

Myth Beyond 1981

Chapter 1981 Cut All Ties

"Miss!" Yang Wu was overjoyed to see Yang Ningchang again.

During this time, he had been forbidden from visiting her, and he couldn't sleep well at night due to worry. If it hadn't been for his persistence, he would have left long ago.

"Uncle," Yang Ningchang stepped forward, her eyes filled with tears, and took Yang Wu's thin hands. Yang Wu was already in his seventies, and his physical condition resembled that of someone in their nineties. It could be seen how hard his life was over the years.

"It's good you're safe, Miss." Yang Wu smiled with satisfaction. Seeing his young miss again, he felt no regret in his life.

"Lintian..." Yang Ningchang looked at Yun Lintian pleadingly.

Yun Lintian stepped forward and placed his hand on Yang Wu's shoulder. He then infused his wood energy into Yang Wu's body. Instantly, Yang Wu's appearance began to change. He grew younger, and his complexion improved significantly. It was as if he had returned to his early thirties.

Yang Wu, stunned, looked down at his body in confusion.

Meanwhile, bewilderment gripped Yang Shen and Yang Xuan as they stared at the scene. They couldn't comprehend what was happening before them.

"Thank you," Yang Ningchang said with gratitude.

"No need for formalities between us," Yun Lintian replied as he retracted his hand.

Yang Ningchang turned to Yang Wu. "I'll explain it later. For now, Uncle Wu, I want you to come with me."

"This..." Regaining his composure, Yang Wu subconsciously glanced at Yang Shen and Yang Xuan, seeking their tacit approval. Despite his disapproval of their treatment towards Yang Ningchang, he remained a loyal member of the Yang family.

"Don't worry about them," Yang Ningchang soothed him.

With a calm expression, she turned to address Yang Shen and Yang Xuan. "Effective today, I am no longer a member of the Yang family. Their fortunes and misfortunes hold no bearing on me."

Yang Shen furrowed his brow. "What do you mean by that?"

With a restraining gaze towards Yang Shen, Yang Xuan shifted focus to Yun Lintian. "It appears you've had a rather magical year, wouldn't you say?"

Yun Lintian offered a smile. "Magical indeed. However, old man, if you're considering a favor, you might want to reconsider."

Previously, Yun Lintian held a modicum of respect for Yang Shen and Yang Xuan. Witnessing their treatment of Yang Ningchang, however, extinguished those feelings entirely.

Yang Xuan sighed internally. He acknowledged the futility of seeking a favor from Yun Lintian but felt compelled to try. He bore the sole responsibility for this outcome.

Yang Ningchang turned to him. "Zicheng has benefited from a favor granted by Lintian."

She trusted Yang Xuan's intelligence to grasp the unspoken message.

"Let's depart," Yang Ningchang said softly.

With a simple wave of his hand, Yun Lintian vanished alongside Yang Ningchang and Yang Wu.

Yang Xuan and Yang Shen stood stunned, staring at the empty space for a long time.

"What... what was that?" Yang Shen stammered, his voice trembling.

"I fear he is the one responsible for Zhu Tianlong's downfall," Yang Xuan finally conceded, releasing a long breath. "The world holds many mysteries. Consider yourself fortunate to have witnessed one."

"Father..." Yang Shen began, his voice thick with guilt. His face contorted with remorse.

"The blame lies with me," Yang Xuan interjected, offering comfort to his son. "My judgment was clouded. You are not to blame yourself."

Yang Shen squeezed his eyes shut, the pain evident. He hadn't anticipated losing his daughter forever in such a way.

Yang Xuan sighed heavily. "You can still make amends with Zicheng."

A heavy nod escaped Yang Shen's lips. "What was the favor Ningchang mentioned?" he inquired.

"Let's call Zicheng over," Yang Xuan replied.

"Miss, where are we?" Yang Wu exclaimed, stunned by the sight of the modern complex surrounding them.

"This is Cloudhaven Orphanage," Yang Ningchang replied with a warm smile. "Lintian will be bringing children rescued from human traffickers here soon. I want you to be the dean."

Understanding dawned on Yang Wu's face. His eyes ignited with newfound purpose as if he'd discovered a new calling in life.

"And what about you, Miss?" he inquired.

"Me?" Yang Ningchang's smile softened. "I'll be leaving soon."

Chapter 1982 Beheading Operation (1)

"Leaving?" A pang of disappointment struck Yang Wu's heart, but he understood. After witnessing Yun Lintian's "magical power," he knew they were no longer on the same plane.

"Don't be sad, Uncle Wu. It's not a permanent goodbye," Yang Ningchang said softly.

"Of course," Yang Wu nodded with a forced smile. He glanced at the facilities and asked, "When do I start?"

Yun Lintian spoke. "I will take everyone to a location first."

With a wave of his hand, the Gate of Beyond Heaven materialized before them.

"Boss, what is that?" Lei Hao exclaimed, startled by the majestic gate's sudden appearance.

"Follow me," Yun Lintian said, pushing open the gate and stepping through.

Yang Ningchang, Lynn, Lei Hao, and Yang Wu exchanged a brief glance before following Yun Lintian into the unknown.

A moment later, they found themselves in a world unlike any they had ever known.

Within the Land of Beyond Heaven, nestled amidst pearlescent clouds, lay a spectacle that defied mortal comprehension. A cerulean lake, vast as the sky itself, shimmered with an otherworldly luminescence.

At the lake's heart rose seven ethereal towers, each a masterpiece carved from moonlight and spun from starlight.

Their spires, impossibly tall and impossibly delicate, pierced the very heavens. Luminescent flowers bloomed upon their pearlescent walls, their petals shimmering with a soft, inner light. Tiny, iridescent birds flitted between the towers, their wings trailing stardust.

A magnificent waterfall cascaded down the side of a nearby mountain, its water a shimmering ribbon woven from moonlight. As it plunged into the lake, it created a symphony of sound, a melody that echoed with the whispers of ancient deities.

The mist rising from the falls shimmered with a rainbow halo, a testament to the otherworldly beauty of the scene.

Exotic flora, unseen in the mortal realm, carpeted the landscape around the lake. Trees with leaves like spun silver and blossoms the color of amethyst swayed gently in an ever-present breeze.

The air thrummed with a subtle energy, refreshing and pure, a stark contrast to the sparse spiritual energies of the mortal world.

Yang Ningchang and the others were speechless, utterly captivated by the ethereal scenery.

"Welcome to the Land of Beyond Heaven," Yun Lintian explained, offering a brief introduction. "Think of it as a pocket world, similar to those found in fantastical novels."

Following the completion of the Beyond Heaven Relics, the Land of Beyond Heaven transformed rapidly. Many things here had changed, so much so that even Yun Lintian wasn't fully familiar with it all.

"Well, displaying my full power here would be difficult. I don't want to ruin this place." Yun Lintian admitted. "However, I can show you a glimpse."

With that, he raised his hand. Images of the Azure Dragon, the Divine Phoenix, the Golden Crow, the White Tiger, the Black Turtle, and the Vermilion Bird materialized in the sky.

Lei Hao and the others gaped in awe, their mouths hanging wide open as they stared at the legendary beasts.

"So, the mythical creatures of legend truly exist," Yang Wu muttered in disbelief.

"See the little guy over there?" Yun Lintian pointed towards Gui Xuan, who splashed playfully in the lake with Hei Shou. "That's the current Black Turtle God. His name is Gui Xuan."

Everyone turned their attention to Gui Xuan, their gazes filled with awe. While their knowledge of the profound path might be limited, they grasped the immense significance of his existence.

"Then, Linlin..." Lynn's voice trailed off, seemingly piecing something together.

"She's the daughter of the former White Tiger God," Yun Lintian confirmed.

The way they looked at Linlin shifted dramatically.

"Don't be so uptight," Yun Lintian chuckled. "Linlin is adorable and friendly, really."

Despite Yun Lintian's reassurance, Linlin flashed her sharp teeth at Yang Ningchang and Lynn, sending shivers down their spines.

Noticing this, Yun Lintian gently stroked Linlin's head. "Be good, Linlin. They're your sisters."

Linlin let out a soft "Mhm" in response.

"Alright, let's head inside," Yun Lintian brought everyone to the villa.

Meanwhile, as Yun Lintian familiarized his companions with the Land of Beyond Heaven, news of Zhu Tianlong's corruption scandal reached a fever pitch, spreading like wildfire across the globe.

Somewhere in Europe, a group of people watched the news reports unfold on a screen, their expressions grim.

"Our key player has fallen," a middle-aged man seated to the right of the head seat spoke gravely. "This is a significant setback for our upcoming operation."

"He cannot stay," a woman with a cold demeanor stated. "I'm authorizing activating our sleeper agents in that region."

"Authorization granted."

Chapter 1983 Beheading Operation (2)

The fluorescent lights buzzed overhead, casting a sterile sheen on the bare interrogation room.

Officer Qin Qi stared across the metal table at Zhu Tianlong, the former director of the National Security Council. Fatigue and defiance etched lines on Zhu Tianlong's face.

"Mr. Zhu," Qin Qi began, his voice clipped and professional. "We've uncovered significant financial data linking your personal accounts to a series of anonymous shell companies. These companies, in turn, have been funneling money to various entities connected to the Hell Church organization. Do you want to explain?"

Zhu Tianlong met Qin Qi's unwavering gaze calmly. "I have nothing to say."

On his way to the interrogation, Zhu Tianlong had analyzed the previous incident, uncovering its flaws.

The livestream by the so-called Sister Phoenix, the convenient arrival of reporters, and Li Zong's involvement - everything seemed too perfectly timed. It hinted at a puppeteer behind the scenes.

He realized there was still a chance. Li Zong's evidence wouldn't secure a strong conviction; abuse of power charges at most.

A flicker of regained composure ignited a fighting spirit within him. As long as he escaped this predicament, he could recover.

"We have evidence contradicting your silence, Mr. Zhu," Qin Qi pressed. "Witness testimonies, coded messages - the trail leads straight to you."

"Witnesses can be mistaken," Zhu Tianlong offered a faint smile. "And coded messages misinterpreted. Little Qin, why don't you summon your superior? This is a waste of everyone's time."

Qin Qi ignored the pointed remark. "Perhaps," he conceded. "But the sheer volume of evidence is undeniable. What was your motive for aiding the Hell Church?"

He tapped a file on the table. "Political gain? Financial benefit? Or something more... sinister?"

Zhu Tianlong raised an eyebrow, choosing silence. His mind raced, suddenly considering the Hell Church's modus operandi. Now that he'd fallen from grace, they would surely make a move.

A flicker of emotion crossed Zhu Tianlong's face, a mix of fear laced with something else.

"You might be unaware," Qin Qi continued, "but your grandson, Zhu Ding, brought his men to Hangzhou and endangered civilians. He's currently in our custody. Perhaps I should attend to him now."

Zhu Tianlong's expression flickered at this news. He hadn't anticipated such reckless behavior from his grandson despite his warnings.

Qin Qi settled into the chair across from him, his gaze heavy. He took a deep breath before speaking, his voice low and measured.

"Mr. Zhu, I have some unfortunate news. It appears your other children..." he trailed off, his eyes boring into Zhu Tianlong's.

A tremor ran through Zhu Tianlong's body. The news hadn't come as a surprise, not entirely. But the confirmation, blunt and heavy, stole the breath from his lungs.

"They're dead," Qin Qi finished, his voice laced with a hint of sympathy. "All of them. Vacationing in different places, apparently. Their deaths were staged to look like suicides, but..." he paused, letting the silence hang heavy.

"The Hell Church," Zhu Tianlong rasped, the words scraping raw against his throat. It was a statement, not a question.

"Mr. Zhu," Qin Qi began solemnly, "we both understand the truth here. You know your current situation more than anyone. I'm not going to say anything further." He paused, letting the weight of his words settle. "The choice is yours."

Zhu Tianlong slumped back in his chair, sweat beading on his forehead. His eyes darted from side to side, betraying the turmoil within. Though his mind raced with thoughts, the reality was he had no choice. Surrender was his only path forward.

Taking a deep breath, he lifted his head and met Qin Qi's gaze. "I want to see General Li."

Qin Qi offered a heavy nod. "Your request will be conveyed."

Recognizing the situation's gravity and the case's complexity, Qin Qi knew this was beyond his purview.

At Hangzhou Central Hospital, a doctor emerged from the surgery room and addressed the police officers waiting outside.

"The patient is safe, but there are concerns about his legs," the doctor explained.

"Thank you, doctor," the team leader replied gently.

With a nod, the doctor said, "He should be waking up within the next hour." He then departed.

Moments later, Zhu Ding was wheeled out of the surgery room...

Chapter 1984 Beheading Operation (3)

The one pushing Zhu Ding's gurney was Ye Ling, who was on duty today.

The team leader instinctively reached for handcuffs but was stopped by Ye Ling. "Officer," she said gently, "do you think he's in any condition to escape?"

Even though she knew Zhu Ding was a criminal, his current state made escape impossible.

The team leader conceded, "You're right."

With the officers' help, Ye Ling pushed Zhu Ding to a secluded top-floor room. After checking his condition, she turned to the officers and said, "Please notify us when he awakens."

"Understood," the team leader replied.

Ye Ling nodded and left, heading straight for the exclusive nurses' lounge. As she entered, a beautiful woman, Cai Yaoyao, immediately offered her a water bottle.

"You've worked hard, Sister Ling," Cai Yaoyao said.

Cai Yaoyao, a talented resident doctor after a year as an intern, remembered meeting Yun Lintian before.

"Thanks," Ye Ling said, opening the bottle and taking a long sip before sighing.

"Sister, is it true Doctor Yun is back?" Cai Yaoyao asked curiously.

"Yes," a sadness filled Ye Ling's eyes. She had just seen Yun Lintian yesterday, and now he was gone.

Cai Yaoyao's apology came rushing out. "I'm so sorry," she blurted.

The news of Yun Lintian's bombed villa had become a headline, impossible to miss.

"I'm okay," Ye Ling mumbled, shaking her head. Exhausted from surgery, her eyelids drooped heavily. Within minutes, she was asleep.

Cai Yaoyao watched Ye Ling with a playful glint in her eyes. Rising, she locked the door before pulling a suitcase from under the bed.

Inside the suitcase lay an assortment of disguise props.

Selecting a mask crafted with startling human likeness, Cai Yaoyao applied it to her face. A wig followed, transforming her appearance into Ye Ling's perfect double.

Gazing at the drugged Ye Ling, Cai Yaoyao spoke in a calm voice, "Forgive me, Sister Ling. But don't worry, I'll reunite you with Yun Lintian soon."

With that, she slipped a sleeping mask over Ye Ling's eyes before turning and exiting the room.

Disguised as Ye Ling, Cai Yaoyao made a beeline for Zhu Ding's room.

"Hello, Doctor Li," she answered upon connecting the call.

"Get to the patient's room immediately. There's been a situation," Doctor Li's voice crackled with urgency.

Ye Ling's eyes widened. "I'm on my way."

Hastily throwing on her shoes, she rushed out the door, leaving Cai Yaoyao's playful gaze fixed on her departing figure.

Rushing into Zhu Ding's room, Ye Ling was met with a chilling reception. The police officers stared at her with icy glares.

On the bed, Zhu Ding convulsed violently, his heart monitor displaying a chaotic rhythm.

Confusion clouded Ye Ling's mind as she hurried towards him, only to be intercepted by the team leader.

"What's happening here?" she demanded, bewildered.

The team leader's gaze was sharp, sending a shiver down Ye Ling's spine. "Did you tamper with him?" he accused coldly.

"What? No, of course not!" Ye Ling sputtered, utterly perplexed.

"I confirmed with Doctor Li," the team leader pressed. "He didn't ask you to check on the patient. Why the lie?"

Ye Ling's confusion deepened. "I..." she stammered, unable to form a coherent response.

Suddenly, a frantic Doctor Li burst in. "Not good! We need to move him now!" He began pushing Zhu Ding's gurney out of the room.

Ye Ling instinctively reached out, but the team leader stopped her again.

"You're under suspicion of murdering Zhu Ding. Please come with us," the team leader stated coldly, gesturing for his officers to escort her away.

"What?" Ye Ling shrieked, utterly bewildered. "There's been a terrible misunderstanding!"

The officers, unfazed, whisked her away, leaving her protests unanswered.

Soon, Ye Ling found herself in a sterile interrogation room. Handcuffed and seated on a metal chair, she tried desperately to compose herself. The situation was surreal.

An hour later, the door creaked open. Qin Qi, newly arrived in Hangzhou, entered the room.

He placed a file on the table and settled into the chair across her. "I'm Detective Qin Qi," he began, his voice calm yet laced with a hint of suspicion. "I'm here to interrogate you."

Ye Ling, a first-timer in such a situation, felt a knot of fear tighten in her stomach. "Officer Qin," she stammered nervously, "can you please explain what's going on? Why am I under arrest?"

Qin Qi studied her intently before speaking. "The charade ends now, Miss. We know you're an agent of the Hell Church."

Chapter 1985 Beheading Operation (4)

Ye Ling was stunned. "The Hell Church? What is that?" she blurted out.

Qin Qi stared intently at Ye Ling's face, searching for any sign of deception. He couldn't detect anything, raising the possibility that she was telling the truth.

"Zhu Ding has been poisoned," Qin Qi said solemnly. "The poison caused his heart and organ failure. Our officers confirmed you visited him a second time right before it happened."

"Wait a minute," Ye Ling interjected, needing a moment to process the information. "I never went back to his room after taking him there. Where did these officers see me?"

Qin Qi narrowed his eyes and handed her a tablet. "It's recorded here."

Ye Ling watched the video on the screen in utter confusion. She saw someone who looked exactly like her walk out of the lounge and head to Zhu Ding's room with a stack of papers before leaving shortly afterward.

"How is this possible...?" Ye Ling muttered, bewildered.

"Miss Ye," Qin Qi pressed on, "I can offer you witness protection if you cooperate. Now, tell me, who's behind this?"

Still reeling from the shock, Ye Ling repeatedly replayed the video. She was certain it was her, yet she couldn't remember anything.

"That's right, Yaoyao," she blurted out, suddenly remembering Cai Yaoyao.

"We already questioned Miss Cai," Qin Qi informed her calmly. "She claims you left the lounge shortly after returning and said Dr. Li instructed you to check on Zhu Ding's condition again."

"No way..." Ye Ling frowned deeply. No matter how hard she tried, she couldn't recall the events from the video.

Qin Qi was inwardly perplexed. He had carefully observed Ye Ling's micro-expressions and detected no signs of lying. Everything seemed genuine. What was happening here?

At that moment, an officer entered the room, handing a paper to Qin Qi. "We found something, leader," he said.

Qin Qi scanned the paper's contents, then raised his head towards Ye Ling. "Miss Ye," he stated, "we found the poison in your locker. There are also traces of the poison on your shirt. Perhaps it's time you stopped wasting our time."

Ye Ling seemed oblivious, lost in thought, as she contemplated the entire situation.

A moment later, she looked at Qin Qi and asked, "Officer Qin, if you were the culprit, would you put the poison in your own locker?"

Qin Qi raised an eyebrow slightly. "No," he replied.

Ye Ling took a deep breath and recounted the situation. "After returning to the lounge, I drank some water Yaoyao gave me and fell asleep on my bed. I didn't wake up for another three hours."

Qin Qi's expression shifted subtly as he pondered this new information. "Cai Yaoyao," he muttered.

Turning to the officer, he said, "Find out where Cai Yaoyao is now."

The officer rushed out and returned a minute later, anxiety etched on his face. "She's gone. We don't know where she is, but we're currently tracking her location."

Gazing at the rows of bookshelves, Yun Lintian explained, "There are various profound arts here. Feel free to browse them. I recommend starting with Primordial rank ones as your primary focus."

"Great!" Lei Hao exclaimed, delighted. He began fiddling with the screen, eagerly browsing through the countless profound arts.

"I'll teach Lynn and Ningchang myself," Long Qingxuan said.

Yun Lintian, momentarily surprised, quickly agreed. "Alright, that would be perfect."

Lynn's eyes sparkled with excitement. "Can we start now, Sister Qingxuan?"

Yang Ningchang also looked expectantly at Long Qingxuan.

"Certainly," Long Qingxuan confirmed. With a wave, she retrieved a few books and said to the two women, "Come with me."

Yang Ningchang and Lynn nodded eagerly and followed Long Qingxuan out.

Lei Hao watched them leave with a touch of envy.

"Don't worry," Yun Lintian assured him with a smile. "I'll find someone to teach you later."

He already had Jin Long in mind for the task.

"Really? Is it someone beautiful?" Lei Hao's eyes lit up with hope.

"No, actually, it's a man," Yun Lintian replied, dashing his hopes slightly.

Lei Hao's enthusiasm waned.

Yun Lintian chuckled. "He's incredibly strong, though. You'll see."

"Fair enough," Lei Hao conceded.

Yun Lintian then turned to Yang Wu. "Please accept my apologies, Uncle Wu. Teaching you right now is too risky for Earth. We can't have another cultivator here just yet."

Yang Wu smiled understandingly. "Don't worry about apologies, Young Master Yun. I'm more than grateful for the gift you've already given me."

He then surprised Yun Lintian with a deep bow. "Thank you for saving young miss."

"What are you doing, Uncle Wu?" Yun Lintian rushed to help him up. "I was the fool back then."

Yang Wu smiled in response.

"I'll give you some crop seeds later, Uncle Wu. They'll be far superior to anything Earth has seen." Yun Lintian continued. "Now, it's time for me to deal with the Hell Church."

Chapter 1986 Beheading Operation (5)

Yun Lintian emerged from the Land of Beyond Heaven with Lei Hao and Yang Wu in tow. The first thing he did was to scan the current situation with his spiritual sense.

"Interesting," Yun Lintian smirked faintly upon learning about Zhu Ding's predicament. "They've already made their move."

"Cai Yaoyao?" he muttered, the name of an intern he'd met long ago surfacing in his mind. It seemed she'd been an agent of the Hell Church all along.

"What's going on, Boss?" Lei Hao inquired, his curiosity piqued.

"The Hell Church has activated its agents," Yun Lintian explained. "They're attempting to eliminate the Zhu family."

"A beheading operation, huh?" Lei Hao chuckled. "Funny enough. They actually fear Zhu Tianlong exposing them."

Usually, the Hell Church displayed extreme arrogance and rarely showed fear of anything. Their sudden fear of exposure struck Lei Hao as odd.

"Of course, they wouldn't give up easily," Yun Lintian agreed with a smile. "Zhu Tianlong is their most valuable pawn here, holding a treasure trove of secrets. If he decided to flip sides, their entire network in this nation would be exposed, forcing them to rebuild from scratch."

"Did he give in?" Lei Hao asked, genuinely curious. In his mind, Zhu Tianlong was cornered with no other option.

"He wouldn't dare," Yun Lintian said calmly. "He's aware of a Hell Church agent lurking within his inner circle."

"Oh?" Lei Hao's surprise was evident. "Their reach must be deeper than I imagined."

Suddenly, he asked, "Have you identified their leaders, Boss? Who are these people?"

The Hell Church's leadership had always been shrouded in mystery. They remained out of sight from the beginning.

"They're a group of global capitalists," Yun Lintian revealed. "Essentially, they're the true puppet masters of the world."

"That explains it all," Lei Hao realized with a sudden flash of understanding. He had always wondered about the Hell Church's immense power and seemingly unfettered access to every nation.

"So, what's the plan, Boss?" he queried.

Instinctively, she reached for the gun at her waist and spun around, aiming at the unseen figure. However, her movements were abruptly frozen. More accurately, an unseen force prevented her from taking another step.

Her eyes widened in confusion as she locked eyes with the man behind her. It was Yun Lintian.

"You..." she forced out, her voice laced with a chilling calmness. "I knew it. You're not dead."

Her mind raced, desperately trying to understand how Yun Lintian had restrained her. Psychic powers?

Yun Lintian walked to her side and leaned against the railing, observing the vibrant city shrinking in the distance. "While it's true you were mistreated by your father and stepmother, that's no justification for your current path."

He had already scanned her memories, piecing together her entire story. He learned of her mother's passing at a young age, her father's remarriage, and the relentless abuse she endured from her stepmother and stepsiblings.

Driven by desperation, she had sold herself to a human trafficker, requesting the deaths of her tormentors. The Hell Church, impressed by her unwavering resolve, had taken her in and turned her into one of their agents.

Cai Yaoyao's expression hardened. Rage welled up in her eyes. "Don't pretend to understand," she spat. "How could someone raised in a loving family like yours ever truly understand what I've been through?"

"Since when did I claim to understand your pain?" Yun Lintian chuckled, a hint of amusement laced with seriousness. "I'm simply offering an observation. After all, aren't you doing the same by assuming you know my life?"

Cai Yaoyao's lips trembled, unable to form a retort. "Just kill me then," she choked out. "The moment I framed Sister Ye, I knew you would come after me."

Yun Lintian reached out, taking the gun from her grasp and playing with it. "Killing you? Do you truly believe you'd be standing here, conversing with me, if that were my intention?"

He tossed the gun to Lei Hao, his gaze flickering to Cai Yaoyao. "Why do you think Zhu Tianlong and Zhu Ding are still breathing?"

Cai Yaoyao's facade faltered slightly. With Yun Lintian's apparent psychic abilities, eliminating Zhu Tianlong and Zhu Ding would have been effortless. The only logical explanation was that he wanted them to suffer.

"What do you want?" she demanded, her voice laced with defiance. "Don't think that I'll cooperate."

Yun Lintian offered a smile. "We'll see about that."

Immediately, he vanished with Cai Yaoyao and Lei Hao.

Chapter 1987 The Heavenly Church (1)

In a secret room somewhere in Europe.

"Ladies and gentlemen," a woman with a cold demeanor addressed the gathering, "taking down Zhu Tianlong has been very costly. This time, we've lost over half our agents in China. We need a recovery plan."

Freya Van der Linde, the current head of the Linde Group, one of the world's biggest consortiums, scanned the room. Her gaze settled on a middle-aged Chinese man. "Mr. Wei," she said, "China is your domain. Surely you have some ideas?"

Wei Jianhong, the wealthiest man in China, had built the powerful Life Group from the ground up. His name remained a secret, even to most within his own country. Like everyone else in this room, he was a top capitalist, a figure who wielded immense power behind the scenes.

Wei Jianhong took a calm sip of his wine. "For now," he said, "laying low is our best action. China's government is notoriously ruthless and cautious. With Zhu Tianlong exposed, cultivating new agents would be unwise."

A Slavic-looking man scoffed. "Cowardice doesn't suit you, Wei. That's not your style." Viktor Antonov, the most powerful oligarch in Russia, couldn't resist a jab.

Wei Jianhong smiled coolly. "In China, we have a saying that aligns perfectly with Sun Tzu's wisdom: 'Victorious warriors win first and then go to war, while defeated warriors go to war first and then seek to win.' We can only blame Zhu Tianlong's incompetence this time."

Freya's gaze swept across the room, seeking further input. Silence met her, tacit agreement with Wei Jianhong's assessment.

"Let's temporarily cede China," a powerful voice finally broke the quiet. Bartholomew Thorne III, the current president of the Hell Church and head of the omnipresent Thorne Group, spoke from the main seat. "We'll resume after the upcoming US election."

A collective nod rippled through the room. The upcoming US election would demand their full attention.

With a semblance of consensus reached, Freya addressed another pressing issue. "We have confirmed the retrieval of Yun Lintian's remains was unsuccessful. He's most likely alive."

While Yun Lintian had previously been considered insignificant, his team's repeated interference with their plans had earned their ire. They'd presumed him dead for four years. His return was unsettling.

An uneasy tension settled in the room. Yun Lintian's unexpected reappearance had cast a shadow over their carefully laid plans.

"A cunning man indeed," Viktor muttered, shaking his head with a frown. "I wonder how he managed to survive back then."

"Curious, aren't you?"

A deep male voice resonated through the room, sending shivers down everyone's spines.

At this moment, Yun Lintian, Lei Hao, and Cai Yaoyao opened the door and entered the room.

Yun Lintian smiled, savoring the wine in silence.

Sensing his lack of response, Freya continued, "We understand that there was no initial conflict on our part. We acknowledge that our people acted first. Please accept our apologies, Mr. Yun."

"Listen, Little Brother Yun," Wei Jianhong interjected with a smile. "Your villa was recently destroyed. How about a replacement? I own a substantial amount of land in Hangzhou."

Yun Lintian raised an eyebrow at Wei Jianhong. "Really? You should know how expensive Hangzhou real estate is."

"Absolutely! Not only Hangzhou but also the other cities," Wei Jianhong chuckled. "Name your desired location and architectural style. My team can build you a magnificent mansion."

Bartholomew and the others exchanged subtle frowns. Yun Lintian's apparent disinterest in wealth was becoming clear.

"Perhaps this, Mr. Yun," Freya interjected smoothly. "We can offer resources to help Ms. Lynn rebuild her business."

Yun Lintian gave a slow nod. "Not a bad proposition. Your generous offers truly showcase your immense wealth."

"Wealth is all we have," Wei Jianhong declared with a sip of his wine. "Name your price, and the funds will be in your account within a minute."

"Any number?" Yun Lintian inquired, feigning contemplation as he tapped his chin. He then raised a single finger.

"One billion?" Wei Jianhong furrowed his brow slightly. "Come on, that's too low, isn't it, Little Brother Yun? Let's do this. We can offer you a hundred billion directly."

"Indeed," Viktor chimed in, suppressing the throbbing pain in his arm. "I know that you like Manchester United. I can give it to you if you want."

Perhaps due to their shared military past, Viktor recalled a surprising amount of detail about Yun Lintian.

Yun Lintian burst into laughter. "Gentlemen, there seems to be a misunderstanding. I wasn't suggesting one billion. The number I have in mind is one hundred trillion."

The room fell silent, a collective gasp escaping their lips.

Wei Jianhong, ever the diplomat, attempted to lighten the mood. "Ah, Little Brother Yun, you jest! We may be wealthy, but even for us, that figure is astronomical."

Yun Lintian feigned disappointment. "Is that so? A mere hundred trillion... I suppose your lives are less valuable than I anticipated."

Chapter 1988 The Heavenly Church (2)

The temperature in the room plummeted. A wave of bone-chilling cold washed over Wei Jianhong and the others, dispelling any lingering doubts about Yun Lintian's seriousness.

Bartholomew's face grew solemn. "We can gather a hundred trillion, Mr. Yun," he admitted, "but such a sum would wreak havoc on the global economy. Are you certain this is the path you wish to take?"

"I'm very touched by your concern for the world, Mr. Bartholomew," Yun Lintian replied, his voice dripping with sarcasm. He swept a cold gaze over the room. "Every single one of you has built your wealth on the backs of others' suffering. Don't you find the irony in your words... amusing?"

Without waiting for a response, Yun Lintian reached out and gripped Wei Jianhong's shoulder. "Since Mr. Barty asks if I'm sure," he said, "allow me to demonstrate."

Wei Jianhong's appearance altered drastically in an instant. His face crumpled, his skin drying and withering as if he had aged fifty years in a blink.

"Ah..." A strangled cry escaped his lips as terror flooded him at the sensation of his own mortality rapidly slipping away.

Bartholomew and the others stared at Wei Jianhong, their minds reeling in disbelief.

A chilling smile stretched across Yun Lintian's face. "I have placed a curse on each of you, extending to your families. Any involvement in human trafficking, especially of children, will result in a ten-year reduction in your lifespan, a curse that will be inherited by your descendants."

The weight of his words hung heavy in the air. Bartholomew and the others desperately wanted to disbelieve, but the evidence before them was undeniable.

"I can see that you are not convinced. Let me show you again." Yun Lintian snapped his fingers.

A collective gasp erupted as everyone's bodies began to mirror Wei Jianhong's transformation. Skin sagged, hair turned white, and their once youthful appearances dissolved into decrepit shells.

Freya, a woman who worshipped beauty above all else, screamed in horror. This was torture beyond imagination.

"Please, stop!" Bartholomew rasped, the effects of the curse already making speech a struggle. "We concede defeat."

Yun Lintian chuckled, a sound devoid of humor. "So quick to surrender? I thought negotiation was your forte."

"We... we dare not anymore," Wei Jianhong pleaded, his voice cracking with fear.

With a wave of his hand, Yun Lintian lifted the curse, returning them to their previous states.

"Regardless of your business ventures, I have only one request: prevent another large-scale war, a global conflict if possible."

Bartholomew exchanged glances with the others before replying, "We can manage that."

War was simply another avenue for profit, one they could easily forgo.

"Don't think of it as a bad thing," Yun Lintian said with a smile. "Consider it for your own good. With such an abundance of resources, I believe you, as astute businessmen, can easily predict the consequences."

Bartholomew and the others exchanged hesitant nods. Once the world recovered, war would be inevitable. Human greed, after all, knew no bounds.

Yun Lintian's intention to spare their lives was clear. He sought to transform them into guardians of the world, tasked with preventing a future catastrophe.

It appeared as a reward, but in truth, it was a form of punishment. Stripped of their influence and wealth, they were undoubtedly vulnerable to those hungrier for power.

"Excellent," Yun Lintian said with a satisfied nod. He just wanted to use evils to fight evils.

Cai Yaoyao, a silent observer throughout the ordeal, finally understood the Hell Church's actions had always been a joke in Yun Lintian's eyes.

"Well, it's time for me to depart," Yun Lintian announced, rising to leave. "Oh, and by the way," he added before departing, "don't even think about another 'Covid' incident. My mercy might not extend that far."

Bartholomew and the others offered wry smiles. It seemed they would have to walk on a righteous path from now on.

Yun Lintian cast a final glance at Wei Jianhong. "Brother Wei," he said, "pay your hometown a visit soon. I hear there's a new school that just opened."

The underlying message wasn't lost on Wei Jianhong. Originally from a mountainous village, he understood Yun Lintian's suggestion – to invest in rural education.

"I know what to do," Wei Jianhong replied promptly.

With that, Yun Lintian, along with Lei Hao and Cai Yaoyao, vanished, leaving everyone speechless once more.

Bartholomew took a deep breath and addressed the room. "Everyone..." he began, "from this day forward, let us operate under a new name: The Heavenly Church."

Chapter 1989 Breakdown (1)

As everyone returned to the Cloudhaven Orphanage, Lei Hao voiced his concern, "Wouldn't it be too easy for them?"

Cai Yaoyao chuckled. "Easy? For these people, the toughest pill to swallow is letting go of their greed. Imagine their frustration – watching their money go to a real charity with no chance of secret retrieval. And that's not all. They've lost control of their lives. From now on, they'll live in constant fear."

Lei Hao, startled for a moment, quickly grasped the situation.

"You're quite clever, aren't you?" Yun Lintian said with a glance at her.

Cai Yaoyao looked at him and asked, "What exactly are you?"

"Me? Of course, the most handsome man on Earth." Yun Lintian grinned.

Cai Yaoyao rolled her eyes. "What are you going to do with me?"

Yun Lintian took a deep look at her and said, "I'll give you a chance

Cai Yaoyao frowned. "Don't make me laugh."

"You clearly sent Sister Ye to the police station for her protection. After all, as an agent of the Hell Church, you couldn't possibly leave Sister Ye alive. But you did." Yun Lintian smiled faintly.

"That's ridiculous," Cai Yaoyao sneered.

"Don't argue. I can read your mind," Yun Lintian chuckled.

Cai Yaoyao was startled. "You..."

"You're thinking about the orange cat you played with yesterday," Yun Lintian interjected.

Cai Yaoyao fully believed him now. Yun Lintian could truly read minds.

"Alright," Cai Yaoyao sighed. "I've always craved familial love, and Sister Ye treats me like a real sister. How could I truly hurt her?"

"That's why I'm offering you a chance to change course," Yun Lintian smiled faintly. "You can continue working as a nurse or stay here and take care of the orphanage with Uncle Wu."

Cai Yaoyao looked at the beautiful buildings around her and said uncertainly, "Can I... stay here?"

"Is there any need for me to lie?" Yun Lintian spoke.

Cai Yaoyao went silent for a moment and said, "I want to stay here."

Two gunshots echoed, the bullets tearing through the door exactly where Zhu Tianlong had been standing moments before.

"Help!" Zhu Tianlong yelled, grabbing a nearby lamp and hurling it at the officer who had shot at him.

"Damn it!" The officer cursed under his breath while slapping the lamp away. He hadn't expected such agility from the old man.

Just as he aimed to shoot Zhu Tianlong again, guards burst into the room and opened fire.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The officer dodged the hail of bullets while returning fire. He moved with surprising agility, eventually reaching the window and leaping out, disappearing into the night.

"Follow him," one of the guards ordered. He then turned to Zhu Tianlong, concern etched on his face. "Are you alright, Mr. Zhu?"

Zhu Tianlong leaned against the wall, drenched in sweat. He panted heavily, his gaze flickering vigilantly at the guard.

The guard understood Zhu Tianlong's apprehension. "Please stay here," he said. "I'll report this."

He then turned and left.

Zhu Tianlong took a few deep breaths, trying to steady himself. Thankfully, his years of experience had kept him sharp. Otherwise, he wouldn't be alive right now.

"The Hell Church..." Zhu Tianlong muttered through gritted teeth. After years of cooperation, they were now trying to eliminate his entire family. Unfortunately, he felt powerless in this situation.

He rose with a sigh and dragged a nearby chair over to sit, waiting for Li Zong's arrival.

A few minutes later, a group of soldiers escorted Li Zong into the room.

Li Zong scanned the room briefly before his gaze settled on Zhu Tianlong. "I hadn't anticipated their ability to infiltrate our defenses so deeply. Is this your doing?"

Zhu Tianlong, observing Li Zong who seemed to have aged backward several years, knew this wasn't the place to lose his composure.

He took a deep breath and replied, "My responsibility is to facilitate their entry and exit from the country. I have no knowledge of the extent of their agent network."

Li Zong pulled a nearby chair over and sat down opposite Zhu Tianlong. "Your son's car was bombed a short while ago."

Zhu Tianlong's expression contorted. "What's his condition?"

"He's unharmed," Li Zong said calmly. "Thanks to the government-issued vehicle." He continued, his voice laced with a pointed question, "Is this fleeting prosperity worth jeopardizing your family?"

Chapter 1990 Breakdown (2)

Zhu Tianlong let out a self-deprecating laugh. "Ha...Isn't it obvious whether this is a 'worth it' situation? Look at me here."

"Originally, none of you would have survived. You should be grateful you can even sit and talk with me here," Li Zong said with a faint smile.

"I know. Thanks to the old man's consideration," Zhu Tianlong sighed. He was aware that if he were an ordinary criminal, he would be dead by now. It seemed the old man still acknowledged his past contributions.

"No, it has nothing to do with the leader," Li Zong shook his head. "This person doesn't want you to die because he wants you to suffer for the rest of your life."

During this period, Li Zong had already figured out Yun Lintian's true intention. Yun Lintian clearly used the Hell Church to torment Zhu Tianlong.

"Who?" Zhu Tianlong was bewildered.

"Yun Lintian," Li Zong didn't hide anything.

"Impossible!" Zhu Tianlong refused to believe it. Although Yun Lintian was capable, he was alone. Even if he could survive the bomb, it was unimaginable that he could force him to this point.

"This is precisely why you've ended up like this," Li Zong smiled. "You've consistently underestimated his abilities."

Zhu Tianlong stared at Li Zong for a while before asking, "Ding'er... Did he do it?"

"Even now, you still blame others instead of taking responsibility for your grandson's actions?" Li Zong shook his head, genuine disappointment flickering across his face.

"Perhaps Little Qin didn't explain clearly," Li Zong continued. "Zhu Ding will never walk again. While he survived the assassination attempt, the poison he ingested is too potent. His future is grim." Follow current novels on [novelb\(in\).com](http://novelb(in).com)

"What?!" Zhu Tianlong shot up abruptly, his eyes wide with horror. "I want to see him now! Take me to him!"

"Have you forgotten your current situation?" Li Zong asked calmly. "Don't worry, you'll have an opportunity to see him soon. Now, tell me everything you know about the Hell Church."

Zhu Tianlong clenched his fists so tightly, his nails dug into his flesh. After a moment, he forced himself to calm down and said in a deep voice, "I will tell you everything. However, you must guarantee my family's safety."

"I'm listening," Li Zong smiled.

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An officer guarding Zhu Ding walked over and offered him a cup of water.

"Thank you," Zhu Ding rasped after taking a sip.

He scanned the room, his gaze landing on the several officers present. "Who are you guys?"

"Mr. Zhu, my name is Jin Kong. We're here to ensure your safety," the officer who provided the water explained.

"Protect me? From what?" Zhu Ding struggled to grasp his situation.

"From Hell Church operatives," Jin Kong replied calmly. "You were recently targeted in an assassination attempt and narrowly escaped with your life."

"The Hell Church..." Zhu Ding muttered, his mind whirring back to life. "No!"

He attempted to rise, only to discover his legs wouldn't obey. The memory of Lei Hao's humiliation flickered back into his mind.

"My legs!" Zhu Ding cried out, his eyes darting down to his limbs encased in splints. "Where are the doctors? Get them in here! I need to know the extent of my injuries!"

"Unfortunately, calling them in right now isn't possible," Jin Kong stated calmly. "However, I can inform you about your legs. Mr. Zhu, you will never walk again."

Zhu Ding reeled back in shock. "No... This can't be true... You're lying!"

Jin Kong remained silent, his expression unreadable.

The silence stretched, and Zhu Ding's face hardened with growing suspicion. "I see it now! You're working with that Yun Lintian scum, aren't you?! Where are my men? What have you done to them?!"

"Mr. Zhu, listen carefully," Jin Kong said, his voice steady. He produced a warrant. "You are under arrest for treason. In other words, you are a prisoner. Your team has already been apprehended."

Zhu Ding stared blankly at the warrant, his world crumbling around him.

"No... This isn't happening..." he whispered, a flicker of hope igniting in his eyes. "Right... My father..." He latched onto this hope. "Can I contact my father? I have the right to do that, don't I? Call him now!"

"I'm afraid not, Mr. Zhu," Jin Kong replied with a hint of regret. "Your father has also been arrested."

The last ember of hope within Zhu Ding flickered and died.

"Ha... Hahaha! So this is how it ends! Hahaha!" A chilling laugh erupted from Zhu Ding, his sanity teetering on the edge...