

## Chapter 5651

Hearing Lily's heavy sigh, Sister Turk couldn't help but smile and ask, "What do you think of Claire from the Wilson family?"

"Claire..." Lily fell into a contemplative silence before speaking earnestly, "In a way, she owes a debt to Charlie. However, after four years of marriage, she has yet to conceive or bear a child. This leads me to believe that their marriage may be superficially strong, but lacking in substance. Charlie's devotion to her is evident from his actions. If their marriage is still devoid of true connection, then the fault must lie with Claire."

Lily continued, "She must have her reasons and I cannot speculate without evidence. But does this not suggest that she may not love Charlie as deeply as he loves her?"

Sister Turk nodded in agreement, "Madam, you are right. I share the same thoughts. If Young Master were to divorce Claire in the future, Miss Sun or Miss Ito would make excellent choices for him. It is clear that both of these women have genuine affection for him."

Lily nodded slightly, sighing with a touch of emotion, "Whether they divorce or not, it is Charlie's decision. In the past twenty years, I have not fulfilled my duties as a mother and now I have no right to interfere in his choice of a spouse. But since you asked, I have spoken my mind. That is all."

Sister Turk nodded and couldn't help but sigh, "You are right, Madam. Zara from the Banks Family and Jasmine from the Moore family are also exceptional women. Even Helena from Norway seems flawless. Charlie's popularity with the opposite sex surpasses that of an average person."

Lily let out a soft sigh, "These women are truly exceptional. But I wonder if Charlie's appearance has hindered their chances of finding happiness."

Continuing, Lily said, "In 'The Return of the Condor Heroes,' Guo Xiang was misled by Yang Guo at Fengling Ferry. However, upon careful consideration, Guo Xiang was not the only one misled in the story. Cheng Ying and Lu Wushuang lived out their lives in loneliness. Were they not also misled by Yang Guo? And Gongsun Lv'e, who was born and died in Jueqing

Valley, was also misled and tragically died in front of Yang Guo. Although Wan Yanping eventually married someone else and found her place, was she truly happy throughout her life?"

Lily sighed, reflecting on her words and asked, "By the way, do you remember Deana Thorne?"

Sister Turk quickly bowed and said, "Madam, I certainly remember. Miss Thorne from the Thorne Families infatuation with Young Master Bruce is well-known in East Cliff's social circles..."

Lily's expression filled with regret as she said, "She resembled Guo Xiang so much back then. After I married Bruce, she, like Wan Yanping, married someone else and became a wife. But now, she lives alone in the old mansion where Bruce and I once resided, much like Cheng Ying. Her life has not been easy, nor has it unfolded as she desired. Thankfully, Charlie saved her and her daughter in the Aurous Hill Forbidden Mountain Tunnel. Otherwise, her life would have been even more bitter."

Sister Turk couldn't help but sigh, "Ah... as you said, Miss Thorne has indeed faced hardships. But now, she should have found happiness."

Lily shook her head, her eyes slightly reddened as she softly said, "If one deeply loves someone but can never be with them, life can only be bitter, devoid of sweetness. The day she bought the old mansion where Bruce and I once lived at the auction was meant to mark the end of her bitterness, but the sweetness has yet to arrive. When Charlie gave her the mansion at the auction, I was happy for her for a long time. If the opportunity arises in the future, I even want to visit her, extend my hand in friendship and engage in heartfelt conversations..."

Pausing for a moment, Lily continued, "I want to tell her that there was a moment before Bruce met me when he was moved by her unwavering devotion and infatuation throughout the years. He even contemplated embarking on life's journey with her. However, fate intervened, bringing him to me. So her years of efforts came to naught and she remains unaware of how close she came to achieving her desired outcome..."

Sister Turk asked her, "Madam, if that day truly comes, would Deana misunderstand your intentions and think you are showing off or something else?"

"No." Lily said, "I believe she would find solace and reconcile with her past self, as well as the Bruce she remembers, the one who seemed indifferent and heartless. Perhaps we could become good friends. If that happens, I can find a mansion in Aurous Hill and visit her to reminisce and enjoy our friendship in old age."

After expressing her thoughts, Lily quickly waved her hand and changed the subject, asking, "Has Master Geoffrey arrived?"

Sister Turk replied, "He is still on the helicopter, but he will be here soon."

As they conversed, the sound of the helicopter engine and the whirling of the rotor blades resonated through the valley.

Sister Turk said, "Madam, Master Geoffrey has arrived."

"Good." Lily nodded, "Let him come directly to see me."

A few minutes later, the helicopter landed in the open space outside the courtyard, and a monk wearing a robe and kasaya strode towards the main gate.

The gate opened and Sister Turk looked at the monk and smiled, "Master Geoffrey, Madam has been waiting for you."

The monk, Master Geoffrey, had gained fame in recent years. He was not yet fifty years old and had been officially ordained as a monk for less than twenty years. Through his profound understanding and unique insights into Buddhism, he had become a highly respected and sought-after enlightened monk.

In recent years, he had dedicated himself to combating depression, using the teachings of Buddhism to instill a positive outlook on life in those who suffered from or were prone to depression. His efforts were focused on preaching Buddhism to the depressed individuals across the country, exchanging their worldly attachments for the wisdom of Buddhism. In doing so, he unknowingly saved countless lost souls from the depths of despair. Truly, he was a virtuous individual.

Master Geoffrey's progress in Buddhism was not solely due to his own comprehension; to some extent, he could be considered a spiritual cultivator. He possessed the ability to sense and cultivate reiki within his body, making it more profound. However, his talent was limited, and after his enlightenment, all the reiki remained within his consciousness. Thus, he did not

possess the terrifying power and supernatural abilities of Charlie. Nevertheless, his expanded and improved consciousness allowed for a deeper understanding and insight into Buddhism.

At this moment, Master Geoffrey stood before Sister Turk, bowing with his hands clasped together and respectfully said, "Master Geoffrey pays respects to Madam!"

Lily replied seriously, "Master Geoffrey, you are now an enlightened monk. In my presence, there is no need for such formality."

Master Geoffrey's tone remained firm as he said, "Madam, I have achieved today's enlightenment thanks to your guidance. Without you, there would be no Master Geoffrey. You hold a place second only to the Buddha in my heart."

Lily smiled and nodded, saying, "You have your own thoughts and beliefs and I will not push you further."

Continuing, she said, "Let us get to the point. I called you here urgently because I heard that you have been preaching Buddhism at Euca Temple, not far from here. I asked you to come and help enlighten a young girl."

Master Geoffrey was taken aback and instinctively asked, "Madam, when you say 'enlightenment,' do you mean the kind of enlightenment you granted me all those years ago?" "Yes!" Lily nodded, "She, like you in the past, has the potential to achieve enlightenment through her consciousness. I want you to convey to her everything I once told you, exactly as it was and help her attain enlightenment."

Without hesitation, Master Geoffrey respectfully said, "Yes, Madam. I will fulfill your command!"

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On her way to Lama Temple, Nanako Ito took advantage of several red lights to discreetly investigate the background of the "Tranquil Master" she heard mentioned.

As it turns out, his name was Master Geoffrey, and his reputation extended far beyond the borders of his homeland. His influence had begun to reach Buddhist followers across East Asia and Southeast Asia.

The consensus among everyone was that Master Geoffrey possessed immense talent and virtue, with a broad mind that embraced all. He was considered a genius in the field of Buddhism.

What astonished Nanako even more was the number of invitations sent by temples in Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Bhutan, and other countries, all hoping to have Master Geoffrey come and preach the Dharma to their followers. However, due to his busy schedule in China, he had not yet accepted any of these invitations.

Furthermore, Nanako discovered that many renowned Buddhist masters, both domestic and foreign, held Master Geoffrey in high regard. Everyone believed that he had the deepest understanding of Buddhism in today's society, surpassing all others.

The more Nanako learned about Master Geoffrey's background, the more amazed she became.

She never expected to have such an extraordinary encounter on an ordinary morning.

However, her primary concern was not Master Geoffrey's proficiency in Buddhism, but rather obtaining a talisman that he had blessed for Charlie.

When Nanako arrived at Lama Temple, many early-bird pilgrims had already begun their ascent up the mountain.

Little did they know that the renowned Master Geoffrey had already arrived.

Bypassing the main hall, Nanako headed straight for the Dharma Supply Center, only to find that it had not yet opened.

The sign at the entrance indicated that the center's opening hours were from 8 am to 5 pm.

Nanako couldn't help but feel puzzled and wondered to herself, "Did the lady send me here as a prank? Why isn't it open yet?"

But she quickly dismissed her doubts, realizing it was unfair to question others' good intentions without cause. Perhaps there was a time difference?

Just as Nanako pondered, one of the wooden doors of the Dharma Supply Center opened, and a monk emerged, clasping his hands together. He greeted her, saying, "Amitabha Buddha, may I ask what brings you here?"

Nanako bowed deeply and replied, "Hello, venerable monk. I apologize for the disturbance. I would like to inquire if I need to register here to meet Master Geoffrey."

The monk paused for a moment, glanced around to ensure no one was listening, and whispered, "I apologize, but Master Geoffrey just arrived this morning, and the temple is not yet ready for public preaching. However, since you have been fortunate enough to know, please follow me."

Initially, Nanako thought the monk was politely rejecting her, but when she heard his follow-up, she felt a wave of relief. She gratefully clasped her hands together and said, "Thank you, master!"

The monk nodded and asked, "Have you prepared any Buddhist supplies? If you wish for Master Geoffrey to bless and empower them, you need to bring the supplies in advance."

Nanako hurriedly replied, "I came in a hurry and didn't bring any Buddhist supplies with me. Is it possible to obtain one from here?"

The monk smiled and said, "My lady, the talismans we have here are silk pouches containing the Heart Sutra. However, they are mass-produced printed products. If you desire better results, you can handwrite a copy of the Heart Sutra and place it inside, then ask Master Geoffrey to bless and empower it."

He added, "The full text of the Heart Sutra is only 260 characters, so it shouldn't be difficult to write."

Nanako asked, "May I borrow paper and a pen from here? Also, I wonder if Master Geoffrey can wait for me to finish writing before I see him?"

The monk replied, "I can lend you paper and a pen, and you can bring them with you to see Master Geoffrey. You can copy the scripture in his presence, and he will recite, bless, and empower it for you. That will yield the best results."

Excitedly, Nanako exclaimed, "Thank you so much!"

With that, she bowed deeply once again.

The monk uttered "Amitabha Buddha" and retreated back into the Dharma Supply Center. Soon, he returned with a yellow silk pouch, as well as paper, pen, and ink. He carefully closed the door behind them and led Nanako to the temple's backyard.

He said to her, "Please follow me."

Nanako nodded and followed him toward the back of the temple.

Passing through a weathered red brick wall, they arrived at the temple's secluded backyard.

This area was rarely open to the public, reserved only for the temple's monks and deeply connected lay disciples.

Here, there stood a Buddhist hall specifically used to teach the Dharma to lay disciples.

Devout and talented lay disciples would cultivate here, regularly coming to the mountain to learn the Dharma. When their affinity with Buddhism deepened, they would eventually ordain as monks.

At this moment, Master Geoffrey sat before the teaching platform in the Buddhist hall, his eyes closed as he recited scriptures.

The young monk pushed open the door to the Buddhist hall and respectfully announced, "Master Geoffrey, there is a female disciple who wishes to see you."

Master Geoffrey opened his eyes and nodded, saying, "Bring her in!"

The young monk respectfully acknowledged his instruction and said, "Yes, Master!"

He then stepped aside, making way for Nanako, and whispered to her, "My lady, Master Geoffrey is waiting for you."

Nanako clasped her hands together once again, expressing her gratitude, and with a mix of excitement and nervousness, entered the Buddhist hall.

Upon seeing Nanako for the first time, Master Geoffrey couldn't help but marvel inwardly, "This girl truly possesses the potential for enlightenment, just as Madam had described. She even surpasses my own past abilities. Some individuals are like this, their extraordinary talent evident at first sight!"

The ability to sense someone's potential for enlightenment and their capacity to embark on the path of enlightenment is a unique intuition possessed by those who have experienced it themselves.

In martial arts novels, top experts can discern the exceptional aptitude of talented children with a mere glance, while those lacking understanding see them as ordinary.

With this thought in mind, Master Geoffrey stood up and addressed Nanako, saying, "Amitabha Buddha, why have you come to see me?"

Nanako bowed deeply and respectfully replied, "I am Nanako Ito, from Kyoto, Japan. My late mother was a devout Buddhist, and I, too, have been influenced by her. Today, I heard that Master Geoffrey has come to Aurous Hill, so I took the liberty to seek an audience, hoping to have a talisman blessed and empowered by you to give to someone dear to my heart."

"Somebody dear to your heart..." Master Geoffrey felt a pang of regret. After a brief hesitation, he spoke up, "Benefactor, with your compassionate gaze and radiant aura, you possess the deepest Buddhist affinity I have ever witnessed. If you were to take refuge in Buddhism and dedicate yourself to the study of the Dharma, it would undoubtedly bring great blessings to all sentient beings. May I inquire if you have any thoughts of taking refuge in Buddhism?"

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In a secluded mountain retreat, Sister Turk observed the bustling activity in the Buddhist hall through the surveillance monitor. Fuming with anger, he exclaimed, "Can you believe it, Madam? Master Geoffrey actually wants to convince Nanako Ito to become a nun! Isn't this a grave deviation from our path?"

Lily smiled reassuringly and replied, "There's no need to fret. Since Master Geoffrey experienced enlightenment, his heart has become intertwined with Buddhism. His utmost concerns lie with the Buddha, the Dharma, and all sentient beings. As for Nanako Ito, she possesses great understanding and wisdom. Even if it were another esteemed master, they

would be eager to accept her as a disciple. That's precisely why I wanted her to attain enlightenment under Master Geoffrey's guidance. Such talent should not go to waste outside our gates. However, I know Nanako well enough to say that even if Master Geoffrey were to morally pressure her with the entire world's population of seven billion, she would never agree. So, there's no need to worry."

Indeed.

Nanako Ito instinctively took a step back and apologized, "I... I already have someone I love. How can I embrace Buddhism?"

Lily smiled knowingly behind the monitor and remarked, "Sister Turk, did you notice the subtlety? Nanako referred to herself as a disciple in front of Master Geoffrey earlier, but now she has shifted to using 'I,' creating a clear boundary between them."

Sister Turk nodded and grinned, "If it weren't for her seeking something from Master Geoffrey, I fear Nanako would have already fled."

Meanwhile, Master Geoffrey, the monk, also realized that Nanako Ito was cautious about taking refuge in Buddhism. With utmost sincerity, he pleaded, "Dear disciple, while love is important, isn't it more valuable to save all sentient beings? The Buddha teaches us to abandon our selfish desires and cultivate selflessness, to save and help others. This is the highest state pursued by great monks throughout history. Moreover, donor, you mentioned that you are a believer in Buddhism. Don't you desire to make a difference for all sentient beings?"

Nanako Ito pursed her lips and timidly replied, "Every being has their own destiny. I am just an ordinary woman. I don't possess grand ambitions to save all sentient beings. I simply want to take care of my loved ones and my beloved. If I can achieve that, it would already be perfect."

Master Geoffrey slapped his thigh and sighed, "In this world, there are very few individuals who possess your level of understanding. If you were to attain enlightenment, your comprehension and insight into the teachings

of Buddhism, passed down through generations, would deepen. To waste such talent would be a great loss for all Buddhist disciples."

Nanako Ito shook her head and said, "I believe in Buddhism because I think it can foster kindness and inner peace within people. It provides a spiritual sanctuary, like going to a restaurant to eat. You wouldn't force me to stay in the restaurant and become a chef, would you?"

Master Geoffrey quickly interjected, "Amitabha Buddha, disciple, I am not asking you to stay, but rather advising you to stay. Disciple, you used the analogy of a restaurant. Though the logic is sound, the realm and significance are not quite the same. A restaurant can satiate people's hunger. If a skilled chef can create exquisite recipes, it can provide balanced nutrition, bring joy to the heart, elevate the taste buds, and even have health benefits and the power to heal. But a fine restaurant and delectable recipes cannot save all sentient beings."

Continuing, Master Geoffrey added, "In truth, every religion has its own sacred scriptures. These scriptures have endured and left a profound and lasting impact from the agricultural era to our technologically advanced modern era because they are rooted in universal human values. They uncover the deeper and fundamental aspects of human nature."

"Do you know why, in today's highly developed technological society, where productivity surpasses that of ancient times, many still regard scriptures from thousands of years ago as guiding lights on the path of life?"

Nanako Ito shook her head, confusion etched on her face, and replied, "I... I haven't really pondered over it..."

Master Geoffrey explained, "The difference between ancient and modern people, aside from technological advancements and broader perspectives, lies in the fact that the lives and thoughts of ancient people were simpler and purer, closer to the essence of humanity."

"They could spend their entire lives contemplating a few philosophical questions, unaffected by materialistic and prosperous worldly pursuits. This allowed them to delve deeper into philosophical matters than the restless and utilitarian modern individuals."

"That's why the great thinkers of Eastern and Western philosophy emerged around 400-300 BC. In the East, we had Laozi, Confucius, and Mencius, while in the West, there were Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle."

"And the birth of the Buddha predates even these philosophers by a few hundred years."

"These wise ancients possessed extraordinary genius, dedicating their lives to contemplating the underlying logic of existence and documenting their insights. These writings became true classics."

"These wise individuals among the ancients were truly geniuses of profound wisdom. When such an unparalleled genius dedicates their entire life to pondering the fundamental logic of existence and documents their thoughts in a book, that book becomes a genuine classic," Master Geoffrey remarked.

"No matter how society progresses, people remain inherently human, and as society advances further, people's energies become more scattered. Consequently, the more society develops, the more it underscores the profound philosophies of the ancients. This is why adherents of the three major religions have always regarded scriptures penned over 2,000 years ago as guiding lights on life's path. Countless individuals have diligently studied these ancient scriptures time and time again, all in pursuit of deeper inspiration from them," he continued.

Nanako Ito pursed her lips, cast her gaze downward at her toes, and then back at Master Geoffrey. After pondering for a while, she raised her thumbs up timidly and uttered, "Si... Si Guoyi..."

"Si Guoyi" is the pronunciation of "sugoi" in Japanese, roughly meaning "wow, so impressive."

Master Geoffrey, a former top student before becoming a monk and having traveled the world in pursuit of enlightenment, was well-versed in various languages. He easily understood the Japanese phrase uttered by Nanako Ito, a gentle-hearted Japanese woman.

Nanako, who had genuinely spoken so much, received only one simple "Si Guoyi" in return, which left her feeling a bit unbalanced despite being a proficient mage.

As she tried to regain her composure, she silently recited, "Amitabha, sin, sin, sin..."

Observing this scene, Lily and Sister Turk couldn't help but burst into laughter. Lily remarked, "She's quite clever. She's been in China for so long that it's impossible for her to unconsciously speak Japanese. It must have been intentional. Because of this, she managed to touch the monk's heart when you look at it carefully."

Sister Turk smiled and shook her head, stating, "I don't know why, but I've suddenly grown fond of Miss Ito..."

Lily's eyelashes quivered slightly, but he remained silent.

At this point, Master Geoffrey made an effort to regain his composure and spoke, "I wonder if the donor has noticed that with the continuous development of social productivity, today's human beings are drifting further from their roots. In some fields, their creativity has dwindled compared to their predecessors. For instance, although there are numerous pianists worldwide, none can match the likes of Chopin, Beethoven, or Tchaikovsky. Even two hundred years from now, pianists will still be playing their works."

"Furthermore, contemporary understanding lags far behind that of the ancients. When modern individuals, driven by impatience and utilitarianism, attempt to delve into ancient scriptures, the archaic and convoluted language therein makes it difficult for them to grasp the truths they contain."

"In such times, we require individuals like ourselves to set aside emotions and..."

Nanako Ito suddenly raised her hand and cautiously interjected, "I apologize for interrupting, but may I inquire if the 'we' you mentioned excludes me?"

Master Geoffrey exhaled and nodded, replying, "You are not included. The humble monk was referring to individuals akin to the humble monk."

Nanako Ito touched her heart and breathed a sigh of relief, saying, "That's good, that's good... please continue."

Master Geoffrey lowered his head and remained silent for a considerable duration. Then, he slowly raised his head with a hint of dejection and continued, "What the humble monk wishes to convey is that the world necessitates individuals like the humble monk who wholeheartedly study Buddhist scriptures, fathom their profound meanings, and subsequently elucidate these ancient classics using language and methods comprehensible to modern people. This way, they may understand, grasp, and make informed decisions when confronted with significant questions. Every religion requires individuals who serve a similar purpose; masters, pastors, and imams, all existing for this reason. Despite different paths, our objectives are the same. We all aspire to save all sentient beings, enabling everyone to find solutions to their problems..."

Upon hearing this, Nanako Ito placed her hands on her chin, lightly and cautiously applauded, and exclaimed with admiration, "Suguichi..."

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Nanako Ito's repeated exclamation of "Wow, amazing" caught Master Geoffrey off guard.

He was no fool and immediately understood that this was Nanako's way of rejecting him. While he felt a pang of regret, he couldn't help but reflect on himself, thinking, "I believed that this donor possessed extraordinary potential. If only she were willing to embrace Buddhism and study the scriptures, she could gain a deeper understanding. Such knowledge would benefit all believers. But I was presumptuous..."

Thinking of this, he sighed again in his heart, "It's a sin, my lady asked me to help her enlighten her, but I wholeheartedly persuaded her to convert to Buddhism..."

With these thoughts in mind, he silently recited a few scriptures and then spoke, "Disciple, I spoke too much earlier. I hope you can forgive me."

Nanako nodded gently, "It's alright. Just please don't try to persuade me to become a nun again."

Saying that, she took out a silk pouch from her pocket and carefully asked, "Master, can you bless and consecrate a talisman for me?"

Master Geoffrey nodded and inquired, "Is the disciple planning to copy the Heart Sutra by hand?"

"Yes," Nanako replied, taking out the pen and paper given to her by the young monk earlier. She asked, "Can I copy it here?"

"Of course," Master Geoffrey pointed to a bookcase below the podium and said, "Please copy the scripture in front of the bookcase."

Nanako thanked him and went to the bookcase, placing the palm-sized paper on it. She began writing down the ten characters of the "Maha Prajna Paramita Heart Sutra" with skillful strokes.

Master Geoffrey stood silently by, watching Nanako's calligraphy, and couldn't help but be amazed. He never expected this young Japanese girl to possess such exquisite handwriting.

As Nanako finished copying the 260 characters of the Heart Sutra, she slowly put down the pen. Master Geoffrey, standing beside her, asked, "Since the donor is familiar with the 'Heart Sutra,' have you attempted to explore the 'unconscious realm' mentioned in the scripture?"

Curiously, Nanako asked, "Are you referring to the 'unconscious realm' mentioned in the part of the scripture that says 'no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind; no form, sound, smell, taste, touch, or object; no realm of sight, and so on, until no realm of consciousness'?"

Master Geoffrey nodded and earnestly said, "No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind; no form, sound, smell, taste, touch, or object refers to the absence of the six senses and their corresponding consciousness. It means not being attached to the limitations of what can be seen, heard, smelled, tasted, touched, or thought. By doing so, the senses become pure, untainted, and free, and all phenomena become empty."

Nanako asked with confusion, "So, it's like not thinking about anything, just being like a Buddha statue?"

Master Geoffrey shook his head and said, "Not exactly. I used to believe that true emptiness meant abandoning all attachments and false appearances. But later, under the guidance of a mentor, I realized that emptiness can also be understood in another way."

Nanako was even more puzzled, "If everything is empty, then nothing exists. What other explanation is there?"

Master Geoffrey explained, "The other way is to detach oneself from the body's senses and distractions from the outside world, using a method similar to Daoist introspection. By doing so, consciousness returns to the depths of one's being. Once consciousness returns to its core, one realizes that even with open eyes, what is seen is merely a speck of dust in the vast expanse of the universe. However, when consciousness returns to its core, it's like closing one's eyes and perceiving the entire universe beyond the universe! This state of openness, where the entire universe lies before you,

is a new realm that has never been experienced before. I believe this is what the Buddha meant by the 'unconscious realm.'"

Nanako murmured, "Closing one's eyes and seeing the universe? Your explanation is quite abstract, and I can't quite grasp it..."

Master Geoffrey said, "Allow me to offer a different explanation."

He spoke with a solemn tone, "With eyes open, you stand on the Earth, gazing at the sky before you. But when you close your eyes and enter the unconscious realm, the Earth transforms into a globe in front of you, and everything becomes accessible to your inner eye!"

Nanako furrowed her brows, "I have attempted introspection and discovered a glimpse of it, but... I have never experienced the feeling of closing my eyes and seeing the universe..."

Master Geoffrey exclaimed, "You understand endoscopic introspection?"

Nanako nodded, "I understand a little. However, I can't confirm if it is true introspection..."

Master Geoffrey asked, "Can you share with me how you achieved it?"

Nanako thought for a moment and said, "I have studied martial arts, and through the circulation of energy within my body, it feels as though I can perceive all the meridians within me..."

Master Geoffrey shook his head and said, "That is not true introspection. It can be considered as self-perception within the body. What you see with that introspection are your own organs, meridians, and dantian. True introspection, at the very least, should involve delving into your Mind Palace, which is the true source of consciousness!"

"Mind Palace?" Nanako asked in confusion, "What is the Mind Palace?"

Master Geoffrey explained, "Although I study Buddhism, exploring the Mind Palace is a crucial practice in Daoist cultivation. The Mind Palace is where cultivators store reiki and true essence, as mentioned in Daoist texts. But in Buddhism, the sea of consciousness, or 'shihai,' is also within the Mind Palace."

"Sea of consciousness?" Nanako was even more perplexed, "I have never heard of this concept before."

Master Geoffrey said, "The Lankavatara Sutra mentions 'the consciousness is stored in the sea of consciousness, and the realm is stirred by the wind. Various kinds of consciousness arise and leap about, causing waves and transformations.' This refers to the sea of consciousness."

Nanako suddenly exclaimed, "The sea of consciousness is that boundless ocean that perpetually propels consciousness outward, right?"

Master Geoffrey's face filled with astonishment as he asked, "You can already sense that ocean? Is it boundless, without wind or waves, and bottomless?"

Nanako nodded, "Yes, precisely."

Master Geoffrey couldn't contain his excitement and blurted out, "That is the sea of consciousness!"

He then asked, "Did you discover that sea of consciousness on your own?"

Nanako thought for a moment and said, "I stumbled upon it by myself. My martial arts master taught us introspection to sense the meridians and dantian, but I don't know how I ended up in that sea."

During her time studying martial arts with Master Vail at Elys-Champ, Nanako had attempted introspection. She discovered the sea of consciousness without any guidance, but Aurora, who practiced alongside her, couldn't even achieve introspection of the meridians.

Even Charlie, who was with her, hadn't reached that level.

However, at that time, neither Nanako nor Charlie fully comprehended the true significance of this state.

Master Geoffrey was far from composed. Despite his cassock attire, he couldn't contain his excitement. He paced back and forth, repeatedly uttering, "The donor is undoubtedly a genius! To discover the sea of consciousness independently! Without a guiding mentor, this humble

monk fears he would never have found his way into the sea of consciousness..."

In this moment, both Master Geoffrey and even Lily, who was watching on the monitor, were taken aback.

Nanako had progressed rapidly in martial arts, and her subordinates had informed her of Nanako's exceptional talent. Hence, she believed Nanako had the greatest potential for enlightenment among those around Charlie. She sought out Master Geoffrey's guidance to help Nanako achieve enlightenment.

However, little did she anticipate that Nanako had already grasped half of the truth by herself!

Her heart quickened, and she stared unwaveringly at the monitor.

Inside the Buddhist hall, Nanako couldn't comprehend why Master Geoffrey found it astonishing that she could enter the sea of consciousness.

To her, it hadn't appeared particularly challenging. While it felt like there were numerous errors, she had successfully entered the sea of consciousness once and acquired the method. This method not only facilitated rapid progress in martial arts but had other potential applications unknown to her.

At last, Master Geoffrey regained his composure and asked Nanako, "Disciple, after entering the sea of consciousness, have you ever contemplated entering that sea?"

Nanako nodded and replied honestly, "Directly entering the sea of consciousness is challenging, so I guided my consciousness upward continuously. Subsequently, I released all attachments at a higher point, allowing my consciousness to descend into the sea of consciousness."

"Guided my consciousness upward..." Master Geoffrey murmured in repetition. His head spun, and he struggled to maintain his balance, steadying himself with the desk.

He gazed at Nanako Ito, muttering, "A genius... indeed, a genius... Numerous exceptional talents were led into Taoism by the master. Yet, this one ventured beyond the Taoist gate alone... This feat rivals the sages who founded sects..."

Turning to Nanako Ito, he continued, "Disciple, discovering the Mind Palace, identifying the Sea of Consciousness, and ascending to higher realms—all have been accomplished correctly. The benefactor has traversed three-quarters of the path to enlightenment on their own! There is only one step left, and should it be taken correctly, enlightenment shall be immediate!"

"Enlightenment?" Nanako Ito inquired, perplexed. "What does enlightenment entail?"

Master Geoffrey explained, "Enlightenment signifies opening the Mind Palace of consciousness, mastering reiki, and stepping onto the path of heaven. In the least advanced scenario, one's reiki remains within the sea of consciousness, akin to this humble monk. With diligent practice, mindfulness of the entire universe can be attained. In a more favorable outcome, reiki emerges from the sea of consciousness and permeates the entire body. In such a state, one can defy the will of heaven and truly become an enlightened monk."

"Reiki, monks..." Nanako Ito was astounded and silently pondered, "Could it be...could it be that the reiki and monks mentioned by Master Geoffrey are the great powers of Charlie?!"

This realization caused Nanako Ito's heart to race.

Throughout her life, she had remained remarkably composed for the most part, with few pursuits. Her relentless dedication was directed towards only two: martial arts and Charlie.

After her serious injury in Aurous Hill and her subsequent return to China, she had abandoned her martial arts pursuits. She later resumed them

solely because she believed that by mastering martial arts, she could draw closer to Charlie.

Now, she suddenly felt that an opportunity had arisen to get closer to Charlie!

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The moment Nanako Ito realized that she might become like Charlie, she felt an overwhelming sense of anticipation. She gazed at Master Geoffrey with reverence and asked, "Master, could you please guide me on how to truly achieve enlightenment?"

As she spoke, Nanako couldn't help but feel uncertain. In today's society, it was common to keep secrets, especially in the realm of martial arts. No sect or family would willingly share their techniques, let alone the higher levels of cultivation.

Nevertheless, she decided to give it a shot. After all, Master Geoffrey had already imparted so much knowledge to her. Perhaps he would be willing to reveal a little more and help her gain a deeper understanding.

Taking a deep breath, Master Geoffrey couldn't help but sigh. "Disciple, you possess exceptional talent, and I cannot allow it to go to waste. In fact, you have already discovered the key to enlightenment. The only mistake you made was trying to forcefully enter the sea of consciousness instead of allowing your consciousness to merge with it. By attempting to leap, you make it impossible to truly enter the sea of consciousness."

Nanako quickly interjected, "Then how can I enter the sea of consciousness?"

Master Geoffrey nodded solemnly. "You must let your consciousness merge within it."

"Merge in?" Nanako exclaimed. "You mean I have to merge my consciousness with the sea of consciousness?"

"Exactly," Master Geoffrey affirmed. "Disciple, the sea of consciousness is akin to the universe. If you treat your consciousness as an individual, it's like a person diving into the sea. The ocean is vast and boundless, but what a person can perceive is only a few meters or a dozen meters around them. Only by merging your consciousness with the sea of consciousness can you control the entirety of it, allowing it to manifest before you like a globe."

"Therefore, when you enter the sea of consciousness, do not bring the subjective consciousness of 'self'. Abandon all definitions of self within your consciousness. In the moment of leaping, release all sense of self and allow your consciousness to enter a state of non-self. When your selfless consciousness completely merges with the sea of consciousness, that is when you have truly achieved enlightenment!"

Although Nanako understood Master Geoffrey's explanation, she was unsure of what the "state of non-self" truly meant.

She believed that one's thoughts were subjective and that, regardless of the circumstances, they were always thinking using their own thoughts. How could she eliminate the consciousness of self from her own consciousness?

With her doubts, Nanako turned to Master Geoffrey. "Master, how can I attain the state of non-self?"

Master Geoffrey replied, "Non-self, also known as the state of unconsciousness, is a realm described by the Buddha. It is a state that can only be understood and not explained. Even I struggled to comprehend it back then, and it took me eight years to finally reach that state. Therefore, you can only rely on yourself to explore and search for it gradually. I cannot offer any definitive advice or assistance."

Nanako wasn't disappointed by this response. She respectfully said, "Thank you for your guidance, Master. I will do my best to try."

Master Geoffrey nodded. "You can try now. Although I can't assist you directly, as an observer, I may be able to provide personal advice based on your progress."

After a moment of hesitation, Nanako nodded and said, "Thank you so much!"

She then asked, "May I attempt it now?"

Master Geoffrey placed a hand on his chest and gestured towards the cushion on the lectern, where disciples meditated with their legs crossed. "Please proceed, disciple."

In another courtyard, Lily observed Nanako on the monitor and turned to Sister Turk beside her. "Sister Turk, it took Master Geoffrey eight years to achieve enlightenment. How long do you think Nanako will take?"

Sister Turk smiled and replied, "Madam, it only took you half a year to attain enlightenment. With Nanako's talent, I believe she will need no more than two to three years."

Lily gently shook her head. "Nanako possesses even greater talent than I do. Her journey to enlightenment will surely be shorter than mine. Who knows, she might succeed within a month."

Sister Turk asked in surprise, "Madam, do you have such high expectations for Miss Ito?"

Lily nodded. "She is purer than most adults in this world. The purer a person is, the easier it becomes for them to attain enlightenment."

Meanwhile, Nanako Ito had already settled onto the cushion, crossing her legs. She closed her eyes and skillfully directed her true Chi and consciousness, entering a state of introspection.

Having mastered the process of introspection, Nanako easily arrived at the sea of consciousness once again.

The sea of consciousness remained calm and undisturbed, just as before.

Nanako continued to elevate her consciousness, moving further away from the sea below.

However, with each ascent, she encountered a nameless resistance growing stronger. She pushed herself to reach the highest point, but eventually, she couldn't hold on any longer and allowed her consciousness to descend from the sky.

In this moment, Nanako's focus was on achieving the state of non-self, non-consciousness.

She struggled to control her thoughts and refrain from thinking about anything, yet the more she tried, the more thoughts flooded her consciousness like a tidal wave.

She reminisced about her childhood, her parents, her first encounter with Charlie, the snowy night in Kyoto...

Suddenly, her consciousness paused briefly before rushing into the sea of consciousness.

However, the surface remained calm, as if nothing had happened.

Surrounded by the sea of consciousness, Nanako had no time to adjust before a tremendous force attacked her from all directions. A powerful current began to push her upwards.

Her consciousness felt like a bubble at the bottom of the sea, squeezed by the omnipresent water, speeding towards the surface.

Then, Nanako's consciousness snapped open, gasping for breath. She didn't know when it happened, but she was already drenched in sweat.

Master Geoffrey spoke, "Disciple, it seems you were pushed out of the sea of consciousness, correct?"

Nanako nodded slightly, her voice tired. "Controlling the consciousness to ascend as high as possible is truly exhausting. But unexpectedly, the process of being pushed out of the sea of consciousness was even more agonizing. The overwhelming pressure made it difficult to breathe. And the more I tried to achieve non-self, the more thoughts related to myself flooded my mind..."

Master Geoffrey nodded and said solemnly, "Indeed, attaining enlightenment is as arduous as reaching the heavens. Not only is success difficult to achieve, but the process of experiencing and attempting is also immensely challenging. I failed countless times during those eight years of my own journey. But your talent surpasses mine, so it shouldn't take you as long."

He continued, "During your state of introspection just now, your expression changed multiple times within seconds. It seems that your thoughts were interfering too much. To attain the state of non-consciousness, you must first let go of all desires and attachments. Otherwise, it will be difficult to succeed."

Nanako pursed her lips and said, "I want to try again..."

## **Chapter 5656**

Upon hearing Nanako's desire to try again, Master Geoffrey didn't give it much thought. He simply nodded and said, "If you wish to enter the realm of the unconscious, the most secure path is to sever your attachments and desires."

Nanako fell silent for a moment and whispered, "But if I sever my attachments and desires, what purpose is there in living?"

Without hesitation, Master Geoffrey responded, "Only by severing attachments and desires can one have a chance at attaining enlightenment and ultimately save all sentient beings."

Nanako shook her head and spoke earnestly, "Forgive me for speaking bluntly, but isn't the pursuit of enlightenment itself a form of attachment and desire? Isn't the single-minded goal of saving all sentient beings just another manifestation of attachment and desire? While saving others is noble, not everyone is dissatisfied with their current circumstances. If someone is living a happy and content life, why should they need someone else to save them?"

She continued, "Furthermore, I have my own family and loved ones. I cannot simply cast them aside. Even if I could forget about them completely, if my focus is solely on attaining enlightenment, then the pursuit of enlightenment becomes yet another desire. When I delve into my consciousness and take the leap, it is for the sake of enlightenment. But then I must deceive either myself or my consciousness, convincing it that I have no desires or wants. Isn't that a form of deception?"

Master Geoffrey was slightly taken aback, but he sighed softly and admitted, "What you say... does make sense..."

He then asked her, "So, how do you plan to approach it this time?"

Nanako shook her head and replied, "I don't know. I just want to try again. Regardless of success or failure, I won't trouble you any further today."

Master Geoffrey reassured her, saying, "I have plenty of time. There's no need for you to rush."

Grateful, Nanako nodded and closed her eyes once again, using the introspection method to guide her divine sense into her consciousness.

Just like before, Nanako exerted all her efforts to elevate her divine sense, but the previous attempt had drained her energy, making this time much more challenging.

Despite the difficulty, Nanako persisted, pouring all her strength into this endeavor.

During this process, she finally understood why it took Master Geoffrey eight years to attain enlightenment. The constant effort to elevate her divine sense took a toll on both her energy and physical strength. After two attempts, she didn't know how long it would take to recover from this mental exhaustion.

Moreover, attaining enlightenment was a continuous process of countless attempts. Spending a few years to achieve enlightenment was already considered short in the long journey of self-discovery.

Nanako pushed her divine sense to its limits, depleting all her energy in the process. When she realized she had exhausted her strength, she immediately relaxed and let her divine sense descend from its high point.

During this descent, various thoughts flooded her consciousness, just like in her previous attempt. They were thoughts about her parents, loved ones, and her constant thoughts of Charlie.

Nanako finally realized that the reason so many thoughts rushed in at this moment was because the sensation of freefalling triggered a feeling of imminent death.

And this impending sense of death naturally made her think of many people and things.

Contrary to Master Geoffrey's teachings, Nanako didn't try to forcefully forget everything or abandon her attachments and desires. Instead, she subconsciously thought, "Master Geoffrey said that I cannot directly plunge into my consciousness, but rather merge with it. Does this mean that my divine sense and consciousness have the inherent ability to merge? The only difference is that some have mastered this art, while others have not?"

With this realization, Nanako's heart stirred. "My consciousness resides within my body, within my inner sanctuary. It should understand me better than anyone. It must know that I cannot simply abandon my attachments and desires. If it still requires me to do so in order to merge with it, then it becomes an unsolvable paradox..."

"Does this mean that my divine sense never had a chance to merge with it?"

"If that's the case, I can never attain enlightenment in this lifetime."

In that moment, Nanako's divine sense once again plunged into the serene depths of her consciousness.

The powerful impact forced her divine sense deep into the abyss, inflicting another heavy blow. Her entire being had lost any strength to resist.

Then, the immense pressure from her consciousness swept over her, carrying her divine sense towards the surface.

Nanako felt a sense of despair. It wasn't because she wanted to give up after two failed attempts, but because she knew herself. Even if she could let go of her deceased mother and her father, who had already recovered and was enjoying his senior years, she could never let go of Charlie.

Her new life was thanks to Charlie.

At this moment, even as she was being propelled to the surface by the sea of consciousness, for the first time, she felt prepared to fight and resist.

Her consciousness involuntarily whispered to itself: "If I never come to understand the truth, I will eventually die. Death isn't what scares me. My mother has been gone for years, and my father will pass away before me. What about Charlie? Surely, there will be someone by his side. If that's the case, then I wish for that person to be me!"

At this thought, her consciousness couldn't help but become excited. While she struggled hard and tried to dive deeper to resist the buoyancy of the sea of consciousness, she said loudly in her subconscious, "I know! I know that Charlie is a married man. I also know that falling in love with a married man is frowned upon and morally wrong, but I love him deeply. No matter what, I can't stop loving him!"

"I can't destroy Charlie's marriage and family, but I also don't want to give up the opportunity to be with him. It's like you want me to abandon my attachments and desires, but I simply can't do it. It's a contradiction!"

"However, perhaps there is a solution to this contradiction. If you and I can merge together, allowing me to attain enlightenment, then I also have a chance at a longer life. As long as I can live, I can wait forever, whether it's eighty years, a hundred years, or even two hundred years, I don't care!"

"So, you can't push me away!"

In an instant, Nanako fought with all her might and swam towards the depths of her consciousness.

To resist the pervasive buoyancy of her consciousness, Nanako nearly exhausted all her energy in the struggle. She was like a marathon runner who had depleted her strength and could barely stand, yet still pressed forward with mechanical determination.

As she fought desperately, she felt her consciousness gradually fading away. It was akin to the blackout that divers fear the most, her consciousness growing increasingly blurred.

And at that moment, her divine sense suddenly halted in her consciousness.

The delicate balance in her consciousness was instantly shattered. Her divine sense seemed to lose all buoyancy and began a slow descent towards the deep depths.

Her consciousness dissipated, and the world plunged into a dark silence. Even her divine sense vanished completely.

After an indeterminate amount of time, a tiny speck of light emerged in the pitch-black expanse of her consciousness. This speck of light swiftly descended to the bottom, and soon more light spots appeared, akin to tiny cells, all converging towards the bottom of the sea of consciousness.

Nanako Ito, having lost all consciousness, suddenly awoke. Before opening her eyes upon awakening, she felt as if the entire temple was laid out before her, as though she were outside, viewing the whole temple from a divine perspective.

She could see Master Geoffrey in the temple, looking in her direction while silently chanting scriptures. His expression appeared somewhat anxious, yet she remained seated cross-legged on the futon, as still as a wax figure.

At that moment, she sensed an unusual disturbance on the roof of the temple. With a mere thought, her consciousness shifted to the tumultuous roof, where she observed a gecko cautiously inching closer to a fly. Then, in an instant, the gecko extended its tongue and swiftly captured the fly in its mouth.

At this instant, Nanako could even discern the sound of the gecko swallowing the fly.

Then, she heard a faint rustling sound once more. With a thought, she moved to a corner of the temple and saw a line of ants marching in formation.

This extraordinary sensation astonished Nanako. She yearned to extend her consciousness beyond the temple, but her spiritual awareness was confined within its walls.

Just as she was pondering this, she suddenly experienced a sharp pain in her head. The divine perspective vanished completely. The next moment, she opened her eyes, and her consciousness returned to her own body.

However, unlike her previous attempt, Nanako awoke feeling refreshed and inexplicably comfortable this time.

Upon seeing her eyes open, Master Geoffrey let out a sigh of relief and reflexively remarked, "You've been in meditation for more than ten minutes this time, which is significantly longer than before. How do you feel?"

Nanako candidly replied, "It felt as though I could leave my body, but the sensation didn't last before it faded. I'm unsure if it was merely an illusion."

Master Geoffrey nodded, "When the soul departs the body, it employs reiki to perceive its surroundings. Such a state is achievable only upon successful enlightenment. Individuals like myself, lacking the reiki to venture beyond the sea of consciousness, are incapable of this.

Perhaps, after your consecutive attempts, you were simply too exhausted and hallucinated."

Nanako nodded slightly, about to speak, when a slight noise from the roof caught her attention. She quickly looked up and saw a gecko pursuing a spider. It seemed to be the same gecko she had observed from her divine viewpoint.

She watched the gecko intently and murmured, "It seems... it wasn't an illusion..."

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"Not a hallucination?!" exclaimed Master Geoffrey, his voice filled with shock.

From the moment he laid eyes on Nanako, he sensed her innate talent for enlightenment. Her journey towards enlightenment would surely be swifter than his own, thanks to this natural gift she possessed.

Among the millions of people in the world, only a rare few possess the aptitude for enlightenment. It is a pursuit that eludes most throughout their entire lives.

However, for those blessed with the talent for enlightenment, it is merely a matter of waiting for the opportune moment.

Yet, the path to enlightenment remains shrouded in mystery and unpredictability, devoid of any set rules. For those with the potential, it is unknown when and where they will encounter the opportunity for enlightenment.

Master Geoffrey believed that by imparting the key to enlightenment to Nanako, she, with her remarkable talent, could achieve enlightenment after a year or two of dedicated effort.

But he could never have fathomed that Nanako would attain enlightenment in just two attempts.

Suppressing his astonishment, he asked, "Are you suggesting that your primordial spirit truly left your body and merged with the sea of consciousness?"

Not only was Master Geoffrey taken aback, but Lily and Sister Turk, who were observing the scene, were also stunned.

Wide-eyed and unable to find words, Lily finally managed to stammer, "Is it truly possible for Nanako to achieve enlightenment in such a short span of time? This... this is truly beyond belief..."

Sister Turk questioned, "Madam, can't he confirm if Miss Ito has attained enlightenment?"

Lily shook her head and replied, "His divine sense does not extend past the sea of consciousness, so he is unable to perceive the presence of reiki in others."

Having said that, Lily suddenly stood up and declared, "I must go and see her!"

Sister Turk, concerned, interjected, "Madam, if you go to see Miss Ito, won't you risk exposing yourself? Miss Ito is deeply infatuated with Young Master, and she may have already researched your background. If she recognizes you, it could be..."

Lily nodded in agreement and instructed, "You're right. Prepare a mask."

...

Inside the tranquil Buddhist hall, Nanako respectfully addressed Master Geoffrey, "Thank you, Master, for your guidance. I now understand that merging one's divine sense with the sea of consciousness is indeed the key to enlightenment. And just now, I believe I have achieved this union."

Master Geoffrey struggled to contain his astonishment and inquired, "How did you manage to accomplish such a feat, dear disciple?"

Taking a moment to reflect, Nanako candidly replied, "I suppose it is because I reached a certain understanding with it."

"It?" Master Geoffrey asked, perplexed. "Do you mean... the sea of consciousness?"

"Yes," Nanako nodded with a touch of serenity.

Master Geoffrey murmured, "How can this be... I have spent eight years striving for enlightenment, delving into the sea of consciousness day after day, only to be met with silence. How did you manage to establish this understanding with the sea of consciousness?"

Realizing that his inquiry was somewhat abrupt, Master Geoffrey hastily added, "Amitabha Buddha, forgive my intrusion. This question delves into personal matters, and I have overstepped."

Nanako spoke honestly, "Master, I opened my heart and shared my deepest secrets and desires with the sea of consciousness, hoping that it would aid me in fulfilling them. Though it did not respond, I found myself merging with it instantaneously."

Master Geoffrey stood in stunned silence, muttering, "Dear disciple, your talent is truly extraordinary. In retrospect, the reason it took me eight long years to attain enlightenment may be because I deceived myself into thinking that I had relinquished my desires and attachments. In reality, I was merely deluding myself. Perhaps, in a single moment, I stumbled upon some form of understanding with the sea of consciousness..."

Unbeknownst to Nanako, her words had sparked a profound shift in Master Geoffrey's perspective. She earnestly continued, "Master, it is possible that you have veered from the true understanding of enlightenment. While both Buddhist and Daoist teachings describe the Mind Palace and the sea of consciousness, enlightenment ultimately lies within the realm of cultivators. Buddhist philosophy speaks of 'no-self,' while Daoist philosophy emphasizes the 'true self.' These two paths are like the cardinal directions, opposite yet intertwined. It is possible that by guiding the sea of consciousness towards the realization of the 'true self,' one's divine sense can merge with it..."

Master Geoffrey stood still, struck by Nanako's words. After a moment of contemplation, he finally spoke, "Ah... your words have truly enlightened me, dear disciple. Looking back, the

reason it took me eight years to attain enlightenment may be because I mistakenly believed that I had renounced my desires. Perhaps I, too, stumbled upon some tacit understanding with the sea of consciousness at a certain moment..."

Nanako humbly nodded and replied, "Master, your words are too kind. Today, I have attained enlightenment thanks to your guidance. I shall forever be grateful for your kindness!"

Meanwhile, Lily, now donning a mask, stood before the monitor, listening intently to Nanako's words. Her heart swelled with a mixture of shock and delight.

She had never given much thought to the concepts of 'no-self' and 'true self.'

When she guided Master Geoffrey on his journey towards enlightenment, she primarily assisted his divine sense in introspection and in finding the sea of consciousness.

As for how to merge the divine sense with the sea of consciousness, Lily herself remained uncertain.

Her own enlightenment had been partly facilitated by Bruce, who possessed the dragon formation. While she had grasped the method of introspection, it was with Bruce's assistance that her divine sense merged with the sea of consciousness.

Now, with Nanako having succeeded in gaining enlightenment after two attempts, this both astonished and overjoyed her.

She understood that Charlie was in need of two crucial roles at this juncture: one being a sagacious and nearly supernatural strategist, and the other, a partner for mutual cultivation.

The concept of a cultivating couple here is not merely about practicing or taking breaks together, but rather about having a wholly dependable companion for joint cultivation.

The path of spiritual cultivation is both extended and solitary. The presence of a wholly trustworthy and like-minded individual is akin to having a companion on a lengthy journey through the night, holding significant and profound importance.

In Lily's opinion, no one was more suitable than Maria for either role, whether as a strategist or a Taoist companion.

Unfortunately, Maria's situation was somewhat akin to Master Geoffrey's. While Master Geoffrey's aura remained confined within the sea of consciousness, Maria, despite possessing nearly all-encompassing knowledge, was unable to cultivate aura.

Thus, Maria could only fulfill the role of a strategist and was unable to join Charlie in cultivation.

Now, Nanako Ito had acquired the essential prerequisites for the latter role.

...

Inside the peaceful Buddhist temple, Master Geoffrey's mind was filled with a myriad of emotions.

Today, Nanako's words had deeply impacted him, causing him to question himself repeatedly. After silently reciting the Heart Sutra several times, he finally spoke, "Since you can already project your primordial spirit and perceive the world with reiki, you have truly attained enlightenment in its purest form. Compared to someone like me, who cannot extend reiki beyond the sea of consciousness, you possess far greater possibilities. However, your reiki still requires continuous cultivation and refinement. At present, you can only perceive this Buddhist hall, but in the future, you may be capable of perceiving the entire temple or even the vast expanse of Tiger Mountain."

Master Geoffrey couldn't help but sigh, "But alas, I am unfamiliar with cultivation methods, so the path you tread after enlightenment will depend on your own efforts or the aid of a benefactor."

Nanako nodded earnestly and expressed her gratitude, "Thank you, Master, for your understanding!"

"Amitabha Buddha," Master Geoffrey responded without confirming or denying, and continued, "Allow me to bestow upon you a blessed amulet, one that will safeguard your loved ones and ensure their safety."

Nanako understood that Master Geoffrey was concluding their discussion on enlightenment, and she gratefully replied, "Thank you, Master, for your kindness!"

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To imbue the amulet with blessings and power, the master recites Buddhist scriptures, bestowing upon it what is known as "divine power." Of course, this "divine power" is not a literal force, but rather a form of merit and auspicious symbolism.

After Master Geoffrey blessed and empowered the amulet, he handed it back to Nanako and said, "Please keep the amulet safe. If you're interested in the future, you can delve deeper into Buddhism. With your talent, you'll grasp truths that elude modern minds!"

Nanako knew that Master Geoffrey had a deep fascination with Buddhism, so she nodded and replied, "Master, don't worry. I will make an effort to study more."

"May Amitabha Buddha bless you." Master Geoffrey bowed slightly and thanked Nanako.

Nanako returned the gesture respectfully and took her leave. Master Geoffrey accompanied her to the door and personally opened it, revealing the grandeur of the Buddhist hall.

Outside the door, several "believers" were already waiting on the stone steps. They held amulets obtained from the temple, patiently queuing up to have them blessed by Master Geoffrey. The first person in line was a woman dressed plainly, her face concealed behind a mask, making it impossible to determine her age.

This woman was Lily.

From the moment Nanako left, Lily could sense that she had achieved enlightenment. Surprised yet delighted, Lily couldn't help but feel a sense of kinship.

As she had mentioned to Sister Turk, Nanako's enlightenment meant that Charlie now had a kindred companion on the long journey of self-discovery. This was a significant and far-reaching development for a solitary traveler.

When Nanako passed by Lily, she paid little attention to the woman in the mask, as the young woman she had encountered in the elevator stood behind Lily in the queue.

Nanako immediately recognized her and was captivated by her presence, completely oblivious to Lily.

At that moment, the young woman was accompanied by another woman of similar age. The two whispered to each other. When the young woman saw Nanako emerge, she exclaimed, "Oh, it's you!"

Nanako nodded slightly and thanked her, saying, "I just received an amulet from Master Geoffrey. Thank you so much!"

The young woman smiled and replied, "No problem. Just a small favor."

Noticing that the young woman had a friend with her, Nanako didn't say much and thanked her again before taking her leave.

The young woman warmly invited Nanako to her home, and Nanako readily accepted the invitation.

While Nanako left, Master Geoffrey was instructing the next "believer" to enter the Buddhist hall. Lily entered.

After closing the door to the hall, Lily asked Master Geoffrey, "Geoffrey, what do you think of Miss Ito?"

Master Geoffrey sighed and said, "Madam, I am ashamed. In my encounters with Miss Ito, I lost my focus several times. Once, I wanted to introduce her to Buddhism, and another time, I believed that renouncing worldly desires was the key to enlightenment. It was only through Miss Ito's guidance that I realized I had been attributing everything to Buddhism, neglecting the foundation of Taoism..."

Lily smiled and replied, "Miss Ito is indeed exceptionally wise. Moreover, she is honest and determined. For someone like you, who enjoys guiding others towards Buddhism, her honesty becomes a powerful tool, and her determination is insurmountable. Even if you were eight of yourself, you wouldn't be able to persuade her to convert to Buddhism."

Master Geoffrey nodded and said, "Madam, you are absolutely right..."

Continuing, he said, "Madam, now that Miss Ito has achieved enlightenment, she has great potential for self-discovery. However, she is still a beginner and urgently needs a mentor. Are you planning to personally guide her?"

Lily shook her head and said, "She has her own destiny, and her talent for self-discovery far surpasses mine. I am not capable of guiding her."

Although Lily achieved enlightenment with Bruce's help, she herself was not a prodigy in self-discovery. Compared to someone like Nanako, who comprehended the essence of life on her own, Lily fell short. Therefore, Lily believed that Nanako's future development should be guided by her son, Charlie, rather than herself.

Moreover, she knew that Charlie was on his way back. She felt that if Charlie knew about Nanako's enlightenment, he would be overjoyed. This could be considered a small surprise prepared by a mother for her son. Throughout the morning, many believers arrived one after another to have their amulets blessed. Some were arranged by Lily, while others rushed to the temple after hearing the news.

At noon, the announcement of Master Geoffrey's lecture at the Lama Temple in Aurous Hill created a sensation among the believers in Aurous Hill.

...

Simultaneously, on the other side of the ocean in the United States, it was late at night.

Inside the Rothschild family estate, none of the direct members of the Rothschild family had gone to sleep yet.

Tonight, in this estate, a mix of joy and worry filled the air for the family. With the patriarch suffering a stroke and becoming paralyzed, losing his fighting spirit, and summoning all family members to the estate for a meeting before tomorrow morning, it was evident to everyone that the patriarch was preparing to step down.

Furthermore, since none of them seized the opportunity of the artifact, there would be no surprises in the selection of the successor; it would undoubtedly be the eldest son, Steve.

Amidst their lamentation and regret, everyone couldn't help but contemplate their own futures.

Once Steve successfully ascended to power, his first priority would be consolidating his control over the entire family.

The most crucial and profitable businesses of the family would undoubtedly fall into his hands. It would be a process of continuously draining their resources. Although they were powerless to resist, they needed to devise strategies to cope with the situation.

Some of the more astute ones immediately planned to individually get close to Steve.

However, they were caught off guard when, after meeting with the doctors, Steve went to see the patriarch once again. After personally giving the patriarch a massage for his recovery, Steve secluded himself in his own villa and refused to meet anyone.

By dawn, his younger siblings and their children arrived to visit, but they were stopped by Steve's butler at the door.

Steve was very shrewd. He knew that his siblings were visiting to privately express their loyalty to him, hoping to leave a good impression and perhaps secure a favorable position within the family once he took over.

And indeed, he needed a few capable subordinates to assist him in quickly taking control of the family.

But at this critical moment, he knew that he couldn't meet with anyone privately.

In his view, capable subordinates could be selected after he successfully ascended to power. There was no need to reveal his intention to recruit or build a team before his succession, as it could potentially have unforeseen consequences on his ultimate goal.

So, he secluded himself, refusing to meet anyone or communicate with anyone outside his family. This was his way of minimizing risks.

Filled with excitement, Steve had not slept all night.

Early in the morning, he quickly got up, dressed neatly, and prepared himself before boarding a helicopter to Ottawa in the darkness.

He intended to personally go to Canada and escort Queen Helena of Northern Europe to New York.

In the early morning, Helena took the Life Saving Pill Charlie gave her and boarded the Rothschild family's helicopter with the help of the butler.

The reason why Charlie was confident in allowing Helena to go to New York alone was that the Rothschild family wielded unparalleled power and influence in the United States. This influence was enough to allow Helena to enter the United States discreetly without anyone else knowing.

Moreover, Charlie knew that Morgana was suspicious and cautious. She would never dare to directly confront the Rothschild family while she herself was in New York. Additionally, during the process of sealing off New York, the Rothschild family unexpectedly integrated AI technology, greatly enhancing their security capabilities. With Morgana's personality, she wouldn't dare take any risks.

The helicopter flew for about two hours before landing on the rooftop of the medical center at the Rothschild estate.

With heavy dark circles and eye bags, Steve enthusiastically led Helena to the special ward where Howard Rothschild resided.

Howard couldn't sleep all night either.

The thought of handing over the control of the family today filled him with regret.

The heads of these American dynasties usually only passed on the baton to their sons on the eve of their last moments. If Howard hadn't suffered a stroke, his self-esteem would have prevented him from appearing in this state. Even if he were paralyzed and lying in a hospital bed, he would continue to lead the Rothschild family.

Now, no matter how unwilling he is, he could only hand over the reins of the family to his eldest son, Steve.

If it weren't for the deep-rooted royal sentiment in the Rothschild family for the past two to three hundred years, Howard wouldn't have met Helena, the Queen of Northern Europe, in this state. Today, meeting Helena before handing over the family's control, seeing her, and establishing a closer relationship with the European royalty to integrate the royal bloodline into the Rothschild family, became the last thing he did as the current head of the Rothschild family.

Howard, assisted by medical staff, changed into a sharp and exquisite top-tier suit and waited on the hospital bed.

When Steve brought Helena into the ward, Howard looked at Helena, who was young, beautiful, and dignified, and couldn't help but sigh in his heart, "The royal bloodline may not excel in terms of making money, but the inherent nobility is truly remarkable. If the Rothschild family could incorporate such a bloodline, it would bring honor to future generations!"

The mentality of the Rothschild family was similar to that of wealthy individuals who idolize entertainment celebrities in Hong Kong and other countries.

They knew that these celebrities weren't particularly outstanding in terms of wealth or power. They were merely attractive and possessed a certain aura. In terms of actual ability, they couldn't compare to even a fraction of the wealthy family.

But they couldn't resist their love for these celebrities.

More than love, it was an obsession, a love bordering on madness.

The Rothschild family's status was higher than that of these ordinary wealthy individuals, so their obsession wasn't with celebrities, but with the royal families of European aristocracy.

Helena, seeing Howard, who possessed almost all the world's greatest wealth, felt no nervousness in her heart. After all, she had seen the world from Charlie and knew that absolute strength surpassed material wealth. In her eyes, Howard was smaller than Charlie.

So she looked at Howard with a smile and confidently said, "Hello, Mr. Rothschild. I am Helena Iliad, the current Queen of Norway. I am here to represent the Northern European royalty and extend my sincere greetings to you and the entire Rothschild family."

## **Chapter 5659**



Helena's regal and poised demeanor, exuding the grace and confidence of nobility, only deepened Howard's admiration for her.

As one of the wealthiest individuals in the world, Howard knew that many people were swayed by money. But only a select few could maintain such composure and dignity in his presence.

Impressed by her, Howard found himself gaining a newfound respect. Struggling to sit up straight, he mustered his courage and said, "Your... Your Majesty, would you... would you honor the Rothschild family with a visit? It would be... it would be a privilege for the entire... Rothschild family."

Helena smiled and nodded, responding, "I heard that Mr. Rothschild's health has been deteriorating, so I specifically came here to visit him. I wonder how Mr. Rothschild is feeling now?"

Howard sighed and replied, "The doctor said... said that I... I might have had a stroke. In the future... I might have to focus on rehabilitation. Later, I plan to gather all the members of the Rothschild family for a meeting... to formally announce Steve as the next family head... I also ask Your Majesty to witness it in person..."

Steve, standing beside them, concealed his joy but maintained a somber expression. He said, "Father... I believe... I believe you will recover fully!"

Helena turned her gaze towards Steve, observing his sincere and teary-eyed expression. She smiled gently and nodded, saying, "Sir, I share your belief. I have faith that Mr. Rothschild will not only recover fully but become even healthier than before."

"Absolutely!" Steve nodded fervently, blurting out, "If Her Majesty says so, I believe a miracle will happen!"

As he spoke, Steve secretly thought, "Phew! I was just being polite. Helena, please don't jinx it at this crucial moment!"

Howard, observing his son's "sincere" expression, felt comforted in his heart.

In that moment, he reassured himself, "Let's face reality and focus on rehabilitation. Perhaps there's still a chance to enjoy a healthy old age..."

With this in mind, he stammered, "Your... Your Majesty... On behalf of the Rothschild family, I... sincerely request a... a marriage alliance with the Nordic Royal Family... If... If you are willing to... to marry into the Rothschild

family... the... the Rothschild family will do everything... to support and help revive the Nordic Royal Family..."

Steve, upon hearing this, was even more elated.

Once he assumed the position of family head, his eldest son, Royce, would become the next heir. At that time, his son's marriage would become a highly anticipated event.

If, at this crucial moment, the old man could use his sincerity and influence to convince Helena to agree to a marriage alliance with the Rothschild family, then the Nordic Queen, the best and only suitable choice for a spouse in the Rothschild family, would undoubtedly be his son, Royce. By then, once he became the family head and his son married the Nordic Queen, the attention garnered would be unmatched in the entire world! In that moment, Howard truly longed for a positive response from Helena. If she agreed to marry into the Rothschild family, it would bridge the only gap the family had experienced in the past two hundred years.

Helena, however, dismissed Howard's proposal with a scoff in her mind and had no intention of considering it. Yet, when she thought about the task Charlie had assigned her, she felt a twinge of awkwardness and said, "Mr. Howard, the primary purpose of my visit today is actually for business. Your proposal has truthfully caught me off guard."

Howard spoke hastily, "Her Majesty the Queen... this... this proposition may not... be effective immediately. You... you should take your time to consider... think it over, whether it's... whether it's three years or... or five, the Rothschilds... the Rothschilds will be... willing to wait..."

Helena pursed her lips, her gaze shifting between Howard and Steve, feigning hesitation.

Howard, an astute figure despite his hemiplegic condition, with a mind still sharp, turned to his son Steve and said, "Ste... Steve, you... you and the doctor... the doctor should step outside first. I... I wish to have a private discussion with Her Majesty the Queen alone."

Recognizing his father's intent to pave the way for his efforts, Steve responded impulsively, "Of course, father!"

He promptly requested the doctor to exit. Before departing, Steve assured Howard, "Father, take your time. You can have a lengthy conversation with Her Majesty the Queen. I'll ensure everyone outside maintains a distance of over 20 meters for your peace of mind."

Howard nodded in approval, then gestured with a flick of his hand, signaling him to leave.

Steve closed the door firmly behind him and ensured that everyone outside was kept at least twenty meters away, including himself.

With the room cleared, Helena wasted no time, addressing Howard who was confined to his hospital bed, "Mr. Howard, the primary reason for my visit today is actually to propose a business deal with you."

Unaware of her actual intentions and presuming Helena sought an alliance through marriage to leverage more favorable terms for herself.

Howard responded without hesitation, "As long as the Queen... Her Majesty the Queen is willing... willing to join... the Rothschild family... all terms can be negotiated freely!"

Helena shook her head calmly and said, "I have no intention of marrying into any family, not now, nor in the future. Although I have become the Queen, my personal marriage has no connection to the Royal Family. I will only marry for love, or not marry at all. There is no other possibility.

Therefore, Mr. Howard, from now on, there is no need to discuss the topic of marriage."

Howard did not expect Helena to reject him so decisively, shattering his self-assurance and arrogance. His confidence wavered, and frustration seeped in.

With a hint of anger, he retorted, "Since Your Majesty is unwilling to marry into the Rothschild family, do you still wish to discuss cooperation with us today? You... you are not qualified enough!"

Before Helena could respond, he continued, "Don't tell me... you simply came here to pay a visit. If it's merely a visit, then you are even less qualified!"

Helena noticed Howard's mounting anger but remained unfazed. She smiled and replied, "Mr. Howard, I am the current Nordic Queen. Two hundred years ago, your ancestors would have kneeled and bowed before mine. Even today, if you were to encounter me in a public setting, you would still need to kneel and bow, just as your ancestors did. Otherwise, people would say that you disrespect the royal family, rather than claiming that I am not worthy of your gesture."

Howard, frustrated, acknowledged that Helena was right about the matter of etiquette. In European high society, even if respect for the royal family was merely superficial, it still had to be observed in public. Otherwise, one would face ridicule and criticism from European and American society. Even former presidents who struggled with etiquette when meeting the British Queen were mocked by society.

Frustrated, Howard blurted out, "This is... the Rothschild Estate! Not a public place! I can have you expelled at any time!"

As he spoke, Howard was eager to press the call button and have someone throw Helena out.

Helena, observing Howard's growing anger, remained composed and smiled as she asked, "Mr. Howard, what if I told you that I have a way to help you recover immediately and become even healthier than before? Would that make me qualified to discuss cooperation with you?"

## Chapter 5660



Upon hearing Helena's words, Howard scoffed with a mixture of anger and disbelief.

"Who do you think you are?" he questioned, his voice filled with disdain. "My Rothschild family... with the best medical... team in the world... would never make such claims... And yet, here you are... claiming that you can cure me."

Helena smiled confidently and replied, "Your team may not have the answers, but I do."

With a flourish, she pulled out the Life Saving Pill that Charlie had given her from her handbag. Holding it out to Howard, she continued, "This pill comes from the ancient and mysterious East. Once you take it, you will be restored to your former self. To ease your doubts, I'm willing to let you try one-tenth of it for free. Experience its effectiveness firsthand, and then we can negotiate calmly."

Howard, almost without hesitation, sneered and said, "I.. I will... will never believe... believe in such a crude pill! Th... There is no... sci... scientific basis for... for this rubbish!"

Helena responded with a touch of disdain, "If you're such a believer in science, then why do you fear the Warriors Den? Are they truly a match for the Rothschild family in terms of scientific knowledge?"

Howard was momentarily taken aback.

He knew that the Warriors Den was mysterious, ancient, and powerful, but he couldn't quite grasp their true nature. As for matters of cultivation, like most Westerners, he dismissed them entirely.

Seeing his confusion, Helena pressed on. "Mr. Rothschild, let me be frank. I have no interest in getting close to your family, forming alliances, or even becoming friends. I am here solely to discuss this business with you. You need not doubt my motives. By coming here in person, I not only represent myself but also the reputation of the Nordic Royal Family. I would never harm you."

With that, she picked up a glass from Howard's bedside and noticed a quarter of water still remaining. Using her leaf-shaped brooch, she scraped off a tenth of the Life Saving Pill and dropped it into the cup, watching it dissolve.

Howard, observing her actions, nervously warned, "What... What are you doing? I... I warn you not to mess around! If.. If anything happens to me... the Ro... Rothschild family will never for... forgive you!"

Helena chuckled softly and questioned him, "Mr. Rothschild, do you really think harming you would benefit me? If you were to die, not a single cent of your immense wealth would end up with me. Moreover, I would have to shoulder the legal consequences and the disgrace of your demise. How could I, as the queen of Norway, allow myself to be drawn into such a predicament?"

Howard acknowledged the logic in her words, yet his apprehension was evident as he observed her movements and stammered, "Then... then what do you intend... to do with that... that pill?"

Helena responded with calm assurance, "I intend for you to take it first. Your stuttering makes communication quite challenging. If you take these pills, it could alleviate your stuttering and conserve your energy. Don't you agree?"

Approaching Howard's bedside, she noticed his alarmed expression and said, "I apologize, Mr. Rothschild. Our royal family usually conducts itself with utmost dignity. Today's actions were a tad impolite, merely a means to expedite matters. Please be understanding."

Howard, panicked, protested, "You... don't approach... stay back..."

As he attempted to reach for the call bell, his hemiplegic condition, compounded by his nervousness, rendered him nearly immobile.

Helena gave him no opportunity to resist. She pinched his cheeks, forcing his mouth open, and poured the water mixed with Life Saving pill directly into his mouth.

Frightened, Howard's face blanched, and though he attempted to kick and struggle, his trembling legs lacked the strength. Believing Helena intended to poison him, fear nearly caused him to faint.

He wanted to eject the water she had administered, but Helena did not afford him the chance. Holding the cup in one hand, she abruptly tilted his chin upward with the other and commanded softly, "Swallow it!"

As his chin was lifted, his esophagus opened, allowing the liquid to flow directly into his stomach, and he consumed it entirely.

Fear filled Howard's eyes, as he braced himself for what he believed was an imminent demise.

The next moment, feeling an unfamiliar warmth in his stomach, Howard's fear escalated, thinking, "Helena, this venomous woman! She must have poisoned me! The poison's taking effect; I'm done for... It's lamentable that I, Howard I, should meet such an ignominious end!"

Outraged, Howard exclaimed, "Helena! God will... certainly consign you to hell!"

Helena inquired, "And why would God send me to hell?"

Howard accused, "You've poisoned me! How could God possibly forgive you!"

Helena, smiling, observed calmly, "It seems your stuttering has significantly improved. Let's see if there's been any improvement in other symptoms."

Initially startled, Howard quickly realized the change and exclaimed, "Eh?! My speech... it's really smoother now..."

Attempting to move, he noticed a marked improvement in his bodily control.

He expressed his astonishment, "This... this is miraculous! Could it really be the effect of that pill?!"

As Helena wiped her hand that had touched Howard's chin, she remarked, "Dealing with someone as obstinate as you sometimes necessitates drastic measures."

She then added, "As I mentioned earlier, this pill can not only treat your condition but also enhance your overall health to be better than it was before. Do you believe it now?"

Howard eagerly responded, "I believe it... I truly do! Your Majesty, could you... provide me with more of these pills? I'm eager to experience... even more pronounced effects!"

Helena shook her head, explaining, "Mr. Howard, being of high stature, you might not frequent supermarkets. While supermarkets and airports offer samples, they don't allow for trial consumption before purchase decisions. Hence, until we settle on a price, I cannot supply you with more pills. I hope you understand."

Without hesitation, Howard declared, "Agreed! If this... this pill can fully heal me... I... I'm willing to pay... 100 million US dollars!"

Surprised, Helena glanced at her watch, smiled, and said, "I apologize, Mr. Howard, but I must be going. Please, take your time to recover. And, unless it's urgent, refrain from contacting me. My schedule is quite hectic, and I prefer not to be disturbed. Goodbye!"

## Chapter 5661



Howard believed that one hundred million dollars was an astronomical sum, a figure that demonstrated his utmost sincerity.

Little did he know that when Helena heard this offer, she didn't even bother to negotiate and simply turned and walked away.

It was only in that moment that Howard truly understood the tangible effects of the medicine. Even a mere fraction of it had shown remarkable results, so it was undeniable that taking the entire pill would undoubtedly restore him to his former self. How could he pass up such a rare opportunity?

Desperation gripped him and he quickly shouted, "Your Majesty...we can discuss...anything you want...but why are you walking away like this?"

Helena responded calmly, "Mr. Rothschild, I have no interest in dealing with people who lack clarity of mind. In your eyes, your health is only worth one hundred million dollars. Frankly speaking, what more is there to discuss between us? While I may not possess great wealth, I believe my own health is worth far more than this sum."

Howard was left speechless, realizing that Helena had elevated the conversation beyond mere monetary value to the realm of personal worth.

So, the more money one possesses, the more they must spend to be considered reasonable?

With his trillion-dollar net worth, how could they even have a meaningful conversation?

Should he offer her three to five hundred billion dollars?

In that moment, Helena recalled something and said, "Oh, by the way, I received news today that Michael Wall's family is auctioning off his private cars to pay for his medical expenses.

It's said that they have already spent hundreds of millions of euros on his treatment over the years. Allow me to make an inappropriate analogy. If it were you lying comatose, would your family only be willing to pay one hundred million dollars for your medical expenses? Or would you hope they spare no expense to save you?"

Howard's face flushed with embarrassment.

Firstly, he realized that his initial offer had been stingy.

Secondly, he hadn't anticipated Helena being so direct in her speech, leaving him utterly humiliated.

He could only muster the courage to say, "Your Majesty...if you believe the price...is too low...you can name your own."

Helena spoke calmly, "Mr. Rothschild, before I disclose the price, I hope you can grasp that I've brought this elixir here to shield you from harm, whether it be from inside or out. Since my intention is to safeguard you from such perils, it's imperative that we assess your value under those circumstances."

After these words, Helena continued, "You are likely the sole individual privy to the intricacies of Mr. Rothschild's current predicament. The stroke has not only impacted your physical abilities, speech, and overall well-being but also your dynamic within the Rothschild family." She paused before adding, "Should you regain your health, you might postpone relinquishing your role as the family patriarch to Steve today and maintain your position. However, should your health decline, you risk losing everything."

Howard comprehended the weight of her words instantly, realizing that acquiring the pill today would come at a significant cost. There was no room for bargaining.

Thus, he braced himself and responded, "Your Majesty, I understand the gravity of your words. Please, proceed with clarity and provide me with a definitive price."

Helena nodded, her voice cold, "One hundred billion dollars."

Howard's eyes widened in disbelief, "How...how much?!"

Helena repeated, unwavering, "I said, one hundred billion dollars."

Howard blurted out, "This...this is outrageous...one hundred billion...one hundred billion dollars could build the most advanced aircraft carrier fleet for the United States and sustain its operation for at least two years..."

Helena nodded, a smile tugging at her lips, "Yes, one hundred billion dollars could indeed construct the most advanced aircraft carrier fleet, even send humans to Mars and bring them back. Perhaps we could even build a Disneyland on the moon."

She continued, "But what does a Disneyland on the moon mean to you? Spending one hundred billion dollars in these pursuits could buy everything, except for your health."

With those words, Helena added, "Actually, if Mr. Rothschild is willing to sacrifice himself for his family, then this money could be saved and used for the family's future development. Perhaps your descendants would build a monument to commemorate you."

Howard's liver quivered with unease. He covered his abdomen, waving his hand dismissively, "Stop...stop talking...since we are making a deal...you can name the price...then I...I can negotiate a step-by-step price."

He extended five fingers, resolute, "Fifty billion dollars! Not a penny more! Anything beyond that, even if I regain my physical health, I will be consumed by depression. The mere thought of spending hundreds of billions fills me with dread for my later years."

Spending a hundred billion dollars, just to obtain a pill - the pain Howard felt was palpable.

Some individuals remain generous even when they lack wealth, while others become increasingly stingy as their riches grow.

Some believe that health is priceless, while others feel that when health becomes excessively expensive, it loses its value.

Howard's thoughts were a blend of both.

The false part was his genuine desire to regain his health. After all, the blow of going from a wise and powerful figure to his current state after a stroke was devastating.

But the true part was his inability to accept spending one hundred billion dollars to buy back his health.

Even if he were to survive the stroke, the notion of spending one hundred billion dollars just to be able to move freely made him consider staying in bed and saving that exorbitant sum.

In truth, Helena didn't require such an astronomical amount of money.

In Charlie's mind, one or two billion dollars would suffice. Their primary goal was not to amass wealth, but to gain leverage over Howard and his son, Steve.

However, Charlie had added a new demand - obtaining the AI model held by the Rothschild family. So, Helena's psychological price today was actually ten billion dollars, along with a complete replica of the AI model. If she could secure these conditions, it would already be considered a success.

Yet, she knew that Charlie was a hands-off manager, entrusting her with these negotiations. She couldn't settle for Howard's bottom line; she had to fight for as much benefit as possible for Charlie.

Thus, she looked at Howard and said, "Mr. Rothschild, let's be direct. I don't just want cash, I also want the AI model your Rothschild family has invested in."

"Therefore, my final offer is as follows: 50 billion dollars in cash, along with a one hundred percent replica of that model."

"I want your team to come to Norway and build an identical AI model for me. From hardware to software, there must be no differences. I also require synchronous updates and upgrades."

"In other words, if your model in Silicon Valley is upgraded to a certain version, my model in Norway must be upgraded to the same version within an hour."

"And all the knowledge bases in the AI model must be completely synchronized."

"You must also commit to maintaining this system for the next 20 years, without any reason to halt maintenance."

Upon hearing this, Howard grew anxious and blurted out, "That AI model...it has already attracted the attention of the United States Department of Defense...its commercial prospects are vast...its future valuation is estimated to be no less than a hundred billion dollars. When integrated with other industries, its additional value is incalculable...Your Majesty, what you're suggesting is a pipe dream!"

## Chapter 5662



Helena could sense Howard's growing irritation, yet she maintained her composure and spoke calmly. "Mr. Rothschild, don't be too hasty to get angry. I have one more condition to discuss."

Helena paused for a moment before continuing, "I want this model exclusively for personal use. It won't be utilized for any commercial purposes, meaning it won't affect your original market. I simply desire an exact replica for my own needs. For you, it's merely providing me with a copy, along with the necessary hardware and twenty years of maintenance fees. That shouldn't be too costly, right?"

Howard questioned coldly, "How can I be certain... that you won't... employ it for commercial gain?"

A smile graced Helena's lips as she replied, "That's precisely what I'm about to explain. You will still pay me one hundred billion dollars, but we will sign a contract stipulating that fifty billion of that sum will be returned to the Rothschild family over the next twenty years, in annual installments of two and a half billion dollars."

"If you fail to deliver the required upgrades and maintenance during that time, I will cease the subsequent repayments."

"And if I were to exploit your AI model for commercial purposes, you would immediately terminate the upgrades and maintenance, and sue the Nordic Royal Family to reclaim the full sum of fifty billion dollars."

"Our entire collaboration, once an agreement is reached, will be documented in the contract and protected by the law."

Howard exclaimed in frustration, "So, I give you one hundred billion dollars, and you put it into a trust. Considering the average return rate in the current US financial market, the yearly interest alone would amount to several billion dollars!"

"And if you factor in compound interest, it becomes an astronomical figure. Aren't you essentially borrowing my hen to lay eggs for twenty years and then returning the hen to me? Where will I find those eggs in the meantime?"

Helena generously proposed, "How about this? You still give me one hundred billion dollars, and I will reimburse you every penny of the interest generated by the fifty billion dollars."

"In the first year, I will calculate the interest based on the actual fifty billion dollars and refund you two and a half billion dollars of the principal, along with all the interest."

"In the second year, I will calculate the interest based on the actual four hundred and seventy-five billion dollars and refund you another two and a half billion dollars of the principal. We will continue this process for twenty years until the contract is fulfilled."

With a smile, Helena added, "You mortgage the hen with me for twenty years, and during that time, all the eggs will belong to you. The hen itself will also be gradually returned to you over the course of twenty years. Is that fair enough?"

Upon hearing this, Howard felt a slight sense of relief.

However, the thought of spending fifty billion dollars solely on a pill still pained him. Suddenly, Howard exclaimed, "I almost forgot! The hardware for the AI model... it's expensive! Most of the cost is due to... hardware produced by NVIDIA! NVIDIA's stock price has skyrocketed precisely because of the AI boom... causing the hardware prices to soar! This set of models alone might cost tens of billions of dollars in hardware!"

Helena smiled and said, "Don't worry, if you're concerned about the cost, I'll give you an additional ten billion dollars. I'm a generous person."

Hearing this, Howard couldn't help but feel a tinge of embarrassment. He knew that Helena's words subtly mocked him.

Helena continued, "Mr. Rothschild, in fact, the Rothschild family has invested in almost all major shareholders of NVIDIA, and you still hold a significant number of circulating shares on the secondary market. Moreover, you acquired these shares very early on, at a low price. As NVIDIA's market value soared over a trillion dollars, you have already made considerable profits."

Howard had just received a ten billion dollar concession, which provided some comfort. Now, hearing Helena expose his background, he quickly explained, "Let's

keep business separate... We... We may have made a lot of money from NVIDIA... But we can't mix that with this matter, can we, Your Majesty?"

"Yes," Helena nodded and said, "But I'm offering you a ten billion dollar hardware cost concession, which is related to NVIDIA. When the time comes, you will still need to purchase the hardware for my AI model from NVIDIA. Since you are a shareholder of NVIDIA, you can make a bulk purchase from them, which, to some extent, is like transferring money from your left hand to your right hand."

"Firstly, even if the external quote costs ten billion dollars, you won't actually spend that much. Secondly, you mentioned being a shareholder of NVIDIA, so you will still benefit from the profit of this order. Thirdly, this order will undoubtedly boost NVIDIA's sales and stock price. With the rising stock price, you can also profit from it. You can benefit from the valuation with the shares held by institutions and directly profit from the circulating shares held in the secondary market. At any stage of the US market, you stand to make money. In the end, the actual cost you will incur may be less than 10% of the ten billion dollars."

Summing up, Helena concluded, "I won't delve into the specific costs, but my final offer now stands at forty billion dollars, along with a set of AI models and twenty years of free upgrades and maintenance. If you have no objections, we can proceed to sign the agreement."

With that, Helena produced several printed contracts and handed them to Howard, saying, "The contract template is ready. Just fill in the specific amounts and the agreed-upon terms for interest repayment. If Mr. Rothschild is interested, we can proceed. If not, I'll leave now."

Upon hearing this, Howard realized that Helena had come well-prepared and had done her homework beforehand.

As she had mentioned, the Rothschild family had controlled NVIDIA through various institutions and individuals, and they also held a significant number of circulating shares on the secondary market. They had already made substantial profits from NVIDIA. The ten billion dollars that Helena had relinquished did indeed provide room for the Rothschild family to maneuver.

Although Howard didn't place much importance on the money, being taken advantage of still left a bitter taste in his mouth.

So, he deliberated repeatedly, but mindful of his health and status, he clenched his teeth and uttered, "Very well! Just as Her Majesty the Queen suggested, 40 billion US dollars...plus...plus a non-commercial AI Model!"

Then, with a hint of uncertainty, he inquired, "Your Majesty the Queen, if this pill fails to cure my ailment, what recourse do we have?"

Helena responded with unwavering confidence, "It's inconceivable; it will unquestionably cure you."

With a gentle smile, she continued, "If Mr. Rothschild feels apprehensive, let us formalize our agreement first. You may take the elixir without upfront payment to verify its efficacy before arranging payment."

Upon hearing this, Howard relinquished all reservations and assented promptly, "Agreed! Just as Her Majesty the Queen suggests!"

Helena nodded, retrieved her mobile phone, and remarked, "However, to mitigate any potential risks of deception on Mr. Rothschild's part, I must record our interactions in real-time and synchronize them with my associates until our contract is finalized and you've taken the elixir. Mr. Rothschild cannot absolve himself of all risks. If you recover after taking the elixir and then act against me, reneging on our agreement, I'll have no recourse."

Howard hastened to reassure her, "Your Majesty, rest assured... I would never default on my obligations... But, if it eases Your Majesty's concerns, recording our interactions seems prudent!"

## Chapter 5663



Since both parties had come to an agreement, Helena pulled out a pen and began refining the contract's details.

The entire process was recorded on a mobile phone. With Helena's identity as the Queen of Northern Europe and her immense online presence, she had no doubt that Howard would not dare to go back on their deal.

Once they had both agreed on the terms of the contract, Howard signed his name and they exchanged agreements, officially sealing the deal.

With everything settled, Helena put away the contract, turned off the mobile phone recording, and cheerfully said, "Mr. Rothschild, it was a pleasure doing business with you!"

Howard quickly inquired, "Your Majesty... can I have the elixir now?"

"Of course." Helena handed him the elixir without hesitation and instructed, "Although our royal family may not be wealthy, we always honor our commitments."

Howard reached out and trembled as he took the elixir, about to ask Helena how to consume it. But before he could speak, she beat him to it, saying, "Just swallow it."

Upon hearing this, Howard no longer hesitated and swallowed the elixir directly.

In an instant, the elixir transformed into a concentrated heat in his mouth, swiftly flowing into his stomach.

Howard felt like a deflated balloon being rapidly filled with air. He immediately sensed a surge of strength in his body, far greater than before.

With a little effort, Howard sat up from the bed and, to his surprise, discovered that his body no longer twitched or trembled.

Excited, he decided to take a few steps and was amazed to find that his legs felt stronger and his body more stable.

Previously, even though he hadn't suffered a stroke, his body was quite weak. His walking was unsteady, although he didn't require a cane. But now, after taking a few steps, he felt significantly more stable, with increased strength and support.

Remembering the helplessness he had felt lying in bed after the stroke, Howard couldn't help but burst into laughter.

He walked several laps around the spacious hospital room and couldn't bring himself to stop. Instead, he grew more and more excited with each step.

Helena began to feel dizzy watching him walk back and forth in front of her, so she interjected, "Mr. Rothschild, that's enough. Stop walking. You still haven't paid the money."

Howard was taken aback and quickly snapped back to reality, realizing that he hadn't fulfilled his end of the bargain. He smiled apologetically and said, "I'm sorry, Your Majesty. I got carried away. Please forgive me!"

He hastily added, "For the cost of 40 billion dollars for the elixir, with 50 billion dollars as a deposit, making a total of 90 billion dollars, I will arrange for the payment to be made. The money will be directly transferred to the account specified in the contract, right?"

Helena nodded, "That's correct, Mr. Rothschild. Please make the necessary arrangements."

With that, Helena smiled and stated, "Mr. Rothschild, have you noticed that your stuttering has disappeared?"

"Yes!" Howard raised his right hand and made a few movements in front of him. He exclaimed, "Incredible! Truly incredible! This elixir is absolutely amazing!"

After expressing his astonishment, he didn't waste any more time and immediately picked up his mobile phone to contact his financial director, instructing him to arrange the transfer payment.

Ninety billion dollars, regardless of the country or group, was an astronomical sum, especially in cash. It was simply unimaginable.

But for the Rothschild family, this amount of money meant nothing, not even pocket change.

The Rothschild family's financial power was already beyond anyone's estimation.

Over the years, they had invested in numerous sectors, both openly and covertly. All the offshore companies registered in tax havens did not need to disclose shareholder information as long as they were not publicly listed. Many of these companies were under the control of the Rothschild family, making their actual value impossible to calculate.

Even for listed companies, only first-tier markets disclosed shareholder information. Second-tier markets were accessed through various channels, making it impossible to trace.

Furthermore, the Rothschild family had investments in real estate, energy, mining, transportation, and various other sectors across the globe. Wherever there was

money to be made, the Rothschild family had a presence. They were like a force of nature, always finding a way to profit.

During the colonial era, Britain earned the moniker "the Empire on which the sun never sets" due to its extensive network of colonies spanning nearly every time zone. Regardless of the time of day, British territory was always under the sun's rays. Similarly, the Rothschild family commands an economic empire that mirrors this concept. With investments across diverse industries worldwide, they maintain a ubiquitous presence, ensuring that no matter which way the economic winds blow, they invariably find a foothold.

Just like the explosive growth of artificial intelligence, the Rothschild family had already made a staggering profit of at least 300 billion dollars from their investments in NVIDIA alone, not to mention the value generated from their other investments in the AI industry.

With such an immense financial empire, their funds, if audited, would likely exceed 10 trillion dollars.

Therefore, transferring 90 billion dollars in cash was just a matter of a phone call and a few instructions for Howard to secretly transfer it to a Swiss bank account held by the royal family.

After receiving notification of the funds being received, Helena finally breathed a sigh of relief.

She then remembered Charlie's instructions and said to Howard, "To be honest, Mr. Rothschild, if this elixir were to be auctioned, it would never sell at such a low price. The reason I brought it to sell to you is because I am very interested in your AI technology and also because of your son Steve's devotion to you."

Charlie's approach was always to strike and reward. Steve was no exception. He wanted Steve to experience both pain and pleasure. That's why he instructed Helena not to forget to give Steve some credit.

"Oh?" Howard asked curiously, "Does Steve know about the Queen possessing this miraculous elixir?"

Helena shook her head, "No, he doesn't. But he heard about the extent of your suffering after the stroke, and I could tell that he genuinely cares about you."

Pausing for a moment, Helena continued, "I believe that anyone who shows filial piety towards their parents deserves respect. His devotion touched me, so I brought the elixir to visit you in New York and see if we could strike a deal. It was also a way to save half of your life."

Howard was pleasantly surprised. He didn't expect his eldest son to care about his well-being to such an extent. It was truly beyond his expectations.

After all, when his own father had been critically ill, Howard remembered feeling excited and thrilled. The memory was still vivid in his mind.

So he believed that Steve's affection for him might be stronger than his desire for the inheritance.

This made him feel grateful and further deepened his fondness for Steve.

Seeing him lost in thought, Helena suddenly said, "Mr. Rothschild, with such a devoted son, you can truly find solace. I believe that once he officially takes over the family after the family meeting at ten o'clock, he will manage the Rothschild family exceptionally well. After all, using virtues to win people's hearts is the highest form of business."

Upon hearing this, Howard, who had fully recovered from his stroke, couldn't help but shudder involuntarily.

It was heartwarming to have a devoted son, but the thought of the family meeting scheduled for ten o'clock made him anxious. He thought, "While it's heartwarming and touching, now that I've fully recovered, the matter of passing on the position of family head must be put on hold! I never intended to pass the position to Steve so early. The decision to pass it on was made out of necessity after the stroke. Now that I'm well, there's no possibility of handing over the reins!"

Thinking this through, he couldn't help but conclude, "Though it might be unfair to Steve, I believe that since he cares more about my well-being than his own succession, he won't object much to it."

"Besides, even if he does object, I can make it up to him. After all, the heir position hasn't been completely decided. This time, I'll use the family meeting at ten o'clock to make it official for him! At least he can have some peace of mind!"

## Chapter 5664



Helena was well aware that Howard had no intention of following the original plan and passing on the position of family head to Steve as agreed.

As expected, Howard looked up, chuckled, and said, "Your Majesty, I appreciate you taking the time to attend the internal meeting of the Rothschild family in New York. Your presence brings honor to our family!"

Helena feigned surprise and asked, "Wasn't today supposed to be the announcement of Steve's succession? Why did you change your decision?"

Howard waved his hand and replied with a slightly embarrassed smile, "Plans change, and change is unpredictable. I never anticipated making such a recovery. Don't you agree?"

Helena smiled faintly and replied, "Your recovery is partly due to Steve's filial devotion, which moved God."

Though Helena spoke these words, she couldn't help but think to herself, "Howard has indeed changed his mind, confirming Mr. the Wade's speculation. Mr. Wade always sees through people's true intentions."

In truth, it's not that Mr. Wade sees through everything, but rather that he understands the complexities of human nature.

Just as water, when electrolyzed, produces oxygen and hydrogen gas, there is a logical reaction between human nature and chemical reactions. Howard being the clan leader is like water, and his sudden stroke is like electricity. The result of electrolyzing water is Howard's intention to pass the position to his son Steve.

Therefore, only when Howard, the clan leader, suffered a stroke, would there be the outcome of Steve succeeding him as the clan leader.

Now that the critical condition of a stroke has disappeared, it's like unplugging the electricity, and the result of Steve succeeding as the clan leader naturally fades away. In Charlie's view, if Howard continues to pass on the position even after recovering from his stroke, it's like leaving a pool of water to decompose into hydrogen and oxygen gas. It would be unthinkable.

At this moment, after a sigh, Helena said to Howard, "Mr. Rothschild, since your plans have changed, I will not participate in the upcoming meeting."

Howard asked puzzledly, "Why, Your Majesty? You're already here. It would be wonderful for you to stay and guide us, to witness the succession."

Helena shook her head and replied, "Aside from doing business with Mr. Rothschild, I also wanted to establish a future foundation of communication with the head of the Rothschild family. If Steve were to succeed today, I would naturally witness it and establish a good communication foundation with the new head. But now that Mr. Rothschild has decided not to retire, my goals for coming to New York have already been accomplished. Staying would be a waste of time."

Howard understood the implications behind her words and smiled, saying, "Your Majesty truly is a skilled negotiator. I have never seen a young person who can control the rhythm of negotiations so well! With Your Majesty leading the Royal Family, it will undoubtedly reach new heights!"

Helena smiled and replied, "Mr. Rothschild, you overestimate me. I can control the rhythm because I have a great teacher."

Howard quickly asked, "May I know who Your Majesty's teacher is? If there is an opportunity, I would like to meet him too!"

Helena calmly replied, "My teacher has a low-key style and dislikes the vanity of fame. But I believe that in the future, Mr. Rothschild will have the opportunity to meet him."

Howard politely said, "That would be wonderful!"

At this moment, Helena said, "It's getting late, Mr. Rothschild. I must take my leave."

Howard nodded, and as Helena turned to leave, he suddenly remembered something and called out, "By the way, Your Majesty!"

Helena turned around curiously and asked, "What is it, Mr. Rothschild?"

Howard asked with concern, "Do you still have those miraculous pills? If you do, I would like to purchase more."

Helena shook her head and replied, "Mr. Rothschild, these miraculous pills are a matter of great fortune. How often does one have the chance to cheat death and turn calamity into fortune?"

Howard smiled and said, "People are greedy. Although I had the chance once, I truly hope for a second or even third chance. If Your Majesty ever comes across that opportunity, please don't hesitate to let me know, and I will offer a generous price!"

"A generous price?" Helena muttered and deliberately pursed her lips, saying with a hint of disdain, "Forgive me for being frank, but considering your stature, Mr. Rothschild, you are not a worthy buyer. I believe that even if I were to obtain these pills in the future, I would not trade with you again."

Howard instinctively asked, "Why do you say that, Your Majesty?"

Helena shrugged and casually replied, "Perhaps it's because I dislike haggling. If another opportunity arises, I will find a more straightforward buyer. It saves time and makes me feel better. You, being a businessman, must have been a seller at some point. When you were a seller, you must have dealt with buyers who always haggled, hesitated, and even doubted your integrity and the authenticity of your products. I'm sure you wouldn't have been pleased either."

Howard knew that Helena was mocking his bargaining behavior earlier. At this moment, he felt a bit unhappy, but he also realized a significant problem.

If Helena's words were not mere empty talk, then he would miss the chance to extend his life.

Reflecting on his actions, Howard suddenly felt a pang of regret for his earlier attempts at bargaining.

Without hesitation, he spoke up, "Your Majesty, please don't be upset. As a businessman, bargaining is second nature to me. Even over a mere dime, I'll instinctively try to negotiate. However, if it discomforts you, I won't counter your offer at all. I'll immediately make up the ten billion dollars as you suggested. Is that acceptable to you?"

Helena waved her hand dismissively, "No need for that. As you mentioned, acquiring the hardware for the AI model incurs expenses. I'd rather absorb the loss myself than see you suffer. After all, Mr. Rothschild, at your age, if my actions caused you distress and led to another stroke, wouldn't I be to blame?"

"No, no, no!" Howard brushed aside any sense of embarrassment. He approached Helena eagerly and exclaimed, "Procuring the necessary hardware for Your Majesty is the least we can do. Your Majesty, please don't feel obligated to refuse."

With a tinge of regret in his expression, he continued, "Your Majesty, old habits die hard. Bargaining is one of them. But rest assured, Your Majesty, from this moment forward, the Rothschild family will never haggle in our dealings with you!"

Having experienced the potency of the life-saving pill firsthand, Howard recognized its value. Though he had recovered, his age made him acutely aware that health complications could arise in the future. Considering the high risk of stroke recurrence, securing another dose of the pill seemed prudent for peace of mind.

Unsure if Helena possessed a second pill, Howard was determined not to let her depart New York dissatisfied. If he needed another dose in the future, he couldn't afford to miss the opportunity.

Observing Howard's anxious demeanor, Helena couldn't help but find the situation amusing. She teased, "Mr. Rothschild, are you feeling embarrassed?" She paused before adding, "Or perhaps forgetful? At your age, worrying about money shouldn't take precedence over your well-being. Health comes before business."

Howard, recognizing her jest, offered a sheepish apology with a smile, "No, no! This payment is a token of respect for Your Majesty. If it weren't given, I'd find it difficult to sleep or eat! So, please, Your Majesty, don't refuse!"

After a moment's deliberation, Helena relented, "Since Mr. Rothschild insists, very well, I won't decline."

Howard's excitement surpassed that of a profitable deal. He swiftly contacted his financial manager, exclaiming, "Quickly, add another 10 billion US dollars to the account!"

However, upon noticing Helena's composed demeanor, Howard felt a pang of guilt and amended, "No, no, no! Make it 20 billion!"

His trusted confidant assured, "Certainly, sir. I'll arrange it immediately."

Helena raised an eyebrow, but remained silent. As Howard hung up, she feigned surprise, "Mr. Rothschild, did you just request a transfer of 20 billion? Isn't that excessive?"

Having seen through Helena's facade, Howard recognized her adeptness at manipulation. Her timing, however, was too obvious. Nonetheless, he acknowledged that dealing with someone as shrewd as Helena required caution to avoid any repercussions.

However, Howard now realizes that despite Helena's young age, she is not to be underestimated. If he desires something from her, he must refrain from entertaining thoughts of bargaining; otherwise, he will bear the consequences.

With age, Howard acknowledges that losing both money and valuable connections is a discomfort he'd rather avoid.

Quick to rectify, Howard clarified, "Your Majesty, 10 billion is to cover your payment, while the remaining 10 billion reflects my earnestness. I admit my earlier behavior was inappropriate. Please forgive me for any inconvenience."

## Chapter 5665



After confirming the receipt of 20 billion US dollars, Helena glanced at Howard with a warm smile and said, "Mr. Rothschild, we've received the money. I can't thank you enough for your incredible generosity. It has been an absolute pleasure working with you! I'll be heading back to Norway in a few days, and I hope your AI team will join us there."

Without a moment's hesitation, Howard replied, "Your Majesty, rest assured! I'll have them prepare immediately and head to Norway for preliminary planning and preparation!"

When Helena successfully sold the revolutionary Life Saving Pill for a staggering 60 billion US dollars, along with an AI model, Steve and his son Royce anxiously waited outside the ward, keeping an eye on the time.

Steve couldn't help but feel a bit impatient. It wasn't that he had any objections to his father meeting with Helena, but he was worried it would delay their family meeting scheduled for exactly ten o'clock. This meeting was crucial for him to ascend to the highest point in his life.

In such an important moment, why couldn't they have arranged for a wheelchair before 9:30 and swiftly taken his father to the venue?

Today was meant to be a joyous occasion for Steve as he assumed the role of the family patriarch. He certainly didn't want anything to delay it, not even for a minute. Just as his anxiety grew, the door of the ward swung open.

Helena emerged from the room.

Steve hurriedly rushed over with Royce, eager to see the outcome of his father's meeting with Helena.

After all, he was also concerned about whether his father had convinced Helena to marry into the family.

If he had succeeded, Helena would become his future daughter-in-law, wouldn't she?

The medical staff followed closely behind them, worried about the old man's health.

With his difficulty speaking, hemiplegia, and tremors, it wasn't suitable for him to engage in lengthy conversations. They didn't expect him to chat with Helena for such a long time, so they needed to quickly assess his current condition. If there were any issues, it could be troublesome.

However, before the two groups reached the entrance of the ward, they were struck by a scene that left them utterly thunderstruck.

Helena turned around and said to the room, "Mr. Rothschild, you don't need to see me off."

And just like that, Howard calmly walked out of the room, as if nothing had happened. He politely addressed Helena, "Your Majesty, it was an honor to have you personally visit me in New York. As the head of the Rothschild family, it would be remiss of me not to see you off in person!"

Steve, Royce, and the medical staff stood frozen in place.

Everyone had the same question echoing in their minds: What... in the world is going on?

Steve was dumbfounded, thinking, "Yeah, what the hell is going on?"

"Just moments ago, wasn't my father lying on the bed, trembling? He could barely speak properly!"

"And now... now there are no signs of any problems? Has he miraculously recovered?!" Steve felt like he was questioning the very fabric of reality. He rubbed his eyes, confirming that he wasn't hallucinating. But he didn't have time to dwell on the specifics. He hurriedly went to support Howard and nervously exclaimed, "Father! Why did you come out on your own? Your current physical condition can't handle this kind of excitement..."

Before Steve could finish speaking, Howard interrupted with excitement, "Steve, my dear son, let me share some incredible news! I'm completely fine now! I've been healed! No more stroke, hemiplegia, speech impediments, or tremors! It's truly astonishing, isn't it? A medical miracle, hahaha!"

"What... what? It's healed just like that?!" Steve was in shock, feeling like his brain had been fried by his father's words.

In his heart, he wondered, "What's happening? Has he really been healed? Didn't the doctors say it was a definite stroke? Hemiplegia? And that a complete recovery was unlikely due to nerve damage? Even with the best rehabilitation treatment in the world, the best outcome would be walking with a cane. That would already be a blessing!"

As he pondered, he turned to look at the attending doctor, his face filled with question marks and an expression of "What the hell?"

Actually, at that moment, even the attending doctor was bewildered.

His brain, memory, and even his entire medical career seemed to have been rendered useless.

After dedicating his life to medicine for so many years, who in the world had ever seen someone go from having a stroke to walking perfectly in such a short span of time?

And not only that, Howard was engaging in pleasant conversation with a queen, dancing and speaking eloquently. Even the doctor couldn't match that level of vitality! He could only push up his glasses and, with astonishment, confusion, and excitement, repeatedly exclaim, "A medical miracle! This is a true medical miracle! Treating a stroke would be an accomplishment even for a Nobel Prize winner!"

Steve, upon hearing those words, had the urge to kick the doctor to the other end of the corridor. He cursed inwardly, "Damn it, all he knows is 'miracle, miracle.' Does he think I don't know it's a miracle? Does he have to keep saying it?!"

Howard, seeing Steve's stunned expression, felt moved and a little ashamed. He said, "Steve, my dear son, thank you for your filial devotion. Your love and care moved Her Majesty, and she brought me a miraculous drug to treat the stroke. I am now cured!" Steve's face was blank, and he instinctively turned to look at Helena, asking, "Your Majesty... what... what... what's happening?"

Helena smiled gently, looked at Steve, and spoke emphatically, "Mr. Rothschild, this is the miracle you prayed for. God has answered your prayers! The miracle has arrived!"

"Damn it..." Steve's expression was one of shock and grief, more sorrowful than if he had lost his own son. In his heart, he silently cursed, "Damn it... I never even prayed!"

Helena noticed his pained expression and realized she needed to take control of the situation. If not, Howard might grow suspicious. So she spoke with a serious tone, "Sir, don't be too astonished. Remember, as stated in Matthew 7:7, 'Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.' This is God's grace for believers!"

She continued, "Even during the most challenging moments of my life, I persisted in prayer and held onto this scripture, assuring myself that God would never abandon me!"

"Therefore, I embraced opportunities, achieved a complete turnaround, and became the Queen of Norway!"

"So please remember, God will never let you walk alone!"

"Damn it..." Steve heard those words and found himself speechless. In his heart, he wanted to challenge God.

He never imagined that something that had been progressing so smoothly would take a sudden turn at the last moment!

And surprisingly, the issue lay with God!

No!

It lay with Helena!

Even if he had eight heads on his shoulders, he couldn't have predicted that Helena, a Nordic queen from a European royal family and a prominent internet celebrity, would

come to New York and miraculously cure his father's stroke, creating a bloody medical miracle.

It was simply outrageous!

It was like hiring a maid to clean your house, and she discovers that your computer's CPU is broken. She casually embroiders a brand new CPU for you using a needle, and it turns out to be even more powerful than the original. How the hell do you explain that?!

## Chapter 5666



Steve's heart was in turmoil at this moment, but Howard, having heard Helena vouch for Steve earlier, felt a mixture of gratitude and guilt towards his son. He didn't think that Steve would have any rebellious thoughts in his heart.

As Steve stood there, overcome with emotion, Howard quickly stepped forward and embraced him, gently patting his shoulder. "Good job, son. Thank you! Thank you for everything you've done for me!"

Steve rested his head on Howard's shoulder, his eyes red from tears. He looked at Helena, silently questioning her.

Helena smiled softly and said, "Mr. Rothschild, I have something to take care of. I'll leave you father and son to your deep bond."

Howard nodded, his voice filled with appreciation. "Go ahead, Steve. Escort Her Majesty the Queen!"

Steve's mind was racing. "I was just about to ask Helena what's going on!" he thought to himself.

He quickly replied, "Of course, Father! I'll accompany Her Majesty the Queen!"

With a deep breath, he suppressed his anger and turned to Helena. "Please, Your Majesty."

Helena nodded and bid farewell to Howard. "Mr. Rothschild, I'll take my leave. Looking forward to seeing you again!"

Howard respectfully replied, "Likewise, Your Majesty!"

Steve's anger was boiling inside him, but he managed to hold himself together as he led Helena out of the hospital corridor. When they reached the top floor in the elevator and found themselves alone, he couldn't contain his frustration any longer.

"Helena! What the hell is going on?! Are you intentionally trying to harm me?!"

Helena smiled slightly and calmly replied, "Mr. Rothschild, I healed your father. Instead of thanking me, you accuse me of harming you. How can healing be considered harm?"

Steve's voice trembled with anger as he shouted, "You knew that I was about to become the new family patriarch! And yet you chose this moment to heal my father! If that's not harming me, then what is your intention?!"

Helena shrugged her shoulders and countered, "Why? I healed your father out of consideration for you. After all, you are also Mr. the Wade's friend. When a friend's father falls ill, you lend a helping hand. Isn't that normal?"

Steve couldn't contain his anger and exclaimed, "To be honest, I never prayed for my father's recovery!"

Steve suddenly muttered to himself, "Oh... I see..."

In that moment, he realized that Helena had always been working for Charlie.

He couldn't help but think, "When Charlie needed the Four Treasures of the Study sent to Canada, Helena rushed to Canada with just one phone call; when Charlie needed to send Peter Cole back to China, Helena included him in her delegation and planned to secretly bring him back to the Nordic region; and when I asked Charlie for help to have Helena visit my father who had a stroke, she immediately came."

"So... when Helena healed my father... it must have been Charlie's orders! Charlie is the one who's harming me!"

Fueled by his anger, Steve questioned Helena, "Why?! Why is Charlie doing this to me?!"

Helena smiled and calmly replied, "Mr. Wade saved your father. Perhaps it was also out of consideration for you. After all, you are Mr. the Wade's friend. When a friend's father falls ill, you lend a helping hand. Isn't that normal?"

Steve trembled with barely contained rage, scratching his arms with shaking fingers. "If it were anyone else, I might believe it, but Charlie? Absolutely not! He orchestrated my father's stroke!"

Helena smiled serenely. "I view this situation objectively, as an outsider. I see no fault in Mr. Wade. Your father's stroke stemmed primarily from the sudden return of the Four Treasures of the Study to China. If I recall correctly, Mr. Rothschild, shouldn't you have sent the Four Treasures of the Study out of New York?"

Steve's face drained of color. He frantically waved his hands and whispered in a panicked voice, "Your Majesty, please don't speak such nonsense!"

Helena feigned ignorance. "Am I mistaken? I seem to recall your helicopter transporting the Four Treasures of the Study and Mr. Cole to Canada. If the Rothschilds discover this, Sir, you know..."

"Stop!" Steve exclaimed, throwing his hands up in surrender. His tone softened dramatically. "Your Majesty, please cease discussing this matter. If it leaks out, I'm doomed."

As he spoke, panic led him to finally grasp Charlie's plan. He thought to himself, "Charlie Wade, the bastard, must think that after successfully ascending to the throne and becoming the new Rothschild patriarch, I'll tear up our agreement. He knows the deterrent effect of the Four Treasures of the Study and Peter Cole will gradually diminish, so he brought Helena to cure the old man!"

With a gritted-teeth sigh, he acknowledged, "Charlie Wade, the bastard, for his young age and questionable taste, has a damn good eye for judging people!"

Helena offered comfort. "Mr. Rothschild, you needn't be so pessimistic. Perhaps old Mr. Rothschild will honor your agreed-upon inheritance."

Steve smiled bitterly. "Who understands my father better than I? Unless he becomes President today, there's no way he'll pass the patriarch position to me."

Helena smiled. "Even if he doesn't bequeath the throne, my recent endorsement solidified your heir status, eliminating others' chances to compete. With patience, you will one day lead the clan."

Skeptical, Steve asked, "What about the next time the old man falls ill? Will Charlie Wade... I mean, Mr. Wade, send that miraculous medicine again?"

Helena shrugged with a playful smile. "That's uncertain. I follow Mr. the Wade's every directive. He requests medicine, I deliver. He requests poison, I deliver."

Steve looked at her, surprised. "Your Majesty, you're the revered Queen of Norway, esteemed by millions! Even my father treats you with deference. Why does Mr. Wade hold such sway over you?"

Helena calmly replied, "My ascension to the throne served my family and vengeance. Those goals are achieved. If Mr. Wade requested my abdication tomorrow, I'd relinquish the crown without hesitation. In my eyes, the Queen's character doesn't hold even a thousandth, or ten thousandth, of Mr. Wade's..."

"Damn it..." Steve sighed, exasperated. "Mr. Wade is indeed formidable. The renowned Nordic Queen willingly relinquishes her throne for him. Truly remarkable..."

Helena smiled. "Mr. Rothschild, may I offer some personal advice?"

Steve nodded. "Your Majesty, please speak."

Helena advised, "Maintain complete sincerity around Mr. Wade. He might have sensed insincerity from you, leading to this decision. Furthermore, even if your father declares you heir today, don't get complacent. The next time your father needs the elixir, it may not come from me, but from one of your numerous brothers. Then, you'll be truly powerless."

## Chapter 5667



"I..."

Helena's words sent a shiver down Steve's spine.

If Helena's previous words were a warning to himself, then her final words were a blatant threat! Just a few sentences, and he could sense the murderous intent! Steve wasn't a fool, he quickly understood the implications. He thought to himself, "Once the old man experiences the miraculous recovery from taking the elixir this time, he will become completely dependent on it. If he falls ill again or faces a life-threatening situation, he will stop at nothing to obtain another elixir to prolong his life."

"When the old man reaches the point of 'stop at nothing,' he will disregard any rules in his eyes."

"Take the incident with the treasure as an example. The old man didn't even consult with me, his eldest son, before making a decision. Whoever finds the treasure and brings it back to the Rothschild Family will be the next successor. Isn't this outright rogue behavior?"

"With this precedent, it's clear that if the old man needs an elixir in the future and can't acquire one, he will make the same decision. Whoever can bring him a miraculous elixir will inherit the family..."

"At that time, as the eldest son, I will always be deprived of the position of the first successor. If I upset Charlie Wade and he gives an elixir to my other brothers to gain their cooperation, won't I be directly eliminated?!"

Thinking of this, a thought suddenly crossed his mind: "Why not stage a rebellion?" But this thought quickly vanished from his mind.

He knew that even if he had the intention to rebel, he simply wouldn't have the opportunity.

The foundation of the Rothschild Family was in New York. While the security in the slums here was even more chaotic than in Paris, the security in the affluent areas was unparalleled. There were at least three police stations surrounding the Rothschild Family estate, equipped with police helicopters. The police here were extremely dedicated. If someone dared to steal a dog in the wealthy area, the police would chase them with a helicopter.

In addition, the old man had his own private security force dedicated to protecting his personal safety. This private security force exclusively served the old man. Even his own sons were among the defense targets of these private security forces.

Furthermore, the old man had deep connections with various important departments in New York, and even in the United States. He had even established a special fund for these departments. Although the scale of this fund was not large, only around one billion dollars, its sole purpose was to thoroughly investigate his death if he died unexpectedly. Regardless of who the culprit was, the Rothschild Family's most powerful legal team would spare no effort to ensure that the culprit received the harshest sentence.

If he staged a rebellion, it was highly likely that he would be killed before he could succeed. The small probability was that even if the rebellion succeeded, he would soon face legal consequences. By then, wouldn't he be serving his other brothers on a silver platter?

Moreover, Steve suddenly pondered a question: "In fact, even if I become the head of the Rothschild Family in the future, I may still rely on Charlie's help. I'm already in my fifties this year. If I wait a few more years to successfully ascend to the position, I'm afraid I'll be in my sixties by then. By that time, I'll only be able to hold the position of the head for at most twenty years... But if Charlie can sell me some elixirs, maybe I can extend my reign as the head for thirty years or even longer..."

"In that case, no matter what, I can't turn against Charlie, right?"

After contemplating, Steve immediately put on a flattering expression and said to Helena, "Your Majesty, please convey to Mr. Wade that I may have had different thoughts in the past, but rest assured that from now on, I, Steve Rothschild, will be completely loyal to Mr. Wade!"

Helena smiled faintly and said, "Mr. Wade has already returned to China. If you have the chance, you can personally talk to him."

Steve's heart sank when he heard this. He thought, "What the hell, I don't even have the credentials to express my loyalty from a distance? I have to rush to China and proclaim it in front of Charlie?"

Though Steve felt frustrated, he didn't dare to voice his discontent. He could only smile and say, "Alright, alright. After I finish my current tasks, I will contact Mr. Wade and personally visit him in China!"

Helena nodded and said, "That's more like it."

While Steve was left speechless, they had already reached the helicopter. Helena then said, "Mr. Rothschild, you can stop here. You have a meeting at ten o'clock, right? It's almost time."

Steve, with a somewhat respectful expression, said, "Alright, Your Majesty, I won't accompany you back to Canada."

Helena nodded and smiled. Every move she made exuded a dignified and elegant royal demeanor.

Steve looked at her and felt a tremor in his heart. It wasn't because he was attracted to Helena's appearance and temperament, but because he felt that the more dignified she appeared, the more sinister she seemed in his eyes.

In her twenties, every word she spoke was filled with a murderous aura. How could an ordinary person compare to that?

However, Steve didn't dare to show any dissatisfaction. He watched as Helena boarded the helicopter and saw it fly away. Only then did he breathe a sigh of relief and turn around, ready to return. Just then, his son Royce approached him.

As soon as Royce saw him, he hurriedly said, "Dad, Grandpa said to take you directly to the family meeting room after you accompany the queen. The meeting is about to start."

Steve, feeling dispirited, said, "Alright, I know. Let's go now."

Seeing his father's mood, Royce asked anxiously in a low voice, "Dad, will you be able to take control of the family smoothly today?"

Steve shook his head and said dejectedly, "Don't dream. Your grandfather won't keep his promise."

"What?!" Royce was shocked to hear this and asked in disbelief, "Why? Wasn't it agreed that the family meeting would be held today to pass the position of the head to you?"

Steve smiled bitterly and said, "What's the use of an agreement? It's not written in a contract. Whether to pass it on or not is entirely up to your grandfather."

Royce had not slept the previous night. He had been fantasizing about becoming the first heir of the family after his father ascended to the throne today. By then, he did not know how many people would kneel and fawn over him. He had even begun to imagine the scene of Queen Helena of Norway throwing herself into his arms.

But after just one night of sweet dreams, his father actually said that there was no chance of succeeding to the throne. This... wasn't this a lie?

Royce, who had never experienced social setbacks, instantly turned red-eyed. He choked and asked, "Dad, if grandpa doesn't let you succeed, aren't we happy in vain? If you don't succeed, will Queen Helena still marry me?"

Steve said dumbfoundedly, "Even if I succeed, Helena will not marry you."

"Why?" Royce asked in confusion. "Could it be that even after I become the first heir to Rothschild, I won't be able to catch her eye?"

Steve thought of Charlie and said angrily, "This woman has sold her soul to the devil!"

Royce thought his father meant that Helena had an evil character, so he subconsciously said, "It doesn't matter, Dad, I can do it."

Steve glared at him. "Is this something you can do?"

Royce looked confused. "Helena came to see grandpa in person today. Doesn't she want to get closer to us? Will she still refuse to marry us?"

Steve kicked him and cursed, "Shut up! If you ever let me hear you mention your marriage to the royal family again, don't blame me for slapping you!"

## Chapter 5668



Royce's heart burned with a sense of injustice.

But despite his grievances, he dared not utter a word in the presence of his furious father.

And so, father and son walked in silence, one after the other, towards the family meeting room.

The room resembled a medieval European court, with its grandeur and solemnity. Almost all the family members had already gathered, waiting for the old master to arrive.

Today was the day when the old master would pass on the position to Steve. Once the announcement was made, Steve would officially become the leader of the entire Rothschild family. While everyone wore unpleasant expressions, they also pondered on how to please Steve as much as possible in the future.

From now on, Steve would hold the power over the family's resources, income, and even life and death decisions.

As Steve and Royce entered, everyone stood up from their seats in unison. It was as if they were attending a military meeting, paying their respects to their commanding officer.

Steve's younger brothers immediately surrounded him, eagerly greeting him. Seeing their insincere and obsequious expressions, Steve felt annoyed, but he still politely nodded to each of them.

The youngest brother, David Rothschild, chimed in, "Hey, big brother! I wanted to visit you last night, but your butler said you didn't want any visitors. Tonight, I insist on giving you a chance. I've prepared a few small gifts and want to personally deliver them to your place!"

Steve smiled awkwardly and replied, "David, you're too kind. I can't let you spend money on me."

David hurriedly responded, "Come on, big brother! Don't be so formal. We're brothers. You've always taken care of me the most."

Witnessing David's rush to flatter Steve, the other brothers quickly followed suit, trying to win Steve's favor.

Steve calmly observed their performance, becoming more and more aware of their true intentions.

He knew that if when couldn't secure the position today, these brothers would immediately turn against him. They would do everything in their power to win the old master's favor and seize the opportunity to replace him as the heir.

Therefore, as long as he couldn't succeed today, these brothers would still see him as their biggest competitor, never truly submitting to him.

At that moment, the doors of the meeting room swung open, and everyone turned their heads to see the old butler entering. Following closely behind was Howard, walking with a light step.

The sight of Howard walking in alone stunned everyone.

They had all witnessed Howard's stroke and expected him to enter in a wheelchair, pushed by someone. But who could have anticipated that overnight, Howard would be completely back to normal?

Despite their shock, everyone felt relieved to see Howard looking healthy.

In the Rothschild family, except for Steve's family, everyone hoped that Howard would stay healthy. For those who had no chance of becoming the heir, Howard's continued reign meant a better life. Once Howard fell ill or passed away, they would be at the mercy of the new clan leader.

David Rothschild reacted the quickest. Just moments ago, he was crowding around Steve, occupying the closest and most favorable spot. But in the blink of an eye, he had rushed out of the crowd and approached Howard.

"Father!" David was the first to reach Howard, gripping his arm tightly. His voice filled with concern, he anxiously asked, "Father, how did you manage to walk here by yourself? Are you okay?"

The other sons, who had been huddled around Steve, snapped back to reality and hurried to Howard's side, cursing themselves for not beating David to it.

Royce, who was witnessing it all, experienced firsthand the fickleness of fair-weather friends.

These people had been crowding around his father a moment ago, so much so that he, as his son, couldn't even get through.

But now, they had all flocked to his grandfather, leaving his father standing alone, evoking a profound sense of loneliness within Royce.

Seeing his brothers rushing to his side with excitement, Howard felt both touched and pleased.

After being moved by Steve's filial piety earlier at the medical center, witnessing his other sons showing the same concern now, Howard felt not only touched but also a sense of accomplishment. He believed he had been a successful father, with his sons competing to be the most dutiful.

With a gentle smile on his face, Howard announced in a strong and resolute voice, "I have some good news to share with all of you. I have fully recovered and am in perfect health."

Upon hearing this, although the descendants were clueless about Howard's swift recovery, they were overwhelmed with excitement.

David couldn't contain his curiosity and asked, "Father, did you gather us here for a surprise?"

Howard smiled and replied, "In a way, yes. This time, I employed some extraordinary means to recover so quickly."

As he spoke, Howard's expression gradually turned serious, and he sternly said, "Therefore, I want to remind all of you that no one is allowed to breathe a word about my stroke to anyone outside. If I find out that someone has leaked this information, no matter who they are, I will expel them from the Rothschild family!"

Upon hearing this, everyone's heart trembled.

Being expelled from the family was the harshest and most severe punishment in the Rothschild family. While the old master had made threats before, this indiscriminate threat was unprecedented.

Except for Steve, everyone realized that the reason the old master didn't want the outside world to know about his stroke was probably to keep it under wraps, avoiding any internal turmoil within the Rothschild family.

If they didn't want others to witness any turbulence, it meant that the old master definitely intended to continue as the clan leader.

Filled with joy, everyone nodded repeatedly, vowing not to reveal this matter to anyone and accepting any punishment if they did.

Howard nodded in satisfaction and took his seat at the head of the large conference table. The other descendants quickly stood by his side.

Howard gestured for everyone to take their seats, and they moved their chairs cautiously, creating space for themselves before placing the chairs back on the wool woven carpet without making a sound.

This was a rule that Howard had long established in the family, and everyone diligently followed it.

Seeing everyone carefully sitting down, with straight backs and no signs of slacking, Howard felt an immense sense of comfort and satisfaction. This was the allure of being the clan leader for him.

As everyone sat down, maintaining a respectful silence, Howard spoke in a serious tone, "I called you all here today to make an announcement."

All eyes were fixed on Howard, eager to hear whether Steve would succeed in becoming the heir.

Only Steve knew that his chances of success today were zero.

Clearing his throat, Howard spoke with utmost seriousness, "From this day forward, Steve will officially become the first heir of the Rothschild family, and Royce will be the second heir! As for me, as long as I can still move, I will dedicate myself to leading the Rothschild family to even greater heights!"

## Chapter 5669



As soon as Howard finished speaking, the entire venue erupted in thunderous applause!

Almost all members of the Rothschild family, except for Steve and Royce, immediately leaped to their feet, clapping wildly!

Even David Rothschild couldn't hold back his tears of excitement!

None of them wanted Howard to step down, let alone see Steve take over.

Preserving the status quo was their greatest hope, ensuring that their current vested interests remained untouched. And who knows, if they were to achieve great success in the future, there might be a chance for them to overthrow Steve and become the new heirs.

Originally, they believed that maintaining the status quo was an impossible dream. But unexpectedly, this dream had become a reality.

Steve was crestfallen at this point. He had already anticipated such an outcome, but he didn't expect his own father to make such a grand declaration, which filled him with anger.

However, the fortunate thing was that his father had already listed him and his son as the first and second successors. With this, his chances of inheriting in the future increased significantly. As long as nothing went awry, he would undoubtedly become the next head of the Rothschild family.

Howard surveyed the reactions of most of his grandchildren and felt a deep sense of satisfaction.

Contemplating the next few years, when he could still wield authority here, he couldn't help but sigh. "Ah, why do people toil so hard to amass wealth? Isn't it for a few more good years? If there was a chance to live to be two hundred years old, what would it matter if I handed over half of the family's wealth?"

...

Two hours later, Helena returned to the Canadian capital, Ottawa.

During her journey, she pondered how she should report her progress in New York to Charlie.

Should she tell him the truth? That was out of the question.

Because Charlie had already agreed that she could take half of the selling price as her commission for this elixir.

The actual sale amounted to 60 billion dollars plus an AI model, which was an additional condition set by Charlie and was not included in the commission. This meant that according to Charlie's agreement, she should receive 30 billion dollars.

But how could she accept such a vast sum of money from Charlie?

Helena couldn't reconcile with it.

Therefore, after careful consideration, she decided to deceive Charlie and report the \$50 billion deposit from the Rothschild family as the sales amount. She would inform Charlie that the elixir was sold for \$110 billion, and according to their agreement, she would take \$55 billion and give \$55 billion to Charlie.

In reality, she would only receive \$5 billion.

This was already the highest commission she could fathom deep down in her heart. Having made up her mind, Helena retrieved her phone and dialed Charlie's number. At that moment, Charlie was still aboard the plane returning to Aurous Hill, with about an hour left in the journey.

Since Morgana was in the United States, Charlie opted not to take a conspicuous Concorde plane back to China. Instead, he chose an inconspicuous private jet, which extended his travel time.

The leisurely pace of the plane, combined with the refueling stop, meant that it had been airborne for over ten hours and had not yet reached its destination.

When Charlie received Helena's call, he surmised that she was likely delivering good news, so he answered with a smile, "Helena, have you left New York?"

"Yes," Helena respectfully replied, "Mr. Wade, I have already returned to Canada and would like to report to you about my encounter with the Rothschild family."

Charlie smiled and said, "Go ahead, I'm all ears."

Helena then proceeded to recount her meeting with Howard in detail to Charlie.

When it came to the price, she fibbed, saying, "Mr. Wade, the final price I negotiated with Howard was that he would pay \$110 billion in cash, along with constructing a complete AI model in Northern Europe and maintaining it for at least twenty years."

"\$110 billion?" Charlie couldn't help but be taken aback and exclaimed, "You really made Howard bleed!"

Helena chuckled and said, "Who asked him to offer only \$1 billion at the beginning? If he had started with \$100 billion, I might have settled for around \$200 billion. But he began with \$1 billion, pretending as if he was making a generous offer. So I thought, why not go all out and squeeze him for a substantial sum."

Charlie smiled and remarked, "The Rothschild family is incredibly wealthy, and for them, shedding some blood won't cause any serious harm. Howard probably still thinks it's worth it."

Helena smiled and replied, "In a few years, he might be willing to pay \$200 billion for a pill."

Charlie responded, "That depends on his performance. If he doesn't measure up, he won't be able to buy any elixirs in the future."

On the other end of the line, Helena inquired, "By the way, Mr. Wade, when are you available to provide me with a bank account so that I can transfer your share of the money to you?"

Charlie was about to agree but suddenly felt that something was amiss.

Given Helena's character, if this deal truly amounted to \$110 billion, she would find all sorts of reasons to reduce her own commission. Convincing her to adhere to the agreement of taking half would likely require a great deal of persuasion.

But now, Helena seemed to have no hesitation at all and wanted to split the money evenly with him. This was completely out of character, which made Charlie certain that there must be something fishy going on.

Charlie speculated that Helena most likely lied to him and that the actual selling price should not be as high as \$110 billion. She probably intentionally reported a higher price in order to lower her own commission.

With this in mind, he said to Helena, "You can hold onto the money for now. I don't have an immediate need for it, and besides, I don't have a suitable account to receive such a large sum of money."

Charlie was concerned that Helena would give him the majority of the proceeds from the sale, so he decided not to accept the money for the time being and figure things out later.

Furthermore, he didn't truly require over \$55 billion at the moment, as he possessed an abundant cash flow that he couldn't even exhaust. It would be better to leave the money with Helena for now. On one hand, it would prevent her from giving him an excessive amount, and on the other hand, he might need a significant sum of money in Europe or America in the future. Keeping the money with Helena would make it more convenient for him to spend it there.

Helena remained unaware of Charlie's intentions, considering the possibility that he genuinely lacked an appropriate account to receive the funds. Thus, she offered, "If you require a discreet account, I can assist in arranging one with a Swiss bank, ensuring high security."

"No, thank you," Charlie replied with a smile. "Simply hold onto it for now. I'll reach out when the need arises."

After a brief pause, Helena acquiesced, affirming, "Very well, Mr. Wade. I'll safeguard this 55 billion dollars for you."

## Chapter 5670



When Charlie arrived in the city of Aurous Hill, the sun had long set over the horizon. After completing the necessary customs and immigration procedures in Aurous Hill, Charlie made his way through the VIP channel at the airport, heading straight for the private plane that had been patiently awaiting his arrival. The engines roared to life, and the aircraft ascended into the night sky, bound for Eastcliff.

Concerned that Morgana's subordinates might be monitoring immigration activities in Eastcliff due to his grandfather's high-profile investment cooperation with the authorities there, Charlie had made the decision to enter through Aurous Hill instead. By doing so, he could reach Eastcliff without passing through the international terminal and customs. With hundreds, if not thousands, of domestic flights to Eastcliff each day, he would blend in with the multitude of passengers and evade detection by the Warriors Den.

Charlie's sole purpose in visiting Eastcliff this time was to meet with his grandfather, discuss the situation in New York, and strategize for the future.

Upon learning of Charlie's arrival in Eastcliff that night, his uncle, Desmond, and Jack had driven to the airport an hour in advance to pick him up.

Two hours after Charlie's departure from Eastcliff, the private plane touched down in the capital. Domestic flights bypassed the need for further customs clearance, allowing the aircraft to taxi directly to the hangar.

Uncle Desmond and Jack had been patiently waiting in the hangar, their car parked nearby. Both men stood outside the vehicle, smoking cigarettes as they watched

Charlie's plane being towed into the hangar. When they caught sight of him stepping off the plane, they quickly extinguished their cigarettes and hurried towards him.

"Charlie!"

"Mr. Wade!"

Their delight was evident as they greeted Charlie.

With a warm smile, Charlie responded, "Uncle, Inspector Lee."

Desmond patted Charlie's shoulder and beamed, asking, "You must be exhausted after all the trouble you went through, right?"

Charlie chuckled and replied, "Not at all. I haven't felt tired in a long time."

"Good to hear." Desmond nodded approvingly. "Your grandfather has been eagerly awaiting your arrival in Eastcliff. He hasn't slept a wink. If you're up for it, let's head over right away."

"Absolutely!" Charlie agreed without hesitation, promptly getting into the red flag sedan that his uncle and Jack had driven.

As Charlie settled into the car, he couldn't help but notice the distinctive license plate. It belonged to the renowned special series in the capital city. Curiosity piqued, he asked, "Uncle, where did you get this car?"

Desmond, while maneuvering the vehicle out of the hangar, replied, "The department responsible for receiving our investments made special arrangements. It falls under the purview of the security department and provides us with a high level of protection."

He continued, "Your grandfather has been making substantial investments lately. The total value of the various cooperation agreements he has been negotiating has exceeded hundreds of billions of dollars. These investments span a wide range of domestic industries and hold immense promise. In a few days, your second uncle and I will be heading south. We've invested in a lithium battery company and plan to establish a state-of-the-art power lithium battery production and research base in the region. This will cater specifically to the development of high-density power lithium batteries required for new energy vehicles. Furthermore, your second uncle intends to launch a new energy vehicle brand, leveraging the domestic new energy field's top supply chain to engage directly in complete vehicle manufacturing."

Charlie's curiosity got the better of him. "It seems that the Evans family hasn't been involved much in the manufacturing industry before. Why the sudden foray into complete vehicle manufacturing? This industry has a long investment cycle, requires significant energy, and the profit margins may not be very promising."

Desmond smiled, ready to enlighten him. "New energy is undoubtedly the future of automotive development. The entire world is advocating for carbon neutrality and reduction in carbon emissions. New energy enterprises are instrumental in achieving these targets. Moreover, clean energy comes with lower costs and reduces dependence on imports, thus alleviating the demand for oil imports. As fossil fuel costs continue to rise in the future, the advantages of new energy will become increasingly apparent."

He continued, "In fact, your grandfather's intention is to invest in real industries. Real industries create more job opportunities and facilitate comprehensive upgrading by integrating labor and resources. The benefits are far-reaching. If we can drive overall industrial upgrading, it would be even better."

Charlie nodded, understanding his grandfather's perspective. "Grandfather prioritizes the impact of investments over immediate returns."

Desmond concurred, "Your grandfather believes that the primary consideration for any project should be how much substantial help it can provide to China. Enhancing China's influence in the respective field is the second consideration. Only then does profit and returns come into play."

Charlie nodded silently. Initially, he had hoped for the Evans family to collaborate with authorities to instill fear in the Warriors Den. However, he hadn't anticipated his grandfather would have such long term plans.

After more than half an hour, Charlie's car bearing the red flag emblem pulled up to a state guest hotel, exclusive to dignitaries. Following the registration process, Desmond and Jack escorted Charlie to the villa where Grandpa Samuel resided. This state guest hotel comprised mainly of discrete villas, ensuring guests could enjoy peace and safety without disturbance.

As the car halted in front of the villa, Charlie's grandfather, Samuel, and his second uncle, Marcus, emerged to welcome him.

Stepping out of the vehicle, Charlie hastened to his grandfather and remarked, "Grandpa, why did you come out so late?"

Samuel smiled warmly. "My grandson has traveled from afar; how could I not come out to greet him?"

Grasping Charlie's hand, he added with emotion, "Charlie, you've endured much these days."

Charlie replied calmly, "It's not a burden, Grandpa. Let's head inside and talk."

"Of course," Samuel nodded, leading everyone into the villa.

Once inside, Samuel couldn't contain his curiosity. "Charlie, what's the situation in New York? Please, provide me with the details."

Knowing the elder's keen interest in New York affairs, particularly regarding his uncle Eddie, Charlie recounted his involvement with Eddie upon arriving in the United States, including his demise and that of the Warriors Den's fourth marshal.

Upon hearing about Eddie's demise and the erasure of even his remains by the Rothschild family, Samuel sighed deeply. "Eddie, that scoundrel, wrought havoc on Tece's life. Although I couldn't witness his demise personally, it's truly lamentable."

Charlie inquired, "Grandpa, what should we tell Aunt Tece?"

Samuel responded, "Eddie's disappearance from the world, as a prominent figure in New York, will soon be known. When it reaches your aunt's ears, she'll likely deduce his demise. However, it's best not to disclose further details. Let's maintain a tacit understanding; we shan't mention him again."

Having said this, Samuel took a deep breath. "Eddie posed a significant threat to the Evans family while alive. His demise is a boon for us. Let's ensure this matter concludes with his demise, severing any lingering repercussions. Your aunt will comprehend."

Charlie nodded in agreement. As his grandfather suggested, handling the situation discreetly was indeed the wisest course of action.

Samuel continued, "Charlie, after discussing with your uncles, we've decided to gradually withdraw from the US market. Apart from retaining equity in certain US investments, other assets will either be repatriated to China or dealt with accordingly. We value your input on these matters."

Charlie deferred, "Grandpa, these are family matters. You and Uncle are best suited to decide."

Shaking his head, Samuel insisted, "Charlie, as I've stated before, you own 60% of Evans family assets. Your approval is essential. Moreover, you'll oversee major decisions for the family in the future. Our proposals will be presented to you, but the final decision rests with you."

Charlie smiled, "Grandpa, as I've mentioned, even if the family's assets were bequeathed to me, I'm not prepared to assume control. I'll await the resolution of the current situation. Until then, your decisions prevail."

In truth, Charlie harbored no desire to inherit the Evans family's assets. Money had long lost its significance to him, reduced to mere numbers on a ledger. His verbal agreement to his grandfather was merely to appease the elder's insistence. If the Warriors Den were eradicated one day, he'd prefer retiring to seclusion over managing business empires.

Samuel then broached another matter, "Charlie, relinquishing our presence in the US entails resolving assets that cannot be repatriated promptly. We must either divest or manage them effectively to prevent their depreciation into liabilities. What are your thoughts?"

Understanding his grandfather's concerns, Charlie deliberated. Before severing ties with Eddie, he had overseen the family's US interests. With his demise, immediate return to New York wasn't feasible. Without capable oversight, these assets risked decline.

However, with the Evans family unable to return and Charlie unable to intervene directly, the looming presence of the Warriors Den complicated matters. Any individual assuming control of the Evans family's US operations would undoubtedly attract unwanted attention from the organization. Thus, for the time being, Charlie found himself in a state of temporary impotence.

Nevertheless, one thing remained certain: liquidating the Evans family's assets would significantly depreciate their market value. Furthermore, the family wasn't in dire need of funds; the urgency stemmed from a desire to prevent these assets from languishing unattended.

The optimal solution was to appoint a trustworthy and capable steward for the Evans family's US properties. Initially considering Michaela, Charlie swiftly discarded the idea upon realizing the scrutiny it would invite from the Warriors Den.

After careful consideration, Charlie proposed, "It would be prudent to temporarily entrust the Rothschild family with the management of the Evans family's US assets. They can oversee these properties until the threat posed by the society is neutralized. Then, we can reclaim ownership of these industries."

## Chapter 5671



"Rothschild?"

With a single sentence, Charlie left the father and son of the Evans family in a state of disbelief.

Samuel couldn't help but speak up, "The Rothschild family has always held themselves in such high esteem. In their eyes, there is no company or family in the world that can match their status. Even though the Evans family is the second largest family in the United States, so what? Howard still treats me with arrogance and superiority."

He continued, "I have known Howard for many years, and there was only one occasion when he treated me with respect and deference. It was when he called me to discuss Eddie's death. With his habit of using people when they are needed and discarding them afterwards, he wouldn't feel any obligation towards me until Eddie's matter was safely resolved."

Charlie smiled and said, "There's no need to deal with Howard on this matter. I will have Steve handle it."

"Steve?" Marcus, the second uncle, instinctively asked, "You mean Howard's eldest son, Steve Rothschild?"

"Yes." Charlie nodded and smiled, "That's him."

Marcus awkwardly chuckled and said, "That guy Steve is even more cunning than his father. While his father uses people and discards them, Steve is quick to criticize and complain."

Charlie laughed and said, "You're definitely referring to the old Steve. He wouldn't dare to be so arrogant in front of me now. I was able to send the Four Treasures of the Study back to China this time all thanks to him personally escorting it. Now I have him under my thumb, and he wouldn't even dare to make a move without my permission."

Saying that, Charlie checked the time and said, "The Rothschild family probably finished their internal meeting a while ago. I'm going to give him a call now."

Hearing Charlie mention the Four Treasures of the Study, the others immediately realized that Charlie had indeed found Steve's weakness.

Charlie made the call, and before it even rang a couple of times, Steve immediately answered. Then, Steve's respectful voice came through, "Oh, Mr. Wade, have you returned to China?"

"Yes." Charlie said lightly, "I'm back in China now. I called to express my gratitude. Thank you for your work on returning the Four Treasures of the Study."

Steve's voice trembled with fear, and he quickly said, "Mr. Wade... those words... we shouldn't mention them on the phone, they are too sensitive..."

Charlie smiled and said, "Alright, I just wanted to say thank you and by the way, how is your father doing?"

Steve was seething with anger.

In his mind, he cursed, "Charlie, you're not satisfied with ruining me, you even have to rub salt in the wound! How could you not know that my father is in good health after Queen Helena visited him?"

Although Steve was furious, he didn't dare to talk back to Charlie. He could only say respectfully, "Thank you for your concern, Mr. Wade. After Queen Helena visited my father, his health completely recovered."

"That's good." Charlie smiled and said, "Steve, I saved your father's life, do you bear any grudges against me?"

Steve, as if someone had stepped on his tail, quickly said, "No, no! I am grateful to you, how could I hold any grudges..."

Charlie curiously asked, "By the way, now that your father is healthy again, has he passed on the position of clan leader to you, as agreed?"

Steve felt extremely frustrated, but he could only reluctantly say, "My father didn't pass on the position to me, he only confirmed my identity as the first successor."

Saying that, Steve couldn't help but mutter under his breath, "Mr. Wade... you really ruined my dreams!"

Charlie no longer beat around the bush and spoke frankly, "Steve, there's an old Chinese saying: 'God will give great responsibility to those capable of bearing it.' You need time to mature and develop your leadership skills. Your father must guide you for a few more years; otherwise, the immense legacy of the Rothschild family might suffer under your leadership."

Though Steve inwardly cursed Charlie, he could only respond angrily, "Mr. Wade, you're correct. I need to learn and grow further."

Charlie nodded and added, "But don't rush. If a few years aren't enough, take ten or twenty. Your father's longevity isn't an issue; I have a solution to prolong his life for another two decades. You still have time to improve."

Steve was nearly petrified upon hearing this revelation. Twenty more years? He would be over seventy! How could he continue living in uncertainty, still without a secure position?

Despite his shock, Steve didn't doubt Charlie's words. He expressed, "Mr. Wade, if you require anything from me, just say the word. I'll do my utmost to assist you."

Continuing in a humble tone, he admitted, "I confess, I've harbored selfish and deceitful intentions before. But rest assured, from now on, I, Steve Rothschild, pledge unwavering obedience. I'll serve you faithfully or perish trying!"

Charlie nodded, ceasing his jests. "Steve, since you're committed, I need your assistance with something crucial."

Steve eagerly interjected, "Mr. Wade, please tell me. If it's within my capability, I'll do everything in my power. Let me share your burdens."

Charlie explained, "My grandfather plans to relocate all of the Evans's US operations to China. However, some assets cannot be moved immediately. Real estate and industries left behind still require management to maintain and enhance their value. With no designated overseer, I hope you can step in and ensure the smooth operation of these ventures."

Relieved, Steve responded, "I understand. Managing these assets is straightforward. Your grandfather can designate someone to organize it. For properties we can't move or sell, I'll oversee operations. I'll ensure their upkeep and growth to the best of my ability."

Charlie interrupted, emphasizing, "Steve, mere effort won't suffice. You must pledge to me. For the real estate I entrust to you, ensure a minimum annual profit of 10%. If profitable, sustain a growth rate of at least 10% annually. Non-profitable ventures must be turned around within a year."

Steve was taken aback. "But Mr. Wade, in the US, even prime real estate yields only 3-5%. And for traditional industries, achieving a 10% growth rate annually is unrealistic. Some sectors may never turn a profit. How can I meet these expectations?"

Charlie shrugged nonchalantly, "If you fall short, supplement it yourself. As the legitimate heir of the Rothschild family, what's a little extra? If necessary, you'll provide it."

"Me?" Steve stammered in disbelief. "Mr. Wade, isn't this extortion?"

Charlie's tone turned cold. "If your father takes charge, he won't mince words. If he handles it deftly and entices me to extend our cooperation, I might reconsider my decision to sell. He know of my medicine, but should I require his services in the future, I'll approach him. I won't say more on that front. However, rest assured, you'll surpass him eventually. When the time comes, your father will be overseeing your funeral arrangements. You... will merely inherit his name."

Steve was gripped by fear, beads of sweat forming on his brow.

Ever since Helena sent the medication from Canada to treat Howard, Steve had harbored an intense animosity toward Charlie.

Now, he realized that Charlie wielded unseen influence over both his and his father's destinies.

If Steve continued providing the miraculous elixir to his father, he might perish before Howard, who battled depression.

Just as Steve was engulfed in horror, Charlie's calm voice broke the silence. "Steve, I've entrusted this matter to you to assess your worthiness for continued collaboration. If you falter, I'll place my faith in your father."

## Chapter 5672



In mere moments, Steve found himself cursing every profanity he knew in his mind.

"Damn it, why must Charlie be so foul-mouthed? Does this jerk really think I, Steve Rothschild, am a complete idiot?!"

"What's with all this 'give me a chance, I'm useless'? Who the hell does he think he is? Does he think I'm just a lapdog by his side?!"

"So what if he bet on my father? Am I supposed to be scared of him?!"

In that moment, Steve's heart sank, and he thought to himself, "Damn it... I'm actually scared! If my father presides over my funeral in the future, what has my life amounted to?"

At this moment, Steve felt a despair he had never experienced before deep in his heart.

With his privileged identity and background, he had never faced hardship, adversity, grief, or despair since the day he was born, unlike most people.

As the saying goes, the well-fed do not understand the hungry.

It was as if those medieval European feudal lords who held the right of the first night, who could never comprehend the agony and torment of a solitary man rolling around in his bed at midnight.

Despair was foreign to him. But now, it felt as though despair had etched itself into his very soul.

In this moment, Steve truly felt like a man who had sold his soul to the devil. Despite achieving great success in human society, he was nothing more than a hellhound in the eyes of the devil. Once the ten-year contract was up, the devil could seize everything from him at any moment.

And right now, Charlie was that devil, an adversary he couldn't possibly contend with. It wasn't that Charlie's overall strength surpassed that of the Rothschild family. The key was that he had found the perfect balance between himself and his father. His father relied on him for his life. As long as his demands weren't too extreme, his father would never defy him.

Charlie had leverage over him, and if he took one step forward, he would expose himself and risk the Treasure's escape from New York, leading his father to dispose of him. But if he took one step back and helped his father prolong his life, he could secure his position as the heir until his father's death.

How could he break this deadlock?

Kill Charlie?

Impossible. This guy possessed the strength of a ghost. In the Cole Family Manor, he had countless opportunities to kill him. In this situation, what could he use to confront him head-on?

Steve pondered, feeling that Charlie was an unsolvable enigma.

He was like a gamer exploiting a bug, continuously using long-range skills from an invincible position. No matter how many monsters, or even the biggest boss, they couldn't touch him at all.

Desperate, Steve could only humble himself like a grandson and said, "Mr. Wade, rest assured, I will do my best! I will do everything in my power to maintain the industries left by your grandfather's family in the United States, and the profits will exceed your expectations!"

Upon hearing his statement, Charlie's tone eased slightly, and he said casually, "Then I'll see how you perform."

After speaking, Charlie hung up the phone without further ado.

Listening to the conversation between Charlie and Steve, the three members of the Evans family were all taken aback.

After a moment, it was Samuel who spoke up, "Charlie, those assets don't matter. If worse comes to worst, we can sell them at a discount and consider it settled. Steve is an arrogant and domineering person. If we provoke him, he might become a problem for you in the future."

Charlie shook his head, "Grandfather, Steve has no leverage over me, and he also has a request. It's just that he can't get his attitude and position right. The more he tries to betray, the more I need to suppress and torment him, to break down his excessive pride and superiority. Only then can he be honest."

Saying that, Charlie continued, "This situation is actually an opportunity to shape him."

Samuel nodded and said, "Charlie, Eddie and Landon's remains were taken care of by Howard's people. I think the Warriors Den might target them in the future. Will they trace it back to you? And what about the medicine you sold to Howard through the Nordic Queen? Will rumors spread and be discovered by the Warriors Den?"

Charlie replied, "I'm not sure about Eddie, but the artifact incident will definitely draw Morgana's attention to the Rothschild family. However, I don't think Morgana will act recklessly. She will most likely send some 'scholars' to infiltrate the Rothschild family, just as she did with the Evans family."

Pausing for a moment, Charlie continued, "Currently, the only people in the Rothschild family who know about my existence are Steve and his son. The only ones who know about Howard's recovery from the stroke are Howard, Steve and his son, and a few doctors. However, Howard will definitely keep this news under wraps, so the outside world is unaware of his stroke, let alone the medicine."

At this point, Charlie paused again and continued, "Whether it's my existence or the existence of the Dan medicine, they are both the most crucial and confidential information within the Rothschild family. If the Warriors Den wants to know these secrets, they must first infiltrate the Rothschild family at all levels. It's unlikely they can accomplish this quickly."

"That makes sense," Samuel nodded and said, "Eddie and Amelia, I only allowed them to enter the Evans family after they spent a few years by your aunt and uncle's side and were at the stage of discussing marriage."

Charlie pondered for a moment, thinking, and said, "So, in the short term, the Warriors Den won't be able to discover my existence, and I don't need to hide for too long. At most three years! Within three years, I want to diminish the Warriors Den's strength by at least seventy percent! By then, they will no longer pose a threat to me."

Charlie was acutely aware that his ability to confront Morgana wasn't just limited by the Soul Palace, but also by centuries of cultivation. Without a significant opportunity, it might take decades, if not longer, to defeat her.

In a pessimistic scenario, even after Morgana's 500-year lifespan had ended, he might still be outmatched.

However, Charlie's perspective on the matter had shifted.

He realized that dealing with Morgana required a holistic approach, considering the bigger picture rather than solely fixating on their power disparity.

Despite Morgana's formidable abilities, she remained human, not divine. Her sustained evasion of the Warriors Den's grasp and the continuous expansion of its influence were largely attributed to the Fifth Army Governor's Mansion. This entity cultivated forces worldwide, amassing tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of soldiers and knights under its command—a truly formidable aspect of the Warriors Den.

Therefore, Charlie believed that neutralizing more than three of the Fifth Army Governor's Mansions aligned with the Warriors Den would significantly weaken Morgana. If he could liberate these soldiers and knights from her control, perhaps he could eventually dismantle all external forces associated with the Warriors Den. Should that day arrive, Morgana would be left stranded on an obscure island in Antarctica, with no chance of resurgence in this lifetime.