

After Chen Yuzhou left, the office was once again restored to its usual calm and tranquility. Chu Xiaoxiao and I didn't leave straight away. We stayed behind to open up all the windows and vents, airing out the gas fumes, otherwise it'd be a dangerous hazard for the people that would be coming back to work in the morning.

The night has fallen, and settled. It was quiet outside. When I opened the window, a cool breeze blew in, clearing and refreshing my mind clean of what just took place minutes ago.

Chu Xiaoxiao came to my side, still in a state of excitement, blood rushing and adrenaline and all.

"You, do you need to talk?" She looked at me and asked.

"In all of my life, I've only heard that when we go see shrinks for our compulsory mental evaluations. Between my buddies, we call that brain assessment and manipulation. Instructor Chu, did you perhaps think that my brain is in need of a thorough checkup?"

"You don't have to be so defensive about it. Even I could tell. It was all fine until he

mentioned that name, Jiang Ming. After that, your mood went south almost immediately. I've never seen you like this before. Did you planned all of this tonight just for that Jiang Ming character?"

I wanted to deny it, but looking at her looking back at me with her honest and thoughtful eyes, I realized that it was no use making excuses.

I could only nod.

"I don't want to speak about this too much, if at all. It's family business. Ugly, family business."

I didn't want anyone else to know that I wanted to avenge my parents, because even I'm not certain whether I could do it or not.

Though I was Junran's Master Zhang, as Han Kun had put it, but in the end, to them, I was nothing more than an unlearned young man with a ridiculous amount of inheritance I didn't deserve. When I risked my life out there on the field of battle, I have a bunch of buddies I could trust my back and life with. But here in Junran, what do I have? Even Han Kun wouldn't help me, and he was the only person that I could possibly trust.

Why? I really wanted to ask him. With all the evidence and hints that pointed at him, there was no doubt that Jiang Ming had everything to do with my parents' death. Zhao Zichen said it too, Jiang Ming disappeared from Tong City after murdering a couple, and it happened right at the time of my parents' death. So why was it that Han Kun simply refused to even looking into it!?

By my own strength, by myself alone, do I really have what it takes to get to the bottom of this and avenge my parents?

If they really were murdered, then for all these years, everything that my aunt did to me, all the hatred that she directed at me would have been wrong. I'd have suffered for no reason at all!

Why wouldn't Han Kun look into it? Was he perhaps... also...

I didn't dare go down that line of thought. If I chased that line down the rabbit hole, I just might began doubting everything that I've ever believed in.

Chu Xiaoxiao patted my back lightly, "Well, you don't have to say it if you don't want to. But

know this, Zhang Chao, we aren't all powerful all the time. We can't possibly shoulder everything that happens by ourselves. You have too much burdens on you, all these secrets and intrigues. When we were in school, you kept to yourself and refused to blend in, and now you're the young inheritor of Junran. Even if you won't tell me, you could at least tell Lin Fang. If you always keep everything bottled up inside of you, one day, you'll eventually succumb to the pressure."

I sighed, breathed in and sighed, and felt a lot better afterwards. Laughing a little, I said, "After that Lin Fang's friends' gathering, I'll tell Lin Fang who I really am. Before this, I wanted to wait until I uproot the Chen's from this city completely, but with what you recorded with your phone just then, I think that would be sufficient to keep them off our backs."

Chu Xiaoxiao nodded, though she looked as if she was deep in thought.

We gazed at the stars in the sky, and after a moment of silence, Chu Xiaoxiao said, "Congrats."

It could have been just my imagination, but somehow, I felt as if she sounded disinterested

and lost, like she didn't really mean it.

After this, Chen Yuzhou never bothered me again, and life returned to how it was, how it should be. Quiet, and peaceful.

I must say, though at first glance Chu Xiaoxiao seemed to have a few screws missing in her head at times, but she really was talented in what she does. After she came, Lutong soon managed to sign a few big major cases, doubling its past revenue. Everyday, Lu Tong couldn't stop smiling like an idiot while sitting in his office and looking at the signed contracts.

Though Chu Xiaoxiao was successful, Chu Huaien's plans was blown to pieces. It was obvious that Junran's cooperation with Lutong wouldn't benefit his Chu Enterprise in the slightest way or influence, and all over the media were rumors of the Chu Enterprise's possible bankruptcy.

Chu Huaien came to see Chu Xiaoxiao a few times, but after knowing that she was officially hired by Junran and appointed general manager of Lutong, he left without saying too much. Though he reminded Chu Xiaoxiao to make sure to stay in good relationships with

Junran's people, and if possible, save the Chu Enterprise.

Though Chu Xiaoxiao didn't say anything, but I could tell that she was really worried about the cash flow of the Chu Enterprise. Rumors circulates around saying that Chu Huaien was in a large debt, which he got from being set up when he went gambling at casinos outside the country. Rumors also said that Chu Huaien wanted to marry her off to a man with a wealthy family background, some rich man called Li Chengyu, for a large sum of money to save the Chu Enterprise.

I have talked to Chu Xiaoxiao about this before. I said to her that if she needed it, I could lend her the money she needed, so long as she kept my identity hidden.

"No need. We're friends. If you lend this much money to me, I'll never be able to return it to you. I wanted to stay as friends, the both of us, I don't want to have to think about a debt that I could never repay you every time I see you, and vice versa too."

"But friends help each other out."

"I said I don't want it and that's final." Chu

Xiaoxiao nailed the coffin shut on that discussion with that.

I really couldn't get her to say otherwise. That's how she was, stubborn to a fault.

At the same time, Lin Fang was once again troubled by her brother. He went to her for more money again.

Lin Fang said to me that Lin Kan went to the underground money lenders again, and now, since he couldn't pay off his debt, they threatened to chop his hand off if he couldn't come up with the money soon. Lin Fang's father just went through a major operation, and needed rest to recuperate, but with all the debt collectors barging in trudging around the house all the time, he couldn't even eat and sleep in peace.

I asked if Xia Genghuai could do something about it, but he told me that it was simply no use.

He said that these money lenders had been very much different than how we thought they were from stories and movies. Every one of them had lawyers with them, and knew more about the law than the law enforcers

themselves.

“There was a saying, nothing was more scary than a thug with a degree. I once brought a squad to one of them, and guess what, first they wanted to verify your badge, and then when the guy handed me his card, oh boy, guy has a master law degree in business and criminal law. Over here on my side, I’m the one with the highest degree, and I have only a measly bachelor that I barely scraped through the passing mark. Guy said that he acted in full accordance with the law, and that there were no threats of violence. We couldn’t even do a thing! You said that they were making noises and threats, but I’ll be that the moment us cops show up at the door, they’d be more tamed than newly hatched chicks. Look, there really isn’t anything I can do here. If you want my advice, tell your father-in-law-to-be to move to some place that only he knew...”

I didn’t know how to respond to that, whether I should laugh at the absurdity or be impressed by their efforts to collect debt while remaining fully in the confinements of the law. I really had thought that money lenders and debt collectors were like how they were seen in the movies, with knives and guns and abandoned warehouses.



“In that case, help me move Lin Fang’s father out of his ward first.”

I made Xia Genghuai bring a few people and help me transport Lin Fang’s father to her current place. All along the way, Xia Genghuai appeared as if he was trying to say something, like a parent that just doesn’t know how to talk sense into their stubborn child who insisted on their ways.



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