

The Beauty 1431

Chapter 1431 Zhu Hong's Reliance (2)

Secret prison.

Zhu Hong sat alone in the cell, surrounded by bulletproof glass and electric grids, completely silent, as if lost in thought.

Suddenly, a sharp pain coursed through his body, as though he'd been shocked. Zhu Hong jerked violently, gritting his teeth and trembling uncontrollably. After a few minutes, he seemed unable to hold on any longer, his body lurched forward, collapsing to the ground, and began convulsing. Worse still, white foam started to bubble from his mouth, the situation extremely dire, as if death could come at any moment.

Beep beep beep! Beep beep beep!

At that moment, the alarm sounded loudly, and soon the cell door was opened from the outside. Tang Yuan and several security personnel rushed in, lifting Zhu Hong from the ground. Observing Zhu Hong's condition, Tang Yuan checked his breath, feeling his faint respiration, he frowned and said, "Notify the medical room immediately to prepare."

Having said this, Tang Yuan, with the help of security personnel, lifted Zhu Hong from the floor and hurried towards the medical room.

Before long, the group arrived at the medical room. At this point, Zhu Hong had already fallen into a coma. Tang Yuan quickly kicked open the door, placing Zhu Hong onto the hospital bed.

"Doctor, treat him immediately, we can't let him die," Tang Yuan said gravely. He remembered Ling Chen's instructions, this guy knew a lot of important things, Ling Chen wanted to extract some intel from him. If Zhu Hong died, he wouldn't know how to explain to Ling Chen.

Several medical staff in white coats were already prepared, equipped to conduct a thorough examination of Zhu Hong's body.

"How is his condition?" Tang Yuan asked anxiously.

A medical staff member sighed lightly: "It's unlikely, his body is on the brink of collapse, there's no solution. If you ask me, just let him have euthanasia, it might lessen his suffering."

As he spoke, Zhu Hong's skin turned a faint red, appearing terrifying. Moreover, his body seemed to inflate, gradually swelling.

Seeing this, several nearby medical staff involuntarily stepped back, fearing that Zhu Hong's body might explode, affecting everyone present.

Tang Yuan frowned, looking around the medical room, he spoke: "Everyone, get out, to avoid..." Before he could finish, his gaze was suddenly drawn to the refrigerated cabinet in the medical room.

That's it! In an instant, Tang Yuan thought of something.

He rushed to the refrigerated cabinet, took out a vial of serum, then called a medical staff over, instructing: "Inject this into him immediately."

Seeing the serum Tang Yuan handed over, the medical staff hesitated: "Sir, this can't be injected directly into a patient, otherwise it will..." Before he could finish, Tang Yuan impatiently urged, "Don't say anymore, hurry up and inject it, he's as good as dead anyway."

Tang Yuan issued the order, and the medical staff dared not disobey, reluctantly taking up the syringe, injecting the serum into Zhu Hong's body. Seconds ticked by, everyone's attention fixed on Zhu Hong.

After about six or seven minutes, Zhu Hong's body finally showed change, his previously reddish skin gradually returned to normal. Not only that, but his mutated limbs slowly returned to normal. However, it was only a partial recovery, not complete. Witnessing this, everyone was stunned, unexpectedly, the serum had saved Zhu Hong's life.

Seeing the data return to normal on the instruments, a medical staff member's eyes widened, exclaiming: "He's made it through."

"Give him a full body examination immediately."

"Yes!" The medical staff responded in unison, quickly surrounding the bedside. After more than ten minutes of examination, Zhu Hong's body had basically returned to health, all data perfectly normal.

"Sir, how did you know that this serum could alleviate his body's anomaly?" After the examination, a medical staff member curiously asked.

Tang Yuan smiled faintly: "I didn't know, but I heard a friend mention this matter, so I tried it out, unexpectedly it worked."

The friend he referred to was naturally Ling Chen. When Ling Chen visited today, they discussed the scene during Zhu Hong's capture. Including Zhu Hong entering the research lab, stealing and directly drinking cell culture liquid, Ling Chen had told Tang Yuan.

For this reason, upon seeing the cell culture liquid in the refrigerated cabinet, Tang Yuan decided to try it out, hoping for a miracle.

"How long until he wakes up?" Tang Yuan asked, looking at the still unconscious Zhu Hong.

"That's uncertain. Sir, I suggest leaving him here for further examination, in case something else happens later."

Tang Yuan nodded: "Alright, I'll leave him in your care then." After speaking, Tang Yuan gestured to the accompanying security personnel, who immediately understood, stepping forward to bind Zhu Hong's hands and feet with special chains to the bed, preventing him from attacking the medical staff upon awakening.

Once Zhu Hong's body was secured, Tang Yuan left two security personnel behind and then turned to leave the medical room.

Tang Yuan wasn't worried Zhu Hong would escape, because any prisoner in this secret prison wears a tracking device, containing a micro-bomb. Should a prisoner make any improper moves, the prison staff can activate the micro-bomb via remote control. So as long as they're wearing this device, even top experts on the Heavenly List can't escape death, let alone someone like Zhu Hong.

About two hours later, Zhu Hong finally woke up on the hospital bed.

Feeling his bound hands and feet, and the unfamiliar surroundings, Zhu Hong immediately realized his location.

"You're awake? How do you feel?"

Hearing the nearby medical staff's inquiry, Zhu Hong replied: "Not bad."

"Seems you've passed through the danger period. To be honest, I thought you were destined to die, but after injecting the cell culture liquid, you managed to survive. In all my years of practice, I've never seen anyone like you. Unfortunately, you're a prisoner, I don't have the authority to conduct further research on your body."

After speaking, the medical staff waved to the security at the door, preparing to have Zhu Hong sent back to the cell.

Watching the approaching security personnel, Zhu Hong's fists clenched involuntarily. With his current power, he was over seventy percent confident he could break free from the chains, and then kill everyone in the medical room.

But after a brief pause, Zhu Hong immediately abandoned this thought.

Chapter 1432 Zhu Hong's Leverage (3)

Killing might be an easy task, but the real key is escaping this prison. Zhu Hong knows full well that even if he kills these people, he won't have a chance to escape, because he still wears that tracking device.

If he can't remove this tracking device, he has no chance of escaping.

So, he can only slowly wait for an opportunity.

"Do you want to know the secret of my body?" Suddenly, Zhu Hong turned his head and said to the medical staff.

Zhu Hong's sudden comment caught the medical staff off guard. Then, without thinking, he nodded and said, "Of course I want to know."

"Tell your superiors that I possess immortality. Haven't you found an ancient tomb? The owner of that tomb also possesses immortality. If you want to know more, you can come to me."

After saying this, two security personnel had already unlocked the chains on Zhu Hong's body and took him out of the infirmary.

As Zhu Hong was taken away, the medical staff exchanged glances filled with strong curiosity. Immortality... could there really be someone in this world who can live forever?

Soon, one of the medical staff snapped out of the shock, quickly picked up a phone, and dialed a number. Regardless of the truth, this matter had to be reported to higher-ups. Besides being doctors, these medical staff had other identities: they were researchers. After the recent discovery of the ancient tomb, although the news was tightly protected, they all worked within the same system, so naturally, they had heard quite a lot about this.

However, due to government orders prohibiting anyone from privately discussing this matter, anyone who violated this would face severe consequences. Thus, although everyone was very curious, they didn't dare to speak out, let alone discuss it in public.

An hour later, Tang Yuan came out of his office, preparing to go to the control room to check on Zhu Hong's situation.

But just then, Pang Jiulin suddenly appeared in front of him. Besides Pang Jiulin, there were four middle-aged men in black suits, each with stern faces and a cold aura about them.

"Colonel?" Seeing Pang Jiulin, Tang Yuan was a bit surprised and asked, "Colonel, why are you here? You didn't even inform me beforehand."

Pang Jiulin pointed to the four men in suits behind him and said, "They were sent by the higher-ups, ordered to take Zhu Hong."

"Zhu Hong?" Tang Yuan was slightly stunned, glanced at those men in suits, then quickly pulled Pang Jiulin aside and whispered, "Colonel, why does the higher-up want to take Zhu Hong? He is a major criminal, having just committed over a dozen murders in East Sea City recently."

Pang Jiulin said helplessly, "I know, but I also have no questions. This is a direct order from above, and we must comply." Pausing, Pang Jiulin continued, "I asked someone to investigate, but no one knows the reason, not even Old General could get any information. However, judging by the attitude from above, they seem to take Zhu Hong very seriously. They not only sent special personnel to take over Zhu Hong but also dispatched a troop to escort him along the way."

"Is that so?"

"I know about the grievances between Zhu Hong and Ling Chen, but we are soldiers and must obey orders. Go, bring Zhu Hong out."

Since Pang Jiulin said so, even if Tang Yuan was a hundred times unwilling, he could only comply. In a short while, Zhu Hong, sitting in a wheelchair, was brought out of the cell by Tang Yuan.

The four men in suits immediately stepped forward, took over the wheelchair from Tang Yuan, and then turned to Pang Jiulin, saying, "Colonel Pang, thank you for your cooperation, we will leave first."

Watching Zhu Hong leave under the protection of the four men in suits, Tang Yuan couldn't help but frown, not expecting such a turn in events.

"What? Zhu Hong was taken away? How could this happen!"

Receiving a call from Tang Yuan, Ling Chen was taken aback. He initially thought Zhu Hong was doomed this time but didn't expect such a change.

"Both Colonel Pang and I are not entirely clear," Tang Yuan's tone carried a bit of helplessness, "It's a direct order from above, and the content is confidential, even Old General is not privy to it."

Ling Chen frowned, feeling somewhat depressed. He thought that capturing Zhu Hong would put an end to their grievances. However, from the current situation, dealing with Zhu Hong might be difficult now.

While pondering, Tang Yuan on the other end of the phone said, "Hold on a moment, I need to take a call."

After about two to three minutes, Tang Yuan's voice came again: "I just received a call from Colonel Pang. He asked me to transfer Chen Quan."

"Transfer Chen Quan?" Ling Chen's heart sank, and he couldn't help but curse, "Are they crazy? Chen Quan is a criminal, why transfer him."

"You might have misunderstood me. When I said 'transfer,' I meant moving him from the secret prison to another department for supervision by others."

"First it was Zhu Hong, now it's Chen Quan. There's certainly more to the reason behind this. Could someone be secretly helping them escape?"

"There shouldn't be any," Tang Yuan said, "According to the intelligence I've gathered, this might be related to the ancient tomb we discovered."

"The ancient tomb..." Hearing this, Ling Chen's interest piqued, and he said in a deep voice, "Could it be that Zhu Hong wants to strike a deal with the government departments?"

Regarding immortality, Zhu Hong learned a lot through the materials left by the Skyhawk Pavilion. If he uses these for a trade, perhaps those people might agree to his terms.

"Old Tang, how much can you access about that ancient tomb now?"

"Nothing at all. That tomb has become a government top secret. Moreover, the department responsible for researching the tomb has become independent. They established a research institute in North County, no longer under government control, but directly overseen by the military. From what I know, the research institute is codenamed 'Eternal Life,' and its level of secrecy surpasses that of the past Ghost and Lonely Wolf. Not only that, but their authority is also enormous, even greater than Lonely Wolf."

"Eternal Life?" Hearing this codename, Ling Chen had a strange feeling in his heart, it felt somewhat akin to the God Organization.

"Are they also researching the secret of immortality?"

"I'm not sure. I heard from Colonel Pang that the primary purpose of that research institute seems to be to develop more medical drugs and solve medical problems."

Ling Chen sneered: "Do you believe that? Given that it's directly managed by the military, what they are researching must not be simple."

"In any case, that's the situation. Zhu Hong is no longer within our jurisdiction. However, I'll continue to keep an eye out for you to see if I can get more information about him."

"Alright, then I'll leave this matter to you. Keep me updated if you have any news."

Chapter 1433 - 1741: Beijing Ling Family (1)

After hanging up the phone, Ling Chen sat in the chairman's office, swiveling in his chair, gazing out at Beijing through the glass, his brow slightly furrowed into a line.

The development of the situation had already exceeded his expectations. That severed limb of Ling Gengqiu was still in Zhu Hong's hands. If Zhu Hong used that thing as a bargaining chip, the whole matter would become extremely troublesome, and retrieving that limb in the future would become a big problem.

In a flash of thought, there was a knock at the office door. "Come in," Ling Chen said, and as his voice sounded, the door was pushed open from the outside. Immediately after, Jiang Yunkai strode in.

"Chen."

Ling Chen pointed to the chair beside his desk and said, "Kai, have a seat. So, any findings?"

"I'm afraid you'll be disappointed. I went to the Zhu Family today with some people and had a chat with Zhu Qianshan. At first, he adamantly denied having met Zhu Hong. It wasn't until I threatened him, saying that Zhu Hong is an A-level wanted criminal and that he had committed a serious crime by helping Zhu Hong escape from East Sea City to Beijing. If he didn't admit it honestly, I would report to the police immediately, and by then, the whole Zhu Family wouldn't fare well. Zhu Qianshan was probably scared, so he confessed everything honestly."

Upon hearing this, Ling Chen hurriedly asked, "Did he say if Zhu Hong gave him anything to keep?"

"No," Jiang Yunkai replied helplessly. "I tried both persuasion and coercion, and even searched the Zhu Family inside and out, but found nothing. From his frightened demeanor, I don't think he knows anything."

Ling Chen nodded, "In that case, don't bother him for now. Also, have someone monitor the Zhu Family 24/7. I want to be aware of Zhu Qianshan's every move."

"Alright, no problem."

After Jiang Yunkai left, Ling Chen took out his phone and checked his contact list. After hesitating for a moment, he finally dialed a number.

After a few words of conversation, Ling Chen picked up the internal phone and asked Dong Ying to arrange a car. Departing from Falcon Company, Ling Chen took a special vehicle and brought Ling Gengqiu to the busiest district in Beijing. This was a villa area where residents could only be those worth hundreds of millions. Besides having money, without a certain identity and social status, it was difficult to live in this place.

Almost half of Beijing's upper-class people lived here. The car went through the gates and slowly drove down a spacious road. All the villas were detached, each having a large private courtyard with a lawn spanning hundreds of square meters.

Moreover, the entire villa area was lush and verdant, with excellent landscaping, providing a tranquil environment that seemed isolated from the external hustle and bustle.

"Not bad!" Even Ling Gengqiu couldn't help but nod, praising, "Those who live here really know how to enjoy life."

As they spoke, the car arrived at the deepest part of the villa area, the largest private section covered thousands of square meters, with four towering buildings surrounded by lush trees, complete with rockeries and flowing water.

At Ling Chen's signal, the driver slowly stopped the car at the entrance.

"Wait for us here," Ling Chen instructed before getting out with Ling Gengqiu.

"What is this place?" Ling Gengqiu asked, observing the surroundings.

Ling Chen smiled faintly and said, "This is our home." As soon as he finished speaking, the gate slowly opened from the inside. Ling Kun, Ling Tao, and Yang Qingling promptly walked out.

Approaching Ling Gengqiu, Ling Kun and Ling Tao appeared very respectful, each greeted him. If Ling Gengqiu weren't put off by such formalities, Ling Kun and Ling Tao might have already kneeled and kowtowed.

"Ancestor, let's go inside." With that, Ling Kun and Ling Tao accompanied Ling Gengqiu straight into the house. Ling Chen followed behind, chatting with Yang Qingling along the way. Yang Qingling had already learned about Ling Gengqiu's identity from Ling Kun. However, compared to this ancestral figure of the Ling Family, Yang Qingling was more concerned about her son.

Inside the house, Ling Gengqiu comfortably sat on the sofa, while Ling Kun and Ling Tao dared not sit, standing respectfully on either side.

Ling Chen, however, wasn't so particular and sat down beside Ling Gengqiu directly. Yet as soon as he touched the sofa, two sharp gazes shot his way. Turning his head, he saw Ling Kun and Ling Tao glaring at him, seemingly reproachful for not showing proper manners by sitting beside the ancestor.

Ling Chen lightly coughed and said with a smile, "Dad, Uncle Ling, we're family, there's no need for such formalities. Ancestor, right?" Ling Chen initially wanted to call him brother but quickly corrected himself to address him as ancestor, to avoid getting reprimanded by Ling Kun later.

"The brat is right, we're all family, sit down, don't stand."

After Ling Gengqiu spoke, Ling Kun and Ling Tao sat down respectfully, asking with concern, "Ancestor, are you comfortable staying at Ling Chen's place?"

"Quite good," replied Ling Gengqiu with a grin, "the brat is very filial to me, you all should learn from him."

Upon hearing the word 'filial,' Ling Chen rubbed his nose, keeping his head down, not daring to look at Ling Kun. If Ling Kun knew that his way of showing filial piety was taking the ancestor out for fun, his buttocks would probably be swollen from a beating.

Ling Kun glanced approvingly at Ling Chen and said with a smile, "Ancestor, if you need anything, just let us know. If Ling Chen can't do it, we'll do our best to satisfy you."

"It's enough that you have the heart, I am quite casual, not having too many demands." After a brief pause, Ling Gengqiu continued, "Today, Ling Chen has something to discuss with you, you needn't bother about me; I'll tour around by myself."

Seeing Ling Gengqiu get up to leave, Ling Kun hastily said, "Qingling, accompany the ancestor for a walk in the backyard."

Yang Qingling nodded gently and kindly invited, "Ancestor, please follow me."

After they had walked some distance away, Ling Kun turned his attention back to Ling Chen, "Regarding the matter you mentioned over the phone, I've discussed it with your Uncle Ling, and it's likely not easy to handle."

Ling Tao chimed in, "The Ling Family's ties to the Martial Arts world are minimal. Although your father and I know some Martial Arts people, their status is too low to help you."

"So you have no solution either?" Ling Chen looked a little disappointed, thinking the Ling Family could help, he was almost at his wits' end about the Martial Arts Association's issues.

Chapter 1434 - 1742: Ling Family of Beijing (Part 2)

Looking at Ling Chen's troubled expression, Ling Kun spoke up, "This matter is indeed a bit troublesome. With the resources the Ling Family currently controls, it's hard to help you. Actually, you can't blame others for your situation now. If you had been ruthless from the start and taken advantage of Su He's situation to destroy the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, today's issues wouldn't have occurred."

Ling Chen rubbed his nose and said with a bitter smile, "Dad, I'm not an executioner; I couldn't bring myself to kill so many people. Forget it! Since you all have no solution, I'll keep looking on my own; maybe there's another way."

At this moment, Ling Kun, who had been silent, said, "Even though this matter is troublesome, it's not completely impossible to handle. However, I'm not very confident right now, so telling you wouldn't help. For now, handle it yourself, and the Ling Family will do its best to support you."

"Alright, thanks in advance."

"We're family, no need to thank me." At this, Ling Kun changed the topic and said, "I heard you were seriously injured a while back and were hospitalized for two weeks?"

"Dad, you know about that?" Ling Chen was a bit surprised; he hadn't mentioned anything because he didn't want to worry his parents.

"Nonsense! The Ling Family may not be what it once was, but our information is still reliable. With such a big incident happening in East Sea City, how could we not know? But you, you dared to keep this from us. If I hadn't known you were fine, I would have gone to East Sea City long ago."

Ling Chen smiled sheepishly, "I was just trying to avoid worrying you."

Ling Kun scolded him, "I'm your father; it's my duty to worry about you. Remember, if you dare to hide things from us again, see how I'll deal with you."

"Oh, right!" As he spoke, Ling Chen suddenly remembered something and asked, "How is Ling Jun doing now?"

Ling Jun used to be a high-ranking member of the northern Ling Family. After the north and south became one family, Ling Jun wanted to follow Ling Chen and the others, but Ling Chen didn't want to associate with someone like Ling Kun. After Ling Kun took charge of the Ling Family, a portion of the wealth was allocated to Ling Jun to let him develop on his own. Regardless, Ling Jun is a master on the Heavenly List, so Ling Chen was quite concerned about his whereabouts.

"Ling Jun took a large sum of money, bought a big house in a pleasant environment, and hired over a dozen servants to take care of him. Recently, I've heard he found himself a young wife in her twenties," Ling Tao sighed and said, "He's no different from those people, only knowing enjoyment; splitting from him was the right choice back then."

Ling Chen curiously asked, "How much property did you divide for him?"

"Quite a lot, over a billion in funds, plus shares in some industries. Even if he does nothing, the pure profits alone bring him eighty or ninety million a year, enough for a luxurious life."

After hearing what Ling Kun said, Ling Chen asked, "Dad, how many people are in the Ling Family now? I haven't seen many since I came in; isn't it too quiet?"

"There are a total of 142 people in the Ling Family now. You haven't seen them because they don't live here."

"That many?" Ling Chen was taken aback. He thought that after the northern and southern Ling Families ended their conflict, there would only be a few dozen left, but there were over a hundred! He had underestimated the scale of the Ling Family.

Ling Tao explained, "Our Ling Family's power is divided into two factions, one literary and one martial. Like your father and me, we mainly focus on enhancing the martial capabilities of the Ling Family. Another faction is responsible for commerce, providing us with a steady stream of funds. So, the real loss was on our side; other Ling Family members are spread across the country, running various companies. Including their children, the number has exceeded a hundred."

With this, Ling Tao glanced at Ling Kun and continued, "Your return this time is just right; in a day or two, all the members of the Ling Family are coming back."

"Coming back for what?"

"To attend the ceremony, of course. Your dad may have succeeded as the Family Head, but we haven't officially held a ceremony yet. Every Ling Family member must witness it to formally acknowledge his position. I bet some people will cause trouble then."

Ling Chen asked in confusion, "Uncle Ling, why would anyone cause trouble for Dad?"

"I just mentioned that the Ling Family is divided into two factions: the Wen Sect, responsible for providing funds and handling nothing else, and the Martial Sect, responsible for fighting the southern Ling Family. Both factions have cooperated to bring the Ling Family to where it is today. However, deep down, there's always been a barrier regarding the division of credit. Some believe the Wen Sect, in charge of business, has made a great contribution; why is the Ling Family's top brass all from the Martial Sect? This has caused discomfort among the Wen Sect members. But at the time, facing external enemies was the priority, so even if some were displeased, no one stirred up trouble. Now, with the Ling Family unified, someone is bound to stand up and fight for the Wen Sect's interests."

"So that's how it is." After Ling Tao's explanation, Ling Chen finally understood the reason.

"Uncle Ling, even if the Wen Sect has objections, I doubt they'd dare offend you guys. After all, the Ling Family's martial strength is in your hands. Power comes from the barrel of a gun, and whoever has the bigger fist calls the shots, unless the Wen Sect wants to learn the hard way."

"I hope so. No matter what, we're all family, and we don't want any unpleasantness."

After a while, Ling Gengqiu, accompanied by Yang Qingling, returned to the living room. After some casual chatting, Yang Qingling got up to prepare the meal. Although there were quite a few servants in the Ling Family, it was rare for Ling Gengqiu to be around, so Yang Qingling naturally wanted to showcase her culinary skills.

After the meal, Ling Chen glanced at the time and, thinking of the matters at Falcon Company, said, "Dad, I'll head back first. Let me know about the Ling Family gathering in a couple of days, and I'll definitely come to attend."

After speaking, Ling Chen added to Ling Gengqiu, "Old Ancestor, stay with the Ling Family for the next few days and have a good chat with Dad and the others. How does that sound?"

"No problem, it's the same wherever I am, as long as there's food and drink."

If there were women, that would be even better! Ling Chen silently added a thought for Ling Gengqiu.

Leaving the Ling Family, Ling Chen mentioned something to the driver, and the car immediately drove onto the highway. About forty minutes later, Ling Chen arrived at the Beijing military district compound.

Getting out of the car, Ling Chen carried the gifts he just bought at the mall and walked directly to the compound. After identity verification at the security post, Ling Chen was granted entry.

Chapter 1435 - 1743: Beijing Ling Family (3)

Ding-dong!

With a crisp chime of the doorbell, the security door was opened from inside. A woman in her forties sized Ling Chen up and asked, "Who are you looking for?"

Ling Chen smiled and said, "Hello, I'm here to see the old General."

"The old General is about to take his lunch nap. How about you come back another day?" No sooner had the woman spoken than Qiao Zhen's voice came from inside the house: "You little punk, you finally remembered to come see this old man."

With Qiao Zhen saying that, the woman didn't dare block Ling Chen anymore and hurriedly ushered him in.

In the living room, Qiao Zhen was wearing a loose Tang suit and sitting on the sofa, his back straight. Even though he had already stepped down from his post, the aura of a soldier still radiated from him.

"Old General." Ling Chen grinned, handed the gift in his hand to the woman, then walked up to Qiao Zhen.

"I thought you'd forgotten this old man. It's been so long and you didn't even make a phone call."

Ling Chen said, a bit embarrassed, "That's my fault, I've been too busy lately. See, the moment I got some free time I rushed over to visit you."

"Enough! You think I don't know what you've been busy with? I may have retired from above, but my eyes aren't blind and my ears aren't deaf. I know very well what's been going on. To be honest, you really stir up trouble. There's nothing going on that doesn't have your shadow in it."

Ling Chen couldn't help but laugh. "Old General, are you praising my capabilities in a roundabout way?"

"All this time and you're still the same, haven't changed one bit." Prodded by Ling Chen, Qiao Zhen also laughed. "I heard from Pang Jiulin that for Zhu Hong's matter, you came all the way from East Sea City to Beijing."

When Qiao Zhen mentioned Zhu Hong, the smile on Ling Chen's face faded a lot. He said solemnly, "Old General, how much do you know about this matter?"

"I asked a few old friends around, but came up empty-handed. The water around that ancient tomb is too deep. Everyone keeps their mouth shut and doesn't dare talk much about it. However, as far as I know, the government has long since stopped getting involved."

"Why?" Ling Chen asked in confusion, "Didn't the government send people to take over that ancient tomb back then? Why are they ignoring it now?"

"Because the impact of this matter is bad. The government has explicitly banned promoting superstitious ideas. An immortal person—don't you think that's superstition? If something like that gets out, who knows what kind of chaos it will cause. Besides that, although a lot of data was left in that tomb, all indicating that the tomb's owner lived for several hundred years, there's no living person and no corpse. Just some documents—what can they prove? So the government isn't interested in wasting effort on this, and they've already withdrawn their people."

"But I heard that the military has taken over this matter?"

"Correct." Qiao Zhen nodded. "To be precise, it's been taken over by the military's research institute. In short, information on this whole thing is sealed up tight, not a word leaks out, so I can't find anything useful either. Kid, I suggest you don't wade into this muddy water, or you'll just bring a pile of trouble down on yourself that's hard to clean up."

Hearing this, Ling Chen gave a bitter smile inwardly. If he could, of course he didn't want to get involved. But since it concerned Zhu Hong and Ling Gengqiu's severed limbs, he had no choice.

"Right, I almost forgot to tell you something." Qiao Zhen said, "Lonely Wolf might be disbanded."

"Disbanded?" Ling Chen asked in surprise, "Why?"

"Whether it's Ghost or Lonely Wolf, they were created to fight the God Organization. Now the God Organization has completely vanished, and the mastermind behind it has also disappeared without a trace. So there's no more value in Lonely Wolf continuing to exist."

"What about Instructor Pang, Mr. Han, and Old Tang? How is the government planning to place them?"

"They'll be assigned into special forces units in the army as officers. With the battle merits they've accumulated, they'll at least be field-grade officers. Also, Pang Jiulin and Han Bing are both key contributors to Ghost and Lonely Wolf. Given a chance to groom them, it's only a matter of time before they've got General Stars on their shoulders. After working so hard for so many years, they deserve this. It's a pity you pulled out of Ghost so early. Otherwise, with your record you could at least be a lieutenant colonel by now. With a few more years of advanced training, you might've become the youngest general."

Ling Chen said with a smile, "It's fine, I'm doing pretty well now too. Compared to being a soldier, I still prefer a free and easy life."

Qiao Zhen sighed with emotion. "Seeing all of you making something of yourselves, I truly feel happy for you. All that effort I put into you back then clearly wasn't wasted. Kid, come visit me more when you have time. I'm getting on in years; I don't know how many more years I've got."

"Old General, please don't say that. With your health, you can easily live another twenty years."

"Twenty years?" Qiao Zhen laughed heartily. "If I could live another twenty years, that'd be great. Lately I've been thinking, while my body's still holding up, I should travel around a bit, and make a trip to East Sea City to visit the Chief."

Ling Chen knew the "Chief" Qiao Zhen mentioned was He Ziyun. Back then, He Ziyun was the one who founded Ghost, and Qiao Zhen was his successor.

"Old General, whenever you want to go, just tell me. I'll come to Beijing and pick you up right away."

"Alright, it's a deal then."

After staying at Qiao Zhen's home for about two hours, Ling Chen took his leave. Qiao Zhen had originally wanted to keep him for dinner, but Ling Chen received a call at the last minute and had to go.

Leaving the military compound, Ling Chen sat in the back seat of the car, took out his phone, and dialed a number.

"Hey, it's me. I was just at the old General's place, so it wasn't convenient to talk. We can talk now—what exactly is going on with Zhu Hong?"

Tang Yuan's voice came from the other end of the line. "I just got some intel. Zhu Hong will be flying to the research institute in North County tonight. Someone will quietly escort him to the airport. If you want to settle this once and for all, this is your only chance. Once Zhu Hong reaches North County, you won't have any chance to get to him."

Hearing this, Ling Chen's brows lifted. "Old Tang, are you egging me on to commit a crime?"

"What, you're not interested?"

Ling Chen pondered for a moment and said, "When I went to visit the old General just now, he told me the water in this matter is too deep, told me to take it easy and not throw myself in. That research institute is operating under the military's name. If I act rashly, it's the same as going up against the military. Putting aside whether I'm okay with that, if the old General finds out, he'll tear into me."

"Fine! In that case, pretend I never said anything just now." With that, Tang Yuan directly hung up.

Chapter 1436 - 1744: Ling Family Grand Gathering (1)

Putting down the phone, Ling Chen recalled Tang Yuan's words, hesitated for a moment, and ultimately abandoned the idea. Given the power he currently possesses, kidnapping Zhu Hong in Beijing would be a breeze. However, considering various factors, someone would surely suspect him. Opposing the military is something he doesn't even dare to think about. Even with his military background, he wouldn't dare act recklessly, as this is no joking matter.

In the blink of an eye, it's been three days since arriving in Beijing. Originally, Ling Chen wanted to resolve the Zhu Hong issue and then return to East Sea City to focus all his energy on the competition between Dragon Tiger Hall and Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. But because of the Ling Family gathering, Ling Chen had to stay a few more days.

"Chairman, your suit is ironed." Dong Ying stood at the door of Ling Chen's dormitory holding a set of exquisite suits.

Last night, after receiving a call from Ling Kun, he learned the Ling Family gathering would be held today. As the son of the Ling Family Patriarch, Ling Chen naturally had to dress well; he couldn't afford to lose face. After receiving the suit from Dong Ying, Ling Chen thanked him with a smile and then let Dong Ying go about her business.

After dressing, Ling Chen sprayed a bit of cologne on himself with flair. Once everything was ready, he headed downstairs alone.

As he got into the car, just when Ling Chen was about to head to the Ling Family, the phone in his pocket suddenly rang. Seeing the caller ID on the screen, Ling Chen hurriedly answered and said, "Wanqing, calling me so early, what's up?"

"Nothing, I heard you're in Beijing, so I called to see when you're free to grab a meal together."

"You're in Beijing?"

"Yeah, arrived last night. Hongyu United Investment Company has an important meeting to host. As the chairman, I must lead it."

"Today's meeting?"

"Tomorrow morning, today some materials need preparation. Why? Are you busy?"

"It's not that." Ling Chen felt a stir in his heart, saying, "I'm heading home for a family gathering now. Would you like to come with me? After lunch, I can take you back. How does that sound?"

"A family gathering..." Nanrong Wanqing murmured on the other end of the phone, her tone carrying a hint of hesitation.

"If you're busy, I won't force you." Seeing Nanrong Wanqing not responding, Ling Chen immediately said.

"No, not at all! How about this? You come to my company, I'll arrange things and then go with you."

"Alright, I estimate it'll take about thirty minutes to get to you." After saying that, Ling Chen hung up the phone, then turned the car towards Hongyu United Investment Company.

At this time, Nanrong Wanqing, having hung up the phone, suddenly stood up, startling the secretary beside her, who quickly asked, "Chairman, what's wrong?"

"I need to go out for a bit, get me a few outfits ready." Nanrong Wanqing instructed, "Nothing too formal, nor too flashy, just plain and simple is fine." After speaking, she glanced at the time and said, "I'll give you fifteen minutes to prepare; if you can't manage it, hand in your resignation letter."

Upon hearing this, the secretary didn't dare delay and dashed out of the office like a rocket.

Nanrong Wanqing took a deep breath, turned, and walked into the office's private lounge, where she took out a makeup box she hadn't used in a long time from the drawer and meticulously began to dress up in front of the mirror. She wasn't unfamiliar with meeting Ling Chen's parents, but as Ling Chen just said over the phone, this was a family gathering. She knew very well what kind of occasion a family gathering was and understood clearly what it meant for Ling Chen to invite her.

Even someone known for her calm demeanor couldn't help but feel nervous at this moment.

It must be said that the secretary was extremely efficient. Less than fifteen minutes later, she returned with over a dozen outfits.

Seeing Nanrong Wanqing's satisfied smile, the secretary couldn't help but breathe a sigh of relief. Luckily, there was a large mall right next to the company; otherwise, she wouldn't have been able to come up with so many clothes in fifteen minutes.

With the secretary's help, Nanrong Wanqing finally got dressed. At the same time, Ling Chen's call came in.

After waiting in the car for about three minutes, Nanrong Wanqing stepped gracefully out of the building, carrying a delicate handbag.

At the very moment Nanrong Wanqing appeared in view, Ling Chen immediately felt awestruck, as if everything around him disappeared, leaving only Nanrong Wanqing in his sight.

Dark jeans paired with a black-and-white checkered coat, her smooth hair danced with her steps in the wind, complementing her breathtaking beauty. Her presence radiated a unique allure, drawing admiring glances from passersby.

As she approached, Ling Chen quickly opened the car door to greet her, taking the handbag from her hand.

"Sorry to keep you waiting." Nanrong Wanqing said apologetically.

"No worries, being able to invite you to the gathering makes even waiting two more hours worth it." Ling Chen couldn't help but praise, "You look stunning today."

Nanrong Wanqing smiled charmingly, as though every flower bloomed at that moment, her beauty beyond comparison.

"So, apart from today, am I not beautiful at other times?"

"Of course not." Ling Chen immediately corrected himself, "You are always the most beautiful, just today particularly so."

"Really?" Nanrong Wanqing slightly raised her mouth, with a sweet smile. Sometimes, a woman's happiness is simple, like a man's compliment. Of course, it's better if the man is someone she cares about.

"Let's get in the car." Ling Chen opened the car door, welcoming Nanrong Wanqing inside, then drove away amidst the envious gazes of onlookers.

Their luck today was good, having avoided peak traffic hours; there were not many cars on the road. After driving for over twenty minutes, Ling Chen and Nanrong Wanqing finally arrived at the Ling Family residence. Seeing dozens of luxury cars parked at the entrance, Ling Chen couldn't help but sigh; the Ling Family members really were wealthy, any car here casually valued in the millions. Comparatively, his Mercedes was the cheapest at just over six hundred thousand.

After parking, as Ling Chen and Nanrong Wanqing got out of the car, they saw a fiery red Ferrari speeding towards them. Not slowing down, it headed straight for Ling Chen's direction. Seeing the Ferrari charging forward, Nanrong Wanqing was shocked and stood there motionless, forgetting even to move. Seeing this situation, Ling Chen's expression changed slightly, worried that something might happen to Nanrong Wanqing, he hurriedly rushed over, grabbed her arm, and pulled her aside, shielding her behind him.

What a close call! Ling Chen breathed a sigh of relief, grateful for his quick reaction in pulling Nanrong Wanqing away just in time; otherwise, it nearly ended in disaster.

Chapter 1437 - 1745: Ling Family Grand Gathering (2)

As the fiery red Ferrari sped closer, it expertly drifted, leaving two tire marks on the ground, and parked perfectly next to Ling Chen's Mercedes.

As the Ferrari engine cut off, a handsome young man stepped down from the driver's seat, casually flicking his bangs.

Seeing the young man leave like nobody was around, Ling Chen frowned slightly and immediately called out to him. The young man turned back, gave Ling Chen a once-over, and asked in a confrontational tone, "Are you calling me?"

"You almost hit my friend just now. Don't you think you owe us an apology?"

"An apology?" The young man was momentarily stunned but then burst into laughter, shrugged, and said, "You're really amusing. Did I hit you? No, right? Besides, I was just passing by here. Do you not have legs to move aside yourselves?"

Ling Chen said with a sarcastic smile, "From what you said, it seems like we're the ones in your way?"

"Obviously!" The young man wasn't keen on dealing with Ling Chen, impatiently waved his hand, and then walked towards the Ling Family's estate. Seeing this, Ling Chen quietly followed him. Just then, Nanrong Wanqing suddenly took Ling Chen's hand and said softly, "It's just a minor issue, not necessary."

The young man seemed to hear Nanrong Wanqing's words and turned back with a smile, saying, "This young lady..." He intended to say "young lady," but upon seeing Nanrong Wanqing's appearance, he was briefly stunned, a glint of interest flashing in his eyes, and stopped his steps. He walked over to Nanrong Wanqing, saying, "Haha! This beautiful lady has a point, why fuss over a small matter? Beautiful lady, let me introduce myself, I'm Ling Dan. How should I address you?"

Nanrong Wanqing looked at Ling Dan and said lightly, "I don't think I need to tell you my name because we will never be friends."

"Beautiful lady, don't say that. If you knew who I am, I bet you'd be very interested in me," Ling Dan said with a complacent smile. "Today is a big gathering of the Ling Family, and I just happen to lack a female companion. Why don't you..."

Before Ling Dan could finish, Nanrong Wanqing pointed to Ling Chen beside her and said, "This is my boyfriend."

"Your boyfriend?" Ling Dan looked at Ling Chen with disdain, sneered, and said, "Just someone who drives a junk car like this, what right does he have to be your boyfriend?" This wasn't far from the truth, as Ling Chen's Mercedes indeed paled in comparison to Ling Dan's multi-million-dollar Ferrari.

"Hey! Since you parked here, you must be from the Ling Family too. What's your name, which house are you from? Why haven't I seen you before?" Ling Dan looked at Ling Chen with a condescending tone.

"I'm from the Martial Sect."

"Oh!" Ling Dan elongated his tone, feigning an understanding look and openly mocked, "So you're with those brainless folks, no wonder you drive a junk car. But you should be grateful; without us from the Wen Sect funding you, you probably couldn't even afford that junk car."

After speaking, Ling Dan pointed at Nanrong Wanqing, said, "From now on, she's not your girlfriend. Understand? If you know what's good for you, leave at once and don't disturb my bonding with the lady."

Ling Chen touched his nose, looked at Ling Dan, and asked, "Are there many people in the Wen Sect like you, who are so full of themselves? Do you think just because you have some money, you can do whatever you want?"

"Haven't you heard the saying that money makes the world go round?" Ling Dan boasted, "If I want, I can crush you with money."

"Really?" Ling Chen's lips curved slightly into a faint smile, "I can't crush you with money, but I can with my fists. Do you want to try?"

"Oh! Boy, you sure have guts to talk to me like that. Do you know who I am? In the entire Ling Family, there are not more than five people who dare speak to me in such a tone, and you're definitely not one of them."

BAM!

Ling Chen couldn't be bothered with more words and directly punched Ling Dan square on the nose. Instantly, blood gushed from Ling Dan's nostrils, splattering on the ground.

With a scream, Ling Dan clutched his bleeding nose, his entire face contorted in pain.

"You... you dare break my nose!" Ling Dan roared at Ling Chen, resisting the intense pain, with eyes full of rage, seemingly wishing to bite Ling Chen to death.

Ling Chen shrugged, expressionless, and said, "I just wanted to let you know, there's no one in the Ling Family I wouldn't dare hit."

"Boy, just you wait, I'll make you regret this," Ling Dan gritted his teeth, pointed at Ling Chen, and cursed, "Not only you, but your woman too. Just you wait, I'll show you both."

"Threatening me?" Ling Chen, touching his undamaged nose, suddenly kicked out, hitting Ling Dan right in the groin. Instantly, a scream, akin to a pig being slaughtered, echoed throughout the parking lot, drawing the attention of some newly-arrived Ling Family members.

"Hmm! That scream sounded like Ling Dan; what's up with him?" A few young men, having just parked their cars, began heading toward where Ling Dan was.

By the fiery red Ferrari, they saw Ling Dan lying on the ground, blood and nasal mucus everywhere, looking as pathetic as possible. Most amusingly, his hands were clutching his crotch, a posture that made onlookers want to laugh.

"Ling Dan, what happened to you?" A young man, who had a good relationship with Ling Dan, quickly went up and helped Ling Dan up.

"Did... did any of you see a man and a woman walk away from here earlier?" Ling Dan asked through gritted teeth, his face full of resentment.

"People? What people?" The crowd looked at each other, all indicating they hadn't seen anything. "Ling Dan, could it be you were beaten up? Who's got the guts to lay a hand on you?"

"Someone from the Martial Sect," Ling Dan growled through clenched teeth, "Today, I'm going to make that bastard pay."

Meanwhile, Ling Chen, holding Nanrong Wanqing's hand, had already entered through the main gate of the Ling Family. Ling Dan's incident was just a minor episode to him, not worth mentioning. Walking on the Ling Family's stone pathway, Nanrong Wanqing looked around the surroundings and couldn't help but ask, "I've never heard of the Ling Family in Beijing before?"

Ling Chen smiled slightly and explained, "The Ling Family is always very low-key, apart from its internal members, not many outsiders know about it." As they spoke, the two arrived outside a three-story villa of the Ling Family. Ling Chen pressed the doorbell, and soon a housekeeper opened the door. Entering the living room, they saw Ling Gengqiu sitting alone on the sofa, remote control in hand, idly watching TV.

Chapter 1438 - 1746: Ling Family Grand Gathering (Part 3)

"You finally came, kid." Ling Gengqiu jumped up from the sofa, his face showing displeasure as he said, "If I had known it was this dull here, I should have gone with you." At that moment, Ling Gengqiu noticed Nanrong Wanqing beside Ling Chen, his eyes suddenly lit up, and he hurried forward, "You're Wanqing, right? Come, sit down. Ling Chen, what are you doing standing there? Go make some tea."

Ling Chen smiled wryly and said, "Brother, where's my dad and the others? Haven't seen them."

"They went to entertain the guests and left me here alone. You're kind of a host for the Ling Family too, why didn't you go to the front hall?"

"Forget it, that kind of occasion doesn't suit me. Being here is better."

The three chatted for a while and then saw Yang Qingling coming in from outside.

"Mom, aren't you supposed to be out there with dad entertaining guests? Why are you back?" Ling Chen stood up and asked.

"Don't mention it." Yang Qingling said, frustrated, "I'd rather be alone than put up with that atmosphere."

"Frustrated? Mom, what's going on? Is there really anyone who dares to disrespect you?"

"It's those Wen Sect people, each more arrogant than the last, acting as if we're inferior to them, not even bothering to look at us properly, and speaking so sarcastically. Your dad has no choice; I reckon he's even more frustrated than I am."

"Mrs. Yang, take it easy; have a seat first, I'll make you a cup of tea." Nanrong Wanqing helped Yang Qingling sit on the sofa, then brewed a cup of hot tea and placed it in Yang Qingling's hand.

Looking at the gentle Nanrong Wanqing, Yang Qingling smiled and said, "It's fine, as long as I see you, all my annoyance disappears." Then Yang Qingling turned to Ling Chen and said, "You shouldn't just sit here all the time; go to the front and help your dad a bit, so he doesn't get overwhelmed."

Ling Chen nodded and said, "Alright, I'll head over now."

Leaving the villa, Ling Chen went straight to the Ling Family's front hall. As he was about to enter, he saw Ling Tao standing alone by the wall, holding a cigarette, looking solemn.

"Uncle Ling." Ling Chen quickly approached and asked, "Why are you here alone?"

"You're here!" Ling Tao dropped the cigarette butt and sighed, "Ling Chen, today's gathering might not be so simple."

"What do you mean?"

"I just talked to some key figures of the Wen Sect in the Ling Family, hoping they would support your father as the Family Head, but their attitudes were ambiguous, not giving a direct answer. Besides, based on what I've learned, the Wen Sect held a secret meeting in Beijing last night, discussing something that might be related to today's gathering."

"A secret meeting?" Ling Chen furrowed his brow and said, "Could it be they really want to cause trouble?"

"Judging by their current attitudes, it seems more than just causing trouble. If I'm not mistaken, they might be vying for the Family Head position." Ling Tao's tone carried a trace of worry, "The peace in the Ling Family didn't come easily; I hope internal conflicts won't lead to division again."

"Seems simple enough." Ling Chen said nonchalantly, "If they dare to create chaos, then let them taste our methods."

Ling Tao smiled bitterly, "If only it were that simple; the Wen Sect controls eighty percent of the Ling Family's industries. Without their support, the Ling Family would be a small family at best. If that's the case, we wouldn't need to revitalize the Ling Family in the first place."

"Uncle Ling, even a small family can grow into a big family; it just takes time, no need to rush. Besides, the ancestors didn't require you to develop the Ling Family on such a large scale, so there's no need to put too much pressure on yourselves."

"That's not the case; during the northern and southern Ling Family conflicts, the Wen Sect indeed played a substantial role, providing significant funds allowing the northern Ling Family to continue developing. However, though the Wen Sect contributed, it was the Martial Sect fighting on the front lines. We Martial Sect started with over a hundred people, and now there's less than ten, suffering the greatest loss. Ling Chen, don't you think the Family Head's position should belong to our Martial Sect?"

"Indeed, the Martial Sect made the most sacrifices."

"But, the Wen Sect believes during the conflict, the Martial Sect leading was expected. However, now that the Ling Family has regained peace, the Martial Sect no longer has a role to play and the responsibility of developing and expanding the Ling Family should fall to their Wen Sect. I admit, their argument isn't without reason. However, if the Wen Sect genuinely wants to contribute to the Ling Family, there's no need to be fixated on the Family Head position. Their actions are purely a move to expand their ambition. In all, the Family Head position must be in our hands. Otherwise, our Martial Sect will eventually be oppressed by the Wen Sect, and when that happens, where can we find a foothold in the Ling Family?"

Ling Tao's tone was firm.

Ling Chen smiled slightly, "Uncle Ling, it's good you think this way; don't worry too much about other matters. Let's see what the Wen Sect people say; if they insist on vying for the Family Head position, then we don't need to be courteous."

"You plan to take action against them?"

"Those who follow me will prosper, those who oppose me will perish; I'm curious to see how tough the Wen Sect people's bones are. Uncle Ling, let's go and see how dad is doing."

With that, the two walked straight into the hall.

At this moment, Ling Kun stood alone at the entrance, greeting the Ling Family members arriving at the gathering. However, the Wen Sect members were all cold, responding to Ling Kun's greetings with perfunctory words. In the spacious front hall, the Wen Sect gathered in groups, chatting quietly. As the Family Head, Ling Kun was left aside, looking quite awkward.

"Dad." Ling Chen strode into the front hall, greeting Ling Kun.

Hearing Ling Chen addressing Ling Kun, several people turned their eyes towards him, sizing up Ling Chen. If Ling Kun becomes the Ling Family Patriarch, Ling Chen's status would rise with it, so everyone was paying close attention.

"You finally came, kid."

Ling Chen glanced around the hall and smiled, saying, "How's it going, not feeling too great, are you?"

"Don't mention it; if it wasn't for the future of the Ling Family, I would've been having tea at the back already. I thought the Wen Sect people would at least pretend and be polite, but who knew they wouldn't give us any face, not even acknowledging us." Talking about this, Ling Kun was clearly aggravated.

"Dad, I just spoke with Uncle Ling. Actually, this matter isn't difficult to solve; just be a bit more assertive."

"Assertive?" Ling Kun shook his head and said, "You make it sound easy; the Ling Family's financial lifeline is in their hands; what do I have to be assertive with?"

Chapter 1439 - 1747: Struggle for the Family Head (1)

Ling Chen still wanted to say something, but before the words left his mouth, he saw a middle-aged man in a suit walk over and say, "Ling Kun, most of the people are here, we can start. You're the host of this gathering, can't neglect the guests."

Ling Kun nodded and said, "Alright, I'll go right away."

After the middle-aged man walked away, Ling Kun whispered, "Kid, you need to restrain yourself later, we're all family here, I don't want any conflicts."

Ling Chen shrugged and said indifferently, "Don't worry, Dad, I know what to do. Today you're the main character, go on, don't keep everyone waiting too long."

Ling Kun responded, then followed Ling Tao and walked straight towards the gradually gathering crowd.

"Everyone." Ling Tao cleared his throat and began, "Today is the first gathering of the Ling Family after unification, very meaningful. Everyone is probably already clear about the main purpose of this gathering, but I still want to say a few more words. The struggle between the Northern Ling Family and the Southern Ling Family has persisted for decades, and the fact that we have today is all thanks to everyone's relentless efforts here. Now, the Ling Family has finally achieved long-awaited tranquility, everyone deserves credit."

After pausing, Ling Tao continued, "After so many years of struggle, the Ling Family's losses have been very severe. Therefore, we need to elect a Family Head to lead everyone in re-organizing the Ling Family, jointly create a glorious future for the Ling Family. In the struggle against the Southern Ling Family, Ling Kun's performance has been outstanding, his capabilities have been recognized by everyone. So, I believe under Ling Kun's leadership, the Ling Family can certainly grow and prosper, and I hope everyone here can offer their support."

"Ling Tao." An elderly man in the crowd interjected, "We don't deny Ling Kun's capabilities and merits, but fighting against external enemies and developing the Ling Family are two different matters, perhaps his ability suits fighting, but the development of the Ling Family isn't based on strength but relies on here." The elder pointed to his own head and said, "I want to ask, does Ling Kun have a huge social network? Development and expansion aren't just empty talk; it must be pursued with real actions. In today's society, without a powerful network, you can't move an inch. In this regard, I believe Ling Kun is not qualified."

Ling Tao looked at the elder who spoke and said, "No one is perfect, Ling Kun indeed has shortcomings in this area, but we can take it slow, as long as we give him a bit of time, I believe he won't disappoint everyone."

"Time?" The elder smiled and said, "Then let me venture to ask, how long will this time be? Half a year? A year? Or five or ten years? I don't think Ling Kun can accomplish it in a short period. Ling Tao, capacity is capacity, merit is merit, some things should be assigned to the most suitable person."

Upon hearing this, Ling Tao sneered and asked, "The suitable person? According to you, who is the suitable candidate?"

"I personally think Ling Song is the most suitable person." The elder said, "The contributions Ling Song has made to the Ling Family over the years are not less than Ling Kun's. Thirty percent of the Ling Family's funds are provided by Ling Song, under his development, the originally existing industry in the Ling Family has expanded by twice, isn't this enough to prove his ability? I can very confidently say that within the next three to five years, Ling Song will surely grow the Ling Family's assets threefold."

"I think so too." Someone in the crowd echoed, "We have all witnessed Ling Song's ability and the contributions he has made. If he becomes the Family Head, the Ling Family's future will certainly be brilliant."

"Ling Song?" Ling Chen murmured the name, seemingly never heard of it before.

"Elder Ling, do you recommend Ling Song as the Family Head without any personal bias?" Ling Tao squinted his eyes and said, "If you recommended someone else, I could understand, but Ling Song is your son."

"Elevating the worthy without averting kinship." The elder said blandly, "Have you never heard this saying? All along, the Ling Family has had a distinction between Wen and Martial Sects, the Martial Sect's presence is to protect the Ling Family from being bullied by outsiders, and the Wen Sect's duty is to seek development for the Ling Family. Now the Southern Ling Family is no longer a threat, so you Martial Sect people should rest, let us Wen Sect people take on the task of developing the Ling Family. Isn't that right?"

As soon as the elder spoke, he immediately received approval from the majority of those present.

Ling Chen stood in the corner, glanced at them one by one, about eighty percent of those who agreed were people from the Wen Sect. It must be said, after the battle with the Southern Ling Family, the Martial Sect of the Ling Family was almost wiped out, few and far between, they simply couldn't compare with the Wen Sect in terms of momentum.

Seeing everyone's response, the elder laughed complacently, "Ling Tao, Ling Kun, you both see this, right? This is the suggestion from everyone in the Ling Family, hope you two can adopt it. Although Ling Kun can't become the Ling Family Patriarch, rest assured, our Wen Sect will cover all your Martial Sect's expenses." Saying this, the elder gave a sign to the middle-aged man behind him, "Ling Song, take out the items."

The latter understood immediately, took out a document, and said, "This is ten percent of our company's shares, with an annual profit of twenty million, enough for you to retire comfortably. How about it? If there's no problem, just sign this document."

Ling Kun didn't even look at the document, just asked, "Is this twenty million for me alone or for everyone in the Martial Sect?"

"How many people do you have in your Martial Sect? Is twenty million not enough for your expenses?" Ling Song sneered, "Ling Kun, one must learn to be content, don't be too greedy."

"Content?" Ling Tao said with a smile that did not reach his eyes, "Ling Song, outsiders might not know the assets you hold, but I know clearly. Thirty percent of the Ling Family's industry is in your hands, managed by your family. Over the years, you've used the Ling Family's resources to establish fourteen companies, all of which are listed under your personal name, rather than the Ling Family's property. Am I wrong? Using the Ling Family's resources for your personal gain, now you have the gall to share ten percent of the shares with us. Let alone, your total assets are at least around ten billion, with almost a billion in annual profits for your pocket, and you only offer twenty million to us Martial Sect people. I just want to ask, Ling Song, do you have the audacity?"

Without waiting for Ling Song to reply, Ling Tao coldly surveyed everyone present and said, "Have you all forgotten, the industries you control all belong to the Ling Family, not to you personally. People from the Wen Sect are indeed wealthy, but I want to ask which of you hasn't profited illicitly?"

Upon hearing this, those from the Wen Sect couldn't help but lower their heads, avoiding Ling Tao's gaze, not daring to meet him straight on.

Chapter 1440 - 1748: Struggle for the Family Head (2)

"Ling Tao, the money we earn is through our own abilities. Besides, all these years we've been providing funds for the Ling Family. Whatever amount you need, we help you prepare it. You utter words at random, but do you know how much effort we expend to earn enough money?" Ling Song said coldly, "In short, the position of the Family Head is settled for the Wen Sect. If you disagree, then our Wen Sect will leave the Ling Family and establish our own branch."

Ling Kun raised his eyebrows and said in a deep voice, "Ling Song, are you threatening me?"

Ling Song said nonchalantly, "I am threatening you, so what? Do you dare to disagree?"

"Hehe!" Before Ling Kun could speak, a burst of laughter suddenly reached everyone's ears. Looking carefully, they saw Ling Chen slowly walking over.

Ling Song sized up the approaching Ling Chen and asked, "Who are you? Do you have the right to speak here?"

Ling Chen pointed at Ling Kun and said flatly, "He is my old man. If I didn't mishear, it was you threatening us just now."

"What are you trying to do?" Ling Song squinted his eyes, his tone carrying a hint of coldness.

"Our Martial Sect isn't as skilled at earning money as your Wen Sect, but do you know what our Martial Sect excels at?"

"What?"

"Killing!" Ling Chen spat out coldly, "On your way home, maybe your car will explode halfway. Unpredictable occurrences, you better be careful."

Upon hearing this, Ling Song's face suddenly changed, and he shouted coldly, "You dare threaten me?"

"If you can threaten me, why can't I threaten you? If I recall correctly, the Ling Family has family rules. People like you who embezzle will be severely punished, and in serious cases, can even be sentenced to death."

"Ling Kun, you'd better rein in your son."

"No need to press me using my dad. To be honest with you, the greatest credit for the demise of the southern Ling Family belongs to me. Originally, I should have been the Family Head, but I have no interest in it, so I let my dad be the Family Head. If you have objections against him, it's like having objections against me. Also, I want to introduce myself to everyone: I'm Ling Chen. Quite a few of you have assets in Beijing, so you might have heard of my name."

With this, the people present suddenly began to chatter, and they looked at Ling Chen with a hint of fear.

"Bastard! So you're here, I've finally found you." At this moment, an angry voice came over, and soon, a young man charged over from the back of the crowd.

Ling Chen took a closer look, and the corners of his mouth couldn't help but raise; it turned out to be Ling Dan, whom he had met in the parking lot earlier. Judging from the band-aid on his nose, he had probably gone to the hospital for treatment, which is why he wasn't seen earlier.

"Dad, this bastard was the one who injured me." Ling Dan pointed at Ling Chen and shouted at Ling Song beside him.

Dad? Ling Chen was somewhat surprised, he hadn't expected Ling Dan to be Ling Song's son.

"Ling Chen, you have some nerve!" Ling Song glared at Ling Chen and shouted, "You'd better quickly apologize, otherwise..."

"Otherwise what do you want to do?" Ling Chen replied fearlessly, "Your son harassed my girlfriend, shouldn't I have beaten him up?"

"Ling Kun, is this how you discipline your son?"

Ling Kun said indifferently, "My son is grown up now, whatever he does naturally has his reasons, I can't manage that much. If you can't stand it, you can go directly to him, I guarantee not to interfere."

"Fine, that's what you said." Ling Song sneered and replied, "Don't think our Wen Sect members are afraid to move against you Martial Sect people." As he finished speaking, an elderly man boldly strode out of the crowd.

Seeing the visitor, Ling Kun, Ling Tao and Ling Chen were immediately taken aback. How could it be him?

While they were stunned, Ling Song quickly walked to the elderly man's side and said, "Elder Ling, please help me teach him a good lesson."

"No problem."

"Ling Jun, you dare!" Ling Kun lightly shouted and immediately stepped forward, placing himself in front of Ling Chen.

That's right! The person wasn't anyone else, but the former senior of the northern Ling Family, Heavenly List master, Ling Jun. Seeing Ling Jun appear, Ling Chen's brows furrowed slightly. A few days ago, he had asked Ling Tao, learning that Ling Jun had used money to buy a mansion, enjoying his retirement. Yet now he appeared at the Ling Family gathering. Moreover, from the current situation, Ling Jun seemed to have joined forces with Ling Song.

Ling Jun seemed heedless of Ling Kun's reprimand, casually saying, "Sorry, today I've been asked to be here. If there's any offense, please forgive me." As he finished speaking, Ling Jun abruptly moved forward, reaching out to grab at Ling Chen.

Seeing Ling Jun charging toward him, Ling Chen didn't move, because he knew Ling Kun wouldn't let him get hurt.

"Ling Jun, you dare!" Ling Kun shouted angrily, quickly confronting to intercept Ling Jun's attack. Seeing this, the others moved away from the area. No kidding, this was a battle between Heavenly List masters, if they got caught up in it, it would be hard to explain later.

In the blink of an eye, Ling Kun and Ling Jun had already exchanged over twenty moves, neither using their full strength, keeping at least half in reserve. Watching their back-and-forth, Ling Chen rubbed his nose and called out, "Stop it, everyone."

With Ling Chen's words, Ling Kun lightly tapped with his toes, swiftly retreating, while simultaneously, Ling Jun also backed away.

"Elder Ling," Ling Chen said, looking at Ling Jun, "You could be living your good life, why come here to find trouble with us? We agreed before, we'd give you a share of assets, and henceforth we'd have nothing to do with each other."

Ling Jun nodded and said, "That's true, but unfortunately, Ling Song found me and reached a new agreement. Once he becomes the Family Head, what I can have will multiply several times over. As they say, people strive upward, water flows downward, so if there's a better life to enjoy, why wouldn't I agree?"

"You really don't know when to stop. Haven't you heard that overly greedy people don't meet a good end?"

"I don't think there's anything bad about it."

Hearing this, Ling Chen couldn't be bothered to respond to Ling Jun, this old man was really too shameless. "Ling Song, is this your reliance?"

"Isn't it enough?" Ling Song raised his head arrogantly, "I know your Martial Sect is powerful, if we weren't prepared, why would I dare challenge you? Ling Kun, I advise you to give up while you can, it will be better for everyone."

Ling Kun furrowed his brows slightly, subconsciously casting his gaze toward Ling Chen beside him. Ling Jun's appearance caught him off guard; under such circumstances he was unsure how to proceed.