

Middle Age 601

Chapter 601: Things Are Looking Up

On the private jet returning to Bird City, Qi Yun showed the stone that Brother Quan had retrieved to Ignacio.

The latter put on his glasses and carefully examined it.

"Found in the city at the lake bottom?"

Qi Yun nodded, "Yes, this stone was placed on a stone pillar at the time."

"Stone pillar..." Ignacio murmured softly.

"From its appearance, there's nothing special about it."

"But I recall that historical records mention that Jialoba City had many altars specifically for worshiping the Buddha. If this stone was placed on a stone pillar, it is very likely a ceremonial artifact."

Something used for worship?

Qi Yun furrowed his brow. Such an object might carry a bit of bad luck...

"If you feel assured, you can temporarily leave it with me. I'll take it back to check some ancient records and give it a detailed examination."

"Of course, no problem." Qi Yun agreed without a second thought.

From the very beginning of searching for the shipwreck clues, Ignacio had been a great help to him, asking for nothing in return, purely interested in the secret as well.

So Qi Yun had no doubts about him.

Besides, this stone seemed to hold no value for him at the moment...

Two hours later, the plane arrived at Bird City Airport.

Qi Yun arranged for Zhong Rui to take Ignacio to the hotel, then he himself returned with his group to Golden Collar Villa.

After being away from home for several days, a round of hard labor was inevitable.

After finishing the physical work, he finally had time to go to the study and handle the messages from the past few days.

The first one was the negotiation with the Farmer's Three Fists. The boss of the other company came to Bird City personally and showed considerable sincerity in the proposal.

Qi Yun entrusted President Bi with the matter, but the boss of the Farmer's Three Fists still hoped to meet him in person, perhaps wanting to further verify the authenticity of the water source.

The second message came from Shao Yuewen, saying Old He had been summoned to Beijing, and the investigation into Qin Minghui seemed to have temporarily halted.

The situation with Qin Minghui was a result of Qi Yun's maneuvering.

That day he took Ma Chaoyang's information to the investigation team and discussed privately with the team leader Zhang Jianjun for quite some time.

When mentioning Qin Minghui, Zhang Jianjun stated that the investigation team had conducted an extensive investigation on him, and although there were some issues with him, nothing was fatal.

Thus, Qi Yun called Xiao Hanguang to subtly express his thoughts.

After listening, Xiao Hanguang did not reprimand Qi Yun for his actions but directly suggested that he should seek out Director Fu.

Perhaps in the view of such high-level figures, what kind of person Qin Minghui truly was only was the least important factor...

Qin Minghui's status as a cadre of the Z Control Department, coupled with the strong influence of the Fu Family in that area, was the direct reason for the temporary halt of the investigation into him.

Shao Yuewen's information was sent over at nine o'clock in the evening.

At present, this information is highly confidential, known only to a very few bigwigs, and he himself learned it from his father-in-law.

After a brief contemplation, Qi Yun called Lu Zhaoxue to give her a heads-up, saving her from running around constantly stressed out.

Simultaneously, it was to let her know that the matter with Qin Minghui was his doing, and this favor should be remembered.

The third message was a piece of good news from Tao Ziming. Ever since Qi Yun invested a huge amount of money to buy the experimental data, their research and development made a rapid advance, and just the day before yesterday, they had produced the first new type of material and successfully applied it to battery technology.

Qi Yun was overjoyed upon hearing this. More than a hundred million had been invested, and finally, there was hope for a return.

Moreover, this was a significant breakthrough. Whether constructing a factory for mass production or cooperating with other companies, it would bring immense benefits.

Creating another Ningde Era was not just an idle dream.

Qi Yun suppressed his excitement. He intended to immediately call Tao Ziming to congratulate him, but seeing it was too late, he decided to wait until the next day.

...

The next day, in the office building of the Farmer's Three Fists branch.

President Bi had already arrived in the lobby ahead of time and was chatting with Lin Fan, the head of their last meeting. Seeing Qi Yun arrive, the two hurried over to greet him.

"President Qi, hello! Welcome, welcome." Lin Fan warmly extended both hands.

Qi Yun also reached out to shake hands with him, "Haha, you're too kind, President Lin, and you even came to greet me personally."

"It's only proper, only proper." Lin Fan waved his hand with a smile, then made a welcoming gesture, "Our boss is already waiting for you in the conference room, please follow me, President Qi."

Qi Yun nodded and followed him to the elevator.

The elevator doors slowly closed. Standing beside him, Lin Fan casually started a conversation, "President Qi, our boss is very much looking forward to this cooperation, clearing his schedule for the past few days to wait for your return in Bird City."

Qi Yun picked up on the amicable tone, recognizing that the Farmer's Three Fists company indeed valued the source of water greatly.

"Haha, I am also very willing to cooperate with your company, as your company's technology and channels are leading in the industry."

The elevator quickly reached the top floor. Inside the meeting room, an elder with graying hair stood by the glass window, looking out over the busy park below.

"Chairman Zhong, President Qi has arrived." Lin Fan gently reminded. Once the elder turned around, he introduced Qi Yun, "President Qi, this is our company's chairman, Chairman Zhong."

The elder before him hadn't been a stranger in the news lately. Qi Yun was not unfamiliar with him. To build the company from scratch to its current scale, his means and foresight were not to be underestimated.

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"Hello, Chairman Zhong. I've long admired your style, and it's truly an honor to have the opportunity to collaborate with your esteemed company," Qi Yun took the initiative to greet.

Chairman Zhong looked at him with a hint of admiration in his eyes: "President Qi, you are young and promising; there's no need for such courtesy."

"I have read reports about you in the news earlier; your generosity and boldness are worth learning from everyone."

Qi Yun smiled and waved his hand, maintaining a humble attitude: "Chairman Zhong, you flatter me. I've only done what I can."

After a round of pleasantries, both parties took their seats.

Although President Bi had already discussed the cooperation details with Qi Yun, Lin Fan still brought several materials.

"President Qi, this is the cooperation plan drafted after our discussion with President Bi. You may review it first."

Qi Yun took the document and started flipping through the pages to review.

The plan was very clear, offering two options from Farmer Three Punch.

The first option was to jointly establish a subsidiary, where Qi Yun's side would be responsible for obtaining water source extraction rights, followed by land acquisition and factory construction approvals, holding a 20% stake.

Farmer Three Punch Company would invest 3 billion, holding an 80% stake.

The other option was to transfer the water source extraction rights to Yangsheng Tang Company, along with 1 billion cash, to acquire 1% equity from Chairman Zhong in Yangsheng Tang Company.

Yangsheng Tang Company is not publicly listed, but it controls two subsidiaries, one being Farmer Three Punch, which is listed in Hong Kong stocks, with a market value exceeding 350 billion.

The second company is Wantai Biological, listed on A-shares, mainly engaged in vaccines, with a market value also exceeding 70 billion.

So, although 1% equity might not seem much, its value is substantial, clearly more valuable than the first option.

Moreover, Chairman Zhong is willing to offer 1% equity to Qi Yun, evidently indicating a desire for in-depth cooperation.

Someone capable of growing business to such a scale must be well-informed in certain areas, aware of Qi Yun's connections with some individuals.

Thus, this plan genuinely showed sincerity.

However, President Bi suggested prioritizing the first option because 1% equity in Yangsheng Tang, although valuable, isn't meaningful.

The 20% stake in the new company is different; although the immediate return is not as direct as the second option, once the products are successful and market share expands, the annual dividends won't be trivial, and Qi Yun can participate in the new company's operations, holding certain influence.

"President Qi, is there anything else you would like to discuss?" Lin Fan asked with a smile.

Qi Yun closed the plan, smiled back, and then looked at Chairman Zhong sitting opposite: "Chairman Zhong, frankly, both plans you offered are very sincere."

"Especially the second one, the 1% equity in Yangsheng Tang, purely in terms of current value, is indeed more appealing than 20% equity in the new company."

"However..." Qi Yun shifted the topic, "I'm leaning towards the first plan, and I hope to make some adjustments to the equity distribution."

Chairman Zhong paused, holding his teacup, with a hint of interest flashing in his eyes, placed the cup down, and asked: "Oh? What are your thoughts?"

"I'll invest 1 billion as well, holding 40% equity."

As soon as Qi Yun finished speaking, the conference room fell silent.

Lin Fan showed a bit of surprise in his eyes; under the previous plan, Qi Yun only contributed resources without capital but still held 20% equity. Now, by proactively investing 1 billion for 40%, he clearly wants more influence in the new company.

Chairman Zhong looked at Qi Yun, after a few seconds of silence.

"Looks like you have great confidence in this project?"

Qi Yun met the gaze with a smile: "Chairman Zhong, it's not that I have confidence in the project, but confidence in collaborating with your company."

"With a unique top-quality water source, combined with your company's technology and channels, I see no reason not to succeed."

"Even if there are risks, I'm willing to bear them alongside your company."

After listening, Chairman Zhong took a sip of tea and after not much consideration, responded: "Haha, how bold and daring young people are nowadays."

"Let's proceed as you suggested."

Qi Yun initially thought he would haggle, but he didn't expect such straightforward agreement.

It seems my perspective was still too small...

He stood and slightly bowed to Chairman Zhong, then extended his hand: "Thank you, Chairman Zhong, for your trust. Here's to a pleasant cooperation."

Chairman Zhong also stood, shaking Qi Yun's hand: "A pleasant cooperation!"

"My business focuses on two key aspects: the project's intrinsic value, and the partner; you have both."

"Chairman Zhong, you flatter me; I'm not good at handling compliments," Qi Yun humorously responded.

Cooperation was confirmed; subsequent matters naturally require legal teams from both parties to follow up.

Unexpectedly for Qi Yun, after the meeting, Chairman Zhong didn't request a visit to the water source site but left it to Lin Fan to handle, as if the meeting was solely to meet him.

Leaving Farmer Three Punch's office building, President Bi also got into the Maybach.

"You've really changed a lot now; 1 billion in cash, and you spend without even batting an eye."

Facing President Bi's tease, Qi Yun chuckled, taking out a cigarette pack and handing one over.

"Are you interested in getting involved in this? I can offer you some equity."

"I've got other matters to handle; if you have the energy, keep an eye on this for me; it'll give me peace of mind."

President Bi took a cigarette, sighed: "I'd love to get involved, but you know I took over old Li's mess; all my cash went to him, and for now, I can't raise much."

Qi Yun shook his head: "Money can be discussed later; the main point is whether you are interested..."

...

At noon, Qi Yun personally saw Ignacio off at the airport, then headed directly to the Dawn Technology factory.

He wanted to see firsthand how impressive the groundbreaking material Tao Ziming mentioned really was.

With funding injected, the factory's guard pavilion now had security on patrol; still, seeing the Maybach's license plate, without even verifying identity, the guard simply asked driver Chen Wei "Who are you looking for" and let them through.

Displaying the philosophy of recognizing the car, not the individual.

Qi Yun didn't bother arguing, planning to subtly remind Tao Ziming afterward about paying more attention to security management.

After all, if the product succeeds, competitors might come sniffing around; commercial leaks are far from uncommon.

Just as the car reached the office building entrance, Tao Ziming excitedly ran down the stairs: "President Qi!"

Qi Yun didn't bother with pleasantries, pointing towards the nearby laboratory: "Let's go, show me?"

Inside the laboratory, several lab coat-clad engineers were busy around the workstation, stopping when Qi Yun and Tao Ziming entered.

Tao Ziming went straight to the sealed cabinet in the center, opening the glass door and carefully removing a silver-gray thin sheet.

"This is our core material, the nano-composite electrode material, weighing 30% less than traditional graphite electrodes, yet improving conductivity by 20%."

"The key point is, the cost is halved compared to traditional materials; once it's mass-produced, the advantage will be greater!"

He handed over the thin sheet, "President Qi, feel its weight."

Qi Yun took it over, examining it under the light.

This thing was palm-sized, lighter than copper and revealing evenly spaced patterns within.

"Our team specifically developed this honeycomb-like nano structure, which reduces weight while increasing conductive area; the conductivity enhancement I mentioned relies largely on this."

"Moreover, this structure can lessen heat during charging, significantly reducing the risk of spontaneous combustion, you know how new energy cars burning up..."

After hearing Tao Ziming talk at length, Qi Yun encapsulated it in two words: "Impressive."

Indeed, as mentioned months ago, this new material far surpasses what is currently the most advanced batteries in the market!

Once this hits the market, it's certainly revolutionary. The mainstream lithium iron phosphate batteries might soon face obsolescence...

Leaving the factory grounds with an elated feeling, Qi Yun already pictured himself raking in profits...

ps: Fathers, I'll be taking a break tomorrow and the day after since my girlfriend is visiting. You should understand what it's like being single for a long time, right?

I'll compensate later, seeking approval from fathers, sincerely grateful.

Chapter 603: New Purple Intelligence

As night fell, several business cars drove into the special passage of the airport. After the convoy stopped, the leader of the investigation team, Zhang Jianjun, opened the door and got out.

He raised his watch to check the time, then nodded to a few subordinates, who escorted a person with a black hood out of the car towards the private jet not far away.

The person wearing the hood was Brother Biao, Old He's cleaner.

Previously, when dealing with Ma Chaoyang, Brother Biao was not brought to the forefront, but now he was about to be taken to Beijing.

Combining this with the fact that Old He had been summoned into J for many days without returning, it's not hard to deduce that some level of contest has been settled.

Some keen-eyed individuals sensed that a storm was about to hit.

Within two minutes, a black Maybach also arrived and stopped next to the convoy.

Qi Yun pushed open the car door and got out, accompanied by Ge Dabao.

The two approached and secretly talked with Zhang Jianjun for more than ten minutes. Finally, Ge Dabao handed over a disc containing classified information to him.

The disc recorded a clue that Guo An had been pursuing for a long time, involving some people and certain transactions with group Z from abroad. After Director Duan applied for approval, it was permitted to hand it over to the investigation team for joint handling.

"Thank you both for supporting our work. Please rest assured, I will report to the higher-ups truthfully." Zhang Jianjun solemnly assured Qi Yun and his team while keeping the file bag containing the disc.

Qi Yun wasn't too worried about this, since Director Duan had instructed them to hand over the materials. It was sure that everything had been coordinated, and no accidents would occur.

"Alright, it's been hard for you this period. Welcome to visit J again when you have time." Qi Yun politely shook hands and bid farewell.

"Certainly!"

"Goodbye!"

After saying their goodbyes, Zhang Jianjun turned and walked toward the private jet.

Ge Dabao watched his back and commented wistfully, "A huge earthquake is coming..."

Qi Yun knew what he meant: when the tree falls, the monkeys scatter. That faction is destined to be purged.

"Director Qi, how about treating the brothers to something at your hot pot restaurant?" Ge Dabao teased, patting Qi Yun on the arm.

Qi Yun waved grandly, "Sure, no problem. I'll reserve seats for everyone."

"Alright, today I finally got the chance to take advantage of a wealthy friend!" Ge Dabao said as he took out his phone to message his brothers.

Forty minutes later, the two arrived at Old Feng Hot Pot Restaurant.

The business inside was as booming as ever, with every table filled to capacity and a dozen or so people waiting outside.

Patrons here were not only locals but also many tourists attracted by advertisements on museum tickets, so Qi Yun's initial deal with the museum wasn't a loss in the long run.

Seeing Qi Yun enter, Old Feng came out from behind the bar to greet him: "You're here. I've arranged your friends in a private room."

Qi Yun nodded to him, then introduced to Ge Dabao: "This is my good buddy, Old Feng."

"Old Feng, this is also a friend, Ge Dabao. You can just call him Old Ge."

Old Feng sized up Ge Dabao without asking much, merely warmly stretching out his hand for a greeting.

"Hello, hello! Come on, please follow me inside."

The three entered the private room, where more than a dozen of Guo An's colleagues, all familiar faces from Ge Dabao's group, were already seated.

During the meal, no one talked about work; they just chatted casually.

It wasn't until the meal was nearing its end that Ge Dabao put his arm around Qi Yun's shoulder and said, "I estimate I'll be transferred next month."

Qi Yun's smile froze: "So sudden, where to?"

"Nan J, A City."

The room fell into silence; it took a while before Qi Yun raised his glass with a smile to congratulate: "Congratulations then."

In his heart, Qi Yun was somewhat unwilling to see Ge Dabao leave, as the latter had provided him with much assistance since they met, and their relationship was very good.

However, people always strive to advance. With Ge Dabao's rank, he would surely become influential in the local Guo An system, which was progress.

Watching Qi Yun raise his glass, Ge Dabao also picked up his glass to toast: "What's to congratulate? It's just changing places to work."

"The work over there is more complicated. It might be hard to freeload on your hot pot in the future."

There was a hint of sentiment in his words, and the colleagues nearby chimed in: "With Brother Bao leaving, I feel a bit empty inside..."

This remark added a slight heaviness to the atmosphere in the private room.

After the meal ended, everyone dispersed, and Ge Dabao stayed behind with a man about Qi Yun's age.

This man was named Bao Cheng, Ge Dabao's deputy.

"Old Bao is likely to take over my position, so you two should get to know each other for seamless communication in work."

Bao Cheng was a man of few words, a rather silent personality, smiling and nodding to Qi Yun:
"Consultant Qi, if there's anything you need my cooperation on in the future, just say it."

"No need to be formal, Captain Bao. Just call me Qi Yun. I might indeed need your help in the future." Qi Yun hadn't interacted much with this person before, only having seen him a few times.

So it seemed that the reason Ge Dabao wanted this meal was likely to use the relaxed atmosphere to build a connection between the two of them.

...

On the other side, inside the manor in Lyon, France.

Just back from Kunlun Mountain, De Gaulle immediately convened a family meeting.

It was the same long table as last time, and sitting around it were the same people.

After De Gaulle explained the course of this journey, the expressions on the faces of those family elders varied; some frowned, others fell into deep thought.

"De Gaulle, are you sure the Land of Eternal Life is just the legendary Shambala?" The elder who spoke was named Alfred, sitting in the first seat on the left side, second in family prestige only to Old George.

De Gaulle turned his head to look at the other party, his tone unhurried: "Yes, although I don't want to believe this outcome either, the fact is just that."

"I've had religious experts analyze the video we brought back carefully, and they've proven that the city at the bottom of the lake is indeed Jialoba City of the Shambala Kingdom."

A person beside him spoke up: "So, what we've been searching for over hundreds of years, immortality, doesn't exist at all?"

De Gaulle nodded: "You could say that."

"Although Shambala is depicted in Buddhist legends as the Pure Land, the Land of Eternal Life, it's just myth and a spiritual symbol; it can't truly grant immortality."

"This can't be!" An elder suddenly stood up, propping his hands on the table, his eyes filled with unwillingness, "Our family spent hundreds of years and countless resources just to receive such a result?"

"I hope it's not true myself." De Gaulle ignored the other's attitude and continued explaining kindly, "But the expert analysis reports are there, and the Jialoba City at the bottom of the lake is the best proof."

"What we've always pursued, immortality, might really just be an elusive legend."

Alfred was silent for a while, then slowly said: "Even if immortality doesn't exist, there must be other unknown secrets hidden in Jialoba City of the Shambala Kingdom."

"We can't give up here; perhaps we can find something else beneficial to the family from there."

Upon hearing this, many nodded in agreement.

De Gaulle pursed his lips, saying nothing.

...

At Golden Collar Villa, Qi Yun returned home, showered, and was about to engage in deep conversation with Zhao Qing when he unexpectedly received a phone call.

He glanced at the mobile phone screen on the bedside table, then apologized and pushed the beauty in his arms away, getting up to take the phone to his study.

"Harris, at this hour, shouldn't you be at the pool party? Why did you think of calling me?"

"Qi Yun, I was just attacked by a group of people! Three bodyguards are dead!" Harris's voice carried anger.

Qi Yun's expression froze, and his originally relaxed tone instantly became serious: "Are you alright? Who were they?"

"I'm fine."

"The opposing party was very professional, leaving no clues at the scene, not even corpses."

Not even corpses were left...

This doesn't seem like a common vendetta; it clearly was a carefully planned professional operation.

Qi Yun almost immediately connected it to that Eight-footed Jade Hook.

The last intelligence reported that the Japanese Imperial Family discovered the Eight-footed Jade Hook was stolen and directly engaged the FBI to investigate, capturing Ichiro Kojima in a very short time.

And after Qi Yun informed Harris of this, the latter also immediately left the United States to hide in Africa.

"Could the buyer have leaked your identity?"

"Probably not, that person has considerable power in the United States; even the authorities can't force him."

Harris paused, continued pondering, "But I haven't provoked any enemies recently, especially those daring enough to attack me in South Africa... so you better be careful too."

Qi Yun furrowed his brows. If it's not related to that matter being leaked, then this is hard to explain...

The Harris brothers are influential figures in Africa, having interactions with the H Gang and even high-level officials in the nation; not anyone would dare attack him without considerable audacity.

"Alright, I'll be careful."

"Yep, I'll inform you immediately if I find any leads in the subsequent investigation."

The two exchanged a few brief words before ending the call.

Qi Yun put down the phone and lit a cigarette.

After pondering for a while, still drawing no conclusions, he chose to put it aside.

At least domestically, his security is assured. Whether the opponent comes openly or covertly, he has the confidence to handle it.

"Whew, let's check today's intelligence."

[Current Intelligence Points: 24]

[Today's Intelligence 1 (Green): Hong Kong Island is about to issue 3 new VASP licenses, the competition among various financial groups is intense, and Liu Xiaotao's father plans to buy a license to enter the market for five billion, but struggles with not having connections]

VASP license, a Virtual Asset Service Provider license. With this license, you can legally conduct virtual currency exchange, custody, and related businesses.

In recent years, the development momentum of virtual currency has been swift; as global regulation of virtual assets becomes stricter, the license issued by Hong Kong Island has become a coveted prize sought after by all kinds of capital.

Two months ago, a company just obtained this license, and its stock price directly rose by 200% within a short time!

This shows the value of this license.

Under normal circumstances, the fee to apply for a VASP license might be around fifty million Hong Kong dollars, but that's the public price; no one knows how much it would cost privately.

So, for Liu the Rich to be willing to spend five billion to enter the game, it doesn't surprise him too much.

"Perhaps I could ask Brother Hui about the situation tomorrow and see if there's a chance to act as a middleman?"

Brother Hui has been mixing around Hong Kong Island for so long and has some connections.

[Today's Intelligence 2 (Blue): The merchant Hussein from Peshawar, Pakistan, arrived at Bird City yesterday; his purpose this trip is to acquire a batch of second-hand lathe equipment, contact phone: 180****]

Peshawar, lathe, connect these terms together, and even using your feet to think, you know what they're producing...

Qi Yun thought for a moment and recalled that near-defunct automobile parts factory. With the sales channels previously connected to Boss Jia's goose business, the factory not only reversed its decline but also expanded its scale.

Such factory owners often have dealings with each other, and with so many factories closing, the other party might have a way to get second-hand lathe equipment.

Lathes don't differentiate between high and low quality; they can shape screws as well as gun barrels.

[Today's Intelligence 3 (Purple 1/2): You have already found Can Cong's eyeball; gather the other missing eyeball to unlock the treasure information buried by Can Cong]

Can... Can Cong?

Ancient Shu King Can Cong?

Treasure information?

Qi Yun's mouth dropped open, stunned by this new purple intelligence; he even forgot to stub out his cigarette.

The name Can Cong, it's familiar yet distant.

The first time I saw this name was in Li Bai's poem "Can Cong and Yu Fu, how vague it was to establish the kingdom."

Ancient Shu King Can Cong, the first ruler to claim kingship in the Ancient Shu Kingdom, legend has it his eyes protruded forward like a crab's, and he had a vertical eye, meaning a third eye on his brow, similar to the mythical Erlang God.

However, with the discovery of the bronze mask at Sanxingdui, many experts disputed the idea of three eyes, believing the mask to be the true image of Can Cong, and that the so-called vertical eye was simply protruding eyeballs.

Putting aside the vertical eye for now, the intelligence states that I have already found Can Cong's eyeball.

But where is the eyeball?

The next second, Qi Yun's pupils shrank drastically.

"Could it be...."

The stone Brother Quan brought up from the lake?

That stone, about the size of a ping-pong ball, indeed seems to match the bronze mask...

However, it seems too incredible.

Can Cong's eyeball, how could it appear in Jialoba City of the Shambala Kingdom?

The burnt smell of the cigarette brought Qi Yun back from his shock, and he stubbed out the cigarette, picked up his phone, and started browsing related material online.

According to the archaeological dating of the Sanxingdui Ruins, its burial time is roughly at the end of the Shang Dynasty, beginning of the Zhou Dynasty, around 1000 BC.

However, the "Huayang Guo Zhi" records Can Cong claiming kingship during the "loss of the Zhou's order," period, in the first year of King Xiang of Eastern Zhou, about 650 BC.

Regardless of which conclusion, both precede the time when the Shambala Kingdom could have existed.

Because although the time of the Shambala Kingdom is impossible to prove, it's certain it existed after Shakyamuni's birth.

And Shakyamuni's birth, was approximately in 560 BC.

So, from a purely chronological perspective, it could indeed be possible...

Moreover, Ignacio also mentioned that the stone could very likely be for sacrificial use...

Chapter 605: Ancient Shu Kingdom

The next day, at the Cultural Relics Bureau.

"It's only been a few days, how did you end up looking so haggard?" Qi Yun asked suspiciously, looking at Hua Weiguo who was frowning opposite him.

Hua Weiguo gave a wry smile, put his cup on the table, and spoke with a weary voice, "Don't mention it, I haven't had a proper sleep for days."

"You must have heard about the donated artifacts being swapped, right? A third of the people in this building have been taken away for questioning."

"Yes, I've heard." Qi Yun pulled out a chair and sat down opposite him.

He had learned about this incident long ago from a system intelligence report, and he also heard some whispers when he returned from Japan last time.

"Did it affect you?"

Hua Weiguo shook his head, "I was always in charge of archaeological excavations; the management of artifacts doesn't involve me, so I was lucky to escape that ordeal."

"But I still have to cooperate with the disciplinary department's investigation. Who wouldn't be apprehensive going to that place?"

Qi Yun chuckled silently, thinking to himself that this little old man was quite endearing.

But surviving such a huge storm, his character was indeed commendable.

Hua Weiguo sighed and looked at Qi Yun, "Did you come to see me today for something? I have a meeting later, so if there's anything, just say it quickly."

"Yes, it's something small." Qi Yun replied while taking out the Bronze Mirror from his bag, "I've finished using this. I'm giving it back to you to handle."

Last time in Genghis Khan's Tomb, Hua Weiguo had tacitly approved Qi Yun to privately take the Bronze Mirror, but the latter had also promised to return it afterwards.

"Alright, give it to me. I'll write a report and submit it." Hua Weiguo took the brocade box handed to him and opened it to take a look.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you, this mirror should be the legendary Qin King Bronze Mirror." Qi Yun added.

"Qin... What did you say!?" Hua Weiguo suddenly raised his head, his eyes widening, "This is the Qin King Bronze Mirror?"

He had inspected the mirror in the tomb and only recognized the inscriptions on the back as from the Qin Dynasty, but he hadn't determined its origin. Unexpectedly, it was one of the four legendary divine mirrors, the Qin King Bronze Mirror...

Qi Yun nodded slightly, "That's right."

Hua Weiguo took out the mirror and examined it closely, then continued to ask, "How did you confirm it?"

"I have a friend whose family has passed down documents that record this mirror. You can also look up related information later." Qi Yun casually made an excuse.

Seeing Qi Yun unwilling to elaborate, Hua Weiguo did not press further, carefully placing the treasure back into the box and locking it in the safe.

"There's one more thing." Once he was done, Qi Yun spoke again.

"Go ahead."

"Do you know much about the history of the Ancient Shu Kingdom?"

Qi Yun had two purposes for coming here today: to return the Qin King Bronze Mirror and to inquire with Hua Weiguo about clues regarding Can Cong.

"Ancient Shu Kingdom?" Hua Weiguo showed a surprised expression, "You're interested in that?"

"Yes, I'm quite curious."

"Alright, then I'll tell you what I know." Hua Weiguo crossed his legs and began to speak at length.

"The history of the Ancient Shu Kingdom can be traced back to the time of the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors, when Changyi, the son of the Yellow Emperor, married Jing Pu of the Shu Mountain Clan. Their son later became Zhuanxu, one of the Five Emperors."

"When Zhuangxi came to power, he appointed the leader of the Shu Mountain Clan as the Marquis of Shu, overseeing the area now known as Rongcheng, marking the proto-beginning of the Ancient Shu Kingdom."

"The Ancient Shu Kingdom experienced the Xia, Shang, and Zhou eras. During King Wu's conquest of King Zhou, the Ancient Shu Kingdom also participated in the war, becoming one of the Eight Allied Nations during the Mu Oath."

"By the end of the Western Zhou period, as the Zhou dynasty's rites and music decayed, the ruler of the Ancient Shu Kingdom at the time, Can Cong, declared independence and officially became king, thus starting the legendary era of 'Can Cong and Yu Fu'."

"People's understanding of the Ancient Shu Kingdom mostly stems from the bronze artifacts unearthed at Sanxingdui. In fact, the Ancient Shu Kingdom not only mastered unique bronze techniques but was also adept at witchcraft."

"Witchcraft?" Qi Yun was momentarily taken aback.

"Yes, that's correct, witchcraft." Hua Weiguo sipped from his tea mug to moisten his throat and continued, "According to historical records, the Qiang people and the Ancient Shu Kingdom coexisted and integrated for a long time in the upper reaches of the Min River, and the Ancient Shu People learned many witchcraft techniques from the former."

"Especially that Ancient Shu King Can Cong, who was exceptionally skilled in witchcraft..."

After listening to Hua Weiguo's summary of the Ancient Shu Kingdom's background, Qi Yun continued with his questions, "That Can Cong, were his eyes very peculiar?"

Upon hearing this question, Hua Weiguo paused in lowering his tea mug, seemingly not expecting Qi Yun to bring up this detail.

"Yes, the historical texts clearly describe Can Cong's vertical eyes, stating that his eyes appeared to grow vertically, unlike ordinary people."

"Initially, the academic community thought it was mythical exaggeration until the vertical eye mask was unearthed at Sanxingdui, with its protruding vertical eyes, suggesting the legend might not be entirely fictitious."

Speaking, he stood up and went to the bookshelf, pulling out a thick archaeological catalog, flipped to a middle page, and handed it to Qi Yun, "Look at this; it's the most famous vertical eye mask from Sanxingdui, with eye posts protruding ten centimeters from the eye sockets, creating a particularly exaggerated shape."

"Some say this is a representation of Can Cong, while others believe it is the Ancient Shu People's imagination of the 'Eye of God'."

"After all, with the prevalence of witchcraft, they believed vertical eyes could see things invisible to ordinary people, like deities, ancestors, or even omens of the future."

Qi Yun stared at the mask in the catalog; the eye sockets of the mask were about the size to fit a ping-pong ball, matching perfectly with the stone Brother Quan had shown him.

Chapter 606: Ancient Shu Kingdom_2

But... how could a person's eyeball possibly be made of stone?

Suppressing the doubts in his heart, he continued to ask: "Is there any record of Can Cong's vertical eyes, apart from their strange appearance, having any other special features?"

"Other special features?" Hua Weiguo pondered for a few seconds, then slowly shook his head, "I haven't heard any records about that."

"What about Can Cong's tomb? Could it be near Guanghan?"

"Guanghan is very likely not the place."

"Although the Sanxingdui Ruins have unearthed artifacts like vertical eye masks directly related to Can Cong, all the excavated sacrificial pits are ancient objects used for worship, and no traces of any tombs have been found, let alone a grand tomb of the Ancient Shu King."

Qi Yun felt slightly deflated, not learning any more useful clues.

"Alright, I won't disturb your work then."

After saying goodbye to Hua Weiguo, he got up and took his leave.

The matter of the Ancient Shu King's treasure is not urgent, as there are no leads on the other eyeball for now. He can only investigate while waiting for the next purple intelligence to appear.

Better to handle the other two money-making matters first...

....

Tianhe District, in front of the auto parts factory.

Boss Jia had received advance notice that Qi Yun was coming, and was eagerly waiting outside the guardhouse.

A few months ago, a sudden tariff hike by the United States caused his factory to lose foreign outsourcing orders, and it nearly couldn't hang on.

If it weren't for Qi Yun bringing him a big deal, buying those unwanted stocks, he likely would've gone bankrupt by now.

He even provided him with a long-term supply agreement to revive the factory.

Although he knows Qi Yun made quite a profit selling his goods to the Russian market, being able to earn that money is Qi Yun's skill.

Compressing the billing cycle to settle monthly has been the greatest help to him.

So in his heart, Qi Yun is not only a business partner but also a benefactor in life.

"Screech~"

A black Maybach stopped at the factory gate.

Boss Jia looked at the impressive license plate, feeling somewhat uncertain.

It was only when he peeked through the car window and glimpsed Qi Yun in the back seat that he hurriedly ran over to help open the car door.

"Ah, haven't seen you for months, President Qi, you're looking more vigorous."

Qi Yun stepped out of the car, seeing Boss Jia's warmly enthusiastic face, bringing a smile to his lips: "Haha, we're old friends, Boss Jia, no need for formalities."

"It's the right thing to do." After Qi Yun got out of the car, Boss Jia gently closed the car door and made a welcoming gesture, "It's an honor for me to have President Qi visit my place."

The two walked into the factory area, where the originally bumpy concrete ground had been repaired and the exterior walls of the factory buildings repainted. These details showed that Boss Jia's factory had been doing quite well recently.

Qi Yun turned his head and saw more workers in the workshop next door, a lively scene, and said with a smile: "Looks like Boss Jia has been managing pretty well recently."

Boss Jia waved his hand repeatedly, with a tone full of gratitude: "It's all thanks to President Qi!"

"Previously, when the factory was about to close down, I could hardly afford the electricity bill. Now, not only have I added new equipment, but I've also hired more than twenty new workers, and last month I even acquired the idle warehouse next door as a raw material storage."

After some mutual business compliments, they arrived at the office.

Qi Yun hadn't warmed up his seat before he got straight to the point.

"Boss Jia, I've come this time to ask for your help."

Boss Jia had just poured hot tea for Qi Yun, and upon hearing this, he immediately put down the teapot, expressing seriously: "President Qi, just say the word! I'll do everything I can, up to climbing mountains or crossing seas, as long as old Jia can do it, there will be no hesitation!"

"It's not that serious, just hoping you can help inquire about some connections." Qi Yun waved his hand with a smile.

"I have a friend in mechanical trade who wants to procure some second-hand CNC lathes requiring precision machining, with decent accuracy. Can you help find any that fit the criteria?"

Boss Jia slapped his thigh upon hearing this: "No problem at all! I might not be able to sort out other things, but second-hand CNC lathes are easy. I know several bosses whose factories have closed down and are struggling to sell their equipment."

"How many units do you want, President Qi? I'll contact them."

Qi Yun sipped his tea before replying: "Quantity is uncertain; you help contact them, and I'll let you know later. Then you give me the price."

"Sorted." Boss Jia immediately took out his phone and searched through the contact list, "No worries, I'll handle this perfectly for you. Since it's for your friend, I'll negotiate the price for the lowest possible."

"Haha, well, thank you in advance."

...

After confirming Boss Jia could get equipment, Qi Yun left the factory, went into the car, and dialed that Pakistani friend's number.

"Hello~ Nee hao." A voice with a peculiar accent came from the other end, somewhat like a drawl...

"Is it Mr. Hussein?"

"Correct, I'm Hussein. Whom might you be?"

"I'm Qi Yun. Heard from a friend you're looking to buy second-hand CNC lathes?" Qi Yun asked.

"Yes! Been searching!" Hussein's voice rose in urgency, "Mr. Qi, do you have old CNC lathe equipment for sale?"

"Yes, roughly what models do you need, and how many units?"

Qi Yun briefly discussed the requirements with the other party.

Hussein, not bad coming from the land of cost-effectiveness, hoped to procure purely Huaxia-made equipment, focusing on affordable pricing.

Needs a hundred units.

Regarding price, the offer from his side is half higher than what Boss Jia charges, a lucrative type deal.

Domestic CNC lathes, selling used ones between 20,000 to 70,000; a typical profit of 10,000 per unit means this deal could net Qi Yun about a million.

Actually, in front of his current ten-digit saving, this million seems negligible.

But Qi Yun wasn't aiming to earn this million; he mainly wanted to establish a connection with this Pakistani businessman, perhaps leading to larger future collaborations.

By afternoon, Boss Jia contacted several closed down factories, sending locations and contacts over. Qi Yun arranged to go see the equipment with Hussein.

This Pakistani's appearance was different from what he imagined, did not wear the traditional Muslim white robe but instead a fitting suit, carrying a leather briefcase, quite resembling a successful person.

After meeting, they exchanged brief pleasantries. Through the conversation, Qi Yun learned Hussein was somewhat like a trader in Pakistan, akin to Mendeleyev, dealing in mechanical equipment business and more if profitable.

Accompanying him for a brief equipment check, Qi Yun entrusted the follow-up matters to Zhong Rui and returned to the company himself.

Once in the office, Qi Yun reckoned it should be dawn in Spain, so he dialed Ignacio's number to inquire about the stone's test results.

"Qi, I was just about to tell you, the stone is too peculiar!"

"Did a full material analysis and found it's not ordinary mineral but like a fossil of a certain biological tissue after special calcification!"

Qi Yun already knew the result, so he didn't appear too surprised and directly told him about Can Cong's eyeball.

"You say it could be Ancient Shu King Can Cong's eyeball!?" Ignacio felt very incredulous after hearing.

"Yes, I can't directly explain why, but it is certainly true." Qi Yun spoke steadily, continuing, "Professor, I hope you can help research any related ancient texts to see if you can find clues about Can Cong's other eyeball."

There was a full ten seconds of silence before Ignacio's voice came through: "Alright, I'll help you look."

Chapter 607: An Unexpected Rejection

Hong Kong Island, outside the Peak District Police Station building.

Brother Hui turned back to glance at the building behind him, spat on the ground, and then sat in the business car by the roadside with a face full of disdain.

Due to recent major changes in his syndicate, he had been targeted by the cops, and using some old cases, they brought him in and kept him locked up for two days.

This police tactic is not uncommon. Whenever such times arise, they want to prevent those syndicates from making a big fuss and disrupting the peace and harmony of Hong Kong Island, so they invite a few influential leaders for a chat, which also serves as a warning to them not to cause trouble.

"Pop."

Brother Hui held a cigarette in his mouth, and the young man in the passenger seat immediately lit it and handed it over.

He took a deep puff, while inquiring about the outside situation over the past two days and turned on his phone.

Upon seeing the message from Qi Yun, Brother Hui raised his hand, signaling the young man to stop for now, then immediately dialed Qi Yun's number.

"Hey, Brother Qi, sorry about that. The cops have been troubling me these past two days, and my phone got confiscated, so I couldn't get back to you promptly." Brother Hui explained awkwardly.

On the other end, Qi Yun chuckled silently, as he had been pondering at noon why he couldn't reach the other party.

"Haha, no problem. Are you alright over there?"

"All good, all good, just detained for two days and released."

Hearing Brother Hui say all was well, Qi Yun didn't delve further and instead brought up business:

"Brother Hui, I need your help with something, it's like this..."

"VASP license? Brother Qi, you're interested in developing in this field too?"

Though Brother Hui was a rough syndicate man, given the booming virtual currency scene in recent years, especially in the Asian financial hub of Hong Kong Island, where many places even allow direct use of virtual currency for transactions, he was naturally aware of it as well.

"I'm not well-versed in this area; it's just that a boss here wants to spend big money acquiring a license, so I'm asking if you have any connections."

Qi Yun was straightforward, explaining the reason directly, then added, "If we manage to get it, I'll cut you in."

"Hey, Brother Qi, you're too formal with that." Brother Hui feigned dissatisfaction in his tone and patted his chest saying, "With our relationship, as long as you ask, I'll risk anything to help."

His words weren't entirely courtesy, as after the five million in bearer bonds were liquidated last time, he intended to give Qi Yun three million, but the latter refused, meaning he pocketed the full five million.

And the cost incurred was merely hiring a few people for dirty work, with expenses not even a tenth of that.

Qi Yun chuckled: "Haha, alright, we'll discuss the rest later, you first explore some ways to obtain that license."

"Sure!" Brother Hui agreed readily, but after a pause, he hesitantly added, "Brother Qi, I've heard many bosses are eager to compete for these licenses; my connections might not ensure success."

"If you could have Mr. Fu step in and say a word..."

Qi Yun was momentarily taken aback upon hearing "Mr. Fu," only recalling whom Brother Hui referred to after quite some time.

Last time on Hong Kong Island, he led people to apprehend De Gaulle's subordinates, then Mr. Fu dispatched Cockroach Qiang to demand their return.

At that time, Brother Hui held Mr. Fu, who hadn't even shown face, in great awe, claiming his influence on Hong Kong Island was formidable.

But in the end, Qi Yun simply phoned Director Duan, and Mr. Fu immediately changed his stance.

No matter how powerful an individual, they must obediently submit before the strength of Country Guo An.

"Hmm... you go ahead and proceed first." Qi Yun pondered and responded.

"No problem! I'll arrange to meet with the Financial Authority now."

After finishing their conversation, the call ended.

Qi Yun pondered briefly while holding his phone, then immediately dialed De Gaulle.

Such matters surely would be inappropriate to approach Mr. Fu via Guo An's channels, and since De Gaulle managed to have the other party come forward last time, they must have some connection, so he might as well ask him.

The call connected quickly, and Qi Yun outlined his purpose in a few words, promising some benefits.

However, De Gaulle didn't seem to care much about those benefits, agreeing right away without haggling.

"Alright, I'll assist you in communicating with him."

Qi Yun was stunned, originally expecting this guy to drive a hard bargain, but was surprised at how easily they agreed.

Could it be they've had a change of heart?

Before he could speak, De Gaulle continued: "There's also something I need to tell you."

"Please go on."

"About..." De Gaulle suddenly paused halfway, finally sighing out two words, "Forget it."

Then promptly hung up.

Qi Yun narrowed his eyes at the screen, unable to understand the guy's intentions.

...

Evening, Hutao Villa.

In the private room, Qin Minghui stood by the window, staring dazedly at the jujube tree in the courtyard, lost in thought.

From his weary expression, it was apparent that the time spent detained wasn't easy.

Although Qi Yun's connections temporarily pulled him out of the vortex, he indeed had some issues himself, so carrying a disciplinary action was unavoidable, otherwise, it wouldn't make sense up or down.

This also meant that the position he had been scheming for a long time would be completely out of his reach.

Although Qin Minghui felt discontented, he knew very well this was the best outcome for him.

Behind him, Lu Zhaoxue served a cup of freshly brewed tea, warmly advising: "Some things are best done within one's capacity; being overly persistent can sometimes leave you stuck."

Qin Minghui stared at the floating tea leaves in the cup, his Adam's apple moved, and his voice still carried a hint of gloom: "I understand, it's just that I'm a bit unwilling..."

Chapter 608: An Unexpected Rejection (Part 2)

Lu Zhaoxue gently leaned her head on his shoulder and said, "There will be more opportunities. After this incident, you can clearly see who is truly worth aligning with."

"Perhaps there's an even better choice right next to you compared to them."

"Are you talking about Qi Yun?"

"That's right." Lu Zhaoxue nodded slightly, "His connections over there might be stronger than you initially thought."

Qin Minghui didn't speak, his fingers unconsciously rubbed the teacup. After a few seconds of silence, he spoke softly, "Indeed, if it weren't for him this time, I probably wouldn't have gotten away so easily."

"So, since those people are unwilling to help you, you might as well choose anew." Lu Zhaoxue's eyes shimmered with wisdom, completely different from the soft, bewildered look she had when they last met Qi Yun.

She wasn't just a pretty face by Qin Minghui's side; she maintained numerous networks beneath the surface.

The very purpose of opening this Hutao Villa was to help Qin Minghui accumulate more resources.

Even Shao Yuewen and Xia Shaohua, originally not part of Qin Minghui's team, slowly became partners under Lu Zhaoxue's mediation.

While they might not be considered insiders, they would execute at least some of Qin Minghui's orders without fail.

This might seem ordinary, but it demonstrates one's control over the local area.

"Knock knock knock!"

There was a knock on the door outside, and after a few seconds, the secretary pushed it open to report, "Boss, President Qi is here."

"Let him in." Qin Minghui instinctively replied.

But before the secretary could close the door, he called him back, "You don't need to go; I'll personally greet him." With that, he tidied his collar and strode out.

Lu Zhaoxue watched his change in attitude, a satisfied expression appearing on her face.

This was her man, able to bend and stretch as needed.

In the parking lot outside, Qi Yun got out of the Maybach and was about to walk towards the lobby when he saw Qin Minghui hurrying to meet him.

"Brother Qi, thank you for gracing us with your presence."

Hearing the somewhat inadequate title "Brother Qi", a hint of surprise flashed in Qi Yun's eyes.

In the past, although Qin Minghui was polite to him, there was always a bit of superiority to his demeanor.

Today, at first glance, he's adopting a very humble posture.

But Qi Yun understood well why the other party had made this shift.

"Haha, Leader Qin, you're too kind. When you personally call, no matter how busy I am, I have to come."

Qin Minghui gently patted his arm, "There are no outsiders today, no need to be so formal."

At this moment, Lu Zhaoxue also came out from behind, smiling softly, "President Qi, knowing you were coming, I had the kitchen prepare some fish maw. You must try it later."

The two acted in perfect harmony, exceedingly warm in their attitude.

"President Lu is considerate, thank you." Qi Yun responded with a polite smile.

"President Qi, you're too polite. Please come in and take a seat." Lu Zhaoxue raised her hand, making a gesture of invitation.

"Sure, please."

The three of them entered the private room, where Lu Zhaoxue poured tea for Qi Yun and then left with an excuse to check the kitchen, giving Qi Yun and the other person some space to talk.

It must be said, compared to those women who only know how to shop and demand emotional value, Lu Zhaoxue stands on a completely different level.

This is what you'd call a capable assistant.

With only the two men left in the private room, Qin Minghui skipped the pleasantries, "Brother Qi, the reason I invited you today is to thank you in person."

"I will remember the favor you did by stepping in to help this time!"

Qi Yun was pleased with his attitude; all his effort had been worth it.

However, even though he thought this way, he didn't show it. He merely chuckled and shook his head, "Leader Qin, you're exaggerating. Friends should help each other."

Seeing Qi Yun's nonchalant demeanor, Qin Minghui couldn't help but hold him in higher regard.

He had helped immensely, yet he didn't seek any credit or show any sign of patronage, merely attributing it to mutual support among friends.

Whether he genuinely thought this or carefully maintained this guise, it showed exceptional character.

"Brother Qi, have you heard about the Wanda Plaza project near Bai Niao Lake?"

Wanda Plaza?

Qi Yun hesitated slightly while holding the teacup, lifting his gaze to Qin Minghui, analyzing his intent behind mentioning this.

"I've heard of it. Although it's not downtown, it seems to be on the new subway line, and there are several large residential communities around it. The overall location is quite good."

"You're right; it was a promising project. If developed normally, the land value should have increased considerably."

As he said this, Qin Minghui sighed and continued, "Unfortunately, Wanda failed to manage it well. Their financial chain broke, causing construction to halt, and they owe the government nearly five billion in land transfer fees."

"This issue has been dragging on, and the district recently filed a report planning to reclaim the assets according to regulations."

By now, Qi Yun roughly understood what the other party meant by bringing this up.

Bringing up Wanda Plaza out of the blue likely meant he wanted to use this piece of prime real estate as repayment for the favor.

Wanda Group has been having a tough time these past couple of years, even as they frantically offload assets to stay afloat, they remain under intense pressure from the market.

The big boss himself has appeared noticeably thinner on camera, presumably worn down by the nearly billion-dollar debt looming as he opens his eyes each day.

Wanda Plaza was arguably the group's core asset. Even in a third- or fourth-tier city, it would be worth billions. Given its location in the capital, its value would be even higher.

Not to mention, the nearly 100-acre commercial land alone would be worth close to seven or eight billion at the current Bird City New District land prices, and with the already completed mall structure and facilities, the overall valuation would be at least fifteen billion.

Though unaware of how they managed to reclaim the asset or what kind of deal they reached with Wanda, the very fact that Qin Minghui was mentioning it now meant the deal was as good as sealed.

"Brother Qi, what do you think about this?" Qin Minghui looked at Qi Yun and asked.

On the surface, the question seemed innocent enough, simply asking for his opinion.

But to Qi Yun, it almost sounded like he was being asked whether he was interested in the plaza.

He was sure that if he nodded, he could acquire the prime asset at an exceptionally low price.

However, after a long silence, he ultimately shook his head with a smile, "I'm not that familiar with the real estate industry, so I'll refrain from commenting."

Qin Minghui's smile faltered, clearly not expecting Qi Yun to refuse.

He paused for two seconds before responding directly, "Do you have any concerns?"

Qi Yun indeed had concerns. While a project that could yield a net profit of ten billion looks enticing, acquiring it would tie him to Qin Minghui.

Though while Qin Minghui was here, no one might question it, but what if he got transferred away in the future?

This could become a vulnerability, ready to be exploited at any moment.

He had already completed his initial wealth accumulation. As long as his current ventures developed steadily, they were sure to yield hefty returns in the future.

Thus, he didn't want a short-term gain to jeopardize his future.

There was another reason: money should be spent wisely, and favors should be saved for critical moments, those times when money can't solve the issue...

But Qi Yun didn't voice these thoughts, merely offering a gentle refusal once more, "It's not about concerns, just that I really don't have the energy to keep up."

"As you know, I'm currently handling solar projects, and my own company has a ton of things to manage, so I really can't juggle more concerns."

Qin Minghui opened his mouth but left it at that, nodding, "Alright, if you change your mind, you can let Zhaoxue know."

There wasn't much substantive content in their ensuing conversation; it was mostly Qin Minghui continually expressing goodwill. After the meal, he personally escorted Qi Yun to his car.

This kind of treatment, if known publicly, would astonish many...

Inside the car, Qi Yun rubbed his temples; he had indeed drunk quite a bit, feeling slightly intoxicated.

Not that he was fond of alcohol, but Qin Minghui's excessive hospitality would have made it hard to refuse.

The car slowly headed towards the city center. As it passed through a railroad bridge tunnel, an exceptionally bright beam of light suddenly shone from ahead.

The dazzling light through the windshield instantly cleared Qi Yun's sleepy state.

Chapter 609: Spending Money Like Water

"Screech!"

The ear-piercing sound of brakes tore through the night sky.

The exit of the tunnel was an uphill slope with poor visibility, so Chen Wei, who was driving, didn't notice it in advance.

But the moment he saw the headlights suddenly light up, he immediately reacted, tapping the brake pedal rapidly while sharply turning the steering wheel, barely avoiding the oncoming truck.

Sitting in the back seat, Qi Yun instinctively gripped the handle, his drunkenness dissipating more than halfway.

He turned his head sharply to look out the window. The truck they had narrowly missed also stopped at a slight distance behind them, but no one got out to check, which was peculiarly abnormal.

"Is everything okay?"

Chen Wei steadied the car, quickly turned around to ask, and his voice had a barely noticeable tremor.

If they had been half a second slower just now, the consequences would have been unimaginable, even making him break out in a cold sweat.

Qi Yun shook his head. He had fastened his seatbelt as soon as he got in the car; aside from his billion-dollar hairstyle being slightly disheveled, he was unharmed.

"Stay in the car, I'll go check it out."

Seeing Qi Yun unharmed, Chen Wei retrieved his gun from its holster, released the safety, and prepared to get out to investigate.

That driver hadn't shown any intent to slow down. It only started to stop after they avoided it, which seemed weird no matter how you looked at it.

But just as his hand touched the door handle, Qi Yun from the back seat pressed on his shoulder: "Don't go, leave first! I'll have someone come and handle this."

Seeing his serious tone, Chen Wei dared not delay, shifted gear, and sped away from the spot.

With Harris's previous experience, Qi Yun was extremely cautious now. For the sake of safety, he didn't want Chen Wei to take the risk.

Who knew if the other party was specifically targeting them?

He took out his phone and quickly dialed Zhang Dayong's number to coordinate getting the nearest police to come over.

Originally, apart from Chen Wei, Brother Quan and Xiao Wu would at least have one person accompany him on the trip, but considering they had just returned from Kunlun Mountain, he gave them a break and didn't bring them along.

As a result, this unexpected incident happened today.

Just when Qi Yun hung up the phone and turned to look back again, that truck had already disappeared from sight.

The car continued moving forward. Qi Yun leaned back against the seat, quickly calculating in his mind.

Recently, he hadn't offended anyone; the only possible trouble could be caused by the Eight-footed Jade Hook or the disruptive moves of the Boot Clan from the United Kingdom.

When it comes to responding quickly, there probably isn't a place on this Earth that matches the speed of Province J besides deserted deserts. Patrol cars are pretty much ubiquitous elsewhere.

In less than three minutes, the piercing sound of police sirens came from afar, and several police cars soon arrived, quickly heading towards the earlier tunnel.

A while later, Zhang Dayong's call came through.

"My people found that truck about two kilometers from the tunnel, but there's no one inside."

"That truck is using a fake license plate. I've already arranged for someone to access nearby surveillance. I'll let you know when there's news."

When Qi Yun heard the truck had fake plates, his expression grew even more serious, basically confirming they were coming for him.

"Good, thank you."

After hanging up the call, he rubbed his temples, realizing he'd need to be extra cautious for a while.

Since they dared to make a move, they certainly wouldn't stop at just one attempt.

...

The next day, from local stations to sub-bureaus in the entire New District, almost all deployable forces were mobilized to investigate the driver of last night's truck.

Moreover, when Qin Minghui heard about it, he showed great concern and directly called the city bureau, asking them to assign personnel for the investigation.

Those unaware thought something major had happened.

Having slept it off, Qi Yun wasn't too affected by last night's incident. After breakfast, he headed out again, but this time Brother Quan personally led a team in a following vehicle for protection.

Today, Qi Yun had something very important to attend to—Tao Ziming's team had already produced battery samples, and he was going over to check the test results and discuss subsequent production details.

Half an hour later, the two vehicles entered the park, where Tao Ziming was already waiting at the entrance of the workshop.

Seeing Qi Yun get out of the car, he immediately came up, "President Qi!"

Qi Yun nodded slightly, seeing his face full of excitement, guessing that the new battery's performance must be outstanding.

Sure enough, Tao Ziming eagerly handed over a printed report as soon as he led Qi Yun into the test workshop.

"Our new battery's energy density has been measured at 900Wh/kg, which is 10% higher than our initial design!"

"Even after 2,000 charge cycles, the capacity only drops by 5%. If used in new energy vehicles, the lifespan would far exceed that of current batteries."

Energy density is an important metric for evaluating battery performance, reflecting the amount of energy a battery can store per unit volume or mass.

Simply put, it's how much electricity a fixed-size container can hold.

The higher the energy density, the more electricity a battery of the same size or weight can store.

For new energy vehicles, this directly determines the driving range.

The same size battery pack with 900Wh/kg cells can double the range of one with mainstream 300-400Wh/kg cells, even making a thousand-kilometer range possible.

Though Qi Yun wasn't too keen on new energy vehicles and had never studied them, after listening to Tao Ziming's explanation, he got a clear understanding of this new battery material.

For now, the performance of this new battery was far ahead of the market's main products, even seen as a next-generation breakthrough.

Chapter 610: Spending Money Like Water (2)

After leaving the test workshop, the two went to the office.

Qi Yun took the mineral water handed over by Tao Ziming and asked, "Have the technology patents been applied for?"

This is a very crucial point. Without patent protection, in case of a technology leak, they might not even start production, and there could already be products on the market.

Tao Ziming immediately nodded: "Don't worry, it's already underway! We have submitted 15 invention patents for core material formulas, battery structures, and so on."

"Not only have we applied domestically, but I have also contacted agents abroad to proceed simultaneously."

Seeing that this guy considered things quite comprehensively, Qi Yun was no longer worried and began discussing follow-up production matters.

"If we want to mass-produce, are there any difficulties?"

Samples in the laboratory are great, but if they can't be mass-produced, they're just castles in the air.

Tao Ziming immediately responded: "There are no technical difficulties, as long as we can get the production workshop built, we can mass produce according to the current process parameters."

"However, we need to personally go abroad for the procurement of production equipment and raw material supply."

Qi Yun nodded and continued to ask: "How much do you estimate is needed to build the production workshop?"

"If we design two production lines according to the minimum requirements, I estimate at least one... one billion."

When it comes to money, Tao Ziming seems a bit lacking in confidence.

Building a standardized production workshop requires a large expenditure.

Besides the land and factory building, top-notch production equipment, a supporting storage area, testing rooms, a professional management team, workers, etc., are needed.

It's known that Ningde Era invested as much as more than 16 billion in the production base built in Province G.

And now, he can't even come up with a single penny, relying entirely on Qi Yun.

Qi Yun was shocked to hear it requires one billion, it's indeed not a small investment.

Seeing his tense expression, Tao Ziming quickly explained: "This is calculating on the high side!"

"Currently, only companies in Germany can produce the equipment that meets our needs. If we subsequently reduce other requirements, maybe 900... 800 million will suffice."

Qi Yun stroked his chin, not because he thought it was unacceptable, but because he was quickly calculating the return cycle of this investment.

"One billion is not a small amount, but it's negotiable as well."

"The key is how long before I see the money returned on this expenditure?"

Upon hearing this, Tao Ziming breathed a sigh of relief and hurriedly replied: "President Qi, rest assured! According to our battery's performance, once mass-produced, it will definitely capture the market quickly."

"If two production lines are running at full capacity, subtracting production costs, monthly net profits could be around 80 million, breaking even in a year, and profits thereafter will only be higher!"

"A year?" Qi Yun was not quite satisfied with this.

The return speed might not even be as fast as the ten billion he invested in selling mineral water...

Tao Ziming noticed Qi Yun's furrowed brow, and his heart skipped a beat, hurriedly saying: "President Qi, that one-year period is a conservative estimate!"

"I've taken into account the price increase of raw materials, equipment maintenance, and even initial orders not being saturated!"

"If we secure large orders from leading car manufacturers, the situation could be significantly better."

Qi Yun did not immediately answer, and after a moment of silence, suddenly asked: "If we build more production lines, can the return speed be faster?"

"Ah... ah!?" Tao Ziming was momentarily caught off guard.

Earlier, he was worried that Qi Yun would be scared by the figure of one billion, but it turns out he didn't even treat this number as a threshold, instead, he was considering taking bigger steps...

"Yes! Certainly!" Tao Ziming, having come to his senses, couldn't suppress his excitement in his voice.

"If we build two more production lines, doubling total capacity, as long as orders keep pace, the return speed can be compressed by at least one-third!"

"Look, two production lines can produce 5GWh per month..."

"You don't need to explain those to me." Qi Yun raised his hand to interrupt, "When we initially entered the partnership, we agreed that you are responsible for the research and production, I just need the results."

"I'll give you two billion, you can start preparing now."

"First, assemble a professional management team, you can't handle everything alone..."

...

After discussing the subsequent arrangements for Dawn Technology, Qi Yun did not stay longer.

In the car's back seat, while watching the line of long "0s" on the phone screen, he secretly lamented the pace at which money was being spent recently.

Last time, using crucial intelligence, he exchanged for 500 million Euros from De Gaulle, plus another 350 million USD obtained from selling Eight-footed Jade Hook.

Converted to RMB, it totals nearly 6 billion.

In the eyes of ordinary people, it's an astronomical figure that can't be spent in several lifetimes, but in his hands, more than half was spent in less than a month.

Just the cooperation with Nongfu Sanquan took 1 billion, plus 500 million for the new company in the photovoltaic project, and 2 billion just promised to Tao Ziming.

In just a few days, 3.5 billion spent, faster than running water...

However, despite spending a lot of money, he's confident that both the invested drinking water company and Dawn Technology will bring him substantial returns in the near future.

Before he could contemplate further, the phone in his pocket suddenly vibrated,

...

Meanwhile, in Hong Kong Island, within the Financial Authority's office.

Brother Hui glanced at the opposite Financial Authority officer and secretly sneered.

Last night, he invited this guy for dinner, but the other party didn't give him any face, not even willing to meet.

However, just one night later, today this guy took the initiative to call him over, speaking with enthusiasm and a hint of caution.

Brother Hui, sitting cross-legged on the sofa, had a faint smile on his lips.

He deliberately kept up appearances, and only when President Li personally handed him tea did he slowly start speaking, "President Li, what matter do you need me for?"

The Financial Authority, officially known as Hong Kong Island Financial Management Authority, akin to the mainland's central bank, reports directly to the Secretary for Financial Services.

And the procedures for virtual currency business licensing fall under this department's jurisdiction.

President Li showed no sign of anger, half-bent over holding coffee: "Brother Hui, you're joking, it's not about orders or anything, it's just that I was tied up with official affairs yesterday and couldn't meet you, so today I'm inviting you over for tea, to apologize."

Brother Hui sneered: "President Li is a busy man, managing affairs of all sorts, it's normal to not have time for a small figure like me."

Originally, they had some mutual interests, but upon hearing about the VASP license last night, the other party wasn't willing to even meet him, somewhat acting high-handed.

So now that there's an opportunity to take advantage of this guy, of course Brother Hui wants to vent his frustration.

And why did President Li's attitude change so dramatically overnight?

The reason is none other than Mr. Fu personally calling him...

Facing Brother Hui's sarcastic tone, President Li's smile froze for a moment, but quickly returned: "Brother Hui! It was really a misunderstanding yesterday!"

"The Independent Commission Against Corruption suddenly came to investigate, and I really couldn't leave."

"ICAC investigation?" Brother Hui squinted at President Li, his face openly mocking, "What a coincidence."

Seeing that lowering his stance was ineffective, President Li knew that without some real action, it wouldn't work. So he placed the coffee on the table, walked back to his desk, and took out a document folder from the drawer.

The folder contained the pre-prepared approval documents.

"Brother Hui, this is what you wanted. With these materials, you can smoothly apply for the license."

Brother Hui glanced at him and stopped pretending, taking the folder to check.

After confirming that the documents were correct, he sneered and left the office.

Hong Kong Island is different from the mainland, there's no notion of resolving rather than knotting animosities, as long as you're strong, others will always fear and respect you.

Conversely, even if you kneel on the ground, they won't pity you for even a moment.

It's as straightforward as that.