

## **Middle Age 371**

### Chapter 371: I Admit Defeat!

"Move your cars now! Don't block the road!" Guo Ju shouted at his men with a stern face.

The men hesitated for two seconds but eventually walked away quickly.

Brother Xiong turned his head and looked again at the woman in front of him, his expression turning extremely ugly. His eyes seemed about to spew fire, but he dared not make the slightest move.

He survived this long without getting caught up in the mess because he was no fool. If someone dares to slap you brazenly, it means they don't regard you at all, supported by some bigshot in the background.

And the respectful attitude of Guo Ju is the best testament.

Today his reputation is completely ruined; probably in the foreseeable future, he will become the topic of gossip over tea and foot baths.

The woman doesn't care about the fire in Brother Xiong's eyes, merely speaking indifferently: "Doesn't feel good being slapped, does it? Remember this for the future."

Brother Xiong stiffened his neck without saying anything, which might be his last shred of dignity.

"Miss Lu, why don't we discuss inside? Causing a commotion isn't good for business," Guo Ju quietly reminded.

The woman referred to as Miss Lu nodded and walked forward. The men standing in her way dared not stop her, swiftly moving aside.

Guo Ju glanced at Brother Xiong and shook his head helplessly, "You too, come inside."

Brother Xiong gritted his teeth and ordered a few men, "You guys wait outside." With that, he followed Guo Ju into the shop.

In the first-floor lobby, the manager had just arranged Qi Yun and some others in the lounge, heading towards the entrance.

Upon seeing Miss Lu, he immediately hurried forward to greet her, "Boss!"

Miss Lu sized up the manager, noting he wasn't injured, then nodded, "Well done."

She hardly ever visits this restaurant, leaving all matters to this manager, so most of the staff, except for those who have worked for many years, don't know her.

"Not well done, it's my failure to manage properly that impacts business..." The manager responded with a bit of shame.

Though he's just a manager, his annual salary runs in seven figures. Since he takes this pay, he must have the ability to solve problems, so the boss doesn't have to worry.

The manager knows his boss has a background. Situations like today are unprecedented. Before, not only was there no trouble, even routine inspections faced by other establishments didn't happen here.

Therefore, he dared to warn Brother Xiong upstairs earlier not to make trouble here.

Miss Lu waved her hand, "Where are those people?"

"Arranged in the lounge," the manager pointed to the side.

"Let's go, follow me," Miss Lu motioned to Brother Xiong, casually leaving a comment and leading the way to the lounge.

In the lounge, Qi Yun sat on the sofa chatting with Lao Wai.

Suddenly, the door opened, and Miss Lu led the manager and Brother Xiong inside.

Qi Yun appeared slightly surprised upon seeing Miss Lu at first—her appearance wasn't the reason; she seemed familiar, giving him a déjà vu feeling.

Like he had seen her somewhere, but couldn't recall.

"Gentlemen, this is our boss," the manager introduced Miss Lu to Qi Yun and the others.

Qi Yun rose from the sofa without abruptly shaking hands, politely nodding as a greeting.

"Please sit," Miss Lu invited, sitting on another sofa, "I've heard from Manager Li about what happened and saw the surveillance footage."

She glanced at Brother Xiong's direction before continuing, "Though he started the provocation, you both got into a fight, so no problem with bearing some responsibility for the shop's damages, right?"

After she finished, she looked towards Qi Yun and his group.

Qi Yun glanced at Brother Xiong, who was glaring at him with a red swelling handprint on his face, like he was slapped.

Wondering if something happened earlier?

But he didn't dwell much, nodding towards Miss Lu, "No problem."

After getting Qi Yun's response, Miss Lu ignored Brother Xiong and asked the manager, "Have you tabulated the damages?"

The manager drew out his phone from his pocket upon hearing this, "Yes, total damages are 1,103,520 yuan."

Miss Lu tapped her finger on the sofa's armrest gently, pondering briefly, then looked at Qi Yun again: "Forget the odd amount, compensate ten thousand from your side; the remaining million will be covered by him."

Before Qi Yun could respond, Brother Xiong, who had been silent, spoke up first: "One million!?"

He nearly thought he heard wrong. How could just breaking some tables and dishes cost a million?

It's not that he couldn't afford a million, but he felt like a pig being slaughtered, having been beaten and now having to pay, leaving him stifled.

"That vase you broke alone is eighty-two thousand, and there are purchase receipts for all damaged items," the manager explained next to him.

Brother Xiong's face turned gloomy, refraining from rebutting.

"Any objections?" Miss Lu asked him coldly.

Brother Xiong remained silent for a few seconds, gritting his teeth and squeezing out a few words: "No objections! I'll take the fall!"

Miss Lu shot him a glance and then turned to look at Qi Yun.

Qi Yun smiled bitterly; since there were receipts, what more could be said—nothing but compensation.

And this compensation seemed skewed favorably towards them; even though Brother Xiong's men seemed ready to fight first, they didn't touch Qi Yun at all—essentially attempted assault.

Despite being on the receiving end of the beatings, many things were broken in the skirmish between Chen Wei and them.

Qi Yun was somewhat surprised by Brother Xiong's reaction, the fact that he accepted the blame easily indicated that the familiar-looking woman might not be simple...

"Ten thousand is acceptable."

Miss Lu listened, stood up from the sofa: "Then each pay, then leave. Hopefully, today's incident won't occur again, or it might not be just a matter of compensation."

She warned slightly before nodding to Qi Yun and the others, stepping out of the lounge.

The manager made a gesture of invitation: "Please come follow me to the front desk to settle the bill."

...

After ten minutes, Qi Yun and his group left Wangjiang Pavilion, walking towards the roadside parking area.

Brother Xiong's men were still standing at the entrance and instinctively inclined their heads when they saw Chen Wei coming out.

Now that the boss was gone, nobody to act tough for—what if that guy came over again to thrash them; they'd only suffer more.

"Ah, today's stir screwed things up, planned to treat you guys to a good dinner, but..." Lao Wai sighed.

Qi Yun patted his arm apologetically, "This is on me, got you guys dragged into it."

"We're buddies, no need to say that; besides, you didn't start this mess," Lao Wai, truly a straightforward guy, hadn't blamed him at all.

Shi Feng shook his hair, lighting a cigarette: "Damn, that Brother Xiong is such a poser; heaven will definitely deal with people like him one day!"

"He indeed acts ruthlessly, his reputation in the Puxin District is atrocious. If he wants a project and can't negotiate, he resorts to force, relying on his backing, dismissing others lightly."

"I feel today's affair may not be over. Brother Xiong won't let this slide without revenge," Lao Wai sighed again, turning to Qi Yun, "Take my advice, leave this area as early as tomorrow; it's not worth getting entangled with guys like him."

Qi Yun appreciated Lao Wai's kindness and just smiled, nodding slightly.

A few minutes later, Brother Xiong came out of Wangjiang Pavilion, and asked his men at the door, "Where are they?"

One of the men replied, "Just left, Xiao Bo quietly followed them."

Brother Xiong ground his teeth, walked quickly towards his Mercedes, and once seated, he immediately took out his phone and dialed a number.

"Got the stuff?"

"Sorry, Mr. Ji, not... not yet, ran into a small issue," Brother Xiong's tone was a bit cautious, briefed on what happened earlier.

The voice on the other end was silent for a moment, soon followed by a stern rebuke: "Who told you to cause trouble at Wangjiang Pavilion?"

Upon hearing this, Brother Xiong immediately realized that the woman's background might be stronger than he initially supposed, feeling somewhat relieved he had exercised restraint and avoided impulsive actions...

Though seen by Lao Wai and others as an upper-circle figure, he knows truthfully he is only a mere henchman in the eyes of the true upper-echelon players.

#### Chapter 372: Driven to Desperation

Inside the Mercedes, Brother Xiong hurriedly expressed that he knew he was wrong after the reprimand, then tentatively asked, "Who is she?"

"You don't need to find out who she is. Don't provoke her in the future." Mr. Ji's tone was solemn over the phone, without much explanation about Miss Lu's identity.

"I understand," Brother Xiong replied respectfully. He could hear the gravity in the other's words, evidently even Mr. Ji was wary of that woman.

"That's it. I hope to see results in the office tomorrow, don't cause any more big disturbances." Mr. Ji hung up after speaking.

Brother Xiong put down the phone and let out a long breath, then rolled down the car window and called out to the driver outside, "Call Xiaobo and ask where that Qi Yun is now!"

...

Elsewhere, inside a riverside mansion.

A middle-aged man in his forties stood holding a glass of red wine, staring at the night outside.

After pondering for a moment, he picked up the phone on the table and searched for a number to dial.

In the office at Wangjiang Pavilion, Guo Ju glanced at the phone screen and smiled wryly at Miss Lu, "The call is here."

Miss Lu took out a box of lady's cigarettes from her handbag, elegantly lit one, and took two puffs, "Go ahead and answer."

With this permission, Guo Ju pressed the answer key, put the phone on the table, and turned on the speakerphone, "Hey, Old Ji."

"Haha, calling you so late, hope I didn't disturb your rest." Mr. Ji's tone was casual, lacking the caution Brother Xiong had when facing Guo Ju.

"No, anything you need to discuss?"

"Hmm." Mr. Ji responded and then slowly said, "There are two projects to start at the Puxin Branch. I want to talk to you about it. Are you free tomorrow? Let's meet."

Guo Ju did not respond immediately but looked up at Miss Lu opposite the desk.

He waited two seconds, seeing no reaction from her, then smiled over the phone, "Tomorrow's quite packed; I might not find the time. Let me adjust my schedule; I'll call you."

"Haha, alright." Mr. Ji chuckled in response.

The conversation ended there, with no more to say.

Guo Ju looked helplessly at Miss Lu, "So should I meet him or not?"

Miss Lu's slender fingers flicked, ash falling into the crystal ashtray, "You decide, I won't get involved in your matters."

After saying that she stood up from her chair, walked slowly to the window, and said softly, "But considering our family ties, I can tell you something."

"He's been getting arrogant these past two years, some people think he's not very obedient."

This statement made Guo Ju's face change instantly.

He knew too well what the consequences of "not very obedient" could be, having been in this circle for years, cold sweat trickled down his back.

"I..." Guo Ju stammered, wanting to speak.

Miss Lu seemed to see through his thoughts, interrupting him before he could finish, "There's still time, cut ties quickly."

Hearing this, Guo Ju finally let out a sigh of relief, "I understand, thank you."

After leaving Wangjiang Pavilion, Guo Ju sat in the car, made several phone calls in a row, and finally instructed the driver, "Starting tomorrow, I'm taking a month's sick leave. During this period, tell anyone who contacts you that I'm unreachable."

The driver nodded decisively without asking, "Okay, got it."

...

Meanwhile, Qi Yun and his group had grabbed a quick meal by the roadside before returning to the hotel to rest.

Initially, Lao Wai had arranged three rooms, but Chen Wei was uneasy and insisted on sharing a room with Qi Yun.

"There was a car following us just now. I'd rather stay with you. I'll sleep on the couch."

"No need to be so tense, this is a five-star hotel." Qi Yun drank some water, his tone relaxed.

Yet Chen Wei had his own insistence, determined to stay.

At the hotel entrance, in the parking lot.

Brother Xiong sat in the back seat of the Mercedes, shook his neck, and asked the minion beside the car, "Did you see them go in?"

"Yes, one drove away, the other three are inside the hotel," the minion replied, bending forward.

Brother Xiong looked at the hotel's sign, contemplating how to handle Qi Yun and his group.

"Should I just take people in and pull them out?" the minion tentatively suggested.

"You idiot!" Brother Xiong glared at him and cursed, "Can you easily handle that guy beside Qi Yun? If you cause a big scene, you'll have to clean up!"

The minion shrunk his neck in grievance, not daring to make another sound.

Brother Xiong seemed to realize he was out of character, unlike his usual big boss image. He rubbed his shiny forehead and took out his phone from his pocket.

"Hey, Fang Suo, it's Xiong Jun."

"Haha, need a little favor from you..."

"Right, just bring them back, I'll be there later."

...

Half an hour later, inside the hotel room.

Qi Yun took a shower, lay on the bed, and made a video call to Zhao Qing.

"Hmm, did Nuannuan sleep?"

On the other end, Zhao Qing seemed a bit downcast, pouting, "She's asleep, when are you coming back?"

"Should be back tomorrow." Qi Yun noticed she seemed to have something on her mind and chuckled, "What's up? Not happy?"

Zhao Qing bit her lip, "Yeah, I have something I want to tell you."

"Haha, what's the matter? Why so hesitant?"

After a few seconds of silence, just as Zhao Qing was about to speak, there came a loud knock at Qi Yun's door.

"Knock knock knock!"

"Knock knock knock!"

"Open up! Police!"

Qi Yun turned to look at the door, his brows furrowing.

## Chapter 373: Driven to Desperation (Part 2)

Chen Wei, sitting on the sofa, suddenly got up, pressed his hand towards Qi Yun, then walked to the door and looked through the peephole. Outside stood two people in uniform. "What's the matter?"

"Please open the door for inspection!" The voice outside was firm, mixed with the crackling sound of a walkie-talkie.

Chen Wei turned to look at Qi Yun, saw him nod, then opened the door.

"Officers, what seems to be the problem?" Chen Wei stood sideways to block the door gap, his tone was calm.

Qi Yun also got up from the bed, dressed, and listened to Zhao Qing's somewhat anxious inquiry on the phone: "What's going on? What's happening?"

"Nothing, don't worry. I'll call you later." After saying this, Qi Yun hung up the phone and walked to the door as well.

Outside, two officers were standing in the corridor, one of them waved the credentials in his hand: "Routine inspection, please show your ID card."

Qi Yun frowned at them for a moment, realizing that this sudden inspection was definitely fishy, but he still cooperatively went back inside the room, retrieved his ID, and handed it over.

The other officer took the ID, scanned it on the card reader, verified the identity, then returned it and said expressionlessly: "We received a report from the public saying illegal activities were taking place in this room. We need to take you back for further investigation."

Chen Wei stepped slightly forward, blocking in front of Qi Yun, speaking with dignity: "We were only resting here. Do you have any evidence?"

The officer glanced at Chen Wei: "No evidence, just a public report. Please come with us for investigation."

Chen Wei shook his head solemnly: "If you need help with your investigation, I can cooperate here, but Mr. Qi Yun is a city committee member. Without legal procedures, you have no right to take him."

"City committee member?" The officer was stunned, those four words implied a special judicial process. Without solid evidence, forced intervention might lead to uncontrollable consequences.

He looked evasive, licking his dry lips, "We... we are following procedure... just need you to come back to clarify things."

"Procedure requires legal summons." Chen Wei stood firm, taking out his security credentials from his pocket, "I'm Mr. Qi Yun's private security consultant, this is my ID. If you insist on taking him, please first show legal procedures."

The two officers hesitated, exchanged glances, and one gritted his teeth: "Please wait, I'll go verify the situation." Then he quickly walked away to make a call.

Two minutes later, the officer returned to the doorway, his attitude much improved: "Sorry, for now, you don't need to come with us for assistance. If needed later, we'll return."

Chen Wei put his ID back into his pocket, nodded silently, then closed the door.

Outside the hotel, Bear Brother was smoking a cigar and took a call.

"What!?"

"Okay, I got it."

"Alright, then don't trouble yourself." After hanging up, Bear Brother squinted his eyes, clenched his right fist.

According to his original plan, he was to have Qi Yun and Chen Wei taken in, taught a lesson, then blackmailed to hand over that Buddha Head statue.

But who knew Qi Yun would be such a tough nut to crack? Not to mention avenging, and tonight he may not even get his hands on the statue.

Despite Mr. Ji's usual gentle demeanor, when he gets angry, he's utterly ruthless. If the Buddha Head is not delivered tomorrow, there's no doubt Bear Brother will be in big trouble.

Thinking of this, Bear Brother frustratedly puffed his cigar twice, glanced again at the hotel entrance, then dialed Mr. Ji's number.

The phone rang for half a minute before being answered, a clearly displeased voice came from the receiver: "Hello."

Bear Brother gulped cautiously and reported the situation to Mr. Ji over the phone: "Mr. Ji, there's a bit of trouble, this kid named Qi Yun..."

It wasn't that Qi Yun's identity really left him helpless, but Mr. Ji gave him too short a time. Bearing no tricks, he was perplexed with the deadline.

"You can't handle this little issue?" Mr. Ji's tone carried anger, whether disturbed from a sweet dream or simply displeased with Bear Brother's incompetence.

"I don't care what method you use. If I don't see the statue tomorrow, you can roll back to the construction site to mix cement." With that, he hung up.

Bear Brother listened to the busy tone of the phone, and veins bulged on his arm.

"Damn!" He cursed, violently smashing his phone onto the seat.

After venting, he forced himself to calm down.

The only solution now was to buy the Buddha Head at a high price first, then deal with Qi Yun later.

He had predicted that going to Qi Yun now would inevitably involve being humiliated, but there was no choice.

Because if the matter isn't handled well, Mr. Ji will surely make him roll back for real, losing Mr. Ji's support means dealing with enemies who would devour him without a trace.

Compared to survival, pride meant nothing!

"Phew!"

After making up his mind, Bear Brother took a deep breath, pushed open the car door and stepped out.

Seeing him, the subordinate in the car next to him quickly followed.

"Don't follow me," Bear Brother ordered darkly, quickly heading toward the hotel lobby.

Chapter 374: Driven to Desperation (Part 3)

Hotel, 11th floor, in the hallway, Brother Xiong stood at the door of Qi Yun's room, first trying to squeeze out a wry smile, then knocked on the door.

Inside the room, Qi Yun was chatting leisurely with Shi Feng, the latter having heard the noise outside and ran over to inquire about the situation.

The sudden knock on the door made Chen Wei alert once again.

He stepped to the door, peering outside through the peephole, and upon seeing Brother Xiong outside, a trace of astonishment flashed in his eyes.

"It's that Brother Xiong." Chen Wei turned his head to report to Qi Yun.

Upon hearing this, Shi Feng's eyebrows instantly furrowed: "That kid still dares to come and cause trouble?"

Qi Yun kept a stern face, previously those two policemen who came, he guessed it was most likely because of Brother Xiong.

"He's alone outside." Chen Wei added.

"Ask him what he wants." Qi Yun instructed.

Chen Wei nodded, raised his hand, and opened the door a crack, his sharp eyes looking towards Brother Xiong in the hallway: "What's up!"

Brother Xiong plastered on a smile, Chen Wei's oppressive gaze made him a bit uncomfortable: "Um... Is Mr. Qi here? I want to discuss a business deal with him." He tried to make his tone seem peaceful and looked past the door crack into the room.

"Say what you want straight up, I'll relay it for you." Chen Wei replied indifferently and rigidly.

Brother Xiong wasn't offended, rubbing his hands, he was quite practiced at playing the role of a subordinate: "Hehe, you should tell Mr. Qi, I'd like to talk with him directly, it's a good thing, a good thing."

Chen Wei hesitated slightly and glanced back at Qi Yun.

"Let him in." Qi Yun called out.

Upon hearing this, Chen Wei stepped aside, Brother Xiong immediately plastered a wider smile on his face, almost squeezing through the door like a hunchback.

The room was spacious, Qi Yun and Shi Feng were sitting in the reception area chairs smoking.

After entering, Brother Xiong stepped forward to address Qi Yun, rubbing his hands: "Hehe, Mr. Qi, about what happened earlier, it was all a misunderstanding, I apologize to you."

Qi Yun glanced at him, said nothing, nor invited him to sit.

Brother Xiong's face grew a bit awkward, standing there like a primary school student who had done wrong.

He suppressed the anger within himself, after two seconds of silence he spoke again: "So here's the thing, I've come to discuss the matter of the Buddha Head with you, the price I offered at the restaurant earlier might not have satisfied you, now I'm offering a new price."

"Twenty million!"

"How does this price sound to you?"

Brother Xiong offered what he thought was a very sincere price, then waited for Qi Yun to respond.

His face appeared to smile, but inside his heart was already bleeding.

This twenty million was purely out of his own pocket, Mr. Ji had only instructed him to bring the item back, but didn't give him a cent.

But this was only temporary, once things concluded, he had ways to make Qi Yun cough up this twenty million along with interest.

"Not really." Qi Yun shook his head, casually blowing out a puff of smoke.

Brother Xiong paused slightly, clearly not expecting Qi Yun to refuse again.

A thing bought for fifteen million, a few hours later could earn five million in a flip, there's nothing easier than this in the world.

He couldn't understand why Qi Yun would refuse.

Not only he couldn't understand, even Shi Feng next to him was a bit surprised, isn't earning five million enough?

At the same time, he couldn't quite comprehend, this Brother Xiong was clearly working for Mr. Ji, and now willing to spend twenty million for the Buddha Head, intent on obtaining it, why didn't they continue bidding at the auction before?

Though he had doubts, he didn't interject, just watched quietly.

Brother Xiong gritted his teeth, forcing himself to stay calm, with a smile on his face he spoke again: "Mr. Qi isn't satisfied with this price?"

"Then you name a price, let's discuss it."

"I'm not planning to sell." Qi Yun didn't offer a quote, directly refused again.

Brother Xiong's smile froze instantly, his thick cheeks twitched twice: "Mr. Qi, what do you mean by that?"

Qi Yun didn't even look at him, snuffed out the cigarette in the ashtray: "It's very clear, won't sell for any price."

The indoor air instantly congealed.

Brother Xiong stared at Qi Yun's calm profile, his anger already nearly uncontrollable, after a few seconds of silence, he tried one last time: "Add five million more! Twenty-five million! Agree and I'll have someone wire you the money immediately!"

"To be frank, this Buddha Head is not something I want, it's Mr. Ji who wants it, keeping it is a hot potato, better to exchange it for some real money." Saying this, he showed little respect, even with a hint of threat.

Qi Yun finally turned his head, his tone still relaxed: "Let me tell you one last time, not selling, I don't know any Mr. Ji."

"Brother Wei, see the guest out."

Brother Xiong's face turned extremely ugly, gritting his teeth to the point of making a "cack" sound, since the negotiations failed, he didn't need to pretend to be servile anymore.

"Qi Yun, you son of a..."

Brother Xiong was about to throw a few harsh words, but before he finished, a big hand grabbed the back collar of his neck, like leading a donkey, pulling him backward.

"Damn you! Let go!"

His weight of over two hundred pounds was like nothing in Chen Wei's hand.

Chen Wei pulled him to the hallway then released him, and slapped him on the back.

This slap had strong force, causing Brother Xiong's figure to stagger, almost knocking the wind out of him.

"Watch your mouth!" Chen Wei warned, then returned inside and shut the door.

## Chapter 375: Driven to the Brink

Brother Xiong bent over, hands on knees, his face flushed like two pieces of pig liver.

Half of it was from the slap Chen Wei just gave him, the other half was from his anger.

It took him over a minute to calm down and regulate his breathing.

"Damn it, you guys are forcing my hand! If I don't deal with you, my surname won't be Xiong!" Brother Xiong swore furiously and immediately took out his phone to make a call.

Inside the room, Shi Feng stared at Qi Yun in confusion. "We offered them 2,500, why won't they sell?"

Qi Yun smiled lightly at him, speaking in a calm tone: "Honestly, I'm telling you the truth. Although I got a bargain on that Buddha Head, I didn't buy it just to make money."

Shi Feng smacked his lips and gave him a sideways glance. "Seriously? You really believe in Buddha now?"

"Not really." Qi Yun shook his head, "You'll know when we get back. I could tell you now, but you wouldn't believe it."

"Alright then." Shi Feng sighed and continued, "Tomorrow I'll let Lao Wai pick out the goods, then we'll head straight back."

"The way they're acting seems pretty determined. We might end up with trouble since this is their turf after all."

...

On the other side, Brother Xiong stormed back to his car.

No longer pretending to be cool with a cigar, he asked his guy for a cigarette, taking a few deep drags to suppress the anger piled up inside.

He hadn't even finished the cigarette when the phone in his pocket rang.

"Boss, we found the place."

Brother Xiong's eyes were cold and he spoke in a deep voice, "Send me the location!"

Just as he hung up, a message from his guy popped up on his phone.

Brother Xiong tossed the cigarette butt out the window and instructed the driver, "To Jiyuan Street!"

"Okay." The guy responded promptly, starting the car, and the two cars parked beside them followed suit.

...

Puxin District, Jiyuan Street, in a certain upscale apartment complex.

Lao Wai, who had just fallen asleep, heard a knock on the door coming from outside.

"So late, who's that?" His wife, lying next to him, grumbled.

Lao Wai turned on the bedside lamp and irritably got out of bed, "You go ahead and sleep, I'll check it out."

"Knock knock knock!"

"Who's there!" Lao Wai shouted towards the door.

A young man's voice replied from outside, "Property management! Somebody downstairs claims there's a dance party going on, disturbing the peace! We're here to check."

Peeking through the peephole, Lao Wai saw only a young man in a security uniform outside. He reached to open the door, replying, "Must be a mistake, my place..."

But before he could finish, the door was slammed open.

Lao Wai stumbled backward, his back hitting the shoe cabinet in the entryway hard, making him take a sharp breath from the pain.

Before he could react, several large men charged inside, including Brother Xiong, whom he had seen not too long ago, lumbers in at the back.

At this moment, Lao Wai's wife heard the commotion from the bedroom, running out, barely dressed in pajamas and without her slippers.

Seeing the scene, she immediately turned pale with fear, pointing shakily at Brother Xiong and his crew, stammering, "W-what do you want?"

Brother Xiong shot her a glance and ordered one of his guys, "Take her phone, lock her up in the bedroom."

The guy promptly approached Lao Wai's wife, "Hand over your phone!"

Lao Wai's wife, sensing danger, cooperated readily, retrieving her phone from the room, "Please don't do anything rash, anything you like in the house, take it, just don't hurt us."

Brother Xiong scoffed, "You're quite cooperative, eh?" Then he crouched down, patting Lao Wai's face with an icy tone, "I hope you can be as cooperative as your wife."

Lao Wai glanced at him, then called to his wife, "It's okay, go back inside."

His wife, who often helped him with business matters, was not the type to scream and shout, and she calmly nodded before turning around to go back to the bedroom and locking the door.

Chapter 376: Let's Weigh Their True Worth

Puxin District, at Lao Wai's home.

Brother Xiong sat grandly on the leather sofa, two of his henchmen standing by his sides.

He stretched out his legs, his shoes propped on the edge of the coffee table, flicking his cigarette, ash falling directly onto the carpet.

After catching his breath, Lao Wai stood up supporting his waist, the dull pain from hitting his back on the shoe cabinet still spreading. He looked expressionlessly at Brother Xiong: "What do you want."

Brother Xiong blew out a smoke ring, patting the empty space beside him: "Earlier at the restaurant, you said your name was Lao Wai, I didn't get that wrong, right."

Lao Wai was silent and didn't say a word, his eyes fixed firmly on him.

"I have no beef with you." Brother Xiong adjusted his sitting posture, continued nonchalantly, "but your friend Qi Yun, he's a bit ignorant."

"Why don't you give him a call, try persuading him."

Lao Wai squinted his eyes, his Adam's apple moved as he refrained from replying.

"What? Not giving face?" Brother Xiong chuckled lightly, his gaze drifting towards the bedroom, the implication clear.

Lao Wai clenched his molars, remained silent for a couple of seconds, and finally spoke: "Your business has nothing to do with me, I've just met him."

"Whether it has anything to do with you isn't for you to decide." Brother Xiong's tone turned sinister, patting the sofa armrest, "I've found you, now this matter is related to you."

The atmosphere in the living room instantly froze, Lao Wai glanced at the tightly shut bedroom door, took a deep breath: "Fine, I'll take you to the hotel to find him."

Forced into it, he could only temporarily agree, at least to leave the house and not involve his wife.

"No need to find him." Brother Xiong said, nodding towards the henchman beside him, "Just call him."

The henchman stepped forward in front of Lao Wai, handing over his phone.

Lao Wai stared at the phone, fists clenched, not taking it immediately.

Brother Xiong wasn't in a hurry, leisurely took another drag of his cigarette: "I've got all the time in the world, if you don't want to make this call, I won't force you, I'll just stay at your place tonight."

Saying that, he indeed kicked off his shoes, a rotten fish smell spreading in the living room.

"A bit thirsty."

The henchman understood, went straight to the corner refrigerator, pulled out two bottles of chilled beer, opened one and handed it to Brother Xiong, behaving as if he were at home, showing no sign of criminal urgency.

Seeing their stance, Lao Wai knew he had no choice but to make the call, so he reluctantly took the phone and dialed Qi Yun's number.

In the hotel room, Qi Yun was chatting with Shi Feng, when the phone on the table suddenly lit up, displaying Lao Wai's name.

Shi Feng glanced at the screen, looked a bit puzzled: "What's this guy calling for so late, Something for us to do?"

Qi Yun shook his head with a smile, picked up the phone and answered: "What's up, Brother Wai."

There was silence on the other end for a few seconds, within the static the sound of suppressed breathing, Lao Wai's voice croaked out: "Qi... Brother Xiong is at my place."

"Sorry, my wife is here too."

Hearing this, Qi Yun's smile instantly vanished, he squeezed his phone tightly, face darkened extremely.

Though Lao Wai's words were brief, combined with tonight's events, he could roughly guess the reason.

Next to him, Shi Feng noticed his concerned expression, furrowed his brow and asked: "What's wrong, something happened?"

Qi Yun looked up at him, responded into the phone: "No problem, give him the phone."

A few seconds later, Brother Xiong's cold laugh came through the earpiece: "Hahaha, have you changed your mind now?"

"You come to the hotel to get the stuff, leave them out of it." Without unnecessary words, Qi Yun got straight to the point.

"That's better." Brother Xiong's attitude now was completely different from earlier at the hotel, transformed from humble to arrogant, full of mockery in his words, "I'll give you a chance, how much do you want now?"

Qi Yun's eyes flashed coldly, his voice icy: "I want no money, I'm giving you the stuff!"

Chen Wei on the couch silently glanced at Qi Yun, it was his first time seeing him react this way.

"Hahaha." Brother Xiong laughed coldly again, understanding the implication, "Looks like you're looking for a showdown."

"Fine, I'll wait for you, someone will come and pick it up from you."

Qi Yun said nothing more, hung up the call with a dark face.

Shi Feng, already restless, immediately grabbed his arm: "What's going on?"

"That Brother Xiong went to Lao Wai's place." Qi Yun responded through clenched teeth, "Threatened him with his wife to call me."

Shi Feng's face also turned ugly upon hearing this, palm slapped the table: "This bastard! Really does things outrageously!"

"Let me make a call first." Qi Yun stood up, walked to the window and dialed a number.

The phone rang a few times and was quickly answered, Duan Pingyu's voice came through: "Hello, Boss, I haven't arrived yet, probably by tomorrow."

"Not about that, contact those brothers working abroad with you, get five people to Shanghai, fifty each, they must arrive by tomorrow night." Qi Yun quickly instructed.

"Something happened? Should I come over?" Duan Pingyu asked.

Qi Yun shook his head: "No need, continue your work, just get the people here."

"Alright, I understand, I'll contact them now."

"Okay, that's it."

After ending the call, Qi Yun quickly dialed another number.

This time it took a while, half a moment before the call connected.

"Hey, not sleeping so late?"

Chapter 377: Let's Weigh Their True Worth

"Last night, you said you had connections here. Could you help me out?" Qi Yun spoke concisely.

The person on the other end sobered up a bit, "Ran into trouble?"

"Yeah." Qi Yun didn't hold back, "They're threatening me through my friend."

There was a pause on the line, then the voice came again, "To what extent do you want this handled?"

"Until he kneels down and begs." Qi Yun bit down his words.

It seemed Brother Xiong had really pissed him off this time.

"Alright, I'll personally stand by you tomorrow." The voice on the other end was casual, "He's just a puppet; we'll definitely sort it out for you."

"Thanks." Qi Yun replied.

After hanging up, Shi Feng approached, about to speak when a knocking sound came from outside the door.

"Knock knock knock."

Qi Yun glanced at the door, knowing Brother Xiong's little brother had arrived, he instructed Chen Wei, "Bro Wei, give the things from the safe to the person outside."

Chen Wei nodded, went to the safe, entered the password, and took out the Buddha Head from inside.

In the hallway, a crew-cut young man, who'd been beaten in the restaurant earlier, stood outside. Upon seeing Chen Wei open the door, he instinctively shrank his neck, "Uh... the boss asked me to collect the item."

Chen Wei handed over the Buddha Head without expression, without uttering a single word.

After the underling left with the item, about two minutes later, Qi Yun dialed Lao Wai's number.

"Wai Brother, did they leave?"

"Just left." Lao Wai sighed, knowing Qi Yun was forced to compromise because of him, he continued apologetically, "Brother, earlier I really couldn't help it, Brother Xiong was using my wife against me, I..."

"Don't blame yourself." Qi Yun interrupted, "This wasn't related to you; I dragged you into this."

"Apologize to your wife for me. After handling things tomorrow, I'll treat you both to dinner."

"Alright." Lao Wai acknowledged, having heard Brother Xiong and Qi Yun's conversation, he cautioned, "Brother Xiong's backed by Mr. Ji, be very careful."

He initially wanted to advise Qi Yun and the others to leave directly, but Qi Yun clearly had his plans, so he couldn't say more.

"Sure, I'll be careful; talk later."

After ending the call, Qi Yun returned to his chair, sat down, took out a cigarette pack, and lit one, "Nothing to worry about with Lao Wai's side."

Shi Feng nodded, exhaling a deep breath, then sat up, "I heard you call for support just now?"

Qi Yun simply nodded without explaining, "They don't see me as a person, so I have to see what they're really made of."

The next morning, after breakfast at the hotel, Shi Feng brought two large boxes to Qi Yun's room.

"I'm going to deliver some goods to Lao Wai. Want to come?"

Qi Yun shook his head, "You go. I'll be heading to the airport to pick someone up."

"Alright." Shi Feng responded, carrying the boxes out.

Qi Yun checked his watch for the time, instructing Chen Wei, "Bro Wei, go rent a car from the hotel, and let's head out."

"Okay."

...

At eleven in the morning, a flight from Beijing landed at Shanghai airport.

A middle-aged man in a suit walked out from the gate, smiling as he greeted Qi Yun.

The visitor was none other than Li Yaohua, Fu Wentao's trusted operative.

Qi Yun had few connections in Shanghai, so after the restaurant clash with Brother Xiong yesterday, he was a bit uneasy. He called Li Yaohua to ask if there was anyone he could rely on locally.

After all, the Mr. Ji mentioned by Lao Wai held significant sway in the official circles, and he didn't want to end up in a mess.

Li Yaohua replied with two words: "Smooth sailing!"

Qi Yun relaxed upon hearing that, explained the local trouble he encountered, and said he might need some help.

He didn't feel embarrassed about it; relying on one's elder brother was, after all, to have backing when needed.

"Why so tanned?" In the business car, Li Yaohua sipped water, chatting casually instead of addressing serious issues.

Qi Yun pulled out a cigarette pack, handed him one, "Yeah, went for a tour around Lop Nur a few days ago."

Li Yaohua lit up a cigarette, took a puff, and relaxedly crossed his legs, "Ah, you're living the life, huh? I'll probably head back to Africa by the end of the month."

"Finished with your business in Beijing?" Qi Yun asked companionably.

"Yeah, basically nothing left for me." Li Yaohua nodded, continued, "This year's performance pressure is heavy; if you come across any good projects, make sure to think of me."

Qi Yun laughed, waved his hand, "I'm just dabbling in some small stuff, can't compare to the projects you're handling."

"Hey, don't say that, even a small mosquito is meat..."

After chatting a while, they returned to the hotel.

The room next to Qi Yun, initially vacated by Chen Wei, was extended for two more days in the morning, just in time for Li Yaohua's stay.

Inside the room, Li Yaohua washed his face, finally started on serious matters, "Later, I'll take you to meet an old friend who can handle this matter for you."

Qi Yun nodded, "Alright."

"This is a personal connection, make sure you repay this favor later, haha." Li Yaohua joked half-seriously.

"No problem, I'll jot it down in my little book." Qi Yun replied jokingly.

"Let's go, it's about time." Saying this, the two headed downstairs, and sat in the business car at the hotel entrance.

Seeing Li Yaohua empty-handed, Qi Yun grinned and said, "Looks like your relationship is solid, no need for any gifts."

"Of course, I'm straightforward; friendships are built on genuine sincerity, none of that superficial stuff." Li Yaohua took out his phone, texting, "He's not among the most powerful here, let's see how his move works first."

"If it doesn't, call the boss, and I'll take you to meet a real heavyweight; a mere puppet will kneel with just a sneeze."

This showed Li Yaohua's smooth and measured approach.

When Qi Yun contacted him last night, he was inquiring about personal connections in Shanghai, not the Fu Family.

Thus, Li Yaohua didn't take the liberty to report the issue to Fu Wentao, nor enlist the Fu Family's network, but instead handled it through his personal connections.

Should future support from the Fu Family's influence be needed, Qi Yun must first communicate with Fu Wentao, Li Yaohua wouldn't act independently.

The car weaved through skyscrapers, drove for half an hour, and finally arrived at a discreet tea room.

Li Yaohua confidently led Qi Yun through the lobby, opening the carved wooden door of the private room on the second floor.

Inside the room, with sandalwood incense wafting, a middle-aged man in a white shirt was steeping tea with a purple clay teapot, a badge adorning his chest.

Upon hearing the commotion at the door, the middle-aged man looked up, "Yaohua, finally you've kept me waiting."

"Haha, traffic was a bit heavy." Li Yaohua walked in first, greeted Qi Yun to sit down, "Haven't seen you for a while, Brother Chen; this is my friend Qi Yun."

Qi Yun greeted, extending his hand to the middle-aged man, "Hello, Brother Chen, nice to meet you. Look forward to your guidance."

Brother Chen set down the purple clay teapot, lightly shook Qi Yun's hand, eyes scanning his face with a scrutinizing smile, "Brother Qi, you're too kind. Yaohua's friend is also my friend; it's all about mutual support."

Qi Yun sensed from his aura and dress that he was likely from within the system.

A system insider saying such straightforward words implied a solid bond with Li Yaohua.

Li Yaohua chimed in, "Old Qi, Brother Chen is the most reliable; we've been close for many years. If you face any grievances here, speak with Brother Chen, he'll surely back you."

"Haha, you rascal, compliments from you usually mean trouble." Brother Chen chuckled, shaking his head.

After the three took their seats, Brother Chen skillfully poured three cups of tea.

#### Chapter 378: Getting Even

Inside the tea room, after a round of pleasantries among the three, Li Yaohua directed the conversation to the main topic.

"Chen, there's no need for pretense with you. This time, I specially came from Beijing because someone messed with Qi Yun here, and I must stand up for him."

"I don't know anyone here in Shanghai, only you, Brother Chen, so I need you to step in."

Chen was well aware that Li Yaohua did not seek him out at this time merely for a cup of tea.

As for only knowing him in Shanghai, it's something to listen to but not take seriously. Considering the connections behind him, going directly to an office for tea wouldn't be an issue.

However, some things are better left unsaid; he wouldn't take the initiative to reveal anything. He just nodded with a light smile, "Tell me the situation."

"You should tell it, Qi," Li Yaohua signaled to Qi Yun, then pulled out a special supply cigarette from his pocket, offering one to each of them.

Seeing that Li Yaohua had set everything up, Qi Yun wasted no time and recounted the details of the situation.

After hearing it, Chen frowned and pondered for a moment, "I've heard of this Xiong Jun, not clean-handed. If you want to act against him, it's fine, but..."

"Ji Liyang is hard to deal with. He has close ties with some people above. To take him down... honestly, I don't have that kind of power."

Chen's words were straightforward, not beating around the bush, reflecting again the close relationship between him and Li Yaohua.

Li Yaohua lit a cigarette with a flick, took a couple of drags, and slowly spoke, "You don't need to worry about the people behind him. Our demands aren't unreasonable. Just have him bow his head to my brother."

"If he thinks he's strong enough and wants to bring out the people behind him to fight, then you don't need to get involved in this matter."

At this, Li Yaohua paused, lightly flicking ash from his cigarette, and said meaningfully, "Qi isn't just a friend; he's even had drinks at my boss's house."

Chen held his teacup in mid-air, took another look at Qi Yun, and after a moment chuckled, "Alright, I get it. I'll handle this for you."

"It's about time to deal with these people; they're getting too overbearing..."

The group chatted in the tea room for over half an hour, after which Chen left first.

Meanwhile, in Puxin District, at the top-floor office of Tianyang Group.

Xiong Jun placed the esteemed Buddha Head obtained from Qi Yun on the desk and said to a middle-aged man sitting in a chair, "Mr. Ji, I brought what you wanted."

This middle-aged man was the same individual who had purchased the Bronze Cauldron at last night's auction—Xiong Jun's backing, Ji Liyang.

Ji Liyang picked up the Buddha Head, examined it closely, then placed it back on the table, saying softly, "Hmm, hopefully, you didn't stir up trouble."

Xiong Jun forced a smile, "No, but that kid Qi Yun isn't too willing to give in, wants to confront me."

"Heh, then play along with him, but don't make too much noise." Ji Liyang's tone was unconcerned, even knowing Qi Yun had connections, he didn't take it seriously.

"Okay, I got it."

Ji Liyang waved his hand, "Yeah, you may go. Make sure the matter at the docks is handled well, leaving no loose ends."

"Yes, yes, I know what to do." Xiong Jun repeatedly bowed, backing out of the office.

After he left, Ji Liyang took out a rarely used phone from a drawer, and dialed a number.

"The goods have arrived. Complete the paperwork and ship them to London asap along with this batch."

"After the items in the Buddha Head are taken out, don't expose them yet, wait for my arrangements."

...

On the other side, after meeting with Chen, Qi Yun and Li Yaohua returned to the hotel, waiting in the coffee shop in the lobby for news.

"Is this Chen guy in officialdom?" Qi Yun stirred his coffee, asking casually.

Li Yaohua nodded, "Yeah, he's pretty straightforward, since he agreed to help, he certainly will do his utmost."

Qi Yun asked no more, took out his phone, and called Duan Pingyu, "When can the people arrive?"

"Contacted people are all domestic, they'll be here by noon at the latest," Duan Pingyu replied briefly.

"Alright, let's stick to that plan. Be careful out there, stay safe."

"I will be careful."

After hanging up, Qi Yun turned to Chen Wei, "Brother Wei, when the people arrive, take them to handle things, and call me when it's done."

"Okay." Chen Wei nodded.

...

In the afternoon, a temporary task force spearheaded by Yopu New District began conducting checks on businesses within its scope, including tax, commerce, and fire safety inspections; the first stop was Tianyang Group.

In Puxin District, inside Tianyang Group's office building.

Ji Liyang was seated in a spacious office chair reviewing financial statements when a knock came at the door.

"Come in!"

The office door swung open, an assistant rushed in with quick steps.

"Chairman Ji, a temporary task force from the district has suddenly come to our group for inspection!"

Upon hearing this, Ji Liyang frowned, "Task force? No prior notification?"

"None." The assistant shook their head. "They just arrived after lunch without warning."

Ji Liyang pondered slightly, "What are they checking? Who's leading?"

"Starting with the finance department; they plan to expand from there. It's led by Director Hong," the assistant answered truthfully.

Ji Liyang realized, going straight for the finance department wasn't just a routine check.

The finance department is the core of any company. For a corporation like Tianyang Group, which pays over ten billion in taxes annually, the financial operations are bound to be complex, not lacking some unsavory practices.

Chapter 379: Venting Some Steam (Part 2)

If a deep investigation is carried out, more than half of the companies couldn't withstand the scrutiny.

Tianyang Group wasn't new to inspections, but they were never handled like this. Regardless of whether the visitors were from the district or the town, they'd always give him a heads up in advance.

It's the first time someone directly comes to check the accounts in the finance department like this.

That's why Ji Liyang sensed something unusual...

"Go and ask Director Hong to come to my office."

"Okay, I'll go right away." The assistant nodded, turned, and left, but just after taking a few steps, Ji Liyang called him back.

"Wait a moment!" Ji Liyang stood up from his chair, walked a few steps inside the office, then waved at the assistant, "You don't need to call him. I'll go down personally later."

The assistant paused but didn't ask more questions, just responded and left the office.

After the assistant left, Ji Liyang picked up the phone on the table and dialed a number, but after waiting for over half a minute, he was greeted only by an unanswered tone.

Ji Liyang's expression gradually became serious, feeling increasingly that something was off.

Putting the phone away, he left the office and took the elevator to the conference room on the eighth floor.

In the spacious conference room, more than twenty temporary task group members sat around a table piled high with documents. A middle-aged man at the head of the table was distributing assignments.

Seeing Ji Liyang leading the assistant at the door, the middle-aged man paused his work and strode over: "Oh, Chairman Ji, didn't your staff say you weren't in the company, yet you came in person."

Ji Liyang could easily tell it was a pretext, but he didn't expose it, replying with a smile and extending his hand: "Haha, heard you were here, so I rushed back from outside. It's been a long time, Director Hong."

Director Hong reached out to shake his hand: "It's been a few months; we've all been busy lately."

Ji Liyang glanced around the room and continued, "Let the subordinates handle the work; let's sit in the lounge room and have some tea."

Director Hong looked troubled, but after thinking it over, nodded: "Alright, I'll try your tea."

"Haha, please do."

As they spoke, both went to a lounge across the room, where the assistant brewed tea for them and sensibly closed the door as he left.

With no outsiders in the room, Ji Liyang casually addressed him as "Old Hong," saying: "Old Hong, why didn't you notify me beforehand, so I could prepare a more comfortable space for your work group?"

Although it seemed like small talk, Director Hong noticed a hint of dissatisfaction and smiled wryly: "Don't blame me; this inspection was ordered by Deputy Secretary Chen from the district personally."

"Before departure, Old Chen repeatedly ordered no one to play tricks, so my hands were tied..."

"Old Chen?" Ji Liyang softly murmured, analyzing the intent behind these actions.

Director Hong took a sip of tea and tentatively asked, "Did you provoke him recently?"

Ji Liyang shook his head: "Even though we are not on the same side, there hasn't been any conflict usually; this maneuver..."

Director Hong glanced at him, providing the crucial hint: "This was done hastily. It's said that Old Chen approached the secretary directly this morning, and the two settled the inspection after talking for a few minutes in the office."

Upon hearing this, Ji Liyang hesitated, but didn't doubt the truth of his words.

Firstly, he had a previous connection with Director Hong, and secondly, such things weren't secret within the unit.

The odd thing was the suddenness of it all.

He bore no grudge against Old Chen previously; even if opposing factions wanted to target him, they shouldn't act so abruptly...

Moreover, while such inspections might cause him some trouble, it's merely a hassle, not enough to harm his core interests; he couldn't figure out why the opposition would act this way.

"Alright, that's all I can say for now; I have to get busy." Director Hong said, setting down his teacup and preparing to leave the lounge.

Ji Liyang symbolically raised himself slightly: "Okay, I'll have the secretary put two boxes of tea in your car later."

Director Hong waved his hand without looking back: "No need; I've had too much tea lately, can't sleep at night."

Watching Director Hong's departing figure, Ji Liyang's expression grew even more solemn.

Although Director Hong didn't have much sway in the district, nobody who reached that position was simple; they all possessed extremely keen political intuition and information channels.

This matter surely isn't so straightforward...

Thinking of this, Ji Liyang took out his phone again, making several calls.

He needed to figure out the current situation and then defensively plan accordingly, as he possessed more than just one group of companies, with many industries not publicly disclosed.

Just then, the phone he had just placed down lit up again with a call from a construction company below.

"Hello, Chairman Ji, just now people from the Quality Supervision Bureau came, citing that our project doesn't meet safety production standards, and directly issued a stop-work order. I've contacted my previous connections, but they're hesitating and unwilling to say anything directly..."

Ji Liyang frowned, holding the phone, and coldly uttered a few words: "Got it, just halt operations for now."

This wasn't over; more calls came in immediately after hanging up.

Frustrated, Ji Liyang directly pressed the power button, then picked up another phone, once more attempting to dial that earlier number, yet there was still no response...

"Xiao Gu!"

The assistant waiting outside heard the call and entered: "Chairman."

"Go find President Qi and let him keep an eye on the company's affairs. I have to go out for a while." Ji Liyang stood up and instructed.

Chapter 380: Venting Some Steam (Part 3)

...

Over an hour later, the city government parking lot.

Ji Liyang dialed a number again, speaking briefly: "Secretary Kong, is the leader in a meeting? I'd like to see him."

After a moment of silence on the other end, the response was: "Mr. Ji, the leader is on a business trip and won't be back until next month."

Ji Liyang was stunned for a moment, then finally said, "Okay, thank you."

After hanging up, he looked up at the office building opposite, his frown deepening, a vague sense of unease rising within him.

The troubles he was currently facing weren't exactly insurmountable for him; what truly worried him was that some people's attitudes toward him seemed to have changed.

This change was extremely dangerous for someone of his status.

...

At seven in the evening, as dusk fell.

Puxin District, by the roadside at the entrance of Yushuiwan Bathhouse.

Inside a van, Chen Wei looked up at the luxuriously decorated entrance, his gaze grim.

This bathhouse was an establishment under Brother Xiong's name, where he and his brothers liked to come for massages when they had nothing to do.

"Take down all those lackeys inside, focus on the leader named Xiong Jun, go hard but leave him breathing. Once you're done, drag them out, strip them, and throw them at the entrance," Chen Wei said as he glanced at his watch, "I've already made arrangements. You have twenty minutes, start now."

"Understood."

The five sturdy men inside the van took out black hoods they had prepared in advance, opened the car doors, and dashed towards the bathhouse.

Yushuiwan, on the fourth floor in one of the private rooms, Brother Xiong, immersed in comfort, suddenly heard a commotion outside.

Annoyed, he waved at one of the technicians: "Go see what's happening outside."

"Okay, boss." The technician adjusted her short skirt and walked out nimbly in high heels to check.

"Continue." Brother Xiong lowered his head again, burying his face in the softness.

After about half a minute, the technician who had gone out rushed back in panic, even her high heels had slipped off.

"Boss, there's a fight outside..."

"If there's a fight, can't you call Xiao Bo to handle it?" Brother Xiong reprimanded in dissatisfaction.

The technician anxiously replied, "Xiao Bo... Manager Bo was knocked down!"

Hearing this, Brother Xiong jumped off the bed and slipped on shorts, heading towards the outside.

In the fourth-floor hall, several guys wearing black hoods were engaged in a brawl with the dozen or so of Brother Xiong's subordinates.

Calling it a brawl was slightly flattering to his subordinates. Despite their hefty size, they were like weak chicks before those five men.

In less than two minutes, seventeen or eighteen underlings were all disarmed, lying on the floor wailing.

Brother Xiong, who had stormed out of the private room filled with fury, saw this scene and his anger disappeared instantly.

These guys were too formidable, similar to the guy who beat up his underlings in the restaurant last night.

This situation was clearly targeted at him, and confrontation was definitely not the wise move.

He quickly slipped back into the private room, locked the door, and took out his phone to make a call.

"Get over here! Call in reinforcements to the club! Bring weapons!"

After finishing the call, he cast a quick glance around the room, finally fixing his gaze on the massage bed.

This type of massage bed had one end that could be raised, so you could recline when washing feet, and lie down to sleep after lowering it.

There was a hollow space underneath that could fit a large suitcase.

Brother Xiong's eyes darted; he quickly moved to the head of the massage bed, pressing the lift button while instructing the two female technicians in the room: "Once I'm inside, you open the door. If someone comes over, just say I left earlier."

"O... okay..." The two female technicians nodded in panic.

Once the end of the massage bed was raised completely, Brother Xiong struggled to squeeze inside, but he underestimated his size. Even though he bent as much as he could, he managed to get his lower body in, but his shoulders and head were still stuck.

Meanwhile, the fight outside had ended, and chaotic footsteps echoed in the corridor outside the door.

Brother Xiong was sweating profusely in anxiety, while the two female technicians were helping, pressing down on his arms.

"Crack!"

A wooden snapping sound occurred, as the wooden frame under the bed finally gave out and broke apart.

Brother Xiong and the two female technicians froze, pausing all action.

Now, there was no place left to hide in the room.

Brother Xiong quickly climbed up from the floor, pushed open the window, and looked down; it was the fourth floor, a good eight to nine meters high, with a concrete ground below. Jumping down would be deadly.

But if he didn't jump, given how ruthless those people were, he wouldn't fare well.

After some internal conflict, Brother Xiong ultimately didn't have the courage to jump.

Even though he didn't know the identity of the attackers, whoever sent them wouldn't likely want him dead, perhaps money could resolve this...

Just thinking that, the sound of someone banging on the door finally came, accompanied by low shouts.

"Open the door!"

"Bang!"

"Bang!"

Seeing no one opening the door, the banging turned into hard kicks.

Brother Xiong involuntarily shivered, praying that his reinforcements would arrive quickly, while the two female technicians beside him were trembling in fear.

"Crash!"

After a few kicks, the door lock finally gave way, and the door was violently kicked open.

Three sturdy men wearing black hoods rushed into the room, while the other two stayed outside to keep watch.