

Middle Age 491

Chapter 491: Salaman's Request

Time quickly flew by to two days later. These past two days, besides spending time with his family, Qi Yun also attended several events organized by the city, mainly to publicize his personal achievements.

That afternoon, after finishing recording a personal interview, Qi Yun had just stepped out of the city TV station when he received a call from abroad. He glanced at the note on the screen and sighed inwardly, knowing it was time to repay a debt.

"Qi Yun, congratulations! I've seen reports about you even here in Zhongdong."

Qi Yun leaned against the car, smiling helplessly: "Haha, it's all just empty fame. I owe it to Mr. Salaman for his help last time. If there's a chance, I'll personally come to Zhongdong to thank you."

"Hahaha, please don't call me 'Mr.', just use my name, otherwise it makes our relationship seem distant." Salaman's hearty laughter came through the receiver, "And there's no need to thank me either. Friends are meant to help each other."

"Alright, then I won't be polite, Salaman." Qi Yun's tone relaxed a bit, as he led the conversation, "I'm guessing you didn't call just to talk about the reports, right?"

"You're as perceptive as ever." Seeing Qi Yun's straightforwardness, Salaman didn't beat around the bush, "That's right, I called because there's something I'd like to ask for your help with."

Qi Yun wasn't surprised, as he opened the car door and got in: "Go ahead, as long as it's within my capability, I won't turn you down."

"Great, then I won't hold back." Salaman's tone became more formal, "It's like this, as you know, our Zhongdong's desert and coastline span very large areas, and ensuring safety in certain regions has always been a challenge."

"So I've been promoting a space project recently, hoping to build our own high-precision satellite positioning system to ensure the safety of the oil transportation routes."

"My advisory team suggests that Huaxia's BeiDou system most closely meets our requirements, but there are some obstacles. I hope you can help facilitate this matter."

Although Salaman mentioned ensuring the safety of oil transportation routes, Qi Yun sensed that the issue was more complex than that.

The so-called "safety of oil transportation routes" is just a façade; a high-precision satellite positioning system has many applications, like missile guidance, jet take-offs and landings, and armored unit maneuvers—all rely on it.

Moreover, what puzzled Qi Yun the most was why Salaman would seek his help for such a matter—did he believe Qi Yun had that much influence?

Qi Yun couldn't help but show a wry smile, pondering how to handle this matter.

Before he could respond, Salaman continued on the other end of the line: "Some things are not convenient to discuss over the phone. Tomorrow, a diplomatic team is visiting Huaxia, and I plan to come with them. I'll tell you the details in person."

Upon hearing that Salaman planned to come in person, Qi Yun temporarily pushed down his doubts: "Okay, we'll discuss it further when we meet." Regardless of whether he could help, he needed to maintain the proper attitude.

The two ended the call, and Qi Yun sighed, feeling both eager and powerless.

After a brief contemplation, he patted the back of the driver's seat: "Brother Wei, let's head to the bank."

Chen Wei nodded and started the car, leaving the TV station compound.

Forty minutes later, the car arrived at the bank's entrance. Before Qi Yun could get out, Tian Yaosheng jogged over to open the car door for him.

"President Qi, welcome, welcome. I apologize for making you come all the way here."

Qi Yun got out of the car and shook hands with him: "Haha, President Tian, you're being too polite."

Originally, Tian Yaosheng had contacted him a few days ago, expressing a desire to visit, but Qi Yun was constantly busy. Today, finally having some free time, he decided to come by directly.

Previously, Secretary Ji's team had tried to access his safe deposit box at the bank. At that time, Tian Yaosheng had discreetly informed Qi Yun through a subordinate named Xiao Jing, although Qi Yun was unreachable by phone, so a message was sent instead.

Although Tian Yaosheng didn't know back then that Qi Yun had been arrested, he still took a risk by discreetly informing him, even though it didn't aid much. Nevertheless, Qi Yun appreciated the gesture.

Tian Yaosheng led Qi Yun to the president's office, personally poured him a cup of tea, and never stopped talking with his plump mouth.

"President Qi, have some tea. I recently got this from Fujian Province through a friend."

"Try it out. If you like it, I'll put some in your trunk later."

Qi Yun waved his hand, unconcerned about the quality of the tea: "Thank you for the kind offer, but I don't drink tea often, so better not take what's yours."

Tian Yaosheng paused, his eyes shifting slightly, trying to grasp the underlying meaning of Qi Yun's words.

As Qi Yun took a sip of tea and looked up at him, noticing his expression, Qi Yun realized there was a misunderstanding.

Sometimes this is how it goes—when someone offers you something and you don't accept, it might make them overthink.

But he didn't explain further. After putting down the teacup, he asked: "President Tian, I assume you didn't invite me for just tea."

Tian Yaosheng came back to reality, rubbed his hands, appearing slightly embarrassed.

Qi Yun smiled: "Haha, we've known each other for some time, so feel free to speak your mind, President Tian."

Tian Yaosheng's chubby face twitched slightly as he coughed twice, then gradually leaned in: "President Qi, to be honest, there's indeed something I need your help with this time."

Qi Yun looked up, signaling for him to continue.

"Here's the situation: Deputy President Sun of the provincial branch will retire next month, and the vacant position is likely to be filled by a recommended candidate from the branch." Tian Yaosheng lowered his voice even further, "Frankly, I've been in the New District branch for five years, and this is the best opportunity..."

Qi Yun understood—it was about Tian Yaosheng seeking a promotion.

He glanced at him and then casually asked: "Do you think I can help you, President Tian?"

Tian Yaosheng bent even lower, his round face filled with a cautious smile: "President Qi, you're too modest! If even you can't help me with this, then no one can."

Considering his position, he needed to be aware not only of policies from the higher-level bank but also of some local developments.

So when Secretary Ji's "guilt-induced suicide" happened, he had looked into it, combined with Secretary Ji's attempt to open Qi Yun's safe deposit box at his bank...

Connecting the dots, Qi Yun's significance in his eyes had skyrocketed.

Adding on the recent flood of media coverage, even getting special mentions on national news, Qi Yun instantly became an unattainable "big figure" to him.

"President Qi, this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for me. Please, help me out considering our past interactions."

"In the future, if you ever need my help, just say the word, and I, Old Tian, won't be vague about it!"

Seeing his sincere words and considering he owed him a favor anyway, Qi Yun thought for a moment and decided to help.

"Haha, President Tian, there's no need to speak so formally."

"How about this, I'll try to ask around for you, but I can't guarantee anything."

Tian Yaosheng's eyes lit up right away, and his already stooped posture almost touched the coffee table: "Oh! Oh! It's great that you're willing to help, President Qi! No matter the outcome, I'll remember this huge favor!"

In his view, such a small matter for Qi Yun was surely a cinch; he was just being humble.

Qi Yun nodded, ready to leave now that they'd finished talking: "Alright, wait for my call."

Tian Yaosheng quickly bounced up from the sofa: "Oh! Yes! Yes! Thank you, President Qi!"

He briskly moved ahead of Qi Yun and attentively opened the office door: "President Qi, I'll see you off. If you need anything, feel free to call me anytime."

Qi Yun naturally understood what he meant by "need," and waved with a smile: "No need, no need to see me off."

Nonetheless, Tian Yaosheng still moved two steps forward, his hand resting on the door handle: "No way! I'll see you downstairs."

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Chapter 492: The Man Behind Him

In the evening, at a private room in Hutao Villa, Qi Yun and Zhang Dayong met with Qin Minghui again.

This time, it was Qin Minghui who initiated the meeting again. As he picked up some food, he casually asked, "Xiao Qi, I heard that a disciplinary team from Beijing is about to come to Bird City to investigate. Are you aware of this?"

Qi Yun smiled and shook his head, "Hehe, the leadership is kidding. I'm not within the system, how could I know about such things."

Although he answered this way, he actually knew about it.

Wendong's leadership had specially called him, advising him to keep a low profile lately and be prepared to answer the investigation team's inquiries.

Of course, there was no way Qi Yun would talk about this to Qin Minghui; he was well aware of confidentiality protocols.

Qin Minghui listened to Qi Yun's answer without showing any dissatisfaction, merely laughing and pointing at him in a familiar tone, saying, "You rascal."

Compared to their first meeting, both were much more casual in their conversation.

On one hand, it was due to their current common goals; on the other, Qi Yun's status was now quite different from before.

As a safety advisor for J province's Guo An, he answered directly to the Secretary-General. His rank within the system was similar to Director Duan, only half a level lower than Qin Minghui.

But the main factor wasn't Qi Yun's identity, it was his connections.

Qin Minghui also had connections in Beijing, naturally having heard some insider information, including those who directly decorated Qi Yun with a medal, as well as Wendong's leader, Xiao Hanguang, and even Lan Bu Chang who favored him.

So while he called Qi Yun "Xiao Qi," he had no contempt towards him.

Qin Minghui put down his chopsticks and continued, "Guo An has handed over Fan Donglai to the disciplinary department today, and as soon as he confesses, Ma Chaoyang's crimes will be clear."

"I will have someone organize the complete evidence materials, and once the investigation team arrives, we'll report to them."

Qi Yun silently nodded. Qin Minghui's stance was clear: he wouldn't be involved further in subsequent matters.

Actually, the outcome was pretty much what Qi Yun expected; going forward, it wasn't something Qin Minghui could interfere with.

After chatting for a few moments, the meal was nearly finished. Just as Qin Minghui stood up to leave, Qi Yun called him back.

"Leader, I have some business matters and would like to meet with the provincial branch president of the Postal Savings Bank. Would you mind introducing me?"

Qin Minghui glanced at him, a faint smile on his lips, "You rascal."

"Alright, I'll have Xiaoxue contact you. I have some things to handle, so I'll leave first."

Though aware that Qi Yun was leveraging his influence, it was merely a phone call to Qin Minghui, so he readily extended this favor to Qi Yun.

Qi Yun was naturally aware of Qin Minghui's thoughts, nodding with a smile, "Thanks, Leader. I'll see you off."

After they left the private room, Qi Yun personally saw him off to the car, then took out his phone to call Tian Yaosheng.

"I'll send you the location; head over now."

On the other end, Tian Yaosheng was overjoyed, "Great! Great! Thank you, President Qi! I'm heading over right away!"

He truly hadn't expected Qi Yun to handle matters so efficiently; he'd barely brought it up in the afternoon, and Qi Yun arranged it by evening.

After hanging up, Qi Yun stood at the entrance, lit a cigarette, and had barely smoked a few puffs before Lu Zhaoxue came out from inside.

"Could I have one?" Lu Zhaoxue approached, elegantly extending her slender hand.

Qi Yun was slightly startled before handing over the cigarette and lighter.

Lu Zhaoxue accepted them and lit a cigarette. From her way of holding it, it was evident she had the habit of smoking.

Qi Yun looked at her side profile, and an inexplicable sense of familiarity surged within him again. Unable to resist, he asked, "President Lu, do you have a sister or a younger sister?"

Lu Zhaoxue handed the cigarette pack back to Qi Yun, teasing, "Why, do you want me to introduce you to someone?"

Qi Yun shook his head, "I mentioned before that I met a lady in Shanghai who looked very much like you."

"Coincidentally, her surname is also Lu."

Lu Zhaoxue paused her fingers holding the cigarette, looking towards Qi Yun, "You've met Xiaoyu?"

Upon hearing her surprised tone, Qi Yun realized he had guessed correctly, as the two were so alike they seemed carved from the same mold.

However, their temperament was somewhat different; Lu Zhaoxue was more elegant and gentle, while the woman in Shanghai had a cold demeanor, like a thorny rose.

"I don't know if she's called Xiaoyu, but she's the owner of a restaurant named Wangjiang Pavilion."

Lu Zhaoxue waved her hand holding the cigarette lightly, her expression shifting from surprise to a faint smile, "Hehe, seems like President Qi and I have quite the connection; Wangjiang Pavilion is run by my sister, her name is Lu Zhaoyu."

Qi Yun nodded, "I see..."

Just as they spoke, an Audi A6 drove up here, stopping at the entrance. A slightly balding middle-aged man hurriedly got out and jogged over.

"Oh, President Lu, I'm sorry to keep you waiting at the door." Even from a distance, he started apologizing; this was the provincial branch president of the Postal Savings Bank.

"President Ma, no need to be so formal." Lu Zhaoxue extinguished the cigarette on a nearby trash bin, then smiled and introduced to him, "This is Qi Yun, President Qi."

President Ma quickly tucked his briefcase behind him and warmly extended his hands, "Oh, I've heard so much about you, President Qi. Recently, I've been seeing a lot of reports about you; your outstanding achievements make me feel deeply inadequate."

Qi Yun shook hands with him calmly, "President Ma overpraises; it's just some duties performed, not outstanding achievements."

"Everyone, the wind is strong outside, let's go into the private room to talk." Lu Zhaoxue gestured with her hand.

"Yes, indeed! President Lu is right! The wind is strong tonight; don't let it freeze you two!" President Ma quickly responded, following suit.

The trio entered a private room that had been prepared in advance, with a server just bringing in a pot of tea on the tea table.

Once seated, Lu Zhaoxue lifted the teapot and began pouring tea while saying, "President Ma, the reason for calling you over is that Mr. Qi wishes to meet you, to make friends."

President Ma was briefly stunned but quickly caught on, realizing it was Qi Yun who really wanted to see him, and Lu Zhaoxue's presence essentially represented Qin Minghui.

"Wow! It's my honor for President Qi to make friends with me! Honestly, I've been looking for a chance to meet President Qi for a while."

That's why he could attain this position; the small chat he engaged in showed how Tian Yaosheng was still lacking.

As the three talked, there was a knock on the private room door.

Upon receiving permission, Tian Yaosheng cautiously peeked halfway into the room.

Qi Yun turned his head and beckoned to Tian Yaosheng, "President Tian, come have a seat."

President Ma glanced over, recognizing Tian Yaosheng, his expression freezing again.

"President Ma, you should know President Tian, so I need not introduce further." Qi Yun smiled and looked at President Ma.

President Ma quickly regained his composure, smiling as he replied, "Hehe, we know each other, know each other, Old Tian, come sit."

"Ah, alright, alright." Tian Yaosheng gave a small bow, after scanning the room, he finally settled into the empty seat beside Qi Yun, barely occupying the chair, keeping his posture very humble.

Thereafter, without mentioning any formalities, they chatted about insignificant topics for a moment before Qi Yun checked his watch briefly, apologizing slightly, "Sorry everyone, my daughter is waiting at home for me to lull her to sleep. I'll leave first, we'll gather another day."

Standing aside, Lu Zhaoxue glanced at him and rose with him, "I'll see you off."

Seeing this, President Ma and Tian Yaosheng quickly stood up too, taking a couple of steps towards the door, "Children are important, when President Qi has time, we'll gather again."

Qi Yun nodded at the two, leaving the private room with Lu Zhaoxue.

After they had left, President Ma returned to his seat, seriously examining Tian Yaosheng before saying meaningfully, "Old Tian, I didn't realize your circle of friends was so wide."

Tian Yaosheng detected the sigh and helplessness within this sentence, knowing President Ma already had someone recommended for that position, but it was all irrelevant now.

Because the man behind him guaranteed that the position would only be his.

Chapter 493: Salaman's Visit

In the early morning, a secluded residential house in West Mountain.

A bedsheet was spread on the cement floor of the main room, with various antiques and cultural artifacts placed on it, including porcelain from the Ming and Qing dynasties, calligraphy, and some jade pieces.

Each item in this pile is worth no less than half a million dollars.

Besides these antiques, there's a suitcase next to it filled with shiny small yellow fish.

This was once the realm that Secretary Ji had conquered, but now none of it belongs to him anymore.

Hong Weize squatted halfway on the ground, holding a flashlight, roughly scanning through the antiques, then stood up and rubbed his hands.

"They are all good stuff!"

"All given to me? Shi Feng won't overthink it, will he?"

Qi Yun laughed and shook his head, pulling his companion to the courtyard outside the house and handing over a cigarette: "These things aren't suitable to be sold in his shop."

Hong Weize, being a sharp old man, instantly understood the implication in Qi Yun's words, touched his shiny bald head, and replied in a low voice: "I'll find a way to break them up into single pieces and distribute them to collectors in the south, which is both safe and profitable."

"Alright, make the arrangements, and later keep your share, then exchange the rest for gold for me."

"Haha, understood." Hong Weize grinned, revealing a set of large yellow teeth.

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The next afternoon, a flight from Oil Country landed at the Bird City Air Force Base.

As the gangway was just set up next to the cabin door, the first person to walk down was wearing a white robe, with a piece of white cloth on their head, none other than the future leader of Oil Country—Salaman.

Following closely behind were the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Oil Country and more than a dozen staff members, including people in charge of the "Eye of God" project negotiations mixed into the group.

Their official reason for visiting China this time was to promote economic and energy cooperation between the two countries, with the northwest being an important economic and energy hub of Huaxia, serving as their first stop for the visit.

Normally, people of Salaman's level visiting China would fly directly to Beijing, rarely heading to the northwest, so the local importance placed on this visit was extremely high.

The perimeter of the tarmac had security stations every ten paces and guards every five paces, not even a fly could get through.

The welcoming party was equally high-profile, with local leaders basically all present, including a certain "Old He," and even some big shots from the foreign affairs and energy departments who rushed from Beijing.

Such a lineup was unprecedented in the recent years of foreign affairs activities in Bird City.

Once Salaman descended the gangway, the foreign affairs leader led the translator forward and greeted with a smile: "Prime Minister Salaman, welcome to China!"

Salaman behaved very humbly, placing a hand on his chest and bowing in the traditional Oil Country manner.

After introductions, both sides began to shake hands, while photographers outside started snapping wildly, with the sounds of shutters continuously echoing on the tarmac.

Once the routine was completed, the foreign affairs leader made a gesture inviting Salaman to walk toward the nearby fleet of Hongqi cars.

"Prime Minister, this way please, we've prepared a welcoming banquet for you later."

Salaman nodded slightly, thanking with a gentle tone: "Thank you for your thoughtful arrangements."

The group got into the cars, and Old He rode in the same vehicle as the big shot from the energy department.

Once the car started, he turned his head and said, "Old Zhou, you'll have to give a hand this time."

"If we can reach a cooperation with Oil Country, it would be a great boon for our J Province's development!"

The elder called Old Zhou gazed out of the window with a chuckle: "Old He, your words are so formal."

"J Province has a strong foundation in photovoltaics, and if we can cooperate with Oil Country, it would indeed be a great thing. I would help even if you didn't ask."

At this point, he paused, with his tone suddenly becoming meaningful, "However... don't you find their visit to J Province a bit odd?"

Old He's eyes showed a hint of doubt, thinking for two seconds before asking: "What's odd about it?"

Old Zhou retracted his gaze, lightly tapping his fingers on his knee: "Think about it, J Province isn't the only strong province in photovoltaics in the country; Tai Mountain and Jiangnan's production capacity and industry support started two years earlier than yours."

"Logically, if Oil Country wanted to procure equipment, they should visit those two provinces first. Why bypass them and come straight to J Province?"

"Moreover, I heard from people in the foreign affairs department that the original visiting list from Oil Country didn't include Crown Prince Salaman, and they only received the notification yesterday."

"Isn't this unusual?"

After listening, Old He frowned unconsciously, and after a few seconds of silence, he pondered and spoke: "Regardless of any other factors, if Oil Country wants to develop photovoltaics, J Province's production line, though not the most advanced in the country, is highly similar to their environment and climate. We do have a significant advantage."

"Indeed, you have innate advantages." Old Zhou smiled and nodded, opting not to continue the discussion.

He could understand Old He's mentality; with such a big piece of meat passing by, who wouldn't want a bite? Once secured, the project could leave a remarkable mark on his administration record.

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Meanwhile, in Cao Yufei's pharmaceutical office.

Qi Yun, Cao Yufei, and Pang Zefeng were discussing the development of healthcare products.

Pang Zefeng's fingers skimmed over dense annotations in the notebook, his eyes brimming with undisguisable excitement.

"During this time, I've repeatedly analyzed the formula you gave me, President Qi, and found that it not only has the effect of nourishing qi and blood, but also significantly exceeds expectations in improving immunity and repairing damaged cells!"

"If products are manufactured based on this formula, they can't be simply labeled as health products; in some aspects, their efficacy could surpass that of many specialized medicines!"

"If we decide to develop it as a special medicine, we stand to achieve monumental success that might even reach the heights of Pfizer or Johnson & Johnson!"

Qi Yun was well aware of the potency of the formula, but the version he gave was truncated, omitting several crucial main ingredients, yet it was still remarkably effective.

Beside him, Cao Yufei frowned and picked up the conversation: "If we switch to pharmaceuticals, the investment cost will be substantial."

"Special drugs require dedicated approval numbers and three-phase clinical trials, needing at least fifty million in funding, with a minimum timeline of three years."

"Companies like Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson usually invest hundreds of millions USD on average to develop a single special drug over ten years of clinical trials."

He glanced at Qi Yun before continuing, "Even if you can potentially manage the key procedures, President Qi, you must be prepared for long-term financial consumption."

On these matters, Cao Yufei was quite knowledgeable, having been seasoned in this field.

Although he previously worked mainly on products like watermelon frost and other traditional Chinese medicines, he's quite familiar with the ins and outs of the industry here.

Chapter 494: Bigger, Stronger, and Toward Greater Glory!

Qi Yun listened to the speeches of the two men, thought carefully for a while, and found that Cao Yufei's concerns were not without reason.

Even though he currently held more than two hundred million in cash, if he really started up, he wouldn't last long, even with other industries bleeding into it. Most likely, he wouldn't match the burn rate of pharmaceutical research and development.

The main issue is the long cycle.

"We're a bit thin on resources now, let's not take too big steps. Let's focus first on doing well with health supplements. If the results are good later, we can consider advancing with pharmaceutical products."

"Additionally..." Qi Yun turned to Pang Zefeng, "I hope you can improve this formula. The effects shouldn't be too exaggerated. It would be best to divide it into multiple versions, gradually enhancing the effects, and launching them in batches."

Pang Zefeng nodded, although his proposal was not adopted, he still showed no trace of displeasure.

"President Qi, your method is good. Improving in versions not only controls effects but also enables market segmentation."

"I can start with the core ingredient concentration and auxiliary material ratio, designing three versions first."

Qi Yun nodded slightly: "Yes, for specific development matters, discuss with Old Cao. If you need experts in this area, hire them!"

"Also, I've already arranged for equipment to be shipped back from Frankfurt, it should arrive in the next two days. First, get the samples ready, then we'll go to the production line!"

"In short, whatever you need, I'll provide. Let's strive to become bigger and stronger this time! Achieve greatness again!"

"Once the health supplements succeed, I'll open a pharmaceutical factory! Then you will be the research and development director!"

Pang Zefeng was stirred by Qi Yun's two statements, immediately showing a determined loyalty: "Rest assured! I will never disappoint you!"

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Eight o'clock in the evening, at the guesthouse.

In a banquet hall exceeding five hundred square meters, accommodating three hundred people, cheerful Middle Eastern tunes were playing.

After a series of grand welcoming ceremonies, it finally entered the opening stage.

The reporters left one after another, and the atmosphere on site eased a bit.

Salaman, as the protagonist of today's event, was approached by numerous dignitaries for toasts and conversation. But considering religious taboos, although everyone held wine glasses, they were filled with grape juice.

Standing beside the main table, Salaman maintained a gentle smile facing those who approached for conversation. He had just finished speaking with external department executives when Old Zhou and Old He approached together.

"Prime Minister, are you satisfied with the arrangements tonight?"

Salaman raised his glass and clinked it with the other: "Very satisfied, thank you for your warm hospitality."

After a few polite exchanges, Old He tentatively opened his mouth: "Prime Minister, regarding your proposed procurement of photovoltaic equipment and demand for local factory construction, we have prepared two sets of plans locally. I'd like to discuss them briefly tonight, would you have time later?"

"Oh, I'm sorry, I have to meet a friend later. Regarding project cooperation, Mr. He can communicate directly with our delegation, who will report the results to me," Salaman replied with a hint of apology.

Old He's face flashed a trace of embarrassment, but soon he masked it with a hearty smile: "It was thoughtless of us not to anticipate your schedule."

Salaman nodded at him, without further explanation.

The energy project was just the surface reason for their delegation's visit to Huaxia, even if the talks succeeded, the amount wouldn't be large. What he truly cared about was the "Eye of God" project he personally promoted.

The banquet proceeded for another ten minutes. Seeing most greetings were done, Salaman checked the time, greeted the Foreign Minister of the Oil Country, then left early.

Old He, noticing the other's departing figure, frowned slightly, then called the newly appointed secretary and instructed quietly: "Find out who he's meeting."

The secretary hesitated momentarily but nodded, quickly heading towards the door.

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The guesthouse, as a place for official receptions of important guests, is not open to the public.

Thus, the guards are very strict, with local security forces and special services personnel from the Oil Country on alert.

Across the street, a black BMW 5 series slowly parked by the roadside, sitting in the rear seat, Qi Yun lowered the window, glanced at the entrance, then took out his phone to send a message to Salaman.

Actually, as long as he presented his credentials, he could enter this place. But he felt it was unnecessary, it was not for official business, being too ostentatious wouldn't be good.

After about four or five minutes, a staff member from the Oil Country came running to the car, respectfully said to Qi Yun: "Mr. Qi, the Prime Minister asked me to greet you. I've explained to the guards, you can drive directly in."

Qi Yun nodded to him: "Thank you, let's go."

Chen Wei started the car, slowly drove into the guesthouse's courtyard, and under the staff's guidance, stopped in front of an independent small building.

The location is a hundred meters from the main building where the banquet hall is, surrounded by tall poplar trees.

The staff member who navigated hurriedly stepped forward to open the rear car door, bending over: "Mr. Qi, the Prime Minister is waiting for you in the reception room on the second floor, please follow me."

Qi Yun asked Chen Wei to wait downstairs and followed the staff inside.

Arriving at the reception room door, the staff gently knocked: "Prime Minister, Mr. Qi is here."

Salaman's voice came from inside: "Please come in."

Opening the door, the reception room was brightly lit, Salaman stood up from the sofa, and came forward to welcome Qi Yun.

"Qi Yun, long time no see, you seem to look younger."

Qi Yun reached out to shake hands, politely smiled: "You look more vigorous than the last time we met."

"Really? Perhaps because Paris Saint-Germain just won the Champions League! Hahaha!" Salaman joked, pulling Qi Yun toward the sofa, "Let me tell you a secret, someone actually holds shares in this team on my behalf, made me a hefty profit!"

Qi Yun followed him to the sofa and sat down, heard the comment, smiled and nodded: "Congratulations to Mr. Salaman, you truly have a discerning eye."

Though he said this, Qi Yun secretly thought to himself, you're not just any prime minister, future leader of the Oil Country, always not focusing on teams but researching various antiques...

Salaman was complimented as having a "discerning eye," making him even more pleased: "Actually, it's not about discernment, I just value the influence of the football industry, it can help the Oil Country enhance its international image, much more useful than mere donations for diplomacy."

After chatting idly for a few moments, they finally started addressing the main topic.

"You know the United States has mighty surveillance methods, some things I can only tell you in person," Salaman's smile significantly faded when he said this.

"To be frank, in certain fields, our country relies heavily on U.S. technology, which means many of our actions cannot be implemented according to our own wishes."

"This includes military equipment, 80% of our arms come from the United States, and these weapons use their navigation and positioning technology."

"This means, if our actions don't gain their approval, our weaponry will become scrap iron!"

"Mate! Can you understand that feeling!?"

Chapter 495: I Will Take Action

Qi Yun listened quietly until Salaman finished his lament, and then put on a sympathetic expression, "I can understand the predicament your country is in. That feeling of having to obey others in everything is indeed very unpleasant."

Salaman fiddled with a cigar on the table, cut one, and handed it over, "Buddy, thank you for your understanding, so please, you have to help me this time."

"Thank you, I don't smoke this," Qi Yun politely waved his hand in refusal, then pondered, "I always remember your help last time, Mr. Salaman. If I can be of assistance, I will do my utmost."

"What exactly do you want me to do?"

Salaman sat up straight, looking expectantly at Qi Yun, "I want you to help settle things with the top executives of Beidou Company. My people have had interactions with them recently, and their willingness to cooperate isn't strong."

"Moreover, you should also know that selling such sensitive technology cannot bypass the Huaxia government; in the end, your higher-ups must agree as well."

Salaman spoke quite directly this time, without holding back anything.

Hearing this, Qi Yun couldn't help but show a wry smile. Salaman really thought highly of him, expecting him to manage both Beidou's executives and get approval from above. It would require immense influence to achieve that.

In Bird City, Qi Yun did have some influence, but handling strategic national resources like this was far beyond his reach...

"Mr. Salaman, to be honest, you may have overestimated my abilities..." Qi Yun rubbed his hands, his tone filled with sincere helplessness, "What you're asking would require decisions at the ministerial level or higher, and as a local businessman, I might not even qualify to pass along a message."

"No, no, please don't put it that way." Salaman's eyes did not show any disappointment. He waved his hand and continued, "Even though you're not a government person, you definitely have the ability to help me with this."

"I've heard some news about recent occurrences around you in the Oil Country; you have connections with quite a few high-ranking individuals who can influence the 'Eye of God' project."

"Moreover, you have a personal friendship with Li Yaohua's boss. With his influence in Huaxia, facilitating this matter shouldn't be difficult."

Upon hearing this, Qi Yun was momentarily stunned, understanding why Salaman traveled to Bird City to meet him; the calculations were already made.

According to Salaman, if Fu Wentao stepped in, there indeed might be a chance to make it happen. But the problem was, Fu Wentao was currently in the United States, negotiating about photolithography machines with Blackstone Group...

While it is true that Qi Yun knows some high-ranking individuals, there is a great misunderstanding outside about his relationships with these bigwigs.

They simply had a bit of appreciation or admiration for Qi Yun, without any interests involved.

If Qi Yun himself were to suffer injustice or face life-and-death crises, these bigwigs might lend a hand.

But for matters like Salaman proposed, they would definitely not save face for him; they might even think he was getting overconfident and grow to dislike him.

After pondering for a while, Qi Yun carefully asked, "Why doesn't Mr. Salaman directly negotiate with the Huaxia higher-ups about this matter?"

Salaman sighed, his voice carrying traces of helplessness, "It's not that I don't want to negotiate directly, but the timing isn't right." He rubbed his temples and continued to explain, "The United States is constantly monitoring every move of the Oil Country; they will not allow us to develop the Eye of God project."

"If I engage in formal discussions with the Huaxia higher-ups, the CIA would likely find out in less than a day. They would exert pressure on the Huaxia government and stir trouble within the Oil Country, accusing me of betraying allies, and those pro-American factions in the cabinet would surely seize the opportunity to oppose."

"More importantly, your Huaxia is currently in a tense trade relationship with the United States. You certainly don't want to complicate matters with such issues. So even if I request cooperation, your higher-ups would likely not agree."

Qi Yun nodded silently, agreeing with what the other party said.

Salaman took a sip from his water cup and continued, "The Eye of God is our country's key project to free itself from the grip of the United States. If it gets completely exposed before it even starts, the United States will absolutely use regional security threats as an excuse to join forces with European countries to sanction us."

"But it's different with you; you aren't an official. You have a private friendship with Mr. Fu Wentao, and with you making the connections, it can avoid the United States' watchful eyes and bring matters to fruition privately."

"Once your higher-ups agree, we can then sign a formal agreement with Beidou Company under the pretext of photovoltaic projects requiring navigation support, thereby keeping it under wraps and avoiding unnecessary trouble for both sides."

Salaman explained his plan in one go, then looked at Qi Yun with eyes full of plea, waiting for his response.

After contemplating for a moment, Qi Yun finally nodded, "Alright, I will do my best to help facilitate this matter for you."

"But if the final result isn't ideal, I hope Mr. Salaman won't blame me."

At these words, Salaman's tense face instantly relaxed quite a bit.

He reached out and patted Qi Yun's arm, his words incredibly sincere, "Buddy, I'm already immensely grateful that you're willing to help. Regardless of whether things ultimately work out, I won't forget the help you've given me!"

"You'll be my most trusted friend from now on!"

Qi Yun smiled and nodded, "It's my honor to be a friend of Mr. Salaman."

Though he said so, he was well aware in his heart that the disparity in status and identity between him and Salaman was too vast. To become friends, it was premised on the ability to bring value to each other.

So they could never become friends like he was with Old Feng or Liu Meng.

...

Not even two minutes after Qi Yun left the guest house, Old He's secretary hurriedly found him to report.

"Leader, we found out who met with Prime Minister Salaman."

"Who is it?"

"Qi... Qi Yun." The secretary said, cautiously stealing a glance at Old He, aware of certain matters from his previous time in the secretariat.

Sure enough, upon hearing Qi Yun's name, Old He's eyebrows furrowed instantly.

"How does he know Salaman?" Previously at the banquet, Salaman personally told him he was going to meet a friend.

Old He really couldn't fathom how someone like Qi Yun could become friends with the future key figure of the Oil Country.

"That... I'm not really sure either."

Old He pondered for a few seconds, then instructed, "Call Li Tongwei and have him investigate."

"Alright, I'll notify him right away." The secretary responded and then left quickly.

On the other side, Qi Yun lit a cigarette while sitting in the car, silently contemplating how to handle this matter.

After a few minutes of thinking, he took out his phone and dialed De Gaulle's number.

Chapter 496: Captive of the Nine-Eyed Celestial Pearl

"Haha, Mr. Qi, still awake at this late hour?" came the voice of De Gaulle on the other end of the phone.

One has to mention the demeanor of this European noble; refined and elegant from a young age, even though he was pinched by Qi Yun last time, he still maintained a polite demeanor.

Although it's most likely a façade.

"Yes, I wanted to ask Mr. De Gaulle about the progress on those lithography machines," Qi Yun cut straight to the chase, without any formalities.

"Haha, Mr. Qi is quite direct." De Gaulle's laughter paused for a moment on the other end, "The progress isn't very smooth. Christophe has discussed this privately with several major shareholders, and although some support has been garnered, it's still not enough."

"He is currently actively communicating with Mr. Wei from TSMC. As long as he can gain support from their side, he can persuade other shareholders and use Taiwan as a transit point to transport the equipment."

Qi Yun nodded upon hearing this; he understood the complexity of the situation. Selling the most advanced lithography machines to Huaxia under the strict EU and US embargo is indeed very challenging.

"Can you give me an estimated timeframe?"

There was a moment of silence on the receiver; after a few seconds, De Gaulle replied earnestly, "I'm sorry, it's impossible to give a specific time for this kind of matter; everything depends on TSMC's attitude."

"But rest assured, Mr. Qi, I also want to obtain the complete map as soon as possible, so I will definitely expedite this matter for you."

Qi Yun didn't doubt his words, but he couldn't wait indefinitely. After a brief thought, he asked, "What is the attitude over at TSMC? Is there anything I can do to help?"

"Mr. Wei has concerns about this matter and doesn't want to cause shareholder division." De Gaulle explained concisely, then added, "If Mr. Qi can help persuade TSMC, the lithography machines can be transported within two days."

Qi Yun placed his hand on the car window, tapping it lightly as he quickly calculated in his mind.

Mr. Wei is worried about shareholder division; fundamentally, he's concerned that transporting the lithography machine to Huaxia poses greater risks than benefits. As long as sufficient profit assurances can be offered, their concerns can naturally be alleviated.

But what can he do about this?

Money? Power?

Seems they are unmatched...

"Alright, I understand. I'll see what I can do if the opportunity arises." Qi Yun sighed and hung up the phone.

To help Salaman resolve the Beidou issue, Fu Wentao has to step in, but Fu Wentao is currently in the United States dealing with the lithography machines.

In the current situation, unless he can get the lithography machines back, it wouldn't be appropriate to ask Fu Wentao for this favor.

Ten minutes later, Qi Yun returned home. His daughter was already asleep, and Zhao Qing was sitting cross-legged on the sofa knitting a sweater, a skill she had just picked up recently, saying she wanted to knit a scarf for Qi Yun before winter.

"Why are you back so late today? Did you eat?" Zhao Qing greeted him warmly upon his return.

Qi Yun shook his head with a wry smile, "I would have forgotten if you hadn't mentioned it."

Zhao Qing reached out to take the bag from his hand, giving him a playful glare, "Busy to the point you don't take care of yourself, even forgetting to eat." As she said this, she turned towards the kitchen, "Sit down for a while, I'll fix you something to eat."

Qi Yun wrapped his arms around her waist from behind, burying his head in her silky hair, taking a deep breath.

Zhao Qing stiffened slightly, gently wriggling with a shy manner, "Stop fooling around, you smell terrible." Despite her words, she didn't push him away, "Go take a shower first, I'll make you noodles."

Reluctantly, Qi Yun let go, taking a quick survey of the balcony before entering the bathroom.

After showering, Qi Yun emerged wrapped in a towel, the aroma of scallion permeating the air as he entered the living room.

Zhao Qing was standing next to the dining table, dishing out freshly cooked noodles into a bowl. Besides a golden fried egg, there was even a shelled small lobster.

"Come eat quickly before it gets cold." Zhao Qing set the chopsticks in place, lifting her head to speak, "Brother Wei Yong came earlier and brought a box of lobsters."

"That guy, just come over, and he still brings stuff..." Qi Yun muttered, sitting down at the dining table, "Did he mention why he was looking for me?"

Zhao Qing shook her head, "He didn't say. He waited for a while, and seeing you hadn't returned as it got dark, he left."

Qi Yun didn't say much else and picked up his chopsticks to eat.

After eating, he took his phone to the study, intending to call Wei Yong, only to be met with the "The number you dialed is turned off" message.

Qi Yun knitted his brows, adding a reminder in his memo to contact Wei Yong. He's been so busy lately, forgetting much, afraid he'll overlook things.

If Wei Yong comes to his home looking for him, there's definitely something he needs help with.

After dealing with this matter, Qi Yun put down his phone and began catching up on the new day's intelligence.

[Today's Intelligence 1 (Red): Sky Rainbow Game Company has conducted a new round of evaluation on "Defense of Azeroth" and plans to re-enter negotiations soon. This time, their psychological price is not higher than two billion to acquire Yunqing Technology and full ownership of Defense of Azeroth]

Two billion... Qi Yun cracked a smile.

Last time, their offer was eight million to buy 51% of Yunqing Technology's shares or twenty million for full ownership of the game, yet now the price has been elevated tenfold!

Looks like Xiang Xiaoyue's millions were well spent; it's already showing results in under two months.

As for whether to sell or not... Qi Yun hadn't considered it yet.

Even if a decision is to be made, he would first listen to the opinions of the company's key contributors.

Though the company is his, everyone has contributed; being the boss doesn't justify acting autocratically.

...

[Today's Intelligence 2 (Red): Little Huang's hair salon business is thriving, planning for expansion, looking to you for financing again]

[Today's Intelligence 3 (Red): TSMC CEO Wei Zhe's household is deeply devoted to Buddhism, attends rituals every Saturday morning at the Dharma Drum Mountain Temple in Taipei, unwaveringly; he also has a strong passion for Tibetan Buddhism culture, having invited high monks from the Tibetan Area to Taiwan for teachings]

Hmm? Qi Yun rubbed his eyes, thinking he had just been contemplating about you.

Buddhist devotee...

He muttered these words softly, then after a few seconds, suddenly his eyes lit up.

"As a Buddhist devotee, how could he refuse the allure of a Nine-Eyed Celestial Pearl!?"

After all, no genuine Tibetan Buddhist devotee can resist a superior-quality Nine-Eyed Celestial Pearl!

And it just so happens that today is Friday, with even the meeting place already known...

Chapter 497: Seems Like She Got Involved with That Stuff

The next day, 10 in the morning, 28 Nanjing Road.

Qi Yun reported his trip to Treasure Island in Director Duan's office.

Although he can't be considered part of the establishment, his identity has changed now, and his position in Guo An is also different, so reporting his trip to Treasure Island to Z Organization is necessary.

Director Duan simply asked a few questions, and then agreed to his trip: "Try to avoid appearing in public places over there; the most important thing is to be cautious in your words and actions. After all, you're in the limelight right now; don't let anyone get any dirt on you."

Regarding Director Duan's kind reminder, Qi Yun hurriedly nodded, responding with a serious tone: "Rest assured, I know what I'm doing. This trip to Treasure Island is mainly about dealing with some personal matters. I won't be in contact with other outsiders, let alone appear in public."

"I promise not to cause any trouble for Z Organization."

Director Duan nodded; he understood Qi Yun well enough to know that the latter would keep his discretion.

"Also, pay attention to your personal safety and be on guard for the recurrence of last time's attack."

"If you encounter any emergency situation beyond your control, you can contact me."

Hearing this, Qi Yun's eyes lit up, deciphering a hint from the words, but it seemed reasonable upon reflection.

"Yes, thank you for your care, Leader!" He gave a standard salute, expressing gratitude to Director Duan.

Director Duan waved his hand: "Alright, off you go."

After leaving Guo An, Qi Yun called De Gaulle and informed him about his trip to Treasure Island, trying to persuade Wei Zhe from T-Bas Electric.

De Gaulle was obviously pleased with this, immediately stating that he had friends on Treasure Island who could provide Qi Yun with appropriate support.

He was eager to resolve this matter quickly and obtain the complete map.

The secret that the Gwen Clan had been pursuing for hundreds of years—if it could be unraveled in his hands—would undoubtedly gain him the support of the elders in his family, enabling him to assume the position of decision-maker.

...

Elsewhere, Old He arrived early with his team at the Guest House to wait. Today, he was accompanying Salaman and the Oil Country's delegation to inspect several photovoltaic project bases.

In the car, Old He raised his watch to check the time and asked the secretary, "Do we have any news from Li Tongwei's side?"

The secretary in the passenger seat turned back: "Leader, last night Li Tongwei's secretary had people conduct an investigation through the night. So far, they haven't found any prior contact between Qi Yun and that person... but..."

"But what?" Old He frowned, feeling dissatisfied with the new secretary, thinking that he couldn't quite use him as smoothly as the previous Xiaojie.

But unfortunately, Xiaojie had been targeted and knew too much...

The secretary stole a glance at Old He, swallowed nervously, and cautiously replied: "Li Secretary said... friends from the Qingbao department revealed to him that it seems related to the last batch of artifacts, and he's still investigating the specifics."

Upon hearing this, Old He wore a somber face and said no more.

After waiting for about four or five minutes, the Oil Country's delegation slowly exited the building, and Old He tidied his cuff and got out to greet them.

However, when he scanned the crowd, he never saw the Crown Prince's figure, making him puzzled. So he approached the Oil Country's person in charge to inquire.

The latter told him that Prime Minister Salaman wasn't feeling well and wouldn't attend today's project inspection.

After learning this, Old He's smile visibly stiffened; you came all the way from Middle East seeking cooperation, but when it came time for project inspection, you didn't attend. What are you here for?

Coupling with Salaman's indifferent attitude last night and the words from energy department Big Guy Old Zhou, Old He felt doused with a cold bucket of water, an icy chill in his heart.

It seemed like the meat that was almost in his mouth would likely not be eaten... yet he was really unwilling...

Sure enough, during the subsequent inspections, although the delegation seemed interested, Old He still felt a lack of sincerity.

...

On Qi Yun's side, after leaving Guo An, he returned home and gathered his subordinates together.

"I need to set off for Treasure Island at noon, and the duration is not yet determined. Brother Wei, Niu Da, and Old Eagle, you three will go with me."

"The rest will be divided into two groups, with Xiaomin and Pingyu each in charge of a group, ensuring the safety of Zhao Qing and Nuannuan. Weapons are allowed in necessity! Do not hesitate!"

"Yes!" Upon hearing this, everyone stood straight and shouted.

Qi Yun waved his hand: "Alright, dispersed, Pingyu stay."

After the crowd dispersed, Qi Yun took Duan Pingyu outside and pulled out his phone to instruct: "I'll give you a number, remember it. In case of emergency, if you can't contact me, call this number."

Duan Pingyu nodded and immediately pulled out his phone.

After giving instructions, Qi Yun raised his watch to check the time, prepared to call Wei Yong, only to see him already driving a small truck to the door.

"I just delivered the goods back to the store, have you been waiting long?" Wei Yong wiped the sweat from his forehead and ran over.

Qi Yun patted his arm, leading him into the living room.

"What's up? It must be face-to-face to talk?" He took a bottle of water from the fridge, handed it over with a smile, and asked.

Wei Yong took the water and drank most of the bottle in gulps, wiping his mouth before speaking: "Hey, can't say clearly over the phone."

Qi Yun saw Wei Yong's hesitant demeanor and was a bit surprised, sitting on the sofa opposite him. "Take your time."

Wei Yong's Adam's apple moved up and down twice before he replied awkwardly, "It's... it's about Sisi..."

"Hmm? What's wrong with her?" Qi Yun asked in astonishment. The last time he saw her was when this house was being renovated.

Wei Yong's fingers unconsciously gripped the mineral water bottle, causing the bottle to slightly deform.

He looked at Qi Yun with an unnatural expression and said hesitantly, "She... she seems to have gotten into that stuff."

Qi Yun's smile instantly froze on his face, his eyes filled with disbelief, "What's going on?"

Wei Yong's Adam's apple moved again, with a hint of helplessness, "We only discovered it recently. A while ago, Sisi kept saying she felt unusually tired. Your sister-in-law thought she hadn't been sleeping well at night, so she let her rest at home for two days."

"Until the night before last, when your sister-in-law and I took the girl to her house to see her, we found her hiding in the bedroom with two other girls. Their faces were as white as paper, and they were holding those small boxes made of folded tin foil. That's when I realized something was wrong."

"I immediately rushed in to snatch the stuff away and asked her what it was, but she wouldn't say."

Qi Yun's face turned extremely grim after hearing this, and he remained silent. Once someone gets involved with that stuff, there are rarely good outcomes.

Wei Yong scratched his head, his face full of anxiety. "I know that stuff shouldn't be touched. I wanted to take her to turn herself in, but I was worried whether it would count as harboring others..."

"I looked online, and it says harboring others... means jail time, but Sisi is still so young. If she really had a criminal record, her life would be ruined."

"My sister-in-law and I discussed it all night, and we didn't dare to report it to the authorities. We can only watch over her closely without leaving her side."

"But... what if those two girls were caught in the future and ratted her out?"

"Old Qi, please help me figure this out. We really don't know what to do..."

Qi Yun raised his hand to press his temples, feeling a bit sorry for the girl.

After a long silence, he finally spoke in a deep voice, "Here's what you do: when you go back, take her to the New District Branch to turn herself in and explain everything clearly."

Wei Yong hesitated for a moment after hearing this, "But she..."

Qi Yun waved his hand to interrupt, "The information online is half true and half false. Don't scare yourself. Harboring others does require taking responsibility, but it depends on the specific situation."

"I'll talk to them over there. After explaining, quickly take her to rehab."

"Okay! Okay! I got it!" Wei Yong quickly nodded, stood up, and prepared to leave.

He knew that since Qi Yun advised him to do this, there would be no problem.

"Don't be soft-hearted." Qi Yun sighed and added another sentence.

Wei Yong's steps paused for a moment. He turned back to look at Qi Yun with a complex gaze, hesitated for several seconds, and then asked in a low voice, "Are you... are you going to see her?"

Qi Yun paused, remained silent for a while before slowly shaking his head, his voice carrying an indescribable tone, "Not right now, I'm about to leave for the treasure island."

"If you encounter any difficulties, call me at any time."

Wei Yong seemed to have expected this outcome, nodded, and didn't say more, quickly leaving the door.

After Wei Yong left, Qi Yun went to the window and lit a cigarette, looking deeply thoughtful.

After finishing a cigarette, he extinguished the butt and took out his phone to send a message to Zhang Dayong.

...

At six in the evening, Qi Yun, Chen Wei, Niu Da, and Old Eagle appeared at the exit passage of Taipei Airport.

The four left the airport, grabbed a cab, and headed straight for Hsinchu City.

The climate here was noticeably cooler compared to Bird City, with rows of camphor trees swaying in the breeze. Qi Yun leaned against the car window, observing this completely different scenery.

Two hours later, the taxi stopped under a Hilton Hotel in Hsinchu, less than twenty kilometers from the Dharma Drum Mountain Monastery.

Although Hsinchu City is a county-level city with only 400,000 people, its area isn't even as large as one of Bird City's townships, yet it's the technology hub of the island. The Hsinchu Science Park under its jurisdiction is known as a mini Silicon Valley, with many famous multinational companies setting up branches here.

After checking into the hotel, Qi Yun and his companions went to eat. The streets were filled with a flow of motorcycles, almost more than the four-wheeled cars.

Moreover, the streets were lined with glowing signs of convenience stores and food stalls. Although it looked a bit chaotic, it was full of lively energy.

The four of them found a nearby snack bar. Wooden tables and chairs were set up along the street, and as soon as they sat down, a Taiwanese girl in a floral apron brought over some winter melon tea and greeted them, "What would you like to order?"

Qi Yun glanced at the menu on the table, full of dishes he had never heard of, and just randomly ordered a few.

The Taiwanese girl noted down the order on paper and looked at Qi Yun and the others curiously, "Oh, you're compatriots?"

Qi Yun nodded with a smile, without giving much explanation.

Before long, the food was served, and they began to eat in silence.

Suddenly, the roaring sound of motorcycle engines came from a distance. Qi Yun looked up to see three motorcycles speeding towards them.

Chapter 498: A Fright Without Danger

The rider wore a full helmet, revealing only two eyes.

Sitting beside him, Chen Wei put down his chopsticks, his arms instantly tensing up. Niu Da and the Eagle also stood up, defensively blocking in front of Qi Yun.

Three motorcycles approached in a pyramid formation at high speed, arriving in the blink of an eye.

The girl from Taiwan was carrying fish soup out from the kitchen and, upon seeing this, her face immediately showed dissatisfaction. She angrily shouted, "Hey! Slow down! People are eating here!"

Although she looked puffed-up with anger, her tone was soft, sounding more like a playful complaint...

The three motorcycles braked sharply a few meters away from the stall, their tires screeching against the ground.

In the next second, the three riders simultaneously reached into their jackets, pulling out three "Black Star" Type 54 pistols, their black muzzles pointing directly at Qi Yun and the others, the sound of safety locks clicking audibly.

"Watch out!" Chen Wei was already alert, almost at the moment the muzzles rose, he grabbed Qi Yun's arm and ducked behind a nearby pillar.

At the same time, three ear-piercing gunshots rang out, flashes erupting from the barrels in the night.

The Eagle reacted extremely quickly, glancing at Chen Wei's movement with peripheral vision, immediately bending down to dodge. Then, he grabbed the table legs with both hands and flipped them over.

With a crash, bowls and soup splattered everywhere, the wooden table overturned in mid-air, just in front.

More gunshots rang continuously, a second wave of bullets hitting the table, wood splintering but failing to penetrate the surface, temporarily blocking the fire.

The Eagle continued moving, lifting the table legs and charging directly at the three assassins, the heavy wooden table transforming into a shield in his hands.

His left foot pushed the ground forcefully speeding up, the middle assassin just adjusting his aim, the table then smashed into his chest with a mighty force, sending him flying backward, crashing heavily to the ground.

Meanwhile, Niu Da also raced forward under cover. His movement was like a leopard, bending close to the ground, dodging the right assassin's aim, then suddenly rising, his fist the size of a sandbag slamming into the opponent's ribs.

With a crisp "crack," the assassin curled up in pain instantly, Niu Da seamlessly continued, grabbing the assassin's wrist, twisting it in the opposite direction.

Accompanied by a heart-wrenching scream, the assassin's arm twisted at an unnatural angle.

"Bang!" Another muffled sound followed, the assassin was punched square in the face, collapsing straightly onto the ground, completely unconscious.

The leftmost assassin, seeing his companions fall one after another, his eyes hardened, aimed to shoot Niu Da in the back.

The Eagle saw this, releasing the table and flying forward, sweeping his leg to kick the assassin's cheek, sending him off as if a kite with its string cut before he could react.

It was easy to imagine the strength of that kick.

As the opponent struggled to get up, the Eagle advanced aggressively, pinning his left foot onto his wrist, punching his right fist into his temple, the assassin's body twitched twice, then fell unconscious.

In less than ten seconds, all three assassins were taken down.

Seeing this, Chen Wei peeked out towards the street corner, then quickly pulled Qi Yun from behind the pillar, leaving the scene swiftly.

The Taiwanese girl, already scared, lay paralyzed on the ground, until she saw Qi Yun toss a wad of cash at her, finally recovering from the shock.

She hurriedly took out her phone to call the police, stammering, "Officer..."

...

Meanwhile, Qi Yun and the group fled the scene, rushing into a nearby alley, stopping only to ensure no pursuers followed.

"Are you hurt?" Qi Yun asked Niu Da and the Eagle with a sullen face.

Being attacked just as they arrived here made him incredibly angry, clearly the attacker knew his whereabouts.

The Eagle and the other shook their heads, "No."

Qi Yun calmly deliberated for a few seconds, then took out his phone, dialing De Gaulle's number.

"I just arrived at Hsinchu, and I've been attacked." As soon as the call connected, Qi Yun spoke directly.

On the other end, De Gaulle paused for a moment, then asked, "Mr. Qi wouldn't think I sent them, would you?"

"If I suspected you, I wouldn't be making this call." Qi Yun gritted his teeth, speaking in a low voice, "Let me see your capabilities."

As he said, De Gaulle had no reason to attack him because he held what De Gaulle needed most.

As for the real culprit, Qi Yun had two rough targets in mind, one was James from the United Kingdom, who previously sent six assassins from Southeast Asia to deal with him.

Otherwise, it was Ma Chaoyang or someone behind him.

They likely got wind of the investigation group, and rushed to take Qi Yun out first.

"At your service." De Gaulle replied coolly, then said, "Tell me your location, I'll arrange a safe place for you."

Qi Yun thought for a moment, then didn't refuse, giving him a location.

...

Over forty minutes later, on a street two kilometers away from the previous shooting scene, a black Alfa slowly pulled over to the side of the road.

Chen Wei and Qi Yun hid in a nearby grove, not rushing to leave until they received safe messages from Eagle and Niu Da. Only then did they quickly cross the road and get into the car.

The driver glanced at the rearview mirror and concisely asked, "Can we go?"

"Wait a moment," Qi Yun replied.

A few minutes later, Eagle and Niu Da arrived from two directions, and the Alfa finally started, slowly disappearing into the night.

As it turned to dawn, Qi Yun leaned back on a sofa in a villa, across from him sat the boss of the Sanhuan Gang—Scarface.

The history of the Sanhuan Gang goes back a long way, tracing back to the 1950s, when the island was dominated by powerful factions. The two biggest gangs then were the Sanhuan Gang and the Sihai Gang.

However, due to certain reasons, both gangs gradually declined and were replaced by the more commonly portrayed Bamboo Union Gang in movies.

Nevertheless, in the area of Hsinchu, the Sanhuan Gang still holds some power.

Scarface had a pipe in his mouth, his exposed palms covered with calluses, indicating he was probably a seasoned fighter.

"I've already instructed my boys to investigate, and we should have information back soon," Scarface said in a raspy voice.

Qi Yun nodded toward him, "Thanks for your help, Scarface."

He waved his hand with a hint of underworld flair in his words, "Dong Sheng called me personally, saying Mr. Qi here is his friend. Since you're Dong Sheng's friend, you're my honored guest."

"In Hsinchu, nobody can make my guests suffer."

Though Qi Yun didn't quite know who this Dong Sheng was, he could guess it might be De Gaulle's connection on the island.

As they were talking, a subordinate hurried in, whispering a few words into Scarface's ear.

After listening, Scarface turned to Qi Yun, "Mr. Qi, it's been confirmed. The three gunmen who attacked you are from the Double Flower Society, and they've been taken by the Government Office."

Qi Yun frowned upon hearing this, "Double Flower Society?"

Scarface took the pipe out of his mouth and explained, "Yes, the Double Flower Society operates around the border of Miaoli and Hsinchu."

"This group started off in recent years by smuggling firearms and clearing paths for others. Though not very powerful, they are ruthless in their methods."

"Especially their boss, Fatty Bo, his hands are stained with quite a bit of blood."

Qi Yun observed the other's expression, noting that this Scarface didn't show any unusual reaction, and his words suggested he wasn't particularly close to this Double Flower Society. Only then did he ask, "Can Scarface find out where this Fatty Bo is at the moment?"

Scarface thought for a moment and replied, "Their stronghold is in Miaoli. I'll make a call to some friends over there." With that, he took out a phone and exchanged a few words in Min Nan dialect on the line.

After hanging up, he looked up at Qi Yun, "Fatty Bo is over at an abandoned sugar factory in Miaoli. I heard he recently got a batch of goods and is personally guarding it."

Qi Yun nodded, saying no more.

Seeing his silence, Scarface tentatively asked, "Mr. Qi, what would you like me to do? If you want Fatty Bo dead, I can bring some men and take care of him now."

After a brief hesitation, Qi Yun smiled, "No need for Scarface to get his hands dirty. Please send someone to escort my two brothers." As he spoke, he pointed to Niu Da and Eagle standing behind him, "They'll bring him back."

Whether the other party was sincerely trying to make amends or had other motives, Qi Yun wouldn't let others hold any leverage against him.

Besides, he didn't necessarily want Fatty Bo dead, just needed to confirm a suspicion.

Scarface nodded, signaling to the previous subordinate with a nod. The subordinate understood and gestured to Niu Da and Eagle, "Please follow me, I'll take you there."

"Be careful," Qi Yun instructed.

Niu Da and Eagle nodded, not taking the other party too seriously.

More than two hours quickly passed, and there was no tobacco left in Scarface's pipe, yet he still resisted sleepiness, waiting with Qi Yun.

Qi Yun yawned, raising his watch to check the time, intending to ask Scarface to rest. However, footsteps sounded at the door, and soon Niu Da and Eagle came in, carrying a three-hundred-pound fatty.

"We've brought him back." They casually tossed the fatty to the ground, and the floor reverberated with a "thud," shaking the teacups on the coffee table.

"Is he Fatty Bo?" Qi Yun glanced at Scarface.

"Yes, that's him," Scarface replied, staring at Fatty Bo.

Fatty Bo, thrown to the ground, took a while to regain his composure. Two buttons on his shirt popped open from his round belly, exposing greasy rolls of fat.

He struggled to sit up, but Niu Da stepped forward, stomping on the back of his hand. Instantly in pain, Fatty Bo grimaced, forced to stay prone on the floor, his eyes filled with fury.

"Scarface! What do you mean by having me brought here? Do you want to start a war with my Double Flower Society!?"

Scarface scoffed and didn't respond to him.

Qi Yun lit a cigarette, his voice calm, "Brother Niu, let him cool down a bit."

Chapter 499: Hello, Chief Qi!

Hsinchu City, in a suburban villa.

Qi Yun extinguished the cigarette butt, stood up from the sofa, and walked slowly to stand over Fei Bo, who was curled up on the ground.

At this moment, after Niu Da brutally dislocated both of Fei Bo's arms, he finally stopped screaming and was forced to calm down.

Cold sweat kept dripping from his forehead, fear gripping his heart.

"Can we talk now?" Qi Yun's voice remained calm, carrying an undeniable sense of oppression.

Scar Brother behind him looked at Fei Bo's cowardly appearance with undisguised disdain. These young ones in the underworld these days had none of the backbone of their generation.

But Fei Bo couldn't care less about what others thought of him. His body was twitching from the pain, and he nodded with difficulty: "We... can talk..."

"Do you know me?" Qi Yun crouched down, staring sharply at him.

Fei Bo was unnerved by Qi Yun's gaze, cold sweat rolling down his face. His eyeballs spun twice, and he finally didn't dare to lie: "I... know you..."

From the moment he saw Qi Yun in the villa, he knew something went wrong and why he was captured. So he deliberately acted arrogantly, hoping to feign ignorance and pass the blame onto his subordinates.

But he underestimated the ruthless methods of Niu Da and others, who dislocated his arms without a word. He wasn't even sure if they were dislocated or crushed, only feeling piercing pain.

This made him realize that if he wasn't honest today, he might not live to leave.

After all, he had done such things himself, putting someone in a sack and throwing them into the sea without a trace.

"Who sent you to kill me?" Before Fei Bo could think more, Qi Yun's voice sounded again.

The question made Fei Bo shiver all over. He quickly weighed his options and finally made up his mind: "If I tell you everything, will you let me go?"

Qi Yun said nothing, standing up and took two steps back.

Niu Da got the hint, and stomped hard on Fei Bo's hand.

"Crack!"

The sound of bones breaking, accompanied by a heart-wrenching scream, exploded in the villa.

"Do you have the right to bargain?" Niu Da's tone was unfriendly, exerting more force.

Fei Bo was in so much pain he almost passed out, his body twitching uncontrollably, unable to form complete sentences: "I! I'll talk! Don't... don't step on it anymore! My hand will break!"

Only then did Niu Da slowly lift his foot, coldly glaring at him.

Fei Bo's right hand was twisted at a strange angle, and he screamed in pain: "Bai Xiaosheng! It was Bai Xiaosheng who contacted me!"

"Bai Xiaosheng?" Qi Yun frowned, never having heard of him. Why would someone send people to kill him?

Scar Brother seemed to see his confusion and explained: "This Bai Xiaosheng is a famous intermediary in Taiwan, specializing in dark business deals, from cross-border smuggling channels to gang resales. As long as you pay enough, he'll take any job."

"The trickiest thing about him is that he never shows his face, even those who've worked with him haven't seen his true form."

Qi Yun nodded thoughtfully, looking back at Fei Bo: "How do you contact him?"

"Through chat software! Telegram!"

"I'm giving you a chance, find a way to ask him for his location, and I'll let you go."

Logically, Qi Yun had already given him a way out, but Fei Bo showed no joy. His face was pale as he shook his head: "No... I... I can't find out!"

"He won't tell me, even the payments were in USTD."

Qi Yun turned to look at Scar Brother, who nodded slightly: "This Bai Xiaosheng is indeed very cautious. It's not easy to find him."

Qi Yun's expression darkened; even payments were anonymous cryptocurrency, showing Bai Xiaosheng's mastery in covering his tracks.

He crouched down again, staring at Fei Bo's trembling face, his voice growing cold: "So, you are of no use to me?"

Fei Bo was so scared by that statement that his soul nearly flew away. He shook his head frantically, shouting: "No! I'm still useful! I have money! I'll give you money! Please spare me!"

"Heh, so tell me, how much do you think your life is worth?"

"Ten million! I have ten million USTD! I'll give it all to you!" Fei Bo was desperate to save his life, offering up most of his fortune.

Ten million USTD is ten million dollars. Qi Yun wasn't too surprised by the number, as those in black markets made money fast and were well-off.

Besides, he didn't intend to kill the guy, as he was just someone working for money, not worth dirtying his hands over.

So if a ten million dollar payout could calm his nerves, sparing the guy wasn't out of the question.

He then gave Niu Da a look, who understood, crouched down, grabbed Fei Bo's left hand, and "crack" put his arm back in place. Then he pulled out the phone that had been confiscated and tossed it on the ground.

Fei Bo tried moving his left hand, finding it could move freely again. Without time to be happy that he could once again play with certain things, he immediately picked up the phone and quickly unlocked the screen, afraid Qi Yun might change his mind and take away his chance at life.

"The... address! Give me your wallet address!" Fei Bo's head was still sweating profusely as he looked up.

"Call Ah Jiao." Qi Yun instructed Niu Da before walking out of the villa.

Once outside, he hesitated for a few seconds, finally pulling out his phone, glancing around to ensure no one was nearby, then dialed Director Duan's number.

The phone rang for a good half minute before being picked up, with Director Duan's caring greeting: "You better have a good reason, or don't bother coming back."

Qi Yun immediately told him about the attack, and after hearing it, Director Duan was silent for two seconds: "How do you want to handle it?"

"Director, I have a meeting with a very important person tomorrow and I'm worried there might be another hitman trying to disrupt it..."

The two talked for five or six minutes before ending the call.

Qi Yun didn't rush back to the villa, lighting a cigarette and smoking outside. Before long, his phone rang, displaying a number based in Taiwan.

"Hello Chief Qi! I am Lu Xingye, the leader of the secret QB Bureau's first group in Taiwan!"

Qi Yun was a bit taken aback, being called Chief for the first time, a bit unaccustomed.

"Hello, Leader Lu."

Lu Xingye's voice was very loud: "I've received orders from the higher-ups, the first group is on standby, ready to follow Chief Qi's instructions!"

"Alright, here's the task: I need you to find someone known as Bai Xiaosheng, capture him, and notify me." Qi Yun didn't hold back, directly assigning the task.

"Yes! I'll immediately search the database for the target information!" Lu Xingye responded at once.

"Good, contact me anytime if there's news."

After ending the call, Qi Yun extinguished his cigarette and walked back into the villa.

Chapter 500: Fried Chicken Shop Owner

In the living room, Fat Bo had already handed over the ransom money, and Qi Yun instructed Niu Da to take his phone and throw him out onto the winding mountain road.

Scarface's villa was halfway up the mountain in the suburbs. At such a late hour, it would probably be dawn by the time Fat Bo walked out.

"Mr. Qi, what do you plan to do next? If there's anything you need me for, just give the order," Scarface said graciously.

Qi Yun raised his watch to check the time, realizing it was getting late and not wanting to keep Scarface with him, he said, "Scarface, you can go rest first. Just prepare a car for me."

Scarface did not insist, as he was getting older and found it a bit overwhelming: "Alright, I'll have A Rong here ready for your command."

"Much appreciated," Qi Yun nodded in gratitude.

Scarface stood up with the help of the sofa arm, rubbed his red eyes, and instructed the nearby henchman: "Whatever Mr. Qi asks you to do, just do it without mistakes."

...

Meanwhile, inside an internet café in Taipei.

A plain-looking man quickly approached the door of the café's lounge, cautiously looked around, and then pushed the door open.

Once inside the lounge, the man locked the door, walked straight to the corner of the wall, and pressed hard on the wall.

In the next moment, the seemingly ordinary wall slid slowly to the side, revealing a secret door just big enough for one person.

The man bent down and squeezed through, the door automatically closing behind him, instantly illuminating the space before his eyes.

Inside the small room, less than ten square meters, was filled with equipment flashing red and green indicator lights; two youths in hoodies were typing on keyboards, the surveillance screens constantly switching views.

"New task! Check where someone with the nickname 'Bai Xiaosheng' is right now," the man ordered.

"Yes! 'Lu Team'!" the two youths replied.

No doubt, the man known as 'Lu Team' was none other than the head of the secret QB Bureau stationed in Taiwan's first group — Lu Xingye!

Including himself, there were eight people in their group, three technicians, and the rest were field personnel — their exact duties unknown due to the high level of confidentiality.

Minutes later, a red dossier popped up on the computer screen, filled edge-to-edge with densely packed text and photographs.

"Lu Team, found him!" the youth on the left reported, pointing at the screen, "Bai Xiaosheng's real name is Lin Kun, 52 years old, originally from Hong Kong Island. Ten years ago, he was wanted by the Hong Kong Island police for collaborating with a transnational criminal organization to illegally sell human organs. Five years ago, he smuggled himself to Taiwan, and has since operated underground as Bai Xiaosheng."

"His current identity is a fried chicken shop owner, and surveillance caught him returning home three hours ago. The exact address is Minsheng Alley 17, East District of Taipei..."

Upon hearing this, Lu Xingye immediately ordered: "Contact Old Lei, have him take people to control this individual..."

...

Back in the villa, Qi Yun glanced at the text message on his phone, then instructed Niu Da, "Brother Niu, drive to pick someone up. I'll send you the address."

Niu Da nodded and quickly left.

He drove the Alphard to a spot a few kilometers north at the foot of the mountain. Seeing a Kia parked on the roadside without its lights on, he pulled up beside it.

The Kia's passenger door clicked open, and out stepped a man wearing a black windbreaker, with a slim build, who was none other than the field agent Old Lei sent by Lu Xingye.

He walked to the rear of the car, opened the trunk, and retrieved a man with his hands and feet bound. After tossing him onto the ground, Old Lei said nothing, climbed back into the Kia, and sped off into the night.

Niu Da, unperturbed by the scene, picked up the man single-handedly, threw him into the Alphard, and then drove back towards the villa.

Upon returning to the villa, Niu Da carried the man directly into the living room, dropping him on the floor with a thud.

The bound man struggled to raise his head — it was none other than the infamous underworld figure Bai Xiaosheng, though few were aware of his appearance.

"Lin Kun, 52 years old, originally from Hong Kong Island. Ten years ago, wanted by the Hong Kong Island police for collaborating with a transnational criminal organization to illegally sell human organs...", Qi Yun stood up and leisurely recited the man's criminal history.

Upon hearing his true name and past crimes recounted in detail, Bai Xiaosheng's struggles froze, his face reflecting a sudden terror as he looked at Qi Yun with disbelief.

He had recognized Qi Yun as the target his employer wanted to deal with today; not only was Qi Yun alive, but he had captured him.

Having hidden in Taiwan under the Bai Xiaosheng alias for five years, his closest woman knew nothing of his real past, yet Qi Yun seemed to know everything.

It was truly terrifying...

Qi Yun reached out to pull the cloth from Bai Xiaosheng's mouth, and said, "I have two questions for you. I hope you can answer truthfully."

Bai Xiaosheng's throat moved, his voice shaky, "You... you ask."

He was well aware of his current predicament; the fact that they had so thoroughly uncovered his background meant killing him would be as easy as crushing an ant.

Qi Yun was pleased with the man's cooperative attitude, nodded, and asked, "Who is the employer that contacted you to kill me?"

Bai Xiaosheng replied without hesitation, "I don't know his identity, but I communicated with him via voice, and judging by the accent, he should be from Huaxia."

Upon hearing this, Qi Yun's face darkened, the likelihood becoming clear: he was probably from Ma Chaoyang's group.

Bai Xiaosheng, sensing Qi Yun's dissatisfaction, hastily added, "There was another group! Two hours ago, another group came to buy weapons and wanted to pay for your whereabouts."

"I think they might also be targeting you."

Qi Yun paused, another group of people? Could it be James' people?

Most likely, he didn't have many enemies.

Unexpectedly, those bastards had teamed up...

"Did you give them the weapons?"

"No...not yet," Bai Xiaosheng shook his head, "According to the plan, I'll place the weapons at a designated location tomorrow morning and then notify them to collect."

Qi Yun pondered his plan, rubbing his chin, before speaking again after a good while, "One last question, besides Fat Bo, did you assign the task of assassinating me to anyone else?"

"No...no one else!" Bai Xiaosheng replied quickly, "When I received news that those three gunmen were caught, I planned to find new people because the employer offered a high price and insisted on killing you."

"But then the people buying weapons came to me, so I thought I'd wait for them to make the first move. If they succeeded in killing you, I could earn an extra portion."

Qi Yun glanced at the guy, thinking to himself that he was quite shrewd.

"Go sit in the corner."

Bai Xiaosheng was very cooperative, jogging to the corner of the living room, squatting down with his hands over his head.

Qi Yun returned to the sofa, explaining to Scarface's henchman A Rong.

