

Scavengers 351

Chapter 351: Direct Challenge

"Lin Lele, is it?" Ji You repeated with a playful tone, slowly curling the corners of her lips into a smile.

"What do you want?" Lin Lele, however, furrowed her brows, defensively arching her back slightly...

Ji You, watching this scene, slowly deepened the smile on her lips, "It's not your fault for not knowing the truth."

Upon hearing this, Lin Lele's brows tightened.

Ji You took a few steps closer to her, still smiling with the corners of her eyes: "It's also not your fault to be deliberately deceived."

Lin Lele was stunned: "What?"

Ji You stopped in front of Lin Lele, smiling and said, "But—spreading rumors maliciously without knowing the facts and without verifying the truth, that's your fault."

"So—" Ji You raised an eyebrow, looking at her faintly: "Go back, read more books, only by learning to think independently can you avoid being biased."

Lin Lele frowned: "You!"

Seemingly realizing something, she raised her head, slightly smugly glanced at Ji You, and provocatively said: "Are you trying to say what I just said isn't true? Are you trying to deny that you haven't plagiarized and stolen from Senior Xu Siyu? The school still holds the record of revoking your admission letter, so don't even dream of clearing your name! You disgusting plagiarist, since you did it, yet you don't dare to admit it, utterly shameless!"

Lin Lele thought that after saying this, Ji You would definitely be infuriated and might even make an inappropriate gesture, in this way integrating her own intentions, but—Ji You's expression remained calm, even the smile on her lips didn't fade.

At this moment—

Ji You's face carried a smile, but her eyes were slightly cold: "Classmate Lin Lele, thank you for your concern. Here, I sincerely ask you to convey a message to those spreading rumors behind the scenes—only dead products can be stolen, but not the living soul and creativity. All that I, Ji You, have lost, I will soon reclaim it, please tell her to be ready to warmly welcome my visit."

Huh?

Upon hearing this, Lin Lele's brows instantly tightened; what did Ji You mean?

Was she about to challenge Senior Xu Siyu?

Or—

Regardless, seeing Ji You so nonchalantly unbothered, Lin Lele felt uncomfortable; she wanted to strike at Ji You, aiming to see Ji You embarrass herself, definitely not to witness such a scene.

Thinking this, Lin Lele stiffened her neck, scoffing coldly: "Stop pretending to be something you're not, acting as if you're so important. You, challenging Senior Xu Siyu? In your dreams."

Ji You heard this, shook her head slightly, and responded with a smile: "So, the one spreading rumors behind the scenes is Xu Siyu herself? Well then, the message I just spoke, please, Classmate Lin Lele, formally pass it on to her. Also—'The gentleman is open and unobstructed, the honorable path straight ahead; the villain hides deceit, step by step uneasy.' All these sneaky, underhanded tactics, please ask Senior Xu Siyu to put them all away."

Lin Lele's pupils shrank.

The surrounding people including Chen Yan, also suddenly widened their eyes.

Ji You—

She—actually did challenge Xu Siyu.

And, her tone, her demeanor, wasn't at all joking.

Also—

By saying this, wasn't Ji You confirming that Senior Xu Siyu spread those rumors? Listen to what she just said? What about 'The gentleman is open and unobstructed, the honorable path straight ahead; the villain hides deceit, step by step uneasy'?

This not only accuses Senior Xu Siyu of spreading rumors but also calls her a villain?

Lin Lele glared, "Ji You! Watch your words! Senior Xu Siyu is not someone such a plagiarist as you can slander! You shameless, despicable plagiarist dog, don't you have any sense of shame? Doesn't your conscience hurt?"

Ji You shook her head, sighed, "Since you aren't speaking humanely, then—I won't be polite anymore. Classmate Lin Lele, take my just-spoken words, now, immediately, get out!"

Lin Lele: "You!!!"

Her face suddenly turned red, her hands shaking, her mouth agape, she couldn't believe Ji You would tell her to leave in front of so many people... How could she? How dare she?

But Ji You ignored her and turned to Chen Yan and the other students from the self-paying class, shook her head, and said with a smile, "Sorry, I'm a bit quick-tempered; I made everyone laugh."

After saying that, Ji You resumed her stride and continued running—

Students around watched Ji You's running figure, and then they seemed to realize that this petite girl had such a thin back, yet her straight spine was like a soaring pine reaching into the clouds.

"Is she serious?"

"Is she challenging Xu Siyu?"

"From what she said, she didn't plagiarize?"

"What's really going on? Does anyone know?"

...

As Ji You's figure gradually moved away, the surrounding students couldn't help but click their tongues and talk among themselves.

Then—

A striking figure suddenly burst out from the crowd.

"Wait..."

Chen Yan couldn't resist but chased after her, "Ji You, please wait a moment."

Ji You was slightly stunned, running and turning back: "What's the matter?"

Chen Yan, with her long legs, leapt to Ji You's side, and she wore a small work vest too, running alongside Ji You, making Ji You seem even more petite and thin...

Chen Yan asked, "Ji You, are you really going to challenge Senior Xu Siyu?"

Ji You nodded: "Yes."

Her voice was firm yet clear, and all the students around could hear it distinctly; everyone suddenly fell silent and took a deep breath: it wasn't a joke.

It was real!

Chen Yan's brow slightly furrowed, her tone filled with apparent concern, "Ji You, I heard you've been taking only Combat Department courses this semester, and you haven't completed any course from the Material Department... you... you..."

Xu Siyu has always been deep-rooted in the Material Department. Her abilities before aside, but now with a mentor guiding her, and reportedly, she was even invited to Senior Nolan's lab... Such Xu Siyu surely has very solid knowledge, a very formidable opponent.

And Ji You—

To be honest, Chen Yan wasn't very optimistic about Ji You, not because she doubted her abilities, but— Ji You had been away from the Material courses for a long time, and it might be challenging to pick them up again...

Ji You looked at Chen Yan, her eyes holding a sincere smile, she softly said, "Chen Yan, are you worried I might lose, trying to persuade me to give up, right?"

Chen Yan listened, hesitated slightly, but still nodded, "Yes."

Ji You shook her head, smiling, "Thank you. However, I will not give up, never. Although I haven't attended even a day of Material classes, I haven't missed any class until now, and I don't believe I will lose."

Seeing Ji You's resolute attitude, Chen Yan stopped persuading her. Instead, she suddenly said, "I believe in you."

Chapter 352: Comfort from My Friends

When Ji You heard this, her face immediately blossomed into a smile, and she couldn't resist saying, "Classmate Chen Yan, I didn't expect that not only are you beautiful, but your taste is also exceptionally good. This really shocked me. I've made up my mind, from now on, I'll only charge you half the standard fee for proof."

Chen Yan: "..."

What the heck?

Normally, shouldn't it be no charge at all?

Ji You laughed heartily, "Not charging is impossible, impossible in this lifetime. Even if you are really beautiful and have long legs, it's still impossible."

Chen Yan: "Goodbye!"

After speaking, she quickened her steps, decidedly leaving Ji You behind.

Ji You didn't mind at all, she kept up her steady pace and leisurely said, "Don't forget to pay the bill later."

Chen Yan couldn't resist turning her head and glaring at Ji You: "Farewell."

...

The charging and paying that Ji You talked about wasn't a direct financial transaction. To avoid trouble and prevent situations like Lin Lele's, where she didn't actually run but still forcibly had Ji You help with false certification, from happening again, Ji You made a requirement to all the self-funded students: if they wanted her to vouch for them, they had to trade with knowledge they possessed and personally organized.

However, these underachievers were all loafers just waiting for meals. What knowledge could they possibly have? Thus, Ji You's demands weren't high. Knowledge on techniques of Mecha Manufacturing...

Basics of Material Processing...

Secrets to driving large machinery...

Or even, where in the Alliance the tastiest food was, the most beautiful scenery, tips for Military Academy Students on how to successfully romance someone, a ranking list of easy-to-find bargains on Star Network's stores...

And so on.

Anything that was useful or interesting could be organized and sent to Ji You as compensation.

Of course, Ji You wasn't a heartless merchant. Generally, Ji You would charge only once, but these things had to be reviewed by Ji You herself, ensuring that the other person had taken heart in organizing them and that they were truly interesting or useful.

Thus far, over half of the self-funded students still owed Ji You a debt yet to be cleared.

Chen Yan was one of them.

This Chen Yan, she was truly not fond of studying. She had no interest in machinery, nor in Mecha, manufacturing, materials, and so on. The only thing she was interested in was writing romance stories.

But?

She was also very unimaginative, her stories so stiff and boring that they left Ji You dumbfounded. After reading them once, Ji You wanted to advise her to give it up and find some proper work to do.

However?

Chen Yan felt Ji You's words were nonsense and had no desire to listen.

Then—

Chen Yan became stubborn, vowing to write a story even more sensational than "Ex-wife's Temptation". However, she procrastinated for a long time without starting to write.

So, Chen Yan remained in debt to Ji You.

Let's skip these details.

Although a little episode occurred, Ji You still managed to run 4 laps within 1 hour. After finishing the run, she was nearly exhausted. After a short rest, she dragged her weary body back to the dormitory.

After washing up.

She took a ride in Sheng Qingyan's Floating Car--a free chauffeur service--and hurried to the cafeteria to buy some breakfast. Just as she left the food line, she heard a buzz of discussion behind her:

"Is that Ji You?"

"The same Ji You who challenged Xu Siyu?"

"It's her."

"So that means, she's the girl who had her admission revoked last year due to plagiarism?"

"Yes, that's her."

"Unexpected that it's really her. After being expelled, she still had the courage to come back as a self-funded student."

"What do you think is the real truth?"

"Did Ji You plagiarize, or did Xu Siyu?"

"How could it be Xu Siyu? Xu Siyu would never plagiarize!"

"That's hard to say—"

"Actually, Ji You may not necessarily be the plagiarist, right? Who would dare to challenge Xu Siyu head-on if they weren't confident in their own skills?"

"Hard to say, who knows what the truth really is? Anyway, one of them is definitely a plagiarist."

"I trust the school's initial judgment. Since the school decided it was Ji You who plagiarized, then it must be Ji You."

...

Ji You, holding her tray, listened to the discussions behind her. Her back remained straight, her steps unfaltering. She calmly found an empty table, sat down, and leisurely started eating her breakfast.

Now—

The whole school is discussing this matter, and Xu Siyu must have received the news by now, so—how does she plan to deal with it?

Ji You is very much looking forward to it.

To tell the truth, Ji You is busy studying and training every day, and the fact that she hasn't approached Xu Siyu is already being quite polite to her. But the first thing Xu Siyu does when she returns to school is to suppress Ji You?

Heh heh...

Then—Ji You will just have to see this through to the end.

Nevertheless, Xu Siyu should not even think about using those filthy tricks again to spread rumors and slander Ji You. Ji You is above engaging in such petty schemes. If it's a smackdown she wants, then they'll have a proper smackdown.

Who's afraid of who, huh?

So—

This matter must be brought into the sunlight, to be clear and unmistakable for all to see.

Xu Siyu—are you brave enough to fight?

One bite.

Two bites.

Three bites.

...

Ji You quickly gobbled down a tasty, crispy fried dough stick, when suddenly a tall shadow fell over her head. She looked up to find Sheng Qingyan standing there.

Ji You gave her a glance and said, "What's up?"

Sheng Qingyan placed a cup of soy milk from her own tray in front of Ji You, huffing, "Poor as a church mouse, always a church mouse... Eating fried dough sticks without soy milk is simply heresy... Seeing how pitiful you are, this Little Cutie is treating you to a cup..."

Ji You smirked with a smile, "Whoa! The sun has risen from the west, Spicy Eye Little Cutie is actually treating me to soy milk? I can't believe it!"

Sheng Qingyan pursed her lips, "If you don't want it, give it back then."

Ji You grabbed the soy milk and took a big gulp, snappily saying, "Stingy... Meat delivered to the mouth and you want to take it back? No way."

Sheng Qingyan set down her tray and decided to ignore Ji You, starting to eat her own breakfast.

Then—

Chu Jiaojiao came over, placing a stack of steamed buns in front of Ji You, "Ji You, you're looking especially pretty today, please have these steamed buns on me."

Ji You: "???"

Yue Qiguang tossed over a sesame pancake, carelessly saying, "Treat for the fool."

Yue Qiyuan followed with a big steamed bun, saying, "Eat more, it's good for your brain."

Ji You: "???"

What's with all these guys? Ji You couldn't understand their string of actions. All these stingy misers, why had they all changed their ways?

Is the sky falling down?

Thus, Ji You watched Shen Changqing as he walked over last, noting his plate looked quite ordinary, nothing special, and he wasn't holding any other food, so Ji You felt slightly relieved.

Then—

Shen Changqing sat across from Ji You, his fingers well-defined as he picked up a long-legged chicken egg and gently tapped it, slowly peeling the shell.

Just as Ji You thought he was going to eat it himself, Shen Changqing unexpectedly held out the peeled long-legged chicken egg to her.

Ji You: "???"

Shen Changqing: "For you."

Ji You, wide-eyed: "Huh???"

What on earth had happened?

Why couldn't she understand?

Seeing that Ji You wouldn't take it, Shen Changqing simply placed the long-legged chicken egg on Ji You's tray and said nothing more, beginning to eat from his own.

In the cafeteria, the discussions about Ji You and Xu Siyu continued, a buzz of noise, and as Ji You listened, she began to understand the intention behind her stingy friends' actions.

Is this their way of consoling me?

Ji You felt a warmth in her heart and said, "You people, not a single one of you can spit out anything nice, only Shen Changqing is somewhat decent, even bothering to peel an egg for me."

Everyone: "..."

What to do if they wanted to hit her?

This one, she doesn't need consoling, right?

Right?

Chapter 353: Fermentation

Ji You unapologetically ate the food sponsored by her friends, swinging her leg while not being able to say anything nice about it. It was an expression that made you want to hit her.

Yue Qiguang, the most impatient of the lot, gritted his teeth and glared at Ji You, cursing, "Even food can't shut your mouth; it seems dad worried for nothing. Give me back my pancake."

With that, he reached out to snatch the pancake.

But Ji You was one step ahead of him, swiftly grabbing the pancake and ferociously licked it. Only after licking it did she feel reassured to put the pancake down.

Yue Qiguang: "..."

Yue Qiguang's forehead vein throbbed: "You won't die from eating, idiot!"

Ji You ignored him and turned to the others, asking, "The stuff you guys gave me, anyone want it back?"

Everyone: "..."

Yue Qiyuan glanced at her, "The steamed bun is for you, to nourish your brain."

Ji You said cheerily, "Thanks, although I'm already a hundred times smarter than you. I won't mind being a thousand, or even ten thousand times smarter."

Yue Qiyuan: "..."

Yue Qiyuan turned away, not wanting to look at this shameless person anymore.

Ji You picked up the soy milk, took a gentle sip, and asked, "Sheng Qingyan, this soy milk tastes really good, want a taste?"

Sheng Qingyan dropped his spoon and said annoyedly, "Anything you've licked reeks of poverty, I don't even want to glance at it, afraid of catching it."

Ji You chuckled, "That's great to hear, from now on I won't worry about you stealing my food."

Sheng Qingyan: "..."

Sheng Qingyan huffed, "You poor deadbeat."

Meanwhile, Ji You leisurely took a peeled Long-legged Chicken egg and turned to look at Shen Changqing.

Shen Changqing's lips twitched slightly and after a pause, he only said two words: "You eat."

Ji You beamed, "Shen Changqing, the Long-legged Chicken egg you peeled tastes incredibly delicious, just not sure if there'll be more tomorrow?"

Shen Changqing: "..."

Shen Changqing silently looked up at the sky.

The aroma wafted from the steaming dumplings on the table, four plump pieces per basket, neatly arranged. Ji You, following the scent's trail, met Chu Jiaojiao's gaze.

Chu Jiaojiao smiled broadly at Ji You, giggling, "Go ahead and eat, Ji You. I'll buy you more once you finish these."

Now there's a decent human sentence.

Ji You was touched and was about to give Chu Jiaojiao a smile when she heard her say, "If Ji You lets me touch her face, I'll buy you two more baskets."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You cursed, "Go dream on."

Chu Jiaojiao scratched her head, wearing a silly expression, "Actually... I've dreamed about it countless times already."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You admitted defeat.

She looked up at the pristine white ceiling, seriously contemplating if she could get away with exploding Chu Jiaojiao's head and what her sentence would be? Would being a student get her any reduction?

...

Thus, this breakfast ended in a strange atmosphere where everyone disdained each other and rolled their eyes.

Mu Jianling's classes were as packed as always, leaving no room for slacking off, but no one actually wanted to slack off. Everyone was fully committed to excel.

Mu Jianling was very pleased by this.

Then, comfortably relieved, Mu Jianling devoted himself to watching a TV series.

...

Throughout the day, Ji You and the students of the Combat Department trained together without receiving any unusual stares, from either teachers or students; evidently, nobody was interested in the gossip about Ji You.

Ji You felt quite at ease about this.

After class.

Ji You hurriedly finished her meal, planning to rush back to the dormitory to continue training, when she suddenly received a call from Sister Lingzhi.

As soon as the holographic call connected, it revealed Sister Lingzhi's extremely displeased face. With furrowed brows and arms crossed, her eyes and the corners of her mouth exuded a disappointed disdain as she looked at Ji You.

Without thinking much, Ji You quickly said, "Sister Lingzhi, what brings you here? Could it be that you missed me after not seeing me for a few days?"

Sister Lingzhi: "..."

Sister Lingzhi spoke with evident displeasure, "Don't flatter yourself. I wouldn't miss your face even if I didn't see it for a hundred years."

Ji You chuckled and said, "Then what does Sister Lingzhi want with me?"

Currently, among the four people from garbage planet No. 101, Xie Chuanqiong and Lea had taken on missions and gone out. Only Sister Lingzhi and Ji You were still at Lanyue Star Military Academy. Everyone was busy with their studies and belonged to different departments, so they rarely met in person and would usually communicate directly through holographic calls.

Sister Lingzhi said, "You're looking to challenge Xu Siyu directly?"

Ji You was startled, "Even Sister Lingzhi has heard about it."

Sister Lingzhi replied irritably, "How could I not know? Since everyone in my class knows that you are my sister and that you're about to do something foolish, they rushed to pull me out of the lab to stop you."

In fact, Sister Lingzhi didn't know until the matter, which had spread even to their secluded labs, came to her notice.

It showed that in less than a day, the tale of Ji You challenging the well-known talented girl of the Material Department, Xu Siyu, had widely spread. This also highlighted how overconfident Ji You's actions were.

A student from the Combat Department challenging one from the Material Department?

Wasn't that a joke?

Moreover, the person being challenged was the renowned Xu Siyu of the Material Department. Her reputation had spread not only throughout Lanyue Star but also throughout the All Alliance. Last year, Xu Siyu led a team in the All Alliance Material Department competition and achieved ninth place in the All Alliance Material Department rankings. Considering the millions of Material Department students in the Alliance...

Could Xu Siyu lack real talent?

And Ji You?

An ordinary person, additionally burdened with the sin of plagiarism, challenging Xu Siyu?

No matter how you look at it... When this news was leaked by Lin Lele, a self-paying student, this morning, Xu Siyu's fans exploded. Especially on the official forum of Lanyue Star, where there were bursts of voices condemning Ji You.

"Our Si Yu hasn't even bothered her, and she has the nerve to be a pest? Don't be disgustingly shameless."

"Right! This Ji You is truly disgusting."

"Is anyone forming a group to confront her?"

"Count me in! Fighting evil is everyone's duty!"

"Include me; I normally don't hit girls, but I won't hold back from teaching her how to behave."

"Let's go! Let's group tonight and make trouble for her. If she really had any shame, she would come out and apologize to our Si Yu herself. Our Si Yu, so beautiful, kind, and generous, will surely forgive her."

Chapter 354: United Against a Common Enemy

...

Lanyue Star Forum is already boiling over this matter. Everywhere you look, you can see supporters of Xu Siyu. If anyone dares to speak the truth, they'll immediately be sprayed with, "Are you in cahoots with Ji You?"

Just out of the lab, seeing all this stuff on the forum, Xie Lingzhi is practically itching with rage.

As a result, Xie Lingzhi's face is particularly unpleasant when she looks at Ji You now.

After hearing what Xie Lingzhi said, Ji You lets out a snicker and asks, "Sister Lingzhi, so did you come out from the lab on purpose to listen to your classmate, to come and stop me in my tracks?"

Upon hearing this, a vein throbs on Xie Lingzhi's forehead, "Stop, my ass! Ji You, I'm telling you! If you don't crush that bitch Xu Siyu this time, don't you ever say you're my sister Xie Lingzhi again! I'll be embarrassed!"

Ji You is startled.

Xie Lingzhi swears, "If you dare lose, I'll wash my hands of you."

Under the shock, Ji You's expression looks somewhat silly, "Sister Lingzhi, you... you're not going to stop me?"

Xie Lingzhi snaps irritably, "Why would I stop you? I've been fed up with that bitch Xu Siyu for a long while! If you don't take her down, I'd be looking for a chance to do it myself. Now that she even dares to have her fans blacken your name, this is the perfect opportunity to take her down! Let's see if she still dares to strut around after."

Ji You: "..."

After being dazed for a while, as Ji You listens to Sister Lingzhi's rude words, her brain finally begins to reboot and think, but she looks at Xie Lingzhi, who is spewing venom, and mumbles softly, "Sister Lingzhi, I feel... I feel like we're girls, shouldn't we be a bit more elegant when we speak?"

Xie Lingzhi whirls around, glares fiercely at Ji You, and scolds, "You be elegant. Why don't you go and see what they're saying about you on the forum? If you've seen it and can still be elegant, I'll take my hat off to you."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You asks timidly, "Foru... forum?"

Xie Lingzhi waves her hand, "Go see for yourself."

Overflowing with curiosity, Ji You checks the forum, and after just a glimpse, she feels her fury exploding like a Particle Cannon—

"Damn it!" Ji You rolls up her sleeves, grinding her teeth she says, "Sister Lingzhi, don't worry, I'll make sure to slap her face hard! Make her regret being born."

Xie Lingzhi swears, "If you can't do it, from now on don't call me sister, and don't say you know me ever again. I mean what I say."

Xie Lingzhi has always had a volatile temper, and she's been like this since she was young. If she doesn't like something and can't stand it, she doesn't care about saving face for anyone and will go right up and

give them an earful, like how she used to despise the timid and weak Ji You, and would ridicule her at the drop of a hat—

But—

No matter how much she ridiculed Ji You in the past, Xie Lingzhi never really did anything to hurt her.

Concerning this, Ji You is well aware, both from her own feelings and from what little You told her: Sister Lingzhi is the type who says one thing but means another, all bark and no bite.

Now, she's threatening to cut ties with herself—

That's just talk.

Ji You thickens her skin, sidles over with a hehe and a smile, saying, "That's not okay! Born as Lingzhi's sister, and I'll die as Lingzhi's sister, that's something that can't change."

Xie Lingzhi's brows furrow slightly, "Quit it with the 'die, die, die'... Alright, I just asked my tutor and classmates for help and gathered some hardcore knowledge from the Material Department. If you're going to challenge her, don't go into battle unprepared. Take a good look at what I've sent you during this time."

Saying so, Xie Lingzhi directly transmits the data to Ji You.

After the transmission, Xie Lingzhi gestures with her hand, "I'm really busy during this time, don't bother me if there's nothing important. Even if you do, I'm not going to pay attention to you, unless you come to me with news of your victory."

"That's all."

Xie Lingzhi doesn't give Ji You time to speak, and breaks off the connection.

Ji You: "..."

What's going on?

It feels like Sister Lingzhi's demeanor is becoming more and more domineering.

Sigh~

Despite Brother Qiong and Uncle Xie Yi being such refined gentlemen, why is Sister Lingzhi so completely different?

But Ji You, looking at the information on the Light Computer, still felt warmth in her heart. This—could this be what family feels like? Even though we're not related by blood, we grew up together and supported each other... This bond has already surpassed the superficial ties of blood relation.

Thump!

Thump!

Thump!

Ji You's heart suddenly skipped a beat, she shifted her gaze away from the Light Computer, and connected with her Spiritual World: "Xiao You, what's wrong?"

In the enclosed space.

The young girl looked down at her rapidly beating chest, and whispered, "Sister... I... I'm okay, it's just that—I heard a few words you were saying to Sister Lingzhi, so—"

She didn't know why her heart suddenly began to beat so violently. Even when—she learned from Sister this morning that she was going to challenge Xu Siyu, her heart hadn't throbbed this intensely.

But—

Now just because she heard Sister Lingzhi say a few words, her own heart went pit-a-pat.

Ji You expressed her concern: "Are you really okay? I could even hear your heartbeat just now."

Xiao You's face was a bit red, her earlobes, her neck, all felt like they were beginning to heat up, and she said in a tiny voice, "Sister... I'm really fine. I... I might be like this because I've been acknowledged by Sister Lingzhi."

Boom—

With those words, Xiao You felt her cheeks grow even hotter.

Thankfully—Sister couldn't see what she looked like at the moment.

Xiao You thought to herself in silence.

Ji You truly couldn't see her, but after a little thought, she understood the reason; it must be because Sister Lingzhi has always been disdainful of Xiao You, never concealing her feelings, which made Xiao You want to have a good relationship with Sister Lingzhi but never had the courage to express it, and now, Xiao You found out that Sister Lingzhi actually cares about her deep down—although right now the body she's using belongs to another Ji You.

But Xiao You was still very happy.

Hence, Ji You teased with a laugh: "So Xiao You really wanted to be friends with Sister Lingzhi before."

Xiao You in a low voice: "I... I did not."

Ji You smiled and said, "Yeah, I know. You didn't, you just thought about it."

Silence.

A few seconds later, Xiao You, with a flushed face, said softly, "I... I admit... I did think about it. Sister... can you keep it a secret for me?"

Heavens—

This is just too adorable, isn't it?

Ji You was nearly charmed by this shy girl who nevertheless mustered the courage to reveal her feelings.

So, Ji You said laughingly: "Alright, seeing as you're so sincere, I'll keep your secret. Next time I see Sister Lingzhi, I'll definitely tell her how much I used to like her."

Xiao You: "..."

After a while.

Xiao You, as if thinking of something and with a voice tinged with worry and unease, asked, "Sister, now that we're challenging Xu Siyu, can we... can we win?"

Upon hearing this, Ji You immediately said, "Of course we can win!"

Chapter 355: I Believe in You

Ji You's tone was undeniably certain, and her words instantly dispelled Xiao You's uneasiness and anxiety. Xiao You lifted her head, looking at the only light source in the enclosed space, where Ji You's spiritual power was emanating.

Every day, when this light shone, it was the happiest moment for Xiao You. She looked up and softly said, "Mhm."

Ji You said: "Xiao You, we'll soon be facing Xu Siyu head-on, so we must give it our all and can't afford to take it lightly. Strategically we can disdain the enemy, but tactically we must take them seriously."

Xiao You nodded vigorously: "Mhm."

Ji You said: "Therefore, this time the one to disgrace Xu Siyu will be you."

Just as Xiao You was about to nod, she suddenly exclaimed in surprise: "Ah??? Sister!"

Ji You curved her lips into a smile and said: "You heard right, you're in charge of designing the product this time. I'm just here to assist you."

Xiao You panicked: "But... but can I really do it?"

Upon hearing this, Ji You frowned and raised her voice, "Nonsense! If I can do it, how can you not? You are the future big shot of the Material Department! The most formidable leader who will lead the department to flourish and expand! If you can't do it, then who can?"

At Ji You's words, with such high praise bestowed upon her, Xiao You's face turned red in an instant: "Sister... I... I'm not as great as you say."

Ji You hummed: "If I say you're great, then you are great. I'm indeed not as good as you in the material subject, or why do I always have to rely on you when I need help with material homework? Without you, I bet my assignments would be sent back by old man Ye Hong."

Mentioning Professor Ye Hong, Ji You's jaws ached again.

That old man, with nothing better to do after a full meal, criticized Ji You's homework as completely useless after it was sent back the first time. And it was the same few sentences over and over:

"This assignment has no highlights."

"This assignment shows no sincerity."

"This assignment is useless."

"This assignment lacks innovation."

...

Every time Ji You saw her feedback, she would get angry all over again. Sometimes, she wished she could confront Ye Hong directly and ask him what exactly he wanted.

What's even more infuriating is that after Ji You submitted her work and received a round of criticism, the old professor would always add a comment on the back: [Suggested to redo.]

At first, Ji You didn't take that comment seriously.

Then—

Two days later, she submitted a new assignment, and after grading it, the old professor added a follow-up question: [When do you plan to submit the redone assignment?]

Ji You: "???"

Huh?

He only suggested a redo, he didn't insist on it.

With a slim hope, Ji You didn't submit a redone assignment.

Then—

Her new assignment received a poor grade.

Retaliation!

Blatant retaliation!

Even though there was nothing inappropriate about her work, why did it get a poor grade? Thinking over and over, Ji You was certain it was because she hadn't submitted the assignment she was supposed to redo. Out of options, she had to enlist Xiao You's help, and they refined the assignment together before resubmitting it.

After the old man Ye Hong received the redone assignment, he then changed the poor grade to a middle grade, and attached a new suggestion: [Suggested to redo.]

Now whenever Ji You saw the words 'suggested to redo', her teeth ached.

Fortunately, Ji You wasn't alone; she had Xiao You to help. With two brains thinking and working hard together, they managed to overcome the various difficulties created by old man Ye Hong.

Through this back and forth, Xiao You gained a deeper understanding of the material course.

Ye Hong, the old man, chose not to mention it.

Ji You said, "Xiao You, you must believe in yourself. Do you know why I asked you to lead this material design project?"

Xiao You blushed softly, whispering, "I know."

After a short pause, with a soft and slightly trembling voice, the girl said, "I... I have also daydreamed countless times about facing Xu Siyu head-on and telling everyone proudly that I did not plagiarize. I..."

Ji You listened patiently, smiling as she said, "Mhm, you rise from where you fall." Having newly acquired this body and learning the true cause of Xiao You's death, Ji You had fantasized countless times about confronting Xu Siyu openly one day, allowing the original owner of this body to witness it, and telling her that giving up on life so easily was wrong. An obstacle that seems insurmountable can be overcome if you just take the first step.

Now—

Ji You was very happy that not only could she challenge Xu Siyu, but she could also do it together with the original Xiao You.

...

Xiao You lifted her head, looking at the only source of light in this confined space. Right now, she could clearly feel a gentle gaze coming from the light source, penetrating the darkness, passing through the Space Barrier, and gently watching over her, encouraging her.

It was so gentle.

It was so warm.

...

Xiao You mustered her courage and exclaimed loudly, "Sister, don't worry! I will definitely defeat her!"

Suddenly—

Xiao You heard the sound of clapping from outside the confined space, loud and clear, each clap striking hard against her heart, inspiring her soul.

She smiled.

Xiao You pursed her lips into a smile and yelled, "Not just this time, but every time in the future, I will defeat Xu Siyu! I won't let her have the chance to slander me again, I will become a mogul in the Material Department in the future! I will be an indelible name on the milestones of the Material Department!"

"Clap, clap, clap..."

Ji You clapped vigorously while nodding forcefully, "I believe in you."

After making her bold declaration, Xiao You suddenly started feeling shy again, "Sister... can we not say that phrase about becoming a future material mogul too often, is that okay?"

Speaking of such ambitions often was embarrassing.

It easily made one shy.

Yes.

That's right.

Just like that.

Xiao You thought to herself.

Upon hearing this, Ji You burst into laughter and exclaimed loudly, "Xiao You, everything about you is great, but you know your skin is too thin, right? To survive in this world, you need to have thicker skin."

"Thick skin allows you to dine everywhere."

"Understand?"

Xiao You: "..."

She didn't understand.

Ji You flicked her hand and said directly, "Alright, it's settled then, from now on Xiao You is the mogul of the material world! Starting now, let's work hard to pave the way for the mogul's journey."

Saying this, Ji You transferred the data that Xie Lingzhi gave her to Xiao You through the Spiritual World.

Transferring this information to Xiao You consumed a great deal of spiritual power threshold. Ji You had barely finished when suddenly everything went dark in front of her, and her figure swayed slightly. She quickly steadied herself and after eating a Candy Bean, she felt somewhat better.

But her connection with Xiao You was immediately severed.

Watching the only light source in the confined space vanish, Xiao You suddenly felt no fear. She looked down at the virtual data in her hands and began to read it carefully and earnestly.

Chapter 356: The Whole Hall Is Astounded

After agreeing to a duel with Xu Siyu, Ji You didn't take immediate action, instead allowing Xu Siyu's fans to arrogantly badmouth her on the forum, which Ji You ignored entirely.

Ji You remained silent.

Xu Siyu also didn't directly address the issue.

So—

Two days passed by. The incident, which initially exploded and stirred up excitement, gradually started to cool down due to the non-appearance of the two parties involved. However, Xu Siyu's fan club still engaged in various insults and disparagements towards Ji You on the school forum.

That day.

After finishing her class, Ji You had just entered the canteen when she ran into Lin Lele leading a group of girls. As soon as they saw Ji You, a scornful smile appeared on their faces.

Lin Lele bluntly said, "Ji You, didn't you say you're going to challenge Xu Siyu? Why are you only talking tough and not taking action?"

Her companion chimed in, "Yeah, if you don't act soon, the flowers will have wilted. You don't plan to wait until after graduation and find a deserted corner to challenge Senior Xu Siyu, do you?"

"I think that's exactly what she's planning."

"If that's the case, it would be a joke for a lifetime."

"Ha ha ha... What's the use of just talking? Get moving."

...

The chatter of the girls immediately drew the attention of the other students in the canteen.

However, much to the girls' disappointment, Ji You's expression remained untroubled, completely unfazed, showing an indifferent demeanor that didn't seem angry at all.

However—

Chu Jiaojiao, who was beside Ji You, couldn't stand it anymore. She stepped forward in front of Ji You, and her eyes filled with danger as she looked at Lin Lele and the other girls:

"I'm saying—if you lot dare to spout one more word of nonsense, I will not be able to control my fists."

Suddenly—

Crack~

Crack~

Crack~

Chu Jiaojiao raised her arm, which was bursting with explosive power, and cracked her knuckles loudly.

Seeing Chu Jiaojiao demonstrate her prowess, fear flickered through the eyes of Lin Lele and the other girls. Yet Lin Lele still stiffened her neck and said, "If you dare to hit me, I'll tell the teacher."

"Pfft—"

The moment those words came out, they were met, unsurprisingly, with a burst of laughter.

"Tch!" Chu Jiaojiao sneered dismissively, "Cowards! Cowards should just slink away and shut up."

Lin Lele: "You..."

Chu Jiaojiao waved her fists and bared her teeth, "You what? I'm warning you one more time—if you dare talk crap in front of me again, it won't matter if you call the teachers, your father, or your ancestors over."

Lin Lele opened her mouth but didn't dare make a sound.

Chu Jiaojiao, the female tyrant, had been involved in group fights since her first day of kindergarten. How could Lin Lele possibly be unaware of her notorious reputation?

On this side—

Ji You looked at Chu Jiaojiao's tall figure blocking her way, standing between her and Lin Lele's group, preventing any contact. She tried several times but couldn't squeeze through.

Ji You: "..."

Ji You cleared her throat and said, "Jiaojiao, step aside, please."

Chu Jiaojiao seemed not to hear her, still waving her fists and narrowing her eyes as she lectured the girls, "Get the hell away from here, and if I see you again, I'll beat you up every single time."

Upon hearing this, Lin Lele and the others started feeling uneasy and began to consider backing off.

At this moment—

Ji You raised her voice, coughing loudly, "Cough cough..."

Chu Jiaojiao turned around abruptly, "Classmate Ji You, what's wrong with your throat?"

Ji You: "Cough... It's nothing. Jiaojiao, please move aside a bit."

Chu Jiaojiao hesitated slightly, then said, "Classmate Ji You, rest assured, as long as I, Chu Jiaojiao, am here, no one will dare to bully you."

"Cough cough..." Ji You felt a pain in her alveolar ridge; although the feeling of being protected was cool and warm, she still hoped to take care of herself. Thus, Ji You reached out, trying hard to push aside Chu Jiaojiao's 'towering' figure, squeezing herself into the center of attention among the crowd.

Seeing Ji You emerge, a vicious glint flickered in Lin Lele's eyes, "Ji You, hiding behind others, what kind of skill is that, weren't you the one challenging Xu Siyu? Come on, say it again, and if you don't, you're a coward, a wimp!"

Ji You lifted her chin and said, "Classmate Lin Lele, on what basis are you questioning me now? As a spokesperson for Xu Siyu? Her mindless fan? Or just a nosy onlooker with nothing better to do?"

Lin Lele was taken aback.

She didn't expect Ji You to ignore her provocation and instead hit her with such a sharp question.

For a moment, Lin Lele was speechless.

Ji You said, "Speak."

Lin Lele's face twisted in anger, "Who are you to ask, why should I answer you?"

"Oh..." Ji You spoke indifferently, "Then—on what basis and with what right is Classmate Lin Lele questioning me, asking for my response?"

Lin Lele's lips quivered, momentarily stumped by the question.

Ji You held her head high, saying, "Because you're loud? Because you have the numbers on your side? Because you like stirring up trouble?"

Lin Lele was so angry, her hands trembled, "You... shut up!"

Ji You didn't even raise an eyebrow, speaking in an even tone, calmly saying, "This world isn't about who can shout loudest, who loves to stir up trouble, who can gather the most people or who can be the most obnoxious and unreasonable—that's not where justice lies. Therefore, Classmate Lin Lele, I suggest you start keeping your mouth shut from now on."

Lin Lele's face turned red, then pale, and the other girls around her also had particularly unseemly expressions due to Ji You's remarks.

And—

The cafeteria was already a place where students congregated easily, and in a few minutes, the space where the few of them were standing was surrounded by three layers of people on the inside and outside, packed tight.

Then, as Ji You's words fell, the looks on some students' faces began to change towards Lin Lele and the others. Their faces grew darker; aside from Lin Lele who was still stiff-necked and wanted to continue contending with Ji You, the rest were considering leaving soon, as it was embarrassing to be surrounded by so many people.

But—

After Ji You finished speaking, she didn't waste another glance at Lin Lele and the others. She turned her head to look around, her voice not loud but clear enough for everyone present to hear.

"Fellow students, my name is Ji You, a self-funded student from Class 131 of the first grade. I major in Mecha Battle Studies and minor in Material Department, aware of many doubts and insults about me on the forums, which I have never responded to directly. Unfortunately, just a moment ago, Classmate Lin Lele and her group came over to ask me when I plan to challenge Classmate Xu Siyu from Class 130 of Material Department. Hereby, I formally announce to everyone: at 8 AM three days from now, on Saturday, I will set up an arena in the Material Department's auditorium to challenge all Material Department students from Classes 130 and 131. If any students present are interested, feel free to participate."

Wow~

With these words, the entire hall was shocked.

Chapter 357: Bragging to the Sky

Everyone's eyes went wide: "!!!"

Lin Lele and a few girls behind her, "!!!"

Chu Jiaojiao: "!!!"

...

As soon as Ji You spoke, everyone thought they were hallucinating, thinking either Ji You misspoke or they misheard—

What did Ji You just say?

She said that she will start at 8 am on Saturday, challenging all students from the 131st and 130th cohort of the Material Department, this...

This—

Is she serious?

Or is this a joke?

Challenging all the students from the Material Department by herself, if this is not a joke, then what is?

Even more shocking, she isn't just challenging students from her own cohort, but also the seniors of the previous cohort.

Arrogant!

The same word simultaneously sprang to everyone's mind.

Exactly!

That's arrogance!

Other than arrogance, what else could describe her?

The silence was deafening; eventually, the crowd gradually became noisy again as they all engaged in various discussions.

Listening to the discussions around her, Lin Lele slowly dropped her unpleasant expression, revealing a gleeful smile, saying, "Getting ahead of yourself, you're done."

Ji You ignored her.

Whether it's getting ahead of herself or not, it will be clear in three days.

Ji You, looking at the chattering crowd around her, slightly raised her voice, "Once Ji You speaks, she never takes her words back. At the appointed time—I will be waiting for everyone punctually at the Material Department's auditorium."

Everyone around: "..."

Crazy!

She really is crazy.

Ji You, with a calm expression, slowly and clearly said, "Unfortunately, Senior Xu Siyu from the 130th cohort is not here, and thus, I kindly ask anyone who knows her to relay a message: Ji You has set up the arena, welcoming everyone for interaction and observation, and she eagerly looks forward to Senior Xu Siyu coming for exchange and learning."

Everyone around: "..."

Ji You: "Thank you, everyone."

Everyone around: "..."

As the crowd of onlookers grew, the atmosphere became more enthusiastic, and the discussion heated up, Ji You and Lin Lele, along with others, were surrounded, barely able to move.

Then—

Ji You remained calm, her tone sincere, "That's all I have to say, please let me through, I need to go queue up for food."

Everyone around: "..."

After stirring up this situation, she still plans to eat?

Respect!

The onlookers lost their appetite, but she, as the person involved, is still in the mood to eat?

Unacceptable.

Absolutely unacceptable.

Then—

A male student from the Material Department loudly said, "Ji You, you mean to challenge everyone from the Material Department, so you think you can overpower all of us?"

After someone asked this question, the surroundings fell silent instantly.

Everyone's eyes were fixed on Ji You, as if fearing she might suddenly flee.

How—

Would she respond?

Everyone was anticipating.

Faced with the intense gazes around her, Ji You didn't show a hint of fear; instead, she suddenly smiled brightly, loudly saying, "That's right! I do think I can overpower all of you with my abilities."

Hiss~

Everyone gasped.

Arrogant!

Indeed arrogant!

Behind her, Chu Jiaojiao couldn't help wiping the sweat from her forehead, extended her index finger, and quietly poked Ji You's shoulder, lowering her voice, "Ji You, if you keep boasting, you're going to burst, be mindful of your image, okay?"

Then—

Everyone saw Ji You suddenly change her tone, saying: "Of course—that's impossible, haha... My previous statement was just a joke, please don't mind it."

Everyone: "..."

Seeing that the insults were about to rise again, Ji You hurriedly added: "How capable I am, will be known in three days, so please be a little patient and wait for the results in three days."

"Now—"

"Can I go and queue up for food?" Looking around, Ji You asked with a pitiful face.

In a second, her image of arrogance, egotism, and haughtiness was shattered completely.

But Ji You didn't care about that; she raised her hand and rubbed her shrunken stomach, mournfully said: "Guys, please, don't crowd around me anymore, I'm really very hungry now... Aren't you guys hungry? Let's disperse quickly, whoever needs to queue should queue, whoever needs to eat should eat, whoever needs to go to the bathroom should go..."

Everyone: "..."

Forget it.

Just as this little person named Ji You said, since the results would be out in three days, why rush it? Moreover, everyone's stomachs were indeed very hungry...

Dispersed.

Dispersed.

Dispersed.

In no time, the crowd dispersed in all directions, and within less than a minute, the queue for food was formed, bathrooms were visited, and seats were taken...

The whole cafeteria was orderly in an instant.

No one was watching Ji You, and she suddenly felt the air was much fresher. Then, quick on her feet, she slipped into the line at the window serving braised pork ribs.

Chu Jiaojiao followed closely behind.

Yue Qiguang, Yue Qiyuan, Shen Changqing, and others were slightly slower.

The queue for food moved swiftly, and the few behind Ji You didn't speak to her at all. Mainly because Ji You had just exaggerated her capabilities in front of everyone, utterly without any subtlety, that for a moment, they did not know what to say to break the silence.

Then—

Ji You finally reached the serving window.

Inside the window, He Bi, wearing a chef's hat, tied with an apron, and a professional smile on his face, greeted a student with, "Enjoy your meal, come again next time."

The boy, being stared at by He Bi's smile, trembled slightly with his hands on the tray, somewhat overwhelmed: "Thank... thank you, Senior."

Mama mia~

Who said Senior He Bi was cunning, miserly, and two-faced? He's clearly very amiable.

And—where's his miserliness? The pieces of braised pork he serves are big and plentiful. Not miserly at all.

Overjoyed, the boy left with his tray.

Then, it was Ji You's turn.

Ji You boldly said: "Server, a portion of braised pork ribs, only the big pieces, no small ones."

He Bi: "..."

He Bi's forehead twitched.

Server?

Very well.

It seems the last lesson wasn't enough.

Ji You glanced at the expression of Senior He Bi; in a blink of an eye, it turned from clear skies to stormy clouds, scaring... scaring someone to death.

Ji You immediately shrank her neck, and with a flattering face said: "Senior He Bi... I was just joking earlier, please be generous and don't take it personally, my only flaw is being foul-mouthed."

He Bi: "..."

Ji You chuckled: "I'll change. I'll change, I will definitely correct this bad habit."

He Bi: "..."

Chapter 358: Bragging Combo Meal

Admitting your own foul mouth is truly a rare sight.

With such thick skin, arguing with her would only be seeking your own frustration, right?

He Bi decided to handle things professionally and started dishing out food.

Shaking the spoon.

Again, shaking the spoon.

A few seconds later—

Ji You was holding her own tray, scattered with small chunks of meat, a bitter smile spreading across her face, she sighed faintly: "Indeed, one must not offend a scumbag, the ancients never deceive me."

He Bi's forehead twitched with a popping vein: "The ancients said? Which ancients are you talking about? Please clarify, classmate."

This ancient person—

Clearly, was her herself, but could she say it?

Absolutely not.

Ji You grinned, chuckled, and said: "I was just talking nonsense, Senior don't mind it."

With that, she picked up her tray, ready to scamper off.

He Bi said: "Wait a second."

Ji You's steps halted:

Hmm?

Don't tell me scumbag He Bi is plotting revenge by suddenly jacking up the price on me?

For a moment, Ji You felt a bit cowardly, she shrank her neck and whispered softly: "Senior, I've paid already."

He Bi: "..."

Taking a deep breath, He Bi barely suppressed the impulse to hit someone and then—he stretched out his hand, took a plate from the side counter, and handed it to Ji You, saying: "Here, take this."

Ji You: "???"

She looked down, and couldn't help but inhale sharply.

Heavens!

Tendons, hooves, liver, lungs, skin, stomach, nose... all these cow parts, if some bored person wanted, they could assemble an entire cow from it.

It's just—

She had no idea what Senior He Bi meant by this.

Ji You stared with wide eyes: "Senior???"

He Bi said indifferently: "Bullshitter + Thick-skinned combo meal, suits you, it's on me."

Ji You: "!!!"

Huh?

Are you kidding me?

He Bi declared: "Take it and get lost, no charge."

Ji You reached out but hesitated slightly: "Really... really free?"

He Bi waved his hand: "If you don't want it, get lost."

With those words, fearing He Bi might change his mind, Ji You grabbed the plate of offal faster than anything, "Thank you, Senior, you're really amazing today, sky-high handsome!"

He Bi: "Hmm~"

Ji You: "But... why only offal, and no steak? No brisket?"

He Bi: "..."

He Bi cursed: "You pauper, what steak, what brisket, hope it doesn't kill you. Now get lost quickly, don't hold up my work."

Joyfully holding two plates, Ji You dashed away.

Gosh!

Who would have thought that scumbag He Bi could actually be so generous one day, this plate of offal, although not even three pounds, was at least worth 5000 credit points.

credit points!

Absolutely incredible.

Ji You couldn't believe she got this from Senior He Bi.

But, even though Senior He Bi has a sharp tongue, most of the time not even spitting out a single ivory from a dog's mouth, he was actually pretty decent to Ji You. She knew that Senior He Bi's gimmick of making a 'Bullshitter + Thick-skinned' combo meal, while seemingly mocking what she said in the cafeteria as bragging and overestimating herself, was actually a way of encouraging her.

Ah!

If only Senior He Bi hadn't been so subtle, and straight up gave her a few pounds of braised pork ribs or something, that would have been even better.

Ji-Greedy-You thought silently to herself.

Then—

She found a dining table, set down the beef offal platter and braised pork ribs rice, picked up her chopsticks, ready to eat. She dared not eat slowly, Sheng Qingyan, Yue Qiguang and the rest of the bunch were lurking behind her like tigers eyeing their prey.

As expected—

In no time, the several empty seats around Ji You were all taken.

Sheng Qingyan didn't wait for Ji You to invite him; quite unceremoniously he reached out with his chopsticks, picked out his favorite beef tripe and tendon from the beef offal platter, and stuffed them into his bowl.

Ji You's eyelid twitched, she held back and made no comment.

Next—

Shen Changqing was the second one to reach out with his chopsticks, and in the blink of an eye, without being picky, he scraped everything, seven or eight kinds of items, onto his plate, piling it up in no time.

After doing all this, Shen Changqing seemed to feel a little overboard, his face flushed slightly, and he said in a low voice, "I'll just have a little."

—Is that a little?

—Are you having vision problems?

—Is your ability to calculate flawed?

Ji You's lips quivered, she held back and still said nothing.

Following that, Chu Jiaojiao picked up with her chopsticks, and wow, beef skin, beef hooves, beef tripe, beef tendon... everything in large amounts. Her pick was even more than what Sheng Qingyan had carefully selected just now...

Ji You pursed her lips, unable to hold back any longer, she asked, "What kind of skill is this? Can it be taught?"

Chu Jiaojiao laughed, "Chu Family's secret, never to be disclosed."

Ji You: "..."

While Ji You talked with Chu Jiaojiao, on the other side, Yue Qiyuan and Yue Qiguang, the two brothers, had already impolitely reached out with their chopsticks. Yue Qiyuan was more reserved, just that his speed of using the chopsticks was fast.

Yue Qiguang was almost about to just lift the plate of beef offal and pour it into his own bowl—

Ji You: "..."

Ji You, with trembling hands, exclaimed, "Enough already, hey, at least leave me some!"

Then—

Everyone was somewhat obedient, each leaving her only one piece of each item.

Ji You: "..."

Ji You took a deep breath and cursed, "Look at you guys... one by one, looking all proper, but in reality, reincarnated from starving ghosts. Aren't you freshmen supposed to be influential figures? Can't you care a little bit about your image?"

Yue Qiguang cursed, "Can image be eaten?"

Yue Qiyuan followed, "It's not as good as a plate of beef offal."

Shen Changqing murmured, "I don't care."

Chu Jiaojiao giggled, "I only care about classmate Ji You's image."

Ji You: "..."

Sheng Qingyan didn't even bother with this comment and just buried his head in eating.

Ji You was speechless.

After thinking for a moment, she started to eat madly.

For a while, the sound of eating heartily filled the dining table, not a single bit of noise was heard.

After the meal.

Sheng Qingyan was the first to clean up his plate and said, "I'm full now, off I go."

The others also stood up one after another, indicating they were satisfied and ready to leave.

In the blink of an eye, they were all gone without a trace, leaving Ji You to leisurely put the last bite of rice into her mouth, chew for a bit, then pick up her plate and head to return it—

Chu Jiaojiao, Yue Qiyuan, and a few other classmates who often hung out together didn't ask Ji You a single thing about her public challenge to the Material Department, it seemed as though they had all forgotten about it.

But—

Ji You knew they weren't indifferent or unconcerned.

Indeed—

Just as Ji You put her plate into the return station, she heard the message notification sound. Chu Jiaojiao, Sheng Qingyan, Shen Changqing, Yue Qiyuan, Yue Qiguang, almost at the same time, sent the exact same message:

[I'll be there to support you at the Material Department's competition in 3 days.]

Chapter 359: The Old Fox

Ji You finished reading through several messages, a slight smile lifting the corners of her lips.

This——

Is what companionship feels like?

Ji You raised her hand, gently touching her thumping chest; it felt warm there, a warmth that lingered constantly.

Three days later, she was set to officially challenge all the students from the Material Department in the first and second years, in the department's auditorium. This matter had already been confirmed, and what Ji You urgently needed to take care of was negotiating the use of the auditorium.

This auditorium was not just a venue for the Material Department's activities, but also a common space for student interaction, self-study... and the like, which were generally free of cost.

But if Ji You wanted to use the auditorium for an entire day, she had to apply through the Academic Affairs Office. Only if the school agreed could she rent it for her own use.

To rent——

As the name suggests, it would cost money.

To avoid any unexpected issues, Ji You did not rush back to her dormitory. Instead, she hurried to the Academic Affairs Office.

When Ji You arrived, Director Wang was on duty.

Seeing the balding Director Wang, who wore a pair of gold-rimmed glasses, a bitter taste began to swell in Ji You's heart:

What a stroke of bad luck!

Encountering this greedy snake.

Greedy snake——Director Wang, apart from Principal Hong, Mu Jianling, and the staid old professor Ye Hong, was the fourth infamous faculty member at Lanyue Star Military School. Why did he alone have such a unique nickname, a 'greedy snake'?

Of course, it was because Director Wang was exceptionally adept at plucking feathers. Whatever passed through his hands, he always managed to shave off a bit of money. Although Director Wang was greedy and loved money, it wasn't for personal gain. The money he amassed didn't go into his own pocket. Instead, it all entered the school's finances and was used for various school expenses.

Over the past ten years, Principal Hong, in charge of external affairs, and Director Wang, managing internal matters, elevated the initially less-renowned Lanyue Star Military School into a top-ten prestigious institution within the Alliance. It was clear how capable the two were and how much effort they had put in.

Therefore, despite the faculty and students grumbling openly about Principal Hong and Director Wang, deep down they all held great respect for them.

...

Ji You had just approached the Academic Affairs Office and hadn't yet had the chance to knock when Director Wang, seated in his office chair, caught sight of her. His face beamed with a smile straight away:

"Yo—Who have we here?" Director Wang greeted Ji You warmly, raising his hand, "No need to knock, just come on in."

Seeing his smile, Ji You felt a chill run down her spine; Director Wang seemed to have anticipated her arrival, looking as though he had long been waiting.

—This... this is bad.

With trepidation, Ji You took a step forward and said, "Director Wang, hello, I'm from class 131 of the self-funded..."

She was only halfway through when Director Wang cut her off, his eyes smiling warmly: "Ji You, no need for formal introductions. I have all the student records here, and despite the thousands of students, I still recognize each one instantly."

Ji You: "..."

It's not a matter of you not recognizing me, but rather that you do.

A wave of despair washed over Ji You internally: She had been singled out.

Ji You moved her lips hesitantly, saying, "Director Wang, the thing is, I came here today wanting to—"

Before she could finish, Director Wang raised his hand yet again, interrupting her with a beaming smile: "No need to say more, I know why you're here. You want to rent the Material Department's auditorium, right?"

Ji You forced a stiff smile: "...Yes, that's correct. You really are well-informed, Master."

Director Wang smiled radiantly, his entire demeanor as benevolent as the Maitreya Buddha, and said affably, "The students at the school are all like my children, how could I not know what concerns my children?"

Ji You: "..."

As if blind to Ji You's frozen face, Director Wang still said with a smile, "As for the matter of renting the auditorium, there's no need to apply to other leaders. I can give the green light right here."

Upon hearing this, Ji You's eyes lit up instantly, and she hurriedly said: "Then I really have to thank Director Wang... I'm so grateful, then... since it's all settled, I won't delay your work, I'll take my leave now."

The best way to avoid getting fleeced is to make a quick escape.

But—

Ji You's butt hadn't even moved from the seat when she heard Director Wang say with a chuckle, "No rush, according to the procedure, it's not approved that quickly. Ji You, please wait a moment."

Ji You: "..."

As expected—

I knew it wouldn't be so easy to flee.

Ji You had no choice but to sit down again with a bitter face, staring at Director Wang with a resentful look and asked bluntly, "Director Wang, please be straight with me, how much will renting the auditorium cost?"

Director Wang, still smiling, said, "Talking about money is so crass."

Ji You, with a strained smile, echoed: "Yes, yes, it's really crass! Utterly unbearable..."

Director Wang laughed: "Still have to talk about it though, crass or not."

Ji You: "..."

Director Wang continued with a smile: "Don't look at me with that expression, the money is definitely something we can't just gloss over."

Ji You: "..."

Ji You took a deep breath and asked, "How much?"

Director Wang looked at Ji You, eyes beaming with kindness, and said, "Not much, just 500,000."

Ji You's eyes bulged: "500,000???"

Ji You gaped: "Just that???"

Director Wang said with a smile, "Don't be shocked just yet, this 500,000, I'm not overcharging you. Let me ask you, since you are going to hold a tournament, there will be a lot of people, right? So—don't you need to maintain order within the venue? These students who maintain order will be arranged by our Material Department's Student Affairs Office, but you at least have to pay them a service fee, right?"

Ji You stammered, "... right...that seems correct."

She hadn't anticipated this aspect.

Then.

Director Wang continued, "The auditorium is so spacious, it can accommodate at least 50,000 people. If no one maintains order with that many people, any accident could cause chaos, so— you'll have to hire at least 500 people to keep order, right?"

Ji You mumbled, "Yes... yes."

Director Wang said with a beaming smile, "500 people, working for one day, excluding lunch and dinner time, would work at least 10 hours for you. According to the Alliance Labour Law, this is considered serious overtime; you have to pay them triple overtime wages. It comes to at least 1,000 credit points per person, right?"

Ji You: "..."

Ji You clenched her teeth and mustered the courage to ask: "Director Wang, is the Student Affairs Office hiring? Would someone like me have a chance to be recruited on the spot? Rest assured about the work, I'm especially diligent, particularly good at maintaining order and such tasks."

Goodness me!

Why bother organizing a public tournament at all, when you can simply go work as a security guard to maintain order?

With 1,000 credit points for a day's work, such a lucrative position should be snatched up fast, why leave it for someone else?

As soon as Ji You said this, Director Wang's smiling face suddenly froze for a moment, but quickly, he resumed his kind smile and said, "It's not hard to get into the Student Affairs Office, but it's rare to find a big spender like Ji You willing to hold a tournament in the auditorium."

Ji You: "..."

Chapter 360: Stingy Old Man

This—

This is just too direct.

Ji You felt a wave of toothache after hearing it.

She even had the audacious thought to find an opportunity, stuff Director Wang into a sack, and beat him up vigorously.

Despicable.

It's really despicable.

For just maintaining order alone, Director Wang, in a few words, had extorted a fee of 50,000 credit points.

Ji You knew that this was not the end!

The real bulk was still waiting behind.

As expected——

Director Wang revealed his signature smiling expression and said, "The Material Department's ring challenge is not like the Mechanical Combat Department, where a direct competition can decide the winner. Thus, you need to invite several fair, impartial, and objective judges, right?"

Ji You: "..."

Ji You said with a pained face, "That's actually true."

Director Wang said with a smile, "When Director Wang was young, he also seriously studied the Material discipline. Therefore, I won't increase your burden. I'll volunteer as a judge for free."

Is there such a good thing?

Ji You's ears twitched, and she even doubted her own hearing.

At this moment, Director Wang's tone shifted, and the follow-up came: "Volunteering for free is my gesture as a part of the school staff, but although I can do it for free since I don't currently have teaching duties, other teachers have heavy teaching loads. We can't just pull them away, as it would delay their work, right?"

What else could Ji You say?

She had no choice but to keep nodding: "Director Wang is right, that makes sense."

Director Wang said with a smile, "The two most proficient professors in Material Department are Professor Ye Hong and Professor Jiang Yulan. Their judgments, I believe, would not be questioned by any faculty or students in terms of fairness. Therefore, for these two, the appearance fee for each one should be at least 100,000 credit points, right?"

Ji You's mouth twitched, and she was almost on the verge of crying, "Director... Director Wang... can we invite some cheaper teachers instead?"

Upon hearing this, Director Wang's face immediately turned stern, and he seriously said, "Nonsense! Since we are holding a public ring challenge, we must guarantee the professionalism of the judges. Plus, if the word spreads outside and the results are found to be unfair, wouldn't it disgrace the school's reputation? Concerning the school's reputation, apart from these two professors, I see no one else fitting."

Ji You: "..."

What else could Ji You say when he had spoken everything? All she could do was nod her head miserably, "Yes, yes, yes... Director Wang, you are indeed foresighted."

Hearing Ji You's words, Director Wang's smile deepened slightly. He then gestured with his hand and said, "With all these necessities, you've spent at least 250,000, and for other miscellaneous expenses in the auditorium, such as electricity, tables, chairs, benches, materials, production needs, and subsequent cleaning... all these small items add up to at least 100,000 credit points to start with. I've rounded off the fraction for you, only charging you 100,000 even. So altogether, there's a minimum essential cost of 350,000."

At this point, Director Wang paused for a moment, looked at Ji You with a smile, and asked, "Student Ji You, ask yourself, isn't it cost-effective for the school to only charge you 150,000 for the rental fee?"

Ji You's face was full of smiles, but the smile contained endless bitterness, "Cost-effective. It's really cost-effective."

Upon hearing this, Director Wang clapped his hands and said, "Since you think so too, it means we've reached a preliminary agreement. Now let's discuss the risk factors."

Ji You widened her eyes, "Ah? There are risk factors?"

Director Wang's face turned serious, and he scolded, "Are you joking? With such a large event, if something went wrong, wouldn't it harm thousands of people? We must have risk control, right?"

Ji You: "..."

His words were utterly unreasonable, but she had no response.

Director Wang's continuous ploys left Ji You, who was usually stingy, frugal, and shrewd, completely dumbfounded.

In a daze, Ji You asked, "Then... how do we control the risks?"

Director Wang said with a grin, "That's simple, just buy a commercial insurance policy. The Alliance Wan Kang Insurance has a product that covers personal accidents, property, critical illness... all within the scope of coverage, perfect for small-scale events like ours. The premium is not expensive, just 100,000 credit points, and in the event of any risk, it will pay out ten million credit points. Though ten million credit points isn't a lot, as long as we have logistics in place, it's enough for us to handle some small risk factors."

Ji You: "..."

Despite racking her brain, Ji You could never have imagined Director Wang, supposedly an educator, was also moonlighting by selling insurance, which was simply —

A sign of the times.

Ji You, struggling to control the twitching at the corners of her mouth, said, "Director Wang — can we skip the insurance? Like you said, as long as we manage the logistics well and maintain order, we can definitely avoid risks."

As soon as Director Wang heard this, he looked displeased and said, "Nonsense! Reinforcing logistics can only reduce risk, not completely eliminate it, so insurance is still necessary."

Saying this, he handed a stack of documents to Ji You, "These are the detailed insurance terms. Take a good look yourself, and if there are no issues, fill in the policy and sign it."

Ji You's hands trembled, somewhat beyond her control.

Seeing this, Director Wang stuffed the documents into her left hand and an electronic pen into her right, saying, "Hurry up and finish it, sign it so I can get off work sooner."

Ji You, staring at the dense insurance terms, felt waves of darkness in front of her eyes, nearly collapsing to the ground.

She had never imagined that just renting the Material Department's auditorium would end up costing 600,000 credit points.

600,000!

It was like they were flaying her skin, stripping her tendons, scooping out her heart...

Suddenly, Ji You put down the insurance terms, threw the electronic pen, and mustered her courage to say, "Director Wang, I've decided not to hold this ring challenge. Is that okay?"

Director Wang's mouth twitched, "Are you joking?"

Ji You wished she could cry out loud, "I'd like to joke too, but I'm poor. It's clear I can't afford to hold this ring challenge, yingyingying..."

Director Wang: "..."

Ji You threw the documents and the electronic pen, ready to make a quick exit.

Suddenly, Director Wang said, "Stop right there!"

Ji You paused, and while internally elated, she turned back around slowly with a face still thick with sorrow, "Director Wang... I'm not joking on purpose, it's just that I am really poor, I can't even come up with 600,000 now."

So —

There must be some way to reduce the fees, right?

There must be, right?

Not to say all of it, but at least half?

Half, that's 300,000. Ji You quickly thought it over, feeling that she could bear it if she gritted her teeth.