

The Beauty 1181

Chapter 1181 Zhu Qing (1)

The assassin hidden in the shadows did not expect Ling Chen to have such a move. As the wooden skewer shot out, Ling Chen immediately heard a muffled groan.

Hit! Ling Chen's eyes brightened, and without a word, he immediately sped up, rushing toward the direction the sound came from. Quickly, a dark shadow flashed before Ling Chen's eyes. Trying to escape? Ling Chen sneered, and instantly executed the Nine Yang Qiankun Step. In an instant, his speed reached its peak, transforming into a residual shadow, chasing after that dark figure.

At this moment, the shadow seemed to sense the danger getting closer and suddenly turned around, flicking their wrist slightly, sending several cold glints cutting through the air. However, those cold glints all merged into the darkness, missing their target. Just then, a gust of wind blew, forcing its way close to the shadow.

Bam!

Before Ling Chen could make a move to subdue the opponent, an explosion suddenly sounded at his feet. Then, thick smoke spread out, concealing the shadow. Seeing this, Ling Chen didn't hesitate and quickly reached into the smoke. But the assassin had already vanished, leaving nothing in the smoke. Damn! Ling Chen couldn't help but curse under his breath. Such a good opportunity, and the opponent managed to escape.

However, the technique used by this assassin gave Ling Chen a sense of déjà vu. Some time ago, while dining in a restaurant with Nanrong Wanqing and the three other women, they had encountered assassins. At that time, those assassins also used this method to escape.

Could there be some connection between the two? Thinking about it, Ling Chen's attention was suddenly caught by something. At his feet, there were a few drops of fresh blood. And a meter away, there were also a few drops of blood. Looking in that direction, not far away, there was a small alley. The assassin had been hit by the sharp wooden skewer and certainly didn't expect to leave traces.

Without much thought, Ling Chen silently heightened his vigilance and walked quietly towards the alley. The width of the alley could only accommodate three people walking side by side. In the center of the alley, there was a trash can, surrounded by a lot of clutter.

After a careful glance, Ling Chen immediately locked his target onto the trash can. As he walked over, Ling Chen found a few more drops of blood. As the trash can got closer, Ling Chen's pace gradually slowed down. With about three meters left to the trash can, Ling Chen suddenly stopped, took out his phone from his pocket, and turned on the light. Instantly, the entire alley was filled with a faint light.

At this moment, behind the trash can, an assassin dressed entirely in black was curled up in the corner, pressing the right hand tightly against the left arm. However, blood was still gushing from the sleeve, dripping onto the ground. Don't underestimate the attack of those wooden skewers, for Ling Chen, being a master on the Earthly List, possessed powerful Inner Strength. Those wooden skewers, enhanced by Inner Strength, had lethality no different from bullets, directly piercing through the assassin's left arm.

Looking at the light emitted from across the trash can, the assassin gritted her teeth and took out two sharp daggers and a small iron ball from her waist.

Taking a deep breath, the assassin, with her back against the wall, suddenly sprang into action, throwing the iron ball down to the ground with a "bang" sound. For a moment, smoke spread, and the light became blurry. Taking advantage of this opportunity, the assassin moved forward, brandishing the two daggers in her hands, stabbing toward where the light was.

However, just as she made a move, the assassin immediately sensed that something was wrong. In the smoke, aside from her, Ling Chen was nowhere to be found.

Where is he?

"Hey! Miss, are you looking for me?" At this time, an annoying voice came from behind.

Before the assassin could react, Ling Chen instantly pressed to her back, gently tapping his forefinger. Instantly, the assassin felt her whole body go soft, as if all her strength had drained away, collapsing directly to the ground.

Seeing Ling Chen's smug look, the assassin coldly shouted, "You despicable!"

Ling Chen shrugged, smiling, and said, "How am I despicable? All is fair in war, I'm just smarter than you." With that, Ling Chen picked up his phone, casting all the light onto her body.

The assassin before him had a petite figure, dressed in black, wearing a face mask, leaving only a pair of bright, beautiful eyes exposed. At this moment, those beautiful eyes were full of hatred. Ling Chen directly ignored the look in her eyes, squatted down, and said, "Miss, of all the people you could trouble, you chose me. I'm not the kind to pity the fairer sex. Come, let me see what you really look like."

With those words, Ling Chen reached out, grabbed her mask, and despite her protests, pulled it off.

Instantly, Ling Chen's gaze froze, staring blankly at that exquisite face. So beautiful! He had thought this woman would be average-looking, but it turned out she was not only a beauty but an extraordinary one. With fair skin, faint willow-like eyebrows, a slightly uptilted delicate nose, and thin lips like tempting cherries, making one want to take a bite.

Faced with Ling Chen's displayed amazement, the woman bit her thin lips lightly, eyes brimming with anger and embarrassment. If her body were not unresponsive, she really wanted to take a bite back.

"Tsk, ts!" After a while, Ling Chen finally snapped back to reality, grinning and saying, "Miss, you're so pretty. Why be an assassin? What a waste of resources."

"It's none of your business." The woman gritted her teeth in hatred and shouted coldly, "Ling, if you're going to kill me, just do it. Stop wasting time with your nonsense."

"No rush, I can hardly bring myself to hurt such a pretty lady. But there are a few questions I must clarify. Who are you? What organization do you serve? Why did you ambush me?"

"No comment." The woman coldly spat out a few words.

Hearing this, Ling Chen wasn't angry. He smiled and said, "It's alright; you'll tell me eventually." With that, ignoring the woman's struggle and resistance, Ling Chen picked her up directly, hoisting her onto his shoulder, taking large strides out of the alley.

"You... let me go..." The woman was anxious, her hands weakly patting Ling Chen's back, trying to break free from his grasp. Ever since she was little, she had never had physical contact with the opposite sex. Ling Chen's action was undoubtedly a form of violation for her.

Slap!

Ling Chen mercilessly slapped her, landing on her perky behind.

"Behave, you're my prisoner now, you have no right to make demands."

"You... you bastard!" Feeling the heat from her buttocks, the woman was filled with humiliation and anger, her skin tinged with a faint rosy color. Her entire body was burning, wishing she could find a hole to crawl into.

Bastard! Shameless bastard! Dirty rogue! The woman used all the curse words she could think of on Ling Chen. Growing up, no other man had dared to treat her this way. Ling Chen was the first!

Chapter 1182 Zhu Qing (Part 2)

It wasn't long before Ling Chen returned to the base with the assassin. It was already late at night, and except for the security personnel on duty, everyone else was resting. Ling Chen didn't wake Hu Fei and the others but instead took the assassin directly to his bedroom.

"What do you want?" The assassin asked warily, watching Ling Chen with a cold voice. The fact that he didn't lock her in a cell but instead brought her to his room made her uneasy. It was late at night, and she was on his turf. If Ling Chen forcibly did something to her... The thought made her even more anxious.

Ling Chen glanced at the assassin and saw her vigilant eyes, clearly understanding her thoughts.

"Don't worry." Ling Chen slightly raised the corners of his mouth and said with a smile, "I'm not interested in you, so you don't have to be afraid of me."

Not interested? Hearing this made her feel even more uncomfortable. Why? She had the looks and the figure, and in her family, she was considered a top beauty, with countless men pursuing her. Hmph! Why was he not interested in her?

Sensing the anger in her eyes, Ling Chen found it odd. He had already said he wasn't interested, so why was she angry?

Forget it! Ling Chen couldn't be bothered to guess her thoughts. He rummaged through the drawer to find a few items, then turned back to her, and said, "Take off your clothes."

Take... take off her clothes? If it weren't for Ling Chen being beside her, she would've thought she heard wrong.

Seeing her sitting there motionless, Ling Chen couldn't help but urge, "What are you still standing around for? Hurry up and take off your clothes."

"You... you bastard, you pervert, Ling, I... I would rather die than let you succeed." The woman said indignantly.

Ling Chen was slightly taken aback, then realized the misunderstanding in his words, and with a wry smile, said, "Aren't you overthinking this? I never meant to bully you; I just noticed your arm is injured and wanted to help treat it. Well! Since you don't want me to touch you, you can handle it yourself." With that, Ling Chen placed the disinfectant alcohol and bandage in front of her and retreated to sit on the bed.

Seeing the bandage and disinfectant, the woman realized she had misunderstood Ling Chen, blushing slightly and lowering her head in embarrassment.

While she treated her wound, Ling Chen asked, "What's your name?"

"Zhu Qing."

"Zhu Qing..." Ling Chen nodded, smiled, and said, "Nice name."

"You... you..." Zhu Qing hesitated for a moment, unable to help but ask, "Why are you doing this? I'm your enemy, you..."

Before Zhu Qing could finish, Ling Chen slightly smiled and responded, "You might be mistaken; in my eyes, you're not an enemy. Although you've injured many of my men, I know you only meant to stop them without intending to kill. However, misunderstanding aside, I want to understand why you're preventing me from finding the tomb? Regarding Ling Gengqiu, do you know some secrets I don't?"

"I'm the Guardian of the tomb," Zhu Qing said.

"Guardian?" Ling Chen was taken aback and asked curiously, "Who would hire an assassin to guard a tomb?"

Hearing this, Zhu Qing's face suddenly turned sullen, and she said angrily, "Don't use the term 'assassin' to describe me; it's an insult."

"Aren't you an assassin?" Ling Chen asked puzzledly. When he fought with Zhu Qing, her techniques were clearly special methods used by assassins. Moreover, such skills could only be acquired after years of training. So, in his eyes, Zhu Qing was not only an assassin but an elite one trained from childhood.

"I'm an assassin, not a killer." Zhu Qing corrected.

Assassin? Ling Chen was confused. Is there a difference between assassins and killers?

Noticing Ling Chen's confusion, Zhu Qing patiently explained, "Killers work for money; they have no morals or rules. As long as there's enough profit, killers can do anything, including killing the elderly, women, and children. But we assassins are different. We follow rules, do not kill recklessly, and don't do things against our conscience. And the most important difference between us and killers is loyalty."

"Assassins and killers have one thing in common: serving their employer. Once we take a mission, whether it spans decades or centuries, as long as our descendants remain, they'll continue to carry it out without abandoning it midway."

Hearing this, Ling Chen immediately realized the crucial point.

"Was it Ling Gengqiu or Guo Qiang who hired you to protect the tomb back then?"

"Guo Qiang." Zhu Qing replied, "Guo Qiang was a friend of our Zhu family's ancestor. All our family's weapons were crafted by Guo Qiang. At the end of his life, Guo Qiang asked our ancestor from the Zhu Family to protect the safety of a tomb. To this day, this mission has been passed down to me."

Ling Chen nodded, as expected. This tomb was built by Guo Qiang; only he knew its location. So, Ling Gengqiu wasn't involved in this matter. However, Ling Chen still found it strange. Since Guo Qiang asked the Zhu Family to guard the tomb, it indicated he didn't want it to be disturbed. Yet, he left clues about the tomb at his death.

Guo Qiang's actions seemed contradictory; why? Ling Chen sighed helplessly at the thought. Guo Qiang had been dead for so many years, and perhaps only he knew the reason.

"Lady Zhu, I think you should know that Ling Gengqiu is my ancestor."

"That doesn't matter to me. Since we've taken the task, we'll continue until the end, unless you kill me." Zhu Qing said firmly.

Ling Chen shrugged and said, "Alright, in that case, I can only be impolite. Before I uncover the tomb, you'll stay here. After it's over, I'll decide what to do with you."

"You can't do this. It's been hundreds of years; since he's your ancestor, he should rest in peace without being disturbed."

"Lady Zhu, some matters aren't that simple. It's an internal affair of the Ling Family, and you don't need to know about it."

Ling Chen called over a few subordinates, arranged a room for Zhu Qing, and considering her skills, he increased security to prevent her escape.

After resting overnight at the base, the next day, Ling Chen and Hu Fei drove to the vicinity of the city government.

Upon entering the shop, Ling Chen chatted briefly with Beison, inquiring about the excavation progress. After working day and night, the tunnel was very close to the tomb. If all went well, they would find the tomb's location today.

Chapter 1183 - 1190: Entering the Tomb

Half a day had passed.

The workers deep inside the tunnel finally delivered good news: they had discovered the tomb. Upon hearing this, everyone's spirits were greatly lifted. Ling Chen hurriedly ordered, "Fatty, quickly get someone to bring the equipment over."

"Okay," Hu Fei responded.

Not long after, under Hu Fei's arrangements, all the equipment was transported to the site. Carrying a few pieces of equipment, Ling Chen, with a backpack on his back, led Hu Fei and Beison directly down the tunnel. The tunnel was very spacious, accommodating two or three people without feeling crowded. At the top of the tunnel, a light bulb was placed every five meters, providing light in the pitch-black space.

Soon, the three of them reached the end of the tunnel. Looking at the wall in front of them, Ling Chen reached out to knock on it, gauging the thickness of the wall.

"Fatty, give me the stuff."

Without a word, Hu Fei pulled plastic explosives from the backpack and handed them to Ling Chen. Since the tomb was already hundreds of years old, to prevent the explosion from damaging its structure, they had to use precise blasting. After spending more than ten minutes, Ling Chen installed the explosives and then retreated more than twenty meters with Hu Fei and Beison.

Bang!

With a loud explosion, smoke mixed with dust rushed rapidly from deep within the tunnel. Fortunately, Ling Chen and the others had prepared for this, all wearing gas masks, so they were not affected. As the smoke gradually cleared, Ling Chen eagerly rushed to the end of the tunnel.

At this time, the explosives had blasted a round hole about a meter in diameter in the wall. Thanks to Ling Chen's blasting skills, the explosion was well-controlled and did not affect other areas. To be cautious, Ling Chen did not enter the tomb directly but threw a few glow sticks inside to assess the situation first.

The builder of this tomb was Guo Qiang, a master of casting who was also very skilled in mechanisms. Therefore, Ling Chen was extraordinarily careful to avoid any unexpected incidents.

On the other side of the wall was a corridor about two meters wide. Hu Fei placed a pre-prepared machine reconnaissance vehicle into the corridor, and through wireless transmission, controlled the vehicle to advance deeper into the tomb.

The tomb was not very large, covering an area of about three hundred square meters. From the images transmitted back by the detector, Ling Chen noticed that the corridors in the tomb were numerous and intricately connected. "Why haven't we found the coffin yet?"

Hu Fei, pointing at the screen's image, said, "See that? There's a tomb gate there. Ling Gengqiu's coffin is likely hidden inside."

"Then we have no choice but to go in ourselves." The reconnaissance vehicle couldn't open the heavy tomb gate, so they had to do it by hand.

"How's the air quality inside?"

Hu Fei glanced at the data displayed on the screen and nodded, "Not too bad."

"No time to waste. I'll take the lead, and Beison, you cover the rear." With that, Ling Chen checked his equipment and crawled into the circular hole.

Since the reconnaissance vehicle had scouted the route beforehand, Ling Chen wasn't too worried about traps. In no time, the three arrived at the heavy tomb gate.

With his hands on the gate, Ling Chen exerted his full strength, and the thick tomb gate slowly moved. As it opened, a pungent odor wafted out. Fortunately, the team wore gas masks and were unaffected.

A glow stick was thrown inside, dispelling much of the darkness in the burial chamber. Ling Chen faintly saw a stone coffin.

"Fatty, you and Beison wait outside. I'll go in and check out the situation."

Hu Fei cautioned, "Be careful." Beison said nothing but handed Ling Chen an anti-explosion shield.

Passing through the tomb gate, Ling Chen stepped forward slowly, each step taken with great caution. Since no traps were found in the corridor earlier, if there were any, they would most likely be in this burial chamber.

The floor of the chamber was pieced together with square-shaped stone bricks, each about half a meter wide. Ling Chen moved forward while observing his surroundings. Suddenly, he felt his right foot sink slightly.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

Instantly, a dozen sharp winds rushed from both sides of the wall, piercing the air.

Without a second thought, Ling Chen immediately raised the anti-explosion shield, blocking the Crossbow Arrows from the left. Simultaneously, relying on keen hearing, Ling Chen swiftly determined the position of the Crossbow Arrows on the right. Using the Nine Yang Qiankun Step, he agilely dodged the arrows one by one.

Once the wave of arrows ended, Ling Chen stood motionless with the shield for over ten seconds. Confirming no more arrows would come, he finally lowered the shield, letting out a sigh of relief. Just as expected, Guo Qiang had indeed set traps in this burial chamber.

Right now, there was about a six-meter distance to Ling Gengqiu's coffin. Though not far, Ling Chen dared not be reckless. The closer to the coffin, the more likely the stone bricks on the ground would conceal traps.

After some thought, Ling Chen pressed the anti-explosion shield gently against the stone tiles in front of him. Only after ensuring the tiles were safe did he take a step forward. This cautious approach was slow but guaranteed safety.

Five meters... Gazing at the coffin so close, Ling Chen took a deep breath.

He had checked five stone tiles in succession, all safe. However, Ling Chen remained on high alert rather than relaxed.

At this moment, the anti-explosion shield he thrust forward sank slightly. Before Ling Chen could react, there was a 'bang' sound, as if something heavy had dropped.

Turning to look, Ling Chen saw a thick stone door fall at the tomb gate, sealing the exit tightly.

Oh no!

Ling Chen muttered a warning to himself and hurried to the tomb gate, inspecting the stone door. This door was extremely thick, even more substantial than the previous tomb gate. This stone door was likely the true Sealing Tomb Stone; anyone entering the chamber triggering the trap would be trapped inside for sure.

Regrettably, though Guo Qiang's idea was good, that was centuries ago. Guo Qiang could never have imagined, when he built this tomb, that technology would advance so fast hundreds of years later. A mere stone door wouldn't stop them.

At once, Ling Chen took out plastic explosives from his backpack, installing them at the stone door's four corners. Since all three wore wireless earpieces, communication was trouble-free.

Bang!

With a resounding explosion, the stone door was instantly shattered.

As the dust settled, Hu Fei and Beison entered the burial chamber with their equipment.

"Are all the traps cleared?"

Ling Chen nodded, "I've checked everything; it's all clear." That stone door was likely Guo Qiang's last resort; beyond that, there were no more traps around the coffin.

Standing beside the coffin, Hu Fei joked, "Ling Chen, what are you thinking right now?"

"What do you think I should be thinking?"

"You're about to meet your ancestor. Aren't you excited, or thrilled?"

"Knock it off. Enough with the nonsense. Let's open the coffin."

Chapter 1184 - 1191: Opening the Coffin

Ling Chen took a deep breath; the coffin was about to be opened, and it was impossible not to feel excited. If there were no issues, the most important parts of Ling Gengqiu's remains should be inside this coffin. Once Hu Fei finished all the preparations, Ling Chen and Beison lifted each end of the coffin lid together, exerting force to slowly raise it and place it onto the floor.

As the lid was lifted, Hu Fei immediately shone a flashlight into the coffin. Upon seeing the contents, Hu Fei's expression turned exceptionally strange. Noticing his change in expression, Ling Chen, still holding the coffin lid, urgently asked, "Fatty, what's the matter?"

"Ling Chen, I think you should see this."

Hearing this, Ling Chen hurriedly put down the coffin lid and walked over to the coffin. He looked closely, and his expression shifted slightly. Inside the two-meter-long coffin, there was a skull, a ribcage, severed arms and leg bones, while all other parts were cast in gold.

Seeing those bones, Ling Chen understood Hu Fei's meaning. Before opening the coffin, Ling Chen was confident that Ling Gengqiu's head and trunk should be well-preserved and not reduced to bones. However, from the current situation, his previous thoughts were all wrong.

Ling Gengqiu's remains had all turned to bones, offering no research value.

"Ling Chen, it seems we were too optimistic. After hundreds of years, it's impossible for a corpse to remain intact."

"No!" Ling Chen exclaimed. "There's definitely a problem here." He had once seen Ling Gengqiu's severed arm; Ling Tao had told him it was found in a cemetery. At that time, the coffin contained a skeleton, but Ling Gengqiu's severed arm remained intact, as if freshly cut. If that arm could be preserved, the rest of Ling Gengqiu's body should have been too. Unless something happened that caused Ling Gengqiu's remains to change.

"Fatty, collect these bones and take them back for research."

Hu Fei nodded, placing the bones into vacuum-sealed bags he had prepared in advance. Meanwhile, Ling Chen wandered around the tomb, looking for signs of intrusion. Yet, to Ling Chen's disappointment, all entrances to this tomb were sealed tight, showing no signs of tampering. Thus, apart from the three of them, no one had entered in hundreds of years.

Before long, Hu Fei finished gathering all the bones from the coffin. The three swiftly retraced their path back to the surface.

"Beison, stay here. Make sure the passage is sealed off and everything restored without leaving traces."

"Understood, boss!"

Back at the base, Hu Fei immediately sent the bones to the laboratory for testing and research by the scientific staff. Simultaneously, Ling Chen called porridge girl to inform her of what had happened and expressed his wish to contact Ling Tao.

The Northern Ling Family placed great importance on this matter, and shortly after Ling Chen hung up, Ling Tao called.

"Did you find more of Ling Gengqiu's remains?" Ling Tao asked directly, his tone reflecting his excitement.

"Found them, but we have a big problem." Ling Chen then described what he had witnessed.

"What?" Ling Tao sounded taken aback. "That's impossible. The other parts of Ling Gengqiu's body are all well-preserved; the main body parts should be even more intact."

"I thought so too. So now, I need to conduct a test to see what's really happened."

Ling Tao pondered for a moment, then said, "I'll send you some information later. Compare it carefully to see if there's any issue. Save this number; notify me immediately once the test results are out."

"Okay, I'll sort it out as soon as possible."

After hanging up, Ling Chen headed directly to the laboratory to oversee the technicians' work. After several hours, the test results were finally out.

Ling Chen examined the test results, comparing them with the information sent by Ling Tao, and furrowed his brows.

So that's what it is, no wonder... Leaving the lab, Ling Chen went straight to the control center.

"How is it, are the results out yet?" Seeing Ling Chen approaching, Hu Fei quickly asked.

Ling Chen said little but handed over the test results and the other document directly. Hu Fei examined them for a few moments, his expression changing as he exclaimed, "The bones in the coffin aren't Ling Gengqiu's? This... how is that possible? Could it be your clue was wrong?"

"The clue should be correct. The tomb we found is certainly Ling Gengqiu's burial site; the problem is whether Guo Qiang really buried Ling Gengqiu's remains there back then."

Upon hearing this, Hu Fei immediately understood Ling Chen's implication and responded, "Are you saying...the tomb is just a decoy, and Guo Qiang buried Ling Gengqiu's body elsewhere?"

"Exactly. The only thing I can't figure out is why Guo Qiang did this. If he didn't want Ling Gengqiu's body found, he could have destroyed the clues. Since he left clues to the tomb, he must have had his reasons."

"It's been hundreds of years; even if he had his reasons, no one knows them now. Ling Chen, what should we do now? Should we continue chasing this lead or..."

Ling Chen resignedly said, "There's nothing else to investigate; the only lead is gone. Guo Qiang's descendant, Guo Liang, knows nothing about this, so we can't rely on him. I think we should temporarily set aside the matter of Ling Gengqiu and pursue it again once new evidence emerges."

"Alright then." Hu Fei paused and then switched topics, asking, "How are you planning to deal with the girl you caught?"

"You mean Zhu Qing? I'm quite interested in her background; I'll decide once I understand more about her origins."

Entering the room where Zhu Qing was detained, Ling Chen asked the security personnel guarding it to leave before walking in alone.

Although Zhu Qing was a prisoner, Ling Chen did not mistreat her. Apart from restricting her freedom, Zhu Qing enjoyed good food and sleep here. Hearing footsteps approach, Zhu Qing kept her eyes on the television, not acknowledging Ling Chen at all.

Ling Chen grinned indifferently, walked over to Zhu Qing, and said, "Lady Zhu, I've entered that tomb."

Zhu Qing replied coldly, "Congratulations on obtaining what you wanted."

"No, I didn't find what I wanted. Furthermore, the one buried in that tomb isn't Ling Gengqiu."

"Impossible!" Zhu Qing blurted out, "That was clearly Ling Gengqiu's tomb."

"Lady Zhu, I think we've all been deceived by Guo Qiang. I want to know, how much do you know about that tomb?"

Chapter 1185 - 1192: Kyoto Factions (1)

"I don't know anything," Zhu Qing maintained her indifferent demeanor.

Ling Chen smiled slightly, knowing Zhu Qing surely had some information, but she was unwilling to share it with him.

"Lady Zhu, if you tell me what you know, I might consider letting you go. How about it?"

"What if I refuse? Besides, how do you know I know anything about Ling Gengqiu's affairs? I'm just responsible for execution, everything else is none of my concern."

Ling Chen nodded and said, "Alright, since you don't want to speak, I won't force you. Seek me out when you decide to talk. Until then, you'll have to stay for a while longer. Don't worry, I'll cover your meals and accommodation, free of charge."

Watching Ling Chen stand up and leave, Zhu Qing couldn't help but panic and hastily called out to him, "Wait! Ling, I warn you, if my family finds out you're detaining me, they won't let you off."

"Is that so?" Ling Chen chuckled lightly, "Alright then, I welcome them to come find me. I've been bored lately. Lady Zhu, hope you enjoy your stay here. Bye!" With that said, Ling Chen opened the room door and walked straight out.

Beijing.

In a five-star hotel, Nanrong Wanqing sat alone in a guestroom, reviewing company documents.

Knock, knock, knock!

At this moment, a knocking sound resonated from outside the door. Liang Zhao Hui, who was stationed in the living room, rose up and opened the door, facing a young waiter pushing a serving cart, and asked, "What do you want?"

"Hello, room service."

Liang Zhao Hui frowned slightly and asked, "We didn't order room service, did we? Are you sure you have the right room?"

"Wait!" Zhong Wei chimed in, "Let me ask the chairman, maybe he ordered it." Saying this, Zhong Wei headed straight towards the bedroom where Nanrong Wanqing was staying. As Zhong Wei turned his back, the waiter at the door suddenly lifted his shirt edge, pulling out a sharp dagger from his waist, stabbing directly at Liang Zhao Hui's body.

Everything happened swiftly, before Liang Zhao Hui could react, he felt a piercing pain in his chest. Looking down, he saw the dagger blade had fully penetrated his body, blood instantly staining the white shirt inside.

Hearing the commotion behind him, Zhong Wei quickly turned around. Seeing Liang Zhao Hui covered in blood, his expression changed drastically, he shouted and immediately charged forward, aiming a punch at the waiter's head.

The opponent, realizing the situation was unfavorable, quickly used Liang Zhao Hui's body as a shield. Seeing this, Zhong Wei, concerned about inadvertently harming Liang Zhao Hui, retracted his attack. Taking advantage of the moment, the waiter shoved hard, causing Liang Zhao Hui to lose his balance, falling backward onto Zhong Wei. Meanwhile, under Liang Zhao Hui's armpit, a blood-stained dagger was thrust directly into Zhong Wei's abdomen.

In an instant, both Zhong Wei and Liang Zhao Hui were injured, collapsing to the ground together.

After dealing with Zhong Wei and Liang Zhao Hui, the waiter, holding the dagger, immediately strode towards the guestroom. However, he quickly realized the guestroom door was securely locked. Inside, Nanrong Wanqing had forcefully pushed a wardrobe against the wall, blocking the door. Moreover, she had piled up tables and chairs on top to prevent anyone from breaking in.

Moments ago, when Zhong Wei shouted, Nanrong Wanqing knew something was wrong. There's no way out, so she had to stay inside the bedroom and wait for rescue.

Picking up the room's landline, Nanrong Wanqing quickly dialed the front desk, hoping to call hotel security up. However, the landline seemed to have been disconnected, filled with busy signals.

Mobile phone!

Even in such an emergency, Nanrong Wanqing managed to remain relatively calm, hurriedly retrieving her cellphone from her wallet and dialing the emergency number.

Knock, knock, knock! Knock, knock, knock!

Suddenly, a hurried knocking, accompanied by a strange man's voice, came from outside the door.

"Miss Nanrong, are you in there? Hurry, open the door, I've come to rescue you."

Nanrong Wanqing put down her phone and asked calmly, "How do I know you're not an imposter?"

"It was Haozi who sent me. Hold on, I'll have Haozi call you." As the voice fell, within two minutes, Nanrong Wanqing's phone rang, it was indeed a call from Nanrong Hao.

After confirming the caller's identity, Nanrong Wanqing quickly cleared away the clutter and pushed the door open. At this moment, the spacious living room gathered more than ten people, Zhong Wei and Liang Zhao Hui lie on the ground, several young men attending to their wounds. In the corner of the living room squatted a young man dressed as a waiter. His hands were tied behind his back, presumably beaten up, covered in bruised marks.

Without paying attention to the young man, Nanrong Wanqing anxiously asked, "How are the two of them doing?"

"Not very optimistic. Miss Nanrong, don't worry, the ambulance will arrive soon."

"Miss Nanrong, hello." Then, a young man walked over and said, "We've met before, I wonder if you remember me."

Nanrong Wanqing scrutinized him, somewhat unsure, "You are... Mr. Jiang?"

The young man nodded and said, "It's me, I'm Jiang Yunkai, Chen and Haozi's brother. They entrusted me to secretly protect your safety." As he said this, Jiang Yunkai glanced at the blood-covered Zhong Wei and Liang Zhao Hui and sighed, "Sorry, this time it's our work oversight. I thought it was just a regular business competition, never expected someone would send an assassin to attack you. Had I taken precautions earlier, this wouldn't have happened."

"Mr. Jiang, don't blame yourself, I never thought even my rivals could be this ruthless." With that, Nanrong Wanqing looked at the young man in binds and asked, "Is he the assassin?"

"That's right. Miss Nanrong, how do you plan to deal with him?"

"I've already called the police, when they arrive, he can be directly..."

Before Nanrong Wanqing could finish, Jiang Yunkai interjected, "Miss Nanrong, forgive my bluntness, handing him over to the police won't do any good."

"Why?"

"Think about it, who are your competitors? Each one holds power and influence, if the assassin falls into police hands, they have a hundred ways to make him disappear. Then, you'll never know the mastermind behind this."

Upon hearing this, Nanrong Wanqing asked, "Mr. Jiang, what's your suggestion then?"

"Keep him, leave him to me to handle, I'll help you uncover those behind him," Jiang Yunkai said, "Miss Nanrong, I hope you understand, some matters can't be resolved with conventional means. If Chen and Nanrong Hao were here, they'd surely agree with my decision. Miss Nanrong, what do you think..."

"Alright then." After pondering for a moment, Nanrong Wanqing nodded and said, "Mr. Jiang, I'll leave this to you."

Chapter 1186 - 1193: The Beijing Factions (2)

Before long, ambulances and police cars arrived one after another. Liang Zhao Hui and Zhong Wei were taken to the hospital, while Nanrong Wanqing was asked to stay by the police to give a statement.

"Miss Nanrong, please rest assured, we will catch the murderer as soon as possible."

"Thank you," Nanrong Wanqing replied coolly. Before the police arrived, Jiang Yunkai had already left with the assassin.

Shortly after the police left, Nanrong Wanqing stood alone on the balcony, quietly gazing into the distance. What happened tonight was unexpected for her. Over the past week or so, she had been running around seeking help. However, the results were not very promising. As she knew, many businesspeople had formed alliances, planning to jointly carve up the Hongyu Group. To prevent this from happening, she needed to find someone to help. Otherwise, Hongyu Group alone would have difficulty resisting such a commercial onslaught.

However, over the past few days, she had visited many elders, all friends of her grandfather, hoping they could lend a hand. But those people all brushed her off. They said nice things, but when it came time to take action, everyone made excuses to shirk responsibility.

Knock, knock, knock!

At this moment, there was a knock on the door outside. A few security personnel left behind by Jiang Yunkai quickly walked to the door and opened it.

"Haozi!"

Hearing the commotion at the door, Nanrong Wanqing turned around and saw Nanrong Hao walking over quickly, asking with concern, "Sister, are you okay?"

"What are you doing here?"

"With something this big happening, there's no way I could just sit still. Sister, listen to my suggestion, you should go back for now. It's too dangerous here in Beijing."

"No," Nanrong Wanqing firmly replied, "Hongyu Group is now facing a huge crisis. If this matter isn't resolved, Hongyu Group will soon go bankrupt. Hongyu Group is the hard work of our Nanrong Family. Are you willing to watch Hongyu Group be destroyed by our own hands?"

"Alright then," Nanrong Hao nodded and said, "Sister, since you want to stay in Beijing, that's fine, but I have one condition: you have to let me stay by your side to help you. They've already hired an assassin to deal with you, which shows they're not interested in taking it slow. If there's a first time, there will definitely be a second. We must be careful." After a pause, Nanrong Hao asked, "Sister, do you know who did it?"

"We haven't figured it out yet, but there are quite a few companies involved in this coalition."

"Alright, I understand. I'll find a way to figure out who's behind this."

Leaving the hotel, Nanrong Hao made a call to Jiang Yunkai and then flagged down a taxi by the roadside. After more than ten minutes, Nanrong Hao arrived at a rented apartment. At that moment, Jiang Yunkai was interrogating the assassin.

"Kai, so did he confess?"

"We haven't gotten any useful information yet, but I've had Hu check his background. Wang Hua, twenty-six years old, trained in martial arts from a young age, Beijing resident, lives at 126 Songlan Street, has close ties with local gangs. I think he might be a top assassin in the underworld."

Nanrong Hao glanced at Wang Hua, who was tied to a chair, and asked, "Mr. Wang, tell me, who ordered you?"

Wang Hua kept his mouth shut, pretending not to hear Nanrong Hao's question, his eyes fixed on the floor. Seeing this, Nanrong Hao smiled to himself and said, "Mr. Wang, you might not be aware of the background of me and my brother. Actually, we're the same kind of people as you. So, you'd better not test my patience, or else you'll be the one suffering."

After speaking, Nanrong Hao stared into Wang Hua's eyes. When the other party still wouldn't confess, Nanrong Hao nodded and said, "Alright, I've given you a chance. Since you don't want to cherish it, don't blame me for being rude."

"Kai, please check on his family for me."

Upon hearing this, Wang Hua, who had been silent all this while, suddenly raised his head and, with a cold gaze, looked at Nanrong Hao and said, "What are you planning to do?"

Nanrong Hao replied with a cold smile, "What do you think I'm planning to do? Mr. Wang, I've warned you, I'm not a kind person, don't expect me to persuade you with kind words. You refuse to talk, right? No problem, I have many means to deal with people like you."

"Haozi, I've found out. His parents and a son all live in Beijing."

"Bring them all in."

"Stop!" Wang Hua shouted angrily, "Don't you dare touch my family."

"You don't want me to touch your family, so why did you harm mine? I'm telling you, if you don't reveal the mastermind behind this, it will not end here. I have more than a dozen ways to make you and your family disappear entirely."

Seeing the cold gaze in Nanrong Hao's eyes, Wang Hua finally realized that the person before him was not joking.

"I'll talk..." After hesitating for a while, Wang Hua finally made up his mind, "It was our boss who ordered me to carry out the assassination. I don't know anything else; I'm just a hired gun."

"What's your boss's name?"

"Hong Wei, he's the big boss of the underworld in Beijing."

"You'd better not be lying to me; I'll verify it." After speaking, Nanrong Hao signaled his men to lock Wang Hua up.

Over ten minutes later.

Nanrong Hao and Jiang Yunkai were sitting at a round table, with a laptop on it. Right now, the computer screen was showing Hu Fei, Tang Guolun, and Ling Chen. For convenience, they were having a video conference.

"Haozi, you say it was that Hong Wei who planned the action?" Ling Chen asked.

"At least that's what Wang Hua said. Brother Chen, how much do we know about this Hong Wei?"

"This person is not simple," Hu Fei replied, "I just looked into Hong Wei's information. His ancestors were old residents of Beijing, and the Hong Family is considered a well-known family there. Besides, the Hong Family not only controls the entire underworld of Beijing but also operates many companies with abundant resources and power. Trying to move against Hong Wei probably won't be easy."

"So what should we do?" Nanrong Hao asked anxiously, "Hong Wei must know who's trying to harm my sister."

"Haozi, don't worry. We never said we wouldn't help," Ling Chen replied, "I just discussed with Boss Tang, and you two won't be able to handle this alone, so I and Boss Tang will head to Beijing to help you. Beijing is not like East Sea City; the forces there are tangled and complicated. As the political center, many things can't be done recklessly. A slight mistake could put not just Wanqing, but even your lives at risk."

Knowing that Ling Chen was coming to Beijing, Nanrong Hao couldn't help but breathe a sigh of relief. Ling Chen is the mainstay, and with him around, there'd be no problem too big to solve.

"Alright then! You all take a good rest, and we'll talk about other matters once we're there."

After the video conference ended, Ling Chen leaned back in his chair and stretched. Originally intending to relax for a few days, who would've thought something like this would happen in Beijing.

Just as he was thinking, a young man walked over quickly and said, "Brother Chen, someone outside is looking for you."

Chapter 1187 - 1194: Lifetime Service (Part 1)

"Looking for me?" Ling Chen was slightly taken aback. The location of this base was very secretive; no one knew where it was except for their own people.

"Do you know who it is?"

"Not clear. The person looks unfamiliar, never seen him before. Chen, what do you think..."

Ling Chen thought for a moment and said, "Alright, you go and invite the person to the meeting room, I'll go meet him shortly."

"Yes."

Soon, Ling Chen arrived at the base's meeting room. As soon as he entered, a middle-aged man in a suit immediately appeared in his sight. The man was about forty years old and judging by his appearance, he must have been quite a handsome man in his youth, exuding an indescribable aura and charm.

While Ling Chen was sizing up the man, the suited man was also observing Ling Chen. Their eyes met, and Ling Chen smiled slightly, saying, "You're looking for me?"

"Mr. Ling, hello, it's a pleasure to meet you." The middle-aged man stood up proactively and extended his hand.

"Hello. Sir, I don't yet know how to address you?"

The middle-aged man smiled and said, "My surname is Zhu, Zhu Houchang."

"Surname Zhu?" Ling Chen felt a shudder in his heart, instantly realizing the man's background, "What relation are you to Zhu Qing?"

"She is my niece, I am her uncle. Mr. Ling, I know you captured Zhu Qing, there must be some misunderstanding. I hope you can show some leniency and release Zhu Qing; our Zhu Family will remember your kindness."

"Mr. Zhu, rest assured, Lady Zhu is doing well with me, I haven't harmed her. Besides, I am very interested in your Zhu Family. If you don't mind, I'd like to have a detailed discussion with you, perhaps there is a chance for cooperation."

Upon hearing this, Zhu Houchang's eyes flashed with surprise, "Mr. Ling, you want to talk about cooperation with me?"

Ling Chen's lips slightly curled into a smile, nodding, "Yes, but I wonder if I'm qualified."

"Mr. Ling, to be honest, our Zhu Family is very selective in choosing business partners. If you wish to employ our Zhu Family, you must pass our family's assessment. Unless you meet all the criteria, I can only say I'm sorry."

"No problem!" Ling Chen nodded and said, "Mr. Zhu, since there is an assessment, there's no time like the present. Let's start now. Whatever you need, I will do my best to comply."

"Mr. Ling, are you serious?"

"Do you think I would joke about something like this?"

"Alright, then please wait a moment, Mr. Ling." After saying this, Zhu Houchang stood up, took out his phone, and walked to a corner to make a call. A few minutes later, Zhu Houchang returned to his seat and said, "Mr. Ling, if you wish to cooperate, there are a few things I need to state upfront. First is the commission; our Zhu Family's services are lifetime unless you perish. Therefore, the commission is not cheap."

"Mr. Zhu, I'm a straightforward person, just tell me the amount directly."

"Our Zhu Family's commission is divided into three levels. The lowest is twenty billion, with assassins trained by our Zhu Family at your service. The second level is fifty billion, served by our family's external disciples. The highest level is one hundred billion, with one-on-one services by our family's internal personnel."

"One hundred billion?" Ling Chen was genuinely surprised. Although he knew the service was lifetime, one hundred billion is not a small amount, "Mr. Zhu, don't you think this price is a bit high?"

Zhu Houchang laughed, "Mr. Ling, compared to our services, this price is definitely not high. You must understand, our services include a lot, not only protecting your safety but also dealing with some of your enemies. Additionally, if you need, our Zhu Family can mobilize one-third of our force to assist you, but you only get one chance."

"How strong is this one-third force?" Ling Chen asked curiously.

Zhu Houchang confidently said, "Dealing with two or three Heavenly List experts is not a problem."

Hearing this, Ling Chen's eyes lit up slightly. If what Zhu Houchang said was true, then the one hundred billion would be worth it. After all, he wasn't short of money; Ling Kun left a considerable fortune for him, totaling hundreds of billions. Besides, the industries Ling Kun invested in still generated a fixed annual income, amounting to tens of billions. So, one hundred billion wasn't too expensive for him.

"OK! I accept your price."

"Mr. Ling, don't be hasty; our assessment isn't over yet. If you don't meet the requirements, everything I said is worthless." As soon as Zhu Houchang finished speaking, the phone rang again.

He answered the call and whispered a few words. Afterward, he hung up and looked at the content displayed on the phone screen. After a moment, Zhu Houchang glanced at Ling Chen and asked, "Mr. Ling, is the Dragon Tiger Hall your asset?"

"Yes, is there a problem?"

"No problem, if I had known the Dragon Tiger Hall was founded by you, Mr. Ling, we could have saved a lot of time." With that, Zhu Houchang put away his phone and looked at Ling Chen, "I think we need to adjust our deal."

"Please go ahead, Mr. Zhu."

"I heard that the Dragon Tiger Hall possesses many lost secret techniques, is this true?"

Ling Chen's heart stirred, instantly understanding Zhu Houchang's implication, "Mr. Zhu, are you suggesting I exchange secret techniques?"

"Exactly. Over the past hundred years, our Zhu Family has lost the transmission of many martial arts, including one called the Spirit Shadow Step. I wonder if Mr. Ling has heard of it?"

"The Spirit Shadow Step, one of the three major movement techniques in the Huaxia Martial Arts. Nine Yang Qiankun Step, Shattered Leaf Step, and the Spirit Shadow Step. Because the Spirit Shadow Step is unique and has high requirements for practitioners, it ranks third. Mr. Zhu, am I correct?"

Zhu Houchang nodded, "Mr. Ling, you're spot on. To be honest, the Spirit Shadow Step was created by our Zhu Family ancestor. Unfortunately, it was lost over a hundred years ago, and we only know the basics, unable to grasp its essence. If Mr. Ling can provide us with the Spirit Shadow Step's secret manual, I can lower the service fee. Mr. Ling, what do you think?"

"Since Mr. Zhu has laid it out, I might as well be frank. I do have the Spirit Shadow Step's secret manual, but Mr. Zhu should be aware of its value. For martial artists, its worth can't be measured by money."

Hearing this, Zhu Houchang pondered for a moment and asked, "Mr. Ling, what do you mean by..."

"I can give you the Spirit Shadow Step's secret manual, and I will not short you a penny of the one hundred billion service fee, but your Zhu Family must stand by me when I need help..." Saying this, Ling Chen raised three fingers, "Three times! If necessary, you need to mobilize half of your forces to assist me. These are my conditions. I wonder if Mr. Zhu can accept them?"

Chapter 1188 - 1195: Lifetime Service (2)

"Mr. Ling, isn't this condition too much?"

Ling Chen smiled faintly, "Mr. Zhu, a piece of martial arts can benefit descendants for hundreds of years. Comparing it like this, do you still think my condition is too much?"

"I can't make this decision alone; I must discuss it with others."

Ling Chen made a 'please' gesture. Immediately, Zhu Houchang walked alone to the corner and picked up the phone to communicate with the Zhu Family.

About ten minutes later, Zhu Houchang returned to Ling Chen's side, smilingly extending his hand, "Mr. Ling, happy cooperation!"

"Happy cooperation!"

Ling Chen was willing to pay such a high price mainly because his current situation was not good. The Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion was a potential threat to him, and sooner or later, they would break the peace with the Dragon Tiger Hall. Therefore, he must prepare in advance and accumulate enough strength to deal with it. With the Zhu Family's capability and considering the exchange of ten billion plus a martial arts manual for their assistance, it's not a loss.

At this moment, a security officer in the base pushed open the door and said politely, "Lady Zhu, hello, Chen invites you to come over."

Zhu Qing coldly said, "Can't he come over himself?"

"Chen said there's an honored guest visiting, and he asks you to come and meet them."

Hearing this, Zhu Qing's eyes turned, immediately stood up, and said, "Okay, I'll go with you." After speaking, under the leadership of the young man, Zhu Qing headed straight to the reception room. Walking along the path, Zhu Qing's gaze restlessly scanned the surroundings, looking for an opportunity.

Humph! Ling Chen is not personally watching her; these people alone can't trap her. With such a good escape opportunity, how could she pass it up.

At this time, Hu Fei came out of the elevator with two subordinates and saw Zhu Qing not far away. Hu Fei asked, "Where are you taking her?"

"Mr. Hu, Chen asked me to take her to the reception room," replied the young man.

Hu Fei nodded without further questioning, just glanced a few more times at Zhu Qing. It had to be said, this little girl was truly a top-grade figure, curvy in front and back, perfect body, and of the petite loli

type, loved by everyone. Even someone like Hu Fei, who'd seen many beauties, couldn't resist being moved.

Feeling Hu Fei's lustful gaze, Zhu Qing coldly snorted. When those around her weren't paying attention, she grabbed the young man in front and pushed him forward sharply. Instantly, the youth leading the way leaned forward, directly falling to the ground.

Simultaneously, Zhu Qing accelerated her pace, rushing to Hu Fei's side in a few steps. Before Hu Fei's two subordinates could react, Zhu Qing was already tightly gripping Hu Fei's neck.

"If you don't want him dead, back off!" Zhu Qing coldly shouted. She hadn't seen Hu Fei before, but from the situation just now, this man's status should be high. As long as she held him hostage, she had bargaining power.

"Lady Zhu, quickly release Mr. Hu."

"Once I leave this damn place, I'll release him." With that, Zhu Qing glanced at Hu Fei, coldly saying, "Take me out."

Hu Fei swallowed his saliva, cautiously saying, "Uh... Lady Zhu, I'm just a minor figure; capturing me is useless."

"Stop talking nonsense; do you want to live or not?"

"I..."

Before Hu Fei finished speaking, a low shout came from not far away, "Stop!"

Zhu Qing turned her head to look, briefly stunned, then her face lit up with joy. She hurriedly called out, "Mr. Chang, you're just in time, help me teach these bastards a lesson."

Zhu Houchang, hands behind his back, quickly walked over. Seeing Hu Fei held hostage, he reprimanded, "Nonsense! Let go of him quickly."

Zhu Qing slightly dazed, not understanding why Zhu Houchang was angry at her. However, she obediently released Hu Fei and let him go. "Fatty, are you okay?" Ling Chen smiled as he walked over from behind and asked.

"I'm okay, I'm okay." Hu Fei rubbed his neck, smiling with lingering fear, "Luckily you arrived just in time."

"Qing, quickly apologize to Mr. Hu."

"Apologize?" Zhu Qing somewhat doubted her ears. If Zhu Houchang weren't her uncle, she couldn't help but start cursing. Looking at Zhu Houchang's serious face, Zhu Qing giggled, quickly wrapping her arms around Zhu Houchang's arm, sweetly saying, "Mr. Chang, why should I apologize, it was their fault first. Especially him..." Zhu Qing pointed at the smiling Ling Chen, resentfully accusing, "He caught your niece, didn't give food or drink, and didn't let anyone sleep. You have no idea how hard my days have been. Mr. Chang, your beloved niece suffered so much, aren't you going to avenge me?"

Hearing Zhu Qing's accusations, Ling Chen just felt he had learned something new. What does it mean to lie with open eyes? This is it. Damn! Food and drink have never been missing for her. To care for this little girl, Ling Chen had specially instructed the kitchen to make special meals, with three dishes and one soup per meal, a treatment even he hadn't enjoyed.

After listening to the beloved niece's complaints, Zhu Houchang sized Zhu Qing up a few times, smiling slightly as he said, "Was it really that hard? Why do I feel you've gained weight these days? Seems like Mr. Ling's place has decent food conditions. You don't have any unpleasant smell, your spirit is high, not like someone who hasn't slept. Qing, do you think Mr. Chang is so easily fooled?"

Exposed by Zhu Houchang in front of everyone, Zhu Qing embarrassedly lowered her head, especially hearing Ling Chen's laughter, feeling more ashamed and indignant.

However, just for a moment, Zhu Qing suddenly realized. Why was the relationship between Zhu Houchang and Ling Chen so harmonious? This... this seemed unusual.

Thinking this, Zhu Qing looked at her uncle, curiously asking, "Mr. Chang, you and him..."

"Qing, I came to East Sea City this time to bring you back, but now you have other tasks."

Immediately upon mention of business, Zhu Qing became serious, nodding, "Mr. Chang, I understand, I will definitely complete the task."

"Good, in that case, you continue to stay here, I'll go first." With that, Zhu Houchang glanced at Ling Chen, smiling, "Mr. Ling, until we meet again."

"Until we meet again!"

Seeing Zhu Houchang about to leave, Zhu Qing couldn't help but get anxious, quickly asking, "Mr. Chang, didn't you say I have tasks? Why are you telling me to stay here?"

Zhu Houchang pointed at Ling Chen, saying, "From today, your task is to serve Mr. Ling. Qing, Mr. Ling values you highly, specifically wants you to be his shadow, so you shouldn't disappoint Mr. Ling, nor should you disappoint our Zhu Family, understand?"

"I..." Zhu Qing opened her mouth, her mind went blank, not knowing what to say.

She was still thinking about giving Ling Chen a good lesson, but now, Ling Chen has actually become her service object. Thinking of that hateful bastard, Zhu Qing really wanted to take a bite of him.

Chapter 1189 - 1196: Hong Wei's Background

After sending off Zhu Houchang, Ling Chen looked at Zhu Qing, who was secretly gritting her teeth, and couldn't help but laugh, "Lady Zhu, I will be relying on your care from now on."

Zhu Qing glared at Ling Chen with displeasure, unable to understand why the Zhu family would cooperate with Ling Chen. The Zhu family's first consideration for a partner was always character, could this guy's character really pass? Of course, that wasn't what made her most angry. The thought of having to follow this guy and take his orders in the future made Zhu Qing feel that her days ahead would be bleak.

If she had the choice, she'd really hope to have someone else instead. However, the family rules demanded unconditional obedience, no matter how reluctant she felt, she had to comply with the family's arrangements and serve Ling Chen.

Ling Chen grinned, acting as if he hadn't seen Zhu Qing's anger, and said, "Lady Zhu, if you need anything, just let me know, I'll try my best to satisfy you. Also, I'm going to Beijing tomorrow, please prepare accordingly, this trip won't be easy."

Early the next morning, Ling Chen set off with Tang Guolun and Zhu Qing. This time, only the three of them were going ahead, Hu Fei would arrange for others to follow to Beijing later.

Beijing was not like East Sea City, where one could act recklessly; after all, it was the political center, many things needed to be restrained.

At ten in the morning, the flight carrying Ling Chen and the others arrived at Beijing Airport. Once they left the airport, Nanrong Hao and Jiang Yunkai were already waiting outside with a car. The group got into the car, Nanrong Hao and Jiang Yunkai were very curious about Zhu Qing, the beautiful new addition. Both were single men and rarely encountered such a stunning beauty, so they naturally tried to impress her. Unfortunately, Zhu Qing was indifferent to them, no matter how eloquently they spoke, she didn't react at all, maintaining a cold expression, which made Nanrong Hao and Jiang Yunkai very embarrassed.

"Chen, what's the deal with this girl?" Nanrong Hao found an opportunity to ask quietly.

"Anyway, she's not someone you can mess with. You guys better be careful, if you anger her, you might not be able to handle the consequences."

Soon, the group drove to a rented house.

"Kai, what's Captain Zhong's situation like?" Ling Chen asked.

"They are temporarily out of danger, but Liang Zhao Hui's injuries are quite severe, he needs to stay in the hospital for observation for a while. I've already assigned additional personnel around Miss Nanrong, so nothing should happen."

"How much do you know about that Hong Wei?"

Jiang Yunkai replied helplessly, "Chen, Hong Wei is not simple. I investigated all night but couldn't track his movements, not even a shadow. However, I've stationed people outside Hong Wei's house, if there's any news, they'll notify me immediately."

Ling Chen nodded, "Know yourself and your enemy, you'll emerge victorious. Let's not rush to take action, find out about Hong Wei's situation first. Also, investigate the Hong family's background. Although Hu Fei has checked the Hong family files in the archives, they aren't very complete. Moreover, the Hong family controls Beijing's underground forces, definitely has many secrets."

Listening to Ling Chen's conversation with Jiang Yunkai, Nanrong Hao asked, "Chen, our main goal this time is to find the mastermind behind targeting my sister, why make things so complicated?"

Beside them, Tang Guolun laughed, "Haozi, do you really think we'd mobilize so many people for such a small matter? To be honest, our main goal in Beijing this time is to replace the Hong family and firmly control the underground forces. As for your sister's matter, that's just incidental."

Nanrong Hao was shocked and asked, confused, "Chen, isn't our main territory in East Sea City? Why expand into Beijing? East Sea City is so far from Beijing, it's hard to manage both..."

Before Nanrong Hao could finish, Ling Chen interrupted him with a smile, "I understand what you mean. East Sea City is our territory, similarly, once something happens in East Sea City, we'll have nowhere to retreat. Therefore, we must prepare an escape route, and Beijing is undoubtedly the best choice. Furthermore, as Huaxia's capital, Beijing has tremendous influence, and once the Dragon Tiger Hall is established, it will definitely expand in the future, and Beijing is definitely the most suitable place to set up a branch. Haozi, East Sea City is our domain, we can live without worries. However, we must remain vigilant even during peace, we cannot be satisfied with the present, we must set our sights longer term. Understand?"

Nanrong Hao seemed to understand partially and nodded.

"Haozi, your job for this period is to stay with your sister, make sure nothing happens to her," Ling Chen instructed.

"Got it."

After lunch, Ling Chen greeted Tang Guolun, then took a taxi alone to a café. Shortly after he sat down, a young man entered from outside. The newcomer glanced around the hall and headed straight for Ling Chen's seat.

"Tang Yuan, you finally decided to come to Beijing."

Ling Chen grinned, "Sit down, what do you want to drink?" Saying this, Ling Chen waved to call over a waiter.

"A cup of cappuccino, no sugar."

After sending the waiter away, Tang Yuan asked, "You didn't call me here just to catch up, did you?"

"As usual, you understand me best. You've been in Beijing longer, I've heard you don't go on missions much now, focusing on training newcomers for Lonely Wolf, so you must be quite knowledgeable about Beijing's situation."

"What do you want to know?"

"Hong Wei, have you heard of him?"

"Why are you asking about him?" Tang Yuan asked, frowning, "He's not easy to deal with, he's considered Beijing's underground emperor, doing things he'd rather not be seen doing. Many forces in Beijing cooperate with him, so his web of connections is vast. If you plan to move against him, many people will disagree."

"So... this guy has strong backing?"

Tang Yuan nodded, "I advise you not to target him, Beijing is his domain, if you go against him, you'll definitely be at a disadvantage." After a pause, Tang Yuan continued, "I know you're very capable now, but Hong Wei is no ordinary person, he has many experts around him. As far as I know, his security personnel are provided by two martial arts academies in Beijing."

"Martial arts academies?" Ling Chen asked with interest, "Which ones?"

"Qinghe Martial Arts Hall and Chengde Martial Arts Hall, both are the most famous academies in Beijing, full of experts."

"I see, it's them." Ling Chen's eyes gleamed.

"How come you know about these academies?"

The Martial Arts Hall Masters of Qinghe and Chengde are Zhou Qian and Ren Han, one is the president of the Martial Arts Association, and the other is the vice president, Ling Chen had heard Tong Zhentian mention them before. It was unexpected, indeed, to encounter them in Beijing. It seems Zhou Qian and Ren Han aren't good characters either, actually colluding with Hong Wei.

However, just as Tang Yuan said, this indeed is a trouble.

Chapter 1190 - 1197: Hong Family Banquet (Part 1)

"Old Tang, how much more do you know about Hong Wei?"

"That's all I know. There's a saying among Beijing's elite: it's better to offend King Yan than Hong Wei. Crossing Hong Wei is akin to courting death." Tang Yuan advised, "I don't know what you're planning, but in any case, try to avoid a conflict with him."

Ling Chen shrugged helplessly, "I'm afraid that's not possible. Hong Wei secretly hired an assassin to attempt to kill Wanqing. Do you think I can just sit by and do nothing?"

"Is that true?" Tang Yuan furrowed his brow, "However, I still advise against a direct confrontation with Hong Wei. Besides, Miss Nanrong doesn't reside permanently in Beijing. If it's dangerous in Beijing, then let her go back to East Sea City."

After listening to Tang Yuan's advice, Ling Chen just nodded without saying anything more. After chatting with Tang Yuan for a while, since he had other matters to tend to and couldn't stay out for long, Ling Chen accompanied him out of the café, then rode alone back to his rented room.

"Chen, it seems that dealing with Hong Wei won't be easy," Jiang Yunkai said. When Ling Chen relayed Tang Yuan's words to the group, everyone felt it would be difficult. Whether in terms of background or the power at their disposal, they couldn't compare to Hong Wei.

"Boss Tang, what do you think?" Ling Chen turned his gaze to the pondering Tang Guolun.

Tang Guolun raised his head and said meaningfully, "Since we can't do it openly, why not in secret? Didn't you say Hong Wei is best at underhanded tactics? That's precisely our expertise too. Hong Wei controls the underworld forces in Beijing; he surely has many illegal activities. We might as well start from there."

"That's a good proposal." Ling Chen nodded with a smile, "I've been thinking the same." As he finished speaking, Ling Chen shifted his gaze to Zhu Qing, who was sitting silently nearby. Sensing Ling Chen's attention, Zhu Qing said irritably, "Why are you looking at me?"

"Lady Zhu, I think you're the most suitable for this kind of task. What do you say?"

Zhu Qing was originally an assassin, skilled in various assassination and stealth techniques, making her the best choice for action.

"My responsibility is to protect your safety, not act as your goon. You'd better find someone else." Zhu Qing refused without hesitation.

Ling Chen acted as if he didn't see Zhu Qing's reluctance, smilingly said, "Lady Zhu, I asked Mr. Zhu, aside from protecting my safety, you must comply with my requests as long as I need besides that, unless it violates the Zhu Family's rules. Otherwise, you cannot refuse me. Hong Wei's acts are all illegal; you hitting him should not violate the rules, right? Mr. Zhu also told me that if you don't perform well, I can lodge a complaint with the Zhu Family."

"You... humph!" Zhu Qing exclaimed in anger, "Do you still call yourself a man, only knowing how to threaten me."

"I'm certainly a man; if you don't believe me, we could test it out. Anyway, there's a vacant room over there."

Upon hearing Ling Chen tease Zhu Qing in public, everyone pursed their lips and secretly chuckled. Seeing the unusual gazes from everyone, Zhu Qing felt her cheeks heat up, turning as red as an apple, causing everyone's hearts to flutter.

"Filthy rascal!" Zhu Qing spat, turned, and walked into her room.

"Chen, you've really got skills." Jiang Yunkai gave a thumbs-up.

"Alright, enough joking. Kai, I'm counting on you for the next few days, try to gather intelligence about Hong Wei's underground forces' bases."

"No problem."

"Ling Chen, aren't you planning to check on your girlfriend?" Tang Guolun asked.

Upon hearing this, Ling Chen was momentarily stunned, then quickly realized Tang Guolun was referring to Nanrong Wanqing. "Not for now, let's deal with what's at hand first."

Just as he finished speaking, Ling Chen's phone rang in his pocket. Answering the call, Ling Chen asked, "Haozi, what's up?"

Whatever Nanrong Hao said on the phone, Ling Chen's expression quickly turned strange.

"Alright, I've got it." Hanging up the phone, Ling Chen looked at Tang Guolun and Jiang Yunkai, smiled and said, "Looks like I'll be meeting Hong Wei tonight."

Nanrong Hao called to inform that Hong Wei was hosting a banquet tonight, inviting various elite members, including Nanrong Wanqing and Nanrong Hao. Having sent an assassin to target Nanrong Wanqing a few days ago and now inviting her, there's a chance the opponent might strike during the evening's gala. Hence, Nanrong Hao hoped Ling Chen could attend the banquet as Nanrong Wanqing's partner, covertly ensuring her safety.

Ling Chen also wished to meet Hong Wei, to see what kind of formidable foe he was.

Nightfall.

Wearing a newly purchased tailcoat, Ling Chen traveled to the hotel where Nanrong Wanqing was staying. After speaking with Nanrong Hao over the phone, within ten minutes, the impeccably dressed Nanrong Hao and Nanrong Wanqing emerged from the hotel.

Seeing Nanrong Wanqing approaching, although the two were already familiar, Ling Chen still felt a sense of awe.

Nanrong Wanqing's outfit tonight was elegant, a white evening gown with light makeup perfectly highlighting her natural beauty. Though simple, this attire undoubtedly suited Nanrong Wanqing best. Like a snow lotus on the iceberg, pristine and immaculate, even without adornments, she was captivatingly beautiful.

"Wanqing." Before they got close, Ling Chen stepped forward.

"Ling Chen?" Nanrong Wanqing seemed surprised to see Ling Chen suddenly appearing there, "When did you come to Beijing?"

"Just arrived today. Heard you needed a partner, so I came uninvited. What do you think, I'm all dressed up, you won't turn me away, will you?"

Nanrong Wanqing shot a glance at Nanrong Hao beside her, knowing without guessing, it must have been Nanrong Hao secretly informing him. However, despite this, she was genuinely pleased with Ling Chen's presence. Lately, she had been unsettled, feeling uneasy even during sleep. With Ling Chen by her side now, all worries instantly disappeared.

At this moment, a Mercedes slowly pulled up and stopped at the hotel entrance. A man in a suit quickly stepped out, courteously smiled and said, "Good evening, Miss Nanrong, Mr. Nanrong, Mr. Hong sent me to pick you up."

"Mr. Hong is very kind."

"Miss Nanrong is an esteemed guest of Mr. Hong; it's only appropriate. Please, all three of you, get in!" As he said this, the man glanced at Ling Chen beside, without asking many questions.

The car drove for about twenty minutes, finally arriving at the venue for the banquet.

Mingquan Hotel!

On the way, Ling Chen learned from the suited man that Mingquan Hotel is one of Hong Wei's properties, classified as a Platinum five-star hotel.