

The Beauty 109

Chapter 109 Partners

Returning to the Nanrong Family home, Ling Chen walked alone into the bedroom, closed the door behind him, and then pulled out the envelope Han Bing had given him.

He tore open the envelope and dumped all its contents onto the table. Inside the envelope was a cellphone, a key, and two red-covered documents. The phone was a touchscreen, and upon startup, it required fingerprint unlocking followed by a password.

After pondering for a moment, Ling Chen entered a code he'd used previously with Phantom. As expected, the phone immediately switched to the system interface.

He opened the contacts list, which already had a number saved. Ling Chen memorized the number after looking it over twice, then deleted it from the phone.

Securing the phone, Ling Chen pocketed the two red-covered documents and hung the key on his own keychain.

With everything packed away, there was a knock on the bedroom door.

"Who is it?"

"Brother Chen, it's me."

Ling Chen got up and opened the door to see Nanrong Hao outside, and asked, "Do you need something?"

"Brother Chen, we have a guest at home. He wishes to see you."

Ling Chen's eyes flickered in recognition of whom Nanrong Hao referred to. He closed the door and followed Nanrong Hao to the next villa over.

As soon as he entered, he saw Jiang Hao approaching quickly with a smile, saying, "Brother Chen." As he spoke, he opened his arms, intending to hug him.

Ling Chen dodged to the side and scolded humorously, "Get lost, you kid—stop this nonsense, you're not a woman, what's there to hug?"

"Brother Chen, if you're longing for a woman, it's easy. I can find seventeen or eighteen to keep you company tonight, you'll have a blast. How about that?"

"Cut it out, I'm not into that. And you, take it easy, don't wreck your health."

The three of them then sat down. Ling Chen picked up the coffee Nanrong Hao had served and asked, "Jiang Hao, what brings you here today?"

"I came to discuss some business with Haozi."

"Business?" Ling Chen was momentarily taken aback, then it dawned on him. Nanrong Hao had mentioned before that he, along with Jiang Hao and Zhao Zhengxiong, planned to invest together in a legitimate business, seemingly an express delivery company.

"Eh, did you guys get that express delivery company up and running?"

Hearing the question, Nanrong Hao's head drooped immediately, and he said with a pained expression, "Don't even mention it, I only just realized how much trouble running a business can be."

"What happened?"

"Well, Brother Chen," Jiang Hao began explaining the issues they had encountered.

After listening to the explanation, Ling Chen understood the situation.

Turns out Nanrong Hao and the others had started several delivery companies, acquiring all the courier services in the Old City area to consolidate under their unified management. However, there was more to East Sea City than just the Old City area. The trio naturally wanted to expand their company further and grow the business. Nowadays, there are many different express delivery services – SF Express, ZTO Express, YTO Express, Yunda Express... countless others, and even more so within East Sea City itself.

Nanrong Hao and his partners wished to expand their business, but rather than opening new branches, they planned to acquire existing ones. Given that East Sea City's courier market was already saturated, opening new couriers would be prohibitively expensive and unlikely to turn a profit. Hence, their strategy was acquisition. In just over a month's time, the trio successfully acquired more than a dozen courier services, spending millions in the process.

Ling Chen found this curious. Jiang Hao and Zhao Zhengxiong came from thug backgrounds; where would they have savings? Not to mention millions, even tens of thousands would be hard for them to produce. His gaze shifted to Nanrong Hao; without a doubt, he must be the financier among the three. But Nanrong Hao is usually kept on such a tight leash by Nanrong Wanqing, how did he get so much money?

Seemingly perceiving his thoughts, Nanrong Hao explained, "Brother Chen, I still have some savings—all from New Year's money from the past."

"Your New Year's money amounts to that much?" Ling Chen was skeptical.

Scratching his head, Nanrong Hao replied, "It's alright, I guess. Add up over a decade of New Year's money, and it's more than ten million."

Hearing this, Ling Chen silently scorned the wealthy in his mind once more. The rich are indeed different; with millions in New Year's money, it would surpass what ordinary people could earn after decades of hard work.

Jiang Hao lamented, "Brother Chen, we were planning to expand our business to the surrounding areas of the Old City, but that's someone else's turf. Last time Xiong and I went to talk business, we hadn't even finished when dozens of their guys gathered, looking for trouble with us. Luckily, we fled quickly; otherwise, we would've ended up in the hospital."

Ling Chen nonchalantly took a toothpick and placed it between his teeth, "They have people, but so do you; are you scared of them?"

"It's not about being scared; we just don't want to start a big conflict."

Nanrong Hao chimed in, "Brother Chen, you don't understand. Starting a fight these days isn't cheap. Whenever we call our brothers into action, we have to give them some perks. Without underplaying it, you have to distribute hundreds per person, not to mention covering their food, drink, and entertainment. And if anyone gets hurt in a fight, there are medical expenses, too. With everything included, you'd easily spend tens of thousands. If it's a big brawl, the costs are even higher."

Jiang Hao added, "Brother Chen, I took your advice and only collect protection money—haven't done anything illegal. But with just that, we can barely support our brothers. If you don't play dirty, there's no way you'll make money."

Upon hearing their grievances, Ling Chen realized just how tough it is to make a living in this circle. The old saying still stands true: with money, things are easy; without it, everything's challenging.

For Jiang Hao to survive, he needs a stable source of income. However, as he said, for someone from the streets to make money without pulling some strings is next to impossible.

"Jiang Hao, how many men do you have now?"

"There are over three hundred regulars, and if needed, I can call up five hundred."

Ling Chen was surprised. When he first met Jiang Hao, the man barely had a few followers. In such a short period, he had grown his ranks to this size; it seems the guy has some smarts.

Thinking this, his gaze turned peculiar when he looked at Jiang Hao and Nanrong Hao.

"Tell me, the two of you aren't looking for me to lend a hand, are you?"

Jiang Hao chuckled, "Brother Chen, we're all brothers here. If we don't help each other, then who will? Besides, Brother Chen, you're not making much as a security guard, maybe two or three hundred thousand a year at most. We've all talked it over, and once the company is up and running, we'll split it four ways—everyone makes money together."

Ling Chen spread his hands, "I don't have money to invest."

"You don't need to." Nanrong Hao said, "Brother Chen, we all know deep down that if it weren't for your help back then, we wouldn't be where we are today. We have never forgotten this debt of gratitude. We just hope that you can lend us a hand when we run into difficulties in the future."

"This..."

Watching Jiang Hao and Nanrong Hao's hopeful gazes, Ling Chen couldn't help but hesitate.