

THE REAL PROTEGE

Chapter 76: CORE GROUP GETS A WARNING

Later, at the party, the atmosphere was surprisingly light. Guests smiled and engaged in friendly conversation, seemingly oblivious to the earlier chaos.

The only noticeable absence was Nina, whose fate was now sealed.

Fortunately, the antidote was found at the camp. After receiving the injection, Fatty's condition improved rapidly. Within twenty minutes, he was back to his usual self, much to the relief of everyone involved.

The night had been a whirlwind of emotions and danger, but for now, the crisis seemed to be under control. The guests continued to enjoy the evening, unaware of the dark events that had transpired behind the scenes.

Right after the grand party, Ling Li gathered her closest confidants and core group members for an intimate conversation over coffee in a secluded, elegantly decorated room. The air was thick with anticipation as they settled into plush chairs around a polished mahogany table.

Ling Li, a figure of immense influence and authority, took her seat at the head of the table. Beside her were Shi Min, her only son, and Four Eyes, her husband. Ling Li exuded an aura of calm confidence, her presence commanding respect.

Among the participants in this gathering were the Presidents of Russia, China, and Colombia, along with several ally countries of Ling Li. El Padre and El Capitan were also present, adding to the gravity of the situation. The room was filled with powerful figures, each one aware of the delicate balance of power and the potential consequences of any misstep.

"Ladies and gentlemen, it has been some time since we last sat down together," Ling Li began, her voice warm yet authoritative. "You're already familiar with Shi Min. This is my spouse, Xu Chu Yan. Don't forget about him." She gestured to a distinguished man seated next to her, who nodded politely.

"Also, tonight, I want to introduce my son-in-law, Shun Chang," Ling Li continued, indicating a young man with a sharp gaze. "And these two individuals are our closest friends, Quan Ye and Tong Xue." both acknowledged the group with respectful nods.

The room fell silent, the guests hanging on Ling Li's every word, their expressions a mix of curiosity and apprehension.

"Well, I've gathered you all here tonight to discuss something important," Ling Li said, her tone shifting to one of seriousness.

"Madam, we would greatly appreciate hearing your perspectives," one of the guests remarked, breaking the silence.

"Madam, how may we assist you?" another guest inquired, their voice tinged with concern.

Ling Li leaned forward slightly, her eyes narrowing. "The situation is quite intricate. My friend Quan Ye recently experienced a troubling incident involving his business."

Ling Li paused, letting the weight of her words sink in. "Loyalty is paramount. The bonds that hold us together are sacred, and betrayal is unforgivable. Offending me or my friends is not just a mistake; it is a perilous gamble with dire consequences. I have gathered you all here to ensure that we are on the same page."

Ling Li's words were a veiled warning, a reminder of the power she wielded and the lengths she would go to protect her empire. The guests exchanged uneasy glances, fully grasping the gravity of the situation.

The room was silent, the weight of her words hanging heavily in the air. Ling Li's gaze swept across the room, meeting the eyes of each participant. "Is there anyone here who questions my loyalty or my resolve?"

"Attacking my friend is attacking me, don't you think?" she added flatly.

"Indeed, that is correct," all of her guests responded in unison, their voices a chorus of agreement.

Ling Li's expression softened slightly, but her eyes remained sharp. "What course of action should I take? Would it be wise to involve Otako in handling this situation?" she inquired innocently.

The mention of Otako's name sent a ripple of unease through the room. Otako was known for his ruthless efficiency and unyielding loyalty to Ling Li.

The Presidents and allies listened intently, their expressions serious. El Padre and El Capitan exchanged glances, their faces betraying a hint of unease.

"It would be appropriate to warn them, Madam," one of the guests proposed cautiously.

Ling Li nodded thoughtfully. "I will give it some thought. However, upon investigation, I discovered that the culprit was someone I considered a close friend."

The revelation hung in the air, heavy and shocking. "Do you all see yourselves as my closest companions?" Ling Li asked, her voice laced with a subtle challenge.

Everyone was utterly taken aback and rendered speechless, the weight of her question pressing down on them.

"Since this is the case, let's adjourn. Thank you for the night, gentlemen," Ling Li concluded, rising from her seat with an air of finality.

Without waiting for a reply, Ling Li left the room with Four Eyes, Shi Min, Shun, and the rest of her inner circle.

No one dared to speak. The message was clear: Ling Li was not to be underestimated, and any challenge to her authority would be met with severe consequences.

The guests departed with a renewed sense of loyalty and a lingering fear of the woman who had orchestrated such a masterful display of power and elegance.

That fateful night, Nina was entangled in a web of mystery and uncertainty, unsure of the number of men she had encountered. She desperately clung to them, her body consumed by intense heat. She could barely withstand it.

Later, Nina found herself thrust into the heart of danger, surrounded by a den of wolves. The fierce creatures wasted no time, launching a relentless attack upon her. She fought valiantly, but the odds were overwhelmingly against her.

Two days later, in their hometown, the news of Nina's abduction broke, revealing the devastating outcome, and a funeral was promptly arranged. The family made a public announcement, requesting privacy in light of Nina's unexpected passing.

Meanwhile, Four Eyes, Shun, and Fatty continued their rigorous training the following week, their determination unwavering. Chatty, on the other hand, was in rehab, focusing on his recovery.

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Chapter 77: OTAKO'S INVITATION

However, Ling Li's supposed friends were in utter chaos. The news updates continued to pour in relentlessly, day after day, for weeks, each headline more shocking than the last:

"The Chinese President has emerged completely unharmed from the terrifying attempt on his life..."

"In an incredible turn of events, the largest car manufacturer in Europe has made the heartbreaking decision to close its plant permanently..."

"A shocking revelation has emerged: the son of the current President has been apprehended for involvement in drug trafficking..."

"The government's joint multi-billion project investor has unexpectedly withdrawn their support..."

Ling Li remained indifferent, ignoring the countless calls and messages flooding her phone. She was focused, her mind set on the bigger picture.

Mushu's phone constantly rang and buzzed with calls and messages from concerned individuals seeking appointments with Ling Li. However, Ling Li remained unwavering in her determination to warn them. She knew that timing was everything.

Ling Li and Shi Min had carefully planned everything, waiting for the perfect moment to strike. She requested Shi Min's presence before the celebration. The tension was palpable, but Ling Li's resolve was unshakable. She was ready to execute her plan with precision and ensure that her message was received loud and clear.

Shi Min had to leave Russia the next day.

Three months later, Ling Li called Mushu to her office for an update. "How is the training?" she asked, her tone both curious and commanding.

"Everything seems good," Mushu replied confidently. "The trainees are learning martial arts from Reginald and Pharsa, and their shooting skills have greatly improved. They've also picked up basic sword techniques."

Ling Li nodded, pleased. "And Murphy?"

"I've asked Murphy to rejoin the training. He's completed all required therapy, and as long as he doesn't carry anything heavy, he'll be fine," Mushu added.

"That's great to hear. How is Goldie?" Ling Li inquired with a hint of amusement in her voice.

"You won't believe how good he is. You'll be surprised," Mushu said with a wink.

Ling Li's curiosity was piqued. "Bring him in," she said with a chuckle.

Moments later, Goldie entered the room, his face lighting up when he saw Ling Li. "My Queen! My Queen!" he yelled excitedly.

"Hello, Goldie, nice to see you," Ling Li acknowledged him warmly.

"My Queen, I thought you had forgotten about Goldie!"

"No, no, no. I could never forget Goldie. So, are you doing well?" she asked.

"Yes! Goldie has learned well," he replied happily, clasping his hands together.

"Very well, it's showtime. Mushu, let's play," Ling Li said. "Call Reginald to join us."

Soon, they were all gathered around a poker table, with Reginald acting as the dealer.

"Let's play poker! Goldie, show me what you've learned," Ling Li said, her eyes twinkling with anticipation.

"Feed me first," Goldie said, giving her a puppy-eyed look.

Ling Li laughed heartily. "Ha ha ha ha. Tod, how could we forget his muffins? Go get his muffins," she instructed.

Tod, a young trainee chosen by Mushu to follow Goldie around, smiled and shook his head before leaving the room. He returned shortly with a tray of muffins.

"He eats that much?" Ling Li asked, surprised.

"It can't run out in the middle of the game," Tod replied with a light laugh.

"Mushu, you must check Goldie's health if he keeps eating this many muffins," Ling Li said with concern. "I don't want another heart attack in my team."

"Don't worry, it's all organic, and I check him frequently myself," Mushu assured her.

"Yes! My muffins!" Goldie exclaimed, grabbing one and popping it into his mouth. "Let's play!" he yelled. "I'm ready, my queen."

"Sure you are! Draw the card, Reginald," Ling Li instructed.

As they played, everyone was amused by Goldie's wit and skill. He would raise his finger if he didn't want more cards, point his finger down if Goldie wanted another, and throw away the cards he didn't need, all while munching on muffins.

They played several rounds, and Goldie showcased his newly learned skills, much to Ling Li's satisfaction.

"Well done, Goldie. You are now ready for a mission," Ling Li said, tapping his shoulder.

Early the next morning, Ling Li summoned everyone to her study. Standing before her were Four Eyes, Shun, Fatty, and Chatty.

Shi Min, Ling Li's son who had just arrived in the country for work the day before, stepped into the room, his presence immediately drawing everyone's attention. Ling Li's eyes momentarily softened before she steeled herself, her voice carrying a weight that silenced the murmurs.

"Shi Min, it is good you are back. All of you listen; a significant person wants to meet you all. But I won't be going with you," Ling Li said in a somber tone, her eyes reflecting a mix of concern and determination.

Shi Min's curiosity was piqued, but he couldn't ignore the worry etched on his mother's face. "Mom, you sound very worried. Who is it?" Shi Min asked, his voice tinged with both curiosity and concern.

Ling Li's expression softened, revealing a rare vulnerability. "I'm not only worried. I'm also afraid to let you go without me," she admitted, her brows knitting together.

Four Eyes, who had been fidgeting impatiently, could no longer contain himself. "Who is it? Why can't you come?" he demanded, his eyes fixed on Ling Li's anxious face.

Ling Li took a deep breath, her shoulders sagging slightly as she exhaled. "It's... Otako," she said with a heavy sigh.

The name sent a ripple of shock through the room. "What?!" they almost jolted upon hearing the name.

Shi Min's disbelief was palpable. "Why does Otako want to meet us? And why can't you come?" he asked, his voice filled with disbelief.

Ling Li held up a letter, her hands trembling slightly. "I don't have any idea. This morning, I just got this letter, and it specifically said, 'Ling Li can't join the meeting,'" she explained, her voice steady but her eyes betraying her worry.

Four Eyes leaned forward, his skepticism evident. "How do you know the letter is authentic?" he asked.

Shi Min nodded in agreement. "Mom, are you sure it is from Otako? Paps is correct; how can we be sure it is authentic?" he questioned, his concern mirroring Four Eyes'.

Chapter 78: MEETING WITH OTAKO

Ling Li felt a throbbing headache creeping in as the relentless questioning continued. "Of course, I know! And I have a way to verify it. Since you are meeting Otako, I could show you. Here, look at this," Ling Li exclaimed, her voice tinged with a sense of urgency as she placed a seemingly ordinary piece of paper on the table.

The paper bore a mysterious seal, piquing the curiosity of everyone in the room. Eagerly, the group leaned in to inspect the paper. Its texture was unlike anything they had ever encountered, crafted from a material that seemed to possess an otherworldly quality.

"It's a blank piece of paper aside from the seal," Shi Min observed, his brow furrowing as he examined the enigmatic document.

"Correct. Unless you put it under a certain light at a certain temperature, you won't be able to see anything. Like this," Ling Li demonstrated, revealing a hidden message that materialized under the special light, eliciting gasps of amazement from the onlookers.

"Wow."

"That is amazing."

"Where did you get the light?" Four Eyes asked, astonished by the unexpected revelation.

"Otako provided it," Ling Li disclosed. As she extinguished the light, the words on the paper vanished once more, leaving the gentlemen in a state of bewilderment.

Four Eyes regarded Ling Li with uncertainty. "Should we go?" he inquired, seeking reassurance from her. Ling Li nodded firmly.

"Definitely. You can't ignore Otako's invitation. This is the address of the meeting place. Bring Mushu and Pharsa with you. Let us have a quick breakfast, then you should all get dressed and go," she instructed with unwavering determination.

An hour later, the entire group anxiously made their way to the venue specified by Otako. Following Ling Li's guidance, they all dressed in their finest attire, understanding that it was a gesture of respect when meeting Otako.

Upon arriving at the address, they were greeted by a breathtaking sight. A beautiful Japanese-style cottage stood, nestled deep within the forest, exuding an air of serenity and seclusion. The fragrance of pine permeated the air, accompanied by the gentle rustling of leaves, creating an atmosphere that was both tranquil and charged with anticipation. Lanterns lined the path to the cottage, their soft glow guiding the group through the dense foliage. The serene surroundings sharply contrasted with the tension gripping their hearts, causing every step to feel like a journey into the unknown.

Awaiting them at the front door was a butler, who ushered them into a room with a partition that obscured their view. On the other side, they could discern the silhouette of a figure wearing a Japanese kimono and a mask seated behind the section.

"Sit." A commanding voice resonated throughout the room, sending a chill down their spines.

Without hesitation, Shi Min and the rest hastened to take their designated seats on the floor, arranging themselves as they typically would when dining with Ling Li. Four Eyes, Ling Li's husband, occupied the first position, with Shi Min beside him. Facing Four Eyes was Shun, while Fatty and Chatty sat beside him. Mushu and Pharsa stood behind the closed doors.

As they settled into their seats, Shi Min noticed a sudden sharp pain, causing him to wince. Outside the door, the distinct sounds of Mushu and Pharsa's grunts reached Shi Min's sensitive ears.

Quickly, Shi Min signaled to assure his companions that he was alright, realizing that any overt display of distress would be a breach of respect towards Otako if they got up to support him.

In that split second, Shi Min comprehended that a flying needle laced with muscle-softening powder had been employed, rendering him temporarily immobilized and his companions.

'Otako is really awesome." Shi Min thought. Everything happened in a split second.

"I was wondering if you would show up. I knew Ling would never fail me. And you all have guts. I like it," Otako's resonant voice reverberated through the room, casting a veil of suspense over the gathering.

"You are Chu Yan," the masked man declared coldly, his eyes boring into Four Eyes.

"You are young. Ling is a significant and influential figure. She is valuable to me. Don't dare to cause her pain because you will suffer worse than death. Do you understand?" The Otako's voice was low and menacing.

Four Eyes, who doesn't speak much, just stared at the masked man behind the partition and replied with, "Um."

"Speak!" The masked man's voice boomed through the room, sending shivers down everyone's spine; they were all nervous for Four Eyes, knowing he didn't speak much.

"I understand," Four Eyes finally replied.

"Ling might have accepted you, but you must prove your worth to me. Ling is my protege," the masked man continued, his tone stern, and the underlying threat remained palpable in the air.

As Four Eyes nodded in agreement, he couldn't help but feel the weight of the expectations placed upon him. The Otako's words echoed in his mind, a constant reminder of the consequences of failure. This was just the beginning of a dangerous and high-stakes journey. Four Eyes knew that he had to tread carefully if he wanted to survive in this unforgiving world.

Four Eyes suddenly dropped on the floor. "This is how you will feel if you fail me," Otako declared.

Four Eyes on the floor crooned in pain.

"And this is how you will feel if you hurt Ling Li. Do you understand?" Otako's voice once again boomed.

The pain in Four Eyes' body instantly doubled.

As the excruciating pain shot through his body, Four Eyes struggled to respond. To his amazement, the agony vanished the moment he uttered, "I understand," leaving him bewildered and relieved.

'This is beyond terrifying,' Four Eyes thought to himself, slowly easing back into his seat.

"Shun Chang," Otako's voice sliced through the air.

Shun felt a sudden drop in temperature despite the beads of sweat forming on his forehead.

"Shi Min, I've summoned you here for a crucial mission involving Shun Chang," Otako declared, his voice resonating with authority.

"Consider it done, Grand Commander," Shi Min replied without hesitation.

"You truly are Ling's child. Shi Min, the Chinese president, has a son who has remained shrouded in secrecy. He is heavily guarded and concealed from the public eye. His name is Shun Chang.

Otako is truly powerful! It's too terrifying!

What could be Shun's mission???

Chapter 79: I WANT OUR SHUN CHANG TO REPLACE HIM

I want our Shun Chang to replace him in two years and take over the government. Train Shun Chang." Otako ordered Shi Min.

Shi Min and Shun don't know if they want to laugh or cry.

However, Shi Min, the seasoned strategist, stood with a look of concern etched on his face as Otako delivered his orders. The weight of the responsibility hung heavy in the air as he processed the magnitude of the task ahead. Shun Chang, a young trainee who just joined Ling Li's camp, listened intently, his eyes reflecting a mix of determination and uncertainty. The room fell silent as Otako's words sank in, the gravity of the situation settling over them like a heavy shroud.

As the orders continued, "Quan Ye and Tong Xue. You will train hard because both of you will be behind Shun Chang. Don't fail me." Otako said resolutely.

Quan Ye and Tong Xue both swallowed hard and exchanged glances, silently acknowledging the challenge that lay ahead. Their commitment to the cause was unwavering, but the path before them seemed daunting; they knew there was no way to defy Otako's order.

Fatty and Chatty, known for their unwavering loyalty to their friends, stood with a mixture of apprehension and determination, fully aware of the expectations placed upon them.

"Mushu, Pharsa, come in," Otako called. With a sense of urgency in the air, Otako called forth Mushu and Pharsa, two of the most skilled officers in Ling Li's group. Their presence brought a palpable tension to the room as Otako's sharp instructions cut through the silence.

When both were already present, Otako instructed, "Pharsa, your training is too slow! Send them to Amazon in two weeks. Send two dozen of class C with them and six class A."

Mushu and Pharsa looked at each other.

"Yes, Grand Commander," Pharsa answered. Pharsa, known for her unwavering dedication, accepted the orders with a steely resolve, her eyes reflecting a fierce determination to carry out her mission with precision.

Mushu, usually quick-witted and outspoken, hesitated for a moment, a flicker of concern crossing his features. Before he could voice his thoughts, Shi Min's subtle yet firm gesture silenced him. The unspoken understanding between them spoke volumes, a testament to the unbreakable bond forged through years of unwavering loyalty and shared experiences.

Like a wind, Otako vanished before their eyes as if he had never appeared, like the person behind the partition was just an illusion.

They would believe they were tricked if they did not feel the pain earlier.

As they exited the room, the butler discreetly informed them that Otako, their gracious host, had requested that they stay for lunch as a token of appreciation for their visit. The tantalizing aroma of the meticulously prepared meal filled the air, and an ornate table was set with an array of delectable dishes.

Despite their underlying urgency to return and break the news to Ling Li, the group found themselves unable to decline Otako's generous offer without causing offense. They settled into their seats and engaged in polite conversation as the attentive staff served a sumptuous feast. Each dish was a culinary masterpiece, and the vintage wine, carefully selected by Otako, was a delight to the senses. Shi Min, in particular, found himself captivated by the rich flavors and indulged in the wine, savoring every sip.

As the meal progressed, the others, influenced by Shi Min's enjoyment, joined in with the wine, unaware of Shi Min's unusually high tolerance for alcohol. Before long, laughter filled the room, and the ambiance grew increasingly jovial as they succumbed to the intoxicating effects of the wine.

Eventually, it was time to bid their gracious host farewell, and the group stumbled out of the wealthy estate, their laughter echoing in the crisp air. Shi Min, surprisingly composed despite the alcohol, took charge and assisted his inebriated companions into the awaiting limousine.

"Mushu, the alcohol didn't give me a headache, but these people do!" Shi Min exclaimed with a mixture of amusement and exasperation as he gently guided Shun into the vehicle, the last member of their party to be seated.

Mushu chuckled, understanding the predicament. "Let's make our way back. Madam will be eager for our return."

The journey back was a blur of laughter and heartfelt conversations, the effects of the wine lingering in the air. Shi Min, acutely aware of his responsibilities, contemplated how he would explain the unexpected turn of events to Ling Li. As the grand estate came into view, he braced himself for the bewildered reaction that awaited them.

When they arrived, Ling Li stood at the entrance, her expression a mix of surprise and concern as she watched everyone stumble into the mansion, their laughter and unsteady movements a stark contrast to Shi Min's composed demeanor.

"What happened to all of you? Did Otako poison you?" Ling Li asked worriedly, her eyes widening as she took in the sight of her drunk family members.

Ling Li walked towards Four Eyes to hug him and check on him. She could smell the rich aroma of the vintage wine lingering in the air.

"You're drunk!" Ling Li said in a surprised tone, trying to stifle a chuckle at the sight of her usually composed family members in such a state.

"Shi Min, are they all drunk?" Ling Li asked, concern evident in her voice.

"Yeah, sorry, Mom. I can't stop them. Otako served us 1975 vintage wine. It was so good," Shi Min replied with a sheepish grin. "I drank a lot, too, but you know my alcohol tolerance," he added, trying to defend himself.

"Ah, you! Butler Peng, ask the chef to prepare a hungover soup for all of them!" Ling Li instructed, shaking her head with a smile as she realized the situation was not as dire as she had initially feared.

Soon, Ren and Lily came down with the twins, their eyes widening at the sight of the slightly intoxicated group.

"What happened to them?" Ren asked, looking concerned.

"Oh, Ren, we just had fun during lunch. Nothing to worry about," Shun tried to calm Ren immediately. He was still in a predicament about how to tell Ren about Otako's mission given to him but now was not the time.

'This man really knows how to coax his woman well,' Ling Li thought as she looked at her daughter, who was always worried about her man.

Chapter 80: THE ENEMY IS POWERFUL

'What should I do to her?' Ren's dependence on Shun was Ling Li's agony. She knew she had to find a way to reassure her daughter and ease her worries.

Ling Li helped Four Eyes to their room and instructed Mushu and Pharsa to assist the others. After ensuring Four Eyes was settled for a nap, she retired to her study, where Shi Min and her will discuss the day's turbulent events and Otako's unforeseen mission.

Ling Li sat at her desk, her fingers tracing the grain of the ancient wood as she processed the events of the day. The room was dimly lit, the soft glow of lanterns casting long shadows that danced on the walls. The scent of incense wafted through the air. Shi Min entered quietly, closing the door behind him with a soft click. His face was a mask of concern, but his eyes held a steely resolve.

"Mother, we need to talk regarding our meeting with Otako," Shi Min began, his voice low and urgent, only to be abruptly cut off by Ling Li.

"I got a message from Otako. He told me all his plans," Ling Li stated, her tone dripping with intensity.

"Really? Otako is very mysterious. What do you think of his plan? He wants Shun Chang to replace the current leader and take over the government within two years. We are to train him," Shi Min inquired, curiosity mixed with apprehension.

"It's immense. We need a profound strategy. I must consult heaven," Ling Li replied solemnly, her eyes reflecting the weight of her thoughts.

Shi Min nodded, understanding the weight of his mother's words. "I know. But Otako's orders are clear. Otako must have considered Shun Chang has the potential. We have to prepare him physically, and he needs to study Chinese politics extensively." Shi Min added, rubbing his temples in frustration, his tone pragmatic.

Ling Li sighed deeply, her gaze turning inward. "And what about Ren? How will she react to this? She's so protective of Shun. This will not be easy for her."

"We have to be strategic about this. Otako only gave us two years to prepare Shun's mission," Shi Min stressed. "We need to reassure Ren and ensure she understands the importance of this mission. But more importantly, we need to prepare ourselves for the challenges ahead. Let me talk to Ren as well. Let's wait for what we discover tonight before you worry too much," Shi Min comforted his mother.

Ling Li's mind raced her thoughts a whirlwind of strategy and concern. "We'll have to increase Shun's training regimen and perhaps bring in additional resources. This is not a task for the faint-hearted."

"Otako also wants Quan Ye and Tong Xue to support Shun. They, too, will undergo intense training. Otako was very clear—no failure is acceptable," Shi Min stated.

Ling Li's brows furrowed in thought. "We will need to be relentless in their training. Mushu and Pharsa will play crucial roles. Their skills and expertise will be invaluable."

Shi Min hesitated for a moment before speaking again. "There's more. Otako has ordered that they be sent to the Amazon in two weeks. They will spend three months in the forest, surviving independently."

Ling Li's eyes met Shi Min's, a mixture of determination and worry reflected in her gaze. "The Amazon will test their limits. It's a harsh environment, but it will forge them into the leaders we need. Pharsa's training must be accelerated. We don't have time to waste."

"I will speak to Pharsa and Mushu immediately," Shi Min said, rising from his seat. "We must ensure they are ready."

Ling Li reached out and grasped Shi Min's hand, her grip firm and reassuring. "Shi Min, we are embarking on a path fraught with danger and uncertainty. But we have faced adversity before. We will overcome this together."

Shi Min nodded, a sense of resolve settling over him. "We will, Mother. We have no other choice."

"Ask Mushu to prepare for tonight's ritual," Ling Li said, dismissing Shi Min with a wave of her hand.

As Shi Min left the room, Ling Li remained seated, her mind already calculating the next steps. The weight of Otako's mission was heavy, but she knew they were capable of rising to the challenge. The future of their family—and perhaps their nation—depended on it.

The night arrived, and everyone was on edge. Ling Li looked intently at the open eye, which displayed the Milky Way before them. Her brows knitted together, and she seemed lost in her own world. The others were oblivious to what she was doing, but as their blood in the cup slowly diminished, so did Ling Li's energy.

Four Eyes, sensing the toll it was taking, handed the twins to Ren and Lily. He feared Ling Li would collapse at any moment and stood guard.

Just as he feared, Ling Li closed the heaven and dropped unconscious into Four Eyes' arms. He carried her to their room with anxiety etched on his face.

Four hours later, Ling Li woke up with Shi Min, Mushu, and Pharsa standing over her. The three had shared their internal energy to revive her, knowing it would have taken days for her to recover otherwise.

"Mom, must you always drain your energy like this? Can't you remember that you have a family waiting for you?" Shi Min reprimanded his mother gently but firmly.

"There are too many concerns," Ling Li said, her voice hoarse. "Mushu, El Padre is attacking tomorrow. Call off their attack! They will all die! The enemy is not to be underestimated! Call him now!" Ling Li roared, a sense of urgency in her voice.

It was the first time they had seen Ling Li so agitated in a long time. Four Eyes, standing by the side, came up to hold her.

"The enemy is very powerful. We must recover Camp Phoenix as soon as possible. We can no longer stall," Ling Li said, her determination unwavering.

"What about the mission Otako mentioned?" Shi Min asked, distraught.

"They go to the Amazon in two weeks as planned. Pharsa, prepare them. They will stay in the forest for three months and must survive independently," Ling Li commanded, her voice regaining its strength.