

Seller 781

Chapter 781: Earth 1712: Aftermath

Giving a bottle of water, Noa said, letting out a subtle smile. "Thanks for the help. If not for you, the situation would have turned very grave for us."

Sungjun gave a momentary pause as he stared front, not at her but at the holographic screen displayed before him.

Ding!

[An S-rank Ability: Memory Extraction is Detected. Would you like to extract it?]

At that notification, Sungjun couldn't help but respond to her more kindly as he took the bottle, "It is not a problem. I just did what I should do."

[Extraction Process has been started. Time for completion: 180 seconds]

Needing to keep her busy for 3 minutes, Sungjun stopped his work and went on conversing, starting by stretching his hand. "Alexander. You can call me Alex."

Noa was slightly surprised but said. "I'm Noa."

"So, what do you do?" As Sungjun asked her while keeping his eye on the timer on the screen, Noa didn't bother hiding it, but instead of completely explaining it, she simply said, "You can say I'm a police officer."

Sungjun blinked in surprise at that. He couldn't help but wonder whether she knew him or something. After all, he was a mafia don. But then, reminding himself that no officer would like to introduce themselves as police, especially to his face, he calmed himself and asked. "Did you come here with someone?"

Noa shook her head. "No. It's just me..."

"That's good." Sungjun nodded and then looked around a bit while saying, "If you don't mind... can we talk somewhere else. I am actually just in need of an officer."

"You like food?" she asked casually in response, brushing hair out of her face.

"I eat to survive," Sungjun replied, blinking in surprise.

"Great. How about I'll treat you to lunch then?" she said, as if it were the most natural thing in the world. "Consider it a thank-you meal. You know, technically, you saved my life. We can talk in a restaurant."

"Sure, not a problem..." He nodded with a smile.

While both of them started walking away, Tianzhu was seen watching them from far away.

Right then, he felt nudging from the side. As he turned, he saw Vera, who had a mischievous smile on her face. "It feels like Uncle's having a crush on someone."

Tianzhu blankly stared at her and gave a knock on her head. "Shut up. Let's go."

"Wait..." Vera, however, grabbed his hand and said, "Let's eat something." Tianzhu looked at her and then at Theo. He let out a sigh and nodded. "Fine."

After a while, as Sungjun and Noa walked out of the mall, a system chime rang in Sungjun's head, receiving a notification that the skill had been extracted successfully.

Once the goal had been accomplished, Sungjun stopped and used an excuse to go to the toilet before rushing back to the mall.

While she waited outside, Sungjun gathered with the remaining two, using their mobile phone service, which was now working due to the disappearance of the dungeon barrier.

Tempest, Umbra, and Sungjun gathered on the first floor of the mall. Both stood before him for further orders.

Sungjun merely took the emergency exit to leave the mall with them and disappeared, leaving a poor Noa there waiting for him for at least forty-five minutes before she stormed away in anger, feeling like he played her a fool.

To improve her mood, she kicked on the accelerator, making her way to Qinghefang Historical Street, which is not far away and known for street food delicacies."

Soon, she found herself at a bustling street food stall in Qinghefang Historical Street. The scent of sizzling oil, sweet and spicy sauces, and freshly made dumplings filled the air.

While she was walking around and enjoying a corn dog, her eyes spotted a familiar-looking family of three.

Vera was seen walking beside Theo and her father, hesitated for a second before finally picking up a grilled skewer of stinky tofu. She took a bite and blinked. "This is... better than I expected," as she admitted, chewing thoughtfully while Theo made a face filled with disgust, not liking the taste. Noa approached them.

With a pat on his shoulder, she attempted to surprise him, but when she touched him, Tianzhu's reflexes activated on their own. Before he reacted, his hands grabbed her arm, resulting in a sharp hiss escaping her mouth. Just as he turned around, he saw her, and he immediately freed her. "Ah..."

"Miss Noa?" Vera's eyes lit in surprise. However, Noa's face turned ugly as she rubbed her reddened arm. "Seriously, what's wrong with you? You just assault anyone who tries to call you?"

"I'm sorry..." Tianzhu immediately bowed, his expression turning awkward. "My body just acted on its own." Meanwhile, Noa still didn't look pleased by his excuse. However, before she could speak, Vera criticized him, letting out a scoff, "Uncle, aren't you a store owner? Why do you have such reflexes?"

As Tianzhu could only apologize to her once again, Noa could only nod.

After a while;

As the group of four walked through the streets, with Vera and Noa quite engaged in conversation, the former asking the latter all kinds of personal questions, Theo halted his footsteps and stared at them. Just stared for a while. No one turned back to pay attention to him.

Theo wanted to turn around to walk away, but in the end, he slowly moved forward, maintaining a steady distance between the group.

Meanwhile, Tianzhu chuckled as he took a bite of his own. "I used to eat these all the time as a kid. After school, before training. Cheap, fast, and filling."

Vera raised an eyebrow. "Really?"

Noa leaned in a bit, curious. "Wait... you mean like martial arts training or hunter training?"

"Not exactly." Tianzhu shook his head. "I wasn't a fighter. I trained to become a baseball player."

Noa nearly choked on her food in surprise. "Athlete? Seriously?" She blinked at him, almost as if trying to figure out if he was joking. "What happened then? Did you retire as a pro? Or..."

Tianzhu sighed softly, interrupting her. "It's a long story," he said, not offering much more but clearly implying to her not to ask anything.

Vera, sensing the shift in mood, quickly changed the topic. "Umm... Noa, when are you going back to Edo?"

Noa blinked at the sudden shift. "Tonight."

Vera seemed to grow more curious. "Do you come to Hangzhou often?"

Noa took a moment before answering, "Hmm... Not really. This is just a one-time visit. But I frequently visit Lin'an (Southern Wu's capital city)." Then, almost as an afterthought, she added, "But lately, I'm thinking of moving to Cheongju in the Goryeo Islands. My mother lives there with my grandparents after her separation from my father. I guess once I shift there, I will be leaving the field and confined to an office. Then, I guess I might not come here."

Vera's eyes widened at the mention of family. "Eh? Why did your parents separate?"

Noa hesitated, the question catching her off guard. It wasn't something she often spoke about.

Just as she was about to respond, Tianzhu raised his voice, his tone stern. "Vera, it's not polite to ask that." He turned to Noa, his expression apologetic. "I'm sorry."

Noa smiled softly, her gaze kind. "It's alright," she said, waving it off. Then, she glanced back at Vera. "In the adult world of relationships, separations happen for many reasons. Sometimes, it's complicated, even for the children who have seen their parents up close. Some things are just difficult to explain."

Vera tilted her head, digesting Noa's answer. Then, after a while, she glanced between the two adults beside her.

"And what about you, Miss Noa?" she asked, her tone lighter now, clearly trying to shift the mood. "Do you have a boyfriend?"

Noa blinked, caught off guard by the sudden question. She awkwardly smiled. "Hmm... No." She paused before adding, "It's been a few years since I dated anyone."

Vera's curiosity was piqued. "So, what's your ideal type then?"

Noa thought for a moment, a slight frown appearing on her face as she tried to gather her thoughts. "Hmm... I don't know. Never really thought about it much, actually..."

"What about my uncle, then?" Vera suddenly interjected, pointing at Tianzhu with a teasing grin.

Tianzhu nearly spat out his food in surprise, his eyes widening. "Vera..."

Vera continued. "He's handsome, young, and quite successful. He's sometimes a little too caring, though... and a bit stingy."

Tianzhu's face darkened slightly, and his voice turned a bit serious. "Okay, Vera, that's enough." His tone was firm, and Vera flinched slightly, her eyes flickering to her father's expression.

Seeing the change in his demeanor, Vera immediately apologized. "Sorry, Miss Noa. I guess that was too insensitive of me." She then let out a quiet sigh, realizing she had gone a little too far. "I was just frustrated, you know? I hate seeing my uncle all alone while everyone else around me seems so happy."

Noa, already taken aback by the question, softened and offered a forced smile. "It's okay," she said, though her tone was a little awkward. She glanced at Tianzhu and, for a moment, seemed to hesitate. "... uh... think it's best if adult matters stay in the adult world," she said, a touch of awkwardness creeping into her voice.

She then looked at Tianzhu with a slightly more playful tone. "As for your uncle, Vera, like you said, he's handsome, young, successful... and strong. So, as long as he's interested, he'll find someone sooner or later."

Chapter 782: Earth 1712: Tianzhu's lesson

When she said that, a figure appeared in her head, and she clenched her fist, growling in her head. "Damn you, Alex. Did you think I was trying to flirt with you or something? How dare you use such a cheap trick to escape?"

Meanwhile, Vera looked between Noa and her uncle, seemingly satisfied with the answer. She quietly picked up another skewer of stinky tofu, her mind momentarily distracted, while Tianzhu, feeling a tinge of discomfort, returned to his food, trying to ignore the lingering tension in the air.

Theo, watching all of this from behind like a silent spectator, muttered under his breath. "Oh, please. Who are you kidding, Vera? You just wanted to keep Uncle busy so that you could date a boy."

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By the time late afternoon arrived, they had finished their informal food tour, and Noa bid her farewell because of an urgent meeting that had come up before the flight.

Meanwhile, Tianzhu made one last stop.

A church.

Vera and Theo followed, glancing around curiously at the high ceilings and stained glass windows.

Though they had traveled plenty, visiting churches wasn't something they did often.

"Uncle," she whispered, "do you come to places like this a lot?"

Tianzhu exhaled, resting his forearms on his knees. "Sometimes." Looking at the statue of Christ, he added. "When I have things to think about, you know, making a big decision, I visit the church. Here, you can think better and might find out what your heart really wants. And right now, I have a big decision to make."

"About moving on?" Vera blinked. "You don't need to ponder it too much and find a woman you like, Uncle. Earlier, I brought up the topic because I found you took out your wedding ring after a long time, and then back in the mall, you looked like you were interested in Miss Noa."

"Vera," Tianzhu sighed at her words. He then looked straight into her eyes and said in a serious tone. "You are no longer a child. So, I think you will understand when I say she is attractive enough to date, but I'm not interested in her. Liking someone based on their looks is different from loving someone. Just because I date doesn't mean I love her, alright? The same goes for you, if any boy who you don't know or have less interaction with you tells you that he likes you. And if he is a bad guy whom you were attracted to, trust me, that relationship will never last long, and you will only be left with distrust and pain. In my life, there won't be another woman who can replace my late wife. So, I don't plan on dating anyone, and if I really found a woman I like, with whom I can picture my future, you will be the first to know before even her. Alright? Right now, I'm more worried about the career opportunities here."

Vera didn't ask for anything more and simply nodded. "I understand." She sat beside him, letting the quiet settle between them.

As for Theo, he was a silent spectator all along. Without being involved in their conversation, he just stared at the statue as if he were thinking about something.

Not long after, Tianzhu let out a heavy sigh and called. "Theo..." His tone stayed softer as he broke the silence between them, at last.

"Yes?"

"Why do you have to do that?" He asked.

Vera glanced to her right, to her twin.

As Theo hesitated a bit, Tianzhu replied. "We are in the House of the Worship. Don't lie in front of the Lord."

Taking a breath, Theo replied. "I want to help. I want to prove that I have what it takes to become a hunter."

Tianzhu sighed at that. "And did you think you proved it?"

Theo answered a bit more confidently this time. "I stopped the monster. Yes, my music might have immobilized those with weak spiritual pressure. But, there were those who were unaffected, too. If only I could have done it earlier, the monster would have been defeated by Haze Guild, too."

Tianzhu stayed silent for a few seconds and said. "How about this? What if that monster turned out to be one with high immunity to mental attacks? What would have happened then? Too few hunters to fight against, and everyone is greatly vulnerable to the Red Ogre, a Class-2 Boss monster. You will see two thousand casualties. Because you are an unregistered hunter, you will be looking at a life sentence. And since you are legally not an adult yet, under the Family Education Promotion Law, as your legal guardian, I will be paying a hefty fine, and no one would ever hire me; your sister, on the other hand, will be haunted by her friends, classmates, and strangers wherever she goes. Your mother will be too ashamed to even be on the camera

ever again. Your cousin will be teased at her school, too. Ever thought of that scenario before you put up such a bravado to prove yourself?"

The atmosphere became silent as each of his words hit like a large hammer striking Theo's heart. Vera couldn't help but glance at her brother again, this time, worried about what would happen now as he saw that Theo's eyes looked completely shaken.

Tianzhu continued. "If you don't want to pursue music, don't. But don't endanger the innocents. You won't understand that responsibility. You will understand it when you have someone to protect." Taking a pause, he took a deep breath and added. "I will say it again, Theo. Forget about being a hunter."

Theo didn't say anything after that. Vera stayed silent, and neither did Tianzhu urge him to speak. He just went back to staring at the statue of Christ.

After spending some time in silent prayer at the church, the three of them stopped by another mall to shop around before returning to the hotel.

The sun started to set, casting a warm glow over the city skyline as they stepped into their suite.

Vera immediately flopped onto the couch, stretching her arms with a sigh.

"What now? Dinner at the hotel?"

Tianzhu loosened his wristwatch and placed it on the nightstand. "We get ready. Go and take a shower and put on the best dress you have. Call me. We'll be at the pool in the meantime. Theo, come with me."

Vera sat up. "Wait... wait... Ready for what?"

He glanced at her. "We're meeting your mother and her family for. Did you forget?"

She blinked. "Tonight? I thought you said it was on Sunday."

Tianzhu unbuttoned a couple of buttons on his shirt as he looked into the mirror, adjusting his hair. "I said it could be on Sunday, not on Sunday, munchkin. Anyway, get ready."

Vera pursed her lips. "But it is just 6:30, though. Isn't it too early?"

Tianzhu answered. "We took an executive deluxe room. There's only one bathroom here, and we are three. After you were done, there were two people in the line. By the time we leave, it will be 8."

"Ah, okay." Vera blinked.

"Let's go," Tianzhu said, walking away. Theo quietly followed him in silence.

There was nothing but silence between them, whether walking in the hallway or riding the elevator.

Tianzhu led, and his son followed in silence.

Reaching the infinity pool, Tianzhu sat down, his legs in the pool, and then he patted the floor beside him. As Theo sat down, Tianzhu let out a sigh. "You have been awfully quiet ever since I reprimanded you. Are you angry?"

Theo took a deep breath and said. "Uncle, can I go back home?"

"Why?" Tianzhu asked. As Theo stayed silent, Tianzhu said. "No, it's alright. You will have your reasons. I won't pester you if you don't want to say it. Moreover, we will leave in a week anyway. However, tonight, you are going to meet your mother's family for the first time. I want you to put your brooding self away for this one night. Try to act friendly and polite to your mother and your sisters, even if you feel unhappy, alright? Can you do that?"

Theo looked at him and gave a subtle nod.

A couple of hours later, the three of them stepped out of the hotel, dressed in elegant formals.

Upon entering the flat, Xueli welcomed them in person, smiling warmly.

"Jiejie..." As Tianzhu smiled, giving a hug, Theo and Vera slipped into the indoor slippers.

Chapter 783: Earth 1712: The Police Interrogation

A while later;

The family of three and the family of four sat down together.

Vera, as always, was effortlessly comfortable, chatting away with Soojin about school, hobbies, and shopping as if they were childhood friends reunited.

Even little Alice, despite her initial shyness, had started warming up to her, occasionally tugging at Vera's sleeve to show her something.

As for Theo, he was trying to be comfortable, conversing with Zhao Mingze. But his reluctance and discomfort were clearly evident on his face.

Meanwhile, Tianzhu and Xueli were talking about his future plans. "So, do you really plan on changing your career?"

Tianzhu nodded. "Yeah. I don't think I want any more money or prestige or whatever, Jie jie. Now, all I care about is keeping them safe."

"Why? Are they not safe in Kitez?" Xueli blinked, taken aback by his response. "I heard that it was one of the lowest crime-rated cities in the world."

Tianzhu awkwardly smiled, "You know it is, Jie Jie. In our profession, we constantly face threats as our influence grows stronger. Before they were kids, I could easily control their movements and restrict the places they could go, preventing them from doing bad things. Now, they are already teenagers, and it won't be long before they completely deny my worries. Since I can't stop it, I have to at least bring them to a better environment."

"Alright. I'll try my best to support you then..." Xueli smiled. Tianzhu smiled back.

The rest of the night pretty much went smoothly. The three of them stayed there for the night. Vera slept in Soojin's room, and Tianzhu and Theo slept in the empty guest room.

Two days later;

At the hotel, the morning sunlight filtered through the blinds, casting pale yellow light across the room.

Tianzhu sat at the small desk, sipping his coffee and watching the news. Vera is still sleeping, and Theo is nowhere to be seen. He has already gotten onto the return flight to Kitez as promised.

"Hmm... Starlight Guild gained much fame for achieving such a high survival rate." Tianzhu took another sip. "But it is strange that no news article or reporter is covering that guy, the one who actually ended the boss. I wonder what his identity was. Should I ask Noa? She seems to have known him. I got her number. Maybe I should ask her for lunch and subtly ask her about this fellow. Hmm... but why though. It is not like he is interrupting my life. Why not let's just behave as if..."

Ting

The doorbell interrupted his thoughts. Tianzhu set his coffee cup down and glanced at the door, raising an eyebrow. "Hmm?" He wasn't expecting any visitors.

"Mr. Qin?" a deep voice called from the other side, before he got up from his seat.

He stood up and opened the door to find two officers in plain clothing, their expressions unreadable but sharp.

The taller of the two, a man with short black hair, stepped forward, showing his badge. "Hangzhou's Awakened Crimes Division, Captain Yang Se-Cheong. May I confirm your identity: Qin Tianzhu?"

Tianzhu nodded. "Yes?"

"Good morning, sir. We'd like to ask you a few questions regarding the incident yesterday, which you have been involved in," the captain continued to speak.

Name: Yan Se Cheong

Age: 36

Ethnicity: Goryeo

Arcane Path: Mage

Ability: Ice manipulation

Ability Rank: S

Mana Reserves: 43,892,308

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The other one added politely, "Nothing to be alarmed for, Mr. Qin. As you have been a foreigner who just landed a couple of days ago, we had to ask some questions as a formality, which I'm sure you will have no problems answering.

"Not a problem," Tianzhu said casually, gesturing toward the small seating area. "Please, come in."

Both men bowed politely before taking a seat.

"Mr. Qin, we found credible evidence that in yesterday's Rift incident in the mall, one unregistered awakener has used powers, and our investigation results found out that it is Mr. Theodore Qin." The captain spoke, unfurling a document about Theo, which seemed to have been taken from the embassy. He continued. "According to the Family Education Promotion Law. Article 11, Theodore is a minor, and Mr. Qin, who is designated as his legal guardian, is responsible for any illegal activities done by Theodore. However, since he hadn't caused any significant damage, no case has been filed against him."

Taking a pause, the captain then said. "There's nothing to be worried about, Mr. Qin. Now, all we need are the answers to a few questions. One, what is your relationship with Theodore?"

Tianzhu replied plainly. "He is my biological nephew and my adopted son." After a pause, he added. "Next?"

"Eh?" The captain and his sergeant were taken aback, exchanging glances at one another before the captain nodded and said. "May we know the reason why you haven't registered your neph... I mean, your adopted son as the awakener?"

Tianzhu's eyes didn't leave the captain a bit, and neither did his expression show any change from calmness as he replied. "If he gets registered, he will have the right to apply for a Hunter's License. I don't want him to become one. As a parent, I want him to be safe."

The captain said. "But according to the file, it says he is 18. He only has to wait for 1 another year to become a legal adult, though. There is no point in not registering even now."

Tianzhu replied as if he were prepared for that. "That's our family's problem to be sorted out, not the police. Next."

Captain Yang was slightly taken aback, feeling that extreme pressure on his soul for some reason, especially when he saw those eyes of Tianzhu. Taking a deep breath, he spoke. "Alright, uhh... secondly, according to

the Association's protocols, it is illegal for any unlicensed awakener to use supernatural abilities in public unless permitted by a hunter in charge or if done strictly in self-defense. And we found out that your son used his powers without having the permission of either the leader of Haze Guild or Starlight Guild's Vice Leader/ Our Superintendent told us to inform you that if Mr. Qin is willing to admit that his son was on the orders of the Starlight Guild or the Haze Guild, whatever charges that could be written on your son will be written off."

Tianzhu frowned at that statement. He continuously stared at the officer for a while. The latter stared back at him, although a bit nervously.

Crossing his arms, he responded with a chuckle. "Then, how about this? Theodore never did pick up the violin. He never did play the music or showcase his powers. Whatever happened, only Haze Guild did the work."

"Eh?" The officers once again exchanged glances in surprise.

Captain Yang got up, stretching his hand. "We have a deal, Mr. Qin."

Tianzhu smiled. "Pleasure."

The officers exchanged one last look, then turned to leave. "We apologize for any inconvenience," the Captain said before heading toward the door.

Tianzhu followed them to the door, expression unreadable. "No worries. Have a good day."

They gave a final bow and disappeared into the corridor.

Downstairs, Lobby;

The two officers stopped by the hotel's polished lobby at the entrance, passing a few early tourists sipping coffee.

Near the far window sat a man in a dark gray coat with a disposable paper cup in his hand.

The officers approached the man, who raised an eyebrow at their presence.

Mo Xingchen, the vice-leader of the Starlight Guild, looked up from the tablet in his lap. They reported the matter as it was to him and left silently.

Xingchen sat in silence for a long moment. Then, he replayed the video on his tablet again.

It was playing the footage recorded by one of the CCTVs in the Atrium that day.

Xingchen's eyes narrowed as he zoomed in on a part of the video where Theodore was playing the music and knocked everyone into an unconscious state.

"This could even restrict the movements of a Class-2 Boss type like Red Ogre. This young man is indeed interesting. An unregistered Awakener and not even an unlicensed hunter? Someone like him should be in the Starlight Guild. Before his talent gets discovered by those top-tier guilds, I need to recruit him. But his father seemed quite persistent. I should come at a different angle to deal with this matter."

Meanwhile, Back Upstairs;

In his room, Tianzhu sat on the edge of the bed, elbows on knees, hands clasped. "Okay, let's land a job, then, look for the house, and after that, finally, Vera and Theo's future school where they graduate..." he muttered under his breath.

Chapter 784: Earth 1712: Noa's Trap

A few days later,

At the reception desk, Tianzhu stood patiently, Vera beside him, absentmindedly scrolling on her phone.

"Mr. Qin," the manager greeted, a warm, practiced smile on his face. "We hope your stay was exceptional."

"It was," Tianzhu replied smoothly, offering a polite handshake before leading Vera toward the exit.

As the chauffeur opened the door, Vera stretched her arms dramatically. "Finally, we are moving into our new home."

Tianzhu chuckled, glancing at her as she climbed into the car.

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Xueli barely had time to tie her hair up before the doorbell rang.

She frowned. It's late noon on a weekday. Soojin is still at school. Alice is also at daycare. Mingze, her husband, left for the shoot and will only return late at night. And she didn't have any work today that her manager could come.

Rubbing her eyes, she shuffled to the door and peeked through the peephole.

"Xiao Zhu?"

She quickly unlatched the door. Her younger brother stood there, dressed in a fitted black coat, looking effortlessly sharp despite the early hour. Beside him, Vera was grinning, eyes twinkling with excitement.

"What are you two doing here, at this hour, and that too without giving me any sort of information beforehand?" Xueli asked, stepping aside to let them in.

Tianzhu walked in casually, hands in his pockets. "Just thought I'd drop by."

Vera slipped past him and made herself comfortable on the couch, humming to herself as she swung her legs.

Xueli narrowed her eyes. Something was up. "That's really suspicious," she said, crossing her arms. "Tell me, what are you two up to now?"

Tianzhu waved his hand. "Nothing big. We're moving into our new place today, Jiejie."

Xueli blinked. "Where?"

"That's still a secret, Mom." Vera chimed in, looking way too amused. "And trust me, you will be surprised."

Tianzhu chuckled. "Also, it's within walking distance from here."

She exhaled, relieved. That meant he was staying close, after all.

"Fine. So, where is it exactly?" She asked again.

Tianzhu simply smiled. "Follow me."

"Alright, give me a minute. I'll change and come."

Roughly 15 minutes later, Xueli looked all ready up with her low-key outfit, a sweatshirt, a cap on her head, loose jeans on the bottom, simple sneakers, and minimal makeup.

Vera couldn't help but comment, with her eyes widened. "Wow, Mom. One wouldn't even be able to guess that it is Jiang Xueli when they see you now."

Putting up the sunglasses with a smile, she replied. "When you live 20 years in the industry, my darling, you would know what to wear to escape the notice of paparazzi."

"Well, you don't need all that, Jiejie, but anyway, let's go." Tianzhu shrugged as he turned around to walk away. As Vera jumped down from the couch and followed him, Xueli blinked in wonder. "Is it the adjacent building or something?"

However, soon, she realized why.

Instead of pressing the button for the first floor in the elevator, he led them to the top floor, particularly, the one that says 'P' instead of any floor number that goes from 1 to 51.

Realization dawned.

Her eyes widened. "No way."

The elevator climbed smoothly, and finally, the doors slid open to reveal a private entrance.

Xueli turned to him, half-expecting a joke. "You're kidding, right?"

Tianzhu only smirked and stepped forward, punching in a passcode on the sleek black panel.

With a soft beep, the doors unlocked, revealing the duplex penthouse that had been empty for years.

The only unit of its kind in the building.

The penthouse was the epitome of luxury, spanning multiple levels with opulent Italian marble flooring, handcrafted oak cabinetry, and coffered ceilings adorned with crystal chandeliers.

Expansive floor-to-ceiling windows showcased a breathtaking panoramic view of the West Lake, while the lower level housed a state-of-the-art home theater, private gym, spa, sauna, bowling alley, wine storage, and a soundproof office.

Upstairs, the grand master bedroom, additional suites, a formal dining area, a plush living room, and a chef's kitchen exuded luxury.

The crown jewel, however, was the two-tiered rooftop terrace, featuring a lush garden, barbecue station, infinity pool, jacuzzi, and sundeck, offering an unparalleled retreat above the city skyline.

Xueli stepped inside, taking it all in: the high ceilings, the expansive windows overlooking the city, the modern and luxurious design that seemed like it was pushed to the peak.

She turned back to Tianzhu, still processing.

"This place..." she started. "This is the one you were moving in?"

Tianzhu nodded. "Mm."

"Did you buy it or rent it?"

Tianzhu shrugged, "I don't have that much money to buy it, Jiejie. It's just a lease."

Xueli exhaled, running a hand through her hair. "Still, this place should have like millions of credits you have to pay for a two-year lease," she said, staring at him. "You must be quite rich to afford this." She squinted in suspicion.

"Not exactly, Jiejie. I was just hunting for houses, and the realtor informed me of this unit, where the owner intends to rent out the lower floor for 3000 credits monthly rent, and asks for 6 months of advance. I found it lucrative and just went on signing the contract." He exhaled, tilting his head toward the sky for a brief second before looking back at her.

Xueli studied his face, wondering whether he was trying to pull her leg so as not to worry her or if it was really the truth. After all, 3000 credits, even in such an affluent neighborhood, no one would be willing to give it. She plans on meeting the penthouse unit owner later on.

But then again, she didn't say anything to her brother but simply patted his shoulder.

The same evening, in Hangzhou City;

Noa's fingers rested lightly on the steering wheel of her unmarked silver sedan as she drove on a rainy night.

She didn't look back too often.

Once every few minutes was enough.

The black car had been behind her since the outskirts of the Sima district. Same model. Same rhythm. Never overtaking, never drifting too far behind.

Noa's eyes slid to the mirror again.

Still there.

A half-smile curled at the corner of her lips. "The fish bit the bait. Come..." She murmured under her breath.

She didn't speed up. Didn't weave through traffic. Instead, her driving remained casual.

Eventually, she pulled into the underground parking of a twenty-story corporate building, dipped under the motion scanner, and smoothly coasted into a visitor slot.

A hooded figure got down from the vehicle and followed her at a distance.

Noa adjusted her dark coat and casually brushed a few droplets from her shoulder before pressing the button of Elevator 4, which was currently on the first floor.

Ting

But just as the door reached the parking lot, her footsteps froze in place. Her face was also frozen for a moment, spotting a familiar young man carrying shopping bags in both hands.

"You..."

At the same time, the other party seemed to be just as surprised as she. "Eh? Noa?"

"HAN. SUNG. JUN..." Her voice turned a bit colder as she stressed each word, looking at him. "Such a small word, isn't it?" Her gaze turned sharp.

Sungjun, on the other hand, let out an awkward chuckle. "It's been a while."

Just as she was about to hiss in anger, she felt something behind her. Glancing toward the source where a bald man was walking toward her, she hurriedly stepped forward, pushing Sungjun back into the elevator and pressing the close button before the number 5 was struck.

"Wha..."

"Don't talk about anything. I'm currently in a police operation. Cooperate with me." She said, although in an icy tone.

Sungjun, surprised by her attitude, couldn't say anything to this woman and simply nodded in silence.

Meanwhile, the man rushed forward but missed the timing. The elevator's doors were closed before he got inside. He kept his eye on the floor indicator. It stopped at 5.

He got in the next one and went up.

But just as the doors opened, he found half a dozen men in suits standing behind Noa. The latter had a smirk on her face.

Then she snapped her fingers.

In an instant, the mana pistols were unholstered as they rushed in, glowing faint blue under the flickering panel light. All of them were aimed straight at the man's chest.

His eyes widened. "This..."

"Don't move," one of the suited men said.

Noa stepped forward, smoothly slipping a compact pair of anti-mana cuffs from her coat pocket. They clicked shut around his wrists with practiced ease.

Up close, she studied his face as she spoke. "You think I don't know that Spiritwood Essence in the mall was used in order to kill me? When you missed it, you should have gone underground, but as foolish as you are, you tried to take a second chance. Hmpf..."

Chapter 785 785: Earth 1712: Noa's trap (Part-2)

He didn't respond and kept his mouth shut.

She let out a smile as she continued. "Honestly, I didn't expect it to work this easily. I planted teams in three buildings, sealed the upper floors, and even had a fake dispatch team nearby just in case you ran. So much effort for one little rat."

Her tone dropped now, and so did her gaze, turning cold.

"So," she said, tilting her head slightly, "was it Twilight who sent you? Or are you working for someone else? Who is your handler? The quicker you answer our questions, the less pain you will experience."

The man swallowed hard.

But in a sudden move, fast and desperate, he lunged, bringing his cuffed hands up toward her throat.

But before his fingers could even graze her, half a dozen triggers clicked in unison.

"Argh..."

He dropped to his knees with a scream, blood blooming down his thighs as he clutched at the wounds.

Noa stepped back, brushing a strand of hair from her shoulder. She adjusted her coat collar, calm as a still pond.

Then she spun around, with a precise snap of her heel, driving her boot into his cheekbone.

Crack.

The man fell sideways with a groan, blood trickling down his chin.

"This bastard..." she hissed.

One of the agents beside her silently offered a tissue. She took it, dabbing the corner of her mouth like a woman freshening up after a long meeting.

"Tidy him up," she said. "Bring him to the safehouse. Remember, Hangzhou City Police cannot know about him yet. Not until we interrogate him thoroughly."

"Yes, ma'am."

The six of them grabbed him, and she turned around to face Sungjun, who was standing not far away but watching everything in silence. The latter just stared at her, blinking. "Man, this girl is fiery than I thought. I cannot let my identity be known. Neither Pavel has any presence in this city, nor those two guardians of mine are here to protect me in case I say the wrong things, and she tries to investigate my background. The best thing to do is to peacefully resolve the matter and pacify her ego... Hmm..."

Noa did look like she had finally paid attention to Sungjun. She was about to walk toward him, but right then, the captured guy burst out into laughter. "You are good, lady, but I cannot afford to fail my mission. Since I cannot hide, I will have to take you down with me..."

At once, the mana core in his body was ignited. Within seconds, his life ended, and all of his mana reserves turned into pure energy, ready to explode.

Noa hurriedly spoke. "Everyone, leave the premises as fast as possible. I will form a barrier around and contain the explosion within the elevator."

"But, Ma'am..." As one of the armed officers tried to say something, she sharply spoke. "This is my order. Now, go..."

She grabbed the dead body and threw him into the elevator before stepping inside.

Meanwhile, the armed officers, her subordinates, rushed away from the scene. One of them was about to grab Sungjun on the way, but the latter quickly slipped from them and entered the elevator just as it closed.

Noa's eyes widened, and a sharp scream escaped her mouth. "Are you crazy. What are you doing?"

To which Sungjun replied, "Of course, to help you."

"I don't need help. This place needs it, idiot." She snapped at him. "Can't sense how much mana this guy has? If he explodes, there will be lots of casualties."

Sungjun replied. "You create the barrier as planned, and leave the rest to me."

Noa didn't know what he planned on doing, but knowing there wasn't much time, she didn't pay attention to him anymore and focused on pushing her mana out and extending it further to create a hexagonal barrier, trapping herself, Sungjun, and the dead body that was almost turned into a ball of compressed energy.

Noa, upon finishing the barrier, finally glanced at Sungjun. He was doing nothing but stare at the ball of energy. Guilt enveloped her mind, and the word, Sorry escaped her mouth. "Sorry, I shouldn't have dragged you up here... If only I get to..."

Boom

She didn't get to finish her words, and the explosion expanded at a terrifying pace. She shut her eyes instinctively, expecting to be hit, but instead, she felt a sturdy body standing in front of her and hugging her. Her face was pressed against his chest while her body was wrapped in his arms.

Ding!

[100,000 mana particles have been deducted. Invincibility Skill has been activated. 8 seconds until effect ends.]

Ten seconds later, the elevator dinged softly on the first floor. Outside, a mother and daughter pair were waiting to board. Just as it opened, they saw both of them hugging, and she instinctively closed her 8-year-old's eyes, but then as Sungjun saw her, he freed Noa, who looked around. While the mana barrier was

heavily cracked, the dead body dissipated, leaving behind nothing in the end. In the meantime, her hair became slightly messy.

She looked at herself and then slowly raised her head to look at Sungjun's face up close. As she stared at him in a bit of daze, Sungjun smiled. "Let's talk somewhere."

She nodded in a daze again.

After a while, Noa was seen in a restroom, fixing her hair and then applying her lipstick. As she checked herself again and again in the mirror, her phone buzzed. She took it out.

It had the image of Tianzhu, but a younger one from twenty years ago, and it was with someone well-known to the police department. "Why was this guy with Shen Triad's former Boss, Ren Fanjie? What was his relation to her? I knew at first glance that Tianzhu was a dreaded killer. The killing intent he was suppressing is huge, but I didn't expect him to have ties with such a dark criminal organization." She couldn't help but frown at the photo.

However, as she scrolled down, past the image, his basic details were shown. Unlike the image, the details are pretty much basic, but one detail attracted her attention: "The brother of Jiang Xueli, the White Fist?"

Meanwhile, outside, in the food court of the mall, Sungjun was waiting for her. He was scrolling through some reels out of boredom, enjoying the bit of modern technology that he couldn't do in the 90s, but then a message from Tempest popped up, shifting his attention.

[Tempest]: Sir, there is a small problem. The Black Dragon Gang caused some problems at Kremlinsk. Last night, as you know, our Cargo shipment was docked at Port Zimorodok, which was under the control of Zimnyye Ruki (Winter Hands). Their men were killed on the spot, leaving behind no evidence. But, a few minutes ago, Mr. Yuri got the message from Black Dragon. Ivan Drago claimed that he had our 1000 tons of Enriched RDX, and he was asking for 1 billion credits.

Clenching his fists, Sungjun murmured, "With Eva gone, Pavel no longer has eyes on the globe, and I bet they must have already found out about it, somehow. Those explosives were regularly used by Alexander for granite mining. It lessens the effort so much. But in the hands of a gang like Black Dragon, they will become C-4. As an organized criminal organization, they might not use it for themselves, but who knows which dark guild they will sell them to, which will then be used for terrorist activities. And going to war against Black Dragon will cause casualties on my side for sure. Some explosives aren't worth losing loyal men. However, if I accept the demand, Pavel's fame will be hit. No, I need to make a firm statement that anyone who messes with Pavel shouldn't have any future left."

He sent back the reply to his subordinate, who was currently at the hotel they were staying at.

Commander: Tempest, we are going back home. Make preparations. However, tell Ivan that I'm currently busy with some other matters. I will give him, not 1 but 2 Billion Credits. Tell him to wait for 2 weeks, and I will meet him in person.

Tempest: Sir, there is no need to give them money. It's just the Black Dragon Gang. Give me an order and I will destroy it for you.

Commander: The Black Dragon doesn't have the guts to steal our shipment and dares to call us. Someone is behind them. But it doesn't matter. They will be destroyed for sure. Just follow my instructions for now.

Tempest: Understood, Sir.

Chapter 786: Earth 1712: Ryu Seongha

A couple of minutes later, Noa walked out of the restroom and came to the food court in a bit of nervousness and excitement, to the table where Sungjun was supposed to be sitting, but instead, she found a staff member there waiting for her.

As she approached the table, the staff member looked at her and asked. "Hello, are you Miss Noa?"

She nodded in a bit of daze, suspecting the worst.

The waiter gave her the slip and said, "Mr. Han left this for you."

A few words were there on the slip: Sorry for standing you up again, but something urgent came up. I have to leave. If fate permits, when we meet again, I will owe you a date."

She immediately tore it into pieces, anger creeping up to her mind, "This bastrd... he didn't even leave behind a phone number and dares to say he owes me a date. I was just thankful because you saved twice... Who wants to go on a date... Hmpf..." She stomped her foot and walked away.

One week later, Xihu District, Hangzhou City;

A large parcel arrived at the penthouse.

It was massive, nearly the size of a small refrigerator, and securely packaged in industrial-grade wrapping. Tianzhu didn't need to check the sender, for he already knew what it was.

Setting his coffee down on the marble countertop, he grabbed a utility knife and carefully sliced through the thick tape.

As the final layer peeled away, a sleek, completely assembled humanoid robotic assistant stood inside the crate, its glossy exterior reflecting the soft morning light.

"Looks completely undamaged. Great, I was worried for nothing."

With a small smirk, Tianzhu powered it on. A faint hum filled the air as the robot's systems booted up, its LED interface flickering to life.

"Amy, activate," Tianzhu murmured.

The robot's synthetic eyes blinked, and it straightened its posture before responding in a smooth, feminine robotic voice.

"System online. Awaiting commands, Master Qin."

Tianzhu glanced towards Vera's room. He lowered his voice and gave the command.

"Go wake Vera up."

Amy nodded mechanically and turned, her steps gliding smoothly. Tianzhu followed slowly behind with his hands in his pockets, watching as the robot approached Vera's bed.

The girl was still curled up under her blanket, her hair spilling across the silk pillow. Amy leaned slightly forward and spoke in her usual tone.

"Young Miss, wake up. It's morning time."

Vera groggily groaned, rolling over. "Not now, Amy..." she mumbled, half-asleep.

Then, suddenly, her eyes snapped open.

"AMY?!"

She shot upright, wide-eyed, as she took in the sight of the robotic assistant standing before her.

From the doorway, Tianzhu grinned. "Surprise."

Vera practically launched out of bed, wrapping her arms around the robot in pure excitement. "Amy! You're really here!"

The AI assistant's head tilted slightly before responding. "It has been a while, Young Miss."

Tianzhu leaned against the door frame, watching his niece's joy with a satisfied smile. Taking a sip, he mumbled. "Okay, with Amy here to look after Vera, I'm finally ready to work. I wonder when Jiejie has her next project."

A couple of days later;

Tianzhu left his daughter at the house and joined Xueli as she was picked up by her manager, as a prestigious project suddenly fell into her lap.

The sleek black SUV was waiting at the entrance. Inside sat a man in his late thirties, his sharp suit and neatly styled hair presenting a polished image.

Xueli smiled and gestured towards Tianzhu. "Xiao Zhu, this is my manager, Li Jingmin."

Jingmin nodded politely, offering a handshake. Tianzhu took it, his grip firm but unreadable. "Pleasure to meet you," Jingmin said smoothly. However, in his mind, he couldn't help but wonder who this young man was.

On the other hand, Tianzhu barely acknowledged the greeting, seeing that this guy was not an awakener.

Xueli introduced him casually. "And this is my younger brother, Qin Tianzhu."

Jingmin blinked in surprise. "Younger brother? I thought you only had two elder brothers."

"Stepbrothers." She corrected him but didn't elaborate on Tianzhu's case. "I didn't tell the company. No one needs to know for now."

Jingmin raised an eyebrow, intrigued but not pressing further.

"As I have mentioned on the phone, he'll be your assistant from today onwards, a road manager alongside Yuna," she continued. "Teach him everything he needs to know."

Jingmin exhaled sharply, shaking his head with a small chuckle. "Well, that's unexpected."

He studied Tianzhu for a moment before commenting, "Tianzhu, you have great looks. Photojournalists might not care much if it is a good-looking female manager accompanying an actress, but male managers are different. They will definitely take an interest in who this good-looking manager is, all in the search for a scoop. Not to mention, Ms. Xueli is an A+listed actress and an A-rank Hunter. In this era, it's easy for people to dig into your background. So, I don't think it can be hidden for long. And when they find out you were working for your sister, some might look down on you. Are you okay with it? If you wish, I can recommend you to another celebrity."

Xueli glanced at Tianzhu, her expression turning serious as she added. "He's right. If you don't want any exposure, you'll need to wear a mask and a hat at all times. No sunglasses, though, especially when you were with me. It'll come across as rude, and my fans will unnecessarily bash you on the internet for no reason. Prefer wearing fake nerd glasses for aesthetic purposes."

"I understand." Tianzhu simply nodded, already intending to do that. He doesn't want any attention at the moment.

Jingmin let out another chuckle and started the car. "Alright, let's get going."

Together, they went to Vesta Entertainment, Xueli's agency, located in Genesis Entertainment Town in the same city.

****Meanwhile, in Southern Siberia;****

****Morozgrad City, Krasnovya;****

In a seemingly abandoned warehouse on the outskirts of the City, far from the prying eyes of law enforcement and ordinary citizens, a new underground fight club has been opened recently, operating after midnight to the sunrise.

"Woo" "Woo" "Woo" "Woo"

Hundreds of cheering filled the arena as a lady, who seemed to be of the Goryeo race, entered the cage ring, where a 7-foot man with a buffed body and a scar over his chest was waiting for her with a grin on his face. He had a bracelet over his arm that was completely suppressing his mana.

There are a couple of men in suits, sitting in the VIP section and discussing something with looks of arrogance on their faces.

As the lady entered the cage with an identical anti-mana bracelet on her wrist and the cage was locked, the referee standing outside the cage announced, "The rules of this death match are the same. One, neither of you will remove the bracelet. Two, only one of you can come out alive."

"Wooooo"

Amid the eruption of the cheers, the man let out a smirk, "Hey, beauty, how do you want to die? Quickly or painfully?"

The lady replied calmly, "Dogs that bark loudly cannot bite."

"So, painfully it is," nodded the buffed guy.

As the referee blew the whistle, the man rushed at her. Just as he was about to give a punch to her chest, she skillfully evaded his punch and gave a knee strike to his abdomen. Strong as his physique was, he should have had only a little pain, but surprisingly, he spat out a mouthful of blood.

But that was just the start. In the next 30 seconds, she went on furiously giving a series of punches to his abdomen and back, followed by kicks to his thighs and forcing him to kneel before finishing with a powerful upper cut to his chin.

The guy never even got a chance to defend or counter strike his opponent, and he ended up getting knocked out.

Thud

As he fell to the floor and went unconscious, the girl placed her foot on his throat and turned her head to look at the middle-aged fellow in the suit, who was shocked by what he saw: "It is a death match, right?" Her words reached him as the arena went silent.

She then applied all her force into a stomp, crushing his neck and killing him on the spot without any mercy.

Amidst the silence from a large part of the crowd, she then left the cage without giving another glance to the corpse, walking to the VIP section and stopping when a few guards quickly surrounded the man in a suit.

"Mr. Petrov, your best bull is lying over there dead. As agreed, Tyumen is now the territory of Chernye Bury (Black Storms). You have 12 hours to vacate that place. After that, no single operative should be sighted within the city limits," said the woman.

At once, several guns pointed at her, Dmitri Petrov, the leader of the Neon Brotherhood, with his hands in his pockets, replied. "We only agreed on the wager of Tyumen. There was no agreement to vacate it. From now onwards, Tyumen is yours. But whether you can protect your territory entirely depends on your capability."

As the woman furrowed her brows, warning him whether he plans on fighting a war, before Dmitri gets to react, a voice came right from behind. "If the Neon Brotherhood fights a war, then they will be exterminated."

"Hmm?" "Hmm?"

Many eyes shift to the voice source.

The Goryeo woman's eyes widened as she spotted Sungjun, with Umbra and Tempest walking behind.

At the same time, the entire place became silent, and everyone was simply watching the scene from their seats.

Chapter 787: Earth 1712: The meeting of mafia lords

"Lo... Lord Pavel!" Dmitri's voice shook as he spoke aloud. Even his entire body trembled as Sungjun continued to walk. However, he didn't pay attention and walked directly toward the woman, who blinked in surprise before pulling him into a hug with a smile. "Oppa... What are you doing here?"

A brief pause later, she continued, her surprise turned into relief, "Heard that someone sabotaged your plane a while ago, and you have gone low-key ever since. A lot of rumors are spreading everywhere lately. Now that I see you, it looks like you gained something from misfortune. Your mana reserves expanded a lot."

Sungjun freed himself from the hug and looked at the lady, and smiled. "It's been a while, Ryu Seongha... But I'm not here to see my friend, though. I'm here to meet the Merchant of Death."

The rotors thumped above their heads, shaking the cabin as the chopper soared over the patchwork of city lights below. Seongha leaned back with her arms crossed, listening in silence as Sungjun explained his plan. The night wind slipped through a crack in the door, tugging at the strands of her hair.

When he paused, she tilted her head toward him. "So... why me, Oppa?" Her voice cut through the drone of the blades. "Pavel can flatten the Black Dragon Gang on his own. You don't need me."

Sungjun's lips curled into a faint, unreadable smile in response. He didn't answer right away. Instead, he leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees as if weighing how much to reveal. "It's not just you I need," he finally said. His tone was casual, almost teasing.

Seongha frowned, curiosity flickering in her eyes. "Not just me? Then what are you planning, Oppa?"

He met her stare, the corners of his mouth twitching upward again. "You'll see." That was all he gave her. No explanation, no hint. Just that mysterious smile that subtly irritated her. She clicked her tongue in annoyance and looked back out the window.

The chopper descended after a while, the estate sprawling beneath them like a miniature city—rows of lights tracing the outlines of tall walls, manicured courtyards, and modern villas. The landing pad was already occupied with two other helicopters. Sleek cars were lined up in the driveway with their engines still ticking from the long rides in.

This was one of Alexander's residences he inherited. For the public, it is the Estate of the Chairman of Royal Gold Group, but very seldom, only those in the higher social ladder know that this is where the Pakhan conducts most of its meetings. Whenever he does, the entire city will go on a lockdown in the name of a monster horde threat, the police will make sure the roads stay clear, all the media channels will be under heavy surveillance, making sure no one reports it, and those who dare will mysteriously disappear the next day.

Back to the present, staring at those all vehicles, Seongha blinked at the sight. "What's this? You didn't tell me you had guests."

Sungjun didn't even glance at her. "You'll know once we're inside."

The chopper touched down with a hiss, and the guards were already seen jogging forward in crisp black suits. They bowed slightly as Sungjun stepped out first, Seongha followed, pulling her jacket tighter against the chilly winds.

Inside the estate, the atmosphere shifted immediately. The polished marble floors reflected the glow of chandeliers, but what caught her attention wasn't the luxury—it was the gathering. Rows of men and women were seated around a massive hall. Gang leaders. Dons. Names that carried quite a lot of weight.

And then her gaze landed on the four figures standing in a neat line near the far side of the room. This made her steps freeze. "Tempest, Umbra, Grime, and Hydro... Four of the eight guardians are here? The matter should be more serious than simply Black Dragon." Her voice was barely a whisper.

Meanwhile, the crowd rose to their feet as he entered. Their eyes followed him as though he were the center of gravity.

Sungjun walked straight to the throne-like seat at the end of the hall and sat down with unhurried grace. He leaned back, one hand draped casually over the armrest with his eyes sweeping across the room.

"Sit," he said simply.

The crowd obeyed.

Seongha hesitated but found a chair near him. She stole a glance at Sungjun.

Meanwhile, Sungjun's eyes wandered across the nineteen warlords. He remembered four personally. Another five, he knew their faces. The rest—unknowns.

Nevertheless, he sat up straighter and folded his hands once on the armrest, and spoke in a low voice.

"I'll be direct." Sungjun didn't bother with any greetings. "Some of you already know what happened with the Black Dragon Gang. They stole our shipment. They killed men of the Winter Hands. And now they have the nerve to call us and ask for a ransom."

A big man with a hooked nose with his coat embroidered in a faded red scorpion, stood before the others and pointed a gloved finger at Sungjun. He spoke with a rasp, heavy accent. Viktor 'Skorpion' Morozov, the leader of Red Scorpion Gang, a rising don with significant influence in the underworld, announced, more statement than question. "Red Scorpion is always ready to take blood for you, Pakhan. If you need help, I can gather my boys from all over the world to, we—"

Sungjun's soft laugh of amusement interrupted his words. He didn't rise. He scoffed and shook his head once,

"Did you take me as weak lord who was asking for the help?" Sungjun said coldly. As the hall went quiet, Sungjun looked each of them in the eye, one by one. "We are going to war, Viktor," he said. "Not just against Black Dragon Gang. Every force that allies with them."

A broad-shouldered fellow near the front—his signet had a snarling wolf—pushed his chair back. Sergei Volkov of the Volkov Cartel, also known as the Casino King of Siberia, stood and spoke with a steady voice. "I apologize, Pakhan. If a war is coming to our doorstep, we will have no choice but to respond but escalating a

simple incident to war, we will need time to think about whether it is good for us or not." The words were meant to steady the room, to remind everyone that they should just think about their own and they aren't the servants of Pavel.

While his words caused a bit of disturbance in everyone's hearts, some were already thinking about defying the order. Sungjun calmly gazed at the others. He gave a few seconds of silence before opening his mouth.

"Listen carefully."

He spoke as if he were making the final judgment. "For decades, you people have been taking money, weapons, and the support of our personnel in order to establish or maintain dominance in your territories. In exchange, all you have done is stay loyal without switching sides when it suited you and listened to Pavel's rules and regulations, not crossing our bottom line either. Whether you did it out of fear or true loyalty, I don't care, but what you did so far wasn't enough."

As they silently stared at him, some tensed and some offended, Sungjun continued. "It's time you prove your worth to Pavel."

He leaned forward, palms flat on the arms of the throne as if to pin the words into the floor. "I intend to make a statement to the entire underworld: Pavel remains the strongest force here. Pavel is the King here. For that reason alone, I will not have Pavel enter the fight directly."

Someone hissed, surprised. Others exchanged looks.

Sungjun's tone shifted calmly once again. "We will fund this war. We will provide weapons, equipment, intel, and money. We will make sure you have everything—maps, logistics, safe houses. But you will be the ones who take back the RDX they stole. You will bring me the heads of those who thought to challenge us. Whatever spoils come from this war—territory, goods, cuts—will be distributed among you. Pavel will not take a cent from it."

He let that settle. The promise and the threat sat side by side, balanced like two weights.

A short, humorless bark broke out from a corner. Old men who had seen too many nights of shifting fortunes began to talk in low, quick bursts. Some shifted forward, hunger for the power showing in the lines around their eyes; spoils and expansion had a way of cutting through caution. Others folded their arms, measuring risk like a commodity.

"And those who aren't interested..." Sungjun added quietly, so that only the nearest could hear, but loud enough that the catch on the other side of the hall felt it like a draft. "I have an exit door prepared for you without any repercussions. If you are not worth to Pavel, then there is no use for you, for me. You may become an independent force and act on your own. But if you then think about joining an alliance with Pavel's enemies, we will directly take action against you. Just remember these words of mine... Unlike my late father, I won't hesitate to burn my own hand to burn down your entire house."

Chapter 788: Earth 1712: Sungjun's orders

Silence wrapped the hall like a cloak. No one spoke for a while; perhaps, they were either thinking or were really intimidated. But some were quite confused about what happened to this Pakhan of theirs. They felt like his personality had changed.

Viktor sat back down, face a hard mask. Sergei Volkov's lips thinned. One or two heads turned to the Guardians who stood like silent bodyguards. Each of them is considered an S-rank Hunter, and four of them in one room is just as dangerous as being surrounded by hundreds of monsters at once.

Seongha's stomach tightened. Never in the world did she expect her childhood friend to make such a move, using threats and leverage against his own allies. It was Boss-like. She couldn't help but see Sungjun in a new light.

It wasn't just her. Essentially, Alexander Han rarely showed his face to the other leaders and was always dependent on his guardians to handle the affairs. Even when doing things in person, he does it on video calls. And his way is always handling through technology, like hacking. So, just like others, everyone just assumed that he just didn't carry the aura of a gangster and was just trying his best to fill his father's shoes. After all, he inherited the title of Pakhan through family heritage, not his own efforts. Hence, the respect other warlords have for Alexander isn't that much. Atleast, in their hearts.

Now, no one could speak a single word properly, feeling immense pressure just through Sungjun's words and the way he was conducting himself. Little did they know Sungjun was actually more pressure than themselves. His heart was pounding quite a bit, but on the outside, he looked as calm as a leopard.

To push them further, he finished it off with a command. "We make a move in 5 days. You have that much time to prepare."

Seongha glanced around, seeing everyone's expressions. Clenching her fists, she drew a breath and stepped into it to grab the opportunity.

"Chernye Bury can handle it alone," she said, voice steady, instantly grabbing the attention. She didn't look for permission as she further said. "You don't need to drag everyone into this. And we also don't need any weapons, money, or tech. We will finish off this task by ourselves and give all the gains to Pavel. Instead, we only need Pakhan (you) to get my father out of Maximum Security Prison."

The air snapped at her announcement, the demand that followed. A man two rows back actually choked on his own intake. Sungjun's face went flat as he dug into Alexander's memory about her father. The former right hand of the Pakhan, his father. The one who was caught alive by the Special Forces of the Siberian Union (the federal organization that comprises 29 of the 32 countries of the Siberian Continent) and was sent to Maximum security Prison for life imprisonment for his role in stealing the Nuclear Missile Technology from the Union and selling it to the underworld.

"You want him freed from Maximum Security?" he asked in a low, snapping back to the present. "You know what's in that place, Seongha. The Anti-mana Rune Technology will render every hunter and monster useless. Even Missiles wouldn't work much against those prison walls, which were built with reinforced steel woven into the concrete. To do damage, we have to blow up the entire prison with our Atomics—if we go that route, we don't just kill the guards and the prisoners. We might not even be sure your father survives the blast."

Seongha met him straight on, looking serious. "Of course, I'm not stupid enough to use force. I want you to use your influence. You can get a Presidential pardon."

At that, Viktor Morozov's lips twitched. Sergei Volkov's jaw worked.

A woman in the second circle, her coat trimmed in black river embroidery, raised a hand. Irina Voronova of the Voronov Line spoke with a clipped accent and a smile that didn't reach her eyes, announcing. "Pardons won't cut it, Miss Ryu. Just because the Prison is in the Velmira Republic doesn't mean the country's

President can pardon someone lodged in Maximum for a life imprisonment. It is under the control of the union."

As if she expected that response, Seongha gave a nod, "I know," she said. "However, the Current President of the Union... well, he and Former Lord Pavel used to be close. For someone on death row, you would need a vote among the countries in an assembly, but my father was facing a life imprisonment sentence, who had already served for more than 12 years. The Union's President can give a pardon."

Sungjun's eyes went dark at that explanation. He stared at her for a few seconds in silence, but in the end, he replied. "I never used my father's name to get what I wanted, Seongha, not even when he was alive." He folded his hands with a stern face. But a moment later, he added when Seongha's face fell. "But your father will come out of that prison. That I promise."

Shock slid sideways into the hall. Seongha felt the floor tilt a fraction. She had half-expected him to refuse. She had not expected him to agree.

However, Sungjun wasn't done yet. He further said, "And you don't have to do it all on your own. Black Dragon falls under your cloak, Seongha. It's your consignment. You and Chernye Bury take them down."

Viktor clicked his tongue in disapproval. Sergei crossed his arms like a man folding a map away. His thoughts were unreadable. Irina gave a slow clap that could have been appreciation or mockery; it landed somewhere between both.

Sungjun saw some reactions and got up. As the others followed suit, he said. "Just like Miss Ryu has her own demand, if you have a demand, one that you can forgo the rewards I promised earlier, you may speak up right away or take your time before the signal of the war is given. For now, just enjoy your stay here. I'm holding the banquet in the evening. Those who are interested may stay in the guest rooms they were assigned."

Silence stretched thin even after Sungjun walked away, leaving them to their own devices.

A few days later, Xihu District, Hangzhou City;

A large parcel arrived at the penthouse where Tianzhu and his niece were staying.

It was massive, nearly the size of a small refrigerator, and securely packaged in industrial-grade wrapping. Tianzhu didn't need to check the sender. He already knew what it was.

Setting his coffee down on the marble countertop, he grabbed a utility knife and carefully sliced through the thick tape.

As the final layer peeled away, a sleek, completely assembled humanoid robotic assistant stood inside the crate, its glossy exterior reflecting the soft morning light.

"Looks completely undamaged. Great, I was worried for nothing."

With a small smirk, Tianzhu powered it on. A faint hum filled the air as the robot's systems booted up, its LED interface flickering to life.

"Amy, activate," Tianzhu murmured.

The robot's synthetic eyes blinked, and it straightened its posture before responding in a smooth, feminine robotic voice.

"System online. Awaiting commands, Master Qin."

Tianzhu glanced towards the staircase leading to Vera's room. He lowered his voice and gave the command.

"Go wake Vera up."

Amy nodded mechanically and turned, her smooth steps gliding up the stairs with eerie precision. Tianzhu followed slowly behind, hands in his pockets, watching as the robot approached Vera's bed.

The girl was still curled up under her blanket, her hair spilling across the silk pillow. Ava leaned slightly forward and spoke in her usual tone.

"Young Miss, wake up. It's morning time."

Vera groggily groaned, rolling over. "Not now, Amy..." she mumbled, half-asleep.

Then, suddenly, her eyes snapped open.

"AMY?!"

She shot upright, wide-eyed, as she took in the sight of the robotic assistant standing before her.

From the doorway, Tianzhu grinned. "Surprise."

Vera practically launched out of bed, wrapping her arms around the robot in pure excitement. "Amy! You're really here!"

The AI assistant's head tilted slightly before responding. "It has been a while, Young Miss."

Tianzhu leaned against the doorframe, watching his daughter's joy with a satisfied smile. Taking a sip, he mumbled. "Okay, with Amy here to look after Vera, I'm finally ready to work. I wonder when Jiejie has her next project."

A couple of days later;

Tianzhu left his daughter at the house and joined Xueli as she was picked up by her manager, as a prestigious project finally fell into her lap.

The sleek black SUV was waiting at the entrance. Inside sat a man in his late thirties, his sharp suit and neatly styled hair presenting a polished image.

Xueli smiled and gestured towards Tianzhu. "Xiao Zhu, this is my manager, Li Jingmin."

Jingmin nodded politely, offering a handshake. Tianzhu took it with a firm grip. "Pleasure to meet you," Jingmin said smoothly. However, in his mind, he couldn't help but wonder who this young man was.

Chapter 789: Earth 1712: Tianzhu becomes a manager?

On the other hand, Tianzhu barely acknowledged the greeting, seeing that this guy was not an awakener.

Xueli then introduced him. "And this is my younger brother, Qin Tianzhu."

Jingmin blinked in surprise. "Younger brother? I thought you only had two elder brothers."

"Stepbrothers." She corrected him but didn't elaborate on Tianzhu's case. "I didn't tell the company. No one needs to know for now."

Jingmin raised an eyebrow, intrigued but not pressing further.

"As I have mentioned on the phone, he'll be your assistant from today onwards, a road manager alongside Yuna," she continued. "Teach him everything he needs to know."

Jingmin exhaled sharply, shaking his head with a small chuckle. "Well, that's unexpected." He studied Tianzhu for a moment before commenting, "Tianzhu, you have great looks. Photojournalists might not care much if it is a good-looking female manager accompanying an actress, but male managers are different. They will definitely take an interest in who this good-looking manager is, all in the search for a scoop. Not to mention, Ms. Xueli is an A-listed actress. In this era, it's easy for people to dig into your background. So, I don't think it can be hidden for long. And when they find out you were working for your sister, some might look down on you. Are you okay with it? If you wish, I can recommend you to another celebrity."

Xueli glanced at Tianzhu, her expression turning serious as if she suddenly realized the risk. "He's right. If you don't want any exposure, you'll need to wear a mask and a hat at all times. No sunglasses, though, especially when you were with me. It'll come across as rude, and my fans will unnecessarily bash you on the internet for no reason. Prefer wearing fake nerd glasses for aesthetic purposes."

"It's not a problem, Jiejie... Teacher Jiang..." Tianzhu corrected his tone in the end, already going into the character. He truly has no intention to grab attention. For now, all he wanted to do was to stay near his sister to gain a foothold in the Entertainment Industry, so that it could become useful for his niece.

After a while, Jingmin let out another chuckle and started the car. "Alright, let's get going."

Together, they went to Vesta Entertainment, Xueli's agency, located in Genesis Entertainment Town.

Genesis Entertainment Town is owned by a private entity of Genesis Corp, a global investing firm worth over 300 billion credits, headquartered in Lin'an City, that majorly invests in entertainment, media, technological, and digital platforms. Surprisingly, it has nothing to do with Hunters or their world despite its heavy influence and high net worth.

The moment they stepped on the third floor of the agency, the air buzzed with the energy of assistants rushing about, directors discussing upcoming projects, and actors going through their scripts. Tianzhu almost felt dizzy, watching the chaos. For someone like him, who enjoyed the peace of being a store owner, it was slightly overwhelming. Not to mention, his fighting skills are practically useless here, other than to make threats. He took deep breaths to calm his nerves.

Meanwhile, the staff member, as if waiting for the actress, led them directly to a meeting with Song Haoxi, a famed director known for his critically acclaimed Chinese historical epics.

He was in the middle of pre-production for his upcoming film, *The Phoenix Throne*.

"Hello, Mr. Haoxi..." "It's been a while, Ms. Xueli." "How long has it been? Three years, right?" "The last time we met personally on the set of 'How do you do?' Yeah, it was a box office bomb, but it ended up in the top 10 trending movies. Anyway, please sit. Let's talk about the project I want you in."

Xueli sat across from him, listening intently as he explained the role he had in mind for her. "Empress Wu," Haoxi said, tapping on his script, "is known to be the only female monarch in the history of Zhonggou, the founder of the Zhou Dynasty..."

As the director went on speaking about the glorious history of Empress Wu, Xueli became more interested in the character.

Tianzhu, standing silently behind her, observed the interaction like a subordinate. But in reality, he was in deep thought. "A movie shoot will last for months, if not a year. And since she is the lead character, she will not have much time to do other projects either way. So, I will not have much work to do, and I could still stay closer to Jiejie. That's a good thing, I guess. Now, for the kids, I can slowly guide Vera into this industry. So, I'm not worried about her. But, Theo... that brat is the most troublesome. He was adamant about staying back at Kitez and intending to complete his graduation there, unlike Vera, who is open to completing her graduation here. Even though Jack was paying attention to him, he couldn't keep an eye on that brat 24/7. I need to quickly sell off my properties and forcefully bring him here."

Meanwhile, the director continued to explain the concept and the history of Empress Wu for the next twenty minutes.

Once he was done and left the area, stating that he needed to go for auditions for various roles, Manager Jingmin couldn't help but congratulate Xueli on securing the role.

He remarked. "Teacher Jiang, Director Haoxi's movies always performed exceptionally well, with the past two films in the franchise selling at least 10 million tickets each." Xueli, however, had a calm smile as if she had expected that much and responded, "I guess I'm lucky."

Then, turning to Tianzhu, she instructed, "Xiao Zhu, follow Jingmin to the CEO's office. With my recommendation, you'll definitely get the job."

Tianzhu smiled with a slight nod. "Thanks," he said before following the manager out.

As they walked together, Manager Jingmin offered some words of caution, "Tianzhu, before we go, I want to remind you of something."

"Hmm? What is it?"

"The CEO has a pretty erratic personality. He might approve you because of Teacher Jiang's recommendation, but every time something goes wrong, he'll remind you that you got the job because of her. He doesn't hesitate to blame employees' qualifications for any mistake. And... he has a short temper. If you argue with him, he won't care if others are around. He'll scold you in front of everyone." The manager explained.

Tianzhu listened carefully before smiling. "Then don't tell him I'm Jiang Xueli's brother. Just say that she recommended me and leave the rest to me."

"Eh?" Jingmin was visibly surprised but nodded in understanding. "Alright."

Soon, they arrived at the CEO's office. The secretary sitting at her desk outside the office looked up and informed them, "CEO Tang is currently in a virtual meeting. Please wait."

As they sat down, Jingmin leaned in and whispered, "There's no meeting. CEO Tang just likes making employees wait on purpose."

Tianzhu simply nodded, understanding this CEO's sadistic personality. He already knew how to deal with people like him.

He waited in patient silence for twenty minutes and did nothing but shut his eyes

And then finally, the secretary looked up and said, "You may go inside now."

They nodded and rose from their seats. As they stepped inside, a man appeared in Tianzhu's sight, sitting at his desk. He seemed like a man in his 50s with a well-groomed, sharp appearance. He has short, dark hair, styled neatly, and a somewhat serious expression.

Manager Jingmin greeted the CEO with a deep bow and a goofy grin, while Tianzhu offered only a slight bow as if he didn't acknowledge the latter's status. CEO Tang Wenhao's eyes flicked between them, his frown only deepening further. "What is it?"

Manager Jingmin cleared his throat. "Sir, this is Qin Tianzhu. He comes recommended by Ms. Xueli as a road manager."

The CEO's frown deepened even further, his gaze studying Tianzhu. He leaned back in his chair but didn't say a word for a moment, regarding his looks, which certainly have quality, but his age is not young. Then, exhaling sharply, he gestured toward Tianzhu. "Let's hear it from you, Qin Tianzhu. What are your qualifications? Experience?"

Tianzhu met his gaze without hesitation. "None. Zero experience in this field," he said plainly. "Before this, I was a store owner."

A flicker of surprise crossed the CEO's face, but he masked it quickly. His fingers drummed against the polished desk as he scoffed. "A store owner wants to become a road manager, and that too, in his 30s? Xueli

certainly has quite a humor..." He narrowed his eyes. "Alright, let's go with that. Why the sudden career change? Did you go bankrupt or something?"

Tianzhu remained composed. "Not really. My daughter wants to be an idol, and I just want to stay by her side to support her career and protect her."

As a beat of silence passed, Jingmin turned to Tianzhu, his expression a mix of confusion and intrigue. No matter how he tries to process it, Tianzhu's reasoning sounds absurd to him.

The CEO, meanwhile, stared at Tianzhu in silence. His gaze carried seriousness, and his legs were on the desk.

Chapter 790: Earth 1712: Misunderstandings Cleared

Meanwhile, Tianzhu felt something strike his mind. He immediately recognized the art of Intimidation. The mental ability wasn't that common, but it wasn't unique either. He had experience with it back in his days. Hence, he swiftly pushed away the foreign threads of aura that were attacking his brain, nullifying the skill in almost an instant.

As Tianzhu calmly stared at the CEO as if he were waiting for the answer, Tang Wenhao's eyes widened for a moment before he opened his mouth. "Jingmin, leave us alone for a minute."

Jingmin hesitated, taken aback. CEO Tang raised an eyebrow, waving a dismissive hand. "Get out," he ordered.

Jingmin hesitated for only a second before nodding and stepping out of the room, closing the door behind him.

As the heavy office door clicked shut behind, an uneasy silence settled in the room. CEO Tang folded his arms, watching Tianzhu with a scowl of irritation for a moment. Leaving his desk, he walked forward to reach him, looking at him. "Who are you, bastrd... My intimidation mental skill was powerful enough to attack even a B-rank Hunter. But it didn't do anything against you. And someone like you is a store owner? Do you expect me to believe it?"

Tianzhu calmly stared back at him in silence.

"Answer me, you bastrd..." He lunged forward, ready to slap him. However, Tianzhu caught his arm in time.

"You dare to sto..." CEO Tang's face turned from anger to pain in the next instant, and a painful scream escaped him. Tianzhu reacted by twisting his arm and pushing his head to bang it on the CEO's own desk. "Shut up... you prick..."

"You, lea... Argh..."

Tianzhu then spoke. "Now, listen carefully. The next time you try to act like this, I'll take off your hand, understand?"

Knowing very well that he wouldn't be convinced that easily, Tianzhu proceeded to summon vines, which erupted from his body, but tied the CEO tightly like a cocoon. Once his entire body up to his mouth was sealed, Tianzhu freed him at last and faced him.

Umpffff

The CEO's eyes welled up in fear, his entire body trembling beneath those vines. Tianzhu didn't say anything but smiled.

After a while;

Tianzhu was seen exiting the door calmly.

In the hallway, Manager Jingmin stood waiting, a puzzled look on his face. "How did it go?"

Tianzhu gave a small smirk. "I got the job."

The manager blinked, then laughed, shaking his head in disbelief. "Well, that was fast. What did you do that changed CEO-nim's mind? Did you reveal who you are?"

Tianzhu mysteriously smiled. "Something along the lines." He left it to Jingmin's imagination.

Together, they walked down the corridor, heading back to Sae-ri's side.

Meanwhile, inside the office, CEO Tang, heavily sweating from top to bottom, sat on the couch and was taking heavy breaths.

"This man... he is dangerous..." His eyes filled with horror.

A couple of minutes later, he hurriedly picked up the phone, dialing a number.

The call was soon connected to someone.

"Hey"

"Mr. Yang... Are you busy?"

"No, I was just lazing around the home. What is it?"

"You have connections with some dark guilds, right? I need you to contact one of them."

"Oh? How much is the reward?"

"100,000 Credits to test his strength. They can then decide on the price."

"100k just to test one's strength. The Target that annoyed must be quite strong. Anyway, fine... Your work will be completed in a week or two."

"Good."

Disconnecting the call, the CEO massaged his arm and growled. "How dare he assault me... Me... Tang Wenhao..."

Meanwhile, Tianzhu and Jingmin continued to walk across the hallway. Soon, they returned to Xueli's side, finding her engaged in conversation with a celebrity he instantly recognized from the hotel. "Eh? She is..."

Tianzhu met the same person he had encountered at the hotel a while ago. It was the same celebrity, Lee Hye-rin, a former idol turned actress, who was voted as the nation's crush twice. Her voice carried the practiced warmth of someone used to charm an audience.

Hye-rin turned at the sound of approaching footsteps, her gaze flickering past Manager Jingmin before landing on Tianzhu. Her brows furrowed for a moment. "This guy," she murmured, recognizing him in one look.

But before she could say more, Xueli smoothly stepped in, "He's my New road manager. The management brought him in to ease Jingmin-ssi's workload. You see, I have too many projects lined up, this upcoming year."

Jingmin opened his mouth as if to correct her, but caught Xueli's pointed look and instead flashed an easygoing smile, playing along. "Teacher Jiang had a busy year ahead. I'm afraid Yuna and I won't be able to handle it, just the two of us."

Hye-rin gave a tight, polite smile, though her eyes hadn't left Tianzhu. "Ah, I see."

Tianzhu gave a subtle nod. "Nice to meet you." His voice was smooth, but he neither offered his hand nor bowed like a typical road manager. Hye-rin, who already held a negative impression of Tianzhu, felt somewhat disrespected by his too casual greeting.

The four of them moved through the corridors. Hye-rin fell into step beside Xueli, chatting like nothing had changed, while Tianzhu and Jingmin kept to the rear. But Tianzhu could feel it—the occasional glances from Hye-rin. He was slightly puzzled but didn't care much about it.

Tianzhu wasn't the only one who felt it. Xueli didn't miss the way Hye-rin flicked toward him now and then. Something tells her that it wasn't the usual kind of curiosity one has, either.

Hence, as they reached the elevator, only the two actresses got into it at Xueli's insistence, leaving the managers to stay behind and follow them.

Once the elevator moved down, Xueli faced Hye-rin. "Hye-rin, out with it."

"Eh? What do you mean?" Hye-rin was taken aback.

"About my manager, Qin Tianzhu."

"What about him?" As Hye-rin feigned ignorance, Xueli spoke. "I notice you are stealing glances at him. I know that he is handsome, but he isn't that handsome that you will have to do that publicly. It was so obvious."

"Ah, no. It is not like that, Unnie," Hye-rin hurriedly waved her hands, her ears slightly reddening in embarrassment. Taking a breath, she said, her voice dipping. "Unnie... I didn't want to say anything, but I think I saw that guy at the Four Seasons hotel last month. He was sharing a room with an adolescent female. And they were... really affectionate, like a couple. It was a bit disturbing..."

Xueli arched an eyebrow but stayed calm. "Adolescent?"

"I confronted the hotel staff about it, but they say that they cannot reveal anything due to their rules," Hye-rin muttered. "And honestly, if someone recorded me doing such things and it ended up being my mistake, it'd be a scandal waiting to explode."

"Hmm..." Xueli's lips curled up as she heard her. She swiftly pulled out her phone from her bag and opened her photo gallery. "You mean... this girl?"

Hye-rin took one look and gasped. "Yes! That's the one."

Xueli burst into laughter, catching the eyes of the others in the elevator. "That's his niece, dummy."

"Wait. What?"

"She is his daughter," Xueli repeated.

"But he looks so young." Hye-rin blinked. "Stepdaughter?" She wondered aloud.

"Adopted daughter. She was his niece. Also, he isn't that young either." Xueli said, letting out a chuckle.

Hye-rin's mouth opened and closed. "He has a daughter that big?! How old is he, anyway?"

Xueli looked thoughtful. "Seven years older than you, I think?"

"39?" Hye-rin's eyes widened. Suddenly, her ears reddened deeply as a few things came back to her. "Sht, I misunderstood and came to wrong conclusions." She slapped her forehead.

Xueli then leaned to the side, whispering in her ear. "Also, this is confidential information. So, keep it yourself. We actually knew each other, and it was me who recommended him for this job. Putting his own reasoning aside, the reason I'm keeping him close is to look for the bride."

"Bride?" Hye-rin blinked.

Xueli nodded, letting out a smile. "He is single right now, and his daughter requested me to find someone for him in my social circle, feeling that he was wasting away his youth. Honestly, I agree with her, too. I mean, he couldn't date anyone properly for the past two decades as he had to raise his daughter and his son, all alone. Now that she has grown up, he should move on with his life. So, I intend to set him up with someone if he doesn't find one."

Ting

The elevator opened, and both of them walked out, going through the parking lot.

Soon, Tianzhu and Jingmin also caught up to them. Hye-rin wanted to apologize, but since all of her misunderstandings never came out of her head, she felt too embarrassed to admit it. As a result, she acted as if he were a stranger and a road manager with whom she had no topics to talk.

Hye-rin and Xueli slipped into the backseat, continuing to chat comfortably about various things, many of which were insider gossip.