

Middle Age 561

Chapter 561: Arranging Uncle's Passing Ceremony

In the early hours, two vans with dark tinted windows slowly pulled over on the road near Sensoji Temple.

As the doors opened, two figures swiftly exited the vehicles. They wore black hoodies, obscuring their faces. These were the top-tier professional killers Hatoyama Yuchi had hired at great expense.

The reason for hiring professional killers instead of using his own men was naturally for the sake of caution.

By hiring outside assassins to handle his uncle's departure, even if they failed, it wouldn't easily trace back to him.

Furthermore, the few skilled ninjas under him had already been beaten into the ICU by Xiao Wu.

Even without such an incident, those ninjas wouldn't obey such an order, as their duty was to protect the Hatoyama Clan, not to kill the old Family Head...

The two assassins scanned their surroundings, confirming that the street was empty, and then quickly crossed the road towards the centuries-old estate opposite them.

They waited under the white wall for a moment until they heard the "surveillance off" signal through their earpieces. Only then did they don their night vision goggles and leap over the wall into the courtyard.

The withered branches of the cherry blossom tree swayed gently in the wind, casting shadows that conveniently concealed their forms. They did not act immediately but stood observing for a moment, seemingly searching for something.

After about a minute, they began to move their steps towards the building at the back, treading lightly to avoid the leaves and branches on the ground...

Inside a room in the rear courtyard, a shadow sat cross-legged, eyes tightly shut, appearing to be asleep.

This person was none other than another master from the Hattori family—Hattori Eiken. He was Hattori Kazuya's uncle and was slightly superior in skill compared to Hattori Kazuya.

Suddenly, Hattori Eiken's closed eyes snapped open!

His pitch-black pupils showed no sign of sleepiness. He twitched his ears and swiftly rose to the door, then vanished into the darkness.

In the courtyard, the two professional killers crept along the wall base to the archway, about to enter the rear courtyard.

In the next moment, a red heat source in their night vision goggles jumped down from the eaves of the front room, stealthily approaching them!

The figure moved like a phantom, not making a sound; had they not been wearing night vision goggles, they wouldn't have noticed at all.

The two assassins exchanged glances, pretending to be oblivious, continuing through the archway. Despite this, their hands, concealed within their sleeves, clutched their pistols tightly.

When only five or six meters remained between them, the two assassins suddenly struck!

With silencers attached to their pistols, they fired several shots at the approaching figure!

"Pew pew..."

The sudden turn of events caught Hattori Eiken, hidden in the darkness, off guard. He hadn't expected to be discovered in advance.

Despite making evasive maneuvers the instant shots were fired, he was still hit in the thigh.

Blood quickly soaked through his black attire, the crimson liquid dripping down his pant leg.

Hattori Eiken grunted, using the momentum of his sidestep to roll behind a nearby cherry blossom tree, evading the subsequent bullets.

Seeing their ambush succeed, the two assassins immediately pursued Hattori Eiken's position. They holstered their guns and each drew a dagger.

The client's request was to make the old man die of a sudden illness, so they aimed to leave as few traces as possible to avoid trouble during cleanup later.

Hattori Eiken, with his thigh wounded, was greatly hindered in his movement, unable to perform the ninja's elusive techniques, and was soon caught up by the two assassins, leading to a direct confrontation.

The assassin on the left lunged with his dagger at Hattori Eiken's chest, the blade slicing through the air, while the one on the right targeted Hattori Eiken's legs.

The two worked in perfect harmony, forcing Hattori Eiken to keep retreating. Within a few exchanges, new wounds appeared on his body.

Realizing he was doomed if this continued, Hattori Eiken resolved not to dodge again. He abruptly lowered his stance, letting the right assassin's dagger slash across his lower back, gritting his teeth without flinching.

Seizing the opportunity of his opponent's recoil, he swung his long sword down towards the back of his opponent's neck.

His eyes were bloodshot, intent on exchanging his life for theirs!

The assassin on the right had just withdrawn his dagger, unable to block in time, watching helplessly as the blade closed in.

At that moment, a "clang!" sound echoed. The other assassin had abandoned his attack to block the blade with his dagger in front of his comrade.

The blades collided fiercely, sparking.

A flicker of despair crossed Hattori Eiken's eyes, knowing his chance was gone...

Minutes later, having dealt with Hattori Eiken, the assassins silently approached the main house, stopping beneath the window. Inside, soft snores could be heard; Hatoyama Norio lay asleep on the tatami in the inner room.

The door was unlocked. The two men gently pushed it open and stepped inside.

In the moonlight streaming through the window, one assassin could be seen holding a syringe, inside which contained a neurotoxin deadly within seconds, mimicking a heart attack.

As the assassin crept closer, Hatoyama Norio's snoring abruptly halted. As though sensing his impending death, he suddenly opened his eyes.

Upon seeing the scene before him, he didn't panic, but rather slowly sat up, leaning his back against the wall.

The two assassins paused, evidently surprised at the old man's composure.

Hatoyama Norio's murky eyes swept over them and calmly said, "Go on."

His voice was serene, as if he had already accepted death.

The assassin holding the syringe hesitated no longer, stepping forward, plunging the syringe into the old man's carotid artery. With a "shh" sound, the transparent liquid rapidly entered his veins.

Hatoyama Norio seemed to want to smile but could only grunt as his chest heaved a few times, then suddenly stopped.

A few seconds later, his head lolled to one side, his complexion turning purplish-black visibly, drool escaping his mouth, exactly like a sudden heart attack victim.

Having dealt with Hatoyama Norio, the two assassins wasted no time in cleaning the courtyard of blood traces, retrieving the casings from the earlier gunfire, and then they disappeared into the night with Hattori Eiken's body bag...

In the hospital ward, Hatoyama Yuchi received immediate updates from his trusted aides.

His face showed no joy. Hatoyama Norio's life or death mattered little to him, as the position of leader would never be his anyway.

The reason for doing this was merely to provoke Hatoyama Kiichi to seek revenge for him.

Meanwhile, upon hearing of his father's departure, Hatoyama Kiichi's face first displayed a complex expression, followed by an uncontrollable trembling.

It was a state of intense excitement.

Chapter 562: Multiple Fronts Erupting

The following morning, a piece of news caused an uproar in Japan.

The former Prime Minister and the old Family Head of the Hatoyama Clan—Hatoyama Norio, passed away last night from a sudden heart attack.

Interview vehicles from major news agencies clogged the street outside the Hatoyama Clan's old residence, reporters jostling forward, trying to glean more details from Hatoyama Kiichi's tense expression.

On NHK's morning news, the anchor reported the news in a heavy tone, the backdrop repeatedly showing footage of Hatoyama Norio delivering a speech in Congress years ago.

Inside the Prime Minister's Residence, when aides hurriedly reported this news to the Prime Minister, there was surprisingly little shock on his face, as if he had already anticipated this outcome...

His heart fluttered, instantly giving rise to countless speculations.

"Also... there's one more thing, Mr. Liu Zhengyi called again, inquiring about the detained Huaxia person. Do you want to return his call personally?"

Without a second thought, the Prime Minister waved his hand: "No need, tell him for me that the Huaxia person violated Japan's laws and needs to undergo investigation by the relevant departments."

He had already made a deal with Hatoyama Kiichi, and the latter would be the representative of the entire Hatoyama Clan, able to provide more support than the Soft Bank Company could in the future.

Seeing the Prime Minister's resolute attitude, the aide didn't say much more.

After leaving the office, he immediately phoned Liu Zhengyi, conveying the Prime Minister's meaning in a tactful manner.

On the other end of the line, Liu Zhengyi paused, although he had suspected that they might be up to something, hearing this decision still made him somewhat angry.

I invested serious money to elevate you, and yet you can't even grant me face in such a trivial matter. How can I expect you to help me secure benefits in future policies?

"Alright, I understand. Convey to him not to regret it!"

Liu Zhengyi uttered a harsh statement and hung up. Then he promptly shared the news with Fu Wentao.

Over ten minutes later, several parties met in the conference room again.

Fu Wentao sat at the main seat, expressionless, saying, "Your Prime Minister made his choice even before the morning came. It's time for us to respond."

The three exchanged glances, knowing they couldn't shirk the responsibility.

Though helping Fu Wentao pressurize the Prime Minister might cost them a bit, losing cooperation with the Fu Group would incur greater losses in the future.

They didn't hesitate further, each calling their subordinates to make the necessary arrangements.

At the same time, multiple major projects that Soft Bank invested in Japan suddenly announced suspension.

Mitsubishi also declared externally that the planned military ship component deliveries for next week would be postponed, while several automobile factories entered equipment inspection status, with all production lines halted.

Understand that Mitsubishi Heavy Industries is indeed Japan's major supplier for the military, with the automotive industry accounting for nearly ten percent of Japan's GDP. Once this news emerged, government phone lines were instantly overwhelmed.

More critically, Seven&I Company directly informed that all 711 stores in Japan were closing, citing upgrades to a national supply chain system, with reopening dates to be determined later.

Bear in mind that nearly twenty thousand 711 stores island-wide, providing everything from morning meal boxes to utilities payments and delivery pickups, had already infiltrated every crevice of everyday life.

Stores unexpectedly shut down collectively, salarymen unable to buy breakfast cursed at subway stations, solitary elderly flustered by setback in paying utilities, inciting an uproar on social media.

Citizens fumed over the government's incompetence in supervision, an overwhelming tide of public discontent surged towards the Prime Minister's Residence.

And all this unfolded within a few short hours.

At Tokyo's Prime Minister's Residence, the Prime Minister had just hung up after a reprimanding call with the Minister of Defense, hardly able to catch a breath before the Chief Cabinet Secretary rushed in: "Prime Minister! The residents' complaint calls are about to blow up the residence's phone lines! Protesters have already appeared on the streets!"

"What's happening!? Why did it suddenly turn into this?"

The Prime Minister hurled a teacup onto the ground, the jarring sound of shattered pieces reverberating through the office.

"How should I know why this happened!" he yelled furiously, his morning-styled hair disheveled, eyes bloodshot.

Even now, he still couldn't believe Liu Zhengyi dared to mess with him.

Nor that Mitsubishi and 711 followed along to embarrass him!

To understand, he was the Prime Minister now, the most powerful man in Japan! Weren't these men afraid of being held accountable?

Seeing the Prime Minister in such an agitated state, the Chief Cabinet Secretary dared not continue speaking, slinking away to prepare a press conference to stabilize public sentiment.

The Prime Minister slumped into his chair, pulling out his phone and dialed Hatoyama Kiichi's number, shouting at him: "Get over here immediately!"

He began to regret collaborating with him, never anticipating such fierce reactions from Liu Zhengyi and the others.

On the line, Hatoyama Kiichi could hear the Prime Minister's fury too, hastily heading to the Prime Minister's Residence despite needing to handle his father's affairs.

"Prime Minister, don't worry, I am very well connected with Mitsubishi's Vice President, I'm contacting him now..."

Before Hatoyama Kiichi could finish defending himself, the Prime Minister slammed down the phone, heavily hurled his mobile onto the desk.

The office descended into silence, only the faint chants of protesters outside served as needles pricking his taut nerves.

He leaned back in his chair, quickly weighing whether to terminate his collaboration with Hatoyama Kiichi.

The promised rewards hadn't even been tasted yet, continuing like this and his seat might become unstable.

Twenty minutes later, Hatoyama Kiichi stumbled into the office, prepared to explain when the Prime Minister pointed and berated him: "Look outside! Civilians are protesting outside the Residence, government phones have all been bombarded!"

"Where's your so-called support!? Your family's influence!?"

Though Hatoyama Kiichi panicked internally, he outwardly strove to maintain composure: "Prime Minister, I..."

Before he could finish, a staff member rushed in again to report urgently: "Prime Minister! Tokyo's police headquarters has urgently reported that gang elements in Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya have suddenly taken to the streets causing disturbances!"

"Several stores on the commercial streets of Shinjuku were smashed, small-scale clashes even occurred at Osaka's subway station, the police headquarters called in full staff, but the agitators continue to gather!"

"Many citizens have already been injured!"

"Gangs?!" The Prime Minister erupted from his chair, eyes wide, "Damn! How dare they? Who gave them the guts?!"

At such sensitive times, public disorder was evidently incited by someone behind the scenes, exploiting civilian discontent to fan the flames, clearly aiming to stir up chaos completely.

Standing beside, Hatoyama Kiichi blinked, seemingly struck by a revelation.

Chapter 563: The Three Sacred Treasures

Tokyo, Public Safety Investigation Bureau.

Qi Yun rubbed his eyes and stretched lazily.

The guys at the Investigation Bureau seemed certain they'd convict him. After yesterday's interrogation, they couldn't be bothered to deal with him anymore, allowing him the rare chance to catch some sleep. Though sleeping in a chair wasn't comfortable, at least he got some rest.

Once his mind was clear, Qi Yun summoned the system panel to check for any intelligence from the outside world.

[Current Intelligence Points: 13]

[Today's Intelligence 1 (Red): Under the hint of his cousin Hatoyama Kiichi, Hatoyama Yuchi hired an assassin to take out his uncle Hatoyama Norio, and Hatoyama Kiichi recorded their conversation on his phone, intending to use it as leverage against Hatoyama Yuchi in the future.]

What the hell?

These two brothers are really damn ruthless, especially Hatoyama Kiichi, killing even his own father. Politicians are truly the most heartless creatures in this world...

After staring at this piece of intelligence for a few seconds, a revenge plan quietly brewed in Qi Yun's mind...

[Today's Intelligence 2 (Red): A reporter from an international environmental organization discovered the truth about Japan's nuclear wastewater discharge, which isn't as harmless as the official propaganda claims;

Just as she was about to publish the evidence, she was arrested by a secret department in Japan. Fortunately, she had stored the evidence on a USB drive and hid it in the water tank of her room's toilet. The specific address is Fukushima Prefecture...]

[Today's Intelligence 3 (Green): In two days, during routine maintenance of artifacts, Ichiro Shima from the Imperial Household Agency plans to steal one of Japan's Three Sacred Treasures — the Eight-footed Jade Hook, and sell it to a black market dealer from the United States for one hundred million US Dollars.]

The Eight-footed Jade Hook!?

Qi Yun was very familiar with this term, having seen it many times in anime.

The Eight-footed Jade Hook, along with the Kusanagi Sword and Yata Mirror, are collectively known as Japan's Three Sacred Treasures. These artifacts have always been regarded as symbols of the Imperial Family and are well-known to the public.

Moreover, the Eight-footed Jade Hook is considered a symbol of imperial power, carrying religious and historical significance of the Japanese Imperial Family's heritage.

This is somewhat similar to the Imperial Jade Seal from ancient Huaxia, which was passed down as a token with each new emperor's accession.

According to Japanese historical records, the Eight-footed Jade Hook was granted to Emperor Jimmu's great-grandfather Ninigi-no-Mikoto by the Shinto deity Amaterasu, and became the only authentically materialized treasure during the emperor's enthronement.

Since the Heian period, the Eight-footed Jade Hook has been strictly guarded within the Imperial Family. It must be carried during major ceremonies like royal relocation or the emperor's visits, and is seldom displayed outside, mostly kept within the palace.

The Imperial Household Agency, where Ichiro Shima is, seems to be the department responsible for palace affairs.

Isn't this just a case of internal pilfering?

This guy has guts! If he steals this thing, he'll probably be hunted throughout all of Japan...

Qi Yun blinked, suddenly thinking about that plan earlier. Is there a chance to kill two birds with one stone?

But first, I need to get out of here. Can't communicate with the outside world while being locked up, can't do anything at all.

...

Meanwhile, inside the Prime Minister's Residence.

Hatoyama Kiichi made consecutive calls to the heads of three companies, including SoftBank, but they completely ignored him, not even answering the calls.

Under the prime minister's deadly glare, the guy was drenched in sweat.

Now it was crystal clear; these three enterprises, along with those syndicate members causing trouble everywhere, were all pressuring the government, more specifically the prime minister, naturally aiming to have them release that Huaxia person.

He couldn't believe Qi Yun was connected with these giant corporations, even to the point where they're willing to offend the prime minister just to back him...

"I need a solution!"

The prime minister listened to the mix of protest and siren noises from outside the window, feeling like a tight, suffocating net around his throat.

He slowly turned to look at Hatoyama Kiichi, the anger in his eyes like a volcano ready to erupt...

He hated this guy to the core right now, rushing in without even investigating the man's background, and inciting him to make a foolish decision.

But this can't be entirely blamed on Hatoyama Kiichi. The reason SoftBank and the other two companies are making a scene is all because of Fu Wentao, and the relationship between Fu Wentao and Qi Yun is known only to a very few...

Hatoyama Kiichi shrank his neck, well aware that if he couldn't clean up this mess, he'd be completely at odds with the prime minister in the future.

But the problem was, he had no better solution for now, dealing with world-class capital and Japan's largest syndicate.

When there's no conflict of interest, they might still respect the Hatoyama Clan's reputation and be polite to him. But now that they're on opposing sides, they certainly won't give him face anymore.

Seeing Hatoyama Kiichi unable to utter a word for a long time, the prime minister could no longer wait. He couldn't let the situation spiral completely out of control.

"Our collaboration ends here! Release that Huaxia person immediately!" he demanded in a deep voice, the only way to swiftly resolve this.

"I don't care what methods you use; you must obtain that Huaxia person's forgiveness. If the crowd outside the residence hasn't dispersed by nightfall, you'll have to step out and explain to the public yourself!"

Hatoyama Kiichi trembled upon hearing this.

He jerked his head up, still trying to resist: "Prime Minister, please give me more time. I'll find a way to convince those three companies to stop this foolishness!"

Apologizing and seeking forgiveness from Qi Yun was more painful than death, and he was still intent on presenting those two treasure swords to the emperor.

"No need." The prime minister, no longer angry, waved his hand in disappointment, "I can't take the gamble."

He grabbed the internal phone on the table and dialed his trusted aide directly: "Contact Mr. Liu Zhengyi for me and tell him I want to personally host him for dinner tonight to apologize."

After hanging up, he slumped back in his chair, looking at the ceiling, too exhausted even to curse.

If this drags on and public discontent completely boils over, leading to large-scale conflict, his seat might not be stable anymore.

Although he's the prime minister, the government isn't solely dictated by him, and history has seen prime ministers impeached before.

Hatoyama Kiichi stood there in a daze, feeling like a clown at this moment.

For the sake of fulfilling promises, I even damn well killed my father, and now you just turn your back on me?

Even if there wasn't a collaboration with the prime minister, he wanted Hatoyama Norio to kick the bucket sooner or later, though it had some involvement...

Seeing the prime minister's decision unwavering, he knew nothing he said would change anything, so he slightly bowed and exited the office.

After leaving the prime minister's residence, Hatoyama Kiichi took a deep breath and immediately headed to the Public Safety Investigation Bureau by car.

Chapter 564: Arrangements

Public Security Investigation Agency, outside the interrogation room.

Hatoyama Kiichi took the briefcase from his subordinate, tried his best to adjust his emotions, then pushed open the door and went in.

"Mr. Qi, I'm sorry you were wronged." Hatoyama Kiichi squeezed out a stiff smile as he approached, placing the briefcase on the table in front of Qi Yun.

Qi Yun, who was dozing off, looked up and glanced at him, saying nothing.

Seeing this, Hatoyama Kiichi's throat moved twice, and he lowered his posture: "Mr. Qi, what happened before was a misunderstanding! I apologize for my stupidity, please forgive me!"

After speaking, he took half a step back, bent his waist at ninety degrees, and bowed to Qi Yun.

Seeing him like this, Qi Yun immediately guessed that it was likely Brother Quan exerting pressure from outside, otherwise this guy wouldn't have this attitude.

Qi Yun slowly sat up straight, glanced at the box on the table, and casually said, "Misunderstanding? Mr. Hatoyama didn't say that yesterday."

Hatoyama Kiichi maintained his bowed posture. He was a decisive person, and once he decided to kneel down, there was no need to care about face.

"I was foolish! I acted irrationally upon hearing Hatoyama Yuchi lost both hands. Please, deal with me as you see fit!"

Qi Yun sneered, "Mr. Hatoyama is a member of Congress, how could I have the right to deal with you?"

Hatoyama Kiichi bent lower, his forehead almost touching his knees, pretending to be extremely nervous: "You jest! This matter was entirely my fault from start to finish!"

After speaking, he opened the box on the table and pushed it towards Qi Yun, "Here is two million USD, just a small token, consider it my apology to you!"

Qi Yun's gaze fell on the neatly stacked USD inside the box, a playful expression on his face. It seems the outside world indeed put great pressure on this guy.

"Alright, considering Mr. Hatoyama's sincerity, I'll accept your apology."

Two million USD—a lot, but not much. Qi Yun wasn't greedy for this money, so much as wanting to get out.

He could deal with this guy without doing it himself.

Having finally heard Qi Yun relent, Hatoyama Kiichi exhaled deeply, thinking he'd have to talk a lot more; he was even prepared mentally to kneel...

"Thank you for your magnanimity!"

Qi Yun stood up and extended his cuffed hands: "However, I have one more condition."

Hatoyama Kiichi quickly called for someone at the door to bring the key while personally unlocking Qi Yun's handcuffs, saying, "Please tell me, as long as it's within my capability, I'll do my utmost!"

The metal lock clicked open, and Qi Yun flexed his wrists: "Tomorrow I'd like to invite Mr. Hatoyama to dinner, and would appreciate your presence."

Hatoyama Kiichi was taken aback upon hearing this.

Both were well aware of their relationship and the apology just now, why invite him to dinner?

"What? Mr. Hatoyama doesn't want to?"

Hatoyama Kiichi quickly shook his head: "No, you've misunderstood, being invited by you is my honor! It's just so unexpected, I was somewhat overwhelmed."

"I'll await your call and be there on time!"

Qi Yun glanced at him, a faint smile at the corner of his mouth: "Okay, can I leave now?"

"Of course! Of course!" Hatoyama Kiichi hurriedly stepped aside to clear the path, making a gesture of invitation while carrying the briefcase full of USD and following behind, "Mr. Qi, about Soft Bank Company and the Yamaguchi-gumi..."

Soft Bank Company?

Qi Yun squinted, quickly understanding the implication of the other party's words, casually replying: "I'll talk to them."

"Alright, thank you for your generosity!"

Hatoyama Kiichi escorted Qi Yun to the door of the investigation agency. He had already thoughtfully informed the Yamaguchi-gumi that Qi Yun was soon to be released, so Brother Quan and Xiao Wu were waiting by the roadside.

Once Qi Yun got in the car, Hatoyama Kiichi placed the briefcase in the trunk, bowed, and watched the car leave until it disappeared at the intersection, then slowly stood up straight.

The humble smile on his face instantly faded, replaced by piercing coldness and a repressed fury in his eyes.

He really lost face this time...

In the car, Qi Yun turned on his phone, asking Brother Quan about the outside situation.

Upon learning the entire Japan was nearly in chaos, he could only describe Fu Wentao's power as "awesome."

His phone screen lit up, Qi Yun called Zhao Qing first to assure her he was fine, then dialed the number of Lao Gui.

"Come to Tokyo immediately, take the earliest flight."

"Okay." Lao Gui on the other end didn't ask why, simply responded with one word.

His position in Qi Yun's team was different from Niu Da, Ah Jiao, and the others; he didn't usually have much to do. Qi Yun gave him a fixed amount of money each month, akin to an ancient guest retainer—a specialized talent.

After arranging for Lao Gui, he checked the time and thought it should be morning in Germany, so he dialed Fu Wentao's number.

"You're out?"

Qi Yun nodded with a smile: "Yes, just came out, thanks to you, big brother."

"Not too hard on you?" Fu Wentao asked with a light laugh.

"No, just the chair wasn't comfortable to sleep on." Qi Yun joked in reply.

"Alright, once things are done, return home first, it'll take me another two days or so, wait for me in Beijing."

Qi Yun paused, thinking: "I still have some matters to handle here, I may need to stay for two or three more days."

Fu Wentao didn't ask much, assuming Qi Yun needed to vent his anger on Hatoyama Kiichi, just reminding: "Don't make too big a fuss, remember it's their turf, if you provoke them too much, even I might not be able to save you in time."

"Haha, alright, I understand." Qi Yun replied with a smile.

After finishing the call, Qi Yun put away his phone, suddenly recalling another piece of information, and picked up his phone again, sending a message to Da Pao...

After more than forty minutes, the car arrived at one of the Yamaguchi-gumi's bases, where Sato Yuichi and Harris personally waited at the door to greet him.

As soon as Qi Yun got out of the car, Harris approached with a friendly hug.

"Bro, how did it feel inside?"

Qi Yun shook his head with a smile: "Thanks for your help this time. I appreciate it."

"NONONO," Harris waved his hand, "What are you saying, my friend? As you Huaxia people say, we're good brothers from different mothers."

"Besides, I know Fu took action, even without us, those fools would sooner or later send you back respectfully."

Sato Yuichi stepped forward at this point too, bowing deeply to Qi Yun, more respectful than before: "Mr. Qi, I'm very sorry I couldn't protect you and let those foolish people take you away."

"Mr. Sato, you're too kind." Qi Yun smiled lightly, lifting him up. As for why Sato was like this, naturally, Qi Yun understood.

...

With Qi Yun's release, Soft Bank Company and the other three companies retracted their previous decisions, and things seemed to temporarily reach a conclusion.

That night, Sato Yuichi prepared a lavish reception banquet, not only with them present but also the leaders of the Kantou and Sekigahara branches.

These three essentially represented the whole Yamaguchi-gumi's power base in Japan.

During the banquet, Qi Yun conversed simply with the other two, and they exchanged contact information for emergencies.

Although Japan's sake had low alcohol content, the enthusiastic old pals trying to build relationships were unyielding, so Qi Yun was honored with drinks until he lay flat.

He regained consciousness late at night when Brother Quan woke him up.

"Boss, the person has been brought back."

Chapter 565: The Old Ghost Makes a Move

Next morning.

Today is the funeral of Mr. Hatoyama Norio, and all those attending are powerful figures from Japan, ranging from cabinet ministers to the heads of financial conglomerates, and core party members.

Black luxury cars lined up for two full streets outside the funeral venue, and the police department even dispatched personnel to maintain order.

Hatoyama Kiichi was dressed in a crisp black suit, a white flower pinned to his chest, and with each guest he greeted, he would slightly bow, his eyes reddened, saying, "Thank you, Your Excellency, for coming despite your busy schedule," with such a facade of suppressed grief that anyone unaware would think he was a filial son.

Qi Yun stood in the shadowy corner of the venue, wearing an inconspicuous black trench coat, and Brother Quan followed behind him, scanning the crowd with cautious eyes.

Looking at Hatoyama Kiichi not far away, surrounded by people, frequently dabbing tears, Qi Yun smirked, "With acting skills like his, it's a damn shame he's not an actor."

Just as he said this, the crowd suddenly stirred, the Prime Minister's convoy slowly parked at the entrance of the venue.

Hatoyama Kiichi immediately adjusted his collar and quickly approached, bending over before the Prime Minister even got out of the car, "Your Excellency, your presence will comfort my father in the heavens..."

The Prime Minister got out of the car, patting him on the shoulder with regret on his face, "Please accept my condolences. The old gentleman was a pillar of the nation, and his passing is our loss."

Though he said this, there was little genuine sadness in his eyes, clearly an experienced actor himself.

Despite having an unpleasant encounter with Hatoyama Kiichi the day before, with Hatoyama Norio's death, all the Hatoyama Clan's power fell to Hatoyama Kiichi. To wield absolute power in Congress in the future, he still needed to win him over.

Qi Yun wasn't focused there; instead, he glanced at the old ghost who had already disguised himself as a worker and slipped into the crowd. With the latter's skills, getting close and stealing a phone was a piece of cake.

Sure enough, a little over ten minutes later, he discreetly signaled to Qi Yun, and the three of them immediately left the venue.

Back in the car, the old ghost pulled a cellphone from his pocket and handed it over.

Qi Yun patted the seat in the driver's area and instructed Brother Quan, "Head to Shinjuku."

Brother Quan nodded, started the car, and set off.

Soon, the car stopped in front of an unremarkable three-story building in Shinjuku.

It appeared to be a bookstore from the outside, but it was actually Guo An's contact point in Tokyo.

After getting out of the car, Qi Yun carefully observed the surroundings, didn't let Brother Quan and the old ghost follow, and walked into the bookstore alone.

Only one staff member was inside, with no other customers in sight.

The staff member nodded to Qi Yun upon his entry, hung a 'Closed' sign at the entrance, and then led him to a room in the backyard.

Inside the room were six or seven people, all colleagues of Guo An. Upon seeing Qi Yun, they immediately stood up and saluted.

"Good day, Chief!"

Qi Yun smiled and waved his hand, "We're all on the same side, just call me Qi Yun."

His eyes scanned the room, noticing the crowded documents on the table in front of everyone, clearly busy with something, and straightforwardly said, "I have a phone here. Who can help me unlock it?"

The leading middle-aged man stepped forward to take the phone, then handed it to a nearby technician, "Xiao Sun, handle it."

"Yes!"

The technician immediately responded and began working on the computer after connecting the phone.

The middle-aged man then guided Qi Yun to a waiting room, giving him the opportunity to inquire about the Japanese Imperial Family and the Three Sacred Treasures.

In less than five minutes, Hatoyama Kiichi's phone was unlocked, and Qi Yun began browsing the information inside.

The phone was quite clean; the message and chat records in communication software were empty, showing Hatoyama Kiichi's usual caution.

Qi Yun swiped the screen with his finger and eventually found what he wanted in the recording files.

...

Two hours later, inside a hospital room in Tokyo.

Hatoyama Yuchi lay on the hospital bed, staring blankly out the window. Due to a recent surgery, he didn't attend Hatoyama Norio's funeral.

Suddenly, the door to the ward opened.

Hatoyama Yuchi turned his head, and upon seeing the visitor, his originally hollow eyes were immediately filled with rage.

The visitor was the culprit who had cost him both hands.

Qi Yun closed the door behind him and leisurely surveyed the room.

"It seems Mr. Hatoyama isn't recovering very well." His tone was flat, like casual conversation, eyes on Hatoyama Yuchi's suddenly tense face, "It's a pity you couldn't even attend your uncle's funeral."

Hatoyama Yuchi struggled to sit up, gasping in pain when the movement pulled at his wounds, the hatred in his eyes intensified, "You dare to come here!"

He had received reports from his subordinates last night, knowing Qi Yun had been released, cursing Hatoyama Kiichi countless times in his mind.

"I have no guilty conscience, why wouldn't I dare." Qi Yun shrugged, pulled out a chair and sat down, looking at him with a smirk, "Rather, you seem so angry, are you trying to disguise your guilty conscience?"

A flash of inexplicable panic crossed Hatoyama Yuchi's face, then he shouted, "Baka! What do I have to feel guilty about!"

Qi Yun didn't want to waste words with this loudmouth, fearing he might lose his temper and have Xiao Wu come in to cut off this guy's feet too.

He directly took out that phone and pressed play.

Two familiar voices immediately rang from the phone, the conversation between Hatoyama Kiichi and Hatoyama Yuchi in the hospital room that night.

Hatoyama Yuchi's face turned pale instantly, even his breathing became rapid.

"You... you!" Fear filled his eyes, unable to utter a complete sentence.

Qi Yun chuckled playfully, "Oh? Want to know where this recording came from?" Saying this, he placed the phone by the bed, "Take a closer look, whose phone is this?"

Hearing this, Hatoyama Yuchi moved his gaze, staring intently at the phone.

The next second, a grim look gradually appeared on his face, clearly realizing who had recorded the conversation.

If Qi Yun's release only made him hate Hatoyama Kiichi for being despicable, using him and then not keeping his promise.

Upon hearing these recordings, his hatred for Hatoyama Kiichi peaked, wishing fervently to tear that beast apart if possible!

Risking so much to help you ascend, and you damn well plot against me in the end?

Enduring such treatment, no one would be able to tolerate it.

"So, what do you think?" Qi Yun, observing his reaction the entire time, smiled and asked when he felt the moment was ripe.

Hatoyama Yuchi glared with fury, teeth gritting audibly, "What's your goal?"

Though enraged, he hadn't entirely lost his reason, knowing Qi Yun came to the hospital specifically to tell him this, definitely not just for amusement.

"I have no particular goal, just thought your cousin was too vile, and came to warn you."

While speaking, Qi Yun retrieved the phone, "In fact, I think you're more suited to be a leader than your cousin, don't you think?"

"Once you become the Family Head, I'll give you this phone as a gift, there's no backup of the recording."

After saying this, he got up and headed for the door. Before leaving, he suddenly turned back and added, "By the way, you must have heard we Huaxia people love a good show. If I don't see any excitement in three days, this recording might just appear on the internet."

Chapter 566: Eight-footed Jade

Hatoyama Yuchi stared at Qi Yun's departing figure, the fury in his chest suddenly doused, replaced by a more complex emotion.

That recording is undoubtedly his Achilles heel; once exposed, he will be accused of murdering his uncle.

Not only would it lead to a government investigation, but those old fogies in the Hatoyama Clan wouldn't let him off either, likely preventing him from even having the chance to be imprisoned.

Thinking of this, a vicious gleam flashed in Hatoyama Yuchi's eyes.

There's no choice now but to follow Qi Yun's instructions.

Resistance is clearly not an option; from the power Qi Yun showed, even without other matters, he alone cannot handle the Yamaguchi-gumi.

Hiring an assassin could be worth a try, but having seen the experts around Qi Yun, he knows the chances are slim.

Moreover, even if he could succeed in assassinating Qi Yun, could the recording be retrieved? Does he have backups? These are all uncertainties...

So he can only take one step at a time...

"Hatoyama Kiichi!!!" Hatoyama Yuchi snarled the name through clenched teeth...

...

Before they knew it, two days had passed.

Qi Yun spent these days in leisure, soaking in hot springs and enjoying beautiful scenery, though he also attempted to gather intel, none of which turned out valuable.

At four in the afternoon, in Chiyoda District, Tokyo City Center, a business van was parked by the roadside.

Inside the lead car, Qi Yun peered through the window at the grand complex across the street.

This is the residence of Japan's Imperial Family and a national symbol of the country.

The entire complex is surrounded by a moat, covering an area of about ten hectares, though it doesn't compare to Huaxia's imperial cities, it still appears quite majestic.

The palace was initially constructed in 1590 by Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first shogun of the Tokugawa shogunate, originally serving as a shogunate castle, until Emperor Meiji moved the capital to Tokyo in 1868, transforming it into the Imperial Palace.

The palace is usually closed to the public, with strict security around, thus to steal the Eight-footed Jade Hook, it can only be achieved by someone from within.

Qi Yun raised his watch to check the time and asked Old Ghost beside him, "They change shifts at six, right?"

"Yes, I've followed him for two days, every time he comes out at six-ten," Old Ghost replied.

Qi Yun nodded, "He should make a move today, it's up to you now."

Old Ghost said no more and, after tidying his wig and beard, pushed open the car door and got out.

Once the door closed again, Qi Yun asked Brother Quan, "Is everything arranged?"

Brother Quan turned and replied, "All set, I'll personally command on-site shortly."

To intercept that Eight-footed Jade Hook, Qi Yun prepared two plans: firstly, to wait for Kojima Ichiro to succeed and have Old Ghost seize the opportunity to steal it from him;

If unsuccessful, then tail him and when he trades with the black market, have Brother Quan lead a team to forcibly snatch it.

The private jet at the airport is on standby; once the item is secured, they will immediately fly out, leaving no trace.

Even if the Imperial Family notices the loss, tracing it back to them would be difficult.

As time elapsed, the sky outside gradually darkened.

At six-ten, a man in a brown trench coat with a mustache appeared in the west side passage of the palace, his steps seemingly stable, yet his eyes unconsciously darting around, clearly betraying the guilty conscience of a thief.

This man is none other than the Deputy Secretary of the Japanese Ministry of the Interior—Kojima Ichiro.

With one hand holding a briefcase and the other stuffed in his coat pocket, inside the briefcase is a specially designed compartment, not only concealed but made of unique materials to block machine detection.

Inside the compartment rests one of Japan's three sacred treasures—the Eight-footed Jade Hook.

Upon closer observation, you'd notice his grip on the briefcase is notably tight, with the veins on the back of his hand visibly protruding.

After leaving the palace perimeter and arriving streetside, Kojima Ichiro's taut nerves finally relaxed a bit, readying to hail a taxi to his prepared secret hideout, until suddenly hearing someone call him from behind!

"Kojima-kun!"

Kojima Ichiro's steps halted abruptly, his heart racing to his throat.

He stiffly turned around only to see the caller was his relieving colleague, his face forced into a smile, "Tanaka-kun, do you need something?"

Tanaka hurried up to him, clutching a document, "Kojima-kun, why didn't you sign today's maintenance record?"

Hearing this, Kojima Ichiro secretly breathed a sigh of relief, his mind entirely on the jade-theft plan, having long forgotten about the signature.

"Ah... Sorry, sorry," he hastily squeezed out a smile to mask his anxiety, "I have a drink appointment with Aoki-san, left in such a rush I forgot to sign."

Tanaka thought nothing of it and handed him the document, pulling out a pen, "No worries, signing now is just as good, I need to submit it to archives tomorrow."

Kojima Ichiro reached for the document, but wouldn't release the briefcase, awkwardly scribbling his name on it.

"All done, sorry Tanaka-kun, for the trouble," Kojima Ichiro bowed, returning the document.

Tanaka accepted it without much thought, waved him off, and strode toward the palace.

Watching Tanaka's departing back toward the palace finally eased Kojima Ichiro's heart, yet cold sweat had already soaked his shirt.

Not daring to linger another moment, afraid someone else might call his name, he abandoned the idea of waiting for a taxi and swiftly headed towards the nearby subway entrance.

It was Tokyo's rush hour peak for public transit, the crowd densely packed, Kojima Ichiro melded in, following the flow forward, heart pounding violently, feeling everyone's eyes were on his briefcase.

In the dimly lit underground passageway, as Kojima Ichiro approached the ticket gates, someone brushed against his elbow from behind, the size of the bump was small yet just enough to strike the nerve point, causing the briefcase to slip and fall.

Kojima Ichiro gasped, instinctively glancing back but saw no one.

Quickly coming to his senses, he turned sharply to look at the fallen briefcase.

Seeing it unharmed on the floor, he exhaled slightly, disregarding his aching elbow, hurriedly picked up the briefcase, and vanished again into the throng.

Two minutes later, inside the subway restroom, an unremarkable-looking man entered carrying a briefcase, glanced around then stepped into a stall.

After a short while, upon emerging, the briefcase was gone, and his appearance seemed different from just moments ago....

Chapter 567: Next Time We Eat, Can I Start First?

Inside the business car by the street, the old ghost took out a Jade Pendant from his pocket and handed it to Qi Yun.

The Jade Pendant was palm-sized, shaped like the English letter C, and felt unique to the touch. There was a small hole on top, likely for threading a cord to wear it.

The edge of the Jade Pendant was carved with a small but exquisitely detailed image of a bird, which was an ibis. The ibis was revered as a "sacred bird" by Japan's Imperial Family, symbolizing purity and longevity.

The Three Sacred Treasures have a high status in Japan, recorded in many places in the Kojiki, relating to creatures like the eight-headed serpent and the sun goddess Amaterasu.

However, there is another theory that, according to historical records, when Qin Dynasty's alchemist Xu Fu crossed east, he not only brought three thousand boys and girls but also carried numerous treasures from the Qin Dynasty.

Among them were the Three Sacred Treasures.

This theory is not entirely groundless, as as early as the Eastern Zhou period, Huaxia's metal and jade craftsmanship was already world-leading, making it possible to craft the Three Sacred Treasures during that era.

Qi Yun rubbed his fingers against the Jade Pendant, feeling that it wasn't as mystical as it was portrayed online, likely more of a spiritual symbol.

"Let's go, inform them all to head to the airport." Qi Yun put away the Jade Pendant, instructing Brother Quan.

"Alright." Brother Quan immediately started the car, quickly driving toward the airport.

More than half an hour later, the group arrived at the airport.

Harris was already waiting for some time as they arrived. Seeing Qi Yun's arrival, he approached with a curious expression: "Brother, what do you want to show me?"

Qi Yun patted his shoulder: "Time is tight. If you have nothing much here, why not come to Huaxia with me and I'll show you on the plane."

Harris raised his eyebrows; after all, he came to Japan just to help Qi Yun, and now that the latter was safely out, he could leave at any time.

"OK, sounds like a good trip."

Saying this, Harris turned around and instructed his subordinates behind him, then boarded the private jet with Qi Yun.

The cabin door slowly closed, and the plane started to taxi slowly down the runway, ascending to the clouds, and Qi Yun's tense heart finally fully relaxed.

Harris savored the champagne brought by the attractive flight attendant, eagerly looking at Qi Yun: "Alright brother, now you should tell me what it exactly is?"

Qi Yun didn't waste words, pulling up the privacy curtain, taking out the Jade Pendant, and handing it over.

Harris took it and glanced at it for a few seconds, then his smile froze instantly: "God... why does this thing look a bit familiar?"

"This is one of Japan's Three Sacred Treasures, the Eight-footed Jade Hook," Qi Yun whispered.

"Eigh... Eight-footed Jade Hook!?" Harris' eyes widened, filled with disbelief, "Isn't this thing supposed to be in the Tokyo Palace?"

Qi Yun smiled mysteriously, offering no further explanation: "You can help me find a buyer for this, with three percent commission for you."

Normally for such a high-priced transaction, middlemen only take one percent, so Qi Yun's offer of three percent was in return for the favor.

Harris swallowed, looking at Qi Yun in surprise, not expecting him to be so generous.

If the right buyer could be found for this thing, it could be one hundred million USD or even one billion USD, all depending on the buyer's level of interest.

Even at the lowest estimate of one hundred million USD, that's thirty million! Enough to buy an estate in Europe.

"Oh! My brother from another mother, thank you for your generosity!"

Saying this, Harris tried to give Qi Yun a warm hug, but was blocked from behind.

"Alright, I leave it to you. Just do the transaction with the buyer directly, preferably without revealing my identity."

...

At nine o'clock in the evening, the plane landed at Shanghai Airport.

The group soon found a nearby hotel to stay at. After a brief tidying up, Qi Yun took Brother Quan and Xiao Wu to a restaurant in the Huangpu District.

The purpose of coming to Shanghai was to attend an appointment.

In the private room, four people were already waiting.

The main seat was occupied by a dignified middle-aged man, with Qi Yun's future father-in-law Zhao Weilin chatting with him.

"Old Zhao, your son-in-law is quite something now."

"I went to Beijing for a meeting a few days ago and met Director Xiao, who mentioned that even Wendong, the leader over there, holds your son-in-law in high regard."

Upon hearing this, Zhao Weilin was momentarily stunned. Being a commercial magnate, he naturally knew who Wendong was, the second-in-command in the office, someone even he might not have the chance to meet.

Could it be that Qi Yun has now entered the sight of such influential figures?

"What? You didn't know?"

Zhao Weilin awkwardly smiled: "I don't often communicate with him."

Saying this, he took a sip of tea, recalling his previous meeting with Qi Yun in Bird City.

Privately thinking, was he too overbearing back then... Would this kid hold a grudge against him?

Director Sun from the development department joined in: "A document has been issued from above, confirming the cooperation on the photovoltaic project with Oil Country, with the order amount reaching one hundred billion USD. Your son-in-law is the person in charge of this project."

"Old Zhao, although our photovoltaic industry base here can't match other provinces, our policies are favorable, you know that."

"Director Huang has already said that if Qi Yun agrees to build the factory here, land and tax rates will be given the highest tier of policy!"

"When Qi Yun arrives, make sure to speak for us, huh?"

Director Huang at the main seat nodded, tacitly agreeing with Director Sun's earlier words.

Zhao Weilin once again tactically sipped his water, having no choice but to nod along.

...

Chapter 568: Next Time at the Table, Can I Start Eating First? (Part 2)

Asking him to help mediate isn't a problem, but... will Qi Yun give him this face? He's uncertain about it...

After all, the last time they met, he was thinking of using money to influence the kid and make him leave his daughter...

As they were chatting, Dong Anyun led Qi Yun through the door.

"Leaders, Qi Yun has arrived."

Everyone at the table stood up, eyes turning towards Qi Yun at the door.

Qi Yun glanced around the room, raised his hands in a gesture of apology: "Sorry for keeping you waiting, leaders."

Zhao Weilin waved at him, pretending to be very familiar: "Come, Qi Yun."

"Let me introduce you, this is Director Huang from the governance department."

Director Huang wore a gentle smile, his gaze at Qi Yun full of appreciation, and he extended his hand proactively: "Comrade Qi Yun, I've been looking forward to meeting you."

"I'm Huang Zhiqiang, I've heard Old Zhao mention you, and it's true you're young and promising!"

Qi Yun quickly stepped forward and extended his hand, smiling as he spoke: "Director Huang, you're too kind. I've been wanting to find an opportunity to visit you, and finally, I get to meet you today."

Having met many big shots before, he appeared very composed, neither humble nor overbearing, without any of the awkwardness that young people might feel in front of their superiors.

Huang Zhiqiang laughed heartily and gently patted the back of Qi Yun's hand: "Haha, two days ago, when I was chatting with Director Xiao, he mentioned you, saying you're an exceptional talent. Seeing you today, it's indeed true."

Upon hearing this, Qi Yun showed a hint of surprise. It seems that this Director Huang deliberately mentioning Xiao Hanguang means they are on the same side.

He had heard Fu Wentao mention once that the Xiao family's momentum was strong, and now it seems it's true, as Director Huang in front of him is on the same level as Old Hou.

"Haha, you're flattering me, Director."

Next to him, Zhao Weilin continued to introduce the others: "Qi Yun, this is Director Sun from the Development and Reform Commission."

Qi Yun politely shook hands with him: "Hello, Director Sun."

Director Sun, not daring to be negligent, quickly extended both of his hands: "Oh, President Qi, hello, hello."

The last person in the private room was Director Huang's secretary.

After all the introductions, everyone took their seats.

Huang Zhiqiang personally filled Qi Yun's glass, his actions composed and natural, without any airs of a superior, rather like an elder entertaining a junior at home.

"Comrade Qi Yun, welcome to Shanghai."

Qi Yun quickly leaned forward to express gratitude: "Thank you, Director, you're too kind."

"Haha, I'm old friends with your father-in-law. He has made quite a contribution to the development of Shanghai. As his son-in-law, you could be considered half a citizen of Shanghai, so feel free to visit more often."

Director Sun chimed in: "Yes, yes, if you have time tomorrow, President Qi, I can show you around."

Qi Yun smiled and nodded in response. Before coming, he already knew these two wanted to meet him. Being so polite, and with his future father-in-law Zhao Weilin present, naturally he wouldn't refuse directly.

The atmosphere at the table was pleasant, and the topics discussed were light-hearted, making everyone feel more familiar with each other.

After several rounds of drinks, Huang Zhiqiang stood up and patted Qi Yun on the shoulder: "Come on, Qi, join me for a smoke outside."

Qi Yun immediately stood up, nodded at Zhao Weilin and Director Sun, and followed Huang Zhiqiang out of the room.

On the opposite side of the corridor was a lush garden landscape, the air was very fresh. Qi Yun pulled out a cigarette pack from his pocket, handed a cigarette to Huang Zhiqiang, and put one in his mouth to light.

The two sat down at a pavilion in the garden. Huang Zhiqiang puffed out a ring of smoke and slowly said: "Qi, what do you think of Shanghai?"

Qi Yun didn't understand the purpose of the question, so he replied truthfully: "It has a deep foundation, develops very well, and the planning is reasonable. You can feel that every inch of land is advancing."

"Hmm, you're right."

"Shanghai is like a well-built car that's been running for decades, with a solid chassis. As long as there aren't any major issues, it will keep moving forward slowly."

Huang Zhiqiang paused, looked more contemplative, "But, because this car's foundation is too solid, whoever drives it will continue moving forward. If you want to make it overtake others and run at unprecedented speeds while in your hands, it's very challenging..."

"Do you understand what I mean?"

Qi Yun nodded, understanding what the other wanted to convey, which was about achieving achievements unprecedented by predecessors.

"Director wants to leverage the photovoltaic project to add new momentum to Shanghai?"

Huang Zhiqiang smiled, openly responding: "That's right, this 10-billion USD project is not just about boosting GDP by a few points."

"The orders from the Oil Country contain opportunities for international cooperation in the new energy field. If your project can link up the industrial chain, Shanghai can gain an early advantage in international photovoltaic energy storage."

At this point, he turned and looked directly at Qi Yun, seriously asking: "So, will you help me?"

Qi Yun flicked the ash from his cigarette, meeting Huang Zhiqiang's gaze, where there was no pressure from a superior, but rather a genuine sincerity.

This was completely different from Old Hou using "the bigger picture" to coerce him.

After pondering for a long time, he nodded: "From a personal standpoint, I'm willing to help you, but I can't give you an immediate answer."

"Please give me two days, and I'll get back to you with an answer then."

Huang Zhiqiang didn't show any displeasure; on the contrary, he laughed heartily and gently patted Qi Yun's shoulder: "Alright, thank you."

This dinner didn't last very long. After returning to the room, they chatted for a while before parting ways.

At the entrance of the restaurant, after seeing off Huang Zhiqiang and Director Sun, Zhao Weilin looked at Qi Yun, momentarily unsure of what to say.

Qi Yun detected his father-in-law's awkwardness and, with some mischievous curiosity, thought of teasingly saying, "Next time, can I start eating first?"

But what he actually said was: "Uncle, I heard from Zhao Qing about last time's incident, thank you."

Zhao Weilin knew exactly what Qi Yun was referring to and waved his hand: "No need to thank me, as long as you're alright."

He paused, continuing, "As for the project, you don't need to consider me, just do as you think best."

Qi Yun nodded; unexpectedly, these two sentences made his father-in-law seem less disagreeable.

"Alright, I understand."

"You're welcome to visit our home anytime."

Zhao Weilin suddenly brightened up. He had been looking for an opportunity to ease the tension with Zhao Qing. With Qi Yun's invitation, he could officially visit his daughter.

"Good!"

"Alright, I'm heading back."

Qi Yun waved and got into the car to leave.

Back at the hotel, he washed his face, and seeing it was not too late, he dialed Xiao Hanguang's number, informing him of tonight's events.

"Huang Zhiqiang..." Xiao Hanguang pondered for a while, finally saying, "Currently, he's kind of on our side; if possible, I'd like you to assist him."

"Alright, I understand."

After hanging up, Qi Yun narrowed his eyes, lit a cigarette. From Xiao Hanguang's attitude, he could tell he placed significant importance on Director Huang.

...

The next morning, Qi Yun had just gotten up when he received a message from Hatoyama Yuchi, simply saying "Check the news."

Qi Yun immediately opened his phone to check the news from Japan. The front-page headline was a report titled "Congressman Hatoyama Kiichi Unfortunatley Dies in Car Accident."

The accompanying photo showed a black sedan slammed into a highway guardrail, its rear completely deformed, with debris scattered all over the road.

The report stated that the accident occurred at six in the morning, with police preliminarily concluding it was caused by slippery roads from the rain...

"Haha, truly ruthless."

Qi Yun sneered and sent a message to Da Pao, who was still in Japan, asking him to verify the information. If Hatoyama Kiichi was indeed dead, he could return the phone to Hatoyama Yuchi.

He did have recordings backed up, but as long as that guy didn't provoke him again, Qi Yun had no intention of messing with him further...

After breakfast, Qi Yun didn't stay in Shanghai much longer and headed to the airport, departing for Beijing.

As for Harris, he was preoccupied with finding a buyer for the Eight-footed Jade Hook and didn't accompany Qi Yun to Beijing; instead, he flew directly to the United States.

Just before boarding the plane, Qi Yun received a call from De Gaulle, who claimed to have obtained key clues about St. Peter's Cathedral and wanted to meet with him. Qi Yun thought about it and told him to meet in Bird City...

Chapter 569: Breaking News

Noon, Fu Wentao's villa.

Qi Yun placed the two treasure swords brought back from Japan on the table. The bronze sword on the left had an ancient shape, its surface covered with green patterns, giving a heavy sense of history from the Spring and Autumn period.

In contrast, the Nine Dragon Treasure Sword on the right appeared much more luxurious. The sword's body was entwined with nine golden dragons, with immaculate details on the dragon whiskers and scales. A pigeon blood ruby was embedded in the hilt, symbolizing the pinnacle craftsmanship of the Qianlong era.

Fu Wentao held the Nine Dragon Treasure Sword in his hand, scrutinizing it closely, with an indescribable emotion on his face. His ancestors were once highly regarded by that emperor, and many items bestowed by Qianlong were still preserved in the ancestral home.

"Tha...thank you." Fu Wentao put the Nine Dragon Treasure Sword back in the wooden box and earnestly thanked Qi Yun.

"Big brother, you're making a big deal out of this." Qi Yun replied, feigning dissatisfaction.

Fu Wentao wasn't a pretentious person. He patted Qi Yun's shoulder and then asked, "What are you going to do with the Tai'e Sword?"

"I haven't thought about it yet," Qi Yun shook his head. This thing is too valuable. It would be the crown jewel in any museum.

Fu Wentao played with the jade thumb ring on his finger, then suggested after some thought, "Why don't you let me handle it? You're not into collecting anyway; I'll get you something practical in return."

Qi Yun's eyes lit up, and he immediately smiled and agreed, "That would be great."

He felt assured leaving it to Fu Wentao, knowing it wouldn't end up overseas.

Fu Wentao nodded, "Alright, stay for dinner tonight."

"I can't stay for dinner. I need to go back to Bird City to handle some matters," Qi Yun politely declined Fu Wentao's invitation.

Fu Wentao didn't insist, "Then take the plane with you; it will make your travels more convenient."

"Gave...gave it to me?" Qi Yun was stunned. A Gulfstream G700 costs six or seven hundred million. Fu Wentao's generosity was astonishing.

The casual tone made it sound like he was giving away a toy plane.

"What? Don't you like it?" Fu Wentao chuckled softly.

Qi Yun regained his composure and quickly grinned in gratitude, "No, no, it's just too moving. Big brother, you've really warmed my heart."

A private jet incurs various costs: annual maintenance, crew salaries, tarmac rentals—all totaling nearly ten million annually, not to mention fuel and route approval fees.

Ordinary businessmen surely cannot afford this, but for Qi Yun, it wasn't much pressure.

On the way back, not only were Qi Yun and Xiao Wu on the plane, but Brother Quan was also sent over by Fu Wentao to temporarily accompany him.

This thrilled Qi Yun. Having an expert like this increased security and also bolstered his team's capabilities.

...

At 8 PM, the plane landed at the airport.

Qi Yun had just walked out of the terminal when he received two explosive pieces of news.

First, many high-ranking officials from culture and the museum were being investigated for smuggling Country artifacts.

These people replaced authentic pieces in the museum with fakes and profited through special channels, not expecting the originals to show up in auctions where sharp-eyed individuals recognized them, ultimately exposing the scheme.

It's important to know that the treasures in the museum are not merely archaeological finds; many are donations from the public, so their actions incited public outrage.

Coincidentally, Tong Lao from the Country's cultural ministry discovered something suspicious during his last visit to Province J, secretly gathering significant evidence. Consequently, the disciplinary department quickly apprehended a group of people.

The other piece of news was even more sensational. Just a few hours ago, the person behind Zhang Dayong was also taken away.

Upon learning of this, Zhang Dayong immediately called Qi Yun for help, but the latter was on the plane at the time, with his phone switched off.

Thus, as soon as Qi Yun landed, Zhang Dayong eagerly arranged to meet him...

Old Feng Hot Pot Restaurant, private room.

Zhang Dayong slumped in a chair, his eyes vacant, looking despondent.

When he heard the door open, he jumped up and hurriedly approached, grabbing Qi Yun's arm, "Bro, you have to save me this time!"

It was the first time Qi Yun saw him so flustered. He patted Zhang Dayong's shoulder, comforting him, "Don't rush, tell me exactly what happened?"

Zhang Dayong returned to his seat, shook his head bitterly, "I know very little right now; I just heard he was taken from the office."

Taken from the office? Qi Yun frowned. Although not very familiar with that circle, he knew that if someone was directly taken from their office, it meant the authorities had concrete evidence.

Especially considering Qin Minghui's status...

Being taken away just before the outcome of that matter was quite intriguing.

After contemplating for a few seconds, Qi Yun looked at Zhang Dayong, "You haven't done anything out of line, have you?"

"No!" Zhang Dayong shook his head earnestly, then hesitated for two seconds and added, "Except for that one bronze artifact incident..."

Hearing this, Qi Yun's brows furrowed tightly, "Did you give him the real or the fake one back then?"

A few months ago, through intelligence, they learned that Boss Liao from Antique Street was smuggling bronze artifacts overseas, so he and Shi Feng set a trap, allowing Zhang Dayong to successfully seize the smuggled artifacts.

One of them caught Qin Minghui's eye, so Zhang Dayong had someone create a replica. Whether Qin Minghui ended up with the real one or the fake one, Qi Yun didn't ask for details at the time.

Chapter 570: Breaking News (2)

"It's fake, but right now we have to prepare for the worst... If we dig deeper, I won't be able to escape..." Zhang Dayong replied bitterly.

Qi Yun breathed a long sigh of relief; as long as it isn't real, the nature of the situation might not be so serious.

The room fell silent, with only the thick soup in the pot bubbling away.

Qi Yun lit a cigarette, took a few deep drags, and then took out his mobile phone to call his brother-in-law, Shao Yuewen. After waiting for more than forty minutes, Shao Yuewen appeared at the door of the private room.

Upon seeing Zhang Dayong was also present, Shao Yuewen immediately understood why Qi Yun had asked him to come; reaching this position naturally meant keen perception in certain aspects.

Once Shao Yuewen took a seat, Qi Yun poured him a cup of tea and then recounted the situation regarding the bronze artifacts.

Shao Yuewen didn't seem too surprised after hearing the story; he just frowned and remained silent.

Qi Yun glanced at Zhang Dayong, then seriously asked, "Brother-in-law, is there room for maneuver in this matter?"

Shao Yuewen sighed; if Qi Yun had asked him about this before Xiao Hanguang's team came to J Province, he would have found reasons to avoid getting involved.

But now Qi Yun was not the same as before... He had to carefully weigh the costs and benefits involved.

Qi Yun saw the other's hesitation and didn't press further, allowing Shao Yuewen time to think.

His relationship with Shao Yuewen was different from that with Zhang Dayong; there was no deep friendship between the two.

Although he had saved the other's son, Shao Yuewen had already repaid him during the security company paperwork incident, so even if he was unwilling to help this time, it was understandable.

Regarding why Qi Yun didn't seek other contacts but asked Shao Yuewen to handle this matter, it was naturally because the latter's father-in-law was the only one in a position to exert influence.

Shao Yuewen stared at the teacup, his fingers rubbing the cup wall repeatedly. After three minutes, he finally looked up at Qi Yun: "There should be room for maneuver, but the difficulty is considerable."

"Wait for me to ask around, and then I'll get back to you."

Upon hearing this, Zhang Dayong, who didn't dare to breathe, let out a sigh of relief, slowly released his bloodless grip hidden under the table.

He knew he was saved.

Of course, this "saving" was not saving his life, but saving his political career.

The stone hanging in Qi Yun's heart also slightly settled; he knew who the other party meant by asking and figured that having room for maneuver was better than being stuck in a dead end.

He nodded earnestly: "Alright, thank you, brother-in-law, this matter is indeed tricky."

"Hmm, I'll be off now. Wait for my news." Shao Yuewen didn't stay long, got up from his chair, and took his leave.

Qi Yun also stood up, accompanying him to the car.

Returning to the private room, Zhang Dayong squeezed out a difficult smile, sincerely thanking Qi Yun: "Thanks."

Qi Yun waved his hand, opened a bottle of beer, and poured a cup for him: "Put your mind at ease, wait for his news. If he can't help, I'll think of another way."

Zhang Dayong nodded, raised his glass, and drank it all in one go; with Qi Yun's words, he felt reassured.

Old Feng outside saw that the talks were over, brought in a few plates of fresh beef tripe, and accompanied Zhang Dayong for a few drinks. The three of them ate until nearly midnight before leaving.

Shao Yuewen was indeed efficient; Qi Yun had just returned home when he received a call from the latter.

"Let him go to the disciplinary department tomorrow and explain the issue himself."

"Okay." Qi Yun responded immediately, knowing that since the other party had said this, the necessary arrangements were definitely made.

Shao Yuewen paused, then continued: "He might face some disciplinary actions, but that's already the best outcome."

"You know, things are very tense right now. Qin Minghui just had an incident, and Zhang Dayong has a very prominent label on him."

"Hmm, I understand. This outcome already exceeds expectations." Qi Yun said with gratitude, "Thank you, brother-in-law. I owe you one."

"Haha, no need to be so formal with me. You've called me brother-in-law; how can I not help you when you have issues." Shao Yuewen replied casually.

Qi Yun chuckled; regardless of whether the words were sincerely meant, they sounded comforting.

"Alright, I won't disturb your rest. When you're free, I'll bring some good tea to your place."

After some polite exchanges, they ended the call.

Qi Yun promptly passed on the news to Zhang Dayong, who could finally get a peaceful night's sleep.

...

The next day was a weekend. In the morning, Qi Yun took Zhao Qing and their daughter for a stroll through the mall, then proceeded to the same tea house where he had previously met De Gaulle.

Since he had received a bit of assistance from De Gaulle in Japan a few days ago, Qi Yun was now less hostile towards him, although necessary caution was maintained.

"ASML share matters; Christopher has already started advancing, and I believe it'll only be a few days before there is news. Once the shares are obtained, I'll have the lawyer contact you."

Upon meeting, De Gaulle promptly expressed his sincerity.

Qi Yun was pleased with his attitude and nodded with a smile: "Alright, I trust Mr. De Gaulle's character."

"So let's discuss the map matter."

"Regarding the final clue, it is indeed hidden in the Apostolic Archives beneath St. Peter's Basilica."

As he spoke, De Gaulle took out a stack of photos from his bag and placed them in front of Qi Yun. "My family paid a great price to obtain this clue, persuading those cardinals to allow entry."

Qi Yun did not doubt this; the mysterious archive was a core part of the Vatican, not easy to access without substantial investment.

He picked up the photos from the table and began examining them one by one.

The first was a fist-sized stone with a rough, pitted surface, resembling the lunar meteorite Qi Yun had found earlier, likely discovered years ago on Mount Kilimanjaro.

The second was a golden compass, inlaid with twelve neatly cut rubies, featuring a lion head-like pattern in the center, presumably related to the Egyptian pyramids.

The third was a statue, the typical feathered serpent god of the Mayan civilization, clutching a small jade piece in its mouth, with eyes inlaid with two milky white shells, giving it a somewhat eerie appearance.

The fourth was a black cross; its material was indistinguishable, with no surface patterns, but there was a small transparent crystal in the center, seemingly containing something inside.

The last was the stone tablet Qi Yun had discovered in the ruins of Loulan Ancient City.

After examining all of them, Qi Yun put the photos down and stared at De Gaulle: "Are these the items found at those five places?"

"Yes!" De Gaulle answered solemnly.

Qi Yun wasn't sure if any private items were mixed in among these five photos, but from the other's demeanor, it didn't seem like he was lying.

After contemplating for a few seconds, he also took out his phone, pulled up a photo from the gallery, and showed it to De Gaulle.

It was a picture of a bronze mirror from Genghis Khan's Tomb in Northern Mongolia.

De Gaulle grabbed the phone, his pupils suddenly contracted, and even his breathing became rapid.

For this secret, his family had explored for hundreds, if not thousands, of years, now finally witnessing the answer in his generation—how could he not be excited?

He stared at the bronze mirror's picture for several minutes, and when he finally looked up, his face was filled with undisguised joy, voice trembling: "It's it! It's the Xuanyuan Mirror!"

Xuanyuan Mirror!?

This thing really exists?

Qi Yun was momentarily stunned hearing these words.

However, what shocked him even more was how the other could recognize the origin of this bronze mirror?

Back in the tomb chamber, even the artifact expert Hua Weiguo couldn't identify this mirror.

Clearly, De Gaulle's family indeed possessed knowledge unknown to him...