

Y Master 421

Chapter 421 Southwest Storm X

As the words fell, Ye Fan's right palm violently retracted, and then... he forcefully pushed forward.

Tai Chi Pushing Hands!

This push, though seemingly casual by Ye Fan, utilized the famous Pushing Hands from Tai Chi Boxing, immensely powerful.

"Crack—"

As the Pushing Hands were executed, an explosive force erupted, overwhelmingly crushing everything in its path. Not only did it break Li Kui's arms inch by inch, but it also sent him flying backwards.

Just as Li Kui flew backwards, Ye Fan's right hand swung again, his fingers forming a claw, grabbing towards the fractured wrist of Li Kui as if retrieving something out of a bag.

"Whoosh!"

With one grab, Ye Fan's right hand clamped onto Li Kui's wrist like a vise, and then... he yanked it back!

In an instant.

Li Kui's body recoiled like a released spring, snapping back in front of Ye Fan.

Swish!

At the same moment, Ye Fan loosened his right hand, transforming his claw back into a palm. He shook the back of his hand, turning his right hand into a whip that lashed toward Li Kui's Dantian.

Whip Hand!

"Smack!"

Before Li Kui could react, Ye Fan's Whip Hand struck directly at Li Kui's Dantian. The powerhouse force exploded in an instant, bursting into Li Kui's body and shattering both his Dantian and the Power Seed within.

Li Kui's body flew out again, like a football kicked without control.

"Pfft—"

Mid-air, his body bent like a shrimp, he spat out a mouthful of blood mist, his face pale as paper.

"Bang—"

After a brief flight, Li Kui's body harshly slammed onto the ground. As he spat out fresh blood, he convulsed like he had been electrocuted.

Two moves!

Ye Fan had used just two moves to destroy Li Kui's Dantian and Power Seed, leaving Li Kui critically injured and utterly incapacitated!

Meanwhile, Ye Fan ceased manipulating the Evil Yin Qi into Li Wei's body, allowing Li Wei to regain some clarity. Li Wei instantly saw Li Kui, bleeding from the mouth, lying on the ground.

"Brother!"

This discovery changed Li Wei's expression, prompting him to run towards Li Kui instinctively.

"Swoosh!"

Just then, a sound of tearing air arose.

A Xuanye Flying Blade suddenly flew from Ye Fan's sleeve, whistling towards Li Wei.

"No!!"

Sensing this, Li Kui let out a sharp howl, ignoring his injuries. He struggled to rise, trying to block the knife for Li Wei.

Hmm?

The next moment.

Just as Li Kui struggled to his feet, the swiftly flying Xuanye Flying Blade stopped less than twenty centimeters away from Li Wei.

"Uh..."

Feeling the icy aura of the Xuanye Flying Blade, Li Wei felt as if he had been kicked into a cold cellar. Chills ran from his head to toe, making his body hair stand on end, and he stiffened on the spot as if an immobilization spell had been cast on him.

"Sigh~"

Seeing this, Li Kui breathed a sigh of relief, then turned to look at Ye Fan, wanting to plead again.

"I told you, I would make you beg me to kill you!" Ye Fan looked at Li Kui, his eyes devoid of any mercy.

"What... what exactly are you going to do?"

For some reason, hearing Ye Fan's words again sent a sudden shiver through Li Kui's heart, a fear seeping into his soul.

What exactly?

Ye Fan answered with his actions!

Under the cover of night, a flash of golden light at Ye Fan's forehead, and an invisible Mind Power shot out, piercing into Li Wei's Yintang point!

As the Mind Power entered his body, Ye Fan, with an irresistible force, instantly shattered Li Wei's Consciousness, and then took the opportunity to control Li Wei's body.

Li Wei trembled, his previously fearful eyes now dull and lifeless, like a controlled puppet.

"You..."

Seeing this, Li Kui knew his brother was controlled by Ye Fan, and he desperately wanted to say something.

However—

Before he could speak, the controlled Li Wei reached out, grabbed the Xuanye Flying Blade still hanging in the air, and expressionlessly walked towards Li Kui.

"Li... Li Wei!!"

Seeing Li Wei approaching with the flying knife, Li Kui realized the full meaning of Ye Fan's words 'I will make you beg me to kill you'. Overwhelmed with shock, he screamed emotionally.

As he yelled, he supported himself with his hands, constantly moving backwards, trying to escape from Li Wei, who had once been like a brother in arms, but Li Wei kept moving forward unceasingly.

You retreat, I advance.

Soon, under Ye Fan's control, Li Wei approached Li Kui, looking down at him from above.

"No... don't!"

Li Kui screamed heartbreakingly, trying to get up.

"Shh—"

The sound of a blade entering flesh sounded.

Under the night sky, Li Wei, expressionless, plunged the Xuanye Flying Knife into Li Kui's thigh. Blood spurted wildly, splashing Li Wei's face.

The sudden pain made Li Kui's body tremble violently. He let out a muffled groan and his uninjured left hand instinctively swung out, turning into a palm strike towards Li Wei's head.

Facing all this, Li Wei remained unafraid.

"Ye... Young Master Ye, please, don't do this to us!"

Eventually, Li Kui, with his powerful control, stopped his palm just less than a foot away from Li Wei's Taiyang point, and turned his head to look at Ye Fan, pleading like a begging dog.

"Shh—"

What responded to Li Kui was the second knife!

Li Wei pulled out the Xuanye Flying Blade and drove it into Li Kui's abdomen, as fresh blood surged out again, dyeing Li Kui's clothes bright red.

"Ow~"

This stab, driven by Li Wei with excessive force, penetrated Li Kui's intestines, causing intense pain that made Li Kui scream in agony, his facial muscles completely contorted.

Seeing this, Ye Fan was completely indifferent.

He was well aware that Li Kui had intended to sell Su Liuli to the filthiest nightclub in the Golden Triangle, not to mention his deliberate feint to launch a sneak attack, making him truly deserve death.

"Ye Fan, please... I beg you, please spare us!" After howling, Li Kui gasped and pleaded with Ye Fan once more.

"If you don't want your brother to kill you, you can choose to kill your brother with one palm strike," said Ye Fan coldly.

Kill Li Wei with one palm strike?

As Ye Fan's words echoed in his ears, Li Kui was initially stunned, then, like a madman, his face contorted as he roared at Ye Fan: "You... you did this on purpose! You know I care most about my brother! So you let my brother stab me with a knife, to torment me, to make me suffer! At the same time, you also know that killing my brother would cause me even more pain!"

"Yes, that's the most satisfying method I could think of."

Ye Fan replied with a smile, that smile, falling into Li Kui's eyes, seemed like a demon's, sending chills down his spine.

"Huff... huff... "

Getting a confirmation, Li Kui became extremely agitated, his breathing rapid, he bellowed, "Ye Fan, if you're a real man, just kill me!"

"Didn't you forget what I said?" Ye Fan said with a smile, controlling Li Wei to swing another blade.

"Shh—"

The third knife, directed by Ye Fan, drove Li Wei to thrust into Li Kui's right chest, the Xuanye Flying Blade not only penetrating flesh but also breaking his rib with a "crack" sound.

"Ahh!!"

The bone-deep pain made Li Kui roar like a madman, struggling to rise.

"Shh—"

Just as Li Kui, driven by strong willpower, propped himself up, Li Wei swung the knife again, striking Li Kui down to the ground.

"Kill...kill me...kill me!!"

After four stabs, Li Kui was on the verge of collapse, screaming for Ye Fan to kill him.

"Pfft!"

What responded to Li Kui was the fifth knife!

With a swift movement, this knife, controlled by Ye Fan making Li Wei exert all his strength, severed Li Kui's palm!

The pain struck again, everything went dark before Li Kui's eyes as he was about to faint, but the severe pain woke him again.

"Ye... Ye Fan, I beg you, kill me! Kill me!!"

After enduring four consecutive stabs, Li Kui had become a bloody mess.

The loss of blood drained the strength from his body, and he looked at Ye Fan with a face filled with fear and agony, pleading for Ye Fan to send him to Yama Palace.

"Whoosh!"

Without a response, Ye Fan moved his consciousness, releasing his control over Li Wei, directing the Xuanyue Flying Blade via Mind Power, bringing it back to hover in front of him.

Once freed from Ye Fan's control, Li Wei regained consciousness.

Under the night sky.

He stared wide-eyed at the blood-soaked Li Kui at his feet, completely dumbfounded, standing there like a statue, motionless.

"Brother!!"

Seconds later, Li Wei, recovering from the shock, roared as he bent down, stretching out his hands, attempting to lift Li Kui.

"You just stabbed your brother five times, each stab vicious," Ye Fan said, holding the Xuanye Flying Blade, walking towards them.

"Uh..."

As Ye Fan's words echoed in his ears, Li Wei's body shook, his hands retracted as if electrocuted, looking at Li Kui in horror, his expression seemingly asking: How...how is this possible?

Is it possible?

"You...you're too cruel!!!" Li Kui completely broke down, realizing Ye Fan wanted them to die in agony.

This torment was a thousand times, no, a million times more painful than a quick execution!

Did I really stab my brother?

Li Kui's roar brought forth the answer in Li Wei's heart; he looked at his blood-stained hands in panic, then his eyes darkened, and he collapsed to the ground.

"Cruel?"

At the same time, Ye Fan walked to the front of the brothers, looking down at Li Kui high and mighty, "Compared to you sending Liu Li to the filthiest nightclub in the Golden Triangle to be gang-raped to death, this doesn't even seem cruel, does it?"

"_"

At Ye Fan's words, Li Kui instinctively opened his mouth to say something, but found his mind blank.

"What do you think, if I let your brother stab you to death, then have the police arrest him, forcing him to endure torture in prison for a lifetime, wouldn't that be even more cruel?" Ye Fan asked.

"Ye Fan, you demon! You'll have no peace when you die! Even as a ghost, I will not let you go!!" Hearing Ye Fan's words, imagining that dreadful scenario, Li Kui's face contorted with rage as he struggled and lunged at Ye Fan.

"A demon?"

Ye Fan sneered: "I don't provoke others unless they provoke me; if someone offends me, I repay it tenfold; you're not the first to call me a demon, nor will you be the last—soon, the Qinghong Gang will join you in Yama Palace!"

"Whoosh! Whoosh!"

As the words fell, sounds followed.

The sharp Xuanye Flying Blades penetrated the throats of the brothers, Li Kui and Li Wei!

A single blow, a lethal one!!

Chapter 422 Southwest Storm XI

The next morning, a light rain fell over Nanming, the sky overcast with clouds.

At 8:20 AM, three cars bearing special license plates arrived consecutively at the Yanhuang Organization in a light drizzle.

The three vehicles belonged to Ma Chaoyang, the head of the Southwest Police, and the directors of the Security and Armed Police departments.

After getting out of the cars, the accompanying drivers simultaneously offered to hold umbrellas for them, but all three men refused. They exchanged greetings and then walked shoulder to shoulder into the Yanhuang Organization Southwest Office building.

In a small meeting room on the top floor, Zhou Wu, the head of the Yanhuang Organization in the Southwest Region, sat at the head of the table, his face extremely grim as he reviewed the report titled "On the failed capture of the brothers Li Kui and Li Wei."

Last night, he had deployed two men to assist the Nan Li Police with the Martial Police in capturing Li Kui. Li Kui had managed to escape using the stratagem "Golden Cicada Shelling," and during the early hours, news came that Li Kui, while fleeing with Li Wei, had driven their car into a valley, causing an explosion. The car was destroyed and both were reported dead, leaving not even whole bodies, let alone intact parts behind.

Upon receiving this news, Zhou Wu felt even more strongly that there was something fishy about the whole affair. Thus, in his capacity as Deputy Head of the Leadership Group and Head of the Special Task Force, he organized a meeting with heads from the Yanhuang Organization, the police, the Security Department, and the Armed Police to report back to the leadership.

Three minutes later, the office director of the Yanhuang Organization Southwest Office brought Ma Chaoyang and his party to the meeting room door, gestured for them to enter, then turned around to instruct his staff to prepare tea.

He then wisely chose to leave.

Because... he could tell that Zhou Wu's mood and expression were even darker than today's sky, and barging in uninvited would have been asking for trouble.

"Director Zhou."

Upon entering the meeting room, Ma Chaoyang and his partners greeted Zhou Wu. Their attitude was not polite, merely perfunctory.

Although Zhou Wu had grown accustomed to this, his mood today was exceptionally poor, and he did not respond, not even bothering to nod curtly, but instead looked coldly at Ma Chaoyang.

"Director Ma, I need an explanation."

Shortly after Ma Chaoyang and his party took their seats, Zhou Wu picked up the report from the table and questioned coldly.

"Director Zhou, what kind of explanation do you want?" Ma Chaoyang played dumb.

"Yanhuang Organization collaborated with the Armed Police to assist your police force in capturing Nanqinghong's core member, Li Kui, yet due to your subordinates' command error, Li Kui escaped—Are your subordinates all incompetent? How was the capture plan devised?"

Zhou Wu had been convinced since last night that there was a foul play involved in the capture, and seeing Ma Chaoyang feign ignorance, the anger he had suppressed for days suddenly erupted, his tone quite hostile.

"Director Zhou, watch your language."

Facing Zhou Wu's fury, Ma Chaoyang, who was of lower rank, was not frightened but instead chose to confront him head on. "What do you mean by 'Are your subordinates all incompetent'? You are well aware that last night's operation was devised after a meeting between three departments, and it was only commanded by our police. Li Kui strategically allowed his men to fall into our trap to distract us, enabling him to escape with his brother Li Wei. This wasn't a command error, but a flaw in the capture plan. If responsibility must be assigned, none of our three departments can escape blame! So please, do not push all the responsibility onto the police!"

"You..."

Perhaps it was because Ma Chaoyang was speaking frankly, Zhou Wu found himself choked and unable to respond.

"Director Zhou, Director Ma, it's best for everyone to stay calm when we meet for a conference."

"That's right, we should focus on facts and there's no need to get heated."

Seeing that Zhou Wu and Ma Chaoyang were immediately confrontational upon meeting, the heads of the military police and the security department naturally tried to mediate and play peacemakers.

"Fine, fine, fine, let's just say the capture operation last night failed because there was a problem with the plan!"

Zhou Wu coldly spoke, his face still full of anger as he stared straight at Ma Chaoyang and said, word by word, "Then tell me, why, after discovering that the brothers Li Kui and Li Wei had an accident, did your police not inform the rest of the departments and proceeded to handle it on your own?"

"Director Zhou, traffic accidents have always been handled by the traffic police department, haven't they? Since when did handling traffic accidents require reporting to the Yanhuang Organization?" Ma Chaoyang's tone was equally cold.

"It's true that traffic accidents are handled by your police, but... don't forget, the person who was in the accident was Li Kui! He was a Postnatal Perfect Martial Artist who died in a traffic accident, do you think that's possible?" Zhou Wu was poised as if he was determined to get to the bottom of it.

"Director Zhou, I need to remind you, after last night's traffic accident, nobody knew that the deceased were the brothers Li Kui and Li Wei. After their car went off the cliff and exploded, there was nothing left of the bodies."

Ma Chaoyang said each word deliberately, "We took photos at the scene to preserve evidence of the accident and then had the bodies sent to the crematorium. Just before cremation, we discovered some items related to Martial Artists on the bodies, and from there we traced and confirmed the identities of Li Kui and his brother Li Wei."

"If Director Zhou has any doubts, you can send someone to ask the duty staff at the Nanli Crematorium; they'll know the truth."

At the end, seeing Zhou Wu's expression grow even more sullen, Ma Chaoyang added nonchalantly.

"Again, do you think a Postnatal Perfect Martial Artist would drive himself off a cliff?" Zhou Wu laughed bitterly in extreme anger, "I'm telling you, this is impossible! Even if there had been an accident, with Li Kui's Martial Artist prowess, he could have definitely escaped during the car's descent!"

"Director Zhou, our police handle cases based on evidence, not conjecture," Ma Chaoyang rebutted once again.

"Ma Chaoyang!"

Continuously rebuffed by Ma Chaoyang, Zhou Wu became thoroughly enraged. He slammed the conference table hard and said in a stern voice, "Don't play word games with me here! You think I'm unaware of the tricks behind this? Are you trying to force me to expose some unknown secrets at the leadership team meeting?"

"That's within your rights, Director Zhou. I have no authority to interfere or stop you," Ma Chaoyang said with a smile as he spread his hands.

"Fine, fine, fine, I want to see if you, Ma Chaoyang, can really fool everyone!" Zhou Wu said furiously, his face turning steely blue.

Unfazed, Ma Chaoyang, looking calm, took out a cigarette, ignited it, and gently inhaled.

The heads of the military police and the security department glanced at each other, no longer playing peacemakers, but chose wisely to remain silent.

With their status, although they were far from the top echelon, it did not mean they could not discern the power struggles among the top from various signs.

"Considering Comrade Ma Chaoyang's attitude, I suggest we end this meeting here and discuss everything at the leadership group meeting!" Zhou Wu gritted his teeth, making a decision.

"Beep~"

This time.

Without waiting for Ma Chaoyang and the others to speak, a special communicator on Zhou Wu's wrist rang.

Upon hearing the sound, Zhou Wu lifted his wrist and was shocked to discover it was a call from the headquarters of the Yanhuang Organization.

This discovery drastically changed his expression, and without greeting Ma Chaoyang and his group, he got up and headed for the door of the conference room.

Hmm?

Seeing this scene, the heads of the police and security departments were somewhat curious about who could be calling to make Zhou Wu so nervous.

Did Little Fan make a move against Zhou Wu?

At the same time, Ma Chaoyang's mind stirred, thinking of something.

"Hello, Elder Teng."

Seconds later, Zhou Wu stepped out of the small conference room, took the call with utmost respect, yet felt a sense of unease.

All this because the Elder Teng he mentioned was in charge of personnel at the Yanhuang Organization, holding all power over the appointment and dismissal of members, just like Xing Feng of the Punishment Hall, wielding great authority and being a figure all middle and lower-level members sought to please.

"Zhou Wu, considering your service at the Southwest Office, your ineffective administration over the local Jianghu, leading to the 'Tiger Roar Manor explosion incident' and 'Wudang Martial Arts Hall shooting incident,' has caused a huge uproar and a very bad influence. Based on the Elder Council's decision, you are hereby removed from your position as the Director of the Yanhuang Organization Southwest Office, and you must report back to headquarters within 24 hours!"

As Zhou Wu's voice fell, a deep and authoritative voice came through the receiver, sounding like a devilish chant from Hell, assaulting Zhou Wu's consciousness and turning his face pale instantly!

"Elder... Elder Teng..."

Recovering from the shock, Zhou Wu tightened his lips, trying to say something.

"Zhou Wu, did you not hear me clearly, or did you not understand?" Elder Teng coldly interrupted him.

"No... no..."

Zhou Wu's Adam's apple bobbed, and he ultimately swallowed the words he wanted to say.

"Now that you understand, how should you respond?" Elder Teng asked in a cold voice.

"Yes, Elder Teng, I will return to the headquarters within the prescribed time..." This time, without letting Zhou Wu finish his words, Elder Teng ended the call.

"Beep... beep..."

Listening to the busy signal from the receiver, Zhou Wu stood frozen in place as if an immobilization spell had been cast on him.

"Director Zhou, will we continue the meeting? If not, we'll leave."

A minute later, Ma Chaoyang, along with two other department heads, walked out of the conference room, seeing the ghostly pale Zhou Wu and they almost confirmed their suspicion, intentionally provoking him.

Without responding, Zhou Wu turned his head and glanced at Ma Chaoyang.

At this moment, there was no trace of anger on his face, just desolation and bewilderment.

It seemed... even now, he couldn't believe he had been dismissed!

"Oh, right, I just remembered, Director Zhou, you just said the meeting is canceled and everything should be discussed at the leadership team meeting, right?" Seeing his expression, Ma Chaoyang deliberately slapped his forehead as if he had just realized something.

"Ma Chaoyang!" Zhou Wu gritted his teeth.

"Zhou Wu, there's a difference in people's worth, and one should also know one's place—you act like a chariot, horse, and cannon, pushing forward when you're no more than a pawn. Isn't that asking for humiliation?"

Seeing that the timing was just right, Ma Chaoyang stopped pretending to be foolish, his face a mix of scorn and mockery.

Swish!

As Ma Chaoyang's words rang in his ears, Zhou Wu's initially gloomy face turned crimson and then instantly paled to an ashen hue, like a chameleon.

Watching this, Ma Chaoyang felt the anger in his heart subside, and without further provocation, he left with a smile.

The other two department heads, guessing what might have happened, sighed secretly at Ma Chaoyang's ruthlessness but pretended to be oblivious, not even greeting Zhou Wu as they followed Ma Chaoyang out.

Not even a pawn?

Watching the three men retreat, Zhou Wu silently questioned himself.

Yes!

The answer emerged, and Zhou Wu's face was stricken with tragedy!

Chapter 423 In the Ascendant

The Jiuzhou International Hotel was one of Nanming's most famous five-star hotels, renowned for its luxurious decorations and pleasant environment. Whether it was the dining or hotel services, it ranked among the top of all five-star hotels in Nanming and was a favorite among officials, the wealthy, and the powerful.

As dusk fell and the light rain gradually ceased, the evening breeze carried a hint of coolness, and a stream of luxury cars and official vehicles arrived one after another at the parking lot beneath the Jiuzhou International Hotel.

Among them, the Audi A8L driven by Ye Fan was inconspicuous compared to the many luxury cars, especially when placed side by side with Bentleys, Maybachs, and Rolls-Royces in the parking lot, where it appeared somewhat inferior.

The car halted, and Ye Fan, dressed in a Zhongshan suit, alighted from the vehicle. He walked alone to the hotel's entrance where, under the enthusiastic welcome of the reception staff, he entered the hotel and took the elevator straight to the Chinese restaurant on the seventh floor.

As the saying goes, "seventh up, eighth down."

The hotel's owner placed the Chinese restaurant on the seventh floor, partaking somewhat in superstition, with the implication that the guests dining there would all ascend to higher levels—meaning their businesses would thrive and their official ranks would increase.

"Sir, may I ask which private room you have reserved?"

When the elevator reached the seventh floor and the doors opened, a supervisor greeted Ye Fan with a smile and asked him respectfully.

"The Southwest Hall."

"Is it reserved by Mr. Wu?"

"Yes."

Ye Fan nodded. Although he had already been in Nanming for several days, his understanding of Nanming could not compare with that of Wu Qianshou, Dao Sect's leader in the Southwest. Therefore,

he had asked Wu Qianshou to help book the restaurant and private room for tonight's dinner, hosting Ma Chaoyang and Li Zhongde, the standard-bearer of the Ye Family Camp in the Southwest.

The former had been of immense help to him, whereas the latter, though never having met or communicated with him in person, had also provided great assistance from the shadows.

Had it not been for them, it would have been impossible for him to disintegrate Qinghong's strength in the Southwest in just one week.

Ordinarily, Ma Chaoyang would arrive right on time to any feast he was invited to, as a way to display his status and position.

But today, he, now out of his police uniform and wearing a suit, arrived twenty minutes early to the private room.

On one hand, today's host was Ye Fan, so he neither dared nor wished to put on airs; on the other hand, one of the guests Ye Fan was hosting was Li Zhongde—the flag bearer of the Ye Family Camp in the Southwest. If anyone had the right to put on airs, it was Li Zhongde, who had more confidence and qualification than him.

Li Zhongde also didn't put on airs by arriving right on time but instead arrived ten minutes early.

"Uncle Li."

At the elevator entrance, Ye Fan, who had been waiting specially for Ma Chaoyang, greeted Li Zhongde with a smile as he stepped out.

"Xiao Fan."

Upon seeing this, Li Zhongde's face broke into a wide smile, yet his heart was filled with surprise.

Yes...

Surprise!

Whether it was through how Ye Fan had acted in Hanghu, Donghai, or Yanjing, he thought Ye Fan to be an extremely arrogant person!

The change of power in the Southwest further confirmed this!

Owing to this preconceived notion, he believed that Ye Fan's invitation to him and Ma Chaoyang for dinner was merely a formality, rather than a sincere expression of gratitude.

Under such circumstances, the surprise he felt from Ye Fan's gesture of waiting for him at the elevator door was undoubtedly immense.

After the surprise, with a slight nod to Ma Chaoyang, Li Zhongde followed Ye Fan into the private room of the Southwest Hall.

When the three of them entered the room, the waiter, upon Ye Fan's indication, began serving the dishes.

Soon, the waiter brought out four cold dishes to the table—two meat and two vegetables, matched appropriately, yet the quantity seemed somewhat modest compared with other banquets Li Zhongde and Ma Chaoyang had attended.

After the cold dishes were served, Ye Fan smiled and said, "Uncle Li, Uncle Ma, my father has always disliked extravagance and waste. I think he makes a good point, so I only ordered eight dishes, four cold and four hot, plus one pastry and one soup. If it isn't enough, shall we order more?"

"Alright."

Hearing Ye Fan's words and looking at the four cold dishes on the table, both Li Zhongde and Ma Chaoyang were somewhat taken aback. After the brief surprise, Li Zhongde, being the older and higher-ranked of the two, agreed to Ye Fan's proposition.

Seeing this, Ye Fan dismissed the waiter who was about to uncork the wine and stood up to open a bottle of Moutai himself, personally pouring it for Li Zhongde and Ma Chaoyang.

Hmm?

Watching this unfold, a flicker of surprise crossed the eyes of Li Zhongde and Ma Chaoyang, their astonishment turning into shock—they had never dreamt that Ye Fan would personally serve them by pouring drinks!

"Uncle Li, Uncle Ma, thank you for everything you have done for me."

After pouring the drinks, Ye Fan returned to his seat, filled his own cup, and then, taking the lead, raised his glass and stood up, saying, "I'd like to propose a toast to you both!"

"Xiao Fan, you're too polite."

"Yeah, Xiao Fan, why stand on ceremony with me and your Uncle Li?"

Upon hearing Ye Fan's words again, Li Zhongde and Ma Chaoyang each picked up their glasses and responded in turn, their hearts filled with mixed emotions.

Those emotions stemmed from seeing a Ye Fan who, in their eyes, exhibited no arrogance at all but only humility and gratitude.

Humility?

Or arrogance?

After their reflections, the two men tilted their heads back and drank up, each quietly questioning themselves.

In full bloom!

The next moment.

Both came to the same conclusion in their hearts without having to say a word to one another.

The true nature of a person is revealed over time.

In their brief encounter, they could not see through Ye Fan, nor could they determine whether Ye Fan was deliberately acting in such a manner or if he always treated his elders like this.

But—

One thing they were certain of was that after the upheaval in the Southwest, Ye Fan, the new top scion of Huaxia, would truly be in his prime, becoming the nightmare of Nanqinghong and, at the same time ... instilling fear into those so-called elite scions!

At nine o'clock, when the dinner ended, Ye Fan personally saw Li Zhongde and Ma Chaoyang off to their respective official cars, sending them off with a wave, impeccable in every detail.

In one of the red flag H7 sedans with a provincial ~ committee license plate, Li Zhongde rubbed his Taiyang point and then took out his cell phone, called Ma Chaoyang, and got straight to the point, "Chaoyang, what do you think of Xiao Fan?"

"If he wasn't involved in the underworld and pursued martial arts, but instead took the path of officialdom and the military, he would become the future standard-bearer of the Ye Family Camp!" Ma Chaoyang hesitated for a moment but finally voiced the deepest evaluation in his heart.

"Yeah, if all that you said could be realized, then the Ye Family wouldn't have to worry about lacking a successor."

Hearing Ma Chaoyang's evaluation of Ye Fan, and thinking of Ye Fan's deeds and all that he had done tonight, he couldn't help but smile bitterly at the contrast between them.

Of all this, Ye Fan was unaware. After seeing off Li Zhongde and Ma Chaoyang, he then got into an Audi A8L.

"Buzz~"

Before Ye Fan could start the car, the vibrating sound of his mobile phone rang out.

Ye Fan took out his phone and saw it was a call from Wu Qianshou, the person in charge of the Dao Sect in the Southwest. After a moment's thought, he pressed the answer button.

"Mr. Ye, have you finished your meal?" The call connected, and Wu Qianshou asked respectfully.

"Mmm, just finished."

"Are you satisfied with the environment and food at Jiuzhou International Hotel?"

"It's quite good, thank you, Boss Wu."

"Mr. Ye is too polite. It is my honour, Wu Qianshou, to be able to run errands for you," Wu Qianshou said ingratiatingly while waiting for Ye Fan's 'compensation'.

As if guessing Wu Qianshou's thoughts, Ye Fan broke through the pretence, "Boss Wu, you put in a lot of effort for this matter and also bore quite a bit of risk."

"Mr. Ye, you are being too formal..." Wu Qianshou's heart leapt with joy, but he pretended to decline.

"Boss Wu, to express my gratitude to you and the Dao Sect, the drug trade in the Southwest, and even the whole of Huaxia, will be handled by you," Ye Fan said after some thought.

"Mr. Ye, this..."

Upon hearing the so-called compensation, Wu Qianshou was initially excited, then felt the difficulty and hesitated.

"I promise you that Nanqinhong will not compete with the Dao Sect for the drug trade on the mainland," Ye Fan stated earnestly. "Without the threat of Nanqinhong, the difficulty of engaging in the drug trade will be greatly reduced. Whether you can succeed or not will depend entirely on your own abilities."

"Thank... thank you, Mr. Ye!"

Wu Qianshou was overjoyed. In his view, without the threat of Nanqinhong, it would not be difficult for the Dao Sect to engage in the drug trade. The enormous profits from the drug trade far exceeded the current income of the Dao Sect.

"How will Ye Fan manage to make Nanqinhong give up the extremely profitable drug trade?" After his elation subsided, Wu Qianshou regained some composure and couldn't help but silently question himself.

"Beep... beep..."

Without an answer and listening to the busy tone coming through the receiver, thinking of Ye Fan's actions in Hanghu, Donghai, Yanjing, and the Southwest, Wu Qianshou murmured to himself, "If he says he can do it, he definitely can!"

As the words were spoken, Wu Qianshou slowly put down the phone, inwardly celebrating his partnership with Ye Fan rather than becoming his enemy!

Otherwise, he had a thousand reasons to believe that it would become a nightmare for him and the entire Dao Sect!

...

While Wu Qianshou felt fortunate, on the other end of the phone, after hanging up, Ye Fan thought for a while and then dialed Pan Jueming's number.

"Mr. Ye."

It seemed that Pan Jueming was always waiting for Ye Fan's call, as the call was immediately answered.

"How's your injury?" Ye Fan asked.

"Uh..."

Knowing the changes in the Southwest, Pan Jueming didn't expect Ye Fan's first words to be of concern for his injury. He was taken aback for a moment, then felt a touch of warmth in his heart, "Thanks for your concern, Mr. Ye, I have fully recovered."

"I'm sure you've heard about the situation in the Southwest. As of now, with Wu Hu at the helm, all the core members of Nanqinghong's Southwest branch are dead, and the police have delivered a devastating blow to Nanqinghong's Southwest influence, almost completely dismantling it."

Having learned that Pan Jueming's injuries had fully healed, Ye Fan pondered and then said, "Since your injuries are healed, take your men to the Southwest immediately to seize the territory and eradicate the remnants of Nanqinghong!"

"Yes, Mr. Ye!"

Pan Jueming immediately accepted the command, his tone filled with excitement, wishing he could fly to the Southwest right away.

"Currently, the Yanhuang Organization is keeping a close eye on Nanqinghong. Lin Tianyi would not dare to send people to the Southwest to stabilize their position, and the other underworld forces in the Southwest region won't dare to compete with us for territory. At the same time, the police will turn a blind eye."

As Ye Fan added more details, he made his expectations clear, "This means that the resistance you will face in this operation will be very small—you must complete this operation in the shortest possible time!"

"Please rest assured, Mr. Ye, Jueming will not let you down!"

Pan Jueming solemnly swore, but inwardly he couldn't help but marvel: without a single soldier, in just a snap of the fingers, to annihilate Nanqinhong's Southwest branch, in the vast underworld of Huaxia, only Ye Fan could achieve such a feat!

Following his exclamation, he felt even more fortunate to have chosen to follow Ye Fan.

Because.

Time and time again, the facts had proven that it was the most correct decision of his life!

Chapter 424 The Love of a Father, the Filial Piety of a Son

The night grew deeper, and Ye Fan drove his Audi A8L towards the oldest wealthy district in the Southwest, the Cuihu District—where he had been staying at a lakeside villa for the past few days.

Just like the Audi A8L, the villa was also provided by Zhang Le, the head of the Southwest branch of Tianshan Group.

Apart from that, Ye Fan had learned from Zhang Le that the villa was purchased by Chu Ji for vacation purposes, mainly left vacant, but fully equipped with all kinds of facilities and tended to by someone every day.

Like all affluent districts, the Cuihu District at night was very peaceful, with villas scattered by the lakeside, only about one-third of which were lit up, their lights reflecting off the surface of the water, shimmering and glistening.

As Ye Fan drove up to the entrance of the wealthy district, he was surprised to see the lights on in the villa he was staying in and couldn't help wondering: Could it be that my aunt has arrived?

While Ye Fan was secretly guessing, the security at the entrance of the wealthy district promptly let him through, and without stopping, he floored the gas pedal, and the car charged towards the villa like an unleashed wild horse.

A few minutes later, Ye Fan arrived at the villa along the district's asphalt road and clearly heard the sound of splashing in the lake.

Whoosh!

Ye Fan looked towards the sound, and with his vision far exceeding that of an ordinary person, he saw someone swimming in the lake.

The person was lying flat on the surface of the water, pedaling with their feet, wearing a red bikini that was particularly striking against the backdrop of the night.

That person was none other than Chu Ji, whom Ye Fan had guessed it might be.

As soon as Ye Fan recognized that it was Chu Ji, she, having already sensed Ye Fan's presence, flipped over and floated in the water by treading water, waving at Ye Fan to indicate for him to join her for a swim in the lake.

Seeing Chu Ji's actions in his eyes and understanding her intentions, Ye Fan couldn't help but point to the area between his legs, signaling that he didn't have swimming trunks, then drove into the villa's courtyard.

In the lake, Chu Ji saw Ye Fan's gesture and was so annoyed that her ample chest heaved; then she kicked out with both legs, swiftly swimming towards the villa.

"You little brat, after I went for a swim, there were seven spineless men with telescopes peeping. I wanted you to join me in the water to dazzle their damn eyes, and you are reluctant?"

Ten minutes later, Chu Ji swam ashore, put on her slippers, wrapped herself in a bath towel and walked into the villa courtyard, where she saw Ye Fan sitting next to the pool. Walking over, she revealed her signature smile that could charm someone to death without compensation.

As she finished speaking, she pulled off the bath towel draped over her and carelessly tossed it onto a chair nearby.

Without the bath towel's cover, her body adorned only in that red bikini, over ninety-five percent of her skin was exposed to the air, now in full view of Ye Fan.

Under the night sky, her hair was wet and dripping, the water droplets falling onto her impressive Holy Maiden Summit, then slowly trickling down between the peaks, flowing over her flat belly and towards the area between her legs...

Gulp!

Witnessing this scene, Ye Fan, who was at an age where a man could be most 'active,' involuntarily swallowed, then deliberately looked away, saying, "Didn't I gesture to you? I don't have any swim trunks."

"No swim trunks, but you still have underwear, right?"

Chu Ji took a few steps forward, looking down at Ye Fan from above, her two voluptuous orbs almost touching Ye Fan's nose, forming an exaggerated curve in contrast with her flat belly, and paired with her straight, long, fair thighs and red-painted toes, she was utterly tantalizing.

"Huff~"

Confronted with Chu Ji's wet seduction, Ye Fan felt a wave of heat and steadied his consciousness, pretending to see nothing: "Who have you ever seen swimming in underwear?"

"Because I've never seen it, that's why I want to see it tonight." Chu Ji said flirtatiously, looking at Ye Fan like a big bad wolf eyeing a little lamb.

Ye Fan felt a tightening in his chest: "What are you trying to do?"

"You little brat, to punish you for not giving your aunt face just now, I've decided to make you swim in the pool in your underwear."

Chu Ji mischievously said: "You can either take off your jacket and shirt yourself and jump in wearing just your underwear, or you can let me rip them off and throw you in—choose one."

"You..."

Ye Fan was at a loss for words, and even though he had experienced Chu Ji's absurdity and capriciousness before, he hadn't expected her to actually make him swim in the pool in his underwear.

"Stop with the hesitations, I'll count to three." Chu Ji extended her delicate hand, propping up Ye Fan's chin, "One."

Ye Fan remained unmoved, attempting to struggle but finding it futile.

"Two!"

Chu Ji said, her right hand slowly sliding down to grasp the collar of Ye Fan's clothes, ready to pull it down at any moment.

"I'll take it off, I'll take it off!" Ye Fan said, close to tears, thus capitulating.

"Good boy." Chu Ji said with a smile, letting go of her hold.

Seeing this, Ye Fan without a word mustered strength in his legs to leap up.

"Humph!"

Seeming to have anticipated Ye Fan's reaction, Chu Ji lightly snorted, her smooth legs suddenly rising, and with a leg-pressing motion, she pinned Ye Fan's thighs down, preventing him from getting up.

With her legs spread wide, the tempting view hidden just beneath Chu Ji's red fabric was fully revealed to Ye Fan's sight.

"Uh..."

Upon seeing this, Ye Fan was shocked, his eyes bulging and his mouth agape, staring unblinkingly at the exposed view.

"Get down into the water, now!"

Noticing Ye Fan's gaze locked onto the area between her legs, Chu Ji's heart raced, her face flushed with shame and anger, and she kicked out forcefully.

"Slap—"

A soft sound emerged as Chu Ji's kick landed squarely on Ye Fan's shoulder, sending him flying like a kicked soccer ball, until with a "plop" he fell into the water.

"My dear, it took me ten minutes to swim from the lake to the shore, so you'd better swim in the pool for a full ten minutes, not a minute less."

By the poolside, Chu Ji sat in a chair, speaking thusly, it was uncertain whether she was trying to intimidate Ye Fan or was hiding the embarrassment she felt moments before, her legs tightly clamped.

"Why are you here?" Sensing Chu Ji's embarrassment, Ye Fan, wearing leather shoes to stay afloat, changed the subject.

"I was afraid you'd be upset about not finding your little lover, so I came over specially to comfort you," Chu Ji said, huffing, "You ungrateful brat, you couldn't even be bothered to swim with me."

"I'll swim with you now."

Ye Fan said with a smile, his heart filled with emotion.

He knew that Chu Ji's coming wasn't just about comforting him, the way she joked about him swimming in his underwear was also meant to lighten the mood and improve his spirits. It was truly a thoughtful gesture.

"Swim in your underwear?" Chu Ji asked with a teasing smile.

"Yeah."

Ye Fan nodded, dived with a firm leap, and emerged onto the pool steps.

Under the veil of night, his entire body was soaked, his clothes almost glued to his skin, and his manhood, having been teased and provoked by Chu Ji earlier, was as rigid as a gun.

"You little rascal, how dare you flirt with your aunt!"

Seeing this, Chu Ji spat in embarrassment, and with a slight panic, she stood up, her voluptuous and upturned buttocks twisting as she walked towards the villa's main building.

Seeing her reaction, Ye Fan was taken aback for a moment, then looked down at his nether region and couldn't help but smile ruefully.

In his view, any man who wouldn't get aroused by a siren like Chu Ji, particularly in such a tempting wet situation, either had some bodily issues or was a Supreme Strongman like the old fellow who entered the Gang Qi Realm, capable of perfectly controlling their desires.

About twenty minutes later, Chu Ji, who had returned to the main building of the villa first, took a shower, changed into a bright red nightgown, and arrived in the living room. Upon seeing Ye Fan, already changed and sitting on the sofa, she teased, "You brat, don't tell me that's the only set of clothes you have."

"Are you going to steal a set for me?" Ye Fan said, slightly irritated.

"Giggle~"

Chu Ji laughed happily, and perhaps the word 'steal' reminded her of something, her thoughts shifted and she asked, "Right, your operation in the Southwest, how did you get such accurate intelligence? You must have used the Dao Sect's information network, right?"

"Yeah." Ye Fan didn't conceal it.

"First, you mastered the intelligence through the Dao Sect, the enemy was in the light while we were in the dark; then you cut off the source, executed a decapitation strike, and framed others; after that, you utilized the agreement you had reached with the old man of the Ye Family to have him fulfill his promise early, influencing the higher-ups to act; next, you moved against Nanqinhong, and finally toppled Nanqinhong's Southwest branch with the mighty force of the legal authorities..."

Chu Ji accurately recounted Ye Fan's whole plan and couldn't help but exclaim, "You brat, you've played your hand quite beautifully, haven't you?"

"It's just a minor trick."

Ye Fan gave a bitter smile, well aware that although the plan was meticulously crafted, the most crucial element was the strong support from the Ye Family. Without high-level directives, even if Ma Chaoyang was on the Ye Family's side and was once a direct line of Ye Wenhao, he wouldn't dare to take such a risk for Ye Fan.

"You don't need to be modest."

Chu Ji said with a hint of irritation, "Even though you won this time in the Southwest mainly by using the Ye Family's power, without your perfect groundwork, the old man might not have fulfilled his promise before the two sessions."

Ye Fan just smiled and didn't say anything.

Even though the era of alliances had begun, many things in Huaxia were still as they were ten years ago, like maintaining stability and harmony before various meetings.

"Speaking of which, the old man of the Ye Family's recent actions were quite odd." Chu Ji thought of something else, seemingly puzzled.

"What's wrong?" Ye Fan asked.

Chu Ji looked somewhat surprised, "Didn't Ye Wenhao tell you?"

"What happened?"

Ye Fan's confusion deepened, like a monk unable to touch his own head.

"He's going to the Southeast Asia Special Zone to take up the position of Special Chief," Chu Ji revealed the mystery.

"Eh..."

Ye Fan was startled when he heard the news and quickly asked, "When did this happen?"

"The news just came out yesterday, I thought Ye Wenhao had called to tell you," Chu Ji spoke, then suddenly realized, "At first, I thought the old man wanted to go through with his promise and eradicate the tumor that is Nanqinghong before the two sessions. Now it seems that's not the case; it's mostly Ye Wenhao himself volunteering for the Southeast Asia Special Zone — he's doing it to help you fight Nanqinghong!"

Hearing Chu Ji's remarks again, Ye Fan suddenly fell silent.

In the light, it was clear that behind his seemingly calm face, there was a profound sense of emotion mixed with a bit of concern.

"Don't worry, with his strength, Nanqinghong poses no threat to him," Chu Ji softly reassured, seemingly picking up on Ye Fan's thoughts.

"I'm not worried about his safety, I'm just afraid that in helping me deal with Nanqinghong, it might affect his career," Ye Fan said, frowning slightly.

"What do you plan to do?" Chu Ji, upon hearing this, also felt this was a possibility.

"I've said that I would do everything in my power to take him to the top of the power pyramid, so I'll stop him from doing this," Ye Fan said, the image of Ye Wenhao's affectionate face coming to mind. With his eyes closed, he continued softly, "If Lin Tianyi dares to meddle with his career, Nanqinghong Headquarters will become a living hell!"

Chapter 425 Choice

As Ye Fan's words resonated by her ear, feeling the determination and murderous intent in his voice, Chu Ji was very clear that with Ye Fan's current combat prowess, if he really set his heart on massacring the Nanqinghong Headquarters, it wouldn't be difficult.

Of course, if Ye Fan really did that, it would severely violate the rules of the Yanhuang Organization.

But—

Chu Ji was not worried about any of this.

Because she knew that with the trump card in Ye Fan's hand, known only to her and Chu Xuanji, he could definitely avoid punishment from the Yanhuang Organization!

"Everyone should hold tightly onto their trump card and avoid going to extremes unless absolutely necessary," Chu Ji thought and then reminded him.

Ye Fan nodded, indicating that he understood.

"By the way, are you still planning to find Su Liuli?"

Perhaps sensing the heaviness in the air, Chu Ji changed the subject, but she didn't refer to Su Liuli as Ye Fan's sweetheart this time; instead, she straightforwardly used her name.

"Yes."

Ye Fan nodded again. Even though he had learned that Su Liuli was safe, he felt that he and Su Liuli should meet.

"If all that you've said is true, the person who took Su Liuli might very well be Bodhi Wuyin—the number one master of the Buddhist sect. Among the Buddhist masters, only she has a fondness for the 'Amitabha Sutra' and has created, through the insights from this scripture, a Buddhist Cultivation Technique 'Amitabha Technique' that made her one of the top ten Supreme Strongmen of the Dragon Ranking!"

Recollecting the information provided by Ye Fan, Chu Ji thought and then said, "Although Bodhi Wuyin is known as the foremost master of the Buddhist sect and the leader of the sect, she has always been accustomed to being solitary, quite similar in temperament to my master. Finding her will definitely not be easy."

Hearing this from Chu Ji, Ye Fan's eyebrows rose slightly.

He was very aware that for Supreme Strongmen like Chu Xuanji and Bodhi Wuyin, if they chose to seclude themselves for cultivation, they would vanish without a trace, far beyond the reach even of the intelligence networks of the Dao Sect or the Yanhuang Organization.

"How about you go back to Spirit Mountain?" Chu Ji suddenly proposed.

A thought struck Ye Fan as he asked, "The old man has returned to Spirit Mountain?"

"Yes."

Chu Ji nodded, saying, "Before I came to the Southwest, my master visited me in Yanjing to inquire about your situation and told me to inform you that he has found two Plant Essences for you on Spirit Mountain, waiting for you to finish your affairs and go to Spirit Mountain to retrieve them."

Heart warmed by her words, Ye Fan recalled that Chu Xuanji had never provided Chu Ji with Plant Essence. The Plant Essence Chu Ji had used was acquired through her own efforts.

Even when Chu Ji had angrily left the mountain, Chu Xuanji, out of anger, hadn't given her life-saving Golden Healing Pills or Nirvana Pills.

But now, for the sake of enhancing his strength, Chu Xuanji had personally descended the mountain in search of Plant Essence, which due to his proud and aloof nature, couldn't be bartered for Elixir Pills, requiring him to venture into perilous lands—a clear sign of his earnest intentions.

"I want you to go back to Spirit Mountain partially so you can take the two Plant Essences my master found for you to increase your strength and partially because I want you to ask for the old man's help."

Seeing Ye Fan grasp only part of her intentions, Chu Ji added, "Though he's reclusive and unwilling to interact with others, he seems to have connections with some of the Supreme Strongmen of the Huaxia Martial Arts World in secret. He might know the location where Bodhi Wuyin is cultivating."

Hmm?

At that, Ye Fan's mind raced, recalling how 'Yan,' the former number one strongman of the Huaxia Martial Arts World, had once visited Chu Xuanji to invite him to come down from the mountain and save the world.

This somewhat confirmed what Chu Ji had just mentioned—Chu Xuanji might indeed have secret connections with some of the Supreme Strongmen of the Huaxia Martial Arts World!

"I'll go back to Spirit Mountain tomorrow."

After a moment's thought, Ye Fan said, "To prevent Nanqinghong from resorting to desperate measures, like their old tricks, you go back to the Dong Hai Gang tomorrow to covertly protect Yuxin and the others."

"All right."

Although Chu Ji knew that Nanqinghong was under strict surveillance by the Yanhuang Organization, she agreed without hesitation—if Lin Tianyi, the helmsman of Nanqinghong, became desperate, he could spend a large sum to hire experts from abroad to kidnap people like Su Yuxin and Situ Ruoshui to lure them out.

Seeing Chu Ji agree, Ye Fan did not bother to thank her overly but instead went back to his bedroom alone, took out his mobile phone, and dialed Ye Wenhao's private number,

"Have you mostly handled everything in the Southwest?"

As usual, Ye Wenhao answered the call immediately, as if his private line was especially for Ye Fan.

"Pretty much handled;, just some loose ends left,"

Ye Fan replied and then changed the course of the conversation, asking, "Dad, I heard from my aunt that you volunteered to go to the Southeast Asia Special Zone as the Special Chief to help me deal with Nanqinghong?"

"Yes."

Seeing that Ye Fan brought up the matter himself, Ye Wenhao didn't hide it.

"Dad, as far as I know, after the 'destroy' virus outbreak, the countries in Southeast Asia, in order to obtain drugs as soon as possible to resist the disaster, were forced to submit to Huaxia, becoming a Special Zone of Huaxia."

Over the years, as the impact of the disaster gradually subsided, the Southeast Asia Special Zone has become very chaotic;, old nations there all want to break away from the Special Zone, or even from Huaxia.

In light of this, the Southeast Asia Special Zone is known among political circles as hell;, all inland Special Chiefs have failed and lost their political careers."

As Ye Fan spoke, a hint of concern could not help but show in his tone, "You better not take the post in Southeast Asia. I'll handle Nanqinghong myself."

"Offering to take the post in Southeast Asia Special Zone was indeed my initiative, but it's also a test," Ye Wenhao said, warmed by Ye Fan's concern, and laughed

"A test?" Ye Fan was puzzled.

"Hmm, a test. Just like you mentioned before, the current situation in the Southeast Asia Special Zone is very unstable; those former small countries within the zone all want independence, creating a situation similar to what Southern Tibet and Western Xinjiang faced back in the day. If I could stabilize the local situation during my term as the Special Chief, it would be a significant mark on my record," Ye Wenhao explained.

He continued, "Your great-grandfather and your grandfather also made it clear that they would support me, and when the time comes, the Ye Family will utilize some of its resources. Moreover, according to your great-grandfather and your grandfather, the higher-ups have already decided to eradicate the Nanqinghong, the cancerous tumor. With government policies backing us, eliminating Nanqinghong will be easy, so you don't need to worry."

Hearing Ye Wenhao's words again, Ye Fan fell silent.

He had always suspected that although the two elders of the Ye Family outwardly chose his father, Ye Wenhao, as the third-generation successor, they valued Ye Wenhao more in secret.

Now, with his father Ye Wenhao volunteering to go to Southeast Asia as the Special Chief, not only did the two elders of the Ye Family agree, but they also strongly supported it.

This made Ye Fan vaguely sense something fishy, but he couldn't mention it to Ye Wenhao—he and the elders of the Ye Family had only a cooperative relationship with no personal feelings, whereas Ye Wenhao treated them as family and respected them greatly.

"By the way, I heard from Ji that you stirred up a storm in the Southwest for the sake of saving a girl named Su Liuli?" Ye Wenhao changed the subject and asked.

"Mm."

"If I remember correctly, she's your girlfriend Su Yuxin's cousin, right?" Ye Wenhao asked again.

"Mm."

Ye Fan responded subconsciously and then thought aloud, "I caused such a big turmoil to save her, not only because she is Yuxin's sister. She also secretly loves me and has done some things for me behind the scenes."

"Oh?"

Perhaps not expecting Ye Fan to say that, Ye Wenhao was taken aback and then asked, "Then why did you let her go to the Southwest alone? You should know that the Southwest is one of Nanqinghong's strongholds, right?"

"She left suddenly on her own," Ye Fan looked out the window at the night view and sighed softly.
"Because she felt it was impossible for her to be with me."

"Why?"

"For one, she is Yuxin's sister and worried about damaging my relationship with Yuxin. Moreover, she is also Bai Guotao's illegitimate daughter..."

"What?" Before Ye Fan could finish, Ye Wenhao interrupted, surprised, "She's Bai Guotao's illegitimate daughter?"

"Mm."

Ye Fan spoke with a complex tone, "She believes that being Bai Guotao's illegitimate daughter, and me returning to the Ye Family, considering the grudges between the Bai Family and the Ye Family, it's impossible for us to be together, which is why she thought of converting to a Buddhist sect and planned to head north from the Southwest to Southern Tibet..."

"Where is she now?" Ye Wenhao then asked.

"If nothing went wrong, she was taken by Bodhi Wuyin, the foremost master of the Buddhist sect," Ye Fan answered.

"What do you plan to do?" Ye Wenhao asked after a long silence.

"I want to continue searching for her, at least to see her once," Ye Fan said, unable to help asking, "If she's willing to be with me, you wouldn't mind, would you?"

"Whatever decision you make, I will support you," Ye Wenhao replied, clearly expressing his stance.

"Dad, thank you."

Ye Fan's heart filled with emotion once more; amidst this emotion, he couldn't help but cast his gaze toward the western sky, as if searching for the distant figure of Su Liuli.

Meanwhile.

At the foot of a large mountain in Shuchuan Province, which is adjacent to the Southwest.

Bodhi Wuyin, dressed in a white robe, sat cross-legged on a stone, multitasking - one hand holding Buddha beads and silently reciting Buddhist scriptures, while the other meditated.

Not far from Bodhi Wuyin, Su Liuli was not engaging in rigorous meditation like Bodhi Wuyin but was gazing toward the eastern sky, lost in thought.

"Thinking of him?"

Bodhi Wuyin opened his eyes, saw this scene, thought for a moment, rose quietly and came up behind Su Liuli, asking in a whispered tone.

"No... not."

Though she denied it, Su Liuli's panicked demeanor betrayed her true feelings.

"He is currently not at Dong Hai; he's in the Southwest," Bodhi Wuyin suddenly said, surprising her.

"In the Southwest?" Su Liuli was startled.

"Yes."

Bodhi Wuyin nodded slightly and calmly continued, "The day after you left, he headed to the Southwest to find you. When he learned that you had fallen into the hands of Nanqinhong, he was enraged and killed all the members of the Nanqinhong Southwest division!"

"Uh..."

As Bodhi Wuyin's words echoed in her ears, Su Liuli was so shocked that she froze on the spot.

"He must know about your love for him, and judging by his actions, he probably truly cares for you," Bodhi Wuyin remarked, gazing intently at Su Liuli's delicate face. "Although you have converted to a Buddhist sect and taken me as your teacher, I can give you another chance to choose—if you can't let go of him, I can take you to him right away!"

Chapter 426 Fish Die, Nets Are Torn

The night had deepened when a sea breeze suddenly made landfall on Taiwan, unleashing violent winds and torrential rain.

In the outskirts of Taipei, within the Nanqinhong Headquarters, members responsible for standing guard and night patrol braved the downpour, facing the howling wind while steadfastly fulfilling their duties.

Raindrops the size of beans pelted their clothing, soaking through the fabric. The gusty wind that followed brought with it a piercing, bone-chilling cold.

In the face of all this, not one of the Nanqinghong members dared complain, nor did anyone dare leave their post without permission.

All of this was because they knew that the Southwest branch of Nanqinghong was facing a catastrophe, and with Lin Tianyi, the helmsman of Nanqinghong in a very foul mood—they were afraid of becoming his scapegoat, of being sent to Yama Palace by Lin Tianyi himself!

Because... Lin Tianyi had done such a thing before!

Lin Tianyi's mood was indeed very bad.

Originally, he had wanted to force Ye Fan to the Golden Triangle by kidnapping Su Liuli, so as to leave Ye Fan's head there. After the plan failed, he discussed with Chen Feilian, the Crown Prince of Qinghong, and decided to fight fire with fire, planning to use the Bai Family's power to nail Ye Fan by the rules.

Now, not only had their plans once again gone awry, but the Southwest branch of Nanqinghong had also suffered a heavy blow from the police, nearly disintegrating!

With the tip of his toe, he could guess that, given Ye Fan's past behavior, Ye Fan would definitely take this opportunity to snatch the Southwest territory, just like Ye Fan did when the higher-ups cracked down on the Southeast forces of Nanqinghong!

Beyond that, since the Southwest turmoil had erupted, the upper echelons had intensified their supervision of Nanqinghong. Not only had they dispatched an investigation team to look into Nanqinghong's criminal involvements, but the Yanhuang Organization had also sent additional personnel to monitor Nanqinghong, keeping Lin Tianyi and his trusted subordinates within their surveillance.

In such a situation, he felt as troubled as a girl being violated, left with no choice but to silently endure the assault.

This made him extremely frustrated!

He wanted to call Chen Feilian to report, but he didn't dare make that call.

Because... in his view, with things having reached this point, even Chen Feilian would likely have no way to turn the situation around.

Therefore, other than getting a scolding from Chen Feilian, calling him would be utterly pointless.

At the Nanqinghong Headquarters, within the villa at the very center.

Lin Tianyi sat in front of his desk, slumping weakly in his chair, a cigar clenched between his lips, the ashtray in front of him packed with half-smoked cigars.

"Ding-a-ling—"

Suddenly, the telephone rang, shattering the silence of the study.

Slap—

Annoyed and restless, Lin Tianyi snuffed out his cigar and picked up the phone.

"Boss, I have important information to report, are you free right now?" As the call connected, an anxious and worried voice came from the receiver.

"Speak in person," Lin Tianyi said in a low tone and then hung up the phone directly.

"Bang, bang—"

Minutes later, the study door was knocked on.

"Come in!"

"Creak—"

Following Lin Tianyi's command, the door to the study opened, and a portly middle-aged man entered, walking straight up to Lin Tianyi to greet him respectfully: "Boss."

"What's the report?" Lin Tianyi asked directly, yet he secretly speculated that Ye Fan had made another move.

As if to confirm Lin Tianyi's suspicion, the chubby man in charge of Nanqinghong's intelligence work said with much concern, "Just now, we received a report from the Southwest that Pan Jueming of the Dong hai Gang, leading a batch of elites, has arrived in Nanming."

"Hissss—"

Even though Lin Tianyi had anticipated this and was fully prepared for it, the report from his subordinate made him grimace with anger, his face turning ashen.

"Boss, the Dong hai Gang seems to want to loot a burning house. What should we do?" the obese middle-aged man asked for instructions.

"What do you think we should do?" Lin Tianyi snapped.

"—"

The obese middle-aged man fell silent, not daring to utter a word.

"Snap!"

With annoyance and restlessness, Lin Tianyi lit another cigar, took a deep draw, and exhaled a thick cloud of smoke, asking, "Is that all?"

"There's... There's one more thing."

Sensing Lin Tianyi's anger, the portly middle-aged man hesitated, wondering whether to report the additional piece of intelligence now.

"Spit it out," Lin Tianyi commanded coldly.

"Just received an internal message, Ye Wenhao has been dismissed from his position as the secretary of the Jiangnan Provincial Party Committee, and he might be going to Southeast Asia as a Special Chief," the obese middle-aged man finally said, steeling his nerves to report.

"Clatter!"

Startled by his subordinate's report, Lin Tianyi bulged his eyes and his mouth hung open, the cigar dropping straight from his mouth onto the high-quality mahogany desk.

"Is the information accurate?"

After a brief shock, Lin Tianyi didn't bother to pick up the cigar but rather asked with a hint of panic.

"It should be accurate," the obese middle-aged man replied hesitantly.

"I don't want a 'should be,' I want a definite answer!"

Lin Tianyi panicked, his intelligence making it clear to him what Ye Wenhao's appointment as Special Chief in Southeast Asia meant.

"Boss, the news is accurate." Seeing Lin Tianyi suddenly lose his temper, the overweight middle-aged man spoke with a mix of fear and trepidation.

Getting a firm confirmation from the overweight middle-aged man, Lin Tianyi slumped in his chair like a deflated ball, silent and motionless.

Witnessing the gloomy expression on Lin Tianyi's face, the overweight middle-aged man wisely chose to say nothing further. He stood to one side like an obedient child in kindergarten, fearful that Lin Tianyi would vent his anger on him.

"Keep an eye on these two matters, and report back to me the moment there's any new information," Lin Tianyi said after a long silence, looking up at the overweight man.

"Yes, Boss!"

With respectful acknowledgment the overweight middle-aged man sighed with relief when Lin Tianyi waved him off, and he quickly left the study.

In the study, Lin Tianyi picked up a cigar that had left a black mark on the rosewood tea table. He took two strong puffs, trying to calm himself down with this method.

Snap—

Moments later, after smoking half of the cigar, Lin Tianyi snuffed it out again, clenched his teeth, and picked up the phone to dial Chen Feilian's private number.

Although he knew calling this number would earn him a scolding, he understood that Ye Wenhao's appointment in Southeast Asia was a signal—it meant eradication of the Nanqinghong Organization was imminent!

Facing an impending crisis, he had to report to Chen Feilian!

"You still have the nerve to call me?"

Just as Lin Tianyi had guessed, as soon as the call connected, Chen Feilian's tone was far from polite.

"I'm sorry, Young Master Chen, it's my incompetence. I am willing to accept any punishment." Faced with Chen Feilian's anger, Lin Tianyi took a submissive approach, offering a strategic retreat.

"Lin Tianyi, stop playing these tricks with me—would you kill yourself to apologize?" Chen Feilian barked.

"__"

Lin Tianyi fell silent, then hesitated before saying, "Young Master Chen, there is something very important I must report to you."

"Are you trying to tell me that Ye Fan has already sent people to take over the Southwest territory?" Chen Feilian asked coldly. If even Lin Tianyi could think of this, what about him?

"No...not that," Lin Tianyi said with trepidation. "It's something else."

"What?" Chen Feilian asked.

"According to reliable information, Ye Wenhao has been removed from his position as Secretary of the Jiangnan Provincial Committee and is going to Southeast Asia to take up the post of Special Chief," Lin Tianyi reported swiftly.

Whoosh!

Upon hearing Lin Tianyi's report, Chen Feilian's expression changed abruptly, his eyebrows raised momentarily, and he asked in a slightly grave tone, "Are you sure?"

"Positive."

"Damn it!"

Chen Feilian cursed furiously, "With the Southwest still unresolved, Ye Wenhao is off to be the Special Chief in Southeast Asia. Are they, father and son, trying to exterminate us completely?"

Lin Tianyi smartly chose to remain silent.

Lin Tianyi's choice was smart indeed because his silence meant Chen Feilian did not vent his anger on him. Instead, after a moment of silence, Chen Feilian said, "What do you think we should do?"

"As you said, Young Master Chen, the Ye father and son are going too far, trying to completely exterminate us," Lin Tianyi said through gritted teeth, filled with hatred. "In my opinion, since they are intent on exterminating us, we might as well have a showdown!"

"A showdown?" Chen Feilian pondered.

"Yes, Young Master Chen, as you know, our main purpose in entering Huaxia was to end Ye Wenhao's political career and bring down the Ye Family," Lin Tianyi said with the determination of a gambler going all-in. "If that's the case, we can go all out to take out that bastard, Ye Fan, and force Ye Wenhao to act against us unlawfully. In doing so, the Bai Family will not just sit back; on the contrary, they will seize the opportunity to deal a fatal blow to the Ye Family!"

"Do you think it's time for a showdown?" Chen Feilian continued to inquire.

"Yes, Young Master Chen."

Lin Tianyi said gravely, "Now that most of our mainland forces have been removed, only Taiwan and Southeast Asia remain. Once Ye Wenhao takes over as Special Chief in Southeast Asia and uses the police and the Yanhuang Organization against us, we will be powerless. Once our Southeast Asia branch is destroyed, the Ye father and son's next move will be Taiwan. Since we cannot resist and are bound to be wiped out slowly, it's better to have a showdown now to achieve Master Chen's ultimate goal."

"If we're going to have a showdown, why not just burst the net?" Chen Feilian's eyes also flickered with madness.

"Uh..."

Startled by the words, Lin Tianyi asked, "Young Master Chen, do you mean to take out Ye Wenhao directly?"

"Don't you think killing Ye Wenhao is more straightforward than dealing with his bastard son?" Chen Feilian sneered.

"You're right, Young Master Chen, but Ye Wenhao is the third-generation successor of the Ye Family, and the most formidable contender for the future throne. If we kill him directly, the Yanhuang Organization will spare no effort in taking us down," Lin Tianyi sighed inwardly at Chen Feilian's audacity while also filled with apprehension.

After all, the Yanhuang Organization, with the Divine List's top-ranked Yan at the helm and many masters at command, if set on obliterating the Qinghong Organization, would be a nightmare!

"The time is not right yet; we'll play along with them a little longer."

Chen Feilian licked his lips arrogantly. "Once my father reaches that legendary realm, not just the Ye Family, but the entire world will be under our feet!!"

Chapter 427 Master and Disciple

As the first ray of morning light pierced through the horizon from east to west, Bodhi Wu Yin slowly opened her eyes after a night of chanting and cultivation, the figure of Su Liuli came into view.

Following her gaze, one could clearly see Su Liuli, with her arms wrapped around her knees and her head buried down beside the grass on the right, staring blankly into the horizon to the east.

"Sigh."

Seeing this scene, Bodhi Wu Yin couldn't help but sigh deeply to herself.

Last night, after telling Su Liuli the truth about Ye Fan eliminating the Nanqinghong's Southwest division, she gave Su Liuli a chance to choose. Finding her utterly conflicted, she let Su Liuli think it over and decided to give her an answer in the morning.

Now, seeing Su Liuli zoning out, Bodhi Wu Yin felt she already knew the answer.

"Master... have you finished your cultivation?"

Seemingly sensing Bodhi Wu Yin's gaze, Su Liuli suddenly turned around, saw Bodhi Wu Yin looking at her and asked slightly panicked.

Bodhi Wu Yin nodded and sighed, "I assume you have made your decision, haven't you?"

"Yes."

Upon hearing these words, Su Liuli took a deep breath and nodded firmly, saying, "I will not go to him; I will continue to practice cultivation with you."

"Uh..."

Hearing an answer that was completely opposite to her expectations, even Bodhi Wu Yin, who was as steady as a rock and not easily swayed by joy or grief, was slightly astonished.

"If I'm not mistaken, you haven't forgotten him."

After her initial surprise, Bodhi Wu Yin thought for a moment and said, "And when you found out that he eradicated the Nanqinghong division to save you, you found it even harder to let go of him, right?"

"Yes."

After a moment's hesitation, Su Liuli still nodded in acknowledgment.

"Then why do you still choose to continue cultivating with me?" Bodhi Wu Yin was puzzled.

"As you said, I indeed cannot let go of him. When you told me all about it, my first thought was to go and see him."

As Su Liuli spoke, she couldn't help but cast her gaze eastward, her expression becoming complicated. "But... that was just a momentary impulse. Reason tells me that he and I can never be together."

"Why?" Bodhi Wu Yin kept inquiring.

"I could hurt my cousin sister mercilessly and give up everything I can just to be with him. But my identity has doomed the impossibility of our relationship—I am the illegitimate daughter of Bai Guotao, and he is the illegitimate son of Ye Wenhao, and he has also returned to the Ye Family. Even if he truly cares for me and wants to be with me, I presume Ye Wenhao and the rest of the Ye Family wouldn't agree."

"To my knowledge, he is a very assertive person, and his relationship with the Ye Family may not be as good as you suggest. With this in view, even if his father and the whole Ye Family are against it, as long as he is willing to be with you, he will most likely stick to it till the end," Bodhi Wu Yin said with surprising conviction.

Huh?

Startled by Bodhi Wu Yin's words, Su Liuli was slightly taken aback; she had never considered that Ye Fan would defy the wishes of Ye Wenhao and the entire Ye Family just to be with her.

"Since he doesn't care, why should you?" Bodhi Wu Yin seemed to sense Su Liuli's heart stirring and deliberately prodded.

"I can't do that."

In the end, Su Liuli still shook her head, rejecting the temptation that Bodhi Wu Yin had suggested.

"Why?" Bodhi Wu Yin asked.

"Because that would put him in a difficult position, and I don't want to make things hard for him," Su Liuli said with a hint of bitterness on her lips.

"Hard for him?" Bodhi Wu Yin appeared thoughtful.

"Yes."

Su Liuli nodded, her mind clear, "Even if, as you said, his relationship with the Ye Family isn't as I've suggested and he might disregard the opinions of the other Ye Family members, I know that his relationship with his father is very complicated, and he definitely wouldn't want to go against his father's wishes!"

"Moreover, he was an orphan for twenty years; he finally recognized his father, how could I disrupt their father-son relationship?" Su Liuli said and suddenly felt a pang of heartache, her voice dropping, "As much as I really, really want to be with him, I cannot destroy his relationship with his father and hurt his already lonely heart again! I absolutely cannot!!"

This time.

Bodhi Wu Yin fell silent.

She could clearly feel the depth of Su Liuli's feelings for Ye Fan; likewise, she could see that Su Liuli had truly decided to follow her path in cultivation.

"Liu Li, do you know why I wanted to take you as my disciple the first time I saw you?" After a long silence speaking with a complex expression, Bodhi Wu Yin asked.

Su Liuli shook her head, indicating she did not know.

"Because you possess the rare Glazed Body Body."

Bodhi Wu Yin revealed the mystery.

"Glazed Body Body?" Su Liuli was perplexed.

"In this world, there are some rare constitutions; for example, Ye Fan is an Extremely Yang Body, your cousin is an Extreme Yin Body, your good sister Situ Ruoshui is a Mental Body, and you are the Glazed Body Body."

Bodhi Wu Yin explained, "The Glazed Body Body, with a heart as clear as Liu Li, is pure and flawless and is the most suitable special constitution for Buddhist cultivation techniques. As long as one can let go of all emotions and desires and forget worldly attachments, reaching a selfless state, the Buddhist cultivation will achieve great success, becoming the legendary Buddha."

"Buddha?"

Su Liuli was utterly lost.

"Buddha, shortened to 'Buddha,' means 'enlightened one.' A Buddha embodies 'cessation,' 'realization,' 'merit,' 'four bodies,' 'five wisdoms.'"

As she spoke, Bodhi Wu Yin expressed a profound longing in her eyes, "Of course, that's the ancient interpretation. To me, Buddha signifies a realm higher than the Gang Qi Realm. Nobody knows about that realm; it is the lofty aspiration of all Martial Artists. That realm is referred to as 'God' by Martial Artists, 'Immortal' by Taoists, and naturally, 'Buddha' by the Buddhist sect."

"I see..."

Subconsciously, Su Liuli echoed her response, then quickly felt something was amiss. "So, by your words, master, I could become a cultivator even stronger than a Supreme Strongman of the Gang Qi Realm?"

"Yes."

Bodhi Wu Yin nodded his head, then shook his head, "The premise is that you can abandon the seven emotions and six desires, achieve a state of inner clarity, and reach the realm of selflessness."

Embarrassed, Su Liuli lowered her head; it seemed to her that reaching this realm was almost impossible.

"Buddhist cultivation stresses that everything should follow fate; originally, if you couldn't let go of him and wanted to seek him out, I wouldn't have compelled you."

Seeing this, Bodhi Wu Yin gave a bitter smile, "Now, although you can't let go of her, yet you've decided to follow me in cultivation and convert to Buddhism. That shows you still have a connection with Buddha—let's just let everything follow fate then."

"Mm."

Su Liuli nodded vigorously.

"If you cannot transcend the tribulation of emotion, how can you become a Buddha?"

Looking at Su Liuli's somewhat puzzled expression, Bodhi Wu Yin sighed silently in his heart. He didn't say anything more but simply started walking, leading Su Liuli towards the west.

...

At noon, a plane from Nanming heading to Chuandu, the capital of Shuchuan Province, landed on time at Chuandu Airport. Ye Fan was the first to walk out of the airport corridor and hurried to the exit, only to see a middle-aged man in a suit and leather shoes holding a sign with the name Ye Fan on it.

"Hello, I'm Ye Fan. You must be Mr. Li?" Ye Fan hurried over and initiated the conversation.

"You... Hello, Mr. Ye!"

The middle-aged man was initially startled, then immediately bowed in response, "Chairman Chu sent me to wait for you here, to hand over the keys to a Range Rover to you."

As soon as he finished speaking, the middle-aged man handed the Range Rover's keys to Ye Fan.

"Thank you."

Ye Fan accepted the car keys and smiled his thanks.

"Mr. Ye, the car is at exit C2, with the license plate number XXXXX. Do you need me to take you there?" asked the middle-aged man, who had been instructed by Chu Ji only to provide Ye Fan with a Range

Rover and did not know what Ye Fan needed the Range Rover for. He hesitated briefly after seeing Ye Fan take the keys.

"No need, thank you," Ye Fan shook his head, thanked the man again, and with a smile, he shouldered his bag and walked towards exit C2.

Just as the middle-aged man had said, there was a Range Rover parked right outside exit C2. It looked as though it was a brand-new vehicle.

Seeing this scene, Ye Fan couldn't help but marvel at how meticulous Chu Ji was in her arrangements.

After a moment of appreciation, Ye Fan did not delay. He quickly opened the car door, entered the car, started the vehicle, and drove away from the airport.

As the sunset gradually descended behind the mountain tops, Ye Fan drove the brand-new Range Rover all the way to the foot of Spirit Mountain.

After parking the car, Ye Fan jumped out and looked at Spirit Mountain shrouded with green trees. The anticipation of meeting Chu Xuanji sent a surge of excitement through him—this descent from the mountain had been the longest separation between him and Chu Xuanji, and he was eager to see his mentor!

In his excitement, Ye Fan didn't linger; he dashed into Spirit Mountain like a Spiritual Monkey, sprinting as if flying through the mountains, straight to the valley where he and Chu Xuanji used to live.

Unlike his previous returns to Spirit Mountain, this time he did not hear Little Wolf's excited howls— Little Wolf was still in Ao Xiang Villa in the East Sea.

When the sunset had completely fallen behind the mountain tops and darkness enveloped the sky, Ye Fan appeared like a Phantom outside the valley.

Within the valley, three wooden houses stood quietly. One of them had candlelight shining through, appearing especially eye-catching against the night sky.

"Old man, I'm back!"

Seeing this, Ye Fan knew Chu Xuanji was most likely indulging in his precious ancient books. He shouted excitedly and quickly rushed towards the wooden house with the candlelight.

There was no response. Inside the wooden house, Chu Xuanji, who had been lying on a vine chair and snickering, immediately straightened up, suppressing his smile and picked up the ancient book he had tossed aside when he sensed Ye Fan's presence, pretending to read it seriously.

"Old man, can we not pretend?"

A moment later, when Ye Fan arrived at the door of the wooden house and saw the old man's pretense of being engrossed in scholarship, he couldn't help but feel amused.

"Back already."

Chu Xuanji struggled to contain his smile, deliberately putting on a stern face and pretentiously placing the ancient book aside.

"Sheesh, with your strength, I bet you sensed me as soon as I entered the Enchanting Soul Array, didn't you?" Ye Fan said contemptuously and gave the middle finger.

"Ahem..."

Chu Xuanji's face reddened slightly as he pretended to cough, disguising his embarrassment, then seriously asked, "Did you complete the task?"

"Whether I completed it or not, don't you already know?" Ye Fan replied, not amused.

"Here, hard work deserves reward. This is for completing your task."

Chu Xuanji chuckled, waved his hand, and a current of Gang Qi materialized, sweeping two Plant Essences from the corner of the wooden house towards Ye Fan.

"Master, thank you."

Gazing at the two Plant Essences floating in front of him, Ye Fan did not reach out to take them but looked towards Chu Xuanji's frail figure, feeling warmth in his heart and his eyes moistening.

Master.

After a half-year separation, hearing this once unfamiliar title, Chu Xuanji felt a sharp jolt in his heart, then teased, "Why have you become so sentimental this time down the mountain?"

"You can rest assured, I won't let you down in the Qing bang competition!"

Ignoring the question, Ye Fan clenched his fists, determination etched into his face.

"The Qing bang competition?"

Chu Xuanji's smile faded, and he stood up, walking towards Ye Fan. With a fond touch to Ye Fan's head, he said with depth, "That's just your new beginning!"

Chapter 428 Secret

Winning the Qing bang competition is just the beginning?!

The words of Chu Xuanji echoed in Ye Fan's ears, leaving him completely astonished.

"As your teacher, I want you to break through that legendary realm, to rise above the Gang Qi Realm and become the foremost Supreme Strongman of this era!" Chu Xuanji revealed his expectations with a face full of anticipation.

"Uh..."

If Chu Xuanji's previous remark had merely surprised Ye Fan, then at this moment, he was utterly stunned by his words.

With an expression as if he had seen a ghost, he blurted out to Chu Xuanji, "Old man, are you sure you're not joking with me?"

"If it were just about winning the Qing bang competition, why would I have deliberately suppressed you in the Postnatal Perfection Realm these past few years?" Chu Xuanji countered with a question.

"Old man, you really have confidence in me." Ye Fan responded with a wry smile and then asked curiously, "By the way, what realm lies beyond the Gang Qi Realm?"

"I don't know," shook Chu Xuanji.

"You don't know?!"

Ye Fan's eyes widened as he retorted somewhat irritably, "Old man, you don't even know what lies beyond the Gang Qi Realm, yet you want me to break through to that realm? Are you not messing with me?"

"In the present world, including 'Yan' who tops the Dragon Ranking and the Divine List, all Supreme Strongmen are stuck in the Gang Qi Realm. No one knows what lies beyond it."

Chu Xuanji gave a complicated look and answered indirectly, "However, including 'Yan', all Supreme Strongmen are exploring and attempting to break through to that legendary realm."

"You've been in the Gang Qi Realm for many years, whereas I'm just in the Innate Great Success Realm. If anyone is to explore and attempt, you're more likely to succeed, aren't you?" Ye Fan rolled his eyes.

Chu Xuanji sighed softly, "Although I've stepped into the Gang Qi Realm for many years, I am only at the beginning of the Peak of Gang Qi Realm, not even knowing how to enter into the Great Perfection Gang Qi Realm, let alone that legendary realm."

"Then why do you believe I can do it?" Ye Fan was stunned.

"First, your Martial Arts talent is the second only to your mother Ling Yun among all the people I've met in my life. Second, if I'm not mistaken, the Meditation Technique you practice is not the one I taught you. Third, your progress in the domain of Magic is so swift that even I can hardly believe it. In my view, you must have some unknown opportunities, and I believe that your ability to leap ranks in battle is closely connected to those opportunities—you now mainly rely on Magic in battle!" While speaking, Chu Xuanji's originally dull eyes suddenly shone bright.

A shock ran through Ye Fan's heart, and he involuntarily opened his mouth, but he didn't know what to say.

On one hand, even though he had long learned from Chu Ji that his mother was a Martial Arts genius, hearing Chu Xuanji's praise for his own mother still shocked him deeply.

On the other hand, as Chu Xuanji said, he had been practicing the "Nine Heavens Profound Skill" that existed in his mind since he was a child, but he had never mentioned it to Chu Xuanji, and Chu Xuanji had never questioned it, making it one of his few secrets.

Now that Chu Xuanji had brought up the matter on his own, Ye Fan felt somewhat guilty. Amidst his guilt, he also hesitated about how to explain the Nine Heavens Profound Skill and the mysterious crimson Golden Crown to Chu Xuanji.

"You rascal, everyone has secrets, you and I both. So you don't have to agonize over how to explain it to me, I'm not interested in those matters."

Seeing Ye Fan's reaction, Chu Xuanji said with frustration, "I only hope that you can strengthen your power as fast as possible and fulfill my wish."

"Master, I..."

Although Chu Xuanji did not press Ye Fan about his secrets, going as far as to say he was not interested in them, Ye Fan hesitated for a moment, still deciding to explain a bit, otherwise he felt uncomfortable in his heart.

But—

Before Ye Fan could speak, Chu Xuanji impatiently waved his hand to interrupt, "Alright, I've already said I'm not interested in your secrets. If you want to tell me, wait until you break through to that legendary realm."

"Alright."

At these words, Ye Fan had no choice but to swallow back the words that had almost left his lips.

"Aren't you going to quickly take the two Plant Essences? Do you really want this old man to kneel and beg you before you'll take them?" Chu Xuanji scolded with a glare.

Swish!

Ye Fan, with a wry smile, waved his hand and grabbed the two Plant Essences, clearly feeling the Essence Qi contained within.

"By the way, old man, there's something I want to ask you." After securing the Plant Essences, Ye Fan spoke again.

"What is it?" Chu Xuanji looked curious.

"Have you had anything to do with Bodhi Wuyin?" Ye Fan asked directly.

Bodhi Wuyin?

Hearing that name, Chu Xuanji's face changed slightly, his pupils dilated a bit, and his brows showed a rare hint of panic.

Hmm?

Noticing Chu Xuanji's reaction, Ye Fan felt something was amiss and deliberately probed, "Old man, it seems you do have dealings with her?"

"No." Chu Xuanji's expression returned to normal as he shook his head in denial.

"Don't lie to me; if you had nothing to do with her, why did your face change color when you heard her name?" Ye Fan didn't believe him.

"When did my face change color?"

Chu Xuanji tried to keep a straight face, glaring at Ye Fan, but seeing Ye Fan's stubborn gaze, he became a bit flustered and admitted, "Alright, I won't hide it from you, I used to have dealings with her, but it's been many years since we last contacted."

"Why?"

Ye Fan was curious; both his intuition and reasoning told him that there was a story between Chu Xuanji and Bodhi Wuyin.

"Brat, I've just told you, everyone has secrets. I haven't asked about yours, yet here you are prying into mine?"

Chu Xuanji raised an eyebrow and then, turning the tables, he asked, "What's the reason for asking about her out of the blue?"

"Well, it's like this..."

Hearing Chu Xuanji say this, Ye Fan felt embarrassed to inquire further, so he told Chu Xuanji about Su Liuli's situation.

"From what you're saying, that girl named Su Liuli is quite fond of you, and having learned all this, you find yourself fond of her as well. So you want to find her and express your feelings?" Chu Xuanji asked with widened eyes.

"Yeah."

Ye Fan nodded and couldn't help letting out a sigh, "I have to see her no matter what. Otherwise, I'm afraid I'll regret it for the rest of my life."

Hearing Ye Fan's words again, Chu Xuanji suddenly fell silent.

Under the flicker of candlelight, his expression seemed somewhat strange, and who knows what he was thinking.

"Old man, what does that look on your face mean?"

Chu Xuanji's demeanor made Ye Fan even more convinced of his guess, but he did not ask again about the relationship between Chu Xuanji and Bodhi Wuyin.

"Although Bodhi Wuyin is a leader of the Buddhist sect, she never established her own sect or even took on disciples, always going her own way," Chu Xuanji said with a bitter smile. "If she doesn't show herself willingly, it's impossible for you to find her."

Even though Ye Fan had heard this from Chu Ji before returning to Spirit Mountain, his face still showed a hint of disappointment upon hearing it from Chu Xuanji.

Seeing his expression, Chu Xuanji added, "There's another thing I want to remind you of."

"What is it?"

"Given Bodhi Wuyin's character, she is most likely to tell that girl named Su Liuli everything accurately, letting her make her own choice."

Saying this, Chu Xuanji seemed to recall something and sighed, "That means if the girl named Su Liuli wants to come back to you, she will return on her own. There's no need for you to find her. Conversely, if she's determined to follow Bodhi Wuyin to practice the Buddhist teachings, then even if you search to the ends of the earth, it'll be for naught."

Upon hearing this, a stronger sense of disappointment washed over Ye Fan's face, and he didn't know what to say for a moment.

"Brat, feelings can't be forced. Let things take their own course," Chu Xuanji suddenly sighed, as if struck by a sudden realization.

Hearing Chu Xuanji's sigh, the gloom and disappointment in Ye Fan's heart diminished somewhat, and he smiled, "Old man, with you saying that, if you tell me there's nothing fishy going on between you and Bodhi Wuyin, I'd never believe it even if you beat me to death!"

"Asking for a beating!"

Chu Xuanji's face showed a touch of anger, and with a wave of his right hand, he sent a burst of Gang Qi that hit Ye Fan and sent him flying out the door, which then closed behind him.

"Could it be that Bodhi Wuyin and the old man had an affair back in the day?" Staring at the closed wooden door, Ye Fan mused to himself.

Lacking an answer, Ye Fan thought for a moment and decided not to disturb Chu Xuanji any further. Instead, his feet flickered, and he transformed into a phantom and dashed to a large stone in the northwest direction of the cabin and sat down cross-legged.

"Swoosh! Swoosh!"

At a thought from Ye Fan, a glint of golden light flashed at his brow, and his Mind Power surged out, controlling two strands of Plant Essence to float up into the air in front of him.

"To an ordinary martial artist, Plant Essence is a treasure they would dream of obtaining; it can boost one's strength in an instant, but its effect on me is greatly reduced,"

Ye Fan said with a bitter smile as he looked at the two strands of Plant Essence, not rushing to absorb the Essence Qi within.

Because of his cultivation of Nine Heavens Profound Skill, his method of cultivation differed from other martial artists. Besides the Dantian, 107 other vital acupoints throughout his body could produce Power Seeds.

Moreover, he could only reach Innate Great Perfection once all 108 vital acupoints contained Power Seeds with the Essence of Power fully saturated.

In that case, the amount of Power Essence required by him was 108 times more than that of an ordinary cultivator!

After a wry smile, Ye Fan focused his mind, opened his mouth, and the emerald green Xuanling Fruit, looking much like a date, fell into his mouth.

Unlike eating fruit normally, Ye Fan didn't chew the Xuanling Fruit. He swallowed it whole and then stimulated the Inner Strength within his body to refine it, thus absorbing the Essence Qi Essence of the fruit.

Before heading southwest, Ye Fan had not only produced a Power Seed within the 45th vital acupoint in his body, but the Essence of Power was nearly saturated. He could have broken through to Innate Great Success Realm after half a month of closed-door cultivation. However, he left early to search for Su Liuli.

Now, as long as he absorbed the Essence Qi from the Xuanling Fruit, he could easily produce a Power Seed in the 46th acupoint and saturate it with the Essence of Power.

In doing so, not only could his Martial Arts Cultivation break through to the Innate Great Success Realm, it could also be consolidated.

"Innate Great Success Realm, break through for me!"

Feeling the rich Essence Qi flowing from the Xuanling Fruit, Ye Fan did not dwell on it and immediately focused his mind to absorb it.

Chapter 429 Trouble Starts Again

"Huff! Huff!"

At noon, Ye Fan moved through the forest like a nimble monkey, leaving phantoms in his wake with each swift movement.

After an indeterminate time, Ye Fan came to a stop, his pores opening wide. White vapor poured out of his pores, enveloping him as if surrounded by immortal energy, which appeared quite mystical.

"I've finally fully grasped the essentials of the Great Success Realm's movement technique."

A gentle breeze blew, dispersing the white mist. Ye Fan wiped the sweat from his forehead and felt a thrill of excitement in his heart.

He had broken through to the Great Success Realm of Martial Arts Cultivation the very night he consumed the 'Xuanling Fruit,' an essence of plants. Afterward, having consumed another plant essence,

he generated a Power Seed in the forty-seventh vital acupoint, solidifying his Great Success Realm. His bodily functions and the quality of his power surged tenfold in an instant.

Among these, what Ye Fan cared about the most was the increase in speed!

Because... magicians are suited for long-range combat, and in close combat, they're practically at the mercy of martial artists.

This meant that the speed of a magician's movement technique was incredibly important!

To put it accurately, a magician with a top-notch speed in movement is the nightmare of any martial artist!

As Chu Xuanji had said, Ye Fan currently relied mainly on magic to kill—controlling the Xuanye Flying Blade was his greatest trump card!

Under such circumstances, a tenfold increase in the speed of his movement made a difference to him that no increase in strength or power could match!

Over the past few days, aside from getting used to his current body, he had spent most of his time practicing his movement technique.

Through several days of practice, he had now completely mastered the movement technique of the Great Success Realm, how could he not be excited?

"You little rascal, it's been several days, why are you still at the Great Success Realm? Could it be that you haven't fully absorbed the essence qi from the two plant essences?" Just when Ye Fan was feeling excited, Chu Xuanji suddenly appeared behind him, asking with confusion.

In his view, Ye Fan had previously reached the limit of the Early Innate Realm and consuming two plant essences should have allowed him to break through to the Peak of Innate Realm.

"I've absorbed them," Ye Fan said with a wry smile.

"Then what's the matter?" Chu Xuanji's confusion intensified.

"The Cultivation Technique I practice is a bit special, it requires a slow progression of strength, to be precise, advancing one realm requires more than ten times the Essence of Power needed by an ordinary martial artist," Ye Fan explained truthfully.

"What... What?"

Startled by Ye Fan's words, even Chu Xuanji, the supreme strongman dual cultivating in Magic and Martial Arts and ranked second on the Dragon Ranking, could not help but be dumbfounded, "What kind of Cultivation Technique are you practicing exactly?"

"This Cultivation Technique is called 'Nine Heavens Profound Skill,' which allows the cultivator to generate Power Seeds in 108 vital acupoints, equivalent to having 108 Dantians..."

"108 Dantians?"

This time, Chu Xuanji was so astounded that he interrupted Ye Fan before he finished speaking, "How... How is that possible?!"

"I also thought it was incredible when I started Cultivation, but according to the current situation, it seems to be true—I've already cultivated a Power Seed in the 47th vital acupoint. Once I cultivate a Power Seed in the 72nd vital acupoint and the Essence of Power reaches saturation, I can break through to the Peak of Innate Realm. To reach the stage of Innate Great Perfection, all 108 acupoints must have Power Seeds!"

Maybe it was rare to see Chu Xuanji so astonished, but Ye Fan couldn't help laughing, "That's also why I didn't break through to the Peak of Innate Realm after consuming the two plant essences—they only increased the Essence of Power in two of the vital acupoints."

"Tsk~"

After listening to Ye Fan's detailed explanation, Chu Xuanji was slightly less shocked, still trembling his lips, then suddenly thought of something and asked, "So, after reaching the stage of Innate Great Perfection and having 108 Power Seeds, your power will be 108 times that of martial artists in the same realm!"

"Yes," Ye Fan nodded.

"Any other special features?" Chu Xuanji asked, full of anticipation.

"Besides having a much larger power storage than martial artists of the same realm, the quality of my power is ten times that of martial artists of the same realm, nearly that of a martial artist of a higher realm," Ye Fan explained, "For now, those are the only two advantages."

"What do you mean by only those two advantages?"

Chu Xuanji couldn't help but scold, "You're playing coy after getting lucky—the technique might slow down your advancement, but as you progress, it becomes more formidable. You're virtually invincible in your realm! Not to mention you can also kill enemies with magic!"

"If it weren't for that, I, your disciple, would have been long gone," Ye Fan quipped with a laugh, but he also understood that his ability to survive multiple encounters against stronger opponents was largely due to the miraculous 'Nine Heavens Profound Skill.'

Realizing this, Ye Fan was also curious why such a miraculous technique as 'Nine Heavens Profound Skill' would appear in his childhood memories.

More importantly, he was even more curious about that crimson gold crown inside his body.

Both intuition and logic told him that the crown was far more important than the 'Nine Heavens Profound Skill' itself!

"It's a pity that the plant essence only works for the first three times you use it; otherwise, I could find more for you so that you could quickly ascend to Innate Great Perfection. In that case, you would be invincible to anyone below the Gang Qi Realm!" Chu Xuanji said, feeling somewhat regretful.

Upon hearing this, Ye Fan intended to tell Chu Xuanji about the crimson golden crown inside him that could absorb special Primordial Qi from the world and transform it into Essence of Primordial Qi for his cultivation, which could help him rapidly improve his realm. But upon further thought, he decided not to mention it, resolving quietly to make good use of the function of the crimson gold crown in the future.

It was like the last time when the crimson gold crown transformed the powerful Pure Yang Qi within the Taiyin Xuan Sword into Essence of Primordial Qi, allowing his strength to surge in a short time, startling Ye Wenhao considerably.

If at that time, Ye Wenhao knew the secret of Ye Fan's cultivation of the 'Nine Heavens Profound Skill,' it would probably have been more than just a great shock to him.

Seeing Ye Fan remain silent, Chu Xuanji gave up on asking about the secrets of his cultivation technique and silently left.

...

In the evening, just as Ye Fan finished his movement technique practice and returned to the wooden house, he was surprised to see Chu Ji dressed in a red tracksuit, massaging Chu Xuanji's shoulders.

Upon seeing Ye Fan enter the house, Chu Ji looked dejected, as if to say: Why is there such a big difference even though we're both disciples?

"Auntie Ji, how come you're back?" Ye Fan asked with a smile.

"Your dad has run into some trouble over there, she came back specially to report it." Before Chu Ji could speak, Chu Xuanji answered first.

Ye Fan's expression changed, "What trouble?"

"Let Ji tell you the specifics." Chu Xuanji thought for a moment, then stood up and walked out of the wooden house.

Ye Fan turned his gaze to Chu Ji, waiting for her to speak.

"The master already said it's trouble, not danger. Look at how worried you are," Chu Ji scolded with a smile.

"What exactly happened?" Ye Fan asked, frowning and getting straight to the point.

"Your dad had barely established a foothold in Southeast Asia when the underworld there plunged into chaos," Chu Ji explained.

"Is Nanqinhong behind this?"

Ye Fan's tone turned colder, fully aware of the severe impact this situation could have on Ye Wenhao.

"Yes and no," Chu Ji pondered and replied: "Nanqinhong hasn't been involved in the turmoil of the Southeast Asia underworld, but everything started because of Nanqinhong."

"How so?" Ye Fan was puzzled.

"Nanqinhong has pulled out of Southeast Asia!"

Chu Ji revealed the mystery, explaining, "You should know that Southeast Asia is Nanqinhong's third-largest base outside Huaxia, with immense power, virtually the flagbearer of the Southeast Asia underworld. Besides Nanqinhong, there are other powerful underground forces rooted there; local forces are also present—once Nanqinhong withdrew from Southeast Asia, other forces began frantically vying for territory and illicit businesses, leading to the chaos."

Upon hearing this, Ye Fan's fists tightened involuntarily.

"The chaos has been raging for three days now, causing a considerable negative impact. Your dad, being new to Southeast Asia and lacking a strong foundation and a direct lineage, is simply unable to control the situation with his power alone."

As Chu Ji spoke, her expression also became more somber, "If the chaos doesn't cease, those above will inevitably start doubting your dad's governance ability, which would have a significant effect on his political career."

"Heh, for the sake of impacting my dad's career, Nanqinhong really went to the extreme with this ruthless move. They are really willing to pay a high price," Ye Fan said with anger filling his eyes, wishing he could fly to Southeast Asia immediately.

"Presumably, that old fox Lin Tianyi guessed that your dad was targeting Nanqinhong in Southeast Asia, so he just gave up the turf, deliberately creating a difficult situation for your dad," Chu Ji analyzed.

"Most likely."

Ye Fan agreed with Chu Ji's analysis, while also secretly contemplating countermeasures.

"At this point, to help your dad out of this predicament, only you can step in, fighting fire with fire," Chu Ji said, implying the reason she had come to notify him.

"Fight fire with fire?" Ye Fan thoughtfully repeated.

"Yes!"

Chu Ji nodded, "Firstly, as I said before, there are many underground forces in Southeast Asia with complex interconnections, even if your dad uses the police force and the Yanhuang Organization to stop this chaos, it would be challenging.

Moreover, the situation in Southeast Asia is unstable at present, and your dad hasn't secured a foothold yet; plus, members of the police and the Yanhuang Organization aren't from the Ye Family Camp, so it's uncertain whether they will support your dad.

Lastly, the officialdom has its own rules, and the jianghu has its own laws. You intervening in this matter would be much easier than for your dad."

"Then I'll set off for Southeast Asia immediately."

After pondering a bit, Ye Fan found Chu Ji's advice reasonable—fighting fire with fire was the best way to handle this matter.

"Southeast Asia, being a Special Zone and having come under Huaxia's rule just a few years ago, is unstable with a complex mix of forces. The Yanhuang Organization's control over that region is clearly weaker compared to the inland. You must be very careful." Chu Ji warned, "Also, unless absolutely necessary, don't go to extremes—the longer you keep your trump cards, the better!"

"What's the point of preserving a trump card if it could help my dad's career?"

Ye Fan narrowed his eyes, a murderous intent flashing in them!

Chapter 430 Helpless

Taiwan.

Nanqinghong Headquarters.

Lin Tianyi, who had been gloomy the past few days, was wearing a satin robe, sitting on the balcony of his villa, holding a glass of red wine and gazing at the scenery of the manor with a contented expression on his face.

Sitting opposite Lin Tianyi was a middle-aged man with a lean figure and dark skin, named Chen Shui, who was the head of the Nanqinghong Southeast Asia branch. Within Jianghu, he was known as Mr. Shui.

At that moment, he was on a call, staying abreast of the situation in Southeast Asia.

"Big brother, I just received news from Southeast Asia. Ye Wenhao organized a meeting this afternoon with the Southeast Asia Special Zone Ministry of Justice, the police, the Yanhuang Organization Southeast Asia Office, and several other departments to discuss a plan to quell the chaos," Chen Shui, dressed in a Tang suit, reported the latest intelligence to Lin Tianyi after hanging up the phone two minutes later.

"Did they come to any conclusions?"

Hearing Chen Shui's report, Lin Tianyi still appeared completely at ease, as if he were not the least bit worried that Ye Wenhao could control the situation and quell the unrest.

"I don't know yet, but it's probably all in vain."

Chen Shui said with a smile, "Leaving aside the person in charge of the Yanhuang Organization Southeast Asia Office, the rest of the departments are not Huaxia people. They are very united and xenophobic— it will be hard for Ye Wenhao to gain their support. Without it, Ye Wenhao is just a Commander with no troops; useless."

"After six o'clock, give them a call to see what the final result of the meeting is, so we can come up with countermeasures in advance," Lin Tianyi thought for a moment and then said.

"Alright."

Chen Shui nodded his head and hesitated before voicing the doubt that had been haunting him for several days, "Big brother, we've paid such a huge price just to make Ye Wenhao's career hang in the balance—is it worth it?"

"It is. Because Ye Wenhao's arrival in Southeast Asia is mostly likely aimed at us."

Lin Tianyi shook his head and spoke with a sagacious air, "In that case, if we don't pull out proactively, and after some time, with the Ye Family's support, Ye Wenhao consolidates his position and strikes at us, our losses may not be less than now."

But now, as we withdraw actively, we not only foil his plans but also cause a great turmoil in Southeast Asia, posing a significant problem for him. If he cannot solve this problem, as you said, his career will be in jeopardy. At that time, not only will he be removed from Southeast Asia, but he might also lose the qualification to climb to the top of the power pyramid.

Once he is transferred away from Southeast Asia, we can return and take back everything that belongs to us. And once he loses the qualification for the power summit, defeated by Bai Guotao, once the old bastard of the Ye Family passes away, the Bai Family will replace the Ye Family as the foremost official family in Huaxia. Then, we will have absolute backing and firmly control Huaxia's underworld.

In other words, whether we look at the short term or the long term, withdrawing from Southeast Asia is a brilliant move."

At this point, Lin Tianyi paused, took a sip of red wine to moisten his throat, and continued, "Moreover, according to Young Master Chen, as long as we can bring down Ye Wenhao, even if Nanqinhong gets kicked out of Huaxia, it would be worth it."

"Big brother is wise."

After listening to Lin Tianyi's explanation, Chen Shui sincerely admired him.

"This brilliant move is not my own making, it's Young Master Chen's."

As he spoke, Lin Tianyi thought of Chen Feilian's entire scheme and laughed, "This play has several scripts, and how it unfolds depends on how things develop. As of now, we have only just raised the curtain, and the best is yet to come."

"I see, then let's wait and watch."

With a sudden realization, Chen Shui then smilingly raised his glass to clink with Lin Tianyi's.

"BANG—"

The sound of the glasses colliding rang out, and both Lin Tianyi and Chen Shui drained their expensive red wine, smiling at each other.

The scene freezes.

The smiles on their faces were even brighter than the sunlight.

At the same time.

Ye Wenhao, who was presiding over a special meeting at the Prime Minister's Office in Bangkok, the capital of the Southeast Asia Special Zone, wore a face clouded with gloom.

As the meeting began, he had participants speak in turn to discuss ways to quell the turmoil; aside from the person in charge of the Yanhuang Organization Southeast Asia Office, all others like the Ministry of Justice and the police presented nothing but bureaucratic lip service with no substantive suggestions, leaving it to Ye Wenhao to come up with a solution himself.

This was an unprecedented situation in Ye Wenhao's political career!

Even when he was parachuted into Jiangnan last year to become second-in-command, those under him were filled with awe of him, unlike these officials from the Southeast Asia Special Zone who treated him with indifference.

In fact, Ye Wenhao felt it wasn't just indifference; it was highly likely that the officials were banding together to send him back like the previous officials from the mainland who had been Special Chiefs.

"According to what you all are saying, we are powerless against the current situation and should just let it develop further?"

Finally, after the last participant parroted the bureaucratic rhetoric, Ye Wenhao, somewhat incensed, asked coldly.

"Mr. Special Chief, as far as I know, wherever you have served before, the public security in that region has been the best in the whole of Huaxia—our meaning is to let you come up with the solution, and we will execute it according to your plan," the head of the police responded to Ye Wenhao's angry question.

"Yes, that's what we all think," the other attendees nodded in agreement.

Seeing this, Ye Wenhao's brows involuntarily knitted together.

Over the past few years, during his tenure in various regions, one reason for the good security environment was his extremely prominent identity, with both the police force and the Yanhuang Organization doing their utmost to cooperate with his work. Another reason was his previous status as the top fighter on the Qing bang, with off-the-charts combat power that had a huge deterrent effect, preventing any monsters and demons from causing trouble.

But now, not only was he unable to garner support from his subordinates, but due to the Yanhuang Organization's lax supervision over the Southeast Asia Special Zone, numerous underground forces were entrenched there, including, aside from Nanqinghong, powerful underground organizations such as the Dark Council and the Giant Axe Organization.

These two underground organizations, like the Qinghong Organization, were among the top global underworld forces, each with a Supreme Strongman in the Gang Qi Realm stationed there, and the organizations were filled with numerous experts, who were far from as reverential towards Ye Wenhao as those from the mainland underworld forces.

"In Huaxia, there's an old saying, 'To catch the thieves, first catch the king.'"

Ye Wenhao was silent for a while before he spoke solemnly, "The literal meaning of this phrase is not hard to understand. I suppose everyone present should grasp its implication. My opinion is to first capture the leaders of the various major underworld forces..."

"Sorry, Mr. Special Chief, to interrupt. The laws in the Special Zone differ from those on the Huaxia mainland; without sufficient evidence of their involvement in crime, we have no right to arrest them. Otherwise, we could be sued by their lawyers," the Minister of Justice interjected curtly: "Besides, I'd like to remind Mr. Special Chief that organizations like Qinghong, the Dark Council, the Giant Axe Organization, and the Yakuza are all foreign underworld forces. The leaders of these organizations in Southeast Asia are mostly executors, not the real decision-makers behind the scenes. Therefore, even if we were to arrest them, it would be in vain—they can easily replace the executors with new ones."

"Then we'll kill the chicken to scare the monkeys and strike at one underground force with all our might, to deter the others," Ye Wenhao said with a furrowed brow.

"Mr. Special Chief, in the past four days, we have arrested hundreds of people, but they are all low-level members of various forces. As for the mid-tier and above members, they have not been directly involved in the chaos," the police chief spoke up again: "That is to say, even if we strike at one underground force with all our might, we're only targeting their low-level members, and this won't change the chaotic situation."

"Chief, I have a suggestion."

Yan Lei, the head of the Yanhuang Organization Southeast Asia Special Zone Office, who had been silent, spoke up.

"Director Yan, please speak," Ye Wenhao turned his gaze towards Yan Lei, with a glimmer of hope in his eyes.

"The root cause of this chaos is basically due to Nanqinghong's withdrawal from Southeast Asia—the absence of Nanqinghong has disrupted the underworld balance of the Southeast Asia Special Zone, leading various forces to madly scramble for territory and the illicit businesses."

Yan Lei looked at Ye Wenhao and spoke earnestly, "If a dominating underground force like Nanqinghong could emerge in the Southeast Asia Special Zone, the chaos would naturally end."

"Everyone is well aware of that, but the problem is, such a force doesn't exist right now," the hope in Ye Wenhao's eyes vanished without a trace, replaced by disappointment.

"Chief, what I mean is, can we support one of these forces in secret, to rule the underworld in Southeast Asia?" Yan Lei offered his suggestion.

"No!"

Ye Wenhao rejected it outright; in his eyes, this was a sign of incompetence and an insult to all the overseeing officials, including himself!

Seeing Ye Wenhao's refusal, Yan Lei wisely chose to remain silent.

"In that case, Director Yan, immediately dispatch people to investigate the residences of the leaders of the major forces and then report the results to me," Ye Wenhao spoke again.

Hmm?

As Ye Wenhao's words echoed in their ears, everyone, including Yan Lei, was stirred, guessing the intention behind his directive.

"Alright."

Yan Lei agreed cooperatively, yet in his mind, he suspected that Ye Wenhao's efforts would most likely end up fruitless.

Not just Yan Lei—other attendees also shared the same thought, their faces displaying mocking smiles as if to ridicule Ye Wenhao's naivety.

"Meeting adjourned!"

Seeing the reaction, Ye Wenhao did not explode in anger; he simply announced the end of the meeting expressionlessly, picked up his notebook, and walked out of the conference room with deeply furrowed brows.

Meanwhile.

A plane from the East Sea destined for Bangkok landed on time at Bangkok International Airport.

Ye Fan stood up, and along with the crowd of travelers, slowly made his way out of the airport passage.

On this day.

He had arrived in Southeast Asia, silently and unnoticed.