company today."

"Yes, the more categories the better, especially system development."

"The name? Let's call it Yunqing Technology."

After hanging up the phone, Qi Yun checks the time—it is almost ten o'clock—so he dials Wei Xueming again, intending to ask about the progress on his side.

The phone rings for a few seconds before being answered, and Wei Xueming's voice sounds a bit tired: "Hey, Qi Yun, I was just about to call you."

"Do you have any progress on your side?" Qi Yun asks.

Wei Xueming sighs and says, "Restoring such ancient books takes time, but it seems that yesterday's findings can basically be confirmed."

"And there are some things that are not convenient to discuss over the phone. If you have time, come over to my place."

Qi Yun is a bit puzzled. Why must the conversation be face-to-face?

But he thinks that there are no other urgent matters at the moment, so he agrees, "Okay, Mr. Wei, I'll be there shortly."

After hanging up, Qi Yun quickly tidies up, grabs his car keys, and heads out.

Soon, he arrives at the university and walks into Wei Xueming's office.

Wei Xueming is sitting at his desk, looking very tired—in fact, he was working late last night.

Seeing Qi Yun enter, he gestures to the chair opposite, indicating for Qi Yun to sit down.

After sitting down, Qi Yun can't wait to ask, "Mr. Wei, why did you call me over?"

Wei Xueming adjusts his glasses and sighs, "I originally thought I could rely on my own strength to restore the Qingnang Book, but I clearly overestimated myself. Last night, I made a mistake and nearly ruined some critical information."

"I have to admit, I'm really getting old, and to avoid damaging this precious manuscript, I shouldn't be insisting on continuing."

Qi Yun can sense a trace of helplessness in the other's voice. He blames himself for not considering things thoroughly. This little old man is in his sixties or seventies; making him do this kind of work is indeed asking too much.

After a moment of thinking, he lifts his head to look at Wei Xueming and asks, "I'm sorry, Mr. Wei, it was careless of me."

"Can you recommend an expert in this area to help me restore it?"

Wei Xueming waves his hand: "It's not your fault. It's my honor to see such a valuable manuscript in my lifetime. I should thank you."

"Introducing you to an expert in this area is no problem, but since we are both in the same circle, I'm not sure if I should say this."

Qi Yun smiles and says sincerely, "Mr. Wei, you're a senior; feel free to speak your mind."

"The Qingnang Book—what do you plan to do with it afterward?"

Chapter 168: Chinese Academy of Sciences

How should we handle this?

Of course, we should exchange it for benefits; otherwise, why would I risk so much and venture into the desert?

Though he naturally wouldn't say this directly to Wei Xueming.

"Wei Lao, what is your opinion?" Qi Yun asked tentatively.

Wei Xueming picked up the teacup on the table, took a sip, looked at Qi Yun, and said slowly, "The Qingnang Book has two major values: first, it can advance the development of medicine, and second, its historical value."

Qi Yun nodded silently, waiting for the other to continue.

"If this Qingnang Book ends up in the hands of a collector, it would be tantamount to burying its intrinsic value. Only in the hands of the nation can it fulfill its deserved function."

Qi Yun understood and replied with a sarcastic smile, "Oh? Are you going to do the same old tricks again?"

Wei Xueming wasn't angry, he waved his hand, "Don't misunderstand me. If it were something else, even if its monetary value is higher, I wouldn't advise you like this."

"Honestly, you might not yet fully understand the value of this book. Once the news is leaked, you might not be able to keep it."

Upon hearing this, Qi Yun frowned, his heart alarmed.

However, his face remained calm, he said in a deep voice, "Wei Lao, I know you mean well for me, but I went through a lot of trouble to get this Qingnang Book, I'm really not willing to just hand it over."

Wei Xueming shook his head slightly and said seriously, "Qi Yun, you don't understand yet."

"The value of the Qingnang Book is too high. Once the news leaks, domestic or foreign forces, and some ill-intentioned people will try every possible way to get it."

"Your power alone is ultimately limited. Can you resist those who are eyeing it covetously?"

Qi Yun gritted his teeth, feeling a bit conflicted inside.

Previously, he was just thinking about finding the item, quietly handling it, and exchanging it for millions.

But after Wei Xueming's statement, he suddenly realized he truly underestimated the book's value.

If it's really as Wei Xueming said, even if the national machine stays out, other forces might secretly covet it, and he might not even have the chance to sell it, instead, it could bring him trouble.

Wei Xueming noticed his hesitation and continued, "If you trust me, I can help you think of a compromise."

"Wei Lao, of course I trust you, otherwise I wouldn't have brought the book to you first." Qi Yun said with a bitter smile, "So just say it directly."

Wei Xueming nodded, "Don't even mention Bird City; even Jiang Province can't keep it, and they won't give you much compensation either."

He paused, took a sip of tea, and continued, "You should know the strength of the Chinese Academy of Sciences; I have an old friend there, I can help you contact them to discuss this book."

He had long understood this kid's nature, knew that playing moral coercion wouldn't work, so he directly proposed a suggestion the other might accept.

"Chinese Academy of Sciences?" Qi Yun was taken aback, not expecting the old fellow to have such connections.

If it's that institution, they shouldn't be short on money, not like the last museum, making him rack his brains.

After pondering for a moment, Qi Yun considered the proposal to be a feasible solution.

If his interests can be safeguarded and the treasure can end up where it should, unleashing its rightful value, it's a win-win situation.

So he nodded and agreed, "Okay, but I have one more request."

"Go ahead." Wei Xueming, seeing him agree, felt joyful, really worried the kid might rashly let the treasure fall overseas.

"I have no problem talking to the people from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, but this matter must remain confidential, only known to those responsible for it." Qi Yun was now a bit paranoid, worried that Yu Qixuan, that stingy old man, might sniff it out and come over again.

"Don't worry about that." Wei Xueming quickly nodded, "I can assure you, before the matter is settled, no information will leak."

"Although the Qingnang Book is very precious, in such places, it's not without items of the same level."

Hearing this reassurance, Qi Yun finally felt relieved and replied, "Okay, I'll leave this matter to Wei Lao then."

"Alright." Wei Xueming stood up and patted Qi Yun's shoulder, "You go back and think it over carefully, I estimate someone will come today once they get the message."

He was concise with his words, believing Qi Yun's astuteness would understand his implication.

Leaving Wei Xueming's office, Qi Yun returned to his car, lit a cigarette, and began contemplating deeply.

He knew this was a rare opportunity; given that department's power, they could fulfill many of his demands beyond money.

What does he lack currently?

After thinking for a while, he gradually formed a plan.

Then he picked up his phone and dialed Mr. Bi, arranging to meet at Shi Feng's antique shop.

...

Inside Qiuyue Pavilion, Shi Feng was polishing a porcelain vase. Seeing Qi Yun enter, he shook the few remaining hairs on his head and teased, "Oh, a rare guest. Tried contacting you for a gathering a few days ago, but couldn't reach you. What's got you showing up today?"

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Qi Yun lifted the bag in his hand and replied, "What's up? Not welcome, huh? Shall I leave then?"

Seeing this, Shi Feng hurriedly threw down the cloth in his hand, rushed forward, and grabbed him with a smile on his face: "How can that be? President Qi, your presence here really brightens up my place. I was just joking with you earlier. Please, please come in!"

The two sat down by the mahogany coffee table inside the shop, and Shi Feng deftly set up the tea set and started boiling water to brew tea.

"President Qi, how about some Da Hong Pao? This is the last bit of my collection, I usually can't bear to drink it. But since you're here today, I won't mind." Shi Feng said, looking up while skillfully brewing the tea.

Qi Yun placed the bag on the table, pulled out a cigarette, and lit it: "It's alright."

Shi Feng didn't mind, his face full of flattery.

At this moment, a voice full of energy came from the door: "Didn't know you had some treasured Da Hong Pao here? We're in luck today, hahaha."

President Bi walked in laughing from the doorway.

Shi Feng was taken aback, then turned to ask: "What brings you here too?"

President Bi didn't answer, just gave him a smile and sat down, pulling his own chair.

Qi Yun looked up and waved his hand, saying, "Once the tea is ready, could you please wait outside for a while? I have some business to discuss with President Bi."

"What do you mean?" Shi Feng's gaze darted between the two, then he glanced at the bag Qi Yun brought, paused, and asked, "So I'm not getting a share of the stuff?"

"You two are just freeloading on my Da Hong Pao?" Saying this, he touched his head and plopped down on a chair.

Qi Yun and President Bi exchanged a glance and both burst into laughter.

"Alright, enough teasing. You two go ahead and take a look." With that, Qi Yun opened the bag and pushed it toward them.

Shi Feng and President Bi leaned in curiously, their gaze landing on the pile of jewelry inside the bag.

President Bi's eyes lit up instantly. He reached out and picked up a necklace inlaid with red gemstones, examining it carefully under a flashlight, clicking his tongue in amazement: "Wow, these are some fine things."

Shi Feng quickly grabbed a jade bracelet, his eyes widening in shock: "This must be from before the Ming Dynasty, right?"

Qi Yun took a sip of tea and nodded slightly: "Most likely from the Tang Dynasty."

"Sss~" Shi Feng took a sharp breath at these words.

After about ten minutes, President Bi put away the flashlight, handed both of them a cigarette, and after lighting it and taking a puff, said slowly: "This batch is quite good, I'll take it all."

Shi Feng paused, then turned to him: "Not even a sip of the soup for me?"

President Bi laughed heartily: "These are just jewelry. What would you do with them?"

"This bracelet is nice, I'm interested in it. I've got a client who wants something like this." Shi Feng retorted with a pout.

"..."

After a round of friendly banter, they finally divided the goods and purchased all of Qi Yun's stock for 3.8 million.

After wrapping up the business, President Bi left first.

Since Qi Yun had nothing else to do, he stayed at Shi Feng's shop waiting to have roast duck.

With 3.8 million more credited to his account, his current balance was nearing ten million, which put him in a very good mood.

Just then, his phone rang in his pocket. Seeing it was Zhang Dayong calling, Qi Yun immediately had a hunch about what it was regarding.

"Qi Yun, got a moment?" Zhang Dayong asked.

"Yeah." Qi Yun chuckled, "What's up, Director Zhang?"

"Well, it's regarding the last time at the teahouse, let's meet up and talk." Zhang Dayong responded.

"Alright, I'll head over now." Qi Yun agreed and hung up the call.

Then he patted Shi Feng on the arm and said, "I'll have the roast duck next time, got something to do now."

Shi Feng didn't try to keep him, seeing him out the door.

After leaving the Antique Street, Qi Yun drove straight to the teahouse from last time.

Upon entering the private room, he saw Zhang Dayong already sitting inside, steam rising from the tea cup in front of him.

Zhang Dayong nodded slightly upon seeing him and picked up the teapot to pour him a cup of hot tea.

"I called you over to see if you've ever been involved in system development projects." Zhang Dayong said bluntly.

"System development?" Qi Yun feigned surprise, "Yes, the company I worked at before specialized in that. Is there some kind of trouble, Director Zhang?"

Zhang Dayong shook his head and said earnestly, "Our bureau is planning to implement a new system. If you have experience in this area, would you like to participate?"

"Of course I'd like to." Qi Yun replied without hesitation, then added with a smile, "Thank you, Director Zhang, for thinking of me for such a good opportunity."

Zhang Dayong smiled as well and continued, "If you're interested, get ready as soon as possible. The project is already approved and will be open for bidding in a few days."

"Alright, I'll start preparing when I get back." Qi Yun said.

"Do you know what's the budget for this project?"

Zhang Dayong took a sip of tea and replied, "The budget is around six million."

Qi Yun nodded silently. With six million, if no extra costs were incurred, the profit would be at least 40%.

"But there's something I must tell you in advance." Zhang Dayong said, looking at Qi Yun, his expression turning serious.

Qi Yun also straightened up and said, "Go ahead."

"This project is highly significant, involving a lot of information security issues. There's no room for error. If you wish to participate, you need to come up with the best plan and ensure the project's success without any mishaps."

"Don't worry about that." Qi Yun nodded earnestly, "I'm not a businessman without principles. If I take on this project, I'll make sure it's done right."

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Zhang Dayong's expression softened at the words: "Of course, I trust your character. Alright, I contacted you to discuss this matter, so you can go back and prepare first. Keep an eye on the bidding announcements in the near future."

...

After leaving the teahouse, Qi Yun called Hong Weize, asking him for help making a connection as he wanted to visit the boss of Grand Software, Huang Juncai.

Grand Software was quite famous locally, having done numerous government projects, and had a good reputation, Qi Yun had heard about them before.

So his first choice was to collaborate with them.

Hong Weize readily agreed, telling him to wait for news.

Not even ten minutes later, Hong Weize called back, telling Qi Yun that he had already arranged it, and Qi Yun could directly visit the company.

Qi Yun expressed his gratitude, hung up, and headed straight for Huang Juncai's company.

Inside an office building, Qi Yun stepped out of the elevator, adjusted his attire, and approached the reception to state his purpose.

The receptionist smiled and asked him to wait a moment, then made a call to inform Huang Juncai's secretary.

A short while later, a secretary dressed in professional attire came over and politely said, "Mr. Qi, President Huang is expecting you, please follow me."

Qi Yun followed the secretary to Huang Juncai's office.

The office was spacious and bright, luxuriously decorated, with some of the company's honorary certificates and project achievements displayed on the walls.

A middle-aged man in his forties was sitting behind the desk. Seeing Qi Yun enter, he stood up, warmly extended his hand, and said, "Mr. Qi, I've heard much about you, welcome, welcome!"

Qi Yun also smiled and shook Huang Juncai's hand, saying, "President Huang, hello! I've long heard of your great reputation, and it's an honor to visit you today."

After exchanging a few pleasantries, they sat down on the sofa.

The secretary brought two cups of coffee, gently placing them on the coffee table in front of them.

"Mr. Qi, may I ask what brings you here today?" Huang Juncai sipped his coffee and asked.

Knowing the other was busy, Qi Yun directly got to the point and explained his purpose.

After listening, Huang Juncai looked at him with slight surprise and smiled, saying, "Mr. Qi, you really are well-connected."

Qi Yun quickly waved it off, humbly replying, "In your presence, I hardly deserve such praise; I'm just trying to make a living."

Huang Juncai laughed heartily, "Mr. Qi, you are too modest."

"Of course, cooperation is possible. We have done many similar projects, and in terms of delivery time and system security, you can rest assured."

Qi Yun's face lit up with joy, "That's wonderful. With President Huang's support, I can be at ease."

With the cooperation settled, they started discussing profit distribution, roughly agreeing on Qi Yun receiving 2.5 million, responsible for his company securing the bid, and the remaining 3.5 million going to Huang Juncai, with Grand responsible for system development and subsequent implementation.

However, for a project like this, the funds are disbursed in phases and definitely not all at once, so they came to an oral agreement, with Grand first preparing the project plan, and after winning the bid, both parties would sign a formal cooperation agreement.

After the discussion, Qi Yun didn't stay much longer, getting up to leave, and Huang Juncai very courteously escorted him to the elevator.

Sitting in the car afterwards, seeing that it was almost time for school to be out, he still hadn't received a call from Wei Xueming.

So Qi Yun decided to drive straight home, planning to pick up his daughter from kindergarten first, as he had promised last night to take her out for pizza today.

After parking the car, he walked to the kindergarten entrance, coincidentally meeting Zhao Qing who was coming out with his daughter.

The little girl saw Qi Yun and happily dashed into his arms.

"Daddy!"

Qi Yun squatted down, his face full of happiness, embraced his daughter, and kissed her cheek: "Nuannuan, were you good at kindergarten today?"

The little girl looked up, nodding vigorously: "Daddy, I was very good! I even got a little red flower!" Saying this, she carefully took a small red flower out of her pocket and waved it in front of Qi Yun.

Hearing this, Qi Yun smiled and patted her head, "Nuannuan is so excellent, then Daddy will take you for a big pizza now! How about that?"

The little girl excitedly beamed, clapped her hands and jumped up, "Yes, yes, I want the biggest pizza!"

At this moment, Zhao Qing also approached, smiling, and said, "She didn't eat properly at lunch, just hoping you'd take her out for pizza tonight."

Qi Yun chuckled, "Then let's go!" Saying this, he picked up the little girl in his arms and held Zhao Qing's hand, heading toward the parking lot.

The three of them got into the car, and just as it started, his phone rang. Looking at the screen, it showed Wei Xueming.

Qi Yun answered the call, "Old Wei."

"Qi Yun, Director Yu from the Chinese Academy of Sciences has arrived, can you come over now?" Wei Xueming asked.

Qi Yun, hearing this, glanced in the rearview mirror, seeing the little girl eagerly looking at him.

So he hesitated for a moment, apologetically saying, "Sorry Old Wei, I'm a bit tied up right now, could you wait for another two hours?"

Wei Xueming was a bit startled, knowing that with Director Yu's status, people usually scramble just to see him, yet this young man was actually making him wait for two hours.

However, he also knew Qi Yun wasn't someone who failed to see the bigger picture, certainly not intentionally being difficult, so he sighed and agreed, "Okay, I'll tell Director Yu. Once you're done, come over as soon as you can."

"Alright, thank you, Old Wei," Qi Yun said gratefully.

After hanging up, Zhao Qing leaned over and asked, "Do you have something to attend to?"