

Middle Age 531

Chapter 531: Truly Untouchable

Qingfeng Manor, Building A11, the business car seated by Ding Junkai slowly stopped at the villa's entrance.

He stepped into the courtyard and saw a young man with multicolored hair, about the same age as him, squatting in the garage fiddling with a fiery red Ferrari LaFerrari.

He also had one white car, which his father, Ding Sanshi, bought for him when he first returned to the country.

The Ferrari LaFerrari, along with the Porsche 918 and McLaren P1, is known as one of the "Three Hypercars." According to the latest statistics, there are only 15 of these cars in the entire Huaxia.

It is also one of the few models where second-hand cars are more expensive than new ones, and not just by a small margin; the new car's price is over twenty million, while second-hand cars can reach an astonishing fifty million!

The reason for such a ridiculous phenomenon is that you can't just buy this car if you want to; you need to go through Ferrari's invitation system.

In other words, to buy this car, you have to apply to Ferrari first, and if they approve, they'll send you an invitation.

It's said that the review is quite rigorous, not only considering the buyer's assets but in many aspects.

But without exception, those who can buy a brand-new car are all well-known figures.

Including Ding Sanshi, Liu Guangxin, Jay Chow, and others...

To some extent, owning a Ferrari LaFerrari symbolizes one's identity.

For this reason, many simply wealthy but do not meet Ferrari's review criteria, yet want this car, are willing to pay heavily to buy a second-hand car...

Seeing Ding Junkai arrive, Liu Xiaotao put down the carbon fiber accessory he was holding and greeted him.

"You've arrived."

Ding Junkai still had a look like he had swallowed a dead fly, silently nodded, and followed the other into the living room on the first floor.

A few trendy coats were casually thrown on the leather sofa, and expensive bottles of foreign wine scattered on the coffee table, everywhere highlighting a luxurious lifestyle.

Liu Xiaotao plopped down on the sofa, took a drag on the e-cigarette from the table, then glanced at Ding Junkai's sullen face: "What's wrong? It's just a couple of days in detention, why so furious?"

Ding Junkai tugged irritably at his collar, gritting his teeth, "I have never been so screwed over like this before, a bumpkin set me up and got me, it's outrageous!"

Yes, even though Qi Yun had already shown some strength, which prevented him from immediately getting out of detention, in Young Master Ding's heart, Qi Yun was still just a lucky bumpkin, not in the same league as him.

Liu Xiaotao seemed to disagree with this, he merely smiled silently.

He got up and took out an unopened bottle of champagne from the wine cabinet, a limited edition from a top winery in France, which costs an ordinary person several years of salary.

But in the eyes of these top second-generation rich, it was like two-yaun bottled water, something they drank as a beverage daily.

He poured half a cup for Ding Junkai, filled his own glass, then sat back on the sofa.

"Have a drink to calm down."

Ding Junkai grabbed the wine cup, drank it in one go, and wiped his mouth angrily: "I just can't swallow this, I must reclaim my dignity."

Saying this, he suddenly turned his gaze to Liu Xiaotao, "Young Master Liu, here is your territory, you won't not help me, right?"

Liu Xiaotao didn't answer immediately, instead he fiddled with the wine glass in his hand, after a moment's thought, he smiled and asked: "What did your dad say?"

Upon hearing this, Ding Junkai's expression became even worse: "He told me to go home first."

Liu Xiaotao nodded, "Then you should listen to Uncle Ding and go back."

"You want me to go back too?! How is that different from admitting defeat? How will people in the circle see me after this?" Ding Junkai shouted as if he couldn't hear clearly.

In his view, Liu Xiaotao's words did not take his reputation into account at all.

Yet Liu Xiaotao wasn't affected by his temper, slowly rotating the wine cup, "I saw this Qi Yun before."

"Initially I didn't pay much attention to him, but later he suddenly rose up, now not only a member of the J Province Chamber of Commerce, but reportedly has connections with Officer Xia."

"So what?" Ding Junkai dismissively asked, frowning, "With your family's connections here, you can't handle him?"

Liu Xiaotao didn't answer this question, instead he crossed his legs and retorted, "Do you know why my dad never scolds me for spending billions on cars every year?"

Ding Junkai frowned and said nothing.

"Because I only spend money, I don't cause trouble."

"As long as I stay cool and don't mess with people whose depth I can't see, I have money to last a lifetime."

Liu Xiaotao put down the wine cup, leaned back on the sofa, his tone filled with some intriguing meaning, "If Qi Yun was as easy to handle as you say, you wouldn't only just get out of detention today."

Ding Junkai's face instantly turned pig liver-red, as if someone had slapped him hard.

The words were like a needle, piercing his self-deceptive bubble, he wanted to refute a couple of words, but couldn't squeeze a word from his mouth.

Yes, if Qi Yun was really so easy to handle, he would have been dutifully sent out of detention as soon as he entered, instead of staying inside for two days.

But the arrogance in his bones didn't allow him to admit that he couldn't handle a bumpkin.

"That guy has government status, not easy to deal with, you better go back first, see how Uncle Ding arranges afterward." Liu Xiaotao advised again.

He is a very sober and low-profile person, even though his family's group is already the largest private enterprise in J Province, he didn't think he could run wild.

If not for the close business ties between the two families in recent years, he wouldn't waste so much talking with Ding Junkai.

Ding Junkai clenched his fists, breathing rapid: "Even if I can't touch him, at least help me shut down his company, can't you?"

Liu Xiaotao sighed, "Eh, would you believe me if I said I can't shut it down?"

"Young Master Liu, you can't shut down a company in this place!?" Ding Junkai's tone was excited, obviously not believing.

Liu Xiaotao didn't explain, he immediately took out his phone, found a number and dialed it, then turned on the speaker and placed the phone on the table.

"Uncle Xia, it's Liu Xiaotao."

"Oh, Young Master Liu, what a rare guest! What made you think of calling me today?" The person on the other end was Xia Shaohua from J's Industry and Commerce, who had dined with Qi Yun and Shao Yuewen at Hutao Villa before.

"Haha, Uncle Xia, there's something I'd like to ask your favor..."

After Liu Xiaotao subtly expressed his intention, Xia Shaohua fell into momentary silence.

After a while he replied in a troubled tone: "Young Master Liu... this... is not easy to handle."

"Is there any misunderstanding between you and Qi Yun? How about I arrange a meeting, everyone sit down and talk, clear up any misunderstandings."

Liu Xiaotao paused slightly, he guessed that Xia Shaohua would refuse, but didn't expect him to actively want to mediate, it seemed the other had quite some relationship with this Qi Yun.

"Haha, alright, I'll pick a time, later you help me invite him out for a meet."

"Sure, I'll wait for your call." On the other side, Xia Shaohua sounded relieved too.

He knew very well how influential Young Master Liu's father was locally, so he sincerely wanted to help Qi Yun resolve misunderstandings, not wishing to see Brother Qi turning an exceptionally powerful enemy...

After hanging up, Liu Xiaotao turned to Ding Junkai helplessly: "Believe me now? Or do you want me to call tax too?"

Ding Junkai clenched his molars, said nothing.

The other end Xia Shaohua also immediately sent Qi Yun a message after finishing the call, informing him of the situation.

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Chapter 532: It Has Begun

In the afternoon, at 28 Nanjing Road, at the Guo An Building.

Inside an office with a sign reading "Special Security Consultant" on the door, Ge Dabao was briefing Qi Yun on the progress of the case.

"Based on the information provided by Li Biao and the others, we have conducted a thorough investigation and evidence collection. It can currently be confirmed that Ma Chaoyang and Old He are indeed suspected of illegal activities."

"However, as you know, this matter should not involve us according to protocol. It's only because they once hired someone to assassinate you that we have a reason to intervene."

"Director Duan suggests that considering the special status of these two individuals, it's best to hand the evidence over to the investigation team."

Qi Yun nodded upon hearing this. Indeed, it wasn't convenient for Guo An to intervene, given their different functions. "Yes, I agree."

"Just agreeing isn't enough; Director said I should hand over the evidence to you, and you'll decide when to pass it on to the investigation team."

"As for Li Biao, he can be temporarily detained here. Let me know when he needs to be transferred, and I'll take him there."

Qi Yun was puzzled: "I'll be the one transferring it?"

Ge Dabao rolled his eyes at him: "Yes, Qi Consultant."

Qi Yun couldn't figure out Director Duan's intentions, but he believed there must be a reason behind the arrangement, so after a brief thought, he agreed: "Okay, then you hand over the evidence to me."

"Alright, I'll bring it to your office later."

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When leaving the Guo An Building, Qi Yun had two more document folders in his hand. They contained not only the confessions of Li Biao and others but also many photos and investigation reports. In short, the evidence chain was very complete.

After getting in the car, he instructed Chen Wei to drive to the address Ge Dabao had mentioned.

Usually, for investigation teams like this, a separate area in a local office building would be allocated for them to work.

But this time, the investigation team broke the norm, having no contact with the locals, as if they didn't need their cooperation, only occasionally sending someone to retrieve part of the data.

This stance, expressed inadvertently, led many to speculate.

However, Qi Yun, aware of the inside story, understood the rationale behind this. After all, the investigation team was specifically targeting Old He and his associates, and given Old He's deep roots, avoiding contact was understandable.

The car drove towards East City for over forty minutes, eventually stopping in front of an ordinary-looking six-story red brick building.

The walls were covered with dark green creeping vines, and there were no signs at the entrance, only two sharp-eyed young men in plain clothes guarding the steps on either side.

Seeing the Maybach pull up, the two scrutinized the scene without moving.

Qi Yun opened the car door, got out with the document folders, and after taking a few steps, one of the plainclothes officers approached, eyes scrutinizing.

"What are you doing? Outsiders aren't allowed in here."

Qi Yun also looked at them, sensing they weren't ordinary people, though he couldn't tell if they were from the investigation team or...

"Are you with the people inside?" Qi Yun pointed to the building beside them and asked.

The plainclothes officer paused for a moment, stared at Qi Yun for a while, and then nodded: "Do you have any business?"

Qi Yun showed Guo An's credentials: "My name is Qi Yun. Please inform your person in charge that I'd like to report some situations."

The plainclothes officer's gaze fell on the credential, pausing on the "Special Security Consultant of Guo An" for two seconds, his tense expression softened a bit: "Alright, please wait a moment. I will report it now."

Having said that, he took out a phone and stepped aside to make a call.

Two minutes later, a middle-aged man jogged out from the building. He quickly approached Qi Yun and extended his hand: "Hello, Comrade Qi Yun, I am Zhang Jianjun from the Third Investigation Team."

Qi Yun also extended his hand for a handshake: "Hello, Leader Zhang."

"I was about to invite you over tomorrow, didn't expect you to come on your own," Zhang Jianjun said with a smile, then gestured invitingly, "Let's go inside and talk."

...

Qi Yun stayed in the building for about an hour. When he came out, his mood seemed noticeably better.

After getting into the car, he was about to instruct Chen Wei to drive to the kindergarten to pick up his daughter, but then he received an unfamiliar call from Jiang Province.

"Hello, Comrade Qi Yun, I am Pan Dongming, the director of the Guozhi Committee in Jiang Province."

Jiang Province Guozhi Committee?

Upon hearing these words, Qi Yun could roughly guess the purpose of the call. It was most likely about the photovoltaic project.

"Hello, Director Pan."

"Hehe, Comrade Qi Yun, I hope I'm not disturbing your work by calling abruptly," Pan Dongming's voice was very courteous over the phone.

"Director Pan, you're being too polite. If you're looking for me, it must be something important, not disturbing at all."

"That's good, that's good." Pan Dongming chuckled, then explained, "I happened to be on a business trip to Bird City with President Song from Huaineng Group, and would like to meet with you to get acquainted if it's convenient for you?"

Qi Yun was taken aback upon hearing this. Wow, they had already arrived before calling him, leaving him no chance to refuse.

However, with a respectable position as the director of the Guozhi Committee and the CEO of a conglomerate with annual revenues of hundreds of billions, flying from the far east to the west showed their sincerity.

Such enthusiasm for business development was a testament to why their economy was flourishing.

"Director Pan, you're too kind. I also enjoy making friends. Since both of you have come such a long way, it's my honor to have a chance to meet and chat."

"How about this, Director Pan? You provide me with a location, and I'll arrange for a car to pick you up. I'll host a simple meal tonight to welcome you."

Given their sincerity, Qi Yun, too, reciprocated with enthusiasm. Whether the photovoltaic project would materialize or not, having a few more friends couldn't hurt.

Over the phone, Pan Dongming audibly relaxed, with a genuine smile in his voice: "Oh, please don't trouble yourself. President Song has already arranged a restaurant, right here in the New District, not far from your company."

"I'll send you the location in a bit, and we'll await your esteemed presence."

"Director Pan, you're..." Qi Yun didn't expect them to be so considerate, even arranging the restaurant close to his office, "Alright, then I'd ask for your patience a little longer, I'm heading over now."

"Good, good, see you then."

After hanging up the phone, Qi Yun let out a long sigh.

Last night, Salaman called to inform him that the contract with Beidou had been secretly signed.

This also meant that the photovoltaic project would soon be launched, likely with an announcement soon.

There wasn't much time left for him to decide where the project would be located in the next week or two.

At that time, officials and business leaders like Pan Dongming, who came sincerely, could probably be numerous.

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Meanwhile, at the foot of Tianshan's Bogda Peak.

Ah Jiao and her two colleagues, having successfully collected water samples and completed the basic exploration, began their return journey.

Chapter 533: Their Sincerity Is Overwhelming

PM, a high-end restaurant in the New District.

Director Pan Dongming of the Guozhi Committee of Jiang Province and Song Zhenhai from Huaineng Group are waiting in the restaurant lobby.

Song Zhenhai glanced at his watch, then turned to Pan Dongming and asked, "Old Pan, do you think Qi Yun will choose us?"

"Ah, it's hard to say. Jiang Province is also strong in photovoltaic technology. Compared to us, their local government definitely has stronger ties with Qi Yun."

Pan Dongming sighed, looking a bit forlorn, "But things depend on people. We've come with full sincerity, so let's try our best."

The photovoltaic project in the Oil Country is a juicy opportunity, with procurement orders alone totaling 10 billion US dollars.

If we do a good job of servicing and satisfy Crown Prince Salaman, expanding our business into the Middle East will become much easier, which offers huge implicit benefits.

"Hmm." Song Zhenhai nodded. His anxious expression showed the high expectations for this trip.

Though Huaineng Group is a super giant with assets over a trillion and maintains rapid growth even in the current economic downturn, this is overall and does not mean all subsidiaries are profitable.

As the group's vice president, Song Zhenhai oversees the region with several subsidiaries in a state of annual losses, which impacts his influence within the group greatly.

Therefore, before meeting Qi Yun, he prepared a very sincere proposal and secured the support of the leadership, hoping to make a significant turnaround.

As the two were talking, a tall figure entered the restaurant. Always keeping an eye on the entrance, Pan Dongming stood up promptly, beckoning to Song Zhenhai to come forward.

"Haha, hello, President Qi. I'm Pan Dongming." Pan Dongming stepped forward quickly, his wistful expression replaced by a warm smile, and extended his hand towards Qi Yun. "President Qi is indeed a talented person. We were just talking about you with President Song."

Qi Yun shook hands with Pan Dongming, smiling as he replied, "Hello, Director Pan. You flatter me, really."

"Sorry for being a few minutes late, and thank you both for waiting."

Without waiting for Pan Dongming to introduce, Song Zhenhai eagerly extended his hand, equally enthusiastic, "Hello, President Qi. I'm Song Zhenhai from Huaineng Group. I've read about your advanced deeds in the news, and I'm glad we finally meet. Pleasure to meet you."

"President Song, you're too kind. I've heard much about you, and I look forward to learning more from you."

While shaking hands, Qi Yun was sizing up the two.

Both are typical southerners, seemingly very pragmatic from their appearance and probably ten years older than him.

After the greetings, Pan Dongming raised his hand to lead the way. "Let's go; the dishes are ready. President Song brought a bottle of fine wine, so we'll chat over dinner."

"Sure, please." Qi Yun politely lifted his hand and followed them inside.

Upon reaching a private room on the second floor, the round table was already set with various dishes—nothing extravagant, just exquisite specialties.

On the table were two bottles of 'Farmer's Three Punch' mineral water, showcasing how adept Pan Dongming and his companion were in hospitality; no one could fault the arrangement.

Inside the private room, it's just the three of them—no service staff—and neither Pan Dongming nor Song Zhenhai brought assistants or secretaries.

This was intentional because the upcoming discussions required temporary confidentiality.

"Ah, I've long admired President Qi from the news, and was eager to make your acquaintance."

Pan Dongming picked up the teapot, pouring tea as he sighed, "I seized the chance to come to Jiang Province for a business trip, and asked Director Xiao Hanguang for your number, shamelessly inviting you out to meet. Thanks to President Qi for honoring us."

Upon hearing the name Xiao Hanguang, Qi Yun's eyes flickered momentarily.

His mobile number isn't exactly private, easy to inquire about, but he hadn't expected them to get it from Xiao Hanguang.

And now Pan Dongming casually mentioned it to further develop his relationship with Qi Yun.

"You're too kind, Director Pan." Qi Yun smiled, then asked, "Did Director Xiao also work previously in Jiang Province?"

Qi Yun had to gauge their relationship with Xiao Hanguang. Normally, if they were close, Xiao Hanguang might have informed him in advance.

But given his high rank and daily workload, it's also possible he forgot, so Qi Yun needed to probe a bit more.

If Director Pan was indeed close to Xiao Hanguang, it would greatly influence Qi Yun's ultimate decision since Xiao Hanguang had aided him and shown much care.

Pan Dongming naturally picked up on Qi Yun's implied meaning and waved his hand with a smile, "Not really; we met during training at the Central Party School."

"I see." Qi Yun nodded.

"Come on, let's start eating; the dishes will get cold." Song Zhenhai gestured to Qi Yun, then twisted open a bottle of mineral water, pouring into three glasses.

Three rounds of drinks and five tastes of dishes later, their conversation gradually shifted from pleasantries to the photovoltaic project.

Song Zhenhai set down his wine glass, took a neatly bound proposal from his briefcase, and pushed it toward Qi Yun, "President Qi, I won't beat around the bush. This is our Huaineng Group's draft joint venture plan for your perusal."

"If you have any dissatisfaction with the proposal, feel free to raise it, and I'll discuss it with the group headquarters."

Qi Yun reached for the proposal, flipping to the first page and seeing the clear cooperation framework.

The content roughly outlined that Huaineng Group and Qi Yun would jointly invest 5 billion to establish a new joint venture energy company, with the project landing in Jiang Province.

Huaineng Group investing 4.5 billion, holding 90% of the shares, and responsible for the entire project's technology, photovoltaic component supply, later operation, etc.

Jiang Province's Guozhi Committee would provide policy and land support.

And Qi Yun only needed to invest 500 million, holding 10% of the shares, without having to worry about anything except signing the contract with the Oil Country.

This direction was consistent with what Wendong and Fu Wentao had previously told him.

million for 10% may not sound like much, but given the joint venture with a state-owned enterprise, that proportion was already quite good; more would be difficult for Huaineng Group to justify to the higher-ups.

After all, the project was somewhat a reciprocal from the Oil Country for the purchase of Beidou authorization, practically free money.

Qi Yun's 10% would certainly yield dividends far exceeding the principal amount of 500 million.

So Song Zhenhai's proposal reflected tremendous sincerity.

Chapter 534: That's Your Bigger Picture, Not Mine

On the other side, inside Old He's office.

He was holding a briefcase, just about to get off work, when Director Luo hurriedly ran in to report.

"Leader, people from the Jiang Province Guozhi Committee and Huaineng Group have come, and they are currently talking with Qi Yun, most likely about the photovoltaic project."

Upon hearing this, Old He's eye twitched involuntarily, and his already expressionless face became even more somber.

"Are you sure?"

Director Luo nodded repeatedly: "I'm sure, they arrived this afternoon, and the two of them are having dinner with Qi Yun now."

Old He paused for two seconds, then waved his hand: "I understand, you may go."

Director Luo dared not say more, bowed slightly, and then left the office.

After the other person left, Old He put down the briefcase, sat back into his chair, frowning as if weighing something.

After about five or six minutes, he called his secretary in and instructed: "Go see if that person has left."

...

In the car on the way home, Qi Yun was still pondering over the proposal Song Zhenhai brought out.

Overall, he was quite satisfied, the only problem being the five billion in funds was a bit beyond his expectation.

Since it involves a series of costly tasks such as building factory premises and purchasing equipment, this five billion must be fully paid up.

Originally, his account had nearly two billion in cash in total, but a few days ago the health product company spent over thirty million, and the deal Tao Ziming negotiated with Lucas used up another ten million dollars, which took away a billion.

Moreover, Xiang Xiaoyue from the online company is also continuously burning money, and now Qi Yun has less than seventy million in cash to spare.

"Should I ask Tian Yaosheng to get me a loan of a few billion?"

With the other party's current position as vice president of the provincial branch, it should be simple to maneuver, right?

Just not sure if it might involve any violations...

Qi Yun shook his slightly dizzy head and quickly dismissed this idea.

Although five billion is not a small amount, it's not that big of a problem either. The company needs at least a month or two to prepare, in which time he could completely sell off the water source information at Bogda Peak.

At the very least, two or three billion should be possible, right?

Even if he can't gather enough, with his connections as President Qi, a couple of casual calls to friends could easily bring in several billion.

While Qi Yun was contemplating, the phone rang.

Qi Yun took out his phone, and the screen displayed a local unfamiliar number without a note.

"Hello, Consultant Qi, I am Secretary to Director Hou (I can't write about the plant, just Old He's class monitor, you get the idea), do you have time now? The director wants to meet with you."

Qi Yun frowned at hearing this. He had never interacted with that person, so he couldn't guess what the purpose of this meeting could be at this hour.

However, refusal was not an option, unless he wanted to antagonize such a big shot intentionally.

"Okay, where?"

"In his office. Consultant Qi, please call me when you arrive downstairs, I'll come down to meet you."
The secretary replied politely.

"Okay." Qi Yun said no more, hung up, and instructed Chen Wei to turn around.

When the Maybach drove into the courtyard, it was already close to ten at night.

As Qi Yun walked into the lobby on the first floor, a middle-aged man briskly approached.

"Hello, Consultant Qi, I'll take you to the director's office."

"Okay, thank you." Qi Yun nodded, maintaining an attitude neither humble nor pushy.

Since interacting successively with Secretary Xia, Secretary Jiang, and Secretary Ji, he had developed a certain distaste for people in such roles.

Even if the middle-aged man in front of him held an exalted status, possibly a frequent guest among countless dignitaries, Qi Yun had no interest in currying favor.

The elevator soon reached the tenth floor, and after passing through a corridor, the two entered a suite.

The secretary knocked on the door, heard a voice saying "Come in" from inside, then opened the door and led Qi Yun in.

In the office decorated with antique elegance, an elderly man with gray hair, meticulously combed, was sitting behind a large mahogany desk, holding a pen and focusing on the documents before him.

He wore a dark-colored Zhongshan suit, and although he wasn't intentionally projecting authority, he naturally exuded the powerful aura of someone accustomed to being in a position of power.

This aura was something Qi Yun had only seen with those big shots in Wendong.

"Director, Consultant Qi has arrived." After lightly reporting, the secretary tactfully retreated and closed the door.

Seeing that the elderly man didn't speak, Qi Yun remained standing in place, not rushing forward recklessly.

He only raised his head after finishing reviewing the document on the desk, casting his gaze toward Qi Yun.

"Please have a seat, Comrade Xiaoqi." The elderly man pointed to the chair in front of the desk, his voice full of vigor, "I've heard of your name for a long time now, you've made quite the contribution to the country recently, even the people of J province benefit from it."

Qi Yun sat down in the chair, his tone still neither humble nor pushy: "I've just done what I can, nothing significant, but I appreciate the director's recognition."

The elderly man put down the pen in his hand and nodded in satisfaction: "Good, young people who are not arrogant or impetuous, I have high hopes for you."

"The development of J province relies on young entrepreneurs like you."

Qi Yun couldn't figure out what the old man was getting at, so he just mustered a slight smile: "Thank you for the director's approval."

"No need to be so formal, I called you over just to have a casual chat." The elderly man leaned back in his chair, crossed his hands together, and continued, "Comrade Xiaoqi, what are your plans regarding the photovoltaic project in the Oil Country? Could you share them with me?"

Qi Yun inwardly breathed a sigh of relief; so that's what the meeting was about.

Though the timing was somewhat intriguing, he had just met with Pan Dongming and the others, and barely had finished a bladder's worth of time before receiving this call.

After pondering for a few seconds, he replied candidly: "There's nothing I can't share, so I'll go over the current details, and I'd appreciate the director's guidance..."

Qi Yun didn't hide anything, roughly explaining the situation to the elderly man.

The elderly man nodded slightly after hearing it: "It seems the Jiang Province has indeed put a lot of effort into this project."

"But Comrade Xiaoqi, you are a native of J Province, and I trust you have feelings for your homeland, so I hope you consider the development of your hometown as well."

The photovoltaic project was a task personally assigned to Qi Yun by that person, so even he did not have the right to interfere, and could only express his stance in such a roundabout manner.

"Rest assured, Director, that is a given." Qi Yun nodded solemnly, regardless of his internal thoughts, the necessary outward forms must be observed.

"Just that... I also hope that the director could provide me with some support then, so that I can advance this project with confidence and assurance."

Upon hearing this, the elderly man's eyes flashed with a sharp glint, staring directly at Qi Yun, as if he could see through people's thoughts.

Qi Yun was clear about what kind of support he wanted; the elderly man knew very well, but his usual stance was to prioritize stability.

If such a thing indeed occurred, the entire government office of J Province would experience a great upheaval, which he wished to avoid during his tenure in J Province.

Though it would not directly affect him, there would be some degree of impact.

The elderly man remained silent for a few seconds, his sharp gaze gradually retracting: "I understand the support you seek."

"But Comrade Xiaoqi, we must sometimes approach matters from a broader perspective..."

Qi Yun really wanted to retort, "That's your broad perspective, not mine." But in the end, he held back...

Chapter 535: Explosive Intelligence!

Qi Yun returned to Golden Collar Villa already past midnight, the lights in the living room were still on, and Zhao Qing was still waiting for him to come back.

As soon as he entered the house, Zhao Qing got up from the sofa to greet him, yawning as she asked, "Why are you back so late today, have you eaten?"

"Yes, I've eaten. Got held up by some work." Qi Yun changed into slippers, smiling happily, "Why aren't you asleep yet?"

"I can't sleep when you're not back." Zhao Qing pretended to complain, leaning close to him and sniffing, "Did you drink?"

"Yes, I entertained two friends tonight."

Qi Yun gently patted her back, "I'm fine, you should go rest, I'll take a shower."

Zhao Qing did not move, instead, she turned around and walked to the kitchen, "You go wash up, I'll make you some honey water, remember to drink it later."

"Okay." Qi Yun nodded with a smile and walked upstairs.

After a quick shower, he came to the balcony and lit a cigarette, his mind unconsciously recalling his earlier conversation with Old Hou.

The attitude of the other party... made him feel really uncomfortable.

Back when Old He and the others were targeting him, Old Hou turned a blind eye, and now he's asking him to consider the bigger picture and use emotional blackmail; such behavior was somewhat shameless.

So although he always outwardly agreed, until he left that office, he didn't make any substantial promises.

Although this might make Old Hou harbor discontent towards him, Qi Yun did not care much, given his current position, as long as he doesn't slip up, few can do anything to him.

This was evident from Old He not taking any actions recently.

"Phew~"

Qi Yun exhaled a long smoke ring, shook his head, pulled back his thoughts and started receiving today's intelligence information.

[Current Intelligence Points: 9]

[Today's Intelligence 1 (Red): The day before yesterday, a relic enthusiast at an auction in Chang'an was surprised to find the artifact he donated last month to the J Province Museum appeared at the auction;

Confused, he hurried back to Bird City the next morning, only to find an identical one still on display at the museum; although he reported this to the museum manager, he did not receive a clear answer]

"Hiss~ Looks like this museum's business is really extensive..."

[Today's Intelligence 2 (Green): In Tobruk Town, the health center in Yinmaili Village is dilapidated, and the village head plans to go to town tomorrow to find a mason for renovation;

A small wooden box buried under the old apricot tree in the health center courtyard contains ten wax-sealed "Qu Huan Zhang Hundred Treasure Pills", all produced in 1916, the first batch of Qu Huan Zhang Hundred Treasure Pills to hit the market]

Qu Huan Zhang Hundred Treasure Pill? What's that?

Qi Yun frowned, immediately took out his phone to search online.

After reading, his eyes widened, he didn't even notice the cigarette burning to the filter tip.

Turns out this Qu Huan Zhang Hundred Treasure Pill was an early name, its current name is Qu Huan Zhang Baiyao, also known as Yunnan Baiyao.

Indeed, it's the Yunnan Baiyao commonly used in Yunnan toothpaste.

Its main efficacy is treating gunshot wounds, inflammation, and stopping bleeding.

This medicine contains a famous core ingredient called Bao Xian Zi, also known as "Life-saving Pill" by people of that time!

The reason for such a name is because it truly can save lives.

During the Anti-Japanese War, the Yunnan Army was ordered to support Shandong, participating in the fierce Battle of Taierzhuang.

At that time, Qu Huan Zhang, to support the soldiers, donated 30,000 bottles of Yunnan Baiyao for free, which was a huge amount of money back then.

With its miraculous efficacy, it saved countless critically wounded soldiers on the battlefield, thus becoming known as "Life-saving Pill".

This was recognized by instructors and generals at the time.

However, as time went on, the production volume of this medicine increased significantly, and changes occurred in some key herbal ingredients, making the pills turn white in color, hence many called it Yunnan Baiyao.

The first batch of Qu Huan Zhang Hundred Treasure Pills from 1916 must represent the peak of efficacy, on par with the Republic-era Angong Niu Huang Pill Qi Yun holds.

If massive hemorrhage occurs, taking one can definitely save a life.

"The longer the night, the more dreams, so better find time to dig it up quickly..." Qi Yun put away the phone, pondering silently.

[Today's Intelligence 3 (Green): Half an hour ago, an earthquake occurred in Kyoto, Japan. Your estate in Chiba Prefecture (bought from Fukui Sakaeda's ancestral home) suddenly collapsed, revealing a hidden compartment under the floor;

The compartment contains two long wooden boxes with two swords inside, one sword's hilt and blade engraved with nine real dragons, the scabbard inlaid with rubies and diamonds;

The other sword is bronze, engraved with the words "Tai'e"]

Tai'e!?

When Qi Yun saw these two words, his whole body felt as if struck by lightning, as the name was too familiar.

Is it the Tai'e Sword of the ancient top ten famous swords?

Wasn't it said to be buried in the Emperor's Mausoleum? How did it end up in Japan?

What is the other one with nine dragons engraved on it?

Filled with doubt, Qi Yun searched for information online.

There are two versions of the top ten famous swords, the first recorded in "Yuejue Book", "Wu Yue Chun Qiu", etc., respectively Xuanyuan, Zhan Lu, Chi Xiao, Tai'e, Longyuan, Ganjiang, Moye, Yuchang, Chun Jun, Cheng Ying.

It's said these divine swords were masterpieces of sword-making master Ou Yezi. He lived during the late Spring and Autumn period, a time when states of Eastern Zhou were constantly at war, and the state of Yue was equally turbulent.

Ou Yezi pursued the utmost in sword-making techniques and extraordinary talent, gathering the sword energy of heaven and earth. When the three factors of time, place, and people unified, he forged a series of peerless famous swords.

However, some of the famous swords in this version have been proven to exist.

While some have no substantive evidence, like Zhan Lu, Gan Jiang, Moye, etc.

The second version is the real top ten famous swords, documented in archaeological or written records as artifacts.

The swords are Wu Wang Guang Sword, Yan Wang Zhi Sword, Mo Yang Sword, Nine Dragon Treasure Sword, Wan Feng Sword, Tai'e Sword, Long Yuan Sword, Chi Xiao Sword, Cheng Ying Sword, and Xuanyuan Sword.

In this version, Qi Yun found the sword matching the intelligence: the sword with nine real dragons carved on the blade, isn't this the Nine Dragon Treasure Sword?

This sword was the imperial treasure sword of Emperor Qianlong, and after his death, it was buried with him in Yu Mausoleum.

Later it was looted during Sun Danying's tomb raid...

Then passed through many hands, its whereabouts remained unknown.

Unexpectedly, it now appears in the ancestral home of Japan's Fukui Sakaeda family?

Chapter 536: World's Number One!

As for the Tai'e Sword, its background is even more significant.

The Yuejue Book clearly states that this sword was forged by Ou Yezi and Gan Jiang for the King of Chu.

During the forging process, the sword was quenched with water from the Chi Spring, using the essence of five metals as material. On the day the sword was completed, it caused the winds and clouds to change colors, and its aura shot straight towards the celestial axis.

Back then, the State of Jin coveted this sword, besieging Chu for three years. The King of Chu preferred death over surrender, standing on the city wall with the sword, which somehow emitted the intimidating aura of the sword, thus deterring the Jin army into retreating without battle.

Thus, the Tai'e Sword earned the title "Sword of Majesty."

Some described its sharpness with the phrase "Chopping cows and horses on land, striking swans and geese on water."

Later, as the Qin state rose, Qin Shi Huang destroyed Chu and immediately took a liking to the Tai'e Sword. Having heard of its legend, he believed that the sword must have a destined significance, and thus it became the sword worn by the First Emperor.

When Qin Shi Huang passed away, the Tai'e Sword was buried with him in the Emperor's Mausoleum.

However, there's another unconfirmed legend that says during Xiang Yu's destruction of Qin, he plundered the palace, including the Tai'e Sword.

Yet, its whereabouts thereafter became a mystery...

Qi Yun put down his phone and took a deep breath to calm his restless state.

Based on existing information, it seems unlikely that the Tai'e Sword was buried in the Mausoleum; otherwise, it wouldn't have appeared in Japan.

Unless...many years ago, tomb raiders had already visited the Emperor's Mausoleum.

"No matter what the truth is, I must first get hold of the object."

This is truly a rare treasure!

....

The next day, Qi Yun got up from bed early, despite resting only four or five hours, he felt sufficiently rested.

After dressing, he quietly went downstairs and took out his phone to call Yamamoto Ichiro, who was far away in Japan.

The latter was the lawyer Qi Yun had previously asked Brother Hui to hire in Hong Kong Island, and Qi Yun had entrusted him with selling his old house upon returning from Japan.

Unexpectedly, after so long, not only had the house not sold instantly, but it had collapsed...

However, the collapse was fortunate; otherwise, who knows how much longer those two legendary swords would remain buried in darkness.

"Hello, Mr. Qi, I'm very pleased to receive your call!" Yamamoto Ichiro was just as enthusiastic.

"Hello, Mr. Yamamoto, I previously entrusted you with handling the sale of the house in Chiba Prefecture; how's the situation now?" Qi Yun remained steady in tone, despite his anxiousness.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Qi, I contacted several clients interested in rural properties, but after visiting the house, they felt it was too old, so it hasn't sold yet."

"But rest assured, Mr. Qi, I'm continuously following up with potential buyers. However, these old houses have limited appeal and will require more time."

Yamamoto Ichiro's voice carried an apologetic tone, evidently feeling guilty for the unsold house, unaware that Qi Yun's priority was elsewhere.

"Hmm, it's alright, I'm not calling to rush you."

"I noticed in the news that there was an earthquake in the Capital City last night, so I'd like you to visit Chiba Prefecture and check if the house has sustained any damage."

"If there's any collapse, please ensure the site is protected, with no one entering the area."

Over the phone, Yamamoto Ichiro promptly agreed: "Alright, Mr. Qi, I'll head to Chiba Prefecture right away!"

Considering the substantial reward Qi Yun provided him last time, such a minor task was easily accepted.

"Good, thank you."

After expressing thanks, Qi Yun ended the call, sat down in the backseat of the adjacent Maybach, and instructed Chen Wei: "Brother Wei, you need to go to Japan now."

"There are some things in the Chiba Prefecture house; help me retrieve them..."

"Bring another person; these items are important. Ensure their safe return, and I'll notify customs for the return journey."

Though Chen Wei wasn't certain of what Qi Yun wanted him to retrieve, he could infer its significant importance from Qi Yun's urgency.

He nodded immediately: "Alright, take care over the next couple of days."

Qi Yun patted his shoulder: "Hmm, don't worry about me. Head out now!"

"Alright."

...

Meanwhile, in the New University's laboratory.

Hua Weiguo, who hadn't slept all night, had red eyes. After returning from Tianshan last evening, he brought a small sample of collected water for lab analysis.

"Beep—"

As the instrument emitted a soft sound, the final test report slowly printed out.

Hua Weiguo almost rushed over to grab the report, scanning line by line through the data, his reddened eyes widening further, breathing rapidly.

"Oxygen content 11.8mg/L, total minerals 3700mg/L, with trace amounts of selenium and zinc..."

He muttered, scanning the data again, "This... this water quality surpasses the national level one drinking water standard by three grades!"

To know, the standard for national level one drinking water is a minimum oxygen content of ≥ 6 mg/L and minerals ≤ 1500 mg/L, while the source at Tianshan Bogda has indicators far exceeding the standard, including multiple beneficial trace elements.

This is simply the best-known natural water source!

Even the "Beverly Hills 90H2O mineral water," priced at sixty-seven thousand a bottle, falls short of this quality.

Excited, Hua Weiguo ran to the doorway, shouting at Ah Jiao who was dozing outside: "Call Qi Yun and tell him to come to see me immediately!"

Awakened by the sudden shout, Ah Jiao rubbed her eyes, took out her phone, and dialed Qi Yun's number.

Though unaware of the elder man's intense excitement, she guessed that something significant had been discovered.

...

When Qi Yun arrived at the New University, it was half an hour later.

Upon seeing him, Hua Weiguo immediately dragged him into the laboratory, skipping any pleasantries: "Take a look at this! With this data, you won't find another like it worldwide!"

"The daily water output fully meets standards!"

Despite already knowing the outcome, Qi Yun feigned a surprised expression as he received the test report from Hua Weiguo.

After casually glancing at it, he set it down and asked: "So this water source is extraordinary, right?"

"World number one! Isn't that amazing?"

"No heavy metals, no pollutants, source is on the southern slope of Bogda Peak, rarely visited, even cattle and sheep seldom go..."

Qi Yun didn't pay attention to Hua Weiguo's subsequent comments, only retaining the words "world number one."

Previously thinking this water source information could at most sell for a billion or two, it now seemed necessary to reassess, as those companies weren't short on funds.

"Thank you, Director Hua, for your hard work. You should return to rest." Qi Yun felt somewhat guilty seeing Hua Weiguo's bloodshot eyes.

"Alright, contact me if you need anything." Hua Weiguo didn't persist further, nodding and leaving first.

After seeing off Hua Weiguo, Qi Yun asked Ah Jiao: "Have negotiations with local herders been settled?"

"Settled. In a radius of twenty kilometers, there's only one family of herders. Under the guise of conducting archaeological research, I temporarily asked them to graze elsewhere, compensated with twenty thousand yuan."

Qi Yun exhaled a sigh of relief: "Good, take another trip to Beijing and send the remaining samples to the Ministry of Ecology and Environment; I'll have someone there to receive you."

Chapter 537: Wai Jiang!

Tobruk Town, Yinmaili Village.

This village is truly a blessed land for Qi Yun, as he has come here several times before.

On the first visit, he found a case of Moutai from the 1980s, later, he discovered a pile of silver notes, and there was even that million-dollar pigeon, not to mention the Western Regions silverware that he found in the chicken coop, which he exchanged for the house he's currently living in...

Inside the car, Liu Meng scratched his head and said to Qi Yun, "I've arranged for the stonemason and the excavator, they can come over anytime."

"But for no reason, why are we repairing their houses?"

"Just doing a good deed." Qi Yun smiled at him without further explanation, "Don't worry about the money, just build the house for them as quickly as possible."

"Alright." Liu Meng asked no further and nodded in agreement.

Ten minutes later, three cars stopped in front of the village's only small shop.

The child acting as a translator immediately recognized Qi Yun as he stepped out of the car, since he was the most generous person he had ever met, and he ran over with great enthusiasm.

"Boss!"

Qi Yun didn't waste words and directly took out a prepared hundred-yuan bill from his pocket, handing it over: "Come, take me to find your village chief."

The kid unceremoniously clutched the money in his hand and gave Qi Yun a bright smile: "Okay, boss, follow me!"

Qi Yun nodded and followed the kid deeper into the village, a few native chickens flapping their wings ran across the road, kicking up a large cloud of dust.

After roughly ten minutes, the kid pointed to a house with a brick courtyard wall ahead: "That's the village chief's house!"

At the entrance of the courtyard, they saw an elderly Uyghur man wearing a grey bābā, sitting under a grape arbor in the yard, hammering on a piece of tin.

For villagers with limited income, crafting some handicrafts to sell at the market had become a very important way for them to earn money.

"Village Chief! We have visitors!" the kid shouted.

The village chief turned around, revealing a face with a goatee and full of wrinkles.

Seeing Qi Yun at the gate and Liu Meng behind him, he put down the hammer and stood up, asking in heavily accented Chinese: "What brings you here?"

Qi Yun took a city permit from his pocket and handed it to the village chief, smiling as he explained, "I heard your village is in tough conditions, so I brought some supplies to express my sympathies, and to see if there are any difficulties that I can help solve."

The village chief's face immediately showed delight, he reached for the permit, recognizing the red seal, although he couldn't read the words on it.

"Good! Good!" He quickly handed back the permit to Qi Yun, wiped his hands on his clothes, and made a gesture of invitation, "The leader has come! Please, come in!"

With that, he led Qi Yun and the others into the house.

Qi Yun glanced around the house; the village chief's living conditions were even worse than the last Uyghur lady he visited. The only things of value might be the few sheep in the pen outside.

Compared with those villages on the news where they live in luxury homes and drive luxury cars, it's a world of difference.

The village chief awkwardly pulled over a chair with cloth strips and offered it to Qi Yun: "Leader."

Qi Yun waved his hand away, speaking kindly, "No need to sit, let's just talk standing."

"Is there anything in the village that needs higher-level assistance?"

The village chief's dark face blushed a little, and after a long pause, he slowly spoke in strange-sounding Chinese: "Leader, our village's clinic, is about to collapse."

As he spoke, he gestured towards the roof, worried that Qi Yun might not understand.

"I was looking for someone to fix it, but the money, only a little."

Qi Yun smiled and nodded, indicating he understood: "You're saying the clinic building is no good."

"Yes, exactly." The village chief nodded repeatedly, "Everyone getting medical treatment, it's dangerous, the building, please help fix it for us."

"No problem!" Qi Yun, who had come specifically for the clinic, lightly patted the village chief's arm, "Please take us to the clinic to have a look, I'll arrange people to fix it today."

The village chief was overjoyed, his wrinkles crumpled together, and he took Qi Yun's hand and led him out.

"I'll take you there now."

The village clinic is just east of the village committee, and calling it a clinic is generous; it's really just a few low bungalows and a courtyard wall.

The plaster had all fallen off the walls, revealing the sun-dried bricks inside, and there were several cracks.

"There are no young people in the village, unable to do labor themselves." The village chief explained, pointing to the bungalow.

Qi Yun understood the implication; if there were young people in the village, they would have repaired it themselves.

"No worries! The city will fix it for you!" Qi Yun gave him a reassuring look, then pulled Liu Meng over and continued, "However you want it fixed, just tell him, the city will cover the cost!"

"Oh, how wonderful!" The village chief was overwhelmingly happy and grabbed Qi Yun's hand, "Thank you, leader." Then he went to shake Liu Meng's hand...

In this era full of material desires, seeing such genuine people is rare.

Qi Yun glanced at the empty space in front of the village office, then shouted to the car, "Brother Niu, have them unload everything."

Niu Da, who was in charge of driving, responded, and signaled the two van drivers to start unloading.

The truck beds were loaded with rice, flour, grain, oil, and other daily supplies, simple and unadorned, exactly what the villagers needed most.

"Village chief, these supplies are sent by the city for you to store and distribute to the villagers who need them later."

"Wonderful!" The village chief's face lit up with joy, "Leader, thank you so much!"

"No need for thanks, it's our duty." Qi Yun smiled and waved his hand, "You all discuss how to fix the clinic while I take a walk."

With that, he strode towards the courtyard.

At the base of the wall on the right side of the courtyard, there was a lush apricot tree, with a trunk as thick as a water barrel, the bark dry and cracked, casting a shade.

This was the place mentioned in the intel, where those ten Yunnan white medicines were buried.

Qi Yun approached, casually plucked an apricot from the branch, blew off the dust, and put it into his mouth.

The taste was sweet and sour, with a hint of sunshine; he slowly chewed as his gaze scanned beneath the tree but saw nothing unusual.

"Probably need to dig it up to find it, but right now there are too many eyes..."

A few minutes later, after the village chief finished telling Liu Meng which buildings needed repairing, he went to summon the villagers to collect the supplies.

Liu Meng quickly walked over to Qi Yun: "They need to build four rooms, I've already called someone over."

Qi Yun nodded: "Once that's done, take the crew to fix the village chief's house as well."

After saying that, he paused, looked around to confirm no one else was around, then leaned close to Liu Meng and whispered, "There's a shovel in the trunk, go get it, and keep watch at the door, don't let anyone in."

Chapter 538: Missing?

Inside the small clinic, Qi Yun had already dug about fifty to sixty centimeters deep around the apricot tree using a spade.

The soil here wasn't sandy but rather clay, still quite firm, making the digging not so easy.

However, with Qi Yun's current physical condition, it wasn't too difficult.

"Clack!"

The tip of the spade seemed to hit something hard, but unlike a rock, it didn't push back with much force.

Qi Yun immediately stopped, not daring to use strength, worried that he might damage whatever was inside the box. He had to hold the spade and slowly clear away the surrounding dirt.

After a few tries, a piece of blackened cloth appeared, long lost its original color, clearly buried for many years.

Qi Yun's heart tightened; he quickly put down the spade, squatted to carefully scrape away the surrounding clumps of soil with his hands.

The cloth was tightly wrapped, layered several times. Bit by bit, he extracted what felt like a square object inside, roughly palm-sized.

At this moment, without minding the dirty cloth, he quickly tore it apart, revealing a small dark brown wooden box inside. The box, whose wood type was unknown, was somewhat moldy and deformed, but not completely ruined.

"Hope it's not damaged..." Qi Yun prayed silently, worrying about moisture damage to the contents.

He hurriedly opened the box and saw ten dark red pills lying on the bottom lined with oiled paper.

These pills were about the size of small candies, each coated with a thin layer of wax. Although they appeared spotted and not as well-preserved as the last two Angong Niu Huang Pills, the coating effectively sealed them, keeping out moisture.

Thankfully... Qi Yun breathed a sigh of relief.

If such a treasure had been ruined by moisture, it would have been a real pity.

As the first batch of Yunnan Baiyao produced, though not particularly expensive at that time, these ten pills were far from affordable for ordinary people of an era when even food was a luxury.

Moreover, 1916 was marked by the death of Yuan Shikai, triggering the fragmentation of the Beiyang government, bringing chaos. The distance of J province from the Central Plains made trade very inconvenient.

Then... how did these ten pills end up here?

"Beep beep!"

Before Qi Yun could think further, the honking of a truck outside the yard interrupted him, followed by the clattering sound of a heavy vehicle.

To avoid complicating matters, Qi Yun quickly retrieved all ten Yunnan Baiyao pills, placing them into a prepared plastic bag, before picking up the spade again to fill back the surrounding soil.

Outside the yard, two vans had pulled up at the gate, unloading about a dozen workers, while two trucks behind them carried a small excavator, along with tools, cement, and other materials.

Liu Meng glanced back, noticing Qi Yun was nearly finished with his task, and stepped up to the foreman to assign tasks.

When Qi Yun came out, the excavator had already been unloaded from the truck, with some villagers gathered around to watch.

Qi Yun didn't stay long. After reminding Liu Meng to be careful, he waved to the village chief and left first.

...

Meanwhile, Ah Jiao, having spent several hours on a plane, finally landed at Beijing Airport, where Li Yaohua personally came to pick her up.

The two had met before in Africa, hence were acquainted with each other.

"What did Qi Yun ask you to deliver to the Ministry of Ecology and Environment for inspection?" Li Yaohua asked curiously.

Ah Jiao didn't hold back, handing over a bottle of mineral water brought on board through special channels: "Just this bottle of water."

Li Yaohua carefully examined it, seeing nothing unusual: "Is someone trying to poison Qi Yun?"

"No." Ah Jiao shook her head and explained, "There's something special about this bottle of water; the boss wants a report."

"In what way special?" Li Yaoguang asked, full of suspicion, as it just looked like a regular bottle of mineral water.

"It supposedly claims to be the world's best... I'm not entirely sure."

With Li Yaohua's connections, the bottle of water was quickly expedited to the Ministry of Ecology and Environment for urgent testing. In just about an hour, an authoritative, professional inspection report was generated.

The lab technician, upon reviewing the water quality report, was so surprised his eyes nearly popped out. He triple-checked the data before submitting the report, which the head of the testing center then personally handed to Li Yaohua.

"Mr. Li, could you tell us where this water source is from?" the director asked out of curiosity.

Li Yaohua handed the report directly to Ah Jiao, standing by the side: "Can't say for now. You must keep this confidential; no outside disclosure."

Hearing this, the director quickly masked his curiosity with a serious nod: "Rest assured, everything is strictly confidential. All testing data is encrypted and archived; no one else has access."

He hesitated for a moment, unable to resist adding, "It's just that the water's indicators are so unique; in my many years in the field, it's the first I've ever seen. If there's ever a need for further research, our center can always provide technical support."

Li Yaohua nodded, not saying anything further, gesturing for Ah Jiao to leave.

The two walked out of the testing center, got into a car, and headed straight to the airport.

Similarly busy were Chen Wei and Da Pao.

After arriving in Tokyo, Chen Wei had been attempting to contact lawyer Yamamoto Ichiro via phone but couldn't reach him.

Frowning with unease, he didn't waste any time. Not having even a bite to eat, he took a taxi directly to Anping Village in Chiba Prefecture.

Last night's earthquake measured 7.2; along the way, he noticed many collapsed buildings.

Upon reaching the site of the old house, the scene that greeted him made Chen Wei knit his brows even tighter.

Where the two-story residence should have been had been leveled to the ground; even the rubble of the fallen courtyard wall had been cleared away.

Following Qi Yun's instructions, Chen Wei went to where the ground floor storage room once was and began to inspect the floor closely.

With just a quick glance, he spotted a hidden compartment, but there was nothing inside...

Chen Wei immediately called Qi Yun to report the situation.

"Gone!?" Qi Yun's eyes widened upon hearing the news.

Unable to reach Yamamoto Ichiro either, could it be that he had discovered the hidden item's location and made off with it?

Damn it!

Qi Yun clenched his fists, his expression grim.

The unforeseen event left him with no other reliable contacts in Japan, leading him to count on Yamamoto Ichiro to secure the site.

Otherwise, if no one were watching, the villagers would likely investigate the collapsed house, exposing the item's hidden place...

"Call Brother Hui, ask him to help trace Yamamoto Ichiro's information, and make sure to find that guy!"

Chapter 539: Greed

Kyoto, Japan, in a secluded Japanese-style courtyard.

Yamamoto Ichiro was kneeling on the tatami, his expression a mix of excitement and a hint of unease.

He glanced at the two long wooden boxes beside him, and his thoughts drifted back to a few hours ago.

In the morning, following Qi Yun's instructions, he went to check on the old house in Chiba Prefecture, only to find that the wooden structure had already collapsed.

Moreover, the collapse was uniform; the beams, pillars, and the second-floor structure were all tilted and smashed onto the open ground on the north side, exposing the interior of the original first floor.

Yamamoto Ichiro was about to call Qi Yun to report the situation when he caught a glimpse out of the corner of his eye. Under the cracked floor of the storage room beneath his feet, there seemed to be a special compartment.

Curious, he leaned closer to take a look and discovered that it was actually a secret compartment!

The compartment was quite large, measuring 1.5 meters in length and about fifty to sixty centimeters wide. The surface of the underground wooden panel was coated with a layer of moisture-resistant tung oil, but perhaps due to the passing of time, it had long since decayed.

Yamamoto Ichiro looked around to ensure no one was watching. Then, using his hands, he peeled away the rotten cover to reveal a layer of dark red velvet, with two long wooden boxes neatly placed on top.

The surface of these wooden boxes was covered in a thick layer of dust, suggesting they had been hidden underground for quite a while.

Unable to contain his curiosity, Yamamoto Ichiro hesitated for a moment before deciding to lift one of the wooden boxes out.

He brushed off the dust and attempted to open the latch.

At this point, he was still guessing if it contained old paintings or other collectibles.

Back in those days, a lot of treasures were taken from Huaxia to Japan, so much so that they couldn't be counted by individual pieces; ships were needed to carry them.

As the wooden box slowly opened, a long sword lay quietly inside, its golden scabbard covered in a thin layer of dust, revealing intricate and exquisite carvings.

The hilt was inlaid with rubies and diamonds, appearing to be incredibly valuable.

"Is it a sword?" Yamamoto Ichiro was momentarily stunned. He reached for the end of the scabbard and gently pulled it out.

"Swoosh!"

Accompanied by a crisp sound, it seemed as though a cold, piercing flash of light flickered briefly!

The silver blade slipped out of the scabbard, the sunlight casting a dazzling reflection on its surface.

On the sword's body, the patterns of nine true dragons unfurled, an artistic masterpiece!

Even the tiny dragon scales were clearly visible, lifelike, as if ready to spring to life.

Yamamoto Ichiro opened his mouth wide, and the reflection on the sword mirrored the shock on his face.

In Japan, many people believe in the samurai spirit and are fond of cold weapons, so many notable families display a rack of weapons in their homes, featuring various precious swords, not limited to Japanese katana but also including swords from Huaxia.

Being a lawyer, Yamamoto Ichiro had seen a lot, as many of his clients were wealthy individuals.

Yet even so, he had never seen a treasure sword like the one before him.

"This... this is definitely not an ordinary piece!"

Not only was he fluent in Chinese, but he was also well-versed in Huaxia culture, knowing that dragon motifs were typically reserved for the emperor.

Yamamoto Ichiro's heart pounded; he swallowed hard and immediately took out his phone to search for information...

Minutes later, he found an image online, describing Emperor Qianlong's personal treasure sword — the Nine Dragon Treasure Sword.

Comparing the sword in his hand with the image on his phone, he realized they were identical!

"Nine... Nine Dragon Treasure Sword!" Yamamoto Ichiro's Adam's apple rolled as he involuntarily swallowed.

Originally, he was just curious about what was inside the wooden box, but now... a frightening desire seemed to grow within him.

Its name was greed...

The shock in Yamamoto Ichiro's eyes was gradually being replaced by greed.

"Swoosh!"

Sheathing the long sword, he set down the Nine Dragon Treasure Sword and turned his eyes to the other wooden box beside it.

The astonishment from the Nine Dragon Treasure Sword had yet to fade, and he dared not imagine what more precious item might lie in this wooden box.

He took a deep breath and carefully unclasped the latch of the wooden box.

It was indeed another sword!

Before his eyes lay a long sword of a full blue-green color, the scabbard seemingly carved from a single piece of ancient bronze, with a simple mark engraved just at the opening and tail.

The oxidized copper rust indicated that this sword had existed for countless ages...

"A bronze sword?"

Yamamoto Ichiro was taken aback; compared to the grandeur of the Nine Dragon Treasure Sword, this sword appeared exceptionally unadorned.

Yet being hidden together with the Nine Dragon Treasure Sword unequivocally told him that this sword was far from simple.

He gripped the hilt, feeling its chill to the bone, even heavier than the Nine Dragon Treasure Sword.

"Swoosh~~"

With a somewhat dull sound of friction, the bronze sword slowly slid out of its scabbard.

The blue-gray blade was dim and unremarkable, with a groove running from the hilt to the tip, and though the edge did not seem sharp, it exuded a formidable aura.

The overall feeling conveyed was just four words, naturally exquisite!

Near the hilt was engraved two ancient seal characters — Tai'e!

Yamamoto Ichiro stared at those characters for a long time, his pupils suddenly contracting.

"Tai'e Sword!"

The legendary Tai'e Sword, ranked third among Huaxia's top ten famous swords!

And now it was in his possession...

He felt as though his breath might stop; his mind could hold only one thought, fortune!

"Mr. Yamamoto, I heard you have something good to sell to me."

A rich voice pulled Yamamoto Ichiro's thoughts back to the present. He snapped back to reality, turning to see a man dressed in a black kimono walking in.

"Yes, Mr. Hatoyama!" Yamamoto Ichiro promptly stood up and bowed, bending low enough to nearly touch his knees.

This Hatoyama Yuchi was the buyer he had found, the spokesperson for the Hatoyama Clan in the Kyoto area.

Normally, Yamamoto Ichiro wouldn't have the qualifications to step into this place, and it was only through an introduction from a lawyer colleague through Mr. Hatoyama that he had the fortune to meet him.

After Hatoyama Yuchi sat down, he nodded, indicating for him to take a seat.

"The items?" Hatoyama Yuchi's deep, throaty voice cut straight to the point.

Yamamoto Ichiro dared not delay. He quickly crawled on his knees to place the two wooden boxes on the table, pushing them in front of Hatoyama Yuchi: "Please, take a look, Mr. Hatoyama."

Hatoyama Yuchi did not immediately reach for them but instead swept his sharp eyes over the boxes, pausing for two seconds.

"What's inside these?"

"They are two very precious Huaxia treasure swords!" Yamamoto Ichiro swallowed nervously, instinctively wiping the sweat from his hands on his pant legs, "One of them is a personal treasure sword of the Qing Dynasty Emperor!"

"And the other, is the Tai'e Sword, one of Huaxia's top ten famous swords!"

Chapter 540: Top-Tier Family

Bird City, after Qi Yun returned to the downtown from the village, he went directly to No. 28 Nanjing Road.

Inside the office, Ge Dabao joked with a smile, "What's up, Consultant Qi, here to inspect the work again?"

Qi Yun had no intention of joking with him, pulled out a chair and sat down, asking directly, "Do we have a unit like Treasure Island in Japan? I need to find someone."

Upon hearing this, Ge Dabao's smile instantly faded, "Yes, but only in several major cities, and the staffing is not extensive."

"Who are you looking for?"

"Looking for a lawyer named Yamamoto Ichiro, who was in Kyoto Chiba Prefecture this morning." Qi Yun replied swiftly.

"A lawyer?" Ge Dabao frowned and pondered, "With your clearance, you can mobilize some resources, but finding a person who's not on the watchlist might take some time."

Qi Yun sighed, "Please contact them for me and try to find him."

Ge Dabao nodded, immediately opening a special system interface on the computer, "Do you have any specific information on this person?"

Qi Yun took out his mobile phone and handed over some documents about Yamamoto Ichiro sent by Brother Hui.

Ge Dabao stared at the phone screen while his fingers flew over the keyboard. After sending the task, he raised his head to look at Qi Yun and asked, "What do you need this person for? Did something happen?"

Procedurally speaking, Qi Yun's authorization ranked above his, so there was no need to explain, nor should he ask.

However, due to their personal relationship, a few concerned words were understandable.

Qi Yun considered his phrasing, replying in a solemn tone, "I found out the whereabouts of two precious artifacts. I sent Chen Wei and the others to retrieve them, but now they are missing. This person should know what happened."

He couldn't confirm if Yamamoto Ichiro took those two treasure swords, but the urgent matter was to find him first.

Ge Dabao didn't ask further, "We'll try our best to find him."

Qi Yun nodded slightly, standing up from the chair, "I'll leave then. Contact me as soon as there's news."

After leaving the Guo An building, he sat in the car with a serious expression and was about to inform Chen Wei, only to receive a call from an unknown number.

"Is this Mr. Qi?"

Qi Yun found the voice somewhat familiar, yet couldn't match it to a name immediately.

"It's me. Who is this?"

"I'm Yuan Xiu Wu."

"Xiao Wu?" Qi Yun was taken aback, not expecting the guy to call, "What's up?"

Xiao Wu on the other end was silent for two seconds, his voice somewhat subdued, "Thank you."

Qi Yun knew the gratitude was for having Li Yaohua fish him out, paused and asked, "Do you have any plans for the future?"

Xiao Wu fell quiet again, after a while he took a deep breath, "I don't know either."

Qi Yun felt a flicker of joy, from the tone it was clear the guy was quite lost now, so he immediately tempted, "If you don't have any plans for now, why not come to my place?"

"You can try working with me first, if you still want to leave by then, I won't stop you."

Even experts on par with Chen Wei felt self-conscious compared to Xiao Wu, Qi Yun certainly didn't want to miss the opportunity, especially when the other was so young, given time, he'd be even more formidable.

Moreover, Brother Fu Wentao had mentioned before that Xiao Wu was trained by a famous master.

Wouldn't that possibly mean he knew other skilled practitioners like him practicing internal martial arts?

Recruit them all when the time comes!

From the receiver came only the sound of wind, after a long while, Xiao Wu finally spoke again, he just said one word: "Okay."

Qi Yun was overjoyed, finally managed to recruit the talent, but he maintained a calm exterior, uttering a cool and composed line.

"You won't regret today's choice."

...

Kyoto, within the courtyard.

Hatoyama Yuchi was inspecting the two treasure swords in his hands, with a gleam in his eyes.

"The craftsmanship of ancient Huaxia is indeed remarkable." he praised softly, flipping his wrist, the blade sliced through the air with a low hum, "Excellent!"

"Thank you, Yamamoto-kun, for bringing me such precious treasures!"

Yamamoto Ichiro stood on the side, daring not to take credit, bowed quickly, "Glad Mr. Hatoyama likes them!"

Hatoyama Yuchi placed the Tai'e Sword back into its sheath, then set it on the table, patting Yamamoto Ichiro's shoulder, "What do you want?"

Even those gentle pats nearly knocked Yamamoto Ichiro out cold.

Yamamoto Ichiro knew it was no time to act tough, his voice full of flattery, "Mr. Hatoyama, I'd like to stay here for the time being. As for the value of these swords, you can evaluate them and pay me later."

He wasn't sure if Qi Yun knew about the secret compartment, if he did, surely he wouldn't let him go, so staying with Hatoyama Yuchi was safer.

He had witnessed Qi Yun's methods, even Muraoka Kono from the Yamaguchi Clan got dealt with, and a major figure like Brother Hui from Hong Kong Island called him brother, he couldn't possibly stand a chance against such a person.

Staying with Hatoyama Yuchi for now, and running as soon as the money's in, was the best option.

"Alright." Hatoyama Yuchi sensed the other's fear of something, wanting to stay on his turf for protection.

He didn't ask further, because he simply didn't care.

In Japan, few entities or families dare to trouble the Hatoyama Clan.

Since the Meiji era, the Hatoyamas have been active in Japanese politics, their members even serving multiple times as Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, and other key positions, wielding tremendous influence capable of determining prime ministerial candidates.

Additionally, not only in politics, but also in business and organized crime.

The Hatoyama Clan has marital ties with Bridgestone's founder Ishibashi Shojiro, granting significant economic power.

Moreover, during the crisis facing the Hattori family, the Hatoyamas extended a helping hand, saving many from the Hattori clan, who later pledged loyalty to the Hatoyamas, continuing the legacy to this day.

The Hattori clan, existing since the Warring States period, was a samurai family, also one of the three major ninja families of Iga, held supreme authority in ninja circles.

The clan produced a notable figure—Hattori Hanzo.

Thus, in terms of might, the Hatoyamas fear no one.

"Stay here for now. I like these weapons very much, and will give you a satisfactory price."

Yamamoto Ichiro hurriedly bowed again in thanks, "Hai! Thank you, Mr. Hatoyama!"

Hatoyama Yuchi didn't spare him another glance, merely raised his hand waving to the shadows.

A figure in a black fighting outfit immediately stepped out from the corridor's shadows, being a Hattori ninja and the core guard of the Hatoyama clan.

"Take Yamamoto-kun to his room."