

Middle Age 361

Chapter 361: Satellite City

But there's no other way for now, let's give it a try.

After a brief thought, he turned and walked towards the camp, arriving at the entrance of Mamati's tent.

"Mr. Qi, do you need something?" Mamati quickly stood up when he saw him approaching.

Qi Yun glanced at the few cars parked nearby and asked, "Do we have extra gasoline?"

"Yes!" Mamati nodded in response, "There are six barrels on Daming's car. Even in an emergency, it's enough for our convoy to travel another seven to eight hundred kilometers."

"And last year when I came in, I buried a few barrels at another place."

Hearing this, Qi Yun raised his hand and pointed in the direction where Zhan Hongbo was standing, ordering, "Drive a car over there, park next to him, and when it gets hot, turn on the engine and the air conditioning."

Mamati glanced over at Zhan Hongbo, feeling a bit suspicious, but he quickly obliged, "Okay."

The camp here was still tolerable, with towering sand dunes providing a backdrop and some makeshift awnings to slightly shield from the sunlight.

But at the spot where Zhan Hongbo stood, there was nothing. Even if he crawled into a tent, it wouldn't help; the only option was to stay in the car with the air conditioning on.

By noon, the temperature had risen sharply, and just sitting there caused sweat to pour down incessantly.

Qi Yun tossed aside a small fan prepared by Zhong Rui and sighed helplessly; the wind blowing was scorching his face...

The reason Lop Nur is called the forbidden zone of life is largely due to its temperature.

There is almost no rain here; daytime temperatures easily reach forty or fifty degrees Celsius, and only a scant amount of life can survive in this desert.

Adding on the occasional sudden sandstorm that can change the landscape of an area within a short period, making it impossible to find directions. Even experienced old guides have to rely on navigational devices.

And even with various professional equipment, many people are permanently buried in this desert.

Because the signal coverage in Lop Nur is very poor, and the magnetic field is disrupted, GPS and other electronic devices become unstable, incapable of accurately determining one's location.

In such situations, most people eventually succumb to thirst in the desert...

The last time Qi Yun and his team stayed in the desert for a week was because it wasn't summer yet, and the daytime heat wasn't as severe.

But now, let alone a week, without finding a sheltered spot, even three days would be unbearable.

In the camp, everyone was listless and lethargic, with Mamati and Daming, along with Lao Tu, huddled together, studying a map.

"I remember passing by this location last time, and it seemed there was a large earth pit nearby. Should we camp there?" Daming looked up at the two and suggested.

Lao Tu slowly shook his head, "It's a bit far, almost seventy kilometers away."

"Let's go here," Lao Tu pointed to another area on the map, "There's a poplar forest here, we should be able to find a suitable spot."

Mamati stared at the map for a moment and nodded, "Okay, I'll go and inform Mr. Qi." Saying this, he stood up and walked to Qi Yun's side.

"Mr. Qi, twenty kilometers to the west, there's a poplar forest. I plan to take two cars over to check it out and find a cooler place for the camp."

Qi Yun naturally had no objections, "Alright, go ahead, and be careful."

"Okay," Mamati responded, motioning to Lao Tu, and the two each drove off in a vehicle.

...

In Madrid, inside a certain research institute.

Ignacio and an elderly white-haired man were poring over a pile of documents together.

Suddenly, Ignacio excitedly stood up from his chair, "Teacher! Look at this!" Saying that, he hurried to the other side of the table with a book in hand, placing it before the old man.

This was a very old book, authored by Duke Tieren's grandson. The title translated roughly to the memoirs of this person.

"It says here that during his later years, Duke Tieren once got drunk one night and told his grandson a story by the fireplace. He said he had led dozens of knights into an Asian desert in search of an ancient city, but after a long time, they couldn't find it."

"The desert described here should be Lop Nur, right?" Ignacio looked at the old man excitedly.

The old man's fingertips trembled slightly as he continued reading the remaining content.

"The grandson asked Duke Tieren what they were searching for that ancient city for, and Duke Tieren replied that it was about the secret of immortality..."

The book's description ended there.

The old man removed his glasses and wiped the sweat from his forehead with a handkerchief, "It should be Lop Nur. Combined with previous information, we can almost be certain that Duke Tieren was indeed carrying orders to search for clues about immortality..."

"Let's continue reviewing the documents. We should be close to uncovering the truth."

...

At 10 PM, deep within the desert, the sun still hung on the horizon.

Zhan Hongbo was flipping through a notebook with recorded data, drawing a line in the sand with his finger, and turned to Qi Yun, saying, "It's in this direction."

"I still need to collect some sand within a ten-kilometer range ahead to determine the exact location."

Qi Yun nodded and called over Daming and Chen Wei, "You two drive and accompany him for a trip. Don't go too far."

"Okay," Daming responded, returning to the camp to drive the other car, while Chen Wei climbed into the driver's seat of the Wrangler beside him.

An hour or so passed quickly, and the sky finally darkened.

Mamati and the others returned from searching for a new campsite.

"Mr. Qi, we found a living poplar forest to the west, there's shade there, so it's cooler during the day." Mamati said as he got out of the car.

"Alright, let's move there tomorrow," Qi Yun said while putting down the water bottle he had in hand. Within just this short afternoon, he had already gone through four bottles of water.

Not long after, Chen Wei and the others returned safely, having gathered the necessary sand samples for Zhan Hongbo.

It was too hot, and no one had much of an appetite, so no special dinner was prepared. They just ate a couple of watermelons and returned to their tents to rest.

Qi Yun and Zhan Hongbo remained seated on small stools, continuing to analyze the location of the ancient city.

Zhan Hongbo placed several sealed bags containing different regional sand samples on the wooden table.

He picked up one bag labeled "ten," poured some sand into his palm, and rubbed the grains with his fingers, "Qi, look, this is sand from ten kilometers away at the edge of the Yadan Group. It has a high quartz content and coarse grains."

"This sand layer from two kilometers away is noticeably finer. When the Ancient Loulan people fired ceramics, they would specifically select this iron-containing sand."

"..."

After analyzing all the sealed bags of sand, Zhan Hongbo took out a notebook and pen, starting to write and draw on paper.

"Based on sand grain differences combined with the solar shadow data measured during the day... I estimate that the underground structure should be in this fan-shaped area with a radius of no more than one kilometer."

"One kilometer?" Hearing this answer, Qi Yun's brows furrowed involuntarily.

They only had a few folding shovels. To excavate the ancient city ruins within a one-kilometer radius seemed unrealistic.

"Can we narrow down the range further?"

Zhan Hongbo took off his glasses, pinched the bridge of his nose, and sighed, "Without professional detection equipment here, I can only estimate this distance, I can't narrow it down further."

Hearing this, Qi Yun gave a slight bitter smile.

Though difficult, at least they had a direction now; they could start digging tomorrow, and if that didn't work, they could return with more preparation.

"Alright, let's rest first. We'll try looking tomorrow."

Zhan Hongbo nodded, packed up his notebook, and got up to return to the tent.

But after taking just a few steps, he stopped, turned to Qi Yun, and hesitantly asked, "Qi, do you have any other clues? If you could tell me, maybe I can narrow down the range a bit more."

Qi Yun looked up at Zhan Hongbo, somewhat helpless.

He thought to himself that this guy was really led astray by Wei Xueming, convinced that he must know something.

But in reality, apart from this coordinate point, he didn't know anything else... Even the possibility of this place having ancient city ruins was deduced by Zhan Hongbo.

Qi Yun sighed, pondered for a moment, then spoke, "Actually, I came across this coordinate point by chance, felt quite curious, so I came in to take a look. I really don't have any other clues."

Upon hearing this, Zhan Hongbo didn't press further, simply nodding with a "hmm" and returning straight to his tent.

Chapter 362: Magnetite Altar

Returning to the tent and lying down, a familiar light screen appeared before Qi Yun's eyes.

Holding a tentative mindset, he began to check today's intelligence reports, hoping to gain more clues about the coordinate points.

[Current Intelligence Points: 37]

[Today's Intelligence 1 (Red): 130 kilometers northwest of the camp, there is an off-road vehicle buried in the yellow sand, with two corpses inside and fifty liters of gasoline]

[Today's Intelligence 2...]

[Today's Intelligence 3...]

The result was as expected, all were intelligence without much use.

At five in the morning, before dawn, everyone in the desert had already had breakfast and packed up their tents.

No way around it, it's too hot during the day, only possible to move around in the morning and evening.

Fortunately, the bright moon in the sky was bright enough, so it wasn't necessary to grope in the dark.

Four off-road vehicles left the camping spot, drove north for three to four kilometers, and stopped at the center of the area Zhan Hongbo had mapped on paper last night.

"Here we are."

Everyone got out of the cars, each taking foldable shovels from the car trunks; Qi Yun had already explained what needed to be done.

Even the guides, Lao Tu and Da Ming, joined the digging team under the promise of generous rewards from Qi Yun.

"Such a large desert, how do we dig? Feels like looking for a needle in a haystack..." A-Ming put on protective gloves and clicked his tongue.

"Let's try our luck." Qi Yun lit a cigarette and exhaled a long smoke ring.

No more words were said as everyone began digging within the area Zhan Hongbo had outlined.

Though the sand wasn't as hard as soil, soft and loose, easy to dig, it was still quite troublesome to dig a deep pit; as soon as one shovel went down, sand continuously rolled down nearby.

So to dig deeper, they had to keep expanding the diameter of the pit.

Three hours passed quickly, and the group of eight had each dug a sand pit over a meter deep.

Zhan Hongbo inspected the sand at the bottom of the pits and sighed helplessly: "This probably isn't the place, the sand's color is wrong."

"Let's move forward a bit and try a different area."

...

By ten in the morning, the sun hung high in the sky, and the temperature in the desert abruptly climbed, surpassing thirty-five degrees already.

Qi Yun wiped the sweat off his forehead and waved at everyone: "Stop digging, let's head to the camp first."

Upon hearing this, everyone put away their foldable shovels and walked toward where the cars were parked.

In this heat, continuing would risk heatstroke.

Forty minutes later, the convoy arrived at a patch of poplar forest, although small, with only a few dozen trees, it brought a touch of green vitality to the barren desert.

Everyone got out of the cars, swiftly pitching tents and tarps in the shade of the trees, this place was much better than yesterday's camp, at least the wind was not as hot.

Mamati brought a tray of Huoxiang Zhengqi liquid to distribute among everyone, then came and sat beside Qi Yun: "Boss Qi, there should be a water source nearby."

"Where there's water, there are animals, so for safety's sake, we need to make a bonfire tonight and have two people stand guard."

"You mean... there might be wolves?" Qi Yun frowned unconsciously; last time, they were chased by a wolf pack for several kilometers.

Mamati looked serious: "Exactly, although Lao Tu and I didn't find any traces of wolves living around here yesterday, we should still be cautious."

Qi Yun nodded calmly: "Sure, make the arrangements."

This time was different from the last; he had the experts Chen Wei and Duan Pingyu with him, so even if a few wolves came, he wouldn't be afraid.

Moreover, his physical condition was also robust now, really facing wolves, he wouldn't back down, he'd just draw his knife and fight.

But that being said, caution was still necessary.

Wolves are pack animals, if dozens came, no one could handle it, and with weaklings like Zhan Hongbo and Zhong Rui around, any incident wouldn't be good.

At nine in the evening, the temperature gradually dropped.

The group headed back to the digging site, toiled for more than two hours again, still finding nothing.

"Boss, doesn't feel right to dig this way..." Duan Pingyu handed Qi Yun a bottle of water and sighed.

Qi Yun took the bottle, unscrewed it, and took a few sips, then patted the other's shoulder: "If we can't find it, so be it, tomorrow let's head back, get some professional detection equipment, and prepare thoroughly before coming back in."

His mindset was quite relaxed, not too discouraged.

Knowing this area might have ancient city ruins was a guess made after Zhan Hongbo's field observations, so he couldn't do much pre-arrangement beforehand.

"Hmm." Duan Pingyu nodded, not saying more.

Qi Yun raised his watch to check the time, it was already midnight.

He sat on the sand, lit another cigarette, and checked today's intelligence reports, hoping to try his luck.

[Today's Intelligence 1 (Blue): 240 kilometers southwest, there is a small potash mine, economically valued over seven million]

Potash mine, this isn't particularly rare in Lop Nur, it's an important component of fertilizers.

The famous scientist Peng Jiamu entered Lop Nur back then looking for potash mines.

These seven million could only be said to be missed... because ordinary people simply don't have the capability to mine here.

[Today's Intelligence 2 (Red): Recently, a group of white men has excavated several ancient tombs on the grasslands of Northern Mongolia but have not taken any burial items]

Upon seeing this intelligence message, Qi Yun's eyes sharpened.

He had received a similar report a few days before, that Northern Mongolian herdsmen noticed a suspicious group of white people, seemingly searching for something, could it be them?

Excavating tombs without taking any burial items? What kind of maneuver is that...

[Today's Intelligence 3 (Red): In 627 AD, a magnetic mountain was located near Satellite City. After learning of this, King of Loulan ordered craftsmen to extract large quantities of magnetic stones, creating a massive altar in Satellite City, serving as a bridge to communicate with the Sun God]

Magnetic stones? You mean magnets?

If the buried structure beneath this sand is indeed the historically recorded Satellite City, then... could this magnetic altar be used to pinpoint the relic's exact location?

Qi Yun rubbed his chin and raised his hand to call Zhan Hongbo over.

"Brother Qi."

Qi Yun flicked some ash off his cigarette, pointing to the ground beside him: "I suddenly remembered something."

"What is it? Tell me." Zhan Hongbo sat cross-legged on the sand.

"I once read in some miscellaneous book that the King of Loulan had ancient craftsmen build a large altar using magnetic stones."

"Do you think that altar might..."

Zhan Hongbo paused: "You mean..."

Qi Yun nodded at him: "Exactly, if that altar happens to be among the ruins we're now looking for, could it possibly help us locate it?"

Zhan Hongbo deliberated for a while: "If that altar is entirely made of magnetic stones, even if buried deep in the sand, it would still have magnetism."

"But the magnetism of magnets naturally diminishes over time and is also affected by high temperatures..."

Chapter 363: A Monumental Achievement

At one in the morning, two off-road vehicles were slowly driving across the sand.

Inside the car, Zhan Hongbo held the compass that Mamati had given him, his eyes fixed on the needle.

The magnetic field in Lop Nur was extremely chaotic, and the needle swung back and forth incessantly.

"Drive slower."

"Okay." Mamati responded as he continued driving.

The vehicle staggered along for another ten minutes or so, and suddenly, the compass in Zhan Hongbo's hand began to oscillate violently, the needle spinning as if powered by a motor.

"Stop!" Zhan Hongbo shouted urgently.

Mamati quickly brought the car to a halt.

Before the car had even fully stopped, Zhan Hongbo had eagerly pushed open the door and jumped out.

"Right here! There's really a magnetic stone platform!" He stared at the compass in his hand, his tone filled with excitement.

Qi Yun felt a surge of excitement as well, surprised to find that it was indeed the Satellite City beneath them.

He stepped out of the car and joined Zhan Hongbo: "Can you confirm it?"

"It must be correct!" Zhan Hongbo pointed at the spinning needle, "The magnetic intensity here far exceeds the normal range; there must be a large area of magnetic minerals underground!"

He walked around the vehicle, eventually stopping six or seven meters to the right, shouting to Qi Yun, "The center of the magnetic field is here!"

Qi Yun opened the trunk of the car, took out an iron rod, and came to the spot where Zhan Hongbo stood, planting the iron rod deeply into the sand.

The others gathered around, curiously watching the compass in Zhan Hongbo's hand.

"Is there really an ancient city down there?" Duan Pingyu asked curiously.

"Based on the existing information, it should be!" Zhan Hongbo spoke with the caution typical of someone in scientific research.

"What's in the ancient city?"

"It's hard to say..."

The group began discussing the matter eagerly, with everyone intrigued.

Qi Yun glanced at his watch; it was already half past one. Suppressing his excitement, he said, "It's getting late, let's head back for a rest and come back in the morning."

With that, everyone boarded the vehicles and returned to the camp.

...

At six in the morning, after a brief rest at the camp, four off-road vehicles arrived at the previous night's location.

The group, each armed with foldable shovels, began excavating around the center point.

The sand layer was soft, causing fine sand to slip continuously during digging. Every so often, Zhan Hongbo would grab a handful of sand and carefully observe the change in sand particles.

A few hours later, a sand pit measuring six to seven meters in length and width, and over a meter deep, had been dug out.

Qi Yun took the iron rod from nearby and plunged it into the sand, burying the entire 1.2-meter rod, indicating that they needed to dig at least this deep again.

As temperatures rose, they returned to the camp to rest until evening before coming back to work.

At eleven at night, the pit had been dug nearly three meters deep. To prevent accidents, Qi Yun instructed Mamati to place two safety ropes in the pit, with the other ends tied to the vehicle's tow hooks.

"Seems like we've hit something!" Suddenly, Zhan Hongbo, in the center of the pit, shouted excitedly.

The others hurriedly gathered around.

After digging a few more shovelfuls, the foldable shovel made a crisp sound as if striking something hard.

Mamati shone the flashlight towards the bottom of the pit, revealing a dark stone slab.

Zhan Hongbo lay on the sand, touching the stone slab with his hands. After a moment, he cried out excitedly, "It's a magnetic stone!"

The others also squatted down to inspect.

Zhong Rui curiously took out a keychain from his pocket and placed it on the stone slab, feeling a very slight pull: "It's really a magnet! There's a pull!"

"Keep digging! Clear out the sides!" Qi Yun stood and instructed.

Everyone increased their digging speed, the sound of shovels against sand echoing clearly in the silent desert night.

As more surrounding sand was cleared, a circular stone platform about three meters in diameter emerged gradually.

The surface of the platform was rough, yet formed a natural radiating pattern, reflecting a somber metallic sheen under the flashlight's beam.

Zhan Hongbo poured water over the stone platform, then removed his t-shirt, wiping away the sand and dust. His movements revealed the radiating patterns more clearly, resembling a sun.

"Look, it's a sun pattern, identical to the features of the sacrificial platform documented in historical records," he shouted excitedly, pointing at the pattern, "The Ancient Loulan people worshipped the Sun God and likely used this magnetic stone platform for rites."

The group gathered around, marveling at the magnetic stone platform.

Qi Yun glanced at it before shifting his gaze, examining the sides of the platform.

A few minutes later, his steps stopped at the front of the platform, where a protruding stone tablet stood.

He turned off his flashlight, seeing a faint glow emanating from the stone tablet.

This is it!

Qi Yun's heart raced; he was familiar with such faint glows, realizing the stone tablet before him was what the intelligence had pointed to!

He hadn't expected the first sign of the purple information to be a stone tablet!

He turned the flashlight back on, squatted down, and reached out to touch the tablet's surface, feeling the cold sensation under his fingertips.

The material of this stone tablet was unknown, but it felt somewhat like marble.

Measuring around eighty centimeters in length and fifty centimeters in width, the tablet was carved with numerous patterns, resembling an unfamiliar script or perhaps some kind of imagery.

He applied pressure with his hand, trying to see if the stone tablet was loose.

Despite using all his strength, neither pulling nor pushing moved the tablet an inch.

Moreover, no seams were visible on the sides, suggesting it was perfectly embedded in the platform.

"Hongbo, come take a look at this stone tablet." Qi Yun called out, looking up.

Zhan Hongbo heard the shout, jumped off the altar, and came to the stele.

Qi Yun pointed to the patterns on the stele: "Do you recognize these characters?"

Zhan Hongbo leaned in to observe closely, raised his hand to touch the patterns on the stele, and murmured, "This... this doesn't seem like the Loulan script..."

Not the Loulan script? Qi Yun frowned.

"Loulan's Kharosthi script is written horizontally, with obvious arc features in the strokes, but these symbols are vertical in structure, and all the corners are right-angled zigzags." Zhan Hongbo pointed to a set of patterns at the upper right corner of the stele, "This set of symbols... I seem to have seen them on a bronze artifact before..."

"What do these symbols mean?" Qi Yun pressed on.

Zhan Hongbo thought for a moment and slowly began to speak, "It seems to mean... 'extreme,' corresponding to today's character for 'extreme.' The specific meaning still needs to be translated with other content."

Qi Yun nodded and said no more, walked over to the side, and sat down, lighting a cigarette to smoke.

It is now confirmed that this stele is the thing indicated by the intel, and it seems to be embedded together with the altar, making it impossible to remove it individually.

To take the stele away, it would have to be forcibly detached from the altar with tools, but doing so would certainly damage the altar.

Otherwise, it would have to be taken along with the altar...

But either way, it's difficult to operate.

This altar looks like a very valuable artifact, and it would be a pity if it were damaged.

Moreover, there may even be legal risks in the future.

As for taking it away... it doesn't seem realistic either. Such a heavy object can't be transported out without lifting equipment, and it would still face legal risks.

Because this time it's different from the last. The last time, it was just the Qingnang Book and those jewels unearthed in the wild. Apart from him, no one knew what the Qingnang Book was.

Even if the news of the jewels leaked, it wouldn't attract much attention.

This time it's different... the discovery of an Ancient Loulan ruins will surely cause a sensation domestically and even attract history enthusiasts worldwide.

As soon as the news spreads, the government will definitely send people immediately.

If it is found by then that such a precious artifact has been damaged by him or taken away... the result is predictable, and even if Zhang Dayong stands up for him, it may not be able to protect him...

Apart from Qi Yun's confidants, there are the guide and Zhan Hongbo on site... who knows if the information will be leaked, so it's better not to have any ideas.

The current plan seems to be to first photograph the content recorded on the stele and study it slowly after returning.

Hopefully, it's the text patterns that are useful, not the stele itself...

"Brother Qi, what do we do next? Should we keep digging?" Zhan Hongbo, having finished examining the altar, came over to ask.

Qi Yun took a drag from his cigarette and shook his head, "No more digging, let's rest and head back to the camp."

"It's now confirmed that there's a ruin underneath here, and relying on just a few of us to dig will take forever, plus we're not professionals; we could end up damaging the ruins."

"When it gets bright, I'll contact Wei Xueming with the satellite phone and ask him to notify the government departments to take over."

Zhan Hongbo nodded after hearing this, "Okay."

...

At eight in the morning, guessing that Wei Xueming should be up, Qi Yun picked up the satellite phone and dialed the number.

"Elder Wei, it's me, Qi Yun."

"Qi Yun?" Wei Xueming was taken aback, "Aren't you in Lop Nur?"

Qi Yun spoke plainly, "Yes, I found something here, so I'm contacting you using the satellite phone."

"What did you find?"

"It's like this..." Qi Yun explained the general situation at the scene to him.

"An altar!?" Wei Xueming was not calm after hearing it, his voice rising several degrees, "Did you really find it, kid?"

Qi Yun smiled and nodded, "Yes, based on Zhan Hongbo's theory, this very likely could be the ruins of a Satellite City."

"Satellite City!?" Wei Xueming's tone was somewhat excited, clearly indicating he knew a bit of this piece of history.

After a few seconds of pause, he cautiously asked, "You called me, what do you want me to do?"

He had previously suspected that Qi Yun must have obtained some clues to venture into Lop Nur.

Though it sounds somewhat incredible, who would normally venture to such a dangerous place without reason?

Now, knowing that ancient ruins were indeed found, further confirms his suspicion.

Meanwhile, Wei Xueming also understood that Qi Yun definitely went with a purpose...

After hearing this, Qi Yun chuckled softly; this is why he trusts this old man. If it were someone else, their minds would be busy calculating their own interests, whereas Wei Xueming was asking for his opinion.

If he wanted to temporarily conceal the news, the opposite party would surely not leak it out.

"Haha, I'm calling you to help report the matter up and ask the country to send specialized archaeological personnel to take over."

"Is that it?" Wei Xueming was a bit suspicious, thinking why this kid's ideological awareness improved so quickly?

"Yes, just remember to mention my name when you do." Qi Yun laughed.

Wei Xueming also laughed, "You kid! Alright, I understand; I'll contact them right away."

"Okay, then I'll wait at the site." Qi Yun wasn't embarrassed, responded, and then hung up the phone.

Although he couldn't take the stele away, the great merit of discovering ancient ruins certainly won't slip away, and rewards are inevitable.

Moreover, the introduction to the Loulan Ancient City still has Sven Hedin's name on it to this day.

After putting down the phone, Qi Yun pushed open the car door and followed a small sand dune back into the sandpit.

He took out his phone and took more than a dozen photos of the stele, ensuring every angle was very clear.

After all this, he got back in the car, lit a cigarette, and quietly pondered.

What do the contents of this stele represent?

And is this Satellite City ruins really the point marked on the sunken ship map?

Chapter 364: New Management Arrives

In the blink of an eye, two days had passed, and during this time, Qi Yun and the others had mostly stayed in the camp and didn't wander around.

Although they occasionally heard a few wolf howls at night, possibly because of the bonfire or the abundant food for the wolves, there was no attack on the camp.

The camp under the poplar forest was quite comfortable, and people would chat or play cards to pass the time.

However, there was some bad news: they were running out of fresh water.

"Including the consumption for the return trip, the remaining fresh water will only last us for a maximum of two days," Mamati leaned over to remind Qi Yun.

"It's okay," Qi Yun reassured him, "I called this morning, and they left yesterday. According to the time, they should arrive by tomorrow at the latest."

"If they don't arrive by tomorrow evening, we won't wait any longer."

Mamati was relieved to hear him say this and nodded confidently.

On the morning of the next day, a large convoy arrived deep in the desert. At a glance, there were at least twenty vehicles.

Besides the regular off-road vehicles, there were also several military trucks at the end.

Leading the convoy was a Toyota Prado with a provincial government F pass.

The convoy drove directly to Qi Yun and their camp.

Three people got down from the leading car, two men and one woman, all around fifty years old.

"Excuse me, who is Comrade Qi Yun?" One of the slightly plump men asked.

Qi Yun took two steps forward, "Hello, I am Qi Yun."

The man warmly extended his hand, "Hello, Comrade Qi Yun, I am He Qihua from the S Cultural Department. You can call me Old He."

"This is Director Luo from the S Prefecture Office and our country's archaeology expert, Professor He."

Qi Yun smiled and shook hands with them, "Hello to the leaders."

He wasn't too surprised by the visitors from S, as this indeed was a major national event.

"We've heard Professor Wei's account regarding the ancient city ruins. The S Prefecture attaches great importance to this, so we came specifically for on-site protection and investigation," He Qihua said, sighing as he patted Qi Yun's arm, "Qi Yun, you've made a great contribution this time! If this can indeed be confirmed as the ruins of a Satellite City of Loulan, it would fill a significant archaeological gap in the Western Regions."

Qi Yun modestly smiled, "The leaders are too kind. We were just lucky to find a clue. The credit mainly goes to Doctor Zhan and those experts involved in the research."

Then he waved to Zhan Hongbo to introduce him to the others, "This is Zhan Hongbo, a student of Elder Wei."

Qi Yun did not take all the credit himself but also mentioned Zhan Hongbo along the way. This was crucial for Zhan Hongbo, who was still pursuing his doctorate, as it would help him in his future career in research institutions or staying on as faculty.

Zhan Hongbo gave Qi Yun a grateful look, stepped forward to shake hands with He Qihua and others, "Hello, leaders. I am studying the history and culture of the Western Regions under Elder Wei. I owe this opportunity to discover the site to Brother Qi's guidance."

Professor He seemed to have a good impression of Zhan Hongbo, holding his hand and chatting for a while, "I haven't seen your mentor in over ten years. Please convey my regards to him."

"Sure, Professor He," Zhan Hongbo nodded with a smile.

After some pleasantries, He Qihua glanced at the convoy behind, then turned to Qi Yun and said, "Qi Yun, why don't you lead us to the site of the ruins first?"

"Alright, leaders, let's go. My car will lead the way," Qi Yun replied, gesturing to Mamati, who understood and jogged over to drive the car.

More than half an hour later, the mighty convoy arrived at the sand pit, and people got off the vehicles one after another, numbering fifty or sixty. More than half were archaeological research personnel here to participate in the excavation, with the remainder being logistical support staff.

The group descended along the sand slope to the bottom of the pit and excitedly gathered around the black altar, starting discussions.

Professor He squatted down, stroking the patterns on the altar's surface, his face full of joy, "Indeed, it's the altar of the ancient Loulan people. This carving style of sun patterns is identical to the Sun Sacrificial Plate unearthed at the Niya Ruins."

Standing beside him, Director Luo from the office crossed his arms, glanced at the altar, and didn't pay too much attention, "Professor He, can we confirm that there are ancient city ruins here?"

"Yes! The ancient Loulan people would build altars in the center of the city, so confirming this altar can basically affirm that this is an ancient city site!" Professor He focused on examining the altar, responding without raising his head.

Director Luo nodded, asking again, "Is it the Satellite City?"

"It can't be confirmed yet; we still need further excavation for evidence. However, there is a significant possibility that the ruins discovered here are those of the Satellite City," Professor He patiently explained.

"Let's first take some video footage," Director Luo said, waving to a young man above the pit, "Xiao Wang, come and take some photos."

Professor He frowned slightly but sighed and instructed the nearby research personnel, "Go get the surveying equipment and collect data within two kilometers around. We will discuss the specific range later."

The crowd responded and left, making the sand pit spacious again, with only four or five people remaining inside.

Qi Yun stood above, smoking, not going down, watching them take photos.

"Qi Yun, come over here and take some photos too," Director Luo beckoned to Qi Yun from beside the altar.

"Me?" Qi Yun responded politely, "I don't think it's necessary for me to take photos."

Director Luo shook his head, "Hey! You are the one who discovered the ancient ruins, and you will surely be the main figure in future reports. Come on."

"That's right, come on, and let Xiao Zhan take a few photos too," He Qihua agreed from the side.

Qi Yun stubbed out his cigarette and stepped down into the sand pit.

The young man responsible for taking photos first snapped a few shots of Qi Yun alone by the altar, and then followed with a group photo. Qi Yun stood in the middle, with Director Luo and He Qihua on either side, followed by Professor He and Zhan Hongbo.

After taking the photos, Director Luo asked Professor He, "Professor He, how long do you estimate this excavation will take?"

Professor He's gaze once again focused on the altar: "Based on my experience, it will take at least three months, at the fastest. It really depends on the size and preservation of the site, and it may take even longer."

Director Luo nodded: "Alright, the follow-up work will be left to you. If you encounter any difficulties, feel free to contact me or Old He."

Professor He gave a slight nod, not saying much more.

Director Luo turned and patted Qi Yun's arm: "Let's go up and have a chat."

Qi Yun responded and followed him to the car.

"Want a smoke?" Director Luo pulled out a pack of cigarettes and offered one.

"Thank you." Qi Yun took it without hesitation and obligingly fetched a lighter to light it for him.

Director Luo exhaled a smoke ring and spoke slowly, "Qi Yun, the discovery of this ancient site is of great significance. Once it's successfully excavated, it will become a scenic spot full of Western Regions cultural characteristics."

"It can greatly boost the tourism economy for the local area and even the entire province, so you've done a great service this time."

It's often said that one's position influences one's perspective.

In the eyes of researchers like Professor He, they focus more on the historical and cultural aspects of the ruins, whereas people like Director Luo—or those he represents—are concerned with the impact and economic benefits of this ancient city site.

Both are aiming to accomplish their respective goals.

"Haha, you're too kind, leader. I just did some minor work." Qi Yun smiled and lit his cigarette.

Director Luo nodded in satisfaction, raising his hand to pat his shoulder: "Mm, it's good that young people stay humble. Once this is all settled, there will certainly be recognition for your efforts."

After a few more words, Director Luo and He Qihua from the Cultural Department left first, having completed their work here.

After they left, Qi Yun returned to the sand pit to consult with Professor He about the text on the stone tablet near the altar.

"Professor He, could you help me translate the text on this stone tablet? I'm quite curious about it."

Professor He was examining the altar's carvings with a magnifying glass. Upon hearing Qi Yun's request, she went to the stone tablet and sighed: "These characters are uncommon and not within any known writing systems I'm familiar with. It's the first time I've seen them."

"Although this stone tablet was found in the city of the Ancient Loulan people, it's very likely to have come from another country."

"In the early Han Dynasty, there were over fifty countries and tribes in the Western Regions. Larger ones like Qiuci Kingdom had populations of over ten thousand, while smaller tribes might have only a few hundred people."

"Almost all these countries and tribes had their own written languages, but many of these have been lost."

"So I'll have to first test its material composition to determine its age before attempting to decipher its meaning."

Qi Yun nodded in understanding, knowing this process couldn't be rushed.

That afternoon, apart from Zhan Hongbo, who insisted on staying to participate in the excavation, the others left the desert to return.

As it was an official excavation, Professor He and the team were well-equipped, even having satellite communication terminals to provide weak signals while in the desert.

It's good that Zhan Hongbo stayed, as he could communicate any updates to Qi Yun in a timely manner.

...

Two days later, at noon, four off-road vehicles returned to Ruqiang County Town.

The group found a local Uighur restaurant and enjoyed a hearty meal of rice pilaf and grilled meat.

After the meal, they prepared to go their separate ways.

Qi Yun was very pleased with Mamati and the other two's work this time and paid them an additional guide fee of eighty thousand yuan.

Originally, Mamati asked for seventy thousand, but because they helped with several days of work and everything went smoothly, Qi Yun added another ten thousand.

"Thank you, Boss Qi!"

"Thank you, boss!"

Qi Yun waved from the business car: "Alright, contact me if you need anything in the future. Goodbye."

"Goodbye, Boss Qi."

"....."

Chen Wei started the car slowly, and Qi Yun took out his phone to let Zhao Qing know he was safe and would be home that night.

Then, he made a call to Ignacio.

Chapter 365: Treasures from Yuanming Garden

Inside the research institute in Madrid, Ignacio picked up the phone. Seeing Qi Yun's name, he quickly pressed the answer button: "Hello, Qi Yun, why haven't I been able to reach you these past two days?"

"I took a trip to Lop Nur and just got back," Qi Yun explained briefly, then asked, "Is there any progress on your end that you're eager to share with me?"

"You went to Lop Nur?" Ignacio was a bit surprised, "Was it about the map?"

Qi Yun nodded: "Sort of."

"Did you discover anything?" Ignacio pressed on.

"I found some clues, but I'm not sure if they're related. I'll send them to you later." Qi Yun chose not to conceal anything, as he needed to rely on experts like Ignacio to unravel the map's secret.

"Do you have any progress on your end?"

"There indeed is progress." Ignacio picked up a piece of paper from the table, glanced at it, and replied, "After some research with my professor, we might have found the hidden secret within the map."

Qi Yun perked up, lit a cigarette, and quietly waited for more information from the other side.

"The Louis Family has been searching for something for over a thousand years, and it might be related to eternal life!"

"Eternal life!?" Qi Yun couldn't help but exclaim at those words.

The last time he heard this term was from Wei Xueming, who told him a rumor about the last king of the Ancient Loulan. The king supposedly obtained a stone tablet from somewhere and believed it was an oracle from the Sun God, leading to the path of eternal life.

So when Qi Yun discovered that stone tablet at the altar, he subconsciously linked the two together.

However, the term 'eternal life' sounded too elusive. As someone educated in modern times, he found it hard to believe such a concept.

But now, with Ignacio bringing up this term again...

"That's right," Ignacio said with a grave tone, "it's about eternal life!"

"However, my professor said this eternal life is not what modern people imagine as immortality, but rather a dual transcendence of spirit and body, achieving a kind of"

"Transcendent realm?" Qi Yun was somewhat confused, "Can you explain in more detail?"

"It's like..." Ignacio pondered how to phrase it, aware of the significant cultural differences between East and West, and provided an Eastern example, "Like your Daoism's ascension, or Buddhism's nirvana and Pure Land."

"Cough, cough!" Qi Yun coughed several times upon hearing this, choking on his smoke, "So it's essentially dying?"

"Seeking eternal life is actually seeking death?"

"You can't understand it that way... it's too simplistic," Ignacio said with a hint of helplessness, "It might be a special place or some kind of artifact that helps one transcend..."

Qi Yun remained silent for a moment, then shook his head, "Alright, let's not talk about life or death for now. Do you have any other discoveries on your end?"

"Yes!" Ignacio continued, "We found out that Duke Tieren once went to Lop Nur under the orders of Louis II, searching for a lost ancient city with the intention of bringing back a stone tablet from the city."

"And on that stone tablet is the recorded method to attain eternal life!"

Qi Yun was taken aback. This... this is identical to the lore about the King of Loulan, isn't it?

So, the city Duke Tieren was looking for was actually the satellite city of the Loulan people... and that stone tablet was the one on the magnetic altar...

Could it be that the Loulan people didn't vanish due to environmental degradation, but, as the legend suggested, were exterminated by the Xiong Nu?

Thinking of this, he became increasingly curious about the inscriptions on that stone tablet.

"The stone tablet you mentioned... I think I've already found it."

"You found it!?" Ignacio was even more surprised this time, his voice full of disbelief.

"That's right." Qi Yun recounted the discovery of the satellite city and the stone tablet to him.

"Oh my God!" Ignacio exclaimed urgently, "Quick! Quickly send me the photos of the stone tablet!"

"Alright, I'll send them to you shortly. Do you have anything else to tell me?"

"Yes! We've gone through a lot of precious materials, and Duke Tieren not only went to Lop Nur but also visited other places."

Upon hearing this, Qi Yun got excited again and quickly asked, "Which places?"

"The Northern Mongolia Grassland. He went there to look for a mirror," Ignacio narrated at a steady pace, "Although he couldn't find it in the end, he later brought back a blue stone from Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa."

"For this, Louis II richly rewarded him."

A mirror?

A blue stone?

Qi Yun absorbed the information Ignacio provided.

The shipwreck map depicts a total of six regions: Lop Nur, Northern Mongolia, and Mount Kilimanjaro, making three points, and each point has a treasure.

The other three points should be similar...

It seems that to unlock the map's secret, gathering information from these six points might be necessary to uncover the truth.

Wait, Northern Mongolia!

Wasn't the intelligence from a couple of days ago related to Northern Mongolia?

These people opened many tombs but didn't take any burial items, clearly not typical tomb raiders.

Could it be that these people were also looking for that mirror? Qi Yun couldn't help but connect the two.

"Do you have specific coordinates for Northern Mongolia?"

Ignacio shook his head, "Not yet. After researching for days, we found that the coordinates on this map are hidden, like an encrypted puzzle."

"To get the exact coordinates of each region, we need to solve the puzzle."

"Alright," Qi Yun sighed, knowing there's no rushing such things, "For now, I'll send you the photos of the stone tablet. We'll communicate again once there's further progress."

"Okay."

After Ignacio responded, the two ended the call.

Qi Yun flicked off some ash from his cigarette and sent the photos of the tombstones he had taken to the other party, then pocketed his phone.

Beside him, Zhong Rui was staring at him curiously, clearly very interested in the conversation that had just taken place.

But he had a good quality, which was a tight mouth. The boss would tell him what he needed to know, and what he shouldn't know, he absolutely wouldn't pry.

This is probably the professional quality of someone from Tilanqiao.

Chen Wei was the same way, generally not inquiring except when Qi Yun's safety was involved.

Sitting in the passenger seat beside him, Duan Pingyu felt restless; just earlier, Qi Yun mentioned things like "immortality" and "dead," which made him want to snatch away the phone in Qi Yun's hand...

At one in the morning, the business car stopped at Qi Yun's doorstep.

"Everyone, go home and get some rest." After greeting them, Qi Yun pushed the door open and got out of the car.

Inside, Zhao Qing heard the commotion outside, hurriedly wiped her tears, and quickly applied a mask to her face, hiding her slightly swollen eyes.

After changing into his slippers, Qi Yun went to the second-floor bedroom and noticed the lights were still on, so he pushed the door open and asked, "Hmm? Why aren't you asleep yet?"

Zhao Qing wiped her cheeks: "Hmm, waiting for you. Have you eaten? I'll heat up the food for you."

"No need, I ate at the service area earlier." Qi Yun approached and hugged her from behind.

Zhao Qing pretended to be disdainful: "Ugh, you smell terrible."

Qi Yun laughed: "Alright, you go ahead and sleep, I'll go take a shower."

"Mm."

Qi Yun went down to the first floor, took out a clay pot he hadn't used for several days, skillfully tossed in the herbs, added water, and lit the fire.

During his days in the desert, even drinking the medicinal concoction was delayed, so upon returning home, of course, he had to make up for it right away.

After finishing everything, he went to the bathroom for a shower.

At two in the morning, Qi Yun carried a large bowl and downed the medicinal soup in one gulp; after drinking, he contentedly wiped the corners of his mouth.

Others despise the taste of Chinese medicine, but he relishes it now.

Having slept in the car all afternoon today, he wasn't really tired at the moment, and went to the study, lit a cigarette, and began checking the news reports for the day.

[Current Intelligence Points: 43]

[Today's Intelligence 1 (Red): Yesterday, De Gaulle Gwen requested the family to dispatch two experts, planning to capture Niu Da and his group completely]

Upon seeing this intelligence report, Qi Yun was startled and quickly picked up the phone on the desk, dialing Ah Jiao's number.

The phone rang twice and was soon answered.

"How's it going on your side?" Knowing that he had already informed Ah Jiao and the others before heading into the desert, Qi Yun hadn't received any news from them these past few days.

"We captured that white guy from last time on Hong Kong Island! The other party hasn't confessed yet; Brother Niu is interrogating him," Ah Jiao replied succinctly.

Qi Yun paused; that guy was skilled, yet they managed to catch him?

"Is everyone okay?"

"Yes, that guy kept following Lao Hei and was then ambushed and subdued by Brother Niu."

Upon hearing that no one was hurt, Qi Yun's heart eased a bit and he continued to instruct: "Listen, the other party dispatched two experts to capture you all, and those two must be better than the one you've caught. So be extra careful, don't show yourselves lately, and retreat if necessary."

Upon hearing this, Ah Jiao nodded solemnly: "Alright, I understand, and will be cautious."

"Okay, that's it for now. Call me anytime if there's a situation."

[Today's Intelligence 2 (Purple 2/6): 111°167'22"E, 44°517'55"N]

Another set of purple coordinates! The original 1/6 is now 2/6!

Qi Yun started to understand; this purple intelligence seems to be akin to game fragments, where each time only a part is obtained...

Now it seems that this purple intelligence likely corresponds to those six area points on the map.

Otherwise, it couldn't be such a coincidence.

He immediately took out his phone to check this coordinate, which showed it near Hu Cha in Northern Mongolia.

That place isn't far from the border crossing, almost about to leave the country.

"Must quickly make arrangements... Can't let that group snatch the item away!"

[Today's Intelligence 3 (Green): Tonight, a Christie's auction in Shanghai will be held, featuring a Golden Buddha Head as an auction item. This Buddha Head contains something extraordinary, hiding the long-lost Dog Head of the Twelve Bronze Heads]

Twelve Bronze Heads! Treasures from Yuanming Garden!

Qi Yun had learned about the story of the Twelve Bronze Heads before, which are said to be part of the fountain at Yuanming Garden, with these bronze statues rotating to spray water according to the hour, creating an impressive scene.

Unfortunately, after being plundered, some went missing without a trace, including the Dog Head mentioned in the intelligence.

If he could obtain this item and donate it to the country at the right time, as long as he hasn't committed any heinous crimes, he should have no more worries, right?

Even discovering Satellite City likely isn't as significant as this...

Considering this, Qi Yun started to have lively thoughts; to prevent national treasures from flowing overseas, it must be obtained!

However... the auction starts tonight, and he doesn't even have a number plate, making it seem a bit tight on time...

Chapter 366: Lao Wai

The next day, inside the business car at Qi Yun's doorstep.

Duan Pingyu scratched his head in confusion, "Going to Hu Cha?"

"Yes." After finishing editing the message on his phone, Qi Yun put it away, "The general location is Hu Cha, around the pastures near Qiqian Village."

"Your main job over there is to see if any unfamiliar faces have appeared recently, all Caucasians. If you find them, keep an eye on them from the shadows."

"Alright, got it." Duan Pingyu responded earnestly, "So when do I leave?"

"Prepare yourself; it would be best if you set off today. Contact me anytime if there's any situation."

"Okay." Duan Pingyu nodded, pushed the car door open, and got out.

Qi Yun leaned over and reminded, "Always put your safety first."

Whether it was Chen Wei, or later Ah Jiao, or Duan Pingyu, Qi Yun always reminded them to prioritize their safety when giving instructions.

He did not consider these people just as subordinates or employees; it was not simply a matter of getting paid to work.

"Yeah, I will." Duan Pingyu replied with a smile, shut the car door, turned, and walked towards the dormitory.

Qi Yun patted the back of the driver's seat, "Brother Wei, to Antique Street."

Hearing the command, Chen Wei started the car and slowly drove out of the community.

Forty minutes later, the car stopped at the entrance of Qiuyue Pavilion on Antique Street.

"How's business lately?" Qi Yun stepped into the shop and greeted Shi Feng, who was slumped in a chair.

"Ah, it's been three days without a single customer." Shi Feng already knew he was coming, so he didn't bother getting up to greet him, just shook his head helplessly, "It's pointless for me to keep watch here; I might as well stay at home and watch the surveillance."

Qi Yun chuckled understandingly, no wonder this guy was slacking off early in the morning. He used to open the shop and polish the treasures, but now he couldn't be bothered.

"Hey, why are you suddenly going to Shanghai for the auction? Found a bargain?" Shi Feng sat up from his chair and turned on the electric kettle.

He knew that Qi Yun wasn't interested in collecting stuff; he messed with these things purely to make money. The last golden rattan chair made him green with envy.

"Yeah, and it's a big one." Qi Yun nodded with a smile.

"Really!?" Shi Feng got interested, "What is it? Give me a hint."

Qi Yun, however, didn't say much more, taking out a pack of cigarettes and lighting one for himself.

"Hey, are you gonna speak?" Shi Feng was hooked, staring at him eagerly.

Qi Yun slowly exhaled a smoke ring, glanced at him, and said flatly, "Twelve Bronze Heads."

"Get lost!" Shi Feng cursed immediately upon hearing this, pouting, "Why didn't you say the Imperial Jade Seal while you were at it!"

"I've already seen the auction list; stop bullshitting me."

Qi Yun couldn't be bothered to respond, "Alright, let's get to serious business. You mentioned on the phone earlier that Old Chen is sick. What's going on? Is it serious?"

He had called Shi Feng early in the morning, telling him about going to Shanghai for the auction and wanting Old Chen's help to sort out the bidding spots.

He had planned to visit Old Chen with Shi Feng, but it turned out Old Chen was ill.

Talking about this topic, Shi Feng sighed deeply, "Wasn't it Old Chen's son's death anniversary two days ago? He got a bit down, drank too much, and ended up in the hospital."

"But now it's nothing serious. He just needs some rest and recuperation."

Qi Yun was momentarily silent upon hearing this; Shi Feng had mentioned Old Chen's tragic life before.

"Which hospital is he in? I'll go see him."

Shi Feng waved his hand, "Not now, maybe later."

"I already passed your message to Old Chen. He got everything arranged; just go to the auction."

"Alright, then I'll visit him in a couple of days." Qi Yun nodded and suddenly realized, "Us? You're going too?"

"Why? Can't I go?" Shi Feng frowned and retorted.

Qi Yun was a bit skeptical, "What are you going for? Not doing business?"

"What's the difference if I do this lousy business or not?" Shi Feng sighed, grabbing the boiled kettle and starting to rinse the tea set, "I have nothing to do anyway, so I'll go join the fun with you."

"And meet a friend while I'm there; he's opening a shop in Shanghai and needs some supplies. I'm taking some for him."

Qi Yun nodded slightly, immediately pulling out his phone, "Alright, I'll have my assistant book both of us tickets then."

"Sure, first class! My hemorrhoids are acting up; I need a roomy seat." Shi Feng shamelessly shouted.

...

At the entrance of Kindergarten, Vanke Mansion.

Dong Anyun found Zhao Qing again.

"Miss Zhao, regarding the events of back then, Chairman Zhao was really helpless..."

"You don't have to say any more." Zhao Qing interrupted with reddened eyes before Dong finished, "I'm having a good life now, and I don't need a suddenly appearing father. Please don't come to disturb me anymore."

Dong Anyun opened his mouth, his tone somewhat helpless. After a moment of silence, he continued to persuade, "Miss Zhao, after all, blood is thicker than water, and family ties can't be cut off, you..."

"I'm sorry, I have to get back to class. Please don't look for me again in the future." Zhao Qing wiped the tears from the corners of her eyes and turned to walk back towards the kindergarten.

From a distance, Gao Min watched everything silently. After a moment of hesitation, he took out his phone from his pocket.

...

Tianshan Airport, on the flight to Shanghai.

Qi Yun fastened his seatbelt while saying over the phone, "Are the lychees sold out?"

Wei Yong on the other end laughed and replied, "Yes, we stocked a total of 2.7 million, and after costs, we made 1.4 million in profit."

"I'll transfer the money to your account shortly."

At this moment, the flight attendant came over, smiling as she quietly reminded, "Hello sir, the plane is about to take off. Please turn off your phone."

"Alright." Qi Yun nodded at her and quickly said to Wei Yong, "No need to transfer all the money, keep a million and split it with Brother Meng."

"That's all for now, I'm on the plane, we'll talk later."

After hanging up, Shi Feng next to him shook his hair and leaned in with a grin, "President Qi, do you still need a servant at home? I'm really good with my hands."

In less than half a year, the guy who used to haggle over two or three thousand bucks now freely gives a million to others...

It was incredibly envious.

Qi Yun glanced at him and said nonchalantly, "My daughter needs someone to carry her backpack, maybe you can accompany her to kindergarten."

"Well, it's not impossible..."

...

At four in the afternoon, the plane landed at Shanghai Airport.

The person picking them up was a friend of Shi Feng, a very hearty man from the Northeast, not looking like a businessman at all.

After meeting, they exchanged some pleasantries.

"Here, Old Wang, let me introduce you. This is my good friend Qi Yun, also part of our circle, and next to him is his assistant, Chen Wei."

Chen Wei had been sticking close to Qi Yun for some time, so Shi Feng naturally knew him.

The man called Old Wang extended his hand, enthusiastically greeting Qi Yun, "Hello, Brother Qi, I'm Fang Songde, just call me Old Wang."

Qi Yun extended his hand and responded with a smile, "Hello, hello."

Old Wang also shook hands with Chen Wei who nodded in response.

Shi Feng pointed at Old Wang and introduced to Qi Yun, "Old Wang has been my friend for many years, we used to mix around Pan Garden, and now he's a big boss."

Old Wang laughed heartily and modestly said, "What big boss, just making a living."

"Come on, let's chat in the car."

A few of them went to a nearby parked BMW 760, and once in the car, Shi Feng looked around at the luxurious interior and gestured at Qi Yun, "Look at this, driving this car but claiming not to be a big boss."

Qi Yun nodded quietly, this car indeed was much better than his second-hand 5 Series, estimating it cost a couple of hundred, which would be a top expense for ordinary people.

If someone's driving a two-to-three-million car, their annual income must be at least ten million.

Old Wang, the driver, didn't continue the topic and took out a box of cigarettes from the armrest, handing it to Shi Feng, "You guys smoke; I recently quit."

Shi Feng didn't stand on ceremony, opened the pack, and lit one for both himself and Qi Yun.

"I'll get you guys settled first, then I have to attend an auction tonight, I'll come find you after it's over," Old Wang said while turning his head.

"Auction? The Christie's one?" Shi Feng leaned in and asked.

After all, Shanghai is an international metropolis with many auction companies.

Old Wang replied, "Yeah, my shop is just starting up, there are two nice items at this auction, I'm going to try my luck and see if I can pick them up cheaply."

"Hehe, what a coincidence, let's go together." Shi Feng grinned.

"You're going too?" Old Wang was a bit surprised.

Shi Feng nodded, flicking ash off his cigarette, "Yeah, apart from delivering goods to you, I'm also here to join Qi Yun for some fun."

"Hehe, alright, let's find a place to eat first, then we'll go together."

"It's your territory, you do the arranging."

...

At 7:30 in the evening, Huangpu District, International Art Center.

Qi Yun and the others took the elevator to the fifth floor, and from the venue setup alone, one could see this auction had a high standard.

The floor was covered with soft red carpet, above hung dazzling crystal chandeliers, and the hallways were lined with posters of the auction's preview items.

"See that, that's tonight's highlight, the Western Zhou 'Zilong Cauldron', estimated to start at fifty million." Old Wang nudged Shi Feng with his elbow, whispering, "But I heard Christie's privately contacted a few major collectors, guessing the final price will break a hundred million."

Shi Feng smacked his lips, "No wonder it's Shanghai, damn rich."

After verifying their identities, they entered the venue.

The curved seating area was already seventy to eighty percent full with guests, all appearing fluent and well-off, and there were many agents in formal suits. If some big tycoons found it inconvenient to attend the auction personally, they would entrust these agents to bid via phone.

Qi Yun and the others picked a spot to sit down, leisurely chatting while waiting for the auction to start.

Not long after, a female auctioneer stepped onto the stage, and with the sound of the gavel striking, the lights dimmed, leaving only the spotlight on the center stage.

Chapter 367: Tycoons Everywhere

Qi Yun had previously attended several auctions, and the process was basically the same, except Christie's had higher standards for the auction items, and hardly anything too low in value would appear.

"Welcome everyone to Christie's summer..." The auctioneer briefly introduced a few words, and the auction began directly.

The first auction item was a Qing Dynasty Zitan carved flower table, which after several rounds of bidding was taken away by a lady wearing a jade bracelet for 1.2 million.

"Next item, a pair of Ming Dynasty Chenghua Doucai Lotus Scroll Cups." As soon as the auctioneer's voice fell, a close-up of the cups popped up on the screen.

From the appearance, this pair of porcelain cups has a delicate texture, warm glaze, and the blue and white double circles at the cup's bottom are quite beautiful.

After several rounds of bidding, it was finally won by a middle-aged man wearing gold-rimmed glasses, with a hammer price of 35 million.

Shi Feng sighed again, "Damn, they're really rich..."

Lao Wai glanced at the middle-aged man, and said in a low voice, "He's the real big boss, often appearing in the news, quite powerful."

"What does he do?" Shi Feng curiously asked.

"Real estate from years ago, now finance, does whatever makes money." Lao Wai replied indifferently.

Having heard this, Qi Yun also looked at the middle-aged man briefly, then continued to look down at the exhibition catalog in his hand.

After a few rounds, Lao Wai also made a move twice, successfully taking down a vase.

"Next item, 013, the late Qing Dynasty Gilded Buddha Head, which was also Master Zeng Yufan's last work before his death." As the auctioneer's voice fell, the photo of this Golden Buddha Head was projected on the screen again.

This Buddha Head shines brilliantly, with finely detailed spiral hair, a pigeon blood ruby embedded between the brows, even the curvature of the earlobe is sculpted smoothly and harmoniously.

"Zeng Yufan?" Shi Feng stared at the screen ahead and muttered to himself, "Could it be the one who repaired the Buddha statues in Yihe Garden?"

Next to him, Qi Yun closed the catalog in his hand, sat up slightly straightened, and looked at the screen.

"Starting price, 800,000, let's start bidding!"

As soon as the auctioneer's voice fell, bidding quickly started in the venue.

"One million!" Someone in the front row was the first to raise a sign.

"One million two hundred thousand!" Someone on the other side followed.

The price climbed steadily, and when the bid reached three million, the middle-aged man who had just spent thirty-five million spoke for the first time: "Three million five hundred thousand." His voice was steady, with an undeniable aura.

With his bidding, the number of bidders immediately decreased, leaving only one person still persisting.

"Three million seven hundred thousand!"

"Four million."

"Four million three hundred thousand!"

"Four million five hundred thousand." The middle-aged man remained unhurried, as if everything was under control.

In the end, the other competitor shook his head, also withdrew from the contest, and stopped bidding.

The auctioneer, seeing this, began the final countdown: "Four million five hundred thousand, first time!"

"Four million five hundred thousand, second time!"

"Last time, is there anyone else who wants to bid?"

Just as everyone in the hall thought it was settled, about to end, a sudden voice came from the back row.

"Five million." Qi Yun, who had been silent, slowly raised the number plate in his hand.

The other attendees in the hall curiously glanced over here but didn't pay much attention, since it was only five million, and those attending such auctions were generally worldly.

However, the person next to him, Shi Feng, was a bit stunned, obviously not expecting Qi Yun to suddenly bid.

Almost as soon as Qi Yun's voice fell, the middle-aged man in the front row again raised his sign, without even looking back.

"Five million three hundred thousand."

Qi Yun without hesitation planned to bid again, seeing this, Shi Feng hurriedly nudged him with his elbow and whispered, "Is this the thing you're looking to snag?"

"Though it's nice, its liquidity is very poor, and the price of five million is already very high, difficult to resell."

"Relax, I know what I'm doing." Qi Yun nodded to Shi Feng, then bid again, "Five million five hundred thousand."

"Six million."

"Seven million."

"..."

Until the price soared to ten million, Shi Feng couldn't sit still anymore, raised his hand to touch Qi Yun's forehead, wanting to see if he was feverish.

Beside them, Lao Wai also whispered persuasion, "Brother Qi, why not let it go, the price has already far exceeded its value."

Qi Yun didn't mind, chuckling lightly, "I believe in Buddha, faith is priceless, besides, Buddha says I have 'fate' with it."

This reason immediately rendered Shi Feng and the others speechless, shooting him a side glance.

"Fifteen million!" This time Qi Yun went all out, adding five million directly.

The attitude was clear, I'm determined to get this item!

In terms of financial prowess, he might not match the opponent, but the opponent didn't seem likely to pay such a high price to buy back a Buddha Head.

Sure enough, the middle-aged man in front didn't choose to continue bidding, but finally turned back, looking towards Qi Yun's direction, smiling at him.

Qi Yun didn't understand what he meant, so he didn't respond.

"Fifteen million, first time!"

"Fifteen million, second time!"

"Fifteen million, last time!"

"Bang!" The gavel struck heavily, and the auctioneer raised a hand towards Qi Yun's direction, "Congratulations to gentleman number 91, for successfully winning the Gilded Buddha Head from the late Qing Dynasty!"

Half an hour later, the auction reached its climax.

The Western Zhou Zilong Cauldron, seen on the promotional poster in the corridor earlier, finally made its grand entrance.

As soon as the bidding began, no fewer than ten people were involved in the competition.

Each bid increased by millions, even tens of millions, which again refreshed Qi Yun's understanding of Shanghai—it truly was a place where big shots roamed.

To know that even in the largest auction house in Bird City, it might not produce an item sold for over ten million in a whole year.

However, tonight's auction had already seen four or five such items, and even more astonishing was this Zilong Cauldron, with bids rapidly approaching one hundred million.

"One hundred and twenty million!" spoke the middle-aged man in the front row again.

The price jumped from ninety-eight million directly to one hundred and twenty million!

As his words fell, the scene was instantly filled with silence.

Even the auctioneer, accustomed to big scenes, showed a momentary look of shock on her face, but she quickly reacted and spoke in a slightly excited tone: "One hundred and twenty million! Now it's one hundred and twenty million from gentleman number 001 in the front row!"

"Is there anyone else willing to bid higher?"

The auctioneer's excited inquiry pulled everyone back from their shock.

But this time, no one raised their placards to bid higher.

...

After the auction, Qi Yun followed the staff's guidance to a lounge.

"Mr. Qi, would you like to take your item with you later, or should we arrange delivery to a specified location for you?"

Qi Yun looked down and skimmed through the relevant paperwork for the Buddha Head: "I'll take it with me directly."

The staff nodded politely: "Alright, I'll arrange that for you now."

About ten minutes later, another staff member arrived at the lounge carrying a specially made box.

This box was fifty centimeters long and wide, about sixty to seventy centimeters high, with the Golden Buddha Head inside padded with special materials to prevent collision.

The staff member handed over a pair of white gloves with a smile: "Mr. Qi, please inspect it first, and if everything is confirmed, I'll take care of the further procedures for you."

"Of course, if needed, we can also arrange for a professional appraisal team to assist you with the inspection."

Truly worthy of being a top-tier auction house, the service was impeccable.

"Thank you, that's not necessary." Qi Yun waved his hand and then picked up the Buddha Head to examine it closely.

He wasn't interested in checking if this Buddha Head was damaged, but was rather curious about how the Dog Head, mentioned in the intel as one of the Twelve Bronze Heads, was hidden inside.

This Buddha Head wasn't light, estimated to weigh around ten pounds, with its gilded surface glowing softly in the lighting.

Holding it in both hands, Qi Yun turned it around, observing that every detail of this Buddha Head was seamlessly joined, leaving no trace. After a few glances, he placed the Buddha Head back in the box, planning to examine it more thoroughly at home.

About ten minutes later, he met up with Shi Feng and the others at the elevator entrance, carrying the box.

Upon seeing him, Shi Feng immediately asked impatiently: "What on earth were you thinking? Didn't you say we're here for a bargain? Spending fifteen million on such a thing?"

"Believe it or not, you might not even get five million for it now."

The old Bai standing next to him had a face full of incomprehension as well.

Qi Yun glanced at the old Bai and then smiled, patting Shi Feng on the shoulder: "I've told you, faith is priceless, how can it simply be measured with money?"

Shi Feng was speechless, giving him a thumbs up: "Impressive, now you've started pursuing faith."

The three of them took the elevator down to the underground parking lot. Just as they were about to get in the car, a voice from a man not far away called out to the old Bai, who turned his head to look and then said to Qi Yun and Shi Feng: "I ran into an acquaintance, I'll go say hi, you guys wait for a bit."

Qi Yun nodded: "Alright, go ahead."

After the old Bai walked away, Shi Feng whispered to Qi Yun: "What exactly is your plan?"

In the antique business, everyone was a savvy player, and with Shi Feng's understanding of Qi Yun, he naturally wouldn't believe in some ridiculous excuse like faith.

He guessed that Qi Yun was keeping quiet most likely because the old Bai was also present.

Qi Yun handed the box to Chen Wei and then feigned mystery: "This is the bargain, you'll know when we get back."

Shi Feng was helpless, no matter how anxious he was, he couldn't force Qi Yun to speak if he didn't want to.

All he could do was keep guessing to himself, wondering what kind of treasure was worth the fifteen million spent for this bargain.

After the old Bai finished greeting his acquaintance, they all drove away.

Over twenty minutes later, the car arrived at a commercial street.

The old Bai was generous and directly booked rooms for Qi Yun and the others at a five-star hotel in the city center.

They went into their rooms, locked the valuables they brought in the room safe, and prepared to go out to find a place to eat.

"Let's eat first, then go take a bath; a new club just opened over in Pudong, all blond and blue-eyed masseuses..." the old Bai grinned with a knowing smile on his face.

Shi Feng's eyes lit up at this but then he rubbed his sore waist, knowing that his current stamina couldn't handle such an intense situation anymore.

Chatting and laughing, the four of them took the elevator down to the first floor, heading out of the hotel.

Just as they reached the parking lot and were about to open the car door, two young men with close-cropped hair came straight toward Qi Yun.

Seeing this, Chen Wei immediately stepped forward, blocking the two men, and asked sternly, "What do you want?"

Qi Yun and the other two looked towards the two young men.

One of the young men glanced at Chen Wei and said to Qi Yun, "Mr. Qi, right? Our boss wants to meet you, please come with us."

Chapter 368: So You're Qi Yun?

France, on the streets of Lyon.

A car chase is unfolding, with three Chevrolet Suburbans furiously pursuing two sedans ahead, the roar of engines startling the pedestrians on the roadside.

In the leading silver car, Old Hei grips the steering wheel tightly, sweat trickling down his temples, his expression extremely tense.

In the passenger seat, Ah Jiao's gaze is also a bit anxious, but she remains calm, her fingers swiftly sliding on the tablet screen, checking the map routes.

"Damn it, these guys are like bloodhounds. We just switched locations, and they've already found us." Ajie cursed angrily.

"Turn right ahead, there's an alley on 23rd Avenue. We'll park the car at the alley entrance and escape on foot!" Ah Jiao quickly made a decision, shouting to Old Hei.

"Got it!" Old Hei sharply turned the steering wheel, the tires screeching against the pavement, and the car darted into the side street like an arrow.

Niu Da, following closely behind, was about to follow when he suddenly heard a loud "bang."

The left front tire of his car burst abruptly, causing the vehicle to lurch to the left, sparking on the road, narrowly missing the roadside guardrail.

"Shit!" Niu Da cursed, slamming on the brakes, causing the car to skid sideways in the middle of the road.

"Brother Niu! What happened!" Ah Jiao's anxious inquiry came through the Bluetooth earpiece.

Niu Da glanced at the rearview mirror, quickly pushed open the door, and sprinted towards the pavement: "You guys go on first! Don't worry about me!"

Ah Jiao turned her head to look through the car window and saw that one of the three Chevrolets had stopped, with four people getting out to chase after Niu Da, while the other two rammed the car blocking the road and continued toward their direction.

Old Hei hesitated a bit when he heard the shouting in the earpiece.

"Keep going!" Ah Jiao shouted with a stern face, "Stopping now will only drag him down!"

Old Hei, hearing this, gritted his teeth, slammed on the accelerator again, and the silver car quickly disappeared around the street corner...

...

Outside a hotel in Shanghai, in the parking lot.

Qi Yun glanced at two crew-cut young men, noting from their expressions that they were clearly not friendly.

"Who's your boss?" Qi Yun asked, expressionless.

"Brother Xiong," one of the young men replied.

Qi Yun showed no reaction to the name. He didn't know anyone in Shanghai, especially not any Brother Xiong, but Old Wai's face turned tense.

"I don't know your boss, if he wants to see me, he should come himself." Qi Yun said in a deep voice, casually opened the car door, and got in.

Shi Feng and Chen Wei also got in the car, while Old Wai gave the two young men a smile and opened the driver's seat door.

Once the car was on the main road, Old Wai said with a wry smile, "Brother Qi Yun, if you're done here, you might want to leave Shanghai."

"Why? Because of this Brother Xiong?" Shi Feng asked with a frown.

Old Wai nodded, "Yes, he's very powerful in the Puxin District. He pretty much has a monopoly on the earthworks and steel business, and even the big bosses have to give him some face."

"Plus, his men have a bit of a gangster vibe, and people who cross him usually don't end well."

"My new place is in Puxin District, so I've heard of him."

This wasn't hard to understand, anyone dealing in earthworks and steel is quite influential.

Shi Feng's expression turned a bit awkward, "A place like Shanghai still allows people like that to exist?"

Old Wai gave a cryptic smile, "There are always places the sun doesn't shine. Rumor has it Brother Xiong is actually working for Mr. Ji, the guy who bought that Bronze Cauldron at the auction."

"Apart from what I've told you about Mr. Ji, he's got a huge business and very strong connections, in some complex ways too."

Shi Feng clicked his tongue, "A white glove then?"

Old Wai nodded silently.

"Old Qi doesn't know this Brother Xiong at all, why would he come looking for trouble?" Shi Feng asked, testing the waters, "Could it be because Old Qi grabbed that Buddha Head from Mr. Ji at the auction?"

"My guess is that's probably it..." Old Wai sighed, "That's why I suggest Brother Qi Yun leave first. If they come looking for trouble, it won't be easy to handle."

Shi Feng felt a bit irritated, "Fair competition at the auction, what kind of white glove has such little tolerance? That's pretty damn tyrannical, isn't it?"

Old Wai said nothing more, and a short silence fell inside the car.

"It's fine, let's go eat first," Qi Yun finally spoke, his tone calm, "If he wants trouble, he can come himself."

Even if the other person seemed powerful, Qi Yun didn't see why he should bow down just because of a name.

If he were alone, Qi Yun might consider fleeing to save his skin, but with Chen Wei beside him, he felt much more assured.

As long as they couldn't quietly take him out, even if Brother Xiong or even Lord Xiong couldn't handle it once it got noisy.

This was the mainland, and Qi Yun was not just some small fry to be easily dealt with.

"Alright, let's go eat first." Seeing Qi Yun's composure, Old Wai didn't try to persuade him further, knowing that given the lack of a big conflict, it was just about saving face.

Half an hour later, a group of four arrived at the restaurant for dinner.

"Wow, this place doesn't come cheap, does it?" Shi Feng said, fiddling with the silverware on the table while taking in the restaurant's decor.

The environment here is quite nice, with no private rooms, only widely spaced window seats separated by screens.

Outside the floor-to-ceiling windows, the river glimmered under the lights, and the skyscrapers on the opposite shore began to illuminate in the twilight.

Restaurants located in such prime areas even charge for the external scenery, though it's included in the price of the dishes.

Lao Wai handed over the menu with a smile: "Since you all seldom come here, I made sure to reserve a good spot for you. This place is not easy to book; try their signature braised pork, which is stewed with ten-year aged Shaoxing wine..."

"I'm treating today, and there's more to come after dinner!"

Meanwhile, outside on the street, a black Mercedes was slowly pulling over.

In the back seat of the Mercedes, a burly middle-aged man with a bearish build and a face full of flesh, puffed on a cigar and leisurely rolled down the window.

Nearby, a young man with a crew cut, who had appeared in the hotel parking lot earlier, ran over and leaned in to speak: "Brother Xiong, they've gone inside."

Brother Xiong shook his head side to side, his neck cracking audibly.

The crew-cut youth outside saw this and quickly opened the car door.

Brother Xiong stepped out, looked up at the restaurant's sign, instinctively furrowing his brows, but still walked in with strides.

On the ground floor of the restaurant, the reception manager came up, politely inquiring: "Good evening gentlemen, do you have a reservation?"

Brother Xiong remained silent, while his sidekick responded: "We're meeting a friend."

The manager intended to say more, but Brother Xiong had already bypassed him, heading straight for the stairs.

On the second floor, since the peak dining hours had passed, there weren't many customers, leaving several open seats.

The manager's insistence on asking about reservations was because the restaurant limits their daily food supply, preparing only a certain number of servings each day.

Qi Yun and his party's table was not too far from the stairs. Upon hearing the approaching footsteps, Chen Wei immediately looked over.

When Chen Wei saw Brother Xiong leading some young men appear at the staircase, he instinctively moved closer to Qi Yun, discreetly gripping a dining knife on the table.

The other three also heard the approaching footsteps and looked over.

Lao Wai, who had been smiling, became serious upon seeing Brother Xiong's sudden appearance.

Brother Xiong led four young men with crew cuts directly to the table, scanned the faces of everyone, and finally fixed his gaze on Qi Yun, speaking calmly: "You're Qi Yun, right?"

Qi Yun glimpsed the two crew-cut youths behind him and roughly guessed the identity of the newcomers.

He stared at Brother Xiong expressionlessly, his voice steady: "Yes."

A sidekick brought over a chair, and Brother Xiong sat down with a chuckle: "It's quite tricky to meet you; I had to come personally."

This sentence was full of arrogance, indicating Brother Xiong's usual swagger.

Qi Yun remained unbothered, his demeanor calm.

Brother Xiong sensed he was being ignored, his face still smiling, but his eyes gradually turned cold.

The tension around the table began to rise.

Lao Wai, who had been silent, glanced at Qi Yun and then at Shi Feng, before gritting his teeth, stood up, and poured a cup of tea, handing it to Brother Xiong with a forced smile: "Brother Xiong, we didn't know you were coming, so we didn't prepare in advance. How about joining us for a simple dinner?"

Brother Xiong glanced at Lao Wai, remaining silent.

His trusted aide beside him, evidently understanding Brother Xiong's intentions, picked up the cup and splashed it in Lao Wai's face: "Who the hell are you? Did anyone ask you to speak?"

"This isn't your business, stay out of the way!"

This blatant display was undoubtedly a warning for Qi Yun and his group to acknowledge their place.

Rage appeared on Qi Yun's face as he coldly stared at Brother Xiong, ready to react.

Clearly, Lao Wai knew Brother Xiong wasn't someone to mess with and tried to speak up to resolve the situation peacefully.

Sitting next to Qi Yun, Chen Wei's left hand's veins bulged in readiness, awaiting Qi Yun's signal to act.

By logic, he was just Qi Yun's bodyguard, not a henchman.

Without a threat to Qi Yun's safety, he could choose not to intervene.

However, after spending so much time together, their relationship had transformed, no longer a mere employer-employee bond.

Qi Yun was generally generous with them, only recently giving bonuses of over a million after a maritime venture, and never treated him as just subordinates, always showing respect.

Therefore, because of their relationship, he'd willingly take risks should Qi Yun ask.

Claiming they could kill Brother Xiong and his men here would be an exaggeration, but giving them a thorough beating wouldn't be a problem.

Chapter 369: Conflict Erupts

However, before the two could react, Shi Feng from the opposite side couldn't sit still.

Seeing his old brothers being bullied, he suddenly stood up from the chair, his fists tightly clenched, furiously glaring at Brother Xiong, just about to speak, but Lao Wai beside him raised a hand pressing on his shoulder, and shook his head at him.

"What, you're not happy about this?" The buzz-cut youth, who splashed Lao Wai with tea, stared at Shi Feng, his words provoking.

Shi Feng stiffened his neck, about to rise again, but Lao Wai didn't give him a chance, holding down his shoulder firmly. Then, he wiped the water stains off his face and squeezed a smile once more.

"Hehe, Brother Xiong, it's all a misunderstanding. I'm also friends with Lao Sun from Puxin District, we're all our own people."

"Lao Sun, huh?" Brother Xiong looked at Lao Wai with a smile, casually flicking the ash of his cigar into the cup, speaking flatly, "He doesn't even qualify to eat at the same table as me. Why do you think you're one of my own people?"

Upon saying this, the smile on Lao Wai's face instantly froze.

Even though he was a boss driving a BMW 760, in their eyes, he didn't even qualify to bend down and kneel.

After Brother Xiong finished speaking, he turned towards Qi Yun again: "I want that Buddha Head. You have two hours to send it to me."

"Originally, if you had seen me proactively just now, I could've given you ten million." Brother Xiong paused, carrying the cigar around in his mouth, "But now, I only give you two hundred thousand."

"If I don't see the item within two hours, then you won't get a single penny."

Brother Xiong was indeed here for the Buddha Head, and the conditions he proposed were utterly audacious.

"Hehe." Qi Yun, who originally had a gloomy face, suddenly smiled. He slowly picked up the teapot from in front of Lao Wai, and calmly poured a cup of tea.

Brother Xiong and his few subordinates all thought Qi Yun was going to soften up, offer tea, and apologize. The buzz-cut youth even showed an expression of disdain.

However, in the next second, Qi Yun abruptly shook his wrist holding the teacup, splashing the steaming hot tea onto Brother Xiong's face!

This sudden scene obviously caught everyone by surprise. Brother Xiong and his henchmen all fell into a brief shock.

Someone actually dared to splash water on Brother Xiong's face!

Even Lao Wai was stunned for a moment, and after coming to his senses, he internally sighed 'trouble' feeling this was going to be a big mess.

"Damn!" Brother Xiong roared in fury as he retreated, the cigar falling from his mouth, scrambling in pain, losing his previous controlling stance.

Four buzz-cut youths immediately crowded over, raising their fists to smash towards Qi Yun's face; their usual way was domineering, basically, no one dared to defy them, so they hadn't brought any weapons.

However, fists could kill as well, and they were determined to cripple the guy in front of them to vent for their boss.

Chen Wei, almost simultaneously, got up, his right hand chopping at the nearest person's wrist, while his left hand clenched and punched into another's face, his moves swift as lightning.

"Bang!" The buzz-cut hit flipped the dining table, sound of broken plates and exclamations echoed together.

Brother Xiong wiping the tea off his face, roared in angry desperation: "Hit him till he's dead!"

The two remaining buzz-cuts raised chairs to smash at Qi Yun, but Chen Wei kicked each of them away, their backs crashing into the floor-to-ceiling window, which instantly cracked like a spiderweb.

Lao Wai and Shi Feng picked up chair legs ready to charge forward but Qi Yun calmly halted them: "Leave it to Brother Wei."

Chen Wei, like a tiger entering a flock, with three punches and two kicks, incapacitated four buzz-cuts leaving them helpless. The final one was picked up by the collar over his head and harshly slammed to the ground.

Shi Feng and the others watched in awe, not expecting Qi Yun's assistant to be so fierce.

In the first-floor lobby, the restaurant manager had been monitoring the upstairs commotion through surveillance. Seeing the confrontation unfold, he immediately grabbed the intercom and shouted: "Security! Go to the second floor! Quickly!"

As he shouted, he himself also started running towards the second floor.

However, by the time he reached the second floor, the battle above had already ended.

The four henchmen brought by Brother Xiong, in mere two seconds, were floored by Chen Wei, moaning endlessly, unable to stand.

The guests at the adjacent two tables had long since fled in terror to avoid getting involved.

"Damn it!" Brother Xiong shouted in rage, tearing off his short sleeves, revealing his thick upper body.

The reason why this guy was called Brother Xiong probably had something to do with his size, those raised chest muscles were larger than some women's flat chests, and in his fury, he really resembled a grizzly bear.

Just by looks, quite intimidating indeed, capable of handling a dozen ordinary people shouldn't pose any problem.

Yet Chen Wei paid no attention to this, soon tossing the dining knife in his hand. Earlier, he was cautious of these people possibly carrying weapons, so he adopted a slightly careful approach.

During the encounter with the four-to-five-hundred-kilogram grizzly in the past, Qi Yun and the group even dared to touch it, let alone a poser like Brother Xiong.

"Stop fighting!" The manager snapped out of the brief shock, briskly walking towards Qi Yun's side, followed by several white-shirted security guards, "Stop!"

Brother Xiong was breathing heavily, chest heaving violently, veins bulging on his forehead.

He glared at Chen Wei, with both anger and apprehension in his gaze; those few lightning-fast moves just now were by no means something ordinary people could manage.

Chen Wei stood in front of Qi Yun, his face expressionless, as if he wasn't the one who just took down four people.

"Qi Yun, you son of a bitch, you've got guts!" Brother Xiong gritted his teeth, wiped the tea off his face, and immediately took out his phone to call for backup, "Changhai Road! Wangjiang Pavilion, bring people over right now!"

The manager's courteous demeanor was gone, and he stared at Brother Xiong with an unpleasant look, his tone carrying a warning: "You better not cause trouble here!"

This wasn't Puxin District, he was just a small manager, so he didn't know who Brother Xiong was.

Already fuming with anger, Brother Xiong saw that anyone dared to ignore him, and he kicked the manager in the stomach, causing him to stagger back repeatedly, luckily being caught by the security behind him, preventing a fall to the ground.

"All of you get the hell out of here! I know your boss has some connections, but today, I don't care who comes, it won't help!" Brother Xiong said coldly, staring at Qi Yun and Chen Wei, "You two aren't leaving today!"

The manager was set back by a kick, his face equally grim. After getting back up, he gritted his teeth and instructed the security, "Escort those guests out."

The security responded, bypassing Brother Xiong and Qi Yun's table, and escorted the frightened customers inside to the first floor.

The manager gave Brother Xiong a hard look and followed downstairs without a word, pulling out his phone to call his boss.

"Boss, we've got a bit of trouble at the store, a guy named Brother Xiong..."

On the second floor, Qi Yun finished editing a message and sent it out, then pocketed his phone and patted Old Wai's arm, speaking calmly, "Let's leave."

With that, he led the way downstairs, completely ignoring the menacing Brother Xiong.

It wasn't that he was afraid of the other party calling people over, but standing around doing nothing in this situation seemed a bit stupid.

Brother Xiong wanted to stop them but was wary of the fierce Chen Wei.

As a man of status in the underworld, being splashed with a cup of water was already a major loss of face; getting beaten afterward, how could he stand it? He would be laughed at.

However, he wasn't worried that Qi Yun and the others would get away. In this area, finding someone was a breeze for him.

Even if Qi Yun and the others wanted to fly out of Shanghai, they couldn't, because behind him was Mr. Ji, whose influence could trap them in the city.

Qi Yun and the other three descended to the first floor, striding towards the front desk.

"Sorry for the trouble, could you calculate how much our table cost, including the damages upstairs, and I'll cover it all." Qi Yun said politely to the manager.

The manager had been watching the surveillance earlier, knew it wasn't Qi Yun and his group who started the trouble, and their attitude was polite, so he didn't blame them.

"No rush on the expenses, I know it wasn't your fault, but it does involve you, so please wait in the nearby lounge for a moment, our boss is on her way to handle it personally."

Qi Yun nodded after hearing this; it wasn't unreasonable, and there was no need to make things difficult for him, "Alright, we'll wait a while then."

"Thank you for your understanding, this way please, I'll take you to the lounge." The manager raised his hand, leading the way.

At this moment, Brother Xiong, bare-chested, came downstairs, glaring over at Qi Yun, with four bruised followers trailing behind him.

The manager, worried he would escape and unable to explain to the boss, shouted to the security at the door, "Keep an eye on them, don't let them leave!"

A few security guards, upon hearing this, immediately blocked the entrance, standing in the way.

Brother Xiong's already grim face turned instantly red with rage, clearly unable to hold back his anger.

Since making a name in Puxin District and monopolizing those dirt business trades, who hadn't treated him with respect? Now, even a few small security guards disregarded him, how could he not be furious?

"Get the hell out of my way!" Without another word, Brother Xiong punched one of the security guards in the chest, sending him stumbling back a few steps, showing that his muscular build wasn't for show.

His underlings, having recovered by then, kicked the remaining two security guards to the ground.

They couldn't handle Chen Wei, but dealing with ordinary security was a piece of cake.

Moreover, the guards clutched their stomachs, not daring to fight back; their orders were to prevent these people from leaving, and actually fighting them would hold them liable and potentially invite retaliation.

The manager afar was hopping mad, "You're just too goddamn bullying!"

A short-haired man turned and pointed at him, cursing, "You better shut up, you'll get yours later!"

After knocking down the guards, they didn't leave, just stood by the entrance, clearly waiting for Brother Xiong's reinforcements.

Just then, a red Ferrari 488 roared up, screeching to a halt at the restaurant's door, the tires screeching and emitting a pungent burnt smell.

The car door opened, and a tall, attractive woman stepped out.

She wore a black slip dress, red high heels, her wavy hair down freely; she exuded a powerful aura that invited admiration but not familiarity.

The woman, upon exiting the car, glanced back, and in the next second, a white-plate Audi A6 pulled up behind, from which a man in his forties stepped out from the backseat.

The man had slightly graying hair at his temples, features stern, exuding an aura of authority.

Chapter 370: I Admit Defeat! (Double-Length)

Shanghai, Changhai Road, the street in front of Wangjiang Pavilion.

A stylish young woman paused to glance at the middle-aged man catching up behind her, then stepped towards Wangjiang Pavilion, the sound of her red high heels clicking crisply on the ground.

She brushed through her wavy hair, her gaze sweeping across the entrance of Wangjiang Pavilion, where a few security guards stood sloppily against the wall, their white shirts marked with chaotic footprints, looking somewhat embarrassed.

The guards didn't show much reaction to the woman's arrival, seemingly not recognizing her.

Xiong Ge, with a cigarette in his mouth, just about to light it, only glanced a few times at the beautiful woman who got out of the Ferrari, without much care.

In a place like Shanghai, luxury cars and beautiful women are in no short supply. Although the woman exuded a powerful aura, someone of Xiong Ge's status had seen all kinds of women.

But when he saw the middle-aged man following the woman, his hand holding the lighter hesitated slightly.

The woman's pretty face was icy cold as she stepped straight to the entrance of Wangjiang Pavilion, her eyes sweeping over Xiong Ge and his group before finally landing on him. She spoke in a clear, cold tone, "Are you that Xiong Ge?"

Xiong Ge was stunned for a moment, did not answer, but looked at the middle-aged man behind him, forcing a smile, "Guo Ju, what brings you here."

The middle-aged man looked at him blankly, nodded to him, then introduced softly to the woman beside him, "He's Xiong Jun."

The woman pointed at the few security guards looking disheveled and spoke again, "Did you beat them?"

Xiong Ge was stunned again, from Guo Ju's somewhat respectful attitude towards this woman, he had already sensed that her identity was not simple.

Now, asking about these security guards, it's obviously related to this restaurant, very likely she's the restaurant owner.

He had heard people say that the owner of Wangjiang Pavilion on Changhai Road had quite a solid background. He didn't expect it to be this solid, even earning respect from the second in command of the city's bureau.

It's important to note that this is Shanghai, and the second in command of this city's bureau is in no way ordinary, it's very prestigious.

Previously, he had felt a bit angry for losing face in front of Qi Yun and his group, but the people couldn't run away anyway. Soon, he would regain his standing and handle the tasks assigned by Mr. Ji.

But with this woman and Guo Ju appearing, a vague feeling arose in his heart that things might be getting out of control.

"I'm asking you, were you the one who hit them?" The woman opened her red lips slightly, her voice not loud, but strangely oppressive.

Xiong Ge glanced at Guo Ju, seeing no sign from him, so he nodded, "I hit them."

"Slap!"

Just when everyone was unprepared, a crisp sound of a slap suddenly rang out.

The woman's delicate hand slapped Xiong Ge hard across the face, causing him to stagger. The cigarette he hadn't lit yet fell to the ground, and he looked at the woman in front of him in disbelief.

"You fucking want to die, don't you!"

"Damn it! How dare you hit Xiong Ge!"

The nearby young men with buzz cuts couldn't take it, seeing their boss being slapped and immediately wanting to make a move on the woman.

Although this woman came with Guo Ju, they had seen Guo Ju before and their boss even played cards with him, their relationship was quite good.

So, in the eyes of these lackeys, you might have some connections, but it definitely couldn't be stronger than Xiong Ge and Mr. Ji behind him.

However, their fawning behavior at this moment, rushing up without their boss's command, was not really due to loyalty.

It was actually because earlier, upstairs, they were utterly thrashed by Chen Wei, leaving them feeling disgraced, and now they were eager to pick on someone weaker.

Couldn't take down Chen Wei, but dealing with a woman like you should be a breeze?

But the woman just stood there quietly, no emotion on her pretty face, as if she wasn't the one about to be hit.

"Stop!"

"Don't move!"

Just as the lackeys' fists were about to reach the beautiful woman's face, two shouts rang out simultaneously.

"Stop" was shouted by Guo Ju.

"Don't move" was shouted by Xiong Ge himself.

Not only did he shout, but he quickly spread his arms, blocking his lackeys behind him.

The lackeys were somewhat confused, their boss had always been vengeful.

But here, being slapped, yet restraining them—could it be that he fancied this woman?

At this moment, the roar of engines again came from the road behind them.

Seven or eight cars drove straight to the front of Wangjiang Pavilion and stopped, completely blocking the road.

The car doors opened, and a dozen people came out in a flurry, aggressively charging towards Wangjiang Pavilion.

Xiong Ge's reinforcements had arrived.

"Xiong Ge!"

"Boss!"

The crowd of lackeys who just arrived saw the somewhat bizarre scene in front of them, not quite understanding what was going on.

"Slap!"

"Slap!"

Just as they were in a daze, the crisp sound of slaps rang out again!

The woman, with no warning, slapped Xiong Ge twice more, then shook her hand lightly, as if stopping because her hand hurt.

The lackeys who just arrived stood in a momentary daze, shocked by what they had witnessed.

When they came to their senses, each of them immediately roared and was about to lay hands on the woman.

"You fucking..."

"Get lost!" Having been slapped twice more, Xiong Ge pointed at the group of lackeys and shouted angrily, "All of you get the hell out of here!"

The lackeys, hearing this, were once again dumbfounded, momentarily failing to comprehend the situation.