

Two Trillion 531

Chapter 531

After seeing off Mayor Dai Mingcheng of Tianqing City, Bai Xiaosheng also bid farewell to Ji Mingyang and returned to the company.

Arriving at Zhongjing Media, Bai Xiaosheng summoned Lin Weiwei, Song Yiming, Lei Ying, and Song Jiajia, gave them instructions, and told them he would be away for the next few days to celebrate his elder's birthday. He asked them to keep an eye on things.

Everyone expressed that they would do their respective duties and wouldn't slack off.

After making arrangements, Bai Xiaosheng had Feng drive him to the well-known Porcelain City in Zhongjing.

Through his father Bai Minghang's introduction, Bai Xiaosheng knew that his uncle enjoyed tasting tea and zisha teapots.

Thus, he spent tens of thousands to buy a master-level handmade zisha teapot as a birthday gift.

Anything more expensive was unnecessary.

Having bought the zisha teapot, Bai Xiaosheng then went to a mall and purchased some tonics.

Only then did he let Feng drive him home.

The entire ride was silent.

Arriving at the entrance of his residential complex, and seeing that it was getting dark, Bai Xiaosheng, to be safe, let Feng leave first and declined his offer to help carry things.

"I won't keep you for dinner; I'll treat you some other time," Bai Xiaosheng said to Feng with a smile, while holding his purchases.

"Mr. Bai, you're too kind! Then I'll be leaving," Feng said, feeling both honored and intimidated by his leader's words.

"Drive safely," Bai Xiaosheng added with another reminder.

"Yes, yes!" Feng nodded vigorously.

Watching the Maybach drive away, Bai Xiaosheng hurried home.

When he arrived, both Li Qiuyun and Bai Minghang were there.

The couple was delighted to see their son return.

Bai Xiaosheng rested for a short while before carrying the tonics to visit his grandmother Li Fengguan.

Bai Minghang and his wife followed him there.

Upon arrival, they found the place bustling; several uncles were present, Bai Fei and Bai Ran were there too, along with other brothers and sisters. The only person missing was Bai Shuanglei.

Regarding Bai Shuanglei, Bai Xiaosheng didn't inquire, and naturally, no one else brought it up.

However, Fourth Uncle and Fourth Aunt from the Bai Family looked somewhat embarrassed when they saw Bai Xiaosheng.

"Sheng, it's been a while since you came home!"

As soon as Bai Xiaosheng arrived, Li Fengguan was so happy she couldn't stop smiling. Holding Bai Xiaosheng's hands, she inspected him, "Hmm, you look thinner! Work is important, but you must pay attention to your health too!"

"Look at you, where have I lost weight? I've only been gaining these days," Bai Xiaosheng replied cheerfully.

There's a kind of thinness called 'your grandmother thinks you've lost weight'...

"Sheng!"

By the side, Bai Fei and Bai Ran greeted Bai Xiaosheng with smiles, their gazes filled with subtly hidden respect.

If even they were like this, the other peers, watching Bai Xiaosheng from a distance, were even more in awe.

Before Bai Xiaosheng's return, Bai Fei and Bai Ran had been the most outstanding members of the younger generation in the Bai Family; however, after his return to Zhongjing, they were outshone.

Now, they couldn't even hold a candle to him.

But after the incident with Bai Shuanglei, both Bai Fei and Bai Ran genuinely admired Bai Xiaosheng and were in awe of his seemingly divine career advancement speed in the workplace.

The position of vice president of Zhongjing Media was something to be proud of!

As for Bai Xiaosheng stirring up storms in Zhongjing, these two were actually not clear on the details.

They might be high-level white-collar workers, but they were ultimately not qualified to mix in certain circles.

The way Bai Xiaosheng crushed the Yin Family, all they saw was Zhongjing Media boldly exposing issues with the Zhongjing Haoran project.

Bai Xiaosheng's dealings with the Zhang Family didn't make it into many reports—those were topics of private discussions within certain circles.

Bai Xiaosheng became the General Manager of Zhongjing Media, but he didn't publicize it.

The Zhongjing Media Industry Alliance didn't even have a plaque, nor did they hold a grand meeting, so outsiders naturally had no way of knowing.

Bai Xiaosheng became a distinguished guest of the mayor, and people here were even less aware.

However, even so, Bai Fei and Bai Ran still regarded Bai Xiaosheng as a role model and idol, taking pride in him.

"Bai Fei, Bai Ran," Bai Xiaosheng greeted them warmly when he saw the two.

The matter concerning Bai Shuanglei had changed Bai Xiaosheng's impression of these two people. He had come to admire Bai Ran's courage and cleverness, and his impression of Bai Fei had significantly improved.

Afterward, Bai Xiaosheng called home and learned that Bai Fei's temperament had greatly changed. He became very attentive to family affairs, no longer nitpicking, and even made weekly visits to see Grandmother Li Fengguan.

For this, Bai Xiaosheng felt even more admiration.

"Is it just the three of us from our generation who will be following this time?" Bai Xiaosheng inquired.

"Exactly," Bai Ran replied with a nod and a smile.

"Just us three among the younger ones. All the uncles and aunts are going," Bai Fei added with a laugh, "This time, among the three of us, you hold the highest honor. You're there to back us up!"

Bai Xiaosheng couldn't help but chuckle, "What backing up? We're all family; there's no need for such formalities."

Seeing Bai Xiaosheng speak like this, Bai Fei's smile shifted ever so slightly. It seemed he had more to say, yet perhaps due to the presence of others, he restrained himself, "Anyway, I'm relieved that you can join us!"

A thought crossed Bai Xiaosheng's mind.

It seemed his cousin had more to say.

It wasn't convenient to ask or discuss, so Bai Xiaosheng had to let it go for the time being.

Li Fengguan pulled Bai Xiaosheng aside for a private talk.

Shortly after, someone knocked on the door.

Upon opening it, a group entered — the chefs and staff from the restaurant where they celebrated the old lady's birthday last time, arriving to provide service again, with tables, chairs, wine, and dishes delivered to the doorstep.

Having come more than once, these people were familiar with the job and got straight to work.

The dinner party began, bustling with excitement.

Bai Xiaosheng sat next to Grandma, helping her with serving food.

The old lady was joyful, even indulging in a small drink.

The large family intermingled; laughter and toasts filled the air.

After the meal, cleaning up was swift, and in perfect unison, everyone took their leave.

They had to set off for Tianqing City early the next day and wanted to let the old lady rest early.

As Bai Xiaosheng was leaving, Bai Fei and Bai Ran personally saw him off. Bai Xiaosheng noticed that Bai Fei seemed to have something to say to him. He kept his composure and readily agreed.

After leaving Grandma's house, they descended the building and walked under the street lights.

After walking a bit and seeing no one else around, Bai Xiaosheng slowed his pace and smiled at Bai Fei, "Brother Bai Fei, I've noticed since I came back that you have something you want to tell me?"

"Yes."

Bai Fei nodded, then suddenly asked, "Sheng, do you still have any memory of our uncle-in-law and... those relatives?"

Caught off guard by the sudden shift in topic, Bai Xiaosheng smiled and responded, "I really don't remember them anymore."

Bai Fei and Bai Ran exchanged glances.

"You left early for your studies, so naturally, you don't remember. But we've had a few interactions with them," Bai Ran suddenly sighed.

This sigh caught Bai Xiaosheng off guard.

Why did it seem like Bai Ran was somewhat reluctant about this trip?

"Let me just say it," said Bai Fei with a sigh, looking intently at Bai Xiaosheng, "Grandma wants to see our uncle out of kinship, but as for us... if it weren't out of respect for Grandma, we really wouldn't want to visit that Li Family!"

Us?

Bai Xiaosheng raised an eyebrow.

Chapter 532 Poor Family, Rich Relatives - Part 1

"Bai Fei, when you say 'none of us want to go to the Li Family,' who are you referring to with 'us'? You and Bai Ran? Don't tell me it includes the uncles too?" Bai Xiaosheng couldn't help but ask.

Bai Fei's words had taken him by surprise.

He had thought it was just an ordinary visit to relatives, following Grandma to see Uncle, and to wish him a happy birthday.

But now it seemed not so simple!

Bai Xiaosheng racked his brains but could only remember that his uncle's name was Li Wenzun, beyond that, he had no other impression.

This wasn't really his fault.

Initially, Bai Minghang had felt that his son should receive a better education and early experience with hardship, so at a very young age, he had sent him away to a boarding school with better teaching conditions and stricter management.

At that time, other families' children still went to nearby schools, close to home, where they could go back frequently.

As Bai Fei said, it was normal for Bai Xiaosheng to seldom see these relatives at home, and it was normal for them to see him even less.

However, what was it about the Li Family that made Bai Fei, and even Bai Ran, show such expressions?

Bai Xiaosheng was very puzzled.

Bai Fei and Bai Ran exchanged glances, Bai Ran nodded slightly as a sign for Bai Fei to continue speaking.

With a bitter smile, Bai Fei said to Bai Xiaosheng, "Let me be frank, the only ones who truly want to go or think it's not a big deal are probably only Grandma and Uncle! The rest, everyone else, is reluctant!"

Everyone is reluctant to go?! Bai Xiaosheng was startled.

Even if he was mentally prepared, the scope of "us" he mentioned was too wide.

How could this be!

The Li Family was so detestable?!

After all, it was Uncle's family, could it really be that bad!

Bai Xiaosheng couldn't figure it out.

"Speaking of our Uncle Li Wenzun, he is definitely a man whose temperament you could see at a glance. He was extremely arrogant, too proud for his own good, and looked down on those who weren't as successful as them. With such a father as an example, you can imagine the kind of people our three cousins must be. And our generation of relatives, they have inherited this arrogance, no, they've gone from 'blue is extracted from the indigo plant but is even more vivid than the plant itself!'"

In Bai Fei's speech, there was no lack of sarcasm.

"In previous years, our Bai Family really didn't do so well! Not as well-off as the Li Family, the Li Family came to our place all for Grandma's sake."

With a self-deprecating smile, Bai Fei said, "A poor family with a rich relative, still in contact; can you imagine what that feels like... you extend a genuine heart, and they feel it's dirty! It's fortunate you were studying away, never once experiencing such ridicule and humiliation!"

As he spoke, the veins on Bai Fei's cheeks faintly bulged, as if he still harbored anger.

Bai Xiaosheng was silent.

"Look at me, do you think I'm particularly greedy for money, that I even calculate against my own family and have fallen into the eyes of money," Bai Fei sighed lightly, "To tell you the truth, it's all childhood shadows, influenced by them! Money, oh how important it is, with money you're kin; without money, even if you're family, their gazes are like knives!"

Bai Fei couldn't go on anymore.

"Sheng, you might think Bai Fei's words are an exaggeration, but I can tell you, he's not exaggerating at all. You've never seen it, so you don't have a direct impression! Back then, our grandmother was made so angry by these visiting relatives that she fell ill and almost had to be hospitalized!" Bai Ran added from the side.

What!

Made Grandma so angry she fell ill and almost had to be hospitalized!

Beneath Bai Xiaosheng's incredulity, his eyes immediately flashed with two sharp cold lights!

His Grandma, Li Fengguan, was a proud and honorable woman, simple-natured, and very forgiving!

If even she was affected like that, it showed just how excessive the Li Family was!

Critically, they still showed up at the door, which infuriated him to the point of falling ill!

Bai Xiaosheng's face suddenly turned very ugly.

Showing up to start a fight, within this matter, there must have been conflicts they were unaware of. Regardless of the reason, their actions were still extremely excessive!

As such, it is better not to associate with these relatives!

Bai Xiaosheng thought to himself.

Through the back-and-forth recounting by Bai Fei and Bai Ran, Bai Xiaosheng understood.

In fact, in recent years, the two families really hadn't interacted much.

It was just that when Li Wenzun turned eighty-eight, he sent a message through someone.

His grandmother Li Fengguan felt that no matter what had happened in the past, it was all in the past. Blood was thicker than water, and this might be her last meeting with her own brother. After this, whether they would meet again in this lifetime was uncertain.

The old woman had this thought, and naturally, they had nothing to say about it.

Bai Xiaosheng remained silent, lost in thought.

"Although it has been a long time since that incident, to be on the safe side, we feel that you need to be mentally prepared for this trip," Bai Ran said, but then immediately smiled, "Of course, with how well you have been doing, even the Li Family wouldn't dare to underestimate you!"

"Having you accompany us, we also feel reassured," Bai Fei's emotions relaxed slightly, and she too smiled.

In his silence, Bai Xiaosheng's face returned to normal.

Bai Fei and Bai Ran noticed this and nodded to each other in private.

They knew best the relationship between Bai Xiaosheng and his grandmother. In the past, Bai Fei had crossed the line, upsetting the old lady. Bai Xiaosheng's anger flared up, and he had a public falling out. If not for the blood relationship, he might have even come to blows!

At that moment, upon hearing that someone had angered his grandmother to illness, the rage Bai Xiaosheng exuded in that instant was chilling for both of them.

Yet in the blink of an eye, he regained his composure.

It was evident how terrifyingly in control of his emotions this younger cousin was!

Bai Fei and Bai Ran's respect and admiration for Bai Xiaosheng increased even more.

"Alright, Brother Bai Fei, Sister Bai Ran, I understand the situation now, thank you for the warning!" Bai Xiaosheng even offered them a calm smile.

Bai Fei and Bai Ran nodded.

"However, after so many years without contact, they might have changed. We're just giving you a heads-up; try not to take it too much to heart. Anyway, go back and get some early rest; we're setting out early tomorrow," Bai Ran said.

"Yeah!" Bai Fei echoed.

Bai Xiaosheng nodded, his expression undisturbed, and with a smile, he said, "You both should rest early as well."

Both of them nodded as well.

The three of them said goodbye and went in the direction of their respective homes.

Walking in the night, Bai Xiaosheng felt the chill in the wind, his gaze flickering coldly under the streetlight's glow.

"Poor and unnoticed in a bustling market, wealth in the mountains has distant kin. If you doubt it, just observe the banquet wine, toast after toast to the rich first, with a tall horse tied in front of the door, they come as kin whether related or not. A begging stick lies in front, but friends and family do not visit. In this world, making friends requires Gold, with little Gold friendships do not deepen, with money and wine, you have many brothers, but who shows up when you're in urgent need? The winner is king, the loser an outlaw, importance placed only on rank, not on the person..."

With each step, Bai Xiaosheng softly chanted these verses derived from "The Book of Thousand Virtues."

Reading them now, wave after wave of coldness washed over him.

"Li Family," Bai Xiaosheng's gaze turned dark, "many years ago, thank you for motivating the Bai Family! Tomorrow when I visit, I hope you have learned to restrain yourselves over these years!"

Chapter 533 Do Not Come Out to Welcome!_1

Bai Xiaosheng returned to his own home and faced his mother, Li Qiuyun, and father, Bai Minghang, his expression remained unchanged, and he did not mention a word about what Bai Fei and Bai Ran had said earlier.

It was a rare reunion, and the family sat together on the sofa, chatting for a while.

When the conversation turned to Bai Xiaosheng's childhood, he intentionally or unintentionally mentioned the Li Family.

Bai Minghang was naturally simple and honest, remembering kindness rather than holding grudges, showing no dissatisfaction with the Li Family whatsoever. It was only Li Qiuyun who nearly let something slip a few times, but Bai Minghang "accidentally" coughed, drowning out her words.

Bai Xiaosheng remained impassive.

After spending a couple of leisurely hours, Bai Minghang and his spouse urged their son to rest early.

After all, they had to wake up early the next day to set off.

So Bai Xiaosheng went back to his room.

The night passed without incident.

The following day, the Bai Family got up early, finished their grooming, had breakfast, and right after that, the uncle called to say that the vehicle had arrived.

The trip to Tianqing would take three hours by car. Considering the long journey and the number of people, not to mention the need to accommodate the elderly Li Fengguan, the Bai Family had rented an RV.

When Bai Xiaosheng and his family arrived at the elderly Li Fengguan's home, everyone was already gathered.

The elderly Li Fengguan, her four sons and daughters-in-law, and the younger generation including Bai Xiaosheng, Bai Fei, and Bai Ran, totaled twelve people.

The group gathered their belongings and, amid calls and directions, descended to the lower floors.

The RV was parked there, and this was the first time the elderly lady was riding in such a novel vehicle. She stepped in and found the bedroom and kitchen with all the amenities, which fascinated her.

Bai Minghang had visited the Li Family several years ago and remembered the way. He sat in the passenger seat, using the GPS to help navigate for the driver.

The RV driver was a talkative and cheerful man in his forties who cracked jokes as they set off.

On the RV.

Bai Xiaosheng, Bai Fei, and Bai Ran sat together, opened a bottle of the pre-prepared red wine, and as they sipped and chatted, they didn't find the ride dull at all.

When the subject of the Li Family came up again, Bai Xiaosheng fell into a contemplative silence.

Yet, a fierce aura unmistakably enveloped his face.

This expression made Bai Fei and Bai Ran fall into an involuntary silence.

"Li Family, I never saw your true faces before, and I could pretend nothing happened. But now, I'm here! If you act like you did before, then don't blame me, Bai Xiaosheng, for turning my back and not recognizing anyone!"

Bai Xiaosheng silently vowed in his heart.

Tianqing City.

The villa district on the eastern outskirts.

This place is the closest residential villa project to the center of Tianqing City, with developed transport and a surrounding area bustling with activity.

Although there are no natural lakes in this villa area, the developers excavated soil to create a river, forming a landscape of waterways, and with the addition of tree planting and greenery, it had its own unique appeal.

Unlike other places, the villas here are all made into Chinese-style courtyards, which have a special charm. Living here is in itself a symbol of prestigious status.

The Li Family occupied a very large, three-courtyard, four-part complex with high walls and imposing gates.

Inside, one could find minor buildings, wing rooms, corridors, the main building, and a back building, all neatly ordered; the courtyard was paved with bluestone, and the greenery and flowers were ever-present.

The Li Family members were adept in business, and in the years past, the patriarch, Li Wenzun, was a wealthy merchant in Tianqing City.

After his three sons established their own families, the family's business was divided into three sections, each growing immensely.

In the grandchildren's generation, there emerged Li Feitian, renowned as the demon of Tianqing's business world, who became a venture capitalist at the tender age of thirty-five!

It is said that the Li Family members are proud, and indeed, they have every reason to be proud.

At this moment, people were coming and going in the Li Family's large courtyard, buzzing with activity.

Although the old patriarch's birthday celebration would not be until tomorrow, preparations had already begun in full swing today.

Inside the main house.

There sat an elder with silvery hair and a lively spirit, dressed in a dark red traditional Tang suit emblazoned with the character for "longevity." He was all smiles, warmly receiving the greetings of the younger generation. He was Bai Xiaosheng's uncle—Li Wenzun.

Li Wenzun's wife, Yu Qingmei, also sat by his side, beaming with joy.

Outside, the younger relatives came to pay their respects and then went out to help.

After a round of bustling noise, the room grew somewhat quieter.

"I wonder when my sister will arrive," Li Wenzun couldn't help but glance at the clock.

"Oh, people do grow sentimental in old age," muttered old lady Yu Qingmei with a curl of her lip. "Why invite them at all! They're just a bunch of country bumpkins from the suburbs, unaware of the ways of the world. Our family is going to celebrate your birthday in grand style this time. The guests are all distinguished figures from the commercial and political worlds of Tianqing. If you invite those people and they embarrass us, it will only tarnish our reputation!"

In her youth, Yu Qingmei had a sharp tongue, and with age, not only did this not change, but her verbal skills had evidently improved.

Just a few days ago, she managed to make a young man cry with her scolding.

"Enough, she is my sister after all!" Li Wenzun couldn't help but put a bit of force into his voice, but then he sighed deeply, "Pity my sister, she had bad luck, insisting on marrying a poor youngster and moving so far away to Zhongjing."

"Pity what? It was her own choice!" Yu Qingmei said coldly, "Back then, when you, her brother, visited her with good intentions, didn't she get angry with you too? Being poor is one thing, but she still wanted dignity. How much is a poor person's dignity worth? She even dared to argue with me, her sister-in-law. My visiting their home was a favor to her! Poor and stubborn to the bone, it serves her right her husband died early."

"That's enough, there are children here!" Li Wenzun scolded in a low voice and then muttered, "Such a trivial matter, and you've held onto it for so many years! When she fought with you back then, wasn't it because you were speaking harshly?"

"As if you speak any more kindly!" huffed Yu Qingmei, unwilling to back down.

"Alright, alright, can we just let it go for my sake? When Fengguan arrives this time, just let it be. This meeting between siblings, we don't even know if there'll be another chance in this lifetime," Li Wenzun said with a touch of melancholy.

This time, Yu Qingmei finally refrained from saying more, but her gaze still held a hint of displeasure.

The two old people continued their conversation.

A five- or six-year-old boy ran in from outside with two streams of snot trailing behind. Upon entering the room, he took a deep breath, sucking back the snot like noodles.

"Great-grandpa, great-grandma, a huge car has arrived outside! They say it's from Zhongjing!" the boy exclaimed.

"Has it come?" Li Wenzun stood up, visibly excited.

"Hey, don't go!" Yu Qingmei glared at him, "You are the Longevity Star Deity, and her big brother, there's no need for you to go and fetch her. Just let her come in to see you!"

Li Wenzun was just about to speak.

Yu Qingmei had already shouted at the child, "Xiaosan, go tell your grandparents to bring those people in. Just say that your great-grandpa's legs aren't good!"

Before Li Wenzun could stop him, the boy uttered an "okay" and ran out like the wind.

"What was the need for that." Li Wenzun sighed and sat back down.

The guests from outside, of course, were the Bai Family members!

Chapter 534: Giving You a Look, Feel It Yourself_1

After three hours of travel, the Bai Family finally reached their destination.

Even though they were riding in a motorhome, the elderly Li Fengguan still seemed somewhat fatigued, having taken a nap along the way.

Through the car window, when they saw the quadrangle-style mansion, those Bai Family Members who had never been here couldn't help but be astonished.

"Is this the Li Family Villa? It looks like the estate from 'The Grand Mansion Gate'!"

"I had no idea they were so wealthy; It's indeed much better than how we live!"

"This was bought many years ago, back when our family was still crammed into that large shared courtyard, right?"

Everyone inevitably felt a sense of exclamation.

Bai Xiaosheng looked out the window and saw the high walls and grand courtyard, which indeed looked magnificent, but the color scheme was cold and gray, giving off a chill air.

Maybe. it's just psychological influence playing tricks on me, Bai Xiaosheng thought to himself.

Now that we're here, no matter the grievances of the past, we ultimately have to consider Grandma's feelings and let bygones be bygones, at least for now.

The Bai Family, along with the elderly lady, carried their things and left the vehicle, one after the other.

Some people from the extensive Li Family courtyard also came out to greet them.

Bai Minghang took the lead in making introductions.

The ones who came out were Li Wenzun's two sons, three daughters-in-law, a grandson, a granddaughter, and a little boy running around with a running nose, who was said to be a great-grandson.

The groups exchanged greetings.

Bai Xiaosheng observed coldly from the sidelines. His two male cousins and three female cousins gave faint smiles, speaking in a tone that was more polite than affectionate. His two older cousins appeared to be even more perfunctory, looking down at their peers from this side with an air of superiority, and they even held a bit of arrogance towards their uncles and aunts.

When Bai Fei and Bai Ran greeted them, the other side responded with just a light snort through their nose as if that was enough.

"It seems that trying to be amicable this visit might be a bit challenging. I'll do my best, but hopefully, they won't provoke me!" Bai Xiaosheng thought to himself.

After a show of strained enthusiasm, the Bai Family Members were ushered inside.

Li Fengguan hadn't seen Li Wenzun for many years, and now, she too was a bit excited, and couldn't help but ask Bai Ran's second cousin as they walked, "How's my big brother doing, is he still in good health?"

"Auntie, my dad's in great health, up in the main room right now. I've already sent word, and he is probably on his way over," the second cousin said with a laugh.

"Good, good, as long as he's in good health," Li Fengguan nodded repeatedly.

Just as she spoke, a little boy burst out, shouting, "My great-grandma said that my great-grandpa is the Longevity Star Deity, and since he is also her big brother, there's no need for him to come out and greet her; she can just come in and see him!"

This chubby child was the mentioned great-grandson, who had just scurried inside to deliver the message, and now he'd brought back such a remark, shouted out loud in front of everyone!

There was an immediate silence on the scene.

Faces looked at each other, and the atmosphere suddenly became somewhat awkward.

"What are you talking about, child?" Li's second cousin snapped, glaring.

Children speak without a filter, but often that unfiltered speech reveals blunt truths.

Bai Xiaosheng frowned slightly, the Bai Family Members were a bit displeased, and the expressions among the Li Family Members were also somewhat unnatural.

"My great-grandma told me to tell you all to say to her that my great-grandpa's legs aren't working well!" the little boy continued to shout.

The face of Li's second cousin suddenly darkened, and he made a move to strike, "Scram, you blabbering little brat!"

The little boy's lips trembled with fear, and he was about to cry.

"Hey, don't scare him, he's still young," Li Fengguan intervened, stopping the second cousin with a gentle smile. "I came here to see my big brother, and since my sister-in-law says his legs aren't well, then I'll just go to him."

Li Fengguan didn't want to create any unpleasantness over such matters.

The second cousin forced a laugh and hurriedly led the way.

Many of the Bai Family Members remained silent, and Bai Xiaosheng's frown deepened, but then he relaxed it.

After all, this was Grandma's own brother, and some respect was still owed!

The group entered the second courtyard and were led to the main room.

Li Wenzun was equally excited upon seeing his younger sister.

As people age, they inevitably become more emotionally fragile.

Hand in hand, the siblings indeed had quite a bit to say to each other.

With many younger members of both families present, naturally, introductions were in order.

The Bai Family Members each paid their respects to Li Wenzun and Yu Qingmei.

Yu Qingmei wore an indifferent expression, even her smiles were sparing. In response to the greetings from the Bai family's younger generation, she merely nodded slightly, her demeanor carrying a lazy air, as if no one could catch her discerning eye.

It was said that when this auntie was young, she was notoriously domineering, and with her family's wealth, she always held her nose high—a saying that rang true upon witnessing firsthand.

Bai Xiaosheng understood, upon seeing her demeanor, why Bai Fei and Bai Ran were so reluctant to visit the Li family.

In her eyes shone a disdainful sense of indifference as if an invisible blade were piercing their pride.

People are dignified beings, and to be condescended to without cause, yet forced to endure it due to respect for the elder, is indeed unbearable.

Perhaps it was the unpleasant memories from childhood, but now grown up, Bai Fei and Bai Ran's greetings were somewhat unnatural, which only added to Yu Qingmei's disdain.

Soon it was Bai Xiaosheng's turn.

"Let me give you a look!"

Bai Xiaosheng thought to himself.

With continuous training using the Micro-Expression Analysis System, Bai Xiaosheng inadvertently discovered that at certain moments, he could make an expression to amplify his emotions and convey them to the other person.

Ordinary people might think that a fleeting expression has little impact.

But a gaze, a subtle microexpression, if used appropriately, can truly be more powerful than a torrent of words.

Isn't there a saying online, "I'll give you a look, go figure it out!"

"Hello Uncle, and my dear auntie... hello!"

As Bai Xiaosheng greeted them, his eyes met those of Li Wenzun and Yu Qingmei directly.

Li Wenzun smiled as he looked at Bai Xiaosheng, his demeanor momentarily pausing. He saw in Bai Xiaosheng's eyes a hint of warmth mixed with dignified authority and an intimidating presence, like the gaze of a superior.

The old man was instantly taken aback.

Yu Qingmei saw something different!

In sync with the subtle changes in Bai Xiaosheng's tone, his gaze carried a certain oppressiveness, a touch of sternness, causing Yu Qingmei's heart to skip a beat.

Though it was but a moment, she felt an inexplicable chill.

After Bai Xiaosheng finished greeting them, he turned and walked away, retreating to the back of the crowd.

Li Wenzun and Yu Qingmei still felt somewhat dazed.

"This kid is no simple matter!" The two of them almost simultaneously harbored this thought in their hearts.

"Could it be that the Bai family has produced an extraordinary person!" Li Wenzun thought to himself.

"Could it be, they have come here to seek revenge on us!" Yu Qingmei thought to herself.

In that instant, Bai Xiaosheng had left them both with a degree of disarray in their minds.

Of course, the others didn't notice any of this.

Though the house was spacious, it couldn't accommodate the number of people present.

Having exchanged greetings, the Li family members invited the Bai family to the hall outside to sit down, thus giving space and time to the elders.

The crowd bustled out.

Li Fengguan suddenly caught sight of her eldest brother and sister-in-law, their gazes fixed, looking outside. Following their eyes, she curiously glanced over and saw the back of Bai Xiaosheng.

Why were these two so concerned about Sheng?

Li Fengguan was quite puzzled.

Chapter 535: Cousin Bai, What Advice Do You Have?_1

After leaving the room of Li Wenzun and Yu Qingmei, the Li Family members closed the door behind them to prevent the outside noise from disturbing the elders and disrupting good communication.

Upon exiting the inner rooms, the Bai Family Members were ushered to sit down in the hall.

This hall, serving the function of a living room, was astonishingly spacious and incredibly majestic.

The decoration was predominantly Chinese style, with some elements of Western design incorporated. However, the overall tone and style were exceptionally harmonious, blending Chinese and Western designs seamlessly, likely the work of a high-end design team.

In the hall, an Eight Immortals Table and Taishi Chairs were placed, with four hanging scrolls adorning the walls.

Sofas were situated on both sides of the hall; the Bai Family elders were seated on one side, accompanied by their counterparts from the Li Family for conversation.

As the parents went off to one side, Bai Xiaosheng and the others moved to the other.

The Li Family's profound heritage was not only reflected in their extraordinary estate but even in this single hall where the wooden furniture was of exceptionally high quality.

Bai Xiaosheng casually glanced around and immediately Red Lotus provided him with a search in his mind.

Indeed, it was quite lavish. Bai Xiaosheng thought to himself.

"Sheng, Sheng, did you notice? That Eight Immortals Table and Taishi Chairs are made of 'huali' wood!" Bai Ran tugged at Bai Xiaosheng discreetly, her tone filled with disbelief.

"Bai Ran, you know about these things?" Bai Xiaosheng asked in surprise.

What Bai Ran referred to as 'huali' was the wood of the Hainan padauk tree.

An old saying goes, "People are divided into classes, and woods are classified as pearwood and rosewood."

Furniture made of 'huali' wood has, for hundreds of years, been coveted by nobility, the wealthy, and virtually vanished in modern times due to over-harvesting. There are some left in neighboring countries, shockingly expensive, a single piece of furniture easily costing millions.

It could be said that just one Eight Immortals Table and two Taishi Chairs alone were worth a fortune!

"I used to sell valuable furniture, so naturally, I know!" Bai Ran couldn't help but say.

The Li Family's deep foundation was apparent from just one table and one chair, terrifyingly so!

Bai Ran knew, hence her astonishment and reverence.

Bai Xiaosheng cast a casual glance; indeed, the 'huali' furniture was nice, but he didn't place much importance on it. To him, the material was not considered premium among 'huali,' especially compared to those in the banquet hall on the top floor of Zhongjing Media Zhongjing Wanhe Building—far from it!

If he really fancied it, he had fifty million in his card, enough to buy whatever he wanted.

Bai Xiaosheng smiled lightly and paid it no more attention.

On the other side, Bai Fei was looking at the paintings on the wall with a gleaming fascination in his eyes, even stepping closer to admire one.

He was observing an ink wash painting of a mountain abode, a monochrome landscape with realistic detail up close and abstract in the distance, emanating a serene ambiance.

Bai Fei couldn't help but nod repeatedly.

"What do you think of this painting, cousin Bai Fei?" someone suddenly asked casually nearby.

Bai Fei turned to look.

It was the son of his second uncle, Li Feiyun, with a handsome appearance but an air of arrogance in his gaze.

"It's excellent!" Bai Fei praised, "I enjoy traditional Chinese paintings for their expansive artistic conception and enduring taste. I often watch programs that introduce traditional Chinese paintings and understand a bit, hoping to collect one someday..."

"Nice aspiration, keep it up. People should have ideals, right? Maybe you can make it come true," Li Feiyun said with a smile. "Since you like it, take a longer look, but don't touch. This 'Autumn Breeze Landscape Painting' is an original worth millions. If you damage it, cousin, you probably won't be able to afford it, and the psychological shadow might ruin your ideals for the latter half of your life, which wouldn't be good, would it?"

Bai Fei's smile stiffened; he had thought Li Feiyun simply wanted to chat and share insights about the painting but didn't expect to be ridiculed.

Seeing this, Bai Xiaosheng frowned slightly.

They had only been there for a short while, always behaving properly, and Bai Fei simply glanced at the paintings—how had he managed to offend Li Feiyun so much?

Could it be that the Li Family invited us, the Bai Family, over just to mock us?

Bai Xiaosheng's face darkened.

In fact, Bai Xiaosheng might have misunderstood; in this matter, Li Feiyun really hadn't intended to be so deliberately unpleasant.

Li Feiyun held a deep-seated disdain for the Bai Family, looking down on them from the bottom of his heart.

Li Feiyun's impression of the Bai Family Members was influenced by what he heard and saw growing up.

As children, Yu Qingmei would occasionally use the Bai Family as an example to teach them to associate with the rich and powerful, to avoid people like the Bai Family who were both poor and arrogant.

Over time, the Bai Family had formed an extremely negative image in the minds of their generation.

Their parents, along with Li Wenzun and Yu Qingmei, had visited the Bai Family a few times and had found those visits rather unpleasant. The disparaging and cursing behind the Bai Family's back only deepened Li Feiyun and others' impressions.

The root of Yu Qingmei's hatred towards the Bai Family actually lay with Li Fengguan.

When Sir Li, the father of Li Wenzun and Li Fengguan, was on his deathbed, the family faced the issue of dividing the property. In pursuit of the inheritance, Li Wenzun and his wife resorted to all kinds of tactics, greatly hurting Li Fengguan.

Out of anger, Li Fengguan refused to accept the inheritance but didn't give it up either, dragging on the matter. With the investments in Li Wenzun's business getting delayed, they ended up making much less money than they could have.

Otherwise, the Li Family's business would have been much larger than it was.

Yu Qingmei harbored this resentment, hating Li Fengguan and hating the Bai Family.

In the end, everything revolves around self-interest.

Bai Xiaosheng was unaware of this history; had he known, perhaps he would have already been unable to hold back his anger and demanded justice for his grandmother.

Although decades had passed, and Li Fengguan no longer cared about those things—if she had, she wouldn't have come to see her brother.

At the moment, Bai Xiaosheng only saw Li Feiyun humiliating Bai Fei for no reason at all.

Bai Fei's face turned pale, but he had nothing to say.

"Big brother Bai Fei, what are you looking at?"

Bai Xiaosheng approached with a calm expression, glanced casually at the Autumn Breeze Landscape Painting and chuckled, "Such a forgery is not worth your time. Hanging it in the main hall is quite embarrassing. You've recognized it as such, but to tell the hosts—it just isn't appropriate, that would be humiliating them in public!"

With that one remark from Bai Xiaosheng,

both Bai Fei and Li Feiyun were taken aback.

Soon after, Bai Fei wore a strange expression.

Li Feiyun's face, however, slowly began to show anger as he stared intensely at Bai Xiaosheng, sizing him up.

When the Bai Family Members were set to visit, his parents had talked about the younger generation of the Bai Family with utter disdain. They mentioned that the only somewhat successful person was a certain Bai Fei, but he was just a senior white-collar worker.

"A senior white-collar worker is just a high-level laborer, earning at most twenty or thirty thousand a month. Among our Li Family's younger generation, that would be an embarrassment! To think he is actually considered the best amongst the Bai Family!" Li Feiyun couldn't help feeling contempt when he heard those words at that time.

He had come here to ridicule Bai Fei, only for another one to pop up unexpectedly.

If even Bai Fei isn't up to scratch, who do you think you are!

Suppressing his anger, Li Feiyun recalled the name he had heard when being introduced and snorted coldly.

"Cousin Bai Xiaosheng, do you have any advice to offer?"

If you can't spell it out clearly, don't blame me for being discourteous!

Chapter 536: Proud of Hanging a Fake Deputy?_1

Seeing Bai Xiaosheng stand up, Bai Fei knew he couldn't stand watching and wanted to regain face for her, and she instantly felt grateful. However, seeing the rather unfriendly expression and tone of Li Feiyun, Bai Fei couldn't help but feel a chill in her heart.

This is the Li Family's home! They are guests!

Since when does a guest start a quarrel upon arriving at their host's home? This is embarrassing for Grandma too!

Bai Fei secretly tugged at Bai Xiaosheng's sleeve, signaling him to step back, to endure it.

"Bai Fei, the Bai Family has been stepping back too much, allowing them—the Li Family—to be so arrogant. In front of me, Bai Xiaosheng, there will be no conceding!" Bai Xiaosheng thought to himself, ignoring Bai Fei.

Seeing this, Bai Fei's face was filled with helplessness.

He knew Bai Xiaosheng's temperament—Bai Xiaosheng wouldn't tolerate even a speck of dust in his eyes!

Considering Bai Xiaosheng's status and achievements today, Bai Fei was confident that even in the Li Family, he would be considered outstanding. But after all, with elders present, a quarrel would involve hierarchies of seniority and respect—it wouldn't matter what manager or vice president you are on the outside.

Bai Fei couldn't help but worry again.

"Speak up, cousin Bai, why are you silent now?" urged Li Feiyun.

Bai Ran was drawn by the voice, his eyebrows slightly furrowed, and then he walked over.

On the other side, a girl with long legs and a slender waist, exuding a refined air, also noticed and walked over, different from Bai Ran, she was followed by five or six of her peers.

This girl was named Li Feiyan, Li Feiyun's cousin, who was normally quite haughty.

"What's happening, brother Yun?" Li Feiyan asked.

"Our cousin Bai Xiaosheng here," said Li Feiyun, glancing at Bai Xiaosheng and scoffing, "claims that the Autumn Breeze Landscape Painting Grandpa has hanging up is a fake!"

Li Feiyan's face slightly changed, and she cast a sidelong glance at Bai Xiaosheng, "You say it's a fake, what evidence do you have?"

"Fake? How can you say it's fake, do you know how much this painting is worth?"

"It was three million at the time, have you ever seen so much money? This is Grandpa's favorite Chinese painting!"

"Speaking nonsense, you can eat messily, but you can't talk nonsense!"

Behind Li Feiyan, those young men and women, either angry or scornful, launched a barrage of accusations against Bai Xiaosheng.

Bai Xiaosheng remained calm, examining the painting ever since this began.

"If a painting is displayed, isn't it for people to see and comment on? If that's not allowed, why bother hanging it up at all!" Bai Ran, unable to contain his anger, spoke up for Bai Xiaosheng.

"It's just a difference of opinion, let's not take it seriously, not seriously at all," Bai Fei, sweating profusely, laughed nervously, playing the peacemaker.

"It's fine to express opinions, but spouting nonsense is wrong. This painting can be appreciated, but it won't stand defamation!" Li Feiyan was aggressive.

"Exactly, if your family also had an authentic Chinese painting and you were used to handling and appreciating them, you might be qualified to judge. But you've hardly seen a few paintings and yet you critique them; that's really laughable!" Li Feiyun sneered.

Bai Ran was fuming, unable to think of a better retort, and Bai Fei's face turned ashen as well. They couldn't help but look to Bai Xiaosheng.

Now, the only one who could fight back was Bai Xiaosheng!

As the deputy general manager of Zhongjing Media, Bai Xiaosheng must be widely experienced!

Though he might not really prove whether the painting was authentic or fake, having some sort of argument would certainly be good.

In the distance,

It appeared that the Bai Family and Li Family elders had also taken notice of the commotion.

Faintly, it sounded like Bai Xiaosheng was calling someone's painting a fake, and the Li Family kids were unhappy about it.

The faces of Bai Xiaosheng's three uncles and three aunts at the gathering immediately showed some changes.

"Second Brother, you should also manage your Sheng a bit. We're still at someone else's place. Look at what's happening," Bai Xiaosheng's fourth uncle couldn't help but lower his voice.

Despite speaking softly, others heard him, and the Bai Family Members looked toward Bai Minghang, their eyes conveying the same message.

"It's normal for kids to roughhouse. Let's continue our own conversation," Bai Minghang replied with a faint smile, unfazed.

He didn't believe that his son would cause trouble for no reason, and besides, they were not children anymore. Let them resolve it themselves.

Li Qiuyun seemed to think the same.

Others beside them found it difficult to say anything further.

However, the conversation here obviously dwindled as they also paid attention to the commotion over there.

Over there.

"This painting, to be strict, isn't considered a fake," Bai Xiaosheng, who had been silent until now, finally spoke up.

"Pfft, you say it's fake one moment and real the next. Do you even understand art? If you don't, stop pretending; it's embarrassing. Not only does it make you look bad, but it also tarnishes the reputation of the Bai Family," Li Feiyun scoffed, raising the issue to the level of the Bai Family's honor.

Bai Fei and Bai Ran's expressions revealed a subtle outrage.

"Turns out he's just an attention seeker. Let's go; there's no need to watch a clown's performance. Some people just want to stir things up to draw attention when they have no real talent," Li Feiyan said lazily, punctuated by a yawn.

The men and women with her burst into laughter immediately, their eyes ridiculing Bai Xiaosheng as they looked at him.

"But it's also not genuine," Bai Xiaosheng continued.

Hey, flipping back and forth, what's the point!

Li Feiyun was infuriated.

"This was originally an authentic piece, but it was peeled into two layers. The first layer is clear and could be sold at a high price, but the second layer's seals and ink marks have become blurred, hence its value is compromised. Unfortunately, this piece is the second layer. It's been treated because of the blurriness, and it's these treatments that have caused its value to not increase but decrease. If the authentic painting was worth three million, then this one, at five hundred thousand, would already be quite good. If you initially bought it for three million, congratulations, you've been had," explained Bai Xiaosheng calmly and slowly, with a look of regret that also subtly revealed — schadenfreude.

Bai Fei and Bai Ran were visibly surprised, staring intently at the painting.

Li Feiyun and Li Feiyan were initially speechless, then their expressions turned very ugly!

The men and women behind them were equally dumbfounded and speechless.

"Where's the evidence? You're just spouting nonsense, you..." Li Feiyun burst out angrily.

"The harder it is to distinguish between the real and the fake, the easier it is even for the connoisseurs to be fooled if the craftsmanship is superb. That's nothing to be ashamed of," Bai Xiaosheng said with a smile, pointing to several spots, "Here, here, and here. In a genuine work, the brushstrokes would be vigorous, and where they overlap, the ink should be thicker and clearly stand out. But if it's the second layer of a two-layer painting that has been retouched, special techniques must be used, even special printers for the ink. Although the ink might appear full, it lacks a sense of transparency. If you don't believe me, take it down to a dark room, shine a flashlight on it, and you will see for yourself."

As Bai Xiaosheng explained, Li Feiyun was left speechless, feeling that Bai Xiaosheng spoke with authority!

Such a confident demeanor couldn't help but be convincing.

But if they were convinced, it meant that there was indeed something wrong with the painting, which would be a slap in the face for the Li Family!

"Yun Brother, don't listen to his nonsense. Mr. Zhou has appraised this painting — surely Mr. Zhou is more credible than this kid!" Li Feiyan suddenly interjected.

Bai Xiaosheng saw the confidence returning to Li Feiyun's eyes, boosted greatly.

Mr. Zhou?

Bai Xiaosheng was puzzled.

Who was that?

Chapter 537: In My Company, You're Not Even Qualified to be a Director_1

Li Feiyan's words restored Li Feiyun's great confidence.

When he looked at Bai Xiaosheng again, his eyes were filled with a cold smirk.

"That's right, that's right! Feiyan, you're correct, this painting was appraised by Mr. Zhou! Could it be wrong!" Li Feiyun looked at Bai Xiaosheng and sneered, "I didn't expect you to be such a smooth talker. Have you been involved in pyramid schemes before, practicing your patter? You almost had me fooled! But, no matter how clever you are, can you be cleverer than Mr. Zhou?!"

"Mr. Zhou?" Bai Xiaosheng's eyes narrowed slightly, showing a bit of curiosity.

Who was this person that made Li Feiyun and Li Feiyan speak so animatedly?

Behind Li Feiyun and Li Feiyan, everyone started talking all at once, bubbling with excitement.

"Yeah, this is the very piece that Zhou Ping, Mr. Zhou himself, appraised!"

"The Tianqing Zhou Ping, who determines authenticity at a glance, is renowned in Anjiang!"

"He's specially employed by the Tianqing Museum as a cultural relics appraiser!"

...

Through the buzz of conversation, Bai Xiaosheng got the gist: this appraiser named Zhou Ping seemed to have some renown.

"This Zhou Ping, Mr. Zhou, is not only highly skilled in his field but is also the son of the Mayor of Tianqing's secretary! Ordinary people can hardly invite him, and only my elder brother Li Feitian has the face to do so!" Li Feiyun said with a proud smile.

Speaking of Li Feitian, the younger members of the Li Family beamed with pride.

Not only was he a business genius with extensive connections, but especially his acquaintance with Zhou Ping, who in turn had established contact with the mayor's secretary, meant that in Tianqing, one could virtually have their voice reach the heavens!

It was no wonder the Li Family Members were so proud.

Bai Fei and Bai Ran's expressions changed slightly, and they remained silent.

The Bai Family was confined to a single county, where the most successful among them was Bai Xiaosheng, the deputy director of Zhongjing Media in the city. As for political resources, they dared not even dream of them; they couldn't even reach the county head, let alone the mayoral level.

Bai Xiaosheng was also taken aback.

Only his expression was somewhat odd; Li Feiyun was so proud, and the Li Family members were so arrogantly elated, all because they could... connect with the mayor's secretary?

Bai Xiaosheng couldn't help scratching his face.

Just yesterday, he had a long talk with the Mayor of Tianqing.

Dai Mingcheng was a good mayor, quite modest and amiable. But never had Bai Xiaosheng imagined that one of his secretaries could make the Li Family so proud.

Why didn't I feel that extreme honor? Was it because the level of my initial contact was too high...

Bai Xiaosheng couldn't help but think.

In Zhongjing, going to the municipal government was like going home to him, and he never felt it was something to be proud of...

"So, nothing to say now, huh." Seeing Bai Xiaosheng reflective, Li Feiyun proudly said, pointing at the painting, "Now you see, is it still fake?"

Bai Xiaosheng laughed.

"Even if it were personally appraised by the Mayor of Tianqing, if it's fake, it's not going to become real! But since you all firmly believe it's authentic, that's beyond reproach."

Bai Xiaosheng shrugged and turned to walk toward the sofa.

He couldn't be bothered to argue with this bunch.

It was just utterly dull.

Watching Bai Xiaosheng walk away, apparently conceding, Li Feiyun smirked in satisfaction.

Bai Fei turned to leave as well but was unexpectedly stopped by Li Feiyun, "Bai Fei, cousin, don't rush off. I actually have something to discuss with you."

"You have something to discuss with me?" Bai Fei was stunned, looking at Li Feiyun with surprise.

Li Feiyun and Li Feiyan exchanged a glance, a hint of a smile playing on their lips.

When the Bai Family members who arrived were found to be mediocre among their peers, Li Feiyan and Li Feiyun plotted to mock them publicly, to make them embarrass themselves and to boast about their own achievements over the past year.

This seemingly childish mentality is actually not uncommon.

Men and women around the age of thirty, if they have a class reunion or something, often play such a scene.

Comparing wealth and showing off, to highlight one's self.

It's just that Li Feiyan and Li Feiyun took advantage of the current occasion, that's all.

After all, their siblings had come along too, and the timing was just right.

"Cousin Bai Fei, I heard you're a high-level white-collar worker. I wonder what line you're in?" Li Feiyun asked with a teasing smile.

"I am the director of a design company," Bai Fei answered.

He could sense that Li Feiyun was up to no good and was on his guard.

"Wow, a high-ranking director, ah, a white-collar, quite successful!" Li Feiyun's voice rose with a laugh. "I've heard you're the one doing the best among us Bai Family Members. May I ask which major company employs you as this high-ranking director? Tell us, so we can listen. Perhaps we can even talk about a collaboration!"

Li Feiyun's words made Bai Fei look somewhat unnatural and even a bit awkward.

What kind of high-ranking director was he? He was merely a nominal director at a slightly larger-scale design company, in reality a manager, earning two or three ten thousand a month. Bragging about it at home was one thing.

But in the Li Family, it was nothing!

Bai Fei had made inquiries; the Li Family was good at business, and their peers were full of talented people. Not to mention the nearly demonically talented Li Feitian, who mingled with the Mayor of Tianqing's son, even Li Feiyun before him managed a small company on his own, not smaller than his own company!

There was no comparison!

The Li Family had endless business resources and extensive networks. If their own family members wanted to find a good job, they had to go out and fight for it themselves!

"Cousin Feiyun is joking. Our company is just a small one and we are located in different prefecture-level cities, so there really isn't a chance for collaboration," Bai Fei couldn't help but say quietly, lacking some confidence.

"Haha, otherwise come to my place, I've started my own small company, not a large one, just about a hundred people. If you join us, I'll give you a vice-president position and pay you a higher salary," Li Feiyun laughed loudly.

The surrounding Li Family peers burst into laughter.

"Come on, our brother Feiyun is a good boss."

"Yeah, if you work over here, you'll earn more money, and that would be our support for you."

Even a cute Li Family girl put on a pretense of innocence, asked bewilderedly, "Isn't Cousin Bai Fei supposed to be the most successful in the Bai Family? How come he's only a director? Sigh, has your family not produced a single remarkable person over all these years? Over here, calling oneself a vice president is almost too embarrassing to mention, and saying you're a director is downright shameful!"

This string of mockery left Bai Fei short of breath and his face extremely unsightly.

Over there.

The elders from the Bai and Li families naturally heard everything clearly, and the atmosphere suddenly cooled.

Even Bai Minghang and his wife Li Qiuyun frowned.

Even if they were children, they were already in their twenties and thirties. Was such an inappropriate joke really something to be made casually?

But then again, the mockery was based on facts!

Bai Fei, among the younger generation of the Bai Family, was already considered outstanding, but here he simply didn't make the cut!

Bai Fei himself felt a sense of humiliation and couldn't help but clench his fists.

Bai Ran, standing nearby, was even more angry.

"So what if he's a director! Brother Feiyun, your company's boss would probably not even qualify to be a director where we come from—"

"Wouldn't even make the cut!"

Suddenly, a voice chipped in.

Everyone looked over, only to see Bai Xiaosheng sitting proudly with one leg crossed over the other, looking down on Li Feiyun with scorn.

Chapter 538 Zhongjing Media Mr. Bai_1

In our place, you wouldn't even qualify as a director!

As soon as Bai Xiaosheng's words came out, everyone was stunned.

Arrogant, too arrogant.

Li Feiyun is, after all, running a company of no small scale and is a boss.

Even if he has the support of his family, his personal ability is undeniable!

Yet Bai Xiaosheng actually spoke of him like this.

"Whose kid is this, talking like that!" From the side, Li's second cousin's wife couldn't help but exclaim.

Li Feiyun was her son and, among the younger generation of the Li family, second only to Li Feitian, the pride of their whole family.

And now, to be belittled by a kid from the Bai Family was more than she could bear.

"Our son is just too humble. The tax revenue his company generates ranks high even in Tianqing! What gives that young man the right to talk about him like that? Could it be that he's done even better than Feiyun?!" Li's second cousin also snorted coldly.

The members of the Li family echoed in agreement.

The elders of the Bai Family suddenly felt a bit embarrassed.

"Sheng, talking like that is a bit too much."

"Right, that young man is a boss after all..."

"Big brother, aren't you going to say something about your family's Sheng..."

The Bai family members also started to murmur amongst themselves.

"Enough!" Bai Minghang, who had been quietly cradling a cup of hot tea, suddenly let out a low shout.

His voice wasn't loud, but it was filled with authority, instantly quieting the room.

"It's just a bunch of kids causing a commotion; we elders shouldn't get involved!" bellowed Bai Minghang, leisurely sipping his tea.

"The one speaking, named Bai Xiaosheng, is my son! Including Bai Fei and Bai Ran, they are just three kids, while your side has seven or eight mouths! There's no need for us to join in the chorus, right?" Li Qiuyun turned towards the Li family members with a faint smile, reaching for the teapot to top up the hot tea in her man's cup.

This couple spoke frankly, with an assertive attitude.

The Bai family members and Li family members fell into silence one after another.

Li's second cousin and his wife exchanged glances. In their view, they had strength in numbers, and their son wouldn't fall short in terms of eloquence!

So, they just watched.

Meanwhile.

As soon as Bai Xiaosheng finished speaking, it set off a huge uproar.

"Utter nonsense, Feiyun brother is the boss of a company. He doesn't need to covet the position of a mere director in your company!"

"Exactly, such outrageous claims. What company do you have? We'd like to hear it!"

"Yeah, go on and tell us. Also, what is your own position, to be talking such nonsense!"

Behind Li Feiyun and Li Feiyan, the crowd was fervently excited.

"Relative Bai Xiaosheng, I thought I was arrogant, but it turns out you are even more so. Yet, I wonder, at which company do you hold such a high position!" Li Feiyun looked around with a sneer and a cold laugh.

"Sheng is the vice-general manager at our Zhongjing City's leading enterprise, Zhongjing Media!" Bai Fei could no longer contain himself and shouted.

Just now, Li Feiyun had made fun of her to no end. Indeed, she had no grounds to compare with the Li family's Li Feitian and Li Feiyun.

But Bai Xiaosheng did have the credentials!

"Zhongjing Media?!" Li Feiyun repeated the name, his eyes widening in an instant.

Of course, he knew this company!

Zhongjing Media was a leading enterprise in Zhongjing City and a spearhead in Anjiang Province's media industry, jointly named with Tianzheng Media as the two giants of the Anjiang media industry.

Especially this year, news about Zhongjing Media was frequently on the hot search list - first collaborating with a major European media company and investing several billion in the initial phase to enter the European market. Later, they partnered with the star Shang Wanwan in a major annual drama series, with an initial investment of ten billion. Zhongjing Media made frequent big moves, spending money like it was water.

It's said that Zhongjing Media originated from seven or eight small companies.

Those small companies, based on their once asset size, each one was stronger than his current one!

After the restructuring to form Zhongjing Media, each department was equivalent to a company, and every department head was in an exceedingly lofty position!

Li Feiyun, this company manager, really might not qualify to be a director at Zhongjing Media!

Li Feiyun had nothing to say!

"You are the deputy director of Zhongjing Media! Just based on you, you, how old are you! How is this possible!" Li Feiyan was also incredibly shocked, her face full of disbelief, her eyes filled with incredulity.

Bai Xiaosheng's age, perhaps people could believe him being a director at Zhongjing Media, but a deputy director, that not only requires ability and experience, but also approval from the group above Zhongjing Media.

The group above Zhongjing Media is the Zhenbei Group!

A world-class financial consortium!

In the Fortune Global 500, it's also of the utmost tier!

How had this Bai Xiaosheng been approved!

His age, it clearly seemed even younger than her own!

The young members of the Li Family, hearing Li Feiyun and Li Feiyan's exclamations, suddenly looked at each other and started a low-voiced exchange. Those who knew about Zhongjing Media shared the information, and the rest were instantly astonished.

"My God! Zhongjing Media, he actually is the deputy director!"

"Incredible, a director at Zhongjing Media is on par with the general manager of a small company, this deputy position... is unreachable!"

"Unbelievable, why have we never heard before, that the Bai Family actually had such a figure!"

...

The members of the Li Family exclaimed in bursts.

Bai Xiaosheng stood as stable as Mount Tai.

Seeing the shocked expressions of Li Feiyun and Li Feiyan, Bai Fei and Bai Ran couldn't help but feel proud.

Who says the Bai Family is no good!

Our younger generation of the Bai Family will have you all look up to us!

On the sofa over there, several of Li's second cousins and their spouses couldn't help but gasp, looking at each other.

The Bai Family's kid is actually the deputy director of Zhongjing Media!

Zhongjing Media is not something their family business can compare to!

"Turns out the son of cousin Minghang is so young and successful!"

"Yes, the deputy director of Zhongjing Media! Really... unexpected!"

"Our two families should get closer and closer, maybe in the future, there can be some cooperation!"

The attitude of several second cousins, which was lukewarm earlier, suddenly became enthusiastic.

Bai Minghang's expression was steady, glancing at his son nearby, pride filling his eyes.

Li Qiuyun sat gracefully, her demeanor also filled with immense pride.

The other Bai Family Members were also filled with pride.

"You Li Family Members have money and wide connections, everything goes smoothly for you, but my Bai Family relies solely on our own efforts. Bai Xiaosheng managed to become the deputy director of Zhongjing Media, you all, who can compare with that!" Bai Ran shouted from over there.

She had been holding back for too long.

Li Feiyun and Li Feiyan, initially shocked by Bai Xiaosheng's position, were awakened by this shout.

Full of youthful vigor, who would admit defeat.

"A deputy director, what's so great about that, your Zhongjing Media is currently applying for provincial-level benchmark enterprise status, my elder brother Li Feitian's Tianfu Wealth Management is also representing Tianqing in the application! My brother, he is the chairman!" Li Feiyan shouted.

Oh?

This statement, made Bai Xiaosheng's eyebrows rise slightly.

The company representing Tianqing in applying for provincial-level benchmark enterprise status, was actually, from the Li Family!

Chapter 539 Zhou Ping, Mr. Zhou_1

Li Feiyan's words invigorated the Li Family Members.

It even dissipated the shock and "gloom" that Bai Xiaosheng, being the deputy general manager of Zhongjing Media, had brought them.

What of being the deputy general manager of Zhongjing Media?

Their elder brother, Li Feitian, was the chairman of the Tianqing Risk Capital's major enterprise—Tianfu Wealth Management!

This year, Tianfu Wealth Management was even representing Tianqing in applying for provincial-level benchmarking enterprises.

It was said that the progress was promising! Maybe they could win the title within the year, and stand shoulder to shoulder with Zhongjing Media on titles, both being benchmarks!

But when it came to positions, one was a chairman, and the other a deputy general manager.

This distinction between primary and secondary roles immediately brought smiles to the faces of the Li Family Members, who felt that at least in terms of titles, they had one-upped Bai Xiaosheng.

"This is quite a coincidence, could make for a good novel!" Bai Xiaosheng remarked after his reflection, instructing Red Lotus to search for information on Tianfu Wealth Management.

In the domestic market, insurance companies are divided into two types—life insurance companies and property insurance companies.

According to the regulations of the insurance law, the two must be managed separately, so some insurance companies have established group companies, which have independent life and property insurance companies under them.

This Tianfu Wealth Management was just a property insurance company, with a registered capital of one and a half billion, and was a joint-stock company.

Red Lotus found quite a bit of information, which Bai Xiaosheng carelessly browsed through, picking out content of interest. He inadvertently noticed changes in the shareholder list over the years, and his expression suddenly turned a bit odd.

Initially, there were shareholders with different surnames, but as time went on, more and more were named "Li," and those not named Li also had family ties with the Li Family.

This was hardly what you'd call a joint-stock company; it was completely a family business.

"My older brother Li Feitian takes charge of a major enterprise all by himself, making all the decisions, something no deputy could ever match," Li Feiyan said proudly.

Bai Ran was not convinced and wanted to argue.

Suddenly, a shout came from outside, "Brother Li Feitian has arrived!"

Then, another shout followed, "Mr. Zhou Ping is here too!"

These two urgent calls made everyone present startle.

The Li Family Members' eyes suddenly lit up, and they became excited.

Even the elderly Li Family Members, who had been chatting with Bai Minghang and others, couldn't help but stand up.

"Mr. Zhou Ping is here?"

"Wasn't he supposed to arrive tomorrow?"

"Mr. Zhou is good friends, like brothers, with our Li Feitian. It's not strange for him to come over to visit today! Let's go, let's go out and welcome them!"

The three uncles and aunts from the third branch of the Li Family couldn't help but say.

Just for the arrival of a Zhou Ping, they were all going out to meet him, and the scene was even more enthusiastic than when the Bai Family Members arrived!

You should know, even when their own aunt Li Fengguan arrived, they weren't this passionate.

While talking, the younger generation of the Li Family, led by Li Feiyun and Li Feiyan, rushed out. Soon after, the elderly Li Family Members followed them out.

The Bai Family Members suddenly felt a bit awkward.

"Second brother, do you think we should also go out and welcome them?"

Bai Xiaosheng's uncle couldn't help but glance outside, before asking Bai Minghang in a lowered voice.

"This is the Li Family's home, the guests are the Li Family's, what does it have to do with us?" Bai Minghang remained seated calmly, expressionless, speaking unhurriedly and steadily.

This trip to the Li Family, apart from the elderly grandmother Li Fengguan, was the only one that Bai Minghang had no reluctance about.

However, this did not mean that Bai Minghang had no complaints against the Li Family.

Always upright and honorable in his actions, steady in the face of issues, Bai Minghang had an open mind about many things, but he would absolutely not tolerate being bullied, and he certainly wouldn't go out of his way to flatter or suck up!

Bai Xiaosheng's personality was greatly influenced by his father.

After some hesitation, Bai Xiaosheng's eldest uncle, along with his other two uncles and aunt-by-marriage, decided to join Bai Minghang and sit there to wait.

Even if that Mr. Zhou, Zhou Ping, was the mayor's secretary's son, wasn't he just the mayor of Tianqing City's secretary's son too? He wasn't from Zhongjing, so why rush forward to be laughed at by the Li Family Members?

Bai Xiaosheng's two other uncles and aunts seemed somewhat conflicted, but ultimately, they also chose not to move since the eldest brother hadn't.

Opposite them, Bai Xiaosheng himself sat as immovable as a mountain.

Bai Fei and Bai Ran sat down on the sofa to his left and right, subtly acknowledging Bai Xiaosheng's precedence.

The Li Family Members who had surged forward returned moments later, escorting two people through the door.

The person on the left was tall and statuesque, roughly 1.8 meters, with a well-proportioned and robust physique. Upon closer inspection, his face was handsome and he exuded an air of refinement tempered with gentleness in his laughter.

The person on the right was slightly shorter, but still around 1.75 meters, comparatively thinner, and while his features were somewhat plain, his eyes were bright, accented by gold-rimmed glasses.

"This time for my grandfather's birthday, someone sent a Baishi Shanweng's 'Remote Mountain Pine Forest Painting.' Later, Mr. Zhou, you'll need to take a good look for us," the person on the left said to the man with gold-rimmed glasses with a smile.

"That won't be a problem. I'm looking forward to appreciating it," the man with gold-rimmed glasses responded with a smile.

Bai Xiaosheng took a discreet glance at them; the man on the left held a commanding aura, exuding the temperament of an entrepreneur. That must be Li Feitian, Li Feiyan and Li Feiyun's much-touted elder brother, and also the chairman of Tianfu Wealth Management—Li Feitian!

This Li Feitian looked quite dignified indeed.

The one on the right must be Zhou Ping, the fabled son of the mayor's secretary and an antique connoisseur. Although he appeared young and his features ordinary, his eyes were exceptionally bright, as if he had seen countless treasured antiques, honing a razor-sharp gaze.

"Li, I'm just a junior, yet you all came out to welcome me, I'm truly ashamed," Zhou Ping even admitted with an apologetic tone to the Li Family elders behind him, looking modest and courteous.

Expecting another arrogant second-generation rich kid, it was somewhat surprising to find him different.

Bai Xiaosheng thought to himself.

Li Feitian and Zhou Ping were talking about Baishi Shanweng, the old man Baishi, that's Qi Baishi, and a Qi Baishi's 'Remote Mountain Pine Forest Painting' is worth a fortune indeed—a generous gift!

Compared to such a lavish birthday gift, their Bai Family's present indeed seemed modest.

Yet, Bai Xiaosheng didn't feel the slightest bit embarrassed. Knowing how the Li Family Members were, he might have even opted not to buy that purple clay teapot and just picked up some cheap token gift instead.

As Li Feitian walked in, the first thing he noticed was Bai Minghang and the other Bai Family Members seated on the other side. He had visited the Bai Family when he was younger and naturally recognized them, but after a glance, he looked away, pretending not to notice. Turning his head, he suddenly spotted a young man sprawling confidently on the sofa opposite, with a man and woman sitting neatly on either side.

Watching them enter, the young man looked on emotionlessly and didn't even rise, quite the arrogant display!

Li Feitian couldn't help but frown.

"Who is that?" Li Feitian asked, looking at Bai Xiaosheng.

"He's Bai Xiaosheng from the Bai Family!" Li Feiyun took the opportunity to stir the pot, "Just before, he said the 'Autumn Breeze Landscape Painting' hanging on our wall is fake!"

"Hmph, ignorant!" Li Feitian snorted from his nose, his tone filled with disdain.

But a spark of interest flickered in Zhou Ping's eyes.

"A half-fake inferior piece hanging in the hall of honor, yet I wonder, who is the ignorant one!" Bai Xiaosheng retorted coldly.

Under the watchful eyes of all, he didn't back down a word!

Li Feitian's brows knit tightly together.

Since when did someone surnamed Bai dare to run wild in the Li Family's territory!

Chapter 540: Let me test you_1

Li Feitian furrowed his brow and strode up to Bai Xiaosheng, giving him a cold look.

Bai Xiaosheng cocked his leg arrogantly, nonchalantly picked up a cup of tea, leisurely moved the lid back and forth, looking at the leaves floating on the surface without so much as glancing at Li Feitian.

His haughty demeanor was more than ten times greater than that of Li Feitian's!

The three uncles and aunts of the Li Family, along with a large number of peers, all frowned and glared, clearly dissatisfied with Bai Xiaosheng, and many were on the verge of scolding him aloud.

"This is the Li Family, not yours. Your insolence won't be tolerated here!" Li Feitian said coldly.

"The Li Family." Bai Xiaosheng chuckled lightly, "Uncle Li Wenzun is still in fine fettle, and the three uncles are still in charge. Does it fall upon you, a peer, to scold a guest in public? Is this how the Li Family teaches its manners?"

Bai Xiaosheng spoke unhurriedly, with each word clear and forceful!

Li Feitian's complexion changed drastically, but he was choked up, speechless.

The members of the Li Family present were infuriated beyond measure, yet had nothing to say.

The three uncles and aunts had thought to step forward and scold him, but with the Bai Family members watching, it would be embarrassing for so many of them to gang up on a young man!

Furthermore, if this sharp-tongued young man brought up Li Wenzun again, it would be unpleasant for anyone who approached.

As a result, no one from the Li Family spoke out.

"Besides, have I been presumptuous?" Bai Xiaosheng glanced at the Autumn Breeze Landscape Painting, "Or do you feel that you can't handle the truth in front of others, afraid of losing face?"

"You!" Li Feitian's expression turned to rage, but he was held back by someone.

It was none other than Mr. Zhou Ping, Zhou Ping.

"Feitian, may I have a word?" Zhou Ping adjusted his glasses and spoke politely.

Seeing it was him, Li Feitian suppressed his anger, nodded, glared at Bai Xiaosheng, and stepped aside.

"I wonder what high opinion this brother has of this painting," Zhou Ping asked politely.

Bai Xiaosheng looked up at him, his expression easing somewhat.

He had heard about this man from Li Feiyun earlier, and Bai Xiaosheng had specially asked Red Lotus to look into him.

Zhou Ping's father, Zhou Yifa, was also a veteran in the political realm. Although only at the level of a vice department head, he had served under three mayors and was the first secretary to the current mayor, known as an evergreen in politics—quite an impressive figure.

Zhou Ping, too, was technically a second-generation official.

However, if he had been just the son of a mayor's secretary, he wouldn't have been enough to earn Bai Xiaosheng's regard. After all, Bai Xiaosheng was now dealing with mayors and ministers.

What interested Bai Xiaosheng was that Zhou Ping, relying on his own abilities, had made a name for himself in Anjiang and had even published several articles on the appraisal of cultural artifacts, which had gained widespread recognition.

Moreover, Zhou Ping also ran an antique company, of considerable scale.

Having seen the likes of Yin Donglei, Zhang Xuan, and Jiang Feifan, these profligate sons, Bai Xiaosheng naturally became somewhat interested when he encountered a different kind of person.

"I already stated my case earlier. Why not let him tell you?" Bai Xiaosheng pointed to Li Feiyun.

Li Feiyun came over, lowered his voice, and conveyed Bai Xiaosheng's words verbatim to Zhou Ping and Li Feitian.

Zhou and Li exchanged glances.

There was a subtle change in Li Feitian's eyes.

Although slight, Bai Xiaosheng caught it with his keen perception.

Could it be that Li Feitian had known all along that the painting was a shrunken version? Bai Xiaosheng's mind stirred.

Given Zhou Ping's discernment, if he had appraised it, it was unlikely that he could not see any of it at all.

Bai Xiaosheng's guess was correct.

The painting had been acquired by Li Feitian and given to his grandfather, Li Wenzun, who had a taste for it but didn't understand it very well.

Zhou Ping had appraised it later and didn't say anything outright, but he had told Li Feitian the truth behind closed doors.

Li Feitian was greatly annoyed, yet he kept it a secret.

After all, at first glance, the painting didn't look any different from the original, so why burst the bubble?

This matter was unknown to anyone in the Li Family.

Unexpectedly, a man surnamed Bai had exposed it today.

Li Feitian felt the gaze of everyone around him and became somewhat irate.

Even if it's indeed fake, you can't admit it!

Especially not in front of the Bai Family!

It's not about money, it's about face!

Li Feitian cast a meaningful glance at Zhou Ping.

Zhou Ping met his gaze and blinked discreetly.

Firstly, they were friends, and secondly, their companies had many collaborations. This favor, he had to help!

"Mr. Bai says it's fake, but I say it's real!" Zhou Ping said with unwavering certainty as he looked at Bai Xiaosheng.

The onlooking Li Family Members let out a breath of relief, sneering at Bai Xiaosheng.

An expert's words are much more credible than this young Mr. Bai's!

Bai Xiaosheng smiled, as he had seen the exchange of glances between Li Feitian and Zhou Ping.

In one's life, in dealing with people, sometimes you have to tell lies with eyes wide open, driven by self-interest.

"Since you and I have a disagreement, that's not a problem; let's use this painting to educate everyone, shall we?" Bai Xiaosheng smiled, "I've heard you're an expert around here, so let me test you!"

With Bai Xiaosheng's words, the crowd stirred.

He wants to challenge Zhou Ping?

Even Li Feitian was somewhat dumbfounded.

"Has this Mr. Bai gone mad!"

"Does he know who Mr. Zhou is, to dare test him?"

"So arrogant and foolish, he's asking for humiliation!"

The crowd couldn't help but interject with various comments.

Bai Fei and Bai Ran looked at Bai Xiaosheng with faint uneasiness.

Meanwhile.

Bai Minghang stood up and walked over, followed by Li Qiuyun.

The other Bai Family Members followed suit.

"Cousin, your son is quite extraordinary, challenging our Tianqing City's renowned connoisseur of curios!" Li Family's third uncle looked at Bai Minghang and chuckled lightly.

"Is that so? I'd like to see this for myself," Bai Minghang said with a faint smile.

He knew his own son very well; Bai Xiaosheng was not one to act recklessly, and if anyone was to suffer a loss, it would be someone else.

Ultimately, Bai Minghang also harbored some resentment towards the Li Family, especially with so many people gathered, waiting to laugh at his son's expense.

Go for it, kid! Dad's got your back!

Bai Minghang thought to himself.

"You want to test me? Fine, then please present your question!" Zhou Ping furrowed his brow, then smiled.

He too had his own pride, how could he not accept a challenge in full view of the public!

Bai Xiaosheng nodded and pointed to the Autumn Breeze Landscape Painting.

"This is a traditional ink wash landscape painting. Chinese painting values the spirit and realm, but all that is profound and elusive. Personal insights vary, and you could argue for three days and three nights without convincing the other party, so let's get technical," Bai Xiaosheng said with a smile, "Let me ask you about the poem on this painting, what do you think?"

Zhou Ping glanced at it and smiled lightly, "The poem is the painting's spirit, and the calligraphy is its bones. Harmonious and complementary, they enhance each other greatly!"

"Which year is the painting from, and which year is the poem from?" Bai Xiaosheng pressed on.

"Judging by the overall technique of the painting, it resembles Xie Jin and should be from the Ming Dynasty. The poetic lines 'After the seeker of the autumn grass departs, only the cold forest witnesses the slanting sun' are indeed from Tang Dynasty's Liu Changqing, but the calligraphy bears the style of Zhu Yunming," Zhou Ping asserted with confidence, "Cross-referencing the two, this painting dates back to the mid-Ming Dynasty! Though unsigned, both the composition and the brushwork can be considered exquisite!"

"Good!"

Li Feiyun and others watched as Zhou Ping's commentary flowed smoothly and couldn't stop praising him.

Zhou Ping also felt somewhat smug.

Unexpectedly, Bai Xiaosheng shook his head with a look of regret and asked softly.

"What about the ink, from which year is it?"