

"Liu Kun, my time is running out."

"Master, the doctors have said that you..."

"Those doctors are all paid by me. They say what I want them to say."

Nanrong Yong glanced at Liu Kun, his voice grave. "You are the person I trust the most; I might as well tell you the truth. The doctors predict I have less than two years to live. The reason I don't tell Wanqing is that I don't want them to worry. Wanqing has only taken over the company for a few years, and the foundation isn't stable. If those at home find out about my health condition, who knows what they might do. In families like ours, interests are more tangible than kinship."

"Master, rest assured, I will not tell anyone else about this."

Nanrong Yong nodded, then changed the subject. "I've heard someone sent a clock while I've been ill?"

"Yes... we still haven't found out who it was."

"Hmph! No need to search, I can guess who. They dare to send me a clock so openly—it seems they can't wait to make their move. Liu Kun, stay by Wanqing's side from now on and protect her. I don't want the tragedy of last time to repeat itself."

Liu Kun knew the 'tragedy' Nanrong Yong was referring to. A few years ago, Nanrong Wanqing was in a car accident on the way to work. The driver fled the scene, and no one has found them yet.

That car accident caused Nanrong Wanqing to become paraplegic, destined to spend her life in a wheelchair. The Nanrong Family unanimously believed that the accident was plotted by their adversaries.

"Master, it is my unshirkable duty to protect the young miss, but if I stay by the young miss's side, given her intelligence, she might soon guess something."

"You have a point." Nanrong Yong frowned slightly. "But in the Nanrong Family, aside from you, no one else is capable of protecting the young miss."

Liu Kun's eyes darted around, and he suggested, "Master, since there's no one suitable in the family, we could hire from outside. I have a good candidate in mind. The last time I sparred with him, I lost. If we can employ him, the young miss's safety should be guaranteed without fail."

"Oh?" Nanrong Yong said with interest, "Even you're not his match. What's his background?"

"I checked, his name is Ling Chen."

Then, Liu Kun recounted what had happened that day.

"Being able to defeat you at such a young age, he really has some skills. However, capability is one thing, reliability is key."

"How about I test him?"

After some thought, Nanrong Yong nodded. "That sounds good. If he's as capable as you say, it's worth a try."

...

After a satisfying meal, Ling Chen patted his full belly as he walked out of the restaurant, picking his teeth with a toothpick, his face flushed with contentment, "Haozi, I won't see you off. You can go back on your own."

Over the course of the meal, their relationship had improved significantly, shifting directly from Mr. Nanrong to Haozi.

"Chen, Brother Hao, then I'll head back first. Let's meet again when we have the time."

"Sure thing."

After seeing off Nanrong Hao, Ling Chen and Jiang Hao strolled down Five Miles Street, casually chatting as they went along.

"Chen..." Jiang Hao opened his mouth, hesitated, then stopped.

"Speak your mind."

"During the meal, you mentioned you got fired by your boss. What are you planning to do now?"

"Why ask me this?"

Jiang Hao hesitated, "Chen, you're so skilled. Why not join us..."

"Forget it, I'm not interested." Ling Chen knew what he was getting at and rejected the idea outright.

He had only just left behind a world of fighting and killing, a life he was already tired of. Besides, hanging out with a bunch of small-time thugs for scraps wasn't classy at all.

"Chen, I was just saying. I won't force you, but... I hope you can teach us."

Jiang Hao said earnestly, "Though I've got quite a few underlings, they're just swaggerers at best, only good enough to make up numbers. When trouble comes, they're useless, as spineless as reeds. Strength is what matters in this world, and while I've got a foundation, it's not solid. I'd like to ask for your help in training a core force. That way, we can take care of things ourselves in the future and won't need to bother you again."

Hearing this, Ling Chen looked at him in a new light. The kid wasn't bad, ambitious and thoughtful.

No matter what you do, you can't do without a good brain; it's the same in the underworld.

Jiang Hao's well-structured request showed he had thought things through.

Everyone likes an ambitious person, and Ling Chen was no exception. Friends help when they can, and he was also curious to see how far Jiang Hao could go.

With that in mind, he nodded, "Alright, I'll help you one more time."

"Really?"

Jiang Hao had expected Ling Chen to refuse since his previous requests had all been turned down. So, Ling Chen agreeing was like an unexpected surprise.

"Chen, thank you."

"Don't mention it. Alright, I'm heading back, we'll get in touch later."

When he got home, Ling Chen was about to unlock his door when he saw Tang Shiyun running down the corridor towards him, her face alight with excitement.

"Ling Brother."

"Hey..."

Before he could finish, Tang Shiyun suddenly stretched out her arms, wrapped them around his neck, and planted a kiss on his face.

Ling Chen was taken aback, staring blankly at Tang Shiyun.

What madness had this girl caught, to be so blatant even if she liked him?

He hurriedly pried off Tang Shiyun's hands, chastising, "You girl, if you want a kiss go inside the house. It wouldn't look good to do this out here where people can see."

Flushing, Tang Shiyun realized her action was a bit excessive and explained, "Who wants to kiss you; I was just happy."

"Happy to see me?"

"As if I would be happy to see you." Tang Shiyun said with a grin, "I have great news for you, my university entrance exam results are out, I got into East Sea University."

"Oh." Ling Chen responded indifferently, a bit disappointed.

He thought the girl had taken a fancy to him, but it turned out to be just a false alarm.

"Hey, what kind of reaction is that?" Tang Shiyun complained, "East Sea University is a well-known key university in the country, with less than a hundred admission slots each year. Aren't you happy for me?"

Fearful of upsetting the young girl, Ling Chen quickly responded, "Happy, of course, I'm happy. You getting into a key university makes me, your brother, proud too."

"Since your sister has added glory to your face, how do you plan to repay me?"

Ling Chen joked, "You know your brother Ling is poor, the most valuable thing I have is myself. How about I devote myself to you?"

Tang Shiyun pouted, "I don't want that."

"Then what do you want?"

Tang Shiyun's eyes spun, and latching onto his arm she cooed, "Brother Ling, why don't you take me out to have fun? Mom always says it's not safe at night and refuses to let me go out."

"In your mom's eyes, I'm even more unsafe."

(New book seeking support, if you have money give a little reward, if not leave a message and recommend.)