

The Amazing-Son-In-Law Chapter 5766 - 5778

Chapter 5766

Charlie had never been one to protect others. His father-in-law's recent actions had dealt a severe blow to his reputation, and he showed no remorse. Consequently, Charlie could no longer secretly aid him.

With that in mind, Charlie made the decision to let his father-in-law do as he pleased. He had chosen to let go.

On the other hand, Peter spoke up for Jacob at that moment and said, "Master Wade, I can somewhat understand why Mr. Wilson did what he did. When he 'broke' that vase, it was actually because of my scheme. I had someone hit him to make it more believable. It's only natural that he resents me."

Charlie nodded and sighed, "It's understandable to hold a grudge, and seeking revenge is also understandable. However, the method he used was indeed somewhat inappropriate. Even so, I don't think there would have been a significant issue if he had simply wanted to restore his dignity from you. The problem lies in his inability to know when to stop."

"Before Zachary exposed this incident, he wasn't really at a disadvantage. Although he sold a valuable item at a low price, the item itself was sold to him by someone else. He even made a net profit of 200,000 dollars. The problem is that once he found out the bronze Buddha was sold at a high price, he wanted it back. If he hadn't taken it too far, I wouldn't have let Zachary expose this incident."

After speaking, Charlie sighed, "In the end, he couldn't handle playing this game. Selling and letting go, and being willing to admit defeat, were still too difficult for him."

Peter smiled and said, "He made a mistake and lost 20 million dollars due to a momentary lapse of judgment. Most people wouldn't be able to accept it. It's understandable that Mr. Wilson wants to regain the item to some extent."

~Then, Peter continued, "As for the subsequent impact, actually, It | don't speak up and it doesn't escalate to the police, there won't be any definitive judgment from the outside. As long as someone in the Calligraphy and Painting Association helps him, he should still have a place there. It's just that the relationships with colleagues might become more tense in the future."

Charlie smiled and said, "Let him go. | don't plan to get involved in this matter anymore."

"Okay." Peter nodded and said, "For Mr. Wilson, his way of doing things and his logic still lack maturity and rigor. Perhaps he has never started a business or experienced any hardships in his life. His overall abilities are still lacking compared to most people his age."

Charlie agreed with Peter's assessment of Jacob. Although his father-in-law had led a miserable life, he had indeed never faced any real challenges. He had been reliant on the Wilson family since graduating from college, and his life only took a downturn after the old master passed away a few years ago.

The crucial point was that he had been suppressed by Elaine, the Lady Wilson, and his eldest brother within the family for so many years.

The decline in his material life didn't have much impact on him. After all, whether he was in a golden nest or a mud nest, he was still lying down.

But his desire to become the president of the Calligraphy and Painting Association stemmed not from lofty aspirations or ambitions, but from a desire to accumulate bragging rights and maintain face in the future. That was all. Considering his father-in-law's current social abilities, he probably couldn't compare to a young person with three to five years of work experience.

For so many years, he lacked ambition and always stumbled wherever he went. The only time he showed ambition was recently, in his

quest to become the president of the Calligraphy and Painting Association. He schemed and plotted every day. However, it seemed that his chances of becoming the president were doomed. If he were to become the president of the Calligraphy and Painting Association, everyone in the association, except for him, would likely resign.

But Charlie was now too apathetic to care.

His initial concern about this matter was that his father-in-law and Zachary would resort to violence against Peter. Peter didn't have much influence in Aurous Hill, and if they were to use violence to solve the problem, they wouldn't stand a chance against him.

Now that the crisis had been resolved, Zachary would no longer help his father-in-law target Peter. His father-in-law had lost the support of violence, and the farce they had just created had helped Peter quickly establish himself in Aurous Hill Antique Street. Peter's future development in Aurous Hill would undoubtedly be smoother.

Curious, Charlie asked him, “What are your plans for the next step, Uncle Cole?”

Peter replied, “I didn't intend to attract so much attention. I simply wanted to open a shop on Antique Street and take it slow. But now, there's a lot of buzz, and many people come to me for appraisals every day. it's a double-edged sword. So, I plan to slow down the pace in the future, open the shop a bit later, close a bit earlier, and have fewer customers. I estimate that after another month, the hype will die down.”

Peter continued, “When the hype gradually dies down, I'll run the business with a relaxed attitude. I don't care about making money, nor do I care about expanding the business. The pace of life in Aurous Hill is relatively slow, and it would be pleasant if people could slow down too. I plan to retire here leisurely.”

Charlie nodded and said, "The Rothschild family is relatively manageable, but I don't know if the Warriors Den is still paying attention to the Four Treasures of the Study and your news. If we can eliminate the Warriors Den in the future, then you will be completely free."

Peter smiled and said, "I believe that with your abilities, that day will come soon."

Peter suddenly thought of something and hurriedly said, "By the way, Mr. Wade, you haven't had dinner yet, right? Do you want to eat something together? There's a small restaurant nearby that makes delicious local dishes and can deliver directly to the store. If you don't mind, let's have some food together in the store?"

Charlie smiled and said, "Alright, it just so happens that my wife has been busy with the company lately, working overtime every night, so I'll join you for a meal."

As he spoke, he suddenly remembered someone and said to Peter, "By the way, Uncle Cole, there's an old acquaintance of yours in Aurous Hil. Please order a few more dishes, I'll call him over!"

Meanwhile, Jacob left Antique Street feeling dejected and hailed a taxi. He told the driver, "Go to Heaven Springs."

~The reason Jacob wanted to go to Heaven Springs was mainly to invite Chairman Frice for a meal and chat.

So, he called Don Albert first and said, "Don Albert, it's me, Jacob..."

Don Albert asked in an indifferent tone, "What's the matter, Mr. Wilson?"

Jacob hurriedly said, "Well, I want to ask you to reserve a private room for me. I plan to invite our president to have a meal there tonight."

Don Albert politely declined, "I'm sorry, Mr. Wilson, but there are VIPs at Heaven Springs tonight, and it's not open to the public. How about we arrange it for another day?"

Jacob didn't expect Don Albert, who had always been accommodating, to be unfriendly now. He felt a deep sense of disappointment and could only say dejectedly, "Okay. Since it's inconvenient, let's arrange it for another day. Thank you..."

Don Albert responded with a grunt and said, “If there's nothing else, I'll hang up. I'm busy.”

Without waiting for Jacob to say anything, Don Albert abruptly ended the call. This is not Don Albert's fault. He respects Charlie deeply, and naturally, he also respects Jacob. However, this time, Charlie wanted his father-in-law to understand the consequences of his actions. Therefore, Don Albert did not dare to continue treating Jacob kindly. While Jacob was polite and responsive, Don Albert's attitude had to remain cold so that Jacob could clearly feel the difference.

Jacob felt extremely frustrated at that moment. He sighed inwardly, “I never expected that even Don Albert would turn against me now. If I had known, I might as well have taken the 200,000 dollars and enjoyed a vacation in Dubai! That way, I would have had 200,000 dollars in hand, and the association wouldn't know about these embarrassing matters, and Don Albert wouldn't bear any grudges against me...”

Regretful, Jacob sat alone in the back seat of the taxi, tears of grievance welling up. Noticing the driver discreetly glancing at him in the rearview mirror, he quickly turned his face away and took out his phone to call Chairman Price.

When Chairman Price answered the call, he asked, “Jacob, how did things go? Did you manage to handle Zachary's situation?”

Chairman Price had been waiting for Jacob to ask Don Albert to pressure Zachary and make him come forward to refute the rumors.

But Jacob knew that refuting the rumors was now impossible, so he said awkwardly, “Chairman Price, there's been a problem with Zachary. This guy is determined to oppose me now. It's no use for Don Albert to talk to him, and Don Albert also explained the difficulties.

Zachary is Don Albert's subordinate, so he's caught in the middle and can't interfere too much.”

Chairman Price sighed, “Oh, this is going to be difficult! If you can't refute the rumors, you can't stop the mouths of those people in the association.”

Jacob hurriedly said, “Chairman Price, although Zachary can't come out to refute the rumors right now, I can guarantee that this matter

won't continue to escalate. What Zachary said about fraud is pure nonsense. The police won't intervene, and if they don't, no one can officially characterize this situation. | also spoke to Felix and explained that it was a misunderstanding. He made it clear that he wouldn't pursue the matter.”

Chairman Price murmured, “This... This is neither good nor bad, and it doesn't resolve the issue!”

Jacob quickly replied, “The issue won't be resolved, but it won't turn into something serious either. After a few days, the buzz will likely die down.”

Chairman Price said, “Jacob, you think the heat will die down, but the people in the association might not let it go so easily. The key issue is that you're now the second-in-command, blocking the way for many people. It's like everyone is in the same line for the restroom, everyone wants to push the person in front out. If they don't push you out, they won't give up. I'm afraid they won't stop making noise.”

Chairman Price was under a lot of pressure himself.

In fact, he no longer planned to let Jacob take over his position, because that would place all the pressure on him. If Jacob's scandal continued and he remained in the position, those people would definitely cause trouble and accuse him of protecting Jacob.

However, he didn't dare to offend Jacob too much. After all, he didn't know Don Albert's current attitude toward Jacob. If he offended

Jacob and was hated by him, his own path would not be easy.

Therefore, Chairman Price's biggest wish now was for Jacob to voluntarily give up the competition for the presidency, and preferably also the position of executive vice president.

In that case, the vice presidents would each move up a level, and he could appease them. Keeping Jacob in the association would also avoid offending anyone.

Jacob hadn't yet understood Chairman Price's intentions, so he said, “Chairman Price, those people are just grasshoppers after autumn.

They won't cause trouble for long. When you are promoted, and | become the president, | will have ways to deal with them and make them behave.”

Chairman Price hurriedly said, “Jacob, you still don't understand. It's not about whether you should be the president, but whether you can continue to stay in the association! What they want is for you to be removed from the association. Otherwise, the quarrel will continue, and they might even report the situation to the city. If the city feels that this matter damages the association's reputation and asks you to withdraw, | won't be able to protect you!”

Jacob suddenly panicked, his tone extremely anxious, almost crying, as he begged, “President! Please help me! I've lost all of my money now. You can't just stand by and watch as my status in the association is jeopardized!”

Chapter 5767

Sometimes, strategically inducing despair in the other party can also be a tactic. When a friend, who isn't very close, asks to borrow ten thousand dollars, but you can only lend them one thousand, you can't just come out and say, “I can only give you one thousand.” Otherwise, the friend will take the money and secretly criticize you for not being reliable, lending only a fraction of what they asked for.

A more suitable approach, with a touch of local charm, is to first confide in your friend, saying, “Hey, buddy, I'm actually worse off than you. I've borrowed a ton of money and can't pay it back. There's this person who hasn't returned the money they borrowed from me in three years.”

When your friend feels desperate, you can then say, “But if you're really in a bind, | can withdraw one thousand dollars from my credit card for you.”

This way, your friend will receive the money and may not express much gratitude, but at least they won't badmouth you behind your back, calling you unreliable.

Chairman Price did something similar. He didn't want to offend Jacob, but he couldn't outright refuse him and say, “Forget about being the president. How can I distance myself from you when you're facing problems? Not helping you would be thoughtless.”

So, he first significantly lowered Jacob's expectations. He said, "At this point, do you still want to be the president? Let me be honest with you, it's uncertain whether you can stay in the association.”

By doing this, he gave Jacob some room to maneuver, and he would definitely be grateful and agree.

Now, Chairman Price felt that the atmosphere was just right, and Jacob had started to fear being expelled from the association.

Chairman Price sighed and said, “Jacob, we have such a close relationship. I will do my best to protect you in this matter. Although I can't guarantee the position of Executive President, I will try my best to secure a Vice President or Director position for you. You can rest assured that as long as I'm here, you will have a place in this Calligraphy and Painting Association.”

Jacob, who had mentally prepared himself for the worst, knew that he might be expelled from the association. But now, he received a promise that he would at least secure a Director position, or even a Vice President position. This alleviated his worries.

It was like being gravely ill and going to the hospital, only to be told that the situation was severe and there was a high chance of not surviving. But in the end, you manage to live, even though you've lost both legs. It's truly a tragic situation, but at least you're still alive.

So, he gratefully said, “Oh, Chairman Price, you're truly a lifesaver! I really owe you for this!”

Chairman Price, upon hearing the news, was thrilled. Knowing that Jacob owed him a favor, he said, “Jacob, you'd better stay away for a few days to avoid the spotlight. Don't rush back. If you're not here, you won't be the target of public criticism. I'll handle the situation.”

Hearing Chairman Price's advice to lie low, Jacob felt like crying. He thought to himself, "Chairman Price, I didn't bother to tell you that I had arrived in Aurous Hill because of the Don Albert's Heaven Springs. Now you want me to hide from the limelight. Was it all for nothing? Not only did I endure a round trip of over 10,000 kilometers and eight hours in economy class, but in the end, it was all in vain. 300,000 dollars donated for nothing! What kind of bad luck is this?"

However, he only dared to complain inwardly and never aloud. So, with great gratitude, he said, "Okay, Chairman Price, I won't hurry back. But can you tell me how you're going to handle this?" ~ Chairman Price replied, "Tonight, I find a computer and write a resignation email. Say that you're old and have limited energy, and you plan to resign from the position of executive vice president. However, because of your deep feelings for the Painting and Calligraphy Association, you hope to continue contributing and will obey any new arrangements from the association."

"As for me, I'll have a small meeting with the vice presidents tomorrow morning and explain everything. You'll step down to the lowest-ranked vice president, and the others will be promoted to the same level. Let Leonard Stives, the most prestigious and senior among the vice presidents, serve as the executive vice president. Everyone should be convinced by this."

"If their opposition isn't particularly strong, I can make a decision on this matter directly and at least help you retain the position of vice president."

"If they strongly disagree, then I'll step back and make Director Jonathan Ram the vice president. You will take Director Ram's position. His position will protect you. What do you think?"

Jacob, who had thought he was going to leave the association entirely, was relieved. Now that Chairman Price offered him the position of director, he naturally had no objections and said gratefully, "Thank you very much, Chairman Price!"

Chairman Price also breathed a sigh of relief and said with a smile, "Jacob, I am your big brother after all. Why are you being so polite to

me? Isn't this what a big brother should do?"

Jacob smiled genuinely from the bottom of his heart and said, "Big brother, with your words, feel at ease."

After saying that, he quickly asked, "By the way, Chairman Price, these vice presidents have taken care of the issue. The people below won't make irresponsible remarks. But what if they're not satisfied and continue to cause trouble?"

Chairman Price smiled and replied, "Don't worry. Although our association doesn't have many people, we all have our own small groups, and they are all vice-presidents. Why don't we unite a few of our own people? In the association, apart from my people, the remaining vice-presidents are basically covered. You can think of them as squad leaders in the army. In our company, as long as they have no objections to my decisions, their subordinates will naturally not have any objections either. Even if they do, they will silence those people."

Jacob said subconsciously, "Oh, is that how it works? Then why don't | have my own subordinates?"

Chairman Price sighed and said, "Who knows what you were thinking? When you were first mentioned as vice- resident, you should have united a few of your own people from below. How could | have known that you're not in the association all day long? How can you develop your own confidants when you spend all your time at a senior university?"

"Ugh!" Jacob wanted to slap himself in the face and cursed, "This foolish university for the elderly, I'll never go there again!"

Chairman Price hummed and said, "When this matter is settled, if you work hard, you might be able to climb up again before long."

"Okay!" Jacob said with great gratitude. "Thank you, Chairman Price. | will definitely work hard in the future!"

After hanging up the phone, Jacob finally let go of some of his worries. He couldn't help but sigh, "Ah, | wonder if | can get back the three hundred thousand dollars | donated!"

Thinking of this, he immediately told the driver, "Go to the largest law firm in Aurous Hilt"

The driver nodded and asked, "Shall we go to Smith Law Firm? They're from the United States and are said to be the largest law firm in

Aurous Hill and even the entire East China!”

Jacob trembled all over and blurted out subconsciously, “I'm not going! I'm going to the second-ranked one!”

Smith Law Firm was established by Matilda and her son Paul.

Matilda was about to marry Mr. Riley, making Paul Mr. Rileys stepson.

Shamelessly, she went to his law firm to find a lawyer to ask for donations from charities.

How could he show his face after that?

The driver also advised him, “If you're looking for a lawyer, it's better to find one at Smith Law Firm. That lawyer is excellent, and everyone in Aurous Hill knows about it”

Jacob waved his hand and firmly refused, “No, | don't like foreigners. I'd rather choose someone local from Aurous Hill”

The driver nodded, “Then let's go to Brighton Law Firm. That firm is said to be the second strongest.” |

While Jacob headed to the law firm, Charlie called Steve Rothschild, who was lounging in the hotel.

Steve had Just enjoyed a meal delivered to his room and was lazily lying on the hotel sofa, playing with his phone.

Ever since he went to the dog farm with Charlie, he had been staying in the hotel every day. not going out or doing anything. He was waiting for the video of the Hogwitz father and son at sea to be released before returning to the United States and becoming a big shot.

However, staying in the hotel every day was boring, and he really wanted to get closer to Charlie. But thinking about Charlies ruthless nature, he didn't dare to rush to please him, afraid of accidentally offending him again. Little did he know that Charlie suddenly called him.

He quickly answered the phone and said eagerly, “Hello, Mr. Wade!”

Charlie smiled faintly, “What are you up to, Mr. Rothschild?”

Steve hurriedly said, “Oh, just call me Steve. Please don't call me Mr. Rothschild.”

Then he quickly added, “I've been staying in the hotel in Aurous Hill recently. Do you know where the Hogwitz, father and son are now?”

Charlie said, “They're still floating at sea. They'll be heading to the Middle East first. Don't worry, I'll let you know when the video is released.”

“Okay, okay!” Steve said eagerly, “I’m not in a hurry. I’m waiting for your news in Aurous Hill.”

“Okay.” Charlie casually agreed and asked, “Have you eaten? If not, do you want to go out and grab a bite together?”

Steve subconsciously touched his round belly. Having just finished a meal, he really had no appetite. However, the opportunity to have dinner with Charlie was too rare to pass up, like being invited out by a beautiful woman.

How could he refuse?

So, he quickly said, “Sure, Mr. Wade, just send me the location, and I’ll come right over!”

Charlie said, “I’ll send you a location. Just follow it and come here. It’s getting late, but Aurous Hill isn’t as dangerous as it is in the United States. You don’t need to bring any bodyguards; just come by yourself.”

“Okay!” Steve knew that Charlie wouldn’t kidnap him, and he had no reason to worry about being in Aurous Hill.

So, he quickly responded, “Mr. Wade, please send me your address, and I will be there right away!”

Chapter 5768

Brighton Law Firm.

Most of the employees had already left for the day, leaving only a handful of lawyers wrapping up a meeting. Just as they were preparing to call it a day, Jacob walked in.

He glanced at the lawyers, busy packing their things, and asked, “Are you guys still taking on new cases?”

The lead lawyer smiled and replied, “We do take on cases, but it’s a bit late now. Why don’t you come back tomorrow morning?”

Jacob impatiently pleaded, “My situation is extremely urgent. Please, I need your help. Let me explain the details, and we can see if it’s feasible. The claim in my case is 300,000 dollars, and if you can help me recover that money, I’m willing to give you 20%!”

A claim of 300,000 dollars was no small amount. If the case was relatively straightforward, a 20% contingency fee would yield a profit of

60,000 dollars.

The lawyer pondered for a moment and replied, "Alright, why don't you give us a brief overview of the situation? We'll assess the feasibility of the case. If it looks promising, we can discuss further. If not, we can revisit the matter another day."

Jacob wasted no time and began explaining, "Here's the situation. Today, I accidentally donated 300,000 dollars to a charity foundation. I meant to donate 30,000 dollars, but my hand trembled. So, I want to retrieve the remaining 270,000 dollars."

He added quickly, "Of course, if you can help me recover the full 300,000 dollars, that would be even better."

Upon hearing this, the lawyer chuckled and remarked, "So, you want to retrieve the full 300,000 dollars. It seems like it wasn't merely an 'accident, but rather a case of regret, am I right?"

"Exactly!" Jacob didn't try to hide it and admitted straightforwardly, "I regretted it. It's not easy for me to earn money these days, and impulsively donating such a large sum was a mistake."

The lawyer smiled and replied, "I'm sorry, sir, but we can't take on this kind of case..."

"Why?" Jacob instinctively asked, "Do you think the chances of winning are too low, or is 20% too little for you?"

The lawyer explained, "Well, it's not necessarily a matter of low chances of winning, and 20% contingency fee is not necessarily too little."

Jacob, puzzled, inquired, "Then why can't you take the case? Isn't that contradictory?"

The lawyer clarified, "We don't take on every case. For some, we prioritize financial gain, while for others, we prioritize our reputation. If it's a multimillion-dollar claim, even if it's challenging, we'll find a way to tackle it. But if it's a case where a man has been stringing along a mistress for years, toying with her emotions and body, only to dump her and sue for the money spent on her, even though the chances of winning such a case are high, we generally don't take it because it would invite public criticism."

Looking directly at Jacob, the lawyer continued, "And for cases like yours, where you regret a donation and want to sue for its retrieval, we

also decline. These types of cases tend to attract significant public attention. Once it hits the media, your reputation will be tarnished, and we would also be implicated. We would both be seen as greedy. Frankly, we're not willing to sacrifice our integrity for a mere 60,000 dollars.”

Jacob was stunned and blurted out, “Will the media really pay attention to something like this?”

The lawyer retorted, “Why wouldn't they? Such matters always catch the public's eye. When someone wins the lottery, the media eagerly reports how much they donate. When a natural disaster strikes, people pay attention to whether public figures contribute and how much they give.”

“To be honest, cases like regretting a charity donation and suing to retrieve the money are rare. They're definitely newsworthy. Besides, court cases are public, and anyone can access the documents. Even if you try to hide it, you won't succeed. So, if you're determined to pursue this lawsuit, be prepared.”

Deep inside, Jacob felt a profound sense of despair. He only wanted to retrieve the money, but he never considered the possibility of this matter becoming public.

Chairman Price had just assured him over the phone that he would weather the storm of this scandal and do everything possible to secure Jacob's position as vice president. However, if he were to reveal that he regretted the donation, sued, and tried to reclaim the money, Chairman Price probably wouldn't be able to save him.

After thinking about it for a long time, Jacob sadly realized that it might be really difficult to get back the 300,000 dollars.

When he thought of this, he lost control of his emotions and cried, “What kind of evil have done? What kind of evil have | done! After struggling for so long, not to mention 100,000 dollars, Aurous Hill, Dubai, Dubai, Aurous Hill, flew back and forth, and all my money was wasted. The worst thing is that | can no longer keep my second-in-command position. Who in the world is worse off than me?”

Seeing Jacob's emotional breakdown, the lawyer quickly stepped forward and comforted him, "Don't get too excited. If you really want to litigate this matter, it's actually not that difficult. As long as you can prove that the 300,000 dollars you donated is innocent, there is no illegal crime or tax evasion, and then explain to the court that you really made an impulsive donation, the court may support your request"

Jacob collapsed even more, crying and asking him, "Huh? Do you want me to prove the origin of the 300,000 dollars?"

The lawyer smiled and said, "Of course, this is the top priority! Let's use an analogy. If you defrauded the 300,000 through telecom fraud, and then wanted to donate it to a charity and then sue to recover it, wouldn't this be equivalent to laundering money through a charity?"

"I..." Jacob was completely desperate and cried, "Bullying people! Bullying people! Even God is bullying me!"

As he spoke, he turned around, wiped away tears, and walked out.

If, as the lawyer said, he still has to prove the Innocence of the 300,000 dollars, then he had already lost on this level.

What kind of lawsuit is this?

At this moment, he had completely given up the idea of recovering the 300,000 dollars.

Right now, he was disheartened and just wanted to escape from the city as soon as possible. After all, if you come back secretly, you can't go back even if you have a home.

He squatted on the side of the road, crying, and opened the booking app. He felt even more miserable when he saw that the ticket to

Dubai would have to wait until tomorrow morning, and he could only book an economy class ticket. He bought the plane ticket, but when he thought about the eight-hour flight, his mood was about to explode.

When he thought about Matilda getting married soon, and how outstanding John Riley was, but now he was in such a mess, his heart broke even more, and he wanted to slap himself in the face to vent his anger.

When he thought back on the whole thing, he realized that it was entirely his own fault, and he felt even more regretful about it.

If he could give himself another chance, he would never use such crooked ideas again!

At this time, a hotel business car drove past Jacob. Steve Rothschild, who was about to go to the banquet, was sitting alone in the back seat, looking through the car window at the roadside and saw Jacob squatting on the ground, holding his head and crying. He couldn't help but sigh in his heart, "This must be what is said on the Internet, that adults collapse in an instant, right?"

Chapter 5769

Steve, a man who had endured the struggles of the common folk, arrived at the entrance of Antique Street in his car.

After closing time, Antique Street stood desolate, akin to an abandoned edifice. This place bustled with activity in the morning when it first opened and in the afternoon as it neared closing time. At other times, there were more staff than customers, and even stray dogs didn't bother scavenging here because there was nothing to eat.

Unfamiliar with the purpose of this place, Steve followed the location given by Charlie and found himself at the entrance of Selected Artifacts Pavilion.

Once he confirmed that he had arrived at the right place, he called Charlie and spoke respectfully, albeit somewhat ingratiatingly, "Mr. Wade, I have arrived. Please open the door for me."

"Alright, wait a moment," Charlie hung up the phone and turned to Peter, who was busy folding tables. "Uncle Cole, hold on a moment, an old acquaintance is here."

After speaking, he rose from his small stool and opened the door.

"Mr. Wade!" Steve smiled upon seeing Charlie and extended his hand in a respectful and friendly manner. "Why did you suddenly invite

me here? What can | do for you?"

Charlie smiled and replied, "I don't have any specific instructions. I just invited you for a few drinks and to meet an old friend."

Steve chuckled, "I only know you as a friend in Aurous Hil. | don't know anyone else."

Charlie responded, "You'll know when you come in."

With that, he invited Steve inside.

As Steve entered, he noticed a person busy at a small table. He wanted to ask Charlie if this person was the old friend he had mentioned, and coincidentally, Peter looked up.

Their eyes met, and Peter smiled, saying, "Mr. Rothschild, we meet again..."

"Oh... My..." Steve trembled with fear, then muttered, "Mr. Wade, | have something to do, | have to go back..."

Charlie stopped him, saying, "Hey, hey, Steve, where are you going?"

Steve turned back, his expression on the verge of tears, and said with a grievance to Charlie, "Mr. Wade, you're tricking me again... And it's going to kill me..."

Charlie smiled and reassured him, "Look at what you're saying. | invited you for a meal, how did it become me tricking you?"

Steve looked at Peter, lowered his voice, and pleaded with Charlie, "Mr. Wade, my father still doesn't know the whereabouts of Peter Cole, nor does he know if Peter Cole has left New York. It's all because of me, his son, eating and drinking on the side. And Peter Cole has already left New York, leaving my father with no chance to discover the hidden truth..."

“But if news of me coming here to see Peter Cole gets out, 'm finished! If my father finds out that | sent him and the Four Treasures of the Study out of New York, he will definitely disown me! Please don't torment me, just pretend that i didn't come tonight...”

Charlie patted his shoulder and comforted him, “Don't worry, Aurous Hill is under my control. The things you do here won't reach your father's ears.”

After speaking, Charlie added, "We're old friends now, can | stil trick you?"

Steve's face was filled with tears as he asked him, “Mr. Wade, haven't you tricked me enough? If it weren't for your help, | would probably be the head of the family by now.”

Charlie laughed and said, “You can't blame me for that. If you had just told me directly that you didn't want your father to live much longer and that you wanted to take over as the head of the family as soon as possible, how could | have arranged for Helena to deliver the medicine? The key is communication. If you don't communicate, how can | know?" Steve trembled in fear and quickly waved his hand, saying, “No, no, no, Mr. Wade, you definitely can't say that. | never meant that. As a son, of course, | want my father to be healthy and live a long life. How could I not want him to live long...”

Charlie asked, “Then why did you say | tricked you so much earlier?”

“H...” Steve struggled to find an answer and could only say in frustration, “It's my fault for not being careful with my words. | take it back...”

Charlie nodded, “Then I'll give you a chance to say it again.”

“An?” Steve didn't quite understand and asked, “Say it again... What?”

Charlie patted his shoulder again and smiled, “We're old acquaintances now, can | still trick you? It's your turn.”

Steve understood Charlie's meaning and inwardly cursed in resentment, “You're just trying to trap me, aren't you? If my father finds out that | came to Aurous Hill to see you two, especially to have a drink with Peter Cole, | won't be able to keep my position as the heir. You're forcing my hand!”

However, even with many grievances in his heart, he couldn't voice them at this moment. He could only grit his teeth and say, "I can't... | can't...Mr. Wade, you definitely can't trick me..."

"That's right," Charlie smiled and said, "Come, the food and drinks are ready. Let's have a drink together."

"I... He..." Steve turned around in a panic, not knowing what to say, and hesitated for a long time.

Suddenly, he looked up and noticed a surveillance camera hanging in the corner of the ceiling. He immediately realized that he was being manipulated by Charlie once again.

Since he had already come, if he turned and left now, the video evidence would still be left behind, and it would offend Charlie. It was better to go all out and leave the video evidence. At least he could please Charlie for now.

With that in mind, he made up his mind and sighed, "Ah! Then I'll listen to you and have a drink together!"

Charlie nodded in satisfaction, "That's right. We fought side by side in New York and Canada. It's not easy to meet again in Aurous Hill.

We naturally have to have a good drink. It's just that the conditions here are a bit simple. | hope you don't mind."

"How could that be..." Steve smiled and said, "If you're inviting me, you consider me a friend. It's my honor."

After speaking, he tried to make amends, "Mr. Wade, the reason | wanted to leave earlier wasn't because of anything else, but mainly because | felt bad that you always treat me. You treated me at Heaven Springs last time, so according to the rules, it should be my tur to treat you."

Charlie didn't expose him either and said with a smile, "Today, we'll let Uncle Cole treat us, but if you want to treat us, that's fine too.

Before you leave, arrange a meal and I'll go with Uncle Cole."

Steve regretted his words, but he could only pat his chest and say, "Don't worry, before I leave Aurous Hill I will treat both of you well!"

Charlie beckoned him to sit on another small stool, and Peter took out an unpackaged bottle of white wine and poured a cup for Charlie and Steve using disposable paper cups, then filled his own cup.

Charlie invited Steve, "The conditions here are limited, but don't mind."

"No, no," Steve hurriedly said, "I don't have high requirements for material things..."

Peter smiled and asked, "What kind of wine do you usually drink, Mr. Rothschild?"

Steve said, "Just call me Steve, no need to always call me Mr. Rothschild."

After a moment's thought, he continued, "I usually drink mostly red wine, occasionally whiskey."

Peter inquired further, "And how much does the wine you usually drink cost per bottle?"

Steve pondered for a moment, "For table wine, the price is generally between \$10,000 and \$50,000. For important banquets, we usually choose wines that cost over \$100,000."

Peter pointed to the glass bottle of white wine in front of him and asked, "Can you guess how much this bottle of wine costs?"

Steve shook his head, "I don't usually drink Chinese white wine, so I'm not very familiar with the market..."

Charlie smiled and said, "I asked you to guess, not to understand. If you knew the price of this wine per bottle, it wouldn't be called guessing, would it?"

Steve said, "Then... | guess it's probably... \$3,000?"

"\$3,000?" Peter shook his head and laughed, "It's not that much, it's only about \$7..."

"\$72" Steve was stunned and blurted out, "Mr. Cole, do you usually drink \$7 wine?"

Peter laughed, "I haven't had such cheap wine before when | was in the United States, but yesterday | ordered a bottle at a small restaurant and found that although this wine is cheap, it's not bad."

Steve stared at the cup of wine in front of him and subconsciously swallowed his saliva. Nervously, he asked, "Should we do a test of the ingredients before drinking this wine?"

Charlie and Peter exchanged glances and laughed, then Peter said, "You can drink without worry. If anything happens, it's my responsibility."

Charlie added, "Don't worry, if something really happens, I'll give you a pill right away. Isn't that a fair deal for you?"

Steve sneered and said, "Then I'll drink two more bottles and trade them for a pill." Peter smiled and replied, "We only have one bottle of wine. The three of us will share it. Each of us will get about thirty-two cents worth, a | little more than five ounces. With your build, you should have no trouble handling that."

Steve sighed, "I know Mr. Wade's elixirs aren't easy to come by..."

Charlie smiled gently and said, "That's not necessarily true. I've never been stingy with my true friends. Not only the kind of elixir you gave ~~ your father, but even rejuvenation elixirs that are several times stronger. | know exactly how many pills to give out."

Steve said seriously, "Mr. Wade, you know I've always considered you a friend."

Charlie smiled and replied, "Really? Why haven't | felt that?"

Peter, fanning the flames, added, "I guess it's because Steve's friendship is more reserved"

Charlie nodded and looked at Steve, joking, “Steve, we Easterners are more reserved, while you Westerners are usually passionate and unrestrained. From now on, you can be more direct in expressing your friendship.” Steve knew Charlie was teasing him, so he responded humbly, “Don’t worry, Mr. Wade, I’ll make sure to be less subtle in the future.” Then, quickly expressing his loyalty, Steve said, “Mr. Wade, if you ever need anything from me, just ask, and I’ll do my best. As the ancient Chinese saying goes—oh, I remembered it, ‘For a friend, I can do anything, and so can I, Steve Rothschild!’”

Chapter 5770

Charlie had reeled Steve Rothschild in and casually tied him up on his own ship. Although Steve wasn't the most reliable guy, being the second-in-command of the powerful Rothschild family meant it wouldn't hurt to win him over.

Plus, if he sat here today, having a drink and a chat with Bruce's son and Peter Cole, who had taken the Four Treasures of the Study from the Rothschild family, he would be completely implicated. If his father found out, he might just want to disown him for his rebellious behavior.

Sure, it might be a while before he could become the heir of the Rothschild family, but he still had value to be used. Charlie would let Helena handle his father, Howard, and he would personally keep Steve in check. In the future, when he went to the United States, it would be as comfortable as going back home.

So, Charlie looked at Steve and flashed a smile, “Gotta admit, your attitude is pretty impressive.”

With that, he raised his glass and continued, “Come on, Steve, let's toast to our friendship.”

Steve accepted the challenge, lifted his own glass, and cheerfully declared, “Cheers to friendship!”

The strong liquor, with its 53% alcohol content, made Steve momentarily powerless.

After taking a sip, he couldn't help but inhale sharply and exclaim, “Wow, this liquor is really spicy, just like the vodka we used to drink at wild parties back in the day. Unfortunately, my doctor has strictly advised me against consuming high-proof liquor anymore. Even the Romanée-Conti wine is limited to just one ounce a day.”

He sighed, “Getting old is tough. Even drinking has lost its charm. In the past, we could handle vodka with even higher alcohol content, and we never batted an eye. But now, it's different. We're plagued by various minor ailments and chronic diseases, and the doctor's prescriptions are thicker than the Oxford English Dictionary.”

Charlie gazed at Steve, a smile playing on his lips, “They say people start going downhill at thirty. Every bodily function gradually declines.

When you reach your fifties, it's inevitable to face numerous issues. But as long as there are no life-threatening diseases, it's like an old car. It may have its problems, but it can still be driven.”

Steve looked down at his glass, lost in thought, and sighed, “When you reach this stage, you feel exhausted. Just like you said, aging turns us into cars with myriad problems. Even with all the wealth in the world, we can't change this reality. | have so many classic cars, and | have the best team to maintain them, so they still look the same as they did decades ago. But they are fragile. Some of them can't even be driven and are merely displayed as relics. The ones that can be driven are still a challenge to maintain for regular use.”

He paused briefly and continued, “In fact, people have it worse than old cars. Cars can replace parts freely. With enough effort, they can even revive sealed production lines and create new replacement parts. But humans can't. | can afford the best houses and beds, but

can't find the sleep | had in my twenties..."

"I can bring the world's finest chefs to cook gourmet food, but | can't regain the appetite | had in my twenties. My wine cellar is stocked with the best wines in the world, yet my doctor advises me to limit myself to just one ounce a day. | had someone calculate it for me. At this rate, it would take me over 6,800 years to finish all the wines in my cellar."

Charlie could see the sadness in Steve's eyes and smiled, "Now you understand some of your father's decisions, don't you?"

Steve forced a bitter smile, "Understand? How could I not? If | could return to my state of a few years ago, | would pay any price and make any sacrifice. Let's not even talk about the past, let's talk about five years ago. Back then, i could sleep eight hours a day, run five miles, and party every night. Now, | sleep less than six hours, | haven't run in a year and a half, and that aspect of my life has become dull."

He sighed lightly, "I'm in my fifties, and I already miss my youth terribly. It! were in my father's shoes, | would value life and health even more."

Charlie smiled and said, "You always think I'm taking advantage of you, but in reality, | indirectly helped you secure the position of the first heir. As far as | know, the Rothschild family hadn't truly decided on the next heir before all this, am | right?"

Steve reluctantly smiled and said, "You're right... | am now the first heir, but my father has the medicine you provided. Maybe he'll outlive me..."

Charlie replied, "Steve, as long as we can sit here and enjoy a drink together, | won't beat around the bush with you. It doesn't matter who lives longer between you and your father. What matters is who can cooperate with me better. Right now, your father's sincerity outweighs yours, so | let Helena provide him with the elixir."

He continued, “Do you know what your father has been busy with in Norway recently?”

Steve responded, “I have some idea. It seems like he’s working on some data centers.”

Charlie nodded and said, “I presented him with a new offer through Helena. If he can build an AI model for me in Norway, | will provide him with the elixir once again. That way, his physical condition will improve even more. If he can continue to meet my requirements in the future, there may come a time when you and your father have the same physiological age.”

Steve felt a sense of desperation creeping in. It seemed like his father had already aligned himself with Charlie through Helena.

In the future, whatever Charlie wanted from him or even the entire Rothschild family, all he had to do was provide the medicine and have Helena convey the message, and his father would comply. In that case, he, as the heir, might be stuck in this position forever.

Feeling the despair in his heart, he picked up his glass and downed the remaining half in one gulp. Then, he looked at Charlie with a respectful tone and said, “Mr. Wade, | may have been deceitful in the past, but I've realized my mistakes. | beg you to show me a clear path. If I still have a chance, I'll double my efforts. If I don't, then after I report back this time, I'll completely give up and stop trying.”

Steve knew all too well that as his father's lifespan continued to extend and he grew older, the future next heir would become more and more distant.

If his father passed the baton at one hundred, he would already be at retirement age. By that time, his father might bypass him for the sake of the family's development and let his own son take over.

It would be bearable if his own son took over, but if his father allowed his younger brother, who was younger than him, to take charge, then he would be completely finished. His bloodline would be doomed to become outsiders of the Rothschild family, gradually marginalized. Therefore, Steve was now willing to work hard for Charlie in exchange for a chance, but it all depended on whether Charlie was willing to give him this opportunity.

Charlie smiled and asked, “Do you know the situation with the Joules family?”

Steve replied, “I know a bit.”

Charlie continued, “Do you know that the old man of the Joules family, like your father, has obviously recovered a lot in physical condition?

So why is he still willing to pass the title of head of the family to Michaela?”

Steve shook his head and asked tentatively, “Does he love his granddaughter?”

Charlie waved his hand, “Doesn't your father love you as his eldest son? If he loves you, he doesn't necessarily have to pass the throne to you. He will give you endless money, the best living conditions, and material things in the world. Isn't that also a sign of loving you?”

Steve sensed something unusual and quickly asked, “Mr. Wade, please help me understand.”

Charlie explained, “The reason why Mr. Joules is willing to pass the throne to Michaela is because the condition for me to give him a long life was that he gives up the throne to his granddaughter. If he didn't give up the throne, I would not give him the pill. No matter how much money he offered, I wouldn't give it to him.”

With that, Charlie looked at Steve and said seriously, “If one day you make me feel that you are reliable, I will also tie your father's chance of longevity to you. Just imagine, if your father can only obtain the elixir through you, and you ask him to give you the position of family head, will he refuse?”

Steve's eyes lit up, and he said, “If he could choose between power and life, he would definitely choose both. But if he could only choose one, he would definitely choose the latter.”

Then, he immediately said excitedly to Charlie, “Mr. Wade, how can you help me achieve my wish?”

Charlie smiled and said, “Steve, an indestructible friendship needs time to be tempered and verified, but you don't have to be afraid of time. If I can make you live a long life, even if you succeed to the throne at the age of sixty, you will still have forty years. If I can let you live to be one hundred and twenty years old, you will be in your prime when you succeed to the throne at sixty.”

Steve didn't doubt Charlie's words at all. His elixir was so miraculous that it would be easy for people to live to be one hundred and twenty | years old.

If what he said was true, then Steve had to try his best to get Charlie's help. Otherwise, if his father lived to 120, he would never have a chance to get ahead.

With that in mind, he said without hesitation, “Mr. Wade, after I report back this time, I'll request to oversee the family's business in the Asia-Pacific region. I'll increase the family's investment in Aurous Hill and work with you to build it into something bigger and better...”

“Aurous Hill will become my second home! That way, I can come to Aurous Hill often and enjoy a drink with you. I wonder if you would welcome that?”

Charlie nodded and smiled, “If you're willing to come to Aurous Hill to invest and develop, certainly welcome it.”

Steve immediately replied, “It's settled then! Wait for my good news. When I come to Aurous Hill next time, I'll set a new record for foreign investment in Aurous Hill!”

Chapter 5771

Steve had already figured it out.

Ever since Charlie had pulled him into this, Steve knew he could just be a captive signing all daylong. He had to adapt to the situation, as the saying goes, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.”

It was crucial for him to find a way to settle down on Charlie's plans.

His future as the clan leader depended on Charlie's decision, and he had no desire to take on that role himself. All he needed was for | Helena occasionally sell some elixirs to the old man, and he could comfortably sit as the crown prince until his last breath. So, whether he could become the clan leader or live a long life, it all hinged on Charlie's intentions.

With that in mind, why not just follow him?

But if he wanted to follow Charlie, he had to show some sincerity. Personally coming to Aurous Hill to invest seemed like a good way to demonstrate his commitment and financial support.

When Steve expressed his intentions, Charlie smiled and said, *Aurous Hill is a remarkable place, filled with talented individuals. As a native of Aurous Hill, | warmly welcome Mr. Rothschild's decision to invest here.” Steve was afraid that Charlie wouldn't want him on board, but with Charlie's welcoming response, he breathed a sigh of relief and said without hesitation, “With your words, Mr. Wade, I feel reassured!”

Charlie nodded and picked up the unfinished bottle of white wine. In front of Steve, he took out a Life Saving Pill and placed it into the wine bottle.

The black pill dissolved instantly, transforming the wine into a light gray-brown hue.

Steve was shocked as he thought, “Is he going to have me drink this?”

Then, Charlie grabbed a wine glass and poured some for Peter, and a smaller amount for Steve.

Observing that Charlie poured about five-sixths of the wine for Peter and only about one-fifth for himself, Steve quickly spoke up, “Mr... Mr. Wade... Can | have a little more?”

Charlie smiled and replied, “Steve, the medicated wine is potent, but don't be greedy.”

With that, he poured the remaining wine into his own glass.

Though envious, Steve didn't dare to say much. After all, that one-fifth was still a generous gift. If he displayed greed at this moment, Charlie might become displeased.

So, he respectfully said, "Thank you, Mr. Wade, thank you!"

Peter was also pleasantly surprised and said, "Young Master Wade... I'm truly grateful!"

Charlie smiled calmly and said, "Uncle Cole, there's no need to be so formal. Let's drink this to welcome Steve to Aurous Hill in advance.

From now on, he will become the foreign businessman with the highest investment in Aurous Hill, contributing to both our country and ~ Aurous Hill's efforts to attract foreign Investment."

Peter nodded firmly, picked up his wine glass, and said, "Then let's welcome Steve in advance for his investment in Aurous Hill!"

Steve quickly picked up his wine glass with both hands and declared loudly, "Don't worry, everyone! I will do my best!"

He then looked at Charlie, waiting for his cue. After all, he wouldn't dare drink the medicinal wine without Charlie's approval.

Charlie picked up his wine glass with a smile and said, "Here, let's do it."

Steve quickly picked up his glass and downed the liquor in one gulp.

As the liquor touched his lips, he noticed a distinct difference from before!

Normally, drinking liquor would bring about a burning sensation, but this medicated wine provided a warm and nourishing feeling. It

seemed as if every pore in his body was tingling with comfort.

After all, this Life Saving Pill, enhanced by the Medicine Cauldron, was twice as potent as the earlier version. This one-fifth of the wine

could at least restore Steve's condition to what it was two years ago.

He felt the overwhelming efficacy of the elixir. He no longer felt fatigued, and sitting on the cushion no longer caused aches in his waist,

back, or buttocks. Even his eyesight seemed to have improved, and his presbyopia had significantly diminished.

In short, he experienced an unprecedented sense of ease!

Looking at Peter across from him, he noticed that his complexion had become rosier, and even his visible wrinkles had diminished!

Realizing that others had consumed twice as much efficacy as he had, Steve couldn't help but marvel, “Mr. Wade... | now understand why my father valued your elixirs so much... This... This is more than medicine, it's like turning back time!”

Charlie smiled and said, “Steve, remember one principle: the one who lives the longest is the true victor. If you're lucky, your life is not even halfway over, and the future holds infinite possibilities.”

Steve quickly stood up and bowed deeply to Charlie, saying, “Mr. Wade is absolutely right. hope that in the future, | will have the opportunity to always be by your side and learn from your teachings!”

While Charlie, Peter, and Steve toasted and drank, Jacob found a cheap budget hotel to stay in.

He didn't want his daughter and son-in-law to know he had returned to China, and he didn't want to spend too much money on accommodation. Thus, he settled for a budget hotel for the night and planned to fly back to Dubai with Elaine early the next morning.

After taking a shower in the moldy and unpleasant bathroom, Jacob lay on the dilapidated bed, tears welling up in his eyes once again, unable to be contained.

He had missed many opportunities in his life. Matilda was one, and the Northern Song Gilded Bronze Buddha was another. As he reflected on his life, he realized that he had never seized any good opportunities.

Finally, he managed to infiltrate the Calligraphy and Painting Association and become an executive vice president, but he had ruined it himself.

Now, he had to lie on this bed and write a resignation email to Chairman Price. He knew the email was merely a formality, stating his

resignation and providing Chairman Price with room to negotiate on his behalf. At this moment, Chairman Price was not idle at home either. He managed to find Don Albert's phone number through various channels.

After hesitating for a while, he decided to call Don Albert.

In his mind, he was Jacob's superior, and since Jacob had a close relationship with Don Albert, he felt it was necessary to inform him about the situation. After all, if Don Albert turned around and blamed him for Jacob's demotion, he would have needlessly offended him.

He needed to make it clear to Don Albert that he had reluctantly dealt with Jacob due to his position, but considering Don Albert's face and his relationship with Jacob, he would do his best to secure a vice president position for him.

Don Albert answered the call from an unknown number cautiously, asking, "Who is this?"

Chairman Price quickly explained, "Hello, is this Don Albert? It's me..."

Don Albert hummed and asked him, "Who are you? What do you want from me?"

Chairman Price quickly explained, "Hello Don Albert, | am Lester Price from the Calligraphy and Painting Association. We've met before."

"Oh, I remember," Don Albert replied, recalling their previous encounter. He asked, "How did you get my phone number?"

Chairman Price said hurriedly, "| asked a few friends to help me find your phone number. | hope you don't mind."

Don Albert smiled and guessed that his call must be related to Jacob, so he said, "If you have any questions for me, just tell me."

Chairman Price continued, "Its like this.... Jacob and Zachary's recent incident in the antique circle has caused quite a stir... | don't know if you've heard about it?"

Don Albert confirmed, "Yes, | have heard about it. Please continue."

Chairman Price proceeded, "To be honest, this matter has had a significant impact not only in the antique circle but also in our field of

calligraphy and painting, and the cultural and artistic aspects of our city. As you know, I had promoted Jacob to the position of executive vice president, and I had plans to further advance his position after my departure from the Calligraphy and Painting Association...”

Sighing, Chairman Price said with a sense of helplessness, “But to be frank, the repercussions of this incident are too great, and it is indeed quite damaging. I can't bear the pressure anymore, so I had to ask Jacob to step down from the position of executive vice president...”

“However, I will do my best to appease my subordinates and try to secure a regular vice president position for him. I personally believe the chances of success are quite high. If all else fails, I will at least secure a director position for Jacob. What are your thoughts on this?”

Don Albert understood Chairman Price's intention, which was to ensure that Jacob wouldn't be demoted and later blame him for it.

In theory, he could simply say, “Thank you for your hard work, Chairman Price,” and the matter would be resolved. Jacob should be able to retain at least a director position, as Chairman Price had mentioned.

However, after a moment of thought, he decided to act differently. Charlie had made his stance clear. He wanted to teach Jacob a lesson.

If Don Albert helped him now and contradicted Charlie's intentions, wouldn't that be going against Charlie?

Considering this, he pretended to be surprised and asked Chairman Price, “Why are you telling me about the internal affairs of the Calligraphy and Painting Association? I'm not a member of your association. What does it have to do with me?”

“An?” Chairman Price was momentarily stunned.

He sensed that Don Albert seemed somewhat displeased, but he couldn't pinpoint the source of this displeasure.

Was it dissatisfaction with his phone call and reporting, dissatisfaction with his handling of the situation, or simply a lack of interest in getting involved at all?

Unable to grasp the key point, Chairman Price quickly explained, “Don Albert, I'm informing you to avoid any misunderstandings later on. I'm also concerned that if you learn of Jacob's demotion, you might be unhappy...”

Don Albert interrupted him impatiently, “It has nothing to do with me. Why should I be happy or unhappy? Even if your Calligraphy and Painting Association dissolves tomorrow, it has nothing to do with me.”

With that, he sounded annoyed and said, “Alright, I have other matters to attend to, so I'll hang up if you have no other business.”

Chairman Price was still trying to process the situation when he heard the busy tone on the other end, indicating that Don Albert had hung up.

Now it was Chairman Price who was left confused.

He couldn't help muttering to himself, “What does Don Albert mean? Doesn't he want to intervene in Jacob's affairs? Wasn't he quite polite to Jacob before?”

Chairman Price's wife emerged from the bedroom, observing her husband's perplexed state. She couldn't help but inquire, “Lester, what did Don Albert say on the phone?”

Chairman Price replied, “He said that the matter in the Calligraphy and Painting Association has nothing to do with him and even if it dissolves, it has nothing to do with him...”

Chairman Price's wife immediately responded, “Why are you even thinking about it? Clearly, he doesn't want to get involved in Jacob's

affairs!”

Chapter 5772

“Don Albert doesn't care about Jacob anymore?” Chairman Price exclaimed in disbelief. “But... He used to hold Jacob in such high regard. Remember when we dined at Heaven Springs? Don Albert not only gave us the best private room, but he personally served us wine and toasted to our success...”

His wife waved her hand dismissively and replied, “Oh, old man, you've been a member of the Calligraphy and Painting Association for far 100 long. Your instincts have dulled. Even if two people were close yesterday, it doesn't mean they can't be at odds today. Besides, there's a reason why Zachary is Don Albert's strategist. Jacob betrayed that trust by conspiring with him to commit fraud. Don Albert won't be pleased with that, | assure you.”

She continued, her tone growing more assertive. “And if you've seen Zachary's social media, you'd know that the money from the fraud ended up in Jacob's pocket. What does that prove? It proves that Zachary became Jacob's lackey, doing his dirty work for him!”

“If Jacob had the audacity to use Don Albert's strategist as his pawn and cause such a scandal, do you think Don Albert would want to associate with him? No, at a time like this, if Don Albert gets angry, he will most certainly sever all ties with Jacob!”

Chairman Price, taken aback by this revelation, exclaimed, “Wife, are you suggesting that Don Albert no longer cares about Jacob's well-being?”

“Absolutely!” his wife affirmed. “If he did, he would have made his stance clear by now. They even prevented you from contacting him, which implies that they want to distance themselves from the situation without explicitly saying it.”

Chairman Price bit his lip, frustration evident on his face. “If only | had known his true feelings earlier. I vouched for Jacob, hoping to

secure his position as the vice president to please Don Albert and avoid any future blame. But now that Don Albert doesn't even care

“about him, why should | bear the burden for him?”

“You're absolutely right!” his wife agreed without hesitation. “Now that Don Albert has made his stance clear, there's no need for you to continue supporting Jacob. And you mustn't forget that your actions will be scrutinized. If you help him, people will accuse you of favoritism, giving them ammunition to undermine your reputation. Handling this matter fairly will earn you a good name.”

She reminded him, “Lester, don't be too optimistic. Consider what happens if you don't get promoted. What will you do then?”

“If I don't get promoted...” Chairman Price pondered for a moment. “If that happens, | will continue working in the Calligraphy and Painting Association.”

His wife nodded, her eyes filled with concern. “If you find yourself staying in the association, whether you show favoritism or handle things fairly will directly impact your authority and position. In my opinion, it's unnecessary to jeopardize your own image for Jacob in this situation.”

Chairman Price nodded thoughtfully and said awkwardly, “But | already promised him...”

His wife interjected, “What happened to the promise? There are many things you can promise to others. My sister wanted to borrow money to buy a house, and | promised her, but she turned around and asked for a loan of two million. Can | give it to her? She sold the old house to buy a new one, and the total price difference is only two million. You think it's reasonable for her to ask me to borrow one million. But if she asks for the full two million, then | can't help her. If she dares to ask, | dare to refuse.”

Chairman Price asked, "What do you mean? Should I simply not bother to protect Jacob?"

His wife suggested, "Didn't you ask him to send an email to resign? As long as he sends the email, just accept his resignation."

Chairman Price hesitated, "This... This is too blatant. I asked him to send an email to resign to first step down from the position of

executive vice president, and then we could mediate with the other vice presidents. Everyone's internal problems could be resolved

internally... Jacob makes a step forward, and everyone is happy. But if I directly remove him, wouldn't that be like the bank's malicious

loan withdrawal? He'll know I've tricked him, and he'll hate me for it." I

"What are you afraid of?" his wife asked, clearly irritated. "Are you so afraid that Jacob will hate you? My sister hates me so much right

now, and what did I say? She just hates me, but there's no way I'm lending her the money!"

"If I gave her two million because I was afraid she'd hate me, what would happen? She'd buy a new house without spending a penny, then

renovate it this year, buy a car next year, and the year after that, her kids would get married and have grandchildren. The spending would

never stop. The two million might not be returned to us in three to five years, maybe not even in ten or twenty years!"

"If I do nothing with the two million and just put it in a universal account, with a 3.5% annual interest rate, that's 70,000 a year. Not

counting compound interest, that's 700,000 in ten years. Who's going to give me that money? can't afford to be that foolish!"

She continued, "There's no point in helping Jacob now. Don Albert doesn't care about him anymore and won't remember you for it. What's

the benefit of protecting him? There's none at all!"

"And by protecting him, you'll definitely get a bad reputation for practicing favoritism. In the future, this will be a weak spot for you in the

Painting and Calligraphy Association. If one day the vice-presidents want to take you down, all they need is a letter of complaint and

you're finished."

Chairman Price broke into a cold sweat and quickly said. “If you put it that way, then | definitely can't protect him anymore”

‘With a long sigh, he added, “Well, at this point, everyone must take care of their own problems. Don’t worry about others. Don't blame me for being unfair to Jacob. He only has himself to blame for causing trouble.”

Meanwhile, Jacob had finished drafting his resignation email. Concerned about his reputation, he sent the email only to Chairman Price without copying the other members.

Chairman Price received the email and opened it immediately. It stated that due to personal reasons, Jacob had decided to resign from his position as the executive vice president and requested Chairman Price's approval.

According to their initial plan, Chairman Price would convene a meeting with the other vice presidents the next day, present the email, and explain that Jacob would step down while others would move up, resolving the matter amicably. However, Chairman Price no longer intended to protect Jacob.

For him, Jacob's resignation email became the perfect opportunity to sever ties with him.

He could have simply replied to the email, approving Jacob's resignation and allowing him to leave the association. However, Chairman Price worried that Jacob might cause trouble in the middle of the night, especially since Jacob would be flying to Dubai the next morning.

Therefore, he decided to approve Jacob's resignation the following day, giving Jacob a few days to process the news while he was already overseas.

Within five minutes of Jacob sending his resignation email, Chairman Price replied to it.

Jacob opened the response and read Chairman Price's words, "Jacob's voluntary resignation as vice president is truly a loss for our association. However, we must respect his personal circumstances and wishes. Therefore, I request all vice presidents to gather in my office tomorrow morning at 10 to discuss this matter together."

Perplexed by Chairman Price's response, Jacob wondered why Chairman Price had copied all the other members. It seemed unnecessary to involve everyone in this matter. After all, it was merely a formality, and keeping it between themselves would have sufficed to maintain the illusion.

Quickly, Jacob sent a voice message on WeChat to Chairman Price, seeking clarification. "Chairman Price, did you accidentally include everyone in your reply?"

Chairman Price replied, "Jacob, everyone is aware of the situation, so there's no need to keep it a secret. By involving everyone, we demonstrate fairness and transparency. Don't worry, in tomorrow's meeting, I will discuss the matter thoroughly with the other vice presidents."

Reflecting on Chairman Price's explanation, Jacob realized the validity of his point. His affairs were already widely known in the antique and literary circles, so there was no need to keep it hidden within the association. In fact, involving everyone would make it more convincing.

Feeling reassured, Jacob messaged Chairman Price, "Chairman Price, I have an early flight to Dubai tomorrow morning, so I'll leave the matter in your capable hands!"

Chairman Price responded, "Jacob, don't worry. I will handle it appropriately."

Trusting Chairman Price, Jacob smiled and said, “Thank you, Chairman Price. When I return, I'll treat you to a splendid meal at Heaven Springs!”

After reading the message, Chairman Price muttered to himself, “Heaven Springs? Even Don Albert no longer cares about you. Perhaps.

at Heaven Springs, I'll have more power than you.”

He let out a sigh, tossing his phone aside, and consoled himself, “I'm not really betraying him. After all, he brought this trouble upon himself, right, dear?”

His wife nodded, a smile playing on her lips. “Of course, you're not betraying him. You're merely distancing yourself from him at the opportune moment. I believe you should not only cancel the small meeting with the other vice presidents tomorrow, but also gather all members for a full meeting. Let everyone vote on whether Jacob should remain in the association.”

“If everyone feels that Jacob's collaboration with Zachary is inconsequential and wishes to keep him, then you needn't worry. Let him stay.”

“But if everyone expresses their desire for him to leave the Calligraphy and Painting Association, you won't bear the blame alone. It will be a decision made collectively by all members. You can use that as a shield.”

Chairman Price replied, “Let me tell you, even without this incident, Jacob would have had to leave. He has the lowest qualifications among us, and everyone knows he lacks the necessary skills. I faced immense pressure when I promoted him in the first place.”

His wife nodded, satisfaction evident in her eyes. “That's perfect, then. Even if it means using a borrowed knife, if Jacob confronts you later and demands an explanation, you can simply say it was a unanimous decision and you had no control over it. After all, he brought

this fraud upon himself. It's his fault, not yours”

Jacob, the sender of the email, remained blissfully unaware that this correspondence would become the catalyst for his departure from the esteemed Calligraphy and Painting Association.

The night was restless for him in the shabby express hotel. Dark circles hung beneath his eyes as he rushed to the airport the next morning.

Security check, immigration, boarding-everything proceeded smoothly. By 10 o'clock in the morning, the plane carrying him had taken off from Aurous Hill Airport, bound for the dazzling city of Dubai.

Meanwhile, several vice presidents of the Calligraphy and Painting Association had already gathered in Chairman Price's office.

Their shared objective was to exert pressure on Chairman Price and ensure that Jacob was expelled from the association.

They were well aware of Jacob's connections in society and his close relationship with Don Albert. It was highly likely that Chairman Price would protect him to save face.

However, they were also cognizant that if Chairman Price went to great lengths to defend Jacob, it would undoubtedly reach his ears, and he would hold a grudge.

Once the group entered Chairman Price's office and closed the door, one of them couldn't help but inquire, "Chairman Price, what are your plans regarding Vice President Wilson's situation?"

Chairman Price replied, "I have called you all here to discuss this matter together. I want to hear your opinions."

"Our opinions?" The group exchanged glances, and one of them spoke up, "In my personal view, this matter has had a detrimental impact.

All eyes are on us now. If we mishandle it, it will provide others with ammunition to accuse us of protecting Vice President Wilson."

Another person nodded in agreement, "I concur. The circle is small, and everyone is watching."

Chairman Price stated, "Since we are having this discussion behind closed doors, let's be direct. Do all of you believe that the association should take action against Vice President Wilson?"

The group looked at each other, and finally, the vice president most likely to replace Jacob spoke up, “Yes, this matter has had a significant negative impact. We must impose some form of punishment.”

He hesitated for a moment before continuing, “In my opinion, we should strip him of his position as vice president.”

Another person chimed in, “Jacob has already sent his resignation email. Why not simply accept his resignation and let it be?”

The third person turned to Chairman Price and proposed, “Ultimately, it comes down to your opinion, Chairman Price. If you don't believe Vice President Wilson's offense is grave, we can negotiate and find an alternative solution to keep him in the association.”

Chairman Price waved his hand dismissively and replied, “This matter concerns the association as a whole. Let's not make it about me personally. If it gets out, people will think I am protecting Vice President Wilson. How can I face everyone in the future?”

The person smiled awkwardly and said, “Chairman Price, I didn't mean anything else. I just don't want you to face difficulties later on.”

Chairman Price asked, “So, what do you believe is the best and fairest course of action?”

Without hesitation, the person responded, “For the sake of fairness, we should vote collectively. There is nothing fairer than that.”

The others nodded in agreement.

In this situation, no one wanted to be the key individual responsible for driving Jacob away. Yet, they all desired his departure from the association.

Under these circumstances, regardless of whom they asked, the most reasonable solution would undoubtedly be a collective vote, with everyone taking responsibility for the outcome. This would eliminate any possibility of singling out individuals.

Most importantly, they were all aware that Jacob lacked popularity within the association. Many privately criticized his lack of professional ability, and the scandal he had caused this time was particularly grave. Everyone wanted him gone.

Chairman Price eagerly awaited someone to propose a public vote, seizing the opportunity to declare, “Well then, let's not keep this discussion behind closed doors. Let's gather everyone in the conference room and hold an open vote. Those in favor of retaining Vice President Wilson will write ‘stay’ on their ballot, while those against will write ‘leave’. We will conduct a public vote, and the majority will decide the outcome.”

Everyone was elated and agreed, “Okay!”

The Calligraphy and Painting Association had a small membership, numbering around twenty individuals. Chairman Price instructed everyone to convene in the conference room at 1 o'clock in the afternoon.

The chosen time of 1 o'clock in the afternoon accounted for a few members who were engaged in external activities. For instance, Stanley Finch, who had taken over Jacob's teaching position at the senior university, received a notification from the association to return for the meeting at 1 o'clock in the afternoon.

By 1 o'clock in the afternoon, everyone in the association, except for Jacob, sat upright in the conference room.

Chairman Price wasted no time and began, “Today, we have gathered here due to certain personal matters involving Vice President

Wilson a few days ago. The repercussions of this incident have been quite severe, and yesterday Vice President Wilson sent me another resignation email. Therefore, after discussing with several vice presidents, we have decided to conduct a public vote within our association to determine whether to retain Vice President Wilson..."

As soon as the topic of retaining Jacob was broached, excitement rippled through the room.

Naturally, no one wanted to keep Jacob.

Observing the room's uproar, Chairman Price rapped the table, demanding, "Please, everyone, quiet down and let me finish speaking."

Gradually, the commotion subsided, and all eyes fixated on Chairman Price, awaiting his next words.

Chairman Price cleared his throat and continued, "Each of you has a piece of paper before you. Now, you will write either 'leave' or 'stay' on that paper. Those in favor of keeping Vice President Wilson will write 'stay', while those against will write 'leave'. It's an anonymous vote, so there's no need to include your name, Just 'leave' or 'stay'. Of course, you can also abstain by writing 'abstain' on the paper..."

"After completing your vote, pass the paper from back to front to me. I will publicly tally the votes and announce the result. If the majority supports retaining Vice President Wilson, then he will stay. If the majority supports his departure, then he will be dismissed. If the votes for leaving and staying are equal, we will find a compromise and ask Vice President Wilson to step down from his position as executive vice president."

Smiles spread across everyone's faces, as if it were New Year's Day.

Chairman Price couldn't help but sigh, "Jacob's popularity truly is abysmal..."

After releasing a sigh, he picked up his own pen and wrote 'abstain' on his ballot. Setting the pen down, he surreptitiously snapped a

photo of his note with his phone.

In any case, he had left himself an escape route. If Jacob approached him, he could simply claim indecision and cite his abstention. The ones truly responsible for Jacob's departure were those who had voted 'leave', not him. Once all the votes were in his possession, Chairman Price publicly began counting them.

He retrieved the first note, opened it, and declared, "Leave."

Without delay, someone recorded the result on the blackboard. He proceeded to open the second note, pronouncing, "Leave!"

He continued reading 'leave' votes one after another, totaling twenty-six, leaving only his own ballot. The room brimmed with joy, as if it were a celebration.

Chairman Price couldn't help but comment, "Jacob's popularity truly is abysmal."

After remarking, he picked up his own note and exclaimed, "Abstain."

Tuning to look at the blackboard, he announced, "Twenty-six people chose to leave, one person chose to abstain. It appears that this result aligns with everyone's expectations. Since the majority supports his resignation, we will respond to Vice President Wilson's email after the personnel manager reviews it and accept his resignation request. We will notify him to complete the resignation procedures at the association upon his return from Dubai!"

Applause erupted, filling the conference room with resounding cheers.

The vice presidents beamed with delight, as Jacob's departure not only rid them of a thorn in their side but also opened up opportunities for each of them to advance further. It was an unequivocally positive outcome.

Chairman Price also felt a sense of relief. He turned to the personnel manager and instructed, “By the way, when you reply to Vice President Wilson's email, attach the minutes of this meeting as well.” [“Of course!” The personnel manager nodded eagerly. “Rest assured, Chairman Price, | will handle it properly.” “Very well.” Chairman Price breathed a sigh of relief, rose from his seat, and declared, “Alright, today's meeting concludes here. Adjourned!”

Chapter 5774

The efficiency of the Calligraphy and Painting Association is remarkably high.

Immediately after the meeting, they promptly posted the news of Executive Vice President Jacob's resignation on their official website and simultaneously released a notification on their WeChat official account.

The wording of the notification was concise, omitting any mention of Jacob's actions. It simply stated that Executive Vice President Jacob had resigned for personal reasons, and the association, following a general assembly, had accepted his resignation request.

Though the message was straightforward, these few words effectively expelled Jacob from the Calligraphy and Painting Association.

The Calligraphy and Painting Association maintains close connections with other literary and art associations in the city, the antique and collectibles circle, and the esteemed university.

The Calligraphy and Painting Association's WeChat official account boasts just over a thousand followers, many of whom are from the esteemed university.

Nearly every student, lecturer, and visiting professor at the esteemed university follows the Calligraphy and Painting Association's official

account. This is primarily because when Jacob used to teach at the esteemed university, he would often urge everyone to scan the QR code and follow the account. Eager to save face, everyone obliged and scanned it.

Now, the esteemed university was the first to learn of Jacob's resignation. Matilda had recently taken leave and was actively preparing for her wedding with Mr. Riley.

At that moment, she had just finished trying on wedding dresses and changed back into her own clothes when she unexpectedly received a push notification on her phone, leaving her startled.

Knowing Jacob personally, Matilda understood how much he valued his position as the executive vice president of the Calligraphy and Painting Association. It seemed unlikely for him to resign voluntarily. However, the statement released by the Calligraphy and Painting Association claimed that Jacob had resigned of his own accord due to personal reasons. This left Matilda perplexed.

She turned to Mr. Riley and said, "The Calligraphy and Painting Association released a statement saying that Jacob resigned..."

"Resigned?" Mr. Riley exclaimed. "Is it because of that incident that went viral in the antique street a few days ago?"

Matilda neither confirmed nor denied it and replied, "Perhaps. I'm not certain. But it seems like the incident didn't escalate further, so he shouldn't have needed to resign."

Mr. Riley suggested, "Maybe he just couldn't bear the shame."

Matilda disagreed, stating, "That's not his style. I'll ask him."

During her time with Mr. Riley, Matilda had shared her history with Jacob, including their unresolved feelings for each other. However, she

had made it clear that she no longer harbored romantic feelings for Jacob after committing to Mr. Riley.

Since Mr. Riley had spent many years in the West, he wasn't overly concerned about the past. Moreover, he trusted Matilda, so he didn't
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Since Mr. Riley had spent many years in the West, he wasn't overly concerned about the past. Moreover, he trusted Matilda, so he didn't feel any jealousy towards Jacob.

He nodded and said, "It's a good idea to ask. There might be more to this than meets the eye. If Jacob is feeling down, perhaps we can

offer some support.”

Matilda agreed with a murmur and sent a message to Jacob on WeChat. She inquired, “Jacob, why did you suddenly resign from the Calligraphy and Painting Association?”

After waiting for a long time without a reply on WeChat, Matilda wasn't sure what Jacob was occupied with, but she didn't feel the need to say more. She simply waited for his response.

After enduring eight and a half hours in economy class, the plane finally touched down at Dubai Airport.

The continuous back-and-forth trips had taken a toll on Jacob. He had hardly had the chance to explore and appreciate Dubai, and he had developed a strong distaste for the city. All he desired was for this trip to end so he would never have to set foot in Dubai again.

During the flight, Jacob couldn't help but find himself lost in a whirlwind of thoughts. He no longer held hope of recovering the lost money. His only aspiration was for Chairman Price to secure a director position for him.

Fortunately, Chairman Price had assured him that he would at least be given a director position, if not the vice president position. So, even as his mind raced with thoughts and speculations, he never imagined that he would be ousted from the Calligraphy and Painting Association in such a manner.

As soon as the plane landed, he eagerly turned off airplane mode on his phone and waited for it to connect to the internet, eager to ask Chairman Price about the progress and details of the meeting. Upon connecting to the internet, he received several messages on WeChat, including push notifications from official accounts and inquiries from many acquaintances.

Numerous people were aware of his resignation from the Calligraphy and Painting Association and reached out to him, seeking details.

This included Matilda.

When Jacob saw Matilda's profile picture among the unread messages, he felt a surge of energy coursing through him.

Though he no longer harbored any illusions about Matilda after the incident a few days ago, seeing her message stirred up an uncontrollable excitement within him.

And now, with Elaine absent, he felt a thrill akin to having an affair.

He swiftly opened Matilda's message and discovered her query about his resignation. Without much thought, he assumed that Matilda was aware of the resignation email he had sent and replied nonchalantly, "It's not exactly a resignation, just an email sent as a formality.

You can consider it as such. By the way, Matilda, how did you come to know about the internal emails of the Calligraphy and Painting Association?"

Matilda responded, "It's not from internal emails. The association's official account has already released a statement. Didn't you know?"

Jacob, initially confused upon reading her message, quickly realized his mistake. He hurriedly searched for the Calligraphy and Painting Association on the official account.

After scrolling through numerous irrelevant notifications, he finally discovered the post published by the Calligraphy and Painting Association. The title read, "Appointment and Removal Statement Regarding the Executive Vice President of the Calligraphy and Painting Association."

Jacob thought to himself, "From the looks of it, they must have removed me from the position of executive vice president. But it doesn't matter. | never expected to retain the position anyway."

He clicked on the post.

As soon as he opened the post, Jacob's eyes widened in disbelief. His anger surged, threatening to burst forth from his eye sockets.

He cursed furiously, "Price, you treacherous bastard! You've played me for a fool!"

His sudden outburst attracted the attention of the passengers around him. Yet, Jacob paid no mind to the curious gazes. He immediately dialed Chairman Price's number.

Chairman Price had already returned home and was seated on the living room sofa with his wife, waiting for Jacob to call and demand an explanation.

Chairman Price fully understood that he needed to provide an explanation to Jacob in order to avoid unnecessary trouble. Ignoring

Jacob's call and refusing to answer would only confirm that he had set Jacob up.

To prevent any trouble, he decided to explain to Jacob, following his wife's suggestion to shift the blame onto others.

He answered Jacob's call and spoke apologetically, "Ah, Jacob, I'm truly sorry!"

Overflowing with rage, Jacob immediately confronted him, "Price, are you playing games with me? You told me to send a resignation email

and promised to secure a vice president or director position for me. But now, what?

Now, not only did you fail to grant me a director

position, you didn't even inform me. You simply fired me! So, it turns out that everything you said was a trap, right? You're a despicable

bastard! I treated you so well, considering you my trusted elder brother, but I must have been blind!"

Chairman Price swiftly interjected, "Jacob, listen to me, this situation is not as straightforward as you believe. I genuinely wanted to keep

you, and this morning, I called the other vice presidents to my office to discuss the matter. However, they insisted that your actions had

significantly tarnished the association's reputation, and many individuals held strong opinions against you..."

"They forced me to conduct a full vote within the association, and during the vote, everyone, except for me, voted for your dismissal. At

that moment, everyone awaited my decision, and I had no choice."

He continued, "By the way, when you return, check your emails. The personnel department should have sent you all the meeting minutes."

Chairman Price shifted the blame onto everyone else, but Jacob felt no gratitude. He shouted angrily, “Price, spare me your useless explanations. All | know is that you promised to secure a vice president or director position for me. Yet, you failed to fulfill your promise!

You failed to fulfill your promise, which means you are not a man of your word!”

After that, Jacob shouted with a trembling voice, his eyes brimming with tears.

“Price, you don't understand how much effort | put in to join the Painting and Calligraphy Association. Ever since my days on Antique

Street, I've always wanted to be part of it! Once | joined, | never asked you for anything as the president, right? Those few times you

wanted to visit Heaven Springs, | took you to the best places and introduced you to

Don Albert. I've always had a good relationship with |

him and treated you with the utmost respect. Now you treat me like this? How will you face him in the future?”

Chairman Price's expression turned sour as he thought to himself, “How long has it been, and you're still using Don Albert to boast? If Don |

Albert showed even the slightest interest in protecting you, I'd have no choice but to comply.”

However, Chairman Price didn't dare to challenge Don Albert, so he coldly replied,

“Jacob, I've made it very clear. This decision isn't mine

alone, it's the consensus of the entire Calligraphy and Painting Association. They all want you to leave. What can | do? Instead of

questioning me. maybe you should ask yourself why you're so unpopular within the association. if you were well-liked. why would ~~

everyone want you gone? No one wants you to stay! Not a single person!”

Jacob was undeterred. He gritted his teeth and said, “Don't give me those excuses.

All | know is that you promised to secure me a position

as vice president, or at least a director, and you didn't keep your word! If you don't follow through, you're breaking your promise!”

Chairman Price responded coldly, “If that's what you believe, then there's nothing more I can do. It's up to you. Whether you curse or hate

me, | have nothing to say. However, | will remind you, Jacob, that the reason you find yourself in this situation is your own fault!”

“If you hadn't engaged in that deceitful act, not only would you have avoided expulsion from the association, but you also would have had a great chance of becoming the president. So, I advise you to reflect on your actions during your time in Dubai and search within yourself for the root of the problem, instead of blaming others for all the faults!”

Before Jacob could respond, Chairman Price concluded, “By the way, when you return, contact Stanley Finch. He's usually closer to you, so let him handle your resignation procedures. Additionally, let him assist you in packing your personal belongings. It's best if you don't return again; otherwise, people won't know how to look at you...”

“Given our relationship, I can only offer this much assistance. Whether you appreciate it or hate me, I can honestly say that I have a clear conscience. So, that's it. Take care of yourself from now on... Goodbye...”

Listening to the busy tone on the phone, Jacob pounded his chest and stomped his feet. He never anticipated that just when he thought this matter was finally behind him, Chairman Price would make such a drastic move!

Now, he had been expelled from the Calligraphy and Painting Association, and it appeared that he would once again find himself unemployed.

Chapter 5775

Emotionally and mentally devastated, Jacob wept as he boarded the plane, and his tears continued to flow when he arrived at the hotel in a taxi.

Elaine, who had spent the day and night lounging luxuriously in the hotel, was speechless when she witnessed Jacob crying like a child and swiping his card to enter the room.

For Jacob, seeing Elaine brought him solace in his distress. He threw himself into her arms and sobbed, "Wife... That guy Price played me... | have nothing now..."

Elaine was taken aback by Jacob's tears, quickly comforting him by patting his back. She said, "Don't cry, dear. It's just a worthless painting and calligraphy association. We don't need to care about it! Listen to me, we won't go there anymore!"

Jacob wept, "But | do care about it, | want to go..."

Elaine, feeling anger rise within her, slid her hand from patting Jacob's back to his waist and pinched him hard when he wasn't paying attention.

"Ouch!" Jacob yelped in pain, then asked her angrily and hurt, "Why did you pinch me?!"

"Of course!" Elaine scolded with a cold face. *I was trying to comfort you, and you turned around and contradicted me. If that's how it is, then go cry on your own!"

Jacob felt even more wronged and asked her in return, "Can't you comfort me a little more?"

Elaine waved her hand dismissively. "Just that one sentence, nothing more!"

She looked at him with disdain and said, "Jacob, do you know what kind of life I had in Bedford Hills Prison? Do you know how I endured it?"

Jacob instinctively asked her, "How did you endure it?"

Elaine glanced at him and said, "I don't even want to tell you! It's just embarrassing!"

Jacob became even more frustrated and muttered, "I'm already in such a miserable state, and you keep scolding me!"

"What's wrong with scolding you? You deserve it" Elaine said. "Let me tell you, Jacob, we came out on this trip for our honeymoon. If you leave me alone and run around for a day and night, | won't say anything. But from now on, if you continue to have that dead face wherever we go, then book the earliest flight back and leave!"

Jacob, seeing that Elaine was not joking, sighed and said, "Alright, alright, can't | turn it around?"

Elaine nodded. "That's more like it!"

Jacob stopped complaining, but his heart was even more depressed. He had never encountered such a series of setbacks in his life, and it would take a long time for him to digest it. At this moment, all he could do was swallow his frustration.

At that moment, Charlie waited in his car outside Claire's company, ready to pick her up from work and take her home.

WERE suddenly called him and asked, “Charlie, how is your father-in-law? I sent him a message on WeChat, but he didn't reply. Is everything okay?”

Charlie replied, “I don't know. My father-in-law and mother-in-law went to Dubai for a vacation and haven't returned yet. Is something wrong, Matilda?”

Matilda said, “I received an announcement from the Calligraphy and Painting Association this afternoon, saying that your father-in-law resigned from the association. Although it is said that he resigned on his own, considering the previous incident with the bronze Buddha, it doesn't seem like it. | wonder if he had a conflict with someone in the association.”

The news of Jacob's resignation from the Calligraphy and Painting Association caught Charlie by surprise.

He had orchestrated Zachary's exposé as a lesson for Jacob and to make him truly understand the pain. However, he had expected that even though Jacob had lost money and face this time, the association's president would at least leave him with a nominal position, allowing him to save face. But unexpectedly, the association announced his resignation, which he hadn't anticipated.

So he said to Matilda, “Matilda, my father-in-law didn't mention this to me. If you hadn't called, | wouldn't have known that he had already resigned.”

Matilda sighed and said, "Knowing your father-in-law's character and how much he values the association, no matter the reason for his resignation, whether it was voluntary or forced, he probably won't be able to accept it for a while. I don't want to ask him, and it's not appropriate for me to persuade him... Please try to keep an eye on him and prevent any further complications."

Although Matilda no longer had feelings for Jacob, they had been classmates and old friends for many years, so she still cared about him.

She called Charlie to make sure that Jacob wouldn't be overwhelmed by such a big blow.

Charlie was puzzled. Chairman Price shouldn't have expelled Jacob from the Painting and Calligraphy Association. Keeping Jacob was essentially maintaining a connection to Don Albert and Heaven Springs, which could be very beneficial. In comparison, it wouldn't have been difficult to simply demote Jacob, despite some pressure to remove him entirely.

Furthermore, Charlie didn't want Jacob to be kicked out of the association. Jacob and Elaine often quarreled. If Jacob were left idle at home, the household might descend into chaos.

Charlie thought for a moment and said, "Matilda, don't worry. I will try to find a way to subtly inquire about it. If he doesn't mention it to me, I can't directly ask him either."

"That's true," Matilda sighed and continued, "Since he's on vacation abroad, he should be feeling better. Enjoying himself might take his mind off things."

After that, she turned to Charlie and said, "Alright, Charlie, please keep an eye on this matter. I have something else I need your opinion on."

Charlie replied, "Matilda, please go ahead..."

Matilda continued, "Your Uncle Riley mentioned that you are the witness at our wedding. He wants to treat you to a meal the day before the wedding. Paul and Zoey will also be there. Is that convenient for you?"

"Of course," Charlie agreed without hesitation. "Just let me know the time and place, and I'll be there."

“Great,” Matilda smiled. “Then | won't keep you any longer.”

“Goodbye, Auntie Matilda,” Charlie said.

After saying goodbye to Matilda, Charlie received a call from Don Albert.

Charlie answered the call, and Don Albert nervously said, “Master Wade, | need to tell you something. | may have been too harsh...”

Charlie asked, “What did you do too harshly?”

Don Albert said, “Oh, it's about your father-in-law. You told me to keep my distance from him, so | didn't give him any face. He called me

and said he wanted to book a private room at Heaven Springs, but | refused him.”

Charlie said, “That's not a big deal. He was involved with Zachary, and you're Zachary's boss. It's natural for you to be unhappy with him.

It's normal to refuse him.”

Don Albert hurriedly said, “Master Wade, | thought | handled it well, but then that Chairman Price called me. | didn't give him any face

either. He told me that he would try to preserve a vice president position for your father-in-law, but | retorted and said it had nothing to do

with me...”

“I didn't think much about it at the time and hung up the phone directly. But just now, Zachary told me that your father-in-law resigned from

the Calligraphy and Painting Association. So | guess the reason Chairman Price didn't protect your father-in-law might be related to my

attitude on the phone...”

“Oh...” Charlie suddenly realized, “No wonder, | was wondering why Chairman Price would kick him when he's down. It turns out it's

because he thinks my father-in-law has lost his backing and has no more value to him.”

Don Albert awkwardly asked, “Master Wade, | really didn't expect things to turn out this way with just a few casual words. So | called you

to ask for your opinion and see if I should mention it to Chairman Price again?”

Charlie pondered for a moment and said, “No need for now. My father-in-law is probably going through the darkest time of his life right

now. Let him stay in the darkness for a while longer. Maybe he can cultivate a pair of eyes that can find the light in the darkness...”

“When he comes back from Dubai, I'll find a way to get him back into the association. To be honest, | wish I could send my mother-in-law to that association as well so that our home can be peaceful. If my father-in-law stays idle at home, there will be chaos every day.”

Don Albert asked, “Should | do some groundwork in advance? | have Chairman Price's phone number. If you think the time is right, just let me know, and I'll contact Price immediately.”

Charlie said, “Forget it, don't contact Chairman Price anymore. Earlier, before Isaac Cameron was sent to Eastcliff to take over as the housekeeper, did he hand over his connections in Aurous Hil City to you?”

After Butler Thompson disappeared, Charlie appointed Isaac Cameron as the new housekeeper for the Wade family. He had already given Don Albert the position of spokesperson in Aurous Hill, and considering Isaac Cameron's style of doing things, he should have handed over all his resources in the city and even the province to Don Albert.

Don Albert said hurriedly, “He did hand them over. Before Mr. Cameron went to Eastcliff, he had already coordinated with me about the connections in the city and the province.”

“Good, then you should find the person in charge of the cultural associations in the province and see if you can figure out where Chairman Price wants to go next. Once you find out, cut off his path of advancement.”

Although the Calligraphy and Painting Association was just a grassroots organization, in the grand scheme of things, most literary and artistic organizations in China had similar characteristics. However, the larger and higher-level the grassroots organization, the more influence and social status it held.

If someone could hold a high position in a major association, their personal status would also be very high. It was another way to achieve

success, just like how most people took the normal route of the college entrance examination, while a few took the art examination or sports examination route.

Chairman Price had been planning to move up another step, but his character didn't seem to be very good. He had previously gone against popular opinion to bring Jacob, a limited amateur enthusiast, to the position of executive vice president. The two of them were inseparable, just like brothers.

Now, with Jacob's scandal and Don Albert's slight coldness, Chairman Price immediately turned his back on Jacob and distanced himself from him. This move was indeed unkind.

Instead of that, it would be better to keep him firmly in the Calligraphy and Painting Association, and later find a way to bring Jacob back. The two of them could continue their complicated brotherhood, without anyone disliking anyone.

Chapter 5776

Jacob, despite his downtrodden state, was fortunate to have Elaine, the Sea Anchoring Needle, by his side. Elaine had the uncanny ability to ground Jacob when he became too arrogant, bringing him back to reality. And now, when Jacob found himself feeling low, she compelled him to put on a smile and soldier on. Elaine's intentions were clear this time. Even if Jacob lost his job or became a vegetable, he would still have to accompany her on shopping sprees through Dubai's bustling centers. Even in death, his ashes would be confined to a box, forever bound to her side. Under Elaine's influence, Jacob spent his days accompanying her as she strolled, shopped, and took photos. Slowly but surely, his mood and mental state improved.

In Aurous Hill, as the wedding day of Mr. Riley and Matilda drew near, Charlie busied himself with preparations for the joyous occasion.

Mr. Riley was a former classmate of Charlie's late mother, and he had become like an elder to Charlie. And Matilda, though their acquaintance was brief, proved to be a poised and knowledgeable individual. Their son, Paul, held Charlie in high regard and respected his advice. Thus, Charlie hoped to fulfill their expectations by officiating their wedding.

In addition to serving as the Officiant, Charlie also wanted to present the couple with meaningful gifts as a sign of his respect. After careful consideration, he settled on gifting them each an enhanced version of the Life Saving Pill. Given their age, this pill would surely hold great significance for them.

With the wedding a mere two days away, Charlie's grandfather, uncles, and Jack concluded their investment trip to Eastcliff and returned to Aurous Hill aboard the Evans Family's private jet.

Before boarding the plane, Charlie's grandfather called him and invited him to a dinner at their home to discuss recent investment prospects.

Charlie agreed and intended to inform his wife, Claire, about the dinner plans. However, realizing that Elaine and Jacob were not at home, he hesitated to leave his wife alone. So, he reached out to Doris Young from Emgrand Group, someone who had been instrumental in Claire's business success, and asked her to invite his wife to join her for dinner. Claire held Doris Young in high regard, considering her a benefactor who had guided her during the early stages of her business.

Therefore, when Doris Young extended the invitation, Claire readily accepted. She apologized to Charlie for leaving him to handle dinner alone.

Charlie graciously agreed, urging Claire to catch up with Doris Young and enjoy their time together. It was a perfect solution.

As the time for their departure to the Elys-Champ Hot Springs Villa drew near, Mr. Riley called Charlie and said, "Charlie, Matilda and I have reserved a private room at Shangri-La. We'd like to invite you to join us tomorrow night. Matilda has already informed you, right?"

“Yes, she mentioned it to me,” Charlie replied with a smile. “What time tomorrow? I’ll be there promptly.”

“Is 7 o’clock alright?” Mr. Riley inquired.

“No problem,” Charlie assured him. “I’ll be there at 7 o’clock sharp.”

After hanging up, Charlie pondered over his earlier conversation with Mr. Riley. He had mentioned his recognition of the future prospects of the new energy industry. Curiosity piqued, Charlie asked him, “Mr. Riley, do you have any plans for tonight?”

“I don’t believe | have any special arrangements,” Mr. Riley responded.

“In that case,” Charlie suggested, “now that my grandfather and uncles have returned to Aurous Hill after signing numerous investment contracts and selecting investment targets, | would like to invite you to my grandfather’s house for dinner tonight. They have made some significant investments, and I’d like you to analyze and discuss them.”

Mr. Riley hesitated for a moment before replying, “I am merely a professor teaching at a university. Your grandfather and uncles oversee a trillion-dollar conglomerate. I am akin to a mere theorist. | dare not presume to possess any expertise in their presence...”

Charlie smiled and reassured him, “Do not underestimate yourself, Mr. Riley. Many successful businessmen, after achieving success in their respective fields, often fall into the delusion that they can conquer anything. Driven by this mindset, they venture into new businesses and territories, only to end up without much to show for it...”

“Real estate companies delving into mineral water, video websites producing cars, e-commerce platforms dabbling in social media, and social media platforms trying their hand at e-commerce, all these endeavors were backed by billion or even trillion-dollar companies. Yet, the final outcomes were far from impressive.”

Charlie continued, “During our previous conversation about new energy and overtaking on a bend, you truly impressed me. | believe you can provide them with a deeper understanding of strategy and underlying logic.” Feeling flattered, Mr. Riley pondered for a moment before responding, “Very well, | shall strive to be astute and helpful. If | can be of assistance, that would be wonderful. If not, at the very least, I'll serve as a negative example.”

Charlie chuckled and said, “Give me the location, and I'll pick you up.”

“I am at the university. Let me know when you're close, and I'll meet you at the entrance,” Mr. Riley replied.

When it came to Mr. Riley, Charlie always had ulterior motives.

Initially, he had sought to recruit Mr. Riley as the head of operations for BAIT Shipping, but Mr. Riley declined and instead introduced his daughter to him. To rescue his daughter from Syria, Charlie risked his life by infiltrating Hamid's base.

Fortunately, Zoey's remarkable abilities, coupled with the joint efforts of her and Zara Banks, propelled BAIT Shipping to rapid growth. Yet, Charlie couldn't help but feel that someone as talented as Mr. Riley was too valuable to be confined to teaching at a university.

Teaching and educating students was undoubtedly a noble occupation, but teaching basic economics at a university hardly required the expertise of a highly qualified professor.

If he could recruit Mr. Riley and have him oversee the Evans Family's domestic business, it would be a rare opportunity for both the Evans Family and Mr. Riley.

Some leaders had limited capabilities and couldn't reach a higher level. However, if they had a talented and capable general under their command, they might find themselves compromising and not truly demonstrating their abilities.

Mr. Riley undoubtedly harbored his own ambitions, but those ambitions might be too grand for him to find a suitable stage and opportunity.

The Evans Family, on the other hand, was different. Their financial power ranked among the top in the world.

Moreover, Charlie himself had amassed billions of dollars in wealth, and with the Evans Family's industries, they were soon poised to rival even the most formidable conglomerates. If the two sides joined forces, they would be capable of undertaking even larger projects. For Mr. Riley, this could be a new chance.

Charlie called his uncle to let him know he would be bringing a guest home for dinner that evening. Afterward, he drove to the University of Finance and Economics to pick up Mr. Riley, who was about to get married.

As they met, Charlie voiced his curiosity, "Uncle Riley, you're getting married soon. Why are you still working? Haven't you taken wedding leave?"

Mr. Riley responded, "The teaching workload is heavy, and it's hard to take a long leave. Besides, I need to go on a honeymoon after the wedding. If something happens at the school during that time, I won't be able to come back. So, I'm trying to handle all my work before I leave."

Charlie nodded and asked, "The wedding is the day after tomorrow. Are you and Matilda ready?"

"It's almost done," Mr. Riley replied. "We decided to keep everything simple. There won't be a wedding reception. We'll hold the ceremony directly at Shangri-La."

Then, Mr. Riley added, "By the way, Charlie, there's something I want your opinion on."

"Please, go ahead, Uncle Riley," Charlie replied politely.

Mr. Riley explained, "Zoey and I know your true identity, but your Matilda and her son Paul don't. Paul is sharp. Although he can't guess

your exact background, he regards you as a person of great wisdom and extraordinary ability. He respects and admires you a lot. Every time he mentions you, it's with great admiration..."

Pausing briefly, Mr. Riley continued, "Now, as Matilda and | are starting a new family, | hope to be honest with her in every aspect. But regarding your identity, | need your approval. If you think it's okay for me to explain your identity to Matilda and Paul, I will find the right opportunity to do so. If you think it's inappropriate, Zoey and | will respect your wishes and keep your identity a secret."

Charlie hadn't expected this to be the issue Mr. Riley wanted to discuss.

Hearing this made him appreciate Mr. Riley's integrity even more.

Many people have secrets they hide, even from those closest to them. It was clear that Mr. Riley did not want to deceive Matilda and had absolute respect for her. His willingness to consult Charlie and use his opinion as a guide was also a sign of respect.

Although Charlie's identity was sensitive, many people already knew it, and those who did were reliable and trustworthy. He had come to trust Matilda and Paul through their interactions. Initially, he felt there was no need to reveal his true identity to them, but now he believed there was no reason to hide it.

So, he said openly, "Matilda and Paul are trustworthy. How about you find a chance to tell them when we have dinner tomorrow night?" Mr. Riley was delighted yet cautious, asking Charlie, "Should you reconsider? Is it necessary?"

Charlie waved away his concerns and replied, "There is no need. Many people in Aurous Hill are already aware of my true identity. Even someone like Don Albert knows who | truly am. It's not a big secret for Matilda and Paul to know."

In truth, Charlie had his own plan. In the future, if he wanted to recruit Mr. Riley to collaborate with the Evans Family, he couldn't keep his wife in the dark about his true identity. Otherwise, he would constantly find himself switching between two identities, much like he had done before. From personal experience, Charlie knew that this constant duality was far from ideal.

Furthermore, Charlie wasn't just planning for Mr. Riley alone; he was also considering this future family of four.

He hoped to bring Matilda and Paul into his and the Evans Family's fold. After all, Matilda herself was an entrepreneur who, alongside her late husband, had built a legal empire. She possessed exceptional abilities in both the legal profession and in entrepreneurship and management. Paul, at such a young age, had inherited the family business and successfully managed the law firm. Their talents would be invaluable to the Evans Family.

Since he intended to be honest about his identity, this family of four could work together without any gaps or secrecy in the future.

Chapter 5777

From John Riley's perspective, Charlie didn't mind revealing his true self to his future wife and stepson and that brought great relief. He had always lived his life openly and loved Matilda sincerely. All he wanted was to spend the rest of his days with her, without pretending to be someone he wasn't, a feng shui expert with connections to local dignitaries. Acting and lying were not his strong suits.

However, if Charlie chose not to reveal his identity, Mr. Riley would completely understand and respect his decision. He just didn't expect Charlie to agree so readily.

Unbeknownst to Mr. Riley, Charlie actually wanted to include him, his future wife, and stepson in his circle.

With a sense of ease and joy, they arrived at the beautiful Villa in Elys-Champ. The grandparents and the rest of the family had already prepared a grand feast and were eagerly awaiting their arrival.

As soon as they caught sight of Charlie's car ascending the mountain, the three uncles, aunt, and Jack hurriedly came out to greet them.

The elderly couple initially wanted to join in the welcoming party, but the recent drop in temperature and darkening sky made their children worry about them catching a cold. They insisted on staying indoors. Even before the car had come to a complete stop, Charlie spotted the five family members waiting for them.

He was taken aback, feeling slightly overwhelmed. These were his elders, and their extravagant welcome felt a bit excessive in terms of etiquette. But the Evans family didn't see it that way. After all, Charlie had twice saved the Evans family from danger. Such gratitude couldn't be repaid simply through seniority.

And Jack, in particular, owed his life to Charlie. If it weren't for him, Jack's bullet-ridden body would have remained buried in American soil.

As Charlie parked the car and stepped out with Mr. Riley, the eldest uncle was the first to approach, greeting him with a warm smile.

“Charlie!”

Charlie quickly returned the greetings. “Eldest uncle, second uncle, third uncle, aunt, Inspector Lee...”

He then introduced Mr. Riley, who was standing next to him. “Allow me to introduce you to the five of them. This is my mother’s former classmate, Professor John Riley. Professor Riley used to work on Wall Street and now teaches at Aurous Hill University of Finance and Economics.”

The second uncle, Marcus, who oversaw external affairs for the Evans family, nodded in recognition. “Professor Riley, your name is well-known on Wall Street. They say you're the most ruthless Asian in the investment banking industry. I've heard many stories of your remarkable achievements!”

Mr. Riley replied sincerely, “Mr. Evans is too kind. When it comes to investment insight, no one | know can compare to Lily. I'm merely a student in her presence.”

He then realized that mentioning Lily in front of the Evans family might be impolite and quickly apologized. “I'm sorry...”

But there was no offense taken by the Evans family. They had long accepted Lily's passing and had an open-minded outlook. They understood that Mr. Riley had been a close friend and classmate of Lily's. Charlie decided it was the right moment to introduce Mr. Riley. He turned to him and said, “Uncle Riley, my second uncle often appears in public. You should recognize him, right?”

Mr. Riley nodded, replying, “Mr. Marcus Evans, of course | recognize him. I've admired him for a long time!”

Marcus responded with a polite smile, “Professor Riley, you're too kind.”

The two men then shook hands courteously.

Charlie continued with the introductions, presenting Mr. Riley to his uncle, his third uncle, and his aunt. Finally, he introduced Jack.

At this point, Charlie intended to introduce Mr. Riley, but the professor spoke up first. “This must be Inspector Jack Lee, known as the pride of the Chinese people! I've seen countless interviews and reports about you, and | deeply admire your accomplishments!”

Jack modestly smiled and replied, “I'm just an inspector, far from being the pride of the Chinese people. Your achievements and contributions far surpass mine.”

“Oh, no, not at all,” Mr. Riley insisted. “As a Chinese, and even as an Asian, it's not difficult to make money in North America. But gaining recognition from mainstream society there is an entirely different matter. For years, only Chinese Americans knew this. To be recognized by Western mainstream society is a true testament to the pride of the Chinese people.”

The Evans family wholeheartedly agreed with Mr. Riley's words. In reality, America was not as glamorous as the media portrayed it to be.

Especially for ethnic minorities in American society, they inevitably faced countless indescribable discriminations. While African Americans and Korean Americans, who stood united and fought for their rights, were relatively better off, those who undermined their own people found themselves caught between a rock and a hard place.

Charlie had visited the United States only a few times in his life and was not familiar with the environment there. But seeing the serious expressions on the faces of the Evans family, he knew that Mr. Riley's words were not unfounded.

At that moment, the grandmother couldn't resist opening the door and calling out, “Why are you all still standing outside in this cold? Come: in, don't let Charlie and our guest freeze.”

Charlie smiled and called back, “Grandma!”

Grandma nodded and waved them in. “Hurry up and come inside. Its time to eat!”

“Okay!” Charlie responded and everyone hastened into the villa.

The old master also stepped forward to greet Charlie and asked, “Charlie, how have you been in Aurous Hill?”

Charlie smiled and replied, “I've been doing well. Aurous Hill is a safe place.”

With that, Charlie introduced Mr. Riley to his grandparents. Knowing that Mr. Riley was his eldest daughter's former classmate and good friend, the grandparents warmly welcomed him. The whole family invited Mr. Riley to sit at the dining table, while the old master instructed his sons, "Professor Riley is your sister's classmate and good friend. Make sure to keep him company and have a few drinks."

He then turned to Mr. Riley and said, "Professor Riley, if you can handle your alcohol, feel free to drink. If not, take it easy. There are no rules about drinking at our table."

Although Mr. Riley rarely drank, he had a high tolerance. He was pleased to see the Evans family's warm reception and readily agreed.

'The old patriarch turned to Charlie and said, "Charlie, why don't you join us for a few drinks? If you can't handle it, I'll have your aunt drive you back to the city later."

Charlie smiled and declined, "No need, Grandpa. Everyone here is family. I'll have Don Albert come and drive me."

The old master chuckled and said, "That's great. You drink, and I'll have a drink too!"

Grandma Evans quickly interjected, "You want to drink? Your mind will get foggy. Who will take care of you if you end up with dementia?"

The old master grinned and replied, "With my eldest grandson here, a few drinks won't hurt. Besides, Professor Riley is also here, so it's only right that we have a toast or two."

Grandma Evans playfully rolled her eyes at him. "So you're making excuses for yourself?"

Charlie stepped in, "Grandma, no need to worry. Let Grandpa have a few drinks. He'll be fine."

Grandma Evans knew her beloved grandson had given the old master some special medicine, and his health was already excellent. A

little alcohol wouldn't be a problem at all. She simply reminded the old man, "Thanks to Charlie speaking up for you, just stick to two drinks. Don't overdo it."

Samuel immediately acquiesced, “Alright, alright, two drinks it is!” The eldest uncle, with sharp eyes, swiftly poured a glass for him. The old master raised the glass, smiled, and proposed a toast, “Here's to our first toast, welcoming Professor Riley as our honored guest!” Everyone raised their glasses.

Before the dinner began and the first sip was taken, Charlie wasted no time and asked, “Grandpa, uncles, how did the investments and projects in Eastcliff go?”

Samuel beamed, “We just finalized several major projects and will be announcing them soon. Your second uncle will give you all the details.”

Marcus took over and explained, "We recently confirmed an investment in a power battery company. And while we were in Eastcliff, we stumbled upon the listing of Xiaomi Auto, an internet company venturing into the automobile Industry. They sold more than a year's worth of production capacity within a month of going public, which is truly remarkable and has garnered attention for domestic brands. So we decided to acquire a new energy vehicle manufacturing company as well.”

Marcus and Charlie discussed the Evans family’s industrial layout, using “we” because the Evans family had already reached a consensus that most of the future responsibilities would fall on Charlie's shoulders. He was not only the Evans family's grandson but also the major shareholder.

Charlie didn't think of it in those terms. He was simply amazed by the news.

When he returned from the United States, the Evans family had only been planning to create a new energy vehicle brand. And now they had acquired a whole company?

Pondering this, he quickly inquired, “Uncle Marcus, did you say you acquired the company outright?”

“Yes,” Marcus confirmed. “There was a new energy vehicle company facing significant financial difficulties. They were desperately seeking financing. After consulting with your second uncle, we decided to acquire them for a valuation of just a few billion. They were on the verge | of bankruptcy, with their production line shut down and the founding team out seeking funds for survival. We took over the company for 3 billion.”

Charlie nodded. 3 billion was indeed a small sum to him, and even less for the Evans family.

At that moment, Mr. Riley chimed in, “The company you mentioned, is it Nio?”

“Huh?” Marcus was surprised. “Professor Riley, do you know about this company?”

Mr. Riley nodded and replied, “I've heard a little about it. They've been facing a major debt crisis, and their sales have always been poor.

Recently, they had to shut down their production lines. It seems they're left with no choice but to sell themselves to stay afloat.”

Charlie added, “Uncle Riley has a deep understanding of the domestic new energy market. We briefly discussed it last time, and his insights truly impressed me.

Especially when he mentioned the concept of ‘feigning weakness to conquer strength’. It left a lasting

impression. | had planned to introduce Uncle Riley to everyone after his wedding, but | couldn't wait and arranged it as soon as you returned.”

Marcus asked again, “So, Professor Riley, what are your thoughts on the current state of the new energy market? Can you offer us some advice?”

With that said, Marcus added, “To be honest, the Evans family rarely gets involved in the manufacturing industry. However, this time we've invested in power batteries, vehicle manufacturing, domestic chip research and development, and commercial aerospace. These are all essentially manufacturing sectors. Our main goal is to contribute to China's manufacturing industry as much as we can. If we can also nurture good companies and gain economic returns, that would be even better.”

He continued, “But honestly, 'm still unsure about how to run a manufacturing business that can handle tens of thousands of people, especially in vehicle manufacturing. We fully acquired Gaoheng, and next, we'll be addressing their debt issues and equity transfers...”

“After that, we'll need to invest more money to start production. | haven't decided yet whether to keep the original team and continue operating it for a while or to replace them entirely with a new team. Professor Riley, what are your thoughts on this?”

Mr. Riley replied, “In my personal opinion, the problem with Nio lies in their product positioning. Their main products rely on continuously increasing prices by piling up materials, but the high unit price makes it difficult to increase sales. Moreover, in the high-end market, they face competition from luxury cars. If their product falls even slightly behind in terms of quality, it will be challenging to gain market share.”

“Furthermore, their product design, to be honest, is not very mature. By confining themselves to a niche aesthetic circle, they further limit their own growth potential... But the company you mentioned earlier, Xiaomi, is completely different. They have a precise and fierce market positioning, along with outstanding product design. Setting aside the issue of imitation, their product appearance aligns with mainstream aesthetics...”

Mr. Riley paused for a moment before continuing, “So, if you ask for my personal judgment, | would suggest splitting Nio's team into two parts. Maintain the production side to ensure the production line can operate at any time, but replace the design, marketing, and market teams as much as possible. Even the brand should be completely changed. Although you acquired Nio, you can't use the Nio brand anymore. Its bankruptcy news has spread widely, and people know the brand is no longer viable. The brand's value has become negative, so it's better to start fresh.”

Marcus inquired further, “In your opinion, how should we position the main products if we start a new brand?”

Mr. Riley replied, “They must compete for the market with the highest sales and market share.”

He continued, “Many people start businesses to reduce pressure and increase their chances of success. They prefer focusing on niche markets, thinking that competing in the e-commerce platform market is too difficult. So they create small online shops or mini-programs, targeting niches like baby products, alcohol, or daily necessities. But once they do that, they can never become a major platform and may even have to survive within someone else's ecosystem forever. The same applies to the automobile industry...”

“Almost every company venturing into the automotive sector believes that the fiercest competition lies in the mid-range new energy vehicle market. On one side, there's Tesla, the dominant player selling hundreds of thousands of vehicles each year. On the other side, there are numerous domestic upstarts. Some focus on the low-end market, while others attempt to enter the high-end market. But as long as they hold onto this mentality, even if they achieve success in a niche market, they may never surpass giants like Tesla...”

“At its peak, Tesla's market value exceeded \$1 trillion. Even now, with the new energy concept cooling down, its market value is still over \$500 billion, surpassing the combined market value of all domestic upstarts. I'm not saying Tesla is invincible, but it seems that many companies, while claiming to be stronger than Tesla at press conferences, instinctively shy away from its sharpness. If it were someone else starting a new energy venture, I might suggest the same approach. But the Evans family is different...”

Mr. Riley's tone grew serious. “The Evans family possesses strong capital strength, and Charlie's funds far surpass those of domestic new energy vehicle companies. Moreover, Charlie also has BAIT Shipping, with a large fleet of roll-on-roll-off ships and high shipping capacity, placing it among the world's best. Now that the Evans family has already ventured into power batteries and acquired Nio Auto, it would be a waste not to integrate resources and truly expand and strengthen the new energy sector.”

Chapter 5778

The Evans Family was Immediately captivated by Mr. Riley's perspective. For the Evans Family, the vehicle manufacturing and power battery industry was not solely about making money. They had a deeper desire to invest in the Chinese manufacturing industry and contribute to its growth and development.

Mr. Riley's viewpoint gave them a newfound hope for their endeavor. If they could transform this industry into a behemoth like Tesla, the business opportunities and profits would be immense. Not to mention the significant advancements and improvements it would bring to the manufacturing industry and the domestic automotive supply chain in China.

The biggest difference between manufacturing giants and internet giants lies in their market domination. Internet giants tend to monopolize the market, continuously offering benefits and even heavily subsidizing the end market until they gain enough users and make them entirely dependent. Then, they shamelessly seize profits.

A few years ago, when they subsidized online ride-hailing services, passengers only had to pay five dollars for a ten-kilometer ride, while drivers earned ten dollars. But now, for the same distance, passengers might have to pay thirty dollars, while drivers only receive eight dollars.

Furthermore, internet companies tend to maximize output with minimal positions, squeezing both the upstream and downstream sectors to attain maximum profits.

However, manufacturing giants operate differently. Manufacturing giants support the entire industry chain.

A car manufacturing company with ten thousand employees not only provides jobs for those employees but also creates numerous job opportunities for upstream steel mills and aluminum plants, as well as transportation jobs for various materials. It also supports a large number of small and medium-sized enterprises that provide components. This driving force is incredibly powerful.

In China and many cities around the world, the economic lifeline often relies on large-scale manufacturing industries. Take Toyota City in Japan, for example, with a population of four hundred thousand, which is almost entirely comprised of Toyota employees and their families.

Toyota itself has over three hundred thousand employees worldwide. If we include the supply chain that depends on Toyota, it can generate employment opportunities for at least a million people.

Such a manufacturing giant can benefit millions of people in the industry chain, rather than squeezing their profits and survival space. Currently, the domestic production rate of new energy vehicles has already surpassed 90%. If a new energy vehicle giant can be established, all the value it generates will be used to drive the development of related domestic companies. Therefore, Mr. Riley's proposal immediately sparked the interest of everyone present.

Charlie was also intrigued by this plan. He spoke up, adopting a casual tone, "I've got a substantial amount of cash on hand. Even if need to invest hundreds of billions It won't be a problem. Uncle Riley, what do you think would be the best way to increase the chances of success for this project?"

Mr. Riley replied, "We don't necessarily need that much money. Two or three billion dollars would be more than enough. As for Increasing the success rate, in my opinion, we need to focus on taking advantage of unconventional opportunities. Not only do we need to surpass traditional fuel vehicle companies, but we also need to outshine most of the current players in the new energy field, who are mostly in the bottom tiers. Catching up with our peers is already a challenging task." Marcus asked, "Professor Riley, in your opinion, how can we achieve this unconventional advantage? Or rather, what does it mean to gain | an edge through unconventional means?"

Mr. Riley pondered for a moment, organizing his thoughts before explaining, “In my understanding, gaining an edge through unconventional means is not just about excelling at one specific aspect. It's about taking a shortcut throughout the entire race track, going where others haven't gone or even thought of, and reaching the finish line faster.” “For example, in the past, our domestic fuel engines were always lagging behind Europe, America, and Japan and South Korea. No matter how hard we tried, we were always slightly behind. But domestic new energy vehicles completely changed the game. They didn't try to catch up in terms of engine technology. Instead, they stopped making vehicles with engines altogether...”

“You're not as good at electric motors, right? You've been focusing on internal combustion engines for decades, but you're clueless about electric motors. I took the opportunity to dive into electric drive technology and gained a competitive advantage in electric propulsion. By the time I develop electric drive technology, I'll be ahead of you in the new energy field. When that happens, even if you cry and tell me that you've been working with internal combustion engines for decades, from L4 to W16, mastering every aspect, I won't pay attention to you. Why? Because I'm no longer playing that game...”

“This is similar to a martial arts master who spent thirty years practicing swordsmanship in the era of cold weapons. He thinks he's invincible when he comes out, but I invented a firearm in just a year and a half. One bullet can end his life. He says that his thirty years of practice are useless and meaningless...”

“Of course, the one who truly turned the tables on traditional car companies globally was not a domestic new energy company, but the industry pioneer Tesla. That was their strategy for gaining an unconventional advantage. However, we also have our own original examples of gaining an edge through unconventional means in the new energy field, such as the three major components of new energy vehicles: refrigerator, television, and sofa. Tesla pursued a minimalist and simple style, right? So we pursued a luxurious and comfortable style, and we also captured a significant market share.”

Pausing for a moment, Mr. Riley continued, “If we want to find another opportunity for gaining an edge and disrupting the industry, to be honest, it's very difficult. But it's not impossible. As long as someone can find the right entry point, they can become the new emperor in the automotive field.”

Marcus understood that finding that entry point would be extremely challenging. If they could find it, it would likely unlock a market value of hundreds of billions of dollars. So, he immediately asked, “Professor Riley, if we can't find a unique and winning strategy for now, what can we do to increase the chances of success for this project?”

Mr. Riley replied, “If you want to further increase the chances of success, in my personal understanding, you need to delve into more critical upstream areas. Power batteries are naturally one of them. You also need to focus on electric control technology and driving technology. Additionally, the development of in-car software is crucial...”

“Penetrating the power battery sector is important for technology reserves, cost reduction, and ensuring a stable supply. The Evans Family has already made some progress in this area...”

“As for electric control and driving technology, improving the hardware competitiveness of the vehicles is crucial. With the same battery capacity, aerodynamic resistance, and weight, the vehicle with more efficient electric control will have a higher range, while the one with better driving technology will have superior performance. These are key factors that influence the overall driving experience...”

“If you don't have your own research and development team or strategic partnerships with relevant companies, you will always rely on standardized solutions provided by third parties. In that case, your vehicle will have the same power parameters as a dozen other models on the market. What's the point of claiming to be a leader then?”

Speaking of in-car systems, Mr. Riley said, “In my opinion, it is of utmost importance. Since started researching new energy vehicles,

have attached great importance to in-car software. Building a new energy vehicle is similar to building a smartphone. It's not just about assembling hardware, you also need to ensure compatibility between hardware and software. Even with the best hardware, if the software lags, the vehicle will be like a strong-bodied but simple-minded fool.”

At this point, Desmond interjected, “Oh, I... I've always driven fuel vehicles, and I don't have any requirements for in-car systems. Having Bluetooth for phone calls, listening to music, and listening to the radio is enough for me. I don't have any concept of this.”

Marcus nodded and said, “I don't understand either. I've never been involved in the new energy vehicle industry, and I haven't even driven a new energy vehicle.”

After speaking, he turned to Charlie and asked, “Charlie, do you understand?” Charlie smiled and replied, “Me? I'm not afraid of my uncle's jokes when I say this. It was only after Butler Thompson found me that I started driving regularly. Before that, I never even bought a car for myself. The only cars I own are two supercars that were given to me, and I've probably driven them only once, twice, or three times. These days, I still drive the BMW 5 Series I originally bought for my father-in-law.”

As he spoke, he suddenly remembered Angela Lombardo's Tesla and added, “I did drive a friend's Tesla on Hong Kong Island once, but it was just for a short while. I never really looked into the car's engine or its so-called assisted driving features.”

After hearing their responses, Mr. Riley smiled and said, “How would you describe the in-car system? Are you familiar with, Balotelli, the football player?”

Except for the elderly patriarch, the other male members nodded.

Mr. Riley continued, “In my opinion, he represents top-tier hardware but third-rate in-car systems. If you give him the football intelligence of Lionel Messi or Ronaldo, he would undoubtedly be a superstar. Unfortunately, he can't compensate for his shortcomings in this area.”

Everyone immediately understood what Mr. Riley meant.

Charlie added, “Since in-car software compatibility is crucial, we should establish a strong software development team. We've already

spent a lot of money, so we shouldn't cut corners on this.”

Mr. Riley agreed, “Exactly. That's what I mean. Many traditional car companies that transitioned to new energy vehicles couldn't keep up with in-car software development and chose to outsource it. Most of the time, the results were disastrous, like the days of counterfeit smartphones. The user experience was very poor. Since you have chosen to directly enter the new energy race and have abundant financial resources, you must prioritize the development of in-car software...”

Mr. Riley continued, “By the way, there's also high-precision mapping, which is very important. In-car navigation, driver assistance, and even more advanced autonomous driving all rely on it. Currently, most companies integrate services from common service providers. If there's an opportunity, you can consider acquiring or even investing in one.”

Marcus nodded and said, “These are valuable suggestions, and we will seriously consider them and try to implement them as soon as possible.”

Then, Marcus looked at Mr. Riley and asked, “Professor Riley, since you have such in-depth research on new energy vehicles, would you be interested in joining us to lead this project?”

Without any gesture from Charlie, Marcus could already see the immense value in Mr. Riley.

When they acquired Nio, they had already decided that, given the scale of the project, which amounted to tens of billions of dollars, and the high level of expertise required, they must find a true expert to lead the project. Otherwise, with just money and impulsive decisions, they would inevitably pay a hefty price.

Even if they hadn't met Mr. Riley today, Marcus had already planned to have headhunters search for suitable candidates nationwide.

However, he didn't expect that as soon as they returned to Aurous Hill, Charlie would present them with a top candidate.

Mr. Riley smiled and politely declined, “To tell you the truth, Mr. Evans, my current focus is on teaching and educating people. Besides, I've been away from practice for too long, and all I can offer are theoretical insights. When it comes to actual execution, I lack the necessary skills.”

Samuel Evans, who had been silent until now, waved his hand and said seriously, “Professor Riley, don't underestimate yourself. I believe you are definitely qualified for this position. The key question is whether you want it or not.

“If your true passion lies in teaching and educating, then no matter what we say, you won't agree. But if you still have any interest or ambition in managing such a significant project, you must consider it carefully... We have already invested \$3 billion in Nio Automotive. Including power batteries, our investment exceeds \$10 billion. We are prepared to invest an additional \$30 billion in this endeavor, making it a \$40 billion project...”

“This scale is unmatched by any new car company in the world. Even the top players in the industry would find it challenging to shine on a \$40 billion stage. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!”

The old man's words immediately captured Mr. Riley's attention. A \$40 billion startup is unprecedented in the history of new energy vehicles. Even Xiaomi, which recently gained nationwide popularity, only announced an investment of 10 billion dollars. Forty billion US dollars is representing not just a car company, but an entire industry chain.

For professional managers worldwide, who would dare to dream of such an opportunity?

This isn't just an opening, it's a dream come true!

How fortunate would it be to realize one's ambitions on such a stage?

‘The potential achievements are beyond imagination.

At this moment, Mr. Riley's initially unwavering heart began to crack under the pressure.

Charlie, seeing his hesitation rather than an immediate refusal, knew that he had started thinking.

So, he immediately added fuel to the fire and said, “Uncle Riley, you said it's difficult to find an opportunity for gaining an edge, right? Well,

I have thought of an opportunity. I don't know if it's reliable or not.”

Mr. Riley asked eagerly, “What opportunity?”

The others also looked at Charlie with great interest.

Charlie said, “The Rothschild family is developing the world's most advanced AI model for me in Northern Europe. The only restriction is.

that I can't use it for commercial purposes. However, I am confident that they will grant me exclusive commercial rights in the automotive field!”

Currently, the main revenue stream for AI models comes from providing AI computing services to individuals and enterprises across thousands of industries. While AI has not yet found practical applications in the automotive sector, this is set to change.

Although Charlie couldn't guarantee that Howard would grant him commercial rights for the AI across numerous fields, obtaining exclusive

rights for the automotive industry alone seemed entirely feasible.