

The Beauty 1051

Chapter 1051 The Trouble with Too Much Charm

"Where's Zhu Hong? Have you found where he is?"

"Not yet," Hu Fei replied. "That day after Zhu Hong and Song Mingzhe escaped, I had people tracking them, but Zhu Hong is too cunning, and with Song Mingzhe by his side, our movements were quickly exposed."

Ling Chen thought for a moment and said, "Deploy more people for a comprehensive search of East Sea City. Zhu Hong and Chen Quan are definitely still in the city. Now that Lin Guodong's threat has been eliminated, it's time to take action against them."

"Don't worry, I've already started investigating," Hu Fei said mysteriously, leaving some suspense. "The lead I'm chasing this time is quite unusual; there might be some special findings."

Ling Chen nodded without asking further. Hu Fei might have his shortcomings, but his ability to get things done is indisputable, and he has plenty of crafty ideas. Anything he takes charge of usually doesn't face any problems.

"Fatty, you'll need to pay more attention to matters at the base with Boss Tang. I won't have much time to help manage things."

Hearing this, Hu Fei asked in confusion, "Why? Are you planning to leave East Sea City?"

"Not really. I spoke with Lin Guodong last time. Although the God Organization has been dealt with, the mastermind is still at large."

"Didn't you make a deal with the government? The Ling Family matters are to be handled by the government, so why are you still worrying about all this?"

Ling Chen sighed lightly and said, "The Ling Family issues are not as simple as you think. I talked a lot with Lin Guodong that day; there are too many secrets about the Ling Family, which the government

can't solve. It has to be handled by our own Ling Family members. If I'm not mistaken, it won't be long before someone approaches me."

Hu Fei said helplessly, "The Ling Family always has so much drama. Fine, since that's the case, I won't bother asking. Come, let's drink!"

After a few bottles of Erguotou, Ling Chen felt dizzy. After sending Hu Fei away, he fell onto the bed and soon drifted to sleep.

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In the blink of an eye, half a month passed again.

During this time, Ling Chen stayed home, occasionally taking a stroll to the base, and rarely went out. After so long, the matter between him and Zhu Xiaozhu gradually faded, and few people mentioned it anymore.

"Mom, I have an appointment tonight, you all go ahead and eat."

After greeting Yang Qingling, Ling Chen picked up his car keys and walked out of the villa alone.

Getting in the car, Ling Chen activated the car navigation and drove straight to his destination. Half an hour later, he arrived at a restaurant entrance.

Led by the waiter, Ling Chen entered a private room on the second floor. Upon opening the door, he saw a bright and spacious private room with several people seated: Jiang Hao, Nanrong Hao, Hu Fei, Tang Guolun, Jiang Yunkai, Bai Huanjun, and Zhao Zhengxiong.

"Chen, you're finally here, everyone has been waiting for you," Jiang Hao said with a smile, standing up and pulling out a chair for Ling Chen.

After taking his seat, Ling Chen glanced at the crowd and asked, "What's the occasion today, inviting me for a meal."

"Chen, the way you say it, can't we invite you for a meal if there's no occasion?" Zhao Zhengxiong laughed. "It's just that it's been a while since the brothers gathered, so tonight I'm hosting, inviting everyone to have a meal together, and then later we can have some fun."

Hearing Zhao Zhengxiong mention 'fun', everyone's eyes lit up, joking, "Xiong, among all us brothers, you're the wealthiest. Tell us, where are you planning to take us for fun?"

"Hey! That's not the right way to say it; the wealthiest should be Chen," Zhao Zhengxiong quickly retorted, waving it off.

Seeing everyone look at him, Ling Chen spread his hands and said, "Okay, don't look at me; I'll cover the bill tonight, all right? After dinner, you can go wherever you want for fun."

Jiang Hao chimed in, "I heard there's a new entertainment center opened in Central District, very high-end. Why don't we go there tonight?"

"Great!" Nanrong Hao agreed, "I've heard that entertainment center is pretty good, but I've never had the time to visit. It's rare for all the brothers to be here, so why not check it out together?"

"Entertainment center?" Ling Chen glanced at Zhao Zhengxiong and asked, "Xiong, don't tell me it's yours?" Such entertainment and leisure industries have always been Zhao Zhengxiong's main business, which is why Ling Chen asked.

Zhao Zhengxiong quickly waved it off, "It's not mine; I don't have that much idle money. As far as I know, the investment in that entertainment center is at least a few hundred million; even if you sell me, it wouldn't be that much."

"Who's the owner then?"

"No idea," everyone said, shaking their heads.

"You guys don't know?" Ling Chen asked curiously, "The underground forces in East Sea City are under your control. If someone were to run an entertainment business here, they should have checked with you guys first."

"Chen, that's not wrong, but we really don't know who owns that entertainment center, and no one has contacted us," Jiang Hao said. "Those who dare to open such venues on our turf without paying their respects are quite bold. During its renovation, I sent people to inquire, but they showed a permit, saying the government had approved its construction. Later, I originally planned to hassle them, but they chose to call the police directly, and the one handling it was Officer Xia. Chen, I couldn't just ignore Officer Xia's standing, so I had to call our people back."

"There's such a thing?" Ling Chen chuckled. The owner of that entertainment center is either really clueless or has strong backing.

Jiang Hao and the others are local power players; if that owner wants to do business, they should at least go to Jiang Hao and pay respects with a token gift. Normally, any entertainment business must maintain good relationships with both official and underground factions to ensure smooth operations.

The owner must have significant backing to invest hundreds of millions. Thinking of this, Ling Chen became intrigued.

Given how idle things have been recently, he thought it might be interesting to check it out and understand the situation.

"Haozi, tell them to start serving the dishes. After we eat, let's visit that entertainment center."

After the feast, it was already 8:30 PM, just as nightlife was beginning.

On the way to the entertainment center, Ling Chen made sure to ride in the same car as Nanrong Hao.

"Haozi, how's your sister doing lately? Is she okay?"

Nanrong Hao grinned and said, "Chen, I knew you cared about my sister. Don't worry; she's fine. She goes to work and comes back home punctually every day, and during her days off, she just reads at home. Before coming over, I visited her; she seemed to be in a good mood."

"So... did she ask about me?"

"No. I tried steering the conversation towards you a few times, but she avoided it each time, so there wasn't much I could do. Chen, don't worry too much; I know my sister well. She'll be fine after some time."

"Forget it! Trusting you is less reliable than trusting myself."

As they spoke, Nanrong Hao slowly pulled the car over to the roadside and pointed to a tall building in the distance, "Chen, we're here!"

Chapter 1052 - 1059: Tianyu (1)

The full name of this newly opened entertainment center is Tianyu Leisure Club, and it has a total of six floors, each offering different leisure and entertainment activities.

Getting out of the car, Ling Chen followed Nanrong Hao and the group to the outside of Tianyu Leisure Club. Looking up, they saw the club was luxuriously decorated, clearly designed to create a high-consumption venue. The entire building was wrapped in neon lights, forming a dazzling sign that could be clearly seen from hundreds of meters away.

Since it was a newly opened and high-end club, its business was extremely booming. As an internationally famous and developed city, East Sea City never lacked wealthy people. At the moment, the outdoor parking lot of Tianyu Leisure Club was full of cars, with the lowest value being over six hundred thousand, and millions-worth of luxury cars could be seen everywhere.

Ling Chen and the group arrived at the entrance, where a youthful and pretty waitress, wearing slightly revealing clothes, immediately greeted them with a sweet smile and asked, "Are you all together?"

Zhao Zhengxiong responded, "Do you have a slightly larger private room?"

"Yes, I wonder what activities you gentlemen are interested in? We have many leisure activities here. This must be your first time here, shall I introduce a bit for you?"

After listening to the waitress's introduction, Ling Chen had a general understanding of the club. Tianyu Leisure Club had six floors, each offering different entertainment activities. The first floor was a nightclub, the second floor had KTV, the third floor was a dance hall, the fourth floor a foot spa, and the fifth floor was a seafood restaurant for late-night snacks. When the waitress talked about the sixth floor, her eyes showed a meaningful smile. Any man would understand that look.

"Gentlemen, the sixth floor is the real 'Heavenly World,' and it's the most expensive in the club. Where would you like to go? If needed, I can accompany you throughout."

Hearing this, Jiang Hao couldn't help but tease, "Accompany throughout? Does that mean you can satisfy whatever I want to do?"

The waitress gave Jiang Hao a playful glance and said coquettishly, "I'm just an employee. Our service principle is customer first. If the boss has any requests, I'll try my best to fulfill them."

"Alright, alright!" Jiang Hao laughed with lustful eyes. If not for the others around, he might have already pounced on the beauty.

"Jiang Hao, don't embarrass us. You fancy anything of this caliber?" Hu Fei mocked from the side.

"Alright everyone, stop wasting time at the door, let's go to the sixth floor," Zhao Zhengxiong directly ordered. "Anyway, Chen's treating tonight, don't hold back, go for the most expensive."

"Haha! Brother Xiong is right, that's how I feel too."

Seeing Ling Chen and the group heading to the sixth floor, the waitress felt overjoyed inside. Bringing a few bosses to the sixth floor would earn her a significant tip. She quickly replied, "Gentlemen, please follow me."

Taking the elevator to the sixth floor, as soon as they entered, Ling Chen immediately saw over twenty beautiful women with tall and attractive figures standing on both sides of the corridor. Not exactly one in ten thousand, but at least one in a hundred, with perfectly applied makeup, absolute beauties.

Faced with the enthusiastic greetings and receptions from these beauties, Zhao Zhengxiong, Jiang Hao, and Nanrong Hao's eyes were wide open, almost drooling.

"Tsk tsk!" Nanrong Hao nudged Ling Chen's arm, speaking in a low voice, "Chen, the quality at this leisure club is really not bad. I guess you can't find such good ones in the whole of East Sea City."

Ling Chen gave Nanrong Hao a glare and quietly warned, "You better take it easy."

Walking past the beauties on both sides of the corridor, the group, led by the waitress, went directly to a private room.

Calling it a private room, it was more like a small bar spanning over two hundred square meters, including a bar counter, KTV sound system, dance floor, billiards table, and massage chairs, almost incorporating all the fun of the entire building.

"Gentlemen, when you came in earlier, did you spot any girl you fancy? If you did, I can call her over for you. If not, that's alright; we have other choices that will surely satisfy you."

Nanrong Hao excitedly asked, "Are there even better ones?"

The waitress smiled slightly and picked up a remote, pressing a button. Suddenly, the TV screen displayed hundreds of pictures, each depicting a beauty.

"Gentlemen, these are the beauties from our club. If any of you fancy one, just select the number and press confirm, and they'll be with you shortly." Saying this, she handed the remote to Nanrong Hao.

Looking at the pictures on the TV screen, Nanrong Hao's eyes lit up as he eagerly browsed, choosing his favorite one.

"Beauty." Zhao Zhengxiong, looking at the waitress, smiled and asked, "What services do the beauties here provide?"

The waitress replied with a smile, "Boss, as I mentioned, our club's principle is customer satisfaction. So, just enjoy to your heart's content."

Hearing this, Zhao Zhengxiong gave a knowing smile and asked no more.

"If you gentlemen don't have any other requests, I'll be off. If there's anything, just ring the bell, and we'll come right over." With that, the waitress turned and left the private room.

Once the waitress left, the men immediately reverted to their wolfish nature, crowding around the TV, eagerly searching for beauties.

"This one... Haozi, I want this one, quickly press confirm for me."

"Fatty, you get lost, I saw this chick first, go find another," Tang Guolun unceremoniously said in front of the beauties.

Watching them scramble, Ling Chen helplessly smiled and said, "I say, can't you all be more reserved? Anyone would think you haven't seen women for ages."

"Chen, since you're treating tonight, why not pick one first?" Zhao Zhengxiong jokingly suggested.

Ling Chen waved his hand and said, "No thanks! I'm not interested."

Nanrong Hao laughed mischievously, "Even if you gave Chen a few guts now, he wouldn't dare to pick a beauty."

Hearing this, everyone understood Nanrong Hao's meaning and decided not to persuade Ling Chen any further. Before long, a knocking sound came from outside the private room. As the door opened, tall, lightly dressed, and stylishly adorned beauties entered one after another.

Ling Chen glanced around, seeing over twenty beauties, a truly dizzying sight.

These guys really went all out, calling over so many beauties, and one could wonder if they had enough stamina.

Nanrong Hao stood aside, counted carefully, and curiously asked, "Why are there only twenty-one, isn't there one more?"

Chapter 1053 - 1060: Tianyu (Part 2)

"That's right!" Jiang Yunkai chimed in, "We've got twenty-two, why are we still missing one? Oh, right! The most beautiful one isn't here."

"Hey, what's going on?" Nanrong Hao asked the beauties who arrived first.

The group of beauties looked at each other, also unsure of what was happening. Seeing this, Ling Chen spoke up, "You guys, aren't so many beauties enough? Missing one or two doesn't matter."

"That's not acceptable." Jiang Hao immediately rejected, "We finally found a rare gem and absolutely can't let it go easily. Haozi, call the waiter and find out what's going on."

Pressing the bell inside the private room, within a minute, the waiter in charge of reception appeared before them.

Upon learning the situation, the waiter immediately said, "Please wait a moment, sirs. I'll find out right away." With that, the waiter hurried out without delay.

Minutes passed, and the waiter finally returned. Looking at all the bosses present, the waiter apologetically said, "Gentlemen, I'm truly sorry, number seventy-six is already entertaining a guest. How about you find another one?"

Hearing this, Hu Fei unhappily shouted, "We clearly reserved her first, why let her entertain other guests? I don't care. Get that beauty over here immediately. If you can't decide, call your manager to talk."

"Well..." the waiter said, embarrassed, "Sir, please try to understand."

"Hey! Beauties, it's not that we're intentionally giving you a hard time. The rules were set by you. We followed the rules to choose, and other guests took her away. Isn't that your responsibility?"

"This..."

"Enough!" Zhao Zhengxiong impatiently said, "Forget this and that, if you can't make the decision, then call your manager."

Soon, a man in his thirties walked in, accompanied by the waiter. Seeing Ling Chen and others, he smiled and said, "Gentlemen, I'm Li Yan, the manager on the sixth floor. I understand the situation, and I sincerely apologize. This was our mistake. How about... a fifty percent discount on tonight's expenses? What do you think?"

"Not good enough." Jiang Hao rudely rejected, "Do we look like people short of money? Let me tell you, this isn't a money issue, it's a matter of principle. Since you've set the rules, you should be responsible to your guests. If you can't even do that, you shouldn't be in business."

"Manager Li, we're not trying to make things difficult for you. If you can't get that beauty here, we'll ask for her ourselves," Jiang Yunkai chimed in.

Hearing this, Li Yan hurriedly said, "No, please don't, gentlemen, we're just workers too, please show some mercy. How about this, tonight's expenses are on the house."

"Manager Li, as my brothers said earlier, this isn't a money issue."

The voice came; everyone turned their attention to Ling Chen. Ling Chen stood up from the sofa and tossed a bank card on the coffee table, casually saying, "There's over two million there, more than enough for tonight. I'll give you one minute to bring that beauty over. If you can't, we'll handle it ourselves."

Ling Chen felt there was no need to make a big deal out of such a small matter, but seeing Jiang Hao's actions earlier, he understood immediately. Jiang Hao and the others weren't being petty; they were deliberately causing trouble. After all, who are Jiang Hao and the others? They are the unchallenged rulers of East Sea City's underground scene. This leisure club opened without notifying them, clearly not taking them seriously.

Moreover, Jiang Hao was also testing the waters to see what kind of person the owner of this leisure club was.

Seeing Ling Chen's firm tone, Li Yan was momentarily taken aback, and his expression became a bit unpleasant.

"Gentlemen, we're open for business, but please, restrain yourselves, don't cause unnecessary trouble." Li Yan's smile vanished, replaced by a cold demeanor.

"A threat?" Zhao Zhengxiong sneered, asking, "Manager Li, can I take that as a threat?" Not waiting for Li Yan to reply, Zhao Zhengxiong pointed at Nanrong Hao and others, with a forced smile, said, "Manager Li, ask my brothers here if any of them are afraid of threats. We intended to settle this peacefully, but since you've spoken, if we don't show some attitude, how can we keep our standing in East Sea City? Come on, let's see which jerk dared to take our woman."

With that, Zhao Zhengxiong led Jiang Hao and the others straight out of the room.

"No!" Seeing the situation turn bad, Li Yan hurried to block their path. However, how could a woman stop people like Jiang Hao? Jiang Yunkai casually shoved her aside, causing Li Yan to lose her balance and fall onto the sofa.

Watching Zhao Zhengxiong and the others leave the private room, Ling Chen smiled slightly, sat back down, and leisurely sipped his drink. With Zhao Zhengxiong handling it, there was no need for him to go along.

After taking a sip of whisky, Ling Chen glanced at the TV screen, scrutinizing the pictures of beauties there. Suddenly, something caught Ling Chen's eye as a sharp gleam flashed in his Mo Che-like irises.

At the same moment, in a nearby private room, Zhao Zhengxiong and the others kicked the door open and strode inside.

In the spacious, dimly lit private room, ten or so men in their thirties and forties sat with over a dozen beauties accompanying them. Among them, one beauty stood out the most. Although the other women were attractive, compared to this one, they were worlds apart. Her looks, aura, and figure were the very definition of perfection.

Her presence made the other beauties fade into the background. Nearly all the men in the room were gathered around her.

Yet, facing the men's eagerness, the woman appeared very resistant, constantly pushing away the men trying to get fresh with her. Several times, she managed to break free, attempting to escape, only to be pulled back each time.

"Gentlemen, had enough fun?" Zhao Zhengxiong turned on the main lights in the room and asked.

The sudden bright light and the men standing at the doorway shifted the room's attention to Zhao Zhengxiong.

A bald man stood up, pointed at Zhao Zhengxiong and his group, and shouted irritably, "Who the hell are you? Get out of here and stop disturbing us!"

Before Zhao Zhengxiong and the others could respond, the woman pinned on the sofa shouted loudly, "Save me... Mr. Hu, save me!"

Chapter 1054 - 1061: Tianyu (Part 3)

Hearing the cry for help from the other side, Hu Fei's expression changed slightly as he said in surprise, "You... aren't you..."

"Fatty, do you know her?" Tang Guolun on the side asked.

Hu Fei nodded and said, "Let's not talk about it for now, Jiang Hao, Haozi, quickly bring her over."

Jiang Hao and Nanrong Hao said nothing, rushed forward swiftly, and mercilessly kicked away all the men around the woman before bringing her back to Hu Fei's side.

"Miss Liu." Looking at the beautiful woman, Hu Fei asked in confusion, "Why are you here?"

This woman with striking beauty was none other than Liu Xiyao. Earlier, when they were browsing pictures on TV, everyone was stunned by Liu Xiyao's beauty. Among them, only Hu Fei and Nanrong Hao had met Liu Xiyao. However, in their minds, someone of Liu Xiyao's status could never work here as a hostess. Thus, they presumed this woman only looked like Liu Xiyao and wasn't Liu Xiyao herself.

"Damn it!" Before she could reply, those men, seeing their buddies getting bullied, immediately shouted, "How dare you mess with my brothers, you bastards! Let's see how I deal with you. Guys, grab your stuff and charge!"

As soon as the words fell, a group of men picked up chairs and bottles in the room and charged straight at Zhao Zhengxiong and his group.

Seeing the men's actions, Zhao Zhengxiong and others slightly curled their lips in a mocking smile. When it came to fighting, they feared no one. Moreover, with skilled fighters like Jiang Yunkai around, these guys were just asking for trouble.

In no time, more than a dozen men were easily taken down, each clutching their stomachs and wailing incessantly.

"Stop! All of you, stop now!"

At this moment, Li Yan rushed in with a group of security guards. Unfortunately, she was a step too late. Seeing the injured guests all over the ground, Li Yan's face turned icy. She looked coldly at Zhao Zhengxiong and said through gritted teeth, "You all have gone too far."

Zhao Zhengxiong replied calmly, "You're right, going too far is our specialty, that's our business. Manager Li, you came just in time, I wanted to ask you, why is she here?" Saying this, Zhao Zhengxiong pointed to Liu Xiyao beside him.

"She?" Li Yan hesitated for a moment, then immediately said, "She is with me, what does it have to do with you?"

"She's my friend, do you think it's unrelated?" The one responding wasn't Zhao Zhengxiong; it was Ling Chen who had just come in from outside the room. He too had seen Liu Xiyao's photos on TV and, although puzzled, came over quickly.

"Manager Li, I need an explanation from you. You better think carefully before answering me." Ling Chen stared into Li Yan's eyes, his sharp gaze like a sharp steel knife, intimidating her into averting her eyes.

"I... I've already told you, she's with me, you..."

Slap!

Before Li Yan could finish, a crisp slap sounded in the room. Ling Chen lowered his raised hand, expressionless, and said, "I'll give you one more chance. I hope you'll answer seriously."

"You... you dare to hit me?" Slapped by Ling Chen, Li Yan's anger soared, and she shrieked harshly, "None of you are leaving here today!"

As her words fell, security guards outside the room immediately charged in.

However, Jiang Yunkai and others had been keeping an eye on the situation outside. Seeing the security guards act, he and Bai Huanjun wasted no time, striding over to block over a dozen security guards at the door.

As the screams from outside the room echoed, Li Yan's face grew paler, her gaze at Ling Chen filled with a hint of fear.

"Manager Li, still not willing to talk?" Ling Chen squinted, his eyes flashing coldly.

"Ling Chen, it's the Liu Family." At this moment, Liu Xiyao quietly said from the side.

The Liu Family?

Ling Chen frowned slightly, well aware of Liu Xiyao's enmity with the Liu Family. If Liu Xiyao was coerced by the Liu Family into working here as a hostess, does that mean... the Liu Family is the owner behind this leisure establishment?

While pondering, Jiang Yunkai and Bai Huanjun at the door suddenly stepped back a few paces. Subsequently, a young man entered, accompanied by two middle-aged men.

The young man wore a neatly pressed white suit, with handsome features, short hair just covering his ears, and a luxurious gold mechanical watch on his wrist, exuding elegance and nobility. One glance was enough to tell that the youth's two middle-aged companions were out of the ordinary—anyone with an eye could see they were not ordinary.

Seeing the young man, a flicker of fear appeared in Liu Xiyao's eyes, and she instinctively moved closer to Ling Chen. Noticing her reaction, Ling Chen began to have more guesses about this young man's identity.

Now, surrounded by his two middle-aged companions, the young man walked up to Ling Chen, scrutinized him for a moment, then suddenly turned around and slapped Li Yan across the face without warning.

Li Yan was stunned by the young man's sudden action, staring at him blankly, muttering, "President Liu, I..."

"Shut up!" The young man snapped coldly, "Is that how you treat our valued guests?" After speaking, he turned his gaze back to Ling Chen. With a sweeping glance, the young man smiled and said, "Mr. Ling, Mr. Zhao, Mr. Jiang, Mr. Nanrong, I truly apologize. My subordinate was ignorant and offended you. If there were any discourtesies, I apologize here. Please show me some mercy and forgive us this once."

Seeing the young man greeting them each in turn, a trace of coldness flickered in Ling Chen's eyes.

This guy is quite something!

Ling Chen thought to himself. His instincts told him that this young man before him was certainly no easy opponent.

"From the sound of President Liu's voice, you seem familiar with us?"

The young man smiled and said, "I wouldn't say familiar, but... since I'm doing business in East Sea City, I certainly need to understand the situation here." At this point, the youth changed the topic, looking at Zhao Zhengxiong and others he said, "Mr. Zhao, sorry, I should have visited you long ago, but I've been busy with work, traveling all over, and only arrived in East Sea City a couple of days ago. I didn't have time to greet you before opening, my oversight, please don't take it to heart. How about this, let me host you all for a meal soon. First, to formally pay my respects, and second, as a way to apologize. How about it?"

Not bad!

Ling Chen squinted slightly. As expected, this young man is very astute, with nothing that can be picked apart in his words or actions.

Zhao Zhengxiong glanced at Ling Chen and said, "Let's leave other things aside for now, I want to know, was it you who brought my friend here?"

Chapter 1055 - 1062: Liu Wei

"No, no!" The young man vehemently denied, "I think you've misunderstood. I didn't bring her here; she came of her own free will. Gentlemen, we are law-abiding citizens; we wouldn't do anything illegal."

"Is that so?" Ling Chen interjected, "In that case, let me ask her to see if she really came willingly." Saying this, Ling Chen turned his gaze to Liu Xiyao beside him, waiting for her response.

Liu Xiyao glanced at the young man. Faced with her gaze, the young man maintained a faint smile.

"Ling Chen, they forced me to sign a contract," Liu Xiyao said softly. "That contract is almost like a servitude agreement. I... I had no choice."

Hearing this, Ling Chen immediately understood what Liu Xiyao meant. The Liu Family's trouble for Liu Xiyao was undoubtedly well-prepared. Even if someone came knocking, as long as that contract existed, no one could do anything about the Liu Family. As for the coercion Liu Xiyao mentioned, unless she could provide evidence, there was no use in saying anything.

"Mr. Ling, everything between Miss Liu and me is in black and white, clearly documented. I've done nothing illegal or criminal," the young man said with a smile. "So, please believe me, my relationship with Miss Liu is purely professional."

"With all this talk, I still don't know your name?" Ling Chen asked.

"Liu Wei."

Ling Chen nodded and said, "President Liu, we're all smart people here; there's no need to lay everything out. Liu is my friend, and regardless of whatever contract you have between you, I'm taking her with me tonight."

"Mr. Ling, wouldn't that be inappropriate?" Liu Wei grinned, the smile at the corner of his mouth noticeably cooling.

"There's no inappropriate or not inappropriate. You have one choice: either let me take Liu with me, or... I'll take her by force and destroy your leisure club, kicking you out of East Sea City. Which do you think is more appropriate?"

Liu Wei asked with a mocking smile, "Mr. Ling, are you threatening me?"

"That's right!" Ling Chen admitted unabashedly, "Believe me, if I say it, I can do it. If you don't believe me, feel free to try. Of course, as a law-abiding citizen, you can choose to call the police. But you should know in your heart that doing so won't change anything, so you better think it over."

Liu Wei frowned, staring directly into Ling Chen's eyes. After a few seconds of eye contact, the corners of Liu Wei's mouth slightly raised, and the gentle smile returned to his handsome face.

"Mr. Ling is indeed extraordinary. Alright, my new store just opened, and I don't want to invite too much trouble. Since Mr. Ling has spoken, I must give you this face." With that, Liu Wei signaled to his subordinates with his eyes.

Soon after, the subordinate left and returned with a contract, bringing it into the private room.

"Mr. Ling, this is the contract I signed with Miss Liu. I now give it to you. From now on, Miss Liu has no connection with Tianyu Leisure Club."

Ling Chen took the contract and carefully browsed through it, checking the signatures and fingerprints at the end. He then handed the contract to Liu Xiyao, letting her confirm that there were no issues.

"The contract is correct."

Upon Liu Xiyao's confirmation, Ling Chen nodded and said to Liu Wei, "I appreciate the favor, President Liu. We should have a meal together someday." With that, Ling Chen gestured to everyone, "Let's go!"

As Ling Chen and others left the private room, Li Yan approached Liu Wei and asked, "President Liu, are you just going to let them leave like this?"

Liu Wei put away his smile and said coldly, "What else do you want to do? Do you know who they are? Ling Chen isn't much of a threat, but the people around him are no joke. Zhao Zhengxiong and Jiang Hao control the underground forces of East Sea City. And that Nanrong Hao, he's the young master of the Nanrong Family and the future heir of the Hongyu Group. None of them are easy to deal with. We just arrived in East Sea City, and our foundation is not stable. It's best not to clash with them."

"But..." Li Yan hesitated for a moment and said, "We went through a lot to bring Liu Xiyao here, and now we're just letting her get away? I think we should have dealt with her directly when we first found her. Now that those people have her back, it might be difficult to handle her in the future."

Liu Wei nodded, "That was my mistake. I originally wanted her to experience what it's like to be played by men, but who knew Ling Chen and the others would show up? Never mind! We'll leave Liu Xiyao's matter for now and deal with her later."

"Yes, I understand."

"And... Manager Li, sorry about earlier. I don't want to provoke them right now," Liu Wei referred to the slap incident earlier.

Li Yan gave a slight smile, "President Liu, don't mention it. I'm not someone who doesn't understand the situation. If there's nothing else, I'll get back to work."

"Go ahead."

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Outside the Tianyu Leisure Club, Ling Chen and Liu Xiyao got into Nanrong Hao's Audi.

"Liu, when I saw you a few days ago, weren't you doing fine?"

Liu Xiyao sighed softly, her face bitter, "After I left your house that day, the Liu Family came looking for me. I didn't even have a chance to call for help before they took me to the Tianyu Club, where I was locked up for several days. Later, Liu Wei forced me to become a hostess. I refused, so he used all sorts of harassment and threats, leaving me without even the chance to die. In the end, he directly forced me to sign the contract. Today was my first day out, and if you hadn't shown up in time, I..." She bit her lip lightly and didn't continue.

Ling Chen understood in his heart that if it weren't for them, Liu Xiyao would have certainly been assaulted by that group of men tonight.

"What position does Liu Wei hold in the Liu Family?"

"He's now the son of the Liu Family head. From what I know, the Liu Family's situation has changed significantly. Previously, the Liu Family was a prominent family with many businesses in the area. However, as more and more emerging companies rose, the Liu Family failed to innovate and relied solely on old resources. This led to diminishing profits, causing the business to decline from a major

enterprise to a third-rate one. As a result, the former family head stepped down, letting his eldest son inherit the position. To seek new development, the Liu Family invested heavily in Liu Wei, sending him to East Sea City to seek business opportunities."

"I see," Ling Chen nodded, "That Liu Wei is quite a character, very meticulous in how he does things."

"Yes, Liu Wei is a key figure trained by the Liu Family, and his choice to start a business in East Sea City is mostly because of me."

Chapter 1056 - 1063: The Decline of the Liu Family

"Why?" Ling Chen asked in confusion. "Did he come to East Sea City to get revenge on you?"

"No!" Liu Xiyao shook her head and replied, "Actually, the Liu Family doesn't care about me. I've always been the one wanting to take revenge on them. The reason Liu Wei approached me is not to cause trouble for me, but to scheme for my assets. You know, over the years, with Lin Guodong's help, I've managed quite a few businesses across the country. Although my assets aren't a lot, they are still in the billions. Liu Wei is a very cunning and opportunistic person. If he can control me, he gets billions in assets for nothing. Who wouldn't want such an opportunity?"

"So, the Liu Family can't keep going and that's why they came to East Sea City to seek development."

"Pretty much."

"Chen, I've heard of that Liu Family you guys are discussing," Nanrong Hao, who was driving, chimed in. "The Liu Family used to be quite famous, involved in various industries, similar to our Hongyu Group. But later, due to poor management and annual losses, the company had to lay off staff and sell off assets. Our Hongyu Group used to collaborate with the Liu Family, but after their decline, we cut off cooperation. That Liu Wei is a clever man. He came to East Sea City and didn't do much, just runs a leisure club. Seems like he's planning something big."

"Haozi, what do you mean by that?"

"Chen, isn't it obvious? High-end entertainment venues will always attract wealthy people. Which of these rich people aren't influential and powerful? Over time, as Liu Wei mingles with them, he can integrate himself into the high society of East Sea City. And, as Miss Liu just mentioned, Liu Wei is

shrewd and opportunistic. These rich folks often indulge in behavior that compromises their image when at leisure clubs. Moreover, these wealthy individuals have families; if word gets out that they are going to Liu Wei's place for women, what kind of impact do you think it will have?"

Upon hearing this, Ling Chen immediately realized.

"Haozi, you mean... Liu Wei will use this as leverage?"

"Liu Wei might collect these handles. Whether he would use them or not, I can't say. Also," Nanrong Hao continued after a pause, "Chen, there's another matter. When Hongyu Group decided not to continue cooperating with the Liu Family, besides their economic downturn, there was another significant reason."

"We have evidence that the Liu Family might have connections with the local underground forces. Moreover, the Liu Family is allegedly behind the scenes responsible for investment and control. Since the Liu Family's background isn't clean, we were concerned they might be involved in illegal activities, which could affect Hongyu Group, so we chose to sever ties with them."

"Mr. Nanrong is right," Liu Xiyao agreed. "I've heard about this too. The police had investigated the Liu Family. Although they covered it up well, not much was found, but it nonetheless impacted their reputation. Many businesses cut ties with the Liu Family because of this."

Ling Chen nodded and said, "Haozi, give Jiang Hao and Xiong a heads-up to keep an eye on Liu Wei. If he dares to do anything out of line, there's no need to be polite with him, deal with it directly."

"Got it!"

"Xiyao, it's not safe for you to go home. Liu Wei will definitely come looking for trouble again. For safety's sake, why don't you stay at my place for a while?"

"Isn't that... not appropriate?" Liu Xiyao appeared somewhat hesitant.

Ling Chen smiled slightly and said, "What's inappropriate about it? After all, there aren't many people staying at my place, and there are plenty of rooms. Once everything's settled, I'll send you back."

Liu Xiyao thought for a moment and decided to agree. Liu Wei knew where she lived and might send someone to trouble her. Better to stay at Ling Chen's place, where it was likely safer.

Upon learning that Liu Xiyao would stay at Ling Chen's house, Nanrong Hao opened his mouth a few times, wanting to say something. But after some hesitation, he swallowed his words.

Back home, Ling Chen brought Liu Xiyao inside the house. At this moment, Yang Qingling and Yang Yan were already asleep.

This villa had three floors, with Yang Qingling and Yang Yan living on the top floor, while Ling Chen lived alone on the second floor. Being a villa, there were ample guest rooms, with three spacious bedrooms just on the second floor alone.

Ling Chen tidied up a bedroom next to his own, found some bedding and pillows, and helped Liu Xiyao settle in.

"Xiyao, here are some of my clothes for you to wear tonight. Tomorrow, I'll take you shopping for clothes."

"Thank you!" Liu Xiyao said gratefully.

"No need to be so polite. It's late, so rest up. I won't disturb you any further." With that, Ling Chen turned and left the room.

...

Early the next morning.

Yang Qingling and Gong Meiling were in the kitchen preparing breakfast. Hearing the sound of footsteps on the stairs, Yang Qingling peeked out of the kitchen and said, "Son, breakfast is almost ready, you..." Before she could finish speaking, her expression changed slightly, staring blankly at the person coming down the stairs, momentarily at a loss for words.

"Daughter, what's the matter?" Gong Meiling, busy in the kitchen, noticed Yang Qingling's reaction and glanced outside. Upon seeing Liu Xiyao at the staircase, she was momentarily taken aback.

"Aunt Yang, Madam Yang, good morning!" Liu Xiyao greeted with an embarrassed smile.

"You are... Liu Xiyao, right?" Yang Qingling was the first to recover, immediately beaming as she said, "I saw you last time when you visited Ling Chen." As she spoke, she looked Liu Xiyao up and down and asked, "What are you wearing...?"

"Oh, these are Ling Chen's clothes that he lent me."

Hearing this, Yang Qingling and Gong Meiling exchanged glances, their eyes revealing a hint of peculiarity.

Her son certainly had the skills, sneaking a woman in for the night. Considering the possible relationship between Liu Xiyao and Ling Chen, Yang Qingling's demeanor shifted instantly, smiling as she said, "How could men's clothes fit you? Come, I have some new clothes that should suit you."

Liu Xiyao quietly replied, "That's... quite a bother, isn't it?"

"It's no bother at all, come on!" Without waiting for Liu Xiyao's refusal, Yang Qingling took her by the hand and led her to the room on the third floor.

Shortly after the two left, Ling Chen stumbled down the stairs, rubbing his sleepy eyes and yawning.

Enticed by the aroma wafting from the kitchen, Ling Chen hurried inside, grabbed a freshly toasted slice of bread, and stuffed it into his mouth.

"Grandma, is the porridge ready? I'm starving."

Seeing Ling Chen eat like a wolf, Gong Meiling immediately set down her spoon, pinched Ling Chen's ear, and scolded, "You little rascal, you're getting bolder by the day."

"Ouch, ouch, ouch!" Ling Chen quickly pleaded, "Grandma, what did I do wrong?"

Chapter 1057 - 1064: Liu Wei's Request

"How dare you say so," Gong Meiling glanced toward the kitchen door and chided in a low voice, "You brought a woman back home for the night without giving us any heads up, leaving us completely unprepared. Ling Chen, it's not that Grandma is criticizing you, but even though society is very open now, you still shouldn't be so reckless. You should at least consider the family's feelings."

Hearing this, Ling Chen finally understood and hurriedly explained, "Grandma, you've got it all wrong, nothing happened between Sister Xiyao and me."

"Sister Xiyao?" Gong Meiling exclaimed in surprise, "You found a woman older than you?"

"No, Grandma, as I said, it's not what you think. Sister Xiyao is just staying here temporarily because she's encountering some trouble."

Gong Meiling asked in half-belief, "Really?"

"Grandma, how would I dare lie to you," Ling Chen spread his hands, looking innocent.

"Who knows, you little rascal didn't inherit any of your dad's good qualities."

As they spoke, Yang Qingling brought Liu Xiyao down from upstairs. Hearing footsteps, Ling Chen bit into his bread and walked toward the kitchen door. He saw Liu Xiyao had changed into a light purple coat with light-colored jeans, her smooth long hair cascaded over her shoulders, making her look fresh and elegant.

Last night at Tianyu Leisure Club, Liu Xiyao wore heavy makeup, though it couldn't hide her beauty. However, Liu Xiyao without makeup was even more radiant, like a mature flower in full bloom, exuding her fragrance and charm freely.

"Mom!" Sensing Yang Qingling's slightly reproachful gaze, Ling Chen plastered on a smile and quickly went over.

"Alright, let's have breakfast first. Xiyao, we made egg custard today, I wonder if you'd like it?"

"Auntie, I'm not picky."

"That's good." Once seated, Yang Qingling instructed, "Ling Chen, after breakfast, go to the market and buy some groceries. Get whatever Xiyao likes to eat, understood?"

Hearing this, Liu Xiyao hurriedly chimed in, "Auntie, there's no need to go to all that trouble. I'm already incredibly grateful that you let me stay here."

"Please don't say that." Yang Qingling said, "You're Ling Chen's friend, treat this place as your home, stay as long as you want, don't think too much."

After breakfast, Ling Chen checked the time and then took Liu Xiyao back to her place to help her pack some clothes and also went to the market for groceries.

...

Hongyu Group.

Outside the chairman's office, secretary Lan pushed open the door and walked to the desk with a stack of documents, looking at the busy Nanrong Wanqing. "Chairman, these are the documents that need signing."

"Leave them there, I'll look at them later," Nanrong Wanqing said without lifting her head.

"Chairman, there's one more thing. A man named Liu Wei called earlier, wanting to meet you. Would you like to schedule a time with him?"

"Liu Wei?" Nanrong Wanqing lifted her head and asked, "Who is he?"

"He said he's from the Liu Family."

"The Liu Family, huh?" Nanrong Wanqing frowned slightly and muttered, "We've already severed business ties with the Liu Family. What's he looking for me for?" After a moment's thought, Nanrong Wanqing said, "Alright, have him come over later, I'll find time to see him."

Lan nodded in agreement, "Okay."

An hour passed, and a gentle knock on the office door was heard.

"Come in!"

As Nanrong Wanqing finished speaking, two people stepped in, a man and a woman, one being Lan, the other being Liu Wei, the owner of Tianyu Leisure Club.

"Chairman Nanrong, hello, it's a pleasure to meet you." Liu Wei stepped forward and greeted with a smile.

"Mr. Liu." Nanrong Wanqing stood up, maintaining a subtle smile on her beautiful face, extending her hand. "Please, have a seat. Lan, could you make a cup of coffee for Mr. Liu?"

"Thank you!"

As the two sat down, Nanrong Wanqing straightforwardly asked, "Mr. Liu, is there something you need from me this time?"

"Chairman Nanrong, it's like this, Hongyu Group used to be closely partnered with the Liu Family, but later on, for several reasons, our business relations were cut off. Now, our Liu Family is planning to expand into East Sea City, and since Chairman Nanrong and us have worked together before, I wanted to ask if you're willing to continue working with the Liu Family?"

"Mr. Liu, if you've come to me about this, then I'm afraid I can only say I'm sorry. Hongyu Group already has partners, and the East Sea City market is already saturated. If I'm not mistaken, the industry the Liu Family is in is quite similar to Hongyu Group's. Putting personal interests aside, just from a friend's perspective, it's not a suitable time for the Liu Family to enter East Sea City. Mr. Liu, I suggest you explore other cities where the opportunities might be greater than in East Sea."

Nanrong Wanqing's meaning was clear, and any smart person could hear her polite refusal.

"Mr. Liu, your coffee." At this moment, Lan came over with a freshly brewed cup of coffee.

"Thank you!"

Liu Wei nodded, then turned to Nanrong Wanqing and said, "Miss Nanrong, could I talk to you alone? Just for a short while, I promise I won't take up much of your valuable time."

Nanrong Wanqing hesitated for a moment and then nodded, "No problem. Lan, you can go now."

After Lan left the office, Liu Wei reached into his suit pocket and took out an exquisite wooden cigar case, picking a cigar from it.

"Chairman Nanrong, do you mind?"

Nanrong Wanqing smiled and said, "Please, Mr. Liu."

Liu Wei lit the cigar, took a puff, and exhaled smoke before saying, "Chairman Nanrong, let me speak frankly. I believe you've heard about the Liu Family's current situation. While we're not what we used to

be, it doesn't mean we can't rise again. As long as Chairman Nanrong is willing to lend a helping hand, the Liu Family will surely regain its former glory."

"Mr. Liu, it's not that I'm unwilling to help. If it were something else, for old times' sake, I would undoubtedly lend a hand. But partnerships aren't child's play, and I also have a responsibility to my current partners. If the Liu Family joins, it would inevitably divide the profit of others. Mr. Liu, if you were in my place, I suppose you wouldn't agree either. Therefore, I really can't help you with this matter."

Despite Nanrong Wanqing's rejection, Liu Wei didn't mind and laughed, "Chairman Nanrong, don't be so quick to decide, I believe I can make you change your mind." Saying this, Liu Wei puffed on his cigar and gently exhaled toward Nanrong Wanqing.

Smelling the faintly fragrant smoke, Nanrong Wanqing waved her hand and said, "Mr. Liu, I have another important meeting later. If there's nothing else, I'll take my leave first."

Chapter 1058 - 1065: Confused

Liu Wei smiled nonchalantly, "Chairman Nanrong, we haven't finished our conversation, why rush to leave?"

"I..." Nanrong Wanqing opened her mouth, about to speak, but for some reason, she suddenly felt dizzy. Liu Wei in front of her became a blur, as if seen through a thin mist, not very clear.

What's happening to me?

Nanrong Wanqing thought to herself, could it be due to excessive sadness lately, not resting well, causing her body to be overly tired? In the blink of an eye, Nanrong Wanqing supported herself on the coffee table in front of the sofa, but her arm went weak, and she suddenly leaned forward, knocking the coffee cup on the table to the ground with a clatter, the glass cup instantly shattering.

Knock, knock, knock!

A knocking sound came from outside the office, followed by Lan opening the door and walking in, asking, "Chairman, what's wrong?"

"I... I..." Nanrong Wanqing sat up, looking at Lan, about to respond. But before she could speak, Liu Wei beside her chimed in, "Chairman Nanrong, your secretary is too alarmed by little noises, barging in to disrupt our conversation. Let her step out, and we'll continue talking."

Hearing this, Nanrong Wanqing nodded unconsciously and said, "Lan, you can leave first. Nothing's wrong here."

Lan glanced at the broken glass on the floor and asked, "Chairman, should I clean up the floor?"

"No need, we'll tidy it up later."

Seeing Nanrong Wanqing had spoken, Lan didn't say more and exited the office, closing the door behind her.

Watching Lan leave, Liu Wei smiled, a hint of complacency flashing in his eyes.

"Chairman Nanrong," Liu Wei's gaze shifted, looking at Nanrong Wanqing beside him, "Let's continue discussing the cooperation between Hongyu Group and the Liu Family, alright?"

"Alright," Nanrong Wanqing nodded blankly, her bright eyes seemingly losing their luster.

...

After over ten minutes, Liu Wei opened the office door, half-stepping out, then turning around said, "Chairman Nanrong, I'll take my leave now. I'll invite you for a meal when you're not busy."

Closing the door, Liu Wei directly headed towards the elevator. Passing by Lan's desk, Liu Wei gave her a smile, a cigar in his mouth, striding into the elevator.

After Liu Wei departed, Lan hurriedly stood and went into the chairman's office. Upon entering, she found Nanrong Wanqing sitting dazedly on the sofa, seemingly deep in thought.

"Chairman... Chairman!" Lan quickly approached, calling softly twice.

"Hmm? What?" Nanrong Wanqing snapped back, looking up at Lan, asking, "Lan, what's the matter?"

Concerned, Lan asked, "Chairman, are you alright? You didn't even notice when I came in just now."

"Really?" Nanrong Wanqing rubbed her temples absent-mindedly and said, "Maybe I've been too tired recently. Lan, could you call Zhong Wei and ask him to prepare the car? I'm feeling a bit unwell today, so I'll head back to rest." As she finished speaking, Nanrong Wanqing seemed to notice something, pointing to the broken glass on the floor and asked, "What's this all about?"

Hearing this, Lan curiously asked, "Chairman, did you forget?"

"Forget? Forget what?" Nanrong Wanqing looked confused. Without waiting for Lan to say more, Nanrong Wanqing waved her hand and said, "Forget it! Don't ask about it. Please clean up later." After speaking, Nanrong Wanqing got up, gathered her things, and walked out of the office.

...

A week passed in the blink of an eye.

Hongjing Villa Garden, the neighborhood where Ling Chen resides. Today is Sunday, and after several days of constant drizzle, the sky finally cleared, with bright sunshine shining on the earth.

After being cooped up at home for a few days, Ling Chen was bored and went for a solitary walk in the neighborhood. Ever since Lin Guodong was transferred to government custody, the influence of the God Organization seemed to vanish overnight without a trace in East Sea City, which was undoubtedly good news for Ling Chen.

Without the threat of the God Organization and with Ling Kun not returning, Ling Chen enjoyed a rare period of relaxation, spending his days idly at home, either watching TV or chatting with his mom and others, living quite leisurely. However, every time he thought of Nanrong Wanqing, Ling Chen would have a headache.

Su Lin had already gone out for an internship, leaving only Nanrong Hao at home. Given Nanrong Hao's attitude towards his sister, he was of no help whatsoever. Moreover, Ling Chen didn't want to cause any discord between the siblings because of him.

After much pondering, there was no suitable solution.

While strolling, Ling Chen suddenly heard the ringtone from the phone on his body. Taking out the phone, he glanced at the caller ID on the screen and immediately answered the call, asking, "Elder Zhou, do you have something for me?"

On the other end, Zhou Qi replied, "Ling Chen, where are you? Is it convenient for you to talk now?"

"Yes, Elder Zhou, please go ahead. What is it?" Ling Chen was a bit curious. Zhou Qi usually handled logistical work at the base; even if there was something, he would directly discuss it with Guolun and Hu Fei, and had never called him alone before.

"It seems there's some trouble at the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion."

Hearing this, Ling Chen was slightly stunned and asked curiously, "Elder Zhou, how did you know about the issue with the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion?"

"No matter what, I spent decades in the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. Although I have retired, I still keep in touch with some friends there. When I spoke to them yesterday, I sensed something was amiss from their words. Since I am no longer a member, it was inconvenient for them to say much, but understanding them, it's likely something has gone wrong internally. Ling Chen, regardless of what the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion has done to our family, I have watched Miss Su grow up and regard her as my granddaughter. Since something's wrong there, as an outsider, I'm unable to intervene, so I can only ask for your help."

"Elder Zhou, I understand what you mean. You want me to visit the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion and understand the situation?"

"Exactly! Everything else is secondary, the key is Miss Su's safety. As long as she's alright, I will be relieved."

Ling Chen pondered for a moment, considering that he had nothing else to do, and he was just idling, he could take this opportunity to visit for Zhou Qi. Besides, he hadn't been to the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion for a long time, he might as well treat it as a trip to relax. With that thought, Ling Chen readily agreed, "Elder Zhou, don't worry, I'll head over as soon as possible, and I'll call you once I understand the situation there."

"Alright, thanks much!"

"Elder Zhou, no need to be so polite."

After hanging up, Ling Chen immediately booked a single airplane ticket for the afternoon using his phone.

Chapter 1059 - 1066: Another Storm in the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion (Part 1)

At five o'clock in the afternoon, Ling Chen's flight arrived at its destination on time. Leaving the airport, Ling Chen hailed a taxi and headed directly to the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion.

The Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion was the same as ever, unchanged for centuries. Upon reaching the outskirts of the mountain, the taxi could go no further. With no other option, Ling Chen had to rely on his own legs to walk forward. After about a half-hour walk, the mountain gate of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion finally appeared in Ling Chen's view.

Before Ling Chen could get close, a few young men emerged from the mountain forest, blocking his way.

These were sentinels deployed outside by the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. Whenever someone approached, they would be the first to notice. Ling Chen was an old friend of the Pavilion, having visited more than two or three times, making him quite familiar to them.

However, familiarity notwithstanding, certain formalities had to be observed. After waiting outside the Pavilion for the information to be relayed, over ten minutes had passed.

"Mr. Ling, I sincerely apologize for taking up so much of your time. The Pavilion Master requests your presence," an elderly man who had come to welcome Ling Chen from the Pavilion said.

On the way, Ling Chen chatted with the man and learned that his name was Han Qi. Since Zhou Qi had withdrawn from the Pavilion, Han Qi had taken over Zhou Qi's work, becoming the chief steward of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. Furthermore, during their conversation, it became apparent that Han Qi was one of the 'friends' Zhou Qi had mentioned, and it was Han Qi who had disclosed many of the Pavilion's secrets to Zhou Qi.

"Elder Han, how has the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion been lately?" Ling Chen asked, probing subtly.

Han Qi glanced at Ling Chen with a meaningful gaze and replied, "Mr. Ling, your arrival is a blessing for the Pavilion. As for what exactly happened, the Pavilion Master will inform you later." Pausing, Han Qi continued, "The Master urgently needs someone to accompany her right now."

Hearing this, Ling Chen was filled with questions, unsure of what had transpired. Contemplating this, Ling Chen followed Han Qi's footsteps and walked straight into the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion.

As he passed through the main entrance of the Pavilion, Ling Chen was immediately hit by a strong aroma, seemingly that of incense, permeating the air, sharp and overpowering.

The scent of the incense was widespread and had been lingering in the air for a long time, indicating that it had been there for quite a while.

"Elder Han, what's going on here?"

"You'll find out soon enough."

As they spoke, the two arrived outside the tower of the Pavilion. Ling Chen had a vivid impression of this tower; it was where Su Mei resided and also the center of the Pavilion, where matters big and small were handled. Before entering, Ling Chen noticed two strips of white silk hanging outside the tower.

This... Ling Chen paused slightly. Generally, white silk hung only in the event of a death. Could it be that someone in the Pavilion had died?

At this thought, Ling Chen quickened his pace and entered the tower with Han Qi.

As expected, the first floor of the tower had been arranged into a funeral hall, with many members of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion dressed in black, standing solemnly on both sides, their heads bowed, mourning the deceased. At the furthest end of the hall stood two framed photographs, one of a man and the other of a woman, appearing to be in their forties or fifties. The man had a steadfast and heroic look, with a hint of pride in his brow. The woman was beautiful, exuding a gentle and virtuous demeanor.

Ling Chen had visited the Pavilion several times but had never seen this couple before.

Upon seeing the names engraved below the photographs – Su Zhengyang, Chen Sumei – Ling Chen searched his memory, but these names felt unfamiliar, never having heard them mentioned before.

"Elder Han," Ling Chen whispered as he approached Han Qi, "Who are these two?"

Han Qi bowed his head slightly, sighing deeply, "They were the former Pavilion Masters of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion."

Former Pavilion Masters?

Ling Chen was shocked. If they were former Pavilion Masters, this man and woman must be Su Mei's parents.

He recalled Su Mei mentioning her parents before, explaining that after stepping down as Pavilion Masters, they traveled the world, often staying out of sight unless something important happened at the Pavilion, only then returning every few years.

But now, this couple was deceased. Ling Chen found it hard to believe that Su Zhengyang, a former Pavilion Master, should have met an untimely death unless it was due to an accident or injury. Moreover, both a husband and wife dying simultaneously suggested something was amiss.

No wonder the scent of incense was so prominent upon entering; it was coming from the funeral hall inside.

Glancing around, Ling Chen saw Song Ge also in the hall. Feeling Ling Chen's gaze, Song Ge turned to him and nodded as a greeting.

The funeral hall was mostly filled with ordinary members of the Pavilion, with none of the elders from the Yangxin Pavilion present.

"Elder Han, where is the Pavilion Master?"

"She's in her room and hasn't come out for days, refusing both food and drink. Many people have tried to console her, but nothing works; she won't let anyone in. Mr. Ling, at this rate, the Pavilion Master's health will deteriorate. You're her friend; please help her come out of her grief."

Ling Chen smiled ruefully and said, "Elder Han, you overestimate my abilities. Losing both parents is a deeply painful experience. The Pavilion Master has endured both at once, an upheaval she wasn't prepared for. Such a sudden blow is unbearable, even for the strongest of people, let alone a woman in her twenties."

Han Qi nodded, "Mr. Ling, I understand it's difficult, but we still hope you'll assist her."

"Rest assured, she's my friend, and I'll do everything I can to help."

While speaking, a burly young man entered the hall. Upon seeing him, Ling Chen promptly greeted him, "Brother Yang, long time no see."

The young man was Yang Tao, a disciple of Elder Du Kang from the Yangxin Pavilion. Ling Chen had interacted with him before during previous visits to the Pavilion, finding him quite likable.

"Ling Chen, my Master heard you were here and wants to have a chat with you."

"But..."

Before Ling Chen could finish, Han Qi interrupted, "Mr. Ling, since Elder Du has requested you, please go ahead. There's no rush regarding the Pavilion Master."

"Very well. Brother Yang, let's go meet Elder Du!"

Leaving the funeral hall, Ling Chen and Yang Tao headed directly to the Yangxin Pavilion. Upon reaching Du Kang's residence, Yang Tao gestured toward the entrance, "Master is inside waiting for you. Go ahead; I won't disturb you both."

"Thanks!" Ling Chen nodded and opened the door to enter alone.

In the spacious and bright room, Du Kang sat on a rattan chair, holding a wine gourd, his cloudy, old eyes looking out the window. His deeply wrinkled face was devoid of any expression.

Chapter 1060 - 1067: Another Storm Rises in the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion (2)

"Have you arrived?" Du Kang didn't even glance at Ling Chen, slowly swaying his wine gourd, without turning his head.

Ling Chen stood behind the rattan chair and respectfully asked, "Elder Du, did Brother Yang say you wanted to see me?"

"Have you been to the mourning hall?"

"I have."

"I assume you've already guessed, the former Pavilion Master and his wife did not die of natural causes; they were murdered."

Ling Chen asked, "Elder Du, who could have done this?"

"It's not clear at the moment." Du Kang turned around, meeting Ling Chen's gaze, and said, "The only thing I'm sure of is that the Martial Arts world, calm for years, is likely to experience a bloodbath. The Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion has been peaceful for so long, and I don't know if it can survive this safely."

After a pause, Du Kang continued, "Su Zhengyang and his wife's bodies were discovered a few days ago, thrown at the entrance of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion after their deaths. As you know, there are numerous Dark Posts outside the Pavilion, yet no one noticed anything. More importantly, Su Zhengyang had crossed the threshold of a Heavenly List expert years ago. Not to mention that Chen Sumei's skills were not weak—at least among the top three of the Earthly List. Yet they were killed, and with just one sword stroke. I examined the wounds on the bodies; it's the work of one person. This means the person who killed them is not only a Heavenly List expert but a very formidable one."

Ling Chen pondered and asked, "Elder Du, could it be an enemy of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion?"

"That possibility cannot be ruled out. The Pavilion has stood in the Martial Arts world for hundreds of years, accumulating some enemies. However, the Pavilion has always conducted itself prudently, having eliminated those guilty of heinous crimes. Even those holding enmity towards the Pavilion are documented, constantly monitored, and any suspicious activity would prompt instant strikes to nip threats in the bud. Yet, I've checked the records, and none of the Pavilion's enemies is such a powerful expert."

At this point, Du Kang took a swig of his spirit, continuing, "It's one thing to kill the Su Zhengyang couple, but to dump their bodies at the Pavilion's doorstep? That's not just a provocation; it's a declaration of war against the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion."

"What is the Pavilion Master planning in response?"

"You mean that little girl, Su Mei?" Du Kang sighed helplessly and said, "She's lost in the grief of losing both parents and can't focus on much else. I'm handling the Pavilion's affairs for now. Ling Chen, do you know why I called you?"

"Elder Du, please speak frankly."

"Alright, I won't beat around the bush. Ling Chen, to be honest, Su Zhengyang and his wife's incident has caused instability in the Pavilion, and everyone is deeply worried. In this situation, we need someone with a commanding presence to stabilize the Pavilion. Otherwise, if we face external threats, we might collapse without a battle."

Hearing this, Ling Chen immediately grasped Du Kang's implied meaning.

"Elder Du, do you want Elder Su to come out of retirement?"

"Exactly!" Du Kang nodded and said, "He's the most suitable candidate. No one else can help the Pavilion out of this crisis. Ling Chen, Su He is your Master, only you know his whereabouts. This matter requires your involvement."

"I... I can only pass on the message. As for whether Elder Su will return to the Pavilion, I can't guarantee that."

"Just relay the message. The Pavilion is the Su Family's legacy; he can't ignore it. Even if not for the Pavilion, he has to consider his granddaughter."

"Elder Du," Ling Chen shifted the conversation, "you're also a Heavenly List expert. Wouldn't it be the same with you overseeing the Pavilion?"

Du Kang chuckled, "How could it be the same? Ling Chen, you're oversimplifying things. As I said, the Pavilion is the Su Family's legacy. If I take over, what do you think people will say? Besides, I'm used to a carefree life; being a guardian is fine, but I can't manage the Pavilion."

Ling Chen nodded in agreement and promised, "Don't worry, Elder Du, I'll convey the message to Elder Su."

"By the way," Du Kang kindly reminded, "be careful recently. The deaths of Su Zhengyang and his wife have stirred much discussion within the Yangxin Pavilion. Those old folks have lived comfortably for too

long, and when faced with a crisis, they think about self-preservation instead of supporting the Pavilion. Now that Su Zhengyang is gone, only Su Mei and Su He remain, and their strength is weak. Some opportunists might emerge. But you don't need to worry too much; with me overseeing, they'll be cautious to some extent."

Hearing this, Ling Chen felt speechless. The fall of a great tree scatters the monkeys; just Su Zhengyang's death has unsettled so many. If Su He were also to encounter misfortune, how could Su Mei alone maintain the Pavilion?

As he pondered, a series of 'knock-knock-knock' sounds came from outside the door. Yang Tao immediately entered and said, "Master, Elder Tong is here to pay his respects."

"Tong Zhentian?" Du Kang nodded and stood up, saying, "Let's go, let's meet our old friend together."

Back at the mourning hall, they saw that Tong Zhentian had finished offering incense, and Han Qi was accompanying him, speaking. Seeing Du Kang approach, a rare smile appeared on Tong Zhentian's aged face.

"Mr. Du, long time no see."

"It has been a long time." Du Kang replied coolly, "With what happened to Zhengyang, I thought you'd visit the Pavilion."

Mentioning Su Zhengyang, Tong Zhentian sighed, "I never imagined such a thing would happen; to bury one's child is unimaginable. If Old Man Su He were here, imagine how heartbroken he'd be."

After speaking, Tong Zhentian glanced at Ling Chen beside Du Kang, smiling slightly, "Ling, it's been a while."

"Elder Tong!" Ling Chen greeted politely.

"Old Man Tong, let's move somewhere else to talk, so we don't disturb others."

"Alright."

Shortly after, they arrived at the reception room on the second floor of a high tower. Once everyone was seated, Tong Zhentian's demeanor changed from amiable to serious as he asked, "Mr. Du, what on earth happened? Have you figured it out?"

"Not yet."

"A few years ago, Zhengyang visited me, and we sparred. His strength wasn't weak; even facing a stronger Heavenly List expert, he should have been able to retreat unharmed. I'm thinking..." As he said this, Tong Zhentian seemed to realize something and suddenly stopped speaking.

Seeing Tong Zhentian's action, Du Kang fully understood his implication and turned, "Yang Tao, Ling Chen, you two go out for now; I need to speak privately with Elder Tong."

"Yes!"

After leaving the reception room, Ling Chen said to Yang Tao, "Brother Yang, I'm going to see the Pavilion Master."

"Go ahead, I'll notify you if anything comes up."