

My Dreamy Old Husband Chapter 1061

When it came to acting, Michael was the best of the best. He was the nation's first-rate actor, the youngest performing arts master, and an expert at micro-expressions. With just a glance, he could tell who was acting, and who was not.

So, what was Cooper trying to do?

He simply could not figure it out.

But, no matter what Cooper wanted to do, it would eventually affect Michael and Sophia.

This was because they had a common interest now; whatever happened to Cooper would happen to Michael as well. The fact that Michael had married his daughter and had given birth to his grandchild meant that he was now stuck on this path.

The banquet was still going on. Despite all the things that had happened tonight, the buzz was not dying down anytime soon.

This vanity fair was top-notch and full of life. An array of fashionably dressed men and women wandered around in search of a place of belonging and the destination of their desires.

When Sophia was tired from dancing, she left the dance floor and walked toward Michael, who was slowly sipping on his cocktail and was deep in thought.

Having drunk a bottle of French Cheval-Blanc by himself, Stanley was getting a bit tipsy. He held onto Michael's arm and rubbed it up and down, all while speaking gibberish.

He was a domineering director in his own right, but in front of Michael, he would always behave like a silly husky.

“What are you thinking about, hubby?”

Sophia squeezed Stanley out of the way and sat next to Michael while pouring a glass of juice to quench her thirst.

She was so happy today that she danced till she was exhausted.

Michael slowly set down his glass and let out a long exhale. He stretched out his arm to pull Sophia in by the waist until she was leaning against his chest where she lifted her chin to look at him.

She was breathtakingly beautiful tonight, but Michael would always remember how she used to look.

At that time, she was simple and innocent. She had taken so much of fate’s beatings that it seemed as if her soul was hollowed out. She was like a weak little wildflower, drooping hopelessly in a withered wasteland; the petals had wilted, but the roots were still trying to look for nutrients among the barrenness.

She was the apple of his eye and he had nurtured her until she gradually blossomed into a bright and brilliant wonder.

Presently, Sophia’s arm was on his shoulder, and her red lips were slightly parted. Her fair, pointed chin was raised a little, and her eyes were as gentle as water, making her look captivating and lovely.

Michael wrapped his arms around her shoulders, letting her lean into him. He held onto her little slender hands while listening to her talk.

“You found out about my brother long ago, didn’t you? Why didn’t you stop me when I discussed the fake marriage with you? This is so embarrassing. I almost married my own brother! I never expected that the ‘brother’ Dad has been raising for more than twenty years was actually his biological son. I really am fortune’s fool. No matter how much I think about it, I wouldn’t have expected Uncle Linus to be my elder brother.”

Michael’s brows furrowed slightly.

Had Sophia ever discussed her fake marriage with him before?

He could roughly guess what had happened.

Linus had taken advantage of her again.

He had deceived Cooper and everyone else.

Michael could not believe that Linus would actually think of something like that. Michael had been abroad, filming by the mountains. There was no signal on set, which cut off all his communications with the outside world. It was only until Justin found the set one day that he found out what was happening.

Justin had gotten a phone call from his subordinate telling him about Lorelei. For a while, he could not take it and wanted to find somewhere to relax for two days.

After taking two days to calm down, he still felt uneasy. He hurriedly contacted Michael, but he could not reach him.

Having always been wary of Linus, Justin paid great attention to him at all times. In the end, he discovered Linus' plan.

Fortunately, Annabel returned and disrupted Linus' plan, delaying the dinner by ten days. Otherwise, he would have achieved his goal by now, resulting in only two possible outcomes.

Firstly, if Michael did not come back, Linus' identity would not be revealed, and he would take advantage of Sophia and Cooper's trust to take action. Even so, Michael was uncertain of what he wanted to achieve.

The other possibility was that when Michael returned, they would have already announced their marriage. A marriage between the brother and sister would definitely pain Sophia.

All of them had almost fallen into Linus' trap.

Today, Sophia was more excited than usual. Her tiny mouth was talking non-stop, and her eyes could not conceal the excitement of finding her brother.

For ten years, she had been an orphan. Having suffered hardships, she had longed for a family. Even though she had lost her memory, that longing was subconsciously hidden in her mind.

Now that she had finally found her family, she felt immensely blessed. To her, all of this was as beautiful as a dream.

Not to mention, Linus was her fraternal twin brother!

They had been conceived together and were born together, but they were ruthlessly separated at birth. Now that they had reconciled and she was overjoyed, how could Michael have the heart to ruin her happiness?

However, it was true that Linus had used her time and time again.

She had forgotten about it, but Linus had once used her and Nathan to probe the Fletchers' military secrets. He had even let her fall into the hands of the Phantom Wolf!

And now, he had tricked her again.

Michael knew that Linus loved Sophia. This blood bond between twins was innate; just like his love for Celine, it was not something that could be abandoned. Although they never knew each other, that love would always be there.

But, so what if he loved her?

Ultimately, the person he loved the most was himself. He had used her to his advantage—to achieve his goals!

Leaning on Michael, Sophia began to tell him about everything that had happened when he was gone. She told him about Carmen falling sick, about how they had relocated Annabel's tomb, about Annabel's return...

She had found her father and her mother, and she had also found her brother. Her family was reunited, which made her feel like the happiest girl in the world.

Michael's expression was indifferent. He was not particularly happy, but he was not solemn either; he just sat there silently and listened.

At this moment, Michael suddenly patted Sophia on the shoulder and said gently, "I need to find your dad to talk about something. You can play with Stanley for a while. I'll be back soon."

Michael then set down his glass and walked out of the dinner hall. Sophia sat on the couch, while Stanley, who was drunk, rubbed her arms and spoke drunkenly.

“Give me three thousand soldiers and horses; I want to defeat the Yard Dynasty!”

“Brothers, attack!”

“Little Yard, take this back thrust!”

...

The atmosphere of tonight’s dinner was extraordinary. After all, Linus had publicly announced that he was a part of the Mitchell family. This meant that he had completely given up on his identity as a Michel, which resulted in him losing all control of the Michel Group.

Many people were whispering at the sides, talking about how they wanted to cut ties with the Michel Group and work with the Yard Group instead. The Yard twins had been in the spotlight lately and were constantly surrounded by beautiful women and celebrities.

Ian was also present today, and he was watching everything in silence.

He had been deceived and swindled previously, and Sophia had even made fun of him for having a redundant prepuce. Even though his mind and wallet had suffered a blow, he dared not tell anyone such a shameful thing. He had no choice but to bite the bullet and cut off his foreskin. When he heard talk about people wanting to end their contracts with Linus and hurriedly sell off their Michel Group stocks before the news got out, he felt rather delighted.

They’re just a bunch of profiteering fools!

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Ian had to clear up his pockets as soon as possible. When they got rid of their shares of the Michel Group, he would buy however much they sold. There was going to be a change in the

stock market tonight. Ian realized that other than him, quite a number of people were emptying their pockets as well; they were all waiting to purchase the Michel Group's stocks, and Michael was one of them.

While everyone's focus was on the Yard twins and Linus' stocks, Linus was standing alone on the hotel rooftop, taking in the evening breeze. Summer in Bayside City was sultry during the day, but cool at night.

Linus propped his hands on the rooftop railing, his head hanging low as tears began to fall. He was happy today, but he was also downhearted; he felt sad and regretful. For twenty years, he had lived with the Michel family in fear. As an adopted son, the pressure he had experienced was unlike any other. He dreamed of becoming a true member of the Michel Family and did not dare to relax for even a day. The heartache he felt for those twenty years was something that only he would understand.

He had only found out today that Cooper was his biological father. The pressure he felt during the past twenty years seemed ridiculous and absurd now. He had actually taken advantage of his biological sister over and over again just to gain a foothold! Now that his identity had changed, his standpoint had changed too. Looking back, he realized how repulsive he used to be; he was simply a monster who would do whatever it took to gain power.

Unbeknownst to Linus, Cooper had appeared behind him. The night was dark, and the city's bright neon lights barely outlined Cooper's fuzzy figure. Linus turned back, and although he could not see his expression, he could guess how disappointed Cooper was at the moment. The man was as sharp as a tack, so it went without saying that he must have seen through all of Linus' plans by now.

"Linus, do you admit to your mistakes?" Cooper asked coldly.

This time, his terrible ploy had failed once again, but Linus was not scared. Instead, he felt guilty and sad. He slowly turned back until he was facing Cooper, then with a 'plop', he knelt on the ground. "Dad, I was wrong..." The pair stayed like that: the father standing and the son kneeling.

Cooper remained silent for a long while before taking a couple of steps forward to help Linus up. Tears were brimming in Linus' eyes, but he could clearly see Cooper's expression. There was no look of reproach on his face; instead, there was only a father's heartache.

The father and son stood on the rooftop, looking at Bayview City's bright neon lights. This was their first time being together as father and son, but Linus did not feel strange because this was how they had always gotten along. Even though they did not know about their relationship, Cooper had always treated Linus as his own and had high hopes for him.

"Linus, you must know that I'm strict with you not because you're adopted. It doesn't matter whether or not you're my son, as ever since I adopted you, I've taken on the responsibility of guiding you. I'm strict with you because I want you to be stronger." Cooper's words were grave and earnest, but his eyes were filled with sadness. "Only when you have power and strength, can you protect all those that you love."

Linus nodded wordlessly. Cooper patted his shoulder and looked at the son that he had found with such difficulty. Sadness surged in his heart, but at the same time, he was gratified. He figured that he had never treated him poorly, and Linus had lived up to his expectations as well. This was enough. It was really enough...

"Linus, a person strengthens themselves in order to protect everything they love. If you only gain power for yourself, you'll be lonely for life."

Once again, Linus nodded silently, and he could not hold back the tears that began to fall.

Cooper continued, "You're the child that I raised, so I know your character, and I know why you did what you've done... But that doesn't mean I'll tolerate everything that you do. There is nothing crueler than hurting the person who loves and trusts you. Once the consequences emerge, you won't even have the chance to make amends. Linus... I will never be able to ask for your grandfather's forgiveness for the rest of my life, which is why I hope that you won't follow in my footsteps."

At this point, Linus sobbed uncontrollably and kneeled in front of Cooper again; he wasn't even able to utter a single word. He was unscrupulous because he had no sense of security, and he felt like he could be replaced at any moment. He lived carefully and cautiously because he feared that he would be sent away mercilessly if he so much as took a wrong step or said something wrong. He really liked his sister, his adoptive parents, and Cooper; he did not want to leave them.

But today, he realized that regardless of whether or not he was Cooper's biological son, Cooper had always treated him as his most trusted family member.

“Dad, I was wrong, and I won’t do it again. Please don’t tell Sophia; I don’t want to lose her...” While Cooper might have been able to forgive him, Sophia might not.

Cooper shook his head, tears welling up in his eyes. “Silly child, she’s your sister—your relative. She will forgive you; after all, we’re family. Linus... As long as you’re sincere, you don’t have to be as careful as a slave is around their master. Nobody will send you away just because you’re not good enough. Back then, I brought you back because I wanted to give you a home.”

Tears were streaming down Linus’ face like rain now, and his voice was hoarse when he spoke. “Dad...”

In the corner, Michael watched everything before quietly leaving. In the end, he did not mention anything to Sophia, so she still thought that it was all a misunderstanding.

He suddenly remembered his childhood when he was adopted by the Fletchers after his parents passed away. People his age were jealous of the affection he got from Mark, so they ostracized him and isolated him. Now, he knew that it was nothing more than children being children, but at that time, he felt as if it was the end of the world. Therefore, he rebelled and left the Fletcher family, not turning back for more than a decade. When he looked back now, he realized that he and Linus were the same type of people. The only difference was that Linus chose to bear everything silently and strengthened himself by any means, while he chose to turn his back on everything.

In no time, the banquet ended, and everyone was happy. The next day, there were rumors that the Vice President of the Michel Group was adopted, but he had found his biological father and was disowned by the Michel family. He would immediately lose his position in the Michel Group, and they would carry out a reshuffling of power, which would cause internal turmoil. This had resulted in many people selling their stocks.

Michael made haste to collect a lot of loose shares, saving them for Sophia and Carmen. When the time came and she really wanted to return to the Michel family, all of this would be her capital.

Sophia was still staying with Michael at The Imperial, while Linus openly moved back to the Edwards Residence. After he returned home, Michael handled several trivial matters before bringing Sophia and Carmen to the Edwards Residence for dinner. This would be their first meal together ever since they acknowledged their relationship, so it was a rather grand occasion. Michael even took the liberty to bring over a few pounds of rice eels.

At the dinner table, Carmen addressed Linus sweetly. "Granduncle!"

Cooper instantly corrected her. "Call him uncle!"

Carmen pouted with dissatisfaction and spoke as if she were wronged. "Papa said that even though Uncle Linus is my real uncle, I'll still have to call him Granduncle when Grandpa is around."

Upon hearing this, Michael was shocked and nearly jumped up to cover Carmen's mouth. He was doomed!

Sure enough, as soon as Carmen finished speaking, three pairs of eyes shot coldly toward Michael.

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Three pairs of faint blue eyes stared coldly in Michael's direction.

Both Cooper and Linus had been immersed in the joy of their family reunion over the past two days, so they failed to carefully reflect on the events that had transpired. However, their niggling doubts had existed in their hearts since before. Thus, everybody immediately noticed something fishy going on as soon as Carmen mentioned it.

Cooper thought to himself, No wonder Michael managed to locate Linus at such a timely moment! No wonder I always felt that somebody was muddying the waters and blocking my way from behind the scenes while I was searching for my son! No wonder Daniel told me to remain spiritual in my search for my son, claiming that my long-lost son would appear if I checked the household registry! That was because Linus is already listed in the household registry! If it weren't for this incident, where Michael became anxious and desperate because I was pushing Linus and Sophia into a fake marriage, who knows how long Michael would have continued deceiving us?! That d*mn Michael!

Sophia angrily put her cutlery down and glared at Michael fiercely. Similarly, the expression on Linus' face was anything but kind. On the other hand, Michael didn't even flinch as he held Carmen and fed her. He even smilingly said, "You're so smart! Uncle Linus became Mommy's brother a long, long time ago. So, don't call him 'Granduncle Linus' anymore. You should call him 'Uncle Linus' just like before!"

Carmen raised her head and looked at him. Pouting, she said, "Okay." Adults are so complicated!

Despite managing to turn the situation around, it did not change the fact that the truth had been ruthlessly exposed. Thus, Linus and Cooper were still glaring daggers at him. However, he gathered all the acting skills he cultivated as an Academy Award winner to keep his expression neutral and calm. Hmph; why should I fear Cooper? He can't do anything to me! I'm his son-in-law!

Carmen was oblivious to the storm brewing between the adults. Picking up her new bowl, she looked at Cooper and asked sweetly, "Grandpa, is my 'royal sweetheart bowl' pretty?"

Only then did Cooper withdraw his vicious glare. By the time he turned to face her, his face was filled with pure delight. "Yes, it's very pretty."

In his opinion, Michael's greatest contribution in life was the child he had with Sophia—Carmen.

Feeling relieved at the sight of his expression, she held her beloved customized small bowl and ate her food. Michael used her 'royal sweetheart spoon' to feed her and wiped her mouth with her personalized napkin when her mouth became dirty.

Hence, the meal continued under that strange atmosphere.

After the meal, Cooper and Linus went into the study. They had a lot of matters to discuss. Then, Sophia hurriedly dragged Michael away with her. Returning to their original room, she asked frankly, "Were you aware that Linus was my brother from the beginning?"

Michael kept his expression stern. "No, I didn't know from the start either. Justin only told me about it two days ago." He did his best to push the blame on Justin. "Justin seems to

have suspected it since the beginning, but he wasn't sure. He only managed to confirm it several days ago. To our surprise, the two of you were about to have a fake marriage. So, I rushed back to stop you. Fortunately, I arrived in time."

She didn't quite believe him. Observing his every action carefully, she tried to detect any flaws in his expression. However, she could not find any. As expected of a Best Actor winner; he's a professional actor indeed. Who knows if he is lying to me... Forget it; our little family is back together again. Let's forget about these trivial matters.

Although they moved out, the room Sophia used to stay in had been kept very neat and clean. Cooper even placed some pajamas in the closet and slippers in the shoe cabinet so that he could welcome her back anytime. At that moment, she suddenly felt the sadness of marrying out of the family. Now that she had grown up, she couldn't keep following her father around anymore.

Later, the family of three decided to have dinner at the Edwards Residence before returning home. However, Michael found Carmen sitting in a corner and sulking unhappily in the afternoon.

"What's wrong, baby?" Michael hurriedly went over and asked upon noticing that his beloved daughter looked extremely aggrieved. His heart trembled at the sight of her expression.

Carmen's round little face was full of grievances. She was pouting and seemed to be sniffing slightly as she looked up at him pitifully. "Daddy, have I been losing money?"

He had not expected her to ask such a nonsensical question. Quickly pulling her into his arms, he gently replied, "No, you aren't. Why would you lose money? Besides, you've been making a lot of money recently! I've been keeping it in the bank for you!"

She sobbed, her tears rolling down her face. Pressing her lips together, she asked, "Then why... Why did Grandma call me a waste of money?"

Upon hearing those words, he froze in shock. The three words she uttered seemed to echo in his ears. Waste of money?! This is the first time anybody has ever dared to describe my precious daughter as such!

When she saw Michael saying nothing, she whimpered and incoherently asked, "Daddy, did I make you waste a lot of money? Grandma says I spend too much money. She says I spend hundreds of thousands every month. She says I'm going to make you go bankrupt!"

His expression immediately became overcast, and he smiled coldly. However, his teeth made a grinding sound as he gnashed them furiously. Hugging her in his arms, he gently patted her on the back to comfort her. Then, he said softly, "Darling, Grandma was talking nonsense. You're very good at making money. Did you forget? You're a little princess who has millions of fans!"

Still, she continued crying. She was about to turn four; she was no longer a three-year-old child, so she could understand what the adults were saying now. She also understood that 'a waste of money' was something bad. Sobbing, she lifted her head to look at him. "Daddy, is it very expensive to raise me?"

He picked her up and kissed her tear-stained face. "Of course not; even Judge spends more money than you do!"

He held her and comforted her, but she kept crying without stopping. She cried all the way to the garage. Placing her in the car, he put a husky doll in her lap and gently said, "Darling, can you sit here and watch 'Where Are We Going, Dad?' for a bit? I'm going to get Mommy. Let's go home together, alright?"

Carmen nodded while wiping away her tears. Michael took out his computer and turned on 'Where Are We Going, Dad?' for her. After that, he instructed the nanny and the driver to watch her before going to search for Sophia. The moment he turned around, the gentle and warm fatherly demeanor was gone. All that was left was a terrible ruthlessness and fury!

In the living room, the family was just starting to watch TV together. Michael had yet to return after heading to the bathroom. Taking advantage of Michael's absence, Annabel rushed over to Sophia and earnestly said, "My dear, you need to make haste! You have to give birth to a son as soon as possible! Only a son can keep your husband by your side!"

Sophia was focused on the TV while using her leg to pet the dog at the same time. When she heard those words, her gaze flicked over to Annabel before flicking away again. "A daughter is nice too." Are all mothers like that? Why do her words sound so hateful?

Unexpectedly, Annabel became exasperated at her words and sternly said, "Daughters will be married off sooner or later. No matter how you raise them, they are a waste of money! You need to get yourself a son! Even if you can't give birth to one, you need to find another way! You can use a surrogate mother. In the worst case, you can secretly find a mistress. Once she gives birth to a son, you can raise him as yours, then give her some money to leave—"

Before Sophia could say a word, she saw Michael rushing into the room in a hurry. Without saying anything, he raised his hand and slapped Annabel across the face heavily. Slap! As the loud sound echoed throughout the room, the room instantly became completely silent.

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Originally, everybody had been watching TV and chatting with each other. Cooper and Linus were talking to each other quietly in English. Meanwhile, Annabel was energetically talking to Sophia about women's issues. Needless to say, Cooper heard everything Annabel said, including 'waste of money', 'surrogate mother', and 'find a mistress'. Although he was sick of listening to it, he said nothing. If anybody else were to say that, he would have killed them a long time ago.

However, nobody could have expected Michael to slap Annabel across the face as soon as he walked in. That clear sound rang out across the room, and everybody in the living room was left frozen in shock. It was the first time they witnessed a son-in-law hitting his mother-in-law!

As swift as lightning, he slapped Annabel again before anybody could react. The second hit was much harder than the first. As a result, Annabel lost her balance, fell onto the sofa, and struggled to get up. When she lifted her head again, her face was red and swollen.

Widening her eyes, it took her a long time to recover from the shock of being hit. On the other hand, he looked menacing and ferocious, and his eyes were filled with rage. Pointing at her, he warned her sternly. "I'm warning you right now. If you can't watch what you say, I'll make sure you can never say another word again!"

At that moment, everybody in the living room finally came back to their senses. Sophia hurriedly got up, put on her shoes, and ran toward Michael. Grabbing at the hand he was pointing toward Annabel, she said, "Hubby, what's going on? Why did you hit Mom?!"

Annabel seemed to have gone into shock from fright. She sat on the sofa in a daze, staring at Michael in disbelief. It wasn't until Cooper hurried over to hug her that she returned to her senses and finally let out a loud wail. Burying her face in Cooper's chest, she sobbed in fear.

Cooper hugged his beloved wife close. Touching her face, he saw that her face was swollen from the slap! Thus, he flew into a rage and roared in a thunderous voice, "Michael Fletcher! How dare you?! How dare you hit your mother-in-law?!"

When Michael heard the words 'mother-in-law', a cold and cruel smile appeared on his enraged expression. "Mother-in-law? Haha. I call her 'mother-in-law' out of respect. She is nothing but a wretched woman!" Even with Cooper standing right in front of him, he didn't seem inclined to be tolerant today. He pointed at Annabel and said warningly, "You wretched woman! Listen well; how I raise my daughter is none of your business! More than that, it has nothing to do with you whether my daughter causes me to lose money or not! If you dare to say something rude again, I will kill you myself!"

Sophia was completely taken aback by his words. The way Annabel spoke was hurtful and harsh, but she simply considered Annabel's words as nonsense—it entered one ear and went out the other. Hence, she did not expect Michael to react so impulsively.

"Hubby, calm down..." She quickly stood between Annabel and Michael. When she grabbed his arm, she could feel his arm trembling slightly. His blood was boiling with rage—he was furious. He had never been as furious as he was now. "Mom's words might be a little nasty, but she has good intentions! Please calm down!"

Annabel shrank back into Cooper's arms, crying loudly. As she sobbed, she incoherently mumbled, "I did it for your sake... Coop, I didn't mean to do it! I love Carmen too! She is my granddaughter..."

"Shut up!" Michael exploded in anger. She was so scared that she trembled in fear. Gripping Cooper tightly, her wails turned into terrified sobs. She looked incredibly pitiful in her current state. Michael's eyes were still filled with rage. His slender and pale hands continued to point at Annabel. "I have not forgotten the time you fed Carmen that so-called talisman drink. Your life is cheap, but Carmen's status is several hundred times nobler than yours! If anything happens to her, even ten of your wretched lives won't be enough to pay the price!"

Tears flowed down her face as she listened to him. As her husband, Cooper was so furious that he trembled in anger. Standing up, he approached Michael swiftly. He raised his fist toward Michael. Similarly, Michael raised his fist in response too.

“You b*stard! I’m going to teach you a lesson today!”

“You old coot! I’ve been tolerating you for a long time now!”

It was a showdown between a raging dragon and a roaring tiger—one was fighting for his wife while the other was fighting for his daughter. Both were livid and gritting their teeth; their eyes were scarlet with rage. They wanted to get back at each other for all the past and current hatred for each other. When Linus saw that the situation was getting out of hand, he rushed forward and stopped Cooper. Meanwhile, Sophia and Roger grabbed Michael.

The situation in the living room was chaotic. It was a cacophony of sounds—Cooper was shouting, Michael was roaring furiously, Sophia was screaming, Annabel was wailing, and there was also the sound of tableware crashing to the ground and smashing to pieces. The entire Edwards Residence was shrouded in a tragic atmosphere like those found in soap operas.

Cooper was forcefully held back by Linus. However, he continued to wave his fists about. “Michael Fletcher! Do you really think you can marry my daughter?! Impossible! As long as I am alive, you will never marry her!”

Michael was struggling against Roger’s grip. “Sophia and I are mutually in love! Since when do you have a say in it?!”

Cooper’s eyes were crimson with hatred. “You knew about Linus from the beginning, didn’t you?! You’ve been hiding it from us all along!”

In response, Michael was so furious that he burst out laughing, but his laughter was bleak and despairing. “That’s right! I knew since the beginning! Five years ago, I was searching everywhere for you on Sophia’s behalf. Where were you?! Where were you when Sophia got into trouble?! I discovered that Linus was Sophia’s brother five years ago. I wanted to let the siblings get to know each other. But... ask your son yourself! Just what did he do?! Why don’t you ask him what he did?! What right does he have to get to know her?! He’s not worthy of her!”

Upon hearing those words, Linus froze in shock. *I see... Five years ago... Michael already knew...* Five years ago, he assisted the Phantom Wolf in kidnapping Sophia. He had not meant for it to happen and later helped rescue her. However, he couldn't just write off his involvement in that matter.

The scars from that time were forcefully ripped open again. Cooper's mind was filled with the memory of Sophia lying in his arms, covered in lacerations, and looking like she was about to die. There were too many memories in his life that he did not dare to recall, and this was one of them. It was no less painful than the time when Annabel died in his arms after being poisoned back then. All of a sudden, he let out a hoarse, angry roar. "Michael Fletcher! I'm going to kill you! I'm going to kill you!"

He ran about the house, looking for a gun. Even Linus couldn't hold him back. On the other hand, Sophia was crying out of fright. She shouted tearfully, "Stop! Stop talking! Let's just go! We won't come back again!"

She and Roger worked together to drag the unwilling Michael outside. He was like an enraged beast, trying to snap at everybody around him. After that, he grabbed her hand and quickly dragged her to the garage.

When they entered the garage, she was crying sadly when she suddenly sensed a warm and large wall of flesh rushing toward her. The force of it was so strong that she staggered back slightly. Her back was against the wall, and she thought that the flesh wall was going to crash into her. Suddenly, a pair of large hands surrounded her and held the back of her head, preventing her from banging into the wall. Then, she was enveloped in a warm and soft embrace.

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry for scaring you..."

Sophia lifted her head blankly. Michael, who was completely livid beyond words just now, had calmed down at some point. His eyes were gentle, and he seemed like a completely different person compared to the man who fought with Cooper just now...

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Sophia looked at Michael in confusion and blinked. Her face was tear-stained, and she couldn't help choking on her tears. "Weren't you fighting with my father just now—"

"It was faked. Your father and I were only acting," Michael quickly replied. He was afraid that if he confessed any later, she would overthink it.

"Acting..." It felt like her brain wasn't working. *All the brawling, quarreling, and opening old wounds... All of that was just an act?* Before she could work through her confusion, his hot lips pressed against hers and forced all her doubts away. The two of them kissed quietly in that secluded corner of the garage. Tenderly kissing her on the lips, he used his actions to express his love for her.

After the kiss, she panted; she was slightly out of breath. Her small mouth opened and closed, breathing in the ambiguous air between them. A light sheen of sweat formed on her skin, and her eyes seemed to be shrouded in mist. Half-closing her eyes, her eyelashes trembled slightly as if tears still clung to them.

It had scared her very badly when the two men started fighting each other out of nowhere. Stuck between the two of them, she watched as the two most important men in her life tried to rip each other apart. It left her at a loss of what to do. Even now, her heart was still pounding fiercely in her chest; she was unable to calm down. However, she finally felt somewhat less worried after Michael's gentle kisses.

He pressed his forehead against hers and closed his eyes as if he was reminiscing the feeling of the kisses they shared mere moments ago. Their lips were only several centimeters apart, and they could feel the heat of each other's ragged breathing. There seemed to be an invisible and alluring sense in the air, attracting them to each other. The kiss mark he placed on her neck glimmered with a familiar sense of seduction. However, he knew that now was not the time for this.

She grabbed his shoulder and questioned him again in an uncertain tone. "It really was just an act, right? You're not fighting with my father or my brother, right?"

Although she knew that Michael wasn't an impulsive man, the words they exchanged just now were too harsh. *Did he really need to say such hurtful words for the sake of an act?*

He breathed out a sigh through his nose. "Yeah. Your father knew I was acting too. But, his acting skills are far too clumsy. It's difficult to fool anybody with that level of acting, so I said some hurtful stuff to agitate him and cause an outburst of emotions in him... I didn't mean to hurt him, and I will apologize for it later."

Upon hearing those words, she couldn't help laughing a little. *I knew it; Michael is a coward. How could he possibly pick a fight with Cooper? No, he's not a coward. It's only because Cooper is my father that he has to back down. Still... was he really not taking the opportunity to pick a fight with Cooper to vent his hatred?*

Afterward, the family of three returned to Villa No.8, The Imperial. As soon as Carmen arrived home, she took out her customized accounting book and started balancing her accounts. She carried the book around with her wherever she went. Any time she made some money, she would carefully record it into the book. From the money she received from letting her friends at the kindergarten play with Judge to the salary she received from filming; she recorded everything down clearly without missing a single decimal point.

One had to admit that children with strong genes always got the longer stick in life. Although Carmen was just about to turn four, she could already do complicated multiplications and divisions. Recently, she even started learning how to do multivariate quadratic equations. Although she couldn't compare to her uncle who was defying logic at the age of four, she was very advanced compared to her peers.

I'm going to balance my accounts today. I need to check if I've been losing money! Thus, she earnestly counted with her fingers, borrowing the help of a calculator once in a while. Among all the various skills she had, she was the best at math.

Michael and Sophia helped her balance her accounts too.

"On X day X year, Carmen endorsed a children's watch. The endorsement fee was 1 million. Daddy saved it for me! On X day X year, Carmen played a bit-part for a show and earned 200 a day. On X day X year, the global box office sales of the movie Carmen acted in exceeded 500 million Amons, and she received a salary of 500,000 Amons for her role in the movie. On X day X year, Mommy used Carmen's social media account to accept an advertisement contract. The advertising fee was 100,000."

...

Carmen pouted, feeling unconvinced. After repeatedly calculating her income over the years, she finally obtained a total amount. Then, she sprung up excitedly and proudly announced, "Haha! I didn't make Daddy lose any money!"

Michael hugged his daughter, who became cheerful all of a sudden. "Look; didn't I tell you that you're good at making money? How could you be losing money?"

Once she confirmed that she was not a 'waste of money', she happily took her afternoon nap. Despite finally cheering their child up, Michael and Sophia entered the study with solemn expressions. If Cooper and Michael were just putting on an act, then there must have been an audience they were acting for. At the time, only Cooper, Linus, Annabel, Sophia, and Michael were present. Since neither Sophia nor Linus was the targeted audience, it could only be Annabel! That meant that something was up with Annabel! However, that was probably the last thing Sophia wanted to hear.

Cooper had waited for more than 20 years before finally reuniting with Annabel. But now, he discovered that she was a fake! Even if she were the real thing, she was here with ulterior motives. How torturous was that to him?! The worst part was that he had to act along with her.

Sophia used to have her suspicions too. However, she had never spent a single day with Annabel before, and her understanding of Annabel as a person was too shallow. Besides, Cooper did not seem to have any misgivings. Thus, she kept her doubts buried in her heart and suppressed her feelings. Now, her doubts were confirmed. Thinking back on it carefully, various questionable points were everywhere. For example, Cooper once mentioned that Annabel was a stubborn lady who struggled against her fate. Like mother, like daughter; they were very similar.

Sophia wanted to study to change her fate. On the other hand, Annabel had been forced to drop out of school at a young age. She then entered society and struggled to earn a living, working many different jobs. In the end, she established 'Crimson House', a franchise restaurant, with Sam. To be honest, she was very talented and innovative. Becoming a multi-millionaire in that era was just a matter of time for her. On the contrary, the current Annabel was full of conservative and rotten beliefs from the olden days. She could even go so far as to mention something like 'surrogate mother'!

Still, Sophia had not dared to investigate further into the matter. What if... she found something during her investigations? For example... the existence of that hooked-nosed man; what if that hooked-nosed man and Annabel were in cahoots with each other?

Finally, Sophia and Michael decided to bring out the previous data they collected to analyze them again and see if they could find new clues. Inside the study, she took out all the information she had gathered in the past and placed them in front of him. "This is the data I collected from some of the villagers Justin and I questioned before. And, this is a sketch of that hooked-nosed man based on their descriptions."

She had compiled them into a document and printed them out. Even so, it was a large stack of documents. He flipped through the documents while instructing Maria to bring out the information he gathered several years ago.

With both their materials combined together, Michael picked up a pen and started doodling on the documents Sophia had gathered. Meanwhile, Sophia looked through the information Michael had gathered. That information was compiled from the traces of Annabel's existence and gathered into a document for safekeeping. To give Sophia a rough idea of the information, it included photos of some of Annabel's personal effects, a diary, and pictures. Comparing the two sets of information, they immediately detected many discrepancies between the information.