

The Beauty 291

Chapter 291 Undercover Protection

However, just at this moment, Ling Chen suddenly turned his face, and Nanrong Wanqing's soft lips immediately landed on his own. Without waiting for Nanrong Wanqing to get up, Ling Chen stretched out his hand to wrap around her slender waist, his hot lips greedily savoring her sweetness.

"No, stop!"

Nanrong Wanqing, almost breathless from the kiss, gently pushed against his chest with both hands and pouted, her cheeks blushing like fire, making her look even more charming.

Rubbing her own hot cheeks, Nanrong Wanqing glared at him resentfully, this man always took advantage of her. However, despite her thoughts, her heart still fluttered with happiness.

"I'm leaving now, see you tonight."

Ling Chen waved his hand, watching Nanrong Wanqing leave, a slight smile curling up at the corner of his mouth, savoring the lingering fragrance she left behind.

At this moment, a faint noise suddenly came from the staircase, and as Ling Chen looked up, he saw Su Lin sneaking out her head, stealing a few glances in this direction. Feeling his gaze, Su Lin's cheeks turned red, and she immediately retracted her head.

Ling Chen shook his head with a smile, guessing that the young girl was probably too shy to see him.

Having finished breakfast, he didn't bother to tease Su Lin anymore and stood up to return to his own room. After a quick tidy-up, he left the Nanrong's home and drove onto the road.

Tang Shiyun's fan meeting would be held tomorrow, and he hadn't forgotten Zhu Yansong's commission. Before the fan meeting took place, he needed to scout the situation.

Twenty minutes later, Ling Chen drove to Wuxun Square in East Sea City, the venue for the fan meeting. At the moment, in the center of the square, dozens of men in work clothes were building the stage and installing lights, preparing for tomorrow's fan gathering.

Ling Chen walked around the square a few times, observing his surroundings. He noticed several suspicious-looking passers-by. Some were sitting or standing, with newspapers in hand, others walking dogs, and a few seemed aimlessly wandering around.

However, despite their good disguises, they could not escape Ling Chen's keen eye.

Undercover police officers.

Ling Chen quickly identified their true identities. It seemed that the person in charge of the operation wasn't entirely incompetent, having the foresight to deploy undercover officers to patrol the area, searching for suspicious individuals. Anyone who wanted to harm Tang Shiyun would definitely come in advance to scout and observe, then plan their actions.

Wuxun Square was vast and could accommodate thousands of people. Given Tang Shiyun's current popularity, the number of fans attending the fan meeting would be sizeable. To manage the crowd flow, barricades and warning tapes were already being set up around the square.

In addition to surveying the environment, Ling Chen also specifically checked the positions of nearby surveillance cameras.

No problems!

He nodded to himself. The security measures in the square were very thorough, leaving virtually no blind spots. However, these were all passive protective measures. The real danger would come tomorrow. Once thousands of fans entered, the scene would surely become chaotic, that would be the real test of the security and police force capabilities.

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The next day.

Afternoon, two o'clock.

Ling Chen rested at home for a while, then set off for Silver Star Entertainment Company.

Silver Star Entertainment's headquarters were located in the southern part of East Sea City, within a ten-story office building. After arriving at the destination, Ling Chen drove out of the parking lot and pulled out his phone to dial a number.

A few minutes later, Xia Mutong came over with a stern face, holding a black suit and a backpack in her hands.

Ling Chen rolled down the car window and greeted cheerfully, "Officer Xia, good afternoon."

"Good your head," retorted Xia Mutong ungraciously. "Hurry up and change, then I'll take you upstairs."

"Sure thing!"

Soon after, Ling Chen changed into the new outfit inside the car and stepped out. Hearing footsteps from behind, Xia Mutong turned her head and was slightly taken aback as she saw Ling Chen approaching.

Dressed in a sharp black suit and wearing sunglasses that complemented his sculpted and handsome face, Ling Chen exuded a calm and stern demeanor that looked irresistibly cool from any angle, leaving no room for criticism.

He's actually quite handsome, Xia Mutong muttered to herself. However, the moment she remembered what Ling Chen had done to her before, she snorted and set her face in a stern expression.

Ling Chen slightly adjusted the sunglasses on the bridge of his nose, turned around with a flippant air, striking what he thought was a cool pose, and grinned, "How about this, when the talent scouts at Silver Star Entertainment see me, do you think they'll want to scoop me up to be a star?"

"You?" Xia Mutong scoffed disdainfully, crushing his hopes without mercy: "Forget it, don't inflict yourself on that company."

Ling Chen could sense Xia Mutong's dissatisfaction, knowing she was still upset about yesterday, but he just smiled it off.

Last night, he had called Xia Mutong, hoping to take charge of Tang Shiyun's safety. Having been a special agent for so many years, he only trusted himself and didn't want to entrust Tang Shiyun's safety to anyone else. As expected, Xia Mutong rejected his request flat out and told him not to meddle, assuring him that the police would handle it.

Left with no choice, he resorted to some smooth talking, bringing up certain matters between them. Annoyed by his pestering, Xia Mutong had finally agreed.

"The personal safety of Miss Tang is in the hands of a professional bodyguard team hired by Silver Star Entertainment. We, the police, are only responsible for maintaining order on the periphery. I've spoken with their team leader, and they will arrange for an undercover officer to join the team."

Ling Chen said in surprise, "You want me to pretend to be a police officer? That's illegal."

Xia Mutong said impatiently, "If I don't say anything and you don't say anything, who will know? If I didn't put it that way, they wouldn't let you join. Just behave yourself, don't blow your cover. If my superiors find out, I won't be able to wear this police uniform anymore."

Ling Chen glanced at her attractive figure and teased, "No problem, it might look even better off."

His comment immediately earned him an eye roll from Xia Mutong.

They took the elevator to the third floor.

Xia Mutong led Ling Chen to a rest room. Upon entering, Ling Chen scanned the room and saw five men in suits lounging around, smoking and casually chatting.

Their arrival immediately drew the attention of the men.

At that moment, a man in his early thirties approached with brisk steps and extended his hand, "Officer Xia, hello." After finishing his greeting, he glanced at Ling Chen and said politely, "Hello, my name is He Zhong, and I hope we can work well together."

Ling Chen responded with a slight smile, "Nice to meet you. Captain He, for certain special reasons, it's not convenient for me to reveal my name. Just call me by my code."

He had no other intention; he just didn't want Yao Li to know of his presence. He had already gotten a taste of that woman's disposition and really didn't want to invite trouble.

He Zhong looked at Xia Mutong in surprise, noticed her subtle nod of approval, and wisely chose not to pry further, "If that's the case, until the mission is over, you'll be known as Number Six."

Chapter 292 Fan Meet and Greet

After Xia Mutong left, Ling Chen sat alone on the sofa in the lounge, looking at the scenery outside the window. He was only a temporary guest this time, not interested in mingling with the bodyguards. Moreover, after briefly getting to know him, the bodyguards started chatting among themselves, paying him no attention.

At three-thirty, He Zhong came in from outside and said, "Time to get to work."

Exiting the lounge, Ling Chen closely followed He Zhong, heading straight to the company's main gate. After a short wait, Tang Shiyun arrived, fashionably late, accompanied by Yao Li and Zhu Yansong.

Watching Tang Shiyun approach, Ling Chen's eyes lit up, dazzled by her beauty. Today, Tang Shiyun had dressed up specially, wearing a light blue off-shoulder gown that showed off her slender figure and subtly revealed her cleavage. Her smooth long hair was tied up and draped over her bare back, her delicate face lightly made-up, and her clear eyes shimmering, she looked enchantingly beautiful, like a fairy stepping out of a painting, captivatingly gorgeous.

Ling Chen's mouth curved into a slight smile as he stood behind He Zhong, unabashedly admiring Tang Shiyun's charm.

Seemingly sensing his gaze, Tang Shiyun slightly turned her head and glanced in his direction. Startled, Ling Chen quickly moved behind He Zhong, using his body to shield himself.

Seeing that fleeting figure, a hint of disappointment flashed in Tang Shiyun's eyes. She had vaguely felt a familiar gaze just now and laughed it off, shaking her head. It must have been her mistake; how could Ling possibly be here?

Although she wished her Ling could be with her, protecting her, seeing Yao Li by her side, she sighed softly, a look of age-inappropriate sorrow on her face, weighed down with worries.

At that moment, a Lincoln Sedan was waiting outside, flanked by a Mercedes Sedan in the front and another in the back, with a van trailing last.

Leaving Silver Star Entertainment, Ling Chen followed behind, quickly getting into the zone, his sharp eyes scanning the surroundings to ensure there were no abnormalities.

Once Tang Shiyun and her group entered the Lincoln Sedan, except for He Zhong who sat in the co-driver seat, the rest of the bodyguards boarded the Mercedes Sedans leading and trailing.

The convoy set off, maintaining a steady speed of sixty miles per hour, heading towards Wuxun Square.

Half an hour later, the convoy safely arrived at the destination.

Through the car window, Ling Chen looked at the crowded and noisy throng at the square, somewhat shocked. Although he knew Tang Shiyun was popular, this level of fandom was beyond his expectations.

At Wuxun Square, apart from the stage and red carpet set up in the center, the place was packed to the brim, shoulder to shoulder, a sea of heads, with probably two to three thousand people, all fervent fans of Tang Shiyun, each looking around in anticipation, eagerly awaiting her appearance.

As the convoy reached the venue, regardless of age or gender, it was like fireworks being ignited, instantly exploding with noise, wave after wave of sound rising higher.

Outside the barriers on either side of the convoy, numerous media outlets spared no expense on their camera memory, flashlights flashing nonstop.

Even though Tang Shiyun had not alighted from the vehicle, the atmosphere at the scene had already reached a climax.

At this moment, the Lincoln Sedan slowly drove to the entrance of the red carpet. Ling Chen immediately followed the other bodyguards out of the van, surrounding the Lincoln Sedan, his piercing eyes scanning the crowd on both sides of the barrier, eliminating any threats.

"Number two, secure."

"Number three, secure."

"..."

Hearing the feedback through his earpiece, Ling Chen immediately replied, "Six is secure. One can move out!"

One is He Zhong. After ensuring the surroundings were safe, He Zhong immediately stepped out from the front passenger side and went directly to the rear seat to open the door.

Zhu Yansong got out of the car first, smiling and waving at the fans at the scene, immediately eliciting cheers. Zhu Yansong was not a pop star, but he was a maker of pop stars, and his popularity was in no way inferior to some big-name singers.

"Miss Tang."

Zhu Yansong turned, slightly bowed, and gentlemanly extended his hand.

"Tang Shiyun!"

"Tang Shiyun!"

"I love you!"

"..."

Amidst the thunderous shouts, Tang Shiyun's cheeks flushed slightly with shyness. She extended her arm, as delicate as white lotus root, and placed it on Zhu Yansong's hand. She stepped out of the car wearing shimmering high heels, lightly lifting the hem of her gown. Following Zhu Yansong's lead, she walked down the red carpet towards the stage, continually waving to the fans on both sides and expressing her gratitude.

At this moment, Yao Li also joined the red carpet lineup, still dressed as ostentatiously as ever, with gold and silver adornments. Facing the overwhelming cheers, her face was flushed with excitement. As if afraid others wouldn't recognize that she was Tang Shiyun's mother, she shouted loudly, "Thank you for supporting my daughter."

With Tang Shiyun's arrival, the scene gradually became chaotic and uncontrollable. Although the police and Silver Star Entertainment had deployed hundreds of staff to maintain order, they had still underestimated the fans' enthusiasm.

Ling Chen followed closely behind the group, his gaze sweeping sharply around, his brows slightly furrowed.

At this moment, the crowd outside the square continued to swell, even blocking the surrounding roads, snarling up traffic. All passing vehicles were stuck at intersections, unable to get through.

Just then, he noticed He Zhong holding a phone, his expression slightly troubled and his tone somewhat sharp, as if he was arguing about something. Seeing He Zhong looking upset as he hung up the phone, Ling Chen approached and asked, "Captain He, what's wrong?"

"Your superiors just issued an order, saying the situation has exceeded their expectations with a severe shortage of manpower. For safety sake, they've ordered us to immediately evacuate Miss Tang."

Ling Chen instantly understood—presumably, the police couldn't allocate more manpower to control the site, thus making this decision. However, they had just arrived, and leaving now might trigger dissatisfaction among the fans, potentially exacerbating the loss of control at the scene.

"Captain He, what's your plan?"

He Zhong glanced at him and said, "I'm employed by Silver Star Entertainment, not by the police. Their orders don't apply to me unless the head of Silver Star Entertainment says otherwise." With that, he hurried to catch up with Zhu Yansong to discuss the situation.

Watching Tang Shiyun, who was less than five meters away, Ling Chen took a deep breath. He didn't relax his vigilance at all, his sharp gaze constantly roving through the crowd.

Suddenly, he halted, feeling a chilly gaze sweep over him. Years of experience as a special agent had honed his instincts, and he trusted his judgment.

The fact that he could feel it so acutely meant that the person was nearby, probably no more than ten meters away, likely around the barrier. However, the barrier was crowded with reporters and photographers, and the glaring flashes made it impossible for him to accurately search.

Chapter 293 Chaos

At this moment, Zhu Yansong came straight over and whispered to Ling Chen, "Mr. Ling, the police hope that we can evacuate Miss Tang as soon as possible."

"What's your opinion?"

"After discussing among the higher-ups at Silver Star Entertainment, this is Miss Tang's first fan meeting. If she leaves as soon as she arrives, it will inevitably cause dissatisfaction among the fans. Besides, with so many reporters and media on the scene, if this gets reported, it will affect Miss Tang's reputation to a certain extent. Therefore, considering the big picture, the company has decided to go ahead, only shortening the fan meeting from one hour to half an hour."

Upon hearing this, Ling Chen was somewhat speechless. Tang Shiyun was facing a life-threatening situation, yet the company's higher-ups were concerned about her reputation. Indeed, for the profit-minded entertainment industry, the things they care about are far more important than safety.

Looking at Tang Shiyun, who was about to go on stage, Ling Chen nodded and said, "Mr. Zhu, don't worry, I will ensure Shiyun's safety." Saying that, he quickly followed her, staying close behind Tang Shiyun as they ascended the stage together. He stood in a corner next to her, maintaining a distance of five meters from Tang Shiyun at all times. His sharp gaze constantly roved through the crowd below the stage, searching for suspicious targets.

Standing on stage with a high vantage point, his view became much broader. Suddenly, with his keen senses, he knit his brows and detected a whiff of danger.

Trusting his intuition, he quickly honed in on the direction of that sensation, in the crowd to his right.

After scanning a few times, his eyes slightly narrowed, the sharpness in his clear pupils flashing. As his gaze incessantly met that of the fans, Ling Chen's pupils suddenly contracted. In the crowd to his right, he captured a chilling gaze.

However, the crowd was too dense with fans, heads packed together so tightly that in an instant, that gaze had disappeared.

"Number One, Number Six calling Number One."

"Received."

"A suspicious target is spotted, at the 8 o'clock direction, hidden in the crowd, please send someone to check."

Upon receiving Ling Chen's message, He Zhong immediately issued orders to Number Three and Number Four. Shortly after, two bodyguards blended into the crowd, searching for the whereabouts of the suspicious target.

At this time, Tang Shiyun was holding a microphone, standing at the center of the stage, looking at the cheering fans below with a slightly blushing face, radiating a bright, youthful smile.

"Thank you all for your support and for coming. Here, I would like to sing a song as thanks for your enduring love for me."

As her words fell, soothing music emanated from the speakers on both sides of the stage. Accompanied by the music, Tang Shiyun started to dance gracefully, her skirt lightly lifting as if bringing a breeze with her twirling movements, spinning like a fairy, captivatingly beautiful.

I think I should calm down and think of some words.

I think I should calm down and walk a distance.

I think I should calm down and read a book.

...

Her sweet voice, passing through the microphone like a gentle, serene stream, flowed quietly into everyone's ears. As Tang Shiyun began to sing, the noisy crowd immediately quieted down, listening to her sweet voice as if basking in a spring breeze, completely mesmerized, unable to extricate themselves.

But at this moment, Ling Chen had no mind to appreciate Tang Shiyun's singing; he was focusing on the crowd in front of the stage.

"No target found."

Number Four's voice came through the earpiece.

"Return to formation and stay alert," He Zhong immediately issued the command.

Ling Chen's brow furrowed slightly; he was certain he hadn't misjudged—the individual he'd seen was indeed in the crowd. Presumably, the appearance of a bodyguard prompted the person to change positions. After all, the bodyguards around Tang Shiyun were all dressed in black suits, which were very conspicuous wherever they appeared.

As the song was midway through and everyone was enjoying Tang Shiyun's singing, a sudden scream erupted from the crowd.

Then, a thick white smoke spread quickly from among the crowd, swiftly enveloping the area around the stage. At the same time, a pungent smell wafted through the air, causing everyone to instinctively cover their mouths and noses and move backward.

However, there were too many fans at the event, crowded and without any space to retreat.

"Protect Miss Tang!"

He Zhong's voice echoed in the earpiece; Ling Chen had already reacted promptly, rushing to Tang Shiyun's side, taking her small hand, shielding her vitals with his body, and moving her to a corner of the stage.

Soon after, He Zhong and several other bodyguards arrived one after another, forming a human wall around Tang Shiyun, protecting her in the middle and vigilantly watching the surroundings.

At this point, the scene became more chaotic. Under the cover of the white smoke, everyone was directionless and at a loss. Some people, in their panic, pushed towards the exits, resulting in a few tripping and falling to the ground. Before they could get up, countless feet had already trampled over them.

Their cries for help were quickly drowned out by the noisy crowd.

Watching the situation spiral out of control, Ling Chen's face turned grim. This way, who knew how many stampede incidents would occur, leading to numerous casualties. With this in mind, he noticed the microphone in Tang Shiyun's hand, snatched it, and shouted loudly, "Don't move! Please follow the commands and leave in an orderly manner to avoid unnecessary casualties."

His voice had an immediate effect, as the previously panicked crowd stopped moving and looked towards the source of the sound.

Seeing this, Ling Chen breathed a sigh of relief, having managed to regain control of the situation.

But just then, a loud 'bang' was suddenly heard from within the crowd, followed by several erratic gunshots.

"There's been a murder!"

"Run for it!"

At that moment, no one heeded Ling Chen's advice any longer; they all rushed out frantically, the scene turning even more chaotic than before. In this crucial moment of life and death, everyone was only thinking of saving their own skin, with no concern for others.

At this instant, watching the crowd scurrying around like headless flies, Ling Chen frowned deeply, unsure of what to do next.

He had heard the explosion and the gunshots. But something felt odd about those sounds. Moreover, if there had indeed been an explosion on-site, why couldn't he detect even a hint of gunpowder in the air?

His mind racing, he glanced at He Zhong beside him and said sternly, "Captain He, you protect Miss Tang, I'll check it out."

With those words, he leaped off the stage and plunged into the chaotic crowd, heading in the direction of the explosion.

It didn't take long for him to locate a portable speaker amidst the thick white smoke. The speaker was turned on, with a memory card plugged into it.

As expected!

He nodded to himself, affirming his suspicion. The explosion and gunshots were fake, designed only to incite panic among the people.

Chapter 294 Tang Shiyun is Kidnapped (1)

"Number Six, quickly regroup, we're sending Miss Tang to the car."

Upon hearing He Zhong's voice, Ling Chen immediately returned to the stage. Zhu Yansong approached, wanting to say something, but before he could speak, Ling Chen cut him off, saying, "Mr. Zhu, you and Miss Yao stay here; we'll take Shiyun away first."

The target was Tang Shiyun, and with limited manpower, if Zhu Yansong and Yao Li came along, they would have to divide their attention to ensure their safety, inevitably pressuring the bodyguards to protect Tang Shiyun and preventing them from focusing entirely on her protection. Therefore, this was the best decision.

Zhu Yansong nodded, not objecting to Ling Chen's proposal, and cautioned, "Be careful."

"Understood."

By now, the smoke that filled the venue was gradually dissipating, and visibility had improved considerably. Seizing the moment, Ling Chen followed closely beside the crowd, his sharp eyes diligently scanning the surrounding throng as he guarded Tang Shiyun toward the parking location.

Through the crowded and chaotic crowd, the Lincoln Sedan was in sight by the roadside. The bodyguards dared not be careless; as professionals, they remained vigilant, not relaxing their guard until the employer was thoroughly out of danger.

A few minutes later, under the tight protection of the bodyguards, they arrived at the Lincoln Sedan without incident.

The sedan could only seat four people. Number Two and Number Three directly escorted Tang Shiyun into the back seat, He Zhong took the passenger's seat without hesitation, and Ling Chen, having no other choice, got into another BMW sedan with two other bodyguards.

Just as the car started, Ling Chen received a call from Xia Mutong, inquiring about Tang Shiyun's status.

"We're in the car now, I'll notify you once we arrive at the company."

Putting away his phone, Ling Chen leaned back in his seat, watching the Lincoln Sedan ahead, a weight lifting off his heart. Based on the current situation, it was virtually impossible for the assailant to get in touch with Tang Shiyun again.

While pondering, the Lincoln Sedan entered the main road and took a detour down a side street.

"Number One, what's happening?"

A few seconds later, He Zhong's composed voice responded: "Nothing, just a temporary route change."

"Understood." Ling Chen replied. Their route had been planned in advance, changing it to prevent any leaks and intercepts was the correct decision. Thus, Ling Chen had no suspicion.

Meanwhile, inside the Lincoln Sedan.

He Zhong watched the driver, and the dagger pressed tightly against his neck, and coldly demanded, "Where exactly are you taking us?"

"Don't worry, someone will come to receive you shortly."

"Why?" He Zhong stared at the driver's profile, enunciating each word, "Guan Long, you're part of our team, and I've treated you well. Why do this?"

Guan Long glanced at him, speaking indifferently, "Captain He, don't blame me; I'm just carrying out someone's order. Now, don't ask too much, hurry up and contact the car behind us, tell them to beat it, stop following us."

He Zhong hesitated for a moment, feeling the light pressure of the dagger on his neck; he pressed the earpiece and said, "Number One calling, we're out of danger, return and pick up Mr. Zhu and Miss Yao."

"Roger that!"

Watching the BMW behind them come to a slow stop, then turn around and head back the way it came, Guan Long's lips curled into a smile, "Captain He, since you're so cooperative, rest assured that except for Miss Tang, everyone else will be safe and sound."

Hearing these words, Tang Shiyun turned pale with fear showing in her eyes. Clutching at her dress, she mustered up the courage, asking, "I have no grievances with you; why are you kidnapping me?"

"Other than money, I can't think of any other reason," He Zhong chimed in.

Guan Long smiled, "Money is only a part, as for the real purpose... Captain He, you're better off not knowing."

In the midst of the conversation, He Zhong raised his head slightly and looked into the rearview mirror on the roof. In the mirror, Number Two and Number Three, sitting in the back seat, were also looking at the rear-view mirror, silently communicating through their gazes.

Just as the two bodyguards in the back seat were preparing to seize an opportunity to grab the dagger from Guan Long's hand, he suddenly said, "You'd better not do anything reckless; I've installed a bomb beneath the back seat. If you leave your seats and the hydraulic pressure is not maintained, the bomb will instantly detonate, and we'll all be dead."

This declaration turned He Zhong and the others pale, and the two bodyguards stopped fidgeting and sat still.

Guan Long smirked, "Captain He, we're all ex-soldiers; we become bodyguards to make money, no need to risk our lives for it, right?"

"You still remember you once were a soldier, then you should know that justice has long arms." He retorted.

"There's no need for you to worry about that; I've made preparations." With that, Guan Long reduced his speed and pulled over to the roadside.

After waiting a few minutes, two middle-aged men wearing duckbill caps approached from both sides of the car and then opened the rear doors. Before the two bodyguards in the back could resist, the men had already pressed daggers against their vitals.

"If you don't want to die, behave." The one speaking was none other than Tang Shiyun, being ordered, "You, get down!"

Faced with their stern gazes, Tang Shiyun trembled, her cheeks turning ashen, biting her lips as she tried her best not to scream out in fear.

"Miss Tang, you'd better cooperate obediently, otherwise, although you'll be fine, I can't guarantee the safety of these three," Guan Long threatened.

Hearing Guan Long's threat, Tang Shiyun glanced at He Zhong in the passenger seat, her eyes wavering, but ultimately she decided to follow their command and stepped out of the back seat. As she got up, the middle-aged man on the right immediately pressed down on the seat to prevent the hydraulic device beneath from activating.

Once out of the car, the middle-aged man on the left immediately placed a prepared duckbill cap on her head, pulling the brim down to cover her face so that passersby wouldn't recognize her, then draped a large coat over her.

"Follow me."

Tang Shiyun dared not resist and followed the middle-aged man into a Wuling Hongguang van.

Seeing that everything went smoothly, Guan Long's smile grew even brighter, "Alright, Captain He, please move to the back seat. Also, hand over all your mobile phones."

He Zhong didn't say a word, his face ashen as he moved from the passenger seat to the back.

Guan Long threw all their mobile phones and radios into a trash can by the road, then reminded again, "Captain He, sit tight and don't move. In the future, when I make it big, I'll treat you brothers to a fine meal. Ha ha!"

Chapter 295 Tang Shiyun Kidnapped (2)

Before long, a taxi passed by the side of the road.

Sitting in the passenger seat, Ling Chen saw the Lincoln Sedan parked by the curb and his gaze swept across the license plate, his expression subtly changing. What were they doing parking here?

"Driver, please pull over."

After paying the fare, Ling Chen quickly made his way to the Lincoln Sedan. Through the window, he could vaguely see three people seated in the back, while both the driver and front passenger seats were empty. Noticing this, a strong sense of unease began to well up within him, and he hurriedly pulled open the rear car door.

"Captain He?" Seeing He Zhong and the other two seated side by side, with no sign of Tang Shiyun, Ling Chen was taken aback and anxiously asked, "Where's Shiyun?"

He Zhong's voice was heavy, "Miss Tang has been kidnapped."

"What?" Hearing this news, Ling Chen felt his heart pound furiously.

"Number six, call the cops quickly. There's a bomb under our seats; moving away will set it off. Also, the driver Guan Long is a traitor. He colluded with others to kidnap Miss Tang."

Without another word, Ling Chen immediately took out his phone and dialed Xia Mutong's number.

Ten minutes passed, and two police cars arrived with sirens blaring, stopping by the roadside.

"Ling Chen, get in the car!"

Seeing Xia Mutong in the driver's seat waving at him, Ling Chen immediately got in and asked impatiently, "Did you find any clues?"

Xia Mutong shook his head, "The license plate number provided by He Zhong is fake, useless. The traffic police department is working with us to access the surveillance footage of the surrounding area, searching for the whereabouts of that Wuling Hongguang van. In addition, we've checked Guan Long's background. He's 43 years old, served as a soldier abroad, returned to the country 13 years ago to join a security company, constantly worked on the front line, and later became a driver due to his age."

"Does he have a criminal record?"

"None, a clean background."

Ling Chen furrowed his brows, that was strange. Why would someone with no bad record suddenly take such a big risk to commit this crime? Didn't he realize what he'd be facing if he failed?

"Right! Captain He mentioned that there are two more accomplices. Moreover, Guan Long kept telling them that money was not their only objective. It's clear that they will definitely call Silver Star Entertainment for ransom."

"I've already sent people to the company headquarters. If the kidnappers call, they'll monitor it and try to pinpoint their location by tracing the call."

Ling Chen nodded, sighing to himself. When He Zhong asked them to go back to pick up Zhu Yansong and Yao Li, he hadn't gone along, but had left the car on his own. His task was to protect Tang Shiyun's safety; besides, he had no desire to meet with Yao Li. If he hadn't waited too long for a taxi, maybe he could have prevented Tang Shiyu from being kidnapped.

Recalling what had just happened, he couldn't help but admire the meticulous and unexpected planning of the culprits. They caused confusion on the spot not to find an opportunity to attack Tang Shiyun but to constrain the police.

"Where are we going now?"

"Back to the station to wait for news."

Arriving at the police station, Ling Chen followed Xia Mutong to the office. At this moment, all the officers were busy, and the case involving Tang Shiyun had many people on tenterhooks. The kidnapping of a big star, and in East Sea City no less, would draw intense scrutiny if it got out.

If the case wasn't solved quickly, the media might start questioning the police's competency, which could greatly affect the force's public image.

"Captain Xia."

A male officer holding a file walked over quickly and said, "We've just received a message. The kidnappers called Tang Shiyun's mother, demanding she prepare thirty million in cash before nine o'clock tonight."

"Did the kidnappers specify the ransom drop location?"

"No, they are very cautious. They kept the phone call short, so we couldn't trace the signal's origin."

"They are ex-military, so they are well aware of our police tactics. Keep monitoring and notify me immediately if there's any news."

"Yes."

Sitting in the office, watching Xia Mutong busy taking calls and arranging work, Ling Chen felt a growing sense of urgency. Tang Shiyun was kidnapped, her life in the balance, and yet he could only sit here helplessly waiting, unable to do anything, which weighed heavily on his conscience.

At that moment, the office door was pushed open, and a male officer walked in carrying a cardboard box and placed it on the desk.

"Captain Xia, this is the bomb we've just disarmed from the Lincoln Sedan."

Upon hearing this, Ling Chen immediately sprang to his feet and hurried to the desk. Without waiting for Xia Mutong to stop him, he carefully took the bomb out of the box.

Seeing him recklessly tampering with its wires, the officer's face turned to one of panic, "Be careful..."

Ling Chen seemed not to hear him, continuing to scrutinize the bomb in his hands, a flash of recognition in his eyes.

"Very professional!"

"What?"

"I said the craftsmanship of this bomb is very professional; only someone with specialized military training could make something like this." After saying this, Ling Chen put down the bomb and asked, "Where are Guan Long's files? Let me see them."

Xia Mutong immediately pulled out a file and handed it over.

Ling Chen skimmed through it and nodded, "It says here Guan Long was trained as a reconnaissance soldier when serving abroad, but only a demolition expert would be capable of making such a sophisticated device. I think Guan Long's two accomplices are probably also military."

Xia Mutong's eyes lit up, immediately getting his point and commanded, "Check Guan Long's former comrades, see if there are any suspects who fit the profile."

"Yes."

In less than ten minutes, a complete file was placed on Xia Mutong's desk.

"Captain Xia, we've found something. There are five people who were demobilized with Guan Long from the foreign military, all locals. Two moved to Beijing over ten years ago, another died of cancer. I've checked the telecom records; the remaining two have been in regular contact with Guan Long, and the three are very close. Moreover, I found a photo of the three of them gathering together on Guan Long's Weibo."

Ling Chen raised the corners of his lips slightly, "Over forty and still into Weibo, he's quite the trendsetter."

Xia Mutong glanced at him and asked, "Have you identified the other two?"

"Yes, one's named Zhou Lin, the other Zhuang Qian. Both are about Guan Long's age. Among the three, both Zhuang Qian and Guan Long are single, only Zhou Lin is married with children. However, owing to his wife's affair, they divorced five years ago." Pausing, the officer looked up, "Captain Xia, based on the data we've gathered, I think I know their real motive for kidnapping Tang Shiyun."

Chapter 296 Avenging for the Son

"What's their objective?" Xia Mutong asked urgently. Knowing the kidnappers' motive would help us hit the nail on the head and figure out a way to rescue her.

"Captain Xia, there was a news story recently that caused quite a stir. A young male fan confessed his love to Tang Shiyun and was rejected. Unable to bear the blow, he chose to commit suicide by jumping off a bridge. That male fan's father is Zhou Lin."

"So that's it!" Ling Chen finally understood why they targeted Tang Shiyun. The previous assault outside East Sea University and this kidnapping—both the perpetrator and the planner must be Zhou Lin. His objective is clear, to avenge his deceased son.

Oh no!

His heart sank. Since it was for revenge, Zhou Lin naturally would not let Tang go. Even if a ransom was paid, it likely wouldn't save Tang Shiyun's life.

With this thought, Ling Chen and Xia Mutong exchanged glances, both simultaneously coming to the same realization.

"The mastermind behind this operation must be Zhou Lin. The previous assault made it so that security was tightened around Tang Shiyun, preventing him from getting close. Hence, he enlisted the help of his old comrades, Guan Long and Zhuang Qian. Both are bachelors without family ties and live modestly, so they struck a deal—two seeking money and one seeking revenge," Xia Mutong analyzed.

"We must notify Silver Star Entertainment Company about this. Yao Li doesn't have thirty million; this money will definitely have to come from Silver Star Entertainment. Since Zhou Lin isn't going to let Shiyun go, we can't let them benefit from this money."

"Let's go to the company," Xia Mutong decided decisively and started walking out of the office. Ling Chen was about to follow when Xia Mutong turned and blocked him, "You're not a police officer; it's better if you stay here."

"No way!" Ling Chen firmly rejected: "I must be involved throughout the case until Shiyun is rescued." His tone was firm, brooking no refusal. Given Tang Shiyun's safety was at risk, how could he just stand by? Besides, he had promised Tang Shiyun that as long as he was around, he would never let her be in danger.

"If you won't let me get involved, then I'll act alone, and you can't blame me for messing up your plan."

"You..."

Xia Mutong fumed as she looked at him—this guy was being completely unreasonable, even daring to threaten her. However, she couldn't really ignore Ling Chen's threat, knowing full well what he was capable of—without constraints, he could wreak havoc.

"Wait here, I can't decide on this matter alone. I'll go and ask the director."

Ling Chen made an 'OK' hand gesture, watching as Xia Mutong left the office. Soon after, Xia Mutong pushed the door open and entered, glaring at Ling Chen before saying, "Come with me."

Ling Chen grinned, it seemed he had succeeded.

"I emphasized your abilities to the director, and how they could be of great help to the case, so the director decided to hire you as a temporary consultant for our police station," Xia Mutong stated fiercely, warning him, "I'm telling you, you better help me rescue Tang Shiyun. I've made a promise in front of the director. If the operation fails, both of us are in deep trouble."

"Don't worry, with me here, there won't be an issue."

"Stop boasting for now, let's talk once we've rescued the person," Xia Mutong grumbled.

Although Xia Mutong was somewhat dissatisfied with Ling Chen's threats, she had to admit that having him by her side was a great help to her. Just like before, based on a self-made *****, he was able to analyze the identity of the kidnapper, thereby pinpointing the suspect. Although the police station was full of talent, very few had this capability.

...

Silver Star Entertainment Company headquarters.

Ling Chen and Xia Mutong walked into the senior office and saw Zhu Yansong, Yao Li, He Zhong among others, including Silver Star Entertainment's Chairman, Yang Chengfeng, a middle-aged man in his forties, slightly overweight, already balding, dressed in home clothes. Clearly, he had rushed over from home upon receiving the notice.

Seeing Ling Chen and Xia Mutong enter the office, Yao Li looked up, and her face immediately fell, her tone full of dissatisfaction, "Why is he here? Get him out quickly, don't annoy us here."

Xia Mutong glanced at Ling Chen, knowing Yao Li was scolding him, and felt somewhat puzzled. Judging by Yao Li's attitude, it seemed she held deep resentment towards Ling Chen. Ling Chen, unconcerned, simply shrugged his shoulders, pretending he hadn't heard her words.

Seeing him still not moving, Yao Li immediately couldn't sit still, suddenly stood up from the sofa, and scolded loudly, "Are you deaf? Did you not hear me telling you to get out?"

"Shut your mouth!"

Xia Mutong frowned, and spoke coldly. Hearing Yao Li's harsh attitude toward Ling Chen, for some reason, Xia Mutong felt an inexplicable anger boiling inside, not venting it would not do.

Yao Li was stunned, her opened mouth suddenly lost for words. She recognized Xia Mutong, who had been personally protecting Tang Shiyun in the past few days, and knew she was a police officer.

"Miss Yao, please show some respect. Ling Chen is a specially appointed consultant by the police, responsible for participating in this kidnapping case. Whether your daughter can be saved depends entirely on him. If you drive him away with your curses, then you better start preparing for your daughter's funeral."

"Him?" Yao Li stared at Ling Chen in a daze, seemingly disbelieving Xia Mutong's words, and disdainfully said, "What capabilities can this thug have."

"Hehe!" At this moment, a mild laugh sounded, and Yang Chengfeng, Chairman of Silver Star Entertainment, strode towards Ling Chen, reaching out his hand, "Mr. Ling, hello, I've long heard of your reputation, never got the chance to meet you. Thank you for helping Tang out last time in Beijing."

Ling Chen was initially puzzled, as he did not know this President Yang, wondering where the so-called long-standing reputation came from. It was only after hearing his final words that he understood it was because of Zhang Zekai's incident.

He grinned and said, "President Yang, you are too kind."

Yang Chengfeng affectionately patted Ling Chen's shoulder, saying, "Mr. Ling, we are counting on your help this time, hoping you can safely bring Tang back."

Hearing Yang Chengfeng and Ling Chen's conversation, Yao Li immediately became anxious, quickly speaking up, "President Yang, you cannot trust him, he's just a thug, if you let him help, my daughter's life definitely won't be saved."

Yang Chengfeng glanced at Yao Li, his thick eyebrows slightly furrowed, showing a hint of displeasure. Tang Shiyun was a well-behaved girl, he liked her a lot, but regarding her mother, not only did he dislike her, but he was also somewhat disgusted. She usually liked to meddle in matters that were none of her business, acting as if everyone had to obey her just because her daughter was a big star, bossing around without restraint in the company.

However, for the sake of Tang Shiyun, he had always restrained himself, never saying anything. But Yao Li's repeated behavior like this made him quite angry.

Chapter 297 The Kidnapper's Call

She's such an uncouth woman who hasn't seen the world.

President Yang thought this way about Yao Li in his heart. He knew everything about the incident that happened to the Zhang Family in Beijing quite clearly. The Zhang Family was somewhat influential in Beijing, yet they suffered a blow at Ling Chen's hands. It was said that even the Chief of Beijing's Police Department had taken action personally, and the reason was none other than for Ling Chen.

The position of Beijing's Police Chief is unlike that of other places; it's an individual with real power and clout. Even someone like that got involved, which shows that Ling Chen's capabilities are not small. So when he learned of this matter, he had been wanting to find an opportunity to meet Ling Chen, to make his acquaintance. Not to say he would rely on him for anything, but at least making a friend wouldn't be wrong.

"Miss Yao, Tang is an employee of our company. Now, I, on behalf of Silver Star Entertainment, am asking Mr. Ling to help rescue Tang. However, after all, you are Tang's mother, so we still need to seek your consent for this matter."

"I disagree." Yao Li didn't even think about it and directly refused. It was a joke, letting a little punk mess around; her daughter would never be able to be rescued.

President Yang nodded and said with an impassive tone, "Well then. In that case, Miss Yao, you find a way to rescue Tang yourself, our Silver Star Entertainment will no longer interfere in this matter. Moreover, about the thirty-million ransom demanded by the kidnappers, that's for you to settle on your own, I'm sorry I can't be of help."

Hearing this, Yao Li's face changed, and she said in a panic, "President Yang... you can't do this. If you don't help, my daughter is doomed. President Yang, as you said earlier, Tang is an employee of your company, you can't just stand by and watch her die."

"Miss Yao, I really want to help you, but you've already refused my help. What can I do?" President Yang spoke while patting Ling Chen's shoulder, "Mr. Ling is now fully in charge of Tang's affair on behalf of Silver Star Entertainment. You've refused him, which means you've declined our company's assistance. Alright, let's not waste time here; everyone should get back to work."

With that, he made a move to walk out of the office.

"Wait, wait!" Yao Li became anxious, quickly grabbing onto President Yang's sleeve and pleading helplessly, "President Yang, I agree, I agree, isn't that enough?"

Without turning back, President Yang said, "Miss Yao, it's no use coming to me. You've just refused Mr. Ling. If you now want to ask him to come back and help, it depends on whether he's willing or not."

"This..." Yao Li didn't expect President Yang to say such a thing and hesitated.

"It seems like you don't care about your daughter's safety."

President Yang's words rang in her ears, and Yao Li hurriedly said, "No, that's not it." After speaking, she turned to look at Ling Chen with a somewhat embarrassed expression. After a long moment of hesitation, she begrudgingly said, "Alright, I'll allow you to intervene in my daughter's affair this time, but this is not to set a precedent."

Hearing her tone, everyone in the room shook their heads in unison, secretly doubting in their hearts—was Tang Shiyun really this woman's daughter? The gap was too wide. Was this the attitude of someone asking for help?

Ling Chen's mouth curved slightly, and he waved his hand, saying, "Sorry, I might have been interested just now, but I've lost interest. You said it yourself, didn't you? I'm just a little punk; how could I have the capability to rescue your daughter? You should find someone more capable. Officer Xia, let's go."

Watching Ling Chen turn to leave, Yao Li stood frozen, unable to believe Ling Chen would refuse her, and was at a loss for what to do.

"Let's go as well. This is Miss Yao's family affair; let her solve it on her own." After saying this, President Yang left the room with others, as everyone understood and started to head out.

"President Yang... no, Ling Chen... you all..." Yao Li opened her mouth, looking foolish, unable to utter a complete sentence.

After leaving the office, President Yang politely said, "Mr. Ling, Officer Xia, this way, please!"

The group entered the conference room and took their seats again. Zhu Yansong proactively brewed some tea and served it to everyone.

"Mr. Ling, please don't mind Miss Yao. That's just the kind of person she is. You don't need to pay attention to her."

"President Yang, I'm not that petty," Ling Chen said with a slight smile. "Let's get back to the matter at hand. Officer Xia and I have gathered some information and have identified three of the kidnappers. Additionally, we've also figured out their real motive."

Talking business, Xia Mutong immediately got into the zone and took out a notepad from his pocket, briefing everyone about the situation.

Zhu Yansong said worriedly, "Officer Xia, from what you're saying, even if we pay the ransom, they might still harm the victim?"

"That's correct, so we can't let the kidnappers get their way. They've asked you to prepare the ransom before tonight; once the ransom is given, Miss Tang's life will not be guaranteed. Therefore, the longer we can delay, the more time we have to increase our chances of finding Miss Tang."

"Good." President Yang nodded and said, "Mr. Ling, Officer Xia, whatever plans the police have, we will cooperate fully. We are willing to spend any amount of money as long as we can rescue Tang."

Night had fallen in an instant.

Ling Chen called Nanrong Wanqing to explain the situation, saying he might not return tonight.

Back in the conference room, Yao Li was also there; Zhu Yansong had already invited her over. After all, she was Tang Shiyun's mother, and the kidnappers would still contact her; she could not be left out of it.

However, with the lesson learned previously, Yao Li was much more subdued, sitting quietly in the corner for hours, not uttering a word, and no one approached her voluntarily. Everyone was clear about her personality and didn't have a good impression of her.

Being ignored for so long made Yao Li uncomfortable. In the past, people would fawn over her wherever she went, always being attended to; she had never been treated with such coldness before. Especially President Yang's attitude earlier had upset her; he actually made her lower her head to Ling Chen—where should she put her face?

With that thought, she grew more indignant, secretly making up her mind.

At 9 p.m.

Finally, Yao Li's phone rang, and the prepped task force immediately connected the equipment, ready to trace the kidnappers' location through the signal source.

With a nod from Xia Mutong, Yao Li pressed the speakerphone button and answered the call.

"Is the money ready?" The person on the other end went straight to the point.

Yao Li was about to speak when she saw Ling Chen shaking his head at her; she had to follow his cue and answered, "Not yet."

The kidnapper's tone immediately turned colder, demanding, "I told you to have the money ready by nine o'clock. It seems you don't want your daughter to survive."

"No, that's not it," Yao Li quickly said, "You name the place, I'll be right there..."

Hearing her misstep, Ling Chen furrowed his brows, cutting off her words, and said, "Mr. Kidnapper, you're not asking for a small amount. Thirty million is a large sum of money, and you only want cash, not accepting a transfer. Banks close at five-thirty. With such short notice, it's difficult for us to gather thirty million in cash. We hope you can grant us some extension."

Chapter 298 The Foolish Woman

There was silence on the phone for a moment before the kidnapper's voice came through: "I only talk with family members. You police should mind your own business. If you dare to butt in again, I'll tear up the ticket immediately."

"You've got it wrong, I'm not the police, I'm Tang Shiyun's brother, so I'm not an outsider. My aunt has a weak heart, she can't handle the scare, so from now on, I'll be the one fully responsible for communicating with you."

At this point, Xia Mutong took a card with a name written on it from the technician and handed it to Ling Chen.

Zhuang Qian!

Ling Chen nodded silently, the technicians had already identified the kidnapper's identity through voice recognition.

At that moment, Zhuang Qian said impatiently: "I don't care if you're her cousin or a cop, I want the ransom by ten o'clock, or else, be ready to collect Tang Miss's corpse." Then the other side hung up the phone.

Ling Chen looked at Xia Mutong, who shook her head and said: "No, we're ten seconds short, they timed it very precisely, we didn't have enough time to locate them."

"Mr. Ling, when ten o'clock comes, should we deliver the ransom?"

"No, keep stalling. Officer Xia, tell the police to step up the search, we have to find their whereabouts."

"I've already contacted all the stations and airports, and increased the patrols at the exits of the city. They won't be able to escape East Sea City."

"Don't be complacent, East Sea City is right by the sea, they could escape by boat. Call your informants and ask if anyone is heading out to sea tonight." After speaking, Ling Chen went behind the technicians, "Play the call recording again, remove the conversation, amplify the background noise, and see if we can find any valuable clues."

...

An hour passed in the blink of an eye.

At ten o'clock, the phone rang on time. Ling Chen answered the call, and before the other party could speak, he said: "I'm sorry, Mr. Kidnapper, the money is not fully raised yet, can we delay it a bit more?"

Zhuang Qian coldly said: "Kid, do you think I don't have the guts to kill the hostage?"

"No no no, of course I hope to rescue the hostage safely, but we really can't raise that much money. How about this, give me a little more time, we'll definitely manage to gather 30 million for you."

"Sorry, you've already broken your word once, I won't trust you again, get ready to collect your cousin's corpse."

Doo doo doo!

Hearing the busy tone from the phone, everyone's complexion changed drastically. Yao Li, in a frenzy, lunged at Ling Chen, cursing: "Ling you beast, you killed my daughter."

Zhu Yansong and Yang Chengfeng nearby quickly held her back, trying to calm her down: "Miss Yao, please cool down for a moment."

Yao Li glared at Ling Chen with a resentful face, gritting her teeth: "Ling, if my daughter suffers any harm, I'll make sure you pay with your life, your whole family will not die well."

Xia Mutong slightly frowned, anxiety in her eyes with a hint of disappointment. She had put too much trust in Ling Chen's ability, thinking he could rescue Tang Shiyun, but by stalling for time, she had actually put Tang Shiyun in danger.

After hesitating for a moment, she spoke: "Ling..."

Before she could finish, Ling Chen raised his head and gave her a smile: "Don't worry, nothing will happen."

As soon as the words fell, the phone rang again.

Ling Chen answered the call with a calm expression, and Zhuang Qian's sneer came through immediately: "Everyone, was that stimulating just now? Don't worry, Miss Tang is still alive, but..."

Just as Zhuang Qian was about to continue, Yao Li suddenly broke free from Zhu Yansong and Yang Chengfeng, rushed to the table, and cried out loudly: "Mr. Zhuang, please, don't kill my daughter, I'll give you whatever amount of money you want."

"Shut up!" Ling Chen's face changed drastically, and he quickly shouted. But it was a step too late. On the other end of the phone, Zhuang Qian asked coldly: "Do you know who I am?"

Ling Chen's mind raced, thinking of how to explain, but Zhuang Qian had already hung up the phone. He looked at Yao Li, his face turning livid with rage in his eyes. Suddenly, he raised his arm, and a loud slap landed crisply on Yao Li's cheek, showing no mercy.

Yao Li covered her cheek in disbelief, speaking sharply: "You... you dare to hit me?"

Ling Chen said coldly: "Congratulations, you have successfully killed your daughter."

"It's you, it's clearly you who killed my daughter, don't think about shirking the blame."

Listening to Yao Li's angry scolding, Ling Chen sighed, no longer wanting to argue with her, and sat down in a chair with a dejected expression.

After several minutes of continuous scolding, Yao Li's mouth was dry, seemingly exhausted, she leaned on the couch covering her face, and began to cry in pain.

Feeling the heavy and oppressive atmosphere in the conference room, Yang Chengfeng couldn't help but speak: "Mr. Ling, isn't there any hope at all?"

Ling Chen gave a wry smile: "Those kidnappers already know that we have their identities; whatever they plan to do, we're aware of it. Whether there is a ransom or not, Shiyun is doomed, so they know we won't pay the ransom."

Xia Mutong curiously asked: "How did you know they would call again?"

"That's not hard. There are three kidnappers, Guan Long, Zhuang Qian, Zhou Lin. The first two are in it for money, Zhou Lin is seeking revenge for his son. If Guan Long and Zhuang Qian don't get money, not only will their efforts be in vain, but they will also have to live on the run with the stigma of kidnapping and murder, which they naturally won't accept. Therefore, until the money is firmly in their hands, they won't easily give up. Moreover, as long as we don't pay the ransom, Shiyun will not be in danger. They

are afraid that we will request to speak with the hostage to ensure her safety. Therefore, even if Zhou Lin can't wait to kill Shiyun right away, Guan Long and Zhuang Qian will not allow him to do so."

After hearing Ling Chen's analysis, everyone admired him a little more, and Xia Mutong's eyes flashed with appreciation. This man, usually so carefree, turned out to be so meticulous in thought, even grasping the kidnappers' mindset; no wonder he was so bold earlier, without any fear for Tang Shiyun's safety.

At this moment, Yao Li, who had been sobbing softly, also lifted her head. She had taken in every word of Ling Chen's, and reflecting on her impulsive actions just now, she couldn't help but regret. There was still a glimmer of hope before, but now not even the slightest hope remained.

Thinking she would never see her daughter again, she couldn't help but burst into tears again.

"Ling Chen, what do we do now?" Xia Mutong asked worriedly: "Is there really nothing we can do?"

Ling Chen shook his head and said: "There's nothing we can do, all we can do right now is wait."

"Wait for what?"

"Wait for hope."

With those words, Ling Chen closed his eyes, silently praying that if everything went as he guessed, perhaps Tang Shiyun might still have a chance for survival.

Chapter 299 A Glimmer of Hope

In an abandoned warehouse in East Sea City, three middle-aged men sat together, speaking words that gradually became more agitated.

"No way, I absolutely disagree." Guan Long waved his hand, giving off a vibe that there was no room for negotiation, "Zhou Lin, I agreed to join for the sake of making money, not to avenge your idiot son. I've now become penniless and have abandoned my former life. I don't want to become a fugitive, running for my life everywhere. If you want to kill that woman, go ahead, as long as you put thirty million cash in front of me. You can do whatever you want with her, I won't say a word."

The middle-aged man named Zhou Lin lowered his head, expressionless, his sharp eyes flashing with a cold gleam. After a while, he lifted his head and looked at Zhuang Qian beside him, asking, "What do you think?"

Zhuang Qian glanced at Guan Long and spoke, "Old Zhou, it's not that we don't understand you, but you have to consider our perspective as well. After this is over, it's clear we can't stay in this country. Right now we're penniless. You have to think about us."

Hearing this, Zhou Lin stood up and walked to the cluttered corner of the warehouse. Opening the door, there sat Tang Shiyun, tied up with ropes on her hands and feet, white wrists chafed by red blood marks, her mouth sealed with duct tape so she couldn't speak.

Seeing Zhou Lin approaching, Tang Shiyun's eyes filled with fear, her pale face looking pitiable.

Zhou Lin, without a word, walked up to her and pulled out a dagger from his waist, the sharp blade gently caressing Tang Shiyun's smooth cheek, eyes merciless and sinister.

"Zhou Lin, what are you doing?" Guan Long and Zhuang Qian, following behind and seeing this, exclaimed with surprise and quickly stopped his action.

"Give me the phone."

Guan Long and Zhuang Qian looked at each other, not understanding what Zhou Lin intended to do, but still handed over the phone.

...

Silver Star Entertainment Company headquarters.

In the conference room, everyone was immersed in a suppressive atmosphere, waiting patiently, silently praying for a turn of events.

Suddenly, the pleasant ring of a cell phone sounded, and everyone's gaze immediately centered on that phone, breathing becoming rapid.

Ling Chen gave Xia Mutong a look and then pressed the answer button, turned on the speakerphone, and an icy voice immediately said, "Since you know she can't survive, I won't waste words with you. Prepare twenty million in half an hour. Remember, this money isn't to buy her life, but to lessen her suffering. If you don't agree, I will have a few men take good care of her, then I will cut her flesh off piece by piece, and record a video to upload online, so everyone can appreciate it."

"Okay. How do we trade?" Ling Chen replied without hesitation, at this moment it wasn't time to be angry or emotional, keeping absolutely calm was the only chance for a turn of events.

"Don't rush, I'll give you half an hour to get ready."

The call ended, Xia Mutong looked at Ling Chen and said, "It's Zhou Lin."

Ling Chen nodded and said, "Right now we can't reject his demand, it's the only lead we have."

"Captain Xia, I've made a discovery," the technician responsible for analyzing the call's content spoke up at this moment.

Ling Chen and Xia Mutong immediately stood up and walked over to him. He said, "I've just filtered Zhou Lin's voice and amplified the background sound. Listen." Saying that, he pressed the keyboard and a muffled sound of a horn blared from the audio.

"That is..." Ling Chen raised his eyebrow, "A truck horn."

"Yes. I checked just now, it's the horn of a heavy truck. East Sea City has strict regulations on heavy trucks, most roads are restricted, with only one ring route permitted for heavy truck passage. I've marked the route, their hideout should be near the ring road."

Xia Mutong slightly frowned and said, "That route is dozens of kilometers long, the scope is still too big, can we further narrow it down?"

"Having a clue is better than none. Contact the traffic police department, get them to retrieve surveillance footage from this route to see if there's a clue."

"Understood."

While they were talking, He Zhong suddenly pushed the door open from outside and whispered a few words in Yang Chengfeng's ear.

"What?" Yang Chengfeng exclaimed.

"President Yang, what's happened?"

Yang Chengfeng quickly walked to the window, pulled back the curtain to look outside the company's main entrance, and said in a heavy voice, "More than ten media outlets know about Tang's kidnapping, they're now gathering at the entrance, wanting to interview us."

Xia Mutong in astonishment said, "How did the media find out? We haven't announced the news publicly."

"It must be someone inside our company who sold the news to the media," Yang Chengfeng said, his face looking grim, "I will find out who's responsible."

Zhu Yansong casually turned on the TV in the conference room and switched to a news station where indeed, a news channel was broadcasting a news flash, with a reporter standing outside the Silver Star Entertainment headquarters, reporting.

"Dear viewers, according to the latest information we've obtained, Tang Shiyun was abducted by kidnappers during a fan meet-and-greet, her whereabouts currently unknown, her life and death uncertain, the police are investigating, and specific details have not been disclosed. We will continue to monitor the development..."

"Forget about that for now," Ling Chen interrupted. He had no mood to investigate who leaked the information. Tang Shiyun was in imminent danger, he couldn't afford to be distracted.

...

Half an hour passed, and the kidnappers made another call.

"Put the money into two garbage bags, bring your cell phone and head to Linxing Road. I will tell you what to do next once you get there. Remember, no tricks, only one person should come."

Without saying another word, Ling Chen took the phone and put it in his pocket. At the same time, Yang Chengfeng approached carrying two black garbage bags.

"Mr. Ling, all twenty million are in these bags. Be careful on your own."

Ling Chen nodded silently and walked out of the conference room swiftly. Since there was media at the front entrance, to avoid them, Ling Chen went to the underground parking garage and drove out in Yang Chengfeng's Mercedes-Benz, quickly heading toward Linxing Road.

Ten minutes later.

The cell phone rang, Zhou Lin's deep voice came from the earpiece, "Now head to Zhenghe Road."

Within moments, an hour passed, and under Zhou Lin's guidance, Ling Chen circled around the city continuously. Ling Chen knew that the other party was testing to see if there were any police tracking him.

"That's enough, stop the car, there's a residential building on your left, go straight to the rooftop," Zhou Lin said.

Hearing this, Ling Chen looked through the car window, surveying the surrounding environment, filtering through the pedestrians on both sides of the street. From Zhou Lin's words, it was clear they were secretly watching his movements.

"Officer Xia, I've arrived at the drop-off point." After reporting the situation, Ling Chen, carrying the bags filled with money, took the elevator all the way to the rooftop of the residential building.

Chapter 300 Ransom Transaction

The night was like water, the autumn breeze slightly cool.

Ling Chen stood at the top of the rooftop, his eyes sweeping around, but besides himself, there was no one else; the kidnapper had not shown up. Holding his phone, he patiently began to wait nearby.

Soon after, his phone finally rang.

"Put the money on the rooftop, and you can leave."

Without hesitation, Ling Chen tossed the trash bag to the rooftop's top and promptly returned to his car. Those wads of cash were implanted with micro-tracking devices; as soon as the kidnapper touched the money, they could track the kidnapper's whereabouts.

Several minutes passed.

"Officer Xia, any movement yet?"

"Nothing."

Odd! Ling Chen furrowed his brow as he watched the stairwell entrance of the residential building. It had been so long, yet the kidnapper hadn't come for the money.

Just as he was pondering, Xia Mutong's anxious voice suddenly came through the earpiece: "Ling Chen, the signal is gone."

"What?"

Ling Chen's heart skipped a beat. Without another word, he dashed out of the car and hurried toward the rooftop. As soon as he reached the rooftop, he immediately heard a buzzing sound above his head. Looking up, he saw two drones hovering in the midair, with hooks on top of the aircraft, precisely snagging the trash bags.

Under the drones, a small device was fitted, its red light flashing.

A signal jammer!

What a tactic, to think up such a method to take the money.

As the drones began to distance themselves, Ling Chen immediately contacted Xia Mutong to report the situation here. He then rushed back to his car and visually tracked the drones in the sky. Because the cash in the trash bags was rather heavy, the drones could not fly too high and were barely maintaining an altitude of fifty meters.

After crossing several intersections, Ling Chen suddenly hit the brakes, his expression changing as he watched the drones flying around in midair. To his surprise, there were suddenly four or five more drones in the air, each with a black trash bag hanging from its bottom.

These identically appearing drones blending together, and given it was night, made them absolutely indistinguishable.

After circling for a while, the drones began flying off in different directions.

With a twist of his brow and an inner sense of urgency, Ling Chen didn't know which drone to follow. Suddenly, his eyes lit up as if he'd thought of something, and he immediately took out his phone to pull up the map of East Sea City.

"Here, yes, it must be this one."

The tech team had previously filtered through the call recordings and analyzed the kidnapper's approximate range. As long as they knew the kidnapper's direction, and then matched it with the directions of those drones, they could determine which two drones were their targets.

Having locked onto the drones, Ling Chen drove the Mercedes-Benz, following closely behind. Five minutes later, the two targeted drones slowly descended and flew into a basketball court. By the time Ling Chen arrived, under the dim light of the street lamps, he only saw two middle-aged men wearing duckbill caps load two drones into a Jinbei van, hitting the road.

At last, he caught up with them!

The corners of Ling Chen's mouth lifted slightly as he followed the Jinbei van from a distance. The three kidnappers were all former soldiers, with Guan Long among them being a scout, well aware of tracking and anti-tracking techniques. Ling Chen dared not take it lightly, always maintaining a safe distance.

At this moment, having received Ling Chen's notification, Xia Mutong had already left the Silver Star Entertainment Company, leading more than ten officers into the car, ready to rendezvous with Ling Chen.

About half an hour later, the golden van that Ling Chen had been following drove into an abandoned warehouse. Without waiting for Ling Chen to get out of his car, the van drove out again after just two minutes, followed by a Wuling Hongguang minivan leaving the warehouse as well.

The two vehicles did not travel together but headed in different directions. Ling Chen hesitated for a moment, then started his car and followed the Wuling Hongguang.

It wasn't long before the Wuling Hongguang suddenly turned into a mountain road. Passing by the intersection, Ling Chen's eyes were immediately drawn to a sign erected on the side of the road.

Hongshan Cemetery!

A cemetery? What is he doing at a cemetery? Could it be... A thought struck Ling Chen, and he quickly accelerated, driving along the mountain road.

Upon reaching the entrance to Hongshan Cemetery, the Wuling Hongguang was parked outside, already empty. Ling Chen turned off his car lights, parked the car, and quickly walked into the cemetery.

At this moment, Zhou Lin used a rope to bind Tang Shiyun's hands and rapidly moved through the cemetery. It wasn't long before the two arrived in front of a grave site. Under the faint moonlight, the picture on the tombstone was visible—it was a very young man.

Zhou Lin gently patted the tombstone and muttered to himself: "Son, you liked her, didn't you? Dad will fulfill your wish and soon have her join you down there." As he said this, he coldly glanced at Tang Shiyun, then reached out and lifted a tombstone in front of the grave. Immediately, an unsealed coffin came into view before Tang Shiyun.

"What... what do you want to do?" Tang Shiyun's face turned deathly pale, especially after seeing the coffin, a hint of fear flashing through her eyes.

"My son liked you very much, but you heartlessly refused him, leaving him cold and despairing, leading to his suicide. He was my only son, and as his father, I don't want him to depart with regrets, so I want to fulfill his last wish. From today onward, you'll stay here and accompany him."

"No, I don't want to." Tang Shiyun shook her head vigorously, tears flowing down her cheeks like pearls off a broken string, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to hurt him, I..."

"Shut up!" Zhou Lin shouted coldly, "You don't need to play the victim in front of me, it's too late for anything you say now. I've been preparing for this day for a long time."

Tang Shiyun bit her lip, trying hard to control her emotions, not allowing herself to cry out loud.

Brother Ling...Unconsciously, she thought of Ling Chen. If Ling Chen were here, he would never let her get hurt.

But now, she would never have the chance to see her Ling again. Thinking that her short life would end here, she couldn't suppress the fear and sadness in her heart and started sobbing softly.

"It's your turn now."

Zhou Lin stood up from in front of the coffin, his face ferocious as he stared at Tang Shiyun, his hand gripping a dagger, veins popping on the back of his hand, looking much like a butcher staring at a lamb waiting to be slaughtered.

"Go down and accompany my son."

He laughed coldly, his arm abruptly lunging forward, the sharp tip of the blade stabbing straight towards Tang Shiyun's heart.

Clang!

Just then, a crisp sound rang out, and the dagger in Zhou Lin's hand dropped to the ground.

The abrupt change stunned Zhou Lin, who shouted loudly: "Who's there? Come out!"

"You looking for me?"

Familiar voice sounded, Tang Shiyun hurriedly turned her head, looking at Ling Chen walking briskly towards her, her mouth slightly agape, filled with an incredible mix of excitement and surprise.