

The Beauty 1171

Chapter 1171 Important Clues

In the intensive care unit, Ling Beichuan lay on the hospital bed, and several doctors in white coats were performing emergency resuscitation.

With the injection of adrenaline, the straight line on the monitor finally showed a slight fluctuation. Seeing the reappearing waveform, one doctor wiped the sweat off his forehead, let out a breath, and said, "Alright, there's no immediate danger, but we need to monitor him closely for twenty-four hours."

Upon exiting the ward, Ling Chen and Hu Fei, who had been waiting outside, quickly approached and asked, "Doctor, how is he doing?"

"It's not optimistic. This is already the second time this week. His bodily functions are degrading rapidly, and he can now only be sustained by medical equipment. Moreover, he cannot eat anymore. Given his condition, living is also suffering because his life is already at its end. Even if we forcefully extend his life, it won't be of any use. Rather than bringing more suffering, it's better to let him go peacefully."

Ling Chen nodded and said, "I understand. Thank you, doctor."

"You're welcome. I'll head back to the office. Contact me if you need anything."

After seeing the doctor off, Ling Chen and Hu Fei pushed open the door and entered the ward. Looking at Ling Beichuan lying on the hospital bed, Ling Chen frowned slightly. More than a month had passed since their last meeting, and Ling Beichuan appeared even older than before, his complexion was pale, and he exuded an aura of death.

Standing by the bedside, as if sensing Ling Chen's arrival, Ling Beichuan moved his lips. Seeing this, Ling Chen immediately understood, removed the oxygen mask, and asked, "What do you want to say?"

"I can't make it," Ling Beichuan said weakly. "I've been to the gates of hell twice; I don't want a third time. Do you remember the promise you made to me? If I helped you find Ling Gengqiu's grave, would you... would you save me?"

"As long as we find it, I will do my best to keep you alive."

"Alright, you must remember what you said today. I've been investigating for years and identified two important leads: the Guo Family and the Tianling Blade. You can start with these to find Ling Gengqiu's grave."

"The Guo Family?" Ling Chen thought for a moment and asked, "Are you talking about the weapon master Guo Liang?"

Ling Chen had visited the Guo family and interacted with Guo Liang. Guo Liang was a well-known figure, and every weapon he forged was a Divine Weapon. Moreover, the Tianling Blade was a Divine Weapon forged by the Guo family's ancestor.

"That's right."

"Besides you, who else knows about these two leads?"

"Currently, only you know. I discovered these two important leads this year and haven't reported them because I haven't confirmed them. Now it seems, I likely won't get the chance to tell anyone."

"Alright, if I can find Ling Gengqiu's grave, I'll do everything I can to keep you alive." With that, Ling Chen left the ward with Hu Fei.

"Fatty, strengthen Ling Beichuan's security during this period, and expand the personnel to cover the entire hospital perimeter, not allowing any outsiders to get to him," Ling Chen instructed. Right now, he must ensure those two critical clues aren't uncovered by others.

Hu Fei proposed, "I say, let's directly move the old man to the Dragon Tiger Hall and have a few doctors take care of him. With so many experts at the Dragon Tiger Hall, who would dare to cause trouble? Don't you think so?"

Ling Chen nodded in agreement. With Tong Zhentian overseeing the Dragon Tiger Hall, Ling Beichuan's safety would not be an issue.

Then, with Hu Fei's help, Ling Chen arranged for a car and directly transferred Ling Beichuan from the hospital to the Dragon Tiger Hall. Additionally, he hired several doctors and nurses with a heavy price to take care of Ling Beichuan specifically. Who knows what secrets the old man might still be hiding; until Ling Chen found Ling Gengqiu's grave, he couldn't let Ling Beichuan die.

After settling Ling Beichuan, Ling Chen returned home briefly, took the Tianling Blade, and immediately headed to the airport. Now that he finally had leads on Ling Gengqiu, he didn't want to wait any longer but wanted to resolve this matter as soon as possible.

At four in the afternoon, Ling Chen arrived at Beijing International Airport. Having visited Guo Liang before, Ling Chen got off the plane, hailed a car by the roadside, and headed straight to Guo Liang's residence.

Guo Liang lived in a Siheyuan, a legacy from his ancestors. After knocking on the door, the vermilion red gate opened shortly, and a young man peeked out. Upon seeing that it was Ling Chen, he immediately smiled and quickly stepped aside, gesturing welcome.

"Mr. Ling, please come in!"

"Thank you!"

Under the young man's guidance, Ling Chen entered the inner hall. Just after sitting down, he heard a hearty laugh coming through: "This morning, I heard magpies chirping and thought it must be an esteemed guest visiting, but I didn't expect it to be Ling!"

Seeing Guo Liang walk in from outside, Ling Chen hastily stood up and greeted him politely, "Mr. Guo, long time no see."

"It has been a while, but I've heard a lot about your exploits. Establishing the Dragon Tiger Hall and openly embarrassing the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion is already widely known."

Ling Chen awkwardly laughed, "Good news doesn't get out, but bad things spread a thousand miles, it seems I haven't done anything good."

"Honestly, I admire you. Probably only you would dare to go against the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, and that too in front of Old Su. But that's not so bad; the Pavilion has been dominating for hundreds of years, being strong-willed all along—facing some setbacks can also be beneficial." As he spoke, Guo Liang changed the subject and asked, "You wouldn't come here without reason; is there something you need from me?"

Ling Chen nodded, took the backpack off his shoulders, and brought out the Tianling Blade.

"Mr. Guo, you once told me that this Tianling Blade was forged by the Guo family ancestor."

"That's right."

"In that case, I suppose you're very familiar with the Tianling Blade."

Guo Liang said oddly, "Didn't I tell you about the Tianling Blade the last time you visited me?"

"Mr. Guo, as far as I know, the Tianling Blade seems to hide a great secret. Since the Tianling Blade was crafted by your ancestor, I thought you might know something about it."

"A secret?" Now it was Guo Liang's turn to be surprised, "I've never heard anything from my ancestors about it. Ling, are you sure you're not mistaken?"

Ling Chen pondered for a moment, then said, "Mr. Guo, to be frank, this matter is related to my ancestor Ling Gengqiu. I'm wondering if there might be any connection between them."

"I've heard of Ling Gengqiu's name, but unfortunately, the ancestors left no secrets about the Tianling Blade or Ling Gengqiu. So, coming to me won't help; even if there is indeed a secret within the Tianling Blade, I wouldn't know it."

Hearing this, Ling Chen, unwilling to give up, asked, "Mr. Guo, did the Guo family ancestor leave anything behind before passing away?"

Chapter 1172 Guo Qiang (1)

"What was left behind?" Guo Liang thought seriously for a moment and said, "Our ancestors indeed left many things, but none of them seem related to the Tianling Blade you mentioned."

"Mr. Guo..."

Before Ling Chen could finish, Guo Liang raised his hand to stop him, saying, "Alright, you don't need to say more. I understand what you mean. Follow me, I'll take you to have a look." With that, Guo Liang walked straight out.

Soon, the two arrived at an elegant study. The study was very spacious, with a wide desk neatly arranged with the four treasures of the study. On the wall opposite the desk hung a painting by a famous artist.

"Sit down first." Guo Liang pointed to a chair beside him and then walked straight to the painting, moving it aside. Instantly, a safe embedded in the wall was revealed behind the painting. In front of Ling Chen, Guo Liang opened the safe and took out several long wooden boxes.

"These are all items left by the Guo Family ancestors. The maker of your Tianling Blade was Guo Qiang, the third-generation descendant of our Guo Family, and I am the eighth generation. Look, these things are relics of ancestor Guo Qiang, all weapons forged during his lifetime. Since our Guo Family is a family of weapons, weapons are our most valuable wealth."

As the long wooden boxes were opened, several swords and knives were revealed inside, still emitting a cold gleam after many years, incredibly sharp. After examining them for a while, Ling Chen couldn't help but feel disappointed, as there were no clues on the weapons.

Could it be that, as Guo Liang said, the Guo Family ancestors left nothing behind?

As he pondered, the sharp-eyed Ling Chen suddenly noticed that inside one of the long wooden boxes, beside a steel knife, there was also an oil lamp.

"Mr. Guo, is this oil lamp also an heirloom from the Guo Family ancestors?"

Guo Liang nodded and said, "Indeed. This oil lamp has always been kept in this box. What, you don't suspect there's something wrong with the oil lamp?"

Ling Chen remained silent but felt curious. Why would the Guo Family ancestors put an oil lamp in the box? There must be a reason. After all, it's just an oil lamp, not something valuable enough to pass on to descendants.

Thinking of this, Ling Chen asked, "Mr. Guo, can I..."

"Feel free to take a look if you want."

With Guo Liang's permission, Ling Chen gently held the oil lamp, examining it closely in his hands. The oil lamp was an old item, having some age to it, but well-preserved, with a very smooth surface and an intact wick. However, aside from it being an antique, Ling Chen didn't find any clues related to the Tianling Blade or Ling Gengqiu.

Could he have been mistaken? Ling Chen felt puzzled. Suddenly, his eyes lit up, and he quickly brought the oil lamp closer to his eyes. Yes! Ling Chen was overjoyed. In the middle of the oil lamp, there was a very thin seam.

Immediately, Ling Chen grasped the base of the oil lamp with one hand and the top with the other, gently twisting it.

It moved! As the seam in the middle gradually widened, Ling Chen was increasingly certain of his suspicion that there was indeed something unusual about the oil lamp. Beside him, Guo Liang was equally surprised, not expecting Ling Chen to have guessed right that a secret was hidden within this oil lamp by their ancestor.

As the middle of the oil lamp was unscrewed, it revealed a hollow interior with a bamboo tube as thick as a finger. Ling Chen tapped on the bottom of the oil lamp, causing the bamboo tube to fall out immediately.

Picking up the bamboo tube, Guo Liang removed the stopper at the top and shook out a roll of paper from inside. As the paper unfurled, it was densely packed with writing, the size of ants.

"This is needle engraving, a unique technique of our Guo Family," Guo Liang said. "Wait a moment, I'll get something."

Shortly thereafter, Guo Liang brought a magnifying glass and began to read line by line the content recorded on the paper. As Ling Chen had suspected, the content was indeed related to Ling Gengqiu. Moreover, the Guo Family ancestor had an extraordinary relationship with Ling Gengqiu, being sworn brothers.

Reading the roll of paper, Ling Chen was filled with emotions.

The Guo Family ancestor and Ling Gengqiu were sworn brothers. At the time, Ling Gengqiu, who had lived for over two hundred years, was struggling against the pursuit of the Ling Family from the South. Although he wished to retreat into the mountains and sever all ties with the mundane world, his nature was not one to settle down. Later, Ling Gengqiu approached Guo Qiang, seeking help. He told Guo Qiang that someone wished him harm. From Guo Qiang's account, when Ling Gengqiu came to him, he seemed very frightened, as if facing a terrifying situation.

With Ling Gengqiu's abilities, something that could instill fear in him was extremely rare, which Guo Qiang found very strange. However, Ling Gengqiu kept silent about his predicament, and Guo Qiang dared not inquire further.

One night, Guo Qiang, following Ling Gengqiu's instructions, secretly hid in a deserted wilderness. At midnight, Ling Gengqiu was brought there by a group of men in black. At that time, it appeared as though Ling Gengqiu had been kidnapped by the group. Moreover, those men in black were digging all around, seemingly searching for something. However, they didn't find what they were looking for.

That very night, Ling Gengqiu was brutally murdered by the men in black, his body torn apart. Witnessing everything unfold, Guo Qiang didn't intervene. He mentioned in the paper that when Ling Gengqiu sought him out, he had already expressed that he might die. Thus, he requested Guo Qiang to retrieve his body and ensure it was properly buried, never to fall into others' hands.

Guo Qiang complied. When the men in black were about to leave with Ling Gengqiu's body, Guo Qiang launched a stealthy attack. Though not particularly powerful, Guo Qiang was an expert on the Earthly List. Moreover, during the ambush, Guo Qiang had prepared numerous traps hidden around the wilderness.

Utilizing those traps and hidden weapons, Guo Qiang successfully seized Ling Gengqiu's head, torso, and one leg. Due to the urgency, Guo Qiang couldn't grab the other parts of Ling Gengqiu's body and had to escape with what he had acquired.

Afterward, Guo Qiang found a place to build a grave, burying Ling Gengqiu's body parts inside. Besides him, no one else knew about this incident or the exact location of the grave.

Until his last moments, Guo Qiang didn't want the secret to remain buried forever, so he recorded the entire incident on the paper and hid it within the oil lamp. Fortunately, Guo Qiang did this; otherwise, no one would know where Ling Gengqiu had been buried.

Tianling Blade!

In Guo Qiang's final words, he mentioned that the location of the grave was hidden within the Tianling Blade.

Chapter 1173 Guo Qiang (Part 2)

"I never expected that our ancestors had such a relationship." Guo Liang exclaimed, "Ling Chen, it looks like your guess was correct. Since this matter is related to the Guo Family ancestor, is there anything you need my help with?"

"Mr. Guo, the Guo Family ancestor mentioned that all the secrets are hidden within the Tianling Blade. However, I have researched the Tianling Blade before and found nothing. This Tianling Blade is a craft of the Guo Family. I wonder if you could help me uncover its secrets."

Guo Liang nodded and said, "That's no problem. However, if we want to unravel the secrets within the Tianling Blade, it's possible it might get damaged."

"No problem." Compared to the location of Ling Gengqiu's grave, the value of the Tianling Blade is obviously insignificant.

"Alright, no time to waste; I'll get started right away." With that, Guo Liang took Ling Chen to a workshop. This was where Guo Liang crafted weapons; not only was the space spacious, but it also contained all kinds of manufacturing equipment, including some advanced modern devices.

"Mr. Guo, I thought the Guo Family's weapon crafting was all done by hand." Ling Chen remarked.

"It used to be, but things are different now. Our Guo Family needs to keep up with the times. Besides, you can't deny that some modern equipment surpasses handcrafting." Guo Liang placed the Tianling Blade on a steel work table, fixed it with clamps, and said, "Among our Guo Family ancestors, Guo Qiang's craftsmanship was the finest. This Tianling Blade encompasses all the skills of the Guo Family. To find other hidden secrets might take a long time. How about you stay at my place for these two days?"

"Alright, I'll take you up on that."

For the next two days, Guo Liang stayed in his workshop, busy unraveling the Tianling Blade's secrets. Occasionally, Ling Chen would go and check, but he wouldn't stay long to avoid disturbing Guo Liang. Such meticulous work needs a tranquil environment, and Ling Chen didn't want his presence to affect Guo Liang.

Three days later, Guo Liang finally made some progress.

In the workshop, although he hadn't rested much in the past days, Guo Liang was still energetic. As soon as Ling Chen arrived, Guo Liang immediately pulled him to the workbench and pointed to the disassembled parts.

"These are all components of the Tianling Blade. It took me a lot of effort to take them apart, and each piece is intact." After finishing, Guo Liang took a box from the side and handed its contents to Ling Chen, "These items were hidden inside the Tianling Blade. They might be what you're looking for."

Ling Chen carefully inspected the box to find it contained thin iron sheets. Moreover, the iron sheets varied in shape, looking much like a puzzle. Thinking of this, Ling Chen dumped all the iron sheets onto the workbench and started piecing them together one by one. Unsurprisingly, within a short time, a complete palm-sized pattern was assembled.

However, the complete pattern on the iron sheets was very peculiar, composed entirely of irregular lines, chaotic and entirely without apparent clues.

"Mr. Guo, what do you think?" Ling Chen asked. This could be a unique Guo Family method of recording information, and as a descendant, Guo Liang should know what these patterns mean.

Guo Liang scrutinized it for a few moments, his eyes also showing doubt.

"I can't understand this thing."

Upon hearing that, Ling Chen could not help but feel a bit disappointed. Clearly, Guo Liang wasn't deceiving him.

"Mr. Guo, thank you for all your hard work these past days."

Guo Liang smiled and said, "You're welcome, it's something I should do. Now, I've done what I can, and from here, you'll have to rely on yourself. If you need my help, feel free to ask."

With clues from the Tianling Blade in hand, Ling Chen didn't stay in Beijing for long; he took the flight back to East Sea City on the same day.

For two consecutive days, Ling Chen continued researching the mystery hidden within the pattern, to no avail.

"Hey! You've been staring at it for two days. Since you can't find any clues, perhaps you should set it aside for now," Hu Fei advised from the side. In these two days, he had been helping Ling Chen study the pattern, but even after researching for two days, they found nothing.

Ling Chen nodded, knowing deep down that continuing like this wouldn't work. Without new clues, there wouldn't be any progress. Rather than waste time here, he thought it might be better to rest; perhaps a solution would come to him.

"Let's go, let's eat at the cafeteria." Ling Chen called Hu Fei, then stepped out of the control center.

After just a few steps, Ling Chen suddenly turned around, staring at the large screen nearby with a peculiar glint in his eyes.

Could it be...

"What are you daydreaming about?" Seeing Ling Chen standing stationary, Hu Fei stepped forward, patting him on the shoulder, urging, "Let's go!"

"Wait!" Ling Chen snapped back to reality and pointed at the large screen, "What do you see there?"

Hu Fei glanced over it, saying, "Isn't it just a map of East Sea City? What's strange about it?"

"You didn't get what I meant." Ling Chen quickly moved to the large screen, having the technicians zoom in on the map, and pointed to an area, saying, "Don't you think the lines formed by these roads resemble those on the pattern?"

Hearing Ling Chen's hint, Hu Fei's eyes brightened, instantly understanding, and he slapped his forehead, "That's right; those lines could be intersecting routes, which is why there's no apparent order. Aren't we searching for Ling Gengqiu's grave? We just need to find roads symmetrical to those lines to locate the grave." Saying this, Hu Fei couldn't help but praise, "That ancestor of the Guo Family was a genius, using such a method to conceal secrets."

"Alright, let's hold off on praises for now; quickly check East Sea City's map and see which roads match." Ling Chen said excitedly.

"No problem." With this new discovery, Hu Fei and Ling Chen were so engrossed that they couldn't spare time for food, immediately pulling up East Sea City's map and involving all the control center technicians in the search.

Although there was a clue, it was limited, lacking further information. Given the size of East Sea City, pinpointing matching sections was no easy task. The group worked tirelessly from noon until late into the night, with no progress.

Yawning, Ling Chen remarked with a weary expression, "Alright, let's call it a night. Everyone's worked hard; rest early, and we'll continue tomorrow."

As they left the control center, Hu Fei teased, "Not going home tonight? Could you bear letting those beauties keep an empty house alone?"

"Get lost." Ling Chen glared at Hu Fei irritatedly, scolding, "Can't you have less indecent thoughts?"

"I'm just saying, with so many beauties at home, haven't you thought about anything? Like the saying goes, seize the moment. If you don't take action, I'd wonder if you're even a man."

Chapter 1174 - 1181: The Old Man's Critical Illness

"I'm sure I'm a real man, too bad you're not a woman, otherwise I'd let you try it."

Upon hearing this, Hu Fei thought Ling Chen was referring to that thing and was ready to joke around, but then he saw Ling Chen swinging his fist, causing Hu Fei to shrink his head, laugh awkwardly, and quickly run back to his room.

After waking up, Ling Chen washed up casually, gnawing on the just-brewed instant noodles, and headed straight to the control center. By this time, Hu Fei was already up, leading a group of subordinates to continue last night's work. It must be said that Hu Fei is indeed responsible in this regard. As long as there's work, he doesn't mess around, which is why Ling Chen appreciates and relies on him.

"Fatty, how's it going, any findings?" Ling Chen walked to Hu Fei's side and asked.

"There are still two-thirds of the map undeveloped, it will probably take two more days. If you have something to do, go ahead, leave this to me. If there's any progress, I'll notify you."

"Alright then, I'll leave it to you." Ling Chen didn't hold back. He's the kind of person suited to being on the frontline, so it was better to leave technical work to someone skilled; even if he stayed there, he couldn't do much except supervise.

Plus, he had been in Beijing for the past few days and came straight back to the base without going home, so it was time to go see his family.

Driving home, he saw a Rolls-Royce and two Land Rovers parked outside. Zhong Wei and Liang Zhao Hui were standing at the door, waiting for Nanrong Wanqing to come out. "Captain Zhong, Brother Liang," Ling Chen greeted them as he approached, "Is Wanqing not down yet? Why not come in and have a seat."

"No, we'd better wait outside," Zhong Wei replied. "You've been busy lately, haven't seen you this past few days when picking up the chairman."

"I went out of town, just got back. Captain Zhong, how's everything at home?" Ling Chen was asking about the Nanrong Family, as he hadn't visited in a long time.

"Things aren't well, especially the old master, his health is getting worse, he's been bedridden every day, unable to walk."

Ling Chen's expression shifted slightly, and he asked with concern, "How did this happen? Wasn't he fine not long ago?"

"I'm not sure either, heard the condition worsened, there are doctors and nurses keeping watch around the clock to prevent anything happening to the old master." As he said this, Zhong Wei glanced at the door and whispered, "The old master instructed us not to tell the chairman for now, so she won't worry."

"With how things are, it's impossible to hide it from her for long. Alright, I'll visit the Nanrong Family later to check on the old master."

As they spoke, Nanrong Wanqing came out of the house. When she saw Ling Chen return, she simply asked a couple of questions and then got into the car with Zhong Wei.

After watching the motorcade leave, Ling Chen didn't even enter his house but drove straight to the Nanrong Family.

At eight-thirty in the morning, Nanrong Hao had already gone to work at Hongyu Group, and Liu Kun was responsible for receiving Ling Chen.

"Uncle Liu, how is the old master's health?"

"Who told you about it?"

"I ran into Captain Zhong this morning, he mentioned the old master's condition to me."

Liu Kun sighed softly and said, "The old master's condition is indeed severe, the doctors have issued two critical notices. However, the old master has good fortune, having survived twice, and his condition is stable now. But the doctors aren't optimistic about his condition, there's a risk of relapse at any time."

Speaking, the two approached the bedroom where Nanrong Yong resided.

"You can go in by yourself."

Ling Chen nodded, pushed the door open, and entered the bedroom. At this time, Nanrong Yong was lying on the bed receiving an IV drip and reading a newspaper, with an unfinished breakfast beside him.

"Ling Chen, what wind blew you here today?" Nanrong Yong put down the newspaper and asked with a smiling face.

"Old master, it's been a while since I visited you, I had some time today, so I came to see you."

Nanrong Yong was highly perceptive and could easily tell Ling Chen's true intention. However, he didn't point it out and gestured toward the chair beside the bed, saying, "Have a seat. It's been a while since anyone chatted with me."

"Has that girl Wanqing been staying with you lately, not causing any trouble?"

"Old master, how could you say that? There's no trouble, everyone's quite lively together."

"That's good, I'm worried she'd be upset seeing me like this when she returns."

Ling Chen hesitated for a moment and said, "Old master, why don't you tell Wanqing? She is your granddaughter and has the right to know about your condition."

Nanrong Yong waved his hand and said, "No need for that. I am already an old codger, bound to end up in a coffin sooner or later, why make everybody unhappy. Besides, Wanqing and the rest still have to manage Hongyu Group, splitting their attention to take care of me might exhaust them. All in all, do me a favor and please don't tell Wanqing for now."

"Nanrong Hao should know about your condition, right?"

"He only knows I'm sick but doesn't know how serious it is. I deliberately hid it from him because I was afraid he'd tell Wanqing." At this point, Nanrong Yong sighed and said, "Actually, I've already made psychological preparations. Last year, when undergoing a check-up, the doctors basically gave me a death sentence. If I'm lucky, I might live another two years. By the looks of it now, it doesn't seem like I'll last two years. Ling Chen, if there comes a day when I'm gone, I hope you'll look after Wanqing and Nanrong Hao. Although Wanqing is quite independent, she's still a woman at the end of the day, and that punk Nanrong Hao hasn't matured and can't bear heavy responsibilities. So the Nanrong Family needs a man like you to help hold the fort."

"Old master, Wanqing and Haozi are both my friends, if needed, I will definitely do everything I can to help. However, I think you shouldn't give up so soon, with today's advanced medical technology, there could still be a miracle."

"A miracle?" Nanrong Yong smiled faintly, "If I were 30 to 40 years younger, perhaps I'd believe in miracles. Ling Chen, I'm in my seventies or eighties, well past the age of believing in miracles. At this age, one must learn to accept reality. Alright then! No need to persuade me, do me a favor, try to keep this from Wanqing, don't let her know."

Ling Chen replied helplessly, "Old master, if Wanqing finds out, she might hate me."

"Then just don't let her find out." Just then, two doctors entered, saying, "Sir, it's time for treatment."

Ling Chen stood up and said, "Old master, I won't disturb you then, have a good rest, I'll come visit you again in a few days."

After leaving the Nanrong Family, Ling Chen looked up at the azure sky and sighed. Nanrong Yong's condition was very concerning, and if it doesn't improve, he might not have much longer to live. It seems he needs to speed things up. Thinking of this, Ling Chen took out his phone and dialed a number.

Chapter 1175 - 1182: Crisis at the Group's Branch (1)

"Chairman." Wang Lan walked into the office and placed a document on Nanrong Wanqing's desk, saying, "This is the material sent from Beijing, please have a look."

Nanrong Wanqing was looking at the computer screen and replied, "Just leave it there, I'll look at it later."

"Chairman, you'd better take a look at this material first."

"What's the matter?" Nanrong Wanqing looked up at Secretary Wang Lan and asked, "Is there something urgent?"

"This is a report from the Beijing branch. Manager Cheng called me and hoped you would review the material first."

Nanrong Wanqing was somewhat surprised, "Why couldn't he call me directly? Is there something he's afraid to tell me?" Despite saying this, Nanrong Wanqing still picked up the material and started reading it carefully.

Before she had even finished browsing the contents, Nanrong Wanqing's face had already turned cold, like frost in the winter month.

"No wonder he didn't dare to call me directly." Nanrong Wanqing tossed the material on the desk, and after pondering for a moment, she said, "Go get Nanrong Hao for me, I have something important to discuss with him."

"Yes, Chairman, I'll notify the young master immediately."

Within five minutes, Nanrong Hao was already in Nanrong Wanqing's office. As soon as he entered, he detected something was off; his elder sister's expression was icy, as if someone owed her billions. Having lived with Nanrong Wanqing for so many years, he knew her temperament well. Her behavior indicated she was genuinely angry.

Afraid of provoking Nanrong Wanqing at this moment, Nanrong Hao cautiously smiled and asked, "Sister, did you need me for something?"

Nanrong Wanqing pointed to the material on the desk and said expressionlessly, "Take a look at this material first; we can talk about the rest afterwards."

After spending a few minutes reviewing the document, Nanrong Hao couldn't help but frown. Now he understood why his sister was angry; if it were him, he'd probably fly into a rage immediately. It's commendable that Nanrong Wanqing's self-restraint was good enough to suppress her anger without venting it.

"Sister, those guys are real bastards; they're clearly out to get us!"

"The Beijing branch is the first step in Hongyu Group's expansion. I've spent years putting together a team to establish a strong foothold in Beijing. The manager in charge, Manager Cheng, has been with Hongyu Group for years and is very capable. Over the years, the development of the Beijing branch has been smooth, and we've built excellent relationships with major companies. But this attack on the Beijing branch is clearly deliberate, an attempt to suppress our Hongyu Group." At this point, Nanrong Wanqing paused and continued, "I need to go to Beijing personally to deal with this situation. Nanrong Hao, while I'm away, I'm leaving Hongyu Group in your hands, so take it seriously, do you understand?"

"Sister, how about I go with you?" Nanrong Hao suggested. "After all, Beijing isn't our turf. I'm worried you might be in danger going alone."

"What's there to worry about? I don't believe those people have the guts. Alright! I've already made my decision. I'll head over there by plane this afternoon. Wang Lan will assist you with Hongyu Group; she's my secretary and knows our business well."

His sister had spoken, so Nanrong Hao didn't dare argue and just complied. He knew his sister had invested a lot of effort into the Beijing branch, and it was Hongyu Group's first step in outward expansion. As the saying goes, a ship sailing against the current must forge ahead or it will fall behind; business is the same. Especially for a large company like Hongyu Group, if they can't actively seek development and merely be content with the status quo, they will eventually fail. There are countless examples of this in the business world.

Night fell.

After a busy day, Ling Chen returned home to find that Zhu Xiaozhu and two other women were there, but Nanrong Wanqing was nowhere to be seen. He couldn't help but ask, "Where's Wanqing? Isn't she back yet?"

"She's on a business trip to Beijing," Liu Xiyao said. "She'll probably be back in about a week." Then Liu Xiyao teased with a smile, "What, it's just been a day and you're lovesick already?"

Ling Chen cleared his throat, "Sister Xiyao, I was just asking casually. Don't overthink it."

"I'm going back to Beijing tomorrow too," Zhu Xiaozhu chimed in. "My mom called and said my dad wasn't feeling well and asked me to go back and check on him."

Upon hearing this, before Ling Chen could respond, Tang Shiyun's eyes lit up, and she took Zhu Xiaozhu's hand joyfully, "Sister Xiaozhu, you can go with me then."

Ling Chen was startled for a moment and asked, "Are you going to Beijing too?"

Tang Shiyun stuck out her tongue and nodded slightly, "There's an award ceremony in Beijing in a few days, and I've been invited to be the opening guest, so I need to go early for rehearsals. Ling, you'll miss me after a few days of not seeing me, won't you?"

"I already miss you," Ling Chen said, then looked at Liu Xiyao and asked, "You're not going to Beijing too, are you?"

Liu Xiyao smiled, "I'd love to, but I'm worried about you. If we all leave, who will stay to accompany you?"

Even though Ling Chen knew Liu Xiyao was joking, he still felt a little embarrassed. He's noticed that these women, once together, like to have fun at his expense more and more.

"You two be careful on your way. I've got some things to do over the next few days, so I won't be able to see you off. Call me when you get back, and I'll pick you up at the airport."

Just then, Yang Qingling called from downstairs, "Ling Chen, we have a guest!"

"Coming!" Ling Chen replied, quickly making his way to the first-floor living room, where he saw Nanrong Hao sitting on the sofa, looking rather troubled.

"Haozi, what brings you here today? Your sister went on a business trip to Beijing, and Hongyu Group is left for you to manage; you must be busy."

"Chen, I'm here about my sister," Nanrong Hao replied.

Hearing this, Ling Chen asked confusedly, "What's wrong? Your sister didn't get into trouble, did she?"

"Nothing has happened yet, but I still feel uneasy. This trip to Beijing is likely dangerous for my sister. Chen, you're the person we trust the most; you have to help me with this."

"Don't worry, take your time to explain. Tell me, what exactly happened?"

"Here's the situation..." Nanrong Hao then proceeded to explain the situation.

After listening, Ling Chen finally understood the cause of the matter. It turned out that Hongyu Group's branch in Beijing had suffered severe losses due to a joint attack by competitive rivals. That's why Nanrong Wanqing put aside her current tasks and rushed directly to Beijing to handle the situation there.

Chapter 1176 - 1183: Crisis in the Group Branches (2)

"Haozi, business competition is quite normal, what's there to worry about?" Ling Chen thought Nanrong Hao was making a fuss over nothing. Doing business is like this, there are ups and downs, wins and losses; no one can guarantee they'll always be successful on this road.

"Chen, I know all that, but the problem is this time all our competitors have joined forces, including some big companies that have nothing to do with us at Hongyu Group. They're not doing it to suppress us, but to destroy Hongyu Group. Chen, if it were fair business competition, we Hongyu Group fear no one; if we lose, so be it, it doesn't matter. But this time it's different, those people don't play by the rules; not only do they send people to make trouble at our branch offices, they intentionally injure our employees and forcefully threaten them. In just a week's time, nearly half of Beijing branch's employees have voluntarily resigned. At this rate, that company will sooner or later go bankrupt."

"This sort of thing too?" Ling Chen was somewhat surprised.

Nanrong Hao said frustratedly, "I also don't know exactly what's happening or why they're doing this. Including those obscure small companies, they've all come out and want a piece of Hongyu Group. Chen, Sister doesn't have many connections in Beijing, only Captain Zhong and others to protect her, I'm really worried something might happen to her."

Ling Chen nodded. So many companies suddenly turning hostile, all targeting Hongyu Group, must be due to Nanrong Yong. Nanrong Yong is critically ill, his life is at constant risk. Although Nanrong Yong has taken measures to conceal this matter, there are no walls that don't let wind through, and the rivals of the Nanrong Family must have heard something, which is why they choose to act at this time.

Don't be fooled by Nanrong Wanqing being the chairman of Hongyu Group, constantly smooth-sailing, the main reason is still Nanrong Yong's presence. Nanrong Yong single-handedly built Hongyu Group; even in his old age, he possesses extraordinary influence in the business world.

Therefore, as long as Nanrong Yong remains seated at the Nanrong Family, no one dares to covet Hongyu Group. Now, with Nanrong Yong gravely ill, it's inevitable that some with ulterior motives will be drawn.

Although Hongyu Group is just a local enterprise, Ling Chen knows well that there is a fair amount of envy towards them. East Sea City is a well-known economically developed city internationally, among the vast Huaxia, aside from one Beijing, there's only East Sea City. Furthermore, East Sea City is a municipality with generous policies from the government. More importantly, East Sea City has many ports, each one is a goldmine.

Of East Sea City's three ports, two are controlled by the government, the other by Hongyu Group; all export trade must pass through Hongyu Group.

Thus, despite Hongyu Group being merely a local enterprise with business confined to East Sea City, its annual profit is alarmingly high. In the domestic top 500, Hongyu Group has long ranked in the top ten spots. Precisely because Hongyu Group occupies such a flourishing city, it attracts the envy of countless.

Once the pillar of Nanrong Yong collapses, Hongyu Group will face a huge crisis.

The marketplace is like a battlefield, this saying rings true; no wonder Nanrong Hao is so concerned about Nanrong Wanqing's safety. "Haozi, our sphere of influence is in East Sea City; there's no manpower in Beijing to use. How about this, since you're worried about your sister's safety, why not dispatch a few people from East Sea City to protect her secretly, what do you think?"

"That seems to be the only way. Chen, thank you!"

"There's nothing to thank me for. Haozi, your grandfather's health is poor; from now on, you need to learn to take on the responsibility of the Nanrong Family."

"I understand."

While they talked, Ling Chen suddenly received an unknown phone call. After chatting for a few minutes, he hung up and asked, "Haozi, are you going home later or heading to Hongyu Group?"

"There's nothing much today, heading straight home."

"Alright, I'll go with you, just right as I have matters to discuss with your grandfather."

Over half an hour later, the two drove to the Nanrong Family. At this moment, there was a car parked outside the Nanrong Family. After saying a word to Nanrong Hao, Ling Chen walked alone to the car and gently knocked on the window.

As the window rolled down, a middle-aged man poked his head out, looking at Ling Chen and asking, "Mr. Ling?"

"It's me."

Confirming Ling Chen's identity, the middle-aged man got out of the car with a metal briefcase, and they entered the Nanrong Family together. Soon, they arrived at Nanrong Yong's bedroom.

Seeing the stranger beside Ling Chen, Nanrong Yong curiously asked, "Who is this?"

"Sir." Ling Chen walked straight to the bedside and whispered a few words into Nanrong Yong's ear. It was unclear what he said, but Nanrong Yong nodded, looking at the middle-aged man and said, "Thank you."

The latter wordlessly moved to the bedside, put down the metal briefcase, and then took out a syringe and a few vials of unknown medication. After mixing the medication, the middle-aged man directly injected it into Nanrong Yong's arm.

After the injection, Nanrong Yong became drowsy and soon fell into a deep sleep.

"How long can the effect of this medicine last?" Ling Chen asked the middle-aged man.

"It's uncertain; different people have different physical conditions, so the effects vary." As he spoke, the middle-aged man took out several more vials from the metal briefcase and handed them to Ling Chen,

"These are for backup, you can use them once more. If he doesn't make it, inject him once again to extend his life for a while."

"Can't it be continuously injected?"

"No!" The middle-aged man said, "This medication is still in the experimental stage and has certain side effects; if used excessively, it will cause severe body function exhaustion, ultimately accelerating death. Thus, this can only be used sparingly. If it were for young people, it could be used three to four times; for an elderly person like him, at most twice."

"I see. Thank you!"

"Mr. Ling, my task is complete; if there's nothing else, I'll take my leave."

"Alright, I'll see you out."

Throughout, the middle-aged man did not reveal his name. When Ling Chen learned of Nanrong Yong's condition, Ling Tao immediately came to mind. Through the study of that severed arm, Ling Tao and his team have made significant progress in the medical field. Previously, the God Organization researched those drugs, and Ling Tao is also researching them. So, Ling Chen contacted Ling Tao via porridge girl, hoping he could provide some help to alleviate Nanrong Yong's condition and let him live longer.

After waiting for about three hours in the Nanrong Family, Nanrong Yong finally woke up.

At this moment, a few doctors who had been waiting by immediately conducted a thorough examination of Nanrong Yong's body.

Chapter 1177 - 1184: Clues on the Old Map

The test results are very optimistic; the illness has been contained, and Nanrong Yong's body has basically returned to normal. This result allowed Ling Chen and the others to breathe a sigh of relief.

"Old man, how are you feeling?" Ling Chen asked with a smile.

"I haven't felt this comfortable in a long time." Nanrong Yong stretched lazily and, with Ling Chen's help, took a couple of steps. On the balcony, Nanrong Yong looked at the clear sky and slowly exhaled a breath.

"Ling Chen, thank you, you saved me once again." Nanrong Yong was a sensible person, knowing that his illness had stumped even the doctors and professors, yet that mysterious middle-aged man had merely injected him with a mysterious drug, and his body had immediately recovered to its original state, proving the extraordinary nature of the drug. Without Ling Chen's help, it would have been impossible for him to receive such advanced medication.

Ling Chen smiled faintly: "Old man, don't mention it. I'm a friend of the Nanrong Family; this is what I should do, you don't have to stand on ceremony."

After speaking, Ling Chen changed the topic and said, "Old man, recently, Hongyu Group has encountered some trouble."

"I know." Nanrong Yong said calmly, "These were all within my expectations. The assets and interests of Hongyu Group are tempting, and if anything were to happen to me, those bastards would certainly not pass up such a good opportunity. Unfortunately for them, no matter how much they planned, they still came up short, not expecting me to live this long. Just in time, we can use this opportunity to lure out those with ulterior motives and eradicate them all at once so that Hongyu Group can have peace of mind."

"Old man, what are you planning to do?"

"Are you asking what I'm planning?" Nanrong Yong laughed and said, "What I need to do is lie in bed and rest well, and let Wanqing handle the other matters."

"Wanqing?" Ling Chen was slightly taken aback and asked in surprise, "Do you intend to let Wanqing handle the crisis alone?"

Nanrong Yong nodded and said, "That's right. I will give some assistance in secret, but she will have to principally rely on herself. Ling Chen, don't underestimate Wanqing, she is someone I have personally cultivated, and I'm very aware of her capabilities. Besides, this crisis is also a kind of training for her."

After Nanrong Yong's condition stabilized, Ling Chen intended to stay a while longer to chat with him, but a phone call from Hu Fei made him rush to the base. Walking into the control center, Ling Chen couldn't wait to ask, "Fatty, have you found the location of the tomb?"

Hu Fei nodded and said, "I have investigated the map of East Sea City entirely, but no matching location was found."

On hearing this, Ling Chen asked curiously, "Could it be that Ling Gengqiu's tomb isn't in East Sea City?"

"No." Hu Fei smiled smugly and said, "If it were someone else, it would probably be difficult to find the whereabouts of the tomb. You should thank God for having someone as smart as me to help you." Saying this, Hu Fei displayed a map on the large screen and explained, "This is the latest map of East Sea City, but we've been on the wrong track. The roads drawn by Guo Qiang are hundreds of years old, and in these hundreds of years, East Sea City has undergone tremendous changes; most of the old roads have been changed. So, we've wasted so much time and haven't found any clues at all."

"I spent a day and found several old maps in the database. After comparing and confirming repeatedly, I finally found some clues." As Hu Fei spoke, he pressed a few keys on the computer, and three area maps were displayed on the big screen immediately.

"Look, these three regional maps were found from old maps, and their road layouts are very similar to the pattern."

Ling Chen examined them closely and asked, "Is there any place that's a hundred percent match?"

"No, the similarity of these three regional maps is around ninety percent," Hu Fei said, "After all, they are roads from hundreds of years ago, many roads have been altered and are untraceable, so we can only investigate these three places one by one."

"That's not difficult." Ling Chen said.

"If you think like that, then you're gravely mistaken." Hu Fei said with a wry smile, "These three places are all in the city center of East Sea City; one is the city government, one is a private office building, and the other is the National Security branch. Aside from the office building which is easier to check, the

other two places are more troublesome; if you alarm the local government, it could reveal the tomb's location."

Ling Chen nodded silently; what Hu Fei said made sense; all of these considerations had to be taken into account. After thinking for a moment, Ling Chen walked to the large screen, pointing out the three locations separately, and said, "Ling Gengqiu's tomb must be constructed underground; regardless of whether it's the city government or the office building, when they were being constructed, it was necessary to dig a foundation. Especially for an office building, the taller the building, the deeper the foundation; when they dug the foundation and didn't find the tomb, this indicates the tomb's position is very deep. We can dig a tunnel from these three places directly to the bottom. This way, we won't disturb those above and can achieve our goal. What do you think?"

"Yes, that's what I was thinking too. Without accidents, it can be done in about three days."

"As soon as possible, and by that time, you, I, and Boss Tang will each be responsible for one place."

"Alright, I'll arrange the manpower now, striving to start construction today."

Night fell.

Ling Chen led a team to a shopfront about fifty meters away from the city government. This shopfront was newly rented for a high price by them; to cover their actions and facilitate operations, a safe environment was necessary, and this place was undoubtedly the best choice.

The number of people Ling Chen brought wasn't large, only about twenty people. Having too many people would attract attention, so maintaining a low profile was preferable. After completing the preparations, Ling Chen took off his jacket and directly started working with the team.

In less than two hours, they had dug a pit over two meters deep, large enough to accommodate four people at the same time. Since the area of the shopfront wasn't very large, machines couldn't be brought in, so manual excavation was necessary.

They worked continuously for five hours, and Ling Chen finally couldn't hold on, dragging his weary body out of the pit to rest for a while.

Just like that, an entire night passed. With the efforts of more than twenty people working through the night, the pit's depth had reached sixteen meters. Since it needed to reach the bottom of the city government, the pit was dug at an angle downward, facilitating both digging and movement.

After working tirelessly for a whole night, by the next morning, Kaelina brought another team to take over. According to Ling Chen's plan, a passage must be dug within three days. To meet the deadline, they had to work extra hours, with two teams rotating shifts.

Returning to the base, Ling Chen didn't stop to rest but first met with Hu Fei and Tang Guolun to discuss their progress. Tang Guolun, given the best location for excavation, had the fastest progress and had already completed one-third of the task, Hu Fei and Ling Chen were about the same.

Chapter 1178 - 1185: Nighttime Killing Intent (Part 1)

When Ling Chen returned home, he went straight to his room, fell asleep without even taking a shower, and slept until dusk.

At that moment, Ling Chen, drowsy with sleep, was awakened by the sound of his phone ringing. He picked up the phone, glanced at the number displayed, and answered the call with a yawn, asking, "Fatty, what do you want?"

"You're still sleeping?" Hu Fei hurriedly said upon hearing Ling Chen's yawn, "Stop sleeping, something happened in the area you're responsible for."

"Something happened?" Ling Chen was slightly startled and instantly became awake, asking, "Fatty, explain clearly, what exactly is going on?"

"Two hours ago, someone attacked the storefront next to the city government, over twenty people were injured, and Kaelina has disappeared. Her whereabouts are currently unknown. The brother who just went over to deliver food discovered something was wrong and immediately called me."

"Kaelina disappeared?" Ling Chen's expression slightly changed as he quickly sat up from the bed and said in a deep voice, "Wait for me there, I'm coming over right away."

After hanging up the phone, Ling Chen, hungry all day, didn't even bother with dinner and drove directly to the city government.

By the time Ling Chen arrived, Hu Fei and Tang Guolun were already there, a group of people was helping the injured brothers into cars to send to the hospital for treatment. "Fatty, Boss Tang." Ling Chen swiftly walked over and asked, "What's the situation?"

"Fortunately, no one was killed, just seriously injured." Tang Guolun said, handing several items to Ling Chen, "These are things we found at the scene. Take a look and see if you recognize them."

Ling Chen examined the items in his hand, a hint of surprise appearing in his eyes. These things... are not only sharp but also very small, similar to darts used by ancient experts, but the material of these darts is very special, hard in texture, lightweight, and balanced for use. Besides, the end of the dart has a double dragon emblem.

"I've never seen this kind of thing before," Ling Chen said.

"We found many at the scene, nearly everyone was injured by these things," Hu Fei spoke, "Moreover, I think the assailants deliberately avoided taking their lives. I've checked their wounds, everyone narrowly avoided the fatal parts, being able to do this definitely requires expertise. You've had more encounters in this area, can you find any clues?"

"I'll do my best to try." After pausing, Ling Chen asked, "What about the tunnel? Was it damaged?"

Tang Guolun sighed and said, "The tunnel was destroyed, it needs to be re-dug. I'm contemplating what kind of person would do this?"

Faced with Tang Guolun's doubt, the first thing Ling Chen thought of was the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. However, the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion seems to have no such motive. What Ling Chen wants to find out most now is whether the opposite side deliberately destroyed the tunnel or if it was unintentional.

If it were the latter, Ling Chen wouldn't have to worry. But if it's the former, then it's a big problem, indicating that they clearly know the purpose of digging the tunnel.

Could it be... besides himself, someone else knows Ling Gengqiu's secret?

Thinking of this, Ling Chen couldn't help but feel worried. After pondering for a moment, Ling Chen walked aside, took out his phone, and dialed a number. A few minutes later, Ling Chen returned to Hu Fei and Tang Guolun, saying, "Fatty, stop the progress on your and Boss Tang's sides, send everyone over here, also get Beison's team, let them be responsible for safety in this area."

Upon hearing this, Hu Fei couldn't help but ask, "You don't think Ling Gengqiu's tomb is right here, do you?"

Ling Chen nodded and said, "I think there's a ninety percent chance. I just called Mr. Guo; he hasn't revealed a bit about Ling Gengqiu to outsiders. Think about it, we have three places digging tunnels, the other side didn't go to you, but came here instead, and destroyed the already dug tunnel, what does this indicate? It indicates that the other side likely knows about the tomb."

"So, they're trying to stop us from finding the tomb?"

"Very possible. But, what really perplexes me is who they are. Since they already knew Ling Gengqiu's secret, why didn't they dig the tomb? Moreover, their approach seems more like protecting Ling Gengqiu's tomb, what do you think?"

Tang Guolun thought for a moment, then said, "Regardless of their purpose, what we should do now is find Kaelina."

"Of course we have to find Kaelina, but we shouldn't worry about her safety," Ling Chen chimed in, "The assailants only injured people, no killings, indicating they have no intention to kill. So, they likely won't harm Kaelina."

Just as he spoke, Ling Chen's phone rang. Seeing the caller, Ling Chen promptly answered, asking, "Where are you? ...Okay, I know." Hanging up the phone, Ling Chen looked at Tang Guolun and said, "Seems my guess was right, they don't intend to trouble Kaelina."

Hu Fei immediately understood and asked, "Was it Kaelina's call?"

"Correct, she's back at the base now. Let's go, let's return and take a look."

Returning to the base, Ling Chen and the others saw Kaelina appear unharmed and couldn't help but breathe a sigh of relief.

"Miss Kaelina, did the person who caught you harm you?"

"No," Kaelina replied, looking at Ling Chen, "Can we chat alone?"

"No problem."

Once in the meeting room, Ling Chen asked, "What do you want to say?"

"The person who caught me was a woman. She asked me to pass a message to you, not to touch things you shouldn't. This is only a warning, if there's a next time, she won't let you off easily."

"A woman?" Ling Chen's brows furrowed slightly. From Kaelina's words, it's certain that the other side knows about the tomb's existence. Moreover, they played a protective role. Who could these people be? Ling Gengqiu has been dead for hundreds of years; who would still guard his tomb? Could it be descendants of Ling Gengqiu? Ling Chen remembered Ling Tao mentioning that Ling Gengqiu's descendants are numerous and scattered worldwide. It's possible Ling Gengqiu secretly cultivated a lineage during his lifetime to protect his tomb.

However, if Ling Gengqiu had arranged this beforehand, then why ask Guo Qiang for help? Isn't this redundant?

Thinking about these, Ling Chen felt increasingly puzzled, baffled. "Kaelina, did she mention her identity?"

"No. She kept her face covered the entire time, but judging from her voice, she didn't seem very old, at most around twenty."

"Alright, I understand." Ling Chen nodded, already having a notion. Regardless, he must uncover the woman's identity. There's certainly a reason behind the protection of Ling Gengqiu's tomb for hundreds of years.

Chapter 1179 - 1186: Killing Intent in the Dark Night (2)

Two days passed in the blink of an eye.

Since the assault that day, Ling Chen had strengthened the security forces around the tunnel, with Beison's team monitoring 24/7. Furthermore, Ling Chen had moved directly into the shopfront to prevent that woman from launching another sneak attack.

During these two days, Ling Chen sped up the excavation progress, reaching over forty meters deep. If all went smoothly, they'd likely discover Ling Gengqiu's tomb in about a day. On this day, Ling Chen stood outside the tunnel, supervising his subordinates' work. Watching bucketfuls of soil being hauled up, Ling Chen felt an excitement he couldn't suppress.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

At this moment, a sudden knocking sounded from outside. Ling Chen turned to look at the rolling shutter door, sensing something was amiss. They had agreed beforehand that if there were knocks of three longs and three shorts, it meant their own people had arrived.

"Beison, who's out there?"

Soon, Beison approached with a handheld monitor. Seeing the situation on screen, Ling Chen silently cursed! Outside the door was Xia Mutong, and besides her, there were more than ten police officers.

How did she end up here? Ling Chen was a bit surprised; he hadn't contacted Xia Mutong for a long time, she couldn't possibly know where he was. Moreover, Xia Mutong seemed to be on a mission to catch a thief.

Knock! Knock! Knock! Knock! Knock! Knock!

The knocking outside grew louder, and simultaneously, Xia Mutong's voice came from outside: "Police, open the door!"

"Mr. Ling, what should we do?" Beison asked, "Should we..."

Before Beison could finish, Ling Chen waved his hand and said, "Don't worry about it, I'll handle the police outside. You continue with the plan." After saying this, Ling Chen walked to the door and had someone lift the rolling shutter door. As the door rose to knee height, Ling Chen bent down and slipped outside, quickly lowering the door to block the police outside.

At this moment, seeing Ling Chen emerge from inside, Xia Mutong looked very surprised, "What are you doing here?"

Ling Chen asked with a bitter smile, "Officer Xia, I should be asking you how you knew my whereabouts. Also..." Ling Chen pointed to the policemen behind Xia Mutong and asked, confused, "What are you doing? Arresting criminals?"

"We received a report saying that here..." Before she finished, Xia Mutong suddenly realized something and looked at Ling Chen warily, asking, "Don't ask what I'm here for. Instead, let me ask you, what are you doing here, and why won't you let us in?"

"Officer Xia, I just rented this place. Why can't I be here? Besides, we're not doing anything illegal, and if people see such a big commotion, it'll create a very bad impression. How will I run my business afterwards?"

"Is it really like that?" Xia Mutong looked at Ling Chen half-believing, saying, "If that's the case, why don't you take me in for a look? If it's truly as you say, I'll immediately withdraw, won't make things difficult for you."

Ling Chen hesitated for a moment and then nodded, "Alright, you come in with me, others stay outside, lest they scare my brothers." After speaking, Ling Chen lightly knocked on the door. Soon, the rolling shutter door lifted, and Beison, clad in work clothes, walked out from inside.

"Boss, what's up?"

"It's nothing, Officer Xia suspects we're engaging in illegal activities, so I'm taking her in for a look."

After entering the shopfront, Xia Mutong saw over ten youths in work attire, painting walls, others dismantling dilapidated cabinets, with wood planks, dust, and dirt all over the ground.

Ling Chen walked beside Xia Mutong, smiling, "Officer Xia, as you can see, we're renovating."

"Then why did I receive a report saying illegal activities are happening here?"

Ling Chen shrugged, helplessly saying, "You know my background, it's definitely someone trying to displease me, targeting me deliberately. Hey! Did the person who reported say who they are?"

"No."

"There you go. They're guilty, afraid you'll pursue them, so they didn't leave a name. Officer Xia, it's rare for us to meet, why don't we go to the tea shop across the street?"

Xia Mutong glared at Ling Chen, speaking with exasperation, "Do you think I'm like you? I'm currently at work, don't have time to accompany you. Alright, since there's no issue here, I won't disturb your work."

Watching Xia Mutong turn to leave, Ling Chen secretly breathed a sigh of relief and hurriedly called for the rolling shutter door to be lowered. Meanwhile, several youths cleared away the wooden boards on the ground, revealing a two-meter wide tunnel. Inside the tunnel, at least forty people were hidden. Fortunately, Ling Chen was prepared, avoiding exposure to Xia Mutong. Otherwise, he'd have to waste breath explaining again.

Regarding Xia Mutong's arrival, Ling Chen didn't feel much, instead, he felt a small anticipation. Xia Mutong's sudden visit indicated that the assault's culprit had acted. Well, he had waited so long, they finally showed up!

As night fell, dozens of workers continued their excavation. Ling Chen glanced at the time and said, "Beison, keep watch for me. I'm going out for a midnight snack, will be back soon."

"No problem, boss."

Leaving the shopfront, it was already late night, the wide streets were desolate, not a person in sight, occasionally a taxi sped by.

Ling Chen walked along the road to another street, seeing several barbecue stalls set up by the roadside, business was not booming, only two or three customers. Ling Chen walked up, ordered two handfuls of skewers, plus a bottle of beer, enjoying his drink.

Apparently very hungry, soon, Ling Chen finished the skewers, wiped his mouth in satisfaction. After paying, Ling Chen bought more food, preparing to reward his brothers back home. It had been exhausting days of excavation, as the boss, he had to show some gratitude.

Returning, it was past midnight, all the street lights by the roadside extinguished, roads were pitch black, not even a hand could be seen.

Suddenly, a fierce gust of wind came, swiftly reaching Ling Chen's proximity. The adversary was exceedingly fast; in a flash, Ling Chen sensed danger approaching. Without thinking, Ling Chen pivoted swiftly, quickly retreating, a cold glint brushed past, just grazing his neck.

What a close call! Ling Chen was startled, didn't expect the opponent to be so skillful.

When Ling Chen readied his defenses, prepared for another bout, the assailant vanished, disappeared into the surrounding darkness. Ling Chen looked around, ears perked, carefully listening to the surroundings. Yet, while he heard the sound of leaves falling, he couldn't hear the attacker's footsteps.

Impossible... no one can hide so well, unless they are a Heavenly List master. Clearly, the one who ambushed him was no Heavenly List master. Otherwise, nine lives wouldn't be enough for him.

Chapter 1180 - 1187: Deadly Intent in the Dark Night (Part 3)

In a flash of thought, Ling Chen reached into his pocket and pulled out a lighter. As the flame flickered, aided by the faint light, Ling Chen could barely make out his surroundings within a meter or so. But at that moment, a whooshing sound came. Before Ling Chen could identify its origin, there was a sharp crack and the lighter in his hand was struck by something hard, falling directly to the ground.

Not a bad aim! Ling Chen squinted slightly, growing more alert in his heart.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

Suddenly, two more cutting sounds sliced through the air. This time, Ling Chen acted without delay, swiftly changing position to evade the ambush.

"Friend, since you're here, why not come out and meet? Or is it because you're too ugly and dare not show your face?" Ling Chen asked. Although unaware of the opponent's identity, Ling Chen could sense the adversary's strong prowess.

In this pitch-black environment, where even he could not detect the opponent's location, this person could accurately pinpoint his position. That alone was sufficient proof of their skill.

Whoosh!

A whizzing sound resonated as Ling Chen prepared to dodge. But then, a subtle footstep came from behind him.

Finally here!

Confirming the opponent's position, Ling Chen's lips curled up, immediately turning and throwing a punch towards the opponent. As the steel fist shot out, Ling Chen felt a rush of joy. He had hit something... Wait, no! Ling Chen's expression changed as he stretched his right hand forward, feeling something soft. Was it... clothes? Ling Chen was startled; he had heard of such a technique before—Golden Cicada—a very ingenious escape tactic.

Although he had only ever heard about it, never seen it before, he now got to witness it firsthand.

Just as Ling Chen was marveling at the other party's technique, a strong sense of danger suddenly erupted from within him.

Damn!

Ling Chen narrowed his eyes and took a sharp step back. Unfortunately, his movement was a fraction too slow, as a fierce gust of air closed in quickly. Fortunately, although slightly late, Ling Chen managed to narrowly avoid a critical hit. Feeling the coolness on his chest, Ling Chen touched it and found a long tear in his shirt.

If he'd been a tad slower, he might've been gutted.

Who on earth is this? Ling Chen pondered with furrowed brows. He's not afraid of experts but does fear tenacious opponents like this. This person strikes and immediately retreats, disappearing into the darkness without a trace, leaving no tracks to follow.

This person isn't an expert but an assassin. Experts strike directly, engaging head-to-head, defeating opponents with sheer strength. But assassins won't do that; their aim is clear: kill the target by any means, including utilizing the environment. Only truly skilled assassins know how to make use of their surroundings. Just like this opponent, lurking in the darkness, waiting for a chance to strike fatally.

This person indeed is formidable, but... Ling Chen smirked to himself; what assassins need most is patience, and he... has it in abundance. Formerly when carrying out missions for the Phantoms, to assassinate a target, he could lie in wait motionless for two days and nights, without food, no bathroom breaks, not even blinking. If he were an assassin, he would surely rank among the world's top-tier, making the first and second on the assassin list step aside.

At that time, the assassin also realized Ling Chen was tough to deal with, so they didn't dare continue their assault.

As time ticked by, Ling Chen and the assassin remained silent, neither making a move, both waiting for the other to show a flaw.

During this time, several taxis sped past Ling Chen. Seeing him standing in the middle of the road, the taxi drivers mistook him for someone hailing a cab, several stopped, asking where he was headed.

However, Ling Chen ignored them. He didn't want to expose a weakness and give the assassin an opportunity. Moreover, he didn't want to flee. Having finally drawn the opponent out, he needed to understand the situation.

In the blink of an eye, over two hours passed.

Neither Ling Chen nor the assassin had moved, both waiting for the other to make the first move. Bored, Ling Chen spoke, "Friend, was it you who ambushed Kaelina and the others last time? Kaelina said you're a woman? I can't understand why you women choose to be assassins, is it fun? I say, you should find a boyfriend and enjoy the joys of being a woman."

Seeing no response from the other side, Ling Chen wasn't surprised, continuing, "If you don't have anyone suitable, I can help find a few prospects. I have several friends who are quite excellent in every way, not too old, just right for you. However, they have high standards; their partner has to be good-looking. I wonder if you meet their criteria. How about you come out and let me have a look?"

"Ah, never mind, beautiful women wouldn't become assassins, only masculine tomboy types would do this sort of thing. But being ugly isn't a problem, today's medicine is so advanced, many hospitals offer plastic surgery. I think you should give it a try. Once you're pretty, you'll have plenty of men chasing you. Then you'll find that making life is more enjoyable than taking it. If you don't believe me, I can let you experience it for free. How about it, interested?"

"Shameless! Vulgar!" Finally, a cold shout came from the darkness.

Ling Chen looked toward the direction of the sound but didn't launch a direct attack. He knew, after making a sound, the opponent would surely change positions. To rush in now would be to fall into their ambush. Though he'd wasted much breath, it wasn't entirely fruitless; at least he'd confirmed the opponent's identity.

Moreover, Kaelina was right; from the sound of that woman's voice, she didn't seem very old.

In thought, Ling Chen chuckled, saying, "Isn't that how men act in front of women? Once you get a boyfriend, you'll understand."

Regrettably, the opponent didn't continue the conversation. Ling Chen spoke for a few more minutes, seeing the other side gave no reaction, he simply closed his mouth, and they both fell back into silence.

Perhaps from standing too long and saying so much, Ling Chen found himself hungry again. Fortunately, he still had some previously purchased barbecue on hand. Though cold, it's better than nothing. Now, Ling Chen opened a bottle of beer, munching on barbecue skewers while staying alert to his surroundings.

"Hey, are you hungry? Want to sit down together and have a bite?" Ling Chen started baiting again.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

At that moment, several whooshing sounds targeted Ling Chen's vitals. Already prepared, Ling Chen grinned slightly, immediately dodging. Simultaneously, his wrist flicked, and over ten sharp skewers shot out, aimed at the direction from which the projectile had come.

While eating the barbecue earlier, Ling Chen had secretly kept the skewers. Their tips were sharp enough to serve as projectiles.