

Full-Level 821

Chapter 821: Grateful to Fate

Worried that Ye Leng'an might expose Ye Wanwan's true identity, potentially jeopardizing the marriage between the Ye family and the Murong family, Ye Yikun wasted no time. Shortly after Ye Leng'an's departure, a clarification statement was promptly issued.

The release of this clarification statement caused quite a stir in the Hidden World. Given the Ye family's prior silence on the matter, many had assumed the allegations were true. The swift turnaround came as a surprise to many.

Questions arose as to why the Ye family had not clarified matters earlier if they were merely rumors. Moreover, the recent influx of benefits from other families to the Ye family fueled speculation. Why had the Ye family stayed silent until now?

Conversations buzzed about potential ulterior motives behind the scenes. However, with the Ye family's clarification, and Ye Leng'an maintaining silence throughout, the situation remained shrouded in mystery.

Since the Ye family's statement, there had been no further developments. The true nature of the situation remained a puzzle.

At the time of the Ye family's announcement, Ye Leng'an was with Huangfu Ruiling. Unsurprised by the news, she said, "Ye Yikun acted swiftly! Within a day, the matter has been clarified."

Amused by this, Huangfu Ruiling quirked an eyebrow. "Or perhaps he fears you'll speak recklessly, tarnishing the Ye family's reputation, and endangering Ye Wanwan's wedding."

"I believe that's the most plausible explanation." Ye Leng'an smiled wryly. "It seems quite simple now for the Ye family to clarify things."

It ultimately depended on their willingness to do so.

"With the Ye family's recent statement, you'll never return to them." Huangfu Ruiling observed solemnly.

Given the Ye family's public disassociation from Ye Leng'an, it seemed unlikely she would ever be welcomed back. Ye Yikun's prioritization of the family's reputation and interests, coupled with the compelled statement, likely left a bitter taste.

Therefore, unless Ye Leng'an could bring significant benefits or Ye Yikun passed away, a return to the Ye family was improbable.

"That's probably for the best." Ye Leng'an chuckled. "I anticipated this outcome when I approached Ye Yikun. I have no desire to be associated with the Ye family. This suits me fine."

Hearing this, Huangfu Ruiling frowned. "Are you certain?"

“Don’t tell me you think I harbor feelings for Ye Hongxuan and Lian Mengzhu?” Ye Leng’an looked at Huangfu Ruiling oddly. “I thought you understood by now. My so-called biological parents are no more to me than strangers!”

“I understand.” Huangfu Ruiling nodded, then added, “I’m simply concerned you might regret your decision one day.”

He could see through Ye Leng’an’s current mindset, but he feared potential future regrets.

“I won’t.” Ye Leng’an’s smile was resolute. “I’ve chosen this path, and I’ll see it through, even if it means kneeling. Besides, I don’t consider them parents.”

Observing Ye Leng’an, Huangfu Ruiling refrained from further comment. Instead, he reached out and grasped her hand. “Whatever path you choose, I’ll stand by you.”

Touched by Huangfu Ruiling’s sincerity, Ye Leng’an chuckled. “I know. And I truly have no feelings for my supposed parents, so you needn’t worry. Besides...”

Her smile brightened as she continued, “You know just how much I’ve been through. That’s why I’m not as fragile as you might think.”

It wouldn’t be entirely accurate to say she had no expectations for her so-called biological parents. She simply wasn’t the same girl from her first life, yearning for familial affection.

If, from the moment she learned the truth, Ye Hongxuan and Lian Mengzhu had firmly stood by her side without hesitation or excessive pity for Ye Wanwan, she might have been able to accept them as her parents now.

Sadly, it seemed Ye Wanwan’s position as their adopted daughter held greater significance in Ye Hongxuan and Lian Mengzhu’s hearts. She felt no need to vie for their attention with Ye Wanwan, for obtaining affection through manipulation wasn’t genuine.

Such impurity was something she wanted no part of.

Especially when, despite knowing it was Ye Wanwan’s biological mother who had swapped them, Ye Hongxuan and Lian Mengzhu still insisted on keeping Ye Wanwan by their side. At that moment, she knew her bond with them was shallow indeed.

Given this, she saw no reason to continue entangling herself. Besides, she was above it.

Recalling the experiences Ye Leng’an had shared, Huangfu Ruiling looked at her with a hint of pity in his eyes. “You can be vulnerable, you know. I’ll always be here for you to rely on.”

Unable to contain herself, Ye Leng’an burst into laughter. “Why so serious all of a sudden? You’re overthinking it. Despite everything I’ve been through, I’m genuinely grateful to fate. I’ve always considered myself fortunate. After all, it’s rare to have the chance to restart one’s life like I did! And it’s these experiences that have shaped who I am now!”

Without her experiences in the cultivation world in her second life, she couldn’t have lived as freely as she did now, even with a rebirth.

So, regardless of the experiences, she saw them all as gifts from fate.

Chapter 822: New Year’s Plans

After resolving matters concerning the Ye family, Ye Leng'an spent most of her time with Huangfu Ruiling. Of course, she didn't neglect her alchemy work either, occasionally setting aside a day or half a day for it.

In the blink of an eye, the new year was approaching.

Inside the CEO's office at Huangye Group, Huangfu Ruiling sat behind his desk, while this time, Ye Leng'an wasn't sitting on the sofa as usual but across from him.

"The new year is almost here. What are your plans?" Ye Leng'an raised her head, looking at Huangfu Ruiling, and asked, "Are you going to spend the New Year at the ancestral mansion of the Huangfu family?"

Last year, they spent the New Year together. However, it was because they were both overseas at the time. Hence, she wanted to confirm whether Huangfu Ruiling planned to return and celebrate with his family members.

Upon hearing Ye Leng'an's question, Huangfu Ruiling paused. He looked up, somewhat hesitantly, and asked, "Do you want to go back for the New Year?"

It didn't matter to him. Previously, he had only gone back to the ancestral mansion for the New Year because Ye Leng'an wasn't in the picture. Therefore, he was fine with wherever she wanted to celebrate. Although he preferred being alone with Ye Leng'an, if she wanted to return to the ancestral mansion, he was okay with that too.

"No!" Ye Leng'an quickly shook her head. "I just wanted to confirm your plans."

Wherever Huangfu Ruiling went, she would follow suit. Spending the New Year with the Huangfu family wasn't a big deal to her. Plus, she was confident that even if they celebrated at their ancestral mansion, no one would dare to give her trouble.

After her reply, Huangfu Ruiling raised an eyebrow and asked, "What do you suggest?"

"How about just the two of us celebrating?" Ye Leng'an pondered for a moment, then smiled. "Besides, without you around, others might relax more!"

This was true. Huangfu Ruiling's mere presence could exert significant pressure without him needing to do anything.

Ye Leng'an's proposal suited Huangfu Ruiling's thoughts. He nodded and continued, "Where do you want to celebrate? I'll have it arranged."

"Let's stay here in the capital." Ye Leng'an suggested, "No need to travel around. We'll just celebrate in the villa. We can even give Sister Li some time off."

Huangfu Ruiling nodded. "Your decision."

"Alright." After a moment's thought, Ye Leng'an added, "I'll go shopping in the afternoon to see if there's anything we need for the New Year."

Huangfu Ruiling promptly offered, "Then after lunch, I'll accompany you!"

“No need.” Ye Leng’an found it amusing. “I’m just getting some New Year’s essentials. You don’t have to come. Focus on your work! Ensuring everything is arranged properly will make for a better celebration.”

Hearing that, Huangfu Ruiling didn’t insist. “Okay then!”

“How time flies!” She couldn’t help but remark. “This time last year, we weren’t even officially together. Now, we’re engaged.”

At this point, she chuckled.

It was undeniable that a lot had happened since her rebirth. In her previous life, she would have never imagined falling for someone like Huangfu Ruiling.

Because from the first glance, he gave off a dangerous vibe. She had never imagined becoming his fiancée.

Indeed, life was unpredictable!

Huangfu Ruiling seemed to reminisce about their past encounters, a hint of nostalgia on his face. “Yes! But, I had already confessed to you back then.”

However, Ye Leng’an had yet to give her answer.

Upon hearing his words, Ye Leng’an couldn’t help but mock, “You dare talk about confessing! Your confession wasn’t even remotely romantic. Who confesses directly in a car, and in such an ambiguous manner?”

She hadn’t found it strange before, but looking back now, it seemed quite unreliable!

Facing her teasing, Huangfu Ruiling said nothing. At that time, he only had eyes for his target, without considering anything else. So, when he saw the right moment, he confessed directly.

Reflecting on it now, he felt a bit guilty.

Seeing Huangfu Ruiling’s expression, Ye Leng’an naturally understood his thoughts. She didn’t press further. After all, she wasn’t seeking retribution, just making a light-hearted remark.

After lunch, Ye Leng’an sent Huangfu Ruiling back to work at the company and then went to the mall herself.

As soon as she entered, the festive atmosphere of the approaching New Year enveloped her. Red decorations adorned the place, and many were busy shopping for New Year essentials.

Since she was only buying basic items, she didn’t head to upscale malls, opting for more ordinary ones instead.

However, even in these standard malls, prices weren’t cheap.

Ye Leng’an strolled leisurely, in no rush to buy everything. After all, there was still plenty of time before the New Year.

“Ye Leng’an!”

As she wandered the mall, a familiar voice called her name from behind.

Turning around, she saw a familiar face and greeted with a polite smile, “Cui’an, it’s you! What brings you here?”

Unaware that Zhou Cui’an had also chosen to stay in the capital for the New Year, Ye Leng’an was surprised. Previously, Zhu Bixuan had complained to her over the phone that Zhou Cui’an had no plans to return home and was struggling to find a job in the capital that provided food, accommodation, and decent pay.

It turned out Zhou Cui’an had found a job here, and it seemed to be going well.

Chapter 823: Sense of superiority

Zhou Cui’an hadn’t anticipated bumping into Ye Leng’an here.

Seeing Ye Leng’an again, she couldn’t help but feel a sense of disdain, but she maintained a smile on her face. “Oh, I found a decent winter break job here in the capital, so I decided to stay. Isn’t it almost New Year? The company needs to purchase some items for the occasion, and that task fell to me.”

As Zhou Cui’an spoke, a hint of superiority crept into her tone. Ever since learning from Murong Yumeng that Ye Leng’an’s current status was achieved through association with wealthy men, she couldn’t help but feel contempt and disdain.

She believed herself to be fundamentally different from Ye Leng’an. She attributed her own standing to hard work, whereas she saw Ye Leng’an as having relied on selling herself.

Previously, she was a sales assistant, and Ye Leng’an was a customer. Now, they were both customers. Zhou Cui’an felt she was far more refined than Ye Leng’an, hence her involuntary sense of superiority.

Observing Zhou Cui’an’s demeanor, Ye Leng’an found it odd but didn’t dwell on it. “Is that so? Well, that’s good.”

The changes in Zhou Cui’an were quite significant, considering the short time since the holiday started. Finding a decent holiday job with accommodation in the capital wasn’t easy. Someone must have helped her!

“I think so too,” Zhou Cui’an affirmed. Then, she turned to Ye Leng’an, implying something as she continued, “Every penny I earn now is the result of my own hard work, so I feel particularly content. After all, relying on others isn’t a sustainable strategy, right?”

After her remark, she gave Ye Leng’an a meaningful glance. Previously, it was Ye Leng’an who reminded her. Now, the tables had turned, and she felt qualified to remind Ye Leng’an.

Confused by Zhou Cui’an’s cryptic attitude, Ye Leng’an raised her eyebrows. “Perhaps. It’s getting late. Aren’t you still going shopping?”

Though uncertain of Zhou Cui’an’s intentions, Ye Leng’an was sure something had changed for her. If Zhou Cui’an had been timid before, she now exhibited an inexplicable sense of superiority.

“Yes, I am.” Zhou Cui’an nodded. Then she looked at Ye Leng’an and said, “Since we’ve bumped into each other, how about going shopping together?”

“Forget it.” Ye Leng’an promptly declined. “Our purchases are probably different. You’re buying for the company, while I’m buying for my family. Our objectives are different.”

She had no desire to accompany Zhou Cui’an, especially given their limited acquaintance. Zhou Cui’an’s recent behavior only added to her perplexity; she wished to avoid any association.

“Alright then.” Zhou Cui’an nodded. “I’ll head off now. Take your time shopping!”

Despite her initial inclination to flaunt her success to Ye Leng’an, she now considered work more important. Securing her current job wasn’t easy, and it was only through Senior Sister Murong’s recommendation that she obtained it. Additionally, her role in this purchase was due to Senior Sister Murong’s influence.

Procurement offered ample opportunities for manipulation, and experienced colleagues often competed for such tasks. Were it not for Senior Sister Murong’s backing, she wouldn’t have been entrusted with this responsibility.

Hence, she couldn’t afford any mistakes and needed to strategize to maximize her gains.

Considering this, accompanying Ye Leng’an for shopping wasn’t appropriate.

Nevertheless, there would be plenty of opportunities in the future. She intended to expose Ye Leng’an’s true nature to everyone.

As Zhou Cui’an walked away, Ye Leng’an watched her departure with a furrowed brow.

Zhou Cui’an had changed significantly, and her attitude toward Ye Leng’an had shifted markedly. Whether Ye Leng’an was somehow involved in these changes remained unclear.

Shaking her head, Ye Leng’an chose not to dwell on it. As long as it didn’t affect her, Zhou Cui’an’s transformation was of little concern.

Zhou Cui’an was no longer a child; she had to bear the consequences of her actions. Moreover, their relationship was merely that of roommates, and Ye Leng’an saw no reason to intervene.

Quickly putting the encounter with Zhou Cui’an out of her mind, Ye Leng’an resumed her shopping in the mall.

She didn’t make many purchases that afternoon, merely acquiring some decorations and New Year’s items. However, there was no rush, as New Year was still days away. She could take her time to complete her shopping, and anything she forgot could be bought later.

Most upscale malls in the capital remained open even during the holiday season.

Returning to the villa that evening, Ye Leng’an found Huangfu Ruiling had already returned.

“Why are you back so early today?” Ye Leng’an asked, surprised. “Didn’t you have a business engagement tonight?”

That had been Ye Leng'an's reason for dining out; had she known Huangfu Ruiling would be back for dinner, she would have stayed

"I canceled it," Huangfu Ruiling replied, taking the items from Ye Leng'an's hands. "I assumed you were still out shopping, so I didn't call you. Have you eaten?"

"I have," Ye Leng'an confirmed. "And you? You haven't eaten yet, have you?"

"Not yet," Huangfu Ruiling admitted. "I'm about to. Keep me company?"

"Of course," Ye Leng'an agreed.

Even if she had already eaten, she was happy to dine with Huangfu Ruiling.

Before long, Sister Li served the prepared dishes, still warm.

Although Ye Leng'an had already eaten, she accepted a bowl of soup from Sister Li to accompany Huangfu Ruiling. They then enjoyed their meal together, chatting and laughing, the atmosphere pleasant.

Chapter 824: Make the Call

As the days drew closer to New Year, it was already the 27th day in the blink of an eye.

However, there was still no word from Huangfu Ruiling's side at the ancestral mansion.

In previous years, Huangfu Ruiling always spent the New Year at the ancestral mansion. Of course, last year was an exception due to his attendance at an overseas auction with Ye Leng'an.

This year marked Huangfu Ruiling's first New Year since becoming the head of the Huangfu family. Logically and sentimentally, he should have been at the old residence. Zhongyu Liuying and Nangong Xiyu had begun organizing various New Year matters. They were now in charge of the domestic affairs, which naturally multiplied with the approaching New Year.

Watching Nangong Xiyu and herself busy together, Zhongyu Liuying felt an inexplicable sense of frustration. Despite being Huangfu Ruiling's biological mother, the management of the domestic affairs should have been solely hers until Huangfu Ruiling married. However, Nangong Xiyu had unfairly divided the power, making it hard for her to accept.

Yet, as this was Huangfu Ruiling's decision, she dared not voice her discontent. Nevertheless, her dislike towards Nangong Xiyu persisted.

Nangong Xiyu wasn't oblivious to Zhongyu Liuying's aversion. However, she remained unfazed, believing that Zhongyu Liuying's opinion was inconsequential as long as she held the power.

So, she welcomed the estrangement and conflicts between Zhongyu Liuying and Huangfu Ruiling, viewing it as advantageous for herself.

In truth, she also looked down upon Zhongyu Liuying. If she had a son as remarkable as Huangfu Ruiling, she would have cherished him like a treasure. Yet Zhongyu Liuying seemed to lack common sense, wanting to distance herself from her own son. Moreover, Zhongyu Liuying insisted on maintaining a maternal demeanor, hoping her son would heed her words. It was absurd.

Nonetheless, Nangong Xiyu refrained from commenting. Firstly, she had no right to intervene in the affairs between Zhongyu Liuying, and Huangfu Ruiling. Secondly, the deeper the conflict between the mother and son, the better it served her interests. Hence, she saw no need to act against her own interests.

As the New Year drew nearer, with only a few days remaining, Zhongyu Liuying, and Nangong Xiyu had made arrangements, yet they remained clueless about Huangfu Ruiling's plans or any other instructions.

Thus, they found themselves rare moments to discuss the matter.

"Sister-in-law, shouldn't we establish some guidelines for the New Year?" Nangong Xiyu looked at Zhongyu Liuying directly, suggesting, "Considering the circumstances, shouldn't we call and inquire about Ruiling's plans?"

Seeing Nangong Xiyu's matter-of-fact demeanor, Zhongyu Liuying felt irritated and retorted, "Our authority is equal. Why must I be the one to ask? Can't you make the call yourself?"

Zhongyu Liuying wasn't Nangong Xiyu's subordinate, so she saw no reason to comply with her instructions. Despite jointly managing the domestic affairs, Zhongyu Liuying's status as the biological mother of the family head held more weight.

After hearing Zhongyu Liuying's words, Nangong Xiyu looked at her with a smirk. "Sister-in-law, are we discussing power now? Ruiling is your son, and I'm just an aunt. Are you sure it's appropriate for me to make this call? Or has your relationship with your son deteriorated to this extent?"

Anyway, the two had been at odds for a long time, so she showed no mercy when speaking. After all, they were always at loggerheads.

"What are you talking about!"

As soon as Zhongyu Liuying heard Nangong Xiyu's words, she almost jumped up. "Even if Huangfu Ruiling is the head of the family, he is still my son. What's between my son and me has nothing to do with you. Besides, there will never be any overnight grudges between mother and son."

As she spoke, her tone was firm, her voice heavy. She wasn't sure if she was trying to convince Nangong Xiyu or herself.

Hearing Zhongyu Liuying's righteous words, Nangong Xiyu's expression remained unchanged. She shrugged her shoulders and then smiled. "That's for the best. In that case, I'll leave this matter to you, sister-in-law. After all, you're mother and son, and communication between you is definitely easier and smoother than with me."

At this point, Zhongyu Liuying had no choice but to accept. She couldn't afford to let Nangong Xiyu look down on her.

Nangong Xiyu didn't press further and simply watched as Zhongyu Liuying made the call.

Under Nangong Xiyu's gaze, Zhongyu Liuying had to dial Li San's number instead of contacting Huangfu Ruiling directly. It wasn't that she didn't want to, but Huangfu Ruiling was avoiding her calls. She had no choice but to go through Li San.

Soon, the call was answered. Before the person on the other end could speak, Zhongyu Liuying stated her request firmly, "The New Year is approaching, and I'd like to know Huangfu Ruiling's plans. Get him on the phone now."

Although she sounded assertive, only she knew how apprehensive she felt at that moment. She wasn't sure if Huangfu Ruiling would even answer her call. If he refused, she could already envision the humiliation she would face in front of Nangong Xiyu.

A hint of surprise flickered in Nangong Xiyu's eyes upon hearing Zhongyu Liuying's words.

She could tell that Zhongyu Liuying wasn't speaking to Huangfu Ruiling directly. This indicated that the relationship between the mother and son was even worse than she had imagined. Otherwise, Zhongyu Liuying wouldn't have to rely on someone else to relay her calls.

Despite her surprise, Nangong Xiyu maintained her composed demeanor.

Zhongyu Liuying felt a bit uneasy, but when she heard the cold voice on the other end, she finally felt reassured.

Chapter 825: I'm Just Informing You

Huangfu Ruiling and Ye Leng'an were in the office discussing plans for the upcoming New Year when there was a sudden knock on the door.

After receiving permission, Li San entered and approached Huangfu Ruiling respectfully. "Master, Madam from the ancestral mansion called. She wants to discuss New Year arrangements with you."

Upon hearing Li San's report, Ye Leng'an looked surprised. She raised her head and glanced at Huangfu Ruiling. "Haven't you informed them yet?"

They had already decided to spend the New Year together, so Ye Leng'an assumed Huangfu Ruiling had already informed his family. She didn't expect Huangfu Ruiling to remain silent even with the New Year approaching.

Huangfu Ruiling was momentarily taken aback. Then, he glanced at Ye Leng'an and replied, "I forgot."

In truth, the matter hadn't crossed his mind. He was accustomed to doing things his own way and didn't feel the need to inform anyone of his decisions. This time was no exception.

Observing Huangfu Ruiling's expression, Ye Leng'an understood the situation. She shook her head with a smile and said, "You should answer the call. At least acknowledge it."

She knew Huangfu Ruiling wasn't particularly sentimental toward his parents, but certain events like the New Year still required acknowledgment.

After Ye Leng'an's remark, Huangfu Ruiling took the phone from Li San and answered coldly, "What's the matter?"

Initially, Zhongyu Liuying was concerned that Huangfu Ruiling might refuse the call, embarrassing her in front of Nangong Xiyu.

However, upon hearing Huangfu Ruiling's icy tone, she couldn't help but shiver. She quickly composed herself, knowing her reaction was excessive. "Ruiling, it's nothing major. With the New

Year approaching, I just wanted to ask when you plan to return to the ancestral home. Many activities are starting soon, but the sacrificial arrangements are the priority.”

Large families like the Huangfu family held sacrificial rituals annually to honor their ancestors before the New Year.

Huangfu Ruiling furrowed his brow and replied coldly, “I won’t be going back to the ancestral mansion this year. As for the sacrifice, leave it to Father and Second Uncle.”

“What?” Zhongyu Liuying’s voice rose in astonishment. “You, as the head of the Huangfu family, can’t just disregard tradition like this, Ruiling.”

Upon hearing Huangfu Ruiling’s response, Nangong Xiyu couldn’t help but sit up straight, putting aside her previous disagreements with Zhongyu Liuying. She just wanted to understand the situation.

While she could infer some details from Zhongyu Liuying’s words, Huangfu Ruiling’s decision not to return for the New Year troubled her.

Like Zhongyu Liuying, she understood that Huangfu Ruiling, as the family head, should attend such significant events.

“I’ve made my decision,” Huangfu Ruiling asserted firmly. “I’m informing you, not seeking your opinion.”

His cold words sent a chill down Zhongyu Liuying’s spine.

It dawned on her that the person on the other end of the line wasn’t just her son but also the head of the Huangfu family. Regardless of his decisions, she had no say.

Realizing this, Zhongyu Liuying felt disheartened and wondered if her son was a disappointment.

Though Nangong Xiyu didn’t know Huangfu Ruiling’s response, she could sense from Zhongyu Liuying’s expression that things weren’t going smoothly.

Facing Nangong Xiyu’s scrutinizing gaze, Zhongyu Liuying took a deep breath and said, “Alright, I understand. However, as the family head, you need to attend the sacrifice. And since you’re engaged to Leng’an, shouldn’t she participate in the sacrifice too? It’s an opportunity for her to meet the ancestors of the Huangfu family.”

Though Huangfu Ruiling’s decision not to return for the New Year troubled Zhongyu Liuying, she knew she couldn’t push further without embarrassing herself. However, she felt obligated to bring up the sacrifice. If Huangfu Ruiling skipped it, the family would surely gossip.

When the time came, nobody would dare to gossip about Huangfu Ruiling. Ultimately, the ones who would bear the blame would be her and Nangong Xiyu. After all, they were the ones responsible for the domestic affairs. Moreover, her responsibility would outweigh Nangong Xiyu’s, as she was Huangfu Ruiling’s biological mother.

Therefore, no matter what, she had to persuade Huangfu Ruiling to attend the sacrifice. So, even if it was against protocol for Ye Leng’an to attend the sacrifice, she had to bring it up.

She was well aware of how important Ye Leng'an was in Huangfu Ruiling's eyes. By bringing Ye Leng'an into the discussion, she hoped to convince Huangfu Ruiling to attend the sacrifice, regardless of protocol.

Upon hearing Zhongyu Liuying's mention of the sacrifice, Huangfu Ruiling couldn't help but furrow his brow. After a moment's thought, he responded, "Inform me once the date for the sacrifice is set. I'll bring An'an with me."

"Good!"

Zhongyu Liuying wanted to say more, but the call was abruptly disconnected.

Nevertheless, Huangfu Ruiling's agreement to attend the sacrifice was a relief.

Seeing Zhongyu Liuying hang up the phone, Nangong Xiyu quickly asked, "How did it go? Will Ruiling return for the New Year?"

"No." Zhongyu Liuying shook her head, changing the subject. "But he has agreed to attend the pre-New Year sacrifice."

Upon hearing this, Nangong Xiyu frowned. "He won't come back for the New Year? Isn't that undesirable?"

Chapter 826: Sacrificial Ceremony

"I've already advised him, but he disagreed. What else can I do?" Zhongyu Liuying looked at Nangong Xiyu and replied, "If you think it's inappropriate, then you should personally call and persuade him!"

She felt she had done enough. Initially, Huangfu Ruiling didn't even plan to attend the sacrifice, but it was only after her persuasion that he agreed. Nangong Xiyu was merely observing from the sidelines, so she had no right to criticize!

Hearing Zhongyu Liuying's suggestion to make a call, Nangong Xiyu's eyes betrayed a hint of unease. Then she said, "Isn't Ruiling your son? Weren't you just swearing that there wouldn't be any lingering grudges between you as mother and son? If that's the case, then it's only natural for you as his mother to make the call."

"I already made the call, and he agreed to attend the ceremony, didn't he?" Zhongyu Liuying sneered and said, "As for the rest, if you have objections, you can call yourself. After all, I've already made one call, so it's your turn!"

Zhongyu Liuying's words left Nangong Xiyu speechless. She didn't know how to respond and chose to remain silent.

On the other side, after Huangfu Ruiling hung up the phone, he saw Ye Leng'an staring at him. "Is something wrong?"

"No, I just wanted to ask about the sacrifice you mentioned..." Ye Leng'an was curious, "And when will it be held?"

She had heard Huangfu Ruiling's words and knew she had to attend the ceremony. But what was it exactly? Why hadn't she heard of it before?

"Every year before the New Year, the Huangfu family holds a grand sacrificial ceremony," Huangfu Ruiling explained. "Not only us, but the other three major families also hold similar ceremonies. Since we're engaged, you'll accompany me to this one."

It was an opportunity for the Huangfu family to meet their future matriarch.

Ye Leng'an nodded. Suddenly, as if realizing something, she said, "Wait a minute! Last year, before the New Year, didn't you go overseas with me? So you didn't attend last year's ceremony, right? Or did you leave after the ceremony?"

Huangfu Ruiling smiled and shook his head. "I didn't attend last year."

"So you're not obligated to attend!" Ye Leng'an raised an eyebrow. "Then it seems you're not that important!"

"I wasn't the head of the family last year!" Huangfu Ruiling smiled. "So whether I attended or not didn't matter to them."

Ye Leng'an nodded in understanding.

Upon receiving the news that Huangfu Ruiling would attend the sacrificial ceremony, Zhongyu Liuying and Nangong Xiyu immediately got busy.

The sacrificial ceremony before the New Year was crucial for a large family, so there couldn't be any mistakes.

At this moment, Zhongyu Liuying and Nangong Xiyu temporarily put aside their conflicts and began preparing together to avoid any issues.

With the New Year fast approaching, the sacrificial ceremony was scheduled for the 29th day of the year.

Early in the morning, Zhongyu Liuying and Nangong Xiyu got busy.

The Huangfu family was large, and not everyone from the collateral branches could attend. Therefore, only direct descendants and some important collateral relatives could attend.

Attending this annual sacrificial ceremony was a great honor for everyone. Therefore, they arrived early at the ancestral mansion, awaiting the start of the ceremony. Even Huangfu Ruixiang, who usually kept to himself, returned to the mortal world with his wife Zhong Yating a few days ago. Early in the morning, they were already here. Only the family head, Huangfu Ruiling, hadn't shown up yet.

But what caught everyone's attention was the presence of Li Yiran, who had no official status. With a proud expression, she occasionally threw provocative glances at Zhong Yating.

Facing Li Yiran's provocation, Zhong Yating was furious but managed to contain her anger.

She hadn't expected Li Yiran to dare show up at such an important event. Politely, Li Yiran was Huangfu Ruixiang's concubine, but bluntly, she was just a mistress kept outside.

If it weren't for the public setting, Zhong Yating would have wanted to confront Li Yiran.

Li Yiran's presence made her the subject of gossip. She could feel the probing gazes of others on her.

Huangfu Ruixiang's recent wedding and the drama surrounding it were still fresh in everyone's minds.

Today, at the Huangfu family's annual major sacrificial ceremony, both Huangfu Ruixiang's official wife, Zhong Yating, and his rumored son's mother, Li Yiran, were present.

No matter how one looked at it, it was odd.

Many thought Huangfu Ruixiang's decision today was inappropriate. Normally, only the official wife should attend such a grand occasion.

Regardless of Li Yiran's favor or the fact she bore Huangfu Ruixiang's only son, to others, she was just a mistress who couldn't be acknowledged publicly.

Huangfu Ruixiang noticed the curious looks directed at him from time to time. He hadn't intended for Li Yiran to attend such an event today.

But his mother insisted, even wanting Li Yiran's child added to the family tree. He couldn't argue and had to agree.

Now, facing those stares, he regretted his decision.

On the other hand, Li Yiran didn't feel out of place at all. In fact, she felt proud when she received strange looks from others.

Being able to attend the sacrificial ceremony today meant her identity was publicly acknowledged. Even without a marriage certificate, she could stand by Huangfu Ruixiang's side openly.

Chapter 827: The Auspicious Time Hasn't Arrived

It wasn't until the auspicious time was nearly upon them that Huangfu Ruiling finally arrived, with Ye Leng'an by his side.

Huangfu Ruiling's demeanor remained icy, his face devoid of any extra expression. Only when he looked at Ye Leng'an did a hint of tenderness occasionally flicker in his eyes.

Though late, Huangfu Ruiling, being the patriarch, faced no objections or even glances for his tardiness.

Nevertheless, there were always those eager to seize the spotlight.

As Huangfu Ruiling led Ye Leng'an into the hall, Huangfu Jingzhang, seething with suppressed anger, couldn't resist speaking up. "Do you even realize what day it is today? It's the sacrificial ceremony! Coming so late, are you deliberately showing disrespect to our ancestors?"

To him, Huangfu Ruiling's cold countenance was a form of triumph. Everyone else had already arrived, except him.

As the family head, everyone had to wait for him, including his biological parents.

This realization stirred up the anger he had been holding back – his lost position as family head, Huangfu Ruiling's habitual coldness toward his parents, the embarrassment of the engagement ceremony, and the subsequent deduction in living expenses.

All these grievances fueled his inner rage. Seeing Huangfu Ruiling now, he knew he shouldn't, but he couldn't help but mock.

"Has the auspicious time arrived yet?"

In stark contrast to Huangfu Jingzhang's fury, Huangfu Ruiling remained eerily composed, almost indifferent. Without even sparing a glance at Huangfu Jingzhang, he asked Zhongyu Liuying and Nangong Xiyu. "If I recall correctly, the auspicious time hasn't arrived yet, has it?"

This time, the sacrificial ceremony was Zhongyu Liuying and Nangong Xiyu's responsibility, so it was only natural to inquire with them.

The two were taken aback. They hadn't expected Huangfu Ruiling to disregard Huangfu Jingzhang and address them directly.

Quickly regaining her composure, Nangong Xiyu replied, "No, not yet. The auspicious time hasn't arrived."

With Nangong Xiyu's response, Huangfu Ruiling glanced indifferently at Huangfu Jingzhang, saying nothing. But the meaning behind his gaze was crystal clear. The auspicious time hadn't even come yet, so why was he causing a scene?

Instantly, everyone understood Huangfu Ruiling's unspoken message. All eyes involuntarily shifted to Huangfu Jingzhang, awaiting his reaction.

Huangfu Jingzhang wasn't oblivious or foolish; he understood Huangfu Ruiling's message perfectly well. This only fueled his simmering rage. His face flushed red, fists clenched as if he would charge forward any moment.

Seeing this, Huangfu Jingxian stepped forward, restraining Huangfu Jingzhang. He then turned to Huangfu Ruiling with a smile. "Ruiling, don't mind him. Your father simply attaches great importance to this ceremony, hence the impatience. It's not aimed at you."

He then turned to whisper to Huangfu Jingzhang, "Brother, mind the occasion. There are many eyes on us! Any trouble won't bode well."

Though Huangfu Jingzhang remained visibly displeased, he only snorted and said no more.

In truth, he felt deeply unsettled by Huangfu Ruiling's indifference. Yet, Huangfu Ruiling's recent disregard had undeniably ignited his anger.

However, he didn't express himself as forcefully as he felt. He also worried that he might be embarrassed in the end.

After all, in Huangfu Ruiling's heart, he held no weight as a father.

Therefore, when Huangfu Jingxian spoke up, he yielded to the situation.

Huangfu Jingzhang's retreat didn't surprise Huangfu Jingxian. They were brothers, having grown up together, so he knew his elder brother well.

This minor incident, hardly a conflict, soon passed, and the sacrificial ceremony was about to commence. Huangfu Ruiling, leading the family, headed toward the ancestral hall, followed closely by Ye Leng'an.

Though engaged, Ye Leng'an wasn't officially part of the family yet, lacking the qualification to enter the ancestral hall. However, with Huangfu Ruiling wielding almost all of the family's power, none dared to challenge his words.

As they reached the hall's entrance, already open, Huangfu Ruiling suddenly stopped, turning to the others. His gaze landed on Li Yiran. "Why is she here?"

Though addressing Li Yiran, the question was directed at Zhongyu Liuying and Nangong Xiyu. They were in charge of the ceremony, thus responsible for everything. So, with an unexpected presence, they were the ones to answer.

At that moment, Li Yiran stood there, her complexion drained of color, looking pitiful. She hadn't expected Huangfu Ruiling to suddenly confront her at this time. Just moments ago, Huangfu Ruiling had remained silent, leading her to believe he tacitly approved her entrance into the ancestral hall.

However, she was caught off guard when Huangfu Ruiling directly questioned her at the entrance of the hall.

Seeing Li Yiran's distressed expression, Huangfu Ruixiang felt a pang of sympathy, wanting to explain on her behalf. Yet, before he could step forward, he was pulled back by Zhong Yating. Though irritated, upon seeing Huangfu Ruiling's cold countenance, he silently retreated.

While Huangfu Ruiling was his older brother, he didn't harbor any brotherly affection toward him. He could already imagine the torrent of criticism he would face if he were to intervene at this moment.

So, he found that his ability fell short of his wishes.

Chapter 828: Entering the Family Tree

Seeing Huangfu Ruixiang's retreat, Zhong Yating's eyes couldn't help but flash with a trace of disdain and satisfaction. She had already anticipated this outcome. As long as Huangfu Ruixiang saw Huangfu Ruiling's cold demeanor, he wouldn't dare to step forward at this moment.

She knew that Li Yiran's presence here today was orchestrated by her cunning mother-in-law. It was due to her dissatisfaction with Zhong Yating's background that she wanted to support Li Yiran against her. Unfortunately, this was the result.

Just moments ago, Li Yiran was still provoking her. Now, in the blink of an eye, she couldn't back down.

Seeing this situation, she felt immensely pleased!

Zhongyu Liuying and Nangong Xiyu glanced at each other, and Nangong Xiyu immediately looked away.

Clearly, Nangong Xiyu didn't want to get involved in this matter. No matter what, Li Yiran's appearance was inappropriate for today's occasion.

She had already warned Zhongyu Liuying earlier. It was a pity the other party wasn't willing to listen, so there was nothing more she could say.

Thus, faced with this situation, she naturally couldn't lend a helping hand.

Seeing Nangong Xiyu's evasive gaze, Zhongyu Liuying gritted her teeth in frustration. She knew that at this critical moment, Nangong Xiyu would definitely shirk responsibility. This was truly shameless.

"What's wrong? Is my question difficult to answer?" Huangfu Ruiling's cold voice rang out again. "Or do you all think it's normal for Li Yiran to be here?"

Ye Leng'an, beside him, remained silent. She simply watched the drama unfold without expressing any opinions.

Upon arriving, she had already noticed Li Yiran's presence. At first, she found it somewhat strange. However, when she saw Li Yiran intending to enter the ancestral hall, she was greatly surprised.

Though she wasn't familiar with many of the Huangfu family's customs, she knew places like the ancestral hall were solemn. With Li Yiran's status, she wasn't qualified to enter.

However, Li Yiran's presence here was likely orchestrated by Zhongyu Liuying.

She understood Zhongyu Liuying's motives but couldn't help but sigh. This was indeed a risky move!

She wanted to use an occasion like today to elevate Li Yiran's status, so she could continue to oppose Zhong Yating. But Zhongyu Liuying hadn't considered whether an occasion like today was really something she could exploit.

Seeing Huangfu Ruiling's expression darken even further, Nangong Xiyu quickly spoke up to distance herself. "This was all suggested by your mother, and I advised against it, but to no avail."

Nangong Xiyu bluntly laid out all the facts; she had no intention of sharing responsibility with Zhongyu Liuying.

Upon hearing Nangong Xiyu's attempts to deflect blame, Zhongyu Liuying's expression turned ugly. She glared fiercely at Nangong Xiyu before forcing a smile and reluctantly speaking up. "Although Yiran is not Ruixiang's wife, she has given birth to Ruixiang's only son. So, today I intend to have the child's name entered into the family tree. Naturally, as the birth mother, Yiran should also witness this scene."

Nangong Xiyu naturally noticed the almost murderous look Zhongyu Liuying directed at her. However, she didn't care at all. After all, this matter had nothing to do with her. She couldn't let herself, an outsider, bear the responsibility!

Seeing Zhongyu Liuying step forward to explain for her, Li Yiran finally felt relieved.

"On the family tree?" Hearing Zhongyu Liuying's explanation, Huangfu Ruiling frowned.

At these words, Li Yiran's heart skipped a beat.

Because she felt today's matter might be doomed. As the head of the Huangfu family, if Huangfu Ruiling disagreed, the child wouldn't be entered into the family tree.

In a large family like the Huangfu family, only those on the family tree were considered true members. Otherwise, even if the child was registered with Huangfu Ruixiang, he wouldn't be recognized.

If the child wasn't recognized by the Huangfu family, he'd forever be an outsider, not valued by the family.

As for her, the so-called biological mother, she had even less status.

Zhongyu Liuying clearly understood Huangfu Ruiling's meaning. She hurriedly said, "This child is Ruixiang's biological child. It's only natural for him to be on the family tree."

"That's right."

At this moment, Huangfu Jingzhang also stepped forward. "This is Ruixiang's son and my grandson, so he must be on the family tree."

Whether out of genuine love for his grandson or simply to oppose Huangfu Ruiling, he firmly sided with Zhongyu Liuying today.

Li Yiran, who had been silent on the sidelines, couldn't help but breathe a sigh of relief seeing Zhongyu Liuying and Huangfu Jingzhang stand up for the child.

Though she knew their motives weren't pure, achieving her goal was what mattered.

Now, as long as the child made it onto the family tree, whether she entered the ancestral hall was less important. To her, the child was her greatest leverage. Only when the child's identity was recognized could she, the biological mother, have a place.

Huangfu Ruiling glanced indifferently at Huangfu Jingzhang and Zhongyu Liuying, then said, "Whether illegitimate children can be entered into the family tree is up to me, not you. Or have you decided to act first and explain later?"

"Huangfu Ruiling, we are your parents," Huangfu Jingzhang said with exasperation. "Is this how you treat your biological parents? We're not asking for much. We just want our biological grandson to be on the family tree. Is that too much to ask? Or do you no longer see us as your parents?"

Regardless of the reason, today he had to get this child on the family tree. He also wanted everyone to see that even though Huangfu Ruiling was head of the family, he was still his father. That was an unchangeable fact.

In contrast to Huangfu Jingzhang, Huangfu Ruiling remained calm, even indifferent. "This child cannot be entered into the family tree."

Chapter 829: The Only Son

The matter of whether the child could be recorded in the family tree brought the scene to a deadlock.

Huangfu Jingzhang insisted on registering the child in the family tree today to counter Huangfu Ruiling, regardless of the circumstances. Zhongyu Liuying naturally sided with him.

As for Huangfu Ruiling, although he didn't say much and wasn't very insistent, it was clear that they wouldn't get what they wanted.

Thus, the situation became extremely awkward.

Seeing this, Huangfu Jingxian stepped forward with a smile to persuade, "The child is still young; there's no rush to enter the family tree. Let's discuss it later! The most important thing now is the sacrifice, and the auspicious time is approaching. We can't afford to delay."

"Yes, that's right!" Nangong Xiyu also stepped forward. "Let's discuss this privately later!"

At this point, Huangfu Jingzhang and Zhongyu Liuying were somewhat swayed. Their persistence wasn't due to love for their grandson but simply because they disagreed with Huangfu Ruiling's attitude.

However, it seemed that continuing to insist would only prolong the stalemate. Since someone had come forward to mediate, they naturally relented.

But although Huangfu Jingzhang and Zhongyu Liuying were willing to back down, it was evident that Huangfu Ruiling wasn't willing to let go so easily.

He didn't intend to give in just because someone had tried to persuade him. He maintained a stern expression, stating, "I've said it before, the child will never be recorded in the family genealogy. There's no room for negotiation now or in the future."

He was indifferent to the feud between Zhong Yating and Li Yiran; his stance was solely based on precedent. Throughout the major families, illegitimate children were never recorded in the family genealogy. This was a fact, leading to his direct refusal.

Upon hearing Huangfu Ruiling's words, Li Yiran, standing nearby, turned pale. This child was her only bargaining chip. But now, with Huangfu Ruiling, the family head, publicly announcing that her son couldn't be recorded in the family tree, it was tantamount to denying her son's affiliation with the Huangfu family.

In families like the Huangfu family, mere registration didn't grant one membership. Only being recorded in the family genealogy symbolized acknowledgment as a member. If her son couldn't be recorded, he would never be considered a legitimate member of the Huangfu family. What kind of future would her son have?

More importantly, what about her? Without her son's support, what status would she have within the Huangfu family? Would she have to live at the mercy of Zhong Yating?

In contrast to Li Yiran, Zhong Yating was ecstatic! She didn't understand why Huangfu Ruiling was so adamant, but she knew this situation favored her the most.

If it weren't for the inappropriate setting, she would have burst into laughter.

"Huangfu Ruiling," Huangfu Jingzhang roared, "What kind of heart do you have, denying your brother's child from entering the family tree!"

“Mind your tone.” Huangfu Ruiling glanced at Huangfu Jingzhang indifferently, then stated, “I’m not stopping Huangfu Ruixiang’s child from being recorded in the family genealogy. However, under normal circumstances, illegitimate children aren’t included in the family tree. This isn’t unique to the Huangfu family; other families do the same.”

These words made Huangfu Jingzhang’s expression darken slightly, but he didn’t back down. Instead, he confidently asserted, “You said it yourself, that’s under normal circumstances. But now, this child is Ruixiang’s only son, so there’s nothing wrong with my request.”

At that moment, Zhong Yating wanted to spit on Huangfu Jingzhang’s face.

What did he mean by Ruixiang’s only son? Was she dead? Wouldn’t the child she gave birth to in the future also be Ruixiang’s?

Ye Leng’an, who had been observing from the sidelines, couldn’t help but chuckle.

Her crisp laughter sounded particularly eerie in the tense atmosphere, drawing everyone’s attention to her.

Instantly, the expressions of Huangfu Jingzhang and Zhongyu Liuying turned even uglier. When they looked at Ye Leng’an, their gazes were murderous.

In contrast, Zhong Yating’s eyes gleamed. She had a feeling that whatever Ye Leng’an said would benefit her.

“Ye Leng’an, have you no manners?” Huangfu Jingzhang berated, “Do you realize the significance of today’s occasion? This is our Huangfu family’s important sacrificial ceremony. Yet, you’re here smiling frivolously. Do you have any respect for our ancestors?”

“Before you ask me, why don’t you reflect on yourself?” Ye Leng’an shrugged casually. “Since you acknowledge the importance of today’s occasion, don’t make unreasonable requests here and waste everyone’s time, right? Since you don’t even respect the ancestors of the Huangfu family, do you have the right to scold me?”

Instantly, Huangfu Jingzhang felt a pang in his chest. Clutching his chest, he pointed at Ye Leng’an with a trembling finger. “You...”

“What?” Ye Leng’an interrupted, “Did I say something wrong? Furthermore, what do you mean by Ruixiang’s only son? Has Ruixiang lost his ability to have children? Can he no longer have children in the future?”

Her words immediately shifted everyone’s focus to Huangfu Ruixiang. The intense gazes seemed to bore holes into him.

“Don’t talk nonsense,” Zhongyu Liuying immediately intervened. “Ruixiang is healthy. Don’t slander him just because you have someone backing you up. If you speak irresponsibly again, don’t blame me for being rude!”

With a fierce glare, she looked at Ye Leng'an. If looks could kill, Ye Leng'an would have been torn to shreds by now.

She didn't care about Huangfu Ruiling, who stood behind Ye Leng'an. She couldn't allow Ye Leng'an to slander Ruixiang. Otherwise, if today's events were to spread, how would Ruixiang face others in the future?

Chapter 830: Hatred

"Since Huangfu Ruixiang's still capable of bearing children, what's the point of claiming to be the only son!" Ye Leng'an sneered, breaking the silence. "If he's no longer the only son, what's there left to fight for? Isn't this just a waste of everyone's time?"

Her words instantly left Huangfu Jingzhang and Zhongyu Liuying speechless.

Watching from the sidelines, Zhong Yating felt a sense of satisfaction. Yet, she couldn't help but shoot a disdainful glance at Huangfu Ruixiang standing beside her.

Despite orchestrating events to secure a wealthy life with Huangfu Ruixiang, she couldn't help but look down on him now. Despite whatever intentions his parents might have had in confronting Huangfu Ruiling here, it was ultimately Huangfu Ruixiang's son who benefited. Yet, Huangfu Ruixiang remained silent, seemingly indifferent.

She once believed Huangfu Ruixiang harbored some affection for his only son. But seeing his apathetic demeanor now, she realized he was truly selfish. In his eyes, he would always be the most important person.

Nevertheless, she wasn't disappointed. She no longer harbored deep feelings for Huangfu Ruixiang. Her desire to marry him was solely to elevate her status in the Huangfu family and live a dream life.

Given her mindset, the current situation was most favorable for her.

After today's spectacle, Li Yiran would have no grounds to flaunt herself in front of her.

Huangfu Jingzhang and Zhongyu Liuying were visibly livid, their faces flushed with embarrassment. Being treated this way by a junior in front of everyone was a humiliation.

Huangfu Jingzhang was on the brink of losing his composure. Ignoring Ye Leng'an, he pointed directly at Huangfu Ruiling, his voice unwavering. "Huangfu Ruiling, no matter what, I will ensure this child is recorded in the family tree today. If you dare to intervene, you will cease to be my son."

Huangfu Jingzhang's anger clouded his judgment. All he desired now was to salvage his pride. Otherwise, he'd never be able to hold his head high in the Huangfu family again.

"Brother, please refrain from speaking rashly."

Seeing things spiraling out of control, Huangfu Jingxian stepped forward, grasping Huangfu Jingzhang's arm, and whispered, "Calm down. Let's not create a scene on such an occasion."

He turned to Huangfu Ruiling with a smile. "Ruiling, your father is just overly anxious, he means no harm. It's simply a matter of familial love! He adores his grandson too much, hence his words."

If the person before him wasn't his elder brother, he'd rather not get involved. Even though he was his brother, he couldn't help but sigh. This was utter foolishness!

If he had an outstanding son like Huangfu Ruiling, he'd surely cherish him. But his brother's behavior was incomprehensible. Constantly opposing Huangfu Ruiling, who wasn't one to tolerate such behavior.

His brother was truly inviting trouble!

Clearly, Huangfu Jingzhang was too enraged to heed Huangfu Jingxian's advice. Before he could speak, Huangfu Ruiling interrupted.

"If you don't want to acknowledge me as your son, then I don't care." Huangfu Ruiling's icy words pierced the air. "If you persist, I can erase your name from the family tree today, and we'll have no relationship whatsoever in the future."

The frigid tone sent a chill through the crowd, lowering the temperature several degrees. Many couldn't help but shiver involuntarily.

All eyes were on Huangfu Jingzhang, waiting for his response. Deep down, everyone knew he wouldn't want to lose Huangfu Ruiling.

Huangfu Jingzhang finally regained his senses. He shivered, regretting his earlier outburst. He couldn't figure out how to respond now. Anything he said would be wrong. His anger had led him to speak rashly, and now he regretted it. But under the scrutiny of the crowd, he couldn't bring himself to yield to Huangfu Ruiling.

Yet, he still harbored resentment toward Huangfu Ruiling and Ye Leng'an. How could they be so aggressive as juniors?

Seeing Huangfu Jingzhang's silence, Huangfu Ruiling's cold voice cut through the tension. "What's your decision?"

Huangfu Jingzhang was taken aback by Huangfu Ruiling's persistence. He looked into Huangfu Ruiling's eyes, only to see an icy resolve.

He realized Huangfu Ruiling wasn't jesting. He genuinely sought a clear answer. If he chose Li Yiran's child today, his name would indeed be erased from the family tree.

The realization filled Huangfu Jingzhang with dread. He couldn't bear the thought of losing his status in the Huangfu family.

Despite his embarrassment, Huangfu Jingzhang took a deep breath, clenched his teeth, and confessed, "I didn't consider the matter thoroughly today. An illegitimate child indeed has no place in the family tree."

His words were met with disdainful glances from the onlookers.

Zhongyu Liuying dared not speak, fearing Huangfu Ruiling might expunge her name from the family tree too.

As Huangfu Jingzhang finished speaking, Li Yiran closed her eyes, concealing the hatred within her. Though she anticipated Huangfu Jingzhang's choice, hearing it still filled her with resentment. Especially when he mentioned "illegitimate child," her hatred surged like an unstoppable tide.

Yet, the die had been cast. She had no power to alter the outcome. And she lamented her failure. Despite her efforts, she couldn't secure her son's place in the family tree.