

Chapter 1 – Cessnock, NSW

The secure internet phone rang, its shrill tone cutting through the air like a silent warning. Wang's heart skipped a beat as he answered on the first ring, his fingers trembling slightly as he entered his secret ten-digit code. "Hello Uncle, I trust this finds you well."

Wang's uncle, Zhang Yong, loomed large over the line—a formidable figure, the fourth most powerful person in the Chinese party. Each word he uttered dripped with authority, sending shivers down Wang's spine. "Yes, thank you, we need you to double your shipments of bituminous coal as soon as possible. We are expanding our steel production, and your metallurgical coal is perfect."

"Of course, Uncle," Wang replied, his mind racing with the implications. Doubling the shipments meant more than just increased production—it meant more equipment, more men, and more railcars. "Uncle respectfully, this will cost a lot."

"Of course. Nephew, you must secure that coal at whatever cost, by whatever means," Zhang Yong's voice crackled with urgency, the weight of his words heavy in the air.

"Thank you, Uncle. I will make this happen," Wang said, his voice steady despite the turmoil within.

"We depend on you and trust you will accomplish the mission." With that, the phone line went dead, leaving Wang grappling with the gravity of his task.

In the dimly lit confines of his office at the rear of Yong's Wok, Wang began making a list, his mind buzzing with plans and contingencies. But little did he know, beyond the quiet streets of Cessnock, in the heart of the Hunter Valley, a formidable opponent was waiting—a man whose passion and determination would rival his own.

Wang Yong, a tiny man with a troubled past, had clawed his way to the top, forging alliances and crushing adversaries in his relentless pursuit of Chinese dominance. To the unsuspecting residents of Cessnock, he was merely a mild-mannered immigrant running the best Chinese restaurants in town. But in reality, he held the keys to Australia's coal kingdom, orchestrating covert operations between the Chinese government and the secretive coal mines scattered across the country.

As Wang prepared to face the challenges ahead, little did he know that his greatest battle lay just beyond the horizon, waiting to test his resolve like never before.