

Middle Age 501

Chapter 501: Meeting Wei Zhe

At eight in the morning, an Alphard drove out of Scar Lord's villa and headed towards the Dharma Drum Mountain Temple over thirty kilometers away.

Inside the villa, Scar Lord, who had just gotten up, listened to A Rong's report with a look of astonishment in his eyes, incredulously asking: "You caught the Hundred Xiaosheng?"

A Rong nodded: "That's right, and it only took a few hours. He's now locked in the basement!"

Once confirmed, the shock on Scar Lord's face lingered for a long time.

Hundred Xiaosheng is notoriously cautious and cunning in the underworld; the fact that Qi Yun managed to catch him within a few hours is incredibly terrifying.

"Moreover... when we went to catch Fatty Bo last night, I personally witnessed his two subordinates in action. They are very strong and seem... very much like soldiers."

Scar Lord paused for a moment and then glared at him disapprovingly, warning sternly: "Don't talk nonsense!"

A Rong shrank his neck from the glare of Scar Lord and quickly lowered his head: "Yes, Scar Lord, I know I was wrong."

He also understood that Mr. Qi's identity was certainly not simple; snooping around would only cause trouble. He had spoken without thinking earlier, blurting out what he had seen.

Scar Lord put down the tea mug in his hand and continued to ask: "You just said, Mr. Qi asked you to arrange people to deal with those killers?"

"Yes, although Mr. Qi didn't explicitly say it, I think that's what he meant; otherwise, why would he specifically tell me the location?" A Rong answered confidently, "I've already arranged for twenty brothers to head over with some guys, so once those killers arrive, we can take them all out!"

Scar Lord nodded slightly, then, as if still worried, said: "Where's the location? Take me there now, I want to oversee it personally!"

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Dharma Drum Mountain Temple, one of the three major Buddhist venues on the Treasure Island, the other two being Fo Guang Shan and Tzu Chi.

Although it claims to be one of the three major Buddhist venues on the Treasure Island, the Dharma Drum Mountain Temple is not large in scale, which can be described as "shabby" compared to some mainland temples.

Of course, this shabbiness purely refers to its material conditions.

Construction of Dharma Drum Mountain Temple only began in 1971, and initially, there were only four people in the monastery, who farmed while practicing Zen and building the temple, leading to the Dharma Drum Mountain Temple today.

It became one of the three major Buddhist venues due to its pure atmosphere, devoted solely to promoting Buddhist culture, never engaging in money-making schemes, lacking luxury cars or beauties, and often extending help to followers in need.

It was this upright spirit that greatly impressed T Semiconductor's CEO Wei Zhe, prompting him to make special trips here every week for worship and Buddhist studies.

At the mountain's foot, the Alphard arrived at the parking lot.

Inside the car, Qi Yun wiped his face and scanned the parking lot with his eyes. It was still early, and aside from their vehicle, only two old Nissans were there, clearly not Wei Zhe's car.

After more than ten minutes, a black Maybach slowly drove into the parking lot. Once it steadied, a bodyguard in a black suit got out from the front row, circled to the back, opened the car door, and out came an elderly man, none other than T Semiconductor's CEO Wei Zhe.

Wei Zhe wore a plain hemp shirt and reading glasses, lacking the sharpness of a business mogul, resembling more a long-time scholar.

He got out of the car without stopping, heading straight for the stone path leading to the mountain top.

Qi Yun inside the car glanced at the photo on his phone and instructed Eagle and Niu Da: "You two wait in the car; Brother Wei and I will go up." Finishing, he opened the car door and got out.

The road leading to the mountaintop temple was not smooth, with occasional protruding stones. After walking for about five minutes, clear bell sounds and faint monk chanting could be heard ahead.

The two men continued along the stone path to the top, where a temple of green bricks and gray tiles came into view, with a faint sandalwood fragrance wafting in the air.

Qi Yun stepped into the temple, and straight ahead was a very simplistic main hall without luxurious carved beams or painted rafters, only a wooden plaque with the words "Dharma Drum Mountain Temple" hanging above the door.

Inside the hall were several Buddha statues that Qi Yun, unfamiliar with Buddhism, could not identify.

Several monks in gray robes were gently wiping the altar tables, and upon seeing Qi Yun enter, they merely clasped their hands in a silent "Amitabha Buddha" greeting and continued with their work.

Qi Yun mimicked their gesture and asked, "Master, where is Mr. Wei who came earlier?"

The monk wiping the altar paused, made a gesture, and replied, "Benefactor Wei should be in the Mahavira Hall; you can see it if you follow the corridor on the right."

Qi Yun thanked him, turned, and walked to the right of the hall.

Passing through the corridor, he saw another hall open ahead, with Wei Zhe seated on a prayer mat inside, eyes closed, reciting sutras, while his bodyguard stood guard outside the hall.

Qi Yun stepped closer, exchanging a glance with the bodyguard without rushing in, as interrupting someone busy would only cause resentment.

The bodyguard didn't linger on Qi Yun; his gaze quickly shifted to Chen Wei behind him, and in the next second, his originally stern expression became solemn, with a sense of alertness.

Chen Wei also tensed up, sensing a hint of danger from the bodyguard.

The two of them remained staring intently at each other as if frozen.

This stand-off lasted over forty minutes until the sutra-chanting inside the hall finally ceased, and Wei Zhe slowly opened his eyes.

Seeing this, Qi Yun prepared to step into the hall but was unexpectedly stopped by the bodyguard extending his hand: "Please wait!" His voice was devoid of any emotion.

Numerous people had various reasons to meet Wei Zhe daily, and part of the bodyguard's job was to prevent them from getting close.

Before Qi Yun could respond, Chen Wei stepped forward, also extending his hand to steadily block the bodyguard's arm.

The atmosphere instantly became tense, as if a confrontation was imminent.

Qi Yun, there to negotiate with Wei Zhe, had no intention of creating a rift, so he called out to the inside: "Mr. Wei."

Wei Zhe, massaging his numb knees, turned around upon hearing the call.

Qi Yun seized the opportunity to continue: "I came here from the mainland to discuss something with you."

Wei Zhe's gaze swept over the two confronting at the door and returned to Qi Yun, staring at him for a few seconds with a puzzled expression: "Are you Qi Yun, the one reported in the recent news?"

"That's me," Qi Yun nodded.

Wei Zhe paused briefly before instructing the bodyguard: "Let Mr. Qi in."

Hearing this, the bodyguard withdrew his hand and stepped aside.

Qi Yun signaled to Chen Wei behind him, indicating for the latter to wait outside, as he stepped into the Mahavira Hall.

The information indicated that Wei Zhe was over seventy years old, and although his hair was white, he appeared very spirited, possibly the result of the well-being regimen of wealthy individuals.

Wei Zhe rose from the prayer mat, moved to a chair in the corner, and gestured for Qi Yun to sit: "Please, have a seat."

Qi Yun graciously walked over and took a seat.

Wei Zhe picked up a teapot from the table, poured two cups of tea, and pushed one towards Qi Yun.

"Mr. Qi said you came from the mainland to discuss what with me?"

Taking the teacup, Qi Yun thanked him and then pulled a small exquisite wooden box from his pocket, opening it and handing it over.

"Mr. Wei, you might want to see this first."

Chapter 502: Qi Yun's Magnanimity

When Wei Zhe saw what was inside the box, his previously calm face seemed to be struck by lightning, and his hand holding the teacup trembled uncontrollably.

He leaned forward, his gaze fixed intently on the box in front of him.

Seeing the shocked expression of his counterpart, Qi Yun felt a slight sense of relief. He had been somewhat worried whether this item could truly move him, but upon seeing Wei Zhe's expression, he knew that he had already been captivated.

"Mr. Wei, why not take a closer look?" Qi Yun said, placing the box on the table.

Wei Zhe looked up at Qi Yun, then carefully reached out to take the Nine-Eyed Celestial Pearl from the box.

This Celestial Pearl was smooth in texture, with distinct nine-eyed patterns on its surface. It was the same one that had been enshrined at the Sangye Temple, which, after several twists and turns, had finally come into Qi Yun's possession.

Wei Zhe gently caressed the pearl's surface with his fingers, his voice slightly trembling as he said, "It's really the Nine-Eyed Celestial Pearl..."

Some things, no matter how much money one has, cannot be obtained and depend on fate.

For example, this Celestial Pearl in front of him, of which there are only three in the world, is considered a divine object in the hearts of countless Tibetan Buddhist followers, with the miraculous efficacy of warding off disasters and purifying oneself, and it can no longer be measured by money.

In earlier years, Wei Zhe had also contacted that superstar, offering a staggering five billion to retrieve the Nine-Eyed Celestial Pearl in their possession, but was ruthlessly refused. Even as the CEO of T-Jingda, he couldn't possess it.

After appreciating it for a good ten minutes, Wei Zhe slowly placed the Celestial Pearl back into the box, covered it, and pushed it back to Qi Yun.

Although his heart deeply longed for it, as an outstanding businessman, without knowing the price he had to pay, he could control his desires well.

This sounds simple, but in reality, ninety-nine percent of people find it very hard to do.

"Mr. Qi, to be honest, I never thought I'd have the chance to see the Nine-Eyed Celestial Pearl in my lifetime. Thank you for bringing it for me to see."

Qi Yun glanced at Wei Zhe, then pushed the box back towards him, speaking calmly: "Mr. Wei, I obtained this item by chance and have always wanted to find a suitable home for it."

"It wasn't until I came to Formosa and heard a friend mention your past that I learned you have always been paying attention to Tibetan Buddhist culture and have been searching for such lost sacred items."

"I think, instead of letting it sit idle in my hands, it would be better to give it to someone who truly has a connection with this sacred item."

"I am willing to gift it to Mr. Wei!"

Having recovered from his earlier shock, Wei Zhe showed no expression when he heard that Qi Yun was willing to gift him the priceless Nine-Eyed Celestial Pearl; he didn't even blink an eye.

Being seasoned and experienced, he naturally understood that there is no such thing as a free lunch; the more valuable the "gift," the heavier the price hidden behind it often is.

"Mr. Qi, I greatly appreciate your recognition, but without merit, I cannot accept a reward."

"I've read about Mr. Qi's experiences in reports and know that you are a selfless person. If there is anything I can help with, please feel free to say so."

"As long as it's within my power and doesn't violate principles, I will do my best to help you achieve it."

Wei Zhe's words were exceedingly gracious. Given his status, even if a troublesome individual were to come, he wouldn't need to heed them.

The reason he treated Qi Yun so kindly was partly because of the Celestial Pearl.

Additionally, as he himself said, he greatly admired Qi Yun for donating a large number of precious artifacts. He too had purchased several precious treasures at auctions and donated them to the Taipei Museum.

Seeing that Wei Zhe had spoken frankly, Qi Yun no longer beat around the bush, taking a sip from the teacup on the table, his tone becoming solemn: "Mr. Wei, indeed, I have something I'd like to trouble you with."

"Christophe from ASML must have already approached you; the purpose of my trip is to seek your agreement to his request."

Upon hearing this, Wei Zhe's gaze flickered with surprise as he looked at Qi Yun, his eyebrows slightly furrowing, clearly not expecting him to propose such a condition.

Christophe had already discussed the matter of lithography machines with several major shareholders. Though officially stating that it was for sale to a Huaxia company, deep down, everyone knew the truth.

Huaxia had been developing lithography machines recently, but there is no shortcut to surpassing such cutting-edge technology. To catch up with top-tier manufacturers like ASML in a short time, they must start with imitation and research.

The issue is that America is unwilling to let Huaxia master such advanced technology, so they enacted a tight blockade; Europe had to comply under pressure, which forced ASML in the Netherlands to follow Europe's requirements.

Seeing that Wei Zhe remained silent, Qi Yun didn't add more, waiting for him to slowly consider.

After quite a few minutes of silence, Wei Zhe sighed, glanced at the box holding the Nine-Eyed Celestial Pearl, and slowly spoke: "Mr. Qi, this matter is highly complicated."

"If Christophe is only asking me to support him at the board meeting, I can agree."

"However, attempting to use T-Jingda's channels to bypass Europe's blockade to sell the equipment to the mainland is different in nature, and I cannot decide this alone."

"America's Department of Commerce has long had T-Jingda on their watch list, and they have issued multiple warnings to us, forbidding technology from flowing to the mainland. If we really did that, we would definitely be kicked out of the North American market, which the company's shareholders cannot accept."

After hearing this, Qi Yun sighed internally, realizing that even the Nine-Eyed Celestial Pearl couldn't capture his counterpart...

He had been quietly observing the other's expressions. Wei Zhe didn't seem to be lying, but he couldn't be entirely sure, since such a high-level figure could conceal his emotions well.

Although Qi Yun didn't know T-Jingda's real situation, he had heard some bloggers' analyses that T-Jingda, while appearing to be an industry giant, was actually strangled by American technology and markets, unable to be truly independent.

"I understand Mr. Wei's difficulties; is there no room for negotiation on this matter?" Qi Yun cautiously inquired.

The hall fell silent once more, with Wei Zhe's brows furrowed and his gaze deep, as if contemplating something.

After a long time, he turned to Qi Yun, musing: "My advice is to switch directions and approach Samsung."

"I can agree to support Christophe at the board and help him communicate with Samsung. If Samsung is willing to use their channels to get equipment to the mainland, then for the subsequent installation and maintenance, I can secretly send T-Jingda engineers to assist you in completion."

"This is the maximum extent I can offer."

Qi Yun's eyes lit up; he hadn't expected Wei Zhe to propose this compromise, which maneuvered around T-Jingda's direct involvement in risks while indirectly helping him achieve his goals. It certainly seemed like a viable solution.

"Will Samsung agree?" Qi Yun expressed his concern.

"I can't be certain, but Samsung's situation differs from T-Jingda's; their primary markets are the mainland and Europe, so they aren't fearful of America's market blockade."

"What Samsung currently lacks is the priority supply right for the new generation of EUV equipment. As long as Christophe promises to prioritize Samsung for next year's first-quarter EUV equipment quota, I think achieving the goal is possible."

Qi Yun pondered for a moment, realizing there was no better approach, and ultimately chose to trust this old man in front of him once.

"I'll trouble you, Mr. Wei, to help facilitate this transaction."

Wei Zhe adjusted his reading glasses: "Since I've agreed, I will naturally endeavor to advance it."

Qi Yun nodded, stood up, and pushed the box holding the Nine-Eyed Celestial Pearl forward: "The Celestial Pearl is yours; I won't disturb your religious practice further and will await good news."

Wei Zhe looked at the wooden box pushed in front of him, stunned: "The matter hasn't been settled yet, and you're already entrusting this to me?"

Qi Yun smiled: "Mr. Wei, I never intended to take this Celestial Pearl back when I brought it."

"Your willingness to help is sincerity enough; whether the ultimate goal can be achieved involves multiple parties."

"Moreover, the Celestial Pearl being with you might be its best destiny."

Qi Yun's answer was filled with spirit, extraordinarily pleasant to hear.

However, there was a slight air of posturing in his words.

He was willing to hand over this treasure to Wei Zhe first because he believed that with Wei Zhe's status, he wouldn't lie or deceive him, and there seemed to be a certain feasibility to this matter.

Moreover, outsiders would see that Qi Yun's attempt to buy lithography machines was on behalf of Huaxia.

There's no issue in refusing, as it's a business matter, but if one dared to maliciously deceive, it would be seen as a serious provocation.

Additionally, Qi Yun could sense that the other's attitude was relatively close to his side. After all, his willingness to allocate engineers for the subsequent installation and maintenance demonstrated substantial effort, even if it entailed considerable risk.

Therefore, Qi Yun decided to entrust the Celestial Pearl to him outright.

Chapter 503: Success Achieved, Entering Crisis Again

Wei Zhe stared at Qi Yun for a while, the astonishment in his eyes gradually faded, replaced by a complex emotional expression.

Obviously, he did not expect Qi Yun to have such boldness.

"Mr. Qi is indeed a gentleman with a broad mind."

Qi Yun heard this, and just chuckled lightly, his tone still calm: "You flatter me, Mr. Wei, I simply did what needed to be done."

Wei Zhe nodded and said no more.

After Qi Yun left, he took out the Nine-Eyed Celestial Pearl from the box again, his gaze becoming incredibly reverent...

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Qi Yun arrived at the foot of the mountain, got into the car, and dialed De Gaulle's number, conveying Wei Zhe's plan to him.

De Gaulle did not expect Qi Yun to actually manage Wei Zhe, and joyfully indicated he would immediately contact Christophe to implement this matter as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, at an abandoned fishing harbor not far from Hsinchu, a speedboat was rapidly approaching the shore.

As the speedboat came to a stop, four tall, blonde, and blue-eyed men disembarked simultaneously, heading toward an iron warehouse ahead.

They were uniformly dressed in black tactical jackets, their expressions were stern, collars pulled up to cover most of their faces, clearly tough characters not to be messed with.

These four were the people mentioned by Baixiaosheng who were looking to buy weapons from him and trace Qi Yun's whereabouts.

They were elite soldiers sent by James from the United Kingdom, all from the British 22nd Special Air Service, abbreviated as SAS, the most elite special forces in Britain, and the world's first formal special operations force.

Its predecessor was the feared Goldman, with extremely formidable combat capabilities, but in terms of reputation, not inferior to the unit Chen Wei previously served in.

The four arrived about twenty meters from the warehouse when the leader suddenly stopped.

He raised his arm, scanning the warehouse ahead vigilantly.

The other three received the order and stopped, their muscles instantly tense, entering a state of alert.

The leader's ears twitched slightly, seemingly perceiving danger, his pupils suddenly constricted, and he immediately signaled a retreat!

At this moment, only a "clang!" was heard.

The iron door of the warehouse ahead was suddenly kicked open, more than ten pistols were pointed out, their dark muzzles aimed at the four, immediately opening fire!

"Bang! Bang! Bang!" The incessant gunfire erupted in the empty fishing harbor.

Although the four were prepared in advance, they were unarmed, forced to crouch quickly and dodge to the nearby cover.

But due to the proximity, the shooters barely needed to aim, a dense barrage of bullets came their way, with two of the four immediately falling to the ground, one shot in the back, another's thigh spurting blood.

"FUCK!"

The white man behind the concrete blocks shouted angrily, reaching to drag the two fallen comrades, but just as his hand extended, the leader pulled him back.

The next second, "puff! puff!" several bullets struck where he had just reached, splintering the surface of the concrete blocks.

The white man's back turned cold with fright, if he had been half a second slower, his hand would have been pierced.

In that blink of an eye, his two fallen comrades had already been riddled like honeycombs, blood flowing everywhere, thoroughly dead.

"Go! They have no weapons, hit them here!" Scar-faced, leading his men, pressed forward while firing.

Nearly twenty of his men closed in fan-shaped, their weapons aimed relentlessly at the concrete blocks, bullets rained on the cement block, debris fell continuously.

Hiding behind, the two men's faces were extremely grim, their fists clenched tightly.

As the saying goes, no matter how skilled, one fears the kitchen knife, let alone these were firing weapons.

The distance between the two sides was now just a dozen meters, and around them it was desolate, apart from these concrete blocks, there was no place to hide nearby.

The leader pulled a dagger from his boot, glanced backward through the gap in the concrete blocks, then extended three fingers, signaling a countdown.

His companion understood, also drawing a dagger, intending to charge out for close combat once Scar-face's men drew closer.

However, the seasoned Scar-faced gave them no such chance; he was trained in martial arts when young, naturally knowing the speed of a blade within seven steps.

So when five or six meters remained, he directly shouted: "Stop!"

"Circle around from both sides!"

This completely dashed the hopes of the two hiding behind the concrete blocks.

Twenties of guns, they gave these two no chance to show their skills, even if they were top retired British special forces, they were similarly gunned down indiscriminately.

Once it was finished, Scar-face waved his hand: "Bag them and dump them into the sea."

...

Elsewhere, in the business vehicle heading to Taipei, Qi Yun received a message from Scar-face.

The content was very succinct, just three words: "Resolved."

Qi Yun did not reply, he simply deleted the text after reading it.

An hour later, Qi Yun and Chen Wei arrived at a roadside snack shop, casually ordered two bowls of noodles.

Opposite the snack shop was an internet cafe.

After finishing the noodles, while settling the bill, Chen Wei discreetly scanned outside, confirmed no one was watching them, then nodded to Qi Yun.

Qi Yun wiped his mouth and returned to the car.

After two minutes, the internet cafe's door opened, and an ordinary-looking man walked out, cautiously glancing around before heading straight for the business vehicle across.

The car door opened, and the man climbed in, then saluted Qi Yun standardly: "Greeting, Commander Qi!"

Qi Yun returned the salute, then smiled and asked: "My coming here won't cause you trouble, will it?"

Lu Xingye responded respectfully: "Where's the trouble in what the commander says, supporting your task is our duty."

"Moreover, our people are constantly monitoring the surrounding area, any unusual personnel appearing will be detected immediately, so there will be no trouble."

Qi Yun relaxed, pointed to the car behind: "The person is in that vehicle, it's up to you now, try to extract the person linked with him, any location or useful information is appreciated."

After hearing this, Lu Xingye saluted again: "Yes!"

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After handing Baixiaosheng over to Lu Xingye, Qi Yun didn't linger in Taipei, he flew back to Bird City that afternoon.

He had done all he could, remaining on the island held no meaning, as for the final outcome, it was beyond his control.

Fortunately, his hard work paid off, as that evening De Gaulle sent news that, with Wei Zhe's assistance, negotiations with Samsung were smooth, and both parties had reached a preliminary consensus, just needing board approval in two days, then the latest five EUV lithography machines could be transported to the mainland via Samsung's channels.

Qi Yun was overjoyed hearing this, the Nine-Eyed Celestial Pearl was finally worth giving away.

Two days quickly passed, Qi Yun brought Chen Wei and others to Beijing, meeting with Wendong's leadership.

Chapter 504: Equipment Worth Over 3 Billion

It's still that heavily guarded complex, where Qi Yun, under the guidance of the secretary, returned to the study from last time.

Behind the mahogany desk, Wendong was looking down at a document. Upon hearing footsteps, he lifted his head and gestured at the opposite chair, "Sit down."

Qi Yun sat in the opposite chair, casually placing a bag of tea leaves beside him, grinning broadly as he said, "Haha, Sir, your work is too exhausting. You need to take better care of your health."

Wendong glanced at Qi Yun with a sidelong look, "This sudden concern from you makes me feel like you might have ulterior motives." Putting down the document in his hand, he continued, "Speak up, why are you here looking for me again? I'll give you five minutes; soon I need to attend a briefing."

Qi Yun wasn't bothered, knowing the other was incredibly busy, with numerous big shots lining up daily to report their work. Even someone as senior as old He might not have the chance to step into this study.

So being given five minutes to meet was already an exceptional privilege.

"Haha, then I'll get straight to the point. This time I specifically came to Beijing for some help I hope you can provide."

"I have a batch of goods to transport over from South Korea, and I wanted to ask if you could drop a word to Kongjun Base, so I can use their airport."

Wendong's gaze settled on Qi Yun's face, with a hint of scrutiny, "What goods? You need to use Kongjun Base's airport?"

Qi Yun rubbed his hands together, "It's a batch of equipment that requires some confidentiality. But rest assured, it definitely doesn't involve anything illegal."

He didn't explicitly say it was a photolithography machine, because although De Gaulle had told him the matter was already decided, the transaction could still be subject to variables until he saw the machine land in Huaxia with his own eyes.

Moreover, he also had his own considerations.

After hearing, Wendong tapped the surface of the table with his fingers, contemplating for a few seconds before his gaze fixed on the tea leaves next to him, "Is this the gift you brought me?"

Qi Yun immediately picked up the thread of the conversation with a smile, pushing the bag of tea leaves towards Wendong, "Haha, I heard from Director Xiao that you haven't been sleeping well. So, I brought you something special from Jiang Province — wild Luobu hemp tea, which can improve sleep and relieve fatigue."

"I suggest that you drink two cups before going to bed, and you'll find it quite effective."

He had indeed brought the tea from Jiang Province, very cheap, less than five hundred yuan for two kilograms, a stark contrast to the kind he previously bought at teahouses for hundreds of thousands per kilogram, practically cabbage price.

Luobu hemp tea is made from Luobu hemp leaves, a beverage the Luobu people have been drinking for thousands of years, even historically favored by the Qianlong Emperor as a royal health drink.

So despite its affordable price, the effects are genuine, improving sleep and notably effective for controlling high blood pressure.

Wendong took out the box of tea leaves from the bag, opened it and smelled it, then looked at Qi Yun with a half-smile, "You kid come seeking my help with just this stuff?"

Qi Yun recognized the teasing in his tone and replied earnestly, "It's primarily about the sentiment; my regard for you is priceless."

After years of ups and downs in the business world, he had learned a bit about the art of gift-giving.

Wendong chuckled, putting the tea aside, "You kid, no wonder old Xiao likes you, huh."

Qi Yun scratched the back of his neck, putting on an obedient facade, "Haha, it's all thanks to your favor."

"Alright, considering your recent achievements, I can make an exception and help you this time." Wendong picked up the document on the desk again and continued, "But the items transported must undergo inspection at Kongjun Base, that's the rule."

Qi Yun immediately sat up straight, "Yes, thank you, Sir!"

"Well then, as you're busy, I won't bother you anymore."

Wendong waved his hand, indicating for him to leave on his own.

...

Upon leaving the complex, Qi Yun immediately called De Gaulle to communicate the situation.

"Five EUV photolithography machines will be delivered to Huaxia in batches within two months. But, because these are through the Samsung channel, the price per machine will be 1.2 billion USD higher, effectively five billion USD per unit."

"Once you make the payment on your end, the first machine will be shipped to Korea immediately, and then from Korea to Huaxia."

Qi Yun let out a long breath after hearing this, "No problem."

Though the price was a bit steep, over thirty billion Yuan per machine, the fact that they could transport it back amidst strict embargo was no small feat.

Moreover, he didn't have to pay the money himself... so he didn't bother trying to negotiate, lest further complications arose.

At 8 p.m., at Beijing Airport, a convoy of Rolls-Royces stood quietly parked not far from the tarmac.

In the back seat of one Phantom, Li Yaohua grabbed Qi Yun's hand, his tone pleading, "Buddy, this time I completely rely on you. I'm counting on you to put in a good word for me so the boss keeps me here."

"I've truly had enough of Africa, I've had malaria seven or eight times, you know how I am..."

Li Yaohua rambled on, spitting as he spoke.

Qi Yun struggled to pull his hand free and feigned disdain while shaking it off, "Can you show me some respect? What's with touching my palm? Treating me like a princess?"

Li Yaohua wasn't upset, took out a pack of cigarettes from his pocket, pulled one out and handed it to Qi Yun's mouth, then lit it, "Buddy, a girl group from Korea has come, I've already arranged it for you, they'll be sent directly to your hotel room tonight..."

Qi Yun quickly raised his hand to refuse, "No! Don't harm me, please."

"How is this harming you? My sincerity towards you is pure..." Li Yaohua continued chattering non-stop, after many interactions, the two were very familiar, so he spoke very casually.

"Alright." Qi Yun sighed, stopped grinning, "I can ask on your behalf, but I can't guarantee anything."

"Since strictly speaking, I'm considered an outsider, it's inappropriate to involve myself in such matters..."

Li Yaohua nodded repeatedly, leaning closer to Qi Yun again, "That's great! I knew you were reliable! You don't have to give me a guarantee, just put in a good word for me with the boss, he'll definitely give you face!"

"By the way, the profit from the Shanghai five-star hotel you gave me last month was over four million, your share has already been transferred to your account..."

Though Qi Yun gave him the hotel, Li Yaohua made sure to keep things warm and cozy, giving Qi Yun half the profit every month.

Which means Qi Yun doesn't need to do anything and can effortlessly earn over two million...

While the two were chatting, a Bombardier Global 8000 slowly landed on the tarmac ahead.

This model of aircraft has a price tag of nearly one billion, Bombardier's latest product, with luxury surpassing even Christophe's Gulfstream G700.

Also, the one before them was the first of its kind delivered worldwide, a real status symbol.

As the cabin door opened, Fu Wentao clad in a refined outfit descended the gangway, followed by his butler Zheng Lin and the negotiation team dispatched from the upper ranks.

Chapter 505: Bro, Get Well Soon!

Seeing Fu Wentao get off the plane, Qi Yun and Li Yaohua quickly got out of the car and walked forward to greet him.

"Brother Fu, you had a hard journey." As they approached, Qi Yun was the first to greet Fu Wentao.

"You're something, even Li Yaohua doesn't know what I'm doing in America, yet you found out." Fu Wentao strode forward, eagerly grabbing Qi Yun's arm and heading to the convoy, "Come on, let's get in the car and tell me everything in detail."

He had just received a call from Qi Yun yesterday, learning there had been a significant breakthrough with the lithography machine here, coupled with unsuccessful negotiations with Blackstone Group in America, prompting his hasty return.

The two of them got into the back seat of the car in the middle, and both Zheng Lin and Li Yaohua wisely did not follow.

"I had just contacted over there, and the sale of the lithography machine to us has already been approved by the ASML board, but it's done privately and shipped through Samsung's channel..." said Qi Yun, succinctly outlining the general situation.

Fu Wentao's eyes lit up after hearing this: "You really have the means to make Christophe push this matter at all costs."

"I had approached that guy before, but he was too concerned and refused to talk to me."

Qi Yun smiled modestly: "It's quite complicated. I haven't had any contact with Christophe, it was pushed by that De Gaulle from the Gwen Clan."

"De Gaulle?" Fu Wentao frowned, recalled for two seconds, then asked, "I remember you saying you had a conflict with him last time?"

"There was a bit of conflict before, but now we've reached a temporary cooperation." Qi Yun explained.

Fu Wentao nodded, not asking further, as in the business world, there are no absolute enemies.

"Having equipment isn't enough; even if we ship it here, no one locally can assemble it. Can ASML handle the assembly and maintenance later on?"

"Don't worry about that, I went to the islands a while ago and reached an agreement with TSMC there. They will secretly send engineers to come over to handle installation and future maintenance of the equipment." Qi Yun continued to explain.

"TSMC!?" Fu Wentao was even more shocked, incredulously asking, "You can even manage them?"

"These bastards are so afraid of the Americans, yet they dare to provide support?"

Before going to the islands, Qi Yun also thought this way, but after a short communication with Wei Zhe, he could feel that the old man had no choice too.

"Actually... Mr. Wei is willing to support our side; I made a private deal with him and made things happen."

Though Qi Yun said it lightly, Fu Wentao knew how difficult this matter was, with those people avoiding you rather than talking, fearing suspicion from America.

Fu Wentao took a sip of champagne, pondering as he asked: "So, you have the equipment and the engineers. Isn't everything already sorted? Why ask me to come back?"

"Money!" Qi Yun replied with a bitter smile, "One machine costs over three billion, for a total of five machines, nearly 18 billion; I can't come up with that much money."

Fu Wentao gave him a side-eye: "If you can get the equipment, is money really the problem?"

"Didn't I hear you have contact with that guy's deputy? Just ask him for money directly."

Qi Yun did not argue, blinking and earnestly replied: "Yeah, asking him would definitely solve it... but I figured since the higher-ups asked big brother you to help get the lithography machine, it's better for you to handle it."

"Besides, I have also seen Wendong's leader earlier and asked him to approve a Kongjun Base, so we can receive goods there later."

Fu Wentao paused, then looked at Qi Yun for a moment and eventually showed a meaningful smile.

"Hehe, you're really getting sharp."

"Setting up the penalty kick and just waiting for me to take it?"

Qi Yun grinned and nodded: "That's about right, even the goalie is gone for you, big brother."

Fu Wentao was amused, patting Qi Yun's shoulder for a while before asking, "So, for helping big brother solve such a big issue, is there anything bothering you that needs big brother's help?"

Qi Yun rubbed his nose, and his goofy smile faded: "Not really troubles, just something I want to talk with big brother about."

Fu Wentao lowered the car window and lit a cigarette: "Let's hear it."

Qi Yun no longer hesitated and immediately relayed Salaman's request: "It's like this, on my last shipment of artifacts from overseas, I ran into some trouble in Aden Bay, and it was Salaman from Oil Country who helped resolve it."

Fu Wentao nodded slightly: "I've heard about this; then what?"

Qi Yun was not surprised that the other party knew such confidential information, given his level, so he continued to explain: "Salaman came to Bird City a few days ago, asking me to help communicate with Beidou over there..."

After explaining the situation, he looked eagerly at Fu Wentao: "I figure a favor owed has to be returned, right, big brother?"

This time, Fu Wentao didn't answer but frowned and pondered.

Qi Yun wasn't in a hurry either, lighting a cigarette and smoking slowly.

It took two or three full minutes before Fu Wentao put out the cigarette, slowly speaking: "A favor must be returned, but Beidou is not an ordinary company, it's a strategic resource of the Country."

"Civil services are easier to talk about, but for needs like Oil Country's, it requires approvals from several departments, not something a private word can accomplish."

Qi Yun nodded, already aware of the complexity of this matter, which is why he didn't give Salaman a definite answer earlier.

"But it's not impossible." Fu Wentao turned to look out of the window, tapping the car door with his fingers, pondering as he continued, "I can stand up and communicate with the top, but just money from Oil Country won't suffice; they need to provide something else."

Qi Yun's eyes lit up, promptly moving forward: "Big brother, just tell me, what do they need to give? It seems like they do want to establish good relations with us, so as long as it doesn't cross their bottom line, it should be negotiable."

Fu Wentao withdrew his gaze: "I need to think carefully about the specifics. I've long wanted to enter the Central Eastern market, but never found a suitable opportunity; perhaps this situation serves as a chance."

"Get in touch with him later and have him come to Beijing; I want to talk to him face to face."

Qi Yun immediately nodded in agreement: "Okay, I'll inform him."

Fu Wentao nodded slightly: "We'll count you in later so you won't work for nothing."

Qi Yun immediately grinned, speaking with utter sincerity: "Brother, it's just family; there's no need to distinguish between us."

Fu Wentao laughed heartily, patting Qi Yun's shoulder again: "Okay, when the lithography machine arrives, you come with me to meet that person."

Qi Yun understood what he meant — "big brother" was clearly lifting him up again.

"Little brother, you're on the rise!" Fu Wentao exclaimed while patting his arm.

Chapter 506: Yet Another Master

Fu Wentao was also a decisive person. As soon as he got in the car, he called the head of his overseas company, instructing them to temporarily transfer 500 million USD to an intermediary account provided by ASML.

At that time, it was noon in Europe, and as soon as the money was transferred, ASML's production factory in Eindhoven began preparing for shipment.

In the evening, Fu Wentao hosted a dinner at his home to entertain Qi Yun, and during the meal, he took the opportunity to say a few good words on behalf of his good friend, Li Yaohua.

After listening, Fu Wentao chuckled and asked, "Did he ask you to put in a good word for him?"

"Yes, Brother Li has mentioned many times that he can learn a lot by being around you, and it helps him grow," Qi Yun replied with a grin.

Fu Wentao nodded, "Alright, since President Qi has spoken, how could I not give face?"

"Hey, big brother, you shouldn't say that; it overwhelms me," Qi Yun hurriedly waved his hand.

The meal was enjoyed by all, and just as it was about to end, Qi Yun learned an unpleasant piece of news from Fu Wentao.

"Uncle Tong isn't doing well; he probably won't last many days. Since you're here, you might as well visit him. Otherwise, you might not see him next time."

Qi Yun's hand, holding the wine glass, suddenly stopped, the smile on his face instantly fading, and his voice grew somber: "When I last visited Beijing, he still seemed quite spirited, how did he suddenly..."

Fu Wentao put down his chopsticks, his tone heavy as well: "They diagnosed him with late-stage liver cancer years ago; his organs are completely failing. As he puts it, living until now is already a bonus."

Qi Yun opened his mouth but didn't know what to say for a moment. After a long pause, he tentatively asked, "I have some very precious medicines; for Uncle Tong's condition..."

"It's no use," Fu Wentao interrupted, waving his hand. "Do you think your old brother lacks money? Our families have been friends for generations. If there was a chance, I would definitely make sure he lived another two years."

"When you're old, this day will inevitably come."

"The main thing is, the old man himself doesn't want to struggle anymore..."

Upon hearing this, Qi Yun let out a long sigh in his heart, finally raising his glass to take a sip, finding no taste in it.

He felt grateful to Uncle Tong; without his deliberate guidance, Qi Yun, with his small stature, would not have even had the chance to sit at the same table and drink with a big shot like Fu Wentao, let alone meet him.

So if he could save the man's life, he wouldn't mind giving away some treasures. But if Uncle Tong himself had no ties and wanted to end it sooner, there was not much more he could do...

Fu Wentao lit a cigarette and, after taking a couple of puffs, continued, "The reason I'm telling you this is, firstly, I want you to see the old man."

"Also, the youngster by his side, Xiao Wu, is a treasure. Don't be deceived by his youth; his skills are extraordinary, and he's from a prestigious school."

"If you can recruit him, you'll thank me in the future."

Qi Yun paused for a moment, realizing that the Xiao Wu Fu Wentao mentioned was the young man beside Uncle Tong.

Chen Wei had already told him before that he sensed an extremely dangerous aura from that young man.

For someone capable of making a top special forces member like Chen Wei feel danger, that person's strength must be substantial...

"Second Brother Fu isn't interested in this person?" Qi Yun asked back.

When he had picked up Fu Wentao from the airport earlier, he noticed that Fu Wentao didn't seem to have any bodyguards, which didn't align with his impression of a big shot, since even he had several bodyguards.

Not that it's about showing off for the sake of appearances, but having reached a certain position, who hasn't offended a few people?

Fu Wentao smiled and shook his head, "I don't need it."

...

The next day, Qi Yun, along with Chen Wei, went to the courtyard house located in the city center.

The person who opened the door was none other than the Xiao Wu Fu Wentao mentioned last night.

Qi Yun gave him a second look and explained his visit, "I heard that Uncle Tong isn't doing well and came specifically to see him."

Xiao Wu's face showed a trace of sadness, he nodded, stepped aside, and led the two of them into the annex room.

When they pushed open the carved wooden door, a faint scent of Chinese herbal medicine wafted out, and sunlight filtered through the window, casting reflections on the tiled floor.

Uncle Tong was half-leaning on the headboard, covered with a thin quilt. His face was much paler compared to the last time Qi Yun saw him, clearly in a state of exhaustion.

When he saw Qi Yun come in, he still made an effort to raise his hand, gesturing for Qi Yun to sit in the chair by the bed.

Qi Yun quickly stepped forward, gently holding Uncle Tong's hand, "Uncle Tong, I'm in Beijing for some business and came by to see you."

Uncle Tong blinked, and after a long pause, he began to speak in a voice so faint it was almost inaudible, with each word requiring effort, "Good... good..."

Qi Yun sighed, and after a prolonged silence, he leaned closer to ask, "Do you have any unfulfilled wishes?"

Uncle Tong's eyes slowly shifted to the old pomegranate tree outside the window, its branches gently swaying in the wind.

His lips moved several times, finally managing a faint smile, and he gently shook his head.

Qi Yun nodded slightly, tucked the quilt around him, then stood up straight, bowed deeply to Uncle Tong, and left the room.

It seems that the last moments of life should be for reminiscing.

In the courtyard, Qi Yun took out a business card and handed it to Xiao Wu, "My contact is on this card. You can reach out to me if you need anything."

Xiao Wu didn't respond verbally, simply raised his hand to accept the card, silently tucking it into his pocket.

Seeing his state, Qi Yun said no more, nodded, and left with Chen Wei.

This moment wasn't quite the right time to discuss recruitment; he planned to wait until after Uncle Tong's affairs were settled.

Back in the car, Qi Yun adjusted his mood and asked Chen Wei, "Brother Wei, what do you think of that young man's strength?"

Chen Wei started the car, glancing at the gradually receding courtyard in the rearview mirror, "He's a master."

"How strong?"

Chen Wei pondered for a moment and replied, "Not below me, most likely stronger."

"He looks like he's only in his twenties, right? To be stronger than you, he must have started practicing martial arts from a very young age," Qi Yun voiced his curiosity.

Chen Wei shook his head, his voice low, "It doesn't relate to age; martial arts can be divided into external and internal."

"People like us from the army train in external martial arts, focusing on explosive power in bones and muscles; there's a limit to this strength."

"There's another kind, internal martial arts, which must be learned from a young age, starting with foundational stance training, then practicing breathing techniques to nurture Inner Strength."

"This practice emphasizes lineage, requiring corresponding cultivation methods and a master's guidance. True experts with Inner Strength are rare."

"My instructor once said he was incapacitated with one punch by a Taoist master," Chen Wei, unusually loquacious, expressed admiration and respect for so-called internal martial arts.

Qi Yun's eyes showed surprise, and he asked curiously, "A Taoist master? Like in the movies, walking without leaving traces in the snow, jumping across rooftops?"

Chen Wei shook his head again, "I've never seen it myself. Internal martial arts require inner cultivation; those adept at it don't often walk the worldly path, but what you mentioned shouldn't be difficult for them."

Qi Yun was internally impressed, realizing that such people indeed existed.

Chapter 507: Harvest Time Is Coming

Two more days passed quickly, during which Qi Yun received two intelligence briefings, but they were all worthless.

However, he didn't idle these past two days, visiting Xiao Hanguang, Director Fu, and others, making some personal connections.

Originally, he planned to meet Minister Lan to report on work, but unfortunately, the latter went to Fujian Province, so they didn't meet.

At 4 PM, in a certain Kongjun Base in the eastern suburbs, amid deafening engine roars from the sky, a total of six Boeing 747 cargo planes from South Korea landed on the runway one after another.

Qi Yun, Fu Wentao, and three scientists recruited by the latter waited near the tarmac.

Once all planes were stationary, Kongjun Base personnel first boarded with specialized equipment for checks, and upon confirming safety, they directed cranes and hydraulic loading platforms to approach slowly.

The cargo planes' cabins contained dozens of containers, filled with parts for EUV lithography machines, a single assembled machine weighing nearly 200 tons.

There are over a hundred thousand precision components, with assembly alone taking several months.

Each container was meticulously transported to a special warehouse, where the three scientists donned anti-static suits and began inspections.

Every container had a barcode; scanning it pops up the components info on a tablet, allowing them to verify the consistency of the shipment with ASML's records.

However, to fully ascertain operational capability, it requires TSMC engineers to come and assemble the equipment.

Qi Yun wasn't terribly worried, though, as the equipment's delivery argues against sabotage; if exposed, the United States would surely trouble them.

Although Christophe might have swayed some people, it would only be a few key figures.

Additionally, the payment of 500 million USD came from the Fu Family; neither Christophe nor Samsung would dare play tricks.

Otherwise, they'd face the Fu's retaliation, whose influence in Europe trumps ASML's in a single industry—they can sway local governments.

"Main optical lens set, production date 2025.02.15, vibration peak 0.04G... data consistent with factory report."

...

Meanwhile, Qi Yun and Fu Wentao were invited into the base bigwig's office for tea; the mission came directly from above, conferring high confidentiality, so even the bigwig didn't inspect the planes when they landed.

"Mr. Fu, Comrade Xiao Qi, the base has limited conditions—please excuse us," the bigwig courteously poured tea for them.

Fu Wentao nodded, speaking lightly, "Thank you, Major Ma. It's us troubling you."

Qi Yun appeared less relaxed, glancing at the gold star on the bigwig's shoulder, handling the cup with caution: "Thank you, Sir. It's an honor to drink tea you've personally poured."

"To be honest, I had dreamed of joining the army, but unfortunately..."

His belief is to never hesitate to boast when needed, and never be ashamed to flatter, since saying nice things cost nothing—better flatter first and check efficacy later.

Sure enough, the bigwig laughed heartily: "Oh, Comrade Xiao Qi, you're too modest. I've seen news reports on your deeds; not wearing a uniform doesn't matter—as long as you're contributing to the Country."

Qi Yun hastily nodded obediently: "Yes, Sir, you're right."

"..."

Unnoticed, exterior light waned, until Fu Wentao received verification results and they both rose to leave.

On departure, the bigwig shook hands with them each, Qi Yun feigning reluctance: "I haven't heard enough of Sir's guidance; why don't we exchange contacts, and I'll visit when Sir's free."

The bigwig laughed, lightly tapping his hand: "Alright, when I'm on leave, I'll get in touch—I enjoy interacting with young people like you."

They exchanged numbers as the bigwig saw them out of the office.

Once outside the main building, Fu Wentao glanced sideways at Qi Yun, a smile playing on his face: "Small talk leading to another contact, all over a tea break?"

"Nice pace, keep it up—if I ever fall from grace, I'll count on you."

Qi Yun feigned exasperation: "Come on, big brother, you're undermining me."

"With your stature, even if you fell from grace, wouldn't you still cut a figure wherever you go? Tagging along with me seems unnecessary."

Fu Wentao burst into laughter, pointing at him: "With that statement, I'll insure it does pay off calling me big brother."

Grinning widely, Qi Yun rubbed his hands: "That's great."

Chatting, they arrived outside the special warehouse, where the three scientists awaited.

"Fu, sir, initial checks confirm it's an EXE5200B EUV lithography machine, supporting 2nm and below processes, matching TSMC's current model."

Fu Wentao nodded slightly: "Great, thank you three; remember this must remain confidential, tell no one."

The trio nodded uniformly: "Yes, Mr. Fu, rest assured, we know this equipment's national significance."

...

Leaving Kongjun Base, Fu Wentao glanced at his watch, immediately calling a number.

"This is Fu Wentao. When can the leader meet me?"

"Okay, let's do tomorrow morning then."

After hanging up, he turned to Qi Yun: "Tomorrow at nine we'll report together."

Qi Yun nodded: "Alright."

"Okay, when will TSMC send engineers?" Fu Wentao asked.

"Mr. Wei secretly organized a team, departing the day after tomorrow via Fujian Province, so we'll need to receive them."

Fu Wentao rapped his knees lightly: "Using Fujian Province is clever, discreet—I'll notify customs there."

"Sure." Qi Yun replied, gearing to speak further when his phone rang suddenly.

Checking the screen, he turned to Fu Wentao: "Salaman finished the diplomatic event; asks when we can meet."

Fu Wentao pondered a few seconds: "Let's go now; it's not convenient for my car to be seen—have him send the embassy car."

Chapter 508: Trillion-Level Project

West of the city, Diaoyutai.

Inside the hotel, Salaman personally waited at the elevator with the Foreign Minister from Oil Country.

As the elevator doors opened, Qi Yun was slightly taken aback by the scene, not expecting this guy to pull off such distinctions. The last time he met him, Salaman wasn't this enthusiastic.

Salaman quickly stepped forward with a familiar smile and reached out to Fu Wentao first, asking Qi Yun, "Qi Yun, is this Mr. Fu?"

Qi Yun smiled, raised his hand in a gesture of introduction, "That's right, this is Mr. Fu Wentao."

Then he turned to Fu Wentao and said, "Brother, this is Mr. Salaman."

Salaman keenly caught the word "Brother," a peculiar gleam flickered in his eyes, confirming that he indeed found the right person. It seemed Qi Yun's relationship with Fu Wentao was far closer than he had understood.

Fu Wentao stepped out of the elevator, shook hands with Salaman, and spoke in a calm tone, "Mr. Salaman, it's an honor."

"Thank you for waiting here. You're too kind."

"It's what I should do," Salaman explained with a smile, "Mr. Fu, you must be tired from your journey. I should have visited you, but there are some bothersome people constantly watching me outside. I'm worried about causing unnecessary trouble for you, hence why I invited you to meet here."

Fu Wentao nodded slightly, "I understand."

After a brief exchange of pleasantries, they moved to the meeting room. The staff prepared tea and then closed the door, leaving only Qi Yun, Fu Wentao, and Salaman in the room.

"Mr. Fu, regarding our intention to purchase Beidou Company's satellite system, Qi Yun should have already informed you, and I sincerely request your assistance in facilitating this transaction."

Fu Wentao gently put down the teacup and spoke slowly, "About the Beidou system, Qi Yun did mention it to me."

"But you also know that this is not a simple commercial cooperation. The external authorization from Beidou Company requires approval from multiple departments, and the process is more complicated than you imagined."

"Moreover, the core issue is that although you claim it's for photovoltaic equipment, it is actually for military equipment."

"This involves the country's strategic level and needs approval from above."

Salaman nodded, speaking earnestly, "Yes, that's why I asked Qi Yun to seek Mr. Fu's help. If Mr. Fu is willing to intervene and coordinate, I will be extremely grateful."

Seeing that the conversation was laid bare, Fu Wentao didn't hold back anymore and said slowly after a few seconds of silence, "Originally, I wasn't willing to get involved in this matter, but since Qi Yun asked, let's be direct."

"I can help coordinate, but first, I need to know what kind of price you are willing to pay."

"First, the military authorization of Beidou is different from civilian use. Once given, the risk is much greater than you imagine. The higher-ups won't agree for no reason."

"Additionally, you know that Huaxia is a society that values personal relationships, so intervening to assist in this matter requires me to spend some favors."

Upon hearing this, Salaman's eyes lit up, "I appreciate Mr. Fu's straightforwardness. Rest assured, I came to Huaxia with genuine sincerity."

He then picked up the briefcase from the chair beside him, took out several documents, and handed them over, "Firstly, regarding energy, Oil Country is willing to sign a 5-year strategic supply agreement with Huaxia, increasing the annual crude oil supply from the current 80 million tons to 100 million tons, with prices 6% below the international benchmark."

"We also promise that even if the future Middle East situation becomes unstable, your supply will not be interrupted, ensuring stable energy costs, and settlements can be made in RMB."

"Secondly, the Future City project will be fully open to Huaxia. The city's smart grid, the maglev rail through the city, and the underground integrated facilities are all billion-dollar projects."

"We also promise that the project's engineering machinery, building materials, and intelligent equipment needed will prioritize Huaxia's brands. As long as you can supply them, we won't consider European manufacturers."

"..."

Salaman spoke fluently for four or five minutes, ultimately promising solemnly, "In the future, Oil Country will be Huaxia's most loyal ally, and we will align with Huaxia's steps on international matters."

Upon hearing the conditions offered by the other party, Qi Yun's heart surged with waves, not expecting Oil Country to be willing to give so much just for Beidou.

Just the Future City project alone, securing one or two segments casually would be enough to last eight lifetimes...

However, Fu Wentao remained calm, merely nodding slightly without uttering a word.

Noticing this, Salaman continued to express, "Furthermore, last month on the edge of Rub al Khali, we discovered a new oil field with conventional crude reserves exceeding 100 million barrels. If Mr. Fu is interested, we can jointly establish a company for extraction."

Upon hearing this, a faint gleam flashed in Fu Wentao's eyes.

At the current price of about 60 USD per barrel, this is still a multibillion-dollar business, although the investment costs might be considerable, the profits remain substantial.

Moreover, Fu Wentao values the opportunity to enter the Middle East market; once he secures a foothold there, he can gradually infiltrate other industries.

"I can see Mr. Salaman is quite sincere." After being silent for quite a while, Fu Wentao finally spoke, "I will discuss this matter with the higher-ups first, and if they permit, we can then discuss the specific details."

Upon hearing this, Salaman's face relaxed instantly, revealing a genuine smile, "Thank you so much, Mr. Fu! As long as you are willing to communicate, I believe this matter can be facilitated."

Then he took a business card from the briefcase and handed it to Fu Wentao with both hands, "This is my personal number. If you need any communication, you can call me at any time."

Fu Wentao nodded, received the business card, and then stood up to leave, "Alright, I will first synchronize the situation with the relevant departments, and any news will be communicated to you promptly."

Qi Yun also stood up, shook hands briefly with Salaman, and left together with Fu Wentao.

After returning to the Rolls-Royce, Qi Yun gave Fu Wentao a cigarette and smiled, saying, "This Salaman is quite sincere, isn't he?"

Fu Wentao took the cigarette, lit it, and took a puff before speaking slowly, "You kid still haven't dealt with these types of people enough..."

Qi Yun revealed a suspicious expression, "Second Brother Fu, what do you mean?"

"That guy's offers may seem tempting, but most are empty promises," Fu Wentao explained, "Take their Future City, for instance; it's been under construction for years, and only a few kilometers have been built, not even reaching 1% of the total progress."

"Even if you sign a strategic cooperation agreement with him, at this pace, you might not live to see those project bids even after you're buried."

Chapter 509: The Big Boss's Gratitude

Qi Yun smacked his lips after hearing this. He really did overlook this point and didn't see through Salaman, with those thick eyebrows and big eyes, as a cunning person.

Although the Oil Country is immensely wealthy, if the project really fails, those agreed-upon conditions would indeed become empty talk.

"But he's not entirely without sincerity," Fu Wentao flicked the cigarette ash and continued, "At least he's increasing our crude oil supply and lowering prices, which are tangible benefits."

"And the new oil field in Rub al Khali, I've heard people mention it. That area has indeed discovered conventional oil reserves, although the exact numbers haven't been disclosed, this isn't something you can fake."

"I'll find an opportunity to communicate with the higher-ups. Once things are settled, you can count the oil field as a share for you, kid."

Upon hearing this, Qi Yun's heart was immediately filled with joy. That was a project worth billions of USD; even a small portion was enough for him.

But despite the joy in his heart, he maintained a composed demeanor. Now that his position was gradually rising, he had to get used to that feeling of being unfazed.

"Second Brother Fu, you're making me a bit embarrassed..."

...

Late at night, Qi Yun lay in bed, just having finished a video call with his daughter and Zhao Qing, when he received another message from Fu Wentao.

The content was simple, just five words: "The old man has passed."

Qi Yun's hand holding the phone suddenly stiffened, and the joy on his face vanished instantly, replaced by an indescribable emotion in his heart.

He still remembered his first visit to Beijing. Due to Mr. Chen's connections, the other party genuinely cared for him like a junior, not only helping to repair that Golden Rattan Chair but also introducing him to Fu Wentao.

The support from the latter needs no further mention.

So he always remained grateful to Mr. Tong. It's just a pity that there would be no chance to repay him in the future...

The next day, Qi Yun got up early and tidied himself up. His hair had grown a bit long lately, so he specifically hired Tony to give him a hairstyle fit for someone worth two billion.

After all, he was about to meet someone important and needed to pay attention to his appearance.

After breakfast, Fu Wentao sent a driver to pick him up. The car drove straight to the grand courtyard in West District, where Qi Yun then transferred to Fu Wentao's car.

This visit was different from the last. Fu Wentao rolled down the window, showed some credentials, and after a phone verification at the guard booth, they were let through directly, without the previous complicated security checks.

This is the kind of authenticity that top-profile figures have—not something held up by pomp and circumstance.

After the car entered the parking lot, a middle-aged secretary was already waiting. As soon as Qi Yun and the others got out, the secretary approached.

"Mr. Fu, the leader has reserved fifty minutes for the meeting. The leader has an important meeting at ten."

Fu Wentao nodded: "Good, that's plenty of time."

The secretary bowed slightly, gestured for them to proceed, and guided them steadily towards the small building: "Let's go through the side hall to save time."

Qi Yun followed quietly, not gazing around. Since it was a workday, the building was populated with many staff members.

The secretary led them to the sixth floor, and upon entering a large suite, stopped before a dark brown wooden door.

He knocked lightly three times, and a deep voice immediately responded from inside.

"Come in!"

The secretary opened the door, gestured for Fu Wentao and Qi Yun to enter, and then quickly followed them to prepare tea in the reception area.

In the center of the bright office was an oval redwood table. Behind it sat an elderly man in a dark Zhongshan suit, with neatly combed gray-white hair, perusing a file with a blue cover.

It was the same person who awarded Qi Yun the medal last time.

Opposite the desk were two chairs, clearly reserved for them.

"Leader." Fu Wentao bowed slightly and greeted.

The elder looked up and gestured for them to sit: "You're here, have a seat, and wait for me for a few minutes while I finish this document."

"Alright." Fu Wentao nodded and sat on the chair to the right, while Qi Yun gently took the seat beside him.

This time he wasn't as timid as before, sitting firmly in the chair.

After the secretary brought the tea, he left and closed the door, leaving the office quiet, with only the sound of papers being turned and the ticking of the wall clock.

After waiting for three or four minutes, the elder finally put the document aside and looked at the two of them.

"Hehe, Wentao, those dark circles under your eyes suggest you haven't rested well last night?" the elder asked casually.

This remark made it clear that their relationship was very close.

Logically, it had to be; otherwise, the lithography machine matter wouldn't have been entrusted to Fu Wentao.

And the fact that Fu Wentao arranged a meeting overnight confirms it as well.

Fu Wentao smiled wryly and didn't explain further: "Yes, I handled some matters last night."

The elder nodded slightly, shifting his gaze to Qi Yun, and smiled: "Comrade Xiao Qi, I didn't expect us to meet again so soon."

"When we parted last time, I said that I hoped you'd bring me good news the next time we met."

"And you've certainly lived up to expectations."

Qi Yun was startled internally. The elder's words clearly indicated he knew some of the developments; it seemed that Fu Wentao had credited the achievements to him...

No time to think further, he quickly sat up straight and responded respectfully: "Report to the leader, I just did what was within my capabilities."

The elder waved his hand warmly: "It's not a formal occasion, no need to be so formal."

Qi Yun nodded with a smile, relaxing his body slightly.

"Let's discuss the situation, has the equipment been verified?" the elder asked Fu Wentao.

"Yes, I invited three experts from the Chinese Academy of Sciences. The preliminary conclusion is that the equipment is indeed ASML's latest EUV lithography machine model."

"Further confirmation requires engineers from T Semiconductor to assemble the equipment."

"Qi Yun has already contacted Wei Zhe, and their discreetly arranged team will arrive tomorrow," Fu Wentao reported in detail.

The elder nodded slightly, looking back at Qi Yun: "You negotiated for a total of five units, correct?"

Qi Yun nodded: "Yes, Leader, a total of five units, all the latest models, will be delivered within two months."

"That should be enough to distribute," the elder clenched his fist and sighed, "I hope these five machines can significantly advance our research progress."

"Over the years, old M has been holding us back in high-end lithography machines, impacting our automotive, industrial, and even aerospace specialty chips."

"Xiao Qi, you've opened a door for our chip industry this time."

"I need to formally thank you, and express our gratitude for your efforts."

Chapter 510: A Shocking Arrangement

In the office, the elder first expressed his gratitude to Qi Yun, then continued with a gentle smile, "Although I don't know how you convinced ASML Company and T Semiconductor, I imagine it must have cost you quite a bit."

"Country thanks you genuinely. So, tell me, do you have any practical needs? As long as they don't violate principles or exceed our capabilities, feel free to ask, and I'll do my best to solve them for you."

Hearing this, Qi Yun did not immediately respond.

According to his previous plan, he intended to help Fu Wentao solve the issue of the lithography machine, and then ask the other party to assist in facilitating the transaction between the Oil Country and Beidou, thus repaying Salaman's favor.

But unexpectedly, his "big brother" was so generous, not greedy for credit at all, and pushed him forward to receive the reward, which caught Qi Yun off guard.

After pondering for a moment and quickly considering it in his heart, he finally shook his head and replied sincerely, "Leader, thank you for your kindness. I only did what I could, and I don't have any other needs."

"Being able to contribute to Huaxia's chip industry is my honor; I don't dare to claim credit."

Beside him, Fu Wentao glanced at Qi Yun, a hint of admiration flashed in his eyes, considering the young man to be sensible and not overwhelmed by sudden favor.

The elder on the opposite side listened to Qi Yun's answer, his smile deepened, and he lightly tapped the redwood table, his tone full of relief, "What a humble statement!"

"It's rare for young people to have such clarity and humility, more valuable than ability."

"Leader, you've overpraised." Qi Yun replied with a smile.

The elder nodded, "We'll talk about this matter later, Wentao, you continue speaking."

"Alright..." Fu Wentao picked up the conversation, succinctly reported the matters, then shifted to talk about Salaman's request, "Additionally, there's another matter I want to report to you."

"Last night, I met with Salaman from the Oil Country privately. He wants to purchase Beidou..." He spoke while taking out a document from his briefcase, "Here are the terms they offered; please take a look."

The elder raised his hand to receive the document, his gaze quickly scanning the clauses, his brows slightly furrowing while reading, then soon relaxing.

He looked at Fu Wentao, then glanced at Qi Yun, roughly guessing why this matter was handled by Fu Wentao.

"Wanting to replace the existing weapon navigation system with Beidou, this young Salaman is quite daring..."

Fu Wentao nodded in agreement, "Their existing weapon technology relies heavily on GPS, but the control of GPS signals is in the hands of Old Sister. The future new king doesn't want to be constrained by others anymore."

"However, they don't want to completely break ties with Old Sister either, so they intend to use the guise of civilian projects to quietly achieve this."

The elder nodded slightly, understandingly, "Wanting to escape Old Sister's control without breaking ties, this kid plays the game of being agreeable with both sides quite well."

"This mindset is more patient than his father."

He paused for a few seconds before continuing, "The terms are quite sincere; settling in RMB will accelerate our currency's internationalization."

"I'm in principle agreement with this matter. Later, let's have Wentao exchange opinions with a few departments. If everyone approves, I'll notify that person."

"Okay, that's all I have to report on these two matters." Fu Wentao responded.

The elder nodded and turned his attention to Qi Yun.

After a long silence, he slowly spoke, "Comrade Qi, I heard your Blue Minister promoted you?"

Qi Yun didn't expect the elder to suddenly ask about this and instinctively sat upright, "Reporting to the leader, Guo An did indeed adjust my position, and I am currently a safety advisor for J Province."

The elder lightly uttered an "Mm" and continued, "Isn't young Salaman trying to use the solar project as a cover? I think you should liaise with them on this matter."

"Later, let State-owned W find a group company and establish a joint subsidiary with you, you'll hold a position, specifically responsible for this matter."

State-owned W? Subsidiary?

Qi Yun was stunned for a while, not understanding the elder's intention. Why are they suddenly asking him to set up a joint subsidiary?

Beside him, Fu Wentao saw that he hadn't answered for a while and quietly nudged his shoe under the table.

Qi Yun quickly refocused his mind and solemnly stated, "Yes! Please rest assured, leader, I will certainly handle this matter well!"

Although he couldn't understand it at the moment, he trusted that the elder and Fu Wentao definitely wouldn't harm him.

"Good, don't have too much psychological pressure. I have confidence in your ability. If you encounter any difficulties, you can report them to Wentao." The elder smiled and offered some comfort, "If there's nothing else, let's leave it at that; I need to prepare for a meeting."

"Alright, then you go ahead."

"Yes, goodbye leader!"

The two stood up to bid farewell.

After leaving the office, the secretary escorted them all the way to the parking lot, and after getting into the car, Qi Yun turned to Fu Wentao and asked, "Big brother, what is the leader's intention with this arrangement?"

The car slowly started and left the heavily guarded compound.

Fu Wentao took a bottle of champagne from the car's fridge, poured it, and replied with a smile, "Hasn't he already said, it's about valuing your capability, kid."

"Huh?" Qi Yun was even more confused, "But..."

"Are you wondering why, despite not understanding the solar business and not being within the system, you're being asked to take charge?" Fu Wentao interrupted him before he finished.

Qi Yun nodded, "Yes, that's indeed what I'm confused about."

Fu Wentao handed the champagne he had poured to Qi Yun and patiently explained, "First, on the question of understanding the solar business, it's not important; there are plenty of experts."

"You just need to steer the general direction, not worry about specific affairs."

"Secondly, why did that person ask about your position in Guo An?"

"Because the capability you've demonstrated in the lithography machine matter has completely made him take notice."

"Especially your overseas connections, they're extremely valuable."

"I personally went to Mediation Island but couldn't reach a deal, yet you got it done quietly. That's your value!"

Qi Yun touched his nose and smiled bitterly, "Big brother, your words are too generous; compared to you, my small stature is like a tiny bug in the sky."

"I just happened to reach a cooperation with De Gaulle and learned about his transaction with Christophe, which luckily facilitated this matter."

Fu Wentao waved his hand, "Regardless of the process, the result is that you accomplished the task; we only look at the result."

Qi Yun smacked his lips, did not argue further, and waited for Fu Wentao to continue.