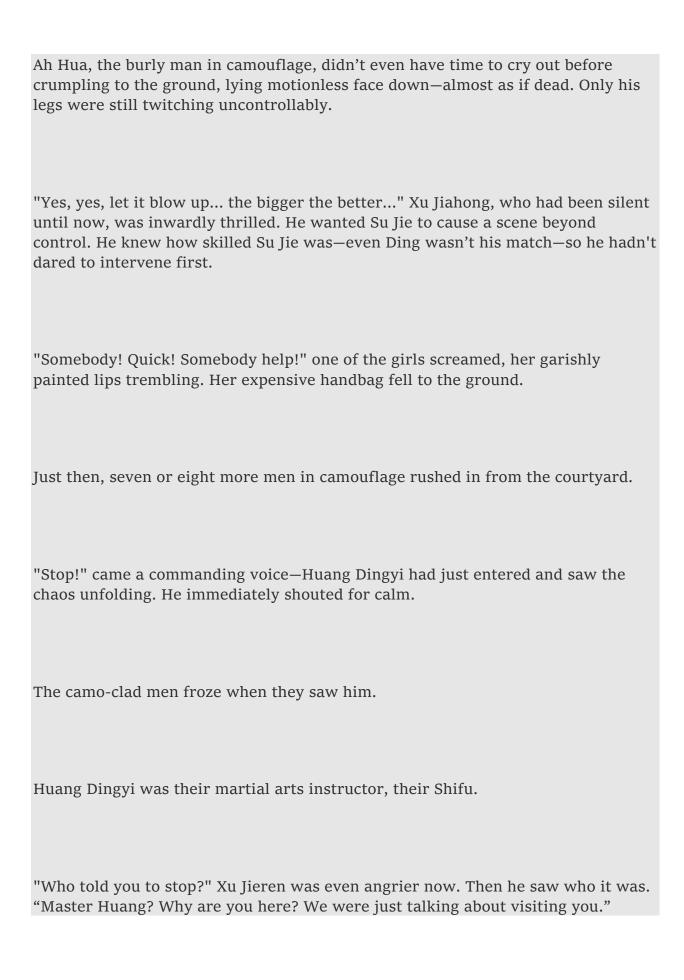
THE WAY OF RESTRAINT

Chapter 91: A Casual Slap Teaches Respect

Chapter 91. A casual shap reaches respect
The younger generation—men and women alike—grinned as they watched Xu Jiahao mess with Su Jie.
To them, Su Jie and Xu Ying had come to disgust them, snatch their wealth, and potentially cut off their financial lifelines.
And cutting off someone's livelihood is like killing their parents.
"Ah Hua! Get over here! Take him into the next room to search him and change his clothes!" Xu Jiahao clapped his hands and ordered the burly man in camouflage.
The camo-clad man looked at Xu Jieren, clearly waiting for his cue.
Obviously, he was one of Xu Jieren's trusted men—Xu Jiahao couldn't command him directly.

Xu Jieren gave Ah Hua a subtle signal, granting permission.
"Ah Hua, hurry up! I can't stand the stink on this guy anymore don't you all smell it?" Xu Jiahao pinched his nose and laughed again with the others.
SMACK! Out of nowhere, a loud slap echoed like a firecracker going off.
Everyone froze.
They saw something unbelievable: Su Jie had raised his hand and slapped Xu Jiahao across the face.
"Aaargh"
Xu Jiahao howled in pain as Su Jie's strike hit a nerve. A clear vertical handprint quickly appeared on his face—not the typical sideways slap. That's because Su Jie's habitual strike came from above—a technique known as the "Hoe Strike Technique."

"You dare hit me" Xu Jiahao's face turned red and swollen. The slap had nearly disfigured him. He was in so much shock he couldn't even yell properly.
"Did your parents never teach you how to speak to people?" Su Jie asked coldly. "Is this how you were raised?"
"You're insane!" Xu Jieren finally came to his senses, seething with rage. He hadn't imagined Su Jie would actually dare to strike someone here. In their eyes, this crowd was the cream of the crop—pampered elites. Outsiders didn't even *dare* to offend them, let alone lay a hand on them.
"Ah Hua! Ah Hua! Grab him! Tie him up! Hang him up!" Xu Jieren barked three commands in a row, unable to hide his fury.
Ah Hua lunged forward.
SMACK!
Su Jie moved faster. Before Ah Hua could reach him, Su Jie was already in front of him, delivering another slap—this time right to the face.

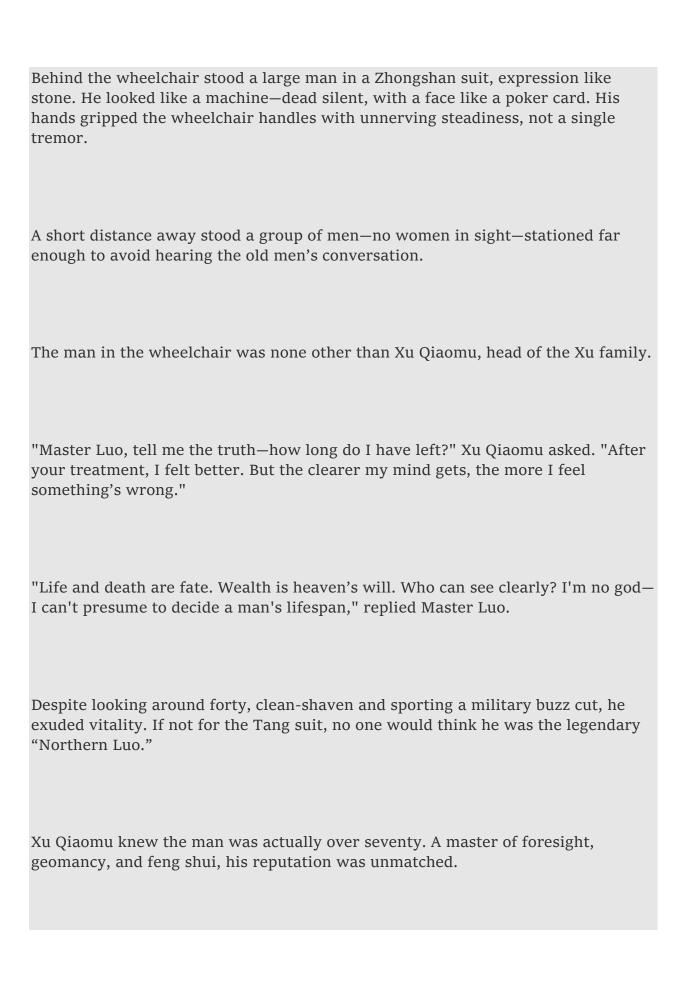


"I told them to stop," Huang Dingyi said bluntly, ignoring Xu Jieren. Turning to Su Jie, he said, "Su Jie, these kids are out of line. For my sake, let it go."
"Master Huang, what are you talking about? He just started beating people out of nowhere!" Xu Jieren was stunned. He had no idea why Huang Dingyi was taking Su Jie's side—or why he immediately blamed them.
"I'm going to kill you!" Xu Jiahao finally recovered a bit and, eyes bloodshot with rage, charged at Su Jie like a madman.
Without hesitation, Huang Dingyi stepped forward and used a "Black Tiger Steals the Heart" strike—right to Xu Jiahao's abdomen.
Xu Jiahao immediately passed out.
"Take him to the side to rest. He'll be fine—just needs to cool off," Huang Dingyi ordered calmly.
"Master Huang, what are you doing?" Xu Jieren's brow furrowed deeply. "We respect you as a teacher, but this is our family's internal matter."

"Jieren, I'm doing this for your own good," Huang Dingyi replied. "Just stay calm for now. The old man will be back shortly. I'll explain it to him myself."
Su Jie couldn't tell exactly why Huang Dingyi was suddenly defending him. Maybe he didn't want anyone seriously hurt, or maybe mentioning the Typhon Training Camp earlier had made Huang think Su Jie was one of *them*.
"Surround the area. Don't let this kid get away," Xu Jieren said coldly, shooting Su Jie a hard look. "I'm going to tell the old master. Master Huang, today is a big day. He assaulted people here—no one can cover for him."
With that, Xu Jieren strode out briskly.
"Su Jie, have a seat," Huang Dingyi said, pulling over two stools. "These younger ones—I watched them grow up. Yeah, they're spoiled, but they're still family."
"All I did was slap him twice," Su Jie replied, sitting down. "Didn't even really go at him."
"True. If you had really used your 'Hoe Strike' move, his skull would've been cracked open," Huang Dingyi muttered under his breath. "You mentioned the Typhon Training Camp earlier—are you one of their trainees?"

Seeing Su Jie sitting and chatting so casually with Huang Dingyi infuriated the younger crowd. But there was nothing they could do.
All they could do now was pray that Xu Jieren could bring back someone from the older generation to crush Su Jie's arrogance.
Even though Huang Dingyi could keep the younger generation in check, if one of the elders stepped in, he couldn't interfere.

At that moment, on the mountainside behind the house
A group of people surrounded two elderly men.
One wore a traditional Tang suit, eyes bright as he gazed out from the mountaintop, lost in thought.
Next to him sat a frail old man wrapped in thick blankets, slumped in a wheelchair. His face was sallow and weary.



In the South, especially among the elderly, such beliefs ran deep. Xu Qiaomu had paid a heavy price to get him here.
"Master Luo, I followed your instructions—offered a house, and inside placed thirty-six catties of gold. No matter what, help me settle my affairs—only then can I leave in peace," Xu Qiaomu said.
Master Luo had a rule: if he agreed to read your fate, you had to offer a house—and fill it with thirty-six catties (18kg) of gold.
At about 300 yuan per gram, that's over five million yuan. But for the truly wealthy, that's pocket change—a token of sincerity, really. More importantly, Master Luo rarely accepted clients.
Xu Qiaomu had only gotten him through an old friend's favor. And he understood the symbolism—an homage to the Buddhist tale of Elder Gudu and Prince Jita paving the grove with gold to invite the Buddha to preach.
It wasn't about the gold. It was about sincerity and the idea that true teachings are never casually shared.
"You're not terminally ill," Master Luo said. "Your vitality is fading because of heart troubles and worry—no medicine can cure that. At this rate, you have two, maybe three years left. But when it comes to lifespan readings, I'm not as skilled as Old Ma. His cloth-divination techniques are unmatched."

"You're too modest. Yes, there's a saying: Southern Mao, Northern Luo, Central Ma. But your ancestor read the fate of Emperor Kangxi's heir, didn't he?" Xu Qiaomu, though aged, still had eyes like steel. In that moment, his former sharpness as a business mogul flared: "When I read Kangxi's letters to Nian Gengyao, I saw him write the words 'extremely accurate in divination' about your ancestor."

"You're just flattering me. What Kangxi actually wrote in the margin of Nian Gengyao's report was: 'This man is not entirely unreliable. His readings are acceptable.' Yes, my ancestor—Blind Luo—read fortunes for Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong. But the scholars of the time scorned him. I personally don't like telling fortunes. That's why I demand houses and gold—to scare most people off. Destiny isn't fixed—it's shaped by action. The Book of Changes begins with the words: 'Strive ceaselessly. Hold virtue to bear the weight of the world.' A person who is diligent, disciplined, and virtuous will naturally live long and prosper. Misfortune won't touch him. Ghosts and gods won't sway him. I may divine fates, but I don't actually believe in fate. I want to make that clear to you."

"A true gentleman does not believe in fate," Xu Qiaomu sighed. "Hearing that, I know you truly are a master. But I know myself—I've lived a petty, grasping life. I'm no gentleman. That's why fate can control me—and why I must believe in it. A gentleman isn't someone who rejects fate—but someone whose virtue is so great that fate cannot touch him. Back when Nian Gengyao entered the capital, Kangxi told him to consult Blind Luo. But Nian, being a Confucian general, feared the scorn of the literati and refused. Kangxi even hinted at it in his letters, but Nian remained stubborn. In the end, he died under Yongzheng. If you're not a gentleman, then you'd better respect fate. Trying to conquer demons with virtue—when you have none—is like smashing rocks with eggs."

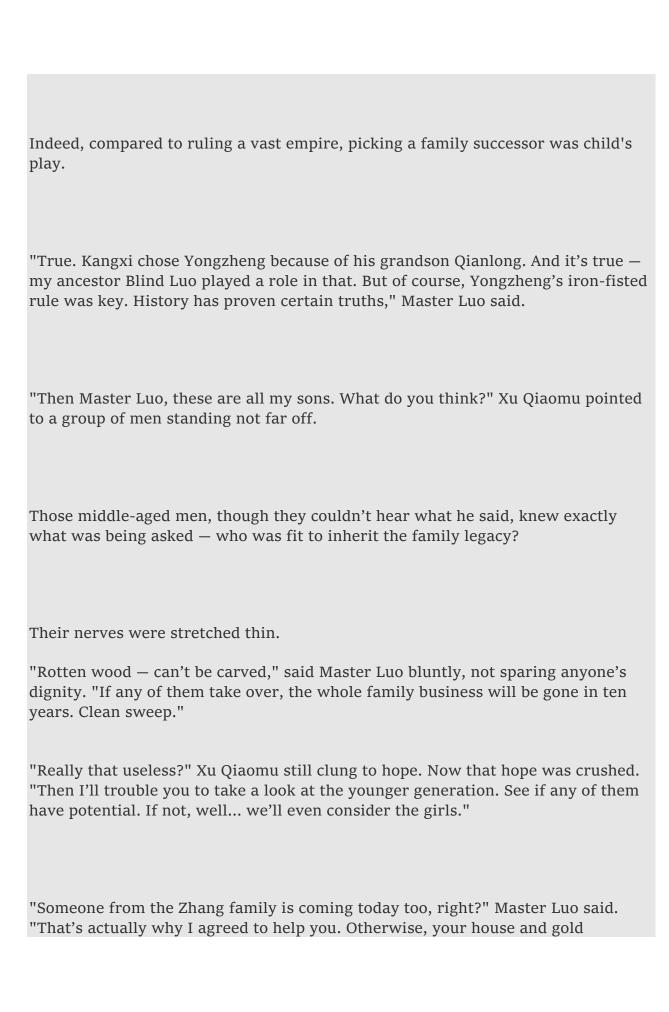
Chapter 92: Gathering of Northern Luo and Central Ma

"That's exactly right. When virtue can't subdue evil, disaster follows. Nian Gengyao wasn't a true gentleman. Trying to act like one brought his downfall," said Master Luo. "I'll do three things for you. First, I've treated your illness — you were on your last legs, wouldn't have made it three more months. Now, you've got two or three years left, though I can't promise more. Second, I helped you choose a feng shui burial site. As I said, three zhang deep under this mountain, encircled like a jade belt — it'll keep your family from decline for three generations."

"Only three generations without decline? Can't we rise to greatness?" Xu Qiaomu was unwilling to settle: "Like Feng Shoucheng — he suddenly rose to power, unstoppable. But our Xu family is already on the decline, and the younger generation is the third. Can't we soar like him?"

"You want to shoot to the heavens with just a grave? That's pure fantasy. In every dynasty, sages picked imperial tombs — how many empires actually lasted ten thousand years?" Master Luo said. "It all comes down to people. If someone in your family has real talent, maybe you can turn things around. Actually, you've got a good eye — the most important task is for me to read faces and see if any of your descendants can shoulder great responsibility."

"Exactly." Xu Qiaomu nodded. "Master Luo, your ancestors read fortunes for emperors. The Forbidden City archives still hold Qianlong's birth chart and Kangxi's comments on it — if I'm not mistaken, those comments were written by your ancestor, Blind Luo. I trust you. If your family could divine an emperor's fate, then finding a successor for my little clan should be a walk in the park."



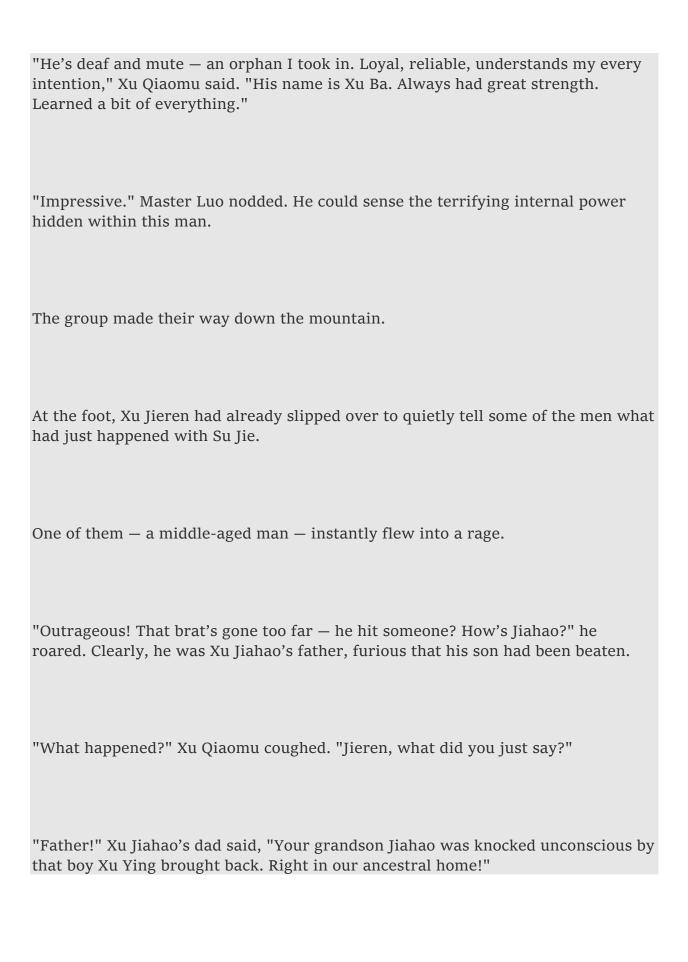
wouldn't have caught my interest. You've calculated this well — decades ago, the marriage alliance with the Zhangs fell through. This time, you're offering a lot, trying to marry Zhang Hongqing's daughter. I won't meddle in that. But Zhang Hongqing and Ma Fengnian are sworn brothers. Ma Fengnian's bringing her over to see if there's any promising talent in your family. I'm actually looking forward to chatting with Ma Fengnian. You didn't tell me he was coming — what, afraid two tigers can't share one mountain?"

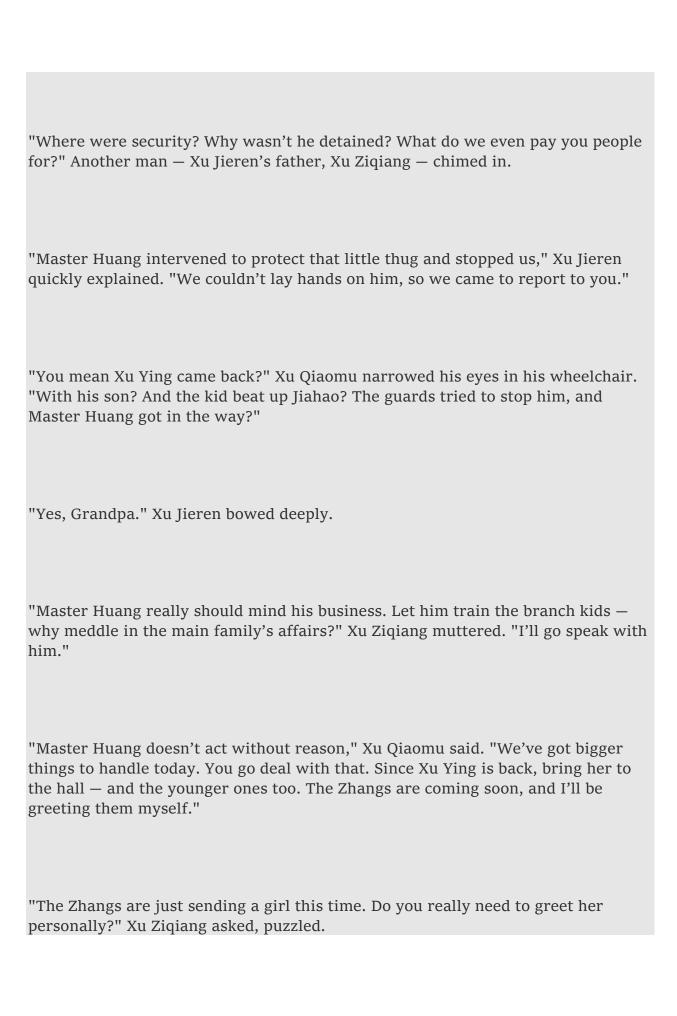
"Of course not!" Xu Qiaomu was startled and quickly explained, not wanting to offend Master Luo. "If Master Ma comes, it's a double blessing. It'll bring great honor to our Xu family. The two of you are the modern-day equivalents of Yuan Tiangang and Li Chunfeng. If you both meet at my home today, perhaps we'll even create a new 'Tui Bei Tu' legend." (G: Tui bei tu is a Chinese prophecy book from the 7th-century Tang dynasty.)

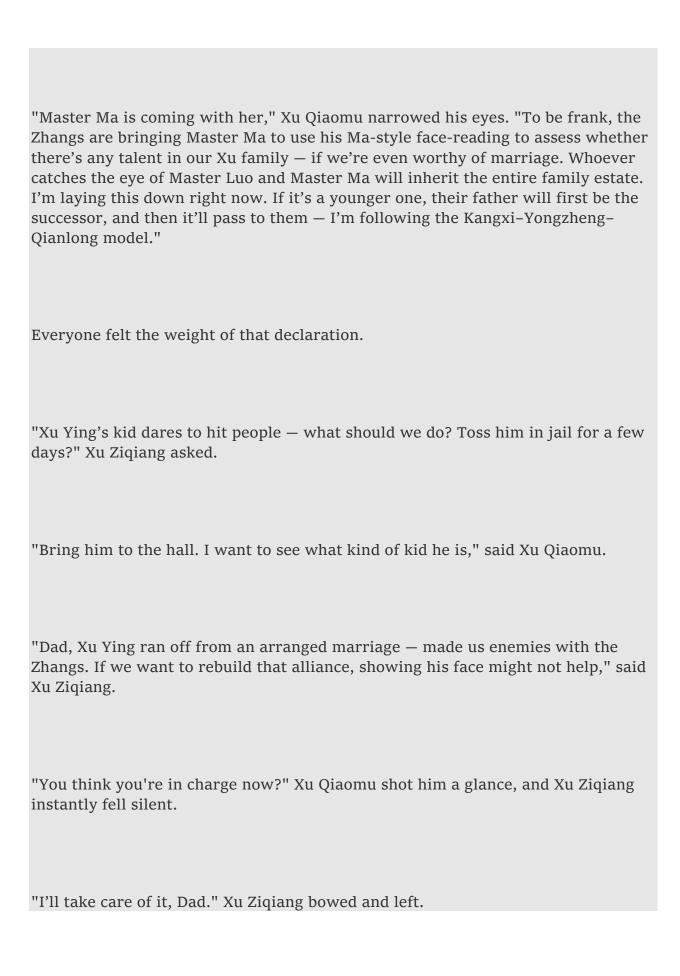
"Hah! Old fox — you sure know how to flatter," Master Luo chuckled. "We're no Yuan Tiangang and Li Chunfeng, and we're not writing any 'Tui Bei Tu'. Just academic exchange, that's all. If I'm right, they should be arriving soon. Let's go down."

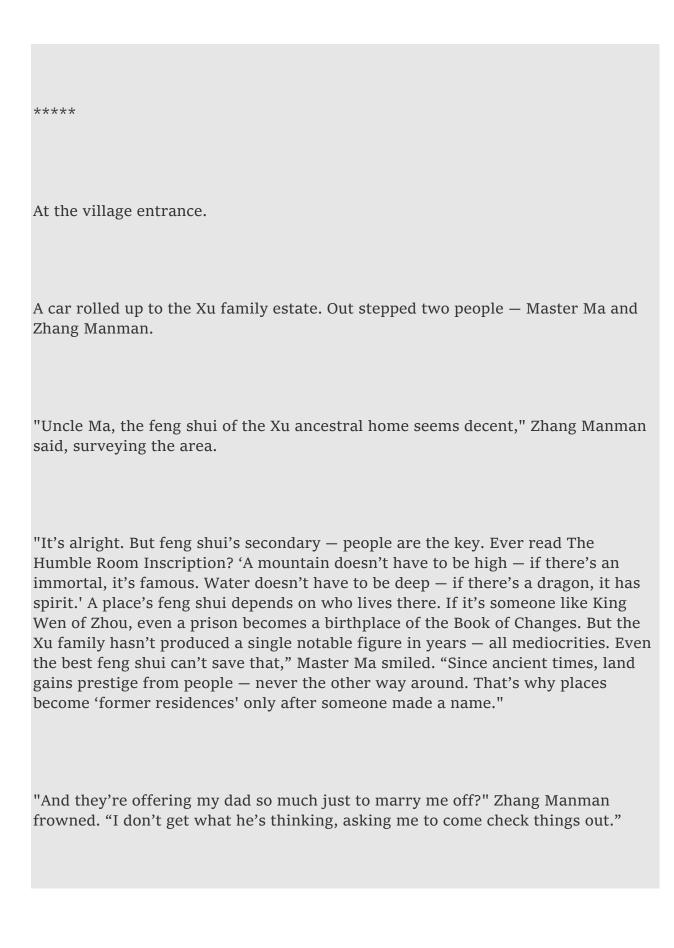
A large man in a Zhongshan suit pushed the wheelchair gently, smoothly, and without the slightest jolt — a level of control and strength that marked him as a true martial arts expert.

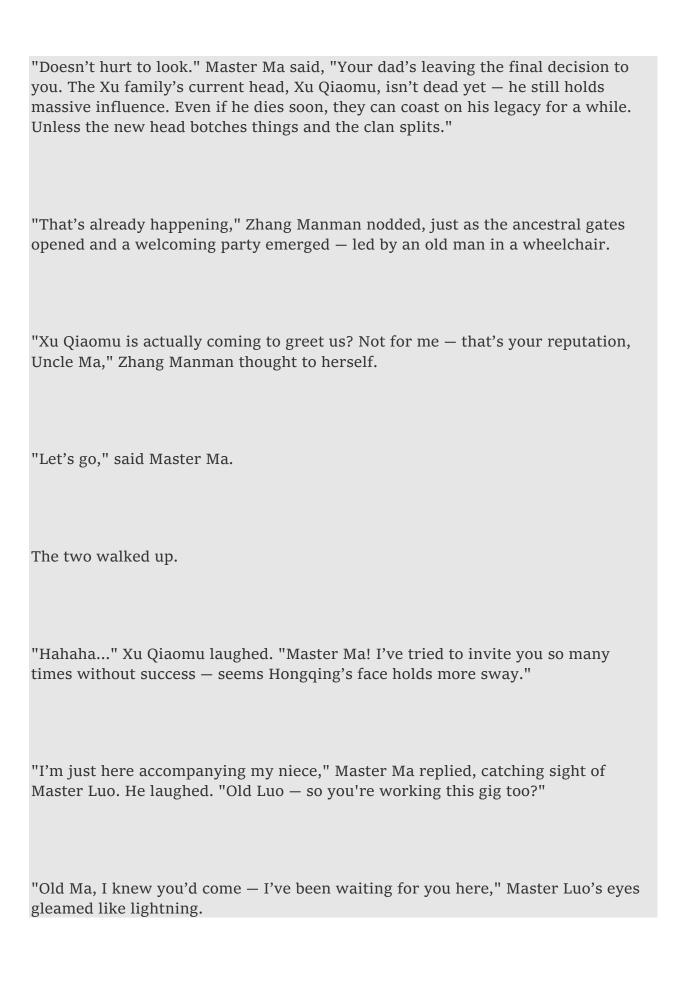
"Good kid. What's his style?" Master Luo asked.











"You two are usually impossible to book — even billionaires can't get you. Today you grace our Xu family — my ancestors must've done something right," Xu Qiaomu said hurriedly. "Please, come in — let me host you properly."

Xu Qiaomu truly dared not offend either of them. First, there's the old maxim: never offend feng shui masters. Second, these two weren't ordinary mystics — they were highly educated, had legions of disciples, and networks far deeper than Xu's own. Befriending them could bring tremendous benefits.

The group entered the hall.

Chapter 93: Unthinkable and Unstoppable K!lling Techniques

"You little b*stard! If you manage to walk out of the Xu household in one piece today, I'll take your last name!"

Xu Jiahao clutched his face, still roaring with rage, trying to rush at Su Jie, but was tightly held back by Xu Jiazhi.

This group of younger Xu family members watched Su Jie lounging casually in front of them, all fuming to the point of bursting a lung. Yet none of them made a move.
First, they had clearly seen that Su Jie's combat ability was terrifyingly strong. That security guard, Ah Hua, was a brawny fighter skilled in hand-to-hand combat, capable of taking down three to five ordinary men easily—yet Su Jie had floored him in one move. Second, it was obvious that Huang Dingyi was protecting Su Jie, so the other guards dared not intervene.
After all, these younger members didn't actually hold real authority within the Xu family.
"Mr. Huang, these guys still think you're siding with me," Su Jie chuckled. He couldn't care less what this junior crew thought. In fact, he saw the entire Xu family as a hollow tree—big in size but rotten at the core. One good storm and the whole thing could collapse. No one here was capable of holding things together.
Especially among this so-called younger generation—not a single one of them was worthy of carrying on the legacy, let alone making something new of it.
Huang Dingyi appeared to be shielding Su Jie, but Su Jie knew better—he was actually protecting these younger family members, worried Su Jie might lash out violently.

"I can't help it," Huang Dingyi said, still shaken. "People from the Typhon Training Camp left a lasting impression on me. Every one of them is a stone-cold killer. They could kill with a sheet of paper, even a drop of spit. Their techniques are impossible to guard against. That's not martial arts—it's pure assassination. Ancient Chinese kung fu used to be called killing arts, but even that was open and righteous. Typhon's techniques are the pinnacle of spy-level assassination: poison, hidden weapons, explosives, and all sorts of unthinkable methods. Sometimes two people could be walking past each other, not even close, and suddenly the other one drops dead. Even the cops on the scene can't find a trace, and the coroner can't determine a cause of death. I'm afraid you know these kinds of techniques."

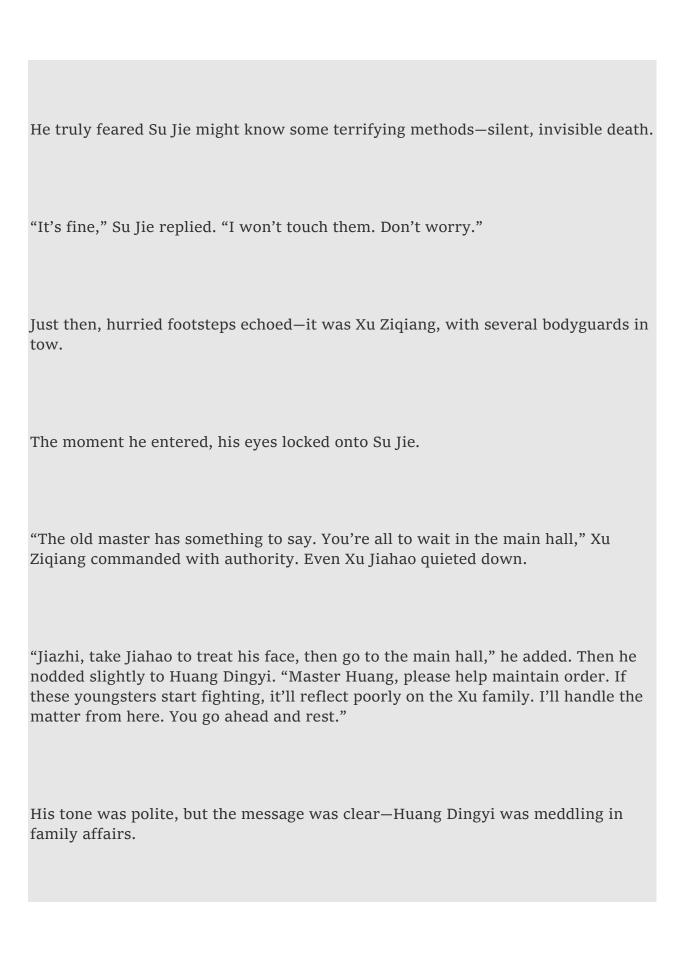
"You mean they can kill from a distance, and even a forensic exam can't tell how the person died? Typhon Training Camp is that dangerous?" Su Jie found it unbelievable, but then again, this world is full of unsolved mysteries.

Besides, the human body is fragile. Many substances, even a speck invisible to the eye, can kill a person a hundred times over—like certain cyanides.

Even with Su Jie's reinforced internal arts and superhuman recovery, poison would still end him just the same. He was still flesh and blood.

'Looks like I'll need to study up on these assassination techniques,' Su Jie thought to himself. 'Otherwise, if my sister really does switch companies, the Feng family might go all-out and play dirty. Typhon's inner workings are off-limits, but I do know Coach Odell. He likely knows all the training camp's assassination methods. I might not learn them, but I need to understand them well enough to defend against them.'

"What are you thinking about?" Huang Dingyi asked, seeing Su Jie quiet and assuming he was silently admitting it.



Huang Dingyi understood but didn't let it show. He stood up. "Ziqiang, you'd better keep your eyes open. That young man has a serious background. I won't get involved in this anymore."
He patted Su Jie on the shoulder. "Little Brother, make sure you visit my academy sometime. We'll have a good exchange. I've got fine liquor."
"No problem. I'll follow up on the app project too," Su Jie thought to himself. 'This Huang Dingyi is an interesting guy—and a client, after all.'
And with that, Huang Dingyi left—without even glancing at Xu Ziqiang.
Xu Ziqiang noticed this and was stirred. Huang Dingyi had been close to the Xu family since his father's generation, serving as their martial arts coach—akin to a private tutor in the old days. The Xu family had always emphasized respect for teachers. From early on, they had strict rules about being polite to mentors, so even Xu Ziqiang didn't dare speak harshly to him.
Plus, Huang Dingyi now had many disciples and considerable influence.
"What exactly does he see in this kid?" Xu Ziqiang couldn't help but feel deeply annoyed by Su Jie—borderline disgusted. In fact, the entire Xu family held no goodwill toward Su Jie or Xu Ying.

Especially now, watching Su Jie remain seated without the slightest attempt to show respect, Xu Ziqiang grew even more irritated. He wanted nothing more than to slap the arrogance out of him.
The younger generation had all exited—even Xu Jiahao didn't dare act up. He knew this was a crucial moment. Stirring more trouble would leave a bad impression on the old man, potentially losing him his share of the inheritance. On the other hand if he behaved, he might just get a bigger cut.
As he left, his gaze was filled with hatred—mortal enemy levels. But his mind was already calculating how to snitch and maximize his gain.
He looked like a playboy on the outside, but underneath he was cold, cunning, and ruthless.
Xu Jiahong had also left. He hadn't said a word the whole time, but Su Jie could feel his venomous gaze—this guy wasn't going to let things slide either.
Now, only Su Jie and Xu Ziqiang remained in the hall. Security guards stood outside.
"Stand up," Xu Ziqiang commanded.

"Say what you want." Su Jie had originally tried to be polite, but after this farce, he was completely disillusioned. Even if his grandfather gave his mom control of the company, it would never reverse the family's decline. She'd be constantly blocked, plotted against, and sabotaged.
This visit was just closure for his mom. From now on, they'd live quietly. The Xu family looked prosperous on the surface, but beneath it all was a tangled mess—not worth the effort or risk.
Since the Xu family treated him with no respect, there was no reason to keep smiling.
"You" Xu Ziqiang's face turned white with anger. "Is this what Xu Ying taught you? Do you have any respect for your elders?"
"Then you sit." Su Jie stood up and pointed at his own chair.
Xu Ziqiang got even more furious but soon narrowed his eyes and calmed down. "You're Xu Ying's son, aren't you? She left the family over twenty years ago. Her actions cost us a huge business deal and weakened our foundation. Now she wants to come back just because the old man is dying? Trying to grab a piece of the inheritance? Isn't that a bit delusional?"

"I don't know anything about inheritance," Su Jie replied. "As for why I hit Xu Jiahao—you know exactly what he did. But arrogance and prejudice have blinded you."
"You little punk, so full of yourself," Xu Ziqiang sneered. "Here's my offer: five million. I'll give you and Xu Ying five million right now. Take the money and leave—don't ever come back. Deal? If you want more—tens or even hundreds of millions—then you won't get a single cent, and I'll make sure you regret ever stepping foot here."
He sat in the main chair, coldly waiting for Su Jie's answer.
"Five million might go a long way in this kind of backwater town," Su Jie glanced around. "But in S City, it might buy you a toilet."
"You—!" Xu Ziqiang nearly coughed up blood.
Su Jie hadn't even raised his voice, but that casual remark cut deep—mocking him as a country bumpkin.
Xu Ziqiang took a deep breath, at a loss for words.

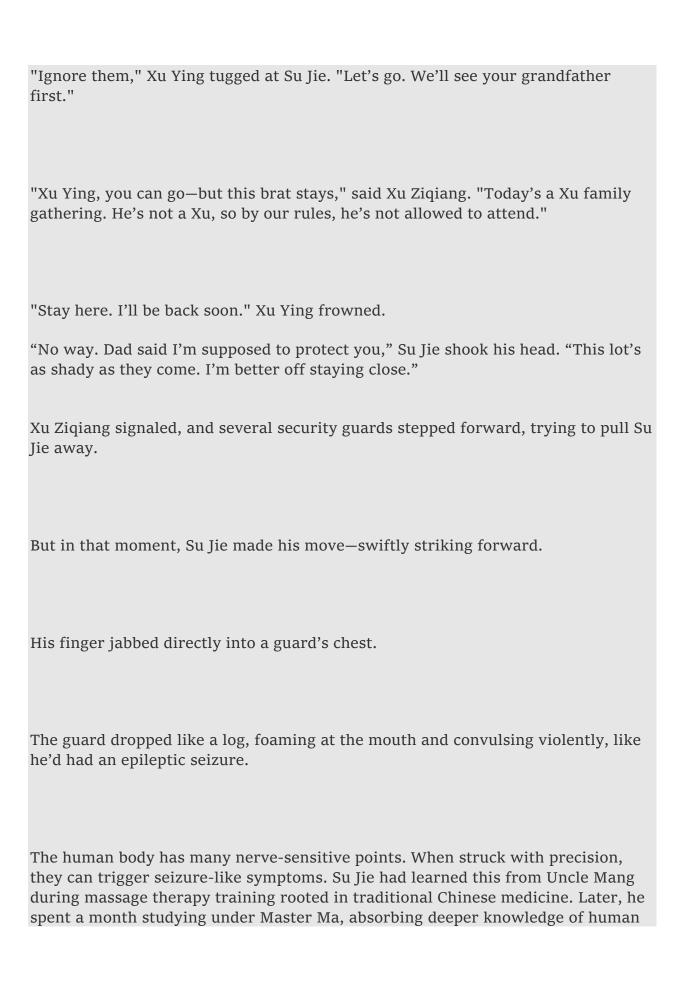
"If you're going to be difficult, don't blame me for being rude," he finally said, standing up and heading out. Then he barked to the guards, "Don't let this kid take a single step outside. Bring Xu Ying to the conference room."
"Hm?" Su Jie moved in a flash and strode to the door.
Wham!
Three guards rushed to subdue him.
Before, they hesitated because Huang Dingyi was there. But now that he was gone and Xu Ziqiang had spoken, they didn't dare defy orders.
Boom! Boom! Boom!
Three thuds later, all three guards were on the ground.
Su Jie had trained extensively in dealing with multiple attackers. His body dropped low, movements tight and compact. His feet hooked and kicked in swift, sweeping arcs—low and fast like a swirling ground wind. Wherever he passed, men flew.

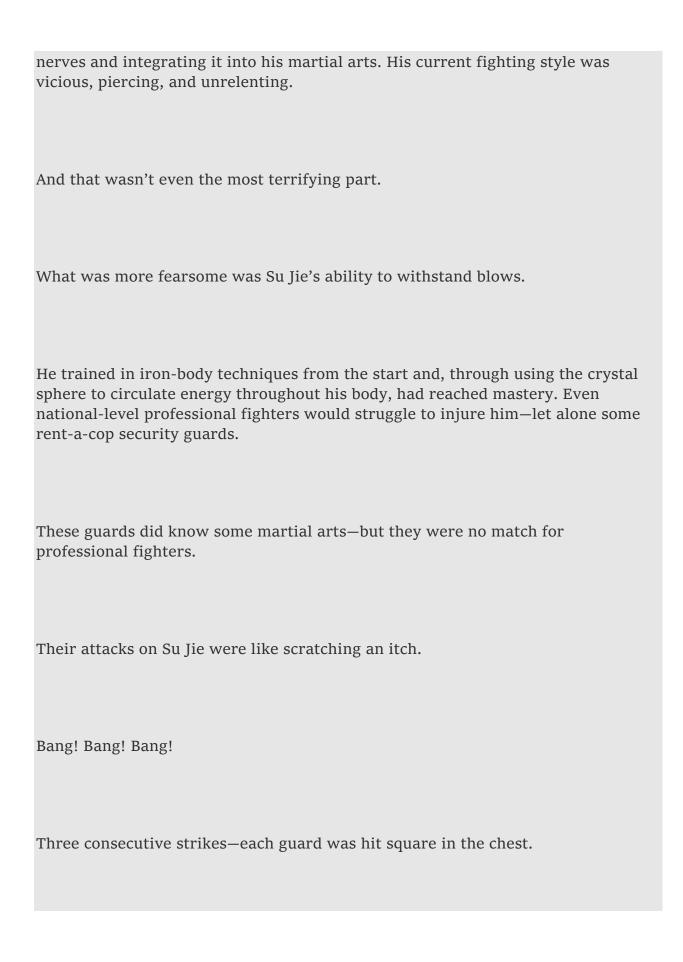
Chapter 94: Above Heroic Talent Lies Great
"Xu Ying, you know why you're really here," Xu Ziqiang sneered. "You didn't visit the old man once all these years. Now you come running the moment you hear he made a will? After all the damage you caused this family back then, you've got the nerve to show your face and fight over the inheritance?"
"Xu Ziqiang, whatever happens between us adults is one thing," Xu Ying said coldly. "But using your son to falsely accuse mine of theft? Since when did the Xu family stoop to such disgraceful, low-life tactics?"
It was indeed Xu Ying. Her presence here was risky—alone, surrounded by hostility, any dirty trick could humiliate her.
"Mom? What are you doing here?" Su Jie turned and quickly moved to her side, eyes scanning around protectively.
"Enough, Su Jie—don't fight them!" came a voice from the door.

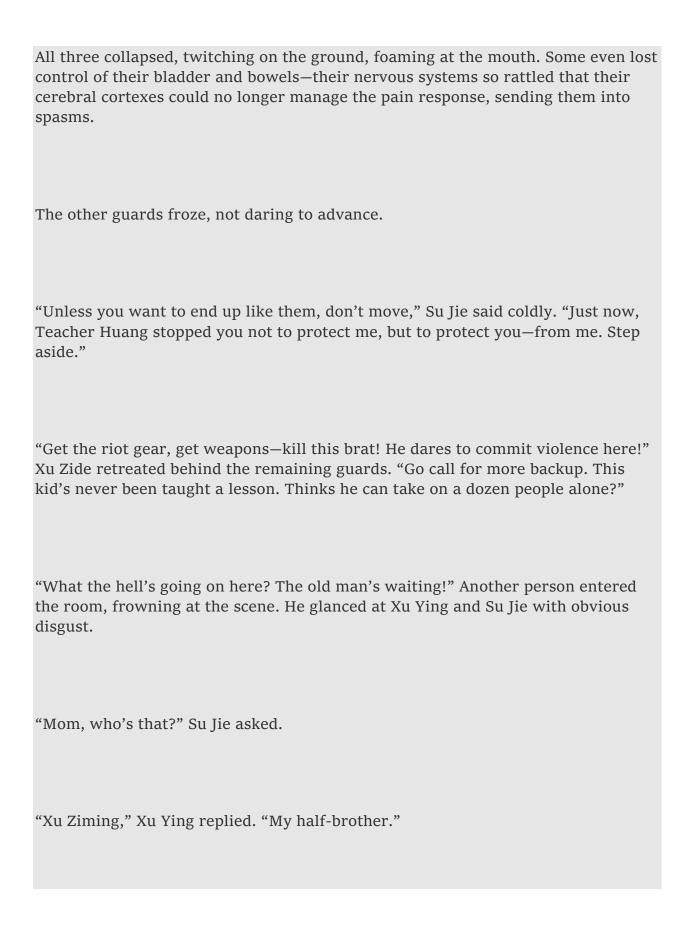
Talent

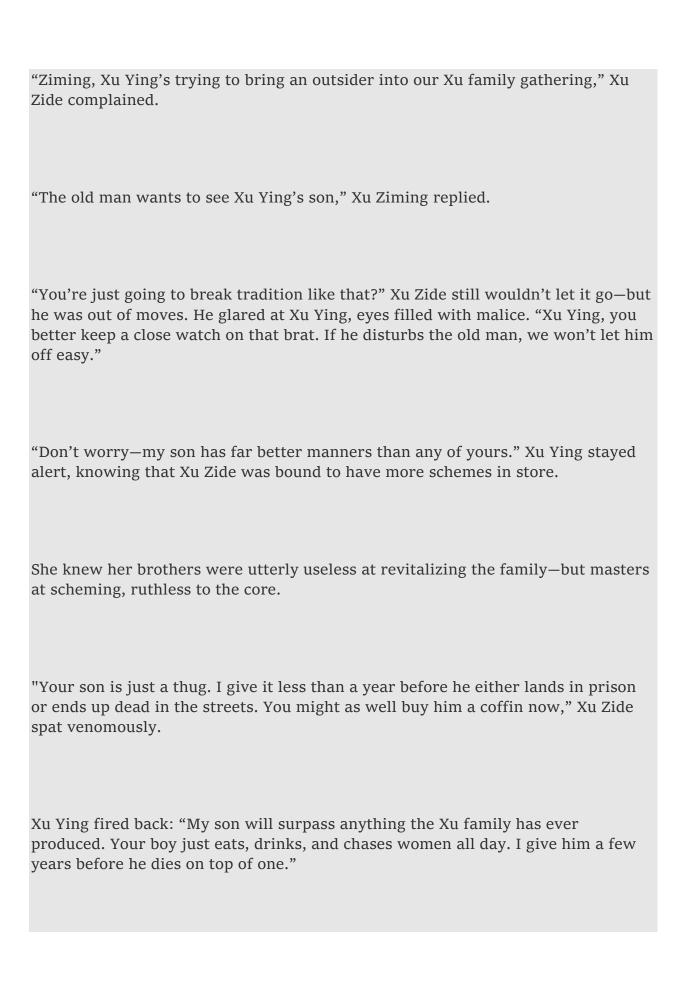
"Xu Ziqiang, I'm not here this time to fight over the inheritance. I just want to see how Father is doing. Unlike you people, always scheming and groveling, obsessed with stuffing family wealth into your own pockets," Xu Ying said, clearly

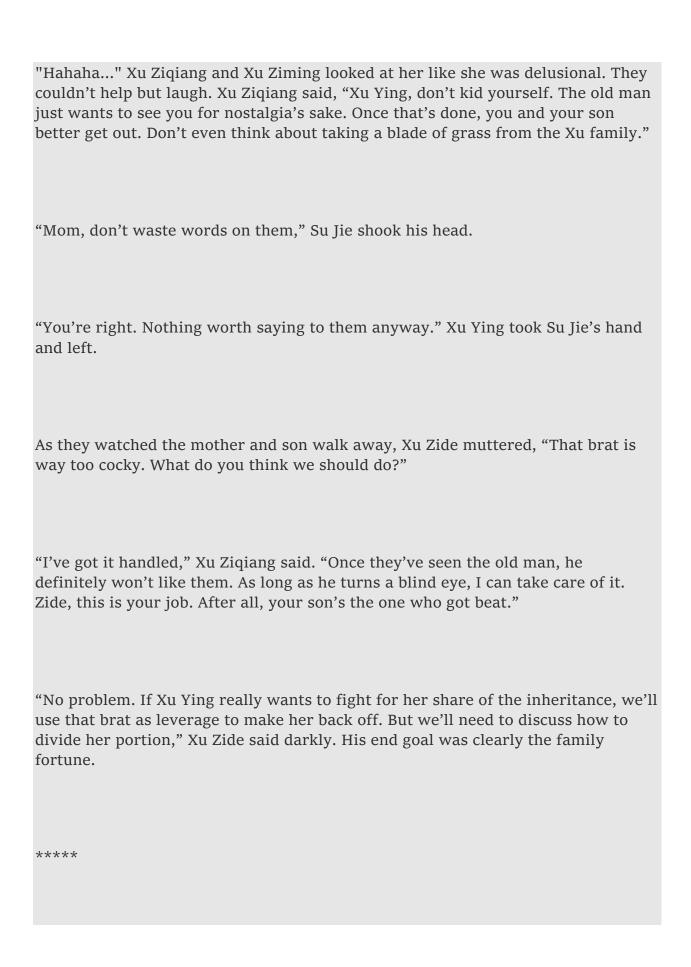
unimpressed by her older brother. "The things you did back then—I've just never said them out loud. If I had, Father would've died on the spot from rage."
"What nonsense are you spouting?" Xu Ziqiang's expression turned visibly unnatural—clearly, Xu Ying had something on him. But then he sneered, "That was twenty years ago. It's all water under the bridge. You don't have any proof, so now it's just slander. And don't forget, in the Xu family, women are ultimately outsiders. A married daughter is like spilled water. Let's not forget, you ran away with some man all those years ago—you disgraced the entire Xu family."
"I'm not here to argue with you today." Xu Ying was unmoved. "And I have no interest in exchanging pointless words. I'll leave right after seeing Father. Keep a close eye on those useless younger ones of yours, and don't use your underhanded tricks again. I won't be responsible for what happens if you do."
"Your son's no good to begin with." Another voice joined in—it was Xu Zide, Xu Jiahao's father.
He hated Su Jie for beating up his son and wished he could have Su Jie arrested.
Xu Zide's eyes were locked on Su Jie. "This little bastard has no upbringing. Comes to the Xu household and still acts up. Xu Ying, is this the son you raised? Looks like you've had a rough time since you ran off with that stray man. Your son turned out useless too. Regretting it now, aren't you?"





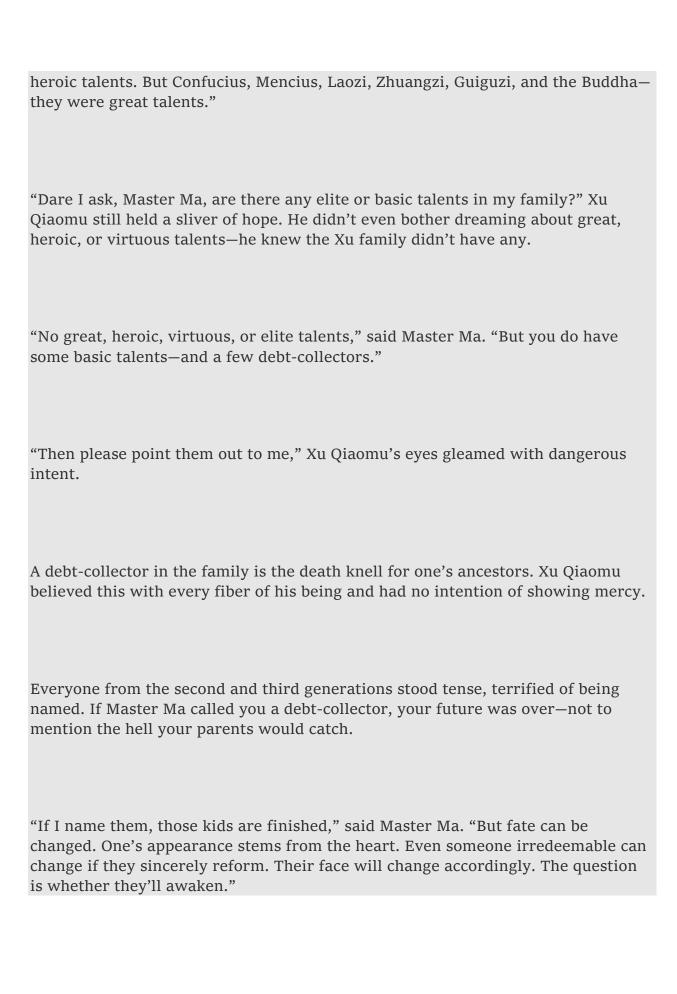






In the Xu family's antique-style side hall used for council meetings, only a handful of people were allowed to sit: the old patriarch Xu Qiaomu, Master Luo, Master Ma, and Zhang Manman.
Everyone else from the second and third generations had to stand.
Those in the middle generation—Xu Ying's peers—each had their own agendas. They all understood this was likely the day the old man would make a major decision. The presence of two renowned masters all but guaranteed it. Their opinions carried the weight of final judgment.
Even families more powerful than the Xus would consider themselves blessed to secure the counsel of either of these masters. Whether it be for major asset sales, new ventures, or make-or-break deals—these two could literally decide a family's fate.
Put simply, a word from either of them could shift billions—or even hundreds of billions—in assets.
"Masters, the second and third generations of our Xu family are mostly here. The fourth generation is still just kids—they're not ready for responsibility." Xu Qiaomu seemed invigorated, eyes sharp and piercing like a crouching tiger. Clearly, he'd been a fierce man in his younger years.

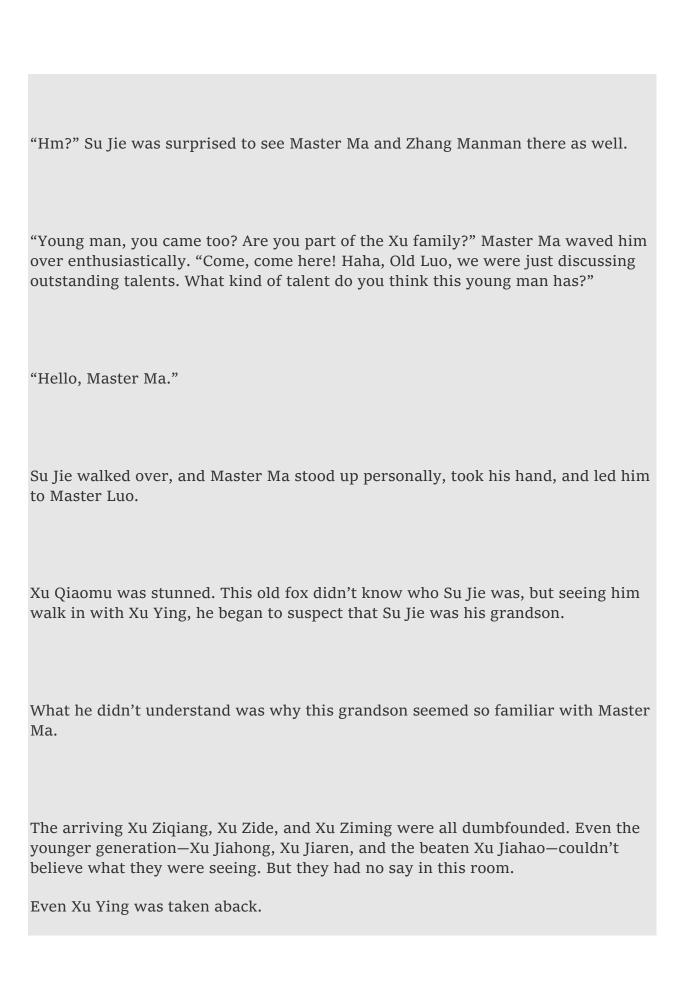
"Talent comes in many levels," Master Luo began. "For a family to soar to new heights overnight, what it needs is heroic talent—extremely rare. Next is virtuous talent, which quietly nurtures the family's steady rise like climbing stairs—less dramatic, but equally solid. Then there's elite talent—adept at crisis management, stabilizing the ship. Below that is basic talent—capable of maintaining the family's holdings while grooming the next generation of virtuous or heroic talent. Then you have mediocre talent, under whose watch the family declines. Below that is foolish talent, which drags the family into chaos. And even worse"
"What's worse than that?" Xu Qiaomu asked.
"Debt-collectors," said Master Luo. "These are people born to bankrupt their families. I've seen a few in your second and third generations. Put your estate in their hands, and you'll end up with nothing. Forget luxury—think prison. You might not even keep your ancestral tomb intact. What do you think, Master Ma?"
"Agreed," said Master Ma, nodding. "But actually, above heroic talent, there's a higher level—great talent. Heroic talent means extraordinary skill, daring, and a powerful destiny. Virtuous talent brings wisdom and refinement. Elite talent is decisive and calm under pressure. But great talent"
"And what makes someone a great talent?" Master Luo asked, straightening up.
"Great talent governs nations and maps the cosmos, holds the world in their mind, commands awe like a towering mountain, sees through the illusions of the world," Master Ma said. "They are like the dragons in the I Ching—able to command all types of talent beneath them. Qin Shi Huang and Emperor Wu of Han were merely

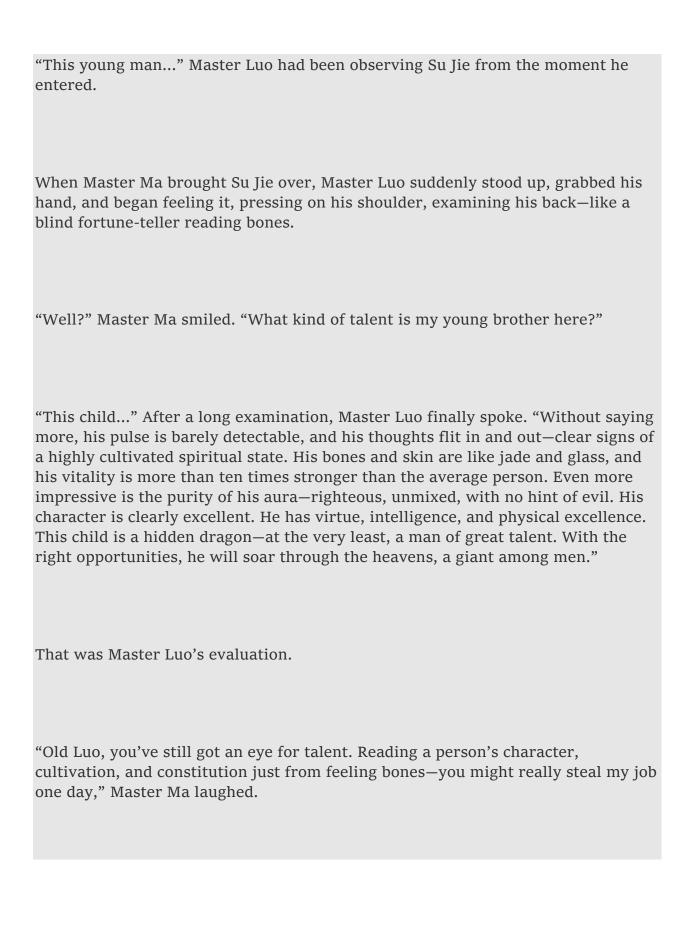


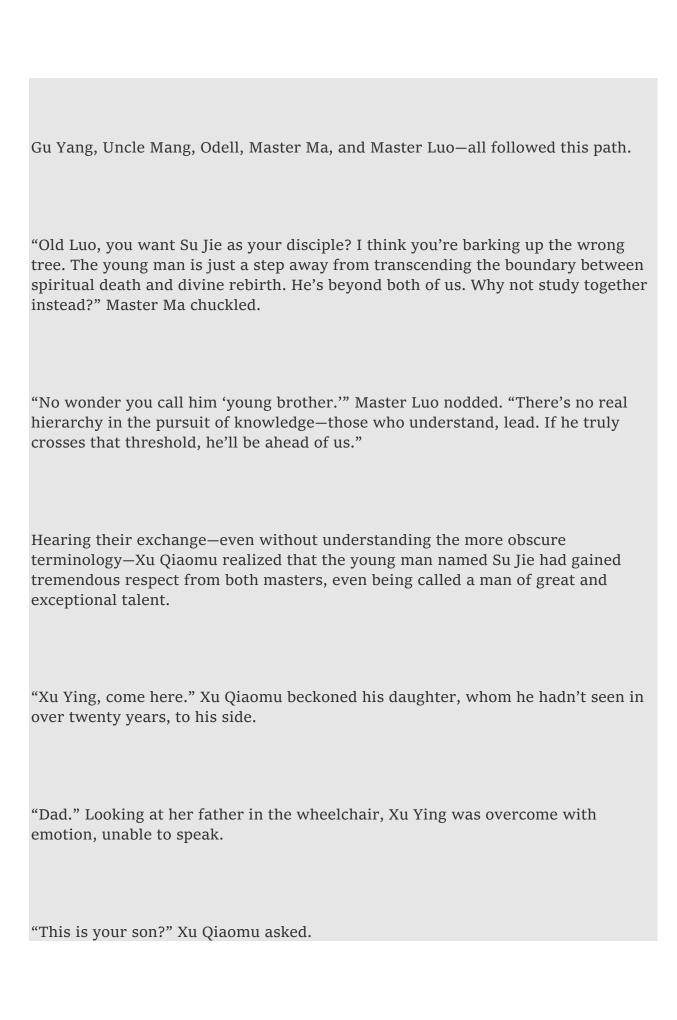
"Old Ma, enough theory. Xu Qiaomu wants to pick a successor today. In a field of dwarfs, you still have to choose the tallest," said Master Luo. "Who'd have thought, after all my years of wisdom, my descendants would turn out so worthless?" Xu Qiaomu sighed. "Masters, if fate can be changed, I'll spare no effort. The Xu family must not decline after I'm gone. Otherwise, I'll have no face before my ancestors." Hearing all this, many in the younger generation were visibly displeased—but no one dared speak out. To offend either master meant being branded a debtcollector, losing your future, and bringing shame to your family. At that moment, Xu Ying and Su Jie entered the room. Chapter 95: Even the Four Seas Struggle to **Contain Him**

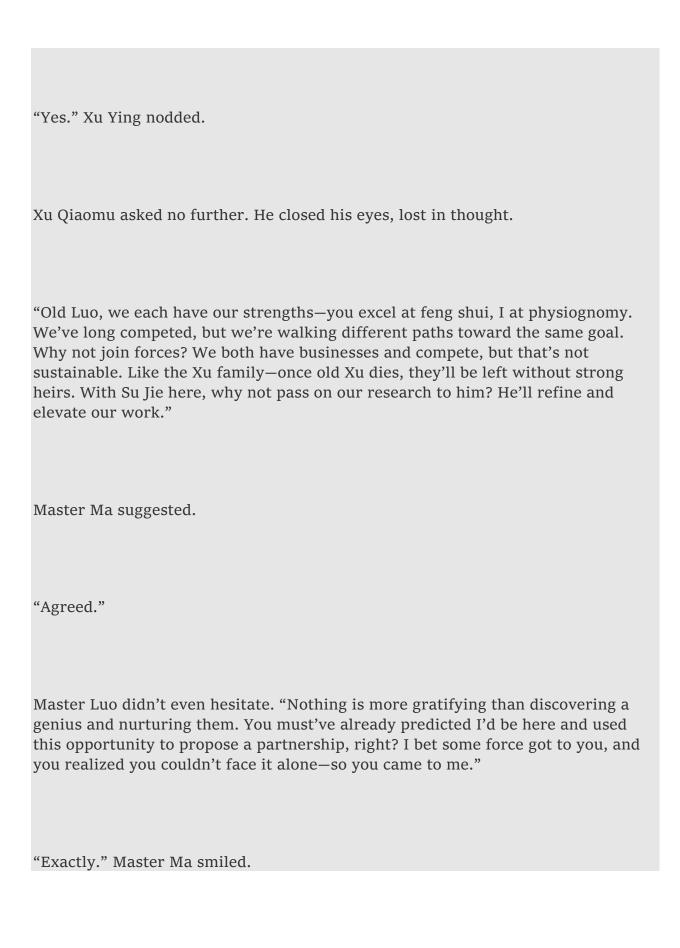
"Dad."

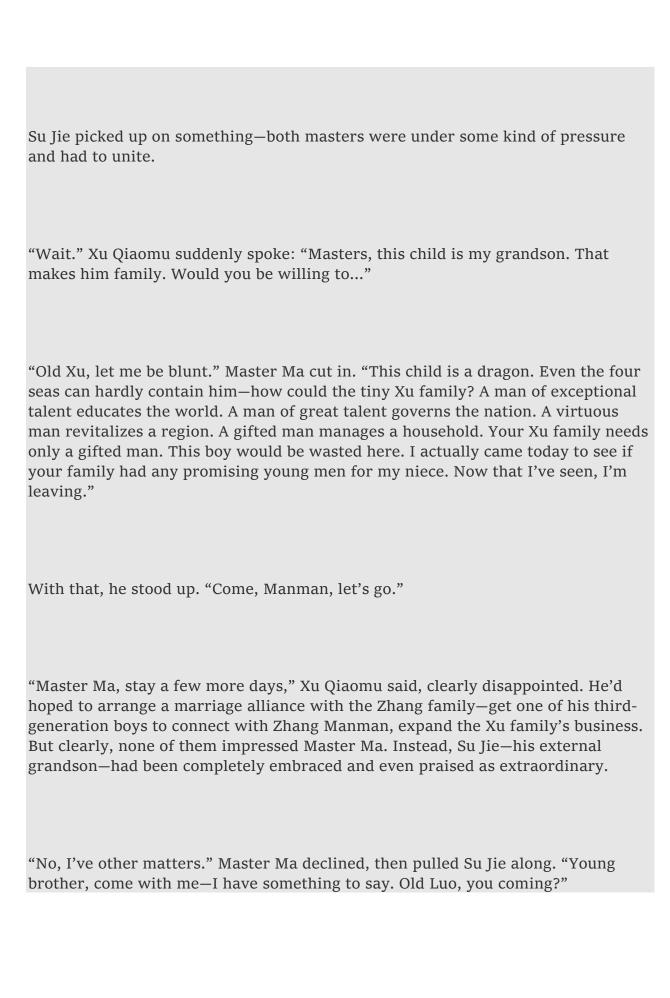
When Xu Ying entered, she saw Xu Qiaomu sitting in a wheelchair, his life clearly nearing its end. Her eyes reddened, and tears welled up.

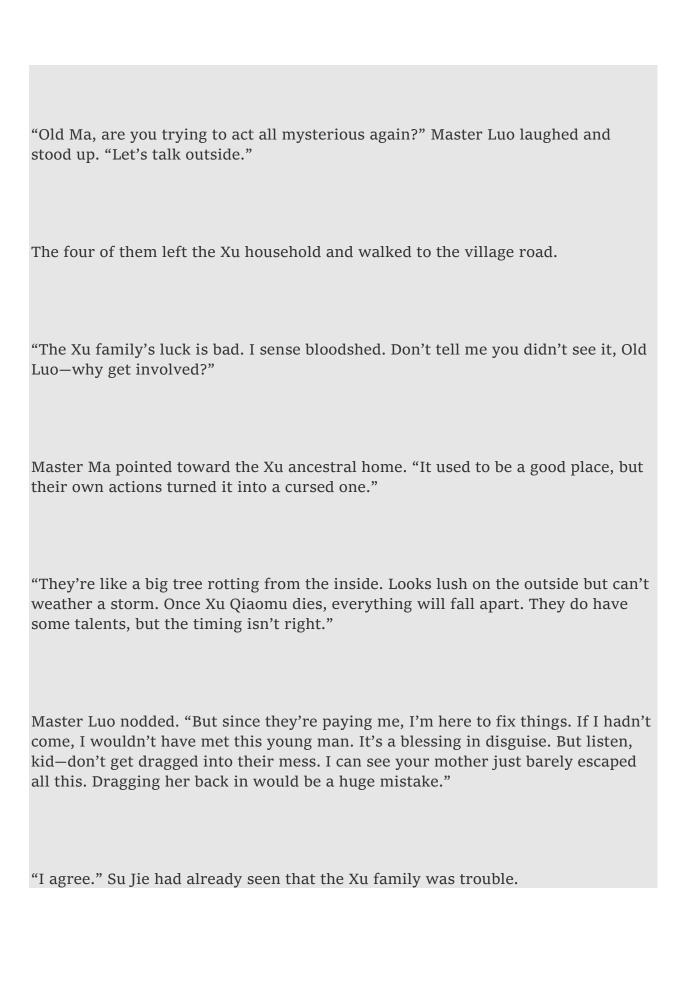


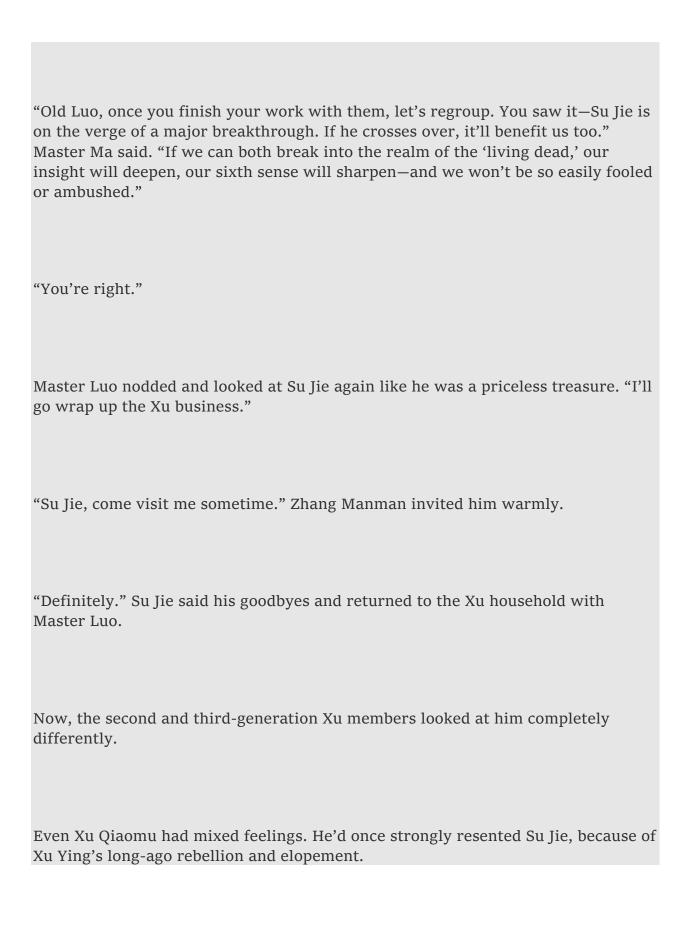


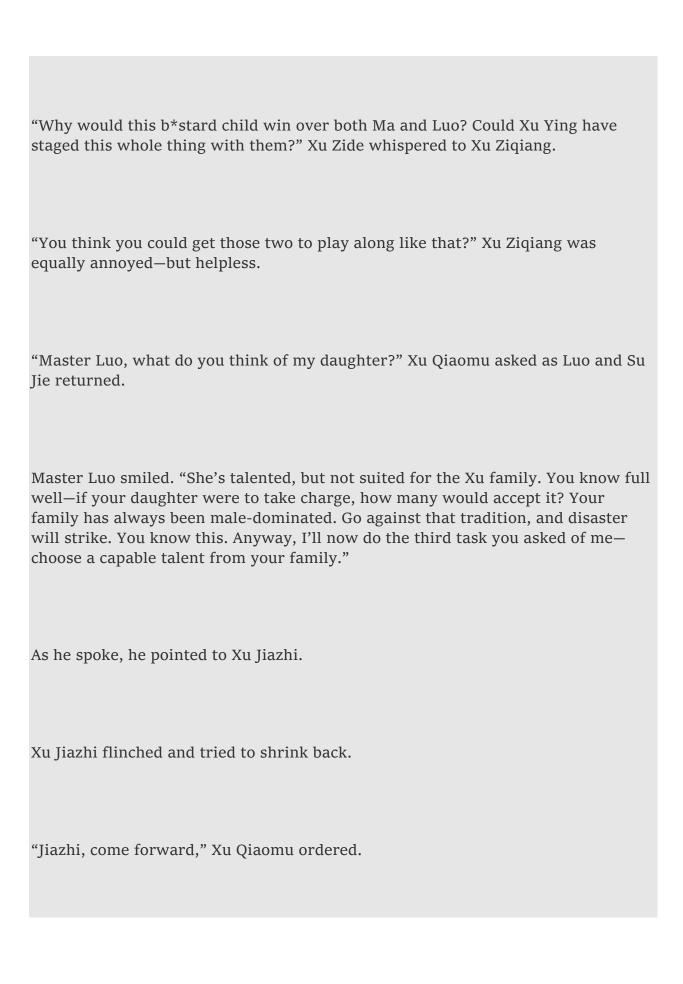








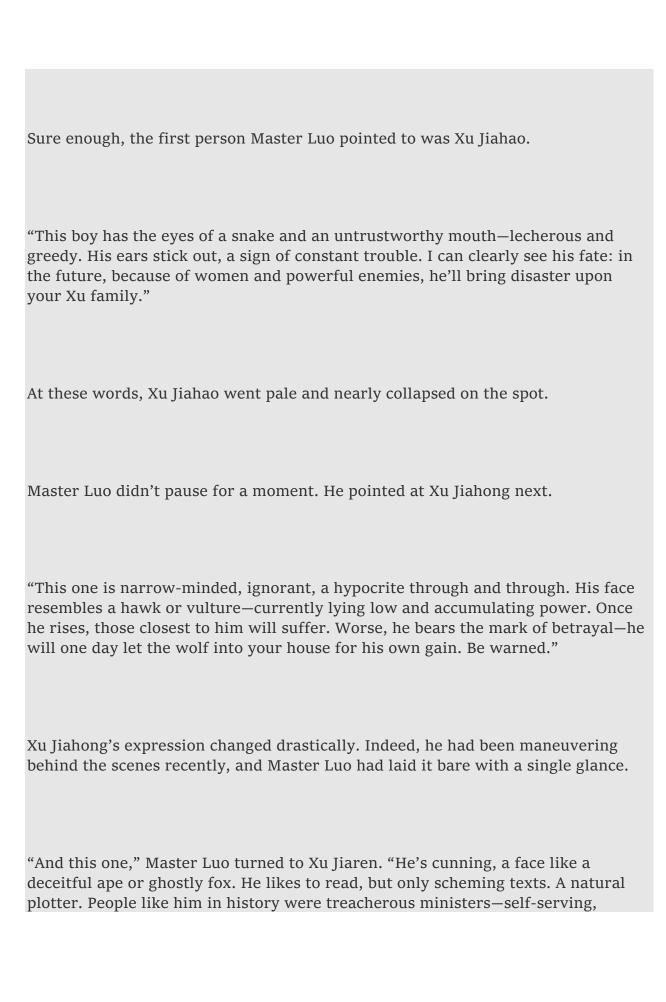




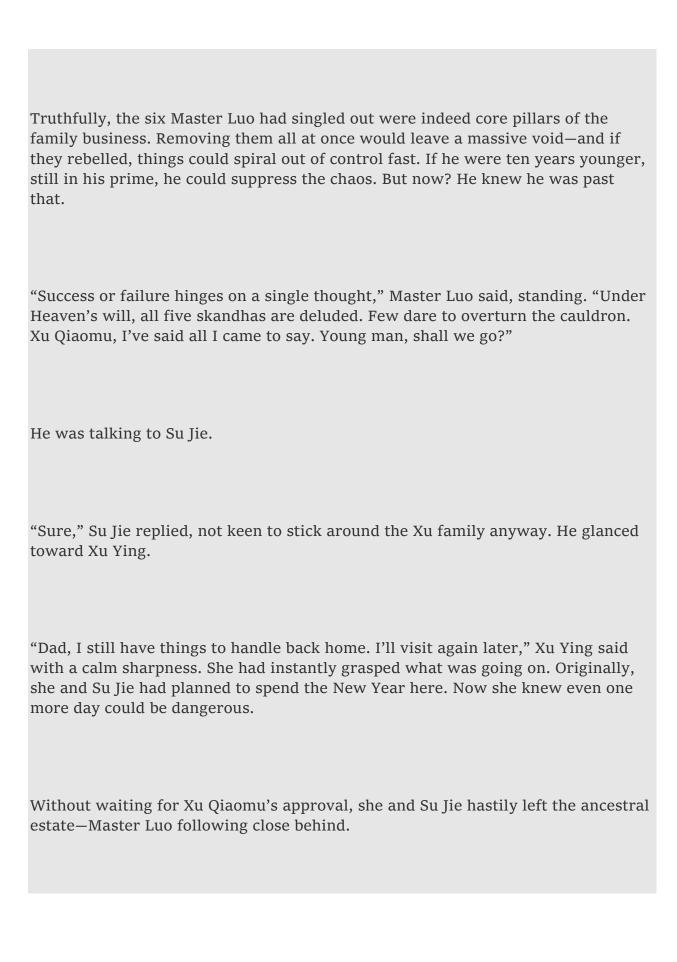
Xu Jiazhi had no choice but to step up.
"This young man is steady and composed. With proper guidance and some experience, he could handle important responsibilities," said Master Luo.
"Oh?" Xu Qiaomu seemed thoughtful. Then he asked, "Then, Master Luo, could you point out the debt-collectors in the family? I will reward you handsomely."
Whoosh!
Everyone's face turned pale.
Su Jie suddenly felt a bit sorry for them—like ministers under a tyrant king. They had no freedom of their own.

Chapter 96: Doomed Beyond Redemption, Blinded by Greed

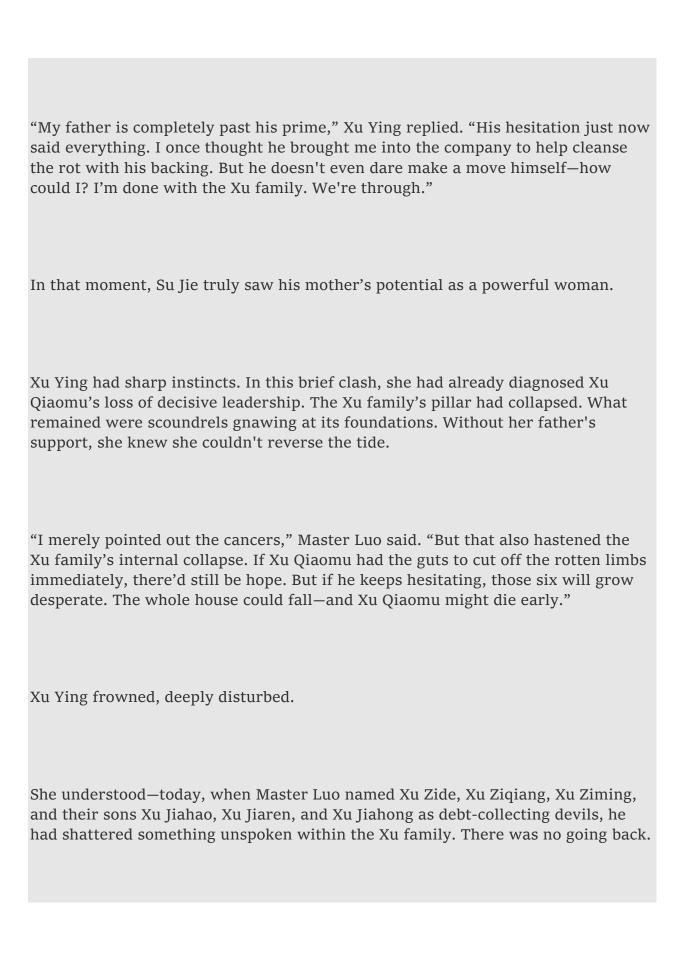
Whether it was the earlier posturing of Xu Zide, Xu Ziqiang, and Xu Ziming, or the overbearing arrogance of Xu Jiahao and Xu Jiaren, all of them now looked ashen, as though awaiting a final verdict.

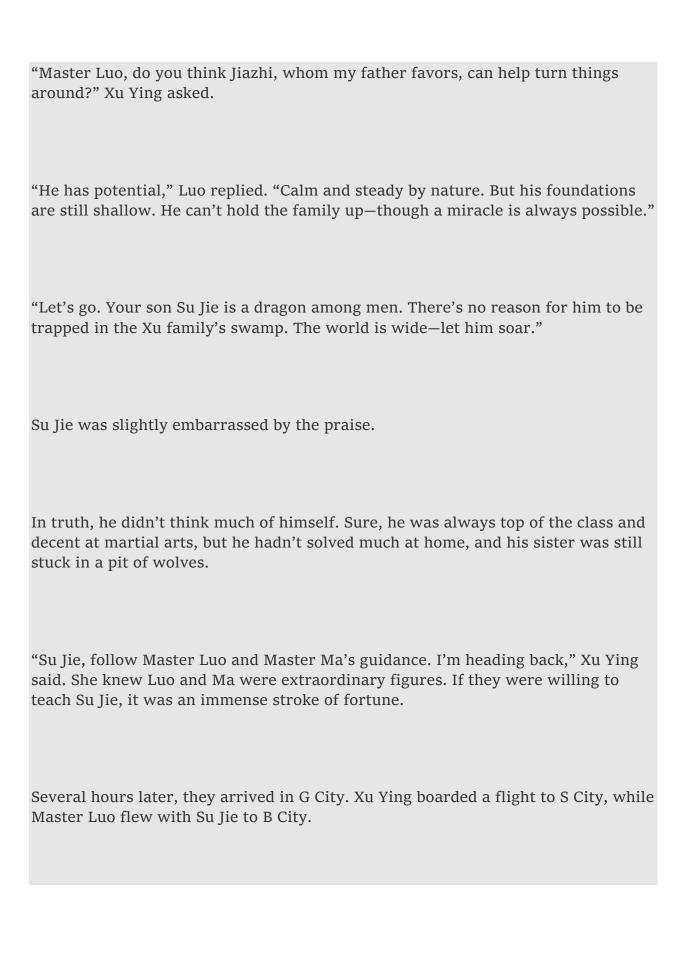


nation-damaging men like Cai Jing or Qin Hui. Yet his talent doesn't even come close to theirs. He'll bring nothing but ruin to your house." "I..." Xu Jiaren was about to speak when Xu Qiaomu suddenly roared, "Enough! Master Luo, continue!" Master Luo paid him no mind and turned to Xu Mingde. Xu Zide felt a chill rising in his gut just as Master Luo's merciless words followed: "This one has a hot temper and tunnel vision. Beady-eyed, selfish. A single selfish act from him is enough to poison the entire pot. He is a ruinous presence." Without pause, Master Luo pointed at Xu Ziqiang and Xu Ziming: "One has the face of a shameless weasel; the other looks like a crow feeding on corpses. I can foresee this—when you're on your deathbed, Xu Qiaomu, these two will wage war over your legacy, ensuring you die without peace. That's all I'll say. The rest of the family is passable—none can revive the house, but at least they won't destroy it. I've pointed out your talent and your debt-collecting devils. My task is done." "Grandfather! You mustn't believe this street charlatan!" Xu Jiaren suddenly burst out in tears. "If Emperor Wu of Han hadn't believed such people, there would've been no witchcraft disaster; if the First Emperor hadn't trusted mystics, there would've been no Second Emperor's downfall! This fraud must've been sent by enemies of the Xu family. We've done so much for the family. We're managing key parts of the business. If you expel us all, the company will grind to a halt!" Xu Qiaomu's eyes flickered with hesitation.



Their departure was like a pressure valve released. Many present let out a breath.
"Father, that damn Luo deliberately drove a wedge between us! After all the money we gave him!" Xu Ziqiang tried to comfort Xu Qiaomu—and to probe his thinking.
"Enough. You all leave." Xu Qiaomu's tone was cold. "Jiazhi, you stay."
Everyone exchanged uneasy glances.
"What? You're not listening? Planning a mutiny?" Xu Qiaomu's voice turned icy.
Xu Ziming knew the old man was truly furious now and dared not cross him. He promptly left.
Meanwhile, in the village, Master Luo, Xu Ying, and Su Jie climbed into Luo's private vehicle. Spacious inside, it came with a driver and was tailed by a convoy of identical vehicles filled with bodyguards and aides. Master Luo's entourage far outclassed that of Master Ma.
"You're a woman, yet you act decisively. Had you been tied down by family ties, staying in the Xu family would've dragged your son down with you," Master Luo said to Xu Ying, nodding in approval.





B City—northern powerhouse, true national hub—stood shoulder to shoulder with S City in global influence.
All the country's top universities were concentrated in B City.
After landing, they were picked up and driven to an old courtyard residence. Su Jie stepped inside and felt an immediate calm. The design was simple, the atmosphere serene. He didn't understand feng shui, but could sense the deep harmony—the place resonated with heaven, earth, and humanity.
This was architectural art.
"The 'I Ching' teaches us to observe all under heaven—to use mountains and rivers to cultivate our temperament, and reach unity with the cosmos," Master Luo explained. "Look at mountains: learn nobility. Look at the vast earth: gain a heart that bears all. When your spirit merges with the world, there's no distinction. That mental state even surpasses what some call the 'living dead.'"
"But Master Ma says that surpassing the living dead's mindset means attaining the Diamond Sutra's teaching—no self, no others, no sentient beings, no lifespan," Su Jie mused in the courtyard. "It's the insight into impermanence and the undying essence. But Confucianism teaches unity with heaven and man. I don't know which is higher."

"That's for the wise to debate," Master Luo said. "Unity with heaven and man is the root of our civilization—it sees man and universe as one. Zen Buddhism teaches that all is empty—even heaven and earth. It's an eternal philosophical puzzle. You'll have to explore it yourself. Ma Fengnian and I often discuss this question."	
Su Jie fell into thought.	
Philosophy, truly, was deep—far deeper than any science. It was the key to how w think.	e
"Su Jie, you're not even eighteen, yet already this accomplished. That's one reason I chose you—but not the main one," Master Luo said. "What matters most is your integrity: your actions match your beliefs, your spirit is righteous. You're still green, yes, but as long as you stay true, you'll achieve greatness. In today's terms your worldview, values, and outlook are all on point. I've seen many talented youths, but they were arrogant, extreme, or emotionally cold. You, though—you're just right."	

Chapter 97: Unity of Heaven and Man, Refining the True Spirit

"Master Luo, are you going to teach me feng shui architecture this time?" Su Jie asked earnestly.

"Not just that. I also hold a PhD in brain anatomy from MIT," Master Luo replied. "You can call me Master Luo. I've been researching psychology and the structure of the human brain for years, hoping to uncover the secrets of spiritual cultivation through scientific means. When humans observe the heavens and the earth, they naturally feel emotions. Emotions cause fluctuations in thought, which in turn reflect in the cerebral cortex, ultimately affecting the entire body—even one's lifespan. External factors influence emotion, and emotion influences longevity. This is a holistic science bridging the spiritual and biological aspects of the human body. Right now, you're not just an excellent student—you're also an ideal research subject. The paper I recently published anonymously in a scientific journal was on this topic. Actually, in this field, Old Ma is slightly stronger than I am, but I have my own unique insights."

"I heard that you and Master Ma were both threatened and had to team up. Is that true? Who would dare threaten you?" Su Jie asked.

"It's an evil international force. They've been hunting down top professionals and elite scholars in every field to coerce them into working on their research—even going as far as restricting their freedom. Old Ma and I nearly got kidnapped while abroad. And now, their influence seems to be slowly creeping into the country," Master Luo said. "My expertise lies mainly in architecture, though I also do brain research. Old Ma is a true master in psychology. We've both trained in martial arts too, but when it comes to real operatives skilled in kidnapping and assassination, we're nowhere near that level."

"There's actually such an evil force out there? Could it be related to the dark web?" Su Jie suddenly thought of Feng Hengyi.

"You know about the dark web?" Master Luo looked slightly surprised. "Well, I suppose that's not unexpected. Actually, the Xu family has already been infiltrated by people from the dark web. I went to their estate to do a feng shui reading, but

the real goal was to sniff out clues about this evil force. They're incredibly powerful—leveraging the dark web as a platform, issuing cryptocurrency, and gaining serious momentum. They've even been acknowledged by global financial markets. With money in hand, they immediately launched into action, driven by massive ambition. Who knows what their true goals are."

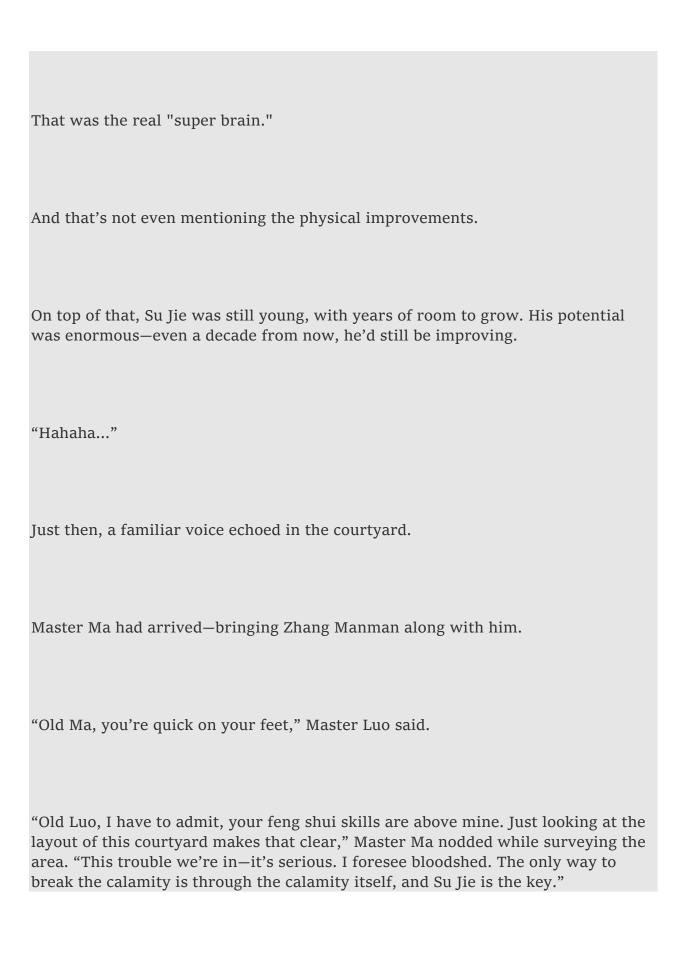
"Were you able to identify any problematic individuals within the Xu family?" Su Jie asked, intrigued.

"Everyone I pointed out had issues," Master Luo said. "Alright, enough of that for now. Old Ma will be here soon, and we'll talk it over together. Since they've come knocking, we've got to fight back. Otherwise, if their influence keeps expanding and they set their sights on us, things will get ugly fast. You're good at martial arts and have a solid character. If you level up a bit more, you'll be a powerful ally for us."

He wasn't wrong. Su Jie's martial prowess now made him virtually untouchable by three to five grown men at once. His physical conditioning alone was enough to make even national-level professional fighter Zhou Chun struggle to break through. Master Luo had a keen eye—Su Jie did have the potential to become a "super soldier."

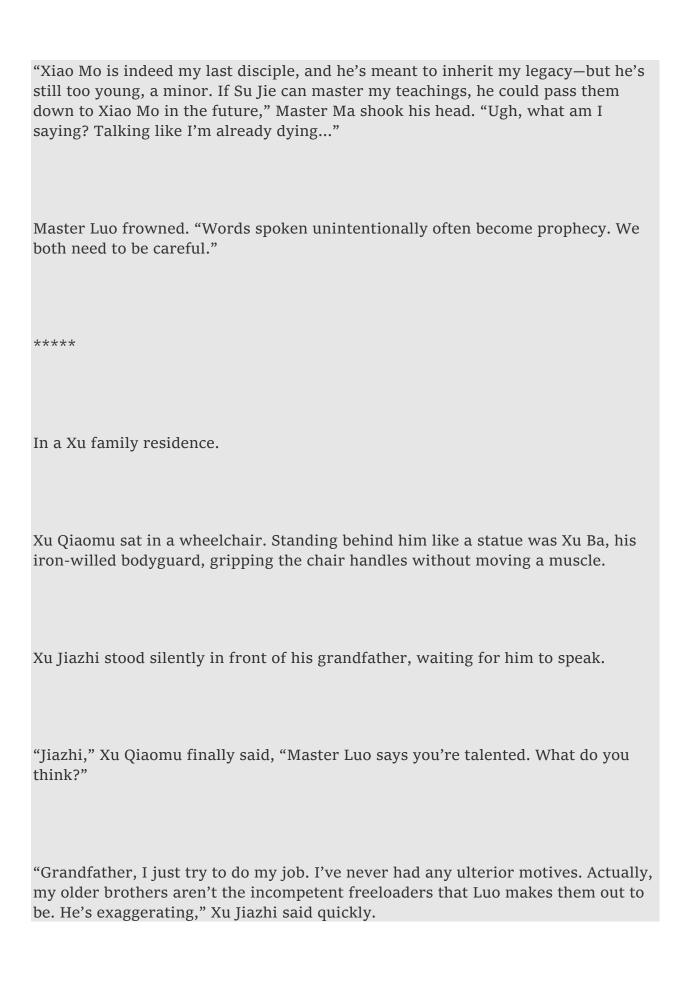
Even more impressively, Su Jie's spiritual cultivation had reached the state of "seeming death but not death"—so rare that not one in tens of millions could attain it. With just one more step into the "living dead" state, his brain and physical capabilities would be pushed to unimaginable extremes.

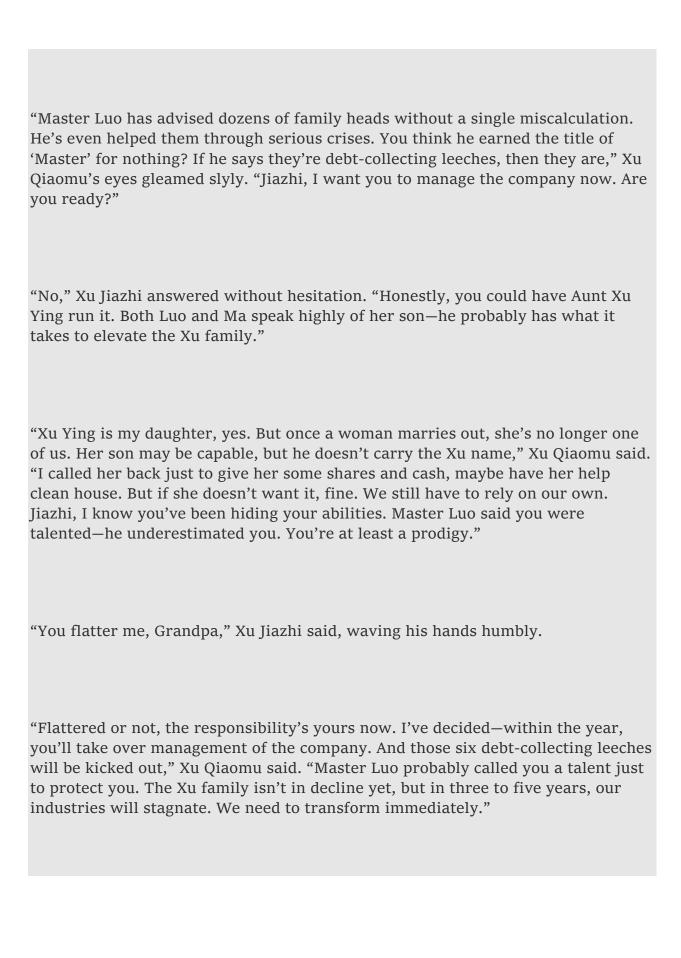
As a brain specialist, Master Luo understood just how powerful the brain could become in this state—thought processes lightning fast, reflexes razor-sharp, almost as if endowed with a sixth sense to perceive danger or fortune. That level of cognitive function made TV "superbrain" contestants look like amateurs.



"Old Ma, you're at it again with your mystical talk. We do have problems, and yes, bloodshed might be inevitable. Su Jie can help us—but only if he grows stronger," Master Luo said. "But all of this is founded on strength and intelligence. I'm a staunch materialist." "Old Luo, this world contains both idealism and materialism—neither can be discarded. Take a human being for example: the body is material, the soul is ideal. Without a soul, the body is just a walking corpse. Like a computer—the hardware is the body, the operating system is the soul. No OS, and the computer's useless. No hardware, and the OS doesn't even exist," Master Ma retorted. "Alright, uncles, this isn't the time for debate," Zhang Manman interrupted. "My father said the d@rk web organization is expanding rapidly and beginning to infiltrate the outside world. Their first targets are elite professionals, especially those in science. You two are scientists, yet you hide behind the façade of martial arts masters. But ironically, that just makes you more enticing to them." "We are martial arts masters," Master Luo countered. "We're the inheritors of ancient traditional culture. Scientific research is just our means of deepening that understanding—not a contradiction." "Enough," Master Ma waved it off. "Let's get to work. Old Luo, we've known each other for ages, but never really collaborated. Oddly enough, it's this evil force that finally made us put aside our differences."

"That's true," Master Luo nodded. "I know your concern—you've accumulated years of research and wisdom, and you haven't found the right heir. If something were to happen to you, it would all be lost. And even if you wanted to pass it on, not many people could even understand it. That's why you want to hand it down to this young man."
"And you're any different?" Master Ma shot back. "Didn't you have a disciple named Zhang Jinchuan? Weren't you going to pass your teachings on to him? What happened to that?"
"Zhang Jinchuan?" Su Jie remembered him—a fellow high school senior from B City. He was also the national champion of the Xixin Cup poetry competition.
That event had been televised. Zhang Jinchuan handled every poem and literary reference effortlessly, discussing thousands of years of culture as if it were casual conversation. His brain seemed like a live search engine—Su Jie had been stunned. Even Qian Zheng had entered that contest, but ran into Zhang Jinchuan and was totally outclassed.
Su Jie hadn't realized Zhang Jinchuan was Master Luo's student.
"Yes, Zhang Jinchuan is my disciple. His talent might even surpass Su Jie's," Luo said. "But he's too scheming. I don't want to pass on my true teachings to someone like that. Speaking of which, don't you have a disciple named Xiao Mo?"





"For the family, I won't refuse," Xu Jiazhi said. "But those men... they're still my uncles and cousins. How can I be so ruthless?" "To achieve great things, you must be utterly ruthless," Xu Qiaomu said coldly. "I won't live much longer. Until then, I'll help you establish your authority. One year—that's all you get. You must be ruthless. If Emperor Taizong hadn't killed his brothers and forced his father to abdicate, there would've been no Golden Age of Zhenguan. If Yongzheng hadn't eliminated his siblings, the Qing Dynasty wouldn't have lasted three centuries. Also-get in touch with Su Jie. Offer him something. I've heard he's had run-ins with those leeches. Use that. Let him help you take them down." "Grandfather, considering how much Master Luo and Master Ma value Su Jieeven teaching him personally—I think we should recruit him into the company," Xu Jiazhi said cautiously. "He's too young to command respect. And more importantly, he doesn't carry the Xu name—he's not guaranteed to be loyal to us," Xu Qiaomu said. "Still, given how Luo and Ma treat him, he'll probably soar in three to five years. Keep a good relationship with him. Don't make an enemy out of him." "I understand. Even just leveraging his connections through Luo and Ma could be immensely valuable," Xu Jiazhi said. "Exactly," Xu Qiaomu narrowed his eyes. "I'm curious to see if this Su Jie is truly a once-in-a-generation talent... Anyway, enough of that. As for Xu Ying, let her be. I'll revise my will and make it official. Remember—those six debt collectors must be crushed. Don't give them a second chance."

Chapter 98: Decisive Action – Infant State in the Womb

When he heard those words, Xu Zhijie felt a chill rise in his heart. Still, he welcomed it—it was, in fact, a good sign for him. And honestly, he wasn't worried that Xu Qiaomu was trying to test him.

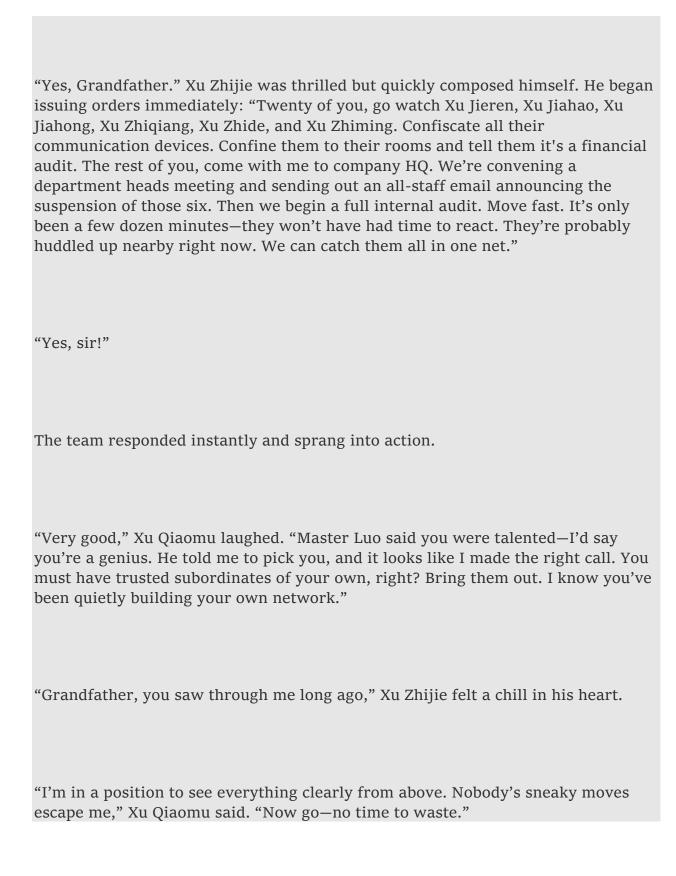
Xu Qiaomu was extremely superstitious, especially when it came to anything said by Master Luo. He practically treated it as divine revelation.

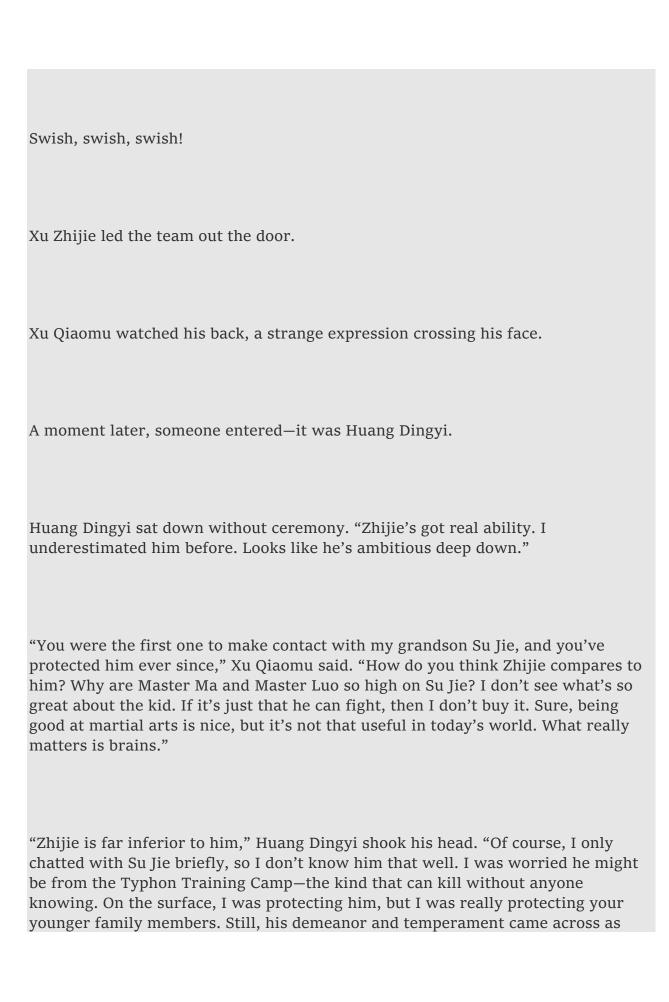
And since Master Luo's ancestors had once helped Emperor Kangxi choose a successor, that only added to his credibility in Xu Qiaomu's eyes.

Since Xu Qiaomu had made up his mind, Xu Zhijie decided to go all in.

He also understood clearly that whether it was Xu Zhide, Xu Zhiqiang, or Xu Zhiming—they all held massive sway in the family company. Each of them managed significant affairs, with deeply rooted power and influence. As a younger member of the family with no real prestige, even with Xu Qiaomu's support, he'd still be walking a tightrope.

But if he could stabilize the situation and turn things around quickly, it would prove his real capabilities.
"I'll convene an immediate shareholders' conference call and remove them from their company positions. Then I'll promote you," Xu Qiaomu said with his signature decisiveness. "Also, you'll need people around you."
As he spoke, he pointed at the wheelchair beside him.
The deaf-mute man, Xu Ba, seemed to understand the gesture. He pressed a button on the intercom on his chest, seemingly triggering an alert.
Soon after, the sound of footsteps approached.
They were remarkably uniform—military-like. A few dozen people gathered in the courtyard.
Xu Zhijie looked over and saw that these individuals exuded the aura of people who had seen combat. Some had deep scars on their faces, even visible bullet wounds. Every one of them looked deadly, as if there was nothing they wouldn't do.
"These are the true elite security forces of our Xu family. They can help you get a lot of things done. Even in modern society, sometimes you need force. Especially during an internal power shift—people play dirty." Xu Qiaomu said, "You'll be in charge of them now. Show me your plan."

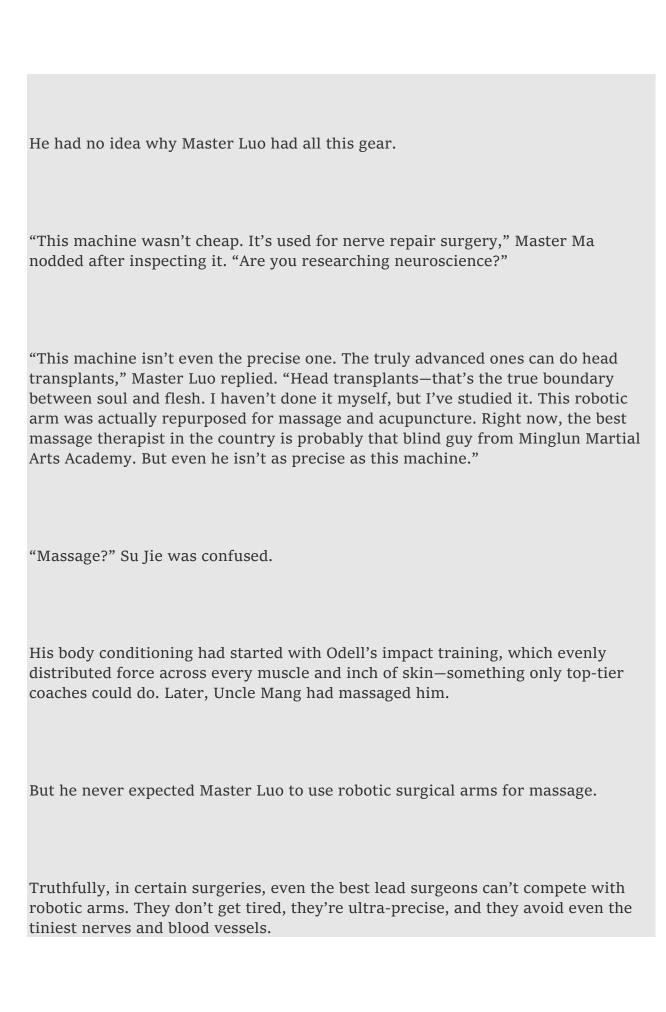




sincere and steady—very easy to get along with. Zhijie, by contrast, appears mild but is full of ambition and constantly scheming. If I had to choose a partner, I'd pick Su Jie over Zhijie any day. That instinct—I trust it."
"Your instincts have saved us from many attacks abroad," Xu Qiaomu said. He and Huang Dingyi were longtime friends and spoke without pretense. "Dingyi, now that I've taken care of those people, what do you think about the future of the family company?"
"It's not going to be that simple," Huang said flatly.
Sure enough, Xu Zhijie returned shortly afterward. "Grandfather, Xu Jiahong is missing—left the family estate and his whereabouts are unknown. The others were indeed holed up in a room talking. They've been placed under house arrest."
"Only Jiahong got away? That's no big deal—he won't make any waves," Xu Qiaomu said indifferently. "Go back to HQ. Audit everything. If we find holes, press charges and send them to prison. If we don't, fire them. We'll deal with the rest later."
"Yes." Xu Zhijie left again.

"Whew" Xu Jiahong was gasping for breath.
He was in a car speeding down the road. Beside him sat Ah Ding, an instructor from the Honey Badger Training Camp.
"That was close," Xu Jiahong looked pale. Then he gritted his teeth. "Can't believe the old man went that far—put us under house arrest and started auditing the books just because of some fortune-teller's words. He's ready to destroy his own sons and grandsons. He must've gone off the deep end thinking he's Emperor Kangxi or something."
"The Xu family's total assets are huge—practically a business empire. Sure, it's not one of those trillion-dollar behemoths, but it's still a mini-kingdom," Ah Ding replied. "You still have a shot at turning things around—it depends on how you use what you've got."
"Turn things around? How?" Xu Jiahong had no confidence.
"Relax. I'll help you. After all, you've been running things for a while and have access to sensitive info. That alone will make Xu Qiaomu hesitate. We're in a society governed by law now—not the clan-based rule of the past. Even if they want to take you down, it starts with removing you from your post, then auditing you, then accusing you of embezzlement or breach of trust. After that, they call the cops and you're looking at jail. That process is full of loopholes we can exploit. So don't panic."

Meanwhile, as the Xu family erupted into chaos, Su Jie had no idea—and he didn't care.
Though the Xu family was his mother's side, he felt like a stranger to them, with no sense of belonging or affection. His mother had originally wanted to help the family a little, hoping to get some money to help his sister, Su Muchen, out of her troubles. But after seeing the internal strife, she felt disillusioned and finally made up her mind to stay out of the muck.
That put Su Jie at ease.
He went back to studying with Masters Luo and Ma in peace.
This was a rare learning opportunity.
After a brief chat, he followed Master Luo into the basement.
Unexpectedly, the basement of this courtyard was a research lab. It had medical equipment and computers—looked very expensive. Su Jie even saw robotic surgical arms, the kind used in high-end hospitals for precision operations.



"Head transplants were hyped up years ago. They say they've already succeeded. I still find it hard to believe," said Zhang Manman. "Sounds like something only underworld judges in old Chinese ghost stories could pull off. Who knows what kind of crazy tech we'll see in a few decades." "The hardest part of a head transplant is connecting spinal nerves and preventing rejection. That takes extreme precision," said Master Ma. "It really is mindblowing. In ancient times, this would be considered divine magic. Anyway, let's focus—Lao Luo, turning a surgical robot into an acupuncture masseur is basically like carrying a master therapist around. Let me take a look at your research." "Actually, I wanted to exchange some findings with you today," said Master Luo. "I've been researching how to return the human psyche to a state like that of an unborn infant in the womb." "That's a topic worth pursuing," Master Ma's eyes lit up. "In Daoist practice, returning to the prenatal state is a major concept. The Classic of the Way and its Power says, 'Can you become as soft and yielding as an infant?' That's the essence of cultivation. I've been exploring that too. Looks like we're on the same path." "How do you even research that?" Su Jie had always dreamed of studying life sciences. He thought topics like these were something he'd only encounter in grad school or during a PhD under a mentor—never did he imagine he'd get to explore them now.

Chapter 99: Switching Between Two Modes of Cultivation

"There are many fascinating insights from ancient times. Take traditional Chinese medicine, for example—many formulas are remarkably effective. When examined using modern scientific methods, we can uncover some truly intriguing things. The pity is, back then, people didn't understand what components were in a given remedy, what its molecular structure was, how it combined, or what chemical reactions it triggered once absorbed by the body. There was no chemistry, no molecular theory, no microbiology—only experience to rely on," said Master Luo. "But in essence, it was all science, a step-by-step search for truth. Even something like ancient feng shui, when analyzed through modern architecture, can reveal many useful findings."

"Exactly. Su Jie, remember this well," said Master Ma. "Though people call us masters and say we're mystical, deep down, we're simply trying to draw insights from traditional culture and use a scientific lens to uncover truth. The ancients were practical. Through repeated experimentation, they found things that worked, but due to their limited worldview, they didn't know the underlying principles. Now that we understand those principles, we can refine and innovate. Science is nothing more than a process of using strict logic to explore truth—and prove that it is truth."

Su Jie listened, deep in thought.

"Alright, let's move on to our research," said Master Luo. "When a fetus is in the womb, it possesses a form of consciousness and can perceive external stimuli. The problem is, the brain at that stage doesn't store memories, which is why we can't recall anything from early childhood, let alone from when we were still in the

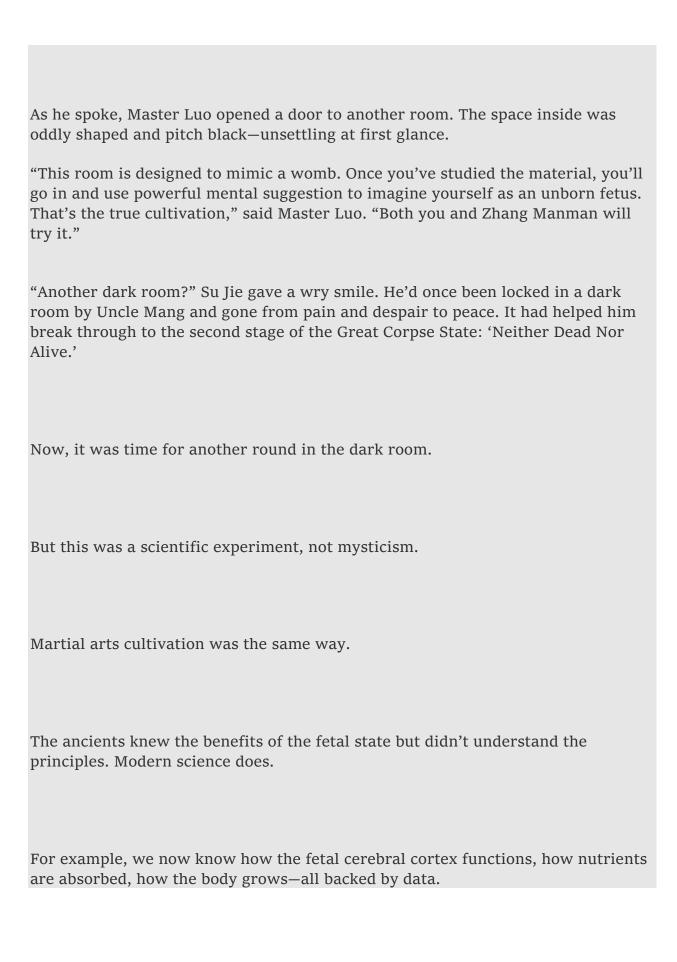
womb. Ancient cultivators believed that returning to that fetal mental state—called the 'prenatal state'—would greatly enhance one's vitality. But how to return to that state? No one really knew. Many ancient cultivation methods aimed to achieve it—through meditation, holding one's breath, even inducing brief oxygen deprivation to trigger fainting—but none offered a clear, repeatable path. Some people stumbled into it by chance, but no systematic method ever emerged. In other words, it couldn't be replicated. That's the real shame. And whether returning to that state can actually enhance the body is still an open question. There are ancient cases, yes—but modern ones are practically nonexistent."

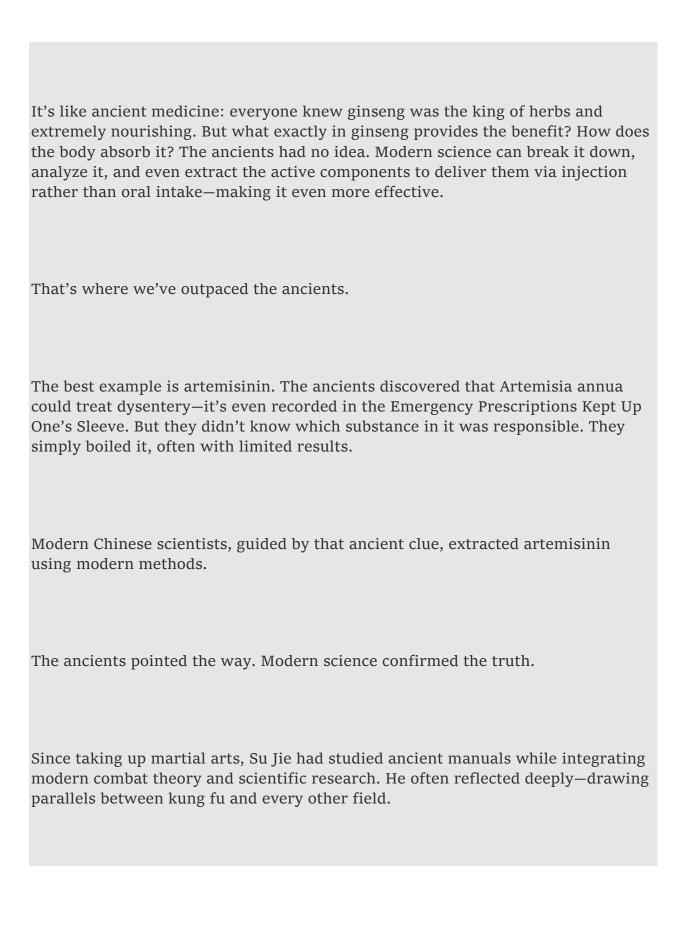
"Science tells us that people can't form memories during the fetal stage," said Master Ma. "But at the Royal Hypnosis Association, we've done a lot of clinical trials. Under deep hypnosis, people can recall events from the womb—and sometimes even past lives."

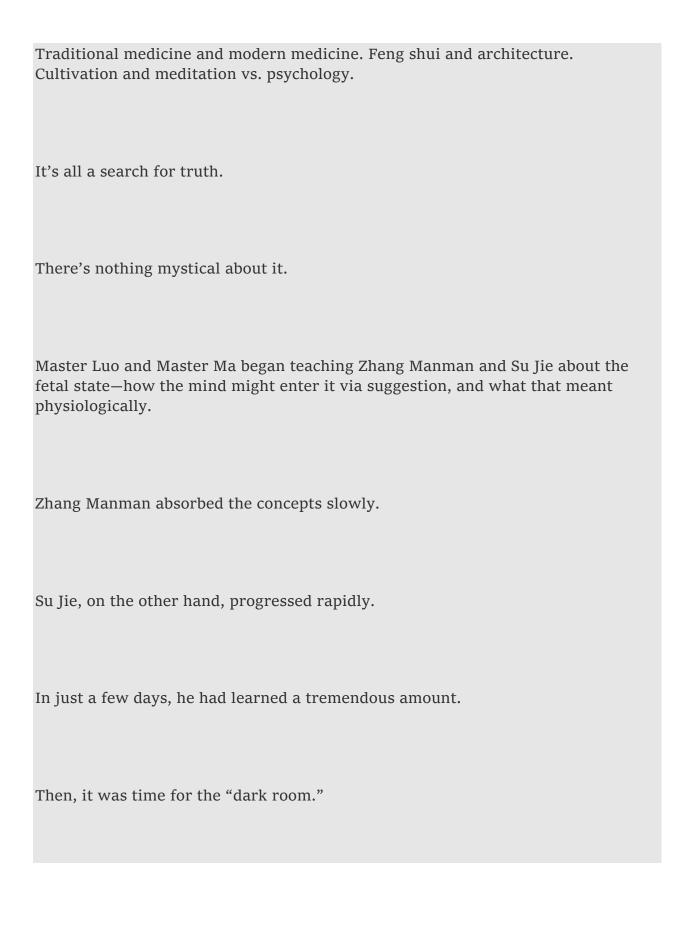
"There's really such a thing as past lives?" Zhang Manman raised an eyebrow. "This is starting to sound pretty far-fetched."

"Well, that's more of a psychological phenomenon. My own research doesn't support literal past lives. It's likely a kind of mental simulation, similar to dreaming. For example, when I was treating a patient abroad, he often dreamed of a specific place, describing its people and scenery in vivid detail. He'd never been there. But when I went myself—it was exactly as he described," said Master Ma. "That's a real case. The mind is astonishing. There's still so much science hasn't touched. That's why we're explorers."

"I need your clinical data to support my project," said Master Luo. "How can we get someone to return to a fetal state—whether through specific exercises, hypnosis, or intense mental suggestion—and what changes occur in the body as a result? This falls into psychology, and that's your domain. Now, I need Su Jie to be our test subject. But before we begin, let's go over fetal development."







Inside, instead of sprawling out as in the Great Corpse State, he curled up like a fetus—like a comma, or a tadpole.
He began mentally suggesting to himself that he was still unborn, still in the womb.
Most people don't have the psychological resilience for this kind of self-suggestion. Even if they try, they can't truly enter the state. But Su Jie's capacity for psychological self-suggestion far exceeded the average. That was one of his greatest assets in martial arts.
The "intent" in martial arts is a form of strong self-suggestion—it activates emotional and hormonal responses in an instant, unleashing strength and speed far beyond the norm.
"He's in the state. His physiological readings are almost identical to those of a fetus—though not a perfect match," said Master Ma, observing the data with Master Luo.
Zhang Manman was impressed. "Su Jie is amazing. His self-suggestion is so intense—I'm nowhere near his level." She had been doing her own experiments, but no matter how much she tried, her physiological markers were far off from fetal parameters.

In martial arts terms, that meant her "intent" training was shallow—hardly enough for mastery.
"Self-suggestion is intent in martial arts," said Master Ma. "The deeper the suggestion, the deeper the skill. But the key is being able to exit the state at will. Otherwise, you end up mentally unstable. I treated someone who went off the rails during training. He thought he was a snake and would hiss all day. He couldn't snap out of the self-suggestion. It took everything I had to bring him back."
"Yeah, my dad told me that's what the ancients called 'qi deviation,'" said Zhang Manman. "Going too deep into a state and losing touch with reality."
"That's why ancient martial artists always trained under a master's watchful eye. Technique errors were one thing—psychological issues were much worse. Even modern fighters need therapists," said Master Ma. "Su Jie, though, can enter and exit the state in a heartbeat. That's incredibly rare. Your father was the same way—but not at Su Jie's age."
"He's extraordinary," said Master Luo. "Really impressive. Old Ma, neither of us had that level of mental control, did we?"
"This is just like the line from Journey to the West: 'Able to be kind, able to be wicked; whether saint or devil is up to him. In goodness, he's a Buddha or an immortal—in evil, he grows horns and fur.'" said Master Ma. "Give it a month. As we record his physiological data, we'll likely gain a lot of insight. And during this process, we can pass on some of our knowledge to him. Multiple wins in one go."

"Su Jie's physical condition is clearly improving," said Master Luo. "The fetal state involves curling up, while the Great Corpse State is all about stretching out. Switching between the two mental states and postures is making his body even stronger. This has to be documented. Looks like our hypothesis was right."

Su Jie used to sleep in the Great Corpse State—fully spread out.

Now, he alternated unconsciously—sprawling for a while, then curling into a fetal position, then sprawling again.

And with every switch, his body became more comfortable, more powerful.

Chapter 100: The Innate State: Dragon-Tiger Vajra Hard Qi Gong

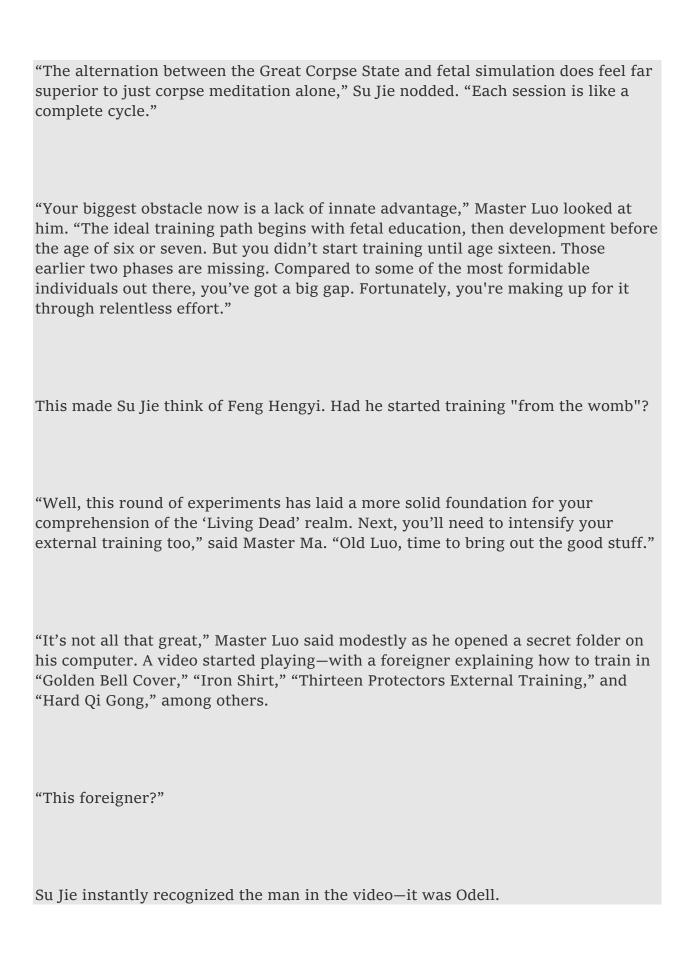
"According to various data, this fetal-like psychological suggestion is extremely effective. It allows a person's mental state to enter its deepest fluctuations and return to the innate state."

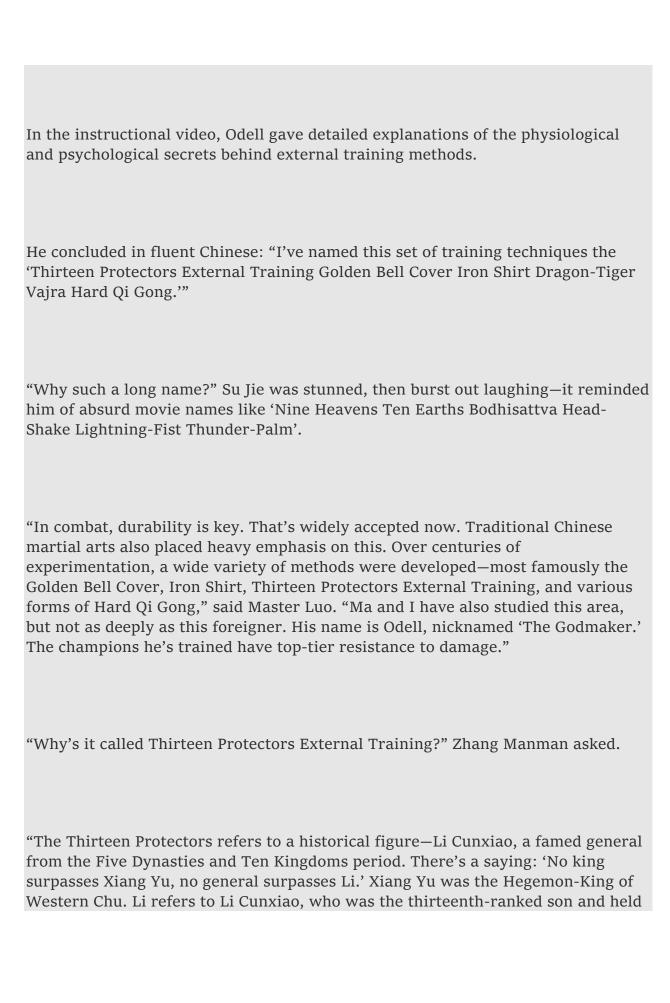
As the days passed, Su Jie continued working with Ma and Luo—the two "professors"—conducting experiments and studying. He changed his sleep habits

and gradually found a unique world between stretching and curling up. Compared to simply using the "corpse-sprawl" method, it had an added layer of mystery.
The Great Corpse State involved treating oneself like a dead body—but still being alive.
However, the state of a fetus in the womb was even more fascinating—seemingly hovering between life and death.
Now, through various cultivation practices and intense psychological suggestion, Su Jie had made his state closely resemble that of a fetus in the womb. This gradually began to awaken some extraordinary abilities.
"Marvelous. Absolutely marvelous."
In the room, Su Jie, Master Ma, and Zhang Manman were watching a playback video of Su Jie sleeping.
His previous sleep posture resembled an empty sack—swelling with inhalation, collapsing with exhalation.
But now, it had subtly changed. At first, he lay flat like a corpse. Then, with the rhythm of his breathing, he gradually curled into a fetal position, then slowly

stretched out, growing day by day, until he reached the peak of growth—then reverted to the corpse-like state of the sprawl method. This entire process completed in six hours, resembling the experience of life from death, and death from life—a full cycle. "Our theory was right after all," Master Ma said as he looked at the data. "In just these few days, your physical performance has increased by ten percent. It's nothing short of a miracle." "I used to think I had hit a plateau, but in fact, all my physical and performance metrics have improved significantly," Su Jie said, looking at the test results, unable to deny that he had advanced again. However, he still hadn't broken through to the realm of the "Living Dead." But he could feel that he was getting closer and closer. "The Great Corpse State is about treating yourself like a corpse and sensing death." The fetal simulation, on the other hand, is about going from death back to life. In Chinese culture, we value the concept of reincarnation and rebirth. You're moving from corpse to fetus—completing a cycle. Then, as the fetus grows and again becomes a corpse, it's equivalent to living an entire life," said Master Luo. "In many research institutions abroad, they've found that fetuses are natural geniuses. They learn and comprehend incredibly fast—only to forget everything at birth. But with certain prenatal education methods, it's possible to deeply engrave

knowledge into the fetus's subconscious, allowing them to retain instincts that benefit them for life," he continued.
"Indeed, the most ideal time for education is during the prenatal phase. Unfortunately, research on fetal education worldwide is still in its infancy. We don't yet know how to implant correct knowledge and concepts into a fetus's subconscious to make sure they retain it post-birth," Master Ma added. "When it comes to physical training, international experts currently divide it into three stages: flexibility and mobility training before losing baby teeth at age 6 or 7, explosive physical development before 17 or 18, and combined physical-mental training in adulthood. But they're missing the most important stage—prenatal."
"My research materials show that the fetal mental state is extremely pure—its receptiveness far surpasses that of the average adult. That's because there's no external interference in the womb; the mind is completely undistracted," Luo said jotting down more insights. "That's why many experts are exploring how adults might return to that fetal mental state, and they've conducted many experiments.
"Ancient cultivation practices emphasized exactly this—returning to the innate, becoming like a baby," Su Jie said.
"Exactly. The ancients noticed this as well and conducted systematic studies, recording their conclusions," Master Ma nodded. "This time, Old Luo and I exchanged our findings and uncovered a lot of new knowledge. Your training in this area validates our research."





the title of Taibao—thus the nickname 'Thirteen Protectors.' Legend has it he was superhumanly strong, with muscles like steel. He charged into battle, unbeatable and invincible. Eventually, he was tricked and executed by being torn apart by five horses. It's said the horses had to pull dozens of times before they succeeded—only after his tendons were cut. He supposedly acquired a special training method from a mysterious master. That method was passed down and became known as the Thirteen Protectors External Training," Luo explained.

"Ancient warriors couldn't be tougher than today's fighters, right?" Zhang Manman asked.

"Not necessarily," Su Jie replied. "Some people in history had not just incredible strength, but a higher spiritual state than modern people. Plus, the brutality of cold weapon combat forced the human body to evolve under pressure. Honestly, if you threw a modern fighter into a battlefield of cold weapons, they'd likely die horribly. The ring doesn't compare to chaotic blade-and-spear warfare. Those who survived multiple battles weren't lucky—they had real skills. Especially those undefeated on the frontlines."

Su Jie, being immersed in martial arts, had developed the habit of putting himself in others' shoes.

Modern people tend to assume fighters today are superior—but that's not necessarily true. There was a world champion boxer who was beaten to death by his nephew and an 18-year-old with steel pipes. Ordinary folks practicing kung fu routines who've never fought real fights are no match for those who train in actual combat.

But even fighters today train in simulated combat—it's not life and death. Ancient warriors hacked and stabbed people regularly. Through countless life-or-death situations, they learned to protect themselves and strike with deadly precision. That was real combat.
Chinese martial arts today have lost those conditions and become mere performance. And there's no going back—cold weapon warfare is long gone.
"Exactly. Without experiencing the brutality of cold weapon combat, you can't imagine its cruelty," Master Ma agreed. "But let's not dwell on history. Let's get back to Odell's external training video."
Su Jie watched intently.
Golden Bell Cover and Iron Shirt techniques can be found in many bookstores, but the books are often vague or incomprehensible.
And frankly, just reading a book and training on your own won't work.
Even with a good teacher, it's hard to master this stuff—let alone through self-study.

Only someone with an already high level of understanding could dig useful insights from those books, test them through practice, and gain benefits over time
Su Jie used to believe those stories where a protagonist finds a secret manual, goes into seclusion for a few years, and comes out a grandmaster. Now he finds them laughable.
No matter the field, progress comes from scientific methods, collective intelligence, collaboration, experimentation, detailed record-keeping, and rigorous logic. Only then can real breakthroughs be made.
Take something as simple as a jab in boxing—it's the result of thousands of matches and endless training. It requires muscle conditioning and full-body coordination to deliver the fastest, most accurate, and most destructive strike.
A lone guy in the woods reading books and training is like a blind man feeling an elephant.
That's why Su Jie always worked with others.
He started at Minglun Martial Arts Academy, later joined Starshine Combat Fitness Club, and eventually organized his own training ground—constantly refining through practice and collaboration.

Ma and Luo did the same. They're both part of top global institutions, collaborating with experts and research teams.
It's that spirit of collective research and innovation that lets humanity fly, terraform, travel through space, and transplant organs. That must never be lost.
This, too, is a small research team.
"Odell has a massive force backing him. I suspect it's the same group trying to recruit—or threaten—us," Master Luo said. "This video was a secret. It took a lot to get my hands on it. I also obtained some external training ointment from the Typhon Training Camp. It's designed to be used alongside this Hard Qi Gong method. I'm too old to practice it—but Su Jie, let's see if you can master it."

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