

Middle Age 461

Chapter 461: Entering the Arena

Ge Dabao's face immediately showed a look of joy: "Then Qi Yun should be fine, right?"

Director Duan shook his head: "It's still unclear right now."

"How's that thing I asked you to investigate?"

"There's a bit of a lead. The former deputy secretary of Kaiyuan Street, Qiu Yuanshan, and his son Qiu Jiahao, both died within half a year, and the cause of death in both cases was concluded to be sudden heart attack. I suspect there's a high probability it was man-made."

"Before Qiu Yuanshan served as the deputy secretary of Kaiyuan Street, he worked in the city's policy research office and was fellow townsmen with that person..."

"And Qi Yun had frequent interactions with this Qiu Jiahao, so he might know something, or he's holding onto some information..."

Director Duan showed a hint of surprise: "In just one day, you've discovered this much?"

Ge Dabao smiled: "It's not all from our own investigation. I have a contact at the municipal bureau. I originally wanted him to help me access some files, and it turns out the guy was just assigned to a newly established special task force."

"And this special task force is also investigating this matter."

"Special task force?" Director Duan was taken aback, "Established by the municipal bureau?"

Ge Dabao shook his head: "Not exactly sure, it's a direct order from the captain of the criminal police team, all personnel are on the field, but I have a feeling Li Jingsong is probably not in the loop..."

Director Duan pondered for a while: "If that guy is released, have him come see me."

"Okay, what about the people we brought back?"

"We only investigate matters within our jurisdiction. If they happen to confess other issues, just record them for now and hand them over to the disciplinary department later."

"Understood."

...

Meanwhile, Tong Yangming and Yu Qixuan walked out of that grand office building, neither of them looked very pleased.

Once inside the car, Yu Qixuan said displeased, "They're clearly just brushing us off! Old Tong, you really have no clout now!"

Tong Yangming remained unruffled, fastening his seatbelt as he replied blandly: "I'm just an old man, never had much clout to begin with."

"Can't you see it's obviously not a small matter?"

Yu Qixuan, as if he didn't understand, waved impatiently: "Don't give me those useless words, just hurry and call that Fu family's kid. I'm telling you, if you don't get Qi Yun out, don't even think about taking those treasures away."

Tong Yangming sighed helplessly: "Director Fu is already in his forties, yet you keep calling him a kid."

The young people in the business car all held back their laughter at this.

Yu Qixuan didn't mind, directly took out the phone from his briefcase and handed it over: "Hurry, make the call now."

Tong Yangming glanced at him, took the phone, found a number, and dialed.

Yu Qixuan saw this and a slight smile of triumph appeared at the corner of his eyes; being an old hand himself, he could clearly see there was more to this.

Otherwise, why would even the deputy director of the National Museum come personally, yet the other side is still playing coy.

The phone in Tong Yangming's hand rang twice before being picked up, and a strong voice came through the receiver.

"Hello, Uncle Tong."

Tong Yangming wasted no words, directly stating: "There's a change in circumstances..."

After briefly explaining, he continued, "They want me to take the items directly without meddling, but given that kid donated so many national treasures to us, we can't just stand by, right?"

The other end was silent for a moment, then responded: "I agree with your view."

Tong Yangming nodded: "Then you handle this personally, I'm an old man with no face."

"Hehe, Uncle Tong, don't say that. You take a rest, I'll contact the higher-ups now."

"Okay." After hanging up, Tong Yangming turned to Yu Qixuan, "Satisfied now?"

Yu Qixuan didn't pretend anymore and instructed the driver: "Let's go, head to my place first."

At six o'clock in the evening, at the gates of the National Cultural Heritage Administration.

Liaison Xiao Han looked around, standing on tiptoe, after waiting for about ten minutes, she frowned slightly and dialed a number, but the phone only played a prompt: "The user is currently unavailable."

Chapter 462: Xiao Hanguang's Reaction

National Cultural Heritage Administration, inside a very modestly decorated office.

Liaison Officer Xiaohan reported to a middle-aged man in his forties in front of her: "Director, that Qi Yun hasn't come yet, and I can't reach him by phone either."

Can't reach him?

A hint of surprise appeared in Xiao Hanguang's eyes.

The secretary next to him frowned, glanced at his watch, and tentatively asked, "Should I try contacting them again?"

Opportunities for such meetings are something an ordinary person might never have in their entire life. Not being able to reach someone, or even being late, is nearly impossible, so something seems off here...

Xiao Hanguang nodded slightly: "Go ahead."

The secretary stood up, took his phone, and walked out of the office.

Turning back to Xiaohan, Xiao Hanguang asked gently, "I heard from your second uncle you're not satisfied with the marriage arrangement?"

Xiaohan pouted: "I don't want others arranging my personal affairs."

"Ah, you, alright then, just take the rest of the day off," Xiao Hanguang chuckled kindly and said no more.

"Okay." Xiaohan playfully stuck out her tongue and left the office.

A few minutes later, the secretary who had gone outside to make a call came back in, whispered a few words to Xiao Hanguang, and upon hearing them, his expression immediately turned somber.

The secretary added: "Additionally, Mr. Tong from the museum went over there today and met with the people there..."

After a few moments of silence, Xiao Hanguang squinted and asked, "Do they have evidence to detain the kid?"

"It seems not." The secretary shook his head and hesitantly said, "From what I've heard... things seem quite complicated."

"No evidence and they dare to casually detain someone?" There was a clear tone of dissatisfaction in Xiao Hanguang's voice.

The secretary bowed his head, not daring to respond. He knew his leader's temper; normally gentle as jade, but once angered, he was as intimidating as a thunderstorm.

After contemplating for a few seconds, Xiao Hanguang picked up his phone and dialed a number.

"Hello, Old Fu, I heard Mr. Tong went over to Qiang Province today?"

There was a moment of silence on the other end before a slightly weary voice responded: "Yes, it's about those artifacts."

"I heard that kid got detained; what's your take on this?" Xiao Hanguang asked again.

"Haha, what can I say, even with Uncle Tong personally going over, they're not releasing him, and we can't manage their affairs," Director Fu said in a tone of lament. "You're the higher authority. I was planning to consult you for advice."

"Even with Mr. Tong personally going, they won't release him?" Xiao Hanguang was taken aback, then commented meaningfully, "Then that kid must have stirred quite a big issue."

"Whether it's a big issue or not, I don't really know. But their message was for us to take the artifacts and leave them out of it," Director Fu remarked nonchalantly.

Upon hearing this, a trace of coldness flickered in Xiao Hanguang's eyes.

"So, what's the plan, my Chief? Say the word."

After some deliberation, Xiao Hanguang slowly opened his mouth: "That kid is not only donating those national treasures, you probably heard about the discoveries in Lop Nur and Northern Mongolia, right? He's the one who led the team to find them, but it's not been made public yet."

"During a meeting at the institute yesterday morning, someone listened to the report and expressed a keen interest in him, wanting to award him personally."

"That person wants to award him personally!?" Director Fu sounded slightly surprised, "Is it necessary?"

"Haha, do you know how those national treasures were transported back?" Xiao Hanguang teased.

"What do you mean?" Director Fu sounded puzzled.

"According to Old Han in the intelligence department, the commercial ship transporting them was intercepted by a British naval vessel in the Aden Bay. This kid, somehow, managed to get the Husai Armed to dispatch drones carrying missiles to provide support, chasing off the British ships!"

On the other end, Director Fu was silent for a long time before finally squeezing out a sentence: "This kid... is indeed quite interesting."

Xiao Hanguang chuckled: "Do you still want to just take the artifacts and leave?"

Director Fu did not justify himself, responding succinctly: "I have a flight in half an hour to Qiang Province."

Xiao Hanguang was momentarily taken aback, checking his watch. After only two seconds of consideration, he made a decision: "Wait for me, we'll go together."

"Why? Are you worried I won't hold enough sway when I get there?"

Xiao Hanguang didn't mind the teasing and retorted: "If you can't hold sway, can't your old man?"

"Now that I've found out about this, I certainly have to show some stance."

"Otherwise, what if this kid meets that person and gives me a hard time, wouldn't you say?"

Director Fu laughed heartily upon hearing this: "Haha, alright then, come over, I'll wait for you at the airport."

After ending the call, Xiao Hanguang put down the phone and turned to instruct the secretary: "Call the office and tell them I'll be there first thing in the morning."

The secretary nodded: "Anything else to mention?"

Xiao Hanguang squinted his eyes: "No need, if they still don't understand, they're asking for trouble."

...

In the office at Maple Capital, Shanghai.

Zhao Weilin stood in front of the floor-to-ceiling window, a hint of anxiety on his face.

Behind him, his assistant Dong Anyun opened the door and walked in, speaking softly: "Chairman, Director Sun from the Development and Reform Commission is here and waiting for you in the meeting room."

Zhao Weilin turned around, his tone tired: "Is the agreement ready?"

Dong Anyun nodded, handing over a document she was holding: "It's ready, the initial 3 billion funds have also been transferred to the branch's account."

Zhao Weilin took the agreement, glanced at it briefly, and then sighed: "Ask the branch manager to join us too."

"Alright." Dong Anyun agreed, picked up her phone, then hesitated for two seconds, "Chairman, Director Sun has approached you many times about this project. You've always thought the risks were too high, but this time, in order to..."

Chapter 463: Xiao Hanguang's Reaction (2)

"No need to persuade me." Zhao Weilin waved his hand to interrupt, "This is the first time Xiao Qing has asked me for something, and as her father, I must accomplish it even if it costs all my effort."

"Finish the procedures tonight, and I will go find that person tomorrow morning."

Dong Anyun opened her mouth, refrained from persuading further, and took her phone outside to make a call.

...

New District, bank manager's office.

Tian Yaosheng held a phone in one hand, wiping sweat from his forehead with the other, forced a smile as he agreed.

"Yes, yes, rest assured, I will definitely cooperate!"

"Alright, alright, I will check it right away!"

After hanging up the phone, the smile immediately disappeared from his face, akin to someone who just lost his wife.

He stared at his phone for a full two minutes before grabbing the landline on the desk to make an internal call.

"Xiao Jing, come to my office for a bit."

"Okay, manager." A sweet voice replied from the other end.

Soon, there was a knock on the office door, and before the person arrived, a faint scent of green tea already wafted in.

"Come in." Tian Yaosheng called out, and Xiao Jing opened the door and entered.

"Manager, you called for me." Xiao Jing, in high heels, walked over to Tian Yaosheng's desk, her revealing chest alluring enough to enchant anyone, and her black silk-clad long legs beneath the tight skirt were even more captivating.

Normally, Tian Yaosheng's eyes would have been fixated, but he wasn't in the mood today.

"Do you still have contact with Mr. Qi?" Tian Yaosheng asked urgently.

Upon hearing this, Xiao Jing ground the tip of her high heel on the floor, intertwining her fingers, looking pitifully adorable.

"I've tried to meet him several times, but he ignores me."

Tian Yaosheng ignored her pretentious act, hesitated for two seconds, then lowered his voice and said, "Try this, tell him..."

"Ah?" Xiao Jing was startled.

Tian Yaosheng waved impatiently, "Ah what! Just do as I say, hurry up and go!"

"Oh~" Xiao Jing pouted and walked pitifully out of the office.

"Tell the security to reserve a VIP parking spot!" Tian Yaosheng added from behind.

"Got it~"

Over half an hour later, Secretary Ji arrived at the bank with two people, the stouter one among them was the one who had threatened to have a deep exchange with Qi Yun in the basement.

At the entrance of the hall, Tian Yaosheng personally stood waiting, and upon seeing Secretary Ji get out of the car, he scurried over to help close the car door.

"Leader, welcome, welcome."

Secretary Ji glanced at him indifferently, then asked, "Is everything prepared?"

"Prepared." Tian Yaosheng nodded hastily, "It's already in my office, let me take you there."

Secretary Ji nodded slightly, "Okay, let's go."

"Alright, right this way please." Tian Yaosheng grovelled while leading the way.

The group of four reached the upstairs office, Tian Yaosheng closed the door, then pointed to an iron box on the coffee table and said, "This is what Mr. Qi stored in our bank."

Secretary Ji glanced at the locked iron box, the two keys beside it.

He turned to Tian Yaosheng and asked, "Did you check the contents?"

Tian Yaosheng hurriedly shook his head, "No, no, it hasn't been touched since taken from the vault."

"And the customer's key was just recently replaced."

Banks often use a "double-person double-lock" mechanism, with the bank and the client each holding a key, ensuring that the safe can only be opened when both parties are present, thus avoiding unilateral risks.

However, if the client's key is lost, the bank can replace it, though the procedures are extremely complex and strict.

But this is all relative, Secretary Ji made a phone call, and the key was ready in less than half an hour.

Secretary Ji nodded in satisfaction, stared at Tian Yaosheng for a moment, but said nothing.

The latter immediately understood, smiled ingratiatingly, "Leader, please have a seat; I'll go brew some tea." With that, he opened the door and went out.

Once the office door was securely closed, Secretary Ji approached the iron box, picked up the key, and prepared to unlock it.

The two burly men sensibly walked to the window, turning their backs to the scene.

The key slid into the lock, with two clicks, the dual locks simultaneously sprung open.

Impatiently, Secretary Ji lifted the lid of the iron box, and in a moment, his previously hopeful expression became stupefied.

Inside the box was a neatly organized heap of gold bars, all the kind sold by banks, each weighing a kilogram and gleaming so brightly they were dazzling.

Any other person seeing this box of gold bars would grin from ear to ear, but Secretary Ji showed no sign of delight.

He tossed out all the gold bars, then meticulously examined the inside of the box, finding nothing else.

Secretary Ji's expression instantly grew grim, turned to instruct the two men, "Get him in here!"

The two burly men spun around, eyes wide at the sight of the table strewn with gold bars, despite their earlier curiosity spurred by the clinking sounds, they hadn't dared to look back.

"What are you dazing for!" Secretary Ji barked in displeasure.

The two men didn't dare delay, turning to dash towards the door.

As they opened the door, they ran into Tian Yaosheng pacing the corridor with a teapot.

"Lea-leader, the tea is brewed..."

"Inside!"

The men unceremoniously grabbed his collar, dragged him into the office, the teapot slipping to the floor, the hot water splashing onto Tian Yaosheng's shoes, causing him to hiss in pain.

Once inside, Tian Yaosheng was shoved again from behind, collided with the coffee table, grimaced in pain, but didn't dare cry out, only looked pitifully at Secretary Ji, "Leader, what... what is this about?"

Chapter 464: Xiao Hanguang's Reaction (Part 3)

"What's going on?" Secretary Ji pointed at the gold bars covering the coffee table, clenching his teeth as he asked, his cold gaze terrifying.

Tian Yaosheng turned his head, puzzled by the sight of the gold bars: "Is there less of them? But no one touched them, they were just put in gold yesterday..."

"Bang!"

Before he could finish his sentence, Secretary Ji slapped him hard, his expression grim as he roared, "I'm damn asking if there are fewer or not!?"

"Tell me why there are gold bars in the box!"

Tian Yaosheng's face swelled instantly from the blow, a trickle of blood at the corner of his mouth. Holding his cheek, he bowed incessantly, "Please calm down, leader! Please calm down!"

"They were supposed to be gold bars inside."

"Yesterday, President Qi asked me to exchange twenty million gold bars for him, said he was coming to retrieve them. Then he said he didn't need them for the time being and asked me to store all the gold bars in the safe. He sent someone to pick up the key."

Tian Yaosheng recounted everything in detail, then fumbled in his pocket nervously, pulling out a storage slip, pointing at the words "precious metals": "Look! It's written here on the slip!"

"The bank originally had regulations, we can't help clients..."

"Shut up!" Secretary Ji shouted impatiently, his face extremely unpleasant. At this moment he couldn't help but realize that he and his people were clearly fooled by Qi Yun.

Tian Yaosheng shuddered at the shout, instantly not daring to say more. His actions today had already violated numerous regulations. If he further angered this person, losing his job would be secondary; it was highly likely he'd end up sewing in prison.

Secretary Ji turned around angrily, glaring at the stout man beside him, raising his hand for a big slap: "You're a damn failure!"

The stout man's head buzzed from the blow, his facial muscles twisted, yet he could only lower his head without daring to react.

"Let's go!" Secretary Ji dropped the words, striding towards the door.

As for those gold bars, he didn't spare them another glance.

He avoided potential troubles that might have hidden risks; secondly, as far as his position went, he didn't need such trifles.

More importantly, his thoughts were now entirely focused on the USB drive Qi Yun possessed. If it couldn't be destroyed in time, perhaps he'd also end up with silver bracelets one day.

Back in the car, Secretary Ji called Ma Chaoyang, his voice icy: "That kid fooled us, the stuff isn't in the safe!"

Upon hearing this, Ma Chaoyang almost ground his teeth to bits. He tried to calm his emotions, hurriedly replying, "Not long ago, National Security took away Secretary Jiang, Old Li, and Old Feng. I must clear up some loose ends now, so I'll rely on you for things there."

Secretary Ji nodded: "Alright, I'll personally go over and keep watch."

...

Over half an hour later, the suburbs.

A bulb hanging from the ceiling barely illuminated the underground room with dim yellow light.

The smell of mold mixed with the scent of blood invaded the nostrils. Qi Yun was tied to an iron chair, the dried blood at the corner of his mouth, his shoulders mildly moving as if resting with closed eyes.

"Tap tap tap~"

A series of footsteps echoed. Secretary Ji led the two stout men into the underground room. The stout man immediately saw Qi Yun, feeling a surge of anger. He took a large step forward to prepare to rough him up, but was stopped by Secretary Ji's raised hand.

Secretary Ji took out a packet of cigarettes and lit one, eyes fixed on Qi Yun, nastily saying, "I'll give you one last chance. Before I finish smoking this cigarette, hand over the stuff and I'll let you leave, everyone at peace."

Qi Yun slowly raised his head, his right eye already swollen shut, smirking coldly.

Though he didn't know the person in front of him, he could guess their identity wasn't low.

"Alright, let me go first, and I'll give you the stuff."

If it were really as the other side claimed, handing over the item would ensure peace. He would have handed it over the moment he got the USB drive.

Can they really let him go though?

Even with his special identities, didn't he still end up here?

Secretary Ji kept a composed face, flicked off some ashes, his tone icy, "Seems you don't want this chance after all."

Qi Yun licked his cracked lips, smiled, and shook his head, "No need to threaten me. I know in your eyes, I'm just a small fry."

"But... even a small fry can't just go and die if you want me dead, no? What do you say?"

"Small fry?" Secretary Ji blew out smoke, his face full of disdain, "If you truly understand you're a small fry, you should know some things aren't for you to mess with."

"Once you touch them, if I say you die, you die!"

Qi Yun spat in disgust, baring his teeth, "Then you're awesome, huh."

"Oh, forgot to tell you something: I had someone back up your accounting books to the internet. If I don't contact them in three days, those things will be all over the web."

"Not just the local network, oh, Shanghai, Peng City, Beijing, even Hong Kong Island too. Your reach isn't that long, right?"

The cigarette in Secretary Ji's hand "plopped" to the ground, sparks scattering.

The words "accounting books" seemed to pull at his sensitive nerves.

If previously they only suspected the things were with Qi Yun, now it's a one hundred percent certainty.

Secretary Ji lunged forward, grabbing Qi Yun's collar, eyes fiercely staring, trying to judge the truth from Qi Yun's expression.

However, Qi Yun didn't shy away, meeting his gaze calmly.

After a long silence, Secretary Ji sneered, releasing Qi Yun's collar, "Alright, you're not crying until you see the coffin."

With that, he pulled out his phone and dialed Director Han's number, "Go and catch his woman too, cooperate in a smuggling investigation!"

"Yes, now!"

Qi Yun's pupils suddenly constricted, his expression twisted in rage, staring at Secretary Ji as if wanting to devour him whole.

Before he could reply, Secretary Ji beckoned, "No more scruples, cripple one of his arms first."

With those words, the two stout men sneered and stepped forward. One viciously grabbed Qi Yun's left arm, while the other picked up an iron hammer from the corner.

Qi Yun let out a beast-like growl, veins bulging on his forehead, struggling desperately but unable to break free from the bindings. His arm, strapped by thick ropes, was already bleeding red.

"Damn, don't faint from the pain, you'd miss out on the feeling." The stout man dragged the hammer close, instructing the other to hold Qi Yun's hand firm, ready to swing the hammer down.

Just then, an untimely ringing echoed in the underground room.

The stout man paused his hand mid-swing.

Secretary Ji took out his phone, glanced at the screen, then walked aside to answer.

"Hello, leader."

"Did you get the stuff?"

"Not yet, this kid's being uncooperative, the safe doesn't have what we want." Secretary Ji turned to glance at Qi Yun, continued, "This guy is dead set against cooperating, I think there's no need to hold back, just a bit more trouble afterward."

The voice on the other side remained silent for a few seconds, sighing somewhat wearily, "Pause for now, don't touch him, you should come back."

Secretary Ji froze at the words, then hurriedly pleaded urgently, "Leader, we have to hurry!"

"I said don't touch him yet! Come back!" The elder's tone grew stricter.

Secretary Ji dared not say more, quickly stating he'd return at once.

Hanging up the phone, he gave Qi Yun a venomous look, then instructed the two stout men, "Don't touch him yet, wait for my call."

The two stout men were somewhat puzzled but seeing Secretary Ji's grim face, dared not question.

...

Over forty minutes later, Secretary Ji returned to that familiar office.

The atmosphere in the room was heavy, the elder sat behind the desk, fingers tapping the tabletop intermittently, the cup of tea on the desk long cold.

"Leader, has there been a development?" Secretary Ji had calmed down, his tone not as impatient as before.

The elder cast a glance at him, pointed to an A4 sheet on the desk, his voice slightly raspy, "Xiao Hanguang and Fu Zhiling are en route here."

Secretary Ji took the paper, his heart sinking.

The head of the National Cultural Heritage Administration personally stepping in weighed much more than they anticipated.

From his perspective, though Qi Yun had some background, it wasn't enough for Beijing's bigwigs to personally fly over and intervene, right?

This situation was quite rare.

Secretary Ji's Adam's apple moved, placing the paper back on the desk, contemplating as he spoke, "We've already agreed to let them take the batch of artifacts away, why are they still so aggressive?"

Indeed, as he said, the two coming from Beijing had clearly shown their stance.

The elder shook his head, eyes deep, "That's why I instructed you not to touch that kid yet, to prevent things from fully blowing up and leaving no room for maneuver."

"We'll know everything tomorrow morning..."

Chapter 465: Releasing the Prisoner

At ten in the morning, the car carrying Xiao Hanguang and Director Fu appeared punctually in front of the imposing office building.

Below the steps, a group of big shots waited personally to greet them, with the person standing at the very front being Secretary Ji's leader.

And Shao Yuewen's old father-in-law stood in the second position on the left in the back row.

As Xiao Hanguang and Director Fu got out of the car, the big shots quickly stepped forward to greet them, maintaining warm smiles on their faces.

In terms of rank, the elder in the forefront even surpassed the two, and many of the big shots behind were on equal footing with them.

But things can't just be judged by their surface; Xiao Hanguang and Director Fu, for one thing, came from over there, and then the background and connections of these two are unfathomable. Moreover, they are only in their early forties, with potentially limitless futures.

"Welcome, you both to the reins. Xue SJ is not feeling well today, so it's up to me to welcome you both." The elder extended his hand to shake with Xiao Hanguang and Director Fu respectively, speaking with an attitude neither humble nor pushy.

Xiao Hanguang nodded slightly. Expressing being unwell at this time obviously signifies a wish not to get involved in the matter between the two sides.

His gaze swept over the faces of the people standing in the forefront: "Thank you to all the comrades. Sorry for interrupting your work."

After some polite conversations, the elder led Xiao Hanguang and Director Fu to a guest room and chatted with a few other big shots about work-related topics. There were journalists taking pictures and filming inside.

After all the routine processes were finished, the other big shots left one by one. Secretary Ji came in to change the tea for the three, and then exited, closing the door behind him. At this moment, only the three stakeholders remained in the guest room, and the atmosphere became oppressive.

After a brief silence, Xiao Hanguang opened the conversation first: "Old He, I heard your customs work here has been going quite well?"

The elder's facial muscles involuntarily twitched. Being called "Old He" was somewhat uncomfortable for him, considering he was nearly a generation older than Xiao Hanguang.

Also, the question was asked rather casually, couldn't even be bothered to pretend?

What does a Bureau of Cultural Relics want to look into customs affairs for? Might as well directly report Qi Yun's identity card...

"Haha, they've achieved certain results over the last couple of years. If you two have any work suggestions, feel free to point them out. I'll make sure they improve." The elder replied with a forced smile.

No matter how uncomfortable it was inside, he wouldn't easily show it. That's basic professionalism.

Xiao Hanguang nodded: "Hmm, I have no other suggestions, just follow the laws and regulations."

"A couple of days ago, when chatting casually with Zhong Ji's Li SJ, I heard that the patrol tasks for the second half of the year were already being arranged. The first stop might be right over your side, so make sure to do surveillance work well, hahaha."

"This is just a friendly reminder, no intention to dictate, aha, Old He don't overthink."

Upon hearing this, a hint of fear flickered in the elder's eyes.

Although Xiao Hanguang spoke casually, the warning embedded in his words made his heart tremble!

Even he must fear that department with three points...

He hadn't expected their attitude to be so assertive.

Because if they went that way, it amounted to tearing faces apart, inevitably having to settle the matter decisively.

Before he could respond, Director Fu, who had remained mostly silent, glanced at Xiao Hanguang: "It's quite a coincidence, when talking to Minister Xiang yesterday, he also mentioned organizing an anti-crime initiative with focus areas possibly being in one of the northwest provinces."

"Really?" Upon hearing this, Xiao Hanguang feigned surprise on his face, turned to look at the elder, and said with a smile: "Old He, you might be facing a bit of work pressure in the upcoming period."

The elder's expression stiffened, originally holding the teacup suspended in mid-air, aware that the counterpart was exerting pressure.

If he didn't agree, given the temperament of these two gentlemen, they might indeed proceed.

Already, there were different voices arising, including from Guo An, city ZX, city F, and these departments, compounded by civilian chambers of commerce, inevitably forming a situation of internal and external troubles.

Although he wasn't entirely without leverage, it's definite that there won't be any benefit, and if the situation deteriorates uncontrollably, he himself might face significant danger.

The room fell silent again; Xiao Hanguang and Director Fu didn't say more. Some matters need just a slight jab, not like bargaining in a market for vegetables to debate fiercely red-faced.

Everyone is smart and used to speaking this way, so they all understand clearly.

After pondering for quite a while, a trace of a smile appeared on the elder's face: "Haha, these are all major issues. Thank you, Director Xiao and Director Fu, for the reminders. I'll establish a working group later to closely address the related problems."

Seeing him say this, Xiao Hanguang and Director Fu exchanged glances.

Having received the desired answer, the two stood up in unison: "Alright then, we won't linger, so as not to delay your work."

Seeing this, the elder didn't insist on them staying, and rising, he shook hands proactively: "Alright, you're welcome to come and guide work anytime."

The three shook hands and then the elder sent them downstairs, continuously standing there until their special car drove away from the compound, his gaze still profound.

The three seemingly just exchanged a few brief words, but what needed to be said had been said, and the result was clear.

Secretary Ji quietly reminded from behind: "Leader, the temperature's quite high today, you should return to the office."

The elder snapped back to reality, sighed, and shook his head, turning to walk up the steps.

Seeing his expression, Secretary Ji's heart skipped a beat with a sudden ominous premonition.

After returning to the office, Secretary Ji hurriedly poured a cup of tea for the elder, then cautiously asked: "Leader..."

The elder waved his hand, not waiting for Secretary Ji to finish speaking, sighed: "Ah, send that Qi Yun back to the antismuggling bureau, have them release him."

"Re...release!?" Secretary Ji's eyes widened.

Although already guessing that matters might be developing unpleasantly, truly hearing this outcome still unsteadied him.

Letting Qi Yun go amounted to completely losing any upper hand.

The leverage in the other's hand was a ticking time bomb, uncertain when it might explode.

If triggered, he and people like Ma Chaoyang might spend the latter half of their lives accompanying the Shaolin Abbot.

The elder stood by the window, gaze through the glass looking afar, the voice no longer carrying its usual reassuring tone.

"Both families are resolute. By releasing him, there's room for maneuver and can still go to negotiate with that lad."

"If not released..."

He didn't finish the sentence, but Secretary Ji understood. His throat moved strongly: "But leader..."

The elder turned, walked to the sofa to sit: "I know what you're worried about."

"Rest assured, you've been with me for quite some time now, I won't let you get taken away."

Better left unsaid; upon uttering, Secretary Ji's back instantly soaked in cold sweat.

A secretive rumor exists among the circle of secretaries below, allegedly the elder had said similar words to his predecessor, the previous secretary.

Later, something happened; indeed that secretary was never taken away, but just unfortunately met with a traffic accident, passing away...

Secretary Ji swallowed hard, dared not say more: "Alright, thank you, leader, I'll go handle this immediately."

...

Chapter 466: If Not Now, Then When?

Shanghai, government office building.

Zhao Weilin, who had waited almost two hours in the meeting room, finally met the leader from last time.

"Had a meeting this morning, sorry for the long wait, Old Zhao." The middle-aged man took a sip from his cup and pointed to the chair opposite, "Sit down, let's talk."

Zhao Weilin nodded, pulled out the chair, and sat down.

"About the Jing'an project, Director Sun reported to me this morning. Old Zhao, I'm grateful for your willingness to make sacrifices for Shanghai's development, to take on risks and handle that situation." The middle-aged man's words were sincere, and he cupped his hands towards Zhao Weilin in a gesture of respect.

Zhao Weilin quickly sat up slightly and waved a hand, "Leader, you're overpraising. It's my duty to contribute to local development." He rubbed his palms on his knees, finally unable to hold back, "It's just..."

"I understand what you're trying to say. Regardless of the project, I'm willing to help you with this favor." The middle-aged man paused and sighed, "But you know their stance over there. Although we're major supporters of the J region, we don't have the right to interfere in their affairs..."

Zhao Weilin's hand under the table clenched suddenly, his face showing a struggling expression.

He knew what the other was saying was true. Although there's cooperation between the two places on some tasks, interfering cross-regionally indeed oversteps bounds.

Yet, thinking that if something really happened to Qi Yun, he might completely lose the chance to reunite with Zhao Qing, he had to brace himself and fight for it.

"Leader, how about this: could you help communicate with them? As long as they're willing to let go, I can promise that our group will invest at least thirty billion over the next two years!" Zhao Weilin gritted his teeth and played his last card.

Even for economically backward areas in the northwest, an investment of thirty billion is not a trivial amount, even in a leading economic city like Shanghai. It could significantly boost the local leaders' performance.

The middle-aged man's fingers on the water cup paused sharply. He looked at Zhao Weilin, whose gaze no longer held the shrewdness of a businessman but the resolve of a father.

"Thirty billion." The middle-aged man repeated the number, sighing lightly as he reminded, "Old Zhao, you know what this means. If any unforeseen changes occur, your lifetime of efforts..."

Zhao Weilin naturally understood the implications of his words. Such a large investment requires 100% trust in the local team. If conflicts arise, the investor will suffer severe losses.

"I've thought it through. Please help communicate with them." Zhao Weilin replied without hesitation.

Seeing his determination, the middle-aged man stopped persuading. He picked up the phone on the table, walked to the floor-to-ceiling window, and dialed a number.

A few minutes later, he returned after ending the call, his expression somewhat peculiar.

"Leader, how did it go?" Zhao Weilin asked eagerly.

"Old Zhao, do you not know your son-in-law well enough?" The middle-aged man asked, implying something.

"Even Director Xiao from the National Cultural Heritage Administration and Director Fu from the museum have gone there. Do you still need to worry here?"

"The... National Cultural Heritage Administration!?" Zhao Weilin was stunned on the spot, only realizing after a few seconds and tentatively said, "Then my son-in-law..."

"Just wait peacefully. With them involved, you needn't worry anymore." The middle-aged man replied confidently, seeming to know Xiao Hanguang well.

Zhao Weilin let out a long sigh of relief and nodded quickly, "Good! Good! Thank you, Leader!"

The middle-aged man waved a hand, "No need to thank me, I didn't really help you much."

"I didn't mention the investment to them, and also..." The middle-aged man pondered and continued, "I won't let your group bear the risk of the Jing'an project alone. The Urban Investment Company will contribute half of the funds, but you'll retain control."

"This..." Zhao Weilin was stunned again. The conditions mentioned were the ones he had previously discussed with Director Sun. Considering the high risk of the Jing'an project, a sizable company had already failed in it, so no company dared to take over rashly.

At that time, the government's attitude was firm, unwilling to let Urban Investment bleed further. But now, even after the agreement was signed, they're agreeing?

The middle-aged man patted his shoulder and sat back in his chair, "Alright, I'll instruct Director Sun later. You can arrange for someone to meet him to re-sign the agreement."

"When things are settled over there, invite your son-in-law to come over, so I can meet this young talent too."

...

Coming out of the office, Zhao Weilin was still in a daze.

Having navigated the business world for years, he clearly understood why the attitude suddenly changed, but what puzzled him was that Qi Yun didn't seem to have any strong background?

So why was even that person so enthusiastic?

"Chairman, did they agree?" Dong Anyun, waiting outside, came forward immediately upon seeing Zhao Weilin, cautiously asked.

Zhao Weilin snapped back to reality, gave her a look, thought for a few seconds, and instructed, "Find out if there's been any change with Qi Yun recently."

"Huh?" Dong Anyun was taken aback, "In which aspect?"

"Any aspect! I need all the information on this guy, the most detailed!"

...

Suburbs, inside a basement.

Qi Yun, who hadn't eaten all day, was starving, feeling his stomach stick to his back. Although still unclear about the outside situation, judging from the reaction of the person who left last night, his rescue likely had arrived.

Chapter 467: If Not Now, Then When? (Part 2)

So the only thing he needs to do now is to keep going.

"Squeak~"

The old iron door was pushed open from outside, and the burly man walked in, holding half a bottle of water.

He came over, grabbed Qi Yun's hair, and poured water into his mouth.

Qi Yun didn't resist, greedily swallowing until the half bottle was empty, at which point the burly man suddenly let go.

"I advise you to hand over the stuff, or you'll die here with no one even to collect your body." The burly man kicked the iron chair, a cold smile creeping up his face.

Qi Yun coughed twice, lowered his head, and panted, not even glancing at the man, completely ignoring him.

The burly man cursed angrily, raising his fist as if to strike, but Qi Yun remained unperturbed, not even blinking.

At this moment, footsteps sounded outside, followed by the iron door opening, and Secretary Ji walked in alone.

His gaze swept over Qi Yun's wretched state, a flash of viciousness in his eyes fleeting.

"You, get out." Secretary Ji waved to the burly man, his tone slightly irritable.

The burly man hesitated, glancing at Qi Yun and then at Secretary Ji, but eventually left reluctantly, giving Qi Yun a vicious glare as he left.

The iron door closed with a "squeak," leaving Qi Yun and Secretary Ji alone in the basement.

Secretary Ji walked up to Qi Yun, looking down at him, and pulled out a pack of cigarettes from his pocket, sticking one in his mouth without lighting it.

"Mr. Qi, actually we are not enemies, there's no need to take it to a life-and-death extent."

"You don't have to hand over the stuff you have, just delete the parts related to me in front of me, and we can be friends."

Qi Yun raised his head but said nothing, the light screen appeared before his eyes once again.

[Current Intelligence Points: 20]

[Available Intelligence Types: None]

"Useless!" Qi Yun cursed, the guy before him and Director Han, both useless, he had hoped to get some intelligence from them, but there was nothing at all.

Secretary Ji was taken aback at being cursed, his face instantly darkened, grabbing Qi Yun's collar, his voice icy: "Do you really think I don't dare kill you!?"

Qi Yun ignored the threat, casually raising his chin, saying: "Come to me to admit your mistake, huh? There's a way to admitting mistakes, first, light up a cigarette."

Secretary Ji was again taken aback, seemingly unprepared for Qi Yun's words.

Qi Yun's lips curled into a smile, his gaze full of mockery: "What's wrong? You can't spare a cigarette? Or are you not here to admit your mistake?"

Secretary Ji stared at him for a full three seconds, his chest heaving violently, but finally let go.

If Qi Yun were truly willing to forgive him, lighting a cigarette was nothing; he would even kneel and call him dad.

But he could see clearly, Qi Yun was obviously playing him.

Seeing no chance for negotiation, he dared not delay further, turning and shouting to the outside:
"Come in!"

The burly man outside pushed the door open and entered at the sound.

"Get him onto the car." Secretary Ji instructed again.

"Huh?" The burly man was somewhat surprised, as few had left this basement alive, most ended up as waste under the apricot tree in the yard.

"Slap!"

With a belly full of fire, Secretary Ji raised his hand and slapped him hard, catching him off guard and causing the burly man to stagger back two steps.

"Are you deaf? What huh?" Secretary Ji glared at him, shouting angrily.

The burly man was dazed from the slap, his left cheek swollen from yesterday's beating not having subsided completely, now even more swollen.

He covered his face, not daring to make a sound, hurried forward to untie the ropes on Qi Yun, using the chance to press hard on Qi Yun's wound with his thumb, clearly taking out his anger from the slaps on the latter.

Qi Yun grimaced in pain but gritted his teeth, not making a sound, though his gaze towards the burly man had turned thoroughly icy.

...

Forty minutes later, a private car drove into the customs courtyard.

In the passenger seat, Secretary Ji dialed Director Han's number: "Come out to the playground."

The call ended, and within minutes, Director Han was jogging out from the building.

Secretary Ji opened the car door and got out, the two walked to a nearby flowerbed and whispered a few words.

"What's wrong? I personally brought the person over, isn't that enough?"

"Do you expect a call from the leader?" Secretary Ji stared at him firmly, his tone brooking no refusal.

Director Han's expression was as unpleasant as having eaten crap, turning his head towards the parked car, he naturally understood what bringing the person back meant.

But he had no right to refuse.

Soon, several officers from the anti-smuggling bureau came out, taking Qi Yun away.

Director Han hurried to the Director's office to report to Director Fang.

Director Fang's face turned extremely unpleasant upon hearing the report, being seasoned, he could clearly understand the underlying subtleties.

If thoroughly investigated, bringing Qi Yun back had procedural flaws, and the fact that he was in good condition when arriving, yet within less than two days sustained injuries all over was unexplainable.

How do you explain?

Director Han had initially taken him from the interrogation room without any records.

This couldn't be explained, nor dared it be explained.

Now the word had spread, the two big shots from Beijing were staying at the guest house, obviously waiting for the matter to be completely settled, and perhaps would even summon Qi Yun.

Seeing him injured like this at that time, Director Fang and Director Han were surely going to be held accountable.

Chapter 468: If Not Now, Then When? (Part 3)

So that Secretary Ji is sending the people back now, just to make them take the fall!

And they can't even refuse!

Because the incident originated in the Anti-smuggling Bureau, the people were captured by them, and more importantly, they don't dare to defy that person's will...

"Director, how do you want to handle this?"

Director Fang almost crushed the walnuts in his hand before gritting his teeth and squeezing out a few words, "Let him go!"

...

More than half an hour later, Director Han walked into the interrogation room with a box.

He placed the box on the table, then took out a cell phone and a wallet from it, pushing them towards Qi Yun, "Check your personal belongings."

After saying that, he took the file from the hands of the officer next to him and a pen, placing them on the table, "Sign the document and you can leave."

Qi Yun lowered his eyes to the file on the table, didn't even lift his hand, just stared at the other person with a mocking gaze.

Seeing this, Director Han furrowed his brow impatiently and warned, "Don't set yourself up for failure, you'd better leave before those above change their mind."

Qi Yun suddenly laughed, but the laughter was full of sarcasm, "What, forgotten what I told you so quickly?"

Director Han paused for a moment, then his face immediately darkened.

On the night he took people to arrest Qi Yun, Qi Yun had said, "Taking me away is easy, sending me back won't be as simple."

At that time, he didn't take it seriously, just thought the guy didn't understand the situation. Now, unexpectedly, the situation has really turned out like this.

But it's not that he wasn't careful enough; after all, the orders came from the Director, and the one who gave instructions was Secretary Ji, and Secretary Ji represents that person...

The gap between them is too vast, at that time he didn't think Qi Yun had any chance to turn the tables.

"Are you going to sign or not?" Director Han asked in a hoarse voice.

Qi Yun didn't answer, he took his cigarette pack and lighter from the box on the table, lit one by himself, and took two deep drags.

Seeing this, Director Han almost ground his molars, didn't say a word, angrily turned and left the interrogation room, heading upstairs to the Director's office.

"Director, he doesn't want to leave!"

"Doesn't want to leave!?" Director Fang was stunned, "Why?"

Director Han growled with a cold face, "Probably guessed something and wants to vent his anger on us."

Director Fang's expression became incredibly colorful upon hearing that, his mouth agape, not saying a word for a long time.

After a long silence, he suddenly slapped his hand on the table, cursing angrily, "Damn Ji Ming!"

After venting his anger, he pointed to Director Han and said, "Isn't he close with Zhang Dayong? Call Zhang Dayong! Let him come over and take the person away!"

This was the only option he had, you can't do anything if they don't leave. Even if you forcibly send him away, he might come back and continue staying at your customs office, making matters worse.

Director Han nodded, took out his phone, and dialed Zhang Dayong's number.

At the New District Branch, Zhang Dayong had just finished a call with that person's secretary, already aware of the situation, and finally felt relieved.

When he received the call from Director Han, he was initially stunned but ultimately pressed the answer key after hesitating for two seconds.

"Hello Director Zhang, I am Han Xiaobo from the Anti-smuggling Bureau." Director Han spoke very politely on the phone.

"What's the matter?" Zhang Dayong asked expressionlessly.

"It's like this, Director Zhang, after our Anti-smuggling Bureau's investigation, it is now confirmed that Mr. Qi is not related to the smuggling case, and we're preparing to let him leave, but Mr. Qi seems to have some misunderstandings with us... he's currently upset, so could you come over and take him away?"

"You know this matter is quite complex, our Anti-smuggling Bureau will definitely have to take responsibility for some work-related errors..."

After Director Han finished speaking, Zhang Dayong thought for two seconds and agreed, stating he would head over right away.

He agreed not to do the other party a favor but simply wanted to see Qi Yun's situation and tell him what's happening outside.

...

More than half an hour later, Zhang Dayong saw Qi Yun in the interrogation room, his face covered in bruises and his body covered in injuries, and he was suddenly filled with rage, his fists clenched tightly.

Qi Yun appeared very calm, picked up the cigarette pack from the table, and handed one over, "Did they invite you here?"

Zhang Dayong took the cigarette, nodded, "I came to see how you're doing." His gaze swept over the blood marks on Qi Yun's wrist, and he cursed through clenched teeth, "These bastards are really ruthless."

"It's no big deal." Qi Yun lit a cigarette nonchalantly, "Is everything at home alright?"

"No problem, I had Ma Baoguo take people to patrol there."

Upon hearing that his daughter and Zhao Qing were both safe, Qi Yun finally relaxed completely, taking a puff of his cigarette and asking, "Have the people from Beijing arrived?"

"They have." Zhang Dayong succinctly explained the situation outside and added, "Director Xiao from the National Cultural Heritage Administration and Director Fu from the museum haven't left yet; they'll probably want to see you once you're out."

Qi Yun nodded, quickly weighing things in his mind.

"Do this, help me convey a message to Vice Director Tong, just say that I'm badly hurt, can't move easily, and ask him to come to the Anti-smuggling Bureau, I'll sign the donation document for him."

"This..." Zhang Dayong showed a trace of worry on his face after hearing this. With his political acumen, he naturally understood Qi Yun's intention, but he reminded, in a low voice, "Will this leave a bad impression on those two people?"

Qi Yun chuckled and shook his head, "Don't worry, just say it like that."

There are a lot of things Zhang Dayong doesn't know, which is why he's worried, but Qi Yun sees things clearly. The fact that they came all the way from Beijing shows their attitude very clearly.

If not now to express this stance, then when?

Seeing Qi Yun had made up his mind, Zhang Dayong didn't try to persuade him further, chatted for a few moments before getting up and leaving.

...

Chapter 469: Personally Coming to Pick Up

At noon, in a small restaurant outside the Provincial Museum, Tong Yangming put down his phone and turned to Yu Qixuan beside him: "They agreed to release him, but he said he's injured and can't move easily, so he asked me to go to the customs bureau to sign the donation agreement with him."

Upon hearing this, Yu Qixuan's hand holding the chopsticks paused in mid-air, and after a while, he smacked his lips: "Qi boy is feeling resentful, huh."

Tong Yangming smiled and shook his head, picked up the teacup, and sipped from it.

Yu Qixuan put down his chopsticks and asked, "What do you plan to do?"

Tong Yangming didn't answer but expressed his stance through his actions.

He picked up his phone and dialed Director Fu's number. After explaining the situation, he added: "My old ailment of dizziness flared up today. Why don't you, as the director, go personally?"

Director Fu on the other end of the phone chuckled: "Alright, then, Uncle Tong, you get some rest, and I'll go with Old Xiao."

"Hmm." Tong Yangming didn't say anything further, just acknowledged and hung up.

Beside him, Yu Qixuan picked up the unopened bottle of white liquor on the table, unscrewed it, poured two glasses, and handed one to Tong Yangming: "You really handled this well, come on! Let's have a drink today, no matter what!"

Tong Yangming didn't refuse, raised his glass, and said: "Just this one glass, I have important work this afternoon."

...

In the living room of a suite in the guesthouse.

Director Fu put down his phone and casually said: "Uncle Tong called, the kid can't wait, he wants to settle accounts now."

Xiao Hanguang sitting opposite chuckled: "Haha, this kid is really interesting, huh?"

"Yes, he's just like you, seeking revenge without delay."

Xiao Hanguang nodded, rubbing his chin: "Alright, since we're here, let's be good to the end and let him vent."

Director Fu agreed: "Will you make the call or should I?"

"I'll do it." Xiao Hanguang picked up the phone on the table, "Old Xiang's involvement wouldn't be appropriate, better let Old Li make this call instead."

...

Over two hours later, four black Passats drove smoothly into the customs compound, with clearance passes affixed to the windshields.

The cars immediately attracted attention as they drove into the compound.

"Why are they here? What's gone wrong?"

"Haven't heard anything, guessing someone is in trouble..."

"This is quite a lineup..."

The four Passats parked directly at the entrance of the customs bureau building, and the people inside got out and lined up.

After Xiao Hanguang and Director Fu also exited the cars, the leader stepped forward and whispered: "Director Xiao, we'll go to work first."

Xiao Hanguang nodded: "Hmm, you guys focus on your work, don't mind us."

"Okay." The leader waved, leading the others into the hall ahead.

"Let's go, let's meet this boy too."

In the interrogation room, Qi Yun was resting in his chair.

With a "creak~" sound, the door opened from outside, and a customs bureau officer led several people in.

Qi Yun turned his head to glance over, finding he didn't recognize any of them, but the two leading figures exuded an air of authority, making him suspect their identities.

Then, someone from the group stepped forward to introduce: "These two are Director Fu of the National Museum and Director Xiao of the National Cultural Heritage Administration."

Qi Yun was taken aback, originally thinking Vice Director Tong would come, but unexpectedly, these two had come personally.

He pressed on the chair's armrest and slowly stood up, his body, though aching all over, was upright.

"Hello, leaders!"

Xiao Hanguang waved his hand, scanning him for a moment, finally focusing on his bruised face and wounded wrist, frowning slightly: "Comrade Qi, sorry for your grievance."

Director Fu stepped forward, his gaze gentle: "How's your body? Would you like to go to the hospital to treat your wound?"

Qi Yun shook his head: "Thank you for your concern, it's nothing serious."

Xiao Hanguang looked at his forced demeanor, but instead smiled slightly: "Alright, let's go."

"Okay." Qi Yun nodded, gathered the things on the table, and followed them hobbling out the door.

He was well aware that since the two had come, there was no need for him to say much about the subsequent matters, just watch quietly.

Upstairs, inside the Director's office.

Director Fang and Director Han were as anxious as ants on a hot pan, as the former had personally gone to the interrogation room that morning to try to persuade Qi Yun to sign and leave. Yet, despite all his persuasive words and humble demeanor, Qi Yun remained unmoved.

Several phone calls had already been made to their office, urging them to resolve the issue swiftly, leaving Director Fang so agitated that his blood pressure had risen.

"These bastards!" Director Han cursed, and only he knew whom he was cursing.

Director Fang swallowed a handful of blood pressure pills, wiped the sweat from his forehead, and said, "We can't delay this matter any longer, or neither of us will be able to get away with it."

"Later, go and see his wife, lower your stance a bit, and ask her to come and persuade him, saying that prolonging his injuries will cause problems."

"I went this morning!" Director Han gritted his teeth, "His bodyguards won't let us get close, I can't even see her! The phone can't connect either!"

Upon hearing this, Director Fang was stupefied and was about to say something more when the office door was pushed open, and seven or eight people in black suits walked in.

The leading man in black showed his credentials and coldly said, "Director Fang, Director Han, we are from SJW. You are suspected of abusing power and illegal interrogation. We are now lawfully investigating you, please cooperate."

The water cup in Director Fang's hand fell with a "clang," shattering into pieces.

He pointed at the door, lips trembling, "You... you must be mistaken, right? Anything can be done through organizational procedures..."

"Procedures?" the leader sneered and motioned for his men to step forward, "Do you think we would appear here if the procedures weren't followed?"

Director Han took a sudden step back, hitting the filing cabinet with a dull thud.

He understood the meaning behind those words and knew what awaited him, his eyes full of despair.

"Take them away!"

With these words, several staff members stepped forward, escorting the two men out.

In the corridor, every member of the Anti-smuggling Bureau widened their eyes in disbelief at the scene before them...

Inside a Volkswagen Magotan parked at the entrance, Xiao Hanguang saw Director Fang and Director Han being escorted out and asked Qi Yun with a smile, "Kid, can you leave now?"

Qi Yun knew this wasn't the time to negotiate. He turned from the front passenger seat, bared his teeth, and replied, "Haha, thank you, leader, for personally picking me up."

Xiao Hanguang laughed heartily and pointed at Qi Yun while speaking to Director Fu, "See, this kid knows how to adapt, hahaha."

Director Fu also smiled and said to Qi Yun, "Rest assured, this matter will be addressed, but remember, there's a limit to everything; don't rush."

Qi Yun understood the implication behind the words but didn't naively believe the hidden dangers were entirely resolved.

"I understand, thank you to both leaders!"

Just then, Director Han and others were escorted downstairs and into the cars behind. Qi Yun glanced at them and then turned with a smile, "Leaders, may I have a word with Director Han?"

Xiao Hanguang raised his chin and signaled the driver, who nodded, opened the car door, and went to the car behind, saying a few words. The people inside then got out and stood by.

Xiao Hanguang glanced in the rear-view mirror and said to Qi Yun, "Go ahead."

"Alright," Qi Yun replied, got out of the car, walked to the back vehicle, and through the windshield, saw Director Han sitting in the back seat, so he opened the door and sat inside.

Director Han's hands were cuffed with silver bracelets, his eyes empty, looking defeated.

Seeing Qi Yun sit beside him, a trace of venom suddenly appeared in his eyes.

The ones he hated most at the moment were Secretary Ji, who dumped the blame on them, and Qi Yun.

If this guy hadn't stubbornly refused to leave, perhaps today's incident wouldn't have happened. Even if there was a reckoning later, he wouldn't be in this state, abandoned like a worthless dog.

Qi Yun ignored his hateful glare, leisurely took a cigarette pack from his pocket, drew a cigarette but didn't light it.

"You were just following orders, a small character; I have no reason to retaliate against you."

"But you shouldn't have threatened my family. Did you think you had me cornered?"

Director Han's face twitched violently as if someone had gouged him with a knife, and the defiance he had been holding onto quickly dissipated.

He thought Qi Yun wanted to hear him admit his mistakes, thinking he might have a chance.

So he suddenly turned his head, tightly grasping the seat's leather with his fingers, his venomous eyes turning into a plea, "I'm sorry, Mr. Qi! It's all my fault! I... I was confused..."

"Click~"

Qi Yun lit his cigarette with a lighter, took a drag, and said with a faint smile, "Don't worry, I won't let you go to jail."

Director Han's eyes suddenly lit up, like a drowning man clutching the last straw, his body unconsciously leaning forward, "Really? Mr. Qi! As long as you're willing to let me go, I'll do anything! I'll give you all my money..."

Qi Yun didn't respond, took a deep look at him, opened the car door, got out, and at the same time as he tossed the cigarette butt, took out his phone and sent a message.

Chapter 470: We'll Do Our Best to Meet Your Needs

Zhongshan Road, inside the office building.

Secretary Ji had just put down his phone when he hurriedly ran into the inner office.

"Leader! Director Fang and the others have just been taken away!"

He initially thought the old man might react, but unexpectedly, the other merely hummed lightly, then casually said, "I know."

A chill ran up Secretary Ji's back instantly; he realized that the other indeed knew, and had known all along.

What about himself? Would he be next?

He stood there, distracted, afraid to think further.

Two hours later, after getting his wounds treated at the hospital, Qi Yun was brought to the hostel by Director Fu's secretary.

"Sit down. How are your injuries?" Xiao Hanguang pointed to the sofa nearby invitingly.

"Just superficial wounds, they'll be fine in a couple of days." Qi Yun replied as he walked over to sit on the couch.

Xiao Hanguang nodded: "We're returning tomorrow. There's something I need to tell you."

Upon hearing this, Qi Yun sat up straight, showing proper attitude: "Whatever you say, Leader."

He certainly wasn't a fool; he knew when to be pretentious and when to obey, mastering that fine line quite well.

Seeing his demeanor, Xiao Hanguang was amused and turned to Director Fu: "Let's talk about the batch of artifacts first."

Director Fu put down his teacup with a gentle smile: "First, on behalf of the National Museum, I'd like to thank you for your willingness to donate these valuable national treasures. I heard from Director Xiao that it wasn't easy for you to transport them back."

"So, if you have any thoughts or requests, feel free to express them, and we'll try our best to accommodate within our capabilities."

Qi Yun gave a shy smile, then replied earnestly: "Thank you for your concern, Leader. It truly was a journey fraught with difficulties to bring these national treasures back home. Initially, I spent a great deal to hire a security company..."

"Then, in the Red Sea, I encountered multiple aircraft carriers from the United Kingdom intercepting us..."

He exaggerated his tale for several minutes, and Xiao Hanguang couldn't take anymore, interrupting him with a laugh: "Alright, are you telling us stories here? Just say what you want directly!"

Director Fu's expression turned bizarre, as if mentally re-evaluating the young man before him.

Qi Yun wasn't embarrassed even after being called out, chuckled, and scratched his head: "Alright, let me just say it then."

Sitting up, he became slightly more serious, "Regarding these artifacts, I offended some powerful people abroad. They've already sent assassins domestically to target me."

"Moreover, these people not only target me but also threaten my family's safety, intending to kidnap them to pressure me."

"To be honest, I've previously set up a security company, hiring retired military personnel to protect my family's safety."

"But my adversaries are highly influential, deploying assassins equipped with weapons, making it difficult even for my security team to handle."

"So, I was thinking... I want to apply for some gun permits for my security company. I hope the two leaders could..."

After speaking, Qi Yun looked at the two with hopeful eyes, appearing aggrieved and pitiful.

Xiao Hanguang's teacup halted mid-air, his smile froze instantly, as if hearing something absurd.

Director Fu also withdrew his smile, furrowing his brows slightly. The two exchanged glances, seeing the surprise in each other's eyes.

"What did you say?" Xiao Hanguang put down the teacup, tapping his fingers lightly on the table, "Gun permits? Do you know what that entails?"

Qi Yun's look of grievance subsided, his tone earnest: "Leaders, I know it's against the rules, but my circumstances are truly unique right now..."

"If you don't believe me, I'll have the assassins caught a couple of days ago sent to the Public Security Bureau. They still have accomplices secretly plotting to attack me, and they all have guns!"

Saying this, he exposed his bandaged hand stained with blood on the gauze: "Personally, I don't care that much, but my wife and kids..." At this point, Qi Yun deliberately paused, showing a worried expression.

Actually, his hand injury wasn't that serious, the blood on the gauze was intentionally smeared beforehand...

Director Fu contemplated before speaking: "Qi Yun, we understand your concerns, but the approval of gun permits is subject to strict legal regulations, not something we can decide lightly."

"Even the leaders of Public Security can't approve it casually."

"I'm not seeking personal gun ownership." Qi Yun quickly explained, "It's for the key members of the security company, handled by designated personnel, absolutely not for misuse."

Xiao Hanguang sighed, taking over the conversation: "Security companies holding guns must have the special qualifications of a convoy company, and can only be equipped with specific models of riot guns, subject to twenty-four-hour surveillance."

"Your kind of company, don't even think about it."

Hearing this, Qi Yun felt somewhat disappointed, although he had already anticipated that this matter wouldn't be easy.

He swallowed, looking at the two with yearning, hesitantly asking: "Leaders, is there no chance for this at all?"

Xiao Hanguang and Director Fu exchanged a glance, remaining silent, the room falling into a brief silence.

After two to three minutes, Xiao Hanguang suddenly spoke: "Do you have another identity in Guo An?"

Qi Yun nodded repeatedly: "Before, I helped them solve a spy case, catching a few spies, so Director Duan recruited me as an auxiliary investigator."

Xiao Hanguang turned to Director Fu: "If that's the case, could Old Xiang help this kid maneuver this?"

Director Fu furrowed his brows at hearing this, pondering for a while: "The process might work, but for anything else I could ask him to handle, but this matter is doubtful..."

"As long as the process works, no need for you to ask." Xiao Hanguang turned back to Qi Yun, "Kid, let's not talk about this first, let me tell you another matter."

"Someone wants to meet you, don't go anywhere these couple of days, focus on healing, then come to Beijing to find me."

"At that time, you can discuss with the person directly, there might be a chance with the gun permit issue."

Qi Yun's eyes lit up, the previous disappointment completely vanished, and his body unconsciously leaned forward: "Director Xiao, who are you referring to...?"

Xiao Hanguang sipped his tea slowly and said, "You will find out when you get to Beijing."

"The tomb over in Mengbei has already begun protective excavation. The scale of the tomb is arguably the largest in the history of the country, probably only comparable to the Emperor's Mausoleum and Zhaoling. This discovery is going to be historic."

"Plus, with the Loulan Kingdom relic you found before and this donation of national treasures, they are all major contributions, so there will be appropriate recognition and rewards for you."

Hearing this, Qi Yun felt a surge of joy internally, but remained humble on the surface: "This is what I should do, I dare not take the credit, I dare not take the credit..."

Xiao Hanguang waved his hand: "Alright, I've told you everything. Go back and have a good rest. If there's anything urgent, you can call me."

"Alright, alright, then I won't disturb you two leaders anymore." Qi Yun said as he stood up and left the room. Once outside, he couldn't suppress the smile on his lips.

Although the other person's words were casual, the weight they carried was undeniable.

Generally, it's impossible for an ordinary person to contact this big shot directly. No matter how urgent the matter is, it would only be conveyed by a secretary, unless it's someone of the same level.

So that sentence just now, basically meant he was getting special attention.

...

At eleven in the evening, Qi Yun, who had been taken away for two days, finally returned home.

Zhao Qing saw him covered in injuries, and tears immediately welled up, as she threw herself into his arms.

The next second, she remembered he was hurt and panickedly stepped back.

Qi Yun's heart was fiercely seized by something. He gently held Zhao Qing in his arms and comforted her: "Don't cry, didn't I come back?"

"It's okay now."

Zhao Qing's tears fell like pearls on a broken string, soaking Qi Yun's clothes.

She carefully hugged Qi Yun around the waist, afraid to hurt his wounds, her voice choked up: "I... I was so scared I'd never see you again..."

Upon hearing this, Qi Yun tightened his embrace, his chin resting on the top of her head, his voice soft: "What nonsense are you talking about, I promised you, I will always take care of you."

Zhao Qing cried even harder, it took quite a while for her to release the emotions suppressed in her heart.

"By the way, that night after they took you away, I was really worried about you, so I contacted him... Last time, I heard you say he was wealthy, so I hoped he could help save you..."

Qi Yun was slightly startled, a warm current surged in his heart.

He knew Zhao Qing still held a deep grudge against Zhao Weilin, but she was still willing to plead with him to save Qi Yun.

"Alright, you don't have to worry about this, I'll find a chance to thank him."

"Mhm~"

After comforting Zhao Qing, Qi Yun went to the little girl's room, kissed her cheek, and then quietly retreated.

"Later you go to sleep first, I'm going to arrange something."

Qi Yun went downstairs and greeted Zhao Qing, then headed outside.

As soon as he arrived at the door, Chen Wei drove up in the BMW 5 Series.

Qi Yun sat in the passenger seat and asked Chen Wei: "Is everything arranged?"

Chen Wei was driving while responding: "Our people have been watching. That guy named Ji might try to escape; his mistress was packing luggage today."

"Also, Old Bai is keeping an eye on the guy named Han over there."

Qi Yun nodded, thought for a few seconds, and instructed: "For the one trying to escape, it's best to catch him when he's on the run."

"Okay."

Half an hour later, the car arrived at the suburbs, finally stopping outside an orchard.

Two hundred meters ahead was the courtyard where Qi Yun was locked up yesterday.

"Are we doing this?" Chen Wei turned off the car and turned to ask.

Qi Yun took a cigarette out of his pocket, put it in his mouth: "Let's do it. Can it be done in the time it takes to smoke a cigarette?"

Chen Wei picked up the walkie-talkie and asked: "The boss is asking if it can be done in the time it takes to smoke a cigarette."

Soon the walkie-talkie crackled with Eagle's response: "Don't worry, boss, we'll be done before the cigarette's out."

Qi Yun lit the cigarette, took a deep puff, and looked out at the dark courtyard two hundred meters away. The barbed wire on the wall glinted coldly in the moonlight, who knows how many unjust souls were buried inside...

"How many people are in there?" Qi Yun asked, cigarette in his mouth.

"A total of six."

Qi Yun "hmm"ed in acknowledgement, not asking further.

Given the skills of Eagle and his team, dealing with these reckless sorts wouldn't even take the time of a cigarette.

Sure enough, in just two or three minutes, the walkie-talkie crackled again.

"All subdued! You can come in!"

The car engine started again, driving straight to the gate. Once the vehicle stopped, Qi Yun strode confidently into the courtyard.