

The Beauty 221

Chapter 221 Difficult Times

"This isn't a matter of whether or not you can testify, someone is out to harm the Nanrong Family, that's why they designed this trap for you. Don't worry too much, I will definitely help clear your name and get you out." After a pause, Ling Chen instructed, "Also, don't mention to anyone that you've seen me, including your sister. Do you hear me?"

"Chen, rest assured, I won't say a word."

If not for this incident, Ling Chen would not have made an appearance so readily. He was still in a period of concealment, and until he had gathered the intelligence about Zhu Hong, he preferred not to reveal himself.

Leaving the police station without a sound, Ling Chen went straight back to his temporary residence in the neighborhood.

As he entered the door, the dense aroma of braised food immediately hit his nose.

Arriving in the living room, he saw Hu Fei sitting in front of a square table with several fast food containers filled with different kinds of braised dishes and accompanied by a few bottles of beer. Hu Fei was holding a pork knuckle, gnawing at it with greasy lips in relish.

"Hey, you're finally back. I bought you supper, let's have some together." Hu Fei called out.

Ling Chen casually picked up a piece of braised meat and stuffed it into his mouth, smacking his lips: "How is it, any findings?"

"That depends on what you're asking." While speaking, Hu Fei spat out a bone and wiped his hands with a napkin, "Let's start with the Snake King's affair. I've checked into Nanrong Zhengqing, there's a domestic record of him, though it's not complete, but I found a name that proves a significant relationship with Nanrong Gang. Nanrong Zhengqing's mother is actually Nanrong Gang's ex-wife."

Ling Chen nodded, "The Snake King must have been aware of the grudge between Nanrong Gang and the Nanrong Family, hence his act of revenge. Put that aside for now, and tell me about Nanrong Hao, have you found anything?"

"The matter with Nanrong Hao is simple, he's done for. I've checked all the evidence, and the most crucial piece is that dagger, it has Nanrong Hao's fingerprints on it. Just based on that alone, it's enough to convict him."

"I just visited him at the police station, he told me that he and Jiang Hao were out drinking until after eleven o'clock that night before leaving."

"All that's useless, the time of death for the victim is between eleven at night and midnight, during which Nanrong Hao was alone, no one can alibi for him. Ling Chen, I advise you not to waste your effort. Their arrangement is flawless, leaving no loopholes unless you can find the real mastermind behind the scenes. But right now, there isn't a single clue to start with." As he finished speaking, Hu Fei suddenly thought of something, his eyes lighting up, "Since Nanrong Zhengqing has a score to settle with the Nanrong Family, could it be him..."

"It couldn't be him." Ling Chen immediately dismissed his conjecture. "Nanrong Zhengqing is an assassin, he could easily do it himself, why make it so complicated?"

Hu Fei spread his hands, "Then there's nothing we can do. To me, saving Nanrong Hao through official procedures is impossible, we'd have to resort to other means. Think about it, the biggest piece of evidence against Nanrong Hao is that dagger, the most crucial piece of evidence. If the evidence disappears, gets lost, can't be found, then what can the judge convict on?"

Upon hearing his suggestion, Ling Chen felt tempted; it was a good idea. Since Nanrong Hao was framed by someone using such means, he might as well employ some tactics himself. No matter what, he couldn't let anything happen to Nanrong Hao.

Having realized this, he felt much more relieved.

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Wealthy Manor No. 118.

Two days have passed since Nanrong Hao was arrested. During these forty-eight hours, Nanrong Wanqing has not been idle, running around for the sake of her brother.

As the chairwoman of Hongyu Group and a public figure in East Sea City, she now put aside her nobility and status, pleading for help everywhere. Lawyers told her if there is no additional evidence, the chances of overturning Nanrong Hao's case are slim. Moreover, Nanrong Hao was already eighteen years old, capable of bearing criminal responsibility and unless a miracle happened, his conviction was a sure thing.

With the situation having reached this point, Nanrong Wanqing didn't want to give up, nor could she. Nanrong Hao was the only male in the Nanrong Family, he must not have any mishaps.

Since she couldn't save Nanrong Hao through legal avenues, her only option was to use her network of relationships and favors.

However, the day after the incident, a sudden piece of news almost drove her to despair.

The tabloids in East Sea City reported the murder case of Nanrong Hao. The news spread like wildfire, and within just one day, the case became public knowledge.

All eyes were on the Nanrong Family, curious to see how they would respond.

Under such circumstances, no one dared to offer help. Because everyone knew clearly, the case against Nanrong Hao was irrefutable, and there was no chance of overturning it.

A life for a life, this was to be Nanrong Hao's ultimate fate.

"Chairwoman, we've arrived."

Zhong Wei opened the car door, helped Nanrong Wanqing out, and came to the front of a small building.

Ding-dong!

The doorbell chimed, and the door was quickly opened by a middle-aged woman who looked at Nanrong Wanqing outside and asked: "May I know who you are looking for?"

"Hello, I am Wanqing from Hongyu Group, I'm here to see Director Zhang."

"Oh, it's Miss Nanrong." The middle-aged woman smiled apologetically, "I'm sorry, but Director Zhang isn't home today, he's gone to a meeting in the city."

"When will he be back?"

"I can't say for sure. How about this, Miss Nanrong, leave me your number, and I'll have him call you back when he returns."

"Thank you!"

After handing over her business card, Nanrong Wanqing returned to the car, her expression desolate, her exquisite face tinged with sorrow.

"Chairwoman..." Zhong Wei hesitated before speaking, "This is the fifth refusal we've encountered, we..."

"Let's move on to the next one."

Nanrong Wanqing looked out of the car window, speaking faintly. No matter what, as long as there was a glimmer of hope, she wouldn't give up. If she couldn't clear Nanrong Hao's name, she would find a way to save his life. As long as he is alive, there's always hope.

In the midst of this, Zhong Wei received a phone call, his expression suddenly turned solemn.

"Chairwoman, Housekeeper Liu says the old master fainted upon learning of Nanrong Hao's situation."

Nanrong Wanqing's expression changed. She quickly said, "Let's go back immediately!"

Two hours later.

In Nanrong Yong's bedroom, Nanrong Wanqing sat by the bed, looking at the unconscious and intravenously fed Nanrong Yong, her face wan and forlorn.

"Grandfather..."

She whispered softly, her stellar eyes devoid of light, a glistening tear shimmering uncertainly, her eyes red at the rims.

She never imagined that in just a day, the Nanrong Family would suffer such a calamity. Who on earth wanted to push the Nanrong Family to their demise, could there really be such deep hatred?

As this crossed her mind, a tear rolled gently down her smooth cheek.

Chapter 222 Meeting Again

"Don't cry."

Suddenly, a gentle voice sounded beside her ear, and a pair of large hands comfortably rested on her delicate shoulders.

Nanrong Wanqing was momentarily startled, turning her head to look at the newcomer, only to see a remarkably handsome man standing behind her, his eyes filled with a hint of pity and tenderness.

She gently wiped the tears from the corners of her eyes, composed herself, and asked, "How did you get here?"

"Such a big incident has occurred in the Nanrong family; of course, I had to come and see you. Wanqing, I know you are suffering now. Believe me, I will stay with you and help you through this difficult time."

Looking at Nanrong Yong lying unconscious on the bed, a sour feeling surged in Nanrong Wanqing's heart, her eyes reddening as she said, "Zhu Hong, I'm scared... I'm really scared..."

"Don't be afraid, I'm here with you. Even if the sky falls, I'll hold it up for you. Don't give up until the very last moment. I still have some connections in East Sea City; I will ask them for help to see if there is a chance to turn things around."

"Thank you."

Zhu Hong gave a slight smile: "Why be so formal between us? I've told you, no matter how you treat me, my feelings for you will never change. Now, let me take you home to rest. People around you said you haven't slept for a whole day and night. No matter how worried you are, you can't wear yourself out."

"Mhm."

Returning to the villa in the backyard, Nanrong Wanqing noticed two bodyguards in suits following Zhu Hong, each carrying a suitcase.

"What is this..."

"I will stay here with you for a few days," Zhu Hong said gently. "Now, with Nanrong Hao detained by the police and the old man fallen ill, there are no men in Nanrong family; I cannot let you face this alone. You may not care about yourself, but I do. Let me take care of you until this is resolved."

As he spoke, he glanced at the bedroom next to the living room, "I'll stay there."

Looking at the bedroom Zhu Hong pointed to, Nanrong Wanqing's eyes suddenly fixed on it. That had been Ling Chen's room, and it had been vacant since he left.

Ling Chen...

Nanrong Wanqing bit her lip slightly, feeling some resentment inside. Why, why did you have to leave? If you were here, perhaps Nanrong Hao wouldn't have gone to the Old City, and things wouldn't have escalated to this stage.

After escorting Nanrong Wanqing back to her room, Zhu Hong went downstairs and stepped into that bedroom.

He pushed the door open to see a computer on the desk and a photo frame beside it with an old photo inside. He casually picked up the photo, glanced at it, scoffed, and threw it directly into the trash bin.

"You two, clear everything out. Anything belonging to Ling Chen, throw it all away, and don't leave anything."

...

The night fell.

Ling Chen sat alone in his room, looking out the window at the starless night sky, a hint of hesitation flashing in his eyes.

Hu Fei had just visited him, bringing news that kept echoing in his mind. Nanrong Yong had fallen ill and was currently unconscious. Together with the arrest of Nanrong Hao, the two pillars of the Nanrong family had fallen. Now, it all depended on the frail shoulders of Nanrong Wanqing.

With so much happening, he wondered if she could withstand it. Thinking of Nanrong Wanqing made Ling Chen worry. No matter how strong Nanrong Wanqing was, she was ultimately a woman. In such difficult times, alone and unsupported, anyone else might have already collapsed.

At that thought, a strong impulse surged in his heart.

"I can't worry about so much now."

He gritted his teeth, stood up, and rushed out of the room.

Half an hour later.

Upon arriving at Wealthy Manor No. 118, Ling Chen's gaze was immediately drawn to a Mercedes-Benz outside the door.

Zhu Hong!

He frowned slightly; this guy was here too. It made sense, after all, Zhu Hong wouldn't miss such a good opportunity.

He initially wanted to meet Nanrong Wanqing directly, but since Zhu Hong was present, he obviously couldn't just walk in openly. Never mind, he thought, I'll just sneak a peek. As long as she is alright, he would feel much more at ease.

At that moment, he circled around to the back of the villa and climbed over the wall into the Nanrong Family's residence. Ling Chen had set up the Nanrong Family's security system himself; he knew every camera and detector like the back of his hand. It didn't take him long to reach the white villa where Nanrong Wanqing lived.

Seeing the lights on in the living room, he stealthily climbed to the second-floor bedroom balcony and then slipped through the glass window.

However, just as he was about to leave through the door, he heard footsteps and the voices of Nanrong Wanqing and Zhu Hong outside the door. Clearly, the two were walking towards the room.

As they reached the door, with the doorknob twisting, Ling Chen had no time to retreat the way he had come. His gaze shifted, and he immediately darted under the bed.

Just after he hid, the door was pushed open. Following closely, Zhu Hong was seen wheeling Nanrong Wanqing into the room.

"Wanqing, do you want me to stay and chat?"

"No need, I want to rest early. You must be tired today too, get some sleep early. We have a lot more to do tomorrow."

"Well then, I'll sleep downstairs. Call me if you need anything. Good night!"

"Good night!"

Listening to their conversation, Ling Chen felt extremely displeased; Zhu Hong was actually staying in the Nanrong Family's house, and even in his former room.

After Zhu Hong left the room, Nanrong Wanqing alone wheeled herself to the bedside. She propped herself up with her hands, moved onto the bed, then began unbuttoning her clothes, revealing her delicate shoulders and fair skin. After changing into a thin nightgown, she pulled back the covers and lay down.

Under the bed, Ling Chen tried to control his breathing, daring not to make much noise, lest he be heard by Nanrong Wanqing.

He waited quietly for about five minutes until the lights in the room were finally turned off. After a while, hearing Nanrong Wanqing's breathing gradually become even, suggesting she had fallen asleep, Ling Chen carefully crawled out from under the bed, his eyes fixed on the sleeping Nanrong Wanqing.

Having not seen her for a while, she was still so beautiful, utterly captivating. But her face seemed a bit pale, with a hint of exhaustion, presumably thinking over issues related to Nanrong Hao these past days.

"Don't worry, with me here, everything will get better," he sighed softly and murmured.

With that, he turned and walked towards the balcony. However, just after taking a few steps, he suddenly heard a movement from the bed. Turning his head, he was surprised to find Nanrong Wanqing had opened her eyes and was watching his retreating figure.

In the darkness, their eyes met, neither of them spoke.

After a while, Nanrong Wanqing sat up in bed, her lips slightly parted, her voice tinged with a trace of indifference: "I thought you had left. Why did you come back?"

Although her tone was cold, her eyes held a hint of tearfulness. Only she knew what that meant.

Chapter 223 Why Not?

Ling Chen opened his mouth and, looking at Nanrong Wanqing in the pitch-dark, didn't know what to say. After some thought, the words "I'm sorry" finally came out of his mouth.

Nanrong Wanqing bit her lip corner, as if an overwhelming wave of sourness hit her heart at that instant, her beautiful eyes reddened. She took a deep breath, trying hard to adjust her emotions, "Didn't you say you would never come back to East Sea City?"

"I..." Ling Chen gave a bitter smile and fell into silence. It wasn't him who said that. Tang Yuan thought he had died afar, so he made up that lie to cover up the true circumstances of his death.

Hearing the faint sobbing from the bed, Ling Chen's heart softened. He went to the bedside and explained, "I'm sorry, I thought I couldn't make it back before, so I... I had no intention to deceive you."

"Now that you're back, why not just come through the front door? Why sneak into my room?"

"I wanted to see you, but I saw Zhu Hong was there, and it wasn't convenient, so I thought I'd sneak in and take a glance at you."

Hearing this, Nanrong Wanqing lowered her brows, a strange light flickering in her eyes. She wiped the tears that lingered at the corners of her eyes and asked, "Are you going to leave again?"

Ling Chen shrugged his shoulders, his expression indifferent, "Zhu Hong has moved into the Nanrong family, hasn't he? With him helping you, I believe you don't need my help."

Nanrong Wanqing's lips curled slightly, with a faint smile. As clever as she was, how could she not hear the jealousy in Ling Chen's words.

"Zhu Hong moved in on his own, I didn't ask him to stay. Besides, so much has happened with the Nanrong family; I indeed need help. If you were here, he would not have come."

"How's the old gentleman's health?"

"The doctor says he's been greatly stressed and needs some time to recuperate." Nanrong Wanqing dropped the smile from her lips, her face full of worry, "Grandfather's health is not the issue; it's Nanrong Hao, he... I really don't know what to do. The lawyer says the evidence is conclusive; it's unlikely for Nanrong Hao to be acquitted. I've been seeking help everywhere but there's no hope. Ling Chen, can you help me contact Mr. Han?"

"Mr. Han?" Ling Chen was startled momentarily and then understood her intent, "You mean Han Bing?"

"Hongyu Group is currently cooperating with the military, I am willing to provide the technology to them for free, I don't want anything in return, I just hope they can help me and let Nanrong Hao go."

"This..." Ling Chen hesitated.

It was very possible that the elder general would agree to such a request from Nanrong Wanqing. With Elder Han's status, he could certainly use some special privileges.

"Wanqing, don't be too anxious. Things haven't reached an irreversible point. Nanrong Hao is framed. If the true culprit behind the scenes isn't found, even if he survives this crisis, there may still be a next time. Rest assured, Haozi is my friend; I will do my utmost to help clear his name and find the real perpetrator. If there's still no turnaround before the trial, then we'll seek help from Mr. Han. All in all, I promise you that Haozi won't be in danger."

"Mm." Nanrong Wanqing nodded slightly, "I believe you."

"Wanqing!"

Just then, Su Lin's voice came from outside the door. Following that, the door was pushed open, and Su Lin stepped inside.

Ling Chen was taken aback by Su Lin's abrupt arrival; he had not anticipated Su Lin's entrance at that moment. Moreover, with the door already open, he faintly saw Su Lin's hand reaching for the light switch on the wall.

In the instant the lights turned on, Ling Chen couldn't find anyplace else to hide and simply lied down on the bed, reaching his hand out to pull over the covers, blanketing his entire body, including his head.

Nanrong Wanqing clearly hadn't expected Ling Chen to make such a move, and was involuntarily taken aback. Feeling his body pressed against hers, her pretty face blushed slightly as she looked at the approaching Su Lin, her beautiful eyes filled with nervousness.

"Wanqing, why is your face so red?" Su Lin asked with concern, "You're not sick, are you?" Saying that, she reached out to touch Nanrong Wanqing's forehead.

"I'm fine."

Nanrong Wanqing held the covers tightly, shielding everything below her neck, and attempted to maintain her composure as she spoke, "It's so late, why haven't you gone to rest?"

Su Lin glanced around the room, "I just happened to pass by your door and thought I heard voices in your room, so I came to check."

"That must have been your imagination."

Listening to the conversation between Nanrong Wanqing and Su Lin, Ling Chen hid under the covers, not daring to move rashly, afraid that Su Lin would discover him. However, being so close to Nanrong Wanqing's delicate body and smelling the faint scent of a maiden, he couldn't help feeling restless.

Moreover, Nanrong Wanqing was only wearing a thin, gauze-like nightgown, and through that layer of fabric, he could clearly feel Nanrong Wanqing's supple skin. Involuntarily, the memory of holding a bare Nanrong Wanqing in his arms surfaced in his mind, and he secretly swallowed his saliva.

"Wanqing, you must take care of your health, don't overwork yourself," Su Lin said as she sat beside the bed, her tone full of concern.

"Mhm, I know. It's getting late, you should go to rest."

"How about I sleep with you tonight?"

"No way!" Nanrong Wanqing blurted out, swiftly rejecting the offer. If Su Lin stayed, Ling Chen hiding under the covers would surely be discovered. Even though Su Lin was her cousin, such a humiliating incident was something she was too embarrassed to let anyone know about. Aside from her family, no other men had ever entered her room, not even Zhu Hong, who would only escort her to the door without daring to enter.

If Su Lin saw Ling Chen in bed with her, who knows what she would think.

"Why not?" Su Lin asked, puzzled, "Didn't we often sleep together in the past?"

"I... I'm feeling a bit under the weather today," Nanrong Wanqing prevaricated.

Su Lin immediately understood and nodded, "Alright then, you should rest early. I won't disturb you anymore." With those words, she stood up, left the room, and turned off the light.

Seeing Su Lin leave, Nanrong Wanqing secretly breathed a sigh of relief, holding back the embarrassment in her heart, and gently lifted the covers.

"Come out now; she's gone."

Ling Chen poked his head out and looked at the beauty so close at hand. His inner restlessness intensified, a flame ignited in his abdomen, burning, becoming more and more intense.

The bright moonlight shone through the window, casting a dim light inside. Feeling Ling Chen's fervent gaze, Nanrong Wanqing unconsciously lowered her head, her beautiful eyes bashful, her pretty face flushed with two blushes, stunning beyond measure.

Looking at her shy demeanor, Ling Chen swallowed his saliva, his body like a wildfire spreading uncontrollably, unable to suppress the flame that was spreading. As if beyond his control, his fingertips slowly leaned closer to Nanrong Wanqing, tentatively touching her tender body.

Chapter 224 A Romantic Late Night Snack

Nanrong Wanqing's body trembled slightly, her hands tightly clutching the sheets, involuntarily she lowered her head, biting the corner of her mouth lightly, a complex expression flickering in her beautiful eyes—uncertain if it was nervousness or anticipation.

Seeing she offered no resistance, Ling Chen's heart secretly leaped with joy. He shifted his body closer to her and wrapped his arms around her from above, gently holding her delicate body.

Feeling his increasingly bold movements, Nanrong Wanqing's breathing became rapid. Her eyes involuntarily closed; her body was tightly tensed, and her palms were sweaty. Meanwhile, she heard Ling Chen's breathing getting closer from the side, her face blushing even more, unbearably hot.

What... what does he want to do?

Caught up in her frantic thoughts, she suddenly felt Ling Chen's large hand on her stomach, gently stroking it. The gentle movements and the warmth from his palm felt comfortable, gradually relaxing her body.

However, before she could speak, she saw Ling Chen lower his head, and her lips were sealed. For a moment, her mind went blank, forgetting everything she wanted to say.

"Don't..."

Nanrong Wanqing braced against his chest, pushing him away.

"What's wrong?"

Nanrong Wanqing, with a flush on her face, whispered weakly, "I... I can't breathe."

"Now?"

"Much better... mm..."

Feeling Ling Chen's lips pressing against hers again, Nanrong Wanqing shyly extended her hands, wrapping them around his broad back, awkwardly responding to him.

At this moment, outside the room, in the corridor, Zhu Hong holding several takeout boxes, walking with a smile, approached Nanrong Wanqing's room and gently knocked on the door.

"Wanqing, are you asleep?"

Hearing Zhu Hong's voice, Ling Chen raised his head and looked towards the door, feeling slightly annoyed. Why did he have to show up at this exact moment? It was irksome.

"Is there something you need?" Nanrong Wanqing asked, still catching her breath, her blush not yet faded.

"I noticed you didn't have dinner. I was worried you might be hungry, so I brought you some late-night snacks. Would you like to eat something?"

"No need, thank you!"

As Zhu Hong's footsteps receded, Ling Chen turned to look at Nanrong Wanqing beneath him; her flushed cheeks and tempting lips nearly made him lose control.

Feeling his gaze and recalling their intimate actions, Nanrong Wanqing bashfully scolded, "You're still looking!"

With a slight smile on his lips, Ling Chen replied, "We've already kissed, am I not allowed to look?"

"You still say..." Nanrong Wanqing blushed as she pushed him away, wrapping herself tightly in the blanket, even covering her mouth, fearing he would take advantage of her again.

Seeing her vigilantly guarding against him, Ling Chen couldn't help but smile wryly. They had already gone that far, what was there to be shy about? He was just about to speak when suddenly a rumbling sound entered his ears.

"Are you hungry?" he asked with a laugh.

"Mhm," Nanrong Wanqing nodded bashfully, complaining, "It's all your fault!"

She had been fine before, but their recent activities had drained all her energy.

"Alright, alright, my fault," Ling Chen quickly replied, eyes twinkling, "How about we go out and grab something to eat?"

"Aren't you avoiding Zhu Hong? He lives downstairs, and his bodyguards are guarding the entrance."

"No worries, I have a way to leave without them noticing," he said, then got up, "You should get dressed first."

Nanrong Wanqing took her clothes, about to change. However, seeing Ling Chen staring intently at her, she blushed, "No peeking."

Ling Chen shrugged, grinned, and then turned around, his back facing her.

After Nanrong Wanqing had changed, Ling Chen sat on the bed and patted his shoulder, "Hop on!"

Understanding his intention, Nanrong Wanqing lay on his back, wrapping her arms around his neck, and inquired, "How will we get out?"

"The same way we came in."

With that, Ling Chen, carrying her, walked to the balcony and smoothly climbed down using the installed pipes.

Seeing him head straight for the boundary wall, Nanrong Wanqing quickly reminded, "What about the wheelchair?"

"With me carrying you, what need do we have for a wheelchair?"

Nanrong Wanqing nodded, a warm feeling spreading through her heart.

Having scaled the wall out of the Nanrong Family estate, Ling Chen hailed a taxi and headed straight for the snack street.

It was already 10:30 p.m., but the snack street was still bustling with activity. Ling had brought Nanrong Wanqing here once before, knowing she was interested in the local delicacies, so he chose this familiar place again tonight.

Carrying Nanrong Wanqing, Ling maneuvered through the crowd, immediately attracting many curious gazes.

Passing couples, seeing their intimate demeanor, the girls envied them immensely, pulling their boyfriends along, saying, "Look at how good that boyfriend is, aware of how to care for his girlfriend."

Listening to the couple's conversation, Nanrong Wanqing's lips curled up into a sweet smile, leaning her face against Ling Chen's shoulder.

"What would you like to eat?"

"Anything."

Right now, she truly didn't mind anything, as long as the person beside her was there, she was content no matter what they ate.

"Then let's have rice noodle rolls, you said you loved their taste last time."

Reaching the rice noodle roll stall, Ling Chen found a seat, ordered two bowls of rice noodle rolls from the owner, and then dashed to the side of the street to buy two bottles of mineral water.

Shortly after, the two bowls of rice noodle rolls were served. Ling handed over a pair of chopsticks, saying, "Eat them while they're hot."

In the midst of speaking, he suddenly noticed someone sitting down beside him. Turning his head, he broke into a grin, "Oh, it's you."

The young man beside him was none other than Jiang Yunkai, whom they had encountered before on the snack street.

The latter nodded, "I was just thinking a few days ago about when I might see you again, and here you are today." Addressing Nanrong Wanqing, he greeted her as well.

"Last time you left in a hurry, I didn't even get your name."

"My name is Ling Chen."

"Ling Chen?" Jiang Yunkai's eyes hardened, a glint flashing through them, "So, you are Ling Chen."

Ling Chen inquired in surprise, "You know me?"

"Ranked tenth on the Tiger List, of course, I know of you."

Hearing this, Ling Chen suddenly realized. Jiang Yunkai was also a martial artist, and with considerable skill, he naturally knew of the Heaven and Earth Dragon and Tiger Four Rankings.

Chapter 225 Challenge

"Tiger List's Tenth?" Nanrong Wanqing, who was beside them, couldn't help but express her interest upon hearing the conversation of the two, curiously asking, "What is Tiger List's Tenth?"

Jiang Yunkai gave a slight smile, "You haven't told your girlfriend? I can't tell, but you're quite good at hiding." He paused for a moment, then explained, "Beauty, there are four rankings of top masters in the world, known as the Heavenly List, Earthly List, Dragon List, and Tiger List, each list containing ten people. The Heavenly List is the highest, while the Tiger List is at the bottom, and your boyfriend is the master ranked tenth on the Tiger List."

Nanrong Wanqing looked at Ling Chen, "The Tenth on the Tiger List, isn't that the weakest?"

Er...

Ling Chen and Jiang Yunkai looked at each other, lost for words.

"What's wrong, did I say something incorrect?" Wanqing, seeing their expressions, asked in confusion.

"No, you didn't say anything wrong, the Tenth on the Tiger List is indeed the weakest," Ling Chen said with a smile, burying his head in eating the rice noodle roll in his bowl.

Jiang Yunkai patiently explained, "Beauty, you can't say it like that. There are millions practicing martial arts, and only forty people can be on the lists, each one being a top master among millions. Do you

know how many people devote their whole lives just aiming to be on the list? Your boyfriend is only in his twenties and already ranked Tenth on the Tiger List, which is a very impressive accomplishment."

Hearing this, Wanqing's gaze towards Ling Chen was filled with admiration. She knew Ling Chen was formidable, but she hadn't realized his prowess was to this extent. With over a billion people in Huaxia, only forty had the qualifications to be on the list, and she obviously knew what that meant.

At that thought, she suddenly realized that she actually didn't know much about Ling Chen's past. She was also unaware of what he had been through over the years to earn such achievements.

Faced with Jiang Yunkai's praises, Ling Chen modestly said, "Don't say that, in Huaxia, there are hidden dragons and crouching tigers, unknown masters concealing their names. Compared to them, I'm not that outstanding, being on the list is just due to good luck."

"Luck is also part of one's strength," Jiang Yunkai said as he stood up, gave a respectful fist salute towards Ling Chen, and said earnestly, "I've wanted to challenge the masters of the Tiger List for a long time. Last month I even sent a challenge card to Mr. Ye, planning to go to the capital to have a friendly sparring with him. Now that you've taken the Tenth rank on the Tiger List, I hope you can give me a chance."

"Now?"

"Yes, right now!"

"Sorry." Ling Chen shook his head, refusing, "I'm not in the mood for a sparring contest right now, but how about this? Leave your phone number with me, and I'll call you when I'm free."

Jiang Yunkai glanced at Nanrong Wanqing, mistaking the refusal as Ling Chen not wanting to fight in front of his girlfriend, and said, "Alright then."

Having left his phone number, Jiang Yunkai got up and said, "I won't disturb you two any longer. Ling Chen, remember to call me."

"Definitely."

After Jiang Yunkai left, Nanrong Wanqing asked, "Are you really going to accept his challenge?"

"No choice, I can't refuse, it's the rule," Ling Chen shrugged helplessly. Ye Liangyong had once told him that any challenge must be accepted. Although it was somewhat troublesome, it was a rule set by the Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion. Moreover, sparring with someone of similar skill level is also a kind of improvement for martial practitioners.

After finishing the rice noodle roll, Ling Chen took Nanrong Wanqing for a stroll around, buying some snacks, and it wasn't until eleven-thirty that he took Wanqing back home.

Climbing back into the room, he held Nanrong Wanqing's delicate body, gently placing her on the bed, then thoughtfully covered her with the blanket.

"Rest well, I'm heading back now."

Seeing him turn to leave, Nanrong Wanqing quickly stretched out her hand and grabbed his wrist.

"What's wrong?"

Nanrong Wanqing's face blushed as she asked, "Are you... coming over tomorrow?"

Ling Chen smiled, "Whenever you want, I'll be there." As he was speaking, he reminded her, "By the way, don't mention me in front of Zhu Hong."

"Why?"

"Don't ask so many questions for now; I'll explain the reasons to you later. Also, don't worry about Haozi's affair. Just go to work with peace of mind and take good care of the old master. I'll take care of the rest."

"Okay."

Watching Ling Chen leave the balcony, Nanrong Wanqing turned over, resting her head on her hand, her eyes lightly closed, and it wasn't long before she drifted into dreamland.

In her sleep, she seemed to dream about something joyful; her lips unconsciously lifted into a sweet smile.

...

The next day.

Nanrong Wanqing came down from upstairs to the dining room, just in time to see Zhu Hong coming out of his room.

"Wanqing, did you sleep well last night?"

"Pretty well." Recalling last night's experience, her pretty face blushed, feeling blissful inside. At this moment, she just wished for night to come quickly so she could see Ling Chen again.

"Wanqing, I've contacted a friend who has some connections in East Sea City. I've mentioned Nanrong Hao's situation to him, and he says he can help. I've made an appointment for you to meet him after breakfast."

Nanrong Wanqing's lips parted, ready to say 'okay', but remembering Ling Chen's instructions from last night, she hesitated briefly and then gently shook her head: "I won't go."

"Not go?" Zhu Hong was taken aback by her refusal, puzzled: "Why?"

As they spoke, Zhong Wei and Liang Zhao Hui walked in from outside.

"Chairman, the car is arranged."

"It's getting late; we should go."

Zhu Hong hurriedly asked, "Where are you going?"

"To the company." Nanrong Wanqing replied indifferently, "Thank you for your help these past few days, but I've figured things out. Nanrong Hao's situation is set in stone and cannot be changed. Given that, I might as well focus on Hongyu Group. I can't allow the Nanrong Family to collapse entirely because of Nanrong Hao."

Hearing this, Zhu Hong's expression changed.

"Wanqing..."

"There's no need to say more. You should move back today; I'm not quite comfortable having a man living in the house."

Watching Nanrong Wanqing leave, Zhu Hong furrowed his brows, his complexion slightly ashen. He didn't understand why her attitude had taken such a sudden turn since yesterday—could she have noticed something?

Impossible! He had been flawlessly discreet; she couldn't possibly know.

But what infuriated him the most was Nanrong Wanqing's last remark.

Not quite comfortable having a man living in the house?

Was Ling Chen not a man before? She could let Ling Chen live in her house, so why couldn't he? Was there such a big difference between himself and Ling Chen in her eyes?

As he thought about it, a fierce rage began to burn within him, his eyes filled with a murderous intent.

Taking a deep breath, he forced himself to calm down. Ling Chen was already dead; why bother with a dead man? There would be opportunities in the future, he thought. Sooner or later, he would make Nanrong Wanqing wholeheartedly follow him.

At that moment, a ringtone from a phone call suddenly sounded. He answered it and gave a simple "Hello". Whatever was said on the other side made his face change dramatically.

Chapter 226 Zhu Hong Gets Tricked

Leaving the Nanrong Family, Zhu Hong, surrounded by several suited bodyguards, quickly got into a Mercedes and urged, "Hurry, let's head back to the company immediately."

Originally a half-hour journey, it took less than twenty minutes before the group arrived in front of the office building where Boyang Company was located.

Ding!

The elevator doors opened, and Zhu Hong charged ahead, swiftly entering the company's main door and heading straight for his office. Upon entering, he was met with a scene of utter disarray; all the office items were scattered about, including the leather sofa which was slashed open with a dagger, exposing the fluffy cotton inside, and even the paintings on the walls were not spared.

Zhu Hong clenched his fists tightly, his face looking dreadful, his eagle-like sharp eyes emitting a cold and harsh light. Several suited bodyguards stood by his side, not daring to breathe heavily for fear of angering their boss.

Having followed their boss for so long, they were all too aware of the consequences of enraging him.

"Mr. Zhu!"

A staff member, who was cleaning up the clutter, quickly approached.

"When did this happen?" Zhu Hong gritted his teeth, his words coldly squeezing through them.

"I arrived at the office this morning as usual to clean, and as soon as I entered, I found the office in chaos. Mr. Zhu, should we call the police?"

"Call the police? I think you're out of your mind," Zhu Hong waved his hand impatiently, "Just get out, you don't need to worry about this." After speaking, he walked to his desk, turned on the computer, and then entered a line of startup password. After typing a few keys, several images immediately popped up on the computer screen.

The images fully displayed every corner of the office. These were the secret surveillance cameras he had installed in his office to prevent anyone from sneaking in. However, he quickly discovered that from two in the morning until six in the morning today, the surveillance records had been deleted.

The intruder not only cracked his computer password but also deleted the surveillance records. A person able to do this must be a professional. Such individuals are very cautious and wouldn't leave any clues behind.

Fortunately, the computer did not store any confidential information, and there was no fear of it being stolen.

Looking at the mess throughout the room, he slightly furrowed his brow, a sense of unease lingered in his mind. The intruder had turned the office upside down, obviously searching for something. With that in mind, he gestured to the suited bodyguards. They immediately understood, leaving the office and gently closing the door behind them.

When only he was left in the room, Zhu Hong walked to the small bar in his office, took hold of a bottle of '84 Lafite, and gently turned it.

Click!

A crisp sound followed as a wooden cabinet below the bar sprung open, revealing a black safe. He crouched down, input a series of numeric passwords, and after a retinal and fingerprint bi-scan, the safe finally opened.

Looking at the materials stored inside, Zhu Hong breathed a sigh of relief. Regardless of who had entered his office last night, they had at least not discovered the safe.

After closing the safe again, he stepped out of the office, called a suited bodyguard, and ordered, "From today on, the company must have someone on watch 24 hours a day. If anything similar happens again, I trust you all know what the consequences will be without me saying."

"Yes, boss."

At this moment, from a building across the street, Ling Chen put down the binoculars, removed the listening earpiece, and looking at Hu Fei who was operating the equipment beside him, he smugly said, "Fatty, how about that, my idea isn't bad, right?"

"You're just a blind cat running into a dead rat, Zhu Hong is a fool for falling for it so easily."

Ling Chen grinned, feeling self-satisfied. He had been monitoring Zhu Hong for days with no real gains. Now that the Nanrong Family was in trouble, he didn't have much time to waste on Zhu Hong, and hence he came up with this plan.

Anyone with a guilty conscience, upon seeing their office vandalized, would first check if their most important possessions were missing—a psychological reaction common to everyone. He was exploiting this to make Zhu Hong involuntarily reveal his secret.

"Now that we know the location of the safe, are you planning to sneak in again? Zhu Hong is already on guard; it won't be so easy for you to succeed next time."

"I know," Ling Chen nodded, "which is why I plan to act now."

"Now? Are you out of your mind? Sneaking into Boyang Company in broad daylight, do you think those people are blind?"

"You see, even you didn't expect that, Zhu Hong certainly won't anticipate that I would break into their company at the least likely time. This is called 'catching them unprepared', a strategy passed down from Sun Tzu. Look at you, all brawn and no brains, you wouldn't understand even if explained."

"Ptui!" Hu Fei frowned displeasedly: "I graduated from a prestigious university, unlike you, who doesn't even have a primary school diploma, and yet you dare compare yourself to me."

"For smart people, diplomas are neither here nor there," Ling Chen waved dismissively, "Enough of this nonsense, let's get moving. I have other things to attend to tonight."

"What could you possibly have?"

Ling Chen revealed a meaningful smile, his lips curling up: "Of course, it's something good."

Having made significant progress in his relationship with Nanrong Wanqing last night, if it weren't for more important tasks awaiting him, he would be eager to see her now.

After packing up the equipment, Ling Chen and Hu Fei each carried a backpack and took the elevator down.

They got into Hu Fei's Santana, and as Hu Fei started the car, he asked, "Hey, how are you planning to get in?"

Ling Chen's mouth curved slightly, he chuckled: "That's easy, of course, I'll just walk right in. Fatty, there's something else I need your help with later."

"Alright, just tell me. As long as it's not arson or murder, I'm in."

"If you say that, how could I bring myself to ask."

Hearing this, Hu Fei glared, "You're not planning to make me commit arson or murder, are you?" He shook his head repeatedly, "I'm telling you, I have my limits, I won't get involved in anything violent, don't drag me down with you."

Ling Chen shrugged nonchalantly, sticking out a finger.

"One million, will you do it?"

Hu Fei's eyes lit up, his attitude clearly doing a 180, squinting he smiled and said: "You should have started with that. Forget arson or murder, climbing a mountain of swords or descending into a sea of flames wouldn't be a problem."

Ling Chen sneered, this guy was nothing but greedy.

"Enough, stop wasting time, let's head back. We still have some preparations to make to wrap things up today."

"Alright!"

Hu Fei pressed the accelerator, and the Santana immediately merged into the traffic.

One hour later.

A Mercedes left the underground parking lot, followed closely by an Audi A5 that pulled up a

Chapter 227 The Safe (Part 1)

The man nudged his sunglasses and hoisted his sagging belt, carrying an air of nouveau riche, he strode into the office building.

Riding the elevator to the tenth floor, the man looked around and, touching his ear, whispered, "Ling Chen, I've arrived."

"Stick to the plan. Remember, don't get busted."

"Don't worry, with my acting skills, I could nab an Oscar if I went into showbiz."

"Yeah, keep dreaming."

After putting his hand down, Hu Fei coughed and cleared his throat. He approached the reception desk, plonked his briefcase onto it with a haughty air, and said confidently, "Is this the Huayu Financial Investment Company?"

The receptionist maintained a charming smile and nodded, "Sir, how may I help you?"

Hu Fei glanced at the receptionist, "Well, aren't you a pure beauty." He chuckled slyly, his face oozing sleaze, "Sweetheart, does your service include everything?"

The receptionist's face stiffened, irritation flickering in her eyes, but she still forced a smile, "Sir, if you have any specific requests, please say so."

"I'm here to see if your company has any worthy investment projects." Hu Fei patted his briefcase, "Call your manager for me."

"Sir, I'm sorry, but our manager is in a meeting. If you're interested in investing, I can give you an introduction to our company's businesses."

"That would be great." Hu Fei grinned, "But don't bother with anything under thirty million. I'm not interested in small investments; only the big deals. Hey, pretty girl, you're so beautiful, do you have a boyfriend? How about we go for a meal sometime?"

"Hey, fatty, can you get down to business?" Ling Chen's voice came through the earpiece impatiently, "If you waste any more time, forget about that one million."

The mention of money immediately straightened Hu Fei's attitude. Pretending to check his watch, he picked up his briefcase and said, "If your manager doesn't have time, I'll just go downstairs to Huahai Investment Company."

"Sir, please wait." The receptionist hurried after him, worried about losing a big deal, "Take a seat first, I'll contact our manager for you."

"Make it quick, I have more business to discuss soon."

In a matter of moments, a middle-aged man came out quickly, all smiles, "Sir, I'm terribly sorry for the wait. I'm the manager of this company. I've heard you're interested in large projects, and we can certainly meet your needs."

"Can't we go somewhere to sit down and talk? Are you letting all your guests stand outside?"

The manager quickly apologized, "My fault, please come in!"

Inside the company, Hu Fei looked around and, as he walked, said, "Manager, before we talk business, could you give me a tour of your company?"

"Of course, right this way."

Led by the manager, Hu Fei wandered around. At each location, when no one was paying attention, he discreetly tossed a disk-shaped metal object overhead. Once the metal touched the ceiling, it immediately adhered.

After the tour, Hu Fei suddenly clutched his stomach, sheepishly saying, "Manager, where's the restroom?"

"Over there."

"Right, I've got it. You wait here." He quickly went into the restroom and closed the door behind him.

"Fatty, is it done?" Ling Chen's voice rang out in the earpiece, and Hu Fei replied smugly, "With me on the case, what can't be done. How's it going on your end?"

"OK! All set."

"Good, then I'll get started." With that, Hu Fei took out a remote control from his pocket and lightly pressed the red button.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Instantly, several explosions sounded from outside the restroom. Immediately after, flames spread quickly along the ceiling and soon gushed into the restroom through the door gap.

"I'm heading out first, the rest is up to you."

Exiting the restroom, he saw the employees screaming frantically, their faces filled with terror, as they stumbled towards the company's exit. Hu Fei was in no rush and strolled out of the company, leisurely.

The bombs he had installed had little lethality, somewhat like incendiaries. However, after some modifications, they were more advanced than regular incendiary devices. The flames would only spread along the ceiling, and as long as evacuation was prompt, there would be no danger.

On the eleventh floor.

A suit-clad bodyguard picked up the phone and dialed a number.

"Boss."

"What's up?"

"There's been a fire on the tenth floor, should we evacuate?"

"Is it serious?"

"We're not sure yet."

"Have the other staff evacuate first, the rest of you stay put, I'm on my way."

Over ten minutes passed.

Two fire trucks swiftly arrived, and more than twenty firefighters with heavy gear hastily headed to the scene, evacuating people and getting ready to fight the fire.

By then, the raging flames had spread, engulfing the entire floor.

In the stairwell of the eleventh floor, a firefighter rushed out and shouted, "Everyone head downstairs via the emergency exit. What are you guys spacing out for? Hurry up and leave." He pointed at several suited men.

"We'll leave later; go help the others first," one of the suited men said.

"Leave later?" The firefighter shrugged, "If that's the case, then all of you might as well stay, don't leave."

"Huh?"

As soon as he spoke, the suited men realized something was wrong. However, before they could react, the firefighter charged them, knocking one to the ground with a punch. In less than ten seconds, all the bodyguards left outside the company were taken down.

After dealing with these guys, the firefighter took off his mask, revealing the handsome, chiseled face of none other than Ling Chen.

Looking at the knocked-out bodyguards, Ling Chen said resignedly, "I told you to leave, and you wouldn't – don't blame me." Then, he quickly entered the company and made his way to Zhu Hong's office with familiarity.

Reaching the bar, he picked out an '84 Lafite and gently twisted the bottle.

Click!

With a crisp sound, a hidden compartment below the bar popped open, revealing a black safe.

"Fatty, I've found the stuff."

Outside the office building, Hu Fei sat in the Santana, communicating with Ling Chen via walkie-talkie while keeping an eye on the situation outside.

"Can you open it?"

"I'll try."

Looking at the safes digital keypad, retinal and fingerprint scanners, Ling Chen shook his head helplessly, knowing it was impossible to crack three codes in a short time.

Just then, a Mercedes sedan slowly drove up to the building and stopped at the curb.

"Ling Chen, you'd better hurry up. Zhu Hong has arrived downstairs."

Chapter 228 The Safe (Part 2)

"So soon?"

Ling Chen was taken aback. Without much time to think, he simply moved the entire safe out from the inside.

Damn, the safe was almost a few hundred pounds heavy, nearly as much as a bull.

He took a deep breath, hugged the safe tightly with both hands, almost exerting all his strength, and step by step, he moved out of the office. After walking over ten meters, he could no longer persist and dropped the safe on the ground, then leaned against the wall and gasped for air.

"Zhu Hong has entered the building. He will arrive at your location in no more than three minutes."

Hearing Hu Fei's voice coming from the earpiece, Ling Chen didn't have time to rest. He continued to lift the safe, struggling towards the emergency exit. Upon reaching the staircase, a series of rapid footsteps suddenly echoed from downstairs. Looking down through the railing, he saw Zhu Hong and a few suit-clad bodyguards hurrying over.

They sure picked the right time!

It seemed he couldn't go down anymore. Immediately, he lifted the safe and headed upstairs.

He had just reached the twelfth floor; Zhu Hong and his men had just arrived at the eleventh. Pushing open the door to the emergency exit, Zhu Hong immediately observed several of his men lying unconscious on the floor.

From just this scene, his eyes turned cold, and he said with a somber expression: "Wake them up." With that, he rushed straight into the office. Seeing the empty secret compartment, he bulged his eyes, clenched his fists tightly, and veins throbbed on his forehead. He took a deep breath, forcefully suppressing his rage, and turned to leave.

At this moment, the bodyguards who had been down on the ground had already regained consciousness. Zhu Hong strode forward, grabbed the collar of one bodyguard, and said with an icy tone: "Speak, what happened."

Feeling the chilling look in his eyes, the man shivered and hastily replied: "Boss, a firefighter suddenly came and told us we needed to evacuate immediately. We refused, and then he attacked and knocked us all out."

"When did this happen?"

"This... I don't know, I didn't check the time."

"Useless!" Zhu Hong spat out through gritted teeth, and shoved him to the ground. After pondering for a moment, he seemed to have thought of something, hurried back to the office, and turned on the computer.

Sure enough, as expected, the office surveillance video showed a firefighter entering his office and then carrying away the entire safe.

The other party was in a hurry, without time to delete the surveillance footage. According to the time displayed on the monitor, the person had left no more than three minutes ago.

Three minutes... A thought crossed his mind, and he immediately rushed outside the company, speaking as he went: "The building's elevators have been disabled, there's only one emergency exit accessible. We did not see anyone when we came up, so that person should still be inside the building. Everyone, split up and search upward; that person is carrying a safe and can't have gotten far."

"Yes, boss."

Time ticked by, second by second.

Ling Chen, carrying the safe, arrived at the fifteenth floor and then entered the floor from the emergency exit. Due to the fire, the entire building's occupants had been evacuated, and there was not a single person upstairs.

"Ling Chen, where are you, how come you haven't come out yet?"

"Don't ask, I can't come out for now. I ran into Zhu Hong's men in the stairwell, had no chance to go down, so I had to head up."

"Do you want me to come and help you?"

"Forget it, don't come up. I'll hide the safe first and come back for it tonight."

Just as he finished speaking, he suddenly heard the sound of footsteps coming from the emergency exit. Turning his head, he saw the door to the emergency exit being pushed open, and two men in suits quickly entered.

Is it them?

Ling Chen was startled and quickly took cover in a corner by the wall.

How did they get upstairs? Could it be that Zhu Hong guessed he was still in the building?

As the footsteps of the other party grew closer, Ling Chen put down the safe and pressed himself against the wall. When the footsteps were less than a meter away, he suddenly turned around, leaped out, and took down two suit-clad bodyguards to the ground. Before they could get up, he swiftly threw two punches, knocking them out cold.

"Hey, Jiang Chao, respond if you hear me."

At that moment, a walkie-talkie on one of the bodyguards started ringing.

Ling Chen frowned slightly, quickly got up, and carried the safe as he made a swift exit. However, not far out, he entered a company's reception room, and an idea struck him upon seeing a coffee table by the window ledge. He moved the coffee table aside, placed the safe on the floor, and then pulled off the tablecloth from the coffee table to cover the safe. From the outside, it looked just like a small table; no one would suspect a safe was hidden under the tablecloth.

With the goods well-hidden, Ling Chen did not linger any longer; he left immediately before Zhu Hong's people could arrive.

More than ten minutes later, he walked out of the building, removed the firefighting suit, and slipped into the Santana.

"Where's the safe?" Hu Fei turned to ask.

"It's still in the building. We'll come back for it tonight."

Through the car window, watching smoke billow out from the tenth floor, Hu Fei said helplessly, "You really did it big for just a safe."

"It's alright, after all, the company's insured. There won't be any significant loss. Let's go, head back first."

Inside the building.

Zhu Hong stood at the entrance of the office building, his face an iron hue, silent. After a while, several suit-clad men hurried over and reported in a low voice, "Boss, we've searched the entire upstairs area and found no trace of him, nor the safe."

"What about the underground parking lot?"

"People were guarding the stairways to the parking lot, and no one has been seen passing through."

Zhu Hong nodded, "I've been monitoring the entrance, and no one left with the safe. If I'm not mistaken, that person must have left the safe inside the building. Hmph! Daring to steal my stuff, I want to see just how many lives you have. Notify the others, immediately gather a team, and surround the whole building. I want to see how capable that person really is."

"Yes."

Night fell.

Ling Chen and Hu Fei drove the Santana and came once again outside the office building.

After parking the car, Ling Chen observed the building from the window and saw four suit-clad men pacing back and forth at the entrance.

"Fatty, go check the parking lot."

Driving to the parking lot entrance, Ling Chen looked around and, unsurprisingly, noticed several bodyguards on patrol.

"It seems Zhu Hong has already guessed," he said, the corners of his mouth lifting into a faint smile.

"All the entrances are guarded, even if you manage to get in, you won't be able to take the safe out. The target is too big and too heavy; they'll definitely notice. In my opinion, you shouldn't rush this; we need a more thought-out plan."

Ling Chen shook his head: "We don't have that much time to waste. Since Zhu Hong has guessed that the safe is still in the building, he will surely send more people to search."

"What do we do then? Just barge in?"

Hearing Hu Fei's question, Ling Chen grinned: "Zhu Hong is smart, but compared to a clever person like me, he falls short. Just wait and see how I play him to death."

Chapter 229 The Frustrated Zhu Hong

"Fatty, do you have a disposable phone?"

"What for, don't you have your own phone?" Although he asked, Hu Fei fished out a compact mobile phone from Santana's storage box and tossed it to him.

Watching the suit-clad bodyguards patrolling outside the underground parking lot, Ling Chen's lips quirked up as he dialed a number. After a short while, he ended the call, rolled down the window, and threw the disposable phone out.

"Alright, let's find a spot to enjoy the show."

"You really are cunning, kid."

Ling Chen grinned: "Thanks for the compliment."

About twenty minutes later, four police cars, with sirens flashing, sped down the road and stopped next to the office building. Right after that, the car doors opened and a spirited female police officer dashed out first, holding a handgun with both hands and raising it to her chest, and she sternly shouted at the suit-clad bodyguards outside the building, "Don't move! Raise your hands."

The bodyguards looked at each other, clueless as to why a bunch of cops had suddenly appeared.

"Officer, we haven't broken any laws. What right do you have to arrest us?" one of the bodyguards said in a deep voice.

"We received a tip-off that someone here is carrying guns without authorization."

Hearing this, the faces of the bodyguards changed instantly, and they began to back away. Seeing their reaction, Xia Mutong sneered: "Seems we got the right people. Handcuff them all."

Faced with the barrels of guns, the bodyguards dared not make any rash moves, obediently raising their hands above their heads. At Xia Mutong's signal, several police officers immediately rushed up, handcuffed their hands, and then went for their waists.

"Captain Xia, jackpot."

Xia Mutong nodded, it seemed the tip-off was correct – these people were indeed carrying guns.

"You guys guard the exits, Zhao Gang, you take a team to the underground parking lot, no vehicles are to leave, the rest follow me into the building. According to the tip-off, there should be more than just these men."

"Yes!"

Across the road from the office building, Ling Chen and Hu Fei sat inside the Santana, watching the bodyguards being taken away through the car window, grinning broadly.

"Zhu Hong would be pissed if he knew you dealt with him this way."

Ling Chen smiled: "Whose fault is that? I've said it before, Zhu Hong is a smart guy, but he doesn't like to use his brain much. Others learn from their mistakes; he knowingly repeats them. Knowing that this is Huaxia, he still dares to carry guns in public. Isn't that just asking for trouble?"

Xia Mutong's team worked efficiently; in less than half an hour, the bodyguards in the building had all been apprehended. They needed two vehicles to take all of them back.

...

In a luxurious villa in East Sea City.

"What did you say?"

Zhu Hong stood up abruptly from the sofa, his arm holding the phone trembling slightly with extreme anger.

"Useless, all of you are useless!"

He yelled angrily, lifting his arm and smashing the phone to the ground, venting his fury. After a while, he took a deep breath, his rage gradually subsiding, then turned and walked into his study, pulled out a satellite phone from a drawer, and dialed a number.

At this moment, in a temporary room arranged by Hu Fei for Ling Chen, they were gathered in front of a safe, carefully studying it.

"Fatty, do you have any experience with this?"

"I deal with intelligence, not a secret agent, you should be the one good at this."

Ling Chen scratched his head. He knew how to crack safes, but this one had triple locks. The digital lock was easy to handle, but the retinal and fingerprint scans were tricky.

"Fatty, go and prepare the tools, let's just pry it open."

"Okay, wait for me."

Not long after, Hu Fei walked in with a big bag from outside. Welding machine, cutter, all the tools were well-equipped. Ling Chen rubbed his hands together, took up the drill, and got busy.

Since it was unknown what was inside the safe, Ling Chen didn't dare use too aggressive a method, for fear of damaging the contents.

After drilling for about half an hour and changing several drill bits, they finally made a thumb-sized hole in the top of the safe. Ignoring the sweat on his body, Ling Chen took the pinhole camera handed over by Hu Fei and stuck it into the hole.

The camera had night vision capabilities; although it was pitch black inside the safe, everything could still be seen clearly. Through the image displayed on the screen, Ling Chen carefully controlled the camera, moving it deeper inside bit by bit.

After a while, he spotted several documents enclosed in folders inside the safe. Unfortunately, they were covered with folders, and the contents inside were not visible unless taken out.

Just as he was about to continue drilling, the pinhole camera suddenly captured something. More precisely, it was an electronic control device installed inside the safe.

Seeing that electronic control device, Ling Chen immediately broke out in cold sweat on his forehead.

Damn, lucky for me, or it would have been all for naught.

He pulled out the pinhole camera and tossed the equipment aside, then sat down on the ground, shaking his head in resignation. Seeing his chagrined expression, Hu Fei asked, "What's wrong?"

"We can't touch this safe anymore."

"Why not?"

"It has a monitoring device installed inside, and the compartment has sensors. Once the sensors are triggered, the self-destruct mechanism will activate, and all the documents will be destroyed. We were lucky just now; the drill didn't touch the sensors inside the compartment, otherwise, our efforts would have been wasted."

Hu Fei was stunned, "So what do we do? After all the trouble to get it here, are we just supposed to give up?"

"Don't rush, there's not completely no solution, as long as we get through the fingerprint and retinal scans, we can open it."

"Fingerprints are easy to deal with, but retinas... unless you bring him here."

Ling Chen touched his chin, his mind whirring, thinking of a viable plan. Suddenly, an idea struck him, and he asked, "Fatty, what time is it?"

"It's almost ten."

Ling Chen got up hurriedly and picked up a jacket, saying as he walked, "Let's talk about the safe tomorrow, I've got something else to do, you can head back by yourself later."

He had promised Nanrong Wanqing last night that he would meet her tonight; he couldn't break his promise.

He took a ride to Wealthy Manor and, just like last night, he sneaked over the wall into the backyard and then climbed onto the second-floor balcony. Looking at the pitch-black room, he muttered to himself, could she be asleep? After thinking for a moment, he gently pushed open the glass door and slipped inside.

Approaching the bed, he saw the bedding slightly bulging; Nanrong Wanqing was lying on her side, her breathing even, clearly fast asleep.

Thereupon, he tiptoed to the bed, leaned over to Nanrong Wanqing's ear, and softly called out, "Wanqing."

Chapter 230 It Really Is a Misunderstanding

However, Nanrong Wanqing showed no reaction, as if she had not heard his calling.

Seeing that she did not wake up, Ling Chen gave a sly smile and quietly slipped his hand under the quilt, wrapping it around her delicate body. His large hand slowly slid up from her lower abdomen, teasing her skin. Not sure whether it was the unusual sensation from her body that she felt, but Nanrong Wanqing's body trembled slightly.

Feeling her stir, Ling Chen's instinctual masculine side grew more rampant, almost overcome with the impulse to take things further right there and then.

Under his gentle movements, Nanrong Wanqing finally reacted, twisting softly and her breathing became increasingly rapid.

"Wanqing, stop sleeping, I..."

Ling Chen leaned towards her ear, whispering softly. Before he could finish, Nanrong Wanqing had already turned her head, her sleepy eyes focusing on him.

Their eyes met, and Ling Chen was momentarily taken aback, his mind seemingly going blank.

"Ah!"

Suddenly, a shrill scream pierced the air, and Nanrong Wanqing in the quilt delivered a kick at Ling Chen, trying to kick him off the bed.

"Hooligan!"

"I... I'm not... Ouch!"

Ling Chen clutched at the hit area, a pained expression on his face. It wasn't Nanrong Wanqing... no, it should be Su Lin, this girl, who had kicked him in a particularly sensitive spot. And she hadn't held back at all.

Snap!

The lights turned on, and the bedroom lit up immediately. Su Lin sat up clutching the quilt, her face a mix of shame and anger, her eyes nearly spitting fire. However, when she realized it was Ling Chen, her expression suddenly froze, and she stuttered, "Why... why is it... you? Didn't you leave?"

"I have my difficulties, I can't talk about it yet." Ling Chen said with a pained look, changing the subject, "Lady Su, there was no need for such a heavy hand; you nearly ended the lineage of the Ling Family."

"I... I..." Su Lin, looking at where his hand was, her face flushed, unsure of what to say.

No, that's not right! She suddenly came to a realization, it seemed she was the one being taken advantage of. While she was asleep, she felt a tingling sensation like someone caressing her. She thought it was a dream, but upon waking, realized it was no dream but this man before her causing the mischief. Thinking that her private parts had been wantonly played with by this man, her face once again flushed with shame and anger.

"Tell me, why are you in Wanqing's room?" She wondered inwardly; wasn't this guy supposed to have quit his job? What was he doing in the Nanrong Family's home, let alone in Nanrong Wanqing's boudoir?

"Lady Su, that's a question I should be asking you. This is Wanqing's room. What are you doing here instead of sleeping in your own room?" Ling Chen was full of grievances. He had come to meet Nanrong Wanqing, but who would have expected such an incident to happen.

"Is there anything wrong with sleeping together with Wanqing tonight?" Su Lin snorted lightly, "You haven't answered my question yet."

"I..."

Just as Ling Chen was about to speak, the bedroom door was pushed open from outside. Soon after, Nanrong Wanqing entered, pushing a wheelchair.

"Wanqing!"

Su Lin exclaimed, hurriedly hopping off the bed barefoot and pointing at Ling Chen, pouting as she complained, "Wanqing, you must stand up for me, this jerk... he... he took advantage of me."

"I... didn't..." Ling Chen quickly waved his hands in defense, internally lamenting. If he had known it was her, he would never have taken such advantage. However, he had to admit, the girl had quite a nice feel.

Nanrong Wanqing looked at Su Lin, then at Ling Chen, a hint of helplessness flashing across her beautiful eyes. She had been working overtime in the study, dealing with company matters, and had forgotten to contact Ling Chen. Had she informed him earlier, this incident might not have happened.

"Wanqing."

Hearing Su Lin's voice ringing in her ears, Nanrong Wanqing came back to her senses and shot Ling Chen an annoyed glance, her pretty face flushed with color. This man was too impatient; he didn't even bother to check who it was before making his move.

Feeling her reproachful gaze, Ling Chen shrugged his shoulders. The room had been pitch dark at the time; how could he have known that the person in bed was Su Lin?

"Alright, don't be angry," Nanrong Wanqing soothed. "You go back to your room first, I'll come to find you in a bit."

"But..."

"I know, you won't suffer any loss for this. Go on!"

Su Lin reluctantly nodded, giving Ling Chen a fierce glare before turning and walking out of the room.

Seeing her leave, Ling Chen let out a sigh of relief and flopped down onto the bed, giving Nanrong Wanqing a wry smile and spread his hands, "You can't really blame me for this, I thought it was you, and so..."

Before he could finish his explanation, Nanrong Wanqing's pretty face had already turned red with anger, as delicate as a blooming flower, she reprimanded him, "You still have the nerve to say it."

This annoying guy, it sounded like if it had been her in bed, he felt he had the right to take liberties with her.

Ling Chen chuckled awkwardly, "Okay, okay, I won't talk about it. So... how are you planning to explain things to her?"

Nanrong Wanqing rubbed her temple with some headache, this matter was indeed a bit difficult to explain.

"It's all your fault," she looked at Ling Chen with no good humor, "You'd better go back first, I'll explain things to her clearly."

"Then... shall I come over tomorrow night?"

Nanrong Wanqing's face blushed, "We'll see."

Ling Chen chuckled mischievously, secretly thinking 'what a game', then stood up, walked over to her, and gently kissed her smooth cheek. In a soft voice, he said, "I'll leave first then. Please apologize to Su Lin for me, I really didn't mean to take advantage of her."

Watching Ling Chen leave through the balcony, Nanrong Wanqing touched her cheek where his kiss had just landed, the corners of her mouth lifted slightly, revealing a sweet yet helpless smile.

"Wanqing."

Just then, Su Lin suddenly pushed the door open and walked in, disbelief in her eyes as she looked at her, filled with confusion.

"Weren't you going back to your room?"

Su Lin shook her head; she had sensed that something was amiss earlier, so she had been hiding outside the door, eavesdropping. When she heard the conversation between Ling Chen and her cousin, she was shocked and couldn't calm down for a long time.

Her own cousin had actually been with Ling Chen... She really couldn't understand why her cousin would fall for him.

"Wanqing, are you and Ling Chen..."

She opened her mouth, finding it hard to speak.

Nanrong Wanqing hesitated for a moment, then nodded slightly, "I know it's hard for you to accept. Actually... I never expected that so many things would happen between him and me. Lin, I hope you can keep this secret for me for now, and don't tell anyone else."

"Why?"

"Don't ask so many questions; there are some things I'm not very clear about either. Just pretend that nothing happened just now, and that you didn't see anyone."

Looking at Nanrong Wanqing's pleading eyes, despite the numerous doubts in her heart, Su Lin agreed.