

War God 131

Chapter 131: Want to Make a Move? You Can Try!

"So, Brother Liu, what prestigious position do you hold these days?" Tang Feng asked a sensitive question the moment he sat down.

"Him? I doubt he even has a job," Huang Qi said bluntly, eager to leave.

"Is that so."

Tang Feng smiled. "Brother Liu, you must have heard of Boheng Pharma, right?"

Liu Zijian nodded. "Of course. It's a major corporation in our River City."

"That's right," Tang Feng said with a laugh. "As it happens, I'm the HR manager there. If you're interested, Brother Liu, you could send in a resume and give it a shot."

Huang Qi's expression tensed. "Brother Feng, is that really a good idea? You may be the HR Manager, but you can't just hire anyone." She was worried that if Liu Zijian actually accepted, they would constantly be running into each other at work, and their past relationship could easily be exposed.

Tang Feng was no fool; he knew the history between Huang Qi and Liu Zijian wasn't so simple. He just smiled and said, "It's no problem. Boheng Pharma has several branch stores. Brother Liu can try for a position there."

Huang Qi's eyes lit up. She nodded and said, "Darling, you're right. Liu Zijian, you're lucky Brother Feng is helping you. Other people don't even get a chance like this." Boheng Pharma had two small, less significant subsidiaries, and sending Liu Zijian to one of them would be perfect.

Liu Zijian said, "That won't be necessary. My friends are helping me find a job."

Huang Qi sneered. "Liu Zijian, don't be ungrateful. Brother Feng is only willing to help you because of me. Besides, what kind of good job can your friends find for you? Three or four thousand a month would

be the absolute most you could hope for. At Boheng Pharma, even our security guards earn more than that."

A faint smile touched Tang Feng's lips. "She's right. Not just anyone is qualified to work at Boheng Pharma. If it weren't for Qi Qi, I wouldn't have even bothered with you."

Liu Zijian just smiled. The two of them were playing good cop and bad cop, both intent on humiliating him. Huang Qi, in particular, seemed willing to say anything to shame him.

"Well then, I must thank you for your kind offer," Liu Zijian said.

Hearing this, a flash of arrogance crossed Huang Qi's face. "That's right. You should count your blessings that you ever knew me."

However, Liu Zijian's next sentence almost made her explode with rage.

"You mean I should wonder what sins I committed in a past life to have gotten involved with a woman like you."

The coffee in Tang Feng's hand nearly spilled, and his expression turned ugly.

"Liu Zijian, what are you talking about? What involvement did I ever have with you?" Huang Qi glared at him furiously, then turned to Tang Feng in a panic. "Darling, don't listen to his nonsense! Liu Zijian chased me in the past, but I couldn't be bothered with him."

"Liu Zijian, are you still bitter that I rejected you? Is that why you're trying to drive a wedge between my fiancé and me? Let me tell you, my relationship with Brother Feng is stronger than a diamond. Your words can't break us apart."

Liu Zijian simply smiled, his expression laced with mockery.

This sent Huang Qi into a rage. This useless bum, Liu Zijian, was now trying to ruin her relationship with Tang Feng. He deserved to die!

"Brother Feng, let's go. I must have been blind to ever associate with someone like him!" Huang Qi said, standing up to leave.

Tang Feng said reproachfully, "I've always told you to be careful about the friends you keep. Now do you see why?"

"Darling, I know I was wrong."

Tang Feng gently stroked Huang Qi's hair. "It's good that you realize it," he said gently. "If a heartless ingrate like him actually joined our company, think of how much he'd embarrass me."

Huang Qi nodded vigorously. "Exactly, exactly."

"Let's go. We're not on the same level. It's best if we don't associate in the future," Tang Feng said with a sigh, shaking his head.

"Don't worry, darling," Huang Qi said sweetly, linking her arm with his. "I'll be sure to avoid people like him. I wouldn't dare keep in touch."

The two of them continued their back-and-forth, their barbed words mocking Liu Zijian.

At that moment, a short-haired girl came running over, panting heavily. "Mr. Liu, I'm so sorry! The traffic was terrible. I'm late." In her haste, she nearly bumped into Huang Qi.

"Miss, I'm so sorry! Did I hit you?" the short-haired girl apologized profusely.

"Are you blind? Don't you watch where you're going?" Huang Qi screeched. "Do you have any idea how much this outfit costs? Could you even afford to replace it if you ruined it?"

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I wasn't paying attention. I apologize," the short-haired girl said, her face flushing red with fear.

"Is 'sorry' all you have to say?" Tang Feng added indifferently.

Huang Qi looked on with cold arrogance, giving the girl a sidelong glance.

"I..."

Before the short-haired girl could speak, Huang Qi pointed to the spilled coffee on the floor. "Tell you what. Lick that clean, and I'll let this go."

"This..." The short-haired girl's eyes turned red as she bit her lip, feeling deeply humiliated.

"Worst comes to worst, I'll pay you," she finally said. Chen Jie had only recently started working for a real estate development company. Her salary was low, so she was desperate to close a deal and finally settle down in River City. She hadn't expected to bump into Huang Qi in her hurry and be put in such a difficult position.

"Hmph! I don't want your money now. I just want you to lick the coffee off the floor!" Huang Qi said haughtily.

"Miss, aren't you being a bit too unreasonable?" an onlooker finally said, unable to watch any longer.

"Yeah, she didn't even actually hit you, and she's apologized. There's no need to drag it out, is there?" another chimed in.

Several reasonable bystanders began to speak up for Chen Jie.

"What? Is this any of your business?" Huang Qi was already in a foul mood after seeing Liu Zijian, and being criticized by strangers made her even angrier.

"I am the HR Manager of Boheng Pharma," Tang Feng said coldly. "Are you trying to bully my woman? Do you have a death wish?"

Hearing the name Boheng Pharma, the crowd immediately fell silent, not daring to say another word. The company's influence was, after all, quite significant.

Chen Jie was on the verge of tears.

"Tsk tsk. Huang Qi, have you no shame? Bullying a young girl like this," Liu Zijian said coolly at the critical moment.

"Liu Zijian, stay out of this!" Huang Qi retorted coldly.

"How could this be none of my business?" Liu Zijian walked over slowly. "She's my friend. You tell me if it has anything to do with me."

"Your friend?" Huang Qi sneered. "I suppose birds of a feather really do flock together!"

Tang Feng scoffed. "What, you want to stand up for her?"

"That's right." Liu Zijian didn't back down. "You have a problem with that?"

Tang Feng's expression soured. "You're asking for it!" he snarled.

As the words left his mouth, he swung his hand in a slap.

THUMP!

His wrist was caught in a firm grip. Liu Zijian's voice was calm. "What, thinking of starting something? Go on, give it a try."

Chapter 132: What's the best house? I want it!

In the past, Liu Zijian would never have dared to make a move. Nor would he have dared to say such things.

But after spending so much time with Elder Brother Mu recently, he had come to understand that a true man must know what he should and shouldn't do.

When it's time to take a stand, you have to take a stand.

Watching Liu Zijian step in front of her, Chen Jie's heart swelled with emotion, and her eyes reddened.

Huang Qi pointed at Liu Zijian and cursed, "You, a cripple, dare to get physical with Brother Feng? Are you looking for death?"

She had just seen him walk over. He was limping—his leg was crippled.

How satisfying.

Seeing the man she once loved most become like this, she felt not a shred of sympathy, but rather a sense of schadenfreude.

"Even so, I'm more than enough to deal with him," Liu Zijian replied dismissively, a calm smile on his face. He paid Huang Qi's words no mind at all.

"You... you're courting death!" Tang Feng shouted, lunging forward. But before he could do anything, Liu Zijian suddenly squeezed the hand he had grabbed.

"AGH!" Tang Feng screamed, feeling as if his wrist was about to snap.

Although Liu Zijian hadn't lived well these past few years and had even been crippled, his physique was still much stronger than that of a pretty boy like Tang Feng, who spent all his time in an office. So with that one squeeze, all the color drained from Tang Feng's face.

Liu Zijian looked at Huang Qi and asked pointedly, "Can a pretty boy who's all looks and no substance like him really satisfy you?"

The remark sent the surrounding crowd into a fit of laughter.

Even Chen Jie couldn't help but let out a little laugh, her face blushing. This Mr. Liu... his words are so infuriating!

"Liu Zijian, don't you go too far!" Huang Qi's face was purple with rage; she looked like she wanted to tear him to shreds.

Tang Feng's expression was even darker. He glared at Liu Zijian with pure hatred. "Kid, if you've got any guts, you won't go anywhere. I'm calling my guys to come and finish you right now!"

Liu Zijian flung Tang Feng's arm away, nearly sending him stumbling to the ground. "Go on then," he said dismissively. "You'd better call a lot of people. Otherwise, it won't reflect the prestige of the great Human Resources Manager of Boheng Pharma."

"Fine! Just you wait!"

Tang Feng stayed put and immediately whipped out his phone.

"Manager Niu, I've run into some trouble. Bring some men over here. Yeah, bring a lot!"

After hanging up, Tang Feng stared coldly at Liu Zijian. "Kid, you're dead."

Chen Jie tugged on Liu Zijian's sleeve. "Elder Brother Liu, maybe we should go."

Tang Feng sneered. "Leave? You think you can?"

Liu Zijian patted Chen Jie's hand reassuringly. "Don't worry. As long as I'm here, they won't dare lay a finger on you."

"By the way, did you bring the contract?"

"I did! It's right here," Chen Jie said quickly. She took two documents out of her bag. "The house in Happiness Community is ready. As soon as you sign the contract, you can move in whenever you like."

Huang Qi interjected with a sneer, "Oh, so you're buying a house now? Happiness Community? Isn't that all second-hand properties? What, has the great Liu Zijian fallen so far that he can only afford a second-hand house?"

Without looking up, Liu Zijian retorted, "Still better than someone else using my second-hand goods. Wouldn't you agree, Manager Tang?"

"You..." Huang Qi was practically exploding with rage. She stared daggers at Liu Zijian, a profound shock welling up inside her.

She never expected Liu Zijian to have changed so much. His words were as sharp as a razor.

Meanwhile, Tang Feng's eyes looked ready to shoot fire.

"Darling, don't listen to his nonsense, we..." Huang Qi started to explain, but Tang Feng roughly pushed her aside.

"Get lost!"

Tang Feng stumbled forward and fixed his gaze on Liu Zijian. "Kid, are you determined to fight me to the death?"

Liu Zijian put down the contract and turned to Chen Jie. "Miss Chen, do you happen to have any newly developed properties? I think someone made a good point. Whether it's a house or a person, newer is always better. Don't you think?"

Chen Jie glanced at Tang Feng and said through gritted teeth, "That's true, but we aren't buying a house just to spite someone. There's no need to waste money like that. We can live a good life by being a little frugal."

Coming from the countryside, Chen Jie was used to hardship. To her, saving every penny was what mattered most.

Liu Zijian let out a hearty laugh. "Miss Chen, your future husband will be a very lucky man. Finding a wife like you... he must have done something truly great in a past life."

Chen Jie blushed. "I... I don't have a boyfriend yet."

Liu Zijian was also a bit embarrassed. "Oh, I'm sorry. My mistake."

"It's no problem at all," Chen Jie replied. "But if you are interested in a new property, Mr. Liu, we have some move-in-ready homes available at Evergrande Garden. They're just a bit more expensive."

"Hmph. A bit more expensive?" Huang Qi scoffed. "The homes in Evergrande Garden cost over ten thousand per square meter. Can he afford that?"

So that's it. This Chen Jie is just an actress Liu Zijian hired to put on a show. A very convincing one, at that!

"Fine, Evergrande Garden it is. I'll take the largest unit you have!" Liu Zijian declared with a grand wave of his hand.

"Huh?" Chen Jie stared at Liu Zijian in utter disbelief.

The largest unit at Evergrande Garden was a two-story, two-hundred-square-meter duplex. In terms of both its decor and prestige, it was considered the finest in the entire area.

Mr. Liu actually wants to buy that one?

"What's wrong? Is it not possible?" Liu Zijian asked.

"It is, but... I've only been with the company for a short time, so I don't have that kind of authority. I need to report this to my supervisor," Chen Jie explained.

"Then call him now. If it's alright, ask him to come over," Liu Zijian said.

"Yes, yes!"

A moment later, Chen Jie hung up the phone and told Liu Zijian excitedly, "Mr. Liu, our supervisor is in the area. He said he's coming right over!"

"Thank you for your help."

Chen Jie's face lit up. "It's my pleasure!"

If Liu Zijian really bought the house, she would get a commission. And the more expensive the house, the higher her commission would be.

Huang Qi sneered, "Right. Keep up the act."

Soon, Chen Jie's supervisor arrived. He was a sharp, capable-looking man of around forty.

As soon as he saw Chen Jie, the supervisor's face grew stern. "Chen Jie, where is this client you mentioned?"

Then, his eyes fell on Tang Feng in his designer suit, and his expression immediately broke into a smile. "You must be Mr. Liu, I presume? It's a pleasure to finally meet you. Rest assured, our properties at Evergrande Garden are..."

"Supervisor, this is Mr. Liu," Chen Jie said, tugging on his sleeve in embarrassment.

"Ah!"

「Ten minutes later.」

The deal was done. In that short time, they had finalized the contract, Liu Zijian had transferred the entire amount on the spot, and the supervisor had promised to handle all the remaining paperwork.

The supervisor gripped Liu Zijian's hands, his face glowing with excitement. "Mr. Liu, I can tell just by looking at you that you're a man of great success! To buy this entire building, and to pay in full... Honestly, in all my years in this business, I've never met someone as decisive and impressive as you."

"This is all thanks to Miss Chen's recommendation," Liu Zijian said. "Otherwise, I never would have found such a wonderful home."

The supervisor turned to her. "Don't you worry, Chen Jie. You'll get every penny of your commission. First thing tomorrow, I'm going to propose transferring you to my team. After that, this supervisor position will be yours."

After closing a sale this big, my own position is due for a promotion. And Chen Jie... yes, she's very promising.

"Thank you, Supervisor! And thank you, Mr. Liu!" Chen Jie was ecstatic.

Huang Qi, however, could only stare at Liu Zijian in stunned disbelief.

When did this guy get so rich?

Chapter 133: If You're the Chairman, Then I'm the Chairman's Wife!

"Mr. Liu, please don't worry about a thing. I'll go take care of the rest of the paperwork for you," the manager said. "I'll make sure you can move in within three days!"

After speaking, the manager turned to Chen Jie and instructed, "Chen Jie, take good care of Mr. Liu. And remember, don't be afraid to spend money!"

Once Chen Jie's manager had left, the café fell silent, so quiet you could hear a pin drop.

Huang Qi stared at Liu Zijian in disbelief. He's changed. He's completely changed, she thought.

He hadn't just become more confident and mature; he was also wealthier.

Spending money like water—over two million! That was an unimaginable sum for her. Tang Feng's family had some money, but even they wouldn't dare spend that much on a house. Where did Liu Zijian get all this money? Could it be...

A sudden thought struck Huang Qi, and she blurted out, "Liu Zijian, did you do something illegal? How else could you have gotten so much money?"

"Who would have thought," she sneered, "that the Liu Zijian who once couldn't even bring himself to kill a chicken would now do anything for money. No wonder your legs got broken."

Huang Qi's words were incredibly harsh.

"A frog in a well," Liu Zijian said dismissively, taking a drag from his cigarette without giving her any further attention.

His money, of course, had come from his winnings at the Xin Yuan Club, from when he bet on the boxing matches with Elder Brother Mu. That day, he had bet every cent he had on Elder Brother Mu. After so

many fights, Liu Zijian had earned several million. It was safe to say his net worth was now even higher than Tang Feng's.

But he had always kept a low profile and never flaunted his wealth. If Huang Qi hadn't been so aggressive, he wouldn't have bothered with her at all.

However, Huang Qi had a point: secondhand things really were no good. After meeting Elder Brother Mu, he needed to start a new life and say goodbye to his past.

And it would all begin with buying this house.

"Hmph, what are you so proud of!" Huang Qi scoffed. "Just you wait. When the guys Brother Feng called get here, we'll see how you die!"

Tang Feng was a company manager; he could easily summon a few people to deal with Liu Zijian. So what if he had a bit of stinking money?

"Mr. Liu, should we call the police?" Chen Jie whispered. The couple looked like trouble. If they really waited for their backup to arrive, they wouldn't be able to leave.

Liu Zijian replied, "Don't worry. It doesn't matter how many people they bring. It'll be useless."

Tang Feng sneered, "Kid, keep up the act. I'd like to see if you're still talking so tough when my guys get here!"

"I'm just afraid that when my brother shows up, you all won't even be able to cry," Liu Zijian sighed, as if lamenting Tang Feng's fate.

"Your brother?" Huang Qi sneered, "Liu Zijian, keep dreaming. What brother? When you were at your lowest, I didn't see any brother around."

Liu Zijian replied indifferently, "We have no relationship, so why would you know about my brother?"

"You..." Huang Qi was so furious she was at a loss for words. Then, her tone turned venomous. "Even if you have a brother, he's probably just like you—a good-for-nothing, utterly worthless loser who's only capable of petty theft. You're useless yourself. Not only do you not have a girlfriend, but you don't even have a decent job."

"And your so-called brother can't be much better!" Huang Qi continued, clinging to Tang Feng's arm. "I'm different now. I'm not just the deputy manager of the sales department at Boheng Pharma; I'm about to have that 'deputy' removed from my title. My fiancé here is the manager of the HR department. Even the company chairman has to give us some face. What does that make wastes of space like you, who are only fit to collect trash?"

"Getting rid of trash like you would be easier than squashing an ant!"

Contempt and disdain filled Huang Qi's face, and Tang Feng wore a similarly proud expression.

Indeed. At his level, what was mere money? What truly mattered was status, career, and power. He, Tang Feng, was now a key member of Boheng Pharma's middle management. The only people above him were a general manager, the president, and the board of directors. Within the company, he could decide the fates of countless people with a single word.

"Really? Today, I'd like to see if crushing my brother is truly as simple as you say—easier than squashing an ant."

Just then, a quiet voice came from behind them.

"Who the hell are you? What I say is none of your damn business!" Huang Qi bellowed, whirling around to face the speaker.

"Your words are like farts, polluting the environment. Of course, it's my business," Lin Mu said as he slowly walked over, looking at Huang Qi with a calm gaze. "After all, you aren't just losing your own face, but the face of all of Boheng Pharma."

Huang Qi's expression turned exceedingly ugly. "Since you know I'm from Boheng Pharma, you still dare to speak to me like that? Are you tired of living?!"

"Really?" Lin Mu took a hand out of his pocket and pointed at Tang Feng. "Even he wouldn't dare to speak so arrogantly. What gives you the right?"

"Who do you think you are? Our company's chairman?" Huang Qi scoffed.

"Why are you pulling on me? Was I wrong?" Huang Qi slapped Tang Feng's hand away and looked at Lin Mu haughtily. "If you really are our company's chairman, then I'm the chairman's wife!"

Her words were meant not only to elevate herself but also to indirectly boost Tang Feng's status.

"Shut your mouth!" Tang Feng's face went pale with fright as he slapped Huang Qi across the face. "If you want to die, go ahead, but don't drag me down with you!"

Huang Qi clutched her face, staring at Tang Feng in disbelief. "You hit me? Tang Feng, do you have any conscience? Whose side are you on?" The slap had already swollen her face. What she found hardest to accept was that Tang Feng had hit her in front of so many people, utterly shattering her dignity.

"You bitch, shut up!" Tang Feng kicked Huang Qi to the ground. Then, under her incredulous gaze, he walked over to Lin Mu and bowed a full ninety degrees.

"President Lin, I'm sorry. She's had too much to drink and said some things she shouldn't have. I hope you won't take it to heart." Tang Feng's face was pale, and his voice trembled.

"Tang Feng, are you crazy? Since when did our company have a President Lin?" Huang Qi shrieked from the floor.

"He is the company chairman, you idiot!" Tang Feng wished he could just tear her mouth off. This self-righteous woman is going to get me killed!

"What?"

The single word struck Huang Qi like a bolt from the blue, and she collapsed completely onto the floor. The man she had just been pointing at and cursing... was really the company chairman?

"President Lin, I... I was just spouting nonsense. I misspoke. President Lin, please don't mind me, please..." Huang Qi felt like she could die. Lin Mu is the chairman... what... what do I do now?

Lin Mu pulled up a chair, sat down, and simply stared at her.

"You said you're the chairman's wife? I find that strange. As the chairman, I don't recall getting a wife.

"Or has the company appointed another chairman that I don't know about?"

Chapter 134 He Really is the Chairman!

Tang Feng was so scared he nearly knelt on the ground.

Back at the meeting, Lin Mu had taken down two manager-level figures and held a wealth of incriminating materials. Those were essentially the rap sheets for Tang Feng and his colleagues. If Lin Mu wanted, he could probably replace a huge portion of the company's staff.

And now, because of that stupid woman Huang Qi's reckless mouth, he might get implicated too.

"President Lin, this has nothing to do with me! Really, it's not my fault! This stupid woman said it all," Tang Feng said, terrified. He knew Lin Mu was someone who would dare to take him down.

Although most people in the company disliked the new chairman, they were all deeply afraid of him. Tang Feng was no exception.

"Is that so?" Lin Mu said with a smile that wasn't a smile. "But how is it that I heard this 'Chairman's wife' is your fiancée? Is that a lie too?"

Tang Feng: "..."

"President Lin, that's false! I have no relationship with this woman anymore. Her words mean nothing!" Tang Feng declared immediately.

Huang Qi: "..."

"Tang Feng, what are you talking about? No relationship? We're supposed to get married this year! Are you really going to deny it?" Huang Qi shrieked.

"Get lost!" Tang Feng slapped Huang Qi aside. "Who said anything about marrying you? I was just playing around. You self-important woman, did you really think I wanted to marry you?"

Huang Qi stared at Tang Feng in disbelief, then burst into loud sobs. Her cries were miserable and full of agony. In that moment, she finally understood what it felt like to be kicked to the curb.

Liu Zijian watched this scene, his expression calm, showing no flicker of emotion. No sympathy, no joy. They had become strangers long ago; there was no connection between them now, and there certainly wouldn't be one in the future.

"President Lin, if there's nothing else, may I leave?" Tang Feng asked tentatively.

Lin Mu smiled. "What's the hurry? I just heard you were calling people to teach my brother a lesson. Let's wait a bit."

The words had barely left his mouth when the café door was pushed open. Seven or eight uniformed security guards swaggered in, reeking of alcohol.

"Manager Tang, who dares to mess with you? Tired of living? Today, I'll show him that no one gets to touch people from Bo Heng!"

Tang Feng's face went white as a sheet.

This is it. I'm done for. It's all because of that damn woman Huang Qi!

Long Bing walked over, tapping his rubber baton on the table. "Manager Tang," he said casually, "Da Niu got a sudden stomachache and couldn't come, so I brought the boys. Where's the bastard who hit you? Point him out, and my brothers and I will take care of him!"

Killing him was out of the question, but a brutal lesson was definitely on the menu.

"Manager Tang, why are you sitting on the floor? Get up! Is that him?" Long Bing pointed at Lin Mu and sneered, "Kid, you've got some nerve, hitting our Manager Tang. You tired of living?"

Long Bing was massive, with a fierce, fleshy face. When he glared, he exuded an Evil Qi.

"Just shut up!" Tang Feng roared, wishing he could beat some sense into Long Bing himself.

Long Bing waved his hand grandly. "Don't be afraid, Manager Tang. Say what you will, but the brothers I brought this time can all fight!" Pointing at Lin Mu, Long Bing ordered, "Boys, take him away! Let him get a taste of what we're capable of!"

Several security guards moved forward, ready to grab him.

"Chairman!"

Suddenly, with a CLATTER, one of the junior security guards dropped his baton. His face was completely pale.

"Xiao Liz, what are you doing? What chairman? I told you to drink less. Are you drunk?" Long Bing laughed heartily and let out a long, boozy belch.

The junior security guard named Xiao Liz looked at Long Bing, on the verge of tears. "He really is the Chairman."

Long Bing: "..."

Only when he saw Tang Feng nod did Long Bing fall to his knees with a THUD.

"Well now! I knew it! The moment I walked in, I felt an undeniable, kingly aura wash over me. It turns out the Chairman was gracing us with his presence!" Long Bing's face was a mask of righteousness as he proclaimed, "I have long heard that our company has a new chairman—young, promising, dashing, and handsome. Though I had only heard his name and never seen him in person, my admiration for the Chairman is like the surging waters of the Yangtze, endless and unceasing, and like the flooding of the Yellow River, utterly unstoppable!"

Tang Feng: "..."

Xiao Liz: "..."

Lin Mu: "..."

Shameless! That Long Bing was simply shameless! If not for the belch that punctuated his speech, Lin Mu might have even believed his words.

Long Bing's face was a little red. "Mr. Chairman, if there's nothing else, I'll be on my way, alright?"

Lin Mu just watched him with that half-smile.

"Oh, Mr. Chairman, please don't fire me! I just heard Manager Tang was being wronged. I thought, since we're all in the same company and see each other all the time, I should stand up for him." Seeing Lin Mu's expression darken, Long Bing's eyes welled with tears. "I have elders to support and children to raise. My whole family—over a dozen people—relies on me alone. If you fire me, they'll all go hungry!"

"Mr. Chairman, you're a magnanimous man. Won't you please overlook my ignorance? Just dismiss me as if I'm nothing. I promise, I will be completely dedicated to the company from now on. I'll never cut corners again..."

"And this dedication of yours," Lin Mu said with a smile, "does it include drinking on the job?"

Long Bing's heart sank.

I'm so screwed. I'm still on duty.

A thought struck him. "Mr. Chairman, it's like this: a brother of mine came to River City, so I had a meal with him. I only had a little to drink, really, just a tiny bit." He made a small gesture with his fingers.

"Drinking on the job. According to company regulations, what's the penalty?" Lin Mu asked, looking at Xiao Liz.

"Deduction of salary and bonus, and a major demerit on record," Xiao Liz said with his head bowed.

"Mm. Then all of you can get lost," Lin Mu waved his hand.

Hearing that Lin Mu wasn't going to pursue the matter, Long Bing scrambled to his feet. "A true Chairman is a magnanimous one! Mr. Chairman, you can rest assured, I will definitely..."

"Scram!"

"Right away!"

Long Bing left with his men. As he walked out the door, he was already bragging to the other guards. "The Chairman let us off because he was giving me face, but this month's salary and bonuses are gone. Whoever wants to stay can stay. Whoever doesn't can scram!"

"I'm staying!"

"Me too!"

"With a chairman this good, I'm definitely not leaving!"

Lin Mu ignored them, turning his gaze to Tang Feng and Huang Qi. "Alright, now it's time to deal with you two."

"So, what do you think I should do with you?"

Chapter 135: River City Martial Meet!

"President Lin, I..."

Tang Feng gritted his teeth, not knowing what to say. In the end, he said dejectedly, "I will resign."

Having offended Lin Mu, he could no longer stay at the company.

What a pity. After establishing a firm foothold at Boheng Pharma over many years, he was just about to take the next step and become a manager. Now, because of Huang Qi, everything had gone down the drain.

Thinking of this, he shot Huang Qi a resentful glance and got up to leave.

"Brother Feng, Brother Feng, don't leave me behind," Huang Qi shouted from behind. "You said you'd make me the sales manager. How can you go back on your word?"

"Go to hell, you bitch!" Tang Feng cursed loudly and left without looking back.

It wasn't until Tang Feng left that Huang Qi remembered she had also offended Lin Mu and couldn't stay at the company either. But she just couldn't accept it.

Suddenly, Huang Qi saw Liu Zijian, and a glimmer of hope appeared in her eyes.

"Zijian, please, beg President Lin not to fire me. I've come so far, and I don't want to give up," Huang Qi crawled over, pleading with Liu Zijian. "Zijian, for the sake of our past marriage, please beg President Lin not to fire me."

Huang Qi was now weeping bitterly and beseeching loudly, a complete contrast to her previous aggressive demeanor.

Lin Mu was a bit surprised. So this Huang Qi was actually his brother's ex-wife. Things were getting interesting.

Liu Zijian looked at Huang Qi and said calmly, "You should leave. From the moment we divorced, we have had nothing to do with each other."

Huang Qi exclaimed, "How can we have nothing to do with each other? We were husband and wife for years! And there's our son—yes, our son!"

She clutched Liu Zijian's leg. "Zijian, I know I was wrong. For our child's sake, please, I'm begging you. Ask President Lin to let me stay."

"You still have the nerve to mention our son?" Liu Zijian let out a derisive laugh and said coldly, "When you insisted on divorcing me and abandoned our son when he wasn't even a year old, did you ever think about today? When you took everything of value from our home, did you think about our marriage then? What gives you the nerve to beg me now?"

Huang Qi cried uncontrollably. "Zijian, I had no choice! I wanted a good life too, but what could you give me?"

"Yes, you wanted a good life, so you abandoned your husband and son to cling to someone else. Go on, then, go live that wonderful life of yours," Liu Zijian said with disgust.

Huang Qi wiped her tears. "But it's different now. Your brother is the chairman of the company, and you're wealthy. We can be like we were before, can't we? Zijian, honestly, I've never forgotten you all these years. I really haven't."

"Enough!" Liu Zijian raised his hand. "You don't feel disgusted saying that? I'm disgusted just listening to it. I must have been blind to have ever known a woman like you!"

Huang Qi immediately burst into a torrent of curses, "Liu Zijian, you heartless bastard! You're a loser! You were a loser before, you're a loser now, and you'll be a loser in the future. What's so great about you? All you did was get lucky with some damn brother!"

"Yes," Liu Zijian said calmly, his single sentence silencing her. "But this brother of mine will never abandon me and never betray me."

Lin Mu shook his head and said, "Zijian, what's the point of talking to a woman like her? Let's go."

With that, Liu Zijian stood up and left with Lin Mu, leaving behind a sobbing Huang Qi, who was now filled with gut-wrenching regret. Chen Jie hurriedly stood up and followed them.

Outside the café, Liu Zijian started to say, "Elder Brother Mu, I..."

Lin Mu patted his shoulder. "Nothing needs to be said between brothers. The Sales Department Manager position at the company is being saved for you."

"I'm afraid I won't be able to do a good job," Liu Zijian said.

"Even if you can't, you still have to do it!" Lin Mu insisted. "You're my brother. If you don't help me, who will?"

Moved, Liu Zijian said in a deep voice, "Don't worry, Elder Brother Mu. I'll definitely do my best and won't let you down!"

"That's more like it." Lin Mu glanced at Chen Jie and smiled. "Alright, I won't disturb you two. I have some business to attend to, so I'll be going."

"Elder Brother Mu, actually, we..."

Liu Zijian tried to explain, but Lin Mu had already walked away, giving him an encouraging fist pump as he left.

"Miss Chen, my Elder Brother Mu isn't usually like this," Liu Zijian said, his face flushing with embarrassment.

Chen Jie chuckled, her own cheeks turning pink. "I know. Don't worry, I don't mind at all. In fact, I envy you for having a brother like him."

"Yes, I feel very fortunate too!" A faint smile appeared on Liu Zijian's face.

As Chen Jie looked at the man beside her, whose face bore the marks of a hard life and whose eyes held a hint of sadness, something trembled softly within her heart.

"Elder Brother Liu... c-can I treat you to dinner?" Chen Jie mustered her courage. When she saw him look at her, she quickly explained, "I just want to thank you for helping me sign my first contract."

"Of course. It would be my honor." Looking at the pure and kind girl before him, Liu Zijian smiled warmly.

* * *

The next day, Liu Zijian reported for duty at Boheng Pharma. He went through the normal procedures, starting from the very bottom to gain experience. When Lin Mu heard about it, he simply smiled knowingly and didn't object. Liu Zijian had done it to prevent gossip at the company, and far from being disappointed, Lin Mu fully supported his brother's decision.

In the days that followed, Lin Mu rarely appeared at the company. Boheng Pharma was just a tool for him to make money, nothing more. It wasn't that important. His focus was entirely on his cultivation.

The River City Martial Way Tournament was approaching, and Lin Mu couldn't afford to slack off. Although Lin Mu was confident he would have no rivals in the Martial Way Tournament, his goal was never just the tournament itself.

Time passed, and only a few days remained until the Martial Way Tournament.

That day, Guan Chengye called. He informed Lin Mu about the time and venue for the River City Martial Way Tournament, telling him they would leave tomorrow and that he should be prepared.

After hanging up, Lin Mu looked toward the sunset, a faint smile on his face. Whether in my past life or now, I've never participated in a Martial Way tournament. I'm actually a little excited. I just hope it doesn't disappoint me.

That night, Lin Mu didn't cultivate. Instead, he simply spent some quality time with his family. His mother's restaurant was now successfully up and running. With her two friends and Liu Zijian's mother, Ye's, business was quite good.

As for Liu Zijian, he had performed surprisingly well in less than a month, securing several major contracts in a row. If it weren't for how new he was to the company, he would have already been promoted. Therefore, that night, Lin Mu met up with Liu Zijian, and the two of them had some drinks.

「Early the next morning, Guan Jiaojiao came to the villa to pick up Lin Mu for the River City Martial Way Tournament.」

Chapter 136: External Strength Master? Impressive, huh!

When Lin Mu stepped out of the car, Elder Guan was taken aback.

"Master Lin, you're going like this?"

Lin Mu was dressed in casual sportswear, hadn't bothered to dress up, and wasn't carrying anything. Stranger still, he was wearing sunglasses. He looked less like someone attending a martial arts tournament and more like a tourist on vacation.

"What's wrong?" Lin Mu took off his sunglasses and glanced at Guan Chengye.

Today, Guan Chengye was wearing a purple Tang suit, his hair and beard meticulously groomed. His expression was solemn, and he was clearly taking the occasion very seriously. Behind him stood Da Jun and two bodyguards, all of whom were formidable. They also wore grave expressions, vigilantly observing their surroundings.

"It's nothing, nothing."

Since Lin Mu didn't elaborate, Guan Chengye didn't press the matter, merely gesturing for him to get in the car.

"Grandfather, what about me?" Guan Jiaojiao said indignantly, seeing that her grandfather didn't intend to take her. I was the one who went to get him, and now they're planning to leave without me?

"Jiaojiao, I don't know what might happen at this River City Martial Arts Tournament, so it's better if you don't go." She's my only granddaughter. If anything were to happen to her at the tournament, how could I face the ancestors of the Guan Family?

"No, I want to go!" Guan Jiaojiao declared stubbornly. "This is a rare tournament that only happens once a decade. I don't want to miss it."

Seeing her grandfather was about to lose his temper, Guan Jiaojiao grabbed his hand and wheedled, "Grandfather, please take me with you. I promise I'll be good. Besides, I can look after you on the way."

Just as Guan Chengye was about to refuse, his gaze fell on Lin Mu. An idea struck him, and he said, "Fine, you can come along. But you must not cause trouble, and you have to listen to everything Master Lin says."

"Got it, got it."

Guan Jiaojiao shot a triumphant look at Lin Mu before hopping into the car and taking a seat.

After getting in, Lin Mu asked, "Where are we going?"

"Wufeng Town, at the junction of the three Jiangling provinces. Most of the locals are refugees from various regions, so the customs and cultures are all different. It's a sort of no-man's-land."

"River City has a place like that?" Lin Mu was surprised. River City was one of the most economically developed cities in the country, and Jiangling had been a prosperous province since ancient times. How could a no-man's-land exist in such a place?

"Of course," Guan Jiaojiao said. "Jiangling has always been a hub of commerce. Behind great prosperity, there are always dark corners. It's not that the authorities don't care; it's more that they turn a blind eye for reasons unknown to the public."

Lin Mu nodded in understanding. Behind every prosperous facade, there was always a dark underbelly where good and evil intermingled. Different powers clashed and competed, yet also depended on one another, creating a delicate balance.

Guan Chengye chose to sit in the front passenger seat, leaving the back for the two young people. After all, they'll have more to talk about.

Hearing their conversation, Guan Chengye explained, "The factions attending the martial arts tournament are not ordinary people, and Wufeng Town is loosely governed, which is why it was chosen as the venue this time."

Lin Mu nodded again. "I suppose the other factions have already set off?"

"They have," Guan Chengye said in a hushed tone. "Before I left, I heard that many factions participate because the rankings will affect the distribution of certain resources across the three provinces and their cities."

Lin Mu's eyebrows rose. No wonder someone with Guan Chengye's sensitive status would choose to participate. It seems it isn't just because of that ten-year agreement.

"When the time comes, just do your best, Master Lin. Frankly, I'm worried the Dark Web might also send people," Guan Chengye said with concern.

"The Dark Web is coming too? Aren't they afraid of trouble?" Lin Mu asked.

Guan Chengye gave a bitter smile. "If they were, the Dark Web wouldn't be growing stronger and stronger." He sighed and added, "Moreover, as far as I know, Wufeng Town is one of the Dark Web's strongholds. However, there's no concrete evidence. The town's backers are a complex web of factions with tangled interests. Any move against them could have widespread repercussions, so it's very difficult for the authorities to send people in, even if they wanted to."

Lin Mu understood immediately. Places like Wufeng Town were always extremely complicated. Internally, they might fight to the death, but they would present a united front against any outside threat. Taking them on would not be an easy task. Otherwise, a place like this would have been suppressed by the authorities long ago, and a lawless zone wouldn't exist.

The car drove at a steady pace, but it still took four to five hours to enter the territory of Wufeng Town. Through the car window, Lin Mu saw towering peaks shrouded in mist. It lacked the hustle and bustle of a big city, instead exuding the tranquil atmosphere of a paradise removed from the mortal world. However, having visited countless serene and beautiful places in both his lives, Lin Mu wasn't particularly impressed. It was the tile-roofed and earthen houses scattered everywhere that gave him a slight pause.

After entering Wufeng Town, they drove for another forty minutes along a mountain road before finally stopping in front of a small, Western-style building. Guan Chengye explained that there were several such buildings in Wufeng Town, funded by various factions to provide a resting place for those attending the tournament.

As soon as the car stopped, a group of people hurried out of the building. The one in the lead was none other than Guan Feifei, who had arrived in Wufeng Town three days prior.

"Grandfather, Master Lin, you've arrived," Guan Feifei said. He was wearing a suit, but it couldn't hide his muscular build. The men behind him walked with a powerful gait and had sharp gazes. They swept a fleeting glance over Lin Mu before quickly looking away. In their eyes, Lin Mu was just a minor character, not worthy of their attention. Their only mission was to protect Elder Guan.

"Master Lin, let's go. We can go inside and rest for a bit. Food and drinks have already been prepared," Guan Chengye said with a chuckle, looking quite weary. He was getting old, and the long journey had taken its toll on him.

"Indeed. Master Lin, this way, please," Guan Feifei said, his attitude toward Lin Mu also respectful.

"Hmph, what master? A beardless young whelp. Not only did he make us wait for so long, but the first thing he wants upon arrival is food and drink. We've been waiting for hours," a sarcastic voice cut in.

At that moment, three people emerged from the building. The leader was a middle-aged man with a goatee. Behind him, a young man and woman both stared at Lin Mu with disdain.

"Master Tian, thank you for making this trip for our sake," Guan Chengye said gratefully, hurrying forward.

"No thanks are necessary," Master Tian replied coldly. "It seems your Guan Family no longer needs the three of us. If that's the case, we have no face to stay."

"Xiao Wu, Xiao Duo, let's go," Master Tian said, turning to leave.

"Master Tian, wait!" Guan Chengye's expression changed as he stepped forward. "Master Tian, please, give me some face, won't you?"

"Hmph, I don't mind giving you face, but on what grounds does *that kid* deserve it?" Master Tian said unkindly, pointing a finger at Lin Mu.

The young man named Xiao Wu sneered. "My master is an External Strength Peak Martial Way Master. What right does *he* have to make my master wait for so long?"

Everyone's expression shifted slightly as they looked toward Lin Mu.

Just then, Lin Mu spoke calmly, "External Strength Master? Is that supposed to be impressive?"

Chapter 137: He's Not My Boyfriend!

External Strength Master? Is he that impressive?

Tian Boguang and his disciple's comments were aimed squarely at Lin Mu, and Lin Mu's counterattack was equally sharp. As a result, Tian Boguang's expression instantly grew grim.

"Kid, it seems you're tired of living!" Xiao Wu said, looking at Lin Mu with a glacial gaze. "Who do you think you are to speak to my master like that?"

Lin Mu looked at him indifferently. "And who are you to speak to me like that?"

Stung by Lin Mu's retort, Xiao Wu could only stammer, "You..."

Tian Boguang sneered, "What a sharp-tongued brat."

He turned to Guan Chengye and said, "Elder Guan, what's your call?"

He was forcing Guan Chengye to take a stand.

Guan Chengye replied with a wry smile, "Master Tian, how about you do me a favor? Let's all take a step back."

Tian Boguang snorted coldly, clasped his hands behind his back, and looked away, completely ignoring Guan Chengye.

His disciple, however, spoke up. "It's not impossible for my master to take a step back. Just have this kid apologize to him. Otherwise, we're not sticking around to help!"

Xiao Wu's demeanor was arrogant, his tone cold. This was a threat.

Guan Jiaojiao was not having it. Although she was somewhat annoyed with Lin Mu, that was a private matter between them. She wouldn't stand by and watch an outsider humiliate him like this.

"What are you so proud of? Why should Lin Mu apologize? You don't want to help? As if we want your help anyway!" Guan Jiaojiao huffed coldly, completely unfazed that her words made Tian Boguang's eyes darken instantly.

"Guan Jiaojiao, shut your mouth! You have no say here!" Guan Feifei's expression changed as he immediately scolded her.

Tian Boguang was an expert invited by their grandfather. If she angered him and he left, would their grandfather have to get on stage himself at the River City martial meet? What would be left of the Guan Family's reputation then?

Tian Boguang's skills weren't weak. Plus, having lived in Lingcheng for years, he knew countless masters of the Martial Way. With him present, their chance of success at the River City martial meet was at least sixty percent. As for Lin Mu, while Guan Feifei respected him, it wasn't to the same degree as his grandfather. Therefore, he still hoped both sides could sit down and talk things over calmly instead of creating a conflict.

"I didn't say anything wrong," Guan Jiaojiao said indignantly. "Grandpa hasn't even said anything. Why are you yelling at me?"

Guan Chengye felt a headache coming on. He looked at Lin Mu and asked, "Master Lin, what are your thoughts?"

Lin Mu smiled. "I'll leave it to Elder Guan."

After all, he had to give the old man some face.

Guan Chengye gave Lin Mu a grateful look, then said to Tian Boguang, "Master Tian, can we just let this matter drop?"

"Let it drop? Elder Guan, I, Tian Boguang, may not be some Martial Arts Grandmaster, but I have some standing in Lingcheng. If this kid doesn't give me a proper explanation today... then you can handle this River City martial meet on your own!"

Having said that, Tian Boguang left with a flick of his sleeve.

Before leaving, Xiao Wu made a threatening gesture at Lin Mu. "Kid, we'll see about this!"

After Tian Boguang and his group had left, Guan Chengye said, "Alright, let's go."

"Grandpa, are we really just going to let Master Tian leave like that?" Guan Feifei asked worriedly.

Guan Chengye glanced at him. "What else do you suggest?"

Before Guan Feifei could respond, Guan Chengye continued, "He's just a mere External Power Martial Artist. How can he presume to call himself a master? In my eyes, ten of Tian Boguang wouldn't be a match for a single Master Lin."

"Ten of them, huh?" Guan Jiaojiao winked at Lin Mu.

In response, Lin Mu just gave a faint smile and said nothing.

"Master Lin, let's go inside and rest for a bit," Guan Chengye said.

Lin Mu was about to agree when he suddenly changed his mind. "No need, you all go ahead. I plan to wander around a bit."

Since he was already here, he wanted to experience the local culture of Wufeng Town. Besides, he thought he had just run into someone he knew.

"How about I send someone to accompany you, Master Lin?" Guan Feifei suggested.

Guan Jiaojiao quickly interjected, "No need, no need! I'll go with Lin Mu. I happen to need to buy some things anyway."

Guan Feifei said, "Don't be ridiculous. You've never been to Wufeng Town. You're completely unfamiliar with the place, so how can you act as a guide?"

"Lin Mu just said he wanted to wander around," Guan Jiaojiao replied, as if it were the most obvious thing in the world. "Why would he need a guide for that?"

Seeing that Guan Feifei was about to argue further, Guan Jiaojiao said impatiently, "Oh, brother, would you stop being so annoying? I'm not a child. Besides, with Master Lin here, I won't be in any danger."

Lin Mu was a Martial Arts Grandmaster, after all. Who would dare bother her? At that thought, Guan Jiaojiao felt a surge of excitement.

"How about this," Guan Chengye suggested. "We'll have Bing'er accompany them."

Guan Feifei nodded and sent someone to fetch Bing'er. She was the daughter of one of his subordinates and usually handled some business in Wufeng Town. As a local, she was very familiar with the area.

A short while later, a young woman in her twenties with a delicate appearance came over. Her demeanor was shy and reserved.

"Master Lin, to be honest, the people of Wufeng Town can be a bit xenophobic. Having Bing'er with you can help avoid some unnecessary trouble," Guan Chengye explained.

"That's fine," Lin Mu naturally wouldn't refuse and nodded in agreement.

Thus, Lin Mu and Guan Jiaojiao began their leisurely stroll through the town, with Bing'er leading the way. The town was surrounded by towering mountains and beautiful scenery. The air was fresh, as the area had been largely untouched by development.

Guan Jiaojiao's mood improved instantly. She stretched lazily and said, "It would be nice to live here forever. You could enjoy the breeze, bask in the sun, and when you have free time, go hiking or have a barbecue. That would be great."

Lin Mu said, "That's just the novelty of it talking. You wouldn't be able to stand it for long."

The young woman named Bing'er nodded, casting an envious glance at Guan Jiaojiao. Compared to the rich young lady from the big city, she felt like a country bumpkin. Her skin wasn't fair nor was her face delicate; she worked outside often, leaving her with a tan. She wholeheartedly agreed with Lin Mu's words.

Guan Jiaojiao balled her small fist. "I was just saying. Do you have to argue with everything?"

Lin Mu shook his head, not bothering to quibble with her, and continued his leisurely walk through the town, which only made Guan Jiaojiao huff in annoyance.

Bing'er smiled gently. "Miss, I really envy the relationship you and your boyfriend have."

Guan Jiaojiao's face went blank. "Who said he's my boyfriend?" she retorted. "Hmph, what nonsense!"

Despite her words, she stole a glance at Lin Mu, her cheeks flushing slightly.

Bing'er grew flustered. "I'm so sorry, Miss. I didn't realize."

Guan Jiaojiao gave a magnanimous wave of her hand. "It's fine, I don't blame you. After all, plenty of people like me."

Bing'er said with envy, "Of course. A young lady as beautiful as you must be very popular."

Guan Jiaojiao said, "Oh, don't call me Miss. Just call me Jiaojiao."

"Alright, Miss."

Guan Jiaojiao: "..."

Chapter 138 - You're actually following us?

The three of them strolled through the small town. Guan Jiaojiao indulged in countless local snacks, her mouth greasy from all the food. Bing'er also benefited from Guan Jiaojiao's feasting, and both girls ate until their bellies were round and full.

"Oh man, I can't eat anymore, I really can't," Guan Jiaojiao said, still holding two skewers of grilled lamb. She took a fierce bite as she spoke.

"So delicious. Lin Mu, have some," Guan Jiaojiao said, wiping the grease from her lips without any concern for her image as she offered a skewer to his mouth.

Lin Mu had intended to refuse, but the lamb was roasted until it was crispy on the outside and tender on the inside. Topped with cumin and chili, it looked so appetizing that he opened his mouth and took a bite.

Guan Jiaojiao smiled. "I didn't lie, did I? Isn't it delicious?"

Lin Mu nodded. "Yeah, it tastes good."

Bing'er laughed along with them, then accidentally let out a small burp, her face turning rosy again.

"Lin Mu?"

Just then, a voice called out from the side as four or five young men and women approached.

At the front was a woman with short hair, delicate eyebrows, and a tall figure, giving her a valiant and heroic air.

"Ye Tong?" Lin Mu glanced at the young woman, and her name surfaced in his mind.

"It really is you. I thought I was seeing things," Ye Tong said with a smile, her gaze shifting as she looked at Guan Jiaojiao.

"Is that your girlfriend?"

She had seen Guan Jiaojiao feeding Lin Mu a moment ago.

Lin Mu shook his head. "No. By the way, what are you doing here?"

Ye Tong didn't mind the change of subject. "Our company is on a team-building retreat here for a few days."

A team-building trip in a place like this? They've got a lot of nerve.

"Tongtong, who is this? Your friend?" a young man behind Ye Tong asked.

Ye Tong shook her head. "He's an old high school classmate. I haven't seen him in years. I can't believe we ran into each other here."

Ye Tong seemed especially concerned about this young man's opinion. She turned to Lin Mu to make introductions. "Let me introduce you. These are my colleagues from work: Jiang Xia, Li Ping, Gu Can, and Xue Fei."

Jiang Xia was tall and always had a slight smile on his lips, but his gaze held a hint of provocation as he looked at Lin Mu.

"So, you're old classmates," he said, extending his hand to Lin Mu. "Hello, I'm Jiang Xia."

"Lin Mu."

Lin Mu reached out, but Jiang Xia merely glanced at his hand without shaking it, quickly retracting his own.

Lin Mu's hand was greasy.

Jiang Xia chuckled awkwardly. "Sorry, I'm... a bit of a germaphobe."

The others smiled subtly, their expressions tinged with mockery.

Jiang Xia had been pursuing Ye Tong for a long time, so seeing that she knew Lin Mu, he was bound to test the waters.

Guan Jiaojiao's expression soured. This Jiang Xia is so demeaning!

Lin Mu's eyes flickered, but he remained unperturbed. He simply took out a tissue and wiped his hand.

Seeing this, the corner of Jiang Xia's mouth quirked up. Is this kid cleaning his hand just so he can shake mine? If that's the case, I can still refuse, right?

Lin Mu wiped his hand slowly. Everyone noticed his long, slender fingers—they were fair and soft. Everyone present had the same thought: holding them must feel wonderful.

After wiping his hand, Lin Mu casually tossed the tissue, and it landed squarely in a trash can.

"Trash belongs in a trash can, right?" Lin Mu asked, looking at Guan Jiaojiao.

Guan Jiaojiao's eyes lit up as she nodded vigorously. "Yes, yes! But what about the kind of trash that doesn't even qualify to be in a trash can?"

Lin Mu smiled. "I'm not a sanitation worker. How would I know?"

"We're leaving. See you around." Lin Mu nodded at Ye Tong and then turned to go.

As Guan Jiaojiao brushed past Jiang Xia, she deliberately muttered one word.

"Trash."

Jiang Xia's expression turned extremely dark. He had intended to put Lin Mu in his place, but instead, he was the one being called trash. A man of his status couldn't possibly tolerate such an insult.

Li Ping said disdainfully, "Ye Tong, what kind of friend was that? He has no class at all. So embarrassing!"

Gu Can added, "Exactly! Considering Director Jiang's status, shaking his hand would have been an honor for that guy."

Jiang Xia was a vice president at their company. Combined with his social skills, he had many supporters. He was the one who had organized this team-building trip.

Ye Tong gave an awkward smile. "We were never really that close. After all these years, I just didn't expect Lin Mu to turn out... like this."

"Someone like that will never amount to much," Jiang Xia declared, his tone certain as he delivered what he considered the most accurate assessment of Lin Mu.

"Director Jiang is right. Not everyone can be like you, Director Jiang," Li Ping said, gazing at Jiang Xia with a look of admiration.

Only Ye Tong hesitated, wondering internally if she should tell *that person* about Lin Mu.

Glancing at Lin Mu's retreating back, Ye Tong shook her head slightly. Better not. That Lin Mu looks like he has no future. If my best friend found out... an old flame is unlikely to rekindle, but what if he became a persistent pest? Since they're in different worlds now, it's best they have no contact.

With this thought, Ye Tong and her group also turned to leave.

"Tongtong, where did you all go? I was looking all over for you," a soft, delicate voice said just then. A young woman approached, her tone slightly reproachful.

"Wenrou, I'm so sorry! We just went to look around over there and lost track of you," Ye Tong said, quickly grabbing the young woman's arm and apologizing profusely.

The young woman was tall and slender with a delicate build, fair skin, and beautiful features. Most importantly, she exuded a fragile air that made one instinctively want to pull her into an embrace and protect her.

Song Wenrou, Ye Tong's best friend. She had also been their high school's belle and was once at the center of a rumor involving... Lin Mu.

"I saw you all talking over there just now. Did something happen?" Song Wenrou had a good temper and a gentle personality, and her voice was always soft.

Li Ping replied, "We just ran into some trash, that's all. Wenrou, you're too kind. I've heard Wufeng Town isn't very safe, so be careful not to get tricked. If you run into people like that, remember to stay far away."

Unlike other beautiful girls, Song Wenrou didn't inspire jealousy. Her introverted and gentle nature made even other women feel protective of her.

"Okay, thank you, Li Ping. I'll be careful," Song Wenrou said with a gentle smile, showing her gratitude.

Li Ping sighed inwardly. This girl is just too sweet and agreeable.

Gu Can suddenly said, "It looks like there's a competition over there. Let's go check it out."

In an open plaza in the small town, a platform had been set up where two people were dueling. The crowd below cheered them on from time to time.

Song Wenrou's face paled. She clutched Ye Tong's hand and said, "Maybe... we shouldn't go?"

"What's there to be afraid of?" Gu Can said. "Director Jiang is here to protect us. We'll be fine."

Jiang Xia smiled faintly. "I'm here. Don't worry."

Protecting young women always filled him with an immense sense of pride.

"Come on, let's go! Just keep me company," Ye Tong coaxed, shaking Song Wenrou's hand.

"Alright."

Just as the group neared the platform, Jiang Xia frowned, and Ye Tong's expression changed.

They saw Lin Mu was there, too.

Li Ping said bluntly, "Are you following us?"

Chapter 139: Want to go up for some practice?

"Tracking?" The word choice was... interesting.

The others looked at Lin Mu with disdain and disgust. This kid is utterly shameless! To think he actually followed us just to suck up.

Li Ping said, "Even if you regret it now and want to apologize to Director Jiang, what good would it do? Don't think we'll let this go just because you know Ye Tong."

"Even if he wants to apologize, it's up to us whether we accept it or not," Gu Can said, his attitude toward Lin Mu equally unfriendly.

"Apologize?" Lin Mu curled his lip. "You're overthinking things."

Jiang Xia was speechless. So were Ye Tong and everyone else.

If he's not here to apologize, then what's his goal?

Li Ping's chest heaved as she suppressed her anger. "If you're not here to apologize, then why were you following us? Don't tell me you have a crush on our Ye Tong? You think you're worthy of her?!"

Ye Tong was outstanding in both figure and appearance, so she naturally had no shortage of admirers. But the only one worthy of her is Jiang Xia.

Lin Mu shook his head, not wanting to argue. Instead, he looked at the frail girl beside Ye Tong, a sincere smile appearing on his face.

"Long time no see."

So many years had passed. She seemed to have changed so little, yet also so much. She was still frail, with eyes as clear as water that seemed to hold a gentle light, stunning the passage of time. She had simply grown taller, fairer, and more beautiful. The shy and timid girl from his memories seemed even more bashful now.

"Lin Mu, is it really you?" Song Wenrou's voice was soft, matching her delicate frame. Her face was flushed, and she spoke so faintly it was as if she were afraid of disturbing the others.

"Wenrou, you've got the wrong person. Let's go," Ye Tong said, pulling on Song Wenrou while shooting Lin Mu a fierce, warning glare.

But Song Wenrou didn't leave. She uncharacteristically shook her head and insisted, "No, I'm not mistaken. That's him! That's Lin Mu!"

No matter how many years had passed, she could never forget him.

Jiang Xia's expression turned ugly. He was pursuing Ye Tong because she had feelings for him, and more importantly, because Song Wenrou trusted Ye Tong completely. Now, seeing that Song Wenrou also knew Lin Mu—and that their relationship seemed more complicated than he'd thought—made Jiang Xia feel deeply unsettled.

It felt as if his most prized possession was about to be stolen.

"Wenrou, Tongtong, let's go. Don't bother with this kind of person," Jiang Xia said.

However, Song Wenrou ignored him. She walked toward Lin Mu and smiled. "It's so good to see you again." Her tone was so gentle it made you worry she might break at the slightest touch.

Guan Jiaojiao glanced at her and then nudged Lin Mu, whispering, "Old flame?"

"Don't be silly."

Song Wenrou's face turned slightly red as she asked, "Your girlfriend?"

Guan Jiaojiao waved her hands frantically. "Definitely not! My standards aren't that low. I'm not into this kind of oblivious straight man."

Lin Mu pressed a hand on top of her head. "No one would think you're mute if you kept your mouth shut."

Song Wenrou giggled, her beautiful eyes softly gazing at Lin Mu as she said, "That term 'straight man' didn't exist back then."

Lin Mu flushed with embarrassment. Back then, he hadn't been good with words and preferred to keep to himself. He remembered one time when Song Wenrou felt unwell, and the teacher asked him to take her to the nurse's office. His only reply had been, "But I haven't finished my homework yet." The entire class had nearly lynched him.

Thinking of this, Lin Mu glanced at Song Wenrou, his brows furrowing slightly.

Song Wenrou lowered her head, not daring to meet Lin Mu's gaze, her little face flushed red.

"Ooh, something's happening here," Guan Jiaojiao whispered, covering her mouth to hide a giggle.

Lin Mu felt helpless and didn't dare respond.

Jiang Xia and the others watched this scene, grinding their teeth in anger.

Just then, the cheers from the crowd grew louder, signaling that the match in the ring was about to conclude. The battle between the two was intense, with both sides exchanging blows; to an outsider, it looked very impressive.

Even the gentle-natured Song Wenrou was captivated, her gaze fixed on the ring. "They're amazing."

Jiang Xia, seizing the opening, remarked dismissively, "They're alright, I guess."

Lin Mu merely smiled.

Li Ping scoffed at Song Wenrou's amazement. "What's so amazing about that? Don't you know our Director Jiang was on the city's official Sanshou team? Of course he's qualified to judge their match."

The others also looked at Jiang Xia with admiration.

Jiang Xia waved a hand in a show of modesty, but his tone was brimming with confidence. "I'm not trying to brag, but the guys on that stage are all undisciplined amateurs. On the Sanshou team, we underwent professional, systematic training. These guys are fighting without any real technique. There's nothing to see here."

"Besides, I heard a match like this only pays a few tens of thousands. When I competed in the provincial Sanshou tournaments, the prize money started at hundreds of thousands, to say nothing of the national boxing championships where the minimum prize was a million. The two aren't even comparable."

His words immediately earned nods of agreement from the others. Li Ping quickly added, "Exactly! Everyone has seen Director Jiang's strength. I heard he was even on TV! Of course these little scuffles between country bumpkins can't compare."

Gu Can and Xue Fei looked surprised. "Director Jiang has been on TV? That's amazing."

Jiang Xia waved his hand dismissively, as if downplaying it all. "That's all in the past. A true man doesn't dwell on past glories. In any case," he continued with a chuckle, "a small-time event like this is only exciting for people who haven't seen much of the world."

"The real main event is the upcoming Martial Way Tournament. Top masters from all three provinces of Jiangling will be gathering here. Now *that* will be thrilling."

"Director Jiang, will you be participating? If you went up and showed them a few moves, that would be incredible!" Li Ping said with a swooning expression.

Gu Can chimed in, "Yeah, Director Jiang! I don't think those so-called masters are anything special. I bet they'd be no match for you."

Jiang Xia said, "I'll see how I feel. It's not particularly interesting, but I don't mind going up for a round. It could be a good opportunity to teach certain people a lesson on how to conduct themselves."

This time, even Ye Tong looked at Jiang Xia with a hint of admiration. Now that's a real man, so much better than some people. She then shot a disdainful glance at Lin Mu.

Her admiring gaze was deeply satisfying to Jiang Xia.

Lin Mu could only listen to Jiang Xia's group with an amused, wry smile. This Jiang Xia is unbelievably arrogant. To put it nicely, he's overconfident. To put it bluntly, he's just an ignorant fool who thinks a little Sanshou training makes him invincible. He has no idea that there's always someone better out there.

His subtle shake of the head might have gone unnoticed, but not by Jiang Xia, who had been watching him the entire time.

Thinking Lin Mu was laughing at him, Jiang Xia sneered, "It seems Brother Lin has a different opinion about what I said?"

At once, the gazes of Li Ping, Gu Can, and the others turned hostile as they glared at Lin Mu.

Sensing the tense atmosphere, Ye Tong quickly interjected, "That's enough, Jiang Xia. Lin Mu doesn't understand any of this, there's no need to stoop to his level."

Jiang Xia snorted coldly. "If Brother Lin disagrees, how about we go up there later for a little practice match?"

Chapter 140: Why do I have to explain my actions to you in my life!

This sentence was like a bomb, causing the expressions of Ye Tong and the others to change drastically. Jiang Xia was deliberately targeting Lin Mu.

Li Ping looked at Lin Mu smugly. "Hey, Lin, do you dare?"

Gu Can sneered, "Like hell he does. With that weak appearance, how could he be Director Jiang's opponent?"

Although Lin Mu was tall and slender, he looked rather frail, as if he couldn't even truss a chicken. How could he possibly be a match for the robust Jiang Xia?

"If you don't dare, then don't talk nonsense, or people will only look down on you," Jiang Xia said mockingly.

He was very annoyed with Lin Mu. From Ye Tong to Song Wenrou, both women seemed very close to Lin Mu. Even the two girls by his side were remarkably beautiful. Wasn't he the one who deserved that kind of attention? On what grounds did Lin Mu have it? Especially when everyone was singing his praises, Lin Mu had shaken his head with disdain, which nearly made him explode with anger.

Now, he was deliberately provoking Lin Mu, intending to teach him a lesson.

As his words fell, Li Ping and Gu Can eagerly chimed in to kick Lin Mu while he was down, their faces filled with schadenfreude. If Lin Mu dared to accept the challenge, he would be beaten to a pulp and made into a laughingstock. Then, Song Wenrou would finally know who the real man was.

"Jiang Xia, let it go. Why bother with someone like him?" Ye Tong shook her head and gestured to Song Wenrou. "He's not your opponent anyway. Going up there would only bring him shame. Wenrou, come over here. Don't stay with that guy."

In her mind, she was doing this for Song Wenrou's own good. She had been deceived by Lin Mu before, so she was naturally worried that Song Wenrou would be as well.

Song Wenrou, gentle as ever, replied, "I'm fine standing right here."

This made Ye Tong frantic. What kind of spell has Lin Mu cast on Song Wenrou? How could she still not forget him after so many years? To think, they had only been classmates for one year before Lin Mu disappeared. The rumor was that he had joined the military. But looking at him now, he didn't have the bearing of a soldier in the slightest. There were also rumors that he dropped out of school because he couldn't afford it. That seemed far more likely.

Thinking of this, a sense of anger welled up inside Ye Tong.

"Wenrou, if you don't listen, I'm telling your mom when we get back!" Ye Tong said, her voice sharp with anger.

This time, Song Wenrou was surprisingly firm. "I'm not a child. I know what I'm doing."

Ye Tong opened her mouth, then gave a bitter smile. That's right, Song Wenrou was never a child. On the contrary, she was smart and had a mind of her own. It was just that her personality and demeanor were so gentle, giving the impression of weakness. Only she, Ye Tong, knew that the famously gentle Song Wenrou was not weak at all. Gentleness is not weakness. She simply disliked competing and fighting. Her detached nature was what gave others the false impression of frailty.

"Brother Lin, are you going to get up here and fight me or not?" Jiang Xia stared at Lin Mu, a cold smile touching the corner of his lips.

Lin Mu shook his head. "Let's not."

Li Ping immediately jeered, "I knew it, he doesn't dare!"

Gu Can added mockingly, "Not a real man at all."

"You're too weak," Lin Mu's voice cut through their taunts. "I'm afraid I won't be able to hold back my punches and might accidentally hurt you."

Jiang Xia was left speechless.

So was Li Ping.

Ye Tong's voice turned icy. "Lin Mu, are you trying to infuriate me? If you can't win, just admit it. There's no need to put on a brave front. Is your pride that important to you?"

Even Guan Jiaojiao couldn't listen to this anymore. She snorted, "So it's fine for you all to care about face, but it's not important for others? Could you be any more shameless?"

"You..." Ye Tong was so angry her chest heaved.

"Leave it to me." Jiang Xia patted Ye Tong's hand. "Dealing with certain people requires more forceful methods."

With that, Jiang Xia went to the registration desk for the fighting ring.

At that moment, the match on the stage had just concluded. Jiang Xia crouched and sprang onto the platform with a powerful leap.

On the stage, the victorious competitor had thick, powerful-looking arms. According to the surrounding discussions, he had already won two consecutive matches and a good sum of money. The reason he chose to stay was to achieve a three-win streak, which would not only earn him a considerable reward but also significant fame.

"Kid, you're just a stepping stone for my third straight win!" Seeing Jiang Xia get on stage, the brawny man sneered and beckoned with his finger. "Come on, Grandpa will show you what true despair feels like!"

Jiang Xia smiled confidently. "Is that so? I hope you don't disappoint me."

As if provoked, the man roared and charged straight at Jiang Xia.

Jiang Xia's confidence wasn't just for show. He clashed with the brawny man for several minutes, exchanging over a dozen moves before finding an opening. With one swift kick, he sent the man flying off the platform. The man was furious, but the winner had been decided, and he could only leave the arena, seething with unwillingness.

Jiang Xia's victory thrilled Li Ping and Gu Can, and even Ye Tong's eyes sparkled with admiration.

Amidst the crowd's cheers, Jiang Xia walked to the edge of the stage. Leaning on the railing, he looked down at Lin Mu in the crowd below.

"I wonder, Brother Lin, do you still think I'm no match for you?" A cold sneer played on Jiang Xia's lips.

This time, he was going to humiliate Lin Mu in front of everyone. He had just kicked an opponent with a two-win streak off the stage in under twenty moves, earning the crowd's applause and proving his strength. In front of so many people, he didn't believe Lin Mu would still dare to refuse.

Li Ping scoffed, "A guy like him could never be a match for our Director Jiang. If you're scared, just get lost and stop embarrassing yourself here."

Gu Can chimed in, "After seeing Director Jiang's power, how could he still dare to go up?"

With his hands clasped behind his back, Lin Mu looked at Jiang Xia and shook his head again. "Let's just forget it. I don't want to bully you."

PFFT!

Lin Mu's words made many people in the crowd burst out laughing. This kid's actual strength was unknown, but his words were certainly infuriating. Even Jiang Xia nearly coughed up blood. This Lin Mu was just too damn insulting!

Ye Tong shook her head in disappointment. "Lin Mu, you are a true disappointment. To think that after all these years, not only have you achieved nothing, but you've also lost even the most basic human decency of being honest."

"Is it really that hard for you to admit you're not good enough?"

Ye Tong's face was etched with heartache, her eyes full of disappointment. Deep down, she didn't hold any grudge against Lin Mu. If he were outstanding enough, she would even consent to him being with Wenrou. But Lin Mu... what right did he have to be with her?

Lin Mu shot Ye Tong an indifferent glance. "You think too highly of yourself. I, Lin Mu, have lived my life as I see fit. Why would I ever need to explain myself to others?"