

THE WAY OF RESTRAINT

Chapter 81: Saving Beauty in Passing Life is Like Chess, Full of Uncertainty

Flames rolled within the wok, the spatula fluttered like a butterfly, and the large iron pan bounced rhythmically in Su Jie's hands. Every ingredient inside was evenly exposed to the heat. This required total focus—to sense the changing temperature of the fire and the way the seasonings were seeping into the food.

Even a moment's distraction would ruin the dish's perfect flavor.

The pan at home was one of those old-fashioned iron woks, completely uncoated—not like the stainless steel or non-stick ones commonly sold in stores.

Only a raw iron wok could infuse that unique iron-plate aroma into the ingredients.

But such woks were incredibly heavy. Most people couldn't even lift one, let alone toss ingredients with it.

Su Jie, however, had serious martial art skills and enormous arm strength. Tossing the pan was easy for him. But doing it while maintaining perfect control over the heat and ensuring every piece of food was evenly cooked—that was as difficult as embroidering a balloon with a needle. One slip, and it would all go boom.

Cooking was easy to learn. But to bring out color, aroma, and flavor—to let the deliciousness penetrate to someone's very bones and soul—wasn't something hard work alone could accomplish. It demanded exquisite control and total unity between heart and action.

It was, in essence, the same as martial art.

No—more than that—it came from the same source.

Su Jie had been learning to cook for a month. Today, he finally grasped the essence of it.

He had only practiced one dish over and over: stir-fried cabbage with pork.

Mixing vegetables and meat into a dish where both flavors fully fuse together—that was no small feat.

But today, Su Jie finally pulled it off.

He felt his martial art had improved as a result.

'Martial art really is present in every little part of daily life. It's not something you can chase through brute force. Now I understand the level Coach Odell has achieved. The Typhon Training Camp has the most advanced technology and enhancement drugs you'd only find in a lab. But if your mental strength doesn't keep up, those tools might help, but they'll never take you to the peak.'

Just like mastering the “Hoe Strike” move, once he perfected stir-fried cabbage with pork, the other dishes he cooked shot up in quality too.

Green peppers with scrambled eggs, minced pork with eggplant, garlic ribs, spicy chicken... each came effortlessly. The more homestyle the dish, the harder it was to get right—but Su Jie was now completely at ease.

“I remember in a wuxia novel, there was a kitchen monk at Shaolin Temple who ended up mastering supreme martial arts, causing an uproar. Cooking really is great for practicing martial art—if you put your heart into it and control the heat right. Gentle simmering for internal energy, strong fire for strikes, sudden bursts for explosive movement—it's the same as internal, external, and hardened training in martial arts. Ordinary ingredients, once handled by a master, can become legendary dishes. It's all a matter of timing and heat. Same with people—get the heat just right, and you can become a master.”

While pondering this, his hands moved quickly, packing all the food into an insulated container to deliver to his mom.

Though it was winter break, his mom was still busy giving lectures—those gigs came with cash bonuses, a nice side income beyond her salary.

In previous years, Su Jie would take tutoring jobs over the holidays through websites. But this winter break, he had money—so he took it easy.

His next plan was to consider upgrading to a bigger home.

But in S City, homes easily cost tens of millions. The larger ones go for dozens of millions, and some villas start at over a hundred million. His one million was basically pocket change.

Still, their current place was too cramped. Su Jie wanted a spacious study where he could cultivate himself, practice calligraphy, and collect more books.

He glanced at the pile of books stacked on his bed and the notebooks and workbooks crammed in the corner. He shook his head. This was a true “shabby room.” Even though he wasn’t materialistic, he’d long had the idea of improving his parents’ living conditions.

Their neighborhood was too old. The original residents had mostly moved out, replaced by renters. Property management didn't care. Cars were parked haphazardly. Graffiti was everywhere. The flower beds were broken and dirty. The whole area was just a mess.

After dropping off lunch to his mom, Su Jie went, as usual, to Huaxing for his regular training and coaching session.

With Huaxing's development, only skilled fighters or people of status came through its doors. It was starting to resemble a proper research association.

Su Jie's display of martial arts amazed everyone. Still, he was young—too young to have the kind of reputation and connections people like “Master Ma” or Old Chen had. People admired his abilities, sure. But to genuinely respect him, to feel he was someone of “profound virtue and great prestige”—that wasn't happening yet.

In most people's eyes, he was just a talented “young coach,” not a true “master.”

That kind of reputation would take at least thirty or forty more years.

Su Jie didn't care. He was making money, and he had people to train and talk with. That was enough.

In coaching others, he felt his own skills growing rapidly. Every person had a different body structure and needed a different approach. By constantly testing and adjusting methods, and by analyzing the feedback, he could refine his own understanding and push his own level higher.

Huaxing had been observing Su Jie's daily routine lately—and they were honestly amazed.

Aside from eating and sleeping, Su Jie was essentially practicing martial art in everything he did—thinking, moving, meditating. No—correction—even when he was eating and sleeping, he was still practicing.

When he was a professional athlete, Hua Xing's training volume and precision weren't even a third of Su Jie's.

Especially in terms of precision—Hua Xing had never seen anyone eat with such thoroughness: chewing everything into pulp, not speaking a word, focusing completely, immersing himself in the experience. After meals, Su Jie would habitually swallow saliva and massage his stomach to promote peristalsis and aid digestion.

Su Jie's daily routine was almost robotic.

He never indulged in the usual pastimes young people enjoyed—games, movies, clubbing, dancing, drinking, playing cards, parties, or even dating. None of it existed in Su Jie’s world.

At times, Hua Xing even suspected Su Jie might be a robot or a cyborg.

It was terrifying—so mechanical, so regimented.

This was truly the embodiment of “a sage moves like a machine.”

To outsiders, Su Jie’s life would seem painfully dull, but he felt a deep, genuine contentment.

Of course, he didn’t think others were wasting their lives by living differently. Everyone had their own way of approaching life—as long as he managed his own path, that was enough.

Gradually, his mind settled completely. He felt he wasn’t far from a breakthrough.

That night, after finishing a coaching match and leaving the club, he was on his way home when a tall woman in professional attire carrying a small handbag stumbled toward him. She was clearly drunk. Without warning, she gagged—and nearly vomited all over him.

“You alright?” Su Jie wasn’t angry. Instead, he calmly offered a warning.

Not far off was a street lined with bars. It wasn’t unusual for drunk women to pass out on the roadside, sometimes even getting “picked up” by predators. Fights between drunkards also broke out from time to time.

But it was rare to see someone this wasted so early in the evening. Usually that mess started closer to midnight.

“Take me home, I’ll give you ten thousand yuan,” the woman slurred, grabbing Su Jie’s shirt.

“Where do you live?” he was about to ask when a shout rang out from the corner: “Stop right there!”

Four young men had followed her.

One of them, a tattooed thug with a floral sleeve, walked right up to Su Jie and yanked him violently. “Get lost. This ain’t your business.”

****BAM!****

Without even glancing, Su Jie slammed his elbow into the guy's chest.

The tattooed punk dropped like a log, spasming on the ground.

“This punk dares hit us!” the other three rushed in, clearly no strangers to street fighting, fists flying at Su Jie.

Su Jie found them laughably immature. Their punches weren't even amateur-level. Even if he stood there and let them hit him a hundred times, it'd do nothing.

He dipped slightly, extended his arm, and struck one of them in the armpit—where nerve clusters and acupoints were dense. The guy froze in place before collapsing, foaming at the mouth like Boone had when Gu Yang struck him.

As Su Jie's hand retracted, his legs stayed in motion. He executed a rapid double sweep with his “Mandarin Duck Chain Kick.”

The remaining two were instantly tripped to the ground, tumbling into a dazed heap.

Su Jie didn't pause. With a follow-up linking motion, he kicked each of them cleanly in the neck—right where the carotid artery runs.

The two passed out cold, without a word.

In under four seconds, four fierce street punks were down. One was convulsing from a strike to the “Tanzhong” acupoint. One was having a seizure after a “Long-armed Ape Reach” to the armpit. The other two were completely unconscious.

“You didn't even ask who they were. You just... took them out like that?” The woman seemed to sober up a bit, her mouth agape. She was still tipsy, her head unclear.

“I've seen this kind before—just some lowlife thugs looking to take advantage,” Su Jie replied matter-of-factly. “I've seen that tattooed one before too—he's known for dragging drunk women out of bars.”

His moves earlier had been swift and clean. “Don't worry, they'll wake up soon. Just needed to teach them a lesson.”

Ruthless and to the point.

“Where do you live? I’ll take you home.”

BLEAARGH!

She vomited again—red wine and whiskey chunks all over herself. After hurling for a while, she tried woozily to stand. “Tonight, hic... I’m hiring you for the night... ten thou—hic—no, twenty thousand. Take me to the office first. I need a document for a project... due tonight...”

Mid-sentence, she almost fell asleep again.

“Where’s your office?” Su Jie asked. “Hey—wake up. Wake up.”

“Ha... Haoyu...”

She barely regained consciousness. “Forget it. Just take me here. This is my room key...”

She pulled up an address on her phone and promptly passed out. No matter how he tried, she wouldn’t wake up again.

“Haoyu Group?” Su Jie noticed she had a work badge clipped to her. Her position: Executive Assistant to the General Manager.

The General Manager of Haoyu Group was Feng Yuxuan.

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Chapter 82: Rich, Sloppy, Filthy, but Not Short on Cash

"Forget it, I'll help her out."

Su Jie picked up the female office worker and used an app to call a car. He paid a few hundred extra on top of the fare because she had thrown up and messed up the interior of the vehicle.

Following the address on his phone, Su Jie arrived at a high-end residential compound and entered using an access card.

The neighborhood was elegantly designed, with landscaped gardens, wide spacing between buildings, and automated features everywhere.

Su Jie knew this was one of the most well-known developments in S City. The current price had hit 150,000 yuan per square meter, and the units were all large—around 300 square meters each. One apartment easily cost 50 million.

He had his eye on this place a long time ago, hoping that if he ever had the money, he'd buy one for his parents. Sadly, that remained a distant dream.

As for the villas that rich kids like Lu Shu owned—those easily went over a hundred million. That was a whole other level, not even worth thinking about for now.

Click!

The card unlocked the door, and what greeted Su Jie made him jump.

The apartment was large, spacious, and filled with natural light. The decor screamed luxury—but that wasn't what shocked him.

What shocked him was how 'filthy' the place was.

Designer leather sofas were buried under piles of clothes, shopping bags, makeup boxes, and all sorts of bottles and jars.

The table was littered with leftover takeout containers.

Every corner of the room was a dumping ground—slippers, throw pillows, stuffed animals, you name it.

“All high-end stuff. What a waste,” Su Jie could tell—whether it was the clothes piled on the couch or the bags—they were all luxury brands, some easily worth tens of thousands. Now they looked like trash.

To be honest, the moment he stepped in, Su Jie felt like he’d walked into a junkyard disguised as a penthouse.

“Even if she won’t clean it herself, couldn’t she at least hire a cleaning service?” Su Jie thought, “Then again, this place is filled with expensive stuff. Maybe she doesn’t trust outsiders. Plus, a lot of girls don’t like strangers entering their private space.”

He caught a glimpse of wads of cash casually scattered on the couch, along with jewelry boxes holding rings and necklaces—valuable items, just lying around.

Bang!

Su Jie opened the bedroom door, laid the woman on the bed, and turned to leave. He'd done enough.

She had promised to pay him 10,000 yuan for getting her home, but Su Jie had no intention of hanging around to collect.

Just as he was about to step out, a soft 'meow' came from the corner.

It was a small British Shorthair cat, poking its head out and letting out a pleading cry.

Su Jie instinctively sensed that it was hungry.

"Hang tight, I'll find your food." He searched the room for a while before finally locating the cat food and pouring some out, along with a bowl of water. Watching the British Shorthair eat happily, he gave its head a gentle pat.

"Your owner's got money, but not a shred of life quality."

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Just as he was feeding the cat, loud pounding came from the door.

“Who the hell is that?” Su Jie raised an eyebrow.

This wasn’t knocking—it was full-on door assault. The entire room shook.

Su Jie rushed to open the door and found a young man standing outside. Though dressed in casual wear, he couldn’t hide that distinct aura of wealth. His outfit was exactly the kind worn by guys like Lu Shu and the other rich kids.

The moment he saw Su Jie open the door, the guy’s face—already fuming—turned crimson with rage. He launched a punch straight at him.

And this wasn’t some wild haymaker—it was a punch with real technique. Guard up, leg planted, hips twisting, waist driving, shoulder pushing, arm snapping forward in one fluid motion—a textbook rear straight from Western boxing.

Su Jie could feel the aggressive force behind it as the punch sliced through the air toward his face.

“The hell?” He didn’t flinch or raise a guard. Instead, he struck second but landed first. With a sweep of his leg in a classic mandarin duck kick, lightning-fast and clean as a scythe through wheat—

The punch came to a dead stop, its power completely neutralized like pulling the rug from underneath. With a loud ‘thump’, the young man crashed to the floor.

“Alright, talk. What’s going on here?”

Seeing the guy still trying to get up and fight again, Su Jie frowned and asked.

“Who the hell are you? Why are you in my girlfriend’s apartment?” the young man shouted as he sprang up, swinging again.

This time, he feinted with his punch, making it seem like an attack aimed at the face. But then, it suddenly stopped—followed by a snap kick that targeted Su Jie’s groin with precision.

This was a military close-combat killing move: the “feint-to-the-eyes, kick-to-the-groin.”

'This guy's ruthless—doesn't even care if he cripples someone,'

Su Jie thought without hesitation, dodging to the side and hooking his leg again.

The young man hit the ground once more.

This time, to keep him from getting back up, Su Jie stepped on his chest. Applying a bit of pressure, the young man's face instantly turned pale as the air was squeezed from his lungs. Fear flashed across his face.

"If that groin kick had landed on a regular person, you might've killed them in one shot. What's with the viciousness?" Su Jie slightly eased the pressure so the young man could speak.

"You..." The young man's eyes blazed with murderous intent. "Do you even know who I am? You dare do this to me?!"

"And who might you be?" Su Jie raised an eyebrow. "Your dad some big shot? Hurry up and say it—I'm recording. I'll upload it, make you famous."

He pulled out his phone.

“This is my girlfriend’s place!” The young man was about to start spewing threats, but seeing Su Jie take out his phone to film, he immediately deflated. Still unwilling to back down, he roared in frustration and struggled to get up. “Why were you in her room?!”

“Your girlfriend? What’s her name?” Su Jie wasn’t convinced. “If she’s your girlfriend, you should have a keycard. So why were you smashing the door?”

“Let me up!” the young man howled, ignoring Su Jie’s question.

“I’m going back inside to ask. You wait here. And listen—if you start smashing again, I won’t go so easy on you next time.” The reason Su Jie had given him a lesson just now was threefold: first, the guy was pounding on the door like a maniac; second, he threw punches without even figuring out who was inside; and third, he went straight for a “lineage-ending” kick. Clearly, he was used to throwing his weight around.

Su Jie wasn’t about to let him in without getting to the bottom of things. If anything went missing in the room—or if this drunk office lady were to be assaulted by that guy—it would all fall on Su Jie. That would be a disaster.

After letting the guy go, Su Jie turned and went back inside, locking the door behind him.

Sure enough, the guy didn’t dare bang on the door again.

“Just wait, punk. I’m Xu Jiahong—I’ll make sure you pay for this.” The young man got up and pulled out his phone to make a call.

Su Jie heard every word from inside the room. Thanks to the training he’d received from Uncle Mang—three days locked in the “black room,” refining his Dead Man’s Corpse technique to the point of “neither dead nor alive”—and later with Master Ma’s guidance, entering the realm of the “Living Dead,” his sensory perception was far beyond that of normal people. With just a bit of concentration, his awareness was several times—maybe even ten times—sharper than the average person’s.

“Still need to get some sleep. Got stuff to do tomorrow. Better have that woman wake up and explain things to that guy outside,” Su Jie muttered, heading to the bedroom. The office lady was still passed out cold. He carried her into the bathroom, then suddenly struck a point on her upper abdomen.

Blaaargghh!

The woman began vomiting violently again.

“Water...”

After throwing up, she was desperately thirsty.

Su Jie had already anticipated this. He handed her warm water, which she gulped down eagerly.

After she had her fill of water, Su Jie tapped her again, and the female office worker immediately vomited everything she had just drunk. It was so intense it felt like she was going to turn her stomach inside out.

After going through this process a few times, the woman finally sobered up. She opened her eyes, looked around, and realized she was in her own home. She let out a sharp scream:

"Who told you to come into my house?!"

"You asked me to bring you home on the street," Su Jie replied patiently. "If it weren't for me, you'd probably have been dragged off by those punks. Who knows what would've happened. But let's not dwell on that now—there's a guy named Xu Jiahong outside. Says he's your boyfriend. I didn't let him in. He's still standing at the door."

"Don't let him in," the woman said, now sounding even more lucid after hearing the name. "Go tell him to get lost. I never want to see him again."

"Seems like you two know each other. In that case, it's better if you go out and tell him yourself. I'm out of here—got stuff to do," Su Jie waved his hand. He didn't mention the promised twenty thousand; he was treating tonight as a good deed.

"Wait a minute," the woman said. She noticed vomit all over herself, shoved Su Jie out of the room, and soon the sound of running water could be heard.

A moment later, the door opened, and she stepped out. Su Jie couldn't help but blink at the sight.

She was wearing nothing but a bra and shorts. Her tall, slender figure, fair legs, and damp hair were enough to tempt a man to sin.

"Let's go," she said, casually hooking her arm around Su Jie's and dragging him to the front door.

Xu Jiahong, waiting impatiently outside, was stunned when he saw her like that, arm-in-arm with Su Jie.

"Li Xiaozhen, what the hell are you doing?!"

"What am I doing?" Li Xiaozhen snapped back, fierce as ever. "Didn't you call me a slut? Now you're here throwing a tantrum like some spoiled young master. This is

my new sugar daddy, so what? He's taller, richer, and hotter than you. And let me tell you the truth—this apartment? Feng Yuxuan bought it for me. You got the balls? Go buy me one too."

"You little punk, just wait!" Xu Jiahong's face flushed red, then green. He suddenly raised his hand and swung it at Li Xiaozhen.

Smack!

Before the slap could land, Su Jie struck Xu's arm right on the pressure point, rendering it numb.

Xu Jiahong dropped to the ground without even a sound.

Seeing Su Jie's skill, Li Xiaozhen's eyes lit up.

"Hitting a woman? What kind of tough guy are you?" Su Jie said, genuinely disgusted now.

"You'll pay for this," Xu Jiahong muttered as he staggered toward the stairwell.

"Man, do you know any other lines?" Su Jie shook his head. "You sound like a bad movie villain."

Xu didn't respond this time. He glared at Su Jie as he stepped into the elevator, the kind of venomous look that made your skin crawl—like a snake marking its prey.

"Alright, that's settled. I'm heading home," Su Jie said, pulling his arm free.

"Hold up. I'll give you another 10,000 yuan if you clean up my room," Li Xiaozhen crossed her arms and gave him a long once-over. "I remember now—you dropped those four punks at the bar in seconds. Even Xu Jiahong does MMA, but he didn't stand a chance. You're a real pro, huh?"

"Clean your own room," Su Jie replied, turning to leave.

"Wait! I'll add another 10,000 yuan!" Li Xiaozhen called after him.

Chapter 83: Under the Shield of True Courage and True Spirit

“Time’s up,” Su Jie glanced at his watch. “I need to be home and in bed by nine—sorry. Oh, and about that twenty thousand you promised me for dropping you off—please donate it to the Children’s Fund.”

With that, he stepped into the elevator and went down.

He was indeed heading home to sleep. Going to bed at nine sharp had become part of his daily routine, and unless something truly urgent came up, he wouldn’t break that rhythm.

“Hey! Hey... You still haven’t told me your name!”

Li Xiaozhen called out repeatedly, but Su Jie ignored her.

Just as he exited the residential complex and was about to head toward the subway entrance, he spotted Xu Jiahong.

The young man was sitting in a Land Rover, window rolled down, eyes fixed on the complex entrance with a look of deep, burning hatred.

As soon as he saw Su Jie step out, the car door swung open and a man jumped out.

The man suddenly burst into motion—his body lunged forward like a sprinter at the starting gun. His speed was on par with world-class 100-meter runners, fiercer even than a cheetah on the hunt, and he charged straight at Su Jie.

Su Jie stopped but didn't dodge.

Swish!

Just three paces from him, the man came to a sudden halt. His body anchored to the ground like a steel post—still as a statue. The explosive charge and instant stop made Su Jie's heart skip a beat. This was no amateur; this was a true expert.

It takes serious mastery to cancel out the momentum of a full sprint and redirect that force downward into rooted stillness in the blink of an eye.

“Come with me.”

The man spoke to Su Jie directly.

He was a burly guy, wearing camo pants and combat boots, with a tight leather jacket stretched across a wide chest and back. His neck was thick and short—like a pillar of concrete.

His face was weathered and rough, clearly someone who spent a lot of time working outdoors, maybe in the wilderness. His hair was cropped into a short buzz cut—too short to even grab.

Two details stood out to Su Jie. The man's ears were mangled into a cauliflower shape, twisted and swollen, and each of his knuckles protruded like fat fava beans.

Cauliflower ears.

Fava bean knuckles.

These features are sometimes seen on professional judo or wrestling athletes—or mixed martial artists. They're forged by years of brutal training and countless throws, ears deformed by constant impact, hands hardened from grabbing and grappling heavy opponents daily.

A buzz-cut brute, with cauliflower ears and fava bean hands.

This was a serious fighter, someone with extensive real-combat experience.

"Sorry, I'm on a tight schedule," Su Jie replied politely, even in the face of this hulk.

“Did you hit Jiahong just now?” the man asked.

“Self-defense,” Su Jie countered. “Are you a cop?”

“I’m not.” The man was like a robot—cold and mechanical. “He’s my brother. You admit you hit him. So what do you think should happen now?”

“Then you should gather evidence and report it to the police. Let them deal with it. What do you think you’re doing blocking me here?” Su Jie could see that Xu Jiahong was still holding a grudge. Now he’d even called in a brute to block his way. Shaking his head, Su Jie turned sideways to leave.

“Come with me,” the man said again—and struck. He lunged to grab Su Jie’s clothes. From the stance and movement, it was clearly a grappling technique.

Grab, rip, and throw in one continuous motion.

This kind of tearing-grapple was also a feature in the Hoe and Pickaxe technique. Last time, Su Jie had used it to rip Grey Wolf’s clothes to shreds, leaving the guy naked and humiliated in the street.

Su Jie spun and dodged without striking back.

The brute missed his grab but moved in again with rapid footwork and another attempt. His hands came in a chain of relentless grabs.

Swish, swish, swish...

Su Jie felt like the man's hands were like iron claws, trying to envelop every part of his body. At the same time, he felt an itching, tingling sensation on seven or eight of his vital points—a sign the opponent was ready to attack any of them at will.

Ever since Su Jie had trained under Master Ma and mastered his hard-body skills, his entire body had become incredibly responsive.

Whenever someone tried to strike any part of him, that area would instinctively contract—a hypersensitive defense mechanism.

A body so attuned that even a feather couldn't land unnoticed.

'This guy's good—way better than Zhou Chun. If Grey Wolf faced him, it'd be like a kid up against a tank. But he still doesn't seem as strong as Feng Hengyi.' Su Jie

kept dodging, his footwork darting up, down, left, right, forward and back—just barely avoiding capture.

“Not bad,” the brute grunted. He kept trying to grab Su Jie, but hadn’t even touched the hem of his clothing. A flicker of admiration flashed across his face. “You jump around like a monkey. But this is as far as that goes.”

Whoosh!

Suddenly, the brute kicked it up a gear. His speed surged.

Twice as fast as before.

Bang!

His foot slammed into the ground as he suddenly exploded into motion like a phantom speeding through the night. It was as if an immense force within him propelled his solid frame to such astonishing speeds.

Logically, his build wasn’t suited for explosive speed—broad frame, heavy weight, large air resistance. But somehow, he was moving like a sprinter on the track.

Rip!

Su Jie felt a strong hand grab his shoulder. A powerful force hurled him upward, but at the critical moment, he dropped his body weight and shook his shoulder loose. Thankfully, he didn't get uprooted.

Had he been lifted off the ground, he'd be in real trouble. Once your feet leave the earth, you lose all leverage. That's basically a straight path to defeat.

Though he managed to defuse the crisis, a large chunk of his shoulder's fabric was torn clean off.

"You're no match for me. Come with me," the burly man said as he stopped.

Just then, Xu Jiahong stepped down from the Range Rover, his face twisted with vindictive satisfaction. "Ah Ding, give him internal injuries—the kind that don't show."

The big man waved him off. "Go sit in the car."

He didn't seem like Xu Jiahong's bodyguard—more like an equal. “This guy's skilled. No wonder your years of training in freestyle fighting didn't help. I won't insult you—just apologize to him and kowtow. Then we'll call it even.”

“Apologize? Kowtow?” Su Jie's eyes narrowed sharply. “If I'm not mistaken, your style is based on Hong Fist, with elements of military close-combat. The core of Hong Fist is national vengeance; the spirit of military training is defending the country. But I don't see a shred of that in you. Since that's the case, let me show you real martial arts.”

Up until now, Su Jie had only been dodging. But now, he was serious.

He stood his ground. No more evasion. His heart surged with the spirit of “Mountains and rivers reside in my heart; with the rooster's crow, light dawns across the land.”

His fists boiled with intent.

The big man's expression shifted slightly. He felt a completely different aura radiating from Su Jie now.

“If you're going to be stubborn, then so be it.” The man suddenly lunged. His body coiled low and sprang at Su Jie like a beast gone mad—much faster and fiercer than before. He was finally in full combat mode.

Su Jie didn't flinch. Instead, he charged straight at the attack. The moment of contact—strike! Punch!

When the nation crumbles, what is there to fear?

To die with honor is enough.

That is the soul of martial arts. The true courage behind the fist.

Boom!

Su Jie's "Hoe Strike" punch sprang up from below like thunder erupting from the earth—stirring and powerful.

Fist met fist.

The big man suddenly realized his attacks had zero effect—like trying to topple a mountain or shake a tree with bare hands.

Meanwhile, Su Jie's punch came down like a mountain's weight and thunder's roar—unstoppable.

Five fingers spread, Su Jie's palm covered the man's entire face and extended outward in all directions like a celestial net.

In Intent Boxing, this “Hoe Strike” strike might seem simple, but its mental intent is ever-shifting. The most crucial concept here is the “Covering Intent”—as in, the blow descends like the sky itself, enveloping every ounce of force within it.

No matter how the enemy squirms, escape is futile.

Let him know what they mean by heaven's net is vast and wide, and not a thing slips through!

Smack!

A solid slap struck the man's face, sliding from his forehead downward, knocking him off balance and dropping him to the ground. He felt like he'd been electrocuted, burned, and stabbed all at once.

That was his trigeminal nerve taking the hit.

Still, he wasn't injured.

Su Jie had held back—had he gone full force, the man's face would've been pulped.

“Your skills and experience outmatch mine. Physically, you've got the advantage too,” Su Jie said, looking at the man as he got back up, voice steady. “But what you've got is fighting. What I've got is martial arts.”

With that, Su Jie left, not bothering with Xu Jiahong.

As for the big guy, a lesson was enough.

He took the subway home. It was almost 9 p.m. He showered, went to bed, and by nine o'clock sharp, he was asleep.

A lot had happened tonight, but none of it weighed on his mind. Except for one thing—“Ah Ding's” techniques were indeed above his own. Aside from Feng Hengyi, Ah Ding was the strongest opponent he'd faced so far.

Of course, Gu Yang and Uncle Mang, as well as Master Ma, were all stronger than this man—he just hadn't seen their full abilities. They were his teachers, not opponents.

Beating this big man had come down to one thing—guts.

True, unshakable spirit. The ancient essence and soul of martial arts. His fists now carried a true soul.

But over time, his martial arts would only deepen. After all, he'd only been training for seven months. Granted, his training volume was two to three times that of a professional team. But even so, it only equated to two or three years of pro-level training.

And two or three years of hard work? That's just scratching the surface.

Su Jie understood clearly—he was only sixteen or seventeen. This was his rapid growth phase. Until around twenty-six, he could improve swiftly. After that, it would be slow refinement. By his thirties, he'd be on the decline.

Every professional—world-class or not—has the same trajectory. Peak performance comes between eighteen and twenty-six.

However, his research with Uncle Mang and Master Ma suggested something else: if a person's spiritual state reached a level of "mental tranquility and divine calm," eliminating coarse thoughts and retaining only refined ones, their physical function could improve by 10–20%. That could extend their prime by about ten years.

And if they reached the state of "life-in-death," where even refined thoughts disappeared, and they couldn't tell whether they existed or not, their physical function could improve by 20%.

If one surpassed even that—to the state of "Living Dead," severing both refined and coarse thoughts, erasing the mind completely—then who knows how much power one could gain? There was no experimental data.

Someone like Odell would never let Uncle Mang and Master Ma test him.

Chapter 84: Inheriting the Legacy The Xu Family's Relatives

While Su Jie was asleep, Xu Jiahong and the burly man returned to their car.

The big man remained silent, a red slap mark still visible on his face. Xu Jiahong's entire body trembled slightly—whether from anger or fear was unclear.

“Ah Ding, who the hell is that kid? Your combat skills are already...” Xu Jiahong forced out the words.

“Skilled,” Ah Ding touched his face. “I never expected to run into such a formidable fighter here. It’s hard to believe.”

Xu Jiahong knew that Ah Ding’s fighting ability was among the best in the country. His training wasn’t in ring-based combat but in real-life bodyguard takedown techniques. He was a top-tier operative from the international security firm "Honey Badger", having trained extensively in Israeli camps and mastered multiple martial arts—especially Krav Maga.

Xu Jiahong had personally witnessed Ah Ding take down seven or eight armed assailants single-handedly while protecting his father abroad, breaking their limbs with ruthless efficiency. Even professional MMA fighters lasted less than three seconds against him.

“What rank would that kid have in Honey Badger? Could he really compare to your elite operatives?” Xu Jiahong swallowed hard.

Honey Badger was a highly secretive foreign security corporation, its operatives all elite military-trained professionals serving the ultra-wealthy and even foreign governments. They operated in war zones, more shadowy than even Blackwater.

“His technique is still immature, lacking real combat experience—but his spirit is fierce, like a newborn calf unafraid of a tiger.” Ah Ding’s eyes gleamed sharply. “If this weren’t a public place, I could’ve killed him with a dozen different methods. The top operatives in Honey Badger are leagues beyond him.”

Being knocked down by Su Jie’s Hoe Strike left Ah Ding deeply resentful.

“Next time we see that brat, don’t hold back!” Xu Jiahong said viciously. “No mercy.”

“I know my job,” Ah Ding narrowed his eyes. “In our line of work, as long as the target isn’t dead, the fight isn’t over.”

Xu Jiahong understood why the company was named Honey Badger. In the African savanna, the most fearless, aggressive, and relentless creature wasn’t the lion, the cheetah, or the hyena—it was the honey badger.

There were stories of a honey badger in a zoo that, after being roared at by a lion, spent days digging under the fence to fight it—and won. Another had taken on six lions and walked away unscathed. They treated venomous black mambas like snacks, casually munching on them.

Honey Badger operatives were similarly ruthless—utterly loyal to their employers and skilled in handling “delicate” tasks.

“My main mission is protecting you and helping you expand into S City’s market while securing the inheritance,” Ah Ding said. “Once that’s done, I’ll settle today’s score with that kid.”

“I don’t know what the old man was thinking, including that disgraceful woman in his will—the one who abandoned the family and eloped. And now she gets company shares? My father tracked her down and demanded she sign away her claim, but she refused!” Xu Jiahong’s eyes burned with murderous intent.

Ah Ding stayed silent. This was a classic inheritance feud.

The Xu family’s empire spanned manufacturing, finance, real estate, tech, and infrastructure—a sprawling dynasty with many heirs. The patriarch, now ill, had divided his estate, even allotting shares to his long-lost daughter. The current heirs were furious but couldn’t openly defy the will—so they resorted to pressuring her into relinquishing her rights.

“Ah Ding, how do I make this partnership with Haoyu Group work? I need a foothold in S City,” Xu Jiahong asked. “The younger generation’s competition is brutal. The old man didn’t leave us anything—we have to fight for ourselves. Damn it!”

“Feng Yuxuan knows this, which is why he’s keeping you at arm’s length,” Ah Ding mused. “You got close to Li Xiaozhen, but she’s not an easy target.”

“That b!tch! I spent so much money and effort on her, and she still won’t let me into her apartment—claims she has ‘psychological trauma’ and hates people invading her space. Always says she’s working late—probably servicing Feng Yuxuan in his office. I only slapped her after holding back for months, and then she goes out drinking and lets some random guy take her home?!” Xu Jiahong’s voice dripped with venom.

“You lost your temper. Everyone knows Feng Yuxuan’s reputation—his female assistants are never clean. But Li Xiaozhen is different. She’s his top aide, sharp in business. Her past boyfriends left her over rumors about Feng Yuxuan, but in reality, they’ve never crossed that line. Her father is friends with Feng Shoucheng. Feng Yuxuan wants her but won’t force it—losing her would hurt his operations, and his brothers would report him to their father.” Ah Ding advised, “You should apologize. She’s valuable—many of Haoyu’s business plans come from her.”

Grudgingly, Xu Jiahong dialed Li Xiaozhen’s number.

In Li Xiaozhen’s Apartment

Her phone rang as she took hangover pills, surveying the disaster of her home. Seeing the caller ID, she cursed and blocked the number.

“I thought Xu Jiahong was different, but he’s just like the rest,” she muttered. “My boss’s reputation ruins everything. But that boy earlier... why didn’t I mind him being here?”

Li Xiaozhen had severe psychological barriers—she loathed people entering her space, yet she never cleaned, leaving her luxury-filled apartment a dump. Yet with Su Jie, she'd felt no resistance.

Maybe it was the alcohol—or maybe it was his presence. Unbeknownst to her, Su Jie's meditation and Great Corpse State training had honed his aura to a tranquil, commanding calm. His mental discipline neared mastery, rivaling even elite mentors like Odell.

"Ugh, this place is a pigsty." She half-heartedly gathered trash before collapsing into bed. As sleep took her, she mumbled, "That kid... I'll make him clean for me."

Back in the Land Rover.

Xu Jiahong hurled his phone. "She blocked me!"

"Apologize in person. Swallow your pride—she's worth it," Ah Ding said. "Once you secure the inheritance, Feng Yuxuan will take you seriously. Haoyu Group dominates the market now."

"Once the old man dies, the family will fracture. I need to grab what I can before my brothers take everything," Xu Jiahong said coldly. "That kid earlier—he's not involved with Li Xiaozhen. Probably just a decoy. No way he's connected if he took the metro."

“Sharp observation,” Ah Ding nodded. As both bodyguard and mentor, he approved.

“If Xu Ying won’t cooperate, we’ll force her. She left the family years ago—her fault the Zhangs cut ties with us, stalling our overseas expansion.” Xu Jiahong’s eyes darkened. “I heard a Zhang girl—Zhang Manman—is in S City. I’ll reach out.”

“Do it,” Ah Ding agreed. “The Zhangs have massive influence abroad. If your aunt Xu Ying hadn’t jilted Zhang Hongyuan, your families could’ve ruled together. Now, Zhang Hongyuan handles their finances, but the real power is Zhang Manman’s father—Zhang Hongqing. You might not know him, but I do. He’s one of Honey Badger’s two chief instructors. My Hung Gar? Learned from him.” (G: Hung Gar, also known as Hung Kuen or Hongjiaquan, is a prominent Southern Shaolin Kung Fu style.)

“Zhang Hongqing? How do you compare to him?” Xu Jiahong asked.

“Me?” Ah Ding laughed bitterly. “He could kill me before I even blink.”

Chapter 85: Sudden Visitors as the New Year Approaches

“So powerful? I don’t believe there are real-life superhumans in this world.” Xu Jiahong shook his head. “You martial arts people always exaggerate things—claiming so-and-so is a top master. If they’re really that good, why don’t they enter the World Championships or the Olympics and become globally famous?”

“How much money do you think that would make?” Ah Ding seemed to mock Xu Jiahong’s ignorance. “Even the current boxing champion, Paski, is only worth about a billion dollars. That might sound like a lot to outsiders, but do you know how many CEOs of publicly traded companies make more than that? As for Olympic champions—don’t even mention it. They get a meager salary, and even with endorsements, at most they might make tens of millions over a few years. Those kickboxing fighters? They fight tooth and nail just for a match worth hundreds of thousands or maybe a million, and that’s at the national elite level. Do you really think it’s worth it?”

“Definitely not,” Xu Jiahong nodded. “The way you put it actually makes a lot of sense. They may be in the spotlight, but not much of that fame translates into actual money. These days, practical gains are what matter.”

“Actually, the kid who fought me today is quite talented. He’s young, yet his skills are already that advanced. We could consider bringing him into the fold,” Ah Ding suggested.

“I’ll think about it,” Xu Jiahong said, but the very thought of it still made his teeth itch with frustration.

“You should learn from Cao Cao. Zhang Xiu killed his son, but Cao Cao still accepted him, and even granted him a noble title in the end. He never killed the

guy. That shows how much tolerance he had. Without that kind of tolerance, you can't achieve great things," A-Ding continued to advise.

"I know Cao Cao—he was a crafty warlord. But who's Zhang Xiu? What's the story there?" Xu Jiahong asked.

When Ah Ding heard that, he was instantly speechless and wanted to curse out loud: *'What a mediocre idiot. And this guy wants to fight for the family inheritance? Wishful thinking. Whatever. I'm being paid to do a job, so I've got no choice.'*

The next morning at the crack of dawn, Su Jie woke up at his usual time—3 a.m.

Like always, he rose at the sound of the rooster and headed to the park for three hours of training.

The more he trained, the more centered his mind became—serene, like a deep abyss.

At every moment, he felt like a hidden dragon lurking in the depths, silently observing all changes from below.

The abyss was calm and peaceful. Deep within, strength quietly gathered, preparing for an explosive ascent.

‘This must be what the Book of Changes means by ‘the dragon leaps from the abyss,’ Su Jie thought, his understanding of the Qian hexagram growing ever deeper.

He realized that his life mirrored the stages of that hexagram. Back when he was at Minglun Martial Arts Academy, it was the stage of “Initial Nine: Hidden dragon, do not act.”

Returning to school marked the “Second Nine: Dragon appears in the field.”

Later, after studying with Master Ma and Old Chen, and defeating Zhou Chun, he continued his diligent training, never becoming arrogant or complacent—this was the “Third Nine: The noble one is active all day, alert at night, with no blame.”

Now, his state of mind had settled completely, as if he were in the depths of the abyss—vast enough to accept all rivers and oceans. This was the “Fourth Nine: The dragon leaps from the abyss, with no blame.”

What came next was “Fifth Nine: Flying dragon in the heavens, beneficial to see the great man.”

The fifth nine was the supreme stage—soaring through the sky like the noonday sun, illuminating the world, reaching the peak of human achievement.

Su Jie understood that this didn't refer to worldly success or wealth, but rather a breakthrough in his cultivation—the “Living Dead” state.

Compared to that spiritual breakthrough, even tens of billions in wealth were meaningless.

It was only at this point that Su Jie truly grasped the meaning of “wealth and status are like floating clouds to me.”

“In the end, all material things—even physical strength—are just tools to fulfill deep-seated desires. Desire is a bottomless pit. If I sever desire and reflect inward toward the void, I'll reach true satisfaction. Of course, even wanting to reach the ‘Living Dead’ state is still a desire. A truly dead person has no desires. That's the essence of that realm. I still desire to reach it. Only when even that desire fades will I truly enter it—where I follow my heart, like a flying dragon in the sky.”

Su Jie was constantly exploring and interrogating the depths of his own heart.

His future path was becoming clearer and clearer, with almost no confusion. He was carving his own way forward.

At this moment, Su Jie's morning routine—three hours of training—had reached an insane level. His workouts, whether jumping, running, plank-like "crouching

tiger" poses, jump rope, footwork, dodging, shadowboxing, and more, matched the daily training volume of national-level professional athletes.

He was like a perpetual motion machine—never stopping.

And to him, this was just the warm-up.

Su Jie's winter break was packed. He'd wake at 3 a.m. to train, eat breakfast at 6, then spend the morning studying various academic subjects. After lunch and a short nap, he'd head to Huaxing Combat Club to spar and train with different people.

At night, after dinner, he would study again, followed by meditation or flexibility training using a crystal ball.

Back when he was at Minglun Martial Arts Academy, his evening routine included mini sparring tournaments and intense physical exertion.

Now, his evenings were dedicated to mental cultivation.

The crystal ball training was his own addition—something that gradually diverged from Odell's training modules.

He found that when he practiced with the crystal ball, his mind was especially clear—like the ball itself, pure and transparent. At times, it felt as though he and the ball were one. When he pushed it to the extreme, it felt like his soul had entered the ball, turning it into an extension of his own body.

Master Ma greatly valued using crystal ball performances as a form of psychotherapy.

After learning how to use the crystal ball from "Master Ma," Su Jie began researching the topic extensively online. He watched numerous performances by crystal ball masters from around the world and studied related materials.

He discovered that the crystal ball had many applications, with the most common being hypnosis and divination.

Scientifically speaking, hypnotists using props found the crystal ball to be ideal—more effective than items like pocket watches.

There seemed to be some mysterious connection between crystals and the mind.

Su Jie understood that this was because crystal, being pure and translucent with no impurities, made it easier to observe internal changes and cleanse the spirit.

After playing with the crystal ball for a month, he finally mastered his hard-style martial arts.

Now, he practiced with the crystal ball every day, learning techniques from various masters' videos. He felt that he was gradually reaching a state of transcendence, and his control over strength had become increasingly precise and refined.

It had to be said that he owed his vast access to knowledge to the smart module on the tablet his older sister Su Muchen had given him.

Whenever he needed to study something, he just spoke to it. The voice recognition would then instantly trigger an extensive search, compiling and organizing data into a structured learning path from easy to advanced.

It was connected to numerous massive databases and even compiled foreign scientific research materials for Su Jie to study—with built-in translation features.

Of course, Su Jie didn't need the translation; his English was on par with that of a professional translator.

Nowadays, researching online was convenient—much easier than in the past when you had to go to the library or borrow books just to learn something. But that

convenience came with its own problem: the sea of information could easily make you feel lost, and you couldn't always tell what was true or false.

This smart module perfectly solved that issue.

It was more knowledgeable than any professor, more efficient, and never made mistakes.

For example, when Su Jie needed to study the application of crystal balls in hypnosis and psychology, as well as various theoretical frameworks, a university team might have needed half a month—or longer—to gather and organize all the materials before systematic study could even begin.

But with the smart module's help, it took just half an hour to compile global resources into a structured learning plan, massively reducing wasted time.

“Now that this smart learning module exists, the gap between people is only going to get wider. Diligent learners can collect information more easily and use their time far more efficiently. What used to take a year to master might now only take a month. Meanwhile, lazy people still won't bother to learn—even with the best teacher in front of them, they'd still resist and fall behind.”

That day, while using the smart module at home to organize information from around the world and conduct targeted study, a sudden thought rose in Su Jie's mind.

As the era of digital, high-efficiency learning arrived, diligent people would grow increasingly powerful, while those who were lazy or disliked learning would grow increasingly weak. The gap would become so vast that it would eventually feel insurmountable.

“In the future, a small group of people will become like gods, while the majority will completely lose their chances.”

This thought stirred a sense of vigilance deep within him.

Now, in terms of both knowledge and martial strength, Su Jie had already surpassed his peers by more than tenfold. With each passing day, he was advancing at a breakneck pace.

He felt lucky to be born in the right era.

Because of this, he refused to waste a single minute or second. He studied obsessively and trained relentlessly.

Even though winter break was already halfway over and the Lunar New Year was approaching—when even most third-year high school students allowed themselves to relax—Su Jie showed no signs of letting up. In fact, he was studying and training even harder.

The Grand Ascent Combat Fitness Club had already closed for the holidays, and even Hua Xing himself had gone home for the New Year.

But Su Jie still trained there daily for extended hours, and even when alone, he never felt bored.

His older sister Su Muchen was the same. She seemed to be living in her lab now and wasn't planning on coming home for the holidays either.

Over the past few days, the weather had taken a sharp turn, becoming bitterly cold. By the early hours of the morning, heavy snow had begun to fall, covering the land in white.

"The weather forecast was spot on. It said a cold front would hit tonight, and I thought it looked fine and probably wouldn't snow. Didn't expect it to be so accurate," Su Jie muttered as he woke up at 3 a.m., still determined to go out and train.

When it rained or snowed, he didn't go to the park—he went to the club instead.

"Don't go train today."

Just as he got up to wash, he noticed his father, Su Shilin, sitting on the couch.

“Dad? Why are you up so early?” Su Jie was a little surprised. “Or did you just get back from the night shift?”

His dad often worked overnight, sometimes even during the New Year.

“When your mom gets up, go with her to the south. You’ll be spending this New Year at your grandfather’s place,” Su Shilin said. “I don’t want to go. But with you accompanying her, I’ll feel better.”

“My grandfather?” Su Jie was stunned. All his life, he’d never even heard that he had a grandfather.

Chapter 86: The Southern Aristocrat Fulfilling One’s Duty

“This is something your mom will talk to you about. Your sister and I are staying home for the New Year. I’m not worried about you now—just be careful. And don’t worry about money—if you need to let go, then let go.” Su Shilin said this out of the blue.

“Got it,” Su Jie nodded. He could roughly guess that his mom probably came from a well-off family, but had fallen in love with his dad, whom her family disapproved of, and so she cut ties with them.

After all, his dad had worked as a security guard, while his mom’s education, knowledge, and demeanor were clearly not something an average household could produce. Their pairing had always seemed strange to the neighbors.

But such stories weren’t uncommon, so Su Jie didn’t care much. As long as the family lived peacefully and he could create his own wealth and live comfortably, that was good enough.

After Su Shilin finished talking, he went straight back to his room to sleep.

Su Jie opened the window and saw that the heavy snow had stopped. Everything was blanketed in white. He went downstairs and took a walk around the residential complex.

His boots crunched in the snow, making crisp sounds. There was no one around, and the world felt especially still. He suddenly had a strange sensation, as if he alone existed between heaven and earth.

Feeling inspired, he took out the crystal sphere.

The crystal sphere, about the size of an apple, spun nimbly between his fingers, dancing like flames—more lively than ever before.

It was as if the snow injected new life into the sphere.

Su Jie's physical condition had now reached a level where neither cold nor heat could touch him.

He wore very little but wasn't cold at all.

As he kept playing with it, he felt as though his soul had entered the crystal sphere.

His entire perspective on the world shifted.

Everything looked sharper, clearer.

The crystal sphere had become his body.

As it spun, he familiarized himself with this new "crystal" body—smooth, flawless, ancient, free of impurities.

Then, his soul returned to his physical body.

He suddenly realized just how filthy, fragile, and impermanent the human body was compared to the sphere.

At last, he understood the Buddhist scripture that said: “The body is like crystal—pure and free from defilement.”

The snow-covered world was pure. The crystal sphere was pure. Only his body was impure.

Is this what they mean by “a sack of stinking flesh”? The thought flickered through Su Jie’s mind.

With that, his practice with the crystal sphere entered a new level.

Dawn broke.

It was already around five or six in the morning.

Without realizing it, he had played with the crystal sphere for two to three hours in the snowy courtyard. He quickly returned home to find that his mother, Xu Ying, was already up.

“Su Jie, come with me to your grandfather’s today. Your dad must’ve already told you. Go pack your things,” Xu Ying said, her suitcase already prepared.

“Mom, I’ve already packed. Just this one backpack—nothing else,” Su Jie said, lifting the large backpack from the sofa.

It was huge and packed with all his essentials—training oils, supplements, boxing wraps, and spare clothes.

“Where are we going?” Su Jie asked.

“To G City,” Xu Ying replied. “I’ve already bought the tickets. We’re leaving now.”

Soon, the two of them were in a taxi heading to the airport.

While waiting for the flight, Xu Ying looked at Su Jie's calm demeanor and couldn't help asking, "Aren't you curious what your grandfather does?"

"Probably some big tycoon," Su Jie guessed casually, not really taking it to heart.

"Something happened when you were at Minglun Martial Arts Academy, didn't it? You came back a changed person." Xu Ying had long noticed her son's transformation. But since his grades remained top of the class, and he had also started working out, plus she'd been busy, she hadn't given it much attention.

Now that she finally had a moment, she decided to talk heart-to-heart.

"What's changed about me? I'm just working harder and exercising. Isn't that a good thing?" Su Jie laughed.

"That's not what I meant. You're more mature now—but also more withdrawn," Xu Ying said, worried.

"Being quiet is a bad thing?" Su Jie grinned. "The Analects say: 'Resolute, simple, slow to speak, close to virtue.' Or in modern terms: Your boy Su's got street cred—strong, silent, and serious!"

Smack!

As soon as he said that, Xu Ying gave him a light slap on the head.

“What nonsense? You think I raised you to run the streets?” she snapped.

“Come on, I was just kidding.” Su Jie chuckled mischievously.

Xu Ying realized he was joking to cheer her up.

But something serious crossed her mind, and her face darkened. “Your grandfather’s family is indeed wealthy. This stock... and this one... and this one too. All belong to your grandfather.”

She tapped her phone and pulled up more than a dozen stocks.

“Huh? So it’s that Xu family?” Su Jie was shocked. He had thought her side of the family was just comfortably rich, not obscenely wealthy—on par with the Haoyu Group.

He’d been following financial news closely—both to prepare for a potential confrontation with Haoyu Group, and to protect his sister.

To beat an opponent, you need to understand them.

He'd been keeping up with entrepreneurship, companies, and the national economy.

Because he knew no individual could take on a giant like Haoyu Group alone.

That's why he and Hua Xing had started a club—to build a network, a reliable team, and some real influence.

Zhang Manman was also starting a business and wanted him to join. He hadn't said no.

Xu Ying saw Su Jie deep in thought and figured he might not understand, so she explained, "You don't need to understand the business stuff. Just remember—your grandfather's family is very wealthy. I'm not attached to the fortune, but your grandfather is seriously ill, and this visit may be our last chance to see him. After that, I'll cut all ties with the family."

She seemed lost in memory.

“Dad said not to get attached to things. Is it because Grandpa left you an inheritance, and your siblings don’t like that?” Su Jie asked, nailing it almost exactly.

“You’re pretty sharp, son,” Xu Ying stared at him, as if he had flowers growing out of his face.

“There’s nothing new under the sun. This is standard soap opera stuff,” Su Jie shrugged. He felt no emotional waves over it—it was a familiar trope.

“Do you want to know how much your mom’s going to inherit?” Xu Ying asked.

“How much?” Su Jie humored her.

“About a billion in stocks and cash. Multiple properties around the world. Shares in four or five subsidiaries. Altogether, maybe two billion,” she said seriously. “I’m not lying. Your uncles and aunts all worked in the company, but they were constantly scheming and embezzling. Your grandfather couldn’t keep them in check. Only I turned things around and helped the family business grow. You can guess what happened next.”

“Mom left the family, married Dad, and chose a regular life?” Su Jie asked.

“Aren’t you even tempted by that kind of money?” Xu Ying was surprised by her son’s calmness.

“It’s precisely because there’s so much that it feels unreal,” Su Jie smiled. “Besides, holding onto it probably wouldn’t bring peace of mind. We’re better off making our own money and living life honestly. Soon you’ll retire and enjoy life. I’m already making money—tens of thousands a month.”

“That won’t last,” Xu Ying replied. She had a general idea of what he was doing. “You beat a pro fighter, got a bit of fame in niche circles, started hosting training matches and attracting enthusiasts—but the novelty will wear off. You’re basically an internet celeb. That kind of thing has a short shelf life. If I’m right, next year your income will drop. A few million max. Sure, it’s a fortune to most, but it’s windfall—not stable, scalable business. A good company doesn’t rely on any one person. Your little club falls apart without you. What, you don’t believe me?”

She noticed Su Jie was lost in thought.

“I know the drawbacks. But I’m still in school. Once I finish college, we’ll see. For now, I’ll earn if I can, and if not, so be it,” Su Jie said. From just a few lines, he could tell his mom had serious business chops. “Besides, I’m still young—a high schooler. Even if I did start a business now, people would look down on me. No facial hair, no credibility.”

“That’s true,” Xu Ying nodded. “Not just others—I don’t find you reliable either. You’re too young. Who’d trust you in business?”

“That’s all secondary. I’m more worried about my sister,” Su Jie said, shifting to a more serious topic. “She works for Haoyu. I’ve met Feng Yuxuan and his brother Feng Hengyi—they’re lawless. I told her to quit, but she refuses. I suspect her old company’s sudden bankruptcy and debt mess had Feng Yuxuan behind it.”

He then told his mom about being threatened by Feng Hengyi’s thug Grey Wolf, and also by Feng Yuxuan himself.

He had kept this from his parents to avoid worrying them.

But now he felt it was better to lay everything out and figure things out together.

His mom didn’t seem like the impulsive type. She had more social experience than him—maybe she’d have some ideas.

Chapter 87: The Things Remain, but the People Have Changed

“Feng Shoucheng is extremely formidable—a true schemer,” Mom, Xu Ying, said after a pause. As expected, she didn’t react emotionally but instead took her time to think it through. “When your sister first started her business, I thought it was just a game—college dorm friends pooling money together seemed totally normal. I

never imagined they'd actually make something of it. At the time, I was busy applying for my professorship and didn't pay close attention. In the end, your sister's startup was acquired by the Feng family, and she signed a harsh performance-based agreement. Honestly, I saw it clearly—your sister's product had strong market potential. The Feng family saw it, laid a trap, and she fell for it. But by the time I realized, it was too late.”

“Is there anything we can do now?” Su Jie felt conflicted. He might be skilled in martial arts with an exceptional mindset, but in the grand scheme of society, he was still insignificant—he couldn't really help his sister out of her predicament.

Not to mention, he couldn't even afford to buy the family a decent house yet.

Li Xiaozhen's apartment was really nice, but Su Jie had looked it up online—worth nearly fifty million now, and that's not counting taxes and agent fees. It was an empty unit.

“To be honest, I didn't want to come back to my parents' home,” Xu Ying said. “Part of it was wanting to see your grandfather one last time. The other part was to see if there's any way to get your sister out of her bind. With her technical skills, it's nothing for her to earn a few million a year at a reputable company. Living steadily is better than anything.”

“If she jumps ship now, breaks free of the Feng family, how much would she have to pay?” Su Jie asked. “I've asked my sister so many times, but she never gave me an answer.”

“Probably three to five hundred million,” Xu Ying said matter-of-factly, as if she had known all along. “There’s no way we can come up with that money. That’s why I’m going back to your grandfather’s house. I don’t care about any other inheritance—I want that money, to help your sister out of this mess.”

“Too bad I’m not capable enough to make that much,” Su Jie muttered. He’d once seen a rich guy online say, ‘Set a small goal first—make your first hundred million.’

Su Jie set the same ‘small’ goal for himself, but so far he was only 1% of the way there.

At that, he fell silent.

Before long, the two boarded a plane and arrived in G City three hours later.

G City was true southern territory—tropical. S City, though also considered southern on paper, was more in the Jiangnan region, where the seasons were still distinct.

G City, part of Lingnan, was practically summer year-round.

It had snowed heavily in S City today, but G City was still a balmy twenty degrees.

Many people started stripping off their heavy down jackets as soon as they got off the plane.

It was Su Jie's first time in the deep south, and everything felt novel. Palm and coconut trees lined the roads, ever green, the air was humid, and you could smell the salty tang of the sea.

He enjoyed the scenery along the way with great interest.

After all, the furthest he'd ever been before was D City, deep in the Central Plains, with a totally different culture and atmosphere.

Now, in a completely unfamiliar place, experiencing unfamiliar customs and lifestyle, he felt himself come alive again—refreshed and reawakened.

'Looks like this summer break, I need to travel the world. Now that I've gotten into college, life's a lot more relaxed. Read ten thousand books, travel ten thousand miles,' Su Jie thought. He had indeed hit the books hard these past few months—one could say he had read his ten thousand books.

But the travel? That part he'd yet to fulfill.

He thought of Coach Odell, who traveled the world seeking strange phenomena, forgotten myths, tirelessly pursuing supernatural powers.

Maybe that was why Odell had grown so strong.

Su Jie immersed himself in the city's atmosphere. He felt that every city had its own unique character—countless people combined with local culture to create something wholly its own. Geography and human spirit came together to form style, to shape a soul.

Before, he never truly felt this. Now, he saw it clearly—every city in the world seemed alive. This wasn't some artsy sentimentality—it was a deep, quiet intuition, a sense that ordinary people might never perceive.

Feng Shui.

The phrase surfaced in his mind.

But before he could dwell on it, Mom hailed a car.

At first, Su Jie thought they'd head to the city center—but the car went out toward the countryside, and got more remote as they went.

“Mom, are we going the wrong way?” Su Jie asked.

“No. Your grandfather is back at the old family home. The Xu family's companies are all in the city, but now that he's aged, he wants to return to his roots,” Xu Ying said heavily.

“I see.” Su Jie still didn't quite get this whole “return to one's roots” idea. He was young, full of ambition, eager to explore the world—how could he relate to a mindset of going back and settling down?

They drove for five hours before reaching a prosperous village.

When Xu Ying saw the village, nostalgia lit up her face. She had clearly grown up here.

“So much has changed,” she said with a sigh. “When I was little, this place was poor. The houses were all run-down. Now, every household has big mansions and cars. The roads are wide—I almost didn't recognize it.”

“You’re from this village?” the driver asked. “This place is something else. Produced some serious tycoons. Look there—that’s the Xu family’s ancestral home. Renovated, of course. They’ve got so much money, not even trucks can haul it all. I hear they own towers overseas, land everywhere. The ancestral house is paved with gold bricks, hundreds of servants. All because their ancestors are buried in some Feng Shui treasure spot. Some people are just born lucky.”

“Not necessarily,” Su Jie replied. “The Xu family likely caught a good era for development and knew how to run their businesses. Feng Shui might’ve helped, but that’s just icing on the cake. If national conditions were bad, no amount of personal Feng Shui would make a difference.”

“Young people shouldn’t talk nonsense—watch your mouth or the spirits will come for you,” the driver scolded. “We drivers can’t afford to say the wrong thing.”

Su Jie just smiled and said nothing. He’d heard people around here were deeply superstitious—Feng Shui, fortune-telling, all that. Even the richest families would consult some ‘master’ before making big decisions.

It was part of the culture, customs passed down over centuries.

After spending a month with Master Ma, Su Jie understood that while Feng Shui, astrology, and face-reading had their logic, in the end, what shaped one’s destiny was still the heart. Everything else—external objects and rituals—were just ways to comfort oneself.

“Here we are,” Xu Ying told the driver.

They got off at the village entrance. Su Jie looked out toward the foothills and saw a massive estate, a cluster of buildings linked into one huge manor. At the center was a house in the classic “Four-Point Gold” layout.

This style, known as “Four-Point Gold,” was a traditional architectural layout used by wealthy Chaoshan families. Similar to a courtyard-style compound.

Such mansions were considered highly auspicious in Feng Shui—said to gather wealth, nurture health, and bless descendants.

Of course, there was some architectural merit to that. Good houses, properly designed, could improve one’s mood and mental clarity. Over time, that mental clarity led to wisdom. If built in a good location—beautiful mountains and clear waters—it was only natural for such places to produce talented people.

“We’re here,” Xu Ying said. Seeing Su Jie looking around and occasionally zoning out, she thought he was just curious about the new environment. “Let’s see your grandfather first.”

Standing at the edge of the village, staring at the estate, Xu Ying didn’t go in. Instead, she made a phone call.

A short while later, an elderly woman hurried over from the manor. Xu Ying rushed to greet her.

“Miss, you’ve finally come back.” The old woman wiped away tears.

“Aunt Wu, what era are we in now? Don’t call me ‘Miss’—just call me Ying,” Xu Ying’s eyes were misty too. “Su Jie, come say hi to Grandma Wu.”

“Hello, Grandma Wu,” Su Jie said politely.

“This is your son? He’s grown so tall!” Wu Ma beamed. “So tall! But skinny—looks like he needs more meat. Poor child.”

“Aunt Wu, don’t let his looks fool you—he’s actually very strong,” Xu Ying said. She didn’t know the full extent of Su Jie’s martial prowess, but she’d seen him single-handedly move a huge cabinet that normally took three people. “By the way, how’s my dad? Why did he come back to the ancestral house instead of staying abroad for treatment?”

“He went abroad, but the foreign doctors couldn’t do anything—couldn’t find anything major. After coming back, he saw all kinds of specialists here, but none of them could diagnose him either. Eventually, an old Chinese medicine doctor said his vital force is fading, and his time has come.” Wu Ma chattered on. “So the old master insisted on returning home. Now all the young masters are in the

house, yelling and arguing. You two haven't eaten, have you? I'll take you to the side house and make something."

Just as she was about to turn, Wu Ma added, "Miss, I heard them talking about you the other day—gritting their teeth, not saying nice things. When you go in, try to keep your distance. Also, the old master invited some powerful Feng Shui master to help with his funeral arrangements. Women can't be present. Wait until the master leaves, then go see him."

"I understand," Xu Ying said. She knew all too well—if the will had any inheritance for her, the rest of the family would be seething with jealousy.

Wu Ma led them in through a side entrance of the estate. High walls surrounded the place. Corridors, courtyards, open skylights—everything exuded an old-world charm.

It made Su Jie feel like he'd stepped into the past. Especially hearing the way people still called each other "young master" and "miss," he felt like this place was a century behind the rest of the world. And that whole "no women allowed" nonsense? Completely mind-boggling.

Wu Ma went to the kitchen.

Xu Ying sat in the small room, lost in thought.

Su Jie, too restless to sit still, got up and wandered.

Suddenly, clanging sounds came from a nearby courtyard.

He passed through a few corridors and archways, and saw a few young men practicing martial arts. They wore heavy iron rings on their arms, pushing forward in circular motions. They were training in a Southern style known as Iron Wire Fist.

Chapter 88: An Encounter with a Master

These young men were all around twenty years old.

They had numerous iron rings hanging from their arms, each weighing about two or three jin. With every ounce of strength they could muster, some of them turned bright red in the face. Holding a horse stance, their legs trembled as if they were on the verge of collapse.

Su Jie knew that this “Iron Wire Fist” was an essential training method within Southern-style martial arts. It greatly helped in building strength and originally came from Hung Gar. In the history of Southern martial arts, it was first passed on by the Monk Jueyin to “Iron Bridge Three (Leung Kwan),” who taught it to Lam

Fook-sing, then to Wong Fei-hung, and later to “Lam Sai-wing.” Eventually, it was documented and widely promoted.

Later on, styles like Wing Chun and other Southern fists also adopted iron rings to train “bridge power.”

In Southern styles, the arms are referred to as “bridges.”

This kind of training involves both internal and external hardening.

Because the iron rings clang against each other, the wrists, skin, and underlying tendons and bones are constantly jarred. Over time, this makes the arms as tough as iron. Just a light clash during a fight can leave the opponent overwhelmed.

In many villages throughout the South, martial arts are deeply rooted in the culture and have even blended into lion dancing, Cantonese opera, and other artistic traditions.

To Su Jie’s surprise, there were still young people practicing here in this manor.

This was the ancestral estate of the Xu family. At the center stood a grand courtyard called the “Four Golden Points,” and surrounding it were buildings that appeared to all belong to the Xu clan—clearly a tightly-knit family compound.

In southern China, it's common for extended families to live in clusters—a habit developed during the turbulent days of the past.

“This training may be tough now, but one day you'll see its benefits,” said the martial arts instructor, a middle-aged man wearing a pitch-black, button-up changshan. He had a long beard, held a teapot in one hand, and a stick in the other. Whenever a young man slacked off, he lashed out without hesitation. “You're all from this village. After the New Year, our company is expanding abroad. If you don't train properly, you might just die out there. Doing business in the Middle East or Africa isn't as safe as being in China. Those places are crawling with bandits.”

'I see,' Su Jie thought to himself. The Xu family's business had clearly extended overseas, particularly in volatile regions where, while opportunities abound, danger is never far behind.

Su Jie had once read online about Chinese folks running restaurants in Iraq, serving American soldiers who'd even roll up in tanks. Some would pay with expensive military equipment. Within a year, these restaurant owners had made millions. But the risk was enormous—gunfights and ambushes were common.

For ordinary people raised in peaceful modern China, such environments are unimaginable.

Doing business in war zones presents immense opportunity—especially in material trade—but the price is your life on the line.

The Xu family was evidently pushing hard into foreign markets and had done quite well in international trade. They now needed young men as security personnel, much like the armed escorts of old martial arts courier agencies.

And these security staff had to be recruited locally—people they knew and trusted. Trust is everything in such environments; a stranger might turn on you, and in a war zone, death could come at any moment.

Su Jie watched for a while and realized the instructor was no average teacher. His moves were swift as wind, thunderous in force, crashing like waves, and rolling like boulders. His strikes were powerful and deep, completely different from the short, compact nature typical of Southern fists. There was even a hint of the open, expansive style found in Northern martial arts.

Yet all his movements were clearly rooted in Southern-style techniques.

This was someone who had mastered the art and incorporated elements from many schools.

“In Southern-style martial arts, hatred is the most important thing,” the instructor said. “When you practice, imagine a man in front of you who killed your parents, violated your wife and daughters, mocked you, humiliated you, and trampled on you. You must kill him. Use the techniques you’ve learned to kill him. Only by cultivating this hatred will your skills grow rapidly. Only when driven by revenge can a person truly dedicate themselves fully to something.”

Su Jie couldn't hold back: "The hatred in Southern-style martial arts is about national hatred, not personal vendetta. Training with personal revenge may improve your skills quickly, but it narrows the heart and warps the mind. You'll never reach the realm of a true master."

He knew it was rude to interrupt someone's teaching—especially among old-school martial arts instructors, it could be seen as an affront worthy of a duel.

But times had changed, and Su Jie genuinely didn't want to see martial arts veer away from their greater purpose.

"Who the hell are you, brat? You've been watching this whole time and I didn't say a word. Now you dare spout nonsense?"

The instructor was enraged—his voice thundered.

Whoosh!

With that shout, the instructor was already in front of Su Jie, his fist thrusting toward Su Jie's chest like a spear or an arrow.

Though he'd started out four or five meters away, with several steps in between, he used some unknown footwork, bounding forward in a few steps like a leaping gazelle, and appeared before Su Jie almost instantly.

That level of movement skill would put him among the elite even in parkour.

Su Jie, however, was no slouch. In the blink of an eye, he compressed his body, folding his torso and raising a knee like a shield to block his whole body—then charged forward.

Most people faced with an attack instinctively backpedal, dodge, or block. Even pro fighters do the same. But Su Jie, through countless bouts, psychological conditioning, and spiritual discipline, had eliminated the urge to retreat. His only instinct was to charge forward.

He imagined himself a soldier “offering his life for his country, ready to die without hesitation.”

He saw himself as a hoe and pickaxe—a humble but unstoppable force.

With this mindset, the instructor felt his attack interrupted before reaching full power. Suddenly, a five-fingered palm came down like a mountain, bearing down on him.

He was stunned.

He'd assumed Su Jie was just another overconfident youth and meant only to give him a scare. He didn't expect to be met with such a ferocious response.

In that critical moment, the instructor abruptly pulled back, retreating.

While falling back, he struck again with a punch and a kick to break Su Jie's momentum.

But Su Jie didn't pursue. He'd been defending himself all along, with no intent to spar. The opponent's fierce aggression had simply triggered a reflexive "Hoe Strike" counter.

"My apologies," Su Jie said, standing up. "I spoke out of turn."

"Was that Xin Yi Ba (Heart Intent Fist)?" The instructor stood firm, bracing himself in case Su Jie charged again.

From that brief exchange, he could already tell Su Jie was no ordinary fighter.

That earlier triple-step, chest-punching strike was called “Black Tiger Steals the Heart”—a seemingly basic move but executed with the force of tiger and crane, light yet deadly. It was his signature technique, rarely countered when used by surprise.

“Black Tiger Steals the Heart” may look simple, but that’s what makes it effective—and profound.

Su Jie’s “Hoe Strike Technique” was similar—an evolved form of a farmer’s digging posture.

“What just happened?” the young men whispered among themselves, confused.

They hadn’t seen the exchange clearly—just their master launching an attack and suddenly retreating.

They all knew “Black Tiger Steals the Heart”—every disciple had felt its bite. No one had ever dodged it.

But now, a young man had seemingly blocked it?

“What are you staring at? Get back to training!”

Whap! Whap! Whap!

The instructor lashed out with his stick, driving them back into formation.

Then he turned to Su Jie. “Hey, kid. Let’s have a chat.”

“Sure,” Su Jie nodded, still bowing repeatedly. “I’m really sorry for earlier.”

His repeated apologies left the instructor with no room to stay angry.

“Alright, let’s let it go. It’s not a big deal,” the instructor said. “Actually, you were right earlier. The ‘hatred’ in Southern fists should be national hatred. But you have to understand—these kids were raised in good times. They have no concept of national tragedy or family annihilation. I haven’t even personally felt that kind of loss. Without real experience, it’s hard to push their martial practice to the psychological limit. That’s why I can only teach them to focus on personal hatred—something they can actually understand. They’re heading abroad after New Year. If they don’t toughen up fast, they’ll suffer for it.”

“I see now,” Su Jie nodded. He hadn’t thought of that angle.

“And as for you,” the instructor continued, “from our brief exchange, I could tell—you’re practicing Xing Yi. You’ve developed a distinct intention—there’s a flavor of reckless charge in it. But you’re missing something. I bet you’ve never actually experienced charging forward through real gunfire and explosions. That kind of courage has a rawness that psychological tricks can’t replicate. You’ve been brainwashing yourself—convincing yourself it’s real. But suggestion is still just suggestion.”

“If your ‘Hoe Strike’ had been truly forged in the fire of real combat, there’d have been no way for me to escape.”

Su Jie nodded again.

Ever since he discovered the spirit behind his own martial path—“The rivers and mountains reside in my heart; one crow of the rooster lights up the world”—he’d been using intense psychological suggestion during practice. His skills had improved rapidly as a result.

But in the end, suggestion isn’t the same as experience.

He couldn’t truly feel the righteous grandeur of those who had once sacrificed everything for a broken nation.

“Great times make great people,” Su Jie said quietly.

“Exactly. A new era demands a new spirit.” The instructor and Su Jie seemed to be having a Zen-like exchange that only the two of them could understand.

“What’s your name, Master? I’m Su Jie,” he asked. He hadn’t expected to meet such a formidable figure here. If they really fought, who would win was uncertain. But in terms of understanding martial arts, this master was his equal.

“I’m Huang Dingyi,” the instructor said, taking out his phone. “Let’s add each other. I’ve got a martial arts school in G City—and an app for training. You should download it.”

Chapter 89: Sinister Intentions Revealed

"Why is your app rating so low? I logged in and it crashed immediately. Your tech team really dropped the ball."

Su Jie pulled out his phone and downloaded the app. As soon as he logged in, it crashed. After a few tries, he barely managed to get it running, but it was so laggy he gave up.

Seeing this, the martial arts instructor Huang Dingyi looked a bit embarrassed. “My student made it for me. The tech isn’t great.”

"Let me recommend a team to rebuild the app. I guarantee it'll run smoothly—no more crashing. Maintenance costs will be cheaper than market rates," Su Jie offered immediately.

"Really?" Huang Dingyi lit up. "I've been struggling to promote my classes. I'm good at martial art, but when it comes to tech, I don't have a clue. I spent over half a million on this thing, and look at it—it's a mess."

"Half a million?" Su Jie instantly knew he'd been ripped off. "Here's the deal: I'll help you get it redone. If you're satisfied, you pay afterward. Sound good?"

"Seriously?" Huang Dingyi still looked wary, clearly burned before. "You'd really do that? If it works out, I can refer more business your way. I have over ten friends who want similar apps. We'll come to you for ongoing support too."

"No problem," Su Jie said, sending a message to his older sister.

His sister used to run a software company with some friends. Back in the day, they specialized in app development and maintenance. Business was booming and their reputation was solid.

Su Jie remembered how developing an app used to take months and cost a fortune—sometimes hundreds of thousands. But his sister's team had some kind of tech breakthrough that drastically shortened the development cycle with

impressive efficiency.

Unfortunately, after landing a massive contract, things went south. They lost a ton of money and the company's reputation tanked.

At the time, Su Jie hadn't understood what happened. Now he suspected Haoyu Group had seen the potential in his sister's tech, deliberately sabotaged them, drove the company into the ground, and then swooped in acting like saviors.

He'd even overheard Feng Yuxuan from Haoyu Group admit to it—and had recorded it, though the recording was later stolen.

The more he learned, the more he realized how tragic the downfall of his sister's company was—and the more he despised Feng Yuxuan and his cronies at Haoyu Group.

Although she now worked for Haoyu, his sister and her team still took on side projects after hours to make extra income.

Su Jie didn't know all the ins and outs of the tech world, but even he could see Huang Dingyi's app was basic. His sister could redo it in her sleep.

Landing her a client meant some income, and ongoing maintenance would bring in steady cash.

The young martial arts students standing nearby were dumbfounded to see Su Jie and Master Huang deep in conversation about mobile apps. The scene felt totally out of place. But none of them dared relax—Huang’s teaching style was notoriously strict. He didn’t hesitate to use a stick, and he sometimes beat them black and blue with no one to complain to.

“Dinner time!”

Just as Su Jie and Huang were hitting it off, his mom Xu Ying called out from across the courtyard.

“Sorry, I’ve got to eat,” Su Jie said, getting up to leave.

“No worries at all.” Huang exchanged contact info with him. “Come by and chat more when you have time.”

From that conversation alone, Huang had developed a good impression of Su Jie.

Meanwhile...

In the central building of the estate, seven or eight young men and women had gathered, seemingly deep in discussion. Among them was Xu Jiahong.

“Grandpa really is preparing for the end,” said a young man decked out in luxury, twirling a car key in his fingers—completely at odds with the old-style courtyard around him. “He brought in Master Luo to pick out a burial site.”

“They say there are three top geomancy masters in China—Luo in the North, Mao in the South, Ma in the Center. Who knows if it’s true,” said another young man. “I heard Haoyu Group’s Feng Shoucheng keeps Master Mao on retainer. That’s supposedly why Haoyu has done so well. Grandpa paid a fortune to get Master Luo and told everyone not to show even a hint of disrespect. Even we aren’t allowed near while the elders are with him.”

“Why is Grandpa so obsessed with this feng shui stuff?” a young woman sneered. “We can’t even sit at the table during ancestor worship meals. What century is this? I feel like venting online.”

“Count yourself lucky,” said another woman, clutching a designer handbag and wearing flashy lipstick. “Try raising a fuss now, and Grandpa will cut your whole branch of the family out of the inheritance. If Master Luo hears you badmouthing him and gets offended, forget Grandpa—even your own father would disown you and leave you penniless.”

The earlier girl quickly shut her mouth, terrified of being reported.

“You really can’t offend Master Luo,” someone warned. “Watch what you say—no talk of superstition or anything like that. The older generation takes it very seriously. The older they get, the more they believe. Upset them in this area and you’re finished. Even the brilliant Emperor Wu of Han lost it in his old age, accusing the Crown Prince of witchcraft and triggering a purge that killed thousands.”

“Your family’s something else, Jiahong,” said the cocky youth with the car keys, Xu Jiahao. “I heard your dad went to Xu Ying—that b!tch—trying to claim the part of Grandpa’s inheritance meant for her. That’s over a billion in assets. You’ve got some nerve.”

“May the best man win,” Xu Jiahong sneered. “Didn’t you blow a few million on two internet celebs last time? Someone even filmed it and put it online. Grandpa was furious. Want me to bring up more of your little scandals?”

“You looking for a fight?” snarled Jiahao.

“You think I don’t know what you’ve done? Using company money for shady loans, couldn’t recover them, then skimmed profits from other departments to cover the hole. That’s a massive deficit. If Grandpa finds out, he’ll make an example out of you.”

“Got proof?” Xu Jiahong didn’t seem fazed.

“You really want me to bring it out?” Xu Jiahao wasn’t backing down either.

“Enough.” A man around 35 finally spoke. He was the same one who’d brought up Emperor Wu’s downfall—Xu Jiaren, the eldest of their generation. “You two tearing into each other— isn’t this family chaotic enough? The Xu family looks strong, but most of our businesses are in dying industries. We could collapse fast. Remember the Jia family from Dream of the Red Chamber? They were bigger than us—then gone overnight. If Grandpa passes, we’ll lose access to all his connections. Our business might drop by 40–50%. Will you still be living large then?”

“Don’t lecture us just because you’re two years older,” snapped Xu Jiahong. “Acting all noble—weren’t you the one who bought a mansion in the U.S. under the company’s name, then somehow made it personal property? That’s a bigger move than any of us. And that starlet you keep on the side already gave you two sons, right?”

“You’ve grown bold,” Jiaren looked mildly surprised. He had thought his younger cousins were just spoiled brats, but clearly, some were more calculating than they let on. “Fine. Right now, we need to stand together. Xu Ying ran off all those years ago—why would Grandpa leave her anything, much less let her manage part of the family business? This isn’t just about giving her ten billion in assets. It’s about putting her on the board, overseeing us. She used to handle a lot of overseas operations for Grandpa. She’s dangerous.”

“In the end, Grandpa just wants her to work for the family again,” said Xu Jiahong. “But we’ll pay the price. We need to stop this woman before she becomes a problem.”

“The older generation already has a plan. As long as we stay united, and Grandpa passes on, even if she comes back, it’s meaningless. What can one woman do?” scoffed Jiahao. “We’ll keep living like kings. You’re all worrying over nothing. The Xu family isn’t going down in our generation. We’ll live comfortably our whole lives.”

“No ambition at all,” thought a young man in the corner, who had been silent the whole time.

“Jiazhi, you haven’t said a word. Got any ideas?” Xu Jiaren looked over.

Xu Jiazhi, despite his internal disdain, kept his composure. “I’m heading abroad after the New Year to work on a business deal. I’ll do as I’m told. I just follow orders—if there’s profit to split, I’m in.”

“Don’t be so modest. I heard you made a killing last year selling supplies in war zones. You’ve got guts,” Jiaren’s eyes narrowed. “Quiet types like you are the ones to watch. Just like Emperor Yongzheng—underestimated, but deadly. He wiped out his brothers and took the throne.”

“Don’t scare me, big bro,” Jiazhi quickly lowered his head.

“You’re clever. Think of a plan,” Jiaren pushed.

“I really don’t have one,” Jiazhi said firmly, sticking to his low-profile approach.

Just then, a burly man in camouflage rushed in and whispered something into Jiaren’s ear.

“I see. Go,” Jiaren said, his face forming a cold smile. He clapped his hands. “Here’s some news: Xu Ying just snuck back into the estate with her son. Wu Ma let them in and is cooking for them in the side house. Looks like they’re going to see Grandpa soon. So... what do we do?”

“D*mn it.” Jiahao spat. “That bitch came back and brought her b*stard kid? Trying to get him a piece of the inheritance too? What a joke.”

“It might actually work,” Jiahong added fuel to the fire. “Old folks lose their minds in old age. Grandpa thinks we’re all unreliable and only trusts Xu Ying to run the business. Has he forgotten? If she hadn’t run away from that arranged marriage, our alliance with the Zhang family would have happened—and our reach would be global by now.”

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Chapter 90: Bullying Beyond Reason: A Shiny Exterior, Rotten Within

“Indeed, what happened back then did great harm to our Xu family,” Xu Jiren nodded in agreement.

“You men are truly pathetic,” a woman sneered. “Since when does the strength of the Xu family rely on a woman's marriage alliance? Of course, I don't like Xu Ying and think she should disappear, but I'm also a Xu woman. If the time comes when I need to make sacrifices, I'd do the same as her. But I wouldn't be as foolish—I'd still take what's mine.”

“Well said,” a few other women chimed in, clearly united: “Let me tell you, nowadays men and women are equal. When the old man kicks the bucket, we're not letting a single cent slip past us.”

“You're all pretty bold,” Xu Jiahong's gaze was sharp, his thoughts unreadable. “But everything depends on the old man's will. If he leaves everything to Xu Ying to manage and distribute, we won't even get the scraps.”

“No way that’s happening,” Xu Jiahao said carelessly. “The old man is a die-hard sexist. If he leaves her anything at all, that’s already a huge favor. But speaking of which, what do we do now? Big Brother, this needs your decision. It’d be best if Xu Ying left voluntarily and never came back. That way, the old man would be disappointed in her and might change his will. The only reason he values her is her usefulness—take that away, and he’s got no reason to give her anything.”

“Jiahao, you’re not so useless after all,” Xu Jiren mused. “I thought you were just a playboy who drinks, gambles, and chases influencers. But this plan to cut her off at the root isn’t bad. So how do we make her leave? She’s still our elder. If we go too far, it’ll bring shame to the family, and if the old man finds out, we’re all screwed. Worse, she might flip the narrative and put us on the back foot.”

“Hold on...” Xu Jiahong said, “Didn’t that b!tch Xu Ying bring along a little b*stard? What if we mess with the kid and get him to do something outrageous—cause a big scene? Today’s the ancestor worship and tomb site selection, everyone in the clan is here. If he screws up, no one will save him.”

“Not impossible,” Xu Jiren nodded. “But Jiahong, isn’t it a bit vicious to use such a plan on a kid?”

“Can’t be a real man without a bit of poison. Besides, Big Brother, don’t act so righteous. You’ve pulled off nastier schemes than this.” Xu Jiahong couldn’t stand Xu Jiren’s fake virtue—clean on the surface, dirty underneath.

“Well, he doesn’t carry the Xu name, but technically he’s of our generation,” Xu Jiren ignored the jab and started giving orders. “Bring the brat over. Let’s have a look.”

“I heard Xu Ying’s husband is just a security guard, and not well off,” said a woman with garishly painted lips. “Wave some money at the kid and he’d probably sell his whole family.”

While they were talking, Xu Jiren tapped his watch, and the camo-clad man from before came in again.

Xu Jiren whispered a few instructions. The man nodded and left.

“By the way, have you all visited Teacher Huang yet?” Xu Jiren suddenly remembered something. “We all studied martial arts under him as kids, formally apprenticed too. Now that you’ve returned to the ancestral home, you should bring him gifts to show respect. Otherwise, if the old man finds out, he’ll blow a fuse, say you were poorly raised and disrespectful. Today’s an important day—ancestor worship and feng shui consultation—so we can’t afford any slip-ups in decorum.”

“D*mn, I forgot!” one person’s face changed.

“No worries, just have someone handle it. There’s still time,” said Xu Jiren.

Meanwhile, Su Jie had finished his meal and, after a short walk, went over to chat with Huang Dingyi in the neighboring courtyard.

This time, their conversation wasn't about mobile apps but martial arts.

Huang Dingyi was intrigued by Su Jie's Hoe Strike technique. After watching him perform it twice, he couldn't help but marvel: "It's true what they say—Shaolin is the source of all martial arts. The strongest Shaolin technique is Heart Intent Fist. I once saw someone who had mastered it; they could kill like mowing grass. Though it seems simple, with just one rising-and-falling move repeated, it contains immense inner strength, intention, and Chan meditation. But sadly, 99% of people brush it off and switch to flashier techniques."

"Exactly. I didn't get it at first either and thought it was useless. But once I understood it, the more I practiced, the more amazing it felt," Su Jie said. "All techniques can be integrated into it, generating endless variations."

"Of course. That's why Shaolin treated it as an untransmittable secret," Huang Dingyi said. "Frankly, Shaolin's techniques have all been deconstructed by now. Most of it is available online—there are no more secrets. After the Thirteen Staff Monks rescued the Tang Emperor, Shaolin was rewarded and prospered, training warriors through every dynasty. In the Yuan Dynasty, Master Xue Ting Fuyu became the imperial tutor to Kublai Khan and openly promoted martial arts. Later, Masters Jue Yuan and Bai Yufeng compiled all martial arts manuals, creating the Five Animal Styles—early internal arts. Southern styles like Hung Gar came from Southern Shaolin. Wing Chun was developed by Abbess Ng Mui based on Shaolin's Snake and Crane techniques. So at the end of the day, we're all from the same lineage."

"True martial arts require people to live and train together, day in and day out. With time, the best techniques naturally emerge," Su Jie said. "Just like in modern scientific research."

“I’m really curious—you’re only seventeen. How did you train your skills? Unless you were practicing from the womb, how can you be so advanced?” Huang Dingyi still looked doubtful. “I’ve been to Minglun Martial Arts Academy. Their training is indeed better than other schools, but not enough to produce someone like you.”

“Teacher Huang, have you heard of the Typhon Training Camp?” Su Jie asked cautiously. He could tell that Huang Dingyi wasn’t some ornamental instructor—he’d clearly seen real combat.

“You’re from Typhon?” Huang Dingyi’s eyes widened. “No way. Everyone in there is a monster. When Old Xu and I went abroad in our younger days, we ran into some thugs—one of them from Typhon nearly killed me...”

Just as he was about to continue, the camo-clad man walked up, spotted Su Jie, and said, “You must be Ms. Xu Ying’s son?”

“Yes, what is it?” Su Jie asked.

“Your cousins would like to see you. Just to get acquainted,” the man said politely, then turned to Huang Dingyi and bowed. “Master Huang.”

Clearly, Huang had also taught him.

But Huang Dingyi ignored him, still preoccupied with thoughts of the Typhon Camp.

“All right, I’ll go,” Su Jie nodded and turned to Huang. “Teacher, I’ll be back shortly.”

“Go on,” Huang waved.

Long after Su Jie had left, Huang finally came back to his senses. “That kid’s movements... they really do carry a trace of Typhon’s style. Could he really be connected to them? No—I need to find out...”

Meanwhile, Su Jie had been taken to a courtyard in the center of the compound.

He entered a room full of men and women, all looking at him like he was some kind of circus act.

“You little bas—” Xu Jiahong started, then froze.

He recognized the teenager. Not long ago, this very boy had toyed with him and even beat his man Ading without breaking a sweat.

“Hmm?” Su Jie glanced over and met his gaze. “So it’s you.”

“What? You know each other?” Xu Jiren looked puzzled.

“Nope. Never seen him before,” Xu Jiahong replied, his face shifting through a dozen expressions, teeth clenched.

“All right,” Xu Jiren interrupted. “I’ll talk to him.”

He turned to Su Jie. “How old are you? Still in school or graduated?”

Su Jie frowned. He had already guessed these younger Xu family members were hostile toward him and his mother.

Inheritance fights in big families often turned bloody. Even in rural areas, blood brothers fought over a few acres or a cow—some never spoke again. So with a clan this size? No surprise.

But Su Jie remained composed. “Seventeen. Senior year of high school. College entrance exams next year. Hello, cousins.”

“Who’s your cousin?” sneered the garishly made-up woman. “Don’t act like we’re related, b*stard.”

“We’re not relatives,” Xu Jiahao raised an eyebrow. “Who knows where you crawled out from? We called you here to see if you’re some con artist trying to scam your way into our family. Even if you are Xu Ying’s son, you’re here for the inheritance, right? Hate to break it to you—you don’t even carry the Xu name. You’re an outsider. Stop dreaming. Just leave with Xu Ying now, or who knows what might happen. This isn’t a place you can handle.”

Su Jie simply shook his head and turned to leave.

He didn’t want to argue with this gang of spoiled brats.

“Stop right there!” Xu Jiahong snapped. “Where do you think you’re going? You haven’t even said your piece!”

Last time he’d been humiliated by Su Jie. Now that he had backup on his home turf, he wasn’t going to miss his chance.

“What more do you want?” Su Jie asked. “If there’s nothing else, I’m leaving.”

“You think the Xu family’s a place you can just walk in and out of?” Xu Jiahao stepped forward. “Maybe you stole something and are trying to run? Grandpa said Xu Ying used to steal stuff when she was a kid. Then she embezzled from the company and got kicked out. You’re her son—don’t tell me you picked up her thieving habits? Ah Hua, take him to the side room and search him. And get him a change of clothes. What’s this stink? When’s the last time you washed?”

“HAHAHAHA...” several women burst out laughing.

“Xu Jiahao, you’re still pulling these stunts, huh?” one woman cackled. “Heard last time you made a waiter in a bar wear panties on his head and dance for spilling your drink.”

“Didn’t you practically assault the bridesmaid at Xiao Wu’s wedding?” another added.

Even Xu Jiren chuckled. He knew Jiahao was a certified playboy who loved tormenting people, but he also had a knack for hiding deeper intentions behind his antics. This little prank on Su Jie might seem childish, but the goal was to provoke him into overreacting—then they’d twist it into something bigger.

And if it got out of hand? Just call it a “joke” and laugh it off.

