

The Beauty 191

Chapter 191: Invitation

"Mr. Ling, I really know I was wrong, can you give me another chance, I will never make the same mistake again," Zhang Zekai pleaded.

Although he threatened Tang Shiyun, saying if she did not comply, he would join other companies in banning her, it was just a verbal threat; he would never actually do it. He was a businessman, and businessmen value profits. It's only been a little over a month since Tang Shiyun's debut, and she had already become nationally famous and a star who attracts widespread attention. If properly cultivated, Tang Shiyun would be equivalent to a money printing press. As a shareholder of Silver Star Entertainment, all he needed to do was sit at home and count money.

So, he would never do something that would cut off his own financial source.

"You originally had a great opportunity, and you were the one who wasted it. My terms have already been laid out; you just need to tell me whether you agree or not."

Zhang Zekai struggled and said, "Mr. Ling, I am not in charge of this matter. It's true that I am a shareholder of Silver Star Entertainment, but I don't manage the company, and my stake is only thirty percent. Unless all other shareholders agree, I have no authority to cancel the contract between Miss Tang and Silver Star Entertainment."

"That's your problem, not mine." After speaking, Ling Chen glanced at Nanrong Wanqing, "Chairwoman, it's getting late. Shall we head back to the hotel?"

Nanrong Wanqing nodded, "Qianqian, thank you for your hospitality today. We will get together again when there's a chance."

Soon after, upon receiving the notification, Zhong Wei rushed over with others and started pushing the wheelchair out.

"Girl, let's go as well," he said.

Tang Shiyun obediently responded and followed closely behind Ling Chen.

Seeing them about to leave, Zhang Zekai breathed a sigh of relief, thinking that Ling Chen was not going to pursue the matter with Tang Shiyun any further. But at that moment, as Ling Chen reached the doorway, he suddenly turned back, lips slightly raised, and said, "President Zhang, I hope you can give me a satisfying response at this time tomorrow, or else you'll be responsible for the consequences."

After watching them leave, Zhang Zekai stood there in a daze. Ling Chen's words made his heart, which had just eased, tense up again.

"Big brother, what's the background of that Ling Chen? Even Director Liu is helping him," Zhang Qianqian asked, confused and puzzled.

"How would I know?" Zhang Zekai kept complaining. If he knew Ling Chen's identity, he wouldn't be so uneasy. With the broad reach of the Zhang Family, he could ask someone for mercy. But the problem was that he didn't know Ling Chen's background, which left him without a starting point. There were so many prominent families in Beijing, with deep backgrounds. Often the most terrifying were those who didn't reveal their family ties.

"Since he's a well-connected man, why would he condescend to work for Hongyu Group as a mere security guard?"

"I..." Zhang Zekai was about to speak when his eyes suddenly brightened, "Qianqian, aren't you close with Miss Nanrong? Could you help me ask her? Ling Chen works for her, so she might know his identity." After a pause, he added, "I'll call Dad in a bit to get him to contact Director Liu to see if anything can be learned."

For a while, the Zhang Family was caught in guesswork and fear about Ling Chen's identity.

After leaving the Zhang Family, Nanrong Wanqing politely said, "Miss Tang, where are you headed? I'll take you."

"No need, I have a car to pick me up, but thank you for your kindness," Tang Shiyun said, and then naturally looped her arm through Ling Chen's, acting affectionately as she smiled sweetly and said as if no one else was present, "Ling, my concert is in a couple of days, will you come to see it?"

"You know I have work now, but if time allows, I'll definitely go."

Hearing this, Tang Shiyun's eyes shifted, and she cast a sly glance towards Nanrong Wanqing, with a hint of a smile on her lips and anticipation in her voice, "Miss Nanrong, may I invite you to watch my concert?"

Nanrong Wanqing looked at Ling Chen, her beautiful eyes filled with surprise.

She knew all too well that the real purpose of Tang Shiyun inviting her to the concert was actually for Ling Chen. She had thought that Ling Chen just happened to encounter Tang Shiyun at the Zhang Family and learnt of her plight, and out of righteous indignation, he helped her.

But now it seemed this was not the case. Two people who had just met would not show such affectionate behavior, nor would they call each other 'Ling brother' with such closeness. Moreover, Tang Shiyun's actions seemed to be very natural. Not only that, Ling Chen always casually called Tang Shiyun 'girl', his eyes filled with indulgence.

From all these signs, they must have known each other for a long time.

Although she did not know the specifics of their relationship, seeing their intimate gestures still made her feel a bit uncomfortable.

First was Zhu Xiaozhu, and now Tang Shiyun. Just what charm did this man have to attract so many women, and each one so outstanding?

"Miss Nanrong?"

Seeing Nanrong Wanqing not responding, Tang Shiyun had to speak again.

"Miss Tang, with such a gracious invitation, of course, I won't refuse," Nanrong Wanqing came back to her senses and smiled as she agreed.

"Yay!"

Tang Shiyun excitedly gestured to Ling Chen, her face nearly blossoming into a flower.

"Ling brother, I'll head back first, remember to contact me when you're free, and don't be like last time, not a word for over a month."

"Okay, okay," Ling Chen smiled and nodded, casually opening the door of the Mercedes-Benz for Tang Shiyun and cautioned, "Be safe on the road."

Not until the Mercedes-Benz gradually drove away from the Zhang Family did Ling Chen retract his gaze. Turning around, he saw Zhong Wei and his party watching him with envy and a hint of suggestive looks.

Liang Zhao Hui secretly gave a thumbs up and winked, the meaning self-evident.

Ling Chen shook his head helplessly; these guys definitely misunderstood the pure friendship between him and Tang Shiyun, but he was too lazy to explain.

Hesitating for a moment, he glanced at Nanrong Wanqing before him, and seeing her expressionless, icy demeanor, he couldn't help but say, "Shiyun used to live in the Old City area, she was my neighbor, and I've always taken care of her like a sister. If anyone bullies her, I'll never look the other way. I hope you don't mind about the incident just now; I didn't intend to ruin your relationship with the Zhang Family."

Nanrong Wanqing said indifferently, "As you said, you were dealing with Miss Tang's situation in a personal capacity, it has nothing to do with me, no need to explain to me. Zhong Wei, let's go back."

"Yes, Chairwoman."

Back in the car, Nanrong Wanqing looked at Ling Chen outside the window, and the discomfort in her heart instantly disappeared, a smile unconsciously rising on the corner of her lips.

Ling Chen really didn't need to explain to her, but he did, could it be that he cared about her thoughts?

Thinking this, the resentment she had felt over the past few days seemed to be somewhat alleviated.

Returning to the hotel, it was almost ten o'clock.

After sending Nanrong Wanqing back to her room, just as Ling Chen was about to return to his own, the ringtone of his mobile phone suddenly rang in his pocket.

Chapter 192 Big Trouble

Glancing at the unfamiliar incoming call, he answered the phone and asked, "Who is this?"

"Hello, may I speak to Mr. Ling?"

"This is he. Who are you?"

"I am Zhu Yansong. Mr. Ling, we have met outside Qingyang Bar before."

Ling Chen immediately recalled, "Ah, Mr. Zhu. What can I do for you, Mr. Zhu?"

"Mr. Ling, the chairman of Silver Star Entertainment asked me to give you a call. He is already aware of the incident involving the Zhang Family, and he deeply regrets the actions of Zhang Zekai. Just now, after discussing with the shareholders and with the consent of the Zhang Family, Silver Star Entertainment has decided to revoke the Zhang Family's shareholder status. From now on, the Zhang Family will have no connection with Silver Star Entertainment. Our chairman hopes that Mr. Ling will allow Miss Tang to continue to stay with Silver Star Entertainment, and he personally assures that such incidents will never happen again. Mr. Ling, are you satisfied with this resolution?"

"Fine, as long as the Zhang Family withdraws, I will give you one more chance."

Zhu Yansong joyfully responded, "Thank you for your understanding, Mr. Ling. I will inform our chairman immediately, and won't disturb your rest any longer."

After hanging up, Ling Chen grinned. These people were quite efficient; they made a decision in less than an hour.

It was clear they valued Tang Shiyun as a lucrative asset.

What Ling Chen didn't know was that an hour ago, when Zhang Zekai reported this matter to his father, the latter immediately called Liu Geng, trying to ascertain Ling Chen's identity. Liu Geng was evasive and unwilling to divulge much, which inadvertently left the Zhang Family extremely anxious, fearing they had offended someone formidable and brought major trouble upon their family.

After much deliberation, Zhang Zekai's father made the painful decision, hoping to placate the situation.

That was the reason for that recent phone call.

Arriving alone at his room, Ling Chen was about to push open the door when his gaze suddenly sharpened, and his right hand, which was holding the doorknob, immediately retracted as his expression grew serious.

Having spent many years with the Ghost Organization, he had developed many good habits, such as being vigilant. Particularly when staying in hotels, he would tamper with the door to ensure no one could sneak into his room while he was away.

There was a strand of fine hair originally wrapped around the doorknob, but now, it was broken, indicating someone had entered the room. Before leaving the hotel, he had informed the cleaning staff that his room did not need cleaning, so it couldn't have been them.

At once, he pressed his ear against the door, listening intently for a while. After confirming there were no unusual sounds from inside, he swiped the key card, then slowly turned the doorknob.

Click!

The lock opened, but instead of pushing the door open, he opened just a sliver and peered through the gap. After a short moment, the corner of his mouth curled up, and a sharp gleam flickered in his eyes.

Behind the door, there was a metal wire wrapped around both the door panel and the frame. If he had pushed the door open directly, it would certainly have broken the wire. What would happen then was clear to him without even thinking.

"Snake King!"

Immediately, a name popped into his mind. Other than the Snake King, he couldn't think of anyone else who would set such a trap.

But wait, it could be Zhu Hong as well. That guy hated him to death; it could have been his doing too.

Right away, he ran to the hotel reception, borrowed a portable makeup mirror from a female service staff, and then returned to his room. Inserting the makeup mirror into the gap, through the reflection, he saw a plastic bomb installed next to the door frame.

The amount of explosives in the plastic bomb wasn't much but was enough to destroy the entire room.

That metal wire was directly connected to the plastic bomb.

Defusing bombs is one of Ling Chen's specialties, especially these simple bomb devices. He pulled out a nail clipper with one hand, preparing to cut the metal wire, while holding the other end of the wire with the other hand to prevent it from snapping back and triggering the explosive device.

Everything was ready, and just as he was about to cut the metal wire into two with the nail clipper, a thought crossed his mind, and he hesitated.

If it was the Snake King, then why didn't he just place the bomb directly in Nanrong Wanqing's guest room? That would've been much simpler. Killing him and then Nanrong Wanqing would only complicate the mission.

As a professional assassin, one would never do such a thing.

With this in mind, he immediately focused on Zhu Hong. Although he had made many enemies, the only ones who truly wanted him dead were probably Zhu Hong and the mysterious organization behind him.

Zhu Hong knew his strength and would not send mediocre people to deal with him; he would definitely send experts.

However, the quality of the bomb installation was passable but far from professional. A real expert wouldn't have the bomb easily visible to the target. Moreover, a professional assassin would have noticed the little trick he set on the doorknob.

"Trap!"

His eyebrows furrowed, Ling Chen pondered for a moment, then moved to the adjacent guest room and prepared to enter the room by climbing through the balcony window.

Fortunately, the window glass had not been tampered with, and he easily entered the room.

Turning on the light, he walked to the back of the door and checked the bomb. As expected, this plastic bomb was not simple; it had three different trigger mechanisms. Moreover, each of these triggers was based on three different ways to disarm them. Any attempt to disarm it in any way would detonate the bomb.

Luckily, he was cautious and not deceived.

After spending a few minutes, he carefully removed the bomb and threw it onto the nearby sofa, then sat down to rest for a while.

But then, something seemed to occur to him, his expression suddenly changed, and he quickly picked up the bomb and looked at it closely.

"How can this be?" His eyes widened with an incredulous expression, "Could it be a coincidence?"

He desperately wanted to believe it was a coincidence, but the reality told him that the chance of such a coincidence was too low.

Putting down the bomb, he took out his phone and dialed a number.

"Hello, Old Tang, you better come over here immediately, something's happened." After speaking, he hung up the phone and sat alone on the sofa, his expression extremely solemn.

In less than half an hour, Tang Yuan arrived at the hotel room.

"What's so important that you had me come all the way here, couldn't you have just said it over the phone?"

Ling Chen didn't bother responding and simply threw the bomb into his hands. Tang Yuan caught the bomb, his expression changing slightly, and asked, "Where did this come from?"

"Stop asking so many questions, just take a good look."

Tang Yuan examined it and praised, "Very good, the person who made this bomb is definitely a professional, with three different triggering devices, and even..." Before he could finish his sentence, his eyes were already fixed on the bomb in his hands, his face full of surprise, "Is this... possibly a coincidence?"

"Do you think there are such coincidences in the world?"

"No."

Ling Chen raised his head, his face showing a rare solemnity, and said word by word, "Old Tang, we are in big trouble."

Chapter 193 The Phantom's Crisis

"Don't jump to conclusions so quickly, maybe we're overthinking it."

Ling Chen shook his head: "Impossible, the world isn't that coincidental." Saying this, he looked at the bomb device, his brows furrowing tightly, "I made this bomb, aside from a few of you, no one knows."

Originally, he accepted a mission from the Ghost Organization to ambush the legendary figure from the worlds of mercenaries and assassins, Blood Wolf, at the hotel. During that mission, before Blood Wolf returned to his room, he secretly installed the bomb as a contingency. If he couldn't complete the mission successfully, he would detonate the bomb, perishing together with Blood Wolf.

Only by doing this could he avoid leaving any clues and revealing the existence of the Ghost Organization.

During the mission, the organization assigned two members to carry out the task with him; the result was two dead and one injured. The two members sacrificed their lives heroically to save him. It was precisely because of this incident that he decided to retire.

After Blood Wolf was killed, because the commotion at the hotel was too big, he didn't dare to linger and quickly retreated, leaving the bomb behind at the scene.

And now, the bomb in Tang Yuan's hands was exactly the one left behind back then; it had a triple triggering mechanism, installed personally by him. When he first saw it moments ago, he hadn't paid much attention, until he remembered the affair with Blood Wolf and the realization hit him.

This bomb installed unchanged in his hotel room, was this really a coincidence? Impossible! He didn't believe the world could have such coincidental matters. His identity might already be exposed right now, and the bomb was a message that someone knew he killed Blood Wolf. As for whether the Ghost Organization behind him had been exposed, he wasn't certain and he didn't dare to think about it because the consequences would be too severe, involving too many people. A slight misstep might bring cataclysmic disaster to the Ghosts.

Seeing Ling Chen silent and deep in thought, Tang Yuan walked to the balcony and dialed a number on his mobile phone.

At the same time, on a street opposite the hotel, a fiery red Ferrari parked at the roadside. The driver sitting in the driver's seat looked through the window at the hotel room lighting up on the fifth floor, a cold smile curling at the corner of his mouth.

"I've contacted Mr. Han, he wants us to head back to base immediately." Tang Yuan said after putting down his phone.

"Let's go." Ling Chen stood up and followed Tang Yuan out of the hotel room.

After driving around the city for half an hour to ensure they were not being followed, the two drove to the countryside manor.

At the manor, Mu Zhiyuan was already waiting at the entrance, he patted Ling Chen's shoulder, managing to force a thin smile: "Everyone has arrived; you can go straight down."

Entering the base, everyone gathered together in the spacious and bright conference room, each person silent with heads lowered, the atmosphere heavy.

After Tang Yuan reported the situation, Han Bing immediately convened all the senior members of the Ghost Organization to discuss solutions.

Seeing Qiao Zhen's tense face, Ling Chen said with a sense of guilt: "General, I'm sorry, I was careless during that mission."

Qiao Zhen waved his hand: "This matter isn't related to you. It must be we who leaked the information internally; hence your identity was exposed. If we really want to blame someone, it should be me. You are a retired member of the organization, and we have a duty to ensure your safety. Your exposure is our negligence." He then turned and said: "Han Bing, explain the situation to everyone."

Han Bing opened a file, taking out a document, and looked at the people present: "Currently, we have six members of the Ghosts out on missions, I just had the headquarters contact them, only five people are reachable, with no news from the other one."

"Who is it?"

"Yang Tao. His mission was an assassination, targeting an arms dealer who had settled abroad. That arms dealer controls all the arms smuggling in the Asian region, extremely vile in nature. We've gathered a lot of evidence against him, but the problem is, the country he's in has no extradition treaty, and we don't have law enforcement authority, so he's been getting away with it over there. After discussion amongst the top brass, we decided to remove this menace without anyone noticing."

"According to the plan, if nothing unexpected happens, the mission would be completed in half a month. Yang Tao has been at the location for over ten days now, he might be in the middle of the mission, which is why it's inconvenient for him to make contact. According to regulations, all members out on a mission must contact headquarters at least once every three days to report on progress. It's been two days since Yang Tao's last report; he should contact us by tomorrow. If there's still no news tomorrow, it means something has happened to him."

Ling Chen tapped the table with his fingers, slightly frowning: "Yang Tao is an old member of the organization, well-acquainted with all of us. If he gets caught and reveals our names and faces, it'd be easy for the opposition to track us down."

"Han Bing, notify everyone, all members out on missions must withdraw immediately; raise the state of alert from level one to level three at the base, everyone is forbidden to leave, cut off all external communications. Before this matter is resolved, no one is allowed to leave their post. Any violation will be severely punished."

"Yes, General."

"Ling Chen, your identity is already exposed for the time being. It's best to stay at the base; this way, your safety is guaranteed."

Ling Chen hesitated for a moment, then declined: "I should go back. What's coming will come; I can't hide from it. Besides, I want to know who exactly wants to take revenge for Blood Wolf."

Qiao Zhen cautioned: "Then be careful. Tang Yuan, you stay with Ling Chen these next few days. If anything happens, it's better for the two of you to look out for each other."

"Understood."

Leaving the base, the two drove back to the hotel.

By now, it was approaching midnight. Ling Chen lay on the couch with his hands behind his head, his eyes fixated on the bomb placed on the table, continuously pondering in his mind.

Seeing this, Tang Yuan couldn't help but ask: "What are you thinking about?"

"Blood Wolf. From what I know of Blood Wolf, that person always acted alone without any companions. Although Blood Wolf was a member of the God Organization, that mysterious organization wouldn't expend so much effort just to avenge an outsider like him."

"You make some sense in your analysis."

"Damn, there's just too much trouble these days." Ling Chen scratched his head and stood up towards the bedroom.

"Hey, where are you going?"

"What do you think, if not to sleep?"

"Where do I sleep then?"

"Obviously on the couch. Or do you want to share a bed with me? My sexual orientation is very straight, so don't even think about it."

Tang Yuan spat out in disgust: "As if I would want to sleep with you."

The next day.

Ling Chen hadn't woken up yet when the internal phone in the bedroom began to ring.

He sleepily answered the phone, yawning, "Hello."

"Mr. Ling, good morning, a guest in the lobby is asking for you."

Chapter 194 Tenth on the Tiger List

"Did he say who it was?"

"No, he just said it was something very important and hoped to meet with you in person."

"Alright, I got it. Ask him to wait." After hanging up the phone, Ling Chen got out of bed, freshened up, got dressed, and then left the guest room alone. Soon after, he took the elevator down to the lobby and found the receptionist.

"Mr. Ling, the gentleman is looking for you." The receptionist finished speaking and pointed towards the lounge area in the lobby.

Ling Chen turned his head to look, only to see a man in his thirties, a stranger, sitting on the sofa, holding a cup of coffee provided by the hotel, and reading a newspaper.

The man had an ordinary appearance, short hair, and a very robust body, dressed in a well-fitted suit, and looked quite genteel.

He approached and sized up the man before speaking: "Are you looking for me?"

The man set down his newspaper and smiled, "Mr. Ling, hello, let me introduce myself. My name is Qin He."

"Speak. What do you want with me?"

"I am here to offer my congratulations."

"Congratulations?" Ling Chen was full of confusion. He hadn't gotten married, much less become a father, what was there to congratulate him about?

Qin He opened his briefcase that was with him and pulled out a gold-embossed business card, presenting it with both hands to Ling Chen.

As soon as the business card was in hand, Ling Chen's gaze was captivated by three characters written in the regular script.

Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion!

He sharply raised his head, looking at Qin He with astonishment, and blurted out: "You're from the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion?"

"Indeed."

Ling Chen looked at his attire with some disbelief. Could it be that people from the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion were all so ordinary-looking? Qin He seemed to see through his thoughts and chuckled: "Mr. Ling, times are changing, and naturally, the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion has to keep up with them."

"Let's not talk about that for now, you were just congratulating me, what did you mean?"

"Well, Mr. Ling, starting from today, you have successfully eliminated Ye Liangyong and ascended to the tenth rank of the Tiger List."

Uh... Ling Chen was slightly taken aback. He wasn't particularly interested in the Heaven and Earth Dragon and Tiger Four Rankings. He had expressed his feelings during the last meal with Ye Liangyong. Why had the people from Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion still come looking for him? With this in mind, he couldn't help but ask: "Did Mr. Ye tell you this?"

"No. Your martial arts match with Mr. Ye at Qingyun Martial Arts Hall, we saw everything clearly. Mr. Ye lost to you, that is an indisputable fact, thus you rightfully ascend to the tenth rank of the Tiger List."

Ling Chen internally clicked his tongue, not many people knew about this matter. Those present at that time were all disciples of the martial arts academy, and Jiang Hao and a few others, no outsiders. How did the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion come to know?

While he was pondering, he heard Qin He say with a smile: "I know being ranked tenth on the Tiger List may seem beneath Mr. Ling. With your skills, you are more than qualified to be placed sixth on that list."

Upon hearing this, Ling Chen's expression shifted slightly as he looked straight into Qin He's eyes, "Mr. Qin, your words seem to imply something."

"A few days ago, you fought Song Qing, who is ranked sixth on the Tiger List, and the duel ended in a draw. I'm not wrong, am I?"

"How do you know?" Ling Chen pressed. At the time, only he and Song Qing were present, with no one else around. He was curious how the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion could know such specifics.

Qin He smiled enigmatically: "Mr. Ling, in this world, there are few things that can escape the eyes of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. Also, there's another thing I'd like to remind you of. You might currently be the tenth on the Tiger List, but I'm not sure how long you can maintain that position."

"What do you mean?"

"You probably remember that on that day, Song Qing was defeated by a woman. So far, we have been unable to determine this woman's true identity, not even her name, so we're unable to rank her. Once we ascertain her identity, she will become the sixth on the Tiger List, pushing Song Qing to seventh place and so on. As a result, Mr. Ling, your position as tenth on the Tiger List will be replaced. Therefore, I suggest that you challenge those ranked higher on the Tiger List as soon as possible to keep your place."

Ling Chen was somewhat surprised, not expecting that the people from the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion would be aware of all these details. Such a mysterious organization might even surpass the

world's leading intelligence organizations; their capability to gather information was nearly freakish, knowing even these secretive matters.

"Mr. Qin, I'm not interested in the ranking of the Tiger List; in fact, it would be better if I dropped out of it. In any case, I don't like trouble, so I hope you won't come looking for me again."

The last time Ye Liangyong told him that being ranked tenth on the Tiger List was troublesome, as it subjected one to numerous challenges. He was too busy with his own affairs to bother dealing with challengers.

"Mr. Ling, ascending to one of the Four Rankings is an irreplaceable honor for any martial artist, and all who practice martial arts wish to see their name on the list. Moreover, those who are placed on the Heaven and Earth Dragon and Tiger Four Rankings receive quite a few benefits."

"Benefits?"

"Indeed." Qin He nodded with a smile: "The Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion is a very humane organization. For those ranked on the list, we provide certain types of assistance."

Hearing this, Ling Chen became interested, "What kind of assistance?"

"High-ranked individuals on each list enjoy different privileges. For instance, those on the Dragon List have access to a certain quantity of elixirs. These elixirs vary, some enhance strength, some assist in unleashing latent potential overnight, and some are Holy Medicine that can heal injuries. For Tiger List masters, we cater to personal needs—some need money, some desire fame, and others may require certain types of informational resources. Depending on the situation, we can provide appropriate assistance."

"Is that so?" Ling Chen's interest was piqued, but he didn't show it; instead, he curiously inquired, "Dragon and Tiger Lists offer so many benefits, but what about the Heaven and Earth Lists?"

Qin He's face revealed a bitter smile: "The Heaven and Earth Lists are not realms ordinary people can engage with. Even though I'm with the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion, I too don't have the qualification to interact with those individuals. You understand what I mean?"

At these words, Ling Chen was startled. He was merely of Tiger List caliber but could already run rampant in the ordinary world, so the formidable figures of the Dragon and Tiger Lists were beyond mention. As for the Heaven and Earth Lists, he initially intended to learn more from Qin He, yet even Qin He himself was not entitled to meet those ranked on them. Therefore, those on the Heaven and Earth Lists must be truly unfathomable. It was hard to imagine what kind of extraordinary individuals they might be.

"Mr. Ling, my phone number is on the business card. You can contact me directly if needed."

"Alright." Ling Chen nodded, casually pocketing the business card. He knew he would never call that number because he had no interest in getting entangled with the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion.

Chapter 195 Rescue Plan

After sending Qin He away, Ling Chen returned alone to his guest room. At that time, Tang Yuan had already gotten up and was washing up in the bathroom.

"What did you run off to early in the morning?"

"Just met with someone." After finishing, Ling Chen's mind moved, and he asked, "Old Tang, have you ever heard of the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion?"

"Of course, I've heard it mentioned quite often in those martial arts novels."

Hearing this, Ling Chen couldn't help but give a wry smile, and decided not to continue this topic. After breakfast, Zhong Wei called to say there was nothing planned for the morning, Nanrong Wanqing would be working in the hotel, dealing with company matters remotely, and told them to go about their day freely.

Tang Shiyun's concert was in two days, so the group had to stay at least two more days in Beijing.

With nothing particular to do, Ling Chen and Tang Yuan stayed in their room, idly watching television. Around noon, Tang Yuan received a call from the base, and his expression changed immediately.

"What's wrong?" Ling Chen noticed the change in his expression and asked.

Tang Yuan didn't speak but rather received a video on his phone and played it. Suddenly, an image appeared on the phone's screen. In the picture, a young man, around twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old, was tied to a chair, his body covered in bruises and wounds, his face swollen and bloody, with a split at the corner of his eye, blood flowing freely, looking very miserable.

Looking at the young man in the video, Ling Chen's eyes narrowed immediately, revealing a cold glint.

He recognized this young man—it was Yang Tao, a former teammate in the Ghost Organization. It appeared their guess was correct, Yang Tao had been captured. The Ghost Organization had lost numerous members throughout its existence, but this was the first time one had been taken alive.

"This video just came in from the base."

"What are they trying to do, extort us?"

As he spoke, the image on the cellphone video suddenly changed, showing a man in a suit and mask.

"Ghost Organization, you are the most secretive organization in the world, but I know all about you. The God Organization was destroyed by your hands, and suffered great losses. And now, you still won't let go, always opposing us at every turn. Do you truly think we are afraid of you? Today, the God Organization rises once more. Old and new grudges, it's time to settle them. From now on, we officially declare war, vowing not to stop until the Ghost is wiped out."

As he said this, the image switched back to Yang Tao, "You have three days' time. After three days, if no one rescues him, I will deliver his corpse to the doorstep of your base."

The video ended, and Tang Yuan put away his phone, saying: "The General has asked us to go there."

Ling Chen nodded; he understood the seriousness of the situation. The Ghost Organization was likely in turmoil, anxious and restless.

Upon arriving at the Ghost Base, Ling Chen and Tang Yuan went straight to Qiao Zhen's office.

"Have you both seen the video?"

Ling Chen asked, "General, what's your plan?"

"Yang Tao's capture is our inescapable responsibility. We had no prior knowledge that the arms dealer was actually a peripheral member of the God Organization, with God Organization members personally guarding him. Yang Tao's mission failure was mainly due to the God Organization's enhancement drugs. Han Bing has just investigated the IP address from which the video was sent, the location indicates that Yang Tao is still being held in the territory of that arms dealer."

"General!" Ling Chen let out a sigh, "You know as well as I do, without me saying, this is obviously a trap, just waiting for us to fall into it."

"I know it's a trap, but it's also our opportunity. The God Organization is very secretive, after all these years of fighting, we haven't caught any big fish; the intelligence we've collected so far hasn't been of much value. We must infiltrate their inner circle to dismantle their power."

"Zhu Hong." A name popped out of Ling Chen's mouth, "He definitely has a deep connection with the God Organization, we can start from him."

"I know Zhu Hong is a suspect, but we don't have enough evidence to arrest him. Although we of the Ghost Organization have privileges, we must still follow the law and cannot supersede it. As long as Zhu Hong is in the country, we must proceed according to legal procedures, first collecting evidence of his crimes before prosecuting him."

After a pause, Qiao Zhen continued, "I know what you are worried about. Yang Tao is bait, and they will surely set up a dragnet. If we send someone to rescue him, I fear it may be a one-way trip. However, as long as there is a glimmer of hope, we must not give up. Moreover, he is our comrade-in-arms, do you really want to stand by and watch his body being sent back?"

Ling Chen and Tang Yuan looked at each other and then bowed their heads in silence.

Qiao Zhen tossed a file onto the desk and said, "Han Bing and I have devised a rescue plan. They have given us a three-day deadline, within which Yang Tao won't be in danger to his life. During these three days, we will stand by and let them think we have abandoned Yang Tao. When the deadline is nearly up, they will certainly let their guard down. That's when we will strike unexpectedly and rescue him. Of course, I don't deny the extreme danger of this mission. Tang Yuan!"

"Present," Tang Yuan quickly stood up, chest out, head high, standing upright, waiting for instructions.

"You will lead this mission. Apart from you, there will be three other team members accompanying you. And you..." Qiao Zhen turned to look at Ling Chen, "You have already left the Ghost Organization; I have no authority to order you around, so I will not force you. It's up to you to decide whether or not to go."

Upon hearing this, Ling Chen couldn't help but laugh bitterly.

The old general had made his point clear—how could he not go? Besides, Yang Tao was once his comrade-in-arms. Now that he knew about this situation, how could he ignore it?

"When do we move out?"

"The flight tomorrow morning. It will take us at least two days to prepare once we're there, so we can't delay."

Ling Chen scratched his head; he had promised to attend Tang Shiyun's concert the day after tomorrow, but now it looked like he would have to break that promise.

"Besides the five of you on this operation, I have arranged for someone to provide you with support. Once you reach the destination, he will contact you. Remember, this rescue operation is happening abroad, we are not authorized; if you get caught, you can only bear the risk yourself."

"General, this isn't our first mission; we're clear on all of this."

Qiao Zhen nodded and said, "Ling Chen, watch that video a few more times. Memorize that person's voice and try your best to locate him."

"Got it."

"Alright, Tang Yuan, you go out first. I have something to say to Ling Chen alone."

After Tang Yuan left, Qiao Zhen got up, walked over to Ling Chen, and clapped him on the shoulder, saying, "Kid, take care of yourself. I don't want to see you return in a coffin. After this mission is over, I might just introduce my granddaughter to you."

Ling Chen grinned and said, "General, at least show me a photo of your granddaughter first. If she's pretty, I'll fight to return alive no matter what."

"Scram, my granddaughter is more than good enough for you." Qiao Zhen said with a smile and a curse.

Leaving the office, Tang Yuan, who was waiting outside, gave him a look and said helplessly, "You shouldn't have agreed to the general just now."

"Why?"

"You and I know very well, this trip is too dangerous, with a slim chance of survival. You don't need to take this risk."

Ling Chen gave a slight smile, draped his arm around his shoulder and said, "What, am I that sort of spiritless person? More to the point, if I don't go, who will bring you back? Without my help, do you think you could complete the mission with your mediocre skills?"

"Get lost, I'm not that bad," Tang Yuan said with a disgruntled face, yet his eyes showed a hint of being touched.

Returning to the hotel, Ling Chen and Tang Yuan were about to head upstairs. But at that moment, a fiery red Ferrari slowly drove up to the hotel entrance. The window rolled down, and a stunning woman stuck her head out, calling towards Ling Chen: "Get in the car!"

Chapter 196 Blood Spider

Looking at the unfamiliar woman, Ling Chen was somewhat bewildered, pointed at his own nose, and uncertainly said, "Are you talking to me?"

The woman spoke indifferently, "Is there another man here?"

Hearing this, Tang Yuan who was standing to the side, felt immediately displeased. What did she mean, was he not a man? He was just about to step forward to argue a few words, but the woman driving the Ferrari didn't even give him a direct look, her cold eyes locked firmly onto Ling Chen with an air that brooked no refusal, "Get in the car. I don't want to repeat myself a third time."

Ling Chen hesitated for a moment, then patted Tang Yuan's shoulder, pursed his lips and said, "You go back to the room first."

"You're going with her? Hey, this woman's background is unclear, you better be careful not to be deceived."

"Don't worry, the woman that can deceive me hasn't been born yet." Ling Chen said confidently with a smile, then pulled open the car door, and sat in the passenger seat of the Ferrari.

Accompanied by the roar of the engine, the fiery red Ferrari sped like a flame on the road, reaching a hundred miles per hour in just a few seconds.

Ling Chen slightly turned his head to discreetly size up the woman using his peripheral vision.

This woman seemed to be of mixed race, looking almost Asian, but with blue eyes like dazzling, pure gems, though somewhat cold.

The beauty of a mixed-race woman didn't need to be described, absolutely a great beauty, with naturally golden hair, delicate facial features, each part in perfect place, impeccable, curvy eyelashes, frosty eyes, skin as tender and white as a newborn baby's, thin red lips like a flame, able to arouse the most primal urges and desires in men.

Just by looking at her age, Ling Chen guessed she was around twenty-seven or twenty-eight, because she carried a mature charm unique to adult women.

"Have you looked enough?" The blonde beauty suddenly threw out a sentence.

Ling Chen grinned, retracted his gaze, looked ahead through the windshield and asked, "Beauty, you should at least tell me your name if you are looking for me."

"You know my name."

"I know?" Ling Chen was startled, then gave the blonde another look. He searched all his memories but could not find any information about this woman. He was certain he had never seen her, let alone knowing her name.

"Beauty, have you mistaken me for someone else?"

"The bomb you found in the hotel room last night was placed by me."

At these words, the smile on Ling Chen's face disappeared immediately, his pupils reflecting a trace of alertness.

"So it was you." He nodded lightly, "Are you here to seek revenge for Blood Wolf?"

"Some people want me to seek revenge, but I'm not interested. He was someone who mingled in the world of assassins and mercenaries. It's always either kill or be killed. With this line of work, one should be prepared. He died at your hands, only because he was not skilled enough. It has nothing to do with you."

Ling Chen looked at the blonde beauty in surprise, not knowing whether to praise her for being reasonable or call her cold and heartless.

"Who leaked the information to you?"

"People from the God Organization."

"Are you also a member of the God Organization?"

"They tried to recruit me, but I wasn't interested in that inhumane organization. If it wasn't for them, Blood Wolf wouldn't have died." Saying this, she suddenly stopped the car, looking directly into Ling Chen's eyes, "My name is Kaelina. Blood Wolf was my friend; we come from the same training camp."

"What training camp?"

"Broken Teeth."

Hearing the words 'Broken Teeth', a hint of caution suddenly appeared in Ling Chen's eyes as he looked at Kaelina, his brows slightly furrowed, "Are you an assassin too?"

The Broken Teeth Training Camp, known to anyone in the mercenary and assassin circles, was a devil's paradise noted for cultivating assassins. Around the world, sixty percent of elite assassins were trained by 'Broken Teeth.'

The rules at the Broken Teeth Training Camp were extremely strict, almost to the point of being perverse. Broken Teeth would recruit a hundred trainees from around the world for each term, around seven years of age, half male, half female, and put them through uniform training. After ten years, the hundred trainees would undergo brutal elimination, leaving only ten survivors. The rest would become stepping stones for the victors, dying during training confrontations.

While the rules were cruel, it was undeniable that the assassins trained by Broken Teeth Training Camp were among the top tier in the world of assassins.

To Ling Chen's knowledge, among the current top ten in the global assassin list, five were from Broken Teeth Training Camp.

"Blood Spider."

At this moment, Ling Chen suddenly blurted out three words.

"You are Blood Spider."

Kaelina spoke blandly, "I just said, you know my name."

"Indeed, it's you."

Ling Chen nodded to himself, and when Kaelina mentioned the Broken Teeth Training Camp, he immediately thought of a figure on the assassin list. To be friends with Blood Wolf, one's strength must not be weak, and given that she was a woman, there was only one person who fit these conditions: Blood Spider, ranked third on the assassin list.

Looking at this cold and stunning woman, Ling Chen simply could not link her to the Blood Spider. She has been in the business for nearly ten years, and her deeds were well known to him as if they were engraved on his heart.

This woman, since her debut, had probably killed no fewer people than him.

As he was contemplating this, he saw Kaelina get out of the car and enter a coffee shop by the road. Ling Chen followed her steps, found a quiet seat in the coffee shop, and ordered two cups of pure coffee.

"God Organization's people told you to kill me, and you say you're not interested. Now you should tell me, what exactly are you interested in?"

"Half a year before Blood Wolf was killed, he gave me something, entrusting me to keep it. He said that if he died one day, I would be allowed to open it and look."

"What is it?"

"I can't tell you yet. In short, he had an unfulfilled wish he hoped I could help complete. But alone, I don't have the power to do it, so I need a partner."

Ling Chen caught on immediately, nodding, "You came to me because you want to cooperate?"

"More precisely, I'm looking to leverage the power behind you. Of course, your ability to kill Blood Wolf is enough to prove your worth to work with me."

Ling Chen joked, "I heard assassins are cold-blooded; why are you so enthusiastic?"

"I owe him my life." Kaelina spoke impassively, "Back in the Broken Teeth Training Camp, if not for him, I would have died long ago. Assassins may be cold-blooded, but we know how to repay a debt." Pausing for a moment, she changed the subject, "Let's not dwell on the past. Now let's talk business—if you can help me, I will give you the thing Blood Wolf left with me. After seeing it, you'll gain a deep understanding of the God Organization."

Chapter 197 Cyprus

Ling Chen pondered for a moment and said, "Sorry, I can't make a decision on this matter myself, I have to ask for instructions."

Kaelina picked up the coffee cup and made a "please feel free" gesture.

Stepping out of the café, Ling Chen took out his cellphone and dialed Qiao Zhen's number. As this was related to the God Organization, he naturally had to report to the old General.

A few minutes later, he returned to his seat in the café and looked at Kaelina sitting across the table. "I've just consulted with my superiors. If you can prove that the item you possess is related to the secrets of the God Organization, I can agree to your terms."

Upon hearing this, Kaelina, without a word, pulled out a portable storage device from her sleeve and pushed it toward Ling Chen, "Take this back and verify it, then you'll know if I'm telling the truth or not." Finishing her speech, she took out a hundred-dollar bill from her wallet, placed it on the table, stood up and said, "I'll leave first. I will contact you when the time is right."

"Okay." After watching Kaelina leave, Ling Chen picked up the hundred-dollar bill from the table, replaced it with another one, and then left the café.

Two hours later.

Ghost Base.

"The kid, you're really lucky this time." Qiao Zhen, brimming with excitement, walked into the office with a wide smile, "The intelligence you sent has been verified, and it's all true. The information we've been collecting for years isn't even comparable to what you got in half a day. Kid, no matter what measures you take, you must obtain all the intelligence from the Blood Spider."

"I will do my best. Oh, by the way, General, has the fingerprint on that bill been checked?"

"It has been checked, there are no fingerprints on it."

"No fingerprints?" Ling Chen was slightly startled. He had seen Kaelina pull out that hundred-dollar bill from her wallet, how could there be no fingerprints? Could it be...

Suddenly, an idea struck him. It's possible that Blood Spider had ironed flat the tips of her fingers, so no matter what she touched, she would leave no fingerprints.

Tsk, tsk! He couldn't help but admire the woman's caution and ruthlessness.

"Kid, you better go back now, rest well for tonight, you still have actions to carry out tomorrow." Qiao Zhen advised, "Take good care of yourself."

"Understood."

Returning to the hotel, Ling Chen greeted Nanrong Wanqing, informing her that he would be away for a few days.

Nanrong Wanqing expressed her surprise, "Miss Tang's concert is the day after tomorrow. Aren't you attending? She will be very disappointed if you don't go."

Ling Chen gave a bitter smile, "I know, but this matter is very important, it can't be delayed. I must depart tomorrow. Chairman, if you see Shiyun, please pass on my apologies, and I'll apologize to her myself when I return."

"Whatever you say." After finishing, Nanrong Wanqing continued to bury her head at the desk, dealing with company matters. After signing a few contracts, she slowly lifted her head and noticed that Ling Chen was still standing in front of the desk, showing no sign of leaving.

"Is there anything else?"

Ling Chen hesitated for a moment before speaking, "Chairman, I hope you can give Nanrong Hao more space in the future, let him make his own decisions whether right or wrong. A man has to experience setbacks to grow. He's actually a good person. I believe he won't disappoint you. Additionally..."

He looked into Nanrong Wanqing's beautiful eyes, his expression hesitant, opened his mouth a few times, but hesitated to speak.

"What else?" Nanrong Wanqing prompted.

"About the other time, I'm sorry. I know it was my fault. I don't seek your forgiveness, I just hope that my matters don't cause you any unhappiness. If...never mind, let's not talk about that. Anyway, I'm very glad to have met you. Chairman, you carry on, I've got to go." With that, Ling Chen turned and left the presidential suite.

Watching Ling Chen's departing back, Nanrong Wanqing was somewhat taken aback. She found it strange why Ling Chen suddenly talked to her like this, it felt like...they might never see each other again.

For some reason, her heart felt strangely panicked and uneasy.

At this moment, as Ling Chen left the suite, he shook his head silently. He was well aware of the level of danger in this rescue operation. In previous missions, he had a seventy percent certainty, but this time, he had less than twenty percent confidence, essentially a slim chance of survival. Because he was unsure if he would return alive, he wanted to say everything he needed to, lest he never get another chance.

Early the next morning.

Ling Chen and Tang Yuan, without notifying anyone, took a taxi directly to the airport.

At this moment, the airport's waiting hall already had three people waiting for their arrival.

These three were the teammates for this operation, Lao Bei, Xiong, and Axe; they were members of the Ghost Organization and had cooperated frequently in the past. These three had been on assignments abroad and were urgently summoned back due to issues at the base.

Lao Bei and Axe were actually young men in their twenties, similar in age, but with rich experiences that aged their mindsets, so they preferred to address each other with 'Old,' like Old Tang.

Both were elites picked from the military and trained by the Ghost Organization, exceptionally skilled.

Xiong, true to his name, was very robust with bulging muscles, towering over everyone else.

After the group of five met, they chatted casually in the waiting hall and then boarded the flight.

After several hours of flying, the plane finally reached its destination, the capital of Cyprus, Nicosia.

Cyprus is an island country located at the junction of Europe and Asia, with a total population just over one million, a very small country; any single city in Huaxia has a population many times greater.

Not only that, Cyprus is also a tourist paradise, welcoming millions of visitors every year, thriving economically.

After disembarking from the plane, Ling Chen and Tang Yuan, along with the other four, rented a minivan outside the airport and then rushed to the pre-arranged meeting point.

The General had already arranged someone to rendezvous with them there.

After driving for half an hour, the minivan stopped in front of a residential building.

The five carried their luggage and directly went to the top floor of the residential building, finding room 508. Under Ling Chen's signal, Tang Yuan rhythmically knocked on the door.

After a short while, the door opened, and a man in his thirties appeared in front of them. The middle-aged man was extremely thin, with piercing eyes like a hawk, and a distinct scar at the corner of his left eye.

Seeing the man, Ling Chen's eyes lit up, exclaimed with joy: "Instructor Pang!"

"Kid, you finally made it, come on in." The middle-aged man gave a slight smile, especially when he saw Ling Chen, the coldness in his eyes gradually warmed, showing a hint of tenderness.

Chapter 198 The Eve of Action

The middle-aged man in front of him was named Pang Jiulin. When Ling Chen first joined the Ghost Organization, it was Pang Jiulin who was in charge of training him. In his heart, he had always regarded Pang Jiulin as his guide.

However, as he grew and became capable of handling matters independently, Pang Jiulin retired and was no longer reachable.

"Instructor Pang, you're not..."

Pang Jiulin glanced at the others, pulled Ling Chen aside, and whispered: "I did leave the Ghosts, but I'm now a member of Lonely Wolf."

"Lonely Wolf?" Ling Chen suddenly realized. The General had mentioned Lonely Wolf to him before; Lonely Wolf was a secret organization established on the basis of the Ghost Organization. Its members were all selected from the Ghost Organization.

Simply put, the Ghost Organization was responsible for cultivating combat abilities and experience in its members, and when the time was ripe, they could join Lonely Wolf.

Lonely Wolf was the main force against the God Organization.

If he hadn't retired now, he would also be eligible to join Lonely Wolf.

"Alright, we can catch up another time when we're free, but don't forget our main mission this time."

Ling Chen nodded, tossed his luggage aside, and sat down on the sofa to rest. This private residence was their base for this operation. They chose this location instead of a hotel mainly to avoid the God Organization from detecting their entry into the country.

"You've been on the plane for so long, you all must be tired, have some food first. Later, I'll take you around to check out the surrounding environment," Pang Jiulin arranged.

After lunch, everyone took the business van driven by Pang Jiulin and toured the surrounding area. Before long, the business van left the city area and came to the outskirts.

After more than ten minutes, Pang Jiulin parked the vehicle in a secluded spot and gestured for everyone to get out of the van.

Through a dense forest, Pang Jiulin stopped, looked around, and said, "We're here, this is our target building."

Ling Chen looked up to see a factory about a hundred meters from the dense woods, with a total area of several thousand square meters. Besides the high walls, it was also enclosed with electric fencing. It was broad daylight, but the factory gates were closed tight, and only a few scattered individuals could be seen walking around inside.

"According to the video IP location, Yang Tao is being held inside this factory. Moreover, I've investigated, and this factory outwardly claims to be engaged in the production of daily goods, but in reality, it's processing weapons. Armaments smuggled in the Asian region are all shipped from here."

Hearing Pang Jiulin's words, Tang Yuan murmured to himself, "The security here doesn't seem very tight."

"If you think that, you're making a big mistake. I'm telling you, the defense level of this factory is very high, almost no different from the Ghost Base. We suspect that this could very well be a secret base arranged by the God Organization."

Ling Chen asked, "Instructor, is there a way to get in?"

"Not yet, I've collected quite a bit of intelligence regarding this factory, we'll go back and study it more. For the next few days, we'll familiarize ourselves with the terrain and formulate a good plan."

"Instructor Pang, have our equipments arrived?"

"No equipment!"

"No?" Not only Tang Yuan, who asked, but everyone else was stunned as well, "Are you telling us to fight them with bare hands? Instructor Pang, you can't mess with us like this."

Pang Jiulin said sternly, "We must not use weapons for this operation. This is an armaments factory; there are many flammable and explosive prohibited items inside. If a fire breaks out, we're all done for. Remember, this is a rescue operation, not a suicide mission, the best outcome is to stealthily rescue the person."

Everyone gave a wry smile helplessly. Not being allowed to use weapons undoubtedly increased the difficulty of the mission several times over. However, what they were more concerned about was their own safety. As Pang Jiulin said, this was a rescue operation, not a suicide mission.

Noticing everyone's concerns, Pang Jiulin smiled and said, "Don't be nervous. We can't use weapons, and neither can they. This country has a strict ban on firearms; anyone who dares to shoot will immediately attract a horde of police. They're not so foolish as to expose themselves."

"Really?" Everyone sighed with relief in unison.

In terms of skills, the members of the Ghost Organization had never feared anyone.

Returning to the apartment building, Pang Jiulin laid out all the information collected in the past two days for everyone's reference, pooling wisdom to create the best strategy.

Ling Chen greatly admired Pang Jiulin's methods. In just under two days, he had managed to get his hands on the factory's blueprints, which would be of great benefit to their mission.

Pang Jiulin explained, "The factory was originally built with government funding to provide jobs for the citizens. Later, as the tourism industry developed, fewer people were willing to work in factories, so it was put up for sale, and eventually bought by an arms dealer, but the blueprints remained in the local Construction Bureau."

Ling Chen scrutinized the blueprint, looking for a route that would allow entry.

After the recent on-site observation, they noticed that the factory was protected by an electric fence. Tampering with the fence would likely alert the enemy, so this plan had to be abandoned.

"Instructor, look here."

Not long after, Ling Chen found a breakthrough and marked it on the blueprint with a pen. "This is the factory's sewage drainage pipe. It's half a meter in diameter and over four hundred meters long, extending from the factory to the sewage treatment plant. We can try to sneak in through here."

"Crawling through over four hundred meters... With our physical capability, we should be able to endure it. Let's do this, I'll go check it out first. If there are no issues, we'll proceed with your plan."

"Instructor, do you want me to accompany you?"

Pang Jiulin waved his hand in refusal, "No need, you should rest well. Oh, by the way, the nightlife in this country is not bad. Since you are here, why not take them out to relax and not wind yourself up too tightly?"

Ling Chen smirked with a knowing smile and nodded, "Sure, I'll certainly give everyone a chance to broaden their horizons."

It was an unwritten rule in the Ghost Organization – before executing a mission, everyone would indulge in pleasures and relax themselves since nobody knew if the next mission could be their last.

Initially, the organization was resistant to this behavior, but over time it became a habit, and even the General accepted it.

Night fell.

The lights of Nicosia City came on, and the streets were filled with tourists. Locals in eccentric costumes performed zealously, and vendors crammed the streetside, an atmosphere of opulence and bustle.

Ling Chen, accompanied by Tang Yuan and a few others, strolled on the street before heading straight to Nicosia City's biggest bar.

Entering the bar, Ling Chen cautioned, "Don't stay out too late."

Lao Bei and two others hurriedly dropped a 'we know,' then enthusiastically plunged into the crowd, searching for their night's conquests.

"Old virgin, aren't you coming?"

"You know that's not my thing."

"Well, I won't keep you company then." Tang Yuan looked at a blond-haired, blue-eyed girl nearby, his eyes sparkling.

Ling Chen teased him, "Get lost, I don't need your company."

After Tang Yuan left, he went to the bar alone, ordered a bottle of beer, and enjoyed the surrounding excitement.

At that moment, a woman walked into the bar with leisurely steps. As the woman appeared, the patrons around the bar immediately became quiet, staring at the woman, unable to take their eyes off her.

Ling Chen glanced out of the corner of his eye and was suddenly taken aback.

Why is it her?

Chapter 199 Chance Encounter

Nicosia City is an island city with a perennial summer climate, sweltering heat, where most tourists wear short-sleeved shirts and beach shorts, and women prefer wearing colorful, locally styled skirts. The more liberated women wear just bikinis, draped in thin shawls, creating an enticing scene.

At this moment, the woman who appeared in the bar was wearing an elegantly light blue long dress that highlighted her slender figure, her hair as flowing as a waterfall bound by a hairband, cascading down her back, and a pure white pearl necklace around her delicate neck.

However, what caught more attention was the woman's appearance, her features finely crafted as if meticulously sculpted, with raised eyebrows, a pointed nose, cherry-red lips, and eyes as bright as gems, exuding nobility and sophistication with every gesture.

Behind the woman stood two tall, young women. They seemed casually following her, yet covertly protecting her.

Sensing everyone's gaze, the woman seemed accustomed to it and was unmoved. However, upon noticing Ling Chen by the bar, she immediately stopped in her tracks, a flash of surprise in her beautiful eyes.

Seeing him approaching, Ling Chen stepped forward, grinning, "President Liu, we really are fated to meet in such a place."

The woman in front was Liu Xiyao.

Liu Xiyao said displeased, "How many times have I told you, don't call me President Liu when we're outside."

"Right, right, Yao, what brings you here?"

"Just taking a break since I'm free lately. What about you? Not working at Hongyu Group and instead coming here, is it a company perk?"

Ling Chen smiled, "Nothing of that sort, it's a personal trip. I haven't seen the guys for a long time, so we planned a get-together."

Liu Xiyao glanced around and casually asked, "Where are these friends of yours?"

"They all went off chasing girls, leaving me all alone," Ling Chen shrugged, an expression of resignation on his face.

"Why didn't you join them? This is the largest bar in Nicosia City, filled with beautiful women from every country. None caught your eye?"

"It's not that; it's just not my cup of tea."

Liu Xiyao chuckled softly, meaningfully adding, "Didn't expect to see such an honest man like you in the world. Since you've no other interests, why not join me for a while?"

During their conversation, a Caucasian manager in the bar quickly approached, bent slightly in front of Liu Xiyao, and respectfully said, "President Liu, welcome, your private room is ready."

"Follow me."

Led by the Caucasian manager, Ling Chen followed Liu Xiyao to a luxurious private room on the top floor of the bar. The room was extravagantly decorated, over a hundred square meters large, equipped with a KTV, bar, billiard table, and even two pretty female attendants.

On the left side of the room was a large transparent floor-to-ceiling glass, from which the bustling district around could be seen.

"Do you come here often?" Ling Chen asked.

"I bought a villa by the sea, and I usually stay here for a few days when I'm free." Liu Xiyao picked up a freshly mixed cocktail, "I'm planning to go sailing tomorrow, you can bring your friends along if you're free."

"You have a yacht?"

"Can't I have one?" Liu Xiyao retorted.

Ling Chen touched his nose, realizing his question was redundant. With assets over a billion, buying a yacht for Liu Xiyao was indeed an easy feat.

"I already have plans to go somewhere else with my friends tomorrow, I'm afraid I won't be able to join you for the sailing."

Liu Xiyao didn't insist and nodded, "Anyway, you have my number. If you want to go out to sea, just give me a call, I'll lend you my yacht."

"Hey, how have you been feeling recently?"

"Much better, thanks to your treatment."

"You're welcome. By the way, that..." Ling Chen glanced at a nearby waiter and whispered, "Have they found out who poisoned you?"

Upon hearing this, a fleeting cold light passed through Liu Xiyao's eyes, and she responded calmly, "Some things don't need to be investigated. I have a clear understanding myself. You don't need to ask more about this matter; I will handle it myself."

Ling Chen chatted idly with Liu Xiyao for a while and then suddenly received a call from Pang Jiulin, telling him to rush back soon. Pang Jiulin calling him at this time must have had something important.

Immediately, he stood up to leave and said, "I have other matters to attend to, I will leave first, you enjoy yourself."

"When will you be going back?"

"In a day or two, I can't say for sure."

"I will leave the day after tomorrow. You can take my private plane back to East Sea City."

"Okay, we'll be in touch."

After leaving the bar, Ling Chen headed straight back to that secluded apartment building.

Back at his place, Tang Yuan and the others were not yet back, only Pang Jiulin was there.

"Coach, what's the matter?"

"I just spoke with the General on the phone, and we're thinking of altering our plan. We're almost clear on the situation outside that factory, but we know nothing about its interior—the number of people inside, defensive measures, and the location of the hostages. To save operational time, the General and

I unanimously decided to first send someone to infiltrate the factory and scout the situation. It would be best if you could locate Yang Tao."

Ling Chen well understood Pang Jiulin's implication; being called back at this time obviously meant he was to lead the operation.

"Coach, right now?"

"Wait until midnight, the guards will be more relaxed then, it's easier to avoid detection." Pang Jiulin said pointing to a bag on the bed, "All the equipment is ready, see if there's anything missing."

Ling Chen walked to the bed and opened the zipper. Inside was a tight-fitting combat suit, a tactical flashlight, a wireless earpiece and receiver, three military daggers, a pair of night vision goggles, and a tool kit.

"We mentioned before, no guns for this operation. Be careful on your own."

"Got it." Ling Chen's lips lifted in a confident smile.

"Also this, keep it with you." Pang Jiulin handed a button-shaped metal object to Ling Chen, instructing, "This is a signal transmitter. Once you find Yang Tao's holding location, install this device. I will lock onto his position via the signal. Once you're clear on the situation, find a place to hide and wait for our support."

When everything was ready and midnight arrived, Pang Jiulin drove the van and dropped Ling Chen near the wastewater treatment plant on the outskirts.

Through the car window, one could see the factory situated 500 meters away. Though it was deep into the night, the factory was still brightly lit.

Pang Jiulin patted Ling Chen on the shoulder and reminded, "Kid, be careful."

"Understood!"

Chapter 200 Taking Action Early

The sewage treatment plant was all automated machinery; there were only two people on duty in the security room at night. It didn't take Ling Chen much time to easily bypass the surveillance and infiltrate the interior of the sewage plant.

Finding the sewage pipe that led directly to the target factory, Ling Chen put on night vision goggles, adjusted the signal of his headset, and then crawled into the sewage pipe. The diameter of the pipe was half a meter long, just enough to accommodate an adult.

However, the pipe emitted a pungent stench, and its inside was coated with sticky filth, which was very disgusting.

Fortunately, Ling Chen was prepared in advance, wearing a mask and gloves, and moved slowly along the sewage pipe. This pipe was over four hundred meters long, and he could only crawl on hands and knees, carrying tools on his back, which was very laborious. It was undoubtedly a serious test of his stamina.

More than ten minutes passed, Ling Chen exhaled deeply and lay down to rest. After regaining some strength, he continued on his way. After roughly half an hour in total, he finally reached the end of the sewage pipe.

There was no exit from the pipe, it was all sealed. Ling Chen took off the backpack he was carrying, took out the welding tools he had prepared in advance, and started to burn through the top of the pipe.

A moment later, a square exit was burnt into the sewage pipe. Climbing out of the pipe, Ling Chen looked around to make sure no one was in the vicinity before sealing the opening of the pipe to avoid detection.

At the moment, his location was a storage room, with goods piled messily all around. After changing out of his foul-smelling clothes, he approached the door and listened intently. Hearing no movement outside, he gently opened the door and poked his head out.

Outside the storage room was a spacious corridor. With no one else around, Ling Chen quickly moved towards the end of the corridor. However, just as he was about to reach the corner, he suddenly heard footsteps coming from around the corner.

His gaze swept around, and he quickly stepped into the nearby room and rushed inside.

The door had just closed when the footsteps passed by outside.

Ling Chen breathed a sigh of relief, put on his night vision goggles, and looked around the room. It was a bedroom, with someone lying on the bed against the wall, deep in sleep and unaware of Ling Chen's presence.

He walked gently to the beside of the bed, taking a glance, and a look of surprise momentarily crossed his face.

The person lying on the bed turned out to be a woman, probably around thirty years old, with a pretty face. However, her only flaw was on her left ear; her left ear had been cut off and replaced with an artificial ear. Moreover, and more importantly, the woman had yellow skin and was very likely to be a Huaxia person.

While Ling Chen pondered, a sudden ringtone startled him.

He turned his head to look and saw that it was the woman's phone by her pillow.

Seeing that the woman was awakened by the ringtone, Ling Chen quickly bent down and hid under the head of the bed to avoid being seen.

The woman answered the call; Ling Chen didn't know what was said on the other end, but the woman responded in English with a simple "Understood" before hanging up. Immediately after, sounds came from the bed as the woman got dressed and headed for the door.

When the bedroom door opened, Ling Chen noticed that two men, unknown when they had arrived, were outside the room. The men were very respectful in front of the woman, indicating that her identity was likely not simple.

After watching the woman leave, Ling Chen stood up and began to search the room, hoping to find some useful intelligence.

However, regrettably, the only items in the bedroom were some change of clothes and female toiletries.

Leaving the bedroom, Ling Chen crept carefully along the corridors in search of the hostages. The factory had three floors in total, and he was currently on the first. After some investigation, he found that the first floor housed the employees' quarters, and the security was not particularly tight.

Soon, he located the elevator and the emergency exit leading to the second floor. However, there was personnel stationed outside both the elevator and the emergency exit—it was clearly impossible for him to bypass these guards and sneak into the second floor without making a sound.

He couldn't afford to spook anyone before the operation began.

According to his original plan, he had intended to disguise himself as a factory employee and blend in, but to his dismay, all the employees were Caucasian, which made his own facial features too easily recognizable.

As he was pondering his options, the elevator doors slid open, and the woman with the defective left ear walked out, surrounded by several men in suits. Soon after, she conferred with the people beside her for a moment before heading off to a room by herself.

Ling Chen hesitated for a bit, then followed the woman after she had walked some distance.

The security of the factory was too stringent, making it difficult to act, but the identity of the woman was not unimportant; she might provide a breakthrough.

Before long, daylight began to break outside the factory.

Ling Chen lay underneath the woman's bed, eyes closed, using the time to rest and gather strength for the operation in the evening.

"Ling Chen, respond if you receive this."

Pang Jiulin's voice came through the earpiece at that moment. Ling Chen didn't dare to give a verbal response, afraid that the woman would hear, so he just lightly pressed the talk button. With Jiulin's experience, he would naturally understand what it meant.

Glancing at the time, it was already 9 AM, and the woman finally got out of bed. Ling Chen, lying under the bed, turned his head and saw the woman undress completely, throwing her clothes and underwear to the floor.

Ling Chen inwardly expressed regret; the bed obstructed his view so he could only see parts of her body below the knees; he could only use his imagination for the rest.

After watching the woman finish freshening up and leaving the room, Ling Chen finally had time to contact Pang Jiulin to report the situation on his side. After listening to his plan, Jiulin said, "Do as you see fit, time it right, don't start too early to avoid alerting anyone."

"Understood."

From morning to afternoon, the woman came back to the room twice, and Ling Chen remained hidden under the bed without making a sound.

Until the evening, with one hour left until Jiulin's operation, Ling Chen crawled out from beneath the bed, walked behind the bedroom door, and waited patiently.

More than ten minutes passed, and a series of footsteps finally approached from outside the door. Following that, the door was pushed open from the outside, and the woman walked straight in.

As the door closed, Ling Chen surged forward, choking the woman from behind and covering her mouth, ignoring her struggle, and whispering sharply, "Be quiet if you want to live."

After a few attempts, the woman felt Ling Chen's overwhelming strength and gave up resisting.

Seeing this, Ling Chen pulled out a dagger, held it against the woman's neck, and warned, "I'd advise against alerting anyone outside. Otherwise, I can assure you that my knife is faster than your scream." After saying that, he released the hand that was pressing firmly over her mouth.

"Who are you?" the woman asked coldly. At this time, she seemed to have regained her composure, no longer as panicked as before.