

The Beauty 351

Chapter 351 The Pretentious Dragon List Expert

Ling Chen looked at the middle-aged man in full surprise. In just a brief confrontation, not only did he not gain the upper hand, but he instead suffered a great loss. The martial skills of this middle-aged man were truly unfathomable.

Indeed, worthy of being Qin Wu's martial uncle, truly formidable.

"The experts of the Tiger List, merely so." The middle-aged man said indifferently, his tone laced with a hint of mockery.

Ling Chen let his numb arm droop, his expression solemn, his sharp gaze fixed on the middle-aged man, he asked, "May I ask how to address you?"

"You, are not worthy of knowing my name." The middle-aged man, with his hands behind his back, proudly said, "Do you wish to continue? If you don't want to continue, as long as you apologize to the Qin Family, I can forgive and let you leave."

"No way, this bastard has made my face like this, he cannot be let off easily," Qin Yang, standing nearby, cried unwillingly.

The middle-aged man glanced at him and asked, "What does Mr. Qin wish to do?"

Qin Yang, with resentment flooding his heart recalling old and new grudges, sneered and said, "Simple, as long as he kneels down and kowtows three times to me, and calls me grandpa, I can forgive his actions."

"You heard it." The middle-aged man turned his head to look at Ling Chen, his expression cold.

Facing the gaze of the crowd, Ling Chen slightly raised the corners of his lips, boldly stating, "You should inquire who I, Ling Chen, am. If you want me to bow, you'll have to chop off my head first."

"Having some backbone, since that's the case, don't blame me for being impolite." The middle-aged man's tone turned colder, initiating the attack.

Seeing the middle-aged man rushing towards him, Ling Chen's pupils contracted slightly. He hurriedly stepped back to dodge. However, his movements were far too slow compared to the other's speed. Before he could react, a figure suddenly flashed in front of him.

Immediately afterward, Ling Chen felt an intense pain in his chest, a powerful force spreading throughout his chest, pushing him back by four or five meters. Luckily, a car behind him stopped him from falling.

However, with just this move, the disparity in their strength was clear, as vast as the difference between clouds and mud, without any basis for comparison.

Ling Chen took a deep breath, calming his tumultuous blood and tightening his brows. This man's skills were too freakishly strong, he didn't even have a chance to respond.

"Come again!" The middle-aged man looked provocatively at Ling Chen.

Ling Chen clenched his fists tightly, gritting his teeth, about to make a move. But at that moment, a nonchalant voice suddenly said, "Impressive, truly impressive. A prestigious expert of the Dragon List actually sparing against an expert of the Tiger List, really giving face."

A Dragon List expert?

Ling Chen was shocked, his view of the middle-aged man changed instantly. No wonder he was so powerful, turned out he was an expert of the Dragon List.

Realizing the identity of the opponent, Ling Chen couldn't help but burst out cursing, "Damn, you're a Dragon List expert and you're still pulling this act in front of me."

The middle-aged man paid no mind to Ling Chen's curses, instead turning to look at the speaker. At this moment, from the direction of the elevator, seven people appeared, men and women, old and young, their group an unusual sight that drew the curious looks of the Qin Wu and others.

Seeing the leading elder, Ling Chen greeted proactively: "Elder Qiu."

Qiu Yong nodded slightly, voicing his concern, "Are you all right?"

Ling Chen patted his chest with a smile, "I'm fine, not that fragile." After speaking, Ling Chen turned his gaze to Xia Yue, smiling warmly as he greeted, "Yue, long time no see."

Xia Yue gave him a cold glance, remained silent.

"Who are you?" The middle-aged man scanned the seven suddenly appeared individuals and said sternly, "This is a private matter between us and Ling Chen. For your own safety, it's best you do not interfere."

Qiu Yong stood with his hands behind his back, his face stern, and spoke deliberately, "Ling Chen's business is our business. If you want to make a move on him, you'll have to ask if we agree."

The middle-aged man sneered, "Knowing that I am a master from the Dragon List and still daring to come forward, it seems you all are quite skilled. Why not state your names?"

The one-armed man standing behind Qiu Yong coldly said, "Not recognizing us, the eight freaks, Liu Yunsong, as a master of the Dragon List shows how ignorant you really are."

"Eight freaks?" Liu Yunsong's pupils tightened, his face changing immediately. How could he not know the reputation of the eight freaks? It's just that there were only seven people who came out, so he didn't think in that direction.

"There are eight people in the eight freaks, you..."

Qiu Yong coldly said, "Isn't there eight of us here?"

"What?" Liu Yunsong was shocked, staring incredulously at Ling Chen, "Is he also..."

At that moment, not only was Liu Yunsong surprised, Ling Chen was equally astonished. Did Qiu Yong's words mean that he was also counted among the eight freaks?

At this time, Xia Yue stepped forward, her face cool as she looked at Liu Yunsong and the others, coldly saying, "Daring to harm a member of the eight freaks, today I really want to test your abilities."

"No!" Now knowing the identities of the eight freaks, Liu Yunsong lost his earlier calmness, his eyes flashing with urgency, hurriedly saying, "Ladies and gentlemen, it was just a misunderstanding earlier, I didn't know Ling Chen's identity. If there's any offense, please be generous in your forgiveness."

Seeing their uncle admit weakness, Qin Wu and the others were suddenly stunned.

The eight freaks were names they had heard, but only by hearsay, and their uncle was a true master of the Dragon List, so why would he fear these people who weren't even on the Tiger List?

Qiu Yong turned his head, looking at Ling Chen beside him and asked, "What do you say?"

"We are all civilized people, and there is an old saying, better to dissolve enmity than to perpetuate it..."

"Yes, yes, Ling has the grace," Liu Yunsong's face relaxed slightly, smiling as he interrupted.

Ling Chen looked displeased at Liu Yunsong and said, "I haven't finished speaking yet, what's the rush. As they say, better to dissolve enmity than to perpetuate it, however..." Saying this, Ling Chen glared furiously and cursed, "I fucking can't stand people acting tough in front of me, you, a Dragon List master challenging me, fuck, I won't be satisfied today if I don't get this anger out, I fucking might as well take your surname."

Hearing the latter part of Ling Chen's words, the other seven freaks slightly smiled, their eyes gleaming with amusement. Indeed, this guy's temperament was very much to their liking.

"Liu Yunsong, you heard it. Blame yourself for offending us eight freaks." With those words, the one-armed man's smile faded, and his body dashed forward like a swift wind, instantly covering the ground to Liu Yunsong.

Following that, without any noticeable movement, he suddenly brandished a steel knife, slashing directly at the top of Liu Yunsong's head.

Feeling the fierce Sword Force contained within the blade, Liu Yunsong's face paled, he didn't dare to be careless, hurriedly retreating to dodge the fatal strike.

"Go, quickly go!"

Hearing Uncle Liu Yunsong's roar, Qin Wu and the others were slightly stunned, then quickly reacting, they rushed towards the parking lot.

Seeing this, Ling Chen immediately gave chase, stepping on the car roofs, his body leaping forward, landing in front of Qin Wu and the others, blocking their path.

Looking at the icy Qin Wu, Ling Chen grinned, "Miss Qin, where are you going?"

Chapter 352 Extortion

Qin Wu looked at her Senior Uncle engaging in combat with the one-armed man, her eyes filled with worry.

"Don't get too smug, Ling," Qin Wu's companion, Qin Yang, called out defiantly, "it's not certain who will win or lose yet. Let's all attack together; with so many of us, we shouldn't be afraid of them."

Encouraged by Qin Yang, the several brothers-in-arms following Qin Wu didn't hesitate, eyeing Ling Chen like tigers before pouncing towards him.

Ling Chen just smiled. Liu Yunsong was a master from the Tiger List, whom he did not consider himself a match for, but these people... he truly didn't take them seriously.

As the group launched their attack, Ling Chen immediately met them head-on, fists and kicks flying as he tangled with everyone.

Meanwhile, the battle between the one-armed man and Liu Yunsong intensified. Undeniably, Liu Yunsong, a Dragon List master, was powerful, but the one-armed man wasn't the slightest bit inferior, wielding a steel knife that was impenetrably swift and deadly in its attacks.

After a long exchange, Liu Yunsong could barely find an opportunity to close the distance, repeatedly forced to retreat without a chance for advantage.

Just then, a sudden 'whoosh' broke the silence as the sound of something tearing through the air was heard.

Liu Yunsong's expression turned grave as if realizing something, but before he could react, a deep wound appeared on his right shoulder. Behind him, not far on the wall, was a piercing arrow with a remnant trace of fresh blood still undried.

Feeling the pain in his shoulder, Liu Yunsong's gaze flickered, only catching a glimpse of a man standing behind Qiu Yong, bow drawn, arrow nocked, intensely focused and with a piercing gaze as sharp and cold as the arrow that breaches one's psychological defenses.

Even as a Dragon List master, facing that simple bow and arrow, Liu Yunsong felt an involuntary dread.

The Eccentric Eight were notoriously elusive, and he had never encountered them before, but Liu Yunsong was well aware of their prowess.

The Archer God, Zhang Zhongfeng.

Across the land, there was no archer more formidable than him. Nearly half of the Eccentric Eight's fame was held up by Zhang Zhongfeng alone.

At this moment, locked in the aim of Zhang Zhongfeng's bow, Liu Yunsong was thrown into panic. For masters in contest, a moment of distraction can reveal a fatal flaw. Seizing the chance, the one-armed man surged with power, his attacks growing fiercer, unleashing five rapid slashes aimed at Liu Yunsong's head.

Liu Yunsong, with his concentration wavering, managed to parry four slashes, but was caught off guard by the last, allowing the one-armed man to breach his defense and leave a gash on his left shoulder, blood spurting out and staining his clothes red.

Simultaneously, the battle on Ling Chen's side also came to a conclusion, and the underlings accompanying Qin Wu were all laid out on the ground. Qin Wu held her right arm, panting heavily, her delicate face showing a hint of paleness from excessive exertion.

Casting a glance at Qin Wu, who was unable to continue the fight, Ling Chen casually dusted off his hands and returned to Qiu Yong's side, then turned his attention to Liu Yunsong. Seeing his opponent's drooping arms and the blood stains on both shoulders, Ling Chen couldn't help but reveal a teasing smile, mockingly saying, "Master Liu, how could you be so careless?"

Hearing the mocking tone in Ling Chen's voice, Liu Yunsong's face turned ashen with anger, and through gritted teeth, he said, "This victory of yours is dishonorable."

"Dishonorable?" Ling Chen's mouth curved slightly as he stepped in front of Liu Yunsong with a mocking smile, "You know all about dishonorable, do you? So, it's acceptable for you to bully with numbers, but it's not allowed when I do this?" Finishing his words, Ling Chen showed no courtesy as he stretched out his leg and brutally kicked Liu Yunsong, cursing unrestrainedly, "Think being a Dragon List master makes you exceptional? Act less arrogant in the future. There's always someone stronger; there are heavens beyond our own. If you dare to provoke me again, I'll strip you and throw you onto the streets."

Liu Yunsong, unreconciled, wanted to retort, but noticing the menacing stance of the Eccentric Eight nearby, he lost his nerve and could only swallow his anger.

"Ling Chen, should we let them go now?" Qiu Yong asked.

"Go..." Ling Chen's eyes shifted as he looked towards Qin Wu not far away, a smile immediately surfacing in his eyes as he continued, "Let's not rush. Eh, I say, Master Liu, not only did you bully me just

now, but you also injured me. Don't you think you ought to give me some compensation for my emotional distress?"

"Compensation for emotional distress?"

This statement not only stunned Liu Yunsong, but even Qiu Yong and the others were caught off guard, never expecting Ling Chen to make such a demand.

Liu Yunsong furrowed his brows and asked reluctantly, "What do you want?"

Ling Chen snapped his fingers and grinned: "Simple. At the auction at Yulong Mansion before, Miss Qin obtained something I'm quite fond of. She's your nephew's apprentice... so why not have her give me that item as compensation?"

"Impossible!" Liu Yunsong refused immediately without even thinking, then added, "I can give you money as compensation."

Ling Chen waved his hand, "You clearly haven't inquired about who my girlfriend is. Do you think I'm the kind of person who is short of money? Master Liu, I've made my terms clear. Whether you accept them or not is up to you. But don't blame me for not warning you – my friends here have bad tempers, and if you can't meet my demands and piss them off, not one of you will leave here alive."

Hearing this, Xia Yue couldn't help but roll her eyes at Ling Chen. This bastard was so despicable, actually using the reputation of the eight eccentrics to swindle and cheat.

However, Ling Chen's threat was not without effect. Liu Yunsong looked at Qiu Yong and others behind him, hesitation flickering in his eyes. When his gaze swept over Zhang Zhongfeng, he gritted his teeth, turned his head towards Qin Wu, and said in a deep voice, "Give him the item."

Qin Wu's expression changed slightly, and she quickly said, "Senior Uncle, that item..."

"Enough, stop talking, give it to him quickly," Liu Yunsong interrupted Qin Wu and urged.

"Yes." Qin Wu's brows slightly furrowed, reluctantly going back to the commercial vehicle to retrieve the weapon wrapped in silk brocade, handed it over to Ling Chen with a face full of resentment.

Ling Chen pretended not to see the anger in Qin Wu's eyes and smiled as he reached out to take it. After checking to make sure it was the right one, Ling Chen nodded with a smile and said, "Everyone, take care, I won't see you out."

"Go!" Liu Yunsong spat out the word through clenched teeth, not wanting to stay a moment longer, and went straight into the car.

Once Liu Yunsong and his group had driven away, Ling Chen put away the weapon, turned around to look at Qiu Yong and the others, and said with a salute, "Elder Qiu, thank you for earlier."

"No need for courtesy. Come on, let's head back to the room and talk."

Arriving at the hotel room where Qiu Yong and others were staying, before they could even sit down, Xia Yue couldn't help but ask, "What's the use of the weapon you extorted from Qin Wu?"

Ling Chen touched his nose and said with a lifted corner of his mouth, "I don't know yet; I haven't studied it." Saying this, Ling Chen took out the weapon and explained, "Apparently, this thing was crafted by someone in the Martial Arts community hundreds of years ago."

"Oh?" The one-armed man said with interest, "Let me take a look."

Chapter 353: The of the Eight Eccentrics: Ling Chen

The weapon reached the one-armed man's hand, and he felt for the mechanism at the top, pressing it gently. Instantly, a blade shot out from one end of the cylinder, its cold light piercing and clear.

With a casual swing or two, the one-armed man suddenly twisted his arm and stabbed towards the wall of the guest room. In an instant, the blade easily penetrated the wall to a depth of a foot.

"Not bad," the one-armed man nodded affirmatively, saying, "Several hundred years old and still this sharp, indeed it's impressive, the person who forged this weapon must have been a grandmaster."

Ling Chen's face lit up with joy at the one-armed man's praise, confirming to himself that he had a unique eye for quality.

"It shouldn't be just that simple," Qiu Yong remarked from the side: "Judging from Liu Yunsong's demeanor earlier, he seemed quite reluctant to part with this weapon."

Ling Chen nodded; he had also noticed this detail.

Xia Yue took the weapon and scrutinized it closely. Before long, she found two tiny ancient seal characters on the top of the cylinder.

"Tianling, this should be the name of the weapon."

"It might not be," Qiu Yong said: "In ancient times, weapon forging grandmasters liked to engrave their names on their work, perhaps 'Tianling' is the name of that grandmaster."

"It doesn't matter," Ling Chen dismissed with an unconcerned smile, "Tianling is a good name, we'll call it that from now on." At this point, Ling Chen changed the subject and asked, "Elder Qiu, who is that Liu Yunsong?"

"He's ranked tenth on the Dragon List, and also from the Dangyang Sect. His senior brother is the Sect Leader of the Dangyang Sect," Qiu Yong explained, "The Dangyang Sect is a southern sect with a history of over a hundred years and has some influence in Martial Arts. Liu Yunsong and his senior brother are both well-known experts on the Dragon List."

"I see," Ling Chen scratched his head, realizing Qin Wu's background was not simple. This was his first encounter with Martial Arts sects, and it seems that he would now have another troublemaker due to his enmity with Qin Wu.

Reading Ling Chen's thoughts, Qiu Yong said: "You don't need to worry too much, with the name of the 'Eight Eccentrics' backing you up, the Dangyang Sect wouldn't dare mess with you, unless they want to make enemies with us, the 'Eight Eccentrics'."

As he finished speaking, Qiu Yong glanced at Xia Yue, the one-armed man, Zhang Zhongfeng, and the other members of the 'Eight Eccentrics', then said solemnly, "Ling Chen, there's something I'd like to discuss with you."

"Elder Qiu, please speak freely."

"The reputation of us 'Eight Eccentrics' has been established for quite a while now. Recently, my third junior brother tragically passed away, leaving us one brother short. Continuing to call ourselves the 'Eight Eccentrics' is no longer appropriate. So, we siblings wanted to ask you, would you be interested in joining us? That way, we can at least retain the name of the 'Eight Eccentrics'."

Hearing this, Ling Chen was momentarily stunned, taking some time to process the proposal.

Back in the parking lot, when Qiu Yong mentioned he was a member of the 'Eight Eccentrics', Ling Chen thought it was just a casual statement to intimidate Liu Yunsong, little did he expect that Qiu Yong would seriously bring up the offer.

Seeing Ling Chen's delayed response, Qiu Yong said: "If you're not willing, we won't force it. You've helped us, and we'll still consider you a friend."

"No, it's not that," Ling Chen quickly said, "Elder Qiu, you misunderstood, I'm not unwilling, it's just..." he said somewhat embarrassedly, "Each member of the 'Eight Eccentrics' has their own special talents, I'm afraid my modest martial arts skills will tarnish the reputation of the 'Eight Eccentrics'."

The one-armed man chuckled, "That's not a problem at all. Ling Chen, to be honest, we investigated you before our eldest brother suggested this. Honestly, you remind us of my late third brother, not just in character, but also in skills."

"Really?" Ling Chen looked at the one-armed man with skepticism, unaware of any unique skills that he himself possessed.

"My third brother had a nickname, 'Playboy'. He wasn't good at many things, but when it came to charming women, he was peerless. Any woman he set his sights on couldn't escape his palm. In that

regard, I think you're very much like him. The beautiful women around you are enough to attest to your charisma."

"Uh..."

Hearing the one-armed man's words, Ling Chen was at a loss whether to laugh or cry, finding it ridiculous that charming women could be considered a skill; were the 'Eight Eccentrics' too eccentric after all?

"Ling Chen, you're a decent person, and you're upright. Although we 'Eight Eccentrics' are known for our eccentric behavior, we're definitely not bad people, and we've never done anything to harm heaven or reason. Most of us in the 'Eight Eccentrics' are orphans or were abandoned by our families. Later by fate, we came together. If you're willing, from now on, you'll be a member of the 'Eight Eccentrics'," Qiu Yong said.

"This..." Ling Chen thought for a moment and hesitated, "Elder Qiu, it's not that I'm unwilling, I just worry about bringing you trouble. Honestly, I have quite a few enemies..."

Qiu Yong waved his hand dismissively, "That's not an issue. Ask Xia Yue and the others; who doesn't have a few enemies? It's quite normal."

"In that case..."

Since the conversation had come this far, any further hesitation would seem discourteous, and Ling Chen readily agreed. Although he had known the 'Eight Eccentrics' for a short time, the impression Qiu Yong and the others left on him was profound - they were loyal and righteous. Being brothers with these people was also a good thing.

"Great." Seeing Ling Chen's agreement, the usually serious Qiu Yong rarely smiled.

"Come, let me formally introduce you to everyone," Qiu Yong said, bringing each member of the 'Eight Eccentrics' to Ling Chen's side.

A few minutes later, Ling Chen finally had a general understanding of all the members of the 'Eight Eccentrics'.

The one-armed man, named Yuan Yun, had practiced saber techniques since childhood under a master. Later, due to jealousy from fellow disciples leading to a trap that cost him an arm, he lost his master's favor and left his sect to join the 'Eight Eccentrics'.

Xia Yue, an orphan from a young age, followed an odd character roaming around and learned a range of martial arts.

Zhang Zhongfeng, known as the 'God of Arrows', had unmatched archery skills and was the strongest member of the 'Eight Eccentrics'. No one knew his origins, not even Qiu Yong.

The blind youth named Yang Chen, had especially keen hearing due to his blindness from birth. During Ling Chen's time at God Organization's secret base, he had witnessed Yang Chen's skills.

And that child around ten years old named Wei Jiahao had left a deep impression on Ling Chen, having fought him before. Despite his young age, his strength was extraordinary. It was only after Qiu Yong's introduction that Ling Chen understood that Wei Jiahao's might wasn't due to solid martial arts foundations, but because he excelled at Mechanical Techniques and liked to tinker with mechanical gadgets.

Inside Wei Jiahao's clothing were all sorts of intricate mechanisms, linked together with springs, which allowed him to exert formidable strength.

Ling Chen was very impressed; despite Wei Jiahao's young age, he was incredibly clever. Even modern scientists might not be able to produce such precise devices.

Chapter 354: The Beauty Coming Out of the Bath

Among the eight eccentrics, aside from these five people, plus Qiu Yong and the newly joined Ling Chen, there is one more person, who is also the most mysterious among the eight eccentrics.

The reason why he is considered mysterious is that he's usually silent and reserved, hardly speaks, and always likes to sit alone. This man is about forty years old and goes by the name Xu Ming. He is the

second eldest among the eight eccentrics, with a very ordinary appearance that wouldn't stand out in a crowd.

After Qiu Yong finished introducing everyone, Ling Chen quietly asked Xia Yue for more information, but even Xia Yue didn't know much about Xu Ming's background, only that Xu Ming is one of the senior members of the eight eccentrics.

"Elder Qiu, should we... perhaps become sworn brothers?"

Qiu Yong replied with a light smile, "There's no need for such formalities. We eight eccentrics don't care for those common rituals, but a drink is unavoidable."

"Let's go, my treat," Ling Chen said generously.

After the drinks, it was already midnight. Ling Chen said his goodbyes to Qiu Yong and the others, then drove back to Wealthy Manor in a drunken state.

Once he entered his room, Ling Chen didn't even bother to shower before collapsing into bed and falling asleep, until the next morning when he was woken up by Nanrong Wanqing.

Smelling the scent of alcohol on Ling Chen, Nanrong Wanqing frowned slightly and chided, "Don't you know to drink less? Too much alcohol is bad for your health."

With sleepy eyes, Ling Chen looked at the beautiful Nanrong Wanqing by his bedside and flashed a grin. Before she could dodge, he grabbed Nanrong Wanqing's hand and pulled her into his embrace, savoring her intoxicating fragrance.

"How annoying," Nanrong Wanqing, blushing, beat on Ling Chen's chest, her delicate body wriggling slightly as she tried to break free from his arms. However, their bodies were tightly pressed together, and her movement instantly prompted a morning reaction from the just-awakened Ling Chen. Fortunately, they were covered with a quilt, which spared them any embarrassment.

Ling Chen, unable to resist the adorable face of Nanrong Wanqing, flipped over, pinning her delicate body beneath him and went straight for those tempting red lips, savoring her sweetness without any restraint.

Nanrong Wanqing struggled briefly before melting into Ling Chen's tenderness, wrapping her arms around his waist, passionately reciprocating.

"Wanqing, breakfast is ready, you guys..."

Just then, Su Lin suddenly appeared at the bedroom door. Seeing the two people on the bed closely entwined, Su Lin's pretty face instantly flushed red, and she quickly covered her eyes, complaining, "Cousin, could you at least be a bit more discreet?"

Caught red-handed by Su Lin, Nanrong Wanqing felt incredibly embarrassed and hurriedly pushed Ling Chen away, dashing out of the room as if fleeing, not daring to stay a second longer.

Ling Chen climbed out of bed smilingly, stretched lazily, knowing that flirting with a beauty early in the morning is good for both mental and physical health.

After taking a shower and changing into a set of clean clothes, Ling Chen made his way to the dining room, only to find Su Lin had already left for school, and Nanrong Wanqing was sitting at the table alone, eating cereal. When she saw Ling Chen, her newly regained composure was again compromised as a blush crept up her cheeks, looking irresistibly shy and charming.

"What did you do last night?" Nanrong Wanqing tried to change the subject.

"I was drinking with some friends."

Thinking of last night's events, Ling Chen rubbed his slightly aching forehead, it felt almost like a dream—him becoming a member of the eight eccentrics. While he was pondering, the ringtone from his cellphone in his pocket went off. Ling Chen took out his phone, glanced at the incoming number, and quickly answered, "Elder Qiu, you looking for me?"

"Still calling me Elder Qiu?"

Hearing Qiu Yong's chiding tone, Ling Chen immediately realized his mistake and corrected himself with a smile, "Big brother."

The eight eccentrics didn't care about seniority, regardless of age; everyone addressed Qiu Yong as Big Brother. Being the sixth oldest among the eight eccentrics, they all called Ling Chen either Ling Cheng or Big Brother.

"Ling Cheng, if you're free later, come to the hotel; we have a task to undertake."

"No problem, I'll be there on time."

After breakfast, Ling Chen and Zhong Wei took a group of people to send Nanrong Wanqing to the headquarters of Hongyu Group, and then he drove alone to the hotel where Qiu Yong and the others were staying.

In the Chinese-style tea restaurant on the third floor of the hotel, Ling Chen met everyone who was dining.

"Brother Ling, you should be clear about our main purpose for coming to East Sea City this time."

Hearing Qiu Yong's words, Ling Chen's mind stirred, and he asked, "Is it for Dongfang Yu?"

"Correct." The one-armed man Yuan Yun nodded and said, "Since we killed Dongfang Yu's disciple back then, Dongfang Yu will look for revenge sooner or later. Given this, we might as well take the initiative and just take him down."

"Dongfang Yu is a master from the Earthly List, big brother, do you guys have a way to deal with him?"

Qiu Yong pointed to the Archer God Zhang Zhongfeng sitting next to him and said with a smile, "With your third brother here, what's there to fear?"

That's true.

Ling Chen nodded silently. Back then at Zongming Mountain, Zhang Zhongfeng had forced He Ziyun to retreat with three arrows, demonstrating overwhelming strength.

"Brother Ling, you've stayed in East Sea City for quite a while, can you find a way to help us locate Dongfang Yu?"

"Big brother, I'm not sure I can, but I can try. How about this, I'll ask someone to look for him first, and notify you if there's any news."

"Alright, thank you for your trouble."

Ling Chen grinned and said, "We're brothers, no need for formalities."

...

Leaving the hotel, Ling Chen drove directly to Qingyun Martial Arts Hall. To find out Dongfang Yu's whereabouts, he could only seek assistance from He Ziyun.

Knocking on the door of the martial arts hall, Little Hua looked at Ling Chen listlessly, quite different from her usual enthusiasm, showing an unhappy face. Seeing this, Ling Chen scooped up the little girl into his arms and asked, "What's wrong? Did someone upset you?"

"Sister Xiaozhu is sick," Little Hua said sorrowfully.

"Xiaozhu?" Ling Chen was slightly shocked and asked, "Is she in the academy?"

"She's in her room; Master said Sister Xiaozhu is very sick."

"Let's go, take me to see her."

Reaching the door of Zhu Xiaozhu's bedroom, Little Hua suddenly grabbed Ling Chen's sleeve and said, "Big brother, you go in by yourself first, Master asked me to fetch medicine for him, and I almost forgot."

"Alright."

Ling Chen responded, set Little Hua down on the ground, and then pushed open the door to enter the bedroom.

As soon as he entered, Ling Chen froze on the spot. Inside the room, steam was swirling, and the fragrance was rich. Through a hazy mist, there was a large wooden tub near the window. Along with the sound of water, a snowy figure stood up from the tub, her hair dancing, cascading down her delicate back, and her tender shoulders covered with droplets.

Although a layer of steam obscured the view a bit, it did not hinder Ling Chen from clearly seeing the elegant and fair body.

Gazing at the beautiful curves and voluptuous figure, Ling Chen's mind went blank, and his breath involuntarily held still.

At this moment, the beauty in the tub was completely unaware of Ling Chen's presence behind her, she kept on moving out of the tub and turned towards the clothes on the bed. However, the moment she turned around, her eyes were immediately drawn to Ling Chen standing at the doorway.

Chapter 355 Flower-like Beauty and Moon-like Appearance

At this moment, Ling Chen's eyes widened, all his attention captivated by the stunningly beautiful and pale body before him. In the dimness, those bright white thighs, slender waist, and round breasts, along with her exceptionally beautiful face, radiated deadly seduction. Any man would find it hard to resist such temptation.

Ling Chen was a man, and a vigorous one at that. Further fueled by the waves of desire evoked by the Prajnaparamita Sutra, he felt an urge surging outward from his belly, his throat involuntarily swallowing, his clear pupils growing brighter.

However, after a brief daze, Zhu Xiaozhu snapped back to reality. Her cherry-like mouth slightly open, she let out an "Ah" of shock, her hands hurriedly pulling a bath towel from the bed to wrap around her delicate body, concealing all her charm.

Seeing that Ling Chen was still staring intently at her, Zhu Xiaozhu felt her face burning hot, a deep red flush spreading across, adding a more seductive allure in the steamy air, making it hard for anyone to look away.

"You... you're still looking!" Zhu Xiaozhu bit her thin lips, holding the towel with both hands against her full figure, she looked annoyedly at the ground, unable to meet Ling Chen's gaze.

Chided by Zhu Xiaozhu's light scolding, Ling Chen finally came back to senses, turning his head with an awkward expression, sheepishly saying, "I'm sorry, I didn't know you were bathing."

While apologizing, Ling Chen internally complained about Little Hua. It must have been that girl who did it on purpose, knowing Zhu Xiaozhu was bathing in the room, thus she found an excuse to leave him to enter alone.

He just couldn't understand, what on earth was going on in that girl's head, to come up with such a bad idea.

"Please... could you step out for a bit?"

Hearing Zhu Xiaozhu's weak, mosquito-like voice, Ling Chen didn't hesitate and immediately stepped outside. He dared not stay in the room any longer, fearing that he couldn't resist the temptation and might do something excessive.

As he heard the door close, Zhu Xiaozhu breathed a sigh of relief, but the blush on her cheeks did not fade quickly, her beauty radiant and moving.

Thinking about the long-unseen Ling Chen suddenly appearing before her, she actually felt a bit thrilled at that instant. However, as soon as she thought about her relationship with Ling Chen, and Zhu Hong being involved, her joy disappeared instantly, replaced with endless melancholy and helplessness.

With a soft sigh, Zhu Xiaozhu let go of her hands, the white towel falling to the floor, revealing her slender and graceful pale figure, her smooth belly was like a tender willow swaying lightly, her soft arms, delicate like lotus roots, gently lifted, playing with the black hair that cascaded down her shoulders.

Then, she picked up a close-fitting garment from the bed, covering all the spring scenery in the room.

Once dressed, Zhu Xiaozhu calmed her emotions, trying to forget the awkward scene just now, then she pushed the door and walked out.

At this moment, Ling Chen was standing alone by the door, quietly waiting. Hearing the sound of the door behind him, Ling Chen immediately turned around, his gaze meeting the charmingly gentle Zhu Xiaozhu, stirring up slight ripples in his heart.

This woman was unspeakably beautiful, as if all the essence of the world was integrated into her.

Internally exclaiming, Ling Chen thought of the words previously spoken by Little Hua, looking at Zhu Xiaozhu a couple more times. Perhaps because she had just bathed, Zhu Xiaozhu's cheeks were flushed, but her spirit seemed much weaker than usual, her eyes pitifully endearing.

Meeting Ling Chen's gaze, Zhu Xiaozhu opened her lips lightly and asked in a soft voice, "Why did you come today?"

"I..." Ling Chen originally wanted to say he came to find He Ziyun, but instantly changed his words, "I heard you were sick, so I came to check on you. How are you, are you okay? Do you need to go to the hospital?"

Feeling the concern from the man in front of her, Zhu Xiaozhu gave a faint smile: "It's okay. Have you forgotten? I'm a doctor myself. If I can't even cure myself, how can I treat others?"

Ling Chen touched his nose and smiled: "True, then you should rest well and don't overexert yourself."

During their conversation, Little Hua came bouncing over, holding He Ziyun's hand. Seeing her proud smile, Ling Chen had to admit, the little girl's acting skills were too good, it would be a pity for her not to become an actress. She had seemed all unhappy when they first met, but that was all just an act.

Life depends on acting skills, and this little girl, so young, had already mastered the essence.

"Big brother, Sister Xiaozhu." Little Hua giggled, her shiny eyes darting back and forth between Ling Chen and Zhu Xiaozhu's faces, seemingly curious about what interesting thing had just happened.

Ling Chen gave Little Hua a stern look, then greeted He Ziyun.

"Little Hua, come, let's go out and buy some herbal medicine."

Hearing Zhu Xiaozhu, Little Hua pouted, reluctant: "Why don't you ask big brother to accompany you."

Zhu Xiaozhu glanced at Ling Chen, her pretty face blushed slightly, and she scolded Little Hua: "He's busy. If you're not going, then I will go alone." With that, Zhu Xiaozhu walked towards the outside of the Martial Arts Academy. Little Hua had no choice, she made a face at Ling Chen and quickly caught up with Zhu Xiaozhu's steps.

Watching the two of them leave, Ling Chen turned to He Ziyun and said, "Mr. He, I need your help with something."

"What is it?"

"I'm looking for Dongfang Yu."

After saying this, Ling Chen continued to explain his reasons. In front of He Ziyun, Ling Chen had nothing to hide.

When Ling Chen said he had joined the ranks of the Eight Eccentrics, the usually unflappable He Ziyun couldn't hide his surprise.

"You're really full of surprises, to think you've ended up with the Eight Eccentrics." He Ziyun smiled and said, "But that's good, each of the Eight Eccentrics has their own skills, and they might become a strong support for you in your future journey. Especially that Zhang Zhongfeng, his archery is the best in the world, unmatched, it's your good fortune to have his help."

Ling Chen knew Zhang Zhongfeng was excellent in archery, hence the title of Archery God, but he hadn't expected He Ziyun to hold such a high opinion of Zhang Zhongfeng.

"Mr. He, how strong is Zhang Zhongfeng exactly?"

"From a hundred meters away, he can certainly defeat me. Within a hundred meters, it's fifty-fifty. Within fifty meters, he will undoubtedly lose."

Hearing He Ziyun's judgment, Ling Chen was secretly stunned. This meant that he had really stumbled upon a great advantage. As long as he kept the Eight Eccentrics by his side in the future, who would dare to mess with him.

Thinking this, he couldn't help but feel secretly delighted.

"If you want to find Dongfang Yu, I can help you. According to my knowledge, Dongfang Yu has been staying in East Sea City recently, but I need some time to pinpoint his exact location. For now, you go back, and I'll inform you once I have news."

Chapter 356 Nanrong Wanqing's Little Secret

Back at the headquarters of Hongyu Group, it was almost noon. Ling Chen gulped down some food in the cafeteria to fill his stomach, then took the elevator to the chairman's office.

He knocked gently on the door, and getting no response from inside, Ling Chen couldn't help but turn his gaze towards the secretary Wang Lan outside, asking, "Where's the chairman?"

"In the office, the chairman hasn't gone out all morning."

Hearing this, Ling Chen didn't bother to knock again and pushed the door directly and entered. The spacious and bright office was empty, but the door to the adjoining resting room next to the office was tightly closed; Nanrong Wanqing was probably taking a nap.

Ling Chen tiptoed to the door and quietly pushed it open a crack, only to see Nanrong Wanqing lying sideways on the bed, playing with her phone, completely unaware of someone peeking from outside.

Ling Chen sneaked a smile, approached like a thief, and then pounced like a tiger, pinning down on Nanrong Wanqing's delicate body.

"Ah!"

The suddenness of the encounter startled Nanrong Wanqing. When she saw who it was, the surprise in her beautiful eyes instantly turned into annoyance. She gently patted her chest, looking reproachfully at Ling Chen and said, "Can't you just not scare me?"

Ling Chen, holding Nanrong Wanqing's soft body, glanced at the phone in her hand and asked with a mischievous smile, "What were you doing?"

As soon as he asked, Nanrong Wanqing seemed to think of something, her pretty face slightly changed, and she hurriedly hid her phone, stuffing it under the pillow.

Her actions only piqued Ling Chen's curiosity further. He had merely asked casually, not expecting such a strong reaction from Nanrong Wanqing.

"Are... are you watching some adult movies or what?"

Flushed, Nanrong Wanqing retorted, "I don't watch those kinds of things."

"Then what were you doing?"

"I..." Nanrong Wanqing was at a loss for words, not knowing how to explain, so she changed the subject, "I have my privacy, don't ask too much."

Seeing that she brought up her privacy, Ling Chen felt it was not appropriate to ask further, yet his curiosity was itching inside.

With a beauty in his arms, Ling Chen's curiosity merely lasted a short while before he immersed in Nanrong Wanqing's sweet lips, seeking her fragrance.

After a period of entanglement, Nanrong Wanqing's cheeks were flushed and her eyes were like silk, gasping under Ling Chen's firm hands. If not for the last bit of her rationality, her bra would almost have been torn off by Ling Chen.

"Why are you getting more and more lewd?" Nanrong Wanqing reproached. When she first met Ling Chen, he wasn't this bold; usually at most they would be affectionate at home, but now he doesn't even spare the office.

She too was becoming increasingly sensitive, barely able to hold herself at the slightest provocation. Compared to before, she had changed too much. Often when she thought of herself lost in amorous caresses, she was almost too embarrassed to face herself.

Hearing Nanrong Wanqing's reproach, Ling Chen grinned and cheekily responded, "What kind of man would I be if I weren't lewd?"

During their conversation, a knocking sound came from the resting room door.

"Chairman, are you there?" The voice of Wang Lan came through the door, causing Nanrong Wanqing immense embarrassment as she glared resentfully at Ling Chen. If Wang Lan were to see her in this state, the image she had carefully cultivated in the minds of the employees would be completely ruined.

Taking a deep breath, Nanrong Wanqing tried to adjust her tone and replied, "What is it?"

"The manager from HR wants to see you."

"Understood, tell him to come over in ten minutes."

Once the footsteps of Wang Lan faded away from the door, Nanrong Wanqing hurriedly stood up and straightened her dishevelled clothes. Ling Chen, propping his head with one hand, stared unblinkingly at the beauty in front of him, feeling as if recent events were like a dream.

"Still looking?" Nanrong Wanqing lightly tapped on Ling Chen's shoulder, saying annoyedly, "Get out now, I have work to do."

Ling Chen shrugged his shoulders, reluctantly sitting up. Nanrong Wanqing took out a mobile phone from beneath the pillow and left the rest room first.

What secrets lie within that phone? Ling Chen thought to himself, his curiosity once again piqued.

Leaving the chairman's office under the ambiguous gaze of Wang Lan, Ling Chen stepped into the elevator.

He had not yet arrived at the security office when he received a call from Jiang Yunkai.

"Bai Huanjun just got discharged from the hospital. I did as you instructed and didn't follow him."

"Understood."

"By the way, if you have time now, come over. Everyone has something they wish to discuss with you."

"Alright, I'll be right there."

After hanging up the phone, Ling Chen headed to the underground parking lot, driving straight to the destination. Half an hour later, he met Jiang Yunkai and Zhao Zhengxiong at a courier company in Old City, surprisingly, even Nanrong Hao showed up.

"Chen."

"Why aren't you in school? What are you doing here?"

"There's a big issue. Hao is still in the hospital undergoing rehabilitation, and we're short-handed here. As a part of Old City, how can I stand idly by?"

Hearing Nanrong Hao's reasoning, Ling Chen chose not to argue and asked, "What's the matter?"

When it came to the matter at hand, Zhao Zhengxiong's expression turned solemn. He pulled out a map of East Sea City, spread it on the table, and placed several coins on various districts of the city.

"Chen, look. East Sea City has six districts: North City District, South District, West District, East District, as well as Central District and Old City. Previously, Dongyi Group's influence was primarily concentrated in Central District and the three districts to the east, south, and west. Since Old City is mixed and chaotic and North City District is relatively remote, Dongyi Group didn't extend its influence to these two districts. These past few days, I've gathered some information on the streets. It was the forces from North City District that attacked us this time. Before, they thought the police had orchestrated the downfall of Dongyi Group, so they hesitated, not daring to take over. Once we took control, they realized and reacted. From what I know, the people from North City District are very ambitious, wanting to swallow several districts in one go."

Ling Chen nodded and asked, "How strong are the forces in North City District?"

"They have about six or seven hundred people, almost equal to our forces in Old City."

"What are your thoughts?"

"The territory left by Dongyi Group is massive, covering four districts. If we take over entirely, we'll face a severe shortage of manpower. I'm worried that hiring temporarily would result in a mixed quality of personnel, potentially undermining our foundation. Plus, with the people from North City District watching closely, if we spread our manpower too thin, we won't be able to confront them, only giving them the upper hand. So, after careful consideration, I think we should act within our capacity, take

over a portion first, and let go of the rest. Once our foundation is solid, we can slowly reclaim those territories. Chen, what do you think?"

Chapter 357 Ceding Power

After listening to Zhao Zhengxiong's analysis, Ling Chen looked at him in a new light. He always thought Zhao was careless, but he turned out to be a meticulous person with a great sense of the bigger picture, not blinded by immediate lucrative gains but rather able to see through them and act accordingly.

Before, Ling Chen thought only Jiang Hao was smart, but it seems Zhao Zhengxiong is not bad either.

Ling Chen smirked and nodded, "You've thought it through well. Since you're suggesting this, you must have a complete plan. Let's hear it."

With Ling Chen's affirmation, Zhao Zhengxiong felt encouraged and continued, "The Old City is our stronghold, we definitely can't lose it. Moreover, the Central District is the center of East Sea City, the most prosperous area. We can't let such a juicy slice slip away. The East District is adjacent to both the Old City and Central District, which makes it easy to manage. My idea is to only keep these two districts. We can give up the West District and South District to others."

"Good, I support your decision." Ling Chen didn't hesitate; Zhao Zhengxiong's analysis was logical and sound, making this the best arrangement. With that said, Ling Chen turned to Jiang Yunkai, "How is the progress with those four security companies?"

"After preliminary screening, only a bit more than thirty individuals meet the basic conditions."

Jiang Yunkai finished speaking, Zhao Zhengxiong couldn't help but complain, "Chen, don't blame me for nagging, but isn't Kai a bit too harsh? I sent over four hundred people, and not even one-tenth got selected."

"My plan is to transform the security company into a top-notch individual combat team, naturally the selection must be strict. Give me half a year to train them, those thirty plus people will be as effective as three hundred, I assure you won't be disappointed."

"Really? That's impressive."

It wasn't just Zhao Zhengxiong and Nanrong Hao; even Ling Chen was somewhat skeptical, thinking Jiang Yunkai's statement was an exaggeration.

Jiang Yunkai calmly said, "Those people are physically fit and with the unique training method of my sect, there will absolutely be no problem."

"Alright, I'll see the result after half a year." Ling Chen was no longer dubious, knowing that seeing is believing.

Leaving the courier company, Jiang Yunkai was just about to head to the security company, so Ling Chen gave him a ride along the way.

As the car merged into the traffic, Jiang Yunkai glanced at Ling Chen who was driving and asked, "The people in the North City District can be troublesome, but with our abilities, it wouldn't be hard to handle them. Why then did you let Zhao Zhengxiong exert so much effort?"

Ling Chen smiled, "The rise of a nation often requires enduring many hardships and difficulties. If things are too easy, no one will cherish what they have. We're currently having a smooth ride, but that's not necessarily a good thing. Jiang Hao, Zhao Zhengxiong, including Nanrong Hao, used to engage in minor skirmishes; suddenly letting them take over the entire underground forces of East Sea City, do you think that's wise? What I need is not just a force but a solid and mature team. For them, this is a process of growth and experience."

Hearing Ling Chen's words, Jiang Yunkai gave a thumbs up, generously praising, "You really do have a far-sighted vision."

While they were talking, two Mercedes-Benz sedans suddenly sped up from behind and quickly overtook Ling Chen's muscle car.

Have they finally made a move?

Ling Chen's lips curved slightly; he had noticed those two Mercedes-Benz sedans trailing behind throughout the ride.

Looking at the two Mercedes-Benz sedans blocking the road ahead, Jiang Yunkai frowned, "Who are they?"

"We'll find out soon."

As he finished speaking, the two Mercedes-Benz cars abruptly came to a harsh stop. Fearing a collision, Ling Chen instantly hit the brakes, bringing the car to a secure stop.

At that moment, two men in suits stepped out from the Mercedes-Benz cars and quickly approached the driver's side window. Ling Chen rolled down the window, squinting at them, he asked, "What can I do for you gentlemen?"

"Mr. Ling, our Miss would like to invite you over."

"Who?"

"Go and you'll find out."

"Not even willing to say a name, that's really insincere. Tell your missus that I'm not free today; ask her to make an appointment."

The man in the suit coldly said, "Mr. Ling, you'd better cooperate with us willingly, don't make it difficult. Otherwise, don't blame us for not being polite."

Ling Chen grinned, a playful smile on his face: "Try it."

The two men in suits looked slightly cold, snorted lightly, reached out to grab the car door handle, and tried to forcibly pull Ling Chen out of the car. But just then, a van suddenly drove up from the left, parked next to the muscle car, right beside Ling Chen's driver seat. Following that, the window rolled down, and a face as cold as frost appeared before Ling Chen.

Seeing the person, Ling Chen smiled and said, "I was wondering who was asking me, turns out it's Miss Qin."

Qin Wu signaled the two men in suits with her eyes, and once they stepped back, she turned her gaze to Ling Chen and asked, "Can we talk in the car for a bit?"

"Would I dare not to show respect when Miss Qin asks?" Ling Chen said with a smile, pushed open the car door, and got into the van by himself.

Inside the van, apart from Qin Wu and the driver, there was no one else. Ling Chen felt a bit relieved; he was actually worried that Liu Yunsong might appear. Calming himself down, Ling Chen looked at Qin Wu's beautiful face and asked, "What did Miss Qin want to see me about?"

"I want that weapon," Qin Wu got straight to the point. Without waiting for Ling Chen to respond, she continued, "I don't want to bring up the past events; I just want that weapon back. As long as your demands aren't too excessive, I can agree to them."

A weapon?

So it was about that weapon called Tianling. Ling Chen suddenly understood, but still felt puzzled, wondering why Qin Wu insisted on getting that weapon—was it very important to her?

Seeing Ling Chen in deep thought and not responding, Qin Wu couldn't help urging, "So is it possible or not?"

Ling Chen looked at Qin Wu meaningfully and said lightly, "Miss Qin seems to care a lot about that weapon. Does it have some special significance?"

Qin Wu's expression faltered, realizing she had been too eager. To prevent Ling Chen from noticing more, she withdrew the urgency in her eyes and spoke emotionlessly, "You're thinking too much. That weapon has special significance for my sect, so I want to reclaim it."

As if I'd believe you!

Ling Chen thought to himself. That weapon must be not simple; otherwise, right after falling out with Qin Wu and her Senior Uncle Liu Yunsong, and with Qin Wu's hatred towards him, she wouldn't come to him lowering her stance and allowing him to name any conditions.

After going back today, he should study the weapon carefully to see what secrets it conceals.

"Ling Chen."

Qin Wu's sharp call pulled Ling Chen back to the present.

"Miss Qin, I am very sorry, but I quite like that weapon, so I am not planning to part with it."

"You..."

"If there's nothing else, I'll be heading back now, goodbye!" After saying that, not waiting for Qin Wu to speak again, Ling Chen had already opened the car door and walked out.

Getting back in his car, Ling Chen started the vehicle, first dropped Jiang Yunkai off at the security company, then drove back to Wealthy Manor alone, and found the weapon placed in his bedroom.

Chapter 358 The Long Spear

After obtaining this weapon, Ling Chen still hadn't had the time to properly study it. Today, Qin Wu's actions had sparked a strong interest in this weapon.

The weapon was laid out in front of him, held up by Ling Chen's hands for a closer inspection. At the top of the cylindrical body, there was a clever mechanism that controlled the extension and retraction of the sword blade. The surface of the cylinder was etched with many patterns, and it felt quite heavy in hand. However, it seemed that besides these features, there were no other special functions.

Moments passed, and Ling Chen couldn't help but doubt - could it be that Qin Wu hadn't deceived him? Was her determination to obtain this weapon simply because it held special significance for her sect?

Lost in thought, Ling Chen casually maneuvered the weapon, his eyes reflecting contemplation.

Suddenly, the astute Ling Chen noticed a thin seam in the middle of the cylinder, hard to spot due to the overlaying patterns. He immediately grasped both ends of the cylinder and gently twisted.

Click!

With a soft sound, the middle part of the cylinder began to rotate. At the same time, the cylinder, initially only a foot in length, rapidly extended from both ends, transforming into a six-foot long staff. Not only that, when he pressed the clever mechanism, a sharp sword blade suddenly protruded from the top of the staff, instantly turning the staff into a long spear.

Tsk, tsk!

Ling Chen's eyes lit up, so this was it. He had to admit, even calling this craftsmanship heaven-defying wouldn't be an overstatement. After all, this weapon was crafted hundreds of years ago. To produce something so intricate in an era with such limited technology was quite the feat.

However, as ingenious as this weapon was, it likely wasn't the main reason that attracted Qin Wu. There must be other secrets hidden within it.

Sadly, after over two hours of searching, Ling Chen had examined every part and found nothing else. Regardless, having this exquisitely made weapon suited his taste well, and it wouldn't hurt to keep it by his side.

...

Night fell.

After having dinner with Nanrong Wanqing and Su Lin, Ling Chen sat on the living room sofa, legs on the coffee table, holding a remote control, idly flipping through channels.

At this moment, the ringtone of his mobile phone echoed from his pocket. Ling Chen pulled out his phone, glanced at the unfamiliar caller ID, and answered the call with a "hello."

"Mr. Ling."

Hearing the caller's voice, Ling Chen immediately knew who it was - Zhu Yansong, the top producer from Silver Star Entertainment Company.

"Mr. Zhu, is there something you need?"

There was a hint of anxiety in Zhu Yansong's tone as he urgently said, "Mr. Ling, there's a problem with Miss Tang."

"Tang Shiyun?" Ling Chen's heart sank as he hurriedly asked, "Has something happened to her?"

"No, no, no, she's safe. It's about Miss Tang's mother. After you helped rescue Miss Tang from the kidnappers, Miss Yao wasn't satisfied with how our company handled the situation and wants to take Miss Tang out of Silver Star Entertainment to join another company." Zhu Yansong sighed, "President Yang and I have tried persuading her, but Miss Yao is hell-bent on severing ties with us."

That idiotic woman!

Ling Chen frowned slightly. Truthfully, he had no fondness for Yao Li; she was too mercenary, only considering immediate benefits without thinking about her daughter's feelings.

"Mr. Zhu, what's the situation now?"

"Mr. Ling, it's not clear over the phone. How about this - when you have time, come to Silver Star Entertainment, and we can talk in person."

"Alright, I'll be there right away."

After hanging up the phone, Ling Chen greeted Nanrong Wanqing and then drove alone to the headquarters of Silver Star Entertainment. Shortly after he left, a neatly dressed Nanrong Wanqing came out of the room and went straight out the door.

Su Lin, who was watching TV, couldn't help but ask, "Wanqing, where are you going?"

"Just have something to do."

"Do you want me to come with you?"

"No need, I've got Zhong Wei and the others with me, you stay home."

Su Lin responded and continued watching the TV program, not asking any further.

Leaving the Nanrong home, Nanrong Wanqing didn't take any security personnel with her, but went alone to the entrance of Wealthy Manor. Then, she took out her cell phone and dialed a number, saying, "I'm here."

A few minutes passed, and a white Honda van drove up from the side of the road and stopped next to Nanrong Wanqing.

The car door opened, Nanrong Wanqing looked at the person in the car, didn't say a word, and directly got in. The car started and soon merged into the flow of traffic, disappearing from view.

At this moment, Ling Chen had already driven to the entrance of Silver Star Entertainment's headquarters. As soon as he got out of the car, Zhu Yansong, who had been waiting at the entrance, hurried over.

"Mr. Ling, I'm terribly sorry for the inconvenience of having you come all the way here late at night."

"It's okay." Ling Chen said nonchalantly, waving his hand and asked, "Where is Shiyun?"

"Still in the meeting room. During this period of time, Miss Yao covertly got in touch with another company, and now she's leading them in negotiations with President Yang."

"Negotiations? About what?"

"Compensation." Zhu Yansong explained, "Initially, Miss Tang signed a ten-year contract with our company. If she unilaterally breaches the contract, she will need to pay a large sum of compensation, about 200 million. Miss Yao cannot afford this amount, so it has to be paid by another company."

Ling Chen nodded to himself. Tang Shiyun's fame is considerable; as long as she continues to be promoted, any company that takes over will be able to reap huge profits in the future. Naturally, there are companies willing to pay about 200 million in compensation.

"What's President Yang's attitude?"

"He certainly doesn't want to let her go. Miss Tang is someone we've cultivated with countless resources, and now that we've finally achieved results, who would want to give away the benefits?"

Zhu Yansong felt somewhat helpless as he continued, "The key issue now is still Miss Yao. If she doesn't relent, it probably will be difficult to keep Miss Tang."

"Mr. Zhu, how about this, could you please call Shiyun out for me and arrange a place for us to talk alone?"

"Sure, no problem."

Upon entering Silver Star Entertainment Company, Zhu Yansong took Ling Chen to his office and said, "Mr. Ling, please wait here a moment while I go call Miss Tang."

In less than five minutes, the door of the office was pushed open from the outside. Following that, Tang Shiyun, dressed in plain goose-yellow casual wear, came in. Tang Shiyun was dressed simply but it could not hide her natural beauty. However, her slightly red eyes appeared as if she had just been crying, and there were still tears lingering in the corners of her eyes, looking vulnerable and pitiful.

Upon opening the door and seeing Ling Chen in the office, Tang Shiyun was momentarily taken aback; it seemed she hadn't expected Ling Chen to be there and froze on the spot.

Ling Chen gave a wry smile and said, "You little girl."

Hearing the familiar nickname, Tang Shiyun's tears broke free like a flood, unable to stop them from gushing out, erupting all her emotions.

"Ling."

With a tender shout, Tang Shiyun threw herself into Ling Chen's arms, wrapping her arms tightly around his waist.

Chapter 359 Contract Dispute

Ling Chen gently patted Tang Shiyun's back, soothing her collapsing emotions, and softly said, "Alright, stop crying, I'll shoulder everything for you."

After crying for a while, Tang Shiyun gradually stopped her tears and sobbingly said, "Ling, I... I'm afraid I can't stay."

"How so? Has the matter been settled on their end?"

"The other party agreed to pay the penalty, and President Yang is helpless. Even taking it to court would be useless. They are drafting the contract now."

Ling Chen took Tang Shiyun's hand and walked with her to a sofa nearby where they sat down. Looking at Tang Shiyun, tear-stained and pitiful, Ling Chen spoke, "Girl, this is originally your family matter, and I, as an outsider, should not interfere. However, putting aside everything else, I want to know what your heart truly desires. Do you wish to go to another company, or do you want to continue staying here?"

"Mr. Zhu and President Yang have always taken good care of me, treating me like family. Of course, I want to stay, but... my mom..." Mentioning her mother, Tang Shiyun's expression immediately turned gloomy.

If it weren't for Yao Li meddling, she wouldn't be this heartbroken. Nevertheless, that's her mother no matter what.

Ling Chen smiled faintly, reached out to wipe away the tears at the corners of Tang Shiyun's eyes, and said, "You're already eighteen, an adult with the right to make your own decisions. It's appropriate to respect Miss Yao, your mother, but you can't hand over your entire life to her. You need to learn to control your own destiny. In terms of gratitude, President Yang and Mr. Zhu have spent so much effort developing you. If you leave them now and turn to another company, even if they don't say anything, outsiders will criticize you for being ungrateful. Of course, I know this isn't your choice; it's mainly because of your mother."

Tang Shiyun whispered, "I tried to persuade my mom, but she won't listen to me."

"You, everything about you is good, just your character is too soft. On this matter, your mother's approach is terribly wrong, and you can't afford to make the same mistake alongside her."

"Ling, then what should I do?"

"Like I said earlier, you need to learn to make decisions for yourself, and you must take a firm stance on this issue. Frankly speaking, for better or for worse, what your mom is doing now is ruining your future, treating you merely as a tool to make money without considering your feelings at all. If you can't break free from your mom's control, you will have a hard time growing in the future."

Seeing Tang Shiyun looking hesitant, Ling Chen continued to persuade, "Girl, if you trust me, do as I say, and don't let your mom interfere anymore."

After saying that, Ling Chen fell silent. He knew that Tang Shiyun was a filial daughter, and asking her to go against her mother was undoubtedly difficult. But he had no choice; for Tang Shiyun to be free, she needed to break away from Yao Li's control.

Time ticked away, second by second, and Tang Shiyun kept her head down, indecisive. Ling Chen understood her feelings, so he didn't rush her, giving her ample time to think things through.

Over ten minutes later, a knocking sound 'dong dong dong' came from outside the office. Following that, Zhu Yansong entered from outside, saying, "Miss Tang, Miss Yao and Mr. Tang asking you to come over." After saying this, Zhu Yansong glanced at Ling Chen with an inquiring look.

Ling Chen shrugged his shoulders, looking at Tang Shiyun beside him, and gently grasping her hand, asking, "Made a decision?"

Tang Shiyun slightly lifted her head, her soft eyes carrying a hint of firmness. Catching the expression in her eyes, Ling Chen smiled, knowing she had made her own decision.

"Go ahead."

Tang Shiyun stood up and followed Zhu Yansong to the door, hesitating slightly as she turned back to look at Ling Chen on the sofa, softly saying, "Ling, can you come with me?" After speaking, she fiddled with the hem of her clothes, hesitantly adding, "I'm afraid... I'm afraid I won't have the courage when the time comes, if you were by my side, I..."

Before Tang Shiyun could finish speaking, Ling Chen grinned and nodded, saying, "No problem."

Leaving the office, the three of them went straight to the conference room on the same floor.

Pushing the door open, they saw five people sitting inside. Besides the chairman of Silver Star Entertainment, Yang Chengfeng, and Yao Li, there were three middle-aged men in suits, probably lawyers judging by the serious and stern expressions on two of their faces.

As for the other middle-aged man, he was a representative from another company, named Xu Qiang, whom Zhu Yansong had mentioned to Ling Chen before coming in.

Seeing Ling Chen following behind, Yang Chengfeng, who had been maintaining a stern face, brightened up and quickly stood to greet him with a smile, "Mr. Ling, hello!"

"President Yang." Ling Chen greeted politely, then turned his gaze to Yao Li next to him.

At this moment, Yao Li was also looking at Ling Chen, not hiding her displeasure. Especially seeing Ling Chen coming in with her daughter, she became even more upset, pulling Tang Shiyun aside and coldly asked, "Why are you with him?"

"I..."

"Miss Tang."

Before Tang Shiyun could finish speaking, Xu Qiang, accompanied by his lawyers, walked over with a smile and eagerly handed a contract to Tang Shiyun, saying, "The contract is ready, just need your signature, and you will have no further ties with Silver Star Entertainment, our company will pay the full penalty."

Looking at the contract presented to her, Tang Shiyun did not reach out to take it but instead said to Yao Li, "Mom, I have something I want to talk to you about."

Yao Li impatiently said, "Whatever you have to say, we can talk about it back home, sign the contract first." Saying that, Yao Li stuffed the contract and a pen into Tang Shiyun's hands, urging her to sign quickly.

Tang Shiyun glanced at Ling Chen standing next to her, her expression steadied, and she casually placed the contract on the conference table.

Seeing her daughter's actions, Yao Li frowned and asked, "What are you doing?"

"Mom, I can't sign this contract."

"What?" Yao Li was stunned, her face immediately looking troubled as she repressed her anger and said, "Why won't you sign? We have arranged everything for you, do you know how much effort and heartache I've put into this matter for you? Are you trying to kill me by saying you won't sign now?"

Tang Shiyun pleaded, "Mom, please don't be mad, let me explain slowly."

"I don't want to listen." Yao Li waved her hand, pointing at the contract on the table and said, "If you still consider me your mother, then sign it quickly."

Tang Shiyun gathered her courage and said, "Mom, please don't force me, I've already decided, I won't leave Silver Star Entertainment before my contract expires."

Hearing this, Yang Chengfeng and Zhu Yansong immediately showed joy, forming a stark contrast to the tightly furrowed brows of Xu Qiang.

Seeing her daughter disobeying her and making decisions on her own, Yao Li became furious, and exclaimed, "Are you deliberately trying to infuriate me to death? Tell me, is it because of this bastard?" Yao Li pointed at Ling Chen, her breathing becoming more rapid.

Chapter 360 Mother-Daughter Relationship

Tang Shiyun glanced at Ling Chen, and the latter nodded slightly without speaking, his eyes offering encouragement.

"Mom, this is my own decision, it doesn't involve anyone else; you don't need to blame Ling."

Yao Li cursed angrily: "Still calling him Ling, why are you so close with him?" Then, turning to Ling Chen, she burst out: "I know it's you, you bastard, leading my daughter astray. What business is it of yours to meddle in our family affairs? Get out! Get the hell out!"

Yang Chengfeng slightly frowned and said, "Miss Yao, we are at Silver Star Entertainment right now, not your home. You don't have the right to tell anyone to get out."

Yao Li was left speechless for a moment and scoffed, picking up the contract off the table and holding it in front of Tang Shiyun, speaking sternly, "If you still think of me as your mother, then sign this right away. Otherwise, I will disown you."

Hearing her mother's coercion, Tang Shiyun's eyes immediately reddened, tears glistening, lightly biting her lower lip, she struggled to hold back her tears.

Seeing Tang Shiyun's indifference, Xu Qiang couldn't sit still and blurted out, "Miss Tang, you reached out to us first, and now that everything has been negotiated, you're unwilling to sign. Are you taking us for a ride?"

"I'm sorry!" Tang Shiyun replied, "I never approached you, nor did I think about switching companies. This was orchestrated by my mother without my knowledge, and I was kept in the dark until your appearance today. I'm sorry for any inconvenience caused and please forgive us."

Hearing this, Xu Qiang looked at Yao Li with dissatisfaction and frowned, "Miss Yao, you repeatedly assured us that you could bring your daughter to our company. Because she is your daughter, we believed you, and even paid the upfront fee you demanded – thirty million. Now that it's come to this, don't you think you owe us a reasonable explanation?"

"Thirty million?" Tang Shiyun asked in confusion; "What thirty million?"

"You don't know?" Xu Qiang continued, "Your mother asked us to pay her thirty million as a 'hardship fee' for poaching you from Silver Star Entertainment."

"No, it's not like that, there's no such thing," Yao Li said in a panic, quickly denying.

Xu Qiang snorted briefly, "It's written in black and white, Miss Yao, are you trying to renege on the deal?"

Tang Shiyun stared at Yao Li, her face deathly pale, and demanded, "Mom, what is going on, explain yourself clearly."

Yao Li hastily replied, "I...daughter, listen to me explain, I thought you would obediently sign the contract, so I made that request. It's not excessive."

After hearing Yao Li's explanation, Ling Chen sighed silently. Calling her mercenary was indeed accurate. She was only interested in immediate benefits, utterly disregarding her daughter's future. For Tang Shiyun to have such a mother was truly tragic.

"Miss Yao, what do you have to say now?" Xu Qiang said irritably, "The contract is right here, will you sign it or not? If you can't fulfill it, please, according to our initial agreement, pay us fifty million including the penalty, and we can consider this matter closed."

"My dear daughter, you've heard it too, just sign it, mom can't afford to pay them that much in damages," Yao Li still did not give up and persuaded.

Tang Shiyun sighed helplessly and said, "Mom, this is a mess you got yourself into, find a way to resolve it yourself; I don't have that much money either." With that, Tang Shiyun felt drained, not wanting to say another word, and turned to walk out.

Seeing this, Yang Chengfeng gently nudged Ling Chen's arm and whispered, "Mr. Ling, go comfort Tang, we'll handle things here."

"Alright, I'll leave it to you."

After leaving the conference room, Tang Shiyun stood alone at the balcony, gazing at the bustling night scene in the distance. Gusts of evening breeze brought a hint of early autumn chill.

Ling Chen walked behind Tang Shiyun, took off his coat, and draped it over her, standing quietly by her side, wordless. Sometimes, silent companionship is more powerful than words.

"Ling."

Tang Shiyun, holding back her tears, slightly turned and leaned her head on Ling Chen's shoulder, seeking comfort. Ling Chen raised his hand, enclosing her slender waist, whispering, "Don't cry. No matter what happens, I'll always be by your side."

Tang Shiyun nodded lightly, her lips curving into a sweet smile.

The evening breeze was cool, but with Ling Chen by her side, she felt a warm heart, unfearing of the chill.

Moments later, the sound of footsteps approached from behind. Ling Chen and Tang Shiyun turned around to see Zhu Yansong walking up.

"Mr. Zhu."

"Mr. Zhu, how did it go? Is everything taken care of?"

Zhu Yansong smiled lightly and said, "It's all settled. The 30 million plus the penalty will be paid by our company in full. The 30 million that Miss Yao got can stay with her, but starting from today, she cannot be involved in any matter related to Miss Tang. From now on, all affairs will be fully handled by Miss Tang herself and our company."

At this point, Zhu Yansong paused slightly before continuing, "Miss Tang, you have a ten-year contract with Silver Star Entertainment. President Yang's hope is that you could renew it early and extend the contract to fifteen years. Do you have any objections?"

"I accept," Tang Shiyun replied without hesitation.

"This is a happy outcome for all," Ling Chen remarked with a smile.

"Well..." Tang Shiyun hesitated before asking, "Mr. Zhu, what about my mother?"

"She's still in the conference room. You can go see her if you want. It's a good opportunity to have a proper talk. After all, you're family, and there's no need for relations to be so strained."

Ling Chen added, "Mr. Zhu is right, go see your mom. Hopefully, this incident will serve as a lesson for her."

"Then I'll head there first."

After seeing Tang Shiyun off, Ling Chen didn't stay long. He greeted Zhu Yansong and then drove back to Wealthy Manor.

When he arrived back at the Nanrong home, Su Lin was still watching TV in the living room. Ling Chen casually asked, "Where's Wanqing?"

"She went out."

"Out?" Ling Chen said in surprise, "What for?"

"She didn't say. With Zhong Wei and the others with her, you don't have to worry."

Hearing this, Ling Chen's eyebrows instantly knitted together, "When I just got back, I ran into Captain Zhong and his team, and they definitely didn't go out."

"Ah?" Su Lin's face turned to shock as she sprang from the couch, "Really?"

Without another word, Ling Chen quickly took out his phone and dialed Nanrong Wanqing's number. Immediately, however, the line on the other end beeped with the busy signal that the phone was switched off.

What is this woman doing?

Ling Chen's mind raced with urgency, and he turned and ran out of the villa.

By then, the Honda minivan had already left the city area, arriving at a deserted countryside. In front of an abandoned derelict house, the Honda minivan came to a stop.

The car door opened, and Nanrong Wanqing got out alone, heading towards the lit-up broken house.