

Young Master 211

Chapter 211: 【Magic, Phenomenon!】

As a disciple of Chu Xuanji, Chu Ji had once dominated the Qing bang for ten years, and her understanding of the Martial Arts World was unrivaled by ordinary martial artists.

She knew that in the Martial Arts World, there existed a special type of cultivator who did not focus on the cultivation of the body but rather on the cultivation of Mind Power. In other major alliances, this was known as the cultivation of spiritual power.

Such cultivators were called Magicians in the Huaxia Martial Arts World, and in other major alliances, they were known as Spiritual Mind Masters.

During battles, Magicians (Spiritual Mind Masters) did not use martial arts but instead used magic.

Magic, in this context, referred to Mind Power (spiritual) attacks, targeting the consciousness (soul) of a person, and could kill invisibly.

According to Chu Ji, magic attacks were divided into direct and indirect attacks.

The former involved the Magician determining that the opponent's soul was not strong enough and forcefully bombarding the opponent's soul with spiritual power to destroy it, while the latter involved setting up a Formation and using powerful Mind Power to activate the Formation through Sealing, causing fluctuations of Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi, and using powerful Mind Power to direct the yin energy from Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi into the opponent's soul, damaging or destroying the opponent's soul, thereby killing the opponent.

In such a scenario, a powerful Magician not only possessed terrifying Mind Power but also had profound knowledge of Formations.

"Are you planning to channel Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi into her body through the Nine Star Gathering Spirit Array?" After a brief shock, before Ye Fan could activate the Nine Star Gathering Spirit Array, Chu Ji anxiously asked.

Ye Fan nodded his head and raised his hands, preparing to form Seals.

"No, this is too dangerous!"

Chu Ji hurried forward to stop him, saying, "Once the Nine Star Gathering Spirit Array is activated, the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi it draws in is equivalent to hundreds or thousands of times that of normal meditation, and being a normal person, she simply cannot withstand it!"

"I know. Once the Formation is activated, I will enter it and channel Primordial Qi into her body, protecting her heart, viscera, meridians, and other critical areas. At the same time, I will guide the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi to heal her damaged soul," Ye Fan explained.

"But this will consume a lot of Mind Power. Do you have enough?" Chu Ji still worried.

"My Mind Power is sufficient to activate the Formation, and while protecting her and guiding the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi to heal her damaged soul, I can multitask to convert the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi into Mind Power to replenish what is consumed," Ye Fan explained again.

Upon hearing this, Chu Ji immediately deemed this method feasible, yet the only danger was the extreme demand on Ye Fan's control of Mind Power. A slight mistake could not only harm Situ Ruoshui but also cause Ye Fan to be injured by the vast and intense Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi.

Realizing this, and seeing Ye Fan's confident expression, combined with Chu Xuanji's full confidence in Ye Fan, her worries gradually dissipated as she quietly stood aside, waiting for Ye Fan to activate the Formation.

"Huh~"

Seeing this, Ye Fan no longer wasted words, took a deep breath, and quickly regained his composure.

Seconds later, with a thought, Ye Fan placed his hands in front of his chest and swiftly formed a strange Seal.

"Activate!"

He shouted, and the Seal was formed.

A sudden surge of air was generated, and on the ground, the nine crystal clear drops of blood seemed to evaporate instantly, turning dull and merging into the airflow, rushing out of the window like a rocket launch, shooting straight into the sky!

Instantly, the Tianpeng Star, Tian Rui Star, Tian Chong Star, Tian Fu Star, Tian Qin Star, Tian Xin Star, Heavenly Pillar Star, Tianren Star, and Tian Ying Star, like called upon, appeared as nine silver spots in the originally clear sky, twinkling brightly.

"Honey, look, a shooting star!"

"Damn, is that an alien spacecraft?"

...

The appearance of the nine stars caused people around the globe to witness this strange spectacle, causing an outburst of exclamations.

"Could it be that a Magician has come to Dong hai?"

In Dong hai, a man clad in a black robe, originally sitting in a forest cultivating, was startled by the change in the sky and couldn't help but pause.

Besides, in Huaxia and the other Five Great Alliances, several mysterious Magicians cast their gaze toward the sky, pondering.

Hmm?

Meanwhile, inside the office building of the Yanhuang Organization East Sea Branch, Xing Feng, an elder of the Yanhuang Organization, although he didn't see the strange sight in the sky because he was facing away from the window, sensed that the Primordial Qi above the office had become very chaotic!

This discovery made his face change, and he quickly rose and leaped to the window.

The next moment.

Under Xing Feng's watchful eyes, a white stream of air descended from the sky, landing in the courtyard of the office, wildly surging into the room where Ye Fan was located.

"Such strong Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi!"

Seeing this scene, sensing the rich Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi in the air stream, Xing Feng's expression changed drastically, and a preposterous thought emerged, "Could it be that the youngster is using magic to repair the soul of those two?"

Indeed.

As the thought emerged, Xing Feng affirmed his own speculation. In his view, since Ye Fan was a disciple of Chu Xuanji, he must, like Chu Xuanji, not only have achievements in the martial arts domain but also inherited Chu Xuanji's medical skills, magic arts, Formation skills, and so on.

"What kind of demon did Chu Xuanji teach..."

Realizing this, Xing Feng thought of how Ye Fan not only practiced both magic and martial arts but was also incredibly accomplished at such a young age, and couldn't help but sigh inwardly.

Beyond the sigh, Xing Feng suddenly felt that next year's Qing bang competition, whether the Ye Family's martial arts genius could continue to dominate the top rank became an uncertainty!

At the same time, he was certain that Ye Fan, the illegitimate son who had not yet been acknowledged by the Ye Family, would definitely become a unique piece in the chess game of Huaxia's political arena, playing an unpredictable role!

Ye Fan couldn't know what Xing Feng was thinking, but as soon as the formation was activated, he immediately leaped into the Nine Star Gathering Spirit Array, reached out and placed his hand on Situ Ruoshui's forehead, where his Power bursting with Pure Yang Qi surged out of his palm like a tide and into Situ Ruoshui's body.

Once the Power entered Situ Ruoshui's body, under Ye Fan's control, it instantly surged towards Situ Ruoshui's organs, meridians, and acupoints, enveloping them.

Simultaneously, Ye Fan carefully guided the Power around the exterior of Situ Ruoshui's consciousness.

"Disperse!"

Feeling the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi crazily rushing into the formation, Ye Fan's consciousness shifted, and the Power lingering outside Situ Ruoshui's consciousness instantly turned into thin threads, wrapping around her consciousness like silk.

After doing all this, Ye Fan didn't dare to linger, hurriedly applied the most common magic "Guiding Technique" in magic skills to draw the rich Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi into Situ Ruoshui's body, and then let some of the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi rampage inside her body. He carefully controlled and guided most of the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi to slowly approach Situ Ruoshui's consciousness and began its repair.

Suddenly, under Ye Fan's guidance, the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi slowly neared Situ Ruoshui's consciousness and, through the gaps formed by the thin threads of Power, poured into her consciousness to mend it.

As the first strand of Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi entered Situ Ruoshui's consciousness, the following ones seemed summoned, rushing rapidly towards it.

"This is bad!"

Realizing this caused a huge wave to surge in Ye Fan's heart!

The reason he had turned his Power into thin threads around Situ Ruoshui's consciousness was precisely to prevent a large influx of Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi which would destroy her consciousness completely.

Now, seeing the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi crazily rushing into Situ Ruoshui's consciousness almost caused him to lose his composure. Fortunately, his resolve was strong. After initial panic, he immediately reactivated the Guiding Technique to direct the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi.

But—

Unexpectedly, Situ Ruoshui's consciousness seemed to magnetically attract the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi, which behaved like untamed wild horses, completely beyond his control!

Just as Ye Fan was out of options, a torrent of overwhelming Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi swept through like a flood, instantly washing away the Power threads surrounding Situ Ruoshui's consciousness, and entirely surged into it!

Realizing this, Ye Fan steeled his heart and crazily pumped Power into Situ Ruoshui's body in an attempt to block the influx of Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi into her consciousness, but it was utterly ineffective—the Power entering her body was directly swept away without a trace by the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi.

"What's happening?"

Outside the formation, Chu Ji couldn't investigate the specifics inside Situ Ruoshui's body, but she noticed the speed of the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi's influx multiplying by thousands and her expression drastically changed!

"Snap—"

The answer to Chu Ji was a crisp sound, as Ye Fan was expelled by the overwhelming Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi from the formation.

At the same moment, a milky-white bead faintly appeared at the spot between Situ Ruoshui's eyebrows.

"What is that?" Seeing that sacred glow, Ye Fan's eyes widened in shock.

"Uh..." Chu Ji's pupils contracted sharply, her expression revealing deep astonishment, "Mental Power Seed!"

"Mental Power Seed?!" Hearing Chu Ji's words, Ye Fan was startled.

Because he fully inherited Chu Xuanji's mantle, he practiced magic while he cultivated martial arts, and knew that a 'Mental Power Seed' was formed in the consciousness of a magician through cultivation, when the Mind Power reached a certain level, similar to how martial artists forming a 'Power Seed' in their Dantian through meditation cultivation.

The difference was that Power Seed could be generated in the Dantian as soon as martial artists entered Postnatal Great Success and learned meditation, while a 'Mental Power Seed' was extremely difficult to form, and anyone who could form one was a famous magician in the Martial Arts World!

Situ Ruoshui, being an ordinary person, forming a 'Mental Power Seed' at this moment, how could that not shock Ye Fan?

"How could she produce a Mental Power Seed?" In shock, Ye Fan blurted out.

"My master once said, there are some extremely rare constitutions in this world, like your Extremely Yang Body, Su Yuxin's Extreme Yin Body, and hers must be a Mental Body."

Chu Ji was also shaken by this scene, "A 'Mental Body' refers to a person whose consciousness is extremely strong from birth. Once the right opportunity arises to activate it, they will possess terrifying mental power. Your activation of the Nine Star Gathering Spirit Array and guiding the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi into her body provided just such an opportunity!"

"No wonder I found her consciousness undamaged earlier; now it all makes sense." Ye Fan realized in enlightenment.

"Although she is a Mental Body, she is not a magician and is passively absorbing the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi, which will soon saturate!"

Seeing the milky-white bead at the spot between Situ Ruoshui's eyebrows growing increasingly brighter, Chu Ji thought of something, her expression changed, and she sternly warned, "At that time, you must stop the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi from entering her body, otherwise, it will cause her consciousness to burst and completely disperse her soul, disappearing from the world!"

"What should we do??"

Ye Fan's face turned pale, his heart instantly reaching his throat.

Chapter 212: [Dual Cultivation of Magic and Martial Arts, One Move to Decide the Fate of the World!]

"It's fine."

Chu Ji said calmly, "When she can no longer absorb the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi, I will rush into the array and save her. Follow me closely, and take the opportunity to enter the array. Enter the meditation state in the shortest time and absorb the remaining Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi. This way, we can not only prevent the waste of Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi but also prevent it from becoming chaotic and damaging the Yanhuang Organization East Sea Branch."

"Okay."

Ye Fan nodded. He didn't care about wasting the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi that was summoned by the Nine Star Gathering Spirit Array, but he couldn't allow the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi to become chaotic and out of control, causing destruction to the Yanhuang Organization East Sea Branch.

"Follow me into the array!"

Seconds later, seeing the milky-white pearl gradually merging into Situ Ruoshui's forehead, Chu Ji gave a cold shout. Her figure flashed, and she took a step to the front of the array, spread her palms open, and fiercely slapped toward the wildly turbulent Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi within the array!

"Crack—"

With that slap, a crisp sound emitted. The Gang Jin from within Chu Ji's body burst out in an instant, pushing aside the Primordial Qi in front of her and stepping into the array.

At the same time, Ye Fan took the opportunity to flash his figure and follow Chu Ji into the array.

Because Ye Fan used his own Essence Blood as the Array Eye to activate the Nine Star Gathering Spirit Array, the array's power was surprisingly great. The Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi it drew was so rich that despite Chu Ji blocking in front, Ye Fan still felt a terrifying pressure.

That pressure seemed as though it could completely crush his body!

Feeling a horrific pressure he had never experienced before, Ye Fan knew all too well that the pressure Chu Ji was bearing far exceeded his own. For this reason, he couldn't hesitate. He quickly sat down cross-legged, instantly gathered his consciousness, and allowed himself to enter the Meditation State.

In an instant, the crimson golden crown pattern appeared above his head once more.

"Swoosh—"

As soon as the pattern appeared, the originally turbulent Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi, like cats that had smelled blood, crazily surged toward Ye Fan.

Chu Ji felt the pressure around her suddenly lighten. She immediately bent down to pick up Situ Ruoshui and, with a flash, moved out of the array.

Simultaneously, the rich and majestic Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi instantly engulfed Ye Fan, fully shrouding his body with a white mist.

Hmm?

Upon seeing this scene, Chu Ji was first stunned, then relieved when she sensed that Ye Fan's presence still existed, and she reminded, "I will take her out first and bring in Jin Ye. When you can no longer absorb the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi, I will then send Jin Ye into the array."

Without responding, Ye Fan, who was in the Meditation State within the array, only felt the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi entering his body as if it cost nothing.

Part of the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi was under Ye Fan's control and rushed toward the first acupoint along the 'Great Cycle Path'. Meanwhile, a greater portion of the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi was completely out of his control, madly rushing toward his consciousness.

"What's happening?"

This discovery shocked Ye Fan—although he had just expended some of his Mind Power, the amount of Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi surging toward his consciousness was too much, too overwhelming for his consciousness to bear!

In his alarm, Ye Fan's consciousness showed signs of breaking down, and the part of the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi that he had been controlling, which was rushing toward the first acupoint of the Great Cycle, also escaped his control and surged toward his consciousness!

"No!"

Ye Fan was greatly alarmed and tried to concentrate all his consciousness to regain control of the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi within his body. To his astonishment, a crimson golden crown suddenly appeared out of nowhere around his consciousness, instantly absorbing all the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi that was surging toward it!

"This..."

Feeling this scene, Ye Fan was completely dumbfounded.

All of this was completely beyond his comprehension, giving him a surreal feeling!

"What... what is that crimson golden crown?" Shocked, Ye Fan couldn't help but quietly ask himself internally.

There was no answer.

Just as Ye Fan was speculating what the crimson golden crown might be, a pure stream of Mind Power surged out from the crimson golden crown, entering his consciousness and replenishing what he had previously expended.

Perhaps still immersed in the shock brought by the appearance of the crimson golden crown pattern, and perceiving all of this, Ye Fan was no longer surprised, nor did he do anything else. He just quietly sensed everything happening.

Under his perception, the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi within the array continued to pour into his body, one after another, all of which were absorbed by the crimson golden crown. Then, pure streams of Mind Power flowed out from the crimson golden crown into his consciousness, creating a perfect cycle.

Soon, Ye Fan sensed that his consciousness's Mind Power was saturated. However, the crimson golden crown continued to greedily absorb the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi and kept feeding the Mind Power back to Ye Fan, causing his consciousness to gradually enlarge and become enveloped in a layer of crimson golden light.

Mind Power Seed?

Chu Ji returned with the mentally damaged Jin Ye, who had become vegetative, and saw a crimson golden bead emerging at Ye Fan's forehead.

This discovery filled Chu Ji with a feeling of shock so intense that her right hand involuntarily let go, causing Jin Ye to fall straight to the ground.

Not caring about whether Jin Ye was dead or alive, Chu Ji just stood there, dumbstruck, watching the light from the crimson golden bead at Ye Fan's forehead grow from dim to bright. She was like a statue, completely motionless.

As someone who once dominated the top of the Qing Bang, Chu Ji was well aware that like Martial Artists, Magicians also had the distinction between Postnatal and Innate.

However, while Martial Artists could produce Power Seeds in their bodies through Meditation Cultivation during the Postnatal Great Success period, Magicians must become Innate Magicians before they could condense a Mind Power Seed—Mind Power Seeds are the hallmark of an Innate Mage!

Now, as Ye Fan condensed a Mind Power Seed, it meant he had become an Innate Mage!

And because sorcerers cultivate consciousness, making the requirements much stricter than those of martial artists, sorcerers make up less than one ten-thousandth of the martial arts world, with Innate Mages being even rarer!

Chu Ji didn't know if there was anyone in Huaxia, let alone the whole world, who could become an Innate Mage at Ye Fan's age, but she was certain that absolutely no one could, like Ye Fan, at the age of twenty, achieve Dual Cultivation of Magic and Martial Arts and reach the Innate Realm simultaneously!

First of all, those capable of Dual Cultivation of Magic and Martial Arts were extremely rare in this world.

Secondly, martial artists cultivate the body, continually improving their physique and enhancing the inner strength within their bodies, whereas sorcerers cultivate the consciousness, enhancing their mind power.

It can be said that not only are their cultivation methods different, but their cultivation philosophies are also entirely distinct!

In such a situation, many cultivators with the conditions for Dual Cultivation of Magic and Martial Arts often show signs of deviation during the process, which forces them to painfully give up one path.

And even for those cultivators with great wisdom and willpower, practicing both martial arts and magic, their progress is extremely slow. It's simply impossible to become both an Innate Martial Artist and a Mage at a young age like Ye Fan. On the contrary, most of them, unable to let go, end up never reaching the Innate Realm in any field for the rest of their lives!

It was precisely because she knew all this that she, who had a very strong mental quality, lost her composure in such a way.

Within the formation, Ye Fan also sensed his consciousness gradually turning into a crimson golden pearl, understanding that this was a sign of condensing a Mind Power Seed!

Just that—

Having continuously witnessed phenomena out of the ordinary, he didn't react with shock like Chu Ji, seemingly having become numb to it.

After an unknown length of time, under Chu Ji's watchful eyes, that crimson golden pearl merged into Ye Fan's forehead.

At the same time, Ye Fan clearly sensed that the crimson golden crown was still absorbing Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi, but it no longer emitted any mind power.

His mind power must be saturated, right?

Realizing this, Ye Fan had a thought, faintly guessing this and then, after thinking for a moment, he tried to control the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi entering his body with his consciousness.

No response.

Even though Ye Fan's consciousness had become several times stronger than before, he still couldn't control the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi inside his body!

Hm?

The next moment.

Just when Ye Fan was about to give up, he suddenly noticed that about one-third of the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi in his body, as if it were repelled by that crimson golden crown, easily surged into the first acupoint of the Great Cycle under the guidance of his consciousness, like a torrent!

Once the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi successfully entered the first acupoint of the Great Cycle Path, it flowed unimpeded all the way, swiftly circulating along the Great Cycle Path. In this process, it silently expelled the impurities in Ye Fan's body, improved his physique, and generated a large amount of Essence Qi, eventually producing Gang Jin, which was far superior in quality and power to Dark Force.

After the Gang Jin was generated, it split into two parts. One part entered the nine acupoints of the small cycle, replacing the power that was in between Dark Force and Gang Jin, and the other part surged into the first eighteen acupoints passed by the Great Cycle, generating Power Seeds within the acupoints!

Twenty-seven Power Seeds!

Long ago, when Ye Fan discovered that unlike other martial artists, his power was not stored in the Dantian but in the nine vital acupoints of the small cycle, he had vaguely guessed that eventually, he might be able to store power in all one hundred and eight vital acupoints of the human body!

Now, seeing that Power Seeds were generated in eighteen more acupoints, Ye Fan was overjoyed!

Amidst his joy, Ye Fan suddenly realized that the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi entering his body was diminishing, knowing well that what was drawn by the Nine Star Gathering Spirit Array was nearly exhausted.

Noticing this, Ye Fan had a thought and stopped meditating—he wanted to use the last of the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi to heal Jin Ye’s consciousness.

As soon as Ye Fan stopped meditating, the crimson golden crown around his consciousness instantly vanished without a trace.

Ye Fan had no time to ponder the reasons, as he suddenly opened his eyes and called out to Chu Ji, who was still in shock, "Senior Sister, hurry and get him into the Array!"

"Okay!"

Ye Fan’s shout snapped Chu Ji out of her shock. She quickly responded, grabbed Jin Ye, and threw him towards Ye Fan.

Ye Fan extended his hands and caught Jin Ye steadily, placing him onto the stretcher immediately.

Having done all this, Ye Fan gathered his consciousness and then, following the method he had previously used to repair Situ Ruoshui’s consciousness, he began to repair Jin Ye’s damaged consciousness.

"If the news that Xiao Fan is both an Innate Martial Artist and a Mage at the same time were to spread, it would definitely shock the global martial arts world, wouldn’t it?"

Seeing Ye Fan easily guiding the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi to heal Jin Ye’s consciousness, the shock on Chu Ji’s face gradually subsided, replaced by excitement. Amidst her excitement, she couldn’t help but ask herself in silence.

The answer was self-evident.

She believed that Ye Fan, currently a pawn in Chu Xuanji’s chess game, would one day become the chariot, cavalier, and cannon, and ultimately, One Move to Decide the Fate of the World!

Chapter 213: Fury Burns Half the Sky

I don't know how much time had passed, the nine drops of essence blood on the floor had all evaporated, the power of the Nine Star Gathering Spirit Array had been exhausted, and the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi in the room had completely disappeared.

On the stretcher, Jin Ye slowly opened his eyes.

Perhaps it was the long coma that made it hard for him to adapt to the glaring sunlight. He opened his eyes and then closed them again, only after several seconds did he open them again, and what he saw was Ye Fan's face—a face not too familiar, yet not entirely strange.

Hmm?

Seeing Ye Fan so close, Jin Ye's eyes widened in astonishment, his face full of shock as if he thought he was dreaming.

Is this a dream?

Subconsciously, Jin Ye pinched his arm.

The pain told him that this was not a dream; indeed, standing before him was Ye Fan.

"How... how could he be here?"

Once he was sure he wasn't dreaming, Jin Ye looked bewildered.

There was no answer.

He had been forced to betray Situ Chen because his wife and children had been kidnapped by Qi Qi's men, aligning with Situ Haotian and Qi Qi to usurp power.

According to his last memory, Situ Haotian had tried to use Situ Chen to force Ye Fan to show himself. Situ Chen had used the opportunity to make a phone call to tip off Ye Fan, only to be beaten to death by Situ Haotian in the end.

At that moment, he felt angry, but more than that, he felt guilt and helplessness!

Lately, when he was immersed in his guilt, Ye Fan appeared, and a roar erupted like thunder next to his ear...

His memory stopped there!

"Where... where am I?" After recalling his memories, Jin Ye looked at Ye Fan in confusion.

"You were hit by my Tiger and Leopard Thunder Sound, and your soul suffered injuries. I've just repaired your soul," Ye Fan answered.

Repaired the soul?!

Jin Ye was stunned. As an ordinary person, he couldn't fathom what it meant for a soul to be injured or even imagine what a miracle repairing a soul could be, but he knew Ye Fan had saved him!

"I saved you for two reasons."

Seeing his reaction, Ye Fan explained to Jin Ye, "First, you betrayed Mr. Situ because your wife and son were kidnapped by Qi Qi's men, which left you no choice."

"Mr.... Mr. Situ..." Hearing Ye Fan mention the betrayal, Jin Ye's face showed guilt and remorse.

Ye Fan continued, "The second reason I saved you is to have you testify for me, to prove that Situ Haotian and Huang Qi used Mr. Situ and Ruoshui to force my hand, attempted to kill me, and made the first move, which led to their deaths by my hand."

"They're dead?"

Upon hearing this, Jin Ye was first startled, then said with a face of great satisfaction, "Served them right! Situ Haotian, that ungrateful scoundrel, deserves to go to the Eighteen Layers of Hell!"

"Your wife and daughter are safe, my people have rescued them." Seeing Jin Ye's reaction, Ye Fan could tell that Jin Ye was truly loyal to Situ Chen, so he added.

"They... they're safe?" Jin Ye was stunned again.

Ye Fan did not say much more, merely nodding slightly.

"Bang! Bang! Bang!"

The next moment.

Under the watchful eyes of Ye Fan and Chu Ji nearby, Jin Ye rolled off the stretcher and knelt down, knocking his forehead against the ground three times before lifting his head, looking at Ye Fan with gratitude, he said, "Thank you, thank you for saving them, and thank you for avenging Mr. Situ!"

"Smack! Smack! Smack!"

As his words fell, Jin Ye swung his hand and slapped himself three times, then continued, "I failed Mr. Situ's kindness, but this time, even if someone were to hold a knife to my neck, I would testify for you and prove your innocence!"

"Go wash up, someone will come to take your statement soon," Ye Fan sighed, "After giving your statement, you can meet your wife and children."

"Thank... thank you!"

Jin Ye knelt down again, bowing deeply to Ye Fan.

Seeing this, Ye Fan turned and walked out of the room with Chu Ji.

Outside the room, Situ Ruoshui lay motionless on a stretcher, still in a coma.

"Is she okay?"

As Ye Fan approached and saw that Situ Ruoshui was still unawake, he asked with concern.

"She's fine."

Chu Ji shook her head and said, "Her consciousness was not harmed. The reason she has yet to wake up is that the event just now triggered the formation of a Mind Power Seed in her, and her consciousness needs some time to adjust."

As if to prove Chu Ji's words, just as she finished speaking, Situ Ruoshui's eyelashes trembled slightly. Then her eyelids moved and she slowly opened her eyes.

"Big... big brother!"

Unlike Jin Ye, due to the formation of the Mind Power Seed and now being a rare Innate Mage, Situ Ruoshui adapted immediately to the light and was unusually alert as she shouted out to Ye Fan, struggling to sit up.

As soon as he saw this, Ye Fan quickly bent over to help Situ Ruoshui up.

"Big... big brother, dad is dead..."

Situ Ruoshui immediately threw herself into Ye Fan's arms, clutching him tightly as she cried out in sorrow, "Dad was killed by that bastard Situ Haotian!"

"Ruoshui, it's okay now," Ye Fan gently stroked Situ Ruoshui's head, soothing her in a soft voice.

"Big... big brother, that bastard Situ Haotian also wanted to kill you!"

Hearing Ye Fan's comforting words, Situ Ruoshui suddenly remembered something, lifted her head, and looked at Ye Fan with big teary eyes, her porcelain doll-like face filled with horror.

"I have already avenged Mr. Situ by killing them."

Seeing Situ Ruoshui worry about his safety even after learning her father had been killed, Ye Fan's heart trembled, feeling a tinge of heartache.

"He killed... that bastard was killed by big brother..."

Hearing Ye Fan's words, Situ Ruoshui muttered to herself, then tears, like a breached dam, uncontrollably burst forth from her eyes and silently slid down.

Seeing this, Ye Fan felt a vague pain in his heart and couldn't help but reach out to gently wipe the tears from Situ Ruoshui's face: "Ruoshui, don't cry, big brother is still here with you."

Without answering, Situ Ruoshui threw herself into Ye Fan's arms again and hugged him tightly!

She hugged him very tightly... very tightly!

She was afraid.

Afraid that if she let go, Ye Fan would also disappear from her side!

Feeling Situ Ruoshui's sadness and concern, Ye Fan opened his mouth but in the end, didn't say a word, simply gently patting Situ Ruoshui's back, comforting her in this manner.

At the stairwell, Xing Feng saw this scene and tactfully did not come forward, but instead wisely waited until Situ Ruoshui took the initiative to step out of Ye Fan's embrace before he directly approached the three of them.

"Mr. Ye, are they alright now?"

After approaching, Xing Feng took the initiative to ask, his gaze toward Ye Fan still filled with reverence.

Reverence, not because Ye Fan was the disciple of the Evil Emperor Chu Xuanji, but because he had determined from the intense fluctuations of Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi earlier that Ye Fan practiced both magic and martial arts, and his strength was formidable!

"Hmm."

"When do you think we should start taking their statements?" Seeing Ye Fan nod, Xing Feng asked again.

"Ruoshui, he will ask you about what happened yesterday at Ao Xiang Villa, just tell him the truth," Ye Fan gently wiped away another tear from Situ Ruoshui's face, softly instructing.

Situ Ruoshui looked somewhat bewildered, seemingly unclear on what recording a statement entailed.

"Ruoshui, someone has framed your big brother for intentional murder, only by telling him the truth can you prove your big brother's innocence and save him from legal punishment!" Chu Ji spoke up, reminding her.

"Big brother didn't kill anyone on purpose, it was that bastard Situ Haotian trying to kill big brother!" Hearing Chu Ji's words, Situ Ruoshui became a bit agitated.

"Lady Situ, I know Mr. Ye didn't kill anyone intentionally, so please don't get agitated, calm yourself down, and then tell me what you know, okay?" Xing Feng said.

"Alright." Situ Ruoshui obediently nodded her head.

"Mr. Ye, then I'll personally record her statement and have someone record another witness's statement," Xing Feng said, seeking Ye Fan's consent.

Ye Fan nodded silently.

An hour later.

Yanhuang Organization East Sea Branch, one floor below, in a secret interrogation room.

"It seems you two won't shed tears until you see the coffin, huh?"

Mu Xiang looked angrily at Xu Feng and another Yanhuang Organization member involved in the Ao Xiang Villa case, almost wanting to beat them up.

Previously, he had tried various methods to get the two to confess. They steadfastly denied knowing about Lv Canghai's collusion with Situ Haotian, and in the face of Ye Fan cooperating with the investigation, they refused to admit they had attacked Ye Fan, insisting that Ye Fan had been violently resisting law enforcement, which forced them to act.

"Director Mu, we are carefully selected by the organization, we are loyal to the organization, we would never knowingly break the law, please discern this!" Xu Feng continued to deny stubbornly.

"Clang—"

As soon as Xu Feng finished speaking, the interrogation room door was kicked open, and Xing Feng appeared at the doorway with a gloomy face.

"Elder Xing, we really didn't collude with the underworld, nor did we defy the Yanhuang Organization's rules to attack Mr. Ye, please..." Seeing Xing Feng's grim face, Xu Feng and his companion jumped in fright, quickly getting up to defend themselves.

"Slap—"

The response to Xu Feng was a loud slap!

He was struck by Xing Feng and flipped to the ground, his words abruptly cut off!

Swoosh!

Seeing this, the other Yanhuang Organization member turned pale with fright, his body stiffening.

"What awaits you is the organization's severe punishment!"

Xing Feng looked impassively at Xu Feng on the ground, who looked like a dead dog, then handed the laptop he was holding to Mu Xiang, saying, "Let them die understanding!"

"Yes, Elder Xing!"

Mu Xiang took it, expertly opened the customized laptop, and clicked on a desktop file named 'Ao Xiang Villa Homicide Statement.'

As the file opened, the video of Situ Ruoshui and Jin Ye giving their statements appeared.

"Uh..."

Seeing Situ Ruoshui and the others, Xu Feng and his companion were shocked as if they had seen a ghost in broad daylight; weren't they supposed to be mentally damaged, reduced to vegetative states? How were they awake?

"Slap—"

As the statement video played, the other Yanhuang Organization member, scared stiff, slumped to the ground.

As for Xu Feng, he was shaking like he had been electrocuted, staring at the video screen, shaking his head uncontrollably, filled with despair and unwillingness as he bellowed, "This... This isn't real!"

Not real??

Mu Xiang looked silently at the two men for a moment, understanding that what would follow was the Ye Family's wrath burning across half of Huaxia's skies!

Chapter 214: [Lifting a Rock Only to Drop It on One's Own Feet]

At 11:30 AM, amid deafening applause, the annual Yangtze River Delta Regional Economic Symposium at the Dong hai International Conference Center came to a close, with prominent figures such as Guan Yi and Ye Wenhao leading the departure from the venue.

With his mind no longer on the symposium, Guan Yi was the first to exit the venue and quickly entered the reception room next to it.

Upon entering the reception room, Guan Yi's curiosity reached its peak, prompting him to immediately take out his phone and call Xing Feng.

The phone took a full ten seconds to connect before Xing Feng's voice came through, sounding quite unfriendly, "Secretary Guan, is the meeting over?"

"Hmm, it just ended."

Guan Yi tried hard to control his emotions, making his voice sound as calm as possible, "After the meeting started, I received a text from Director Luo, telling me that you personally went to Dong hai

Hospital to take away two eyewitnesses from the scene, and withdrew two members from the Yanhuang Organization in charge of the meeting's security. Elder Xing, has there been a new development in the case?"

"New development is not exactly the term, but the case has become clear," Xing Feng said indifferently.

"Oh?" Guan Yi's expression shifted slightly as he quickly asked, "What do you mean?"

"The two eyewitnesses I took have regained consciousness and have recorded statements for this case."

Xing Feng said calmly, "According to the testimonies of the two eyewitnesses, the murder victim Situ Haotian and Hongwu Sect elder Huang Qi, in collusion with other core members of the Hongwu Sect, plotted a coup, killed Situ Chen, and used Situ Chen and Situ Ruoshui to lure Ye Fan to the scene, attempting to injure Ye Fan and frame him for everything."

"Ye Fan fought back at the brink of death, using the rules of legitimate defense to kill both Situ Haotian and Huang Qi. Lv Canghai, the Yanhuang Organization East Sea Branch representative, secretly colluded with Situ Haotian and, accompanied by two of his trusted subordinates, attempted to assassinate Ye Fan to silence him while he agreed to cooperate with the investigation. They were stopped by Ye Wenhao, who arrived in time—regarding this point, the two members of the Yanhuang Organization East Sea Branch have confessed without reservation!"

"Hmm~"

Upon hearing Xing Feng's words and although Guan Yi did not understand why the two eyewitnesses, who had become vegetative, suddenly awakened, he realized that the direction of the case had changed drastically and that the Bai Family's carefully planned conspiracy had crumbled on its own.

At the same time as he understood this, a sense of unease began to emerge in Guan Yi's heart.

After the unease, Guan Yi steadied himself and said, "Elder Xing, as far as I know, all the eyewitnesses at the scene were injured, lost consciousness, and became vegetative. You said that the two eyewitnesses have regained consciousness and have testified for this case. I personally think that, first and foremost,

we should confirm whether their consciousness has indeed completely recovered before we can accept their testimonies."

"Secretary Guan need not worry about that. My men had them examined before they recorded their statements. Not only have they fully regained consciousness, but their mental states are good, completely meeting the standards of normal people," Xing Feng said with a hint of mockery.

"Secretary Guan, the real circumstances of the case differ greatly from what we decided in our meeting. Do you think we should have another meeting to settle the case before reporting it, or should I report it directly from my side?" Xing Feng asked sarcastically.

"Let's discuss it at a meeting and then report it," Guan Yi replied weakly, feeling a bitterness in his mouth.

Although he knew that if the case was settled in the meeting according to the latest findings of the Yanhuang Organization, it would not only clear Ye Wenhao and Ye Fan's names, proving that they had done nothing illegal or out of regulation, but it would also earn Ye Wenhao points in the minds of the bigwigs above—the case was clarified by the Yanhuang Organization's own investigations, and Ye Wenhao had never intervened in the case illegally or out of regulation because his son had been framed!

And if he refused to hold another meeting to settle the case, the higher-ups would still rely on the findings of the Yanhuang Organization's investigations. At that time, they would hold him and all the other participants of the previous meeting accountable, a situation too dire to contemplate!

"Then I will have someone send out the meeting notice now. I hope Secretary Guan can attend on time," Xing Feng reminded, somewhat pointedly, "After all, the outcome of the meeting needs to be communicated by Secretary Guan to certain individuals."

Click!

Perhaps sensing the underlying message in Xing Feng's words, Guan Yi's heart jolted, and just as he wanted to say something, he realized that Xing Feng had already hung up.

"Bang bang..."

At that moment, there was a knocking at the door.

Guan Yi was still absorbed in the apprehension brought on by Xing Feng's words, seemingly not hearing it, motionless.

Creak!

With a slight noise, Bai Luo pushed open the door and seeing Guan Yi standing there with a heavy expression, a bad premonition began to emerge in his heart. He closed the door behind him, but due to not using enough force, the door didn't close completely, leaving a crack open.

"Uncle Guan, what's wrong?"

Not noticing the crack left in the door, Bai Luo quickly approached Guan Yi and asked, "Has there been a change in the case at the Ao Xiang Villa?"

"Hmm."

"Has the Ye Family overturned the case?"

"Hmm."

Again, Guan Yi nodded and then subconsciously shook his head, saying, "It's not the Ye Family overturning the case, but the two eyewitnesses at the scene suddenly became lucid and testified on behalf of Ye Wenhao and his illegitimate son, proving their innocence!"

"Wha... what?"

Bai Luo was shocked to hear Guan Yi's words and his face turned pale, "Weren't those eyewitnesses at the scene turned into vegetables? How could they suddenly wake up and testify??"

"I don't know why they suddenly woke up either," Guan Yi said with a furrowed brow, analyzing, "But since Xing Feng says so, it must be true."

"What do we do now?"

Bai Luo blurted out the question, as one of the only few fully informed individuals on this case, he was well aware that due to Ye Fan killing Situ Haotian and Huang Qi, they altered their plans at the last moment, setting a trap to pin the premeditated murder charge on Ye Fan, forcing Ye Wenhao to break the law and regulations to save him. Now that things had developed to this step, their plans were about to go down the drain!

This made him extremely unwilling to accept the outcome!

In his view, if the plan had been executed perfectly, Ye Wenhao would have completely lost any chance to compete with his father, Bai Guotao, for the peak of red authority!

What to do?

"Hello, Governor Ye, may I ask you a question?"

Just as Bai Luo was asking Guan Yi what to do, a pleasant voice sounded from outside the door. A bold female reporter from Nangang stopped Ye Wenhao in his tracks.

Facing the female reporter's impoliteness, Ye Wenhao did not get angry but glanced unintentionally at the reception room, spotting Guan Yi and Bai Luo at a glance, and nodded.

"Jiangnan is a major economic province in Huaxia, but the economic growth rate has noticeably slowed down over the past couple of years. As the Governor of Jiangnan charged with boosting Jiangnan's economic development, do you have any plans?" the female reporter asked.

"As you said, since the late last century, Jiangnan has become a major economic province in Huaxia. Now, Jiangnan's economic development has encountered a bottleneck. In my opinion, we should focus on developing the economy solidly, rather than taking what so-called shortcuts for a short-term economic effect," replied Ye Wenhao slowly.

Ye Wenhao continued unhurriedly, "Just like our approach to work, there are no shortcuts to success. Those so-called shortcuts are, in a sense, unorthodox or improper ways. Even if they achieve temporary success, in the end, they'll only be picking up a stone to drop it on their own feet and pay a painful price!"

As he finished speaking, Ye Wenhao purposefully cast his gaze towards the reception room.

The next moment.

His eyes met in mid-air with those of Guan Yi and Bai Luo, sparking an invisible flash.

After a moment, Ye Wenhao withdrew his gaze and gave the female reporter a slight smile before striding away.

At the same time, Guan Yi and Bai Luo exchanged glances, both reading a particular emotion in the other's eyes: panic!

"Xiao Luo, I'm going to attend the press conference. You first inform Secretary Bai of the latest developments in the case," said Guan Yi through the gap after seeing Ye Wenhao leave, making arrangements, and then he stepped out of the reception room without waiting for Bai Luo to respond.

As he watched Guan Yi leave, Bai Luo did not dare to delay and immediately called his father, Bai Guotao.

"What's up?"

Once the call connected, Bai Guotao spoke first, his tone slightly discontent. He'd told Bai Luo more than once not to call him unless it was necessary.

"Dad, the Ye Family has overturned the case!" Bai Luo said somewhat sullenly.

"Overturned the case?"

Bai Guotao was shocked. Although he was in Nanling, he was well informed about the progress of the case at Ao Xiang Villa and had heard nothing of an overturned case.

"Yes, overturned..."

Bai Luo quickly related to Bai Guotao exactly what Guan Yi had just told him, not daring to omit anything.

On the other end of the phone, Bai Guotao's eyebrows instantly furrowed into a '川' shape after hearing his son's recount, his expression extremely grave.

"Right, Dad, when Ye Wenhao saw Uncle Guan and me, he took the opportunity of being interviewed by the reporter to subtly remind us of the painful price we'd have to pay!"

Seeing Bai Guotao remained silent, Bai Luo, thinking of Ye Wenhao's subtle warning, spoke with some annoyance, "Even if the case is overturned, he can't do anything to us, right? After all, there's no evidence that we're involved in this case."

"Are you an idiot?"

Bai Guotao, who had been contemplating how to minimize the impact and bring this issue to a close, suddenly berated Bai Luo after hearing his presumptuous words.

"Dad, you..."

Bai Luo was stunned, partly because he sensed Bai Guotao's towering anger, and partly because he couldn't figure out what he had said wrong.

"Indeed, there is no evidence to connect us to this case, but some people are crystal clear about this matter. You could say that by mid-stage of this affair, it had evolved from a conspiracy to an open secret, with us essentially blackmailing Yanhuang Organization, forcing them to let us lead them by the nose and pressure Ye Wenhao into breaking the law and the rules—For Yanhuang Organization to maintain its authority, it had to be led by us!"

A sharp light flickered in Bai Guotao's eyes, and his face revealed deep worry, "If Ye Wenhao had fallen for our trap and failed, Yanhuang Organization, even knowing we had betrayed them, would likely have kept quiet. But now, not only has Ye Wenhao not fallen, but he and his secret son have cleared their names together! Hence, the Ye Family won't let things go easily, and Yanhuang Organization would certainly not mind kicking them while they're down, to avenge their grudge!"

"Uh..."

Bai Luo, upon hearing Bai Guotao's revelation, was scared stiff.

As the Young Master Bai, he was acutely aware that if they were only facing the wrath of the Ye Family, today's Bai Family would not be afraid. But if the Ye Family joined forces with Yanhuang Organization, Bai Family wouldn't even have the power to fight back!

Picking up a stone to drop it on one's own feet.

Bai Luo finally grasped the implication of Ye Wenhao's words.

Chapter 215: [Sacrificial Piece]

The following morning, the sky was a blanket of greyness, with a fine drizzle falling silently, like countless silkworms spewing their silken threads, connecting heaven and earth.

In the rain, some people walked briskly to bus and subway stations under their umbrellas, while others, without umbrellas, could only put their bags over their heads to fend off the rain. Those driving cars, due to the slippery roads and low visibility, had no choice but to slow down, forming a long procession along the streets.

"Director Luo, the traffic ahead is really bad. Should we use the siren?"

On the main thoroughfare leading to Dong hai Police Department, in a high-capacity Audi A6L bearing the Dong hai's Police No.1 license plate, the driver, seeing the slow-moving cars ahead like a line of crawling snails, couldn't help but suggest.

As Director Luo's personal driver, he knew very well that Director Luo was supposed to preside over a very important meeting this morning, and with less than ten minutes to go before the meeting started, if they continued to be stuck in this traffic jam, Director Luo, who was the main figure of the meeting, would be late.

"No."

Seated in the rear of the car, Luo Chun, who was the top official in Dong hai's Police, shook his head gravely, rejecting the driver's suggestion.

"Uh..."

Upon hearing Luo Chun's words, the driver was somewhat taken aback. In his memory, Luo Chun used to have police escorts wherever he went, exuding an aura of command, but today, there was no police escort, and surprisingly not even the siren would be sounded.

Ignoring the driver's confusion, Luo Chun ignited a cigarette and took a deep drag.

The glow of the cigarette butt illuminated his square face, allowing one to see that the usual domineering air was gone; all that remained were furrowed brows, almost twisted into a character for 'chuan'.

As the top official in Dong hai's Police, not only was he Guan Yi's trusted confidant, but he was also a member of the Bai Group. He possessed a level of consciousness and foresight that ordinary officials didn't have, and he could foresee the fallout from the reversal of the Ao Xiang Villa murder case—the Ye Family would seek vengeance!

This made him highly uneasy.

He was just a pawn living in the crevices, at any time he could become disposable.

However—

Just at this critical juncture, the news of Situ Chen's murder had leaked, causing the key members of the Dong hai Gang to fight fiercely over territory and positions, creating an extremely bad influence, and the police's phones were nearly exploding with calls.

Even, he had heard from reports that there had been an intense gunfight right under the Dong hai International Conference Center, where the big shots of the Yangtze River Delta region were staying...

He was already concerned that he would become a disposable pawn in the struggle between the Ye and Bai families, and now such events had added insult to injury!

This almost made him see his own downfall in the future. How could he still have the mood for special privileges and official grandeur?

At 8:30 AM, with Luo Chun's worried face, the large-capacity Audi A6L bearing the police No.1 license plate entered the precinct of the Dong hai Police Department and stopped in the parking lot beneath the office building.

At the entrance of the office building, Luo Chun's secretary had been waiting for a long time. Seeing Luo Chun get out of the car, he immediately greeted him, "Director, all the participants have arrived; we're just waiting for you to chair the meeting."

"Hmm."

Luo Chun nodded slightly, adjusted his emotions, and stepped into the office building.

As the secretary said, aside from the two seats for Luo Chun and his secretary, the other seats in the conference room were all filled. Yet, no one spoke, and the room was eerily quiet, with only the occasional sound of smoking.

Among the participants, more than half were smoking, and the conference room was shrouded in smoke, looking at first glance as if it was on fire.

Through the smoke, one could see the expressions of the participants could be almost divided into two types. About two-thirds had furrowed brows, just like Luo Chun's expression earlier in the traffic—they were Luo Chun's direct lineage, and although they didn't stand as high or see as far as Luo Chun, they also had a vague sense of danger.

The remaining third had the opposite expression, with the corners of their mouths turned upwards, almost eager to reveal their joy on their faces.

"Sorry for being late, there was some traffic," Luo Chun apologized as he walked into the conference room with his secretary, three minutes later, without displaying his usual high stature.

"I suppose everyone here already knows what happened last night, so I won't repeat it. What I want to tell you is, because of the Ao Xiang Villa murder case, the ministry is very dissatisfied with our work. On top of that, a large-scale bloody event occurred last night, and there was even a gunfight under the hotel where some of the leaders from the surrounding provinces were staying," Luo Chun continued, his expression becoming grave again as his tone turned extremely solemn. "All this has caused a very negative impact on our reputation and put our work in a very passive position. We must soberly recognize the current situation and restore public order in Dong hai as soon as possible!"

"Now, let us all discuss how to deal with the current situation. Everyone will take turns speaking, try to keep it within five minutes, focus on the main point, talk about measures, and skip the empty talk and official jargon," Luo Chun said, getting straight to the point right after a brief introduction.

Perhaps knowing that the current situation was difficult to handle, no one spoke up after Luo Chun finished speaking. They all looked around, choosing to feign ignorance.

Sometime later, just as Luo Chun was getting somewhat irritated and was about to call on someone to speak, a piercing ringtone of a mobile phone cut through the silence.

Swish!

In an instant, the eyes of the attendees turned toward the source of the sound, and they starkly saw Director Li of the office looking extremely troubled.

Director Li didn't dare to look at Luo Chun's livid face, but immediately took out his mobile phone, didn't even look at the caller ID, and pressed to silence the call.

"As the Director of the office, you can't even remember to set your phone to vibrate during a meeting. What else can you do?" Luo Chun, already in a terrible mood, exploded with anger and scolded him, "If you can't handle it, pack your bags and get out immediately!"

"Buzz... Buzz..."

In response to Luo Chun was the sound of the phone vibrating again; Director Li's phone started to vibrate once more. His expression changed again, and suddenly cold sweat emerged on his forehead. It felt as if what he was carrying in his pocket wasn't a phone, but a primed grenade, and he wished he could throw it away immediately!

"Sorry... I'll turn off the phone right now."

Realizing he had become the focused of everyone in the meeting room, Director Li spoke with an ugly expression on his face, pulled out his phone, and was about to turn it off when he saw a text message from the deputy director of the office.

This discovery made his brows twitch slightly!

As far as he knew, although the deputy director was outwardly polite to him, deep down, the man couldn't wait to replace him.

This made him suspect that the other party did it on purpose.

With this thought in mind, he opened the text message as if possessed by a ghost right before shutting down his phone.

Hmm?

The next moment.

His pupils suddenly dilated!

"Director Li, are you still able to turn off your phone?" Seeing that Director Li had not turned off his phone but instead was staring at it dumbfounded, Luo Chun suddenly raised his voice in uncontrollable anger.

Luo Chun's scolding snapped Director Li out of his shock, and he said somewhat panicked, "Director... Director Luo, Minister Feng and..."

"I don't care if it's Minister Feng or Minister Zhang, we are having a meeting, not here to watch you take calls!"

Perhaps because he had been suppressing his frustration too much, seeing Director Li, a key member of his own direct lineage, drop the ball at a critical moment, Luo Chun without thinking, just blurted out a reprimand.

However—

After he finished speaking, Luo Chun suddenly noticed that the expressions of several deputy directors beside him were a bit odd. A thought struck him, and his expression instantly stiffened, "Which... which Minister Feng?"

"Creak!"

The answer to Luo Chun was the sound of the meeting room door being opened.

Bang!

As the noise echoed, everyone in the room, including Luo Chun, turned their attention to the meeting room door, only to see Dong hai's number two and a middle-aged man wearing glasses appearing at the doorway, followed by several others.

The scene, as if freezing in that moment, left the people in the meeting room, including Luo Chun, staring dumbfounded at Dong hai's number two and the Minister Feng mentioned by Director Li, motionless.

Bang—

After a brief spell of stupor, the sound of chairs and tables colliding echoed as everyone stood up from their seats one after another.

Luo Chun was the last one to stand up. Overcome with panic, he knocked over the chair behind him, looking exceptionally disheveled.

"Director Luo seems to be quite fiery," Minister Feng said with a smile, jesting, yet the narrow eyes behind his glasses twinkled with mocking light.

"Minister Feng, I..." Luo Chun opened his mouth, as if ready to say something, then promptly shut it again, letting his further words die in his stomach.

"Since all the members of your team are here, I will announce a notice on behalf of the municipal committee and the municipal government." Dong hai's number two glanced at Luo Chun expressionlessly, pulled out a red-headed document, and said sternly, "Due to the severe dereliction of duty by Dong hai's police during the Yangtze River Delta Economic Symposium, which led to the malignant murder at Ao Xiang Villa and a series of bloody incidents, causing a huge public outcry, and with an extremely bad impact! After communication and research by the Security Department and the municipal committee and government, it was decided to demand Luo Chun and Zhang Qian to immediately suspend their duties for review. Superior leadership has appointed Feng Dong to

temporarily take charge of work and expediently handle the bloody incidents that occurred in Dong hai last night..."

"Uh..."

As the red-headed document was read out by Dong hai's number two, the large meeting room instantly fell silent. Luo Chun and the deputy director named Zhang Qian looked dazed, as if unable to believe that all of this was real.

"Comrades Luo Chun and Zhang Qian, you are to go for review now and must submit the reviews separately to Minister Feng and me by 18:00 this afternoon," Dong hai's number two added coldly.

"Yes... Yes!" Zhang Qian answered, his face pale.

Luo Chun, now utterly stripped of his former arrogance, was so scared that his legs gave way, nearly causing him to collapse to the floor.

"Whew... Yes!"

Soon after, Luo Chun took a deep breath, forcibly adjusted his emotions, responded hoarsely, and then walked towards the meeting room door with an ugly expression under everyone's gaze.

Seeing this, both Dong hai's number two and Feng Dong treated Luo Chun as if he was air, heading towards the vacant seats in the meeting room to continue the conference.

Five minutes later, Luo Chun, having been suspended, returned to his office but did not head to his once proud and esteemed seat. Instead, he grimly took out his phone and directly called Guan Yi.

"Beep... I'm sorry, the number you have dialed is currently on another call."

Upon dialing, a beep sounded in the earpiece, followed by the voice of the answering service.

That voice, usually pleasant, fell into Luo Chun's ears like the howl of a demon from the Nine Nether Abyss, startling him so much that his phone slipped from his shaking hands.

"Clack—"

A crisp sound echoed; the specially made phone remained undamaged, but Luo Chun didn't bend down to pick it up. Instead, he slumped powerlessly to the ground, deflated like a balloon.

The Ye Family had counterattacked, and he was the first pawn to be abandoned.

Chapter 216: [The Price!]

Dusk had descended, and the sky over Dong Hai was still a murky gray. The raindrops increased in size, shrouding the entire city under a gloom, making people feel a chill that led many to believe: this year, Dong Hai had no autumn—it had leapt straight from summer to winter!

For the common folk, the cold brought by this autumn rain was merely skin-deep, yet for those within the administrative system of Dong Hai, the chill of this 'autumn rain' penetrated deep into their bones.

In the past few hours, rumors were rampant across the political scene of Dong Hai, with everyone feeling insecure.

At six o'clock, Bai Luo, after finishing work, did not drive home but instead headed straight for the municipal committee family courtyard.

Shortly before seven o'clock, Bai Luo drove up to the entrance of the municipal committee family courtyard, took out his ID, and was smoothly let inside by the armed police on duty.

Entering the courtyard, Bai Luo drove expertly to the front of Villa No. 1.

Through the villa's iron gate, Bai Luo immediately spotted the car with Dong Hai's most prestigious official license plate parked inside. Consequently, he hurriedly got out of his car and ran into the villa without even using an umbrella.

In the villa's living room, Guan Yi was sitting on the sofa, his suit soaked and his hair dripping wet.

He did not mind all this but silently smoked a cigarette, until he heard footsteps outside and then listlessly lifted his head.

Seeing that the visitor was Bai Luo, his facial expression remained unchanged, as if he had anticipated Bai Luo's arrival.

Hmm?

Seeing Guan Yi looking as wilted as a frostbitten eggplant, Bai Luo couldn't help but be taken aback.

As the major steward of Dong Hai City's government and the designated successor of the fourth generation of the Bai family, Bai Luo had a wide information network. He was the first to know about some issues in certain departments of Dong Hai, subconsciously thinking that the Ye Family had made a move. He had intended to call Guan Yi to inquire, but felt it inappropriate, so he held back his curiosity and rushed over after work.

Now, seeing Guan Yi looking utterly disheartened, Bai Luo became even more certain of his suspicions, yet he couldn't help but ask, "Uncle Guan, today both the head of the police and the national security chief were replaced. Did the Ye Family make their move?"

No answer came back; Guan Yi silently lit a cigarette and took a deep drag, as if trying to dispel the inner gloom this way.

Silence spoke louder than words at this moment.

Bai Luo took Guan Yi's silence as an answer.

As the elder son of the Ye Family and marked to be the successor of the fourth generation, Bai Luo's capability, depth of cunning, and vision were top-notch among his peers, thanks to his upbringing in an emperor's family!

He was well aware that the head of the police had traditionally been the confidant of provincial governors, even tantamount to being their right and left arms!

Now, with Luo Chun being treated as a scapegoat, what did this mean for Guan Yi?

It was as good as being crippled!

Understanding all this, Bai Luo did not further embarrass himself with questions but, like Guan Yi, silently took a seat on the sofa.

"Uncle Guan, can nothing be done to save it?"

After a while, seeing that Guan Yi showed no inclination to speak, Bai Luo couldn't help asking again. In his view, Luo Chun was currently only suspended for investigation, not yet officially dismissed, and there might still be a chance for salvation.

"Salvation?"

Hearing this word, Guan Yi couldn't help laughing, his laugh filled with sarcasm and more so with bitterness, "Who would save him?"

"Even if we can't save the situation, Uncle Guan, it won't cripple our essential strength..." Bai Luo said, realizing that Luo Chun's downfall was inevitable, no longer dwelled on it but tried to console Guan Yi.

"Xiao Luo, you're still too green." This time, before Bai Luo could finish, Guan Yi slowly extinguished his cigarette and sighed, "This time, the price we've paid is no less destructive than when your great grandfather died!"

"Uh..." Bai Luo was startled by Guan Yi's words!

As the designated successor of the fourth generation of the Bai Family, he was well aware that a decade ago, following his great grandfather's death, the Bai Family, erstwhile on par with the Ye Family, had been severely struck down in collusion with other forces, severely wounded in its vitality, taking over a decade to recover.

Now, Guan Yi was telling Bai Luo that this blow was comparable to that one, the horror of this revelation was beyond imagination.

"No... it can't be?" Despite his father Bai Guotao's prior warnings and Guan Yi's straightforward words, Bai Luo couldn't believe it; he refused to accept that the thriving Bai Group would repeat the disaster of a decade ago!

"Xiao Luo, next month I'll be leaving Dong Hai," Guan Yi said weakly, leaning back on the sofa and staring at the ceiling, his answer irrelevant to the earlier discussion.

"Where to?" Bai Luo asked spontaneously.

"Find a place to retire," Guan Yi replied with self-mocking laughter.

Retire?!

Hearing this word, Bai Luo was stunned once more—he was well aware what 'retire' meant for Guan Yi!

Staring in shock, with wide eyes and an incredulous look, Bai Luo seemed to be asking: How... how is this possible?

Ignoring Bai Luo's shocked demeanor, Guan Yi seemed to age years in that moment, devoid of the sharpness and the aura typical of those in power, resembling an elderly man on the verge of death.

Seeing this, a heaviness inexplicably settled in Bai Luo's heart!

Despite believing in the supernatural, Bai Luo could not believe that Guan Yi would retire, but reason told him Guan Yi wouldn't joke about such matters.

"How... how could this be??" Unable to avoid accepting this horrifying reality, Bai Luo asked, full of confusion.

Guan Yi seemed resigned, his face showing no regret: "Yan intervened."

"Yan?!" Bai Luo exclaimed once again.

After the shock, he fell silent.

He understood why Bai Guotao, whom he had always regarded as an idol and target, was worried, and he also understood why Guan Yi, the deputy flag-bearer of the Bai Group, would retire!

As far as he knew, although that first strong person of Huaxia who secretly controlled the Yanhuang Organization did not concern himself with worldly affairs and spent most of his time in closed-door cultivation, he possessed a terrifying influence throughout Huaxia and was even hailed as the Guardian of Huaxia!

In such circumstances, one could imagine the power of Yan acting together with the number one wealthy Ye Family!

"Xiao Luo, you just arrived in Dong hai City not long ago, and with what happened, you definitely can't mobilize forces in the short term."

Seeing that Bai Luo was so frightened by the truth behind the scenes that he dared not utter a word, Guan Yi could not help but caution, "After I leave, my replacement will not be one of our people. For the time being, everything will depend on you. You must be careful and overcome this difficulty."

"Yes."

Bai Luo subconsciously nodded, filled with frustration in his heart.

That's right...

It was frustration!

As the fourth-generation successor of the Ye Family, his transfer from a deputy position in a city of Nansu to Dong hai City was entirely to leverage the support of Guan Yi and the Bai Family for a rapid ascent!

But now, with Guan Yi retiring, his plan for ascent had completely failed!

Even more importantly, besides being his support in Dong hai City, Guan Yi was also his future father-in-law!

Originally, in his plans, both his father Bai Guotao and Guan Yi would squeeze into the top of the pyramid, allowing him to smoothly take over the Bai Family's flag and stand at the peak!

Even, at one point, he thought that the highest peak was very close to him... very close, but now it became unattainably distant.

"Had I known earlier, I would have just killed that wild breed from the Ye Family and forced Ye Wenhao into desperate action!" Out of frustration, Bai Luo was filled with regret, wishing he could mercilessly slaughter Ye Fan right then and there.

But... that was just talk.

He knew there was no medicine for regret in this world.

"You can go, I need to be alone for a while."

Seeing Bai Luo's agitated emotions, Guan Yi didn't say more, but felt an unprecedented tiredness.

"Uncle Guan..."

"Go."

Guan Yi stood up and walked toward the staircase.

Seeing this, Bai Luo opened his mouth, but ultimately said nothing and tactfully turned to leave the hall.

Outside the villa, the rain grew heavier. As soon as Bai Luo stepped out, he was drenched to the bone, but he didn't care and gritted his teeth as he walked toward his car.

"Buzz... Buzz..."

After getting into the car, before Bai Luo could start the engine, the phone he had thrown onto the passenger seat vibrated.

Bai Luo didn't want to answer it, but, catching sight of Lin Tianyi's call from the corner of his eye, he hesitated for a moment before picking up the phone and pressing the answer button.

"Lord Bai, what has happened?" As soon as the call connected, Lin Tianyi asked first, his tone no longer flattering but filled with unease.

Although he was still unaware of Guan Yi's retirement, he knew of some personnel changes in Dong hai City, which led him to perceive the situation developing in the opposite direction and smell a strong crisis!

"Are you brain-dead? Can't you think for yourself?"

Upon hearing this, Bai Luo scolded him head-on, forgetting his praise for Lin Tianyi the previous morning for possessing the cunning of a wolf and the craftiness of a fox, and better suiting the title of a treacherous hero than Du Yuekui. Instead, he vented his inner frustration and anger through the kick-the-cat effect.

"I know the Ye Family might have turned things around."

Facing Bai Luo's insults, Lin Tianyi was frustrated but could only swallow the bitter pill, saying, "I mean, how did the Ye Family turn things around?"

"Two witnesses, who had been reduced to vegetative states, suddenly woke up and testified for that bastard from the Ye Family!"

Hating to his core, Bai Luo thought if it wasn't for Situ Ruoshui and Jin Ye waking up to testify, how could things have developed to this stage?

"They suffered spiritual attacks from martial artists, their consciousness severely damaged, how could they possibly have woken up?"

Bai Luo's reply dumbstruck Lin Tian Yi. As a Peak stage Innate high-level martial artist, he was well aware that ordinary people with damaged consciousness were almost unsolvable, even if Chu Xuanji took action, he might not be able to heal them.

"You being a Peak Innate martial artist don't know, how the hell would I know?!" Bai Luo, upon hearing this, was so furious he felt like slapping Lin Tianyi.

"__"

Lin Tianyi was so choked up he couldn't speak.

"Bang bang—"

Just then, the door to the study was knocked, and before Lin Tianyi could give instructions, it was pushed open. Lin Tianyi's bodyguard stepped briskly into the study, his expression grave as he reported, "Mr. Lin, I have just received news that the Yanhuang Organization, in collaboration with the police, has conducted a secret raid on our forces in the mainland, taking away almost all the local leaders!"

"What... WHAT??"

Lin Tianyi was originally displeased with his bodyguard for barging into the study, but as soon as he heard the bodyguard's report, he was so startled that he jumped right out of his chair!

Chapter 217: [The Thief's Ambition Never Dies, The Grand Curtain Rises]

Hmm?

On the other end of the phone, Bai Luo faintly heard Lin Tianyi's bodyguard's report, at first startled, then relieved—Ye Family Camp, since even Guan Yi, the deputy flag bearer of the Bai Family Faction, had been targeted, it was all too normal for Nanqinghong to be next!

"Bai... Lord Bai, the Yanhuang Organization has joined forces with the police to take action against Nanqinghong, what should we do?"

Just as Bai Luo came to this realization, Lin Tianyi recovered from his shock. Seeing that the call had not ended, he hastily sought Bai Luo for help.

No sooner had he spoken than his originally somber face filled with anxiety and hope, like that of a drowning man clutching at the last straw.

"Lin Tianyi, if you are to be a dog, you must have the awareness of one."

Bai Luo's cold response was like a bucket of ice water poured over Lin Tianyi's head, extinguishing the flames of hope in his heart.

"Uh..."

Lin Tianyi had no response. He knew not only had he and the entire Nanqinghong been abandoned by the Bai Family, but as a discarded pawn, if taken away, he must keep his mouth tightly shut, like a virgin crossing her legs!

Realizing all this, Lin Tianyi no longer begged for Bai Luo's mercy—if he were in Bai Luo's shoes, he too would certainly not offer any.

At this moment, to beg would be cheaper than a prostitute's chastity!

"Beep... Beep..."

Listening to the busy tone on the phone, Lin Tianyi felt as if all his strength had been sucked out, and he slumped into the chair powerlessly.

Seeing this, the bodyguard couldn't help but say, "Mr. Lin..."

"Get out."

Lin Tianyi cut off the bodyguard's words, no longer as unquestionable as before but sounding drained and weak.

Upon hearing this, the bodyguard didn't dare to speak further and quickly left the study.

"Clack—"

After the bodyguard left the study, Lin Tianyi ignited a cigar.

Because of his martial arts training, he didn't have the habit of smoking, only resorting to it when facing tough issues. On one hand, it was a way to decompress, and on the other, the nicotine stimulated his brain cells to think faster, to devise possible solutions.

Until now, Lin Tianyi had always found success with this method—many tough problems were solved while he smoked and pondered solutions.

Only—

This time, this method that Lin Tianyi had always cherished failed him.

He had smoked three cigars in a row but was still completely befuddled, unable to come up with any effective countermeasures.

In his view, even if he could, by virtue of his American Alliance citizenship and foreign company executive identity, make the Huaxia organizations and police hesitate to take action against him, the Qinghong Headquarters would not let him off!

On one hand, the failure of this plan would mean that Nanqinghong would bear the brunt of the Ye Family's wrath, enduring unprecedented attacks within Huaxia territory!

More importantly, he had finally connected with the Bai Family, but because of this incident, the connection had been severed!

It was as if he had completely botched the task entrusted to him by the Qinghong Organization's powerholder behind the scenes!

"Ring-a-ling—"

A bit later, just as Lin Tianyi was as clueless as a fly crashing around, the phone on his desk began to ring.

That grating ringtone, like a curse from hell, startled Lin Tianyi so much he shuddered!

He turned his head to glance at the caller ID and saw a familiar number, causing his hand to tremble and the cigar he hadn't finished to fall from his grasp.

"Hoo~ Hoo~"

Without considering whether the cigar would burn the expensive solid mahogany desk, Lin Tianyi's breathing grew rapid, his expression fluctuating, as if debating whether to answer the call.

Lin Tianyi had never been one to hesitate. Two seconds later, he made his decision, took a deep breath, and answered the phone, "Young Master Feilin."

"I just heard that Situ Chen died, and there is great chaos in the Underworld of the Yangtze River Delta region—such an important matter, why didn't you report it to the higher-ups?" On the other end of the call, Chen Feilian, stationed at the Qinghong Headquarters, questioned sharply.

As one of the world's largest Underworld organizations, the Qinghong Organization's management took a page from the Yakuza's model during the national era, utilizing a single-line contact where all information is reported to the Headquarters by the global six major branches. The Headquarters then consolidates the information to make deployments.

Of course, this is in theory.

In reality, to prevent deception and independent action, the powerholder behind the scenes at the Qinghong Organization also placed its own people in the major branches to monitor them.

Because the matter of Situ Chen's death was well concealed, it wasn't until the bloodshed in the Donghai Region last night that the news began to spread, and the Qinghong Headquarters' agent in Huaxia only learned of it today, thus only just reporting it to Chen Feilian.

Thump!

Facing Chen Feilian's interrogation, Lin Tianyi's heart skipped a beat, unsure of how to respond.

"Lin Tianyi, have you gone deaf?" Chen Feilian's temper flared, so much so that he disregarded Lin Tianyi's status as a division head and chastised him directly.

"Young Master Feilin, Situ Chen was killed through my schemes and machinations." Lin Tianyi seemed to realize there was no avoiding the issue, hesitated briefly, then began to explain, planning to provide good news first, and then share the bad.

"Oh?" Hearing this, Chen Feilian was somewhat surprised, "How so?"

"This is what happened..."

Lin Tianyi organized his explanation, planning to tell Chen Feilian about his collaboration with the Bai Family to scheme against Ye Fan and Ye Wenhao.

However—

When Lin Tianyi revealed that Ye Fan was the illegitimate son of Ye Wenhao, Chen Feilian on the other end of the phone became as excited as if injected with an adrenaline shot, his breathing turning rapid, "You... you said that Ye Fan is Ye Wenhao's illegitimate son, and also Chu Ji's nephew??"

"Yes, Lord Feilian."

Despite his curiosity as to why Chen Feilian was so agitated, Lin Tianyi tactfully refrained from asking further and simply responded truthfully.

"Heh, I never expected that Ye Wenhao and that wench had a son!"

Upon receiving confirmation from Lin Tianyi, Chen Feilian sneered, then asked, "You just said, that guy called Ye Fan, only has strength comparable to Early Innate Entry, but acts high and mighty?"

"Yes, Lord Feilian. Based on his consecutive slaying of our Nanqinghong members, I deduced this point. So, I used the fact that Ye Wenhao values him greatly to set up a trap in the hopes that the kid would go on a killing spree, and then force Ye Wenhao to violate rules and laws to save him, losing the chance to strike at the peak of red authority," Lin Tianyi answered, understanding that Chen Feilian knew about Ye Fan's background but still chose not to ask further details.

"And then?" Chen Feilian, instead of scolding Lin Tianyi, was intrigued.

Detecting the shift in Chen Feilian's attitude, Lin Tianyi's heart stirred, and sensing a glimmer of hope, he no longer held back and quickly told Chen Feilian about the subsequent events.

"Lord Feilian, man's schemes are no match for Heaven's will. The Bai Family and I never expected that those ordinary people, mentally traumatized, would actually come to their senses."

Although he found a ray of hope, Lin Tianyi was still nervous after reporting everything; in his nervousness, he quickly offered his mea culpa, "Of course, this isn't an excuse to shirk my responsibility—I am willing to be accountable for this and willingly accept the headquarters' punishment!"

"One careless move can lose the entire game."

To Lin Tianyi's surprise, after hearing the entire report, Chen Feilian did not explode in anger but instead pondered, "This time, the Bai Family is likely to suffer a severe blow to their vitality."

Not daring to speak further, Lin Tianyi pursed his lips tightly, his face tense.

"Lin Tianyi, my father is currently in seclusion, and I am handling all affairs in the meantime."

After his reflection, Chen Feilian thought for a moment, "Originally, according to what you just said, because you took matters into your own hands and acted rashly, you not only led Nanqinghong towards a path of no return but also lost the chance for Qinghong to join forces with the Bai Family. You should be executed!"

"Lord Feilian is right, I deserve death!" Upon hearing these words, Lin Tianyi's heart leaped with joy, knowing he had dodged a bullet, and quickly grasped the opportunity to admit fault.

"However, on second thought, the failure of this plan is not entirely your fault."

As expected, Chen Feilian changed his tune, "Moreover, your discovery of that kid being Ye Wenhao's son is very important; therefore, I will spare your life for now. Your future actions will determine your fate."

"Thank you for your leniency, Lord Feilian!"

Lin Tianyi's heart settled, and he quickly expressed his gratitude. Then he asked for further instructions, "Lord Feilian, what should I do next on my end?"

"Stand down."

Chen Feilian's eyes flashed with a sharp light, "You are an American Alliance citizen and a representative of a renowned foreign company in Huaxia—your record there is cleaner than a virgin's blood. And since Taiwan is a Special Zone, even if the Yanhuang Organization and the police take you away, they wouldn't dare to do anything forceful to you and will eventually release you. Thus, you need not worry; just quietly observe how things unfold. Once this storm passes, you can silently recover your vitality."

"Yes, Lord Feilian!"

Hearing Chen Feilian's words, Lin Tianyi's heart dropped to his stomach, and he let out a long sigh of relief.

On the other end of the phone, Chen Feilian did not waste more words and ended the call.

"Should I sneak into Huaxia before my father comes out of seclusion and slap that scum born to Ye Wenhao and that wench to death to surprise him?"

After hanging up, Chen Feilian paced back and forth, pondering over Lin Tianyi's words and couldn't help murmuring to himself, "Better not, that waste is too weak; killing him would dirty my hands. Besides, killing him would greatly diminish his usefulness. Let him slowly plague Ye Wenhao and the entire Ye Family!"

Having made his decision, Chen Feilian couldn't help but laugh, imagining the scene when he would tell all this to his father!

...

Huaxia, Nanling.

Bai Guotao, the third-generation successor of the Bai Family, received a phone call.

"Guotao, due to your recklessness, we have suffered a tremendous loss. In addition to Guan Yi, those three connected to the south and Nanqinghong will also face disaster," the Family Head of the Bai Family, Bai Yuan, spoke first from inside a government villa within the walls of the Forbidden City, "What's more critical is that we have offended that person from the Yanhuang Organization, who will likely side with the Ye Family from now on."

"I'm sorry, Dad. I was too impatient; I shouldn't have been so eager for success," Bai Guotao admitted his fault, his face filled with regret. "Since I had a clear view of Ye Wenhao's Achilles' heel, I shouldn't have been hasty. I should have coldly observed from the sidelines, waiting for Ye Wenhao's tragedy—to judge by the acting style of that bastard from the Ye Family, sooner or later he would make a huge blunder, affecting Ye Wenhao and the entire Ye Family."

"Ah, what's done is done, no need for regret," Bai Yuan sighed, then changed the subject, "As you said, though we have suffered heavy losses and our vitality has been greatly damaged, it's not all for naught. At least we can be certain that Ye Wenhao will do anything for that bastard. Moving forward, we just need to wait quietly for that bastard from the Ye Family to spoil the broth!"

"Yes, just as long as that bastard brings down Ye Wenhao, causing infighting within the Ye Family, then we can win back what we've lost with interest!" Bai Guotao clenched his fists involuntarily, vowing with confidence.

Bai Yuan listened, filled with anticipation.

Chu Xuanji smiled and said nothing.

Chapter 218: [Joke? Glory!]

At eight o'clock in the evening, after the autumn rain had stopped, the renowned Ao Xiang Villa in Dong Hai was brightly lit. The large courtyard of Villa No. 1 had been transformed into a mourning hall, where the bodies of Situ Chen, Fei Si, and Liu Tianjun, after being cleaned and made up, lay in suits and shoes inside three crystal coffins.

In front of the coffins, there was a rectangular table displaying the portraits of the three men, with Situ Chen in the middle, flanked by Fei Si and Liu Tianjun on either side.

In front of the portraits stood an incense burner filled with hundreds of incense sticks, the smoke permeating the air.

Situ Ruoshui, clad in hemp and wearing mourning attire, knelt in front of Situ Chen's portrait, staring blankly at the image, motionless.

Under the light, one could clearly see her delicate porcelain doll-like face covered with tear stains, her eyes red from crying, swollen as if they were panda eyes.

She had been crying for a full twelve hours.

Yet despite this, tears continued to flow from her eyes like a dam burst, slowly sliding down her exquisite cheeks.

The sight of her heartbreaking grief was pitiful to behold.

"Ruoshui, the dead cannot be brought back to life; don't be too sad, take care of your health." Su Liuli, standing beside Situ Ruoshui, saw that her tears would not stop and could not help but comfort her again.

She had arrived at Ao Xiang Villa in the afternoon and learned of Situ Ruoshui's misfortune.

Since the afternoon until now, she had tried to comfort Situ Ruoshui no less than twenty times, but Situ Ruoshui, as if she had lost her soul, did not stop crying or even acknowledge her.

It was the same this time.

Situ Ruoshui seemed not to hear what Su Liuli said, her face indifferent as tears continued to fall.

Seeing this, Su Liuli couldn't help but sigh. She was about to say something when she heard footsteps behind her. Turning her head, she was surprised to see Ye Fan pushing aside the curtain of the mourning hall and entering.

"Ruoshui has been crying for so long, continuing to cry will be too much for both her mind and body, try to persuade her," Su Liuli stood up and said to Ye Fan in a low, anxious voice.

Without responding, Ye Fan's gaze turned to Situ Ruoshui's frail figure, his heart aching.

Being an orphan himself from a young age, Ye Fan could empathize with Situ Ruoshui's feelings.

In his view, Situ Ruoshui had lost her mother when she was a child and had relied solely on Situ Chen. Although Situ Chen was often busy and seldom took care of her, his place in Situ Ruoshui's heart was irreplaceable by anyone else.

Under such circumstances, for Situ Chen to suddenly leave Situ Ruoshui was undoubtedly a devastating blow to her.

"Her heart hurts; crying it out might make her feel better," Ye Fan withdrew his gaze from Situ Ruoshui and softly told Su Liuli.

"But..."

Su Liuli started to say something but, seeing Ye Fan's determined face, she abandoned the thought of persuading him further and considered, "Alright. I'll stay with her and also recite scriptures to help the passage of uncle Situ's soul."

"Good, call me if you need anything," Ye Fan nodded, then turned and walked out of the mourning hall.

Outside the mourning hall, four men whose clothes were soaked, bowed deeply as they saw Ye Fan emerge.

"You've been on guard all day; take turns to eat something," Ye Fan suggested, noticing their completely wet clothes.

"Mr. Ye, we are alright," the leading man spoke up, his expression sorrowful and his voice hoarse.

Hearing this, the other three, with reddened eyes, also shook their heads vigorously.

Seeing this, Ye Fan felt somewhat touched.

After the death of Situ Chen and elders of the Dong Hai Gang, the gang had fragmented. Those core members fought fiercely over territories and had shown no regard for the deceased Situ Chen. In contrast, some of Situ Chen's friends from the business community had come one after another to pay their respects by burning incense at Ao Xiang Villa.

As for Situ Chen's friends in the political realm, due to the turmoil within the Dong Hai system, they were powerless to help and dared not even send a wreath.

The four men, who were responsible for the vigil, were subordinates of Fei Si tasked with the security of the Situ family, and they were absolutely loyal to Situ Chen and Fei Si.

Besides them, there were twelve bodyguards of the Situ family stationed at Villa No. 1 and the villa entrance.

"Humans are iron, food is steel; you still need to eat," sighed Ye Fan lightly. "Notify the others to take turns eating, and change your clothes—don't catch a cold. You'll need to be strong to attend the funeral for uncle Situ and the others the day after tomorrow."

Hearing the latter part of Ye Fan's statement, the four men, with tears in their eyes, bit their lips, clenched their fists, and remained silent.

"Go ahead," Ye Fan stepped forward and gently patted the leading man's shoulder.

"Yes, Mr. Ye!"

With reddened eyes, the leading man bowed to take his orders, then followed Ye Fan's instructions to rotate for meals and change clothes.

Seeing this, Ye Fan said no more and walked straight towards the main building.

As Ye Fan reached the main building's hall, he was taken aback to see Chu Ji sitting on the sofa in the hall.

Tonight, she was not wearing her usual favorite red cloak but had switched to a black cloak, which gave her a less charming but more solemn appearance.

"Why did you come?"

Seeing Chu Ji dressed all in black, Ye Fan knew that she had changed her clothes out of respect for Situ Chen.

"Just checking in."

Chu Ji said, "Your dad was also planning to come see you, but he felt the occasion wasn't right, so he went back to Hanghu directly, asking you to look him up after dealing with things here."

"Understood," Ye Fan nodded.

"Yesterday and today, the Ye Family and the Yanhuang Organization joined forces to pressure others. With a lightning-fast strategy, they took down nearly ten people from the Bai Family Faction. Guan Yi, the Faction's deputy flag bearer, not only lost his chance for advancement but will also be transferred from Dong hai to a retirement facility next month. It can be said that this time, the Bai Family tried to steal a chicken only to end up losing the rice, suffering heavy losses."

After thinking for a moment, Chu Ji told Ye Fan the latest developments, "In addition, the Yanhuang Organization also teamed up with the police to secretly raid the Nanqinhong's power in several southern provinces, capturing the leaders from those regions. In Taiwan, under the guise of an investigation, the Yanhuang Organization entered both the Hongwu Sect and the Nanqinhong Headquarters, taking away Lin Tianyi, the Ruler of the Nanqinhong, and the Hongwu Sect Leader."

"However, there's no evidence to prove that the two were involved in this incident, and the Yanhuang Organization can't really do anything to them. Especially Lin Tianyi, who is a citizen of the American Alliance and is responsible for the Qinghong Group in the Huaxia Region. He holds various titles, but has a perfectly clean record within the Huaxia Realm; no criminal records at all. It's expected that as soon as the Yanhuang Organization takes him into custody, his lawyer will launch an appeal; the Yanhuang Organization will have no choice but to release him," Chu Ji added.

"Crack—"

As he listened to Chu Ji's words, Ye Fan's mind conjured the pitiful image of Situ Ruoshui. Anger clenched his fists tightly, and his knuckles kept popping.

"Xiao Fan, you mustn't act impulsively..." Seeing the anger on Ye Fan's face, Chu Ji felt somewhat worried and couldn't help but speak out to remind him.

However, before she could finish, Ye Fan interrupted her, "Nanqinhong has calculated against me time and again, trying to put me in a deadly situation, not to mention they killed Uncle Situ and framed my father. Their sins are unforgivable—I will make Nanqinhong disappear from Huaxia!"

"I can understand how you feel, but you mustn't be impulsive."

Sensing the mad murderous intent emanating from Ye Fan, Chu Ji knew he was determined to annihilate Nanqinghong and once again cautioned him, "You can deal with Nanqinghong, but you must do so within the boundaries allowed by law and rules!"

"Law! Rules!"

Ye Fan's expression turned grim. Ever since he came down the mountain, he had tried to abide by these, yet he was continually bullied with laws and rules used against him, filling him with frustration.

"Xiao Fan, even if you trample on the law and disregard the rules, using extreme measures to annihilate Nanqinghong might allow you to avoid penalties using your capital, but it would implicate your father," Chu Ji warned.

Swish!

Ye Fan's expression slightly changed.

"You should know that this time, if it weren't for you being able to heal the injured consciousness of Situ Ruoshui and Jin Ye, allowing them to regain consciousness and testify for you, your father would have risked his career to save you!" Chu Ji continued.

"He can stay out of it, I can handle it myself," Ye Fan furrowed his brows.

"Do you think that's possible?"

Chu Ji sighed, "Even if you tell him you have the capital to avoid legal penalties, do you really think he would stand by and watch if you were in trouble?"

Impossible!

An affirmative answer surged in Ye Fan's heart.

"He wouldn't stand by; he would do everything in his power to help you and save you."

Chu Ji answered her own question, "This would not only ruin his career, but he would also face skepticism, blame, or even ostracism from other members of the Ye Family, which could lead to an internal strife within the Ye Family! And this is exactly what the Bai Family would be pleased to see!"

After hearing Chu Ji's words again, Ye Fan fell silent; he had no emotional attachment to the Ye Family, not even a clear concept of it.

He didn't care whether the Ye Family thrived or fell, but... he couldn't implicate Ye Wenhao!

He didn't want to, nor would he let Ye Wenhao risk his career to help him again!

"Through this period of trials, you've learned to abide by the law and the rules, and you've started to try using them against your enemies,"

Seeing Ye Fan silent and sensing that he didn't want to involve Ye Wenhao, Chu Ji gradually guided him, "You can use the law and rules to eliminate Nanqinghong, and even help your father deal with the Bai Family!"

Without responding, the murderous look in Ye Fan's eyes gradually tempered, and his brows slightly raised as he seemed to ponder something.

Seeing this, Chu Ji decided not to add anything more and let Ye Fan digest her words.

"Thank you, Auntie." After a while, Ye Fan came out of his thoughts, completely calm, "I know what to do now."

Auntie.

Hearing these two words, Chu Ji's heart trembled slightly, but her face showed a relieved smile.

She didn't know when Ye Fan would truly transform, but she believed that once he did, he wouldn't be a burden to Ye Wenhao. Instead, he would make Ye Wenhao proud, proving wrong those who mocked them!

"Ye Wenhao will rise to the top because of Xiao Fan, and the Ye Family will flourish because of Xiao Fan!"

As Chu Ji felt reassured, the words of Chu Xuanji echoed in her ears, painting her face with deep anticipation.

She looked forward to that day!

Chapter 219: Taking the First Step!

"Buzz... Buzz..."

As Chu Ji looked forward to Ye Fan's answer, Ye Fan's phone in his pocket began to vibrate.

Hmm?

Ye Fan was slightly startled.

Only a few people knew his mobile number. Su Yuxin and Su Jindi had already been informed about the situation in Dong hai and wouldn't be bothering him at this time, and both Chu Ji and Situ Ruoshui were in the villa.

Could it be Jin Ye?

After a moment's confusion, Ye Fan recalled that Jin Ye had noted down his number before leaving.

With this speculation in mind, Ye Fan took out his phone and saw that it was not Jin Ye calling, but rather an unfamiliar number with the area code from Yanjing.

Looking at the strange number displayed on the phone screen, Ye Fan gave it some thought and then decided to answer the call.

"Hello, Ye Fan." Once the call connected, a magnetic voice came through the receiver, its tone subtly authoritative.

Detecting the unmistakable assertiveness in the caller's tone, Ye Fan deduced that the person on the other end must be someone accustomed to wielding power and giving orders, which intensified his curiosity, "Who are you? How did you get my number?"

"Let me introduce myself, my surname is Feng, first name Dong, I'm the deputy minister of the GA Department, and currently, I am in charge of Dong hai's Police work as per the orders of the higher-ups."

On the other end of the phone, Feng Dong first introduced himself and then explained, "You left your number when recording your statement for the Ao Xiang Villa homicide case."

"It seems we don't know each other. I'm curious, what's the purpose of your call?" Ye Fan asked with a slight frown, a guess forming in his mind but still uncertain.

"I'd like to have a chat with you, if you're interested?" Feng Dong extended the invitation.

"The location."

Hearing Feng Dong's invitation, something clicked in Ye Fan's mind. After a brief contemplation, he asked for the meeting place.

"Jinmao Grand Hyatt Hotel's Jiuchongtian Bar, I'll wait for you." After revealing the meeting place, Feng Dong didn't wait for Ye Fan's response and hung up the phone directly.

Ye Fan put down the phone, deep in thought.

"Are you going?"

Seeing Ye Fan in contemplation, Chu Ji couldn't help but ask. As a strong person in the Martial Arts World, she heard the entire conversation between Ye Fan and Feng Dong loud and clear.

"Yes." Ye Fan nodded and asked, "Are you familiar with this Feng Dong?"

"Not familiar."

Chu Ji shook her head and said, "However, I know he's not from the Ye Family or Bai Family camps; he's a core member of another faction. His current appointment in Dong hai to oversee the police force is probably an opportunity for his faction to garner support for the Ye Family in exchange for a golden opportunity to be assigned here. If nothing unexpected happens, he will stay in Dong hai and become one of the political bigwigs while concurrently heading the police force."

"I see." With Chu Ji's explanation, Ye Fan's guess was fully confirmed, and he said, "I'll go see him."

"Do you want me to accompany you?"

Upon hearing this, Chu Ji immediately guessed Ye Fan's intention and felt relieved, yet she worried that Ye Fan might be at a disadvantage dealing with a politician for the first time.

"No need."

Ye Fan declined Chu Ji's offer with confidence, saying, "He wants to see me at this time, most likely to make use of me to bring order back to Dong hai's Underworld. And I can take this opportunity to cooperate with him."

"Xiao Fan, you catch on quickly."

Hearing Ye Fan succinctly express Feng Dong's intentions, Chu Ji was momentarily surprised, then smiled with relief, "It seems you have your plans, so I won't accompany you. I'll stay here to protect them."

"Yes."

This time, Ye Fan did not refuse Chu Ji's kindness. He knew that, with the Dong hai Gang now in complete chaos, those core members fighting over territories and dividing the gang's assets might come to Ao Xiang Villa and pose a threat to the safety of Situ Ruoshui and the others.

Two minutes later, Ye Fan walked out of the villa. He first visited the mourning hall to comfort Situ Ruoshui, asked Su Liuli to take care of her, and then drove alone away from Ao Xiang Villa, heading to the Jinmao Grand Hyatt Hotel.

As one of the tallest hotels in the world, the Jinmao Grand Hyatt Hotel boasts a 31-story atrium that is also the tallest in the world. Starting from the 56th floor, the hotel's atrium—with a clear height of 152 meters and a diameter of 27 meters—is one of the iconic features of the Jinmao Building, known as the "Golden Annular" and "Time Tunnel." Looking up from here, layer upon layer of gently lit golden lights sketch out 360-degree, spiraling patterns, tranquil and serene, like an ancient pagoda, conveying a sense of harmony and auspiciousness.

The "Jiuchongtian Bar" located on the 87th floor of the hotel has successfully replaced the "Cai hong Hall" of the Rockefeller Center as the highest rooftop restaurant in the world. Here one can enjoy music and wine while taking in the classical-style architecture that grew with Dong hai on the opposite Puxi bank along the river and the skyscrapers of the bustling Pudong New District.

When Ye Fan arrived at the Jiuchongtian Bar of the Jinmao Grand Hyatt Hotel, the bar was bustling with patrons, who listened to soothing piano music while drinking with their companions and admiring the night view of Dong hai.

"Sir, may I do anything for you?"

As Ye Fan surveyed the condition of the bar, a female waiter approached with a smile, politely inquired.

"No thank you," Ye Fan responded with a smile, and then strode toward a seat by the window—he saw Feng Dong waving at him from there.

"Hello, Minister Feng." Ye Fan approached the seat but did not immediately sit down. Instead, he greeted Feng Dong first.

"Hello, Mr. Ye," Feng Dong replied with a smile, gesturing for him to sit, "Let's sit and talk, care for a drink?"

"Minister Feng should know that, as a Martial Artist, drinking alcohol is detrimental to cultivation. I'll just have a glass of ice water," Ye Fan declined.

No sooner had he spoken than he signaled to the waiting waiter with a wave and made his request.

Meanwhile, a glint flashed in Feng Dong's narrow eyes behind his glasses—he could tell that Ye Fan was a man of strong convictions.

"I've heard that Mr. Ye is a young Innate Great Success Martial Artist, a rare Martial Arts genius in the Huaxia Martial Arts World. It's truly my good fortune to make your acquaintance," Feng Dong said as the waiter brought over the iced water. Though his words were complimentary, his tone subtly conveyed the authority of a powerhouse within the establishment, giving off the impression that in his eyes, Ye Fan's identity as a Martial Artist was nothing much to speak of.

In fact, that was indeed the case. For Feng Dong, who had been involved in politics, having worked with the police for nearly ten years, he had no fondness for Martial Artists who revered physical power—on the contrary, he held some disdain from deep within because the resurgence of the Martial Arts World and the establishment of the Yanhuang Organization had greatly weakened the police's standing in Huaxia!

"I am but a mere Martial Artist, not worth mentioning," Ye Fan said with a smile, seemingly indifferent to Feng Dong's subtly displayed authority.

Hmm?

Feng Dong was slightly startled to hear Ye Fan's response.

Before coming, he had thoroughly investigated Ye Fan's background, understood everything Ye Fan had done from Hanghu to Dong hai, and concluded that Ye Fan was a proud, almost arrogant person who would hardly bow his head.

Yet at that moment, Ye Fan's words made him question his judgment—Ye Fan didn't come across as arrogant at all, but rather, he seemed humble and low-profile.

"Come, let's toast to our new acquaintance."

Despite doubting his own judgment, Feng Dong didn't let it show on his face. Instead, he raised his glass to toast with Ye Fan.

"Minister Feng, someone as important as you inviting me to meet this late couldn't just be for drinks and enjoying the night view of Dong hai, could it?" After clinking glasses, Ye Fan took the initiative to steer the conversation.

"So, what do you think my purpose for arranging a meeting with you is?" Feng Dong asked with a smile.

"You want me to help you restore order in Dong hai's Underworld, to bring back normalcy to Dong hai's public security," Ye Fan said slowly, his tone seemingly casual yet filled with confidence.

Feng Dong was taken aback once again, appearing not to have expected Ye Fan to guess his intentions so quickly.

However—

Before Feng Dong could recover from his surprise, Ye Fan's next words almost overturned his impression of Ye Fan: "Not only am I aware of this, but I also know that you're choosing to enlist my help in restoring order to Dong hai's Underworld not because I am a Martial Artist, but because of my identity. You plan to leverage the deterrence my father and Chu Ji granted the core members of the Dong hai Gang, to make them submit to me, thereby achieving your goal."

"Mr. Ye, I must admit, your words have upended the rumors about you and overturned my own judgments," Feng Dong said after a moment's contemplation and with a more serious demeanor. "You are not rash at all."

"People always change."

Ye Fan responded with an ambiguous remark, then got straight to the point, "I can help you achieve your goal, but I have one condition."

"What is it?" Feng Dong's eyebrows lifted.

"Provide help to me, or I should say, to the Dong hai Gang, when necessary," Ye Fan stated cryptically.

"Agreed."

Feng Dong hesitated slightly before agreeing to Ye Fan's request, then continued with an earnest face, "But I'll only give you one day! Within a day, you must restore normal order to Dong hai's Underworld!"

"To our cooperation," Ye Fan said, raising his glass, ignoring the implications.

"Cheers."

Feng Dong lifted his glass to clink with Ye Fan's, but his expression was somewhat displeased.

Because he realized that ever since meeting Ye Fan, the initiative had always been in Ye Fan's hands!

"Mr. Ye, the iced water is on me; I look forward to hearing the good news from you," Feng Dong said, perhaps because he had misjudged and underestimated Ye Fan, and no longer wished to stay, he rose from his seat to take his leave after toasting with Ye Fan.

Hearing this, Ye Fan did not stand up but merely responded with a smile and a nod of his head.

Feng Dong's face changed, but he controlled himself, not letting the anger show as he turned and exited straight away.

"Buzz... Buzz..."

No sooner had Feng Dong left than Ye Fan's phone began to vibrate again.

With a sense of anticipation, Ye Fan took out his phone and saw that it was Jin Ye calling.

"Mr. Ye, this is Jin Ye, I have important matters to report to you," Jin Ye spoke as soon as the phone was answered, his tone slightly grave.

"Go ahead."

"Since this evening, those bastards have been calling me nonstop, demanding that I divide the assets that belong to them!" Jin Ye said, with some anger: "Damn it, they used to be at best middle-ranking in the Dong hai Gang, they never held any shares in the Dong hai Group, why should they divide any assets? Moreover, after Mr. Situ passed away, they only cared about fighting for turf and slicing the cake, none of them even bothered to pay respects, so even if there is a share for them, they won't get it!"

"In my name, inform them that a meeting to discuss asset division will be convened an hour from now at Villa No. 16 in Ao Xiang Villa," Ye Fan instructed authoritatively. "Additionally, when you notify them of the meeting, tell them that if anyone is late or absent, they can forget about getting a penny!"

"Alright."

Jin Ye was momentarily caught off guard, curious as to why Ye Fan would do this, yet he tactfully refrained from asking further and simply agreed to it.

Ye Fan put down his phone, picked up the iced water, and turned to look out the window.

Outside the window, the lights were brilliant, and his heart was like a painted landscape.

Tonight.

He had taken the first step in his transformation!

Chapter 220: [The Name of a Person, the Shadow of a Tree]

The night was deep, and a Mercedes-Benz van, flanked by three off-road vehicles, was making its way toward the brightly lit Ao Xiang Villa in the darkness of the night.

"Brother Pan, with the Jin Ye organization holding a meeting at Villa 16 in Ao Xiang Villa, could it be that they want to take control under Miss Ruoshui's name?" Inside the Mercedes-Benz van, a meticulously dressed middle-aged man with gold-rimmed glasses turned his head and asked the man sitting in the back seat.

Following his gaze, one could see that the man he called Brother Pan was a young man with a buzz cut, younger than the middle-aged man.

He addressed the young man as Brother Pan because the under-thirty-year-old was in charge of the Dong hai Gang's gambling business in Dong Hai and had previously helped Situ Chen manage the business of two casinos.

"When it comes to economics and finance, Jin Ye is an expert, but in the underworld, he's not even a beginner," said the young man, surnamed Pan and named Jue Ming, in a light tone filled with confidence, under the watchful gaze of the middle-aged man.

"So what is he up to?" the middle-aged man asked again.

"You'll find out soon enough," Pan Jue Ming replied, dodging the question while casting his gaze towards Ao Xiang Villa ahead, his eyes faintly shimmering with excitement.

Hearing this, the middle-aged man wisely closed his mouth and thought seriously about Pan Jue Ming's words.

A few minutes later, the four vehicles arrived at the entrance of Ao Xiang Villa, where four bodyguards from the Situ Family stepped forward to stop them.

"Jin Ye has called us to a meeting at the villa, you can verify it with him," said Pan Jue Ming, as he opened the window and explained to the obstructing Situ Family bodyguard, putting on a very submissive attitude.

"No need for verification, please, Boss Pan!" said the Situ Family bodyguard, gesturing for them to enter. His colleagues hurriedly opened the villa's grand gates, allowing Pan Jue Ming and his party to enter.

"Thank you," Pan Jue Ming thanked with a smile, then instructed the driver, "Notify the people ahead, enter the villa and go straight to Villa 16."

"Yes, Brother Pan!"

The driver quickly took the order and relayed Pan Jue Ming's instructions.

Soon, under the watchful eyes of the four Situ Family bodyguards, the four cars entered the villa, heading straight for Villa 16.

The villa gate closed again, and the leading Situ Family bodyguard immediately reported the information.

"Stop the car."

Ten minutes later, Pan Jue Ming arrived at Villa 1 of the compound and asked the driver to stop.

"Zizz~"

The sound of the car tires against the ground rang out as the Mercedes-Benz van came to a halt, and Pan Jue Ming got out of the car alone and walked toward Villa 1.

"Mr. Pan, the meeting is taking place at Villa 16, not here," said a Situ Family bodyguard who approached Pan Jue Ming before he could reach the front door of Villa 1, his face expressionless.

"I know, but I want to offer some incense to Mr. Situ before the meeting," Pan Jue Ming replied.

"Only now you think of offering incense to Mr. Situ? Where have you been earlier?"

The bodyguard gave Pan Jue Ming a cold stare. Being an absolute confidant of Situ Chen, he was very dissatisfied with all the Dong Hai Gang middle management, including Pan Jue Ming, who had come to the meeting tonight. To him, Pan Jue Ming and his peers were all crying crocodile tears.

Faced with the bodyguard's cold interrogation, Pan Jue Ming did not respond or get angry. Instead, he stood with his legs together and bowed deeply three times in the direction of the memorial shrine.

After completing this ritual, Pan Jue Ming turned and returned to the car, heading toward Villa 16.

When Pan Jue Ming arrived at the entrance of Villa 16, the villa's parking area was already filled with cars, well over thirty of them.

With the help of the light, Pan Jue Ming clearly saw that most of the cars were occupied.

Beyond that, Pan Jue Ming noticed one car with its door open, where the burly man in the driver's seat had a bulge at his waist, hiding a gun.

"Mr. Pan, it looks like everyone's brought their weapons," said Pan Jue Ming's assistant, a middle-aged man who was a bit curious, "It's odd that Jin Ye didn't have them search for guns when entering the villa."

"Whether or not they bring guns won't affect the outcome of the meeting, and if we searched for guns, the meeting wouldn't happen," Pan Jue Ming said, his eyes gleaming, smiling. "You guys wait here; I'll go in alone."

"Brother Pan, just in case, let Xiao Hu and a few others accompany you in," the middle-aged man said, not reassured.

"No need, as I've said, the outcome of the meeting is already predetermined."

Confident, Pan Jue Ming said and pushed open the car door, stepped out, and, under the gaze of other Dong Hai Gang members, walked into Villa 16 alone.

Villa 16 was the only office villa in Ao Xiang Villa, three times larger than a normal villa. The first floor served as a conference room, and the second floor contained Situ Chen's former office and reception room.

On October 1st, Situ Chen staged a coup in the conference room of Villa 16, which was left in shambles, still not yet cleaned up to this day.

Inside the conference room, eight mid-level Dong Hai Gang members sat on sofas in the eastern resting area, each with subordinates standing behind them, varying in number, with at least two each.

Possibly because they had engaged in fierce battles over turf and profit before, now that they had met, there was barely any communication between them. They all sat in silence, smoking, filling the conference room with a haze of smoke.

Creak!

The sound of the door opening was heard as Pan Jue Ming pushed it open and entered.

Whoosh!

In an instant, everyone in the meeting room turned their gaze towards the doorway.

Upon seeing the newcomer was Pan Jueming, the eight mid-level members of the Dong hai Gang showed varying degrees of surprise on their faces.

Their surprise stemmed partly from the fact that they saw Pan Jueming enter the meeting room alone, without any underlings, and partly because they all knew that Pan Jueming was the man who had instigated the internal conflict within the Dong hai Gang — just a few hours after the news of Situ Chen's death, Pan Jueming had ordered a surprise attack on a venue owned by Liu Kui!

"Boss Pan has quite the courage to come here alone," sneered Liu Kui, who had suffered heavy losses from Pan Jueming's attack.

As his voice fell, the four muscular men behind him all reached towards their waists as if to draw their guns, giving the impression that they would open fire on Pan Jueming at Liu Kui's command.

Hmm?

Seeing this scene, the expressions of the other seven mid-level members of the Dong hai Gang suddenly changed, their nerves instantly on edge.

For a time, the atmosphere in the meeting room became tense and even oppressive with the arrival of Pan Jueming, as if a gunfight could break out at any moment.

In the face of Liu Kui's provocation, Pan Jueming did not respond but, under everyone's watchful eyes, turned his gaze to the conference area on the west side.

He noted the broken conference table, the floor, and the chandelier, as well as the dark red bloodstains left on the ground.

When he saw those bloodstains, his guess grew stronger. Without a word, he walked alone to one of the undamaged chairs in the conference area, sat down, and silently lit a cigarette.

"Boss Pan, in your opinion, what's Jin Ye's angle in all this?"

Out of the blue, a middle-aged man with a slightly balding head spoke up, breaking the silence of the meeting room and asking Pan Jueming a question.

His name was Zhang Ming, he had been in charge of eight large nightclubs under Dong hai Gang, and he had known Pan Jueming before Pan had joined the Dong hai Gang. The two were quite friendly.

"Do we even need to ask? Jin Ye purposefully chose this meeting location to imply to us that he is the only core member of Dong hai Gang still alive, and that we will have to follow his orders," Liu Kui said with a cold laugh before Pan Jueming could reply. "Someone wants to stir up trouble and ambitiously climb to the top, but I'm afraid he'll end up achieving nothing in the end."

"Jin Ye is a core figure, that's true, but he's just a money launderer. He has no idea how the gang's money is made. If he thinks we'll follow his orders, I'm afraid he's not qualified." Another voice spoke up, belonging to a bald man, slightly overweight, with piercing eyes set deep into his flesh.

His surname was Ma, given name Liu, but everyone knew him as Old Sixth Tu. He was one of the key players in Dong hai Gang's drug trade, having been to the Golden Triangle Region more than once. After the internal strife within Dong hai Gang, he managed to replace an old-timer who was responsible for the drug trade, making him the most powerful among the mid-level ranks, but also the most devoid of legitimate business connections.

"I agree with Old Sixth's point. Jin Ye thinks he can control us? Not a chance!"

Another person chimed in. He was tall and imposing, with a fierce look about him, a key member of the Dong hai Gang's smuggling business. His surname was Wu, given name Jun. Like Old Sixth Tu, he had risen through the ranks through more or less the same means, similarly lacking the network in the legitimate world because of his deep involvement in criminal activities.

This common ground naturally allied Wu Jun and Ma Liu. They did not participate in the fight over Dong hai Gang's territories, but they strongly demanded Jin Ye share with them the income from smuggling and drug trade of the recent years!

"Jin Ye probably wants to prop up Situ Ruoshui as a puppet and use righteousness and seniority to control us. We can't let him get his way. Instead, we should unite and force him to hand over our share!" Following the stance of Ma Liu and Wu Jun, others quickly joined in.

"That money was earned by our brothers risking their heads like pots, we fought for it—why should Jin Ye monopolize it?"

"Exactly, he must share the money!"

Suddenly, apart from Pan Jueming, the other eight mid-level members of Dong hai Gang quickly put aside their differences, forgetting the fight for territory, and joined forces in a stance suggesting they wouldn't let Jin Ye off easily if he refused to share the money.

After reaching a consensus, the eight mid-level members of Dong hai Gang once again turned their gazes to Pan Jueming, seemingly waiting for him to make a statement.

"A bunch of idiots!"

Sensing the stares, Pan Jueming slowly snuffed out his cigarette and cursed silently to himself.

"Boss, Jin Ye has arrived, and he's brought Ye Fan with him!"

Shortly after, before Pan Jueming could make a statement, a subordinate behind Ma Liu suddenly stepped forward and reported in a nervous tone to Ma Liu—he might be just an underling of Ma Liu, yet he had heard that it was Ye Fan who had killed Huang Qi and Situ Haotian, avenging Situ Chen!

Given his status, he was aware of this, so how much more so for the nine mid-level Dong hai Gang members present?

Whoosh!

In an instant, except for Pan Jueming, everyone's face changed dramatically!

The same thought involuntarily surged in their minds: Ye Fan was the one who had called this meeting!

A man's reputation, a tree's shadow.

A fear from the depths of their souls silently crept into their hearts.