

## I Regained 51

### Chapter 51: This Invitation is Indeed Genuine

When Gu Dai heard the trio, her eyes finally settled on Jiang Yue. “Miss Jiang,” she said in a cool tone, “if you feel a need for a sister, I would advise you to go home and urge your aunt and uncle to give you one, so you don’t arbitrarily refer to others as ‘sister’.”

Wang Lan’s piercing shrieks had already garnered the attention of many bystanders. Upon hearing Gu Dai’s words, they couldn’t suppress their laughter.

Jiang Yue, scanning the amused faces around her, felt a dark cloud settle over her. Her gaze hardened as she locked eyes with Gu Dai.

For the first time, Wang Lan had to face such public humiliation. In her mind, this was entirely Gu Dai’s doing and she couldn’t resist the urge to tear the girl apart.

Unfazed by the growing tension around her, Gu Dai sneered. Her words flowed in a composed and collected manner, “Instead of being convinced that I’m fabricating things here, why don’t you consult the one concerned, Song Ling, to confirm if what I’ve described is accurate.”

Gu Dai’s tranquil demeanor stirred a flicker of anxiety in Wang Lan’s mind. Could the situation possibly be as Gu Dai described?

This disturbing thought, however, only lingered for a moment before Wang Lan forcefully shook her head, dismissing her own speculation. There’s no way Gu Dai could have rejected Song Ling! She’s just saving face now!

Bolstered by this notion, Wang Lan composed herself, retrieved her phone, and texted a message. She then turned to Gu Dai, a provocative edge to her voice, “Alright, since you’re insistent on getting a confirmation from Song Ling, I’ve texted him. Just you wait to be humiliated!”

Unruffled, Gu Dai retorted, "Let's see who ends up humiliated."

Noticing the curator of the art exhibition standing nearby, Gu Dai addressed the trio, "You mentioned that I infiltrated the exhibition without an invitation. It just so happens we have a witness present. Let's bring him over for verification."

Before the trio could react to Gu Dai's words, she had already summoned the curator.

"Ladies, how may I assist you?" the curator asked, approaching the group.

The sight of Gu Dai bringing the curator over unnerved Jiang Yue. She tried to restrain Wang Lan, hoping to prevent her from speaking out of turn.

However, while she managed to muzzle Wang Lan, she failed to silence Song Yu in time.

Without a second thought, Song Yu blurted out to the curator, "This woman snuck in without an invitation. Get someone to throw her out!"

The curator's brows furrowed in confusion. He fought to maintain respect in his voice as he responded, "Miss, our exhibition has stringent entry checks. It's impossible for such a situation to occur."

Despite the curator's assurance, Song Yu stood her ground, insisting, "How can you be certain there won't be any mistakes?"

At Song Yu's question, the curator's expression soured. Turning to Gu Dai, he requested, "Miss, may I see your invitation?"

"Of course." Gu Dai extended her invitation to the curator.

The exhibition's invitations were bespoke, adorned with a distinctive rose pattern and subtle anti-counterfeiting features, discernible only by those with specialized knowledge. After scrutinizing it for a few moments, the curator reached a conclusion.

He offered a respectful bow as he returned the invitation to Gu Dai, affirming, “Miss, this invitation is indeed genuine.”

“How can it be real!” Song Yu exclaimed, stunned by the outcome.

Jiang Yue’s eyes dimmed. She reached for Song Yu, turning to Gu Dai to offer a soft apology, “I apologize. We misunderstood due to our lack of knowledge of the situation. I should have assumed from the outset that a gentleman must have given it to you.”

Upon discovering that the invitation was authentic, Wang Lan felt cornered, her pride wounded. However, hearing Jiang Yue’s words sparked an idea. She quickly seized the opportunity to sneer, “So you did possess an invitation, but only by relying on other men. My son’s decision to divorce you was undoubtedly the right one. After all, our Song family cannot tolerate a woman who flouts social norms!”

Not content with this, Wang Lan turned to Jiang Yue, “You’re leagues behind Yueyue. If not for grandpa, Yueyue would have been the one to marry Song Ling from the get-go. She’s the epitome of a perfect daughter-in-law in my eyes..”

## Chapter 52: Slap

Jiang Yue’s face was suffused with heat as she lowered her head and grasped Wang Lan’s hand, her voice barely above a whisper, “Mother, I’m not that admirable, Sister Gu Dai, oh, I mean Gu Dai is also quite exceptional.”

Wang Lan cast a glance at the flustered Jiang Yue who had just corrected herself, and her mind instantly conjured up the assertive image of Gu Dai. Instinctively, she felt a greater affinity for Jiang Yue and subconsciously stepped protectively in front of her.

Song Yu adopted a similar defensive stance beside Jiang Yue, his glare firmly fixed on Gu Dai, “I won’t let you bully my sister-in-law!”

Gu Dai surveyed the trio, their demeanor as if they were guarding against a predator. A cold huff escaped her lips before she posed her question with apparent sincerity, "Has grandpa already given his blessing to Jiang Yue?"

This left the trio at a loss for words.

Jiang Yue, in particular, was taken aback. As the person concerned, she was acutely aware that the old man would not even deign to give her a second glance, much less accept her.

Jiang Yue had no idea what sort of charm Gu Dai had woven around Song An, but the elderly man had made it clear that Gu Dai was the only granddaughter-in-law he recognized!

Observing the expressions on Wang Lan and the others' faces, Gu Dai could ascertain the answer, so she continued, "Since grandpa hasn't approved, what's the point of your warm and friendly act?"

Tears welled up in Jiang Yue's eyes, and within seconds began to trickle down her cheeks. She voiced her melancholy thoughts, "Even if grandpa doesn't accept me, I just wish to remain by Song Ling's side."

On seeing Jiang Yue's distressed state, Wang Lan immediately sought to console her, "Yueyue, don't weep. Next month, I'll have Song Ling accompany you to the civil affairs bureau to register your marriage."

Jiang Yue hastily countered, "No, auntie, I can't impose on Song Ling, and grandpa wouldn't approve..."

This evoked even more compassion in Wang Lan, "Silly girl, how can this be considered imposing? Song Ling is so smitten with you, he would surely wish to marry you at the earliest! As for your grandpa, don't worry about it, Yueyue."

Wang Lan used her own experience to drive home her point, "Take a look at me, the old man initially disapproved, but aren't we leading a good life now?"

Wang Lan omitted the fact that the old man had always held her in disdain, and even the servants in his employ looked down upon her. But it didn't matter, Song An's days were numbered, and once he passed away, she would see who dared to display any insolence towards her!

Initially, Wang Lan had assumed that the old man had stringent standards and would disapprove of anyone, but much to her surprise, he held Gu Dai in high esteem.

With this thought in mind, Wang Lan cast a resentful look at Gu Dai. Her voice laced with discontent, she said, "You, born in a slum, an impoverished waif without the guidance of parents, will never know etiquette, you'll always be inferior to Yue..."

Her parents... Gu Dai felt a pang in her heart and her gaze towards Wang Lan grew icy.

"Slap!" The sound of a resonating slap reverberated throughout the exhibition hall.

Wang Lan, who had been slapped, toppled to the ground. She clutched her face and stared at Gu Dai in disbelief, her voice shaking as she asked, "You dare to strike me, you wicked girl!"

"Yes, precisely who I intended to hit," Gu Dai retorted, her voice as frigid as Arctic ice.

Feeling a searing pain on her face and a sense of mockery from the surrounding onlookers, Wang Lan couldn't let Gu Dai off lightly. She struggled to her feet and lunged at Gu Dai.

In response, Gu Dai slightly raised her leg and kicked Wang Lan back to the ground.

Gazing down at Wang Lan crumpled on the floor, Gu Dai chuckled and retorted, "You incessantly accuse me of lacking manners, yet you persist in calling me a slum dweller, a beggar, a wicked girl? Going by your logic, doesn't that make you even more unrefined?"

When Song Ling entered the exhibition hall, he was met with this chaotic scene. His frown deepened as he demanded coldly, "What are you doing?"

Upon hearing Song Ling's voice, Wang Lan seemed to have found her support. She managed to hoist herself from the ground, approached Song Ling, and pointed accusingly at Gu Dai, "Son, this wicked girl hit me!"

Song Ling's gaze settled on Gu Dai, his brows furrowed and his expression stern, "How could you behave in such a manner with my mom?"

In the past, Gu Dai had always maintained a submissive stance towards her mother-in-law, not even daring to raise her voice. Now, she had the audacity to strike her. Where did she get this courage? Was it from the men who had been pursuing her lately?

Hmph!

The men fawning over her were merely wealthy, while he, Song Ling, had the powerful Song family backing him. With a mere stamp of his foot, the entire country could shake. Dispensing with those men would require just a snap of his fingers.. So where had Gu Dai sourced such audacity to disrespect his family in this manner?

## Chapter 53: Shut Up

Unfazed, Gu Dai locked eyes with Song Ling, his threatening aura bouncing off her. She jeered, "Not only do I dare to stand up to your mother, but I'll stand up to you too! Have you entered your dotage, forgetting past events, and in need of me to help to revisit your memory?"

At her words, an incident at a bar flashed into Song Ling's mind, his expression hardened as he warned, "Gu Dai, I hope you forget this incident quickly, or I'll set my sights on Su Ting, making it impossible for him to stay in the industry!" "Mr. Song, feel free to try it!" retorted Su Ting.

Unfazed by the threat, wearing a smile, he strolled over to Gu Dai's side, although his icy gaze was directed at Song Ling.

"I certainly will!" Song Ling shot back.

Su Ting and Gu Dai made a striking pair, but the sight of them together was like a dagger in Song Ling's heart. He grumbled, "Su Ting, move aside. I need to speak with Gu Dai."

Su Ting didn't budge but turned to Gu Dai for her opinion.

"Don't move," Gu Dai gripped Su Ting's arm and then faced Song Ling, "If you have something to say, spit it out."

Song Ling gritted his teeth and nodded, his voice harsh, "Gu Dai, don't think that after hitting my mom it's over. Apologize to her!"

"No!" Su Ting interjected instantly.

Wang Lan initially wanted to deny the request herself but was surprised that Su Ting had preemptively declined.

A scowl spread across her face as she admonished Su Ting, "You, a famed international model, are so eager to curry favor with a woman that you can't distinguish right from wrong!"

Su Ting's frosty glance fell on Wang Lan before he disdainfully shifted his gaze and lightly commented, "My sister wouldn't hit anyone without reason. If you were hit, it only means you stepped out of line!"

Song Yu burst out defensively, "How could we possibly bully anyone? You were outside the whole time, you didn't witness what happened, and you're just making assumptions. How can you justify the affection I've shown you over the years?"

Being an international superstar, Su Ting had numerous fans worldwide.

Song Yu was one of them.

Seeing Su Ting stand by Gu Dai, she was stunned.

She couldn't fathom what Gu Dai had to charm the ordinarily aloof Su Ting into defending her so ardently!

A wave of fierce jealousy washed over Song Yu, who yelled, "Do you realize this woman is divorced? She's just damaged goods! She's a cheap woman who can't do without men! She's barely divorced my brother and now she's already latching onto you!"

Su Ting's fury was palpable, his eyes flamed red as he bellowed, "Shut up!"

Had Gu Dai not been holding him back, Su Ting would have already lunged at Song Yu.

Song Yu's snide smile wavered, but before she could respond, she was met with a resounding slap. In disbelief, she looked at her usually loving brother, sobbing, "Brother, you actually hit me because of Gu Dai!"

Song Ling's face turned stormy. He hadn't expected his sister, whom he'd always seen as pure and kind-hearted, to spew such venomous words!

Seeing Song Ling disturbed brought Gu Dai immense satisfaction. Before she left, she kindly advised him, "There's surveillance in the exhibit hall. If Mr. Song wants to know what just happened, he can check the footage."

Song Ling stood rooted to the spot, sternly watching the backs of Gu Dai and

Su Ting as they walked away together. The chilling aura he emitted seemed capable of freezing everything in its vicinity.

At that moment, Song Ling acknowledged a hard truth. The Gu Dai standing before him was not the same as the Gu Dai he remembered from the past.



Wang Lan was severely disgruntled. Cradling the weeping Song Yu, she queried Song Ling, "How could you hit your sister, and just let that woman get away?"

In that moment, Song Ling realized that it wasn't just Gu Dai who had become unrecognizable, but even his own family, who seemed far removed from the image he had of them.

Under Song Ling's icy stare, Wang Lan grew less confident. She meekly turned her head away but couldn't resist mumbling, "I didn't say anything wrong though.."

#### Chapter 54: It Might Tarnish Your Reputation

Song Ling's gaze turned colder after hearing Wang Lan's words. "I'll message

Zhao Xuan later, and alter the monthly transfers from ten million to a hundred thousand. Furthermore, Song Yu can't stay with you anymore. I'll send her to a school to be taught manners correctly!"

Stunned by Song Ling's words, Wang Lan found her voice and expressed her displeasure. "A hundred thousand a month, how am I supposed to live off that? And why are you sending your sister to learn manners?"

Song Ling refrained from answering her question, stating instead, "I'm merely informing you of my decision, not asking for your opinion!"

Wang Lan was taken aback by the turn of events. She'd messaged Song Ling to get a simple question answered and put Gu Dai in her place.

Then, she remembered her question.

Her eyes lit up, and she quickly spoke. "I confess we were somewhat harsh on Gu Dai earlier, but there was a reason for it!"

Still wary of his family who had turned so ruthless, Song Ling asked after hearing Wang Lan's explanation, "What reason?"

Wang Lan explained, "Gu Dai had the audacity to claim that she proposed the divorce, that she dumped you. We were simply too enraged after hearing this, which led to our severe reaction."

Song Ling's expression briefly froze. He cast a glance around, then declared with a stern face, "There are so many people around watching this spectacle. Aren't you embarrassed? Let's leave, immediately!"

Seeing Song Ling's demeanor, Jiang Yue approached him, gently saying, "Song Ling, the situation earlier was more complex than you think, it's not what you believe it to be."

Song Ling responded indifferently, "Hmm, let's go."

With that, he was the first one to leave.

Watching his retreating figure, Jiang Yue's eyes gradually darkened.

She sensed danger. Previously, she was the one that wanted to distance herself from Song Ling, but the situation took a different turn. In that entire exchange, Song Ling didn't even look at her once, and his response seemed half-hearted.

This situation was not ideal for her!

Meanwhile, Gu Dai continued exploring the art exhibition with Su Ting.

However, Su Ting seemed somewhat upset.

Gu Dai had already caught Su Ting's gaze several times, and after a soft sigh, asked, "What's the matter?"

Upon being questioned by Gu Dai, Su Ting quickly vented his frustration, "Sister, why did you hold me back earlier? Why didn't you let me confront them?"

He then asked another question, "Can't bear to see Song Ling get hurt?"

Gu Dai was briefly taken aback by Su Ting's interpretation of her actions. She quickly clarified, "I was merely concerned that if you had assaulted someone, it might tarnish your reputation."

"Why would I care about someone like Song Ling? Unless I had a masochistic streak!" she added.

Seeing Gu Dai's earnest explanation, Su Ting finally exhaled in relief, responding, "That's good."

Recalling Gu Dai's words of concern for him, his ears turned red as he stuttered, "Sister, you don't need to worry about me. I don't mind about such things!"

Gu Dai responded in a lighter tone, "But I do!"

Su Ting looked at Gu Dai, his voice slightly hoarse, "Hmm?"

Gu Dai turned her head away, not meeting Su Ting's gaze, "After all, I've invested a lot of resources to make you famous. We can't afford any setbacks."

After listening to Gu Dai, Su Ting smiled slightly, saying quietly, "To honor your efforts, I will pay more attention to my conduct in the future, not to waste your efforts."

Struggling to respond, Gu Dai awkwardly changed the subject, "Let's look at the paintings."

Su Ting agreed, "Okay."

Eventually, Gu Dai halted in front of a painting.

Seeing the vast world depicted, the bird flying freely, and the joyful family living within, she lost herself for a moment. Quietly, she murmured, “I like this painting.”

Without a second’s delay, Su Ting replied, “Then we’ll buy this one..”

## Chapter 55: Auction

Song Ling came to the exhibition not because he had received a message from Wang Lan, but because he had learned about an auction at the exhibition that would feature the works of the esteemed Master Cui Song. He had planned to purchase a piece and gift it to Miss Gu, of Gu Group, during their upcoming meeting.

Because of this plan, he didn’t take Wang Lan and the others home, despite the embarrassing encounter earlier.

The auction had yet to commence, and they found themselves wandering around the exhibition hall.

Song Yu, finding the paintings uninteresting, felt notably irritated. His annoyance only deepened when he unexpectedly spotted Gu Dai.

Upon seeing Gu Dai, the memory of being slapped because of her came rushing back.

Observing Gu Dai standing before a rather unremarkable painting, Song Yu sidled up to Jiang Yue, commenting sarcastically, “Sister Jiang, observe Gu Dai, quite the country girl. She clearly has no taste, spending her time with such an unremarkable piece.”

Following Song Yu's pointed look, Jiang Yue glanced at Gu Dai. A flicker of disdain crossed her eyes, but her voice was gentle as she responded, "Any painting displayed here at the exhibition won't be ordinary. Perhaps she sees something special that we, ordinary people, cannot."

Song Yu disagreed instantly, "How is that possible?" She then asked Jiang Yue, "Then, Sister Jiang Yue, do you see anything special in this painting?"

Jiang Yue subtly shook her head and replied, "No."

Song Yu triumphantly stated, "Sister Jiang Yue, you have been exposed to art since childhood, even minoring in it abroad. Your understanding is exceptional, and if even you couldn't find any merit in this painting, how could Gu Dai, a country girl, know better? She's obviously feigning knowledge."

Jiang Yue did not contradict Song Yu's assertion. In her heart, she shared the same sentiment. She laughed lightly and suggested, "The auction is about to begin; let's head to our box."

Song Yu agreed enthusiastically, "Okay!"

Arm in arm, Jiang Yue and Song Yu departed, their closeness resembling that of sisters.

They didn't notice the elderly man who had been standing behind them. The man was none other than the celebrated artist, Cui Song. He had overheard their conversation, and now his gaze fell upon Gu Dai.

When Gu Dai asked the curator about purchasing the painting she had been admiring, she was informed, "I'm sorry, miss, but we don't have the authority to sell this painting."

Disappointed, Gu Dai further asked, "Could I possibly meet with the owner of the painting? I'd like to discuss it with them."

Again, the curator had to refuse, "I'm afraid we can't facilitate that."

Accepting the situation, Gu Dai nodded, "Okay."

The curator then suggested, "Our exhibition will hold an auction later, and it will feature works by Master Cui Song. You might want to check that out."

Gu Dai's face lit up at the mention of Master Cui Song's name, "Master Cui Song?"

The person in charge affirmed, "Yes."

Delighted, Gu Dai pulled Su Ting with her, following the person in charge towards the auction.

After taking their seats, she felt a wave of surrealism wash over her. She whispered to Su Ting, "My father used to adore Master Cui Song's paintings. He'll be thrilled if we could present him with one."

Su Ting, who had been attentively watching Gu Dai, softly reassured her, "Yes, let's bid for a painting and gift it to Uncle Gu."

Gu Dai nodded in agreement, "Okay."

By the time Su Ting and Gu Dai arrived, the auction was just about to begin. Moments after they had settled into their box, the proceedings commenced.

The host gave a brief introductory speech, quickly moving to discuss the pieces to be auctioned off that evening.

Master Cui Song's work was the highlight of the event and was reserved to be auctioned last. Currently, they were starting with some less prominent pieces.

Leaning slightly towards Gu Dai, Su Ting whispered, "Sister, feel free to bid on anything you like. I brought plenty of money."

Gu Dai hesitated, intending to say she could pay for herself, but reconsidered and simply responded, "Okay."

The first painting was introduced by the host, who hit the gavel and announced, “Lonely Starry Sky, starting price 500,000, let’s begin!”

Gu Dai wasn’t particularly interested in this piece. However, she was taken aback when she heard a familiar voice from the neighboring box, “600,000.”

It was Wang Lan.

Lowering her gaze, Gu Dai softly outbid her, “1 million..”

Chapter 56: Don’t bid

Upon Gu Dai’s declaration, a hush descended over the auction house. All eyes snapped towards the direction of Gu Dai’s booth in shock.

Once Wang Lan had announced her interest, the consensus amongst the attendees had been that the painting was effectively hers. No one wanted to provoke the Song family over a mere piece of painting. But, to everyone’s astonishment, someone had chosen to challenge this unspoken agreement by bidding against her.

Stunned expressions mirrored not just among the spectators but also on Wang Lan who was directly involved. She thought she had this one wrapped up, but Gu Dai’s unexpected appearance threw a spanner in the works.

Wang Lan’s expression darkened noticeably. Recalling the earlier incident, she defiantly hoisted her bid card, declaring, “1.1 million!”

Without missing a beat, Gu Dai countered, “5 million.”

Provoked, Wang Lan retaliated with “5.1 million.”

Watching Gu Dai escalate the bidding war from his side, Su Ting softly asked, “Sister, are you fond of this painting?”

Gu Dai offered a slight nod, “It’s alright.”

Following her confirmation, Su Ting asserted, “Sister, allow me to take over the bidding.”

With his declaration still lingering in the air, Su Ting lofted his bid card, announcing, “10 million.”

His deep voice, akin to a stone plopping into still waters, sent a ripple of shock throughout the room. The attendees were taken aback at the audacious bidding for a painting that was initially worth 500,000.

“Who is this magnanimous person not only defying the Song family but also dishing out 10 million in a single move!”

“I saw Su Ting entering that booth.”

“All, it’s Su Ting. That’s not surprising. Given his reputation, there are numerous families with clout equal to the Song family who want to collaborate with him. Even if he offends the Song family, those other families will undoubtedly protect him.”

“With Su Ting as a contrast, the Song family suddenly appears petty. While others are raising the stakes by millions, she merely increases by one hundred thousand.”

Despite not being soundproof, the murmurs from the crowd on the plaza below seeped into the auction house booths. Hearing the buzz, Wang Lan’s already grim face twisted further.

Wang Lan was poised to raise her bid card yet again, but was taken aback when she heard Song Ling say coldly, “Don’t bid.”



Incredulously, Wang Lan asked, “Why?”

Exasperated by Wang Lan’s obliviousness to the malicious strategies in business, Song Ling snapped, “They are baiting you to inflate the price, making you waste your money. Stop bidding now, let them have the painting.”

Wang Lan gleaned Song Ling’s intention. However, the thought of the painting being snagged by Gu Dai, coupled with the public scorn, left her seething. Her gaze, filled with hatred, fixated towards Gu Dai’s booth.

Suddenly, an idea sparked in her mind.

Wang Lan proposed, “Since they intend to inflate the price to trap us, we should reciprocate. Let’s jack up the price and ensnare them. Once the price escalates enough, we’ll back out.”

Without waiting for a consensus, Wang Lan promptly hoisted her bid card, announcing, “20 million.”

Since her goal was simple, she was far more resolute now in driving up the price.

Song Ling hadn’t anticipated Wang Lan to bid again. His eyebrows knitted together, and his voice dripped with displeasure, “Mom!”

Su Ting spoke out, “30 million.”

Wang Lan, initially somewhat apprehensive that Su Ting might back out, exhaled in relief upon hearing his bid. Smugly, she glanced at Song Ling, “See, they’re still bidding.”

Song Ling also breathed a sigh of relief and cautioned, “30 million is enough. Don’t bid anymore.”

While Wang Lan conceded, understanding that Song Ling was displeased and continued bidding would genuinely anger him, she nodded, “Okay.”

Song Yu was far from satisfied. Having been publicly humiliated by Gu Dai and seeing Su Ting spend so lavishly on Gu Dai's behalf was something she couldn't stomach!

And if Su Ting was so reckless as to disregard her feelings, then she would show no mercy in making him pay the price!

Song Yu pulled Wang Lan aside and suggested in a whisper, "Mom, I think they are truly desperate for this painting. Let's push the price a bit more."

Coaxed by Song Yu, Wang Lan wavered, sharing similar thoughts, but apprehensive about Song Ling's disapproval.

Sensing Wang Lan's dilemma, Song Yu turned to Jiang Yue, posing the same question, "Sister Jiang Yue, do you also believe that Gu Dai and the others are adamant about acquiring this painting?"

#### Chapter 57: A Painting Worth Fifty Million

Jiang Yue did not expect Song Yu would involve her in the dispute.

Throughout the previous period, only Wang Lan and Song Yu from the Song family showed her any particular affection. They played a significant role in determining whether she could become part of the Song family.

Having grasped this point, she responded gently with a smile, "Yes."

Wang Lan harbored her doubts deep down. However, once she received encouragement from Jiang Yue, she hesitated no longer. She held up her bid card and exclaimed, "50 million!"

The second her words resonated, the entire location erupted into a clamor.

Wang Lan was somewhat delighted to hear the praises rising from the assembly beneath. Her gaze fell upon Gu Dai's box, anticipating Su Ting's next bid.

Wang Lan's actions were swift, so swift that Song Ling couldn't grasp what had transpired. He voiced his objection, discontent filling his tone, "Mom, why did you raise the bid again? Didn't I instruct you to let them win it?"

Nonchalantly, Wang Lan waved her hand to answer Song Ling's query, "It's fine. Su Ting is bound to keep bidding for that sl\*t Gu Dai. I will surely stop later and not bid any further."

Wang Lan's reference to Gu Dai caused a slight furrow of Song Ling's brow, but in the end, he remained silent, adding only, "Hmm, ensure you don't bid later, no matter what."

Wang Lan promptly concurred, "Hmm, noted."

However, events didn't unfold as Wang Lan anticipated. A minute slipped by with no bid increase from Gu Dai's side.

Song Ling noticed this, and his brows contracted. Wang Lan's heart pounded. Both Song Yu and Jiang Yue closely monitored the unfolding situation.

They weren't the sole observers, others and even the auctioneer joined in, their attention riveted on Gu Dai's box, curious to know whether the bidding would continue.

Yet as seconds turned into minutes, silence reigned from the box.

Eventually, a sound emanated from the box, but it wasn't a bid. It was a woman's voice, suffused with mirth, inquiring, "Why isn't the auctioneer striking the gavel? Isn't the deal final?"

The auctioneer promptly regained his composure when he heard the voice, "50 million for the first time!"

“50 million for the second time!”

“50 million for the third time!”

“Sold! Congratulations, Mrs. Song!”

The room detonated with applause and exclamations.

“Goodness, Mrs. Song truly is affluent, prepared to bid 50 million for a painting.”

“The initial price was a mere 500,000, and it now skyrocketed by 100 times! This is typical of the Song family, they aren’t concerned with the cost. As long as they desire it, they don’t mind how pricey it is.”

“I genuinely envy Mrs. Song’s life!”

“I feel the same, I do too.”

At that moment, Wang Lan, the object of everyone’s envy, felt as if she had been whacked over the head. Her mind whirled, her face ghostly pale, she clutched her chest in fear, and shakily rose from her seat.

Song Ling’s countenance was extremely somber. He spoke to Wang Lan in a grave voice, “You can go and make the payment.”

“I don’t have the funds.” Wang Lan uttered the statement and turned towards Song Ling, pleading in her tone, “Son, can you help your mom in paying? I truly don’t have any money!”

Song Ling remained unmoved, “Settle it with your own money.”

Wang Lan looked taken aback, she hadn’t anticipated that Song Ling would be aware of her secret funds.

But since Song Ling had recently reduced her to receiving only 100,000 a month, her secret funds were her only solace. If she were to pay, she would genuinely be left penniless, so her only choice was not to pay!

Once Song Ling cast a glance at Wang Lan's expression, he immediately saw through her ploy, "I won't cover for you. If you fail to pay, they might approach grandpa."

Wang Lan did not expect Song Ling to be so ruthless.

Song An was already dissatisfied with her. If he discovered this, the repercussions would be unthinkable...

The auction assistant had already entered. Wang Lan had no option but to grudgingly hand over her card to pay. As she viewed the painting that came into her possession, she threw it on the floor, stomping on it multiple times in frustration.

Wang Lan looked up, and through the window, she caught sight of Gu Dai in the adjacent box. Instantly, fury blinded her and she yelled, "Gu Dai, you are utterly shameless, escalating the price and not bidding. You're really sly!"

Gu Dai remained poised, in contrast to Wang Lan's furious and flustered demeanor. Her voice held a light chuckle, "I'm just less affluent, I lack the funds to continue bidding, unlike Mrs. Song, who is so wealthy."

Gu Dai glanced at the painting on the ground, and continued, "Mrs. Song, your painting accidentally fell.. You bought it for fifty million, you should certainly take careful care of it!"

Chapter 58: Words

After Gu Dai had spoken, she shut the box's window, paying no further heed to Wang Lan.

Wang Lan, tremors coursing through her body in indignation, had never anticipated that one day she'd be outmaneuvered by Gu Dai.

Witnessing Gu Dai's return, Su Ting asked, bemused, "Sis, I do have the funds. Why didn't you permit me to proceed with the bidding? You genuinely seemed to want it."

At this juncture, Su Ting felt somewhat aggrieved, recollecting the moment Gu Dai had previously interrupted him.

Exhaling in resignation, Gu Dai tousled Su Ting's hair, clarifying, "Our priority is to secure Master Cui Song's masterpiece; the rest doesn't really matter. Furthermore, upon reflection, watching Wang Lan's defeated look as she takes the painting... it's actually quite satisfying."

"Understood." Su Ting, after hearing Gu Dai's reasoning, nodded gently. After all, as long as his sister was content, that's what truly mattered.

Casting a glance at the time, Gu Dai addressed Su Ting, "It's time for you to head to the airport. You should get going."

"So soon?" Su Ting's disappointment echoed in his words as he sought to delay his departure, "I think I'd still make my flight even if I left post-auction and after dropping you home. May I stay a bit longer, please?"

Gu Dai, immune to Su Ting's sorrowful plea, countered, "No, Zhang Zheng messaged me; you start work tomorrow morning. A red-eye flight won't leave you adequate rest time. He also mentioned he's en route to fetch you and will call once he's nearby."

Faced with Gu Dai's resolute stance, Su Ting had to acquiesce, "Alright."

All he could do was hope that Zhang Zheng would run late.

To Su Ting's dismay, his phone buzzed just as he gave in. It was a call from Zhang Zheng.

Su Ting was left speechless.

Left with no alternative, he had to depart, "Sister, I'll wrap up my overseas work as soon as I can and return early."

Gu Dai, smiling warmly, nodded in acknowledgment, "Sure."

Just as Song Ling exited the box, he found Su Ting and Gu Dai in close proximity.

Gu Dai, dressed in a black outfit that accentuated her ivory complexion, exuded an alluring radiance and charm. She was gazing at Su Ting, appearing genuinely saddened by his imminent departure.

Song Ling's gaze of the pair gradually turned stern.

"Brother Song, why aren't we moving?" Zhou Ci asked, puzzled, as he emerged from behind Song Ling. To his surprise, he found Gu Dai and Su Ting nearby.

He clammed up, vividly recalling that this was the woman who had once floored Song Ling.

Song Ling, ice coating his voice, responded, "Nothing, let's go,".

Then, he led the way.

Feeling Song Ling's frosty aura, Zhou Ci deeply regretted his premature question.

Had he known the outcome, he would have refrained from seeking Song Ling out!

Nonetheless, Zhou Ci found the situation baffling. Song Ling had always treated Gu Dai as if she were nonexistent, but now he was becoming emotional around her. Drawing on his extensive relationship experience, an idea crossed Zhou Ci's mind.

Impossible, absolutely impossible!

The moment this idea popped into his head, he immediately shook it off, rejecting the notion outright.

After all, the thought of Song Ling, who had once strongly disliked Gu Dai, now developing feelings for her was beyond his belief.

Noticing Zhou Ci's failure to follow him, Song Ling's mood plummeted further. His voice growing colder, he questioned, "Are you planning to just stand there and do nothing? Hurry up and show me the painting."

Snapped back into reality, Zhou Ci quickly agreed, "Right away, right away."

As for Gu Dai and Su Ting, they gave no thought to the actions of the other two.

Su Ting, still quite anxious, reminded Gu Dai, "Sis, if you need anything at home, don't hesitate to call me."

Although she had heard this numerous times, Gu Dai responded patiently, "Sure, I will."

Seeing that Su Ting had more to say, Gu Dai swiftly interrupted him, "Let's head out. It's getting late, and any further delay will cause you to miss your flight."

Su Ting stopped Gu Dai, preventing her from walking him out.

"Sister, continue with the auction." After uttering this, Su Ting promptly departed, leaving no opportunity for Gu Dai to accompany him..



## Chapter 59: He Didn't Pay

Zhou Ci, wrapped in a cloak of Song Ling's icy aura, grew increasingly anxious. Upon their arrival at the box, he unveiled Master Cui Song's artwork, "Moon".

"This is Master Cui Song's creation set to be auctioned," Zhou Ci announced.

The frostiness radiating from Song Ling noticeably thawed at the sight of the painting. "Handing over an auction item to me in advance... is that permissible?"

With swift reassurance, Zhou Ci replied, "Don't fret, it won't cause any trouble. I've personally acquainted myself with the owner of this exhibition, and I managed to secure this painting from him beforehand. The auction for this piece has already been called off."

Without further questioning, Song Ling simply accepted the painting and departed.

Watching as Song Ling disappeared from sight, Zhou Ci's expression darkened.

He'd gone to great lengths to acquire the painting for Song Ling, with the hope that it could serve as a bridge to discuss potential cooperation between their two families. Yet, to his disappointment, Song Ling merely took the painting without so much as a thank you, let alone a discussion on reimbursement.

Following Su Ting's departure, Gu Dai returned to her private box to anticipate Master Cui Song's artwork.

To her surprise, however, the auction concluded without a hint of the promised painting.

She cross-checked the auction list, verifying that Master Cui Song's work was indeed listed, before deciding to investigate backstage.

Upon spotting the auctioneer, she stopped him to inquire, "Excuse me, why wasn't Master Cui Song's painting put up for auction?"

The auctioneer instantly recognized Gu Dai. After all, it was she who had managed to sell an ordinary painting for an astounding tens of millions of yuan, providing him with a lucrative commission of up to a million.

Although somewhat uncomfortable discussing the matter, he discreetly revealed to Gu Dai, "Our boss's friend had pre-ordered the painting, which is why it wasn't on display."

Although Gu Dai had already suspected something of this sort, hearing it confirmed made her brows furrow. However, she gathered her composure and continued, "Could you possibly tell me who this friend of your boss is?"

The auctioneer responded, "I'm sorry, miss, all I know is that the individual is a friend of our boss. I can't tell you who exactly."

Disappointed but not wanting to trouble the auctioneer further, Gu Dai nodded and excused herself.

Having failed to purchase Master Cui Song's painting, Gu Dai planned to return to the exhibition hall to revisit the painting she had taken a liking to earlier.

Exiting the auction venue, Wang Lan and her group crossed paths with Gu Dai. Recollecting how she had conned them into spending 50 million yuan on a worthless painting, their rage reignited.

Marching up to Gu Dai, Song Yu sneered, "Despite all the masterpieces available, you zero in on the most mediocre one. You truly live up to your 'country girl' reputation!"

Typically, Gu Dai would brush off Song Yu's snide remarks. But today was different; she was not in a mood to let it slide. "If my taste is indeed deplorable, why did you engage in a bidding war for a painting I was interested in at the auction, to the extent of paying 50 million yuan for it?"

Reminded of the vast sum they had forked out, Wang Lan's expression twisted uncomfortably. Nonetheless, she stubbornly retorted, "I simply have more money than I know what to do with, and I wanted to splurge a little!"

Unfazed, Gu Dai smiled, then replied sincerely, "Mrs. Song, I feel compelled to inform you that the boxes are not soundproof. Regrettably, I overheard your earlier conversation."

Wang Lan was taken aback. She never imagined that her lies would be unveiled, especially by someone she looked down upon. Her fury escalated to the point where she was visibly shaking.

Observing Wang Lan's state, Jiang Yue patted her on the back and interjected, "Even if Sister Song Yu and Auntie were a tad harsh, there's no need for such comments, Gu Dai. They were merely stating the facts."

At this point, Gu Dai realized how vastly different her world was from Jiang Yue's. She couldn't comprehend how anyone could utter such a brazen remark.

Gazing directly into Jiang Yue's eyes, Gu Dai asked, "Are you suggesting that I should refrain from exposing lies and just endure their hostility in silence?"

## Chapter 60: Meet Him in Person

Jiang Yue wilted under Gu Dai's fierce gaze, her confident demeanor faltering. She awkwardly diverted her gaze to the painting hanging behind Gu Dai and opted to shift the topic.

Wearing a facade of an understanding elder sister, she ventured, "Daidai, you've taken a liking to painting recently? Having grown up surrounded by wealth, I had the privilege of being exposed to numerous renowned paintings. I have a bit of knowledge about them. If you need any help understanding them, feel free to ask me."

Gu Dai found Jiang Yue's smugness amusing. Despite her urge to laugh, she restrained herself and queried, "Do you also consider this painting I'm admiring to be subpar?"

Caught off guard by the question, Jiang Yue stuttered momentarily before she regained her composure. She nodded confidently, confirming, "Absolutely!"

Unable to contain herself any longer, Gu Dai burst into a hearty laugh.

Aggravated by Gu Dai's response, Song Yu couldn't resist chiding her, "Gu Dai, what sort of attitude is this? Sister Jiang is generously imparting wisdom and this is how you respond? Your refusal to seek self-improvement guarantees your life's stagnation!"

Gu Dai glanced at Song Yu dismissively before she retorted coolly, "I would be all ears if there was something worth learning. However, it's apparent that Jiang Yue's knowledge is insufficient to merit my attention."

Jiang Yue's eyes hardened at Gu Dai's response.

Infuriated, Song Yu snapped, "Sister Jiang humbly stated that she only knows a little, yet you, an ignorant person, are audacious enough to criticize her. It's a laughable spectacle!"

Gu Dai responded with a simple question, "How are you certain of my ignorance?"

Wang Lan joined the discussion and scoffed, "How can you, who admires a painting that doesn't even bear the artist's name, claim to understand art?"

Unfazed, Gu Dai retorted, "This painting defies traditional art conventions, specifically in its depiction of shadows and outlines. It lacks noticeable shadows and prominent or flattened outline lines. Moreover, the application of color is meticulous."

She continued, "The technique employed in this painting is remarkable. I believe the artist chose anonymity to keep their identity a secret. Despite Jiang Yue's claim of this painting being mediocre, I firmly believe she lacks even the basic understanding of art."

As Song Ling made his way into the exhibition hall, after his exhausting business discussions with Zhou Ci, he noticed Gu Dai commending the painting.

Gu Dai's demeanor momentarily stunned Song Ling, causing a strange sensation to ripple through his heart.

Both Wang Lan and Song Yu were taken aback by Gu Dai's confidence. However, their reluctance to accept her expertise quickly revived their senses.

Wang Lan belittled Gu Dai, saying, "Anyone can spout fancy terminology. If you're ignorant, admit it instead of pretending."

Recovering from her shock, Jiang Yue chimed in, "Indeed, Daidai, there's no need to put up an act. We're aware of your humble upbringing. Your ignorance won't alter our opinion of you."

An elderly man who had been observing from the crowd stepped forward and bluntly retorted, "It appears to me that you're looking down on this young lady."

Song Yu frowned at the elderly man and rudely fired back, "Old man, is it your place to interject?"

Recognizing the elderly man, Song Ling quickly interjected, "Song Yu, show some respect!"

He shielded Song Yu and respectfully addressed the elderly man, "Master Cui Song, I apologize for my sister's insolence. Please forgive her."

Master Cui Song, however, ignored Song Ling and shifted his attention to Gu Dai.

The sight of Master Cui Song rendered Gu Dai speechless.

Gu Dai had viewed several of his works in the past and knew what he looked like from her father's admiration of him. However, she had only ever seen him in photos.

Master Cui Song, a lover of travel and nature, was an elusive character whose whereabouts were rarely known. Gu Dai's father had always lamented never having met him.

The chance to meet him in person was beyond Gu Dai's wildest expectations!