

It had been ages since Benjamin last had such a scrumptious home-cooked meal. He devoured the dishes with gusto.

When Arissa saw him gobbling up the food, the corner of her mouth slightly twitched in dissatisfaction as she thought of her kids who were yet to be fed.

She could not help stealing glances at the man.

Benjamin had impeccable table manners and extremely graceful movement.

Noticing Arissa's gaze on him, he glanced back at her.

"What are you looking at?"

At his question, Arissa smiled sheepishly. "Mr. Graham, what do you think of the food?"

"They're okay," Benjamin replied curtly.

Arissa's lips twitched again. *Just okay? You look like you'd die for them.*

"Mommy, the food is great!" Gavin complimented with a huge grin.

Flashing him a gratified smile, Arissa dotingly tousled his hair.

She proceeded to put more food on his plate. "I'm glad you like them. You can have as much as you like!"

"Thanks, Mommy!" Gavin thanked Arissa happily and ate some more.

Benjamin did not like that Arissa was looking at Gavin with a tender gaze.

"Do you have more pasta?"

Arissa turned to him and replied, "Yes."

"I want another serving!" Benjamin ordered.

Twitching the corner of her lips, Arissa said, "They're in the pot. You may help yourself, Mr. Graham."

Sensing the impatience in her tone, Benjamin let out a snort and complained, "Is this how you treat your boss?"

Amused by his question, Arissa responded, "Mr. Graham, we're off the clock now. I can do whatever I want when I'm not at work!"

"Aren't you afraid that I'd fire you?" Benjamin glared at her.

Arissa shot him a glance. As she met his intense gaze, she quickly averted her eyes.

"Do as you wish. You're the boss anyway."

At her reply, Benjamin knitted his brow.

*Is she really not afraid of being fired?*

Gavin looked between the both of them. He opened his mouth and said to Benjamin, "Daddy, Mommy was almost kidnapped, and she even had to prepare dinner after she came home. She must be tired. Can't you get it on your own?"

Surprised that Gavin was taking Arissa's side, Benjamin hummed. "Are you hurt?"

Arissa's heart skipped a beat when Benjamin actually expressed concern for her.

Suppressing her excitement, she put on a calm façade and said, "I'm fine."

However, Benjamin noticed the bruise on her forehead right away. His handsome face darkened at that sight.

He did not notice it earlier as the bruise had been concealed by her hair.

Now that he saw it, he believed he had been too lenient toward the offender.

Not knowing the reason behind the sudden change of his expression, Arissa dissed him in her thoughts. *What a moody man!*

Nevertheless, she took his bowl and refilled it for him.

"Where else did you get hurt?"

Arissa looked at him. "Nowhere."

"What's this, then?"

Suddenly, Benjamin reached out a hand and pressed on the wound on her forehead.

Arissa instantly felt a stab of pain. She drew in a sharp breath and shrank away from his touch at once.

Glowering at him, she complained, "What are you doing?"

A hint of a smile flashed across Benjamin's eyes as he teased, "I thought you said you're not hurt."

Arissa groaned.

On the other hand, Gavin giggled inwardly before putting on a straight face and reprimanded Benjamin, "Daddy, you shouldn't do that. It's painful!"

"She said it herself that she wasn't hurt, so I'm testing her out!" Benjamin retorted.

Arissa's mouth twitched slightly at his words.

"Mr. Graham, why don't you finish up your food and bring Gavin home? It's late already."

*The kids are still waiting for dinner inside the room.*

"Are you chasing me out?"

Benjamin shot Arissa a glance. *She seems nervous. The kids can't be home, can they?*

Arissa grinned sheepishly as she replied, "Of course not. I'm just saying that it won't look good if you stay too long in a subordinate's home."

"I'm fine with it, though. Thanks for your concern," Benjamin snapped.

Curling her lips, Arissa turned to her food without uttering another word.

For a long while, nobody spoke as they ingested the food.

Meanwhile, the kids inside the room exchanged glances, their bowls long empty.

"I need to pee now!"

Jesse, who couldn't bear it any longer, declared to her brothers.

"Hold it in for a little more while, okay?" Jasper patted her head in a pacifying manner.

Pouting in annoyance, Jesse complained, "Why is Daddy taking so long? When is he going to leave?"

As they were not supposed to meet their father, Jesse's only hope now was for him to leave as soon as possible so that she could go relieve herself.

"He should be going soon!" Oliver tried to soothe Jesse as well.

Clasping her belly, Jesse paced back and forth in the room uneasily.

Seeing that she was at her wit's end, Zachary whispered, "Go pee at the balcony, then."

"Huh?"

Jesse was taken aback by his suggestion. She looked hesitant.

"Right. Just go pee at the balcony. We'll clean that up later."

Then, Jasper leaped off the bed and led her to the balcony.

"Hurry up!" Jasper urged her as he stood guard at the entrance of the balcony, his back against her.

Despite being afraid of darkness, Jesse steeled herself as she hastily peed at the drain hole in a corner of the balcony.

After she was done, she hurriedly pulled up her pants as she looked around the space, afraid that someone might see her. Her face was blushing from embarrassment.

"Jasper, I'm done!"

"All right. Come on in!" Jasper whispered.

After Jesse re-entered the room, Jasper and Oliver took turns to relieve themselves. They had too much soup earlier and had been resisting the urge for quite some time too.

After that, the four children sat on the bed idly and waited some more.

Holding onto the laptop, they silently monitored the surveillance footage of the trio having dinner outside.

"Wow, it's Daddy!" Jesse exclaimed in surprise as she saw Benjamin, who bore an uncanny resemblance to her brothers.

Oliver covered her mouth immediately. "Shh!"

Meanwhile, at the dining table, Benjamin looked sideways at the room with the closed door.

Arisa heard Jesse as well. Her heart racing, she attempted to divert Benjamin's attention with a question. "Mr. Graham, are you done with your meal?"

Benjamin turned to look at her.

Arisa was somewhat diffident as she met Benjamin's deep gaze.

Not intending to let her slide, Benjamin countered with another question, "Is there anyone else in your

house?"

"Not at all. Why do you ask, Mr. Graham?"

Arisa looked straight into his eyes, grinning.

Benjamin narrowed his eyes. "I could have sworn I heard a child's voice just now!"

Arisa gulped nervously. Nevertheless, she forced a smile and said, "My children are not home, Mr. Graham. Perhaps it was one of the neighbor's kids. My place is not exactly soundproof, so sometimes you can hear them quite clearly."

Benjamin shot her a glance and turned to his son, who was still enjoying dinner. Then, he wiped the corner of his mouth and voiced, "Take your time. I'll be waiting in the living room."

Then, Benjamin got to his feet and made his way to the living room. At the same time, Arissa breathed a sigh of relief.

"Mommy, you don't have to be scared of Daddy!" Gavin uttered jokingly when he saw Arissa's change in demeanor.

Arisa pinched Gavin's nose. "I'm not scared!"

She was just worried that Benjamin might find out about the kids.

"Here, have another one of these."

Arisa placed another piece of steak on Gavin's plate.

"Mommy, I'm full. You can save this for the others."

Gavin had already eaten a fair bit. At the thought of his starving siblings, he could not help feeling guilty.

"That's all right. Eat up. I'll make some more for them later!" Arissa whispered.

At her words, Gavin flashed a smile before gulping down some more food.

Meanwhile, Benjamin sat in the living room, gazing at the two rooms that were tightly shut. He shifted his gaze toward the duo who were having a great time at the dining table.

Suddenly, an indescribable warm feeling arose in his heart, as if he was watching his wife and son having a meal together.

While Arissa was not paying attention, Benjamin got to his feet, crossed the living room and promptly opened the door to the first room.

It turned out to be Arissa's bedroom. He was instantly hit by the woman's familiar fragrance. He could not hold himself back from taking a few deep breaths of that sweet scent.

Benjamin looked around and noticed that the room was decorated in pink hues and filled with a feminine charm. It seemed rather warm and cozy.

*I didn't expect her to be so girly at heart.*

Over at the dining table, Arissa, who was still eating with Gavin, turned around to check on Benjamin, only to find him standing in front of her bedroom.

Her cheeks flushed crimson at once.

*How could he enter my bedroom without my permission?*

"Mr. Graham!" Arissa called out to him. She could not let him invade her privacy.

Benjamin turned to her, looking as composed as ever. He did not show a single shred of unease despite being caught red-handed.

His handsome face remained calm as he explained, "I heard some noises coming from inside. I was just checking to see if there are any rats!"

Arissa was rendered speechless by the sensible excuse.

"So, did you find any rats, Mr. Graham?"

"No. Perhaps it's in the other room. Let me go check."

As he said that, he turned around and headed toward the other room.

Arissa's heart almost leaped out of her chest. Hastily, she stormed over and blocked his way.

"Mr. Graham, there are certainly no rats in my house. You must be hearing things."

Benjamin did not expect her to do that. Unable to halt his tracks, he bumped straight into her.

As a result, Arissa found herself pressed against the door. Flushing crimson, Arissa stretched out a hand in an attempt to push him away.

Yet, Benjamin remained where he was.

With a hand on the door, he boxed her in his embrace.

Gavin turned around to sneak a glance and burst into a furtive giggle before resuming his dinner.

"Are you afraid to let me in?"

Benjamin lowered his gaze at her, looking unabashed as if he was the owner of this house.

"Very funny. That's not it. It's rather messy in here, and I don't want you to see it!"

Arissa tried her hardest to suppress her nerves. It was difficult to keep a straight face, especially when she was in his arms.

"Now that you mentioned it, I really think we should have a look in case of rats! They can be quite dangerous as they carry a variety of viruses. I don't think a woman like you can deal with them on your own. It'll be best if you let me check," Benjamin said sternly.

"Thanks for your offer, Mr. Graham, but I can handle it on my own!"

The corner of her mouth twitched nervously at the thought of Benjamin discovering the four children hiding inside.

"Mr. Graham, this is my house!"

Raising her voice, Arissa reminded him that he was the guest here.

Sensing the distress in her eyes, Benjamin's gaze flickered as he bent down and drew closer to her.

The distance between them gradually diminished. Soon, they got so close that they could even see the pores on the other person's face.

Benjamin's warm breath sprayed onto her face, giving rise to a suggestive atmosphere.

Arisa picked up on the man's intense pheromones. Her heart raced uncontrollably as her ears flushed.

She swallowed instinctively. "Mr. Graham..."

"Are you hiding something from me?"

Just as Benjamin's lips almost touched hers, he came to a halt before questioning in a deep voice.

With her back pressed against the door, Arissa smiled sheepishly. She lifted her eyes only to meet the man's enthralling gaze. She quickly looked away.

"What could I be possibly hiding from you?"

Benjamin's gaze remained fixed on her.

At that moment, Arissa felt that her heart could almost leaped out of her chest.

She pushed Benjamin again, but he did not even budge.

The pair stayed rooted to the spot in a somewhat amorous position.

Arisa swallowed nervously and asked, "Mr. Graham, will you get off me, please?"

Benjamin stared at her flushed ears as his gaze darkened.

Her sweet scent kept creeping into his nose, teasing the desire rising from the depth of his heart.

Arisa could not read his thoughts at all. Whenever Benjamin was quiet, he always exuded a profound aura that managed to induce a sense of apprehension.

Suddenly, Benjamin loosened his grip on her and said in a deep voice, "Get back to dinner."

He turned around and headed toward the living room. In a bid to conceal his feelings, he sat with his back facing Arissa.

Benjamin's eyes slightly narrowed as a hint of a flush washed over his face.

Arisa glanced at Benjamin and his broad shoulders. It was some time later when she rejoined Gavin at the dining table.

"Sweetheart, you go back with Daddy first, okay?"

Bending over, Arissa gently coaxed the boy as she placed her hands on his shoulders.

Gavin nodded. "Sure. Can I still visit tomorrow, Mommy?"

"Of course. You can come over whenever you please, Gavin."

Arisa held Gavin in her arms and kissed his delicate face.

Even though she was reluctant to part with Gavin, she felt guilty of making the other four kids starve if she were to let Benjamin and Gavin stay any longer.

"Yes, Mommy. I like it here. I like you. I like my brothers," Gavin said. He muttered the last part rather softly.

"Mommy likes you too!"

Arisa was overjoyed to hear him say that. She kissed him over and over again.

As Benjamin watched them exchange goodbye kisses, he felt a pang of jealousy.

Arisa ushered Gavin to the living room. She said to Benjamin, "Mr. Graham, Gavin's done with his meal!"

In other words, it was time for them to leave.

Benjamin shot her and Gavin a glance before beckoning the latter over.

"Come over here, Gavin!"

Gavin obediently complied.

Arisa's gaze remained on her son as he approached Benjamin.

Noticing her relentless gaze, Benjamin snorted inwardly at her doting attitude toward Gavin.

"Do you like it here?" Benjamin asked Gavin.

The boy's eyes lit up. He nodded fervently. "Yes!"

"Then we shall stay for a little while longer!" Benjamin patted Gavin's head and suggested.

Arisa was taken aback. Benjamin's suggestion had put her in a tight spot, as it would seem impolite if she forced them to leave.

"Gavin, have some fruits!"

Arisa had no choice but to sit next to Benjamin. She scooped Gavin up and had him sit on her lap as she offered him fruits.

"Mommy, I want to stay here!"

Gavin clung to Arisa and pleaded. Holding him tightly in her arms, Arisa, more than anything, would love for him to stay longer too.

Yet, she figured Benjamin would most probably not allow that.

"Daddy, can I stay over? I don't want to go home. I want to spend a little bit longer with Mommy!" Gavin pleaded.

Benjamin looked at Gavin, then at Arisa.

His handsome face was apathetic. When he spoke, it was in an authoritative tone.

"Gavin, I can let you stay for a little bit longer, but you ought not cause trouble."

Gavin pursed his lips at Benjamin's words.

Sensing Gavin's disappointment, Arisa frowned slightly.

"Mr. Graham, I'm glad Gavin likes it here. I don't mind if he stays over for the night. I can send him to school tomorrow."

Benjamin gazed at her intently. "Why do you want him to stay over?"

Arissa was stumped by his question.

Benjamin did not know that Gavin was her son as well. As far as he knew, Gavin was his son, not hers.

"Because I like him!" Arissa promptly replied.

"Do you just let anyone you like stay over?"

Benjamin let out an unnoticeable snort. There was a hint of annoyance in his tone.

Puzzled by Benjamin's reaction, Arissa opened her mouth in an attempt to refute, "Why not? Should I rather have people I hate stay over?"

Arissa shot him a glance, only to notice that his expression was as gloomy as the night. He was glaring at her.

*How dare you!*

Gavin observed the two and let out a sigh. "Mommy, I think it's better for me to go home. I'll come over again tomorrow!"

"All right!" Arissa gave him another hug and kiss him dotingly.

Benjamin knitted his brows. He was upset by the fact that Arissa treated his son in such a tender manner but acted so disagreeably toward him as if he was her enemy.

With that, he was no longer in the mood to discuss the matter regarding the kids with her.

"Gavin, let's go!"

Getting to his feet, Benjamin beckoned his son over.

Gavin was reluctant to part. Arissa tousled his hair gently. She carried him in her arms and approached Benjamin.

"Don't forget to call me when you get home!"

"All right, Mommy!"

Arissa smiled as she bent down with Gavin still in her arms.

She seated Gavin on her lap and helped him put his shoes on.

Benjamin could tell that her patience and affection toward Gavin were genuine, unlike Danna, who behaved quite pretentiously toward the boy.

Arissa genuinely wanted the best for him. He was her son by blood, after all.

"Gavin, stand up!" Benjamin chided.

After putting on Gavin's shoes, Arissa finally set him down.

"Bye, Mommy."

"Bye, Sweetheart!"

Arissa leaned down and kissed Gavin goodbye for one last time.

Gavin's cheeks reddened from both embarrassment and joy.



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Benjamin shot Gavin a glance before taking the boy's hand. "We're leaving now," he said to Arissa.

"Drive safe, Mr. Graham."

Arissa finally heaved a sigh of relief as she sent him off with a huge grin.

Benjamin was rendered speechless by her eagerness to do so.

Benjamin noticed the cut on her forehead and stared at it for a moment.

Then, he grabbed his son's hand and walked over.

Arissa watched him in confusion and asked, "Mr. Graham, what's the matter?"

In response, Benjamin grabbed her hand and led her into the room. "Go get the medical kit."

Hearing that, Arissa felt puzzled and didn't know what Benjamin was up to.

She glanced at him, then at Gavin. Meanwhile, Gavin also had no clue why Benjamin was staring at Arissa.

"Are you hurt?" Arissa asked.

Benjamin's face darkened, and he instructed, "Just go and get it!"

The corner of Arissa's lips twitched, but she quickly went to grab the medical kit.

Unsmilingly, Benjamin opened it, pulled out the antiseptic, and soaked a cotton ball with it.

Then, he stood in front of Arissa and tucked her hair behind her ear.

Arissa froze.

*Is he going to treat my wound?*

The faint smell of mint on Benjamin's body made her heart race.

"Ouch..."

The sudden pain made her gasp.

"Don't move!" Benjamin ordered as he held her head still with one hand and roughly cleaned her wound with the other.

His strength was much stronger than Gavin's. It hurt so much that Arissa started to tear up.

Benjamin noticed the tears in her eyes from the corner of his eye, and he grinned devilishly.

"Rubbing it will increase blood circulation and make it heal faster."

"Don't be so rough. Stop! I'll do it myself!"

At that moment, Arissa felt like her skin was about to get peeled off.

*If he continues to rub so hard, I'll get bruised.*

"You got hurt on the way home, so it is considered a work injury. I have to make sure that you are taken care of," Benjamin said coldly.

Upon hearing that, Arissa sneered. *What a smart-mouth.*

"It's none of your business. Let go of me! My skin is about to fall off!"

"Stop being so dramatic!" Benjamin scoffed.

The corner of Arissa's lips twitched again, and she cursed him under her breath.

When Gavin saw Benjamin personally tend to Arissa's wound, he smiled from ear to ear.

Then, he held Arissa's hand and comforted, "Mommy, just bear with it for a while. It'll be over soon."

"Your daddy is being very rough."

It was so painful that Arissa started crying.

Benjamin continued to rub her wound a dozen more times before he stopped.

"All done! However, you will have to rub your wound again after you take your shower," Benjamin ordered before he left with Gavin.

"Bye, Mommy!" Gavin yelled as he smiled and waved at her.

"Bye, Sweetheart!"

Arissa sniffled in embarrassment as she said goodbye to Gavin.

She accidentally met Benjamin's mocking gaze and was dumbfounded by his expression.

"Such a crybaby," Benjamin murmured as he led Gavin into the elevator.

Arissa glared at him furiously, slammed the door, and locked it from the inside.

Then, she sniffled, wiped away her tears, and walked to the children's room.

"Hey kids, you can come out now."

The four children in the room immediately rushed to open the door.

"Mommy, is Daddy gone?"

The four children looked up at her with innocent eyes as they waited for her answer.

Arissa hurriedly looked away in embarrassment and replied, "You didn't even see who the visitor was. Don't simply call anyone Daddy."

It was obvious that she was still mad at Benjamin for what he did.

She softly caressed her forehead, but it hurt so much that her lips twitched.

"Haha!" The four children chuckled and said, "Of course it's Daddy! Otherwise, why won't you let us meet him?"

Arissa looked at the four smart children and felt speechless.

"Are you hungry?"

"Yes!" The four children answered simultaneously. "We are famished because we didn't eat much just now."

Arissa hugged them for a moment before she said, "They finished the food. I'll go cook something up for you. Wait for a moment."

With that, she went to the kitchen and started cooking. Meanwhile, the four children ran to the restroom to grab water to wash away the urine on the balcony.

When they went to the dining room and saw the empty plates, they were shocked.

Shortly after, they noticed that there was some leftover soup.

Zachary instantly turned to face the kitchen and yelled, "Mommy, can we drink the soup?"

"Of course!" Arissa replied.

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Then, she washed some pasta and threw them in the pot.