

The Beauty 1191

Chapter 1191 Hong Family Banquet (2)

Among the star-rated hotels domestically, the highest rating is five stars. If it's an ultra-luxurious hotel exceeding the five-star standard, it will be rated as platinum five-star. In Huaxia, there are no more than ten platinum five-star hotels like Mingquan Hotel.

Led by the man in the suit, Ling Chen and his two companions arrived at the banquet hall on the fifth floor of the hotel. Upon entering, they saw a spacious and luxurious banquet hall already filled with nearly a hundred guests, creating a very lively atmosphere. Those qualified to be invited were all societal elites. Ling Chen glanced around and recognized many familiar faces, all of whom were public figures frequently appearing on television.

The arrival of Nanrong Wanqing indeed caused quite a stir. After all, most of the guests attending the banquet were business people, and everyone was familiar with the famous name of Nanrong Wanqing. However, they only pointed and whispered among themselves, and not a single person came forward to greet her. In face of such treatment, Nanrong Wanqing remained very composed, not taking it to heart at all.

Only Nanrong Hao felt displeased, grumbling indignantly. It was known that at past banquets like this, whenever Nanrong Wanqing attended, she would surely attract a lot of attention, with everyone hoping to establish a good relationship with the Hongyu Group.

Nowadays, although it wasn't to the point where everyone would kick a man when he was down, everyone knew in their hearts that the decline of the Hongyu Group was only a matter of time. Therefore, they felt there was no need to waste time and energy on someone about to lose power.

Under the gaze of all, Ling Chen and his two companions found a sofa against the wall to sit on. Watching the comings and goings of guests, Nanrong Wanqing couldn't help but sigh.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing, just feeling the harshness of reality." Nanrong Wanqing pointed at a middle-aged man not far away and said, "That man is Chen Yunsheng, the chairman of Earth Real Estate. When his business ran into problems facing bankruptcy, it was my grandfather who helped him, giving him a chance to bounce back. Now his business is growing stronger, and his wealth ranks in the top fifty in the country. Now,

knowing our Nanrong Family is in trouble, he not only doesn't help but wants to disassociate from us to avoid being affected."

Pausing, Nanrong Wanqing pointed to another man in the crowd, "His name is Hu Zhichun. Thirty years ago, he approached my grandfather with a project hoping for an investment. Having been rejected by dozens of companies due to high risks, only my grandfather saw his potential and invested over a billion. He is now a prominent figure in the business world. When I looked for him for help recently, he ignored me. Moreover, he shamelessly demanded that our Nanrong Family withdraw our shares from his company."

"Many of the people you see here have benefited from my grandfather's favors. Now that the Hongyu Group faces a crisis and needs help, every single one keeps to themselves, unwilling to lift a finger. If he knew this outcome, grandfather would never have helped these ingrates."

Sensing Nanrong Wanqing's emotional turmoil, Ling Chen comforted her, "Don't think too much about it. Everyone looks out for themselves in today's society. The saying 'repay a drop of water with a gushing spring' applies to only a few people."

As they spoke, the banquet hall suddenly fell silent, and all eyes turned to the entrance. Ling Chen looked up to see a middle-aged man in a white suit stride in, flanked by several bodyguards.

This middle-aged man appeared to be around forty, well-maintained with no traces of time, tall and slender with handsome features, exuding a mature masculine aura. Particularly noticeable was his slightly upturned smile, giving an impression of great confidence as if nothing in the world could stump him.

"Mr. Hong, good evening and thank you for your invitation!"

In an instant, everyone flocked over, vying to greet him.

Hong Wei!

Ling Chen narrowed his eyes and smiled slightly, finally seeing him in person.

"May I have everyone's attention, please?" Hong Wei gestured with his hand, and the banquet hall quickly quieted down, with all eyes focused on him. Hong Wei enjoyed this moment of being the center of attention immensely. Glancing around the crowd, Hong Wei smiled and said, "First, I want to thank everyone for gracing us with your presence; if you're here, it shows you're my friends."

"Mr. Hong, what's the purpose of tonight's banquet?" someone asked from the crowd.

"Don't read too much into it. It's just that I haven't had a gathering with everyone for a long time, so I hosted this banquet to deepen our connections, no other purpose. So, please feel free." At this point, Hong Wei looked at the crowd and said, "Tonight I specially invited several distinguished guests. One is Miss Nanrong from East Sea City, whom I believe everyone is familiar with. Another is Miss Zhu; most of you are from Beijing, so she should not be a stranger. Additionally, I'm fortunate to have invited the rising music star Miss Tang Shiyun."

"Miss Nanrong and Miss Zhu are known as the two flowers of Huaxia, talented and beautiful; Miss Tang is seen as the pure goddess in many people's hearts. Being able to invite these three tonight is indeed my privilege. Oh! I kindly remind everyone that these three beauties are currently single, so... you might want to be proactive; perhaps Fortune might smile upon you tonight."

Hearing this, everyone present couldn't help but laugh, their eyes filled with eagerness.

Are Xiaozhu and Shiyun here too?

Ling Chen was a bit surprised, not expecting Hong Wei to invite them as well. However, what bothered Ling Chen more was Hong Wei's previous remarks. The implication in Hong Wei's words seemed to liken the three women to socialites, which was undoubtedly an insult to them.

Nanrong Wanqing obviously found the remarks harsh as well, with anger flashing in her beautiful eyes.

"Ling, you're here too? Great! I thought I'd have to return to East Sea City to see you." The voice came, and Ling Chen didn't need to look to know who it was. Tang Shiyun came running over, hugging Ling Chen's arm, her exquisite face beaming with a happy smile.

Besides Tang Shiyun, Zhu Xiaozhu also approached, but her smile was somewhat forced. Both she and Nanrong Wanqing were the type of women with keen minds, and Hong Wei's words left them quite uncomfortable.

Unlike Nanrong Wanqing, though the Zhu Family holds some reputation in Beijing, they pale in comparison to Hong Wei. Moreover, the Zhu Family has long been based in Beijing, and they dare not offend Hong Wei unless they wish to quit high society. Thus, even if Zhu Xiaozhu felt displeased, she couldn't show it, as she didn't want to create trouble for the Zhu Family because of her own sake.

Chapter 1192 Hong Family Banquet (Part 3)

"Girl, how did Hong Wei invite you to his dinner party?" Ling Chen asked curiously.

"I happened to be a guest at Xiaozhu's house. Mr. Hong sent someone with an invitation, saw me there, and invited me as well. I was bored alone, so I came along with Xiaozhu for some fun."

"I'm sorry," Zhu Xiaozhu said apologetically. "If I'd known it was this kind of dinner party, I wouldn't have brought Shiyun."

Ling Chen smiled and said, "It's okay, it's not your fault."

As they were speaking, a few youths walked over from the crowd.

"Buddy, what luck you have, enjoying the company of three beauties all by yourself. Can you handle it?" A youth said sarcastically. "Why don't we help you share the joy?"

"We're all battle-hardened, we guarantee your satisfaction," the youth's companion chimed in while making obscene gestures with his hips.

"Enough!" Nanrong Hao stood up abruptly and said coldly, "Watch your mouth, or I'll make you lose all your teeth."

"Oh! Mr. Nanrong is angry," the youth laughed loudly. "I'm so scared, what should we do?"

"Mr. Nanrong, how about this? When your Nanrong family goes bankrupt, I'll take care of your sister. Don't worry, she'll eat well and sleep well with me. I'll take good care of her in bed."

This remark immediately drew a wave of boisterous laughter.

"You bastards, watch how I deal with you." Nanrong Hao shouted furiously, swinging his fists as he charged forward. However, before he could teach them a lesson, Ling Chen had already stopped him.

"Haozi, don't be impulsive."

Had it been anyone else, Nanrong Hao would have probably cursed by now. Seeing Ling Chen speak, Nanrong Hao suppressed his anger and said sternly, "Chen, they talk about my sister like that. Can you stand it?"

Ling Chen patted Nanrong Hao's shoulder and smiled slightly, "Don't be rash. Can't you see they're deliberately provoking you? If you act now, you're playing right into their hands."

Upon hearing this, Nanrong Hao calmed down significantly, "Chen, is someone targeting our Nanrong family?"

"No, not your family, but me." Ling Chen turned his head to look at a youth in the crowd. As if sensing Ling Chen's gaze, the youth immediately turned away, pretending not to notice what was happening.

Observing this, Ling Chen's lips curled slightly as a hint of cold light flashed in his eyes.

Ren Chong!

Ling Chen remembered that youth well; back in East Sea City, this guy was kicked by him and lost face badly. He probably hated him. Ren Chong attending today's dinner was likely due to his father, Ren Han.

Tang Yuan mentioned that Ren Han and Zhou Qian's martial arts academies were closely linked to Hong Wei, with Hong Wei's bodyguards consisting of experts from these academies. Without this connection, Ren Chong wouldn't qualify to attend such a dinner.

Upon entering, Ling Chen had noticed Ren Chong. At that time, he was hanging out with these youths. These youths causing trouble were undoubtedly instigated by Ren Chong.

Thinking of this, Ling Chen withdrew his gaze, looked at the arrogant youths, and asked, "What benefits did Ren Chong offer you?"

At this question, the youths' expressions changed slightly but quickly returned to normal, "What Ren Chong? We don't know what you're talking about. Ling, if you don't have the guts to stand up for your women, just say so. Don't change the subject; we won't laugh at you."

Ling Chen smiled faintly, without the slightest sign of anger, "Fellows, perhaps Ren Chong didn't tell you who I am. If you knew, you wouldn't dare bother me even if you had the guts. Unfortunately, it's too late to regret now. If I were you, I'd call my family now and ask them to prepare for your funeral. Because...you won't make it home alive tonight."

The youths were initially stunned, but only for a moment. A youth sneered, "Is this a threat? Haha! I thought you were formidable, but you're just all talk. If you're that capable, why not act now?"

"Now?" Ling Chen stared at the youth, the smile on his face growing brighter, "Are you sure?"

"I..." The youth smirked, ready to mock, when suddenly his face turned pale, he spat out a mouthful of blood, and his body went limp, collapsing to the ground. After twitching twice, he lay there motionless, without a sound.

This sudden change left the other youths stunned.

After a while, one youth snapped out of it first, nudging his fallen companion with his foot, urging, "What are you doing? Get up and stop embarrassing us."

Despite repeated calls, the youth on the ground remained unresponsive.

Seeing this, the other youths finally realized something was wrong. They hurriedly crouched by their companion, flipping his body over. Seeing their companion's pale face, lifeless, the youths' pupils shrank, their expressions filled with terror.

Dead...he's dead!

Ling Chen glanced at the dumbfounded youths, leaned in slightly, and said softly, "Don't forget to call your family."

With that, Ling Chen ignored them and led Nanrong Hao and the ladies to another part of the banquet hall.

After Ling Chen walked away, the youths finally snapped out of their shock and horror. They exchanged glances, visibly showing fear in each other's eyes.

Recalling Ling Chen's words, they finally understood it wasn't a joke. Dead...a few minutes ago, their companion was a living, breathing person, laughing and chatting. Now, he was a cold corpse.

"Ren Chong...that bastard got us into trouble." A youth stood up shakily, quickly rushing into the crowd, searching for Ren Chong. Meanwhile, the others realized what was happening and quickly followed.

At this moment, in a corner of the banquet hall, Ling Chen and Nanrong Hao sat on a sofa, while Nanrong Wanqing and the ladies sat on the opposite sofa.

"Ling, what happened to that person just now? Did he...really die?" Tang Shiyun asked curiously, blinking her big eyes.

Ling Chen smiled slightly and said, "He's just asleep. Haozi, there are plenty of snacks; go grab some. I haven't had dinner, and I'm starving."

"Okay!" Nanrong Hao responded, immediately heading for the table.

Not just Nanrong Hao, Zhu Xiaozhu and Nanrong Wanqing also knew Ling Chen was changing the subject, not wanting this incident to affect Tang Shiyun.

As for that youth...Nanrong Wanqing, Zhu Xiaozhu, and Nanrong Hao all knew he was truly dead!

Chapter 1193 - 1200: Hong Family Banquet (Part 4)

All along, Nanrong Wanqing and others thought they understood Ling Chen's personality well. But it was only today that they realized they had underestimated Ling Chen's ruthlessness. He kills without hesitation, showing no mercy, adding a coldness to his character.

Looking at the calm and composed Ling Chen, Nanrong Wanqing and Zhu Xiaozhu's eyes revealed a hint of surprise. What kind of experiences made Ling Chen's heart so strong? Just a minute ago, he had killed someone with his own hands. Yet Ling Chen showed no abnormal reaction, as if... this was already routine for him.

However, even though Ling Chen's actions were excessively brutal, their hearts felt relieved. No matter who it was, being humiliated face to face would not feel good. If it weren't for Ling Chen being present, they would probably have had to endure it silently.

"Chen," Nanrong Hao leaned over to Ling Chen and whispered, "We may feel relieved, but this is a banquet. Won't Hong Wei come to trouble us?"

Ling Chen gave a faint smile and asked back, "Are you scared?"

Nanrong Hao raised his eyebrow and immediately replied, "Who says I'm scared, I'm just..." before he could finish speaking, he heard footsteps approaching quickly from afar. Ling Chen looked closely and saw the person leading the group was none other than Ren Chong, followed by Hong Wei, the host of the banquet, as well as those young troublemakers and a group of security personnel.

Ren Chong looked at Ling Chen coldly, with a sinister smile in his eyes. After hearing the news of his companion's death earlier, Ren Chong was genuinely shocked by Ling Chen's ruthlessness, which instilled a sense of fear in his heart. But remembering the host of the banquet, Ren Chong immediately

had an idea. Hong Wei's status in Beijing was well-known; he was like an underground emperor—who dared to provoke him?

Ling Chen defying Hong Wei at his place was simply asking for death. With this thought, Ren Chong directly found Hong Wei. Humph! No matter how formidable you are, Ling Chen, this is Beijing, not East Sea City, let's see how capable you are.

"Ling Chen!" As Ren Chong got closer, he didn't bother with pleasantries and directly yelled, "You have guts, daring to kill at Mr. Hong's banquet. Do you not regard Mr. Hong at all?"

Ren Chong's voice was loud, deliberately attracting the attention of the banquet hall guests. How could he miss such an opportunity to stand out?

Ling Chen glanced at Ren Chong, said nothing, and directly shifted his gaze to Hong Wei behind him.

"Mr. Hong, are you here to question me too?"

"Mr. Ling, I'm just here to find out the truth. I'm a law-abiding citizen, if indeed someone was killed at the banquet, I must hand them over to the police for handling. Besides, I also need to give an explanation to the deceased's family."

Ling Chen said indifferently, "If that's the case, take your time investigating, and if you need my assistance, I won't refuse."

Hearing this, Ren Chong shouted angrily, "Ling Chen, do you dare say you didn't kill him?"

"Mr. Ren, things can be randomly killed, but words can't be randomly said. Which eye saw me kill? If you have evidence, feel free to present it. If not, please shut your mouth; otherwise, I might sue you for defamation."

"You want evidence?" Ren Chong sneered, "Fine, it looks like you won't cry until you see the coffin." Saying that, Ren Chong turned around and pointed at those troublemaking young men and said, "You are all witnesses, loudly tell everyone what happened just now."

Ling Chen looked into the eyes of those young men and said with a smile, "Everyone, you'd better think clearly before speaking. If you provide false testimony for him, it will cause big trouble. Do you remember what I just said to you? Did you call your family yet?"

With these words, the young men's eyes immediately showed fear, looking at each other in confusion, unable to say a word for a long time. Seeing this, Hong Wei, who had been silent, finally spoke, "Speak up, I'll support you, are you afraid to say even a word?"

With Hong Wei backing them up, the young men's courage grew significantly. One of them mustered the courage to say, "Mr. Hong, at the time we were all with Chen Yong. He was fine, and then suddenly coughed up blood and died. Before Chen Yong's death, Ling Chen said in front of us he would kill him."

"Did you see me make a move?" Ling Chen asked with a smile.

"At that time, it was only you with us, who else would it be?"

Ling Chen shrugged, looked at Hong Wei and said, "Mr. Hong, you've seen a lot. Do you think this kind of talk can be considered evidence?"

Hong Wei furrowed his brows slightly, looking at Ren Chong and the others with displeasure. When Ren Chong found him earlier, he only said Ling Chen killed someone in the banquet hall. Ren Chong is Ren Han's son, and he had a close relationship with Ren Han, so he naturally didn't doubt Ren Chong's words. Therefore, he didn't ask much and directly came with Ren Chong to find Ling Chen. If he had known Ren Chong and the others didn't have direct evidence, he wouldn't have wasted his efforts to deal with this unnecessary matter.

Sensing Hong Wei's displeasure, Ren Chong's heart sank, suddenly feeling something was wrong.

"Ren Chong, is this the evidence you mentioned?"

Ren Chong quickly replied, "Mr. Hong, listen to my explanation, Ling Chen is definitely the killer, I dare use my life to guarantee if you investigate thoroughly, you will surely find the evidence. Besides, Chen Yong couldn't have died without reason."

"Do you think I have plenty of time to play with you? Hmph! Without evidence, you accuse others, that's defamation. Fortunately, Mr. Ling is generous and doesn't hold you accountable. In the future, investigate before encountering such things, understand?"

Hong Wei truly felt disappointment; Ren Chong's father, Ren Han, was a notable person, how could his son be so foolish? Even if Ling Chen killed the person, so what? If he dared to do so, he surely wouldn't leave any evidence. Finding trouble with Ling Chen now would only be a humiliation to oneself.

After hearing Hong Wei's words, Ling Chen was slightly stunned, wondering when he said he wouldn't pursue it? But just a second later, Ling Chen laughed. Hong Wei indeed was clever, subtly helping Ren Chong resolve the trouble. If he continued to pursue, it would seem ungenerous.

Enough! Ren Chong was just a minor character, as long as he doesn't provoke him in the future, there's no need to stoop to his level.

"Aren't you going to apologize to Mr. Ling yet?"

With Hong Wei's order, how could Ren Chong dare to defy, he swallowed his unwillingness, bowed his head, and murmured like a mosquito, "Sorry... sorry!"

Ling Chen smiled slightly, "What did you say? I can't hear you."

Chapter 1194 - 1201: Hong Family Banquet (Part 5)

Ren Chong secretly gritted his teeth with hatred. He knew Ling Chen was deliberately picking a fight. However, with Hong Wei standing nearby watching him, he dared not make any rash moves. Taking a deep breath, Ren Chong said in a deep voice, "I'm sorry, it was my fault earlier, I shouldn't have doubted you."

Ling Chen smiled and nodded, saying, "It's good that you know you're wrong. Since you've sincerely apologized, I won't hold you responsible. But I have a word of advice for you: don't cause trouble out of nothing in the future, otherwise, when you really stumble, it'll be too late to regret."

"Alright! Remember Mr. Ling's words and be on your way." Hong Wei waved his hand, and Ren Chong dared not linger any longer, leaving the banquet hall with a few young men in tow. Watching Ren Chong and his group depart, Ling Chen's lips curled into a slight smile as he let out a cold laugh.

This scene was caught by Hong Wei, who curiously asked, "What is Mr. Ling laughing about?"

"It's nothing," Ling Chen replied blandly, "I just hope they get home safely."

Upon hearing this, a faint, imperceptible cold gleam flashed in Hong Wei's eyes. "Mr. Ling, as the host of the banquet, I apologize for what just happened. I hope you won't take it to heart."

"Mr. Hong, you're too polite. As you just said, I'm a magnanimous person and won't fuss over such trivial matters."

"That's good." Hong Wei smiled and said, "I have other guests to attend to, so I won't disturb you further. Enjoy your time." After saying this, Hong Wei smiled at Nanrong Wanqing and the others, then turned around with his subordinates and left.

"You, send a few people to protect Ren Chong and make sure you safely escort them home. Did you hear me?" Before his own people, Hong Wei looked stern, his eyes and words carrying a trace of cold severity, devoid of the friendliness from earlier.

"Mr. Hong, could they be in danger?"

"Ling Chen is not a simple person; he might very well cause trouble for them. In any case, it's better to be safe than sorry."

"Yes, I understand. I'll send someone over immediately."

Meanwhile, Ling Chen picked up the phone, dialed a number, and said, "Did you see those guys? ... Alright, get someone to deal with them, and remember, leave no traces, so they can't trace it back to us."

After hanging up, Ling Chen turned to Nanrong Wanqing and the others, chatting with them casually, as if nothing had happened.

Before attending the banquet tonight, Ling Chen had made thorough preparations. He had installed a miniature camera on his collar, capturing every situation in the banquet hall. The main purpose of this was to collect intelligence and information.

So, Tang Guolun on the other end of the phone knew exactly who Ling Chen was referring to.

Half an hour flew by, and Ling Chen checked the time; it was already past nine o'clock. However, this banquet showed no signs of ending. On the contrary, from everyone's high spirits, it seemed there was even more fun to be had.

"Ling Chen, why don't we head back?" Nanrong Wanqing suggested, "Staying here is pointless, just a waste of time."

Ling Chen opened his mouth, ready to respond, but at that moment, someone hurriedly walked into the banquet hall and whispered a few words in Hong Wei's ear. It was unknown what the person said, but Hong Wei's expression changed as he quickly turned his gaze to Ling Chen. As their eyes met, Ling Chen gave a slight smile, but Hong Wei showed no reaction, leading his people out of the banquet hall.

"Chen, what are you looking at?" Nanrong Hao asked.

"Nothing." Ling Chen stood up and said, "Let's go; we can head back now."

Exiting the banquet hall, Ling Chen noticed Hong Wei and his people standing outside, their expressions grave, discussing something unknown. Hearing footsteps approaching, Hong Wei turned his head, looked at the approaching Ling Chen, and walked forward with wide strides.

"Mr. Ling."

"Mr. Hong." Ling Chen asked with a smile, "What are you doing outside?"

"I just received a message that Ren Chong and a few others were ambushed halfway, with a few dead and one seriously injured."

"Is that so?" Ling Chen feigned surprise and asked, "Who would do such a heinous act? Mr. Hong, have you caught the culprits yet?"

"Not yet," Hong Wei stared into Ling Chen's eyes, speaking meaningfully, "But Beijing is my territory. No matter who it is, if they dare to act recklessly on my turf, I won't let them leave Beijing alive."

"Well said, we must not let the culprit go unpunished. I hope you can apprehend them soon, Mr. Hong. Unfortunately, my capabilities are limited; otherwise, I'd surely lend my full support. Anyway, we need to head back, so we won't disturb you any further, Mr. Hong. Until next time."

Watching Ling Chen and the others enter the elevator, Hong Wei slightly furrowed his brows, his gaze sharp.

"Mr. Hong, it must have been Ling Chen. Why not just arrest him?" one of the security personnel in a suit asked.

"Do you have any evidence to prove it was him?"

The man in the suit chuckled coldly, "Mr. Hong, since when do we need evidence to do our jobs?"

Upon hearing this, Hong Wei couldn't help but laugh, nodding, "It seems you haven't wasted your years with me; you've finally learned something. Give the order to keep Ling Chen under 24/7 surveillance. I want to know his every move."

"Yes, I'll arrange it immediately."

After dropping off Nanrong Wanqing, Zhu Xiaozhu, and Tang Shiyun at home, Ling Chen headed straight to the rented apartment. Throughout the journey, Ling Chen changed cabs several times, making a detour for over an hour. From the moment he left Mingquan Hotel, he noticed someone tailing him, but they were too inexperienced to successfully monitor him.

Entering the rented apartment, everyone was present except for Tang Guolun and Jiang Yunkai, who were busy. Zhu Qing sat alone at the corner, holding a knife and wiping its blood-stained blade with a cloth. It was Zhu Qing who had acted earlier. Given their limited manpower, aside from Zhu Qing's skills, Tang Guolun and Jiang Yunkai's abilities were not suitable for such ambush operations.

Ling Chen's judgment proved accurate; while Zhu Qing might not rank on the Earthly List, her profession as an assassin made her adept at surprise attacks. Coupled with some special stealth techniques from the Zhu Family, she could hold her own even against Earthly List masters.

"Lady Zhu, thank you for your hard work tonight."

Ling Chen's voice reached her, and Zhu Qing glanced up at him without saying a word, refocusing on her knife.

Seeing that she was unwilling to engage, Ling Chen shrugged, unwilling to make a fool of himself. He turned toward Tang Guolun and asked, "Have you gathered any intel?"

Tang Guolun nodded and said, "You wouldn't believe it until you see it. Hong Wei is involved in numerous businesses, with illegal activities making up more than half. Drug trafficking, smuggling, human trafficking... just with what I can find, there are over a dozen counts. With these charges alone, he could be executed a hundred times over."

Chapter 1195 - 1202: The Influence of Hong Wei

"And what else?"

"I looked into it, and seventy percent of the entertainment industry in Beijing belongs to Hong Wei. Just the annual profit from this aspect alone reaches billions, not including other illegal earnings and profits from companies he operates. If you add it all up, it's estimated to be hundreds of billions. However, I've heard that Hong Wei spends as much as a billion each year on favors, with a large portion used to curry favor with those above." Saying this, Tang Guolun gave Ling Chen a 'you know what I mean' look.

"Aside from this, have you found any of his secret hideouts?" Ling Chen asked.

"This is rather difficult to find. So far, there's been no success. Hong Wei operates so many entertainment venues, every hotel, nightclub, and foot spa could be his hideout, making it quite troublesome to search. Additionally, we are currently understaffed, and many tasks are hard to carry out."

"I've contacted Fatty, a group will arrive in Beijing tonight."

As soon as he finished speaking, the ringtone of Ling Chen's phone rang from his pocket. He answered the call; it was Hu Fei calling. Whatever Hu Fei said on the other end, Ling Chen's expression immediately soured.

"Alright, I got it. Try to figure something out, and get people over here as soon as possible." Finishing speaking, Ling Chen hung up the phone and looked at Tang Guolun, saying, "We've run into some trouble."

"What's going on?"

"Fatty called to tell me that our people were just intercepted at the airport, apparently they're not allowed into Beijing and will be sent back."

Tang Guolun frowned and asked, "Why?"

"Do you even need to ask? It must be Hong Wei's doing. Hong Wei framed them, saying they were carrying dangerous items. There's nothing I can do about it; I can only have them return first, and send another batch over. But doing so will take a few days. Hong Wei should be aware of this, so if I'm not mistaken, he will definitely make a move in these two days."

"You mean... he will directly come after us?" Jiang Yunkai chimed in from the side, "He doesn't have any evidence to prove we did it, I..."

Before Jiang Yunkai could finish, Tang Guolun interjected, "Do you think someone like him needs evidence?"

"In short, everyone should be cautious, and try to lay low for the next few days." Saying this, Ling Chen turned to look at Zhu Qing in the corner, smiled, and said, "Lady Zhu, things might be tough for you these few days."

Deep into the night.

Hong Family villa.

A Mercedes sedan slowly drove through the gates, and a middle-aged man in a suit got out of the car, quickly entering the villa with a butler accompanying him.

"Mr. Hong."

"Master Ren, what brings you rushing to see me so late?"

Ren Han said gravely, "What happened to Ren Chong? I just found out he was sent to the hospital's intensive care unit and is still in critical condition. Wasn't he supposed to attend a banquet tonight? How did this happen?"

"Master Ren, don't be so upset, sit down and let's talk slowly."

Once Ren Han sat down, Hong Wei began to ask, "Master Ren, do you happen to know Ling Chen?"

"Ling Chen?" Ren Han's expression changed slightly, he nodded, and said, "I know him, I met him a few times in East Sea City the other day. Mr. Hong, why are you suddenly bringing him up?"

Hong Wei casually stated, "Because tonight's incident might be his doing. Aside from your son being seriously injured, several others were killed. I suspect the perpetrator deliberately spared your son's life."

"This... how is this possible?" Ren Han was startled, "Ren Chong and Ling Chen have no grievances, why would Ling Chen target my son?"

"If you must blame someone, blame your son for being foolish enough to incite trouble for Ling Chen. As a result, those youths all lost their lives." Hong Wei rubbed his temples, saying, "Now their families are seeking justice from me. Master Ren, what do you suggest I do about this?"

"This..." Ren Han was rendered speechless, momentarily falling silent.

Seeing Ren Han hesitate to speak, Hong Wei asked with a sarcastic smile, "Why, Master Ren, are you not planning to avenge your son?"

Ren Han sighed helplessly and stated, "If it were someone else, I would deal with him directly, but... Ling Chen cannot be touched."

"Why?"

"I'm... I'm afraid!"

"Afraid?" Hong Wei's eyes slightly opened, feigning a smile, "Master Ren, I've known you for so many years, and I've never seen you so timid. Does Ling Chen have three heads and six arms that even you fear to move against him?"

"Mr. Hong, to be honest, it's not Ling Chen I'm scared of, it's the people behind Ling Chen. You should have heard of Tong Zhentian; he's the most respected figure in the martial arts world today. With Tong Zhentian backing Ling Chen, how could I dare to act? After all, it's my livelihood, and if I offend Tong Zhentian, I'll never be able to survive in this circle."

"Master Ren, I understand your concern. However, don't forget, this is Beijing, my turf. What I say goes. Since Ling Chen is so formidable, I'm afraid I'll have to trouble you to handle this matter. I don't care what means you use, capture Ling Chen within two days, and I'll have people fully support you. If you can't handle even this small matter, then don't bother coming to see me anymore. Have I made myself clear?"

Ren Han wanted to say something else, but upon meeting Hong Wei's piercing gaze, he swallowed his words and nodded, "Yes, I understand."

"Good. Once this matter is done, I won't forget your reward. Haven't you always wanted that plot next to the Martial Arts Academy to expand it? Once it's done, I'll have it sorted for you."

Upon hearing this, Ren Han's expression slightly improved.

"Rest assured, Mr. Hong, I will not disappoint you."

The night passed.

The next morning, Ling Chen had just finished breakfast and was preparing to thoroughly investigate Hong Wei's background with Tang Guolun. Before he could leave, a call suddenly disrupted Ling Chen's plans.

"Chen, come quickly!"

Nanrong Hao's anxious voice came through on the phone, and at the same time, Ling Chen heard banging noises on the other end.

"Haozi, what's going on?"

"I'm not clear, I woke up and saw a lot of people outside making a fuss wanting to see Sister. I complained to the hotel, but they haven't responded at all. Half an hour ago, I called the police, but there's still no sign of them. Chen, they're many and powerful, if you don't come soon, I'm really afraid something bad will happen."

"Alright, I got it. Stay at the hotel, I'm heading over now." Hanging up the call, Ling Chen grabbed Zhu Qing and immediately headed towards the hotel where Nanrong Wanqing was staying.

Chapter 1196 - 1203: Ling's Duel (1)

Under Ling Chen's urging, the taxi driver sped all the way and finally arrived at the hotel where Nanrong Wanqing was staying after more than ten minutes.

Entering the elevator, Ling Chen pressed the floor button. However, the elevator suddenly stopped on the third floor. At the same time, the elevator doors slowly opened. Looking at the corridor outside, Ling Chen frowned slightly, feeling a bit strange. Nanrong Wanqing lived on the fifth floor, but the elevator automatically stopped on the third floor, which was really odd. As thoughts raced through his mind, a young man appeared in the corridor.

"Mr. Ling, my master invites you over for a chat."

Upon hearing this, Ling Chen immediately understood. It seemed that all of this was deliberately arranged by someone, with the purpose of drawing him here. With this in mind, Ling Chen looked at Zhu Qing beside him and said, "You go to the fifth floor first to find Wanqing and ensure their safety; leave things here to me."

Zhu Qing nodded, then took the stairs from the side emergency exit. After Zhu Qing left, Ling Chen strode directly towards the young man.

The third floor of this hotel was not a guest room but a spacious fitness room. Entering the fitness room, Ling Chen immediately saw someone sitting on the floor in the center of the room.

Ren Han!

Ling Chen squinted his eyes, thinking it would be Hong Wei personally, but it turned out to be Ren Han. At this moment, Ren Han sat cross-legged on the ground, wearing a loose training suit, with a tea table placed in front of him, brewing Kung Fu tea.

Hearing the approaching footsteps, Ren Han did not raise his head or look at Ling Chen, but simply reached out to make a cup of Kung Fu tea and placed it opposite him, lightly saying "Please."

Ling Chen smiled slightly and, without wasting words, sat down by the tea table. After drinking a cup of tea, Ling Chen looked directly at Ren Han and asked, "Does Chairman Ren have something to discuss with me?"

"Ling Chen, we all understand, so there's no need to waste words. You've killed so many people and gravely injured my son; do you think I'd let it go without doing anything?"

"Chairman Ren, Ren Chong is really like you; both of you never provide evidence when accusing others, making it seem as if the court is yours. Chairman Ren, let's not beat around the bush. If you want to make trouble for me, just say it. There's no need to find such excuses. I'm not the kind of person who is afraid of causing trouble. If you want to make trouble, bring it on; I'll deal with it all. However, you are at least my senior, so... don't blame me for not warning you. Before you do anything, think clearly whether you can bear the consequences."

Ren Han picked up a cup of tea and said expressionlessly, "People are often not in control of themselves."

Ling Chen nodded. At this stage, there's no point in saying more. After finishing a cup of tea, Ren Han slowly stood up. At this time, the young man who brought Ling Chen over quickly moved the tea table from the center of the room.

Looking at the spacious surroundings, Ling Chen slightly raised his right hand, making a 'please' gesture.

"Ling Chen, our Ren Family's ancestral skill is the Lianyang Saber Technique, so only weapons can let me unleash my full power. For a fair duel, you can choose the weapon you are good at, and I will have someone bring it to you." As he spoke, the young man walked up to Ren Han with a long rectangular wooden box.

The wooden box opened, revealing a three-foot three-inch long steel saber inside. The saber's back was thick, and its edge sharp enough to cut hair, truly a rare Divine Weapon. Ren Han picked up the steel saber, skillfully moving his wrist and arms.

"Ling Chen, you may choose now."

Ling Chen stood still, staring at the steel saber in Ren Han's hand. After a while, he smirked and said, "The Ren Family is famous for its sword technique; I too would like to experience it. If I must choose a weapon, then give me a saber."

"Are you sure?"

Ling Chen nodded. Soon, the young man handed Ling Chen a saber. As Ling Chen gripped the steel saber, his eyebrows furrowed slightly.

Damn! I've seen shameless people, but never this shameless. They talk about a fair duel, but then give me such a pathetic saber. I get it now, Ren Han never intended to have a fair duel. Letting me choose a weapon was just his first deceit.

"Are you ready?" Ren Han looked at Ling Chen and said, "I'm going to make my move."

Ling Chen remained silent, quietly assuming a defensive stance. Seeing his move, Ren Han said nothing more, lightly tapping the floor with the tip of his toes and charging forward, covering a few meters in an instant. As the force of his strike approached, Ling Chen looked up, seeing only the sharp blade rapidly approaching, aiming directly at his head.

Seeing this, Ling Chen slid his foot, immediately activating the Nine Yang Qiankun Step, vanishing from under Ren Han's steel saber like a phantom.

Seeing the target disappear from the blade's edge, Ren Han didn't hesitate; the Sword Force shifted, directly slicing towards his left side.

This slash instantly frightened Ling Chen into a cold sweat. It was as if Ren Han saw through his movement technique, as the blade's edge fell exactly at his moving position. If not for his quick reflexes, stopping his legs in time, the sharp blade would likely have slashed into his body.

Was it a coincidence? Or skill?

Ling Chen couldn't figure it out. He had faced many Earthly List experts, but no Earthly List expert had ever accurately judged the position of the Nine Yang Qiankun Step and attacked preemptively. If Ren Han possessed such an ability, it would mean his Nine Yang Qiankun Step would be entirely ineffective.

Thinking of this, Ling Chen bit his teeth and once again activated the Nine Yang Qiankun Step, like a gust of wind, rapidly changing positions around Ren Han's body. Listening to the wind stirred by the flapping clothes, Ren Han remained standing still, his eyes fixed straight ahead.

Suddenly, Ren Han raised his hand gripping the saber slightly, slashing towards his right side. As he attacked, only a shadow flickered past his eyes, instantly widening the distance between them.

Seeing the piece of cloth falling to the ground, Ling Chen's gaze gradually grew solemn. He had been testing Ren Han earlier, trying to figure out if that previous slash was coincidence or something else. Now it seemed that Ren Han relied not on luck but indeed on skill.

What Ling Chen couldn't understand was that although Ren Han was an Earthly List expert, his skills were at most slightly stronger than Wang Hao's. Wang Hao not only practiced the Nine Yang Qiankun Step but was also proficient in the Shattered Leaf Step. Yet, even so, Wang Hao couldn't see through his identity. Could Ren Han's skills truly be that strong?

According to what Tong Zhentian had told him, the Nine Yang Qiankun Step, ranked first among the three great movement techniques as an Absolute Skill, was extremely formidable. Unless the opponent mastered equally powerful and countering methods, it would be difficult for an Earthly List expert to see through his movement technique.

From this perspective, Ren Han's consecutive ability to see through wasn't a coincidence; he must have mastered some means or techniques.

His strongest ability being countered made Ling Chen a bit worried.

Chapter 1197 - 1204: Ling Ren's Decision (2)

Ren Han didn't give Ling Chen much of a chance to catch his breath. He lifted his steel blade and swiftly closed the distance, slashing toward Ling Chen's shoulder.

The Nine Yang Qiankun Step lost its effectiveness, and Ling Chen had no other choice but to forcefully withstand Ren Han's attack. Clang! With a crisp sound, the edges of their steel blades collided, sparking bursts of fire. Ling Chen focused his gaze and his expression changed.

As expected, compared to Ren Han's weapon, his own steel blade was completely inferior. After just one strike, the edge of his steel blade was already chipped. Without time to think further, Ren Han leaped into the air, his steel blade slicing through the air. The Lianyang Saber Technique unfolded instantly, like a relentless river, strike after strike, each one deadly. Furthermore, when Ling Chen's steel blade touched the opponent's, it seemed as if a strong suction force emanated from the opponent's blade.

It was as if Ling Chen's steel blade was stuck, the rhythm entirely controlled by Ren Han.

Damn!

Facing this situation, Ling Chen couldn't help but curse under his breath. He had seen many formidable saber techniques, but never one as strange as this. He understood clearly that once he fell into the opponent's rhythm, defeat was only a matter of time.

After enduring over a dozen moves, Ling Chen's footsteps continuously retreated. With no choice, as the opponent's offense was too fierce and coupled with Ren Han's upper hand in weaponry, Ling Chen could only adopt a passive defense. Yet, even so, he felt extremely strained.

Looking at his chipped steel blade, Ling Chen gritted his teeth and abruptly moved back, widening the distance between them. Before Ren Han could close in again, Ling Chen shook his wrist and thrust his steel blade toward the ground. In an instant, the blade shattered into more than ten sharp steel fragments.

Seeing Ling Chen's action, Ren Han was slightly taken aback, not understanding what Ling Chen intended to do.

Taking advantage of the moment, Ling Chen quickly bent down, scooping all the sharp steel fragments from the ground into his hands, gripping them tightly.

Huh? At this moment, the sharp-eyed Ling Chen suddenly noticed a red light flashing on the floor. Taking a closer look, it appeared to be a microchip. After a brief moment of shock, Ling Chen quickly realized. It must have fallen out of the handle when he shattered his steel blade.

To think a microchip was hidden inside a sword, this was something he had never encountered before. As his mind raced, Ling Chen's gaze turned towards Ren Han, a hint of suspicion in his eyes. This sword was prepared in advance by Ren Han; he must have known about the microchip.

Could it be... Ling Chen's eyes darted back and forth as he instantly understood the function of the microchip.

Earlier, when he executed the Nine Yang Qiankun Step, Ren Han had seen through his movement technique twice. He initially thought Ren Han had mastered a way to counter his technique, but now it seemed that wasn't the case. It was likely the microchip at work.

The microchip could provide precise positioning, and by relying on the signal from the microchip, Ren Han could accurately determine his location, launching attacks in advance. According to Ling Chen's earlier plan, he intended to shatter the blade into many pieces to use as hidden weapons, never expecting this unexpected discovery of a microchip.

Hmph! You call this a fair duel? Damn!

Ling Chen spat disdainfully, glaring coldly at Ren Han, "Chairman Ren, I thought you were a gentleman. I didn't expect you to be so deceitful, using such despicable means."

Exposed by Ling Chen, Ren Han felt no shame and instead said, "Victory belongs to those who are prepared. Using tactics is not shameful; as long as I win, anything goes."

"Is that so? Chairman Ren, you're truly shameless. I can't imagine how someone like you became the Chairman of the Martial Arts Association."

"Enough talk. Today, you're not leaving this room." With those words, Ren Han raised his steel blade high and approached quickly, ready to launch another attack.

Whoosh!

A whistling sound pierced the air, and Ren Han quickly stopped, brandishing his blade to block. With a crisp 'clang,' a steel fragment was deflected away.

Seeing the fragment miss its target, Ling Chen immediately shifted sideways. At the same time, he executed the Nine Yang Qiankun Step once more, transforming into a series of afterimages, rapidly moving around Ren Han. Without the microchip's assistance, Ren Han was left to rely solely on his skills.

Watching Ling Chen's rapid movements around him, Ren Han kept turning his head, trying to lock on to Ling Chen's position. However, Ling Chen was too fast for his eyes to catch. Seeing this, Ren Han suddenly swung his blade forward, executing a sweeping move that forced Ling Chen back several meters.

Taking this opportunity, Ren Han suddenly accelerated, rushing towards the back of the gym.

Trying to escape?

Without a word, Ling Chen slid forward, immediately following behind Ren Han. However, after pursuing only a short distance, Ling Chen abruptly stopped.

By this time, Ren Han had reached a position against the wall, with the wall providing defense. He only needed to defend from the front without worrying about attacks from behind. Yet, seeing Ling Chen stand motionless in the center of the room, Ren Han was momentarily puzzled. He thought Ling Chen would pursue him, yet he showed no intention of doing so.

Sensing Ren Han's bewildered gaze, Ling Chen spoke in a detached tone, "Chairman Ren, do you take me for a fool? Duped once, would I fall for it again? Are you luring me over there to use underhanded tactics against me?"

Ren Han said nothing, but from his gloomy eyes, it was clear that Ling Chen had seen through his intentions. Indeed, he had prepared a 'surprise' gift for Ling Chen around himself. If Ling Chen followed, it would certainly neutralize him, making him his prisoner.

But Ling Chen wasn't falling for it, rendering his carefully laid plans ineffective.

Whoosh!

The sound of something piercing the air arose, and a steel fragment shot from Ling Chen's hand toward Ren Han.

Ren Han immediately raised his steel blade across his front, deflecting the fragment away. After being blocked by Ren Han, Ling Chen continued the same method of attack, steel fragments constantly flying towards Ren Han. At this moment, in Ling Chen's eyes, Ren Han was like a stationary target.

Ren Han dared not leave his position against the wall and could only cower there unless he had confidence in dealing with Ling Chen's Nine Yang Qiankun Step. Otherwise, as long as Ling Chen didn't enter his trap, Ren Han could only take a beating passively.

Soon, Ling Chen used up all the steel fragments in his hand. Looking at the equipment around, Ling Chen's eyes lit up, and he quickly walked toward a set of dumbbells. These dumbbells were composed of very heavy plates, each weighing ten kilograms, the lightest being five kilograms. For Ling Chen, they were undoubtedly the best weapons.

Chapter 1198 - 1205: Ling Ren's Decision (Part 3)

Seeing Ling Chen move those dumbbell plates to the center of the gym, Ren Han's face immediately turned unsightly.

"Chairman Ren, since you're unwilling to come out, let me entertain you." With that, Ling Chen picked up a dumbbell plate, spun his waist, and sharply threw it forward. The 10-kilogram dumbbell plate was instantly hurled out.

With the support of Inner Strength, the impact of the dumbbell plate was greatly enhanced. Faced with the flying dumbbell plate, Ren Han immediately dodged. However, as soon as he evaded it, another dumbbell plate was already thrown over. He had no choice but to swing his knife to block it.

Clang!

With a crisp sound, Ren Han's arm holding the knife trembled slightly. Although he successfully blocked the dumbbell plate's attack, he did not feel well either.

In the blink of an eye, Ling Chen had already thrown more than ten dumbbell plates. Compared to the suffering Ren Han, Ling Chen was having a great time. The Vice President of the Martial Arts Association, what a coward, without a shred of courage. Ling Chen was speechless and couldn't help but say, "Chairman Ren, don't you want to come out for some fresh air? You're the host here. If you don't come out soon, I, as the guest, can only leave."

Hearing this, Ren Han snorted coldly, angrily saying, "Let's see where you think you're going."

As soon as he finished speaking, over thirty suited men of various ages surged in from the front and back of the gym. Judging by their appearance, they were likely disciples from Ren Han's Martial Arts Academy.

Each of them held weapons, all looking ferocious. Seeing those people rush over, Ling Chen immediately picked up two 10-kilogram dumbbell plates from the ground and charged straight at them.

In a flash, a few men were hit on the head by the dumbbell plates, instantly knocked out.

"Chairman Ren, if you don't take action soon, all your disciples will be done for."

Watching the disciples of the Martial Arts Academy fall one after another, Ren Han gritted his teeth, hesitated for a moment, then finally rushed up with his steel knife.

Hearing footsteps coming from behind, Ling Chen immediately sped up, executing the Nine Yang Qiankun Step, charging swiftly towards the crowd. At the same time, Ling Chen swung both arms, throwing Ren Han's disciples one by one to the back, blocking Ren Han's steps.

Before long, before Ren Han could catch up, Ling Chen had already reached the gym's entrance. Turning around, he glanced at Ren Han approaching quickly, then picked up the dumbbell plate in his hand and threw it forcefully. Instantly, Ren Han's steps paused slightly, and by the time he regained his senses, Ling Chen had already dashed out of the gym, heading straight for the elevator.

Seeing Ren Han chasing out from the gym, Ling Chen smiled and waved until the elevator doors were completely closed. Although the elevator couldn't go up, it could still go down. As the elevator arrived at the hotel's first-floor lobby, Ling Chen strode out of the hotel.

Soon, Ren Han emerged from the hotel with a group of people, scanning around, searching for Ling Chen's whereabouts. However, Ling Chen had already blended into the crowd and disappeared.

"Master, we can't find him."

Ren Han couldn't help but curse, "A bunch of useless fools, so many of you can't stop him. Go back and control that woman, Nanrong Wanqing. Don't let her escape! As long as we have her, I'm not afraid Ling Chen won't show up."

Immediately, a group of people rushed to the hotel's fifth floor. As soon as they stepped out of the elevator, they were stunned by the scene before them. In the long corridor, people were lying all over, yelling in pain.

A few minutes later, Ren Han arrived on the fifth floor by elevator. Seeing the state of the corridor, Ren Han's expression changed, and he demanded coldly, "What's going on here? Where is that woman?"

A young man, head down, replied tremblingly, "Mas... Master, that woman is... is gone..."

"What?" Ren Han shouted angrily, "Didn't I tell you to keep an eye on her?"

"I asked around, and they said a woman appeared earlier and injured them all. I suspect it might have been the woman Ling Chen brought before."

Hearing this, Ren Han couldn't suppress his anger. Not only did he fail to catch Ling Chen, but even that woman got away. This is bad. Not only can he not report back to Hong Wei, if Ling Chen tells Tong Zhentian about this matter, the latter won't let him off. With this thought, a chill ran through Ren Han's heart.

No! He must take action to prevent the Ren Family's foundation from being destroyed.

"You take care of things here, I have something important to do." After giving orders, Ren Han turned and walked into the elevator.

At this moment, in a taxi, Ling Chen looked at Nanrong Wanqing beside him and asked, "Were you frightened?"

"No. Who were those people earlier? Were they here to trouble me?"

"They weren't after you, it's my personal affair. Don't worry, I'll resolve it quickly and it won't affect you." Saying this, Ling Chen turned to Nanrong Hao, who was in the front passenger seat, and instructed, "Haozi, make sure to protect your sister well and don't let anything happen to her. If you're short on manpower, contact Kai for some help."

"Got it, Chen."

"Driver, please stop at the intersection ahead."

"Where are you going?" Nanrong Wanqing asked Ling Chen.

"I have some personal business to take care of. You find somewhere to stay first." Pausing for a moment, Ling Chen seemed to think of something and said, "The hotel might not be safe. Why not go stay at Xiaozhu's place for a few days? Besides, Shiyun is there too. How does that sound?"

"This..." Nanrong Wanqing seemed a bit hesitant.

On the side, Nanrong Hao interjected, "Sister, I think Chen's suggestion is good. You saw what happened today. If we stay at the hotel, there's no guarantee the same thing won't happen again. We're now in Beijing, not East Sea City, so we must be cautious."

Hearing Nanrong Hao's advice, Nanrong Wanqing thought for a moment and gently nodded, "Alright then."

"Okay, I'll contact you later." With that, Ling Chen stepped off the taxi with Zhu Qing.

Watching Ling Chen's figure grow more distant, a trace of doubt appeared in Nanrong Wanqing's beautiful eyes.

"Nanrong Hao, who was that woman just now, do you know her background?"

"Not really, she seems to be someone Ling Chen just brought in for help, and she's very powerful."

"I see." Nanrong Wanqing responded absentmindedly, looking out the car window, her expression complex, lost in thought.

"Why are we here?" By the roadside, Zhu Qing stood beside Ling Chen, asking.

Ling Chen replied with a smile, "No rush, let's wait a moment."

After about ten minutes, a taxi pulled up beside them. The car door opened, and out stepped Jiang Yunkai.

"Chen."

"Did you get the documents?"

"All set. Are we acting now or waiting until night?"

"No time to lose, we act now. Humph! Since Hong Wei wants to mess with me, I must return the favor."

Chapter 1199 - 1206: Wanziqianhong (1)

Not long after, Ling Chen and his two companions found themselves in an alleyway behind a nightclub. According to the intelligence gathered by Tang Guolun, the nightclub before them, named Wanziqianhong, was the most renowned entertainment venue in the Hong Wei Entertainment Industry. Moreover, the annual profit from this nightclub accounted for twenty percent of all their operations, signifying its undeniable importance. Even Hong Wei himself would often visit this nightclub.

The nightclub typically opened in the evening, and it was only midday now. Ling Chen and his team walked through the narrow alley, surveying their surroundings.

The alley had three hidden surveillance cameras, and with Ling Chen's extensive experience, it didn't take long for him to take care of them. Upon reaching the back door of the Wanziqianhong Nightclub,

Ling Chen pulled a few wires from his pocket and inserted them into the iron door's keyhole. In less than ten seconds, the iron door was easily unlocked.

Once inside the nightclub, Ling Chen looked around. Since it was break time, the nightclub was empty except for a few security personnel at the main entrance. Before long, the three of them reached the nightclub's main hall. Gazing at the luxurious decor, Jiang Yunkai casually walked to the bar, picked up a bottle of foreign liquor worth tens of thousands, and poured two glasses.

"Chen, want to try some?"

Ling Chen smiled and waved his hand, continuing to wander leisurely around the nightclub's hall. After all, they had plenty of time, so there was no rush.

The nightclub was vast, with two halls in total; a front hall and a back hall. The front hall was the largest, while the back hall was smaller but much more luxurious, likely intended for entertaining VIP guests.

"Kai," called Ling Chen to Jiang Yunkai, who was savoring fine wine at the bar, and asked, "Are you sure it's here?"

"Shouldn't be wrong. We've been monitoring for two days, and every day around two in the afternoon, a truck arrives at the nightclub. My men told me that the truck wasn't carrying liquor or food; everything was in barrels, packed with small items. Both I and Boss Tang suspect there are drugs inside. Also, the annual profit of this nightclub is peculiar. No matter how luxurious a regular nightclub is, annual profits usually max out at a few hundred million. After all, the bigger the nightclub's income, the greater the expenses. However, Wanziqianhong Nightclub's annual profit reaches over a billion, several times more than ordinary nightclubs, which is clearly abnormal. So, a large part of the profit here should come from drugs."

After listening to Jiang Yunkai's analysis, Ling Chen nodded. Indeed, a nightclub with an annual profit of over a billion is terrifying; many businesses couldn't even achieve that.

Checking the time, it was just past noon, and Ling Chen, after a brief contemplation, said, "Didn't you say the truck arrives promptly at 2 pm? Let's wait here, and when the time comes, we'll find out what's in that truck."

The nightclub's supplies were quite abundant, with not just liquor but plenty of food and fresh fruits. Ling Chen and his companions casually grabbed something to eat, solving their lunch problem. After resting for about an hour, as it neared two, the ever-vigilant Ling Chen heard the sound of a car horn from outside.

Calling over Jiang Yunkai and Zhu Qing, the three found a more concealed spot to hide. Shortly after, the nightclub's main door was pushed open, and over ten men in work clothes began carrying large wooden barrels inside.

The men passed through the front hall, heading straight to the back. Ling Chen signaled Zhu Qing, and she understood immediately, trailing behind them. Given Zhu Qing's adept skills in stealth, she wouldn't easily expose her presence, making her the perfect candidate.

Surreptitiously observing, Ling Chen noted that they moved over twenty barrels in total before closing the door again once the transport was complete.

After confirming the departure of the others, Ling Chen and Jiang Yunkai quickly proceeded to the back hall, where they found Zhu Qing waiting for them. "Lady Zhu, where did they place the goods?" asked Ling Chen.

Zhu Qing pointed to a passageway behind a screen, and without a word, Ling Chen went inside immediately. After passing through the passage, the three reached a storage room filled with piled goods. The warehouse wasn't large, about a hundred square meters, with various sizes of wooden crates stacked inside.

What puzzled Ling Chen was that there were only wooden crates and no barrels in sight. As his mind raced, Ling Chen glanced at Zhu Qing, who silently moved to a corner of the warehouse and shifted the crates stacked nearby. Instantly, a secret door was revealed against the wall.

Beside the secret door was a combination lock. Ling Chen slapped his forehead. If only he had known this was here, he would have brought his equipment.

Just as he was contemplating this, Zhu Qing reached out and entered an eight-digit code. Seeing the secret door open, Ling Chen couldn't help but smile joyfully.

The Zhu Family members are indeed impressive!

Passing through the secret door, Ling Chen took the lead, heading straight inside. After walking a short distance, he saw a staircase leading downward. As he reached the bottom, he heard faint noises.

Someone there?

Ling Chen glanced around and gestured toward Jiang Yunkai and Zhu Qing behind him, indicating they should proceed with caution. Below the staircase was a secret underground room, where numerous wooden barrels were placed in a corner against the wall—exactly those that had been moved in earlier. Ling Chen approached one of the barrels, knocking on it, hearing a hollow 'thud' sound.

Empty? Ling Chen was puzzled and lifted the lid of the barrel. Immediately, a strong smell of alcohol wafted out.

Jiang Yunkai leaned closer, observing the alcohol inside the barrel, and said in surprise, "Why is it this stuff? Did we make a mistake?"

Ling Chen contemplated for a moment, dipping a finger into the liquid, and then tasted it. Seeing Ling Chen's action, Jiang Yunkai asked in confusion, "Chen, what are you doing?"

Ling Chen smiled slightly and said, "Try it yourself, and you'll understand."

Hearing this, Jiang Yunkai dipped his finger into the alcohol and put it in his mouth. "This..." Jiang Yunkai exclaimed in surprise, "This alcohol tastes terrible."

Ling Chen nodded with a smile, saying, "A nightclub like Wanziqianhong would never use such poor-quality liquor to entertain guests. I think there's definitely something wrong here." With that, Ling Chen lifted the entire barrel and poured the liquid onto the ground.

Once the liquid finished flowing out, Ling Chen and Jiang Yunkai discovered that the alcohol only filled up halfway in the barrel, separated by a wooden divider. Seeing this, Ling Chen immediately understood,

quickly flipping the barrel over onto the floor. Examining the bottom, Ling Chen grasped both sides and turned it gently, instantly dislodging a round cover.

Chapter 1200 - 1207: Wanziqianhong (Part 2)

Seeing what's under the round cover, Yunkai's eyes immediately lit up with excitement, "Chen, looks like we got it right." As he spoke, Yunkai took out a small transparent plastic bag. The bag contained many crystalline particles, and having hung out with Jiang Hao and others for so long, Yunkai was no stranger to such granular things.

"Chen, this is the latest drug on the market, called Excitement Pill. It's not only cheap, but highly profitable, and it works really well. It's easy to get addicted to, and recently, quite a bit of it has shown up in East Sea City."

"Now the evidence is irrefutable. With this evidence, I wonder how Hong Wei will deny it." As he spoke, Ling Chen took out his phone and dialed a number.

After the call, Ling Chen turned to look at Yunkai, preparing to speak. At this moment, he suddenly realized that Zhu Qing was nowhere to be seen.

"Huh? Where's Lady Zhu?" Ling Chen looked around and asked, "Kai, did you see Lady Zhu?"

Yunkai looked around, scratching his head, "I didn't notice. Lady Zhu... maybe she went that way." Saying this, Yunkai pointed towards a passage behind them. Ling Chen took a closer look, just about to search for Zhu Qing, when he saw her emerge from the corner of the passage.

"Lady Zhu, where did you go without telling me?" Ling Chen asked as he walked. As he spoke, he suddenly noticed that Zhu Qing's face was a bit pale, her eyes hiding deep-seated anger. Not only that, but her hands seemed to be stained with blood.

"Lady Zhu, you... what's wrong?"

Zhu Qing took a deep breath and turned around, "Follow me."

Sensing the anger Zhu Qing was trying hard to suppress, Ling Chen and Yunkai exchanged glances and quickly followed her.

Soon, Ling Chen saw several men lying on the ground, all lifeless. It seemed Zhu Qing was responsible. Ling Chen was puzzled about what had happened to make Zhu Qing so angry. As an assassin, being easily influenced by emotions was unprofessional.

"You guys should go inside and take a look."

Hearing this, Ling Chen pushed open a door, barely stepping inside before a pungent stink hit him. Covering their noses, Ling Chen and Yunkai entered one after the other. With just one glance, they were both shocked by what they saw.

In a small house, forty to fifty young women were imprisoned. They were all separated, with more than ten in each, held in small iron cages of only six or seven square meters, without clothes, hair disheveled, living, eating, and sleeping in the cages, making the air terrible with a thick stench.

One glance told that the spirits of these young women were very low, probably not fed well or rested properly. However, their looks were above average. Seeing these women treated like animals, finally made Ling Chen understand why Zhu Qing was so angry.

"Damn! That bastard Hong Wei deserves to die," Yunkai cursed angrily, "Is he even human?"

"Kai, open all the cages."

Yunkai responded, and before long, more than fifty young women were freed. However, due to the harsh environment here, some women were seriously ill, and two had been dead for a day or two, with their bodies already beginning to rot. The men on watch hadn't noticed, likely because the odor in the room was so strong, it masked the smell of the corpses. People simply thought they were sleeping.

After more than ten minutes, Ling Chen finally received a call from Tang Yuan.

"Old Tang, have you arrived yet?" Earlier, Ling Chen had called Tang Yuan, knowing local police might take too long to handle the situation, and only Tang Yuan could help.

"Sanlang, you're such a headache. I've warned you not to go against Hong Wei. I just consulted the higher-ups, but they don't allow us to intervene, suggesting we leave it to the local police. I've told you that Hong Wei's connections are vast, and officials of all levels in Beijing are closely connected with him."

"So what do we do?" Ling Chen asked with a furrowed brow, "I just rescued dozens of illegally imprisoned women from Hong Wei's den. Are you suggesting we do nothing?"

"Brother, it's not that I'm unwilling to help but rather that it's inconvenient to intervene. After all, I'm not a police officer, and such matters aren't my jurisdiction. You've been in the shadows long enough to know Beijing's rules; no matter what you do, you better not cross the line." Pausing for a moment, Tang Yuan continued, "I just reported this to the high-ups, initially believing the military wasn't closely connected with Hong Wei. But now it seems we were all wrong. If nothing unexpected happens, Hong Wei is probably already aware. Sanlang, don't worry about the others just now, get out of there."

"No, you should know my personality; once I've come across something, I won't ignore it." With that, Ling Chen hung up the phone.

Seeing Ling Chen's serious expression, Yunkai asked, "Chen, what do we do now?"

"Hong Wei's people will be here soon. If they surround us, we'll be in trouble. We need to get them out immediately." With that, Ling Chen carried two incapacitated women and dashed toward the surface.

With the three of them working together, it took less than fifteen minutes to get over fifty women to the nightclub's back hall. Meanwhile, the sound of car tires screeching outside reached them. Ling Chen went to the window, pulled back the curtain, and looked outside, only to see more than ten cars parked in front of the nightclub, with about fifty to sixty suited men blocking the entrance.

Looks like the front door is a no-go.

"Chen!" Yunkai rushed over, anxiously saying, "The back door is blocked too."

Ling Chen's heart sank. The nightclub had only two exits, now both blocked, leaving only one option: break through. But with so many women in the back hall, if it were just the three of them, escape would be easy.

"I can call for my team," Zhu Qing said from the side.

Ling Chen knew who Zhu Qing was referring to. Besides Zhu Qing, who was responsible for his personal protection, there was also a hidden team of elite assassins cultivated by the Zhu Family, managed by Zhu Qing. Whenever necessary, Zhu Qing could call them to action. Simply put, this team was exclusively assigned to Ling Chen, specializing in his service.

"No!" Ling Chen said, "This is Beijing, and you have to use your head when doing things. Don't act rashly." After a moment of thought, Ling Chen said, "Here's the plan: you two stay back and take care of those women, I'll handle the people outside. I'll try to divert their attention, giving you a chance to get them out."

"Chen, be careful."

Ling Chen nodded, walked directly to the main door, and pushed it open to go out.