

## THE WAY OF RESTRAINT

### Chapter 121: A Mastermind's Brilliance Stirs Envy

China, countryside.

Inside the Xu family's ancestral home.

Xu Zhizhi was reporting the latest developments to Xu Qiaomu, who sat in a wheelchair.

“Grandfather, this time our counterattack was a success. The Feng family took a heavy loss—they’ve even been forced to give up the shares they swallowed. More importantly, we’ve secured quite a few foreign trade orders overseas. This year’s overall profits will probably jump to a whole new level.”

A trace of excitement flickered across Xu Zhizhi's face.

In recent days, he had suffered torment but also basked in triumph. Having seized the reins of the Xu family and been named heir, he faced plenty of resistance—but also plenty of flatterers.

And in his struggle against the Feng family, as well as while reorganizing the Xu family, his abilities gradually came to light.

At first, people just stood by and watched. But step by step, he consolidated power, reassigned responsibilities, placed his own people, audited accounts, cut unprofitable projects, and expelled idlers. He was tough when he needed to be, flexible when he had to be. Within a short time, many of the Xu family's companies looked completely renewed. That made people reevaluate him.

The sharp-eyed sighed one after another: Master Luo's fortune-telling was indeed accurate.

It looked as if the Xu family, once flourishing but hollow at its core, was about to decline. Yet with a casual finger-point toward an inconspicuous junior, the family suddenly found new vitality.

Even if one couldn't yet call it rising higher than before, there was at least no trace of looming collapse.

"A single seed well-placed brings new life—that is the Xu family's fortune." Xu Qiaomu narrowed his aged eyes. "The key is that shipment of goods detained overseas was unexpectedly released so quickly, without breach of contract. Had there been a breach, we'd have suffered catastrophic losses, and that whole foreign trade channel would've been cut off. Foreign trade is profitable, but dangerous—like those Shanxi merchants of the Qing dynasty hauling tea, silk, and porcelain to Mongolia and Russia. If successful, they grew rich overnight. If not,

their cargo was plundered and they went bankrupt instantly. Who would've thought? Just as Master Luo said—that Su Jie is a dragon who saved our Xu family.”

Xu Zhizhi said nothing.

He knew the details.

If not for that shipment being released—no massive damages, no strangling of the family's breathing room—those business tycoons would never have dared join Xu Qiaomu in reporting Haoyu Feng family's crimes.

Who would risk offending the all-powerful Feng family on behalf of a dying Xu clan?

But now the Xu family had recovered somewhat, the heir had shown competence, and future collaborations seemed promising. Add in the Fengs' long-standing arrogance, and many had already been itching for payback. That's what made the joint complaint possible.

The blow had dimmed the Feng family's fire; their swagger was finally checked.

“Zhizhi, what have you learned from this?” Xu Qiaomu asked.

“Grandfather, this ordeal tempered me greatly. Before, I thought myself capable—enough to reorganize the family, expand outward. Now I see much of it still came down to luck. Heaven does not wish the Xu family destroyed.”

That answer seemed to satisfy Xu Qiaomu. “Good. Small money comes from effort, great fortunes come from luck. Families have their fate, nations their destiny. That you grasp this shows precocious maturity. I can rest easier entrusting the family to you. These days I’ve seen your ability firsthand—cutting useless projects, selling what should be sold, discarding what should be discarded. You’ve stripped us of burdens, let us advance light and swift. Very good. As for those six who once came to demand repayment—how much blood did they secretly drain from the family for their own gain? I turned a blind eye, thinking feeding a dog made it docile. Who knew they’d conspire with outsiders to bite me? Master Luo truly saw with piercing eyes.”

“They still haven’t settled down. After being bailed out, the Feng family invested in them, set up a department just to dig into our foundations.” Xu Zhizhi shared the intelligence he’d gathered.

“These people must be eliminated,” Xu Qiaomu said coldly. “And you must also beware Su Jie and Xu Ying.”

“Why? Didn’t Su Jie just help us enormously?” Xu Zhizhi asked, puzzled.

“Precisely. He has revealed his capability—and he’s not someone you can control.” Xu Qiaomu’s imperial cunning showed through. “Originally, I considered bringing Xu Ying into the company, but now that’s out of the question. Look at her son Su Jie, young Miss Zhang Manman, and Zhang Jinchuan. At such a young age they accomplished what even I could not. That kind of talent—if they join, can your position be secure? Remember: the Fengs are an external enemy, but the internal threat is even deadlier. You may use Xu Ying and Su Jie, but never let them touch company affairs. Remember this well.”

“Yes, Grandfather.” Xu Zhizhi nodded. Indeed, he could never truly rein in Su Jie.

At first he had thought to rope Su Jie into the company as his right-hand man. Now that thought had faded.

Someone that capable, that young—in three to five years, would the Xu family still be “Xu,” or would it become “Su”?

“Truly, Grandfather’s far-sightedness—I’ve much to learn.” Xu Zhizhi silently agreed. He then asked, “What about Xu Nuo’s promised reward to the Zhang family?”

“A promise must be kept. The Zhang family must not be offended,” Xu Qiaomu said. “I know you want to win Su Jie over. But the stronger he is, the more dangerous. If his surname were Xu, I’d entrust the family to him without hesitation. But alas, it’s Su. We’ll see if he even makes it back from overseas.”

“What do you mean?” Xu Zhizhi was startled.

“The Feng family is not so easily thwarted.” Xu Qiaomu closed his eyes. “They invested heavily in this venture, yet failed. At home they don’t dare use certain underhanded means. But abroad? Who can say?”

“Should we help?” Xu Zhizhi asked quickly. “We have plenty of people over there.” Follow current novels on [Nov3lFire.net](http://Nov3lFire.net)

“No.” Xu Qiaomu waved it off. “We can’t squander our manpower. Besides, the Zhangs aren’t to be underestimated—they’re far stronger than us. We signed a contract with them. Pay what we owe, and let the rest be. You focus on stabilizing our domestic business and consolidating loyalty.”

“Yes.” Xu Zhizhi, seeing his grandfather ready to rest, tiptoed out.

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Overseas.

In the compound, the van started up again.

The matter was more or less resolved. Su Jie, Zhang Manman, and Zhang Jinchuan were preparing to head home.

“All in all, it went smoothly. Dangerous, yes, but no bloodbath,” Zhang Manman summed up. “The Xu family paid up quickly, so once we’re back we can split the reward.”

“This deal really paid off,” said Zhang Jinchuan, who knew the inside story. “You’ve secured startup capital, and also helped forge a business bridge between the Zhangs and the Xus. The family must see you in a new light now.”

“You’re the one who gained more. After all, you’re taking sixty percent of the payout.” Zhang Manman looked pained.

“If I hadn’t drafted the plan and pulled in Fuya, could it have succeeded?” Zhang Jinchuan retorted.

“Actually, it was Su Jie sparing that Gale and winning his goodwill that made things go so smoothly,” Zhang Manman countered. “If you’d killed Gale like you wanted, not only would the mission have failed, we’d probably be dead.”

“Alright, alright—everyone contributed,” Su Jie cut in, smoothing things over. “Without Manman’s father’s deterrence, Awasi wouldn’t have even agreed to meet

us. I did show mercy once, which earned Gale's favor. And Jinchuan nailed down the execution. By merit, we each deserve credit. But since we agreed beforehand how to split, let's stick to it. Arguing now is pointless. Besides, I've already gotten the fattest gain of all."

"I can tell this whole ordeal really toughened your mindset," Zhang Jinchuan said, sensing how Su Jie's spirit had shifted—becoming unfathomable.

Before, he'd seen Su Jie as a great talent to recruit under him.

But now, after this crucible, Su Jie had shed his earlier traces of vanity and youthful arrogance. He was becoming steady, deep, someone not so easily suppressed.

He had endured dangers at home he never could've faced—proving his psyche had been fragile, a paper tiger. That hollowness was now beaten out of him, leaving only tempered steel.

That was Su Jie's greatest harvest.

For him, wealth was secondary. Enough was enough.

The real treasure was his hardened mentality.



He knew this experience was something no amount of money—billions, even—could buy.

“This time, we’re not taking the old route back,” Zhang Manman said. “We’ll drive across the border to a major city in another country, then catch a flight. We came by sea, but now that we’ve wrecked the Fengs’ plan, it’s too risky. On land, if ambushed, we can scatter and escape. At sea, we’d all be wiped out, no escape at all.”

“We definitely need to be cautious. They’ve already started—killing Daru, assassinating those officers. It’s intimidation. Such methods are impossible to guard against,” Zhang Jinchuan warned. “This time, we can’t afford any carelessness.”

“I’ve been on edge for a while. But I’ve never studied those bizarre assassination methods, so I don’t know how to guard against them. What about you?” Su Jie asked.

“I haven’t studied them,” Zhang Jinchuan admitted.

“I have, actually.” Zhang Manman was driving the van fast as the wind. Yet Su Jie now sat steady and calm, completely different from last time.

The scenery around them was monotonous—either barren loess plains with desertification, or sheer mountain cliffs. The villages they passed were dilapidated, many people barely clothed, refugees everywhere.

“War leaves people destitute,” Zhang Jinchuan sighed.

“This country’s feng shui has been destroyed,” Su Jie said. “It was once lush with greenery. But with population growth came reckless logging without replanting, leading to soil erosion and poor harvests. Decline followed. Fortunately, our own country has been reforestation, conserving soil, protecting the environment. Short-term it restricts profits, but long-term it strengthens national destiny and lays a solid foundation.”

As he spoke, suddenly there was a screech of brakes—then a violent explosion ahead.

The entire van jolted hard, flipping toward the roadside.

“We’re under attack!” Zhang Manman, though flipping the car, stayed utterly calm.

For a veteran driver like her, even rolling a vehicle was nothing out of the ordinary.

## Chapter 122: A Narrow Escape: Bullets and Blades

For an ordinary person, a car rollover would mean severe injuries. But Su Jie had already anticipated it. At the moment of impact, he steadied his body, using inertia and the car's motion to shield himself.

As soon as the vehicle flipped, he smashed open the window and crawled out.

Even so, he was covered in scrapes and bruises. No matter how tough his body-training was, a violent crash still left its mark. Fortunately, they were only surface wounds — no broken bones or internal damage. He could still move around energetically, while a regular person would at least have broken a few bones and been left immobile.

“Take cover! We're under attack!” Zhang Manman and Zhang Jinchuan also scrambled out. Their speed was just as fast.

Especially Zhang Manman — she seemed to be wearing protective gear under her clothes, with not a scratch on her joints.

The three of them also wore helmets and bulletproof vests, which had absorbed a good portion of the impact.

Zhang Jinchuan had his share of scrapes too, but overall, he was intact.

“Peh!” He spat on the ground — streaks of blood mixed with saliva.

“You alright?” Su Jie asked quickly.

“I’m fine. Just banged a tooth, bleeding gums.” Zhang Jinchuan rolled to his feet, never slowing down.

The moment they got away from the van, a hail of bullets rained down from the mountainside ahead.

Luckily, they’d moved fast. Otherwise, they’d already be corpses.

“The shooters are on the opposite mountain!”

Experienced as they were, the three instantly pinpointed the attackers’ position and ducked behind cover.

The road had a mountain on one side and barren land on the other, scattered with boulders and small rises — enough to hide behind. But the enemy held the high

ground and could fire down at will, making it extremely dangerous for Su Jie and his companions.

“What do we do? The ambush came as expected.” While Su Jie’s mind was racing — gauging the enemies’ positions and listening to the surrounding noises — he asked Zhang Manman and Zhang Jinchuan, hoping their input might spark a plan.

“There are six attackers, spread across the mountainside,” Zhang Manman said, raising her watch. Tiny red dots glowed on its display, marking their positions.

“What kind of black tech is that?” Zhang Jinchuan blurted out.

“A compact military detection radar. Not perfectly accurate in positioning, but good enough to confirm their number,” Zhang Manman explained. “Could be applied to self-driving systems in the future.”

Bzzz...

Suddenly, a sound like a swarm of mosquitoes filled the air. Zhang Manman’s face changed. “Domn — that’s an armed drone!”

Sure enough, a drone buzzed into sight, gun barrels glinting as they aimed down at them. No cover would protect them now.

“Shit!” Su Jie cursed outright.

He’d only seen things like this in movies. Against human opponents, he wasn’t afraid — but a machine? In the sky? What was he supposed to do, throw rocks at it? That was suicide.

“Run!”

Without hesitation, Zhang Jinchuan bolted to the side.

Adrenaline flooded Su Jie’s veins. In an instant, his mind calculated the drone’s flight path, muzzle positions, and bullet trajectories, simulating them to preemptively dodge.

Ratatatata—

The drone opened fire, bullets tearing up the ground.

Su Jie sprinted like lightning, but the drone locked onto him, chasing relentlessly. Zhang Jinchuan and Zhang Manman, however, weren’t immediately targeted.

Clang!

Something slammed against Su Jie's helmet and chest, nearly making him black out. A ricocheted bullet had struck him.

Fortunately, he was armored — bulletproof vest and helmet both. A direct shot would've punched clean through, but a ricochet had far less force. He survived the hit.

“God, that hurts.” He felt the brush of death again. Without his gear, he'd already be a corpse.

Bang!

A shot rang out. The drone shuddered mid-air and plummeted.

Zhang Manman had drawn a pistol — he hadn't even noticed when — and with a single precise shot, took it down.

“No worries. Drones like this are expensive, but they’re not cutting-edge. The recoil from their guns still throws off their accuracy.” At that moment, Zhang Manman revealed her bounty hunter’s nature. She tossed two pistols to them. “Su Jie, Jinchuan — let’s flank them and wipe them out. These guys are probably internationally wanted criminals. Take them down, and we’ll earn a fat bounty.”

Su Jie caught the pistol and familiarized himself with its weight and function in less than a second.

He’d practiced shooting before. Not an expert, but definitely better than a novice.

In this situation, martial arts meant agility. The real killing would come from bullets.

“We’ll circle around and close in,” Zhang Jinchuan said. He crouched low, moving with a rat-like scuttle, slipping between cover.

Su Jie suddenly realized something: in this kind of firefight, modern combat footwork was useless. Instead, traditional martial arts movements — like monkey-style dodges — worked wonders. Ancient techniques designed to evade arrows were now saving him from bullets.

His fear faded. After having multiple muzzles pointed at him, he grew accustomed, his nerves hardening like steel.



He matched Zhang Jinchuan and Zhang Manman's pace, darting cover to cover.

Bang bang bang—

Gunfire roared back from the opposite hillside.

Several shots nearly hit Su Jie. Ricochets slammed into his vest again, but he endured it, prepared this time.

“These vests and helmets are godsend,” he thought. “No wonder soldiers rarely drop from direct hits. It's the stray rounds that get most of them. Basic military knowledge — useful after all.”

By standard stats, it took tens of thousands of bullets on a battlefield to kill a single enemy. Of course, some unlucky souls got hit right off the bat.

Su Jie was quick, agile, and lucky. He pushed closer, eyes sharp as an eagle, spotting shadows of the gunmen.

Bang!

Zhang Manman fired again. One attacker dropped.

Zhang Jinchuan fired too, but missed.

Su Jie didn't shoot. He crept forward instead, knowing his marksmanship wasn't reliable. Better to play to his strengths. And besides, this was a chance to train his combat skills under real fire.

Bullets kept hammering the ground. Zhang Manman hugged cover, experienced enough not to expose herself recklessly. Compared to her, Zhang Jinchuan was raw — talented, but green. As for Su Jie, this was his first real firefight.

Darkness fell.

"Perfect timing," Zhang Manman whispered. "Nightfall means reduced visibility. Time for counterattack. Su Jie, you go up the middle — fire randomly to draw their focus. Jinchuan and I will attack from the flanks."

Su Jie nodded. Dangerous, yes — but correct.

He charged out, loosed a shot, then immediately dove aside.

Bang bang bang!

Bullets shredded the spot he'd just vacated.

Using the darkness, he weaved unpredictably, firing and dodging, pulling enemy fire toward himself.

He discovered the trick: fire, then vanish like a turtle withdrawing into its shell — limbs tucked, vest protecting his back, pressed flat to the ground. Direct shots couldn't hit him, and ricochets hardly mattered.

Slowly, he was mastering the battlefield.

"How are Zhang Manman and Jinchuan doing?" he wondered. Just then, a burst of gunfire rattled through his earpiece. Zhang Manman's voice came: "We got them. Careful — one might be closing in on you!"

Relieved, Su Jie suddenly felt as if he were in a survival video game. Though he rarely played, he'd seen classmates shouting in internet cafés, dodging and shooting in those battle royale games. Now, he was living it.

Not only had his fear evaporated, he was actually exhilarated. Find the newest release on [N\(\)velFire.net](#)

Then — footsteps.

A whisper of air.

He rolled instantly, as a dark figure lunged at him with a blade — a dagger glinting in the dark.

Swish!

In mid-roll, Su Jie whipped out his own dagger to meet the attack.

At this range, there was no time to shoot. Only a master gunman could react fast enough, and he wasn't one. So he relied on his strongest skill — close combat.

Blade met blade.

The enemy was vicious, angles sharp and strikes fast. The dagger's tip darted straight for Su Jie's throat.

Su Jie ducked and twisted, spiraling his arm to slash at the man's wrist.

The opponent dodged, counter-stabbing toward Su Jie's thigh.

Both wore vests that blunted the daggers' penetration.

Their exchange was a blur of danger. One slip, and blood would spray.

*'This guy's good. Better than Grey Wolf. And his style—yes, it's the same as Odell's dagger drills. I know these moves.'* Su Jie realized the attacker was using Typhon training camp techniques — the very same ones he had learned.

And he had already internalized them.

Which made countering them far easier.

## Chapter 123: The Mastermind Begins to Emerge

*'If I expose this opening, he'll definitely go for a throw... and that's when my chance comes.'* Su Jie suddenly stepped back.

As expected, his opponent seized the moment—flipping his dagger forward, aiming it right along Su Jie's retreating motion.

But Su Jie dropped low instead, surging forward close to the ground. Using the move "Black Dog Burrows Under the Gate," he slipped under his enemy's legs. With a swift slash, his blade severed the tendons at the man's thigh and calf.

Thud!

The opponent collapsed instantly.

Su Jie followed up with a hard kick to the temple, knocking him out cold and ensuring he could cause no more trouble.

"All done on my side," he messaged.

Soon after, Zhang Manman and Zhang Jinchuan came over, pulling lighting equipment from their packs.

The man Su Jie had subdued was in his thirties, his face sharp and cruel—the textbook image of a professional killer.

“This is Hungry Wolf, the one who slipped away. He’s the strongest of the lot, and you actually knocked him out,” Zhang Manman said, giving Su Jie a look. “He’s one of Feng Hengyi’s most trusted men. Even under these circumstances, you didn’t kill him. Truly, your righteousness is unmatched.”

Su Jie couldn’t tell if she was mocking or praising him. “So what now? This group was just a small ambush. If Feng Hengyi himself comes after us for killing Dalu, we won’t stand a chance. We’ll really die here.”

“Relax. I already notified my dad—he’s sent people, and he might even come himself. If Feng Hengyi dares to show up, my father will see to it that he dies here. It’ll be the perfect chance to get rid of a plague.”

“I really want to meet your father one day, to see just how high his level truly is.” After these days together, Su Jie had learned that Zhang Manman’s father was a formidable figure in the mercenary and security worlds. Even powerful warlords respected him. He had served as a senior instructor at several world-class training camps. Both Master Ma and Master Luo had mentioned him by name—Zhang Hongqing—a name spoken in the same breath as Odell.

But while Odell occasionally appeared in the media as a coach for world champions, Zhang Hongqing never once showed up in public reports.

Even the Zhang family didn't seem to run any companies—no one knew what they actually did—yet they were extremely wealthy.

That kind of background placed them firmly in the realm of underground power.

“Su Jie, you're still too soft. These people came here to kill us. If you don't finish them, they'll just keep coming after you. Don't tell me you think he'll turn out like Gale—someone you can reform with compassion?” Zhang Jinchuan said coldly. “Gray Wolf, Hungry Wolf, Ghost Wolf, Nether Wolf, Demon Wolf, Cunning Wolf, Evil Wolf—these seven wolves are Feng Hengyi's real enforcers. They're vicious, their hands stained with countless crimes. Killing them a hundred times wouldn't be excessive.”

“I've been thinking—sometimes, restraint is harder than killing,” Su Jie replied calmly. “I'm actually training my own mentality. When a person feels the urge to kill, in a law-governed place, acting on it is hard. But in a lawless land, that impulse is easily unleashed. Take now—I could kill Hungry Wolf. In fact, I probably should—it would save me endless trouble. But if I can restrain myself here, it strengthens my mind.”

“Your thinking is contradictory,” Zhang Jinchuan frowned. “That's not good. Training martial arts requires unwavering resolve.”



Su Jie shook his head. “I wonder—if martial arts pursued something other than killing, could they still reach the highest realm? A new era needs a new spirit to replace the old one. When the world is peaceful, with no killing anywhere, will martial arts lose their meaning? I don’t think so. Martial arts will always exist, but killing skills will not. One day, killing arts will vanish, while true martial arts endure. Without relying on slaughter, martial arts can still reach their peak.”

“So that’s your pursuit,” Zhang Jinchuan exhaled deeply. “It’s true—since ancient times, martial arts were killing skills, born on battlefields and in gang fights. Even in the West, their origins lie in war, gladiator arenas, even man’s struggles with beasts. History proves that pure health practices and performance arts can’t match real combat styles. But you raise a good question—peace is the trend of the future. If war disappears, will martial arts stagnate? Even for you now, though you don’t kill, just facing constant threats to your life hones your skill. But if no one fights at all one day, how will you improve?”

“That’s exactly what I’m exploring,” Su Jie nodded. “Others may be searching their own paths. This is mine. I just hope I can walk it to the end.”

“You might get yourself killed,” Zhang Jinchuan said. “Aren’t you afraid?”

“Of course I’m afraid. But after facing so many bullets, my fear has lessened.” Su Jie’s answer was honest.

“Hahahaha!” Zhang Jinchuan burst out laughing.

“Let’s go. My van still runs—help me lift it up,” Zhang Manman said, stepping forward. “As for Hungry Wolf, we’ll bring him along alive. He’s worth more this way. He knows plenty of Feng Hengyi’s secrets, not to mention his price on the international bounty market. Since you won’t kill him, we’ll haul him back breathing.”

As she spoke, she pulled a syringe from her pack and jabbed it into Hungry Wolf’s neck vein.

“This is a strong sedative—keeps him asleep for three days straight. Weaker bodies will suffer for it, but that’s not my problem.”

The three of them worked together to right the van. Although the vehicle was badly damaged and its windows shattered, it could still run.

“This van is incredible. Domestic-made really is tough—the quality is unmatched,” even Zhang Jinchuan had to admit.

They drove off again, now with Hungry Wolf in tow.

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Meanwhile, dozens of kilometers away, in an abandoned factory.

The factory still bore scars of bombing, long deserted.

In its center sat Feng Hengyi, clad in dusty yellow camouflage gear, fully armed. He wasn't here to show off. For all his martial prowess, he was still flesh and blood. Enough bullets would kill him like anyone else.

One shot was all it would take. His body, however strong, was no different from an ordinary man's when pierced by a bullet.

So he wore a bulletproof vest, helmet, gloves, even a protective collar around his neck against shrapnel. His helmet could drop down into a face shield.

In short, nearly every vital point was armored—his safety much increased.

“Boss, Hungry Wolf's operation has begun. Not sure if he can take down Zhang Jinchuan and the others,” a soldier hurried in. Built like Gray Wolf, this was Demon Wolf, one of Feng Hengyi's lieutenants. His real name was unknown—the codename was all anyone used.

“You think Zhang Jinchuan is the biggest threat? He's crossed my family many times, tricked my elder brother and made him suffer. But truthfully, he can't do us much real harm. That Su Jie, though... who'd have thought a nobody would turn

out decent? Back at Minglun Martial Arts Academy, I should've crippled him completely." Feng Hengyi stood.

"When do we move, Boss?" Demon Wolf's masked face was unreadable, his voice low and sinister, like the devil his codename suggested.

"Wait for news," Feng Hengyi said. "What's the word from Awasi? I killed his top fighter, Dalu. He ought to show some response. That man made Awasi a fortune. Without him, he'll lose face in the arena against the neighboring warlords."

"I'll call in Ghost Wolf—he's in charge of intel." Demon Wolf turned to leave, but rushed back moments later, his voice ice-cold. "Boss... Boss..."

"What is it?" Feng Hengyi shot up to his feet.

"Ghost Wolf and all our patrols—they've all been knocked out. Next to Ghost Wolf, words were written on the ground. I didn't dare touch anything. You should see for yourself."

Expression unreadable, Feng Hengyi strode out.

At one of the defensive points, sure enough, Ghost Wolf lay unconscious. No bullet wounds. No knife cuts. Just... gone, without even a chance to cry out.

Next to him, words were carved into the ground: This chapter is updated by  
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[Touch my daughter, and I'll kill you.]

The handwriting was elegant, but each stroke was like a sword—brimming with murderous intent.

“Zhang Hongqing,” Feng Hengyi spat the name, scanning the surroundings. Suddenly, he vaulted upward, racing around the factory perimeter. Everywhere, his men lay collapsed, all unconscious—taken down without a sound.

“Zhang Hongqing! Show yourself!” Feng Hengyi roared. “Come fight me face to face! What kind of man skulks in the shadows?”

But the factory echoed empty, no reply.

Reaching Ghost Wolf, Feng Hengyi pressed acupoints, but the man didn't stir.

His face darkened. Examining again, he realized the truth. Murderous aura burst from him like a storm—so fierce that even Demon Wolf stumbled back in fear.

“Boss... Ghost Wolf?” he asked cautiously.

“His brain took a massive blow. Permanent damage. He’s a vegetable now. Useless. Ruined,” Feng Hengyi said grimly. “We’re leaving.”

“What about the others?” Demon Wolf shivered.

Their comrades had been disabled without a sound. Was Zhang Hongqing even human? How had he done this?

“Put a blade in them all.” Feng Hengyi gave the order and left without a backward glance.

## **Chapter 124: Encounter with God-Maker Odell**

The battered van sped down the winding road. Despite its condition, its speed was still astonishing. Every now and then, other cars appeared, but they only saw the van whoosh past, leaving them in a cloud of dust.

“Once we get to the main highway, there’ll be fewer obstacles. The van can go even faster,” Zhang Manman said. “If we drive another day and night, we’ll reach the border. Once we cross, in just a few hours we can get to another city and catch a flight back home.”

*‘We really haven’t run into another ambush along the way,’* Zhang Jinchuan thought. He knew this had to be the Zhang family’s influence at work. Otherwise, their chances of survival would’ve been slim.

But that was within his expectations. The reasons he dared to risk this trip with Zhang Manman were threefold: first, to strike at the Feng family and weaken an enemy; second, the enormous wealth to be gained; and third, with Zhang Hongqing protecting Manman, the dangers would likely end up as mere close calls.

“Su Jie, what are you thinking about?”

Throughout the journey, Su Jie had kept silent, eyes closed, resting.

The more Zhang Jinchuan observed him, the more he felt this man had value. He was already scheming about how to recruit Su Jie into his company, to bind him completely to his service.

*'From his appearance and bearing, Su Jie has great fortune, enough to complete my own fate,' Zhang Jinchuan judged, using his art of physiognomy. 'If I can secure him, it's like Liu Bang gaining Zhang Liang and Han Xin, plus Xiao He and Chen Ping. In fact, it's true. His ability aside, the team behind him—his sister Su Muchen's team—is one of Haoyu's most important tech groups. If I can poach Su Jie and bring him to my company, our technology will explode with growth. I have countless ideas right now, but I lack the technical backing.'*

Jinchuan himself understood technology—and was no slouch. Precisely because of that, he knew just how crucial it was. Official source is [novel◇fire.net](#)

His company had hit a bottleneck. The only way forward was tech.

“I’m just resting,” Su Jie opened his eyes.

“There’s a roadblock up ahead. Be careful,” Zhang Manman warned.

The van slowed and came to a stop.

Up ahead, two cars seemed overturned across the road. A few shabby buildings stood nearby, perfect for hiding ambushers. Everything about the scene screamed “trouble.”

Su Jie knew in this lawless land, roads were often broken—or blocked by bandits demanding tolls, or robbing and killing outright. That was why doing business here was so hard.



Of course, the blocked transport routes also meant sky-high prices. Anyone who could deliver goods stood to make a fortune.

“No one around,” Zhang Jinchuan reported after sliding out, crawling to cover, and scouting.

Su Jie and Zhang Manman exited instantly, splitting up to survey the area.

Manman checked her watch—her infrared radar showed no heat sources. No one was lying in wait.

“Should we move the cars and keep going?” Su Jie asked. He didn’t act yet; he knew danger often hid in the obvious.

“Careful. Could be mines or bombs among them. Let’s check again. High-tech jammers could also block the sensors.” After a moment, Zhang Manman pulled a grenade from her pack and lobbed it at the wrecks.

Boom!

The cars blew apart somewhat, no secondary explosions.

“Seems safe.” After a while longer, and with Su Jie double-checking, Manman nodded. “Now we can clear the way.”

The three moved to drag the wrecks aside.

“Someone!”

Jinchuan froze, alert.

Manman and Su Jie sensed it too. Before one of the houses by the road, a figure had appeared—tall, masked. The mask was a panda’s face, cartoonish and absurd, like a theme park mascot.

But none of them felt like laughing.

Whoosh!

Jinchuan flicked his hand—at some point he'd drawn a dagger. It shot at the panda-masked man like lightning.

“So fast!” Su Jie was startled. In the instant Jinchuan threw, his body barely moved, but the blade flashed forth like it had sprung from inside him. His throwing technique was so flawless it seemed like magic—an ultimate hidden weapon skill, honed through endless training.

This was Jinchuan's true art: lethal hidden weapons.

Though despised in martial tradition, in real combat, few things were deadlier.

Even a year's training in throwing knives could let someone kill a national fighting champion of ten years.

The old escort agencies were named for this—"biao" meant both dart and cargo. Hidden weapons were once essential survival tools on the road.

As soon as Jinchuan threw, Su Jie realized: if Jinchuan ever turned on him, he might not be able to dodge.

But the panda mask shifted—and the dagger missed. The figure closed in instantly.

His movements were ghostlike, almost ignoring gravity. If he used that footwork to dance, he'd outdo Michael Jackson's moonwalk.

*'So that's how the moonwalk can be used in fighting?'* flashed through Su Jie's mind.

But this man's "moonwalk" was fused with combat footwork—sliding, gliding, weaving like a boxer's butterfly steps. He seemed weightless, flickering like a phantom.

In barely a second, he was upon Jinchuan.

Wham!

A palm pressed his neck—pinching a nerve. Jinchuan collapsed without a sound.

Su Jie moved to help, Manman raised her gun—but the panda-masked man ducked before she could fire, slid forward, bumped her gently, and she dropped unconscious.

Su Jie felt danger like never before.

In the blink of an eye, both comrades were down—dead or alive, he couldn't tell. He couldn't even lock onto the opponent's position.

Still, he resolved to fight to the death.

He roared—a dragon's cry, a tiger's roar. He inhaled deep, then blasted it out from gut to throat, shaking his body and spirit.

In that instant, he forgot fear, forgot life and death. Time and space vanished. His psyche reached a realm he had never touched before.

He couldn't even feel his body anymore.

He launched—the “Hoe Strike.”

In the face of his comrades' defeat, his will flared fiercer than under gunfire. Spirit, energy, intent—everything rose higher.

Boom!

This strike, he believed, could tear apart mountains.

But when it hit, it was like striking the mythical pillar holding up the heavens. The man didn't budge.

Shhht!

The panda-masked man caught his move, seized his clothes, and with a mighty heave, flung him.

Su Jie hit the ground, rolled several times. Momentum slammed his head into a rock—blood flowed down his face. His bones were intact, just torn skin. Thanks to his hard-trained body, what would've cracked an ordinary skull left him only bloodied.

Drenched in blood, numb to pain, Su Jie got up. Eyes fixed on the panda mask, ready to fight again.

At that moment, grief and resolve welled in him—the feeling of being the last soldier after his homeland had fallen and comrades all slain.

Nothing left.

Only a warrior's death remained.

But then, the panda-masked man waved—and removed the mask.

Su Jie's eyes widened.

It was Odell!

The God-Maker.

His first coach, his mentor.

“Didn’t expect you to become this strong,” Odell said. His Beijing-accented voice was firm and resonant. His stubbled face looked weathered, yet his eyes shone with deep clarity.

“Coach... it’s you.” Su Jie wiped blood from his eyes with his sleeve. To outsiders, his face was ghastly, but he didn’t care. “Why did you... them...”

“They’re fine. Just unconscious,” Odell replied, studying Su Jie closely. “The account I gave you—you never logged in, yet you’ve trained to this level? As for why I’m here... it’s because of that girl’s father.”

He pointed at Zhang Manman.

## Chapter 125: A Sudden Premonition

“His father killed many of our people. I was called in to deal with him. But in fact, he and I have been long-time friends in spirit,” Odell said. “I was only playing around, really. Then I happened to find you, so I wanted to test your skills. You didn’t disappoint me. In less than a year, you’ve already become a warrior. Though still immature in places, the form is there. And you’ve broken away from my teaching, heading toward a higher path.”

“I’ve been studying Coach’s advanced technique—the ‘Thirteen Protectors’ Golden Bell Iron Shirt Dragon-Tiger Vajra Qi Gong,” Su Jie let out a breath of relief.

“Oh? That set of external training.” Odell thought for a moment. “It’s not easy to master. It includes psychological suggestion, vocalization, strike absorption, control of skeletal and muscular systems, and even keeping the rhythm of internal organs. I created it by combining anti-impact training from around the world,



refined through advanced AI big data analysis. The biggest inspiration was from Chinese hard qigong, so I gave it this name. After I perfected it, I intended to teach it to some world-class fighters, but none of them could keep it up. Yet you've managed to practice it with real effect. That's rare."

"Coach, you're not going to do anything to us, are you?" Su Jie still felt a trace of wariness.

Because Odell might be in the same organization as Feng Hengyi—part of an evil faction.

"Are you afraid?" Odell stared into Su Jie's eyes.

"I wasn't afraid just now. But now I am," Su Jie admitted.

"Perfect answer." Odell clapped his hands. "I'm leaving. There's nothing more I can teach you. You have to strengthen your own mental qualities and make the final breakthrough."

"No, no, no..." Su Jie quickly waved his hands. "I still have so many questions. Last time, one month wasn't enough—you only gave me the foundation, and it's too tiring to explore everything alone. By the way, could you explain that sidestepping 'space step' you used to dodge the dagger just now? I didn't see it clearly."

"There's a flash drive with my video materials." Odell tossed him a USB stick. "Watch it when you get back. That step actually exists in the 'Hoe-Head' move—

you just don't know how to vary it. I simply improved it with experimental data. Ancient Martial Art was powerful, but lacked precision. Modern biomechanics, powered by big data, has gone far beyond the ancients. Only in psychological training do we still lag behind."

"Coach, after all this searching, have you found supernatural power?" Su Jie asked.

"Not yet," Odell replied. "But I think I'm close. I've seen evidence of its existence. Even if I explained it, you wouldn't understand. I'll be waiting ahead for you. Don't fall behind."

With that, he left quickly.

Su Jie, seeing him go, rushed to revive Zhang Manman and Zhang Jinchuan. After massaging them for a while, the two indeed woke up.

They were unharmed. Su Jie trusted in Odell's extraordinary skill—the strongest "god-maker" in the world.

"Su Jie, are you okay?" Zhang Manman saw his face covered in blood. "Where are we?"

"Did you drive that man off?" Zhang Jinchuan, the quickest to recover, glanced around and realized they were still in the same place. His mind snapped back into gear, and he looked at Su Jie suspiciously.

He couldn't help it. With his skill, he couldn't last even one round against that 'masked panda.' Su Jie should be no different. How could he possibly have driven the man away?

"That man was my former coach. He was just joking with me," Su Jie said. "The blood on my face came from hitting a rock. Nothing serious."

He wrapped the wound simply.

"Your former coach?" Zhang Jinchuan was even more puzzled. "What kind of coach is that strong? I've seen many masters, but never anyone like that. Even the strongest world champion fighter couldn't drop me with a single move."

"Alright," Zhang Manman cut in. "Since we're fine, let's leave here quickly. There's too much chaos in a warzone."

Zhang Jinchuan didn't press further. The three moved the barricade aside, restarted the van, and continued forward.

The road was smoother this time, with no real obstacles. But Zhang Manman's mind was clearly elsewhere—brooding. Zhang Jinchuan was lost in thought as well. Su Jie knew what weighed on her: she feared her father might face a formidable enemy.

Whether it was Odell or Zhang Manman's father Zhang Hongqing, both were terrifying. Super-soldiers with sky-high solo combat ability were disasters wherever they appeared. Su Jie remembered when armed criminals in China once evaded capture despite tens of thousands of armed police combing the mountains. Even though they were eventually shot, the resources spent were immense. And those criminals only had basic counter-surveillance and some fitness training.

The destructive power of true "super-soldiers" was on another level. Skilled in disguise, exceptional physical endurance, sharp counter-surveillance, superb marksmanship, agile minds, and unshakable nerves—such agents were terrifying.

Even though Su Jie was now strong, able to fight in rings and brawls, against such enemies—say, an assassin with poison blow darts—he might not escape death.

This realization only hardened his conviction.

Killing techniques are not Martial Art.

Martial Art might include killing moves, but those were never the core—only side branches.

Stimulated by Odell, Su Jie felt he had advanced again. Especially when he thought his companions Zhang Manman and Zhang Jinchuan had "died," he had exploded

with the full intent of the 'Hoe-Head' strike. It was beyond anything he'd ever achieved, reaching a new peak.

If he tried again now, he probably couldn't replicate it.

*'If I could bring out that punch every time, my mental strength might break through its shackles and truly reach the 'living-dead' state,'* Su Jie pondered. But no matter how much he tried to re-enter that mindset, he couldn't.

"I must still lack accumulation. This time I faced real danger, bullets flying, and that gave me one authentic experience. But perhaps it's still not enough." He thought. "No matter. There will be more chances. When I go back, I'll carefully digest this, let it settle, and wait for it to mature."

After all, he was still a student, with college entrance exams awaiting him.

This trip had been both a mission and a journey. NEW NOVEL CHAPTERS ARE PUBLISHED ON [novellfire.net](http://novellfire.net)

He had lived through experiences that enriched his life. His martial progress was leaps ahead of what it would've been had he trained alone in seclusion.

For the first time, he truly understood the saying: “Reading ten thousand books is not as good as traveling ten thousand miles.”

As they neared the border, Zhang Manman stashed guns, ammo, grenades, and knives in the van, waiting for pickup. Sure enough, members of the Zhang family arrived to receive them, even taking the “Hungry Wolves” into custody.

“These men all carry sizable bounties. Once we’re back, the money will be wired to you,” Zhang Manman said. “Now let’s change clothes for the airport.”

The three changed outfits. Su Jie put on a simple tracksuit, Zhang Jinchuan a suit and tie, instantly charming and eye-catching.

Before long, they reached the airport, boarded with passports, and got on an international flight.

It wasn’t a bad plane, though their seats weren’t together. Zhang Jinchuan was in the back, Zhang Manman in the middle, and Su Jie in the front. It was going to be a long trip—over ten hours, with stops in several foreign countries.

Once seated, Su Jie finally relaxed. His head wound had already healed well, thanks to disinfectant, medicine, and his strong constitution. Surface injuries always healed faster on him than on others.

“At last, going home. No matter how great the outside world is, it’s never as good as home.” Su Jie’s mood was light. Thinking of all he’d been through, it felt dreamlike. In just ten hours, he’d be back in his country. He couldn’t help but feel happy.

But suddenly, another thought struck him: “What if something cliché happens? Hijackers on board, or terrorists taking over?”

In movies and novels, whenever the protagonist boarded a plane, something always went wrong.

At that thought, he immediately stood up, pretending to head for the restroom, and walked toward the back of the plane. As he moved, his eyes scanned each passenger, memorizing their faces, builds, and spirits, comparing them against his knowledge of physiognomy to see if any looked suspicious.

After careful observation, he found nothing unusual.

“Sir, the lavatory is closed fifteen minutes before and after takeoff,” a foreign flight attendant said to Su Jie in English.

“My apologies.” Su Jie hadn’t really needed the restroom anyway. He returned to his seat, scanning again.

*'My physiognomy isn't sharp enough. If only Masters Malao were here—their skills are a hundred times sharper than mine. They could even read foreigners at a glance. I can't.'*

Su Jie cursed his lack of mastery.

Books are useless when you truly need them.

During exams, you regret not studying harder. In the ring, when beaten, you regret not training harder.

"What's wrong?" Zhang Jinchuan, seated behind, quietly asked. He knew Su Jie didn't actually need the restroom.

"Right, your physiognomy is better than mine. You've seen more people, studied longer. Take a look—any criminals or terrorists here? Better to be sure before takeoff." Su Jie said.

"Why would you think that?" Zhang Jinchuan was taken aback.

"No reason. Just being cautious. The thought popped into my head when I relaxed. Everything's gone too smoothly. I don't want us to die just when we think we're safe."



“A sudden premonition?” Zhang Jinchuan’s face grew serious. He too began scanning. “You may be right. I hadn’t thought that far, assuming it was over. Actually, your physiognomy knowledge isn’t beneath mine. But this is an experiential science. You need practice. In business, recruiting talent, spotting reliable people, that’s what trained my eye. You lack that kind of experience.”

Zhang Jinchuan had interviewed and selected thousands, even tens of thousands of people to build his company of hundreds. Naturally, his experience outstripped Su Jie’s.

## Chapter 126: Fortune and Disaster Hang by a Thread

At that moment, Zhang Jinchuan also began to deliberately observe.

He strolled around, taking the chance to carefully size up each passenger, but he found nothing unusual. It all seemed normal.

“Foreigners’ faces are different from ours. The records in physiognomy might be incomplete; we’d need a large dataset of foreigners to fill the gaps.” After a quick sweep, Zhang Jinchuan spread his hands helplessly. His physiognomy skills were stronger than Su Jie’s, but still far from flawless.

“What are you two doing?” Their movements caught Zhang Manman’s attention.

“Su Jie thinks something feels wrong. He asked me to see if any of the passengers might be terrorists.” Zhang Jinchuan said, “But I didn’t notice anything.”

“It’s not even that I feel something’s wrong. It was just a sudden thought. Normally, this trip has gone relatively smoothly, and once we’re back home, we’d be safe. But this is the last hurdle.” Su Jie said, “I’m not sure—maybe I’m just overthinking it.”

“A thought like that must have a reason.” Zhang Manman instantly became alert. “You two both know physiognomy—can’t you see anything?”

“Nothing at all,” Zhang Jinchuan shook his head.

“Then let’s get off this plane,” Zhang Manman said. “Change our itinerary. Or report it and have the plane re-checked.”

“That’s not necessary, is it?” Zhang Jinchuan thought she was joking. “Maybe Su Jie’s just being paranoid. Everyone gets thoughts like that. I often think about car accidents when I’m out driving, but nothing ever happens. Usually, disaster strikes when you least expect it. If you’re mentally prepared, it might not come at all.”

He was describing a psychological phenomenon.

“There’s also Murphy’s Law—the more you worry about something, the more likely it is to happen.” Su Jie analyzed his sudden thought. “But we’ve already boarded the plane. We can’t exactly get off now.”

“It’s fine.” Zhang Manman said, “Both Master Roma and Master Luo saw something special in you, so you must have some hidden luck. I’ll go speak to the stewardess.” She stood up, walked over, and whispered a few words in English.

The stewardess conversed with her at length, then nodded.

Sure enough, before long, a group of police boarded the plane for another security check.

But the first people they inspected were Su Jie, Zhang Jinchuan, and Zhang Manman.

After thoroughly checking the three and finding nothing, they moved on to the others and even unloaded all the luggage for re-inspection.

The passengers grew nervous seeing this.

But again, nothing turned up.

Then, an officer gave a brief order to his subordinate.

Soon, a police dog was brought on board.

The dog sniffed around, then suddenly lunged at an inconspicuous woman, barking furiously and nearly attacking her.

“Don’t move!” Several officers instantly drew their guns and aimed at her.

The woman, however, suddenly grabbed a nearby passenger and twisted his neck. She wore a ring, and from it sprang razor-sharp blades—something the security checks had completely missed.

Shhht! Shhht!

But before she could act, the police fired their tasers. The electrodes shot into her body, and she convulsed violently before collapsing unconscious with the hostage.

It all happened in an instant—fast, decisive, leaving Su Jie and Zhang Jinchuan stunned.

“That’s how the police operate abroad. Especially here—taking hostages is useless. Sometimes they’ll even kill the hostage along with the criminal.” Zhang Manman was unfazed. “But Su Jie, you really are a lucky star. If not for you, things could’ve ended badly. I took a risk too—if nothing had been found, I’d probably have ended up in detention. Luckily my dad has connections with airport security, or they never would’ve brought a dog aboard.”

“I can’t believe there really was a terrorist. Was it truly my sixth sense... or just coincidence?” Even Su Jie was shocked.

“Incredible.” Zhang Jinchuan gave him a thumbs-up. “I thought once she grabbed a hostage, there’d be a standoff and we’d have a chance to shine. I didn’t expect the police to be so ruthless, not even caring about the hostage.”

“That’s how it always goes in stories: hijackers on a plane, the protagonist fights them off, rescues everyone, and wins the girl’s admiration.” Su Jie laughed, feeling genuine relief for the first time.

“You two are worse than a dog,” Zhang Manman said. “And you call yourselves students of Masters Roma and Luo?”

“The police dog was definitely sharper than us.” Su Jie had to admit.

Zhang Jinchuan had no comeback.

After all this, the flight was delayed two hours—but they gained peace of mind.

More than ten hours later, after multiple transfers, Su Jie finally landed safely at B City's airport that evening.

He didn't linger. He immediately bought a ticket to S City and rushed back overnight.

Zhang Manman and Zhang Jinchuan stayed in B City to handle follow-up matters.

This trip abroad to a war-torn region hadn't exactly been life-or-death, but it had been full of danger. Su Jie hadn't gained a cent, but he didn't care. He needed time to quietly reflect on how the experience had toughened his mentality.

He'd been away long enough. Now it was time to return to school and prepare for the college entrance exams—that was his real priority.

Not that the exam itself worried him, but he still had to decide which university to attend.

Boarding the flight from B City to S City, Su Jie finally relaxed. Traveling abroad had shown him that home was where true peace lay, where he could actually sleep soundly.

He bought a first-class ticket, reclined in the spacious seat, and pulled out his brick-like AI learning device. Plugging in the USB drive Odell had given him, he was ready to study the “Space Step.”

This footwork was as swift and elusive as a phantom—an illusion of weightlessness. It looked like moving forward but was actually retreating; looked like retreating, yet advanced instead. It was clearly one of Odell’s latest creations, and extremely difficult.

Just as Su Jie was about to start the video, a waft of perfume brushed past him. A tall woman in professional attire—a sharp-looking elite—sat down beside him, as if fresh from a high-stakes negotiation.

“So it’s you?” she spoke first.

Su Jie had already recognized her: Li Xiaozhen.

Last time, when she was drunk, he had rescued her and taken her home, and that was the end of it.

Later, while reading about Haoyu Group's acquisition of the Xu family, he saw that she was the one leading the negotiations. In life, she was a mess who couldn't clean her house; in business, she was sharp, precise, and a formidable opponent.

Feng Yuxuan had two key women under him: one outward-facing—Li Xiaozhen; and one inward-facing—Tang Tian, who gathered intelligence, managed departments, and monitored employees.

It was said that Haoyu Group had three powerful career women: Li Xiaozhen, Tang Tian, and Fang Jia.

Li Xiaozhen and Tang Tian worked for Feng Yuxuan, while Fang Jia worked for Feng Qianzang.

"So it's you." Su Jie didn't even sit up, replying lazily.

"I really underestimated you." Li Xiaozhen stared at him as if flowers bloomed on his face. "You actually handled the Xu family's seized goods overseas without a word. Thanks to you, I not only failed to complete the acquisition but cost my company money. Tell me—how are you going to compensate me?"



“Those who commit too many wrongs will bring about their own downfall,” Su Jie said without looking at her. “I think you should leave Haoyu. You don’t need the money, so why help criminals and play the accomplice?”

“Criminals? With just that statement, I could sue you for slander.” Li Xiaozhen’s expression cooled. “I’ve already looked into you. Your sister still works at Haoyu. Are you calling her a criminal too?”

“Don’t let me find out you caused my sister’s company to go bankrupt.” Su Jie’s tone stayed calm. “I saved you once, and instead of being grateful, you used me as a shield against Xu Jiahong. I let it slide, but make no mistake—Feng’s family taking this loss marks the beginning of their decline.”

“Then I’ll wait and see.” Li Xiaozhen replied. “Haoyu’s strength is beyond your comprehension. This small setback is just a step back to advance further. And don’t even think about convincing your sister to jump ship—her contract binds her to Haoyu for life.”

“Threats won’t work.” Su Jie laughed.

Before, he might’ve gotten angry. But after facing bullets abroad, this seemed like child’s play. “That so-called strength is just Feng Yuxuan’s ties to international crime syndicates. Evil never triumphs. We captured one of their men—‘Starving Wolf’—and handed him to Interpol. It’s only a matter of time before they uncover Feng Yuxuan’s crimes. When Interpol knocks on your door, we’ll see if you’re still so confident. You probably don’t even know the half of it—like how Feng Yuxuan used drones armed with guns to try to kill me. That’s straight out of a movie. Ever seen that in real life?”

“Are you serious?” Li Xiaozhen’s face darkened as she tried to argue. “Feng Yuxuan colluding with international criminals?”

“Use your brain.” Su Jie said. “The Xu family stumbles, and immediately Feng’s people step in, with armed forces seizing their goods. You don’t think that’s suspicious? You’re clever, but not foolish enough to wade into outright crime. Walk away before you get dragged down and end up in prison.”

“I don’t know if what you say is true or not.” Li Xiaozhen hesitated. “But I’ll investigate. If it’s real, I’ll leave Haoyu immediately. I may push limits in business, but never into crime.”

“Good.” Su Jie knew she was just a capable businesswoman, not someone who’d dare mix with international criminals. Anyone with sense could see it was a powder keg.

If she refused to listen, she’d eventually pay the price.

Since Li Xiaozhen was beside him, Su Jie didn’t feel like studying Odell’s video anymore. He closed his computer and rested his eyes.

Li Xiaozhen busied herself on her own laptop, digging for information.

The plane took off smoothly, and two hours later they landed in S City without even turbulence.

“Nothing feels better than home.”

After disembarking, Su Jie stretched, breathing in the fresh air. It was spring turning into summer. A fine drizzle fell, with a chill in the air.

It was already April, but the cold lingered.

“How about I give you a ride? I’ve got a driver—it’s on the way.” Li Xiaozhen came over.

“No need,” Su Jie said. “I booked a ride through an app. It’s a high-end business car. Only two hundred yuan, and the service beats your driver’s.”

Sure enough, outside the exit, a high-end business van pulled up. The driver, wearing white gloves, opened the door, loaded Su Jie’s luggage, and closed it behind him.

Li Xiaozhen could only watch as Su Jie disappeared into the distance.

## Chapter 127: Hardship in the Bustling City

When Su Jie got home, it was already two in the morning. His parents were asleep, and his older sister, as usual, had spent the night at the company.

He didn't wake his parents. After a quick shower, washing up, and tidying things, he lay down and went straight to sleep.

Four hours later, at six o'clock, he got up. The sky was bright, the streets already crowded with commuters hurrying to work.

Traffic in City S was notoriously bad. Some people who lived in the suburbs had to get up at five and spend two or three hours on the road just to get to work—it was exhausting. Su Jie quickly washed up and ate breakfast. His breakfast was simple: military field rations, plus an egg and a glass of boiled water.

He'd gotten home too late yesterday to buy groceries and cook. Fortunately, while the field rations didn't taste great, they were rich in nutrition, packed with the vitamins and supplements soldiers needed in combat—perfect for someone training intensively.

These rations were actually expensive and unavailable on the market. They were designed for convenience, their only drawback being the flavor.

Zhang Manman had once said that these were developed by advanced nutrition labs specifically to address soldiers' needs in war zones. Su Jie ate them happily—he didn't care about the taste, only that they replenished his body.

"This stuff isn't bad."

While he was eating, his father, Su Shilin, got up. He glanced at the metal can on the table, scooped a bit with his finger, and tasted it. "You've been saying you were studying in City B these past few months. When did you go to a war zone? Are you trying to get yourself killed?"

"Dad, that's disgusting," Su Jie frowned as he watched his father dig his finger into the can.

"You little brat, you dare complain?" Su Shilin barked. "Forget that—what I want to know is, did you get shot over there?"

"Of course not," Su Jie replied, feigning nonchalance. "It was just business negotiations. Dad, don't imagine a war zone is as dangerous as it sounds. Haven't you seen the videos online? People open restaurants there, screen movies, take on construction projects, run export businesses—the economy is booming. Even the foreign mercenaries there told me, 'Bro, no problem.' It's not as bad as you think."

“You think I’ve never been abroad?” Su Shilin snapped. “Enough. Today you’re going to school. The college entrance exam is only two months away. If you don’t come out on top this time, you’d better watch your legs.”

“Got it,” Su Jie said. “I’m heading out then.”

“Who said you’re done?” Su Shilin added. “After school, go pick someone up at the airport. I’ll send you the flight and contact details.”

“Who is it?” Su Jie asked.

“You’ll find out when you get there. Stop asking so many questions. Just go—you’ll benefit from it.”

Su Jie shook his head, cleared the dishes, washed up, shouldered his big backpack, and left for school.

Normally he woke up at three to train, but since he’d gotten home so late, he decided to prioritize rest and recovery. Besides, he’d realized that the saying \*‘the perfect man moves like a machine’\* wasn’t about external actions but about inner discipline.

“Still, I’ll have to resume training tomorrow. Can’t slack off. But where am I supposed to train...?” Su Jie worried.

Before, his morning workouts were simple—joint stretches, push-ups, Tiger’s Rest, running, jump rope, punching, kicking. Even though they were intense, doing them quietly in the park never disturbed anyone.

But now, that sort of exercise no longer did much for him.

He was practicing the “Thirteen Protectors’ Golden Bell Iron Shirt Dragon-Tiger Vajra Qi Gong.”

This kind of external hard-style training required stripping down, covering himself in ointment, and taking heavy blows that sounded like firecrackers going off. On top of that, he had to roar like a beast.

Tiger’s roar! Dragon’s cry! Furious shouts! Roars! Eagle’s screech! Crane’s call! Ape’s howl! Elephant’s trumpet! Horse’s neigh! Bull’s bellow!

These sounds, combined with the explosive movements, pushed his body to the limit—so that in the chaos of ten thousand troops, he would remain unshaken; against crashing waves, stand like a rock; amidst quakes and floods, laugh as if nothing mattered.

But in the city? Impossible to practice.

He'd thought about it many times but never found a solution. And he couldn't skip training—this was his prime time for growth.

The only option was retreating to deserted mountains and forests, where he could unleash himself fully. He'd already noticed that training in the wilderness was far more effective than in a soundproof room. Out there, he could let his wildness out and be closer to nature.

*'If nothing works, I'll just have to take leave again—and maybe head back to the Minglun Martial Arts Academy. There are mountains nearby, and I could talk more with Uncle Mang and Gu Yang,'* Su Jie thought as he arrived at school. But the idea of taking leave again made him wince.

In senior year, with exams looming, asking for leave all the time was unheard of.

If he didn't always rank first, the school would've expelled him long ago.

When he entered the classroom, his classmates gave him thumbs-up. His old buddy Qi Shuai said, "Bro, you're a legend—one leave lasts half a month. Today's the mock exam. If you bomb it, the homeroom teacher's gonna eat you alive."



“Qian Zheng’s been working hard too,” another friend, Zhang Minghui, added. “He’s gunning for you.”

Sure enough, Su Jie sat down and looked over at Qian Zheng.

Qian Zheng had grown sturdier. His energy and spirit had transformed—brimming with vitality and determination. He wasn’t the same as before.

Before, his strength was only external. Now, something had solidified inside him, filled with a new aura.

Others might not notice, but Su Jie felt it clearly.

“Su Jie, it was a pity you left Starshine last time. Coach Hua Xing left too, teamed up with you, and opened a gym. That wasn’t very cool of you,” Qian Zheng said, walking up.

“My business and Starshine aren’t in the same field,” Su Jie replied. “You recruit students; we don’t.”

“But Coach Hua Xing used your win over Zhou Chun to promote you, and that hurt Starshine’s reputation in the industry,” Qian Zheng said, slamming his hands on the desk, tension radiating from him.

“Your real mistake was selling out to Haoyu,” Su Jie said. “You grabbed short-term profit but gave up long-term growth. I know you probably gained something, but keep going like this and you’ll lose yourself.”

“I’ve gotten stronger,” Qian Zheng insisted. “Much stronger. Strong in a way you can’t imagine. Haoyu brought us a whole new training system—yours is outdated. One month of mine equals a year of yours. After school, dare to meet me in the gym for a rematch?”

“Sure,” Su Jie nodded.

“It’s settled,” Qian Zheng declared. “This time, I’ll defeat you!”

Su Jie could feel the intensity of his obsession.

Soon, their homeroom teacher, Chen Juan, entered with a stack of test papers. She cast a sharp look at Su Jie. “Su Jie, you’ve been gone far too long. No sense of discipline. Sure, your grades are good, but don’t get arrogant. If you slip today, I’ll be watching you.”

She singled him out deliberately.

Su Jie only smiled, saying nothing.

The exam began.

It was as grueling as ever—denser and harder than the college entrance exam itself. That was the point: if you practiced with the hardest, the real test would feel easy.

Like at the start of the semester, the papers came from Haoyu Group's AI-driven question bank. Back then, a full day of exams had left Su Jie exhausted. Now, it felt like sipping afternoon tea.

Every question, he only needed a glance, and the answer formed instantly in his mind. His pen flew across the paper.

His study speed was ten times that of a normal student, his mental reaction dozens of times faster.

When the results came in, Su Jie didn't even need to look—he knew he was first.

Sure enough, he scored 749, essentially full marks, with only one point deducted from his essay by the system's rules. Apparently, the AI had been programmed so that no essay could get a perfect score.

So really, 749 meant perfection.

Qian Zheng came second with 740, a massive leap—improving by 20 points at his level was shocking, like breaking a world record by tenths of a second.

“Impressive,” Qian Zheng admitted, giving a thumbs-up. “You skip weeks of classes and still get a perfect score.”

Even Chen Juan had nothing more to say. She just gave Su Jie a long, meaningful look.

“You wanted to spar, right?” Su Jie said to Qian Zheng. “Shall we head to the gym?”

“Of course.” Qian Zheng walked out.

The two went to the gym, with half the class swarming after them—students from other grades too.

“I wanted you to be my coach once, to learn your methods. But after Haoyu invested and brought in the new system, I realized yours is outdated,” Qian Zheng said as they faced each other.

Su Jie waved him on. “You ready? Let’s start.”

Roar!

Qian Zheng’s feet blurred, like gears spinning at high speed. His upper body barely moved, but in less than a second, he’d closed the distance, fists flying at Su Jie’s head, chest, and legs.

In that instant, Su Jie was reminded of Feng Hengyi’s two-punch knockout back at the Minglun Martial Arts Academy.

## Chapter 128: Confidence Shattered, Doubt Begins

Qian Zheng’s skills had indeed improved tremendously.

But in Su Jie's eyes, he wasn't even a "paper tiger."

Before Su Jie went abroad, he himself had been a "paper tiger." He thought he was a master, sometimes even feeling nearly invincible, his ego swelling every moment. But once he was thrown into the hail of bullets overseas, he realized just how fragile his psyche was—fear, worry, anxiety, panic, helplessness—negative emotions were everywhere.

Of course, he still felt those emotions now, but far less than before.

So when Qian Zheng's fist came at him, Su Jie's brain registered it as nothing more than a baby waving its tiny fists—not frightening, just childish.

And the speed? Painfully slow.

Smack!

Su Jie casually raised his arm.

Forearm clashed with forearm, intercepting Qian Zheng's strike. Then Su Jie's fingers hooked in like an eagle's talons, clamping muscle and bone, yanking downward.

“Ahh!” Qian Zheng cried out in pain. His knees buckled, and he dropped to the floor, unable to stand. Pure leverage.

Su Jie had turned his arm into a lever—any struggle would only risk snapping his bones.

“Let’s reset. Come again.” Su Jie released him.

Qian Zheng shook his wrist to dull the pain, glared fiercely, then lunged again—this time hands and feet together, feinting below while striking above.

Crack!

The instant he attacked, Su Jie’s arm swept up, clashing against his again, then snaked in and clamped down.

It was like a mantis chopping down a cicada, or a crab seizing prey, or a tiger pinning down its kill...

“It hurts, it hurts!” Qian Zheng couldn’t stop himself from crying out, no matter how hard he tried to keep face.

“Still want more?” Su Jie asked with a smile.

“You’re really using joint locks against me?” Qian Zheng shook out his arm. “That only works if you’re way stronger than your opponent.”

At least Qian Zheng knew what he was talking about. His skills had grown a lot recently, but the gap between him and Su Jie was only widening.

Fighting was fighting. Joint locks were joint locks.

Fighting was what pro fighters did in the ring—punches, kicks, maybe some wrestling. Joint locks were all about breaking fingers, snapping joints, subduing criminals—military and police training.

But joint locks required a massive skill gap. Against an equal, you’d never grab their arm; you’d just get pummeled instead. Only with overwhelming advantage could it work—and to outsiders, it looked effortless, bloodless, almost like a master’s magic trick.

“How do you even train like this?” Qian Zheng slumped to the floor. “Do you know how I’ve been training these past months? Constant sparring with experts, AI correcting my posture, specialized nutrition and meds for resistance training. I was convinced I could go toe-to-toe with pro fighters. And yet, you still locked me down so easily?”



“Physical conditioning is important, but the most important thing is psychological conditioning,” Su Jie said. “Mental cultivation. Look at any top-tier fighter—do you think they don’t have psychological coaches? Of course, that’s my secret. But if you want to learn, that’s possible too. Sign up at Grand Ascent, I can get you a membership slot.”

“You’re upselling me? Aren’t you afraid I’ll take what I learn and give it to Starshine, stealing your business?” Qian Zheng asked, baffled.

“Actually, Sharshine isn’t really under your family anymore.” Su Jie shook his head. “You should be careful. Haoyu’s no good. On the surface, it looks like your dad gave him a big share of Sharshine while keeping control himself—benefits plus authority. But the world doesn’t hand out free lunch, and Haoyu isn’t easy to deal with.”

“It’s not that complicated. My father knows exactly what he’s doing. Haoyu wants into the fitness and combat market, even bought shares in Minglun Martial Arts Academy. My dad saw the opportunity, played both sides, and Haoyu panicked, overpaid, and agreed to a bunch of conditions. It’s already a done deal—no tricks possible. You just don’t understand business. If you did, your little club wouldn’t still be playing small-time.”

“Small is good. Easier to maneuver.” Su Jie didn’t mind. Qian Zheng was competitive, sure, but at heart he wasn’t bad.

“I’ll drop by your club sometime. Even if the public hasn’t heard of it, there’s some mystique about it in the industry.” Qian Zheng got up and left in a rush, clearly off to consult someone about why he’d lost today.

Su Jie didn’t linger either. He grabbed hot water from the cafeteria, ate a military ration can, then checked the time and headed for the airport by taxi.

On the way, he pulled out his brick-thick tablet, inserted Odell’s USB drive, and started watching his instructional videos.

The opening three minutes showed slow-motion, high-definition footage of animals hunting.

A tiger ambushing an antelope—the real wilderness. The tiger crouched, hidden in the grass, then suddenly sprang. Its spine coiled and released like a spring, body surging upright almost like a man, forelimbs locking onto the prey’s head, all its force exploding in that one pounce, accompanied by a roar that froze the victim in sheer terror.

There were mantises hunting, vipers striking, eagles diving, wolves and leopards chasing, gorillas brawling...

Almost every fierce predator in nature appeared in that montage.

Most people wouldn't understand. But Su Jie immediately recognized it: a carefully crafted study of the essence of predation, capturing the power, the rhythm, the raw momentum of the kill.

To him, it wasn't just nature—it was martial wisdom.

He watched the hunting clips over and over, engraving them in his mind, before continuing.

Then Odell appeared, explaining footwork.

“Fighting footwork should be short, fast, practical. The ‘moonwalk’ is just a visual trick, useless in combat. But its feints can inspire deception, taken to the extreme...” Odell demonstrated as he spoke.

This was a secret tutorial, the kind that would sell for a fortune on the dark web.

He went on for over an hour: how to generate power, how to deceive, how to evade, how to play real against false in countless situations—like pure strategy.

Su Jie had never realized how deep footwork could go. It tied into the environment, even subtle shifts in magnetic fields that unsettled opponents.

Almost like magic.

Or rather—Odell’s footwork was a kind of magic. Practical magic.

But very hard to master.

Even top fighters, given this video, might spend years and never succeed. But Su Jie was different. He had studied under Odell directly, had a broad foundation, a sharp mind—he could digest and begin practicing right away.

The USB was packed with dozens of hours of content. Clearly, Odell had dumped his life’s research onto him, hoping Su Jie would advance further.

Su Jie had just finished the first footwork lesson when the taxi arrived at the airport. He shut it down, but not before hearing Odell’s conclusion:

“My system of footwork combines boxing steps, Chinese martial arts body methods, plus the moonwalk and robotic dance. But the most mysterious part draws from ancient Taoist ritual steps—Yu Bu Gangdou. Legend says Taoists used it to summon storms, commune with gods, and banish demons. Though long lost, fragments survive in old texts and among rare hermits. I collected and analyzed these scraps with AI, creating this new footwork. I call it the Magic Step—because in truth, anything that seems to defy physical laws is simply magic.”

Hearing this, Su Jie realized Odell was conflicted.

On one hand, he believed in science, in physical law. On the other, he was desperate to find the supernatural, to witness miracles.

And the Magic Step really was uncanny—like sleight of hand, a trick of perception. Su Jie shut off the video, thinking it would take him months just to scratch the surface.

Actually, martial arts already had similar techniques. Japanese kendo had the “inch step,” where a sudden toe-grip propelled you forward in tiny bursts. It looked like you hadn’t moved at all, yet you were suddenly closer—a pure visual trick.

Mastered, it felt like teleporting.

It reminded Su Jie of “contact juggling” with crystal balls.

Experts could make the ball look alive, floating in midair.

He searched for “Magic Step” online—nothing. On foreign sites, though, he found some news.

Latest headline: “MMA newcomer David Laki wins first championship belt.” In the fight, he used illusion-like footwork to confuse the ex-champion Cole, then defeated him. Afterwards, Laki credited his coach entirely: “My Magic Step comes from him.” His coach? The godmaker himself—Odell.

Another: “Champion Pascchi asked if he’s the strongest man alive.” Pascchi answered, “The strongest is my coach, Odell.” When asked why Odell didn’t fight himself to make money, Pascchi laughed: “A third of my fight earnings go straight to him. He doesn’t need to fight.”

## Chapter 129: Random Matchmaking

Upon arriving at the airport, Su Jie stopped looking at his computer, turned it off, and stuffed it into his bag. At that moment, a message from his father, Su Shilin, came through on his phone.

"Song Qiong, phone number xx.... flight number...."

The message contained detailed information about picking someone up.

"Who exactly is this person?" Su Jie wondered. "Is this a task from the company? By the way, it seems the boss recently switched security jobs, moving from his previous company to Zhonglong Group as the head of security, and apparently got promoted."

In fact, Su Jie was also concerned about his family's situation. During these days away, his mother, Xu Ying, was still a university professor, but it seemed she was partnering with some friends on projects.

As for his father, Su Shilin had changed companies. Originally, his father's company wasn't very large, but the work was quite relaxed. Now, Zhonglong Group was extremely vast, with a global influence surpassing that of Haoyu, being a well-established enterprise. The last time Su Jie used a ride-hailing app to mock Li Xiaozhen, it was a product developed by Zhonglong Group.

To enter this industry, Haoyu had also developed software but couldn't compete with Zhonglong, ultimately having to exit the market in disgrace. This was one of Haoyu's more unsuccessful investments.

However, when Zhonglong Group tried to enter the gaming market, they were severely beaten by Haoyu.

The two sides had clashed several times, each with their victories and defeats.

Zhonglong was the old big brother, while Haoyu was the suddenly rising newcomer.

Now, both sides had acknowledged each other's status.

The chairman of Zhonglong Group was named Song Longhua, a legendary figure who had grown up in poverty, later served in the military, and upon returning to civilian life, started a business that spiraled into a massive commercial empire. Moreover, he was low-key and rigorous in his style; it was said that he would go out alone with just a suitcase, taking taxis and standing in line. His clothes and shoes were all old and very simple, no different from an ordinary person.

His children were also very low-profile, never showing their faces, making it difficult for the media to know who they were. Unlike the flamboyant young masters of Haoyu Group, who were constantly surrounded by scandals, Song Hengyi rarely made an appearance.

Zhonglong Group's management was extremely strict, making it hard to get hired. However, once hired, the benefits were excellent, with the company covering almost everything.

Song Longhua even developed real estate not for external sale, but as rewards for internal employees.

In contrast, Haoyu was quite stingy, offering low salaries and requiring frequent overtime.

Strangely, however, applicants for Haoyu kept coming in droves.



This was a peculiar phenomenon in the industry.

Su Jie was very meticulous and knowledgeable about business, having researched the top-ranking companies in the country.

Among domestic private technology companies, Zhonglong Group ranked in the top three, closely followed by Haoyu.

As for the Xu family, although they were large now, they operated in an old, sunset industry, which would inevitably decline if they did not rapidly transform. It was only a matter of time before they faded from the historical stage; the question was whether it would be sooner or later.

*'Dad is indeed somewhat inscrutable,' Su Jie thought, a notion flashing through his mind. 'He switched to Zhonglong Group; could it be part of a larger plan? But I've seen Zhonglong Group's recruitment information, and they only want tech talents with high educational requirements, not to mention they also consider personal character. Those who smoke or drink are outright rejected. Given the boss's preferences and age, it's basically impossible for him to get in, and the HR personnel are known for being strict and unsentimental, so connections won't help.'*

These thoughts flashed through his mind, connecting various clues, and Su Jie began to understand more clearly. Including the fact that his father had him pick someone up likely had some meaning behind it.

"It's about time; I'll head to the pickup area," Su Jie said to the driver as he made his way to the pickup point.

Sure enough, not long after, a girl walked out of the exit, standing about 1.75 meters tall, dressed in ordinary sportswear and running shoes, carrying several bags and dragging two or three large suitcases. With so much luggage, it would be a struggle for even a strong man, yet she was still trying hard to pull them along.

"Song Qiong."

Su Jie held up a sign to greet the girl.

He had already seen her photo from his father's message, and despite some differences, he recognized her instantly with his keen eyesight.

"You're Su Jie? Here to pick me up?" Song Qiong was about to free her hands to make a phone call when she spotted Su Jie, her eyes lighting up.

"Let me help you with the suitcase," Su Jie offered, grabbing the largest suitcase. He weighed it slightly and looked at Song Qiong, realizing it was very heavy, wondering what was inside.

"Is it heavy? Then you can take this one," Song Qiong said, handing him a smaller bag.

"I'm just curious, how can you, a girl, manage to carry such a heavy suitcase?" Su Jie grasped the suitcase firmly, lifting it effortlessly.

Then he grabbed another large suitcase with ease, showing no signs of strain.

Not only that, but he switched hands, securing the other two large bags on top of the suitcases and lifted them all without breaking a sweat, his face calm and composed.

"You're really strong!" Now it was Song Qiong's turn to be surprised.

"You're not weak either; you managed to bring so much luggage by yourself," Su Jie remarked. "Why didn't you just ship it?"

"The things inside are very precious," Song Qiong replied. "I was afraid the courier would damage them. By the way, Su Uncle said you were strong and could help me carry things. I didn't believe it at first, but now it seems you really are quite skilled. You don't look like you have much muscle, though. Is this internal strength?"

Su Jie's physique, dressed, was merely healthy-looking, not like those muscular strongmen.

In fact, Su Jie noticed that the more he practiced the "Thirteen Protectors' Golden Bell Iron Shirt Dragon-Tiger Vajra Qi Gong," the more compact his body became, with a feeling of contraction in his flesh and bones. He suspected that if he continued practicing, he would appear even slimmer, much like the character "Li Yuanba" from legends, "with a face like a sickly ghost and bones as thin as a stick."

However, he knew this was a normal phenomenon.

Some international track athletes were even thinner than him but had tremendous explosive power and frightening endurance.

"There's no such thing as internal strength," Su Jie noted a detail; Song Qiong actually referred to his father as Su Uncle. "It's just that I'm a bit stronger."

He carried the suitcases and bags to the parking lot and placed them inside the car. Song Qiong sat in the car and sighed, "I'm really exhausted. How about you?"

"I'm fine," Su Jie asked. "Where are you headed?"

"Let's go to Zhonglong first," Song Qiong said, giving an address that was the headquarters of Zhonglong Group.

"Are you an employee of Zhonglong or..." Su Jie wondered, connecting the dots. The chairman and founder of Zhonglong was named Song Longhua, and since Song Qiong also had the surname Song, he began to suspect something.

"Didn't Su Uncle tell you?" Song Qiong glanced at Su Jie. "Song Longhua is my grandfather. Su Uncle used to help my grandfather, and now my grandfather has invited him to help with some matters again."

"That makes sense," Su Jie vaguely guessed some things in his heart; his father was indeed not a simple man. "I heard that the children of your Song family don't get cars when they go out and aren't allowed to have assistants; they arrange everything themselves, right?"

"Exactly," Song Qiong sighed, "Also, when we get to the building, you can drop me off nearby. I need to carry the suitcase myself to avoid being seen and getting scolded."

Su Jie nodded, comparing the upbringing of the Song family with the Feng and Xu families.

He had seen Feng Hengyi and Feng Yuxuan from the Feng family. Both of them were arrogant and domineering at their core, but each had their strengths. They seemed to embody a Western mindset, believing that the more high-profile they were, the more popularity and attention they could garner.

The Western style was completely different from the Eastern approach, which emphasized humility as per the I Ching; the more capable one was, the more they concealed their abilities. In contrast, the West believed that if one had abilities, they should be publicly proclaimed to gain fame, wealth, and support.

As for some disciples from the Xu family, they had become spoiled and shortsighted due to excessive indulgence from their family.

As for the Song family's disciples, looking at Song Qiong, she was just ordinary, no different from an average girl.

*'The Feng family has ability and temper. The Xu family lacks ability but has temper. The Song family's abilities are unknown, but they lack temper. I wonder how the Zhang family is?' Su Jie thought of Zhang Manman. 'She has abilities and can be temperamental with some people but not with others. She knows how to navigate situations; otherwise, she wouldn't have sought out Zhang Jinchuan and given up so many benefits. However, the Zhang family is too low-key, to the point that people hardly know them.'*

The young generation of several companies flashed through his mind in an instant.

Suddenly, he thought about national fortune and human fortune.

*'If the cultural atmosphere of the country fully aligns with the West, the Feng family's style could truly explode and become mainstream. If the cultural atmosphere of the country maintains its traditions while developing its own characteristics, then the Song family will gain the upper hand.'*

Nation, family, and people.

Su Jie increasingly understood some things.

In the car, Su Jie and Song Qiong chatted casually.

Meanwhile, in the Zhonglong Group office, Su Shilin was chatting with a "middle-aged man" in his seventies.

This "middle-aged man" was Song Longhua.

He was already over seventy years old but looked like he was in his fifties, adept at maintaining his health.

Su Shilin sat boldly across from him, lighting a cigarette and taking a puff.

Outside the door, several assistants were wide-eyed, knowing that smoking was completely banned in Zhonglong Group. Even if an executive lit a cigarette, they would be immediately fired. Yet here was a man in a security uniform smoking in the chairman's office, and the chairman was smiling.

However, beside Su Shilin, a large-capacity air purifier was running, sucking up all the "secondhand smoke," ensuring that Chairman Song Longhua wouldn't be affected health-wise.

"Little Su, you finally agreed to help me this time," Song Longhua said, watching Su Shilin smoke three cigarettes in a row before stopping. "Now tell me, what kind of treatment do you want? You don't want money?"

"Nothing much," Su Shilin flicked the cigarette butt, which accurately landed in a distant trash can, the ember extinguishing mid-air, and it was unclear what technique he used. "I don't want money; it's just that my fate seems to dictate I can't have money. Every time I have money, something unfortunate happens."

"You believe in fate?" Song Longhua asked.

"Not really," Su Shilin took a big sip of tea. "But not believing it can also lead to trouble. To be honest, I'm here to help you so that my son can meet your granddaughter. I've discovered something troubling: my arch-enemy's daughter is



about to get close to my son. If this blows up, whether he kills me or I kill him, it's going to be a big problem."

## Chapter 130: Family Traditions Differ

"Is it Zhang Hongqing?" Song Longhua seemed to understand some past events: "Brother Su, I think this matter can actually be settled. Your children are grown up; why bring up things from back then? Besides, let them handle their own affairs. It's no longer in vogue for parents to dictate their children's relationships."

"My son is not an ordinary person," Su Shilin said, crossing his legs. "Ma Fengnian and Luo Weiji have teamed up to take him as their disciple."

"Is that so?" Song Longhua was taken aback. "Old Ma and Old Luo would team up? To snatch someone?"

"This kind of news is easy to find out," Su Shilin replied. "Zhang Hongqing probably won't allow his daughter to be with my son, because we have a pact; it's uncertain who will die at whose hands."

"I said it's unnecessary," Song Longhua shook his head repeatedly. "What era is this? You still play the game of challenges? Are you in a martial arts novel or with those ruffians? Everyone has settled down and is living honestly; isn't that better?"

"You don't understand our matters," Su Shilin said. "Old brother, you just focus on your health. There's no need to get involved in this killing and fighting, which shortens life. But if something happens to me, I need to make arrangements for the future and give you a big gift. That is, my pair of children. My son Su Jie goes without saying; my daughter is a troublesome matter. She works at the Feng family and can't get out now."

"With your abilities, getting your daughter out shouldn't be too difficult," Song Longhua said. "Actually, that girl Muchen is indeed impressive. It's a pity I didn't notice her earlier; otherwise, I would have brought her into the company to avoid all this trouble." Song Longhua regretted, "Brother Su, this is your fault for not keeping an eye on your children."

"It was my oversight," Su Shilin said. "But they need to go through some trials. For example, my son, I never taught him anything. He somehow ended up at the Martial Arts Academy to learn martial arts and met some masters. Now he is gradually making a name for himself. If I had taught him, he might not have achieved what he has now."

"Whatever you say goes," Song Longhua replied. "If you need money or want me to help your daughter switch from Haoyu, I would be very willing."

"I said I don't want money. Every time you give me money, I end up in trouble," Su Shilin reiterated. "Also, if my daughter switches from Haoyu to Zhonglong, it should be a huge profit for you. Why does it seem like I'm taking advantage of you?"

"Alright, alright..." Song Longhua seemed to be at a loss with Su Shilin. "Do you think I don't want to poach the team from the Morning Dawn Studio? It's not just Zhonglong; even other old foxes are eyeing that studio. I've had the team research

it carefully; it's not just a matter of money. There are significant troubles involved, and it could even lead to commercial leaks or crimes. If it were just about money, I would have acted long ago."

"You've clashed with Haoyu multiple times, so you must know the loopholes," Su Shilin stood up. "Alright, I just brought it up. Let the children handle their own matters. I need to focus on preparing for battle and confronting Zhang Hongqing. He has already made up his mind; one of us must die."

"I know he has been secretly cultivating his strength over the years. He is very powerful. Meanwhile, you have been living aimlessly, smoking and drinking, without any exercise. Your physical abilities have deteriorated significantly; you are no match for him and would just be going to your death," Song Longhua said. "Of course, to ordinary people, you are incredibly strong, but you and I both know how terrifying Zhang Hongqing is."

"Old Song, you don't understand what realms are," Su Shilin laughed. "Don't think that just because you invite health experts for massages, diet, and psychological advice, and practice health Qi Gong yourself, that you have grasped the true core of it."

"What is the core?" Song Longhua asked.

"If you haven't died, how would you know what it means to live?" Su Shilin replied. "There are ordinary people who smoke and drink yet live over a hundred years without illness, while those who are health-conscious and avoid smoking and drinking can die young. What is the reason? It's all about one's inner state."

"Brother, I still hope you can reconcile, especially since you have a common enemy. An evil force has emerged, and I have been threatened as well. I suspect the Feng family is colluding with this evil force; it's a transnational issue. If you both end up hurting each other, it might give others an opportunity to take advantage," Song Longhua frowned.

"There can be no reconciliation," Su Shilin waved his hand and walked out.

After Su Shilin left, a trusted assistant walked in. "Chairman, what is the background of that security guard? He was smoking here; please don't let that happen again; it's not good for your health."

"He can smoke as he pleases from now on; don't mind him," Song Longhua smiled helplessly. "He is an old friend of mine. In the future, we might need to rely on him to solve our troubles."

"Why not solve any troubles through regular channels?" the trusted assistant said. "Chairman, you have always taught us to abide by the law, haven't you?"

"We do abide by the law, but abroad, in many places, if we want to sell our products, they don't play by the rules and use illegal means against us. In that case, we can only fight back," Song Longhua said. "For example, our mobile phones need to be sold in large quantities to other countries. Isn't it true that things have been going poorly lately, with extortion happening everywhere?"

"That is true," the trusted assistant nodded. "But he doesn't look impressive; can he really handle these matters?"

"That's not your concern," Song Longhua said. "Just remind the team below not to offend him and let him do as he pleases."

"Understood," the trusted assistant walked out.

On the street not far from the Zhonglong Group building, Su Jie helped Song Qiong move boxes and bags down.

"You wait here," Song Qiong said. "Sorry, I'll move these in first and then come back to thank you properly."

"No need," Su Jie waved his hand.

"No way," Song Qiong insisted. "If my grandfather finds out, he will punish me. Please!" There was a hint of pleading in her eyes.

"Alright," Su Jie nodded. "Then I'll wait for you here."

Song Qiong struggled to drag the large bags and boxes into the Zhonglong Group building.

"This family discipline is really strict," the rental car driver commented. "We also rely on Zhonglong's ride-hailing app for our livelihood. The platform is indeed fair and often gives us subsidies. Such a company doesn't go bad. Unlike before, Haoyu also had a ride-hailing app, and at first, they offered huge subsidies to attract us. But when they started losing money, they began cutting our pay and frequently had problems. In the end, they had to sell it off. I still have a few thousand yuan stuck in there; I might as well feed it to the dogs."

"Haoyu has a terrible reputation," Su Jie knew that in business, Haoyu was like a locust, leaving nothing in its wake, devouring everything, but one had to admit Feng Shoucheng's sharp vision.

Especially his three sons, though arrogant and notorious, were extremely profitable and did not squander their family wealth.

Take the second son, Feng Qianzhang, for example; entertainment news was always about him being photographed with some female star at a hotel or vacationing with some female internet celebrity, his private life a complete mess, yet he would spend millions to book out a bar.

But every movie or TV series he invested in would become a hit.

Moreover, any industry he invested in would experience explosive growth, and at the peak of that growth, he would quietly withdraw, pocketing the last penny.

In this regard, he truly had a bit of luck and strength.

After waiting for half an hour, Song Qiong came out of the building, still in her sportswear. "There's a leisure center opened by our company nearby. I have an employee card that gives a 50% discount. Can I treat you to sit there for a while?"

"No problem," Su Jie said as he bid farewell to the driver.

"Thank you, driver, for taking us," Song Qiong waved her hand, very approachable, showing no airs.

Then, the two walked two blocks and arrived at another building.

This building was quite upscale, with a shopping mall on the outside, offering food, drink, and shopping, while inside was a fitness area, also featuring coffee, desserts, and various snacks. The environment was quite nice, and most of the people inside were employees of Zhonglong Group, wearing employee badges.

Some even recognized Song Qiong, greeting her as they passed by, but everyone was busy with their own affairs, and there was no gossip or crowding around.

Su Jie then realized that the employees of Zhonglong Group were indeed of very high quality.

The two found a quiet seat inside, facing a large floor-to-ceiling glass window.

Across the glass was a Japanese dojo, where people were practicing judo, karate, and kendo, as well as archery. The divided areas were somewhat similar to Xingyao but had more cultural depth than Xingyao.

Most of the fitness practitioners here were not looking for fights but were experiencing martial arts culture.

The decor also had a subtle Zen quality to it.

"I heard you practice martial arts and have opened a club, but it's only open internally," Song Qiong said, knowing Su Jie well. "I also practiced judo and learned from a famous master, Master Hōshō from Japan, who mastered the highest judo technique, 'Air Throw.' I saw your video of defeating Zhou Chun. Do you know what level Zhou Chun is at now?"



"I haven't kept track these days," Su Jie replied.

"Yesterday, Zhou Chun won the championship at the He Shan Cup National Fighting Championship, defeating the domestic third-ranked Gao Jianhong. His ranking has now entered the top three in the country, and his strength is fierce and domineering; he has completely transformed into a different person," Song Qiong took out her phone and opened a news article. "Look, this is a video of his match."

Su Jie watched the video and noticed that Zhou Chun's combination of punches and kicks, and his fighting style, indeed seemed to have changed. Almost every dodge was exceptionally precise, and during his attacks, he clearly exuded a fierce killing intent. This killing intent was not just a show of bravado but had a tangible bloody quality to it.

*'Zhou Chun has killed before. And not just one person,'* a fleeting thought crossed Su Jie's mind.

Having returned from a war-torn area and learned about physiognomy, he could, on a certain psychological level, discern whether someone had killed before.

Killing is prohibited in any country; it is a psychological and moral shackle. Once someone breaks through this moral barrier, their mental and spiritual quality will subtly differ on some level.

Ordinary people find it hard to sense this difference, but Su Jie could clearly feel it.

Even when he faced attacks in war-torn areas, he had never killed anyone.

For example, "Gray Wolf" only injured, and "Hungry Wolf" also only injured, without ever harboring thoughts of killing.

In a way, Zhang Jinchuan said that his mercy would lead to great losses in the future.

Su Jie also believed he might suffer losses, but deep down, he still held onto the idea of maintaining a certain moral and civilized bottom line.

Zhang Jinchuan actually acknowledged that martial arts is a killing technique; ring fighting does not count as martial arts; it is merely a performance. Only by truly engaging in combat, having blood on one's hands, can one break through certain psychological defenses and attain true martial arts.

Su Jie understood this principle, but he wanted to try something new.