

Full-Level 841

Chapter 841: Her True Nature

“A banquet?”

Upon hearing Murong Yumeng’s suggestion, Zhou Cui’an’s eyes brightened. However, soon after, she seemed to reconsider and her expression dimmed. She timidly replied, “Maybe not. It might not be suitable for me to attend such an occasion. Senior Sister Murong, thank you for the invitation! But I think I’ll pass.”

Banquets like these were the world of the wealthy. For an ordinary girl like her to fit in would be quite challenging. Especially considering Senior Sister Murong’s status as a member of the Murong family, the events she attended were bound to be high-class. It would likely be uncomfortable for her to attend.

“Why wouldn’t it be suitable?” Murong Yumeng’s lips curled into a smile as she continued to persuade, “It’s not a very formal gathering, just friends getting together to chat. We’re all young people; it’ll be easy for everyone to get along.”

Although Zhou Cui’an was tempted, her rational side told her to decline.

“Senior Sister Murong, I appreciate your kindness, but I’ll pass,” Zhou Cui’an said, shaking her head with less conviction. “I’m afraid I’ll embarrass you.”

“Why would you think that?” Murong Yumeng persisted, “You have to believe in yourself. You got into Capital University; you’re definitely outstanding. Besides, you’re alone during the New Year. Why not come out and meet new friends? I’m sure you want to stay in the capital after graduation! If that’s the case, making more friends will be beneficial. More friends mean more opportunities! Alright, it’s settled then. If you insist on refusing, then you’ll be looking down on my friends.”

“How could I?” Zhou Cui’an responded anxiously, eventually agreeing, “Alright! Senior Sister Murong, I’ll see you then.”

Though it seemed she had reluctantly agreed, Zhou Cui’an’s eyes sparkled.

She never expected to receive such a pleasant surprise when she sought Murong Yumeng’s help earlier. Just six months in the capital, and she already had the chance to mingle with the elite families. It felt surreal. She couldn’t help but recall a joke from her days working at a luxury store, where a colleague suggested she befriended Ye Leng’an. Perhaps she could introduce her to some wealthy young gentlemen, and then she could ascend to the top in one fell swoop.

At that time, she was very excited, but her relationship with Ye Leng’an was never good, so her wish was never fulfilled. Later on, she learned about Ye Leng’an’s true nature, which directly dispelled such thoughts. After all, she was just a woman who clung to a wealthy man. What help could she offer?

Who would have thought that she had already dismissed such thoughts, but now she had such an opportunity again because of Murong Yumeng.

Now, looking back, she felt that it was really the right decision to muster up the courage to call Murong Yumeng. Murong Yumeng was her greatest benefactor in life, practically changing her destiny.

Not wanting to waste too much time on Zhou Cui'an, Murong Yumeng excused herself after a brief conversation

Watching Murong Yumeng leave, Zhou Cui'an felt a twinge of regret. There were still things she wanted to say, but she didn't dare to waste Murong Yumeng's time.

Despite Murong Yumeng's departure, Zhou Cui'an had no intention of leaving just yet. With her worries resolved and an invitation from Murong Yumeng, she felt unexpectedly relieved.

For days, she had been unable to eat or sleep well, fearing her secret would be revealed. With Murong Yumeng's promise to help, she felt reassured.

With the weight lifted off her chest, she felt unprecedentedly light-hearted. Now, she simply wanted to savor this moment of relaxation.

Especially when her eyes fell upon the bank card on the table, Zhou Cui'an's smile widened.

She had resigned herself to losing the money, but to her surprise, she still had it. With the kickback issue resolved, she decided to keep it.

With this money, she thought about what dress to wear to the banquet.

Meanwhile, after leaving the café, Murong Yumeng got into a car waiting by the roadside.

In the car, besides the driver, another person sat in the backseat -Murong Yumeng's follower, Xiao Lingling.

Seeing Murong Yumeng enter the car, Xiao Lingling immediately took her coat and asked, "Senior Sister, are you finished chatting?"

"Yes," Murong Yumeng replied, her tone indifferent, even mocking. "It was just desperate. To bother me for such a trivial matter, she really has no shame."

At this moment, Murong Yumeng had completely shed the gentleness she displayed when facing Zhou Cui'an just now. The moment she got into the car, her entire facade was stripped away. Now, leaning against the back seat, her face bore a sneer, and she appeared exceptionally indifferent. This was a stark departure from her usual image of being understanding and caring, akin to an elder sister.

Xiao Lingling wasn't surprised by this.

As Murong Yumeng's follower, she knew exactly who Murong Yumeng was. And now, Murong Yumeng didn't even bother pretending in front of her.

Of course, Xiao Lingling dared not reveal Murong Yumeng's true nature. Offending Murong Yumeng would only bring trouble to her family.

Moreover, Xiao Lingling knew that Murong Yumeng's public persona was deeply ingrained. Even if she revealed the truth, no one would believe her.

Ignoring Xiao Lingling's silence, Murong Yumeng looked at her and said, "I've invited her to the banquet on the fifth day of the Lunar New Year. Remember to take care of her."

Chapter 842: Leverage

After hearing Murong Yumeng's words, Xiao Lingling was somewhat surprised. "Senior Sister, why are you so good to this Zhou Cui'an?"

She genuinely couldn't comprehend it. Zhou Cui'an didn't seem particularly remarkable! Moreover, despite Murong Yumeng's assistance to Zhou Cui'an, it was evident that she harbored no fondness for her. One could even say she despised Zhou Cui'an.

"Hehe, she's a valuable pawn, naturally worth nurturing." Murong Yumeng's lips curled into a sneer. "Although Zhou Cui'an is greedy and vulgar, she holds a significant position as Ye Leng'an's roommate."

Zhou Cui'an was merely a pawn planted beside Ye Leng'an, a ticking time bomb waiting to explode.

Upon hearing Murong Yumeng's callous words, Xiao Lingling lowered her head, refraining from further conversation.

Unfazed by Xiao Lingling's presence, Murong Yumeng retrieved her phone and dialed the company, briefing them on the Zhou Cui'an situation and instructing them to drop the matter.

However, before ending the call, she added, "Although we're letting this matter go, ensure the evidence is retained, understood?"

After confirming with the other party, Murong Yumeng hung up.

Listening to the entire conversation, Xiao Lingling couldn't help but feel shocked. Initially, she thought Murong Yumeng intended to help Zhou Cui'an resolve the issue. Yet, from her final instruction, Xiao Lingling discerned that Murong Yumeng's goal was not to assist Zhou Cui'an but to secure leverage against her!

The image of Murong Yumeng portraying herself as a caring elder sister to Zhou Cui'an while scheming behind her back sent shivers down Xiao Lingling's spine. Simultaneously, she grew apprehensive about her own predicament.

She wondered if she had inadvertently provided Murong Yumeng with any leverage.

Nevertheless, this incident taught her one thing: now that she was Murong Yumeng's follower, she could never entertain thoughts of betrayal. Otherwise, the consequences would be dire. Moreover, despite Murong Yumeng's pretentiousness, she had indeed gained numerous benefits by staying by her side.

Reflecting on this, Xiao Lingling felt that everything she did was worthwhile.

Murong Yumeng reclined in her seat, eyes closed, seemingly aware of Xiao Lingling's conflicted gaze but unperturbed by it.

Her decision to make the call in Xiao Lingling's presence today was a warning shot. She wanted Xiao Lingling to understand that betraying her would have severe consequences, akin to crushing an ant.

Time passed swiftly, and before they knew it, it was New Year's Eve.

Early in the morning, Ye Leng'an roused Huangfu Ruiling from sleep.

With Sister Li on vacation, only the two of them occupied the vast villa. However, it didn't feel desolate at all.

After getting up, they adorned the villa with couplets and decorations, infusing it with the festive spirit.

Once the villa was festooned, Ye Leng'an had a sudden idea. "Ling, what do you say we make dumplings together?"

Neither of them knew how to cook, and they had already arranged for their New Year's Eve dinner to be delivered. However, Ye Leng'an suddenly felt that since they had time on their hands, they might as well make dumplings together.

Huangfu Ruiling wouldn't refuse Ye Leng'an's suggestion. This time was no exception. He paused for a moment before agreeing, "Okay!"

Soon, they began kneading dough and preparing fillings.

Huangfu Ruiling handled the dough, while Ye Leng'an prepared the fillings. They chatted intermittently, fostering a pleasant atmosphere.

Although they were both novices, with the aid of online instructions and their quick learning abilities, they soon had the fillings and dough ready.

As Ye Leng'an surveyed the well-prepared ingredients, a sense of achievement washed over her. "Ling, I didn't expect us to be quite talented in cooking! Look, everything looks decent."

"You're right." Huangfu Ruiling chuckled and nodded. "Shall we start rolling the dough for the dumplings?"

"Yes!" Ye Leng'an nodded eagerly.

However, to their surprise, they couldn't quite get the hang of rolling the dough and shaping the dumplings.

The dough turned out either too thick or too thin, and the dumplings were either too flat or leaked filling. In short, none of them looked appealing.

Observing the oddly shaped dumplings on the table, Ye Leng'an couldn't help but sigh. "Well, I just praised our talent, but now we're being proven wrong. Perhaps it's better not to boast too soon."

Huangfu Ruiling glanced at the dumplings, unable to find anything positive to say. Eventually, he could only offer, "Well, it doesn't matter. They'll all taste the same in the end."

Hearing Huangfu Ruiling's words, Ye Leng'an felt speechless. Rolling her eyes at Huangfu Ruiling, she retorted somewhat irritably, "Perhaps it would have been better if you hadn't said anything."

After Ye Leng'an's complaint, Huangfu Ruiling remained silent and continued rolling the dough and shaping the dumplings.

Yet, they remained unattractive.

Observing Huangfu Ruiling rolling the dough, Ye Leng'an's eyes gleamed mischievously as if she had an idea. She quietly dusted her hands with flour, approached Huangfu Ruiling, and said, "Ling, your face is dirty. Let me clean it for you!"

Unsuspecting, Huangfu Ruiling leaned closer, allowing Ye Leng'an to wipe his face.

With an evil smirk, Ye Leng'an extended her flour-covered hand and began smearing Huangfu Ruiling's face, saying, "Ling, don't move. I'm removing the dirt for you!"

As she spoke, Ye Leng'an's hand covered Huangfu Ruiling's face in flour, lending his originally stern visage a touch of humor and softening his appearance.

Chapter 843: Childish Antics

Seeing Huangfu Ruiling's face covered in flour, Ye Leng'an couldn't help but burst into laughter. She had never seen Huangfu Ruiling like this before. Normally, he never showed such a childish side.

Thinking this, she felt an urge to join in. She wanted to capture Huangfu Ruiling's current appearance on her phone. However, she doubted he would want photos taken at this moment!

Huangfu Ruiling wasn't oblivious; he noticed Ye Leng'an's secretive demeanor.

He wasn't a puppet; when Ye Leng'an was goofing around with his face, he felt it. Yet, he didn't stop her. Instead, he allowed her antics.

Faced with his gaze, Ye Leng'an felt a moment of guilt. She chuckled. "I accidentally got flour on your face while cleaning your face."

She doubted Huangfu Ruiling would believe her explanation. Nonetheless, she had no choice but to offer it. Besides, it was just a casual remark; she didn't expect him to believe it.

Hearing her explanation, Huangfu Ruiling burst into laughter. Then, a mischievous glint flashed in his eyes. He reached out and wiped her face.

He was rolling dough, and his hands were flour-covered. Now, he smeared it all over her face.

His movement was swift, leaving her momentarily stunned. By the time she reacted, her face was covered in flour.

Glaring at him, Ye Leng'an retaliated by grabbing a handful of flour and tossing it at him

He immediately fought back.

Before they knew it, the two of them, who had been dutifully making dumplings, forgot about the dumplings altogether. They began playfully tossing flour at each other, like children, turning the living room into a battlefield.

Laughter filled the room, adding to the festive atmosphere of the New Year.

Half an hour later, they both lay on the sofa, smiling.

The living room was now a mess.

Looking at the chaos, Ye Leng'an felt a pang of guilt. After surveying the scene, she stammered, "So, what do we do now?"

They had started making dumplings in the dining room, but their antics had spilled over into the living room. Now, both rooms were covered in flour, as were they. It was quite a sight.

Ye Leng'an was the one who initiated the mischief, so she couldn't help feeling guilty. She had suggested making dumplings, and now things had ended up like this.

Huangfu Ruiling remained calm. "Let's clean up first," he suggested. "I'll have someone come to tidy up the living room."

It was impossible for just the two of them to clean up the mess. If left to them, they probably wouldn't finish today. Especially with flour scattered all over the carpet and sofa.

Ye Leng'an quickly washed up and came downstairs.

As she descended, she saw that Huangfu Ruiling had already finished cleaning up and was sitting on the sofa. The living and dining rooms were spotless.

She sat down beside Huangfu Ruiling and sighed as she glanced at the dining room. "I was looking forward to making dumplings today," she lamented. "But it looks like that's not happening now."

They had barely made any dumplings before their playtime began. And now, those few dumplings had been sacrificed during their antics.

Seeing Ye Leng'an's disappointment, Huangfu Ruiling chuckled and said, "We can try again next time if you want."

Of course, he felt they should practice first. Otherwise, they might end up with more oddly shaped dumplings that tasted questionable.

"We'll see." Ye Leng'an chuckled, checking the time. "Our meal should be arriving soon."

"It should be here in a few minutes," Huangfu Ruiling confirmed.

He had ordered the meal before they went to clean up. Judging by the time, it should be arriving shortly.

As Huangfu Ruiling finished speaking, there was a knock on the door.

"That was quick!" Ye Leng'an raised an eyebrow, then stood up to answer the door. "I'll get it!"

Seeing her move, Huangfu Ruiling remained seated.

However, upon seeing the familiar faces accompanying Ye Leng'an, his brows furrowed in displeasure. "What are you doing here?"

The visitors were none other than Huangfu Jingzhang, Zhongyu Liuying, and others, including Huangfu Ruixiang and Zhong Yating. A family of four had suddenly dropped by.

What surprised him most was that Zhongyu Lingshan was also with them. Li Yiran, however, was absent. He wondered if she was left behind intentionally or for another reason.

Ye Leng'an's expression remained neutral. She sat beside Huangfu Ruiling without a word, casting a curious glance at those uninvited guests.

Upon opening the door and seeing the visitors, she was momentarily taken aback. However, she quickly stepped aside to let them in.

She hadn't expected Huangfu Jingzhang and the others to visit on this particular day. But upon seeing Zhongyu Lingshan behind Zhongyu Liuying, she understood why.

Raising an eyebrow, she observed Zhongyu Lingshan with keen interest. It seemed she found the situation quite amusing.

Sensing Ye Leng'an's gaze, Zhongyu Lingshan tensed momentarily. She frowned at Ye Leng'an, but soon noticed Ye Leng'an looking away. Her frown deepened.

Chapter 844: Unexpected Guests

Zhongyu Lingshan always felt that Ye Leng'an's gaze was peculiar. Simultaneously, she felt a shiver down her spine because, under such scrutiny, she felt as if she were completely transparent, completely laid bare by the other party.

Huangfu Ruiling remained silent, and Huangfu Jingzhang and the others appeared particularly uncomfortable. After all, Huangfu Ruiling hadn't even invited them to sit down.

Ignoring the awkwardness, Huangfu Jingzhang sat down directly.

Seeing Huangfu Jingzhang take a seat, the others followed suit. However, with no one speaking, the atmosphere only grew more awkward.

Ye Leng'an sat beside Huangfu Ruiling like a spectator at a show, looking eager but saying nothing.

Observing Ye Leng'an, both Huangfu Jingzhang and Zhongyu Liuying had plenty to say.

In their view, Ye Leng'an's behavior lacked refinement. As Huangfu Ruiling's fiancée, she should have taken the initiative to ease the tension, not act like a spectator.

“Dingdong.”

The clear sound of the doorbell shattered the solemn atmosphere in the living room.

Hearing the doorbell, Ye Leng'an raised an eyebrow, knowing their food had arrived. Without paying attention to the others, she got up and headed towards the door.

Opening the door, she saw that indeed, the hotel had delivered the food.

Ye Leng'an stepped aside, allowing the hotel staff to enter with the dishes. Then, upon her signal, they made their way to the dining room.

While the hotel staff were busy setting up the dishes, Ye Leng'an returned to Huangfu Ruiling's side.

Finally lifting his head, Huangfu Ruiling glanced at Huangfu Jingzhang and the others before speaking, "Speak! What's your purpose for coming today?"

He wouldn't just entertain guests without reason. He didn't believe these people had come to the villa just to see him.

With this statement, the tension in the living room broke. Huangfu Jingzhang breathed a sigh of relief before speaking, "Today is New Year's Eve, a day for family reunions. If you won't go back to the ancestral mansion, can't we come and see you?"

Glancing towards the dining hall, Zhongyu Liuying thought their timing was fortuitous – they could stay for dinner, which would benefit both Huangfu Ruiling and Zhongyu Lingshan.

"Now that you've seen, you can leave," Huangfu Ruiling said lightly. "We'll be eating soon."

In other words, he was hinting for them to leave on their own accord, not to disturb their mealtime.

Hearing this, Huangfu Jingzhang's expression immediately darkened. His tone was filled with anger as he retorted, "Today is New Year's Eve. We're family. Are you really not letting us stay for a meal?"

If it were his former self, on a day like today, he would definitely have stayed at the ancestral mansion. Back then, as the head of the Huangfu family, he was revered by everyone. He enjoyed seeing people's reverence for him, relishing the feeling of being elevated.

However, now that he was no longer the family head, there was no need for him to stay at the ancestral mansion for the reunion dinner. Especially since he didn't want to see the peculiar gazes of others, especially considering his position as the family head had been usurped by his own son.

"That's right!" Unlike Huangfu Jingzhang, Zhongyu Liuying appeared much more amiable. She smiled and spoke, "Ruiling, I understand that you don't want to return to the ancestral home for the New Year, so we came specially to accompany you for a reunion dinner. The reunion dinner on New Year's Eve is best enjoyed with family, creating the most festive atmosphere."

"Exactly, exactly." Huangfu Ruixiang chimed in quickly, "Brother, it's rare to have Sister-in-law with us this year. Let's all have a reunion dinner together!"

Seeing these people keep insisting, Huangfu Ruiling glanced around before saying, "It's inconvenient, so you should leave!"

His tone was filled with endless coldness and detachment, sounding nothing like talking to his own family.

Already filled with anger, Huangfu Jingzhang's temper soared upon hearing Huangfu Ruiling's words. If it weren't for Zhongyu Liuying holding him back, he might have exploded right then and there. "What did you say? We're your family. What's inconvenient about having a reunion dinner together?"

Recalling the events of a few days ago, he couldn't help but feel furious, despite his earlier fear of Huangfu Ruiling's threats.

“Inconvenient means inconvenient. What more is there to say?”

In this tense atmosphere, Ye Leng’an chuckled. “If we truly wanted to share a reunion dinner with you, we would have gone back to the ancestral mansion long ago. Since we’re unwilling to return, doesn’t that say it all?”

Her matter-of-fact demeanor only fueled their anger.

Before Huangfu Jingzhang and Zhongyu Liuying could respond, Zhongyu Lingshan spoke up first.

“Miss Ye, don’t you think your words are too much?” Zhongyu Lingshan’s cold voice rang out as she glanced indifferently at Ye Leng’an. “Regardless, aunt and uncle are the parents of the head of the Huangfu family. This matter is between parents and children. It’s not appropriate for you to interfere.”

Her cold demeanor bore a striking resemblance to Ye Leng’an’s.

Even Ye Leng’an couldn’t help but pause momentarily at Zhongyu Lingshan’s demeanor. However, she quickly regained her composure. With a faint smile, she looked up at Zhongyu Lingshan and uttered words dripping with sarcasm.

“I’m not sure if my words are harsh, but...” Ye Leng’an’s tone carried a hint of mockery. “If you think it’s inappropriate for me to interfere, why are you intervening now? Do you believe this matter concerns you? Or do you wish it did?”

As she spoke, the mocking smile on Ye Leng’an’s face became more apparent, her gaze sharpening as she looked at Zhongyu Lingshan.

Chapter 845: Leaving Gracefully

Under Ye Leng’an’s scrutinizing gaze, Zhongyu Lingshan couldn’t help but feel a hint of panic, but she quickly regained her composure. Directly meeting Ye Leng’an’s eyes, she spoke calmly, “Miss Ye, I’m not sure what you’re implying. I’m simply concerned about my aunt. We share the same family name, and we’re relatives. Is it not permissible for me to speak up for my own kin?”

Ye Leng’an shrugged, neither confirming nor denying, “You really don’t need to be so anxious. What matters most is what you think. Others can’t interfere with that.”

Zhongyu Lingshan remained silent, but she couldn’t shake off the feeling that her thoughts were laid bare before the other party.

“Ye Leng’an, it’s not your place to intervene,” Zhongyu Liuying immediately stepped in to defend Zhongyu Lingshan. “She’s my niece and has every right to speak. As a junior, how dare you utter such words? Do you have no respect for us?”

She harbored no affection for Ye Leng’an, her supposed future daughter-in-law. In fact, she found Ye Leng’an more detestable than Zhong Yating. At least Zhong Yating, as a daughter-in-law, understood the need to please her in-laws. But Ye Leng’an showed no respect in their presence. Sometimes, her demeanor was even more insolent than Huangfu Ruiling’s.

Was she even fit to be called a daughter-in-law? To them, she was nothing short of an enemy. If not for Huangfu Ruiling's autocracy, Ye Leng'an wouldn't have gained their recognition.

This was why when Zhongyu Lingshan approached her, she almost instantly agreed without hesitation.

While Ye Leng'an's attitude had not been particularly pleasant before, this time, she was blatantly disrespectful. It was as though she had thrown their parental authority to the ground and trampled upon it.

So, Zhongyu Liuying didn't hesitate to rebuke Ye Leng'an.

However, as soon as Zhongyu Liuying finished, she felt a chill emanating from the depths of her heart. She looked up to see Huangfu Ruiling's icy gaze fixed upon her. It wasn't the gaze of a son towards his mother; it was more akin to that of someone looking at a corpse.

Instantly, Zhongyu Liuying felt her body stiffen, her breath becoming labored. A sinister chill enveloped her, inducing an unprecedented fear.

"Mother, are you alright?" Huangfu Ruixiang, sensing something amiss, reached out and tugged at Zhongyu Liuying's sleeve with concern. "Do you feel unwell?"

He sensed that something was off with his mother. She seemed tense, her breathing quickened, her face drained of color as if she had seen something terrifying.

Huangfu Ruixiang's voice snapped Zhongyu Liuying out of her fear-induced stupor. She breathed in deeply, feeling an eerie closeness to death upon encountering Huangfu Ruiling's cold gaze.

It was the first time she realized that, in Huangfu Ruiling's eyes, she didn't exist as a mother. Merely scolding Ye Leng'an had brought forth Huangfu Ruiling's murderous intent.

At that moment, she didn't know whether to be angry or saddened for herself.

Huangfu Jingzhang, unaware of Zhongyu Liuying's ordeal, noticed her pale complexion and asked, "What's wrong? Do you need a doctor?"

He too was oblivious to Zhongyu Liuying's state. Just moments ago, she had been fervently reprimanding Ye Leng'an, but now, she appeared pallid.

However, Huangfu Jingzhang thought this turn of events might work to their advantage. If Zhongyu Liuying truly felt unwell, it would provide an opportunity for Zhongyu Lingshan.

He harbored an intense aversion towards Ye Leng'an now.

When they clashed with Huangfu Ruiling, Ye Leng'an didn't mediate but instead exacerbated the situation. How could such behavior befit a daughter-in-law? She was nothing short of an enemy!

"I'm fine." Zhongyu Liuying shook her head, then clasped Huangfu Jingzhang's hand and murmured, "Let's leave."

Upon hearing this, Huangfu Jingzhang's expression darkened. Regardless of Zhongyu Liuying's discomfort, he immediately reproached her in a hushed tone, "Stop acting out."

Others were taken aback by Zhongyu Liuying's sudden change in demeanor.

Ye Leng'an, however, shot a meaningful glance at Huangfu Ruiling before flashing a cryptic smile "You should leave promptly," Huangfu Ruiling commanded, glancing towards the dining hall. "You've disrupted us enough. If there's nothing else, please leave."

Such a blatant dismissal was akin to trampling on their dignity. The atmosphere turned sour.

Zhongyu Lingshan stood up, gazing at Huangfu Ruiling with a cold demeanor. "Since Master Huangfu has spoken, I won't disturb you any longer. However, Master Huangfu ought to improve your manners. Even in the Hidden World, the Huangfu family isn't the only prominent one. Therefore, such arrogance should be rectified."

As a young lady of a prestigious family, Zhongyu Lingshan made a calculated decision to take her leave promptly.

She knew that prolonging their stay would only leave a negative impression on Huangfu Ruiling. Hence, it was better to depart gracefully and leave an indelible mark. However, the method of departure was crucial.

Having said her piece, Zhongyu Lingshan glanced meaningfully at Huangfu Ruiling before turning on her heels and leaving.

Her departure was swift and decisive, devoid of hesitation or regret. It was as though her visit today was merely coincidental, and since the hosts weren't welcoming, she could leave without further ado.

Zhongyu Lingshan was confident that she had left a lasting impression on Huangfu Ruiling. Little did she know that Huangfu Ruiling hadn't spared her a glance, let alone paid heed to her words.

Chapter 846: Jaw-Dropping News

Zhongyu Lingshan's departure left the atmosphere in the living room somewhat awkward. Especially for Huangfu Jingzhang, he found himself in a dilemma. His primary reason for coming today was to create an opportunity for Zhongyu Lingshan. Otherwise, he wouldn't have wanted to face Huangfu Ruiling's cold demeanor.

However, now that the main figure had left, what purpose did he have in staying?

Huangfu Jingzhang cursed Zhongyu Lingshan inwardly for wasting his time. If he had known, he wouldn't have bothered to come and subject himself to this.

With Zhongyu Lingshan gone and Zhongyu Liuying looking pale, seemingly on the verge of fainting, coupled with Huangfu Ruiling's aloof aura, Huangfu Jingzhang had no desire to linger any longer. Thus, without saying a word, he stood up and left.

Huangfu Ruixiang and Zhong Yating, who had accompanied them, were also unaware of Huangfu Jingzhang and Zhongyu Liuying's intentions. Their purpose was simple: to build rapport with Huangfu Ruiling. Seeing everyone else leave, they too felt it was best to take their leave.

The group came and went in haste.

In just a few moments, only Huangfu Ruiling and Ye Leng'an remained in the spacious living room.

Seeing everyone depart, Ye Leng'an couldn't help but chuckle. "They certainly left in a hurry! Barely exchanged a few words before taking off."

Amused, Huangfu Ruiling shook his head at Ye Leng'an's remark, then jokingly suggested, "Should we call them back and have New Year's Eve dinner together?"

"Nah." Ye Leng'an shrugged with a smile. "I barely know them. On a day like today, I'd rather not have such a dull dinner."

Normally, she might not have minded, but today she just wanted to be comfortable. As for others, it was none of her concern.

Moreover, Huangfu Jingzhang and Zhongyu Liuying didn't seem genuinely interested in reuniting. Anyone observant could see through their intentions. Perhaps only they thought they were being subtle.

"That sounds perfect." Huangfu Ruiling couldn't resist reaching out to tousle her hair. A hint of tenderness flickered in his eyes. "Just being together like this is enough for a day like today. In the future, let's spend every day like this."

"Of course." Ye Leng'an beamed. Then, as if recalling something, she asked, "By the way, speaking of Zhongyu Lingshan and Zhongyu Jiarui, they're sisters, right? Why do I feel like their brains don't seem to function well!"

She recalled Zhongyu Jiarui trying to snatch spiritual herbs from her before. Now, with Zhongyu Lingshan mimicking her, it was clear what they were thinking.

"Probably because the Zhongyu family prioritizes the cultivation of boys," Huangfu Ruiling explained calmly. "Their cultivation techniques are geared towards boys. Boys have inherent advantages from birth, leading the family to allocate resources towards them, neglecting the girls' development."

"Why don't they seek cultivation techniques suitable for girls then?" Ye Leng'an couldn't help but voice her curiosity. "Wouldn't that be better?"

"It's a good idea, but not very feasible," Huangfu Ruiling explained, ruffling her hair. "Quality cultivation techniques are hard to come by, and major families aren't keen on sharing their techniques."

Understanding dawned in Ye Leng'an's eyes.

Indeed, the Hidden World differed from the cultivation world. Though both involved cultivation, the former paled in comparison in all aspects.

Furthermore, even the most powerful in the Hidden World could only prolong their lifespans; ascending was beyond their reach. It was evident that cultivation was in decline in this era, nearing its end.

Feeling Huangfu Ruiling's hand in her hair, Ye Leng'an playfully swatted it away. "Don't mess up my hair."

Huangfu Ruiling felt a pang of regret at having his hand pushed away, but he relented.

Suddenly, Ye Leng'an remembered something. Looking up at Huangfu Ruiling, she asked, "By the way, speaking of Zhongyu Jiarui, wasn't she with Nangong Xuyao before? How are they now? Did Master Zhongyu agree to their request?"

Having seen Nangong Xuyao with Zhongyu Jiarui several times before, Ye Leng'an had heard rumors that Master Zhongyu had never agreed to their relationship. After all, Nangong Xuyao was from the mortal world and not even from the Hidden World's Nangong family.

Their backgrounds didn't align, but it was perhaps more challenging for Nangong Xuyao. Back in the mortal world, he was the heir of the Nangong family, a sought-after suitor among noble ladies. But in the Hidden World, his status was reversed, becoming a less desirable match.

For someone with weaker resolve, such a change might be insurmountable.

Surprised by Ye Leng'an's sudden mention of Nangong Xuyao, Huangfu Ruiling paused before responding, a hint of complexity in his eyes. "Master Zhongyu has agreed to Nangong Xuyao and Zhongyu Jiarui's marriage. They're said to be engaged already, and a wedding date is being considered."

"What?" Ye Leng'an's eyes widened in disbelief, almost dropping her jaw. "Is that true? Master Zhongyu agreed? Didn't you say before that he'd never agree to this?"

Huangfu Ruiling glanced calmly at her before speaking softly, "You seem quite concerned about Nangong Xuyao's affairs, don't you?"

Chapter 847: Disdain for Nangong Xuyao

Watching Huangfu Ruiling's expression, Ye Leng'an couldn't help but laugh. She reached out, hooked her hand around his neck, and then twitched her nose before saying, "Are you jealous?"

Huangfu Ruiling didn't feel the slightest embarrassment upon hearing her words. He even responded directly, "Yes, I'm. After all, you're his lifesaver!"

Ye Leng'an couldn't contain her laughter. She reached out, pinched his cheek, and said with a smile, "How long has it been? Why do you still keep remembering it?! If one didn't know any better, they'd think you were Nangong Xuyao's savior, and you're holding a grudge because he never repaid you!"

"If I were his savior, I probably wouldn't remember this matter." Huangfu Ruiling glanced at Ye Leng'an beside him and said, "It's because you saved his life that I've been brooding over it."

Hearing that, Ye Leng'an felt convinced. She shook her head in amusement and continued, "I was just a little curious. Also, if you didn't keep emphasizing the fact that I saved his life, I would have forgotten that I'm Nangong Xuyao's savior."

She didn't take this matter to heart in the first place. Moreover, Nangong Xuyao had also used money to settle this life-saving debt. So, the karma between her and Nangong Xuyao had long been severed.

Huangfu Ruiling raised his eyebrows and didn't say anything else. He simply replied, "Nangong Xuyao's methods aren't bad, coupled with his shrewdness, he naturally gained the Zhongyu family's approval."

"That would be interesting." Ye Leng'an blinked and said with a smile, "Master Zhongyu is an old fox who has lived for many years. How could he be swayed by Nangong Xuyao?"

She wouldn't believe such words.

"Who knows!" Huangfu Ruiling said indifferently, "Nangong Xuyao must have something on him that can attract Master Zhongyu. Otherwise, he wouldn't have agreed to Nangong Xuyao and Zhongyu Jiarui's marriage. It's just that it's hard to say who will be using who and who will benefit from it."

"Who knows!" Ye Leng'an relaxed her shoulders and continued, "But now, it seems that these two people are not easy to deal with! If you want to talk about stupidity, it should be Zhongyu Jiarui, who are stuck in the middle!"

At this point, she couldn't help but sigh. "That's why I said that it's not good for girls to be too love-blinded."

However, she also looked down on Nangong Xuyao. He was a man, but he had to rely on a woman to get to the top. If he really had the strength, shouldn't he rely on himself?

Huangfu Ruiling laughed and shook his head. "Maybe he is enjoying it!"

Ye Leng'an shrugged her shoulders and did not comment.

"Well, it's getting late." Huangfu Ruiling got up and reached out to pull her up. "The food is all ready. Let's go eat first!"

Soon, the two of them arrived at the dining room.

The hotel staff had all left. At this moment, the dining table was filled with delicious food. These delicacies were emitting steam, making people drool at the sight of them.

They quickly sat down and began to eat. Although there were only the two of them, they were chatting and laughing. The atmosphere did not seem cold at all.

Huangfu Ruiling didn't eat much himself, but he had been serving Ye Leng'an, scooping soup, picking bones, and peeling prawns. It could be said that he took care of her meticulously.

Ye Leng'an did not feel uncomfortable at all and accepted Huangfu Ruiling's service.

"By the way, let's go back to the Hidden World on the fifth day of the Lunar New Year!" Huangfu Ruiling put the peeled prawns into her bowl and said, "At that time, the Hidden World will hold a relatively important banquet. All the major families will send people to attend. Let's go together!"

“Alright!” Ye Leng’an didn’t object. After thinking about it, she asked, “Then who will be the host of this banquet?”

It could be heard that the scale of this banquet was not small. Which family was the host?

“None.” Huangfu Ruiling shook his head and said, “This banquet is held by the Enforcement Team. It’s held once a year. Firstly, it was to give the various large families a chance to get to know each other better. Secondly, if there’s anything important, we can take this opportunity to announce it.”

Ye Leng’an’s eyes flashed with a thoughtful look. “Then this year’s banquet will definitely talk about the evil cultivator!”

Huangfu Ruiling nodded. “I have already informed the major families about the matter of the evil cultivator. After returning, many families began to count the missing outer sect disciples of their families. They realized that there were indeed many who had disappeared for no reason. However, it won’t be so easy to investigate whether they were killed or because of some other reason.”

Ye Leng’an frowned and said, “There’s still no progress on the matter of the evil cultivator, right?”

After hearing her question, Huangfu Ruiling’s face became serious. He nodded. “That’s right. I don’t know if it’s because I heard some news, but the evil cultivator seems to be hiding now. There’s no trace of him at all. Although we found many traces of that evil cultivator in the mortal world, many years have passed, so there aren’t many useful clues left behind.”

Ye Leng’an sighed. “Looks like it won’t be easy to find this evil cultivator!”

“Alright, let’s not talk about this anymore.” Huangfu Ruiling smiled and said, “It is now during the New Year. On such a happy day, don’t let these things disturb our atmosphere.”

After hearing that, Ye Leng’an’s lips curled into a smile. She then looked at Huangfu Ruiling and said, “Then what identity will you be attending? The head of the Huangfu family or the leader of the Enforcement Team!”

Now it seemed that her fiancé had many roles, and each of them was quite impressive.

Looking at her smiling face, a trace of gentleness flashed in Huangfu Ruiling’s eyes. “When the time comes, we will attend in the name of the Huangfu family.”

Chapter 848: Something Very Important

Ye Leng’an nodded, then, as if she had thought of something, her brows furrowed involuntarily, and a trace of impatience flashed across her face. “Since representatives from all major families will attend, does that mean the Ye family will also send someone?”

Just the thought of encountering someone from the Ye family made her uneasy.

If she once had expectations for her family, ever since learning about her true identity, she felt it was better off without them.

Huangfu Ruiling's eyes glinted with a hint of coldness, but soon, a faint smile appeared on his lips as he spoke. "If you don't want to interact with them, just pretend not to recognize them. Besides, the Ye family has already issued a statement claiming you have no connection with them.

Ye Leng'an nodded in agreement. "Indeed, I have no ties with them anymore."

Although Ye Hongxuan and Lian Mengzhu were her biological parents, they didn't raise her. Moreover, they were reluctant to let go of Ye Wanwan, whom they had raised for many years, treating her as their own daughter.

Therefore, the bond between her and her biological parents was shallow, and it was fading away. It wouldn't be long before it was completely severed.

After that, they didn't dwell on the topic any longer. Instead, they chatted aimlessly, without any particular focus. However, the atmosphere was warm and harmonious.

Meanwhile, in a small café in the capital, Li Yiran sat at a table, her face betraying a hint of anxiety. Today was supposed to be a day for family reunion. However, Huangfu Jingzhang suddenly decided to visit Huangfu Ruiling.

Upon hearing this decision, her heart skipped a beat. If Huangfu Jingzhang and the others were still around, she could have attended the reunion dinner with Huangfu Ruixiang. After all, with Huangfu Ruiling absent, others were already aware of her existence. So, even if she attended, though others might laugh at her, they wouldn't confront her directly.

However, with Huangfu Jingzhang and the others gone, it was a different story. She couldn't possibly attend with the second branch, right?

Moreover, she didn't dare to follow Huangfu Ruixiang to see Huangfu Ruiling. She hadn't forgotten the humiliating words Huangfu Ruiling had said to her at the ancestral hall entrance. She feared she would face humiliation again if she followed them.

In the end, she decided to spend the whole day in her room with the child.

Unexpectedly, shortly after Huangfu Jingzhang left, she received a message from Li Yi, saying he had found something very important about Zhong Yating and needed to tell her urgently. Without hesitation, she immediately arranged to meet him.

With many people returning to the Huangfu family's ancestral mansion today, it would be troublesome if she were seen. So, they agreed to meet elsewhere.

After ensuring the nanny would look after the child, she went straight to the café they had agreed upon, waiting for Li Yi.

Although it wasn't the appointed time yet, and there was still a long wait, she couldn't stay put at the ancestral mansion, so she decided to arrive early.

Every passing minute felt like torture for Li Yiran, who eagerly awaited Li Yi's news.

Finally, it was time for their meeting. Li Yiran spotted Li Yi entering. She suppressed her excitement, waving her hand towards him. "Brother Li Yi, over here."

Hearing her voice, Li Yi turned and walked over. Soon, he sat across from her.

“Brother Li Yi, you’re here!” Li Yiran didn’t immediately inquire about Li Yi’s findings. Instead, she handed him the menu. “Look at you, all sweaty. Take a look at the menu and order something. Sit down and relax first!”

Though she was anxious, she remembered the lesson from last time. Li Yi was her only ally now; she couldn’t let him leave.

Li Yi appreciated Li Yiran’s concern. Feeling warm inside, he didn’t disappoint her. After ordering a glass of juice, he drank some water before speaking.

“Yiran, you have no idea what I found during my visit to the Hidden World.”

Li Yiran became even more anxious upon hearing this but managed to suppress it. With gratitude and concern on her face, she asked, “Did you encounter any danger, Brother Li Yi? If anything happened to you because of me, I wouldn’t know what to do. You’re my only family now. I can’t afford to lose you. Otherwise, I’d be all alone.”

Li Yi felt a warm ray of sunshine in the cold winter as he looked at Li Yiran, his gaze gentle. He felt that his efforts to investigate everything for her were worthwhile.

“Yiran, don’t say that,” Li Yi said softly. “As long as you’re happy, whatever sacrifices I have to make are worth it. Didn’t you once say I’m your brother? In that case, everything I do for my sister’s happiness is worthwhile.”

Touched, Li Yiran was eager to get to the main topic. She wanted to know what Li Yi had discovered about Zhong Yating.

Soon, Li Yi’s expression turned serious. “Yiran, I went to the Hidden World again to investigate Zhong Yating’s supposed lifesaving act for the Second Young Master. After a thorough investigation, I discovered that Zhong Yating had orchestrated the entire incident from start to finish.”

“What!” Li Yiran’s voice trembled but with excitement rather than fear. “What’s going on exactly?”

Chapter 849: Call Me Anytime

Although Li Yiran was on the verge of losing her composure due to excitement, she knew she couldn’t afford to do so in front of Li Yi. Thus, she exerted all her strength to contain her emotions, ensuring Li Yi wouldn’t detect anything amiss.

Li Yi continued, “I’ve investigated. The day before Second Young Master went for his training, Zhong Yating sneaked into his room unnoticed by others. Moreover, the reason for the spirit beast’s attack on Second Young Master was the scent of his clothes, which attracted them. Previously, it was speculated that Second Young Master might have accidentally come into contact with a substance in the forest that attracted the spirit beasts. However, after investigation, it seems likely that Zhong Yating applied the substance to his clothes the night before.”

“Is that so?” Li Yiran’s tone was filled with excitement, but she quickly realized her inappropriate emotions and switched to an indignant expression. “How could she do such a thing? Doesn’t she realize that her actions could have led to Ruixiang’s death? Zhong Yating is truly despicable.”

Li Yi didn’t doubt Li Yiran’s words. He continued, “However, these are just speculations without substantial evidence. Also, there’s another matter. Before Second Young Master left, Zhong Yating was already inquiring about his whereabouts. And most importantly, two days before the incident, Zhong Yating spent almost all her savings on a one-time defense talisman.”

Although there was no concrete evidence, these clues strongly suggested Zhong Yating’s involvement in orchestrating the rescue. Li Yi felt it necessary to inform Li Yiran about this promptly. Thus, after gathering these leads, he hurried back from the Hidden World without delay.

“It must be Zhong Yating’s doing,” Li Yiran exclaimed with excitement. “I never expected her to be capable of such treachery. If Ruixiang finds out, he’ll surely be deeply disappointed.”

This news was indeed a blessing for her. Regardless of whether Zhong Yating was behind it or not, with these clues, she could ensure that Zhong Yating would be implicated.

As long as Huangfu Ruixiang learned about this, he would surely divorce Zhong Yating. And with that divorce, she’d have a chance to rise. After all, she still had a child.

However, she was well aware that ascending to power wouldn’t be easy. After all, there were hurdles like Huangfu Jingzhang and Zhongyu Liuying to contend with. Though they seemed supportive now, she knew it was to balance against Zhong Yating.

But if she could bring Zhong Yating down, it would be an opportunity for her. If she could marry Huangfu Ruixiang and become his legitimate wife, she and her son would be recognized in the Huangfu family’s family tree.

Seeing Li Yiran’s silence, Li Yi thought she was overwhelmed and quickly said, “Yiran, don’t dwell on it too much. If Second Young Master learns of Zhong Yating’s true nature, he’ll surely divorce her.”

No man could accept being manipulated in marriage, especially when it endangered his life.

Li Yi’s words snapped Li Yiran out of her thoughts. She quickly masked her smile and said, “Thank you, Brother Li Yi. Without you, I wouldn’t have caught Zhong Yating. Then my child and I would have been under her oppression forever.”

Li Yi had indeed proven invaluable. His trip to the Hidden World yielded significant information. Her act of appearing weak and helpless had paid off.

“Yiran, you must take care of yourself,” Li Yi urged with concern. “If Zhong Yating could scheme against Second Young Master, she’s definitely not kind-hearted. I’m worried she might target you.”

“It’s okay,” Li Yiran reassured him. “Brother Li Yi, you don’t have to worry about me. She won’t get the chance to scheme against me. Because...”

At this point, a glint of determination flashed in Li Yiran's eyes. "I'll expose her before she can harm me. Once her true nature is revealed, she won't be able to stay in the Huangfu family. How could she harm me then?"

So, her immediate task was to find the right moment to reveal Zhong Yating's misdeeds. Only then could she ensure Zhong Yating's downfall.

"Alright." Li Yi nodded. "But be cautious. Don't let Zhong Yating know you're aware of these things. Otherwise, she might act out of desperation and harm you. After all, despite Zhong Yating's low cultivation, she's capable of causing you harm."

After all, Li Yiran had no innate talent for cultivation; she was just an ordinary person. If she were to truly confront Zhong Yating, it could be said that she would be virtually defenseless.

"I understand." Li Yiran nodded. "But, Brother Li Yi, I'm currently at the ancestral mansion. Even if Zhong Yating is anxious, she wouldn't dare to act there. Even as Huangfu Ruixiang's wife, the family wouldn't tolerate her actions."

Relieved, Li Yi continued, "That's good. However, Yiran, if you need anything, just contact me directly! Whatever it is, I'll help you."

Looking at Li Yiran, Li Yi's eyes were filled with tenderness.

Sensing Li Yi's sentiment, a hint of disgust flickered in Li Yiran's eyes. Nevertheless, she maintained a grateful smile. "Okay, Brother Li Yi, you're so kind. But if I contact you often in the future, don't find me too bothersome!"

Li Yi smiled sincerely. "If you contact me often, I'd be glad! Yiran, remember, whenever you need help, just call me anytime."

Chapter 850: Wanting a Divorce

On New Year's Eve, despite the commotion caused by Huangfu Jingzhang and others, it didn't ultimately dampen the spirits of Huangfu Ruiling and Ye Leng'an. The two continued to celebrate the New Year happily.

In the following two to three days, they enjoyed uninterrupted tranquility. They lived like any newlywed couple would, with warmth and sweetness.

However, peaceful days were often prone to disturbances.

On the second day of the Lunar New Year, Huangfu Ruiling and Ye Leng'an were out shopping in the mall.

Although traditionally it was the day when married daughters returned to their parents' homes, the mall was bustling, even more so than usual.

Today, Huangfu Ruiling and Ye Leng'an decided to come out for a date, feeling a bit restless staying indoors in the villa.

Their plans were simple, just like any other couple – shopping, dining, and catching a movie. Coincidentally, there was a new Lunar New Year film screening, which piqued Ye Leng'an's interest, and Huangfu Ruiling was happy to accompany her.

After breakfast, they set out, aimlessly strolling through the mall. Ye Leng'an was casual, popping into shops that caught her eye. Huangfu Ruiling followed along, his demeanor gentle and accommodating.

Observing this striking couple, passersby couldn't help but take a second glance, especially young couples. After witnessing Huangfu Ruiling and Ye Leng'an's affectionate interaction, some young girls found themselves comparing their boyfriends unfavorably. Handsome, wealthy, and attentive – they seemed to have it all. It made some wonder why they settled for less.

Unaware of the envy they sparked, Ye Leng'an continued to lead Huangfu Ruiling around.

However, as they emerged from a store, Huangfu Ruiling's phone rang. Glancing at the caller ID, he promptly hung up.

Observing his action, Ye Leng'an asked curiously, "Who was that?"

Huangfu Ruiling didn't withhold anything. "It was Huangfu Jingzhang. I wonder what he's up to now."

He had forsaken the title of "father."

"Let's not let him ruin our mood," Ye Leng'an said, taking Huangfu Ruiling's hand. "Let's continue our shopping!"

Meanwhile, Huangfu Jingzhang stared at his phone, still lost in thought. His anger burned as he fixed his gaze on the screen, seemingly capable of boring a hole into it.

Clearly, he hadn't expected Huangfu Ruiling to cut him off like that. And worse, he hadn't even answered his call.

Zhongyu Liuying wasn't surprised. "Jingzhang, call Li San. He can reach Huangfu Ruiling."

"That bastard!" Huangfu Jingzhang clenched his phone tightly, barely containing his rage. Otherwise, he might have thrown it.

"Alright, make the call quickly," Zhongyu Liuying urged. "Huangfu Ruiling needs to be present to resolve this matter. If he doesn't come back, it'll only prolong the issue."

Huangfu Jingzhang understood the reasoning, but his anger lingered. Taking a deep breath, he struggled to suppress it. Reluctantly, he dialed Li San's number again.

Thankfully, they were in the study, away from prying eyes. Otherwise, their inability to reach their own son directly would have been a disgrace.

Inside the mall, Huangfu Ruiling queued up to buy movie tickets. Wanting to experience a normal couple's date, he insisted on purchasing the tickets himself.

Meanwhile, Ye Leng'an sat nearby at a small round table, sipping on a coke. Her gaze never left Huangfu Ruiling as he stood in line.

Soon, Huangfu Ruiling returned with two tickets in hand.

Scanning the couples waiting to watch the movie, he turned to Ye Leng'an. "Should we get some popcorn too?" He saw everyone else have some.

Ye Leng'an agreed. "Yes, let's go get some now."

Little did they expect Huangfu Ruiling's phone to ring again as they spoke.

Unlike before, he answered this time.

But as he listened to the caller, his brows furrowed. Clearly, it wasn't good news.

Considering the earlier call from Huangfu Jingzhang, Ye Leng'an suspected a connection between the two calls.

After hanging up, Huangfu Ruiling saw Ye Leng'an's inquiring gaze. "Li San called."

"Li San?" Ye Leng'an paused, then quickly deduced, "It must be related to Huangfu Jingzhang's call earlier."

Previously, when Zhongyu Liuying couldn't reach Huangfu Ruiling, they had relayed messages through Li San. It seemed the same approach was being used now by Huangfu Jingzhang.

Huangfu Ruiling nodded. "Huangfu Jingzhang said that Huangfu Ruixiang wants a divorce. He asked me to come back."

"What?" Ye Leng'an exclaimed. "If I remember correctly, they haven't even been married for a year! Why divorce so soon? Could it be Zhong Yating still can't accept Li Yiran's situation?"

The last sentence was meant as a joke.

After all, if Zhong Yating couldn't accept Li Yiran's situation, she should have intervened when Li Yiran caused a scene at the wedding, rather than waiting until now.

They just couldn't fathom what could have led to this divorce on a day like today.