

Full-Level 491

Chapter 491: Design Competition 3

When Huangfu Ruixiang received Li Yiran's call, he was a little surprised. Then, when he heard that Li Yiran had come over to deliver him lunch, he didn't say much, just casually said that he would notify the front desk.

Not long after Li Yiran hung up the phone, the phone at the front desk rang as well.

After finishing the call, the receptionist stood up, looked at Li Yiran, nodded slightly, and said, "Miss, you may go upstairs now."

"Humph!" Li Yiran let out a cold snort, then glared fiercely at the receptionist before heading towards the elevator.

She went straight to the elevator Ye Lengan had just taken and pressed the button.

At that moment, the receptionist from before had already jogged over. She looked at Li Yiran and said in a polite yet firm tone, "Miss, you cannot take this elevator. Please use the one next to it!"

"Why not?" After what had just transpired, Li Yiran was already in a terrible mood. Now, even taking the elevator required being ordered around, which she could not tolerate. "Didn't Brother Ruixiang just call you earlier and ask you to let me up? Does he need to call you again before you'll allow me to take the elevator?"

Facing Li Yiran's aggressiveness, the receptionist's expression remained unchanged. She continued, "Miss, there's been a misunderstanding. This is the CEO's private elevator. Fingerprint verification is required to enter."

Although the receptionist's attitude was perfectly polite, her words felt like a slap in the face to Li Yiran. She felt the receptionist was mocking her. Glancing up, she saw that the elevator showed no sign of movement even after she had pressed the button.

Li Yiran flushed red, then pale. She didn't even look at the receptionist again before heading to the adjacent elevator.

She swore that one day, she would make sure this condescending receptionist received the punishment she deserved.

On the other side, Ye Lengan had reached the top floor as well.

When the secretaries outside saw Ye Lengan arrive, they glanced up but did not react otherwise. After all, Ye Lengan had come to see the CEO not long before, so their good memories naturally remembered.

Ye Lengan waved her hand without letting Li San get close, then walked straight towards the office herself.

Upon hearing the door open, Huangfu Ruiling was not surprised. Clearly, he knew the person entering was Ye Lengan.

Ye Lengan went right to the desk, pulled out a chair, and sat down across from Huangfu Ruiling. Then with a smile, she said, "It's almost lunchtime.

Handsome, want to grab a bite?"

"We can once I finish this little bit," Huangfu Ruiling replied.

Ye Lengan rested her chin in her palm, gazing at Huangfu Ruiling. Suddenly she remarked, "Ruiling, I feel like I haven't lost our bet yet!"

Hearing Ye Lengan's words, Huangfu Ruiling's eyes flashed with surprise. He set down the documents in his hand and looked over at Ye Lengan, raising his eyebrows. "If I remember correctly, you admitted defeat last night, didn't

"Yes, I did!" Ye Lengan nodded, then continued, "But now that I think about it more, I don't believe I've lost after all! Our wager was on whether or not Li Yiran could marry Huangfu Ruixiang. It's true, she's become Huangfu Ruixiang's lover now. However, Huangfu Ruixiang still isn't married! So that means there's still a chance Li Yiran could become a mistress who displaces the wife. I wouldn't call myself the loser yet!"

The idea had just occurred to her when she saw Li Yiran downstairs. Even after Huangfu Ruixiang's irresponsible behavior last night, Li Yiran still hadn't abandoned her hopes of marrying him. Otherwise, she wouldn't have shown up today.

This Li Yiran had both beauty and cunning wit. There was still the possibility she might succeed in the end. Plus, with Huangfu Ruixiang not married yet, the situation remained fluid.

"Why the sudden change of heart?" mused Huangfu Ruiling, curious. "You admitted defeat readily enough last night.. And now you have a fresh perspective?"

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"That's right! Because I saw Li Yiran downstairs just now," Ye Lengan didn't hide anything, smiling as she spoke. "Li Yiran probably hasn't been here before, otherwise she wouldn't have been stopped by the front desk. Now that she's suddenly shown up at the company, she must be trying to get on Huangfu Ruixiang's good side. So whether or not Huangfu Ruixiang eventually falls for Li Yiran's charms remains to be seen. I think admitting defeat at this point would be premature."

Huangfu Ruiling nodded in understanding and smiled slightly. "Since you feel the bet is still ongoing, let's continue it then! However, I do have a bit of news to share."

"What news?" Ye Lengan narrowed her eyes at Huangfu Ruiling, a trace of suspicion in her tone. Clearly, she didn't anticipate this would be good news.

"My mother started making arrangements this morning to set up a blind date for Huangfu Ruixiang," Huangfu Ruiling disclosed directly without beating around the bush. "So if you think Li Yiran still has a chance, we'll have to wait and see!"

“Huh?” After hearing Huangfu Ruilings words, Ye Lengan was actually rather surprised. “Is there such an urgent need? That all went down just yesterday, and today she’s already working on matchmaking?”

This Zhongyu Liuying really was ruthless. If Li Yiran found out, she’d probably be so angry she vomited blood!

“It’s precisely because of what transpired yesterday that Mother is in such a rush to arrange this blind date,” Huangfu Ruiling explained lightly. “Otherwise she likely would have waited until after the Family Competition before taking action on this. After all, she still hopes Huangfu Ruixiang can shine during the competition, catching the eye of those Hidden World families and making him seem like worthwhile marriage material.”

“So she’s changed plans now?” Ye Lengan found it rather amusing.

Li Yiran probably couldn’t have imagined in her wildest dreams that it was her own scheming against Huangfu Ruixiang that triggered Zhongyu Liuyings urgency to marry him off! This was essentially Li Yiran indirectly causing Zhongyu Liuyings decision.

In fact, if Li Yiran hadn’t been so impatient and was willing to take things slowly, the outcome certainly would have been much better than now. Even if Huangfu Ruixiang remained unwilling to marry her in the end, at least her position in his heart would be far more significant. And her bargaining chips would be that much heavier then.

“She didn’t actually change plans,” Huangfu Ruiling said, his lips twisting into a sardonic smile. “Even if Huangfu Ruixiang takes interest in one of these matches, there won’t be a rushed marriage yet. She’ll at least wait until after the Family Competition concludes, confirming none of those Hidden World ladies have taken fancy to Huangfu Ruixiang. Only then would she willingly let Huangfu Ruixiang marry one of those mortal elite family daughters. This also serves to distract Huangfu Ruixiang somewhat, so he doesn’t have as much attention to devote to Li Yiran.’

“So it’s about finding a backup option!” Ye Lengan curled her lip disdainfully.

“Whoever he takes interest in really is quite unlucky then – not only a backup option but a tool to divert affection from Li Yiran.”

“Even so, it would end up being a mutually consensual matter,” Huangfu Ruiling said, unconcerned. “Those things have nothing to do with us. Though after the Family Competition wraps up, I imagine Huangfu Ruixiangs marriage will be placed on the agenda.”

“Then it’ll be a few more months before our wager concludes and we know who the winner and loser is!” Ye Lengan nodded. She glanced back at Huangfu Ruiling and

suddenly posed, "Ruiling, have you never considered any of what I just said? Why didn't you mention all this when I was readily admitting defeat last night?"

"An'an, we were making a bet," Huangfu Ruiling replied, smiling at Ye Lengan. "Since you volunteered to concede, why would I go reminding you of caveats?"

Hearing Huangfu Ruiling's response, Ye Lengan was left speechless, unable to formulate a retort.

"Oh right, there is one other thing." Huangfu Ruiling suddenly pulled out a document from his desk and passed it to Ye Lengan. "Have a look at this."

Without hesitating, Ye Lengan accepted the proffered file and opened it, teasing as she did, "This is confidential company documentation! How could you just casually show such a thing to an outsider? Aren't you worried I might leak secrets?"

"Since even I am yours now," Huangfu Ruiling stated matter-of-factly, "then all that I have naturally belongs to you as well. By that logic, the Group is also yours. Not to mention this, all the documents in the office you can feel free to peruse now."

"I must decline the honor!" Ye Lengan quickly shook her head. "I have zero interest in these documents of yours. I do still quite like hearing that you're mine though."

As she spoke, Ye Lengan skimmed through the opened file. Finally realizing why Huangfu Ruiling had her look it over, she knew.

"Is this about the design competition Ye Xiyuan entered?" Ye Lengan queried with a smile. "What about that designer I mentioned who would win – how is he doing?"

"Our subsidiary has contacted and signed him on," Huangfu Ruiling elaborated. "Coincidentally though, some trouble struck the designer en route to report at the subsidiary this morning. While not life-threatening, he sustained a hand injury that requires a month's convalescence."

"And the competition itself takes place next week." Ye Lengan's eyes flashed with comprehension. "Sticking to the original plan, I suppose missing out now is unavoidable for him. So that 'accident' was undoubtedly manufactured by Ye Xiyuan."

Huangfu Ruiling nodded. "Highly likely, yes. Our people didn't dig into it deeply though – the report to his doctor sufficed."

No need to investigate so thoroughly when it ultimately had little bearing for them either way.

"This Ye Xiyuan really is quite ruthless!" Ye Lengan's lips twisted into a sardonic smile. "She's eliminating all potential complications!"

"Even minus this designer's participation, Ye Xiyuan claiming the championship remains unlikely," Huangfu Ruiling countered. "At my prompting, the competition's

scale and gravitas were elevated exponentially this year. Naturally, the theme itself is still undeclared as well..”

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“Then Ye Xiyuan will undoubtedly be dumbfounded.” Ye Lengan chuckled behind her hand. “She went through such effort just for a rare shot at making a name for herself, even clearing obstacles early on, only to suddenly realize it was all pointless busywork. Do you think she might be angered to death by it

“Do you have any interest in attending yourself?” Huangfu Ruiling asked with a smile. “You could serve as a judge this time.”

“Huh?” Ye Lengan was taken aback after hearing this. “Me? A judge? But I’m rather ignorant when it comes to fashion design. Doesn’t it seem I’d lack proper qualifications to sit on the judges’ panel?”

“You’re more qualified than anyone,” Huangfu Ruiling asserted, looking directly at her. “As the lady boss of Huangye Group, who could boast higher standing?”

Rather than objecting or getting flustered by Huangfu Ruilings pronouncement, Ye Lengan instead nodded matter-of-factly, as if it were only natural. “I suppose you make a reasonable case. Then I shall reluctantly take on the duty of judge this time!”

Seeing Ye Leng’an’s haughty manner, Huangfu Ruiling just chuckled and shook his head, eyes full of affectionate indulgence.

“I bet Ye Xiyuan will be quite surprised to see me there!” Ye Lengan laughed softly behind her palm. “I truly look forward to witnessing her reaction soon.”

“It won’t be long now,” Huangfu Ruiling assured lowly. “With you seated at the judges’ table watching her, I imagine she’ll be anything but composed!”

After nodding in agreement, Ye Lengan suddenly urged, “Alright, enough chitchat. You ought to hurry up and get back to work! Once you’ve finished we can go eat.”

Within a few dozen minutes Huangfu Ruiling had powered through the paperwork, and the pair headed down to the parking lot intent on lunch. Unexpectedly, in the parking lot they happened across Huangfu Ruixiang and Li Yiran.

Seeing the two of them, Ye Lengan was genuinely surprised for a moment. If her memory served correctly, when she’d passed Li Yiran downstairs earlier the girl was carrying a thermal food container. Meaning she’d come to deliver a lovingly prepared meal. But even by the clock, surely they couldn’t have finished eating so soon!

“Big brother, Miss Ye,” Huangfu Ruixiang greeted them first. “You’re off to lunch too? What a happy coincidence! Shall we go together?”

“You haven’t eaten yet?” Hearing this, Ye Lengan was puzzled. “But wasn’t that...

Before she could even complete the sentence, Li Yiran’s expression had already soured noticeably.

“Oh, so you knew about it too, Miss Ye!” Huangfu Ruixiang didn’t seem surprised.

“Well, since our paths crossed... Indeed Yiran brought food over just now, but she can’t cook to save her life. The taste was utterly unpalatable. So we planned to just go out instead.”

With each word from Huangfu Ruixiang, Li Yiran’s face fell further. Especially upon catching sight of Ye Leng’an standing next to Huangfu Ruiling, she was awash in embarrassment. She couldn’t have imagined that the lunch she had painstakingly prepared, Huangfu Ruixiang had spat out after a single bite. Not only that, but he’d mercilessly declared it far too distasteful and instructed her not to cook for him again in the future.

She had done all of this expressly to curry favor with Huangfu Ruixiang, only to have her efforts completely dismissed as worthless. She was even starting to question if choosing Huangfu Ruixiang as her target had been a mistake!

His feelings for her seemed far too tepid in her view.

Yet at this point, there could be no reversing course. Even if she’d erred, she could only continue erring now.

It was evident Huangfu Ruiling merely wanted an intimate two-person lunch with Ye Lengan, with no intruding third wheels to hamper them. But before he could voice refusal, Ye Lengan already acquiesced.

“Sure!” she said with a bright smile. “Since we’re all yet unfed, why don’t we take this felicitous encounter as a reason to share the meal?”

No one expected Ye Lengan would actually agree. Even Huangfu Ruixiang was briefly taken aback following her response.

But he swiftly rebounded, suggesting, “There’s a Japanese restaurant in the shopping center nearby I’m not sure would suit your tastes.... Shall we try it though?”

Chapter 494 - 494: Dining Together 2

While somewhat unexpected, this was actually a welcome happenstance for Huangfu Ruixiang. Huangfu Ruiling had now rightly assumed leadership of the Huangfu family. However, despite being brothers, he and Huangfu Ruiling did not share a close relationship. Their association could only be characterized as slightly better than that of total strangers.

Huangfu Ruixiang had often sought opportunities to improve relations with Huangfu Ruiling, especially after their father lost his position as family head. Yet Huangfu Ruiling had always remained lukewarm towards him.

Now presented with such an opening, Huangfu Ruixiang naturally refused to squander it.

Li Yiran’s face had darkened to near ink levels, though she could only force a smile.

If asked to name the person she currently least wished to see, her response would undoubtedly be Ye Lengan. The two were formerly love rivals. And Li Yiran felt that back then, they had been evenly matched. As to why she lost out to Ye Lengan for Huangfu Ruilings heart – that came down to Ye Lengan simply being more cunning.

But standing before Ye Leng'an now, Li Yiran sensed the gulf dividing them growing ever vaster. Ye Lengan was publicly recognized by Huangfu Ruiling as his girlfriend. Out in public, most people would automatically grant Ye Leng'an additional courtesy simply for Huangfu Ruilings sake.

Meanwhile, Li Yiran merely remained an illicit lover lacking any formal standing. Despite Huangfu Ruixiang still being unmarried, she could not style herself as his girlfriend either.

Indeed, just earlier downstairs the differential treatment she and Ye Lengan received had been blatantly apparent.

The sheer discrepancy made Li Yiran feel ashamed and inferior next to Ye Lengan.

However, no matter how much she might wish otherwise internally, Li Yiran could not defy Huangfu Ruixiangs directives aloud. She feared that voicing reluctance to dine together might prompt Huangfu Ruixiang to dismiss her on the spot.

Currently, her only recourse was to cling tightly to Huangfu Ruixiang. Thus no matter what, she had to maintain her grip.

In the car.

“Why did you agree to eat together with them?” Huangfu Ruiling regarded Ye

Leng'an beside him. “Haven't you had run-ins with both in the past? Such a meal – could you even eat?”

Huangfu Ruixiang had previously directed Ye Lengan to take money and leave Huangfu Ruiling alone. And that was before even touching upon her long-running feud with Li Yiran – far too convoluted to encapsulate briefly.

“Of course, I'll manage to eat!” Ye Leng'an grinned. “If anything, whetting my appetite! I've realized Li Yiran simply has too much time on her hands, thus constantly targeting me. So I think it wise to occupy her with something.”

“You intend to tell her of Huangfu Ruixiangs matchmaking then?” Huangfu Ruiling swiftly guessed her aim.

“Indeed, you're far too clever! Come, a kiss as a reward.”

After planting a quick peck on Huangfu Ruilings cheek, Ye Lengan continued, “Once she discovers Huangfu Ruixiang plans to court matches, no doubt she'll grow anxious. Presently she lacks any formal standing, after all. If Huangfu Ruixiang remains unmarried, opportunity still knocks for her to advance. But that narrow window slams shut fast once he weds. Her circumstances will only grow more difficult then. And in the interim, this could prove an additional complication for your mother's schemes! With Li Yiran meddling, realizing her goals won't come easily!”

“Mm, well said.” Huangfu Ruiling nodded. His gaze on Ye Lengan held layered meaning as he remarked, “I might have thought you worried over our wager instead – fearing a loss yourself – and so moved to apprise Li Yiran out of self-interest!”

“Heh, I’ll allow there’s an element of that too!” Ye Lengan made no pretense otherwise, even responding somewhat defiantly, “But such action strikes me as perfectly normal under the circumstances, no? This is a bet, so we each leverage what advantages we can! And I wouldn’t call this cheating either! Just giving Li Yiran a friendly reminder or two – what she opts to do after lies beyond my control.”

Huangfu Ruiling chose not to belabor the issue further aloud, though his eyes flashed briefly with hidden depths.

Soon enough they arrived at the Japanese restaurant Huangfu Ruixiang had indicated. Entering the private room, Huangfu Ruixiang and Li Yiran already awaited them inside..

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“Big brother, Miss Ye, you’ve arrived. Please have a seat!” Huangfu Ruixiang quickly ushered them in.

Once seated, menus were passed their way. “Take a look and decide what you’d like. We already ordered some dishes, but unsure of your preferences, didn’t go overboard. Feel free to add more.”

As a high-end establishment, once orders were placed a server promptly arrived with the first round, the wait brief.

Ye Lengan sampled a slice of salmon, then nodded approvingly. “The fare here really is exceptional.”

“Agreed,” confirmed Huangfu Ruixiang. “I’ve visited a few times before and found the ingredients quite fresh. When treating clients out, this restaurant is a frequent choice.”

“Sounds great.” Ye Lengan nodded, then pivoted the conversation. “Well, once you have a girlfriend, you can bring her here to sample the cuisine. I imagine most girls would be quite fond of this place.”

“You think so?” mused Huangfu Ruixiang. “Though presently I’ve no girlfriend – that’s for some future day.”

He was clearly disregarding Li Yiran’s feelings entirely now. In fact, prior to securing Li Yiran, he might have paid them more heed. A common enough male tendency, it would seem – once obtained, interest fades. In Huangfu

Ruixiangs mind, Li Yiran was his to claim and need not overexert holding her.

And, he had long agreed with Li Yiran that he could give her everything, including companionship and a luxurious life. However, he just couldn’t give Li Yiran a proper status. Moreover, Li Yiran

couldn't control his affairs outside. Therefore, when he said these words in front of Li Yiran, he felt no psychological burden at all.

Meanwhile, upon hearing Huangfu Ruixiang's response, the color swiftly drained from Li Yiran's face, leaving it paper-white. She was shocked to hear him casually reference a future girlfriend with her present. Was she truly so insignificant to him?

Just as she felt that first blow landed critical force, Ye Lengan's next words struck with even greater devastation:

"It likely won't be long either!" Ye Lengan gave a small smile. "I happened to catch word your mother's begun matchmaking arrangements? Once a fitting partner emerges, I expect you'll have found a girlfriend in no time!"

Hearing this, Li Yiran's head jerked up, eyes filled with disbelief as she stared at Huangfu Ruixiang. She couldn't fathom him already courting matches so soon after they became involved. Where did that leave her?

Oblivious to Li Yiran's visible dismay, Huangfu Ruixiang continued nonchalantly between bites, "Even entertaining matches won't ensure quickly finding the right fit – that relies on fate's will."

At this point, Li Yiran's expression had shifted fully to one of despair. She clung to a faint sliver of hope that Huangfu Ruixiang might deny it, despite her subconscious signaling the truth of Ye Lengan's words. Still, she desperately wished Huangfu Ruixiang would refute them – even if utter fabrication for her benefit.

Instead, he had openly confirmed while she sat right there, brazen in admission.

"You're attending matchmaking meetings?" Li Yiran barely recognized her own voice emerging so hoarse and muted.

"I am," confirmed Huangfu Ruixiang, finally shifting focus to Li Yiran. Taking in the ghastly pallor of her complexion, a hint of remorse flashed through him, yet still he explained, "Yiran, you know my hand's forced here... Mother arranged this and I truly cannot refuse. But you must know how I care for you still. It's just that given your standing..."

"I'm fine," Li Yiran insisted, though her sickly face belied the words. She forced a trembling smile. "Brother Ruixiang, I understand I could never be your wife. I'm alright, just a bit overwhelmed by the sudden news. Let me process it and I'll be fine – no need to worry.."

Chapter 496: Dining Together

Seeing Li Yiran's forced show of strength, guilt swelled further within Huangfu Ruixiang. He quickly pledged, "Yiran, don't worry. I guarantee nothing will change. Even taking a wife, I'll still treat you even better."

“Brother Ruixiang, I believe you’d never let me down.” Li Yiran gazed at him with dewy eyes, as though tears might spill at any second. That delicate countenance, exuding vulnerability, could capture any man’s sympathies.

Yet despite her words, icy indifference filled Li Yiran’s heart now. She realized passively awaiting some twist of fate was fruitless. By the time Huangfu Ruixiang truly wed, it would be far too late.

Facing such a pitiable Li Yiran, Huangfu Ruixiang naturally lacked defenses.

He vigorously nodded, vowing, “Yiran, trust me – no matter what, I won’t fail you!”

Watching this exchange, Ye Lengan sighed inwardly. Li Yiran’s skills were clearly formidable – in mere sentences she had successfully stirred Huangfu

Ruixiang’s guilt. Whether his avowals stemmed from momentary weakness or genuine intent remained uncertain.

But by Li Yiran’s ploys, perhaps she might still manage to marry Huangfu Ruixiang in the end after all!

Considering this, Ye Lengan shot an insolent glance toward Huangfu Ruiling. Catching Ye Leng’an’s defiant stare, Huangfu Ruiling arched a brow, then proclaimed bluntly, “Ruixiang, since matchmaking is already underway, I imagine a wedding date is not far off. After the family competition concludes, if you’ve found a fitting partner, start making ceremony arrangements.”

Hearing this, Ye Leng’an’s eyes blew wide. She skewered Huangfu Ruiling with a fierce glower, clearly signaling: “You cheating scoundrel!”

She hadn’t expected him to cheat so flagrantly. With months yet remaining post-competition, was he maneuvering for a premature end to their wager?

“Huh?” Huangfu Ruixiang was startled at Huangfu Ruiling’s sudden suggestion. Instinctively he demurred, “Isn’t that rather fast? And you aren’t even married yet, elder brother!”

“It’s not soon enough. Mother surely hopes to see you wed with haste,” Huangfu Ruiling breezily dismissed, not even glancing Huangfu Ruixiang’s way. “Anyway, pay me no mind. You may marry first regardless. I’ve reason still to wait.”

His meaningful look toward Ye Lengan left little ambiguity.

Huangfu Ruixiang understood it all and, at the same time, felt somewhat surprised. He naturally grasped the meaning behind Huangfu Ruiling’s words. The marriage partner for Huangfu Ruiling was Ye Lengan, and considering Ye Leng’an’s age, it was certainly not suitable for immediate marriage. Therefore, Huangfu Ruiling couldn’t possibly get married in the short term.

He hadn’t expected that Huangfu Ruiling had already decided to marry Ye

Lengan. Initially, he thought it was impossible for Huangfu Ruiling to marry Ye Leng’an. After all, Ye Lengan was nothing more than an orphan without known parents, definitely not a suitable marriage candidate and certainly not a suitable matriarch for the Huangfu family.

Yet Huangfu Ruixiang also grasped that even if his elder brother now favored wedding Ye Lengan, none within the family would dare raise objections. Huangfu Ruiling firmly held the reins as rightful family head, having gathered full authority unto himself – arguably the most iron-willed leader in their history.

With none brave enough to defy his directives, that left matriarch selection solely Huangfu Ruiling's prerogative.

Though Li Yiran kept composure outwardly, jealousy raged wildly within. She couldn't believe Huangfu Ruiling already contemplated marrying Ye Lengan!

What defined the gulf between herself and Ye Lengan? Both were orphans. Yet she had been reared amidst the Huangfu, granted the finest upbringing.

Furthermore, her own brother had sacrificed himself for the family! Was she still inferior to Ye Lengan despite all that?

Why then did Ye Lengan stand qualified to be Huangfu Ruiling's wife, while Li Yiran was relegated to a mere illicit affair?

Thinking of all this, fury ignited within Li Yiran's heart – yet she did not show it, nor permit Huangfu Ruixiang glimpse anything amiss. Otherwise, her efforts to date would crumble completely.

Around the table, while each nurtured private thoughts, all except Li Yiran ate well regardless.

Truthfully her appetite had already fled partway through the meal. Now, having finished eating, her stomach distantly ached.

Originally Ye Lengan intended to treat Huangfu Ruiling, but with Huangfu Ruixiang and Li Yiran now imposed, she naturally could not. Ultimately the bill was settled by Huangfu Ruixiang – a middling expense for him.

Li Yiran politely excused herself to the bathroom.

Spying opportunity, Ye Lengan promptly tailed her out.

Watching Ye Lengan's departure, affection swam in Huangfu Ruiling's eyes.

Clearly, she had gone to confront Li Yiran. Yet for all his conjectures, Huangfu Ruiling remained fully uncertain of Ye Lengan's exact aims.

Just now, he mentioned Huangfu Ruixiang's marriage, and Ye Lengan would definitely not accept defeat so easily. She would surely find a way to turn the situation around as soon as possible.

In the bathroom.

After using the restroom, Li Yiran came out and saw Ye Lengan waiting outside. She hesitated for a moment, then without even looking at Ye Lengan, she walked past her, intending to go back to the private room.

Ye Lengan clearly came to find her, but she felt that the other party's approach at this time was just to mock her. Therefore, she genuinely had no intention of listening.

“Leaving just like that?” Ever unruffled, Ye Lengan spoke tonelessly. “I understand you can’t accept this. Nor watch Huangfu Ruixiang take another bride. Don’t you wish to marry Huangfu Ruixiang yourself? Because I happen to know of an excellent method that may help you...”

Li Yiran froze mid-step.

She kept telling herself that Ye Lengan must be deceiving her. There was no way she could have a solution, and it was even more unlikely that she would be so kind as to help her.

However, despite her rational thoughts, she couldn’t bring herself to take a step forward.. Because she was afraid that if what Ye Lengan said was true, she would miss out on a great opportunity!

Chapter 497: A Suggestion 1

After going through an internal struggle, Li Yiran finally chose to turn around. She looked at Ye Lengan with suspicion in her eyes. “Would you really be so kind as to help me? Ye Lengan, what sinister scheme is this?”

“If you think what I’m saying now is a devious plot, feel free to turn and leave,” Ye Lengan said indifferently. “I promise not to try to stop you.”

Li Yiran desperately wanted to have enough backbone to immediately storm off, but her body seemed to ignore her will, frozen in place.

Ye Lengan showed no impatience either, standing there with an aura of calm indifference as if Li Yiran’s response held no real importance to her.

After about 15 minutes had passed, Li Yiran was finally unable to restrain the yearning within her heart. “Ye Lengan, what exactly is this method you mentioned?”

While believing Ye Lengan unlikely to earnestly aid her, she currently lacked the resolve to discard even the slightest possibility. With all escape routes severed, failing to become Huangfu Ruixiang’s lawful wife doomed her eternally to hidden affair status.

Rather than mocking or taunting Li Yiran, Ye Lengan directly said, “I’m sure you’ve heard this saying before. The mother’s status relies on the son.”

“You mean...” Li Yiran swiftly grasped the implication.

“In terms of background, capabilities, connections – you lack any advantage whatsoever,” Ye Lengan candidly assessed. “Thus, this remains your sole bargaining chip now.”

As she spoke, Ye Lengan pulled a small bottle from her pocket and tossed it over to Li Yiran.

Unsure what it held, Li Yiran reflexively reached out to catch it.

“There is a medicinal pill inside that can improve your constitution. Ingesting but one suffices to restore your health substantially, if not completely. At a minimum, it should grant the ability to bear children safely as an ordinary woman. Otherwise,

given your current frail state, even achieving pregnancy risks fatal complications when birthing.”

Hearing Ye Leng'an's words sparked a touch of indignance within Li Yiran, yet she could contrive no counterarguments, recognizing the harsh truth they contained. However...

“What if I do conceive, yet Huangfu Ruixiang still refuses marriage?” Chaos swirled within her. Doubts lingered whether undertaking this held wisdom, alongside suspicion around Ye Leng'an's motives for the suggestion.

Most importantly, Ye Leng'an actually gave her pills. Yes, these were pills, not ordinary capsules. Although she didn't know what kind of pills were in this bottle, she couldn't help but acknowledge Ye Leng'an's medical skills. After all, Ye Leng'an had cured her of the Gu poison. However, she didn't understand why Ye Lengan would give her pills for body conditioning!

Ye Leng'an responded to Li Yiran with bafflement. “That would be your own affair – how does it relate to me? I've simply laid an idea before you. Whatever unfolds next lies wholly beyond my interests. Whether Huangfu Ruixiang marries you or not – what slightest difference does that make to me?”

Did Li Yiran misunderstand something? Could it be that Li Yiran felt she had an obligation to help her marry Huangfu Ruixiang? At this moment, she was willing to remind Li Yiran only because of the bet between her and Huangfu Ruiling. Due to Huangfu Ruilings recent actions, she was just trying to turn the situation around.

“Aren't you trying to help me marry Huangfu Ruixiang?” Li Yiran faltered briefly after those words. “Why else tell me to exploit motherhood ties, or provide recuperative medicine?”

“Consider it a random act of kindness,” Ye Lengan coolly replied. “The outcome holds zero relevance – your marrying Huangfu Ruixiang or not matters not at all to me.”

Having said her piece, she strode past Li Yiran directly toward their private room.

Gazing after Ye Leng'an's retreating back, dejection and turmoil roiled through Li Yiran..

Chapter 498: A Suggestion 2

She was utterly perplexed by Ye Lengan's actions – what could they mean? Why suddenly impart such counsel?

Their relationship had always been extremely poor. Yet now Ye Lengan helpfully suggested bearing a child might lead to marrying Huangfu Ruixiang. She had even provided recuperative medicine to aid that prospective conception and pregnancy.

One had to recall, were it not for Ye Lengan seizing the Seven Star Flower initially, she would have long obtained similar restorative pills from Ye

Min'er. The very thought made Li Yiran gnash her teeth over Ye Lengan.

Moreover, she harbored no illusion Ye Lengan held any fondness for her.

What then was Ye Leng'an's true objective? Naturally, she placed no credence in the claim of "doing a good deed daily." Even if Ye Lengan did aspire to routine benevolence, Li Yiran felt certain she herself would never benefit from such fortune.

Gazing at the bottle in hand, Li Yiran couldn't resist opening it regardless.

The moment the lid parted, an intensely medicinal fragrance emerged.

She quickly covered the bottle, excitement gleaming in her eyes. Although she didn't know what kind of pills were inside the bottle, she was certain that these pills could indeed nourish her body. Just by smelling the fragrance of the medicine, she felt as if her entire being had lightened considerably.

Since waking up, she had consistently felt a sense of weakness, as if her entire being was frail. Even sitting quietly seemed to be a considerable effort. However, just by catching a whiff of the medicinal fragrance a moment ago, she suddenly experienced a long-lost sense of ease. That feeling was as if she had returned to her previous state.

If mere fragrance could provide such a benefit, ingesting the contents would likely yield even greater restorative effects.

Ye Leng'an's earlier words on maternal status echoed through her mind, steeling Li Yiran's resolve towards a final gamble. Although she didn't understand why Ye Lengan was willing to remind her or provide her with pills for body conditioning, this was now her only chance.

If she didn't implement this plan soon, it might be too late. If Huangfu Ruixiang's marriage was truly settled, even if she were to become pregnant, she would never become Huangfu Ruixiang's wife.

Moreover, even if she ultimately couldn't become Huangfu Ruixiang's wife, she would still bear his first child. Men always had an indescribable attachment to their firstborn. Having a child would enable her to better capture Huangfu Ruixiang's heart. Even if he married someone else in the future, she could still hold a more significant place in his heart.

Clenching the bottled pill, Li Yiran tucked it into her bag before nonchalantly returning to rejoin the others.

Back inside, Huangfu Ruixiang had already settled their bill.

Noticing Li Yiran's return, he casually inquired, "What took you so long?"

"Oh, I ran into an acquaintance and we talked a bit," Li Yiran gently demurred, then shifted focus. "Ruixiang, are you free tonight? Could you come over and keep me company? I've missed you."

Seeing Li Yiran's soft entreaty, Huangfu Ruixiang's heart softened. He directly agreed, "Alright, I'll come by and visit you tonight."

After the meal, Huangfu Ruiling and Ye Lengan also took their leave. Huangfu Ruiling needed to return to work affairs at the company, while Ye Lengan simply went back to the villa itself. Naturally, Huangfu Ruiling first saw Ye Lengan safely home before continuing to his own business.

En route, Ye Lengan kept stealing expectant glances toward Huangfu Ruiling, anticipating when he might finally forfeit composure and inquire what had passed between her and Li Yiran. Yet Huangfu Ruiling remained steadfastly silent.

At last, the one losing patience proved Ye Lengan. “Don’t you plan to ask what happened at all?” she questioned Huangfu Ruiling. “Aren’t you the least bit curious what Li Yiran and I discussed?”

“If I were to ask, would you even tell me?” Huangfu Ruiling evaded responding directly, instead answering her question with one of his own..

Chapter 499: A Suggestion 3

“If you sincerely ask me, I might just tell you!” Ye Lengan smiled and said, “So, do you want to know?”

Looking at Ye Leng’an’s slightly arrogant expression, Huangfu Ruiling had a doting look in his eyes. “Alright, I’ll ask you sincerely now. Will you tell me?”

“Then, after I tell you, you must promise not to interfere between Huangfu Ruixiang and Li Yiran.” Ye Lengan demanded that Huangfu Ruiling make this guarantee. “You were the one who decided on Huangfu Ruixiangs marriage just now. That should count as cheating!”

“That’s not cheating.” Huangfu Ruiling shook his head and explained, “Although it was my proposal, it was my mother’s idea. Even if I hadn’t said anything, she would have planned it this way. In her eyes, her youngest son is outstanding in every regard. Therefore, she would never allow Li Yiran to become a stain in his life. The best solution is to quickly arrange for Huangfu Ruixiang to marry a wife with a powerful family background.”

After hearing Huangfu Ruilings words, Ye Lengan blinked. “I see! However, I thought you had cheated, so I was thinking of evening the score.”

Although she said that, she didn’t look apologetic at all.

“Alright then!” Huangfu Ruiling pressed his lips together, looking at Ye Lengan with a smile. “So what was your plan to get back at me?”

“A mother relies on her son to bring honor.” Ye Lengan raised her eyebrows and smiled. “However, I don’t know if Li Yiran will actually resort to this method in the end.”

After all, she had only made a suggestion. The final decision still rested with Li Yiran.

Upon hearing Ye Leng’an’s words, Huangfu Ruiling laughed. “That’s not a suggestion – that’s encouragement! Li Yiran isn’t a fool. She won’t be able to resist such a temptation.”

“Don’t even think about stopping me!” Ye Lengan narrowed her eyes and glared warningly at Huangfu Ruiling. “Even if I hadn’t brought it up, Li Yiran probably would have thought of this herself. I’m just giving her a little reminder.”

“Don’t worry, this matter has nothing to do with me. I won’t intervene.” Huangfu Ruiling chuckled and shook his head. “But I’m afraid the final outcome may not be as you wish!”

“Then let’s wait and see what happens!” Ye Lengan shrugged indifferently.

Although she really wanted to win this bet, she wasn’t obsessed with the result. After all, when she had first made the wager with Huangfu Ruiling, it had simply been on a whim. As for how things turned out between Li Yiran and Huangfu Ruixiang, it had no bearing on her.

After hearing Ye Leng’an’s words, Huangfu Ruiling suddenly seemed to recall something and abruptly changed the subject. “Oh, by the way, I found the helper you were looking for. She’ll come to your villa in a couple of days.”

“You already found one?” Ye Lengan nodded and then asked, “What kind of person is she?”

Looking for a helper again, she was much more cautious than the last time. She didn’t want any unexpected situations to arise again. However, this time it was Huangfu Ruiling who found one for her, so this one should be more reliable than the one she found through the domestic service company!

“You can call her Sister Li.” Huangfu Ruiling added, “She is a martyr’s widow with a ten-year-old child. She is diligent and hardworking, and doesn’t talk much. You’ll know when you meet her in a couple of days.”

Ye Leng’an nodded.

Soon, the car arrived at Ye Leng’an’s villa. After watching Ye Lengan enter the house, Huangfu Ruiling left.

Early the next morning, Ye Lengan went to school. She had already made an appointment with the Shu family to go there around noon today, so in the morning, she thought about it and decided to go to school today. After class, she would go to the hospital to treat Old Master Shu.

When the teachers of Class F saw Ye Lengan when they entered, they were all surprised for a moment. Obviously, they did not expect Ye Leng’an to appear today. However, they didn’t dwell on it for too long.

They knew well of Ye Lengan who often took leave every few days. However, even though she frequently skipped classes, she always ranked first in every monthly exam. The principal had also mentioned that they didn’t need to pay too much attention to her..

Chapter 500: A Suggestion 4

Later on, they discovered that Ye Lengan already knew everything they were going to teach her. To put it bluntly, Ye Lengan might know more than what they themselves knew. Therefore, sometimes when they saw Ye Leng'an, they had rather complicated feelings.

Ye Lengan pretended not to notice the occasional glances from the teachers. Although she was in the classroom, she wasn't listening to the lecture; instead, she was reading a book. However, her book looked like an ordinary exercise book; but as long as someone glanced at it, they would see the unfamiliar, difficult words and some strange patterns inside.

After sitting seriously in the classroom for the whole morning, the bell rang.

Ye Leng'an picked up her book and left the classroom without looking back. However, when she reached the entrance, she saw someone who should not have been there — Auntie Zhuang's daughter, Li Qiaomeng.

If she remembered correctly, Li Qiaomeng should have been in prison right now. Although the impact of that previous incident was not significant, under normal circumstances, she would have had to serve at least two to three months in jail! But now, Li Qiaomeng had appeared at the school gate.

After being told by the Public Security Bureau that everything had to go through the normal legal process, she no longer cared about the matter. Because she didn't pay close attention, Huangfu Ruiling probably hadn't continued paying attention either. Therefore, she had no idea that Li Qiaomeng had been released.

She just didn't know who had helped get Li Qiaomeng out of prison. She didn't believe that Li Qiaomeng was so capable that she could shirk all responsibility herself.

When Ye Lengan saw Li Qiaomeng, Li Qiaomeng naturally saw her as well. When Ye Lengan noticed Li Qiaomeng's gaze, she couldn't help but frown; because she had a vague feeling that Li Qiaomeng's appearance at Sheng'an High School was also aimed at her. She just didn't know what the other party was planning to do.

As expected, after seeing Ye Leng'an, Li Qiaomeng's eyes lit up. She immediately jogged towards Ye Lengan. Then, without saying a word or letting anyone react, she knelt down directly in front of Ye Lengan.

It was time for school dismissal so there were still many students at the school gate. After seeing this scene, everyone couldn't help but stop in their tracks, their gazes falling on Ye Lengan and Li Qiaomeng. They began guessing what was going on.

Ye Lengan also hadn't expected that Li Qiaomeng would kneel in front of her like this. However, it didn't matter what Li Qiaomeng was thinking; because Ye Leng'an wouldn't cooperate with her.

Therefore, Ye Lengan acted as if she didn't see anything; she bypassed Li Qiaomeng and continued walking forward.

"Miss Ye, don't go." Seeing that Ye Lengan was about to leave, Li Qiaomeng grew a little anxious. She quickly reached out her hand, wanting to grab Ye Leng'an's hand to stop her from leaving.

It was as if Ye Leng'an had eyes on the back of her head. She immediately turned around and dodged Li Qiaomeng's outstretched hand; a hint of warning flashed in her eyes. "Li Qiaomeng, if you still want to protect your hand, you'd better not touch me, otherwise I don't know if your hand will still be useful in the future."

Looking at Ye Leng'an's cold eyes, Li Qiaomeng couldn't help but flinch. She didn't know why, but a chill rose from the bottom of her heart when she saw Ye Leng'an. She felt that Ye Leng'an was not joking with her — she would really do it.

For a moment, she couldn't help but shrink back a little regarding her purpose in coming here today. However, when she thought of the one million yuan check, her retreating thoughts became active again.

She had already accepted the one million; when the matter was settled she would get another five hundred thousand. As long as she came here to kick up a fuss, she would be able to get 1.5 million. This was not a loss at all.

Even if she graduated in the future and found a job in the capital, it would be very difficult for her to save up 1.5 million; she did not know how many years it would take to save that amount. Now she could get 1.5 million just by making a scene here; she couldn't give up no matter what.

Moreover, Ye Xiyuan had also promised that even if she failed, she wouldn't take back the one million. Furthermore, she might be able to force Ye Leng'an to forgive them under public pressure. Therefore, having come this far, even if she had to brace herself, she had to continue down this path.

At this thought, Li Qiaomeng's expression changed; she looked as if begging for mercy. She did not stand up but continued kneeling there. She pleaded,

"Miss Ye, I came here today to beg you to let my mother and I go. We really know our mistakes. Please, let us go!!

When they saw Li Qiaomeng kneel down, many people had already surrounded them. Although no one knew what was going on, one of the parties involved in this matter was Ye Leng'an. Therefore, everyone was very interested, even a little gossipy.

Seeing Li Qiaomeng's pitiful appearance, many people couldn't help but side with her. After all, human nature was to sympathize with the weak. Therefore, even if nobody said anything, when everyone looked at Ye Leng'an, their gazes became a little strange.

Ye Leng'an's expression didn't change when she saw everyone's strange gazes. "If you really know your mistake, then you shouldn't have come to beg me now; instead, you should have consciously accepted the punishment of the law, rather than blocking my way here and attempting moral coercion."

"I didn't," Li Qiaomeng subconsciously retorted. She raised her head and stretched out her hand, wanting to grab Ye Leng'an's pants. However, as soon as she stretched out her hand, she remembered what Ye Leng'an had said earlier. Then, under Ye Leng'an's cold gaze, she could only retract her hand.

“Miss Ye, please be magnanimous and let my mother and I go!” After withdrawing her hand, Li Qiaomeng continued to plead, “No matter what, she worked for you for a period of time. Even if she didn’t accomplish anything, she still worked hard for you! Please let us go, considering how seriously she took care of you in the past!”

After saying that, Li Qiaomeng immediately started kowtowing to Ye Lengan. Moreover, she wasn’t acting — she was really hitting the cement floor. One could even hear the sound of her forehead striking the ground..