

# The Promise of Happiness

## Chapter 45

Natalie was so concerned and anxious that she failed to catch the guilt that flashed through Franklin's eyes.

"Lift your shirt," she ordered.

Franklin's eyebrows furrowed. He was hesitant as he was unsure why Natalie wanted him to do that. Moreover, he did not know whether he should obey or not.

The boy glanced toward Samuel, silently pleading him to give an order.

Samuel narrowed his eyes. "Didn't you hear what Ms. Nichols said, Franklin?"

Without further hesitation, Franklin gritted his teeth and did as he was told.

After feeling around his stomach, Natalie realized that the child in front of her was faking his stomachache.

She looked into his eyes and maintained eye contact for a few seconds until he lowered his head and averted his gaze.

How could he fake his sickness just to see me? He would get accused of crying wolf if he repeatedly does this. What will happen if he actually falls sick, and the Bowers family ignores him?

Franklin was not sure what to do. The sight of Natalie remaining silent made him even more anxious than he was before.

“Natalie, I... I think I’m fine now,” he stuttered. “You’re really my medicine! Just the sight of you made my stomachache go away.”

Natalie could see through the boy easily, yet she chose not to expose him. “It might be a mental stomachache. Drinking more water should help soothe it.”

Both Franklin and Sophia released breaths of relief after hearing what Natalie said.

Natalie caressed Franklin’s cheek before turning around to Samuel. “Mr. Bowers, could you kindly get Franklin a glass of warm water?”

Samuel, who was leaning on the doorframe, nodded slightly and went downstairs to

get the water.

At that moment, the only people remaining in the children’s bedroom were Natalie and the siblings.

Natalie furrowed her brows. “Franklin, lying is not the right thing to do.”

Her words made Franklin nervous all over again. “Natalie, 1-”

She cut him off before he could even finish his sentence. “I’m glad that you wanted to see me, but this isn’t the right way,” she said, her tone serious. “I’m not mad, but I’m definitely disappointed. I care a lot about you, which was why I came in such a hurry. But knowing that you lied to me made me feel as if my worries earlier were useless and ridiculous.”

After hearing that, Franklin’s expression immediately fell. He could not even think of anything to refute her.

Sophia, too, with her head hung low, stood obediently and listened to Natalie's scolding

"I'm sorry, Natalie," Franklin apologized.

Natalie was glad. "Learning from your mistakes is what I admire from a boy."

"But..." Franklin hesitated. After mustering up all his courage, he continued, "Sophia and I would like to see you every day. Could you move in with us?"

Though Sophia was unable to speak, her lively eyes were filled with anticipation.

Natalie, on the receiving end, was shocked by Franklin's words.

Move in? With what justification?

She already had her two sweethearts, Xavian and Clayton.

No matter how much she liked Franklin and Sophia, they were ultimately not biologically related to her.

Even if there were various reasons behind the separation of Samuel and their mom, they still had their own mom. It was not her duty to move in and take care of them.

"I can't," she refused.

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"Why?"

“There’s no reason to that,” Natalie stated with a smile. “You and Sophia have your daddy. Naturally, you also have your mommy. If I move in with you guys, your mommy will be very sad,” she explained patiently.

Upon the mention of their mom, Franklin and Sophia’s expressions darkened.

There was a hint of fear on Sophia’s face as she started rubbing her hands together.

“That woman who only tries to butter us up?” Franklin questioned, his expression livid. “She’s not our mommy!”