

My Dreamy Old Husband Chapter 1041

“I’m on my way to the filming location. We’re entering an isolated area now. The line might be bad.”

Sophia was on the phone with Michael, but his voice kept cutting out. It looked like they were losing connection.

“Okay, you should focus on filming now then. I’m hanging up.” She blew a kiss into the phone.

After the call ended, however, she still felt uneasy. On the one hand, she was thinking about the advantages that a fake marriage would bring. Even though family did not equate entirely to business, the Michel Group was currently being managed by Linus and Alice. Fass’ daughter did not have as much authority as Linus’ wife would have. If she and Linus got married, it would be much easier to enter the company.

On the other hand, her conscience was bugging her. The more she thought about it, the more the fake marriage seemed flustering and awkward. Moreover, she was going to marry her own uncle.

She spent the whole night tossing and turning in bed, wondering if Michael was in the same state as she was in.

On the other side of the world, Michael was filming a movie in a mountainous region. There were many developed places overseas, but the infrastructure in some places was just unlike Cethos’, especially when it came to phone signals. All in all, they even had Wi-Fi connection in their subway stations in Cethos while many places overseas did not even have a basic mobile network.

Once Michael arrived at the filming location, he grabbed his high-end Dragon Eye phone and searched for a signal everywhere. He eventually managed to call Sophia, but it kept indicating that her line was busy. When the call finally went through, her voice came in choppy and they were unable to say a complete sentence.

Later, he gave a call to Justin that also only went through after a long while and sounded just as choppy.

Some time ago, he planned to let Cooper drop the search for his son, but a flood of events occurred and the matter ended up being delayed. Now that he was overseas, he entrusted Justin with the matter.

On the other hand, since they found Lorelei and brought her home, Cooper feared that Justin would sense something if he had nothing better to do, so he started sending Justin out to look for his son on his behalf.

According to Michael's plan, he was going to make Cooper abandon the search by the end of the month.

Through their choppy conversation, Michael was able to receive an update on Sophia.

Justin replied, "She's been quite busy lately with the partnership contract with Ronney. The line over there is bad, so video calls won't work. Carmen has no way of seeing you. These days, we've been fooling her with fake video calls from you."

"Fake video calls? What's that?"

The line started to cut out again. "Video... with this software... edited... your voice... combined to produce a conversation and vague image..."

Even with the bits of information, Michael knew what was happening, and it made him feel anxious. He could not see his precious daughter and kiss his wife, but the phone signal there was certainly not of much help.

It'll be over soon. It's just slightly over a month. I'll go home right after we're done here!

Taking the opportunity when there was still a connection, he quickly asked Justin about Cooper's search for his son. According to their plan, Justin should be helping him look for his son now.

But there was a heaviness in Justin's choppy voice.

"A change in plans... moved the grave... the casket was empty."

...

On the outskirts of Riverdale in Bayside City, the Johnson Family Village's cemetery, which was usually isolated except on Ancestors' Day, was crowded with people today.

Today was the day they were going to move Annabel's grave. Cooper found another tomb for her. He wanted her to receive a grand burial as his wife.

When they dug out the grave and opened the casket, however, they found that it was empty.

"What happened?"

The Johnson Family members were glancing at one another. Cooper stared at the empty casket and did not want to believe his eyes.

Annabel's casket was empty!

He jumped into the grave and observed the casket. It was simple. At the time of her death, things were hectic and they had prepared the casket hastily. It was almost broken now, but it was definitely empty. There was no corpse or any burial objects.

The villagers were pointing at the casket.

"How did that happen? Her uncle and I were the ones that buried her that year! I still remember how hot it was that day. She passed away in the afternoon, but we were unable to get an ice casket, and the morgue was too expensive. We quickly brought her home that night and buried her. I even laid the final layer of soil!"

...

While everyone was pointing and whispering, Sophia rushed forward to look and Justin jumped down to observe. "Someone tried to open it. Look at the marks. It was done a long time ago—at least twenty years ago."

Cooper did not look good. With his hands on the casket, he was looking at the empty space inside and radiating a frightening presence throughout his body.

Who dared to touch his Annabel?

The villagers were also making guesses.

Annabel was dead, and there weren't any expensive burial objects in there. What maniac dug her body up?

She had gotten pregnant before marriage. Even though people talked behind her back, no one held a grudge against her. Who could have that much hatred for her that they would dig up a dead person's body?

The villagers talked among themselves when suddenly someone shrieked, "I know who did this! It must be him—Aiden Johnson!"

At the mention of that name, Cooper suddenly remembered that Annabel had two older brothers. One was Liam, and the other was Aiden.

Liam and his family advanced abroad and had not been back in years. Meanwhile, the second brother, Aiden, was released from prison less than a year ago.

The reason he served time in prison was that he stole a female corpse!

A man who died before he got married was given a female corpse to be buried with him. It was said that he needed a wife; otherwise, he would wreak havoc on the whole family.

The female corpse was usually purchased. These days, they were sold for thousands. The younger and fresher they were, the better. The ones who weren't married yet were the best.

But, looking for a female corpse was not easy, since not everyone was willing to sell their family for money.

When Annabel passed away that year, someone came to ask if they wanted to sell her corpse, but the Johnsons kicked that person out.

She might have been dead, but how could they sell their own daughter?

Some who could not buy a female corpse targeted females who were already buried underground.

That was how it produced a group of desperate people who only stole freshly buried female corpses to sell. Aiden was sent to prison because he stole a female corpse.

He went in and out of prison countless times for the same reason. At this point, he had only been out for less than a year.

When Annabel's body went missing, he was the first person that came to all of their minds!

The family head was fuming mad. He assumed that Aiden had stolen from other graves, but who would have thought that he would desecrate his own sister's grave?

Knowing that Annabel's body could have been stolen to become a ghost bride, both Cooper and Sophia were quivering with anger.

"Bring Aiden to me right now!" the family head shouted and the people got moving. They quickly dragged a boorish and thin middle-aged man over and flung him in front of Annabel's empty casket.

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That man was Aiden Johnson. Previously, Sophia had seen a photo of him at the Johnson Residence. He had wretched and shrewd inverted triangular eyes. His body was so skinny that

he was all bones and skin. On the back of his hands were various needle scars of unknown origins. His entire body had a deathlike pallor, and his back was hunched. He didn't look human but more like a ghost.

Cooper could not believe that Annabel had a brother like him. As the saying went 'spare the rod and spoil the child'. Back then, Annabel sacrificed her chance to study and went to work instead. It was so that she could earn enough money to allow her two elder brothers to continue their studies. In the end, one molested a child while the other stole a corpse. How tragic it was for her to be born into such a family!

Aiden collapsed to the ground in horror. Before he could react to anything, a large hand reached toward him from above and fiercely grabbed him by the neck. A man looked down at him condescendingly. "Tell me Anna's whereabouts in a single sentence. If you dare to lie, I will crush your throat!"

Despite struggling like a monkey, Aiden was unable to break free of Cooper's grip. Cooper was wearing gloves. He exerted force, squeezing Aiden's hand so strongly that he broke his hand. Thus, Aiden let out a hoarse scream, trembling in fear. "Have mercy! I was wrong! I did it! I dug her up! Have mercy on me! I won't dare to do it again!"

Upon learning that the culprit was truly Aiden, Cooper stomped on Aiden in a rage. He wanted to kill this man; he did not hold any kindness for the person who could commit such desecration against Annabel. Afraid that Cooper might lose control and trample Aiden to death, Sophia hurriedly asked somebody to drag Aiden to the side.

After the severe beating, Aiden wept as he confessed. When Annabel breathed her last, the hospital asked them if they were willing to sell her corpse for money. A young lady's corpse was worth 1000 back then. That was a lot of money! At the time, Mr. Johnson, Liam, and Aiden agreed to sell her corpse for money, hoping to have some use for their garbage. To their surprise, Mrs. Johnson invited Annabel's grandfather over, threatened the buyer in front of everybody, and chased the buyer away. In the end, the corpse was not sold. However, Aiden couldn't forget about the money. On the night Annabel was buried, he stealthily dug her corpse back up and sold her body to the hospital that offered to buy her in the first place.

"That buyer... His son was about to be buried after dying in a car accident that day. But, he was not married, and his family was worried that he might haunt them after his death..." Aiden begged for mercy with tears and snot flowing down his face, prostrating himself before them.

Upon hearing what he said, everybody within the family was livid at the thought that he would dare to harm his own sister!

Meanwhile, Justin quickly sent people to investigate the people who bought Annabel's corpse. It was easier to search for the family, as they might have left traces behind, compared to searching for Cooper's long-lost son. After several twists and turns, they found the grave of the

boy that died in the accident twelve hours later. Upon excavating the grave, they found a pair of skeletons inside—they clearly belonged to a male and a female.

“Anna! Anna...” Cooper sobbed uncontrollably; he finally found Annabel’s corpse. Right now, he was no longer the greatly accomplished and all-powerful Cooper Mitchell. He was simply a pitiful man who just learned that the corpse of his deceased lover had been stolen and sold off as a match for necrogamy—an arranged marriage between the dead. He was simultaneously furious and heartbroken.

As he was emotionally disturbed by the sight of Annabel’s corpse, he lost part of his reasoning. Still, Sophia was very vigilant as she studied the shifty-eyed Aiden. She was suspicious of him; she had the feeling that he was lying. “Justin, can I ask you to do something? Can you perform a DNA test on the corpse? I suspect this man is lying.”

Justin said, “Sure. Let me compare the DNA between this man and the corpse. Since they are biological siblings, we’ll get a match. If it doesn’t match, I will slice his head off!” As he spoke, he deliberately glared at Aiden fiercely.

When Aiden heard that they were going to perform a DNA test on the corpse, he shuddered in fear and nearly lost control of his bowel movements. “No! I swear I’m speaking the truth! Anna... Anna isn’t my biological sister! We don’t share a drop of blood between us, so you won’t be able to check with my DNA!”

Everybody was shocked by his words. Annabel was not Aiden’s biological sister?! What was going on?!

Lying on the ground, he wept piteously. “Our entire family is so ugly. How could we possibly produce a daughter as beautiful as Anna?! When I was younger, I accidentally overheard a conversation between my mother and my grandmother. After my mother gave birth to my sister in the hospital, she accidentally lost my sister and was unable to explain it to my father when she returned. Hence, my grandmother went to the train station and stole a baby girl to replace the one my mother lost!”

Everybody was shocked and immediately started gossiping among themselves. No wonder Annabel did not look like anybody from the Johnson Family—it turned out that she was a stolen child!

Staring at Annabel’s bones blankly, Cooper... couldn’t say anything. He even lost the ability to think and could only subconsciously murmur under his breath, “Anna... Anna...”

At this point, it was meaningless to obsess about Annabel’s origins when she died so many years ago. Sophia was already 28 this year; that meant that Annabel had been dead for nearly 28 years now.

Sophia kept her composure. Violently stomping on Aiden's hand and grinding her foot against his hand as hard as she could, she coldly said, "I'll believe you for the time being! If you're lying, I'll make sure you wish you were dead!" Turning her head, she quietly whispered to Justin, "I still suspect that this guy is hiding something from us. Why don't you use my DNA instead?"

Justin nodded, temporarily forgetting about finding a signal to contact Michael. He hurriedly extracted some DNA from Sophia and the corpse to perform the DNA test. Traveling through the night, he returned to Bayside City. On the other hand, Sophia and Cooper stayed at the guesthouse in Johnson Family Village for the time being while Aiden was locked up.

Cooper had experienced a lot of emotional instability today. He was unable to remain calm anytime he came across something related to Annabel. Losing her was a heartache that would remain for as long as he lived! For that reason, Sophia did not voice her concerns. Instead, she quietly asked Justin to return to Bayside City with the DNA samples so that he could obtain the results of the DNA test as soon as possible.

It was late at night when Sophia finally called Michael. Unfortunately, she still couldn't get the call to go through. Although the call connected once, the signal was unstable—so much so that she couldn't even get two sentences in before the call dropped. I wonder where they are filming the movie. Why is the signal so terrible?

Upon learning that Aiden had lied, Cooper rushed toward the room where Aiden was being detained like a rampaging dragon. "Where on earth is Anna?! Where is she?!"

It seemed like Cooper had completely lost control of his emotions. At this point, Sophia was afraid that he might be unable to stop himself from strangling Aiden to death. If that happened, they would never be able to locate Annabel's corpse. Therefore, she quickly asked Roger and the others to drag Cooper away. Stepping on Aiden, who was bruised and battered from the beating, she coldly said, "The Johnson Family was around during the day. My father did not kill you on the spot out of respect for them. But, they aren't here now. We can kill you at any time! So, are you going to talk?!"

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Aiden clutched at his head and repeated the same words. “Have mercy on me! I don’t know what’s going on either! I handed the body over to them myself! I don’t know anything else!”

Sophia knew that he was lying. Looking at the needle scars on his arms, she immediately had an idea. Soon, Roger brought some items over and placed them in front of Aiden. Upon seeing those items, Aiden screamed like a banshee. It was his life’s blood—heroin.

He was a drug addict that had been injecting heroin for years. When the addiction of a drug addict flared up, they were willing to say anything. Sure enough; he spilled everything. It turned out that he had just dug up Annabel’s corpse on that fateful night twenty years ago when he met a man before he could even step out of the cemetery. That person bought her corpse and paid 10,000 for it. 10,000 was an incredibly large amount of money at the time. Thus, he happily sold off her corpse and dug up another random female corpse nearby for the family at the hospital.

Not knowing where her body was now, he casually led them to the female corpse he sold off previously. At first, he assumed that he could fool them since all that was left after twenty years was a pile of bones. He did not expect them to be so technologically adept that they could determine whether it was Annabel just by matching her DNA.

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“What did that person look like? What was their name? Where did they come from?” Sophia continued questioning.

The drug Aiden craved so much was placed right in front of him, but he couldn’t enjoy it. Hence, he was so anxious that he looked like he was willing to sell his soul for it. No matter what questions they asked him, he answered without fail. “I don’t know him. By the time I finished digging, he was already there when I turned around. I nearly died of fright when he appeared at the grave in the middle of the night like that! But, I really don’t know him! Besides, it has been twenty years, and it was very dark at the time. I don’t know anything else... Please give it to me! Just let me take it... Just a little bit...”

Sophia could tell that there was nothing else she could get from the man in front of her, and she felt a chill in her heart. *How I wish I could kick him to death!* There was nothing else for her to learn from him. It was dark that night, and he only saw that person’s figure. Still, so many years had passed, and he couldn’t describe that person’s appearance anymore. It was impossible for them to figure out who the buyer of Annabel’s corpse was at this point.

Snatching the heroin from them, Aiden began inhaling it frantically. At that moment, he looked more like a ghost than a human.

In contrast, Cooper fell silent. He was unusually silent as he blankly sat there with bloodshot eyes. It seemed like he couldn't wake himself up from the great shock he had experienced all day. That was his beloved—the one he could never forget but had lost through a strange sequence of fated events! Yet now, he couldn't even find her!

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Comparatively, Sophia was a lot calmer than he was, considering that she had never experienced life with Annabel before. After all, Annabel passed away on the day she was born. For that reason, she was still much calmer than he was at the moment, even though she, too, was filled with sorrow and rage. “Dad, I heard from Aiden that he sneaked out to the grave in the middle of the night and dug up Mom’s body. As soon as he finished digging, he turned around and saw the person that offered to buy her corpse for 10,000. I don’t believe an ordinary person would show up in a cemetery in the middle of the night, much less carry 10,000 around with them. Plus, who would go out of their way to buy a corpse for 10,000? I’m guessing that that person might be an acquaintance of Mom’s or somebody sent there by an acquaintance. Moreover, they were there specifically to take her body away. Even if Aiden didn’t make the first move, that person would have done the same. It just so happened that Aiden was one step ahead.” Lightly shaking Cooper, who was about to faint, she asked, “Dad, think back carefully. Back then, who, among Mom’s acquaintances, could afford to spend 10,000 and might have known about her circumstances?”

Cooper closed his eyes, vigorously trying to recall everything he knew about Annabel in his memories. In the end, he shook his head. He actually knew little about Annabel. When he first met her, they were both very young—they were only 16. They had gotten to know each other and fallen in love in their ignorance. As a result, he had never met her family nor visited her house before despite knowing about her family circumstances. Not to mention, their relationship had been a secret that not many knew about.

Besides, she did not have many friends. Her social circles were very limited, and she generally hung out with him. The serving staff that worked with her were jealous of her beauty, so they rarely interacted with her and even teamed up to exclude her from their circles. Therefore, he had never seen her with any other friends. The only other person they both knew was Sam Edwards.

Sam was 14 years old at the time. He was still studying and had yet to step into the political world. However, he was extremely talented. He took over the family business at a young age. It was his first business, and it was a restaurant that was not particularly well-run. As soon as he took over the place, he changed its name to ‘Crimson House’.

On the other hand, the 16-year-old Annabel had just dropped out of middle school and came to the city to look for work. Thus, she became one of Crimson House’s earliest employees. The

restaurant was located near the university. Since Cooper and Sam were very close friends, Cooper often went there to eat. At the time, she was a fair and slender beauty—she was the prettiest member of the serving staff, as well as the restaurant’s unofficial mascot. She charmed many men, including him. They later got to know each other and fell in love. At the peak of their love, something happened and they eloped. Afterward, they were caught and a tragedy ensued...

Who on earth was it that took Annabel’s corpse away? The willingness to pay 10,000 in exchange for a female corpse 28 years ago... couldn’t have been for something like necrogamy. Could it have been a medical institute that was looking for corpses to perform experiments on? Or, was a medical school nearby buying corpses to use for their teaching materials? Did somebody from the Mitchell Family take her corpse away? But, why would they do that? Anna... Why did they do that to my beloved Anna?! Cooper’s eyes were bloodshot, and his head felt like it was going to split apart. Even so, he couldn’t think of any leads. 28 years was simply far too long ago...

Sophia knew that too many things had happened today, and he was still in shock. He probably couldn’t recall anything more in his current state. Hence, she comforted him and told him to rest. However, she could not fall asleep. After ruminating and struggling over it all night, she finally decided to question the Johnsons. Perhaps they knew something.

The next day, all members of the Johnson Family who could come were gathered in the Johnson Family’s ancestral hall. Squeezing in the yard, they gossiped about the disappearance of Annabel’s corpse. Meanwhile, Sophia sat on the rattan chair in the middle of the great hall. She had an extraordinary aura around her as she watched the Johnson Family standing before her. Then, she announced loudly, “Everybody, think back to the time my mother was still alive. Were there any strange or special people that she interacted with before she died? No matter how big or how small the clue you give me, or no matter good or bad, as long as you have news, I will reward you.”

She was very straightforward. Stacking a huge pile of money on the table before her, her slender fingers tapped against the stacks of cash. When everybody saw the mountain of money, their eyes widened. There were at least several hundred thousand scattered across the table. All of a sudden, their memory became sharp as they racked their brains and started providing clues of what they knew, one after the other.

A woman, who looked to be in her forties, suddenly waved her rough hands from among the crowd and yelled, “I know something! I know something! After Anna dropped out of school, she worked at my noodle restaurant. One day, a bigshot came into my shop and took an interest in her. After that, he brought her to the city to work!”

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A bigshot? Sophia frowned, then relaxed her scrunched-up brows. My mother was acquainted with 'a bigshot'? Still, anything unusual could be a clue. Lifting her hand, she gestured slightly. In response, Dimon picked up a thick stack of cash and handed it to the woman.

The woman took the money happily, weighing it in her hands. Everybody felt incredibly jealous at the sight. Even without counting, they could tell that that stack of cash was worth around 10,000. It was real! They really received money for providing clues!

Sitting in the hall, Sophia instructed her men to record the information they obtained. After that, she asked again, "What was the name of the noodle restaurant? What was the address? Who owned the noodle restaurant? How did the bigshot who took my mother away look? How old was he? How was he dressed?"

She fired off a series of questions in quick succession. After receiving the stack of cash, the woman was very enthusiastic as she racked her brains to answer them. "The noodle restaurant is located right by the middle school in our town. It is owned by a school teacher that has retired now. Unfortunately, I don't quite remember how that bigshot looked anymore. I recall he looked extremely wealthy. He also brought several bodyguards with him... Oh! I remember! He had a hooked nose! Moreover, he came here in a big sedan!"

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When the woman finished answering the questions, Sophia raised her hand again. A few more stacks of cash were handed over to the woman, and the woman was so overjoyed that she nearly passed out!

Motivated by the promise of money, everybody's memory suddenly became good. As Annabel was the prettiest lady in the village, everybody paid attention to her affairs. For that reason, some people still remembered things about her even though more than 20 years had passed, and a steady stream of people provided information about her.

"When she was pregnant with you, a man came to visit her. He was hooked-nosed and looked extremely wealthy. Moreover, he drove a luxurious car! I ran into Anna when she sneaked out to the small river in town to meet him. If memory serves me right, he was in his twenties!"

"Hooked-nosed... It feels like I've seen him before too. The next day after Anna passed away, a BMW was parked in front of the guest house in town. It was super eye-catching! It was the first time I had ever seen such an eye-catching car in our town, so I remember it very clearly! The man in the car was a young man with a hooked nose!"

“That’s right; that’s right! It was a BMW! I didn’t know it back then, but now that I think about it, it was a BMW! The bigshot that took Anna away drove a BMW too. Furthermore, he had more than one!”

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...

Everybody took turns describing the situation back then. As a result, the money Sophia brought dwindled while the information they retrieved increased. From the raw information they obtained, Sophia deduced that the mysterious person was a wealthy hooked-nosed man in his twenties who drove a BMW. 28 years ago, the BMW had just entered the Cethosian market. It was very expensive and rare at the time. Therefore, those that could afford to drive a BMW back then were not just ordinary rich men.

Over the next few days, Cooper, who had suffered a great shock, returned to the city ahead of time. Meanwhile, Sophia took the initiative to spearhead the efforts on locating Annabel’s body. At first, Justin was tasked to search for Cooper’s son. However, he was caught by Sophia and roped into searching for Annabel’s corpse.

According to the information Sophia obtained, they found the retired teacher that ran the noodle restaurant next to the middle school in town. Thus, they questioned the teacher about the wealthy bigshot that had taken Annabel away back then. Fortunately, the teacher still recalled the events back then even though he was quite elderly by now.

Back in those days, the 15-year-old Annabel had been one of the teacher’s brightest students. Unfortunately, she had no choice but to drop out of school due to her family’s circumstances. Feeling sorry for her, the teacher then asked her to help out in his restaurant. When she was being harassed by the local bully one day, the bigshot stepped in and rescued her. The bigshot was extremely wealthy. Moreover, he drove a BMW. Hence, the teacher could remember it as if it were just yesterday because it was his first time seeing a BMW. The bigshot did indeed turn out to be a hooked-nosed young man in his twenties that was very handsome.

Then, they questioned the guest house in town and confirmed that a bigshot driving a BMW had indeed visited the place 28 years ago. As the town was quite poor back then, many people saw a BMW for the first time. As a result, most of the older staff at the guesthouse recalled the incident. It was the first time a BMW had graced the guesthouse, and many people came to gawk at the car.

More importantly, the bigshot driving the BMW had a hooked nose. Furthermore, he did not come alone. Quite a few people were traveling with him, and they drove several cars, including BMWs and Mercedes-Benzes. Most of the townspeople saw luxurious cars for the first time, so it caused quite a stir.

After asking around town for several days, Sophia had figured out a rough timeline. After Annabel dropped out of school at 15, she worked at the noodle restaurant. After that, she was

taken away by a wealthy bigshot. At 16, she suddenly started working at the Crimson House, a restaurant owned by Sam. As a result, she got to know Cooper and Sam. At 18, she eloped with Cooper and was caught. At first, she was supposed to be disposed of, but Woody secretly let her escape. Following that, she entered the Edwards Residence as a nanny and returned to her village after she was raped. Then, the hooked-nosed man appeared again to visit her secretly.

According to the villagers, she was taken away by the bigshot to work in the city and came back pregnant. Therefore, everybody assumed that she was pregnant with the bigshot's child. The day after her death, the hooked-nosed man appeared in town again. Later, the Johnsons brought Sophia into the city in search of Joe after she was born, thinking that the bigshot was Joe. However, they returned embarrassed.

On another note, Aiden claimed that the man who took the body away did not have a hooked nose. However, they could not be certain that he was not working for the hooked-nosed man. After all, he was so wealthy—there was no need for him to personally go to the cemetery in the middle of the night to excavate a corpse.

In other words, if we can find the hooked-nosed man, we will be able to find my mother's body! Sophia sent all the information she obtained back to the Edwards Residence without fail. She planned to let Cooper analyze it since he was from that era. Perhaps, he might have known of a hooked-nosed, wealthy, handsome man.

However, he had been greatly shocked by the news about Annabel's body. Not wishing to bother him too much, she worked with Justin over a few days and collected information on all the men in Bayside City that matched the age, looks, and financial strength of the person they were looking for. Once the information was organized, she planned to ask Cooper to screen through them, one by one.

Justin was extremely capable. In a single day, he selected and compiled a long list of possible matches for her to go through. Thus, Sophia went through the computer database, going through the pictures one by one. Sean and Sarah, who had been recuperating in the Edwards Residence, decided to help out too. Screening through the list, they spent the entire morning looking through the information and the photos of over ten people while discussing them.

"It's not this guy; I know him. Their family was not affluent 28 years ago, so they couldn't afford a BMW back then."

"I asked somebody to obtain the consumer list of the BMW factory from around 30 years ago. You can refer to it."

All of a sudden, Sophia came across a photo. Naturally, the man in the photo had a hooked nose. Aside from that, he was very handsome and sharp, and his angular side profile had an air of heavy solemnity which made his handsome features particularly prominent. His name was Jordan Edwards.

28 years ago, Jordan was 27 years old. According to the information on him, he was already the chairman of the Edwards Group back then. He was young, wealthy, and at his prime. To this day, he was still a domineering president. However, the man in the photo and the man Sophia had met during the Edwards Family's Annual Meeting seemed different somehow.

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Needless to say, one's beauty would fade after 28 years. Besides, Jordan had grown older—so much so that his hair was starting to grey. However, Sophia compared the two men's photos side by side and discovered that aside from their ages, both men were vastly different.

28 years ago, Jordan had a sharp aura, a steely gaze, and a towering arrogance. He had a frivolous and domineering attitude that looked down on others. However, the man she met 28 years later was a sly and wretched little old man with a large potbelly. No matter how she looked at them, she had the feeling that they were not the same person.

All things aside, Jordan owned a BMW back then. More importantly, he was also Cooper's greatest enemy. According to Cooper, he was just an underaged boy 30 years ago. On the other hand, Jordan was already the head of the Edwards Family by then. Even so, he felt jealousy and hatred for a child 10 years younger than himself. He was the kind of man who would eradicate all his potential enemies, even if the opponent was just a child. As a result, many promising young geniuses in Bayside City met an untimely end, and he was the mastermind behind their deaths.

Although Jordan and Sam were brothers, they constantly competed with each other. Back when Sam was still active in the political scene, he nearly became president at one time. However, he was only one step away from becoming the president when he suddenly retired from politics and returned to doing business. It was rumored that Jordan was behind that incident too.

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Sam and Cooper were Jordan's enemies. Even if those two were just teenagers at the time, Jordan would not hesitate to take action against them. If the bigshot who had taken Annabel away from the Johnsons turned out to be Jordan... Sophia suddenly felt a chill running down her back. Her heart pounded wildly, and her eyes were filled with horror and disbelief—her hand

holding the photos started trembling. If... Annabel was already acquainted with Jordan before she started working, and Jordan was the one to introduce her to her workplace...

Annabel was taken away by Jordan when she was 15. Upon turning 16, she appeared at Sam's first independently-run business—the restaurant known as the Crimson House—as part of his first batch of employees... Not only that, but she also met Sam and fell in love with Cooper through her connection with Jordan.

At the time, Jordan must have begun to fear Cooper's existence. After all, Cooper was already starting to show his extraordinary talents. He was in the process of writing the world's first online game and developing the world's first USB flash disk. He was a genius with unlimited potential as well as the future head of the Mitchell Family.

On the other hand, Sophia had never heard Cooper and Sam mentioning the fact that Annabel was already acquainted with Jordan before meeting them. It was highly possible that they were completely unaware of that fact. Moreover, Cooper later gave up on his promising future, eloped with Annabel to the South, and even encountered assassins along the way...

The deeper Sophia dug into the matter, the more frightened she became—it felt as if she was about to unravel a terrible truth. From the start to the end, it was all a conspiracy! It was a huge conspiracy!

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"Sophia, what's the matter?" Justin suddenly put his hand on her shoulder when he noticed her staring at Jordan's photo in a daze.

She quickly snapped back to the present and smiled stiffly. "It's nothing. I was just taking a second look."

Stanley glanced at Jordan's handsome picture on the computer and said in disgust, "Look at you; your eyes must have gone blind after staring so hard at these handsome guys! Tsk!"

She did not respond. Instead, she silently crossed Jordan's name from the list of suspects. She was scared. She didn't dare to question the authenticity of her parents' love—she did not have the courage to do so. If the person who took Annabel away back then turned out to be Jordan, it would be a hugely painful and shocking blow for both Cooper and her. Cooper could never accept it, and neither could I...

For the moment, Justin put the matter of searching for Cooper's long-lost son aside and focused all his efforts on helping Sophia locate her mother. Thus, he went back to Johnson Family Village to look for clues. Before returning to the city, he avoided everyone else as he went to the house of the woman who once worked with Annabel at the noodle restaurant.

As soon as the woman opened the door, she was very surprised to see him. However, he did not waste time on pleasantries. Taking out a photo, he showed it to the woman. “The bigshot that took Annabel away back then; was it this man?”

That woman leaned closer and studied the hooked-nosed man in the photo. The man in the photo was unusually handsome and noble. Looking at it, she thought back to the man in her memories. Finally, she said affirmatively, “It’s him! He was so good-looking that I still remember him now.”

Upon hearing those words, Justin’s expression suddenly became somber. Sure enough; it’s him... Then, he rushed back to the Edwards Residence with this information. However, he did not know how to bring this information up with Sophia. The further they looked into this matter, the more he realized that what they might discover could potentially be an unacceptable truth for all the parties involved. Seeing as this matter took place such a long time ago, and the person involved has already been dead for 28 years now... Perhaps... what happened back then isn’t so important anymore... Perhaps, it doesn’t matter anymore...

Pondering over what he should say when he met Sophia later, he drove toward the Edwards Residence. To his surprise, he saw Linus as he walked out of the garage. It seemed like Linus had been waiting for him for a long time. He hesitated slightly upon noticing Linus. Avoiding his gaze, he did not greet Linus immediately. Although Linus was very welcomed at this house, he knew that Linus was not to be taken lightly. Justin had not forgotten that he once worked with the Phantom Wolf to spy on the Fletcher Family’s situation.

Based on Michael’s progress, Linus should have joined Cooper’s household registry by now. However, Justin had been helping Sophia search for Annabel over the past few days—so much so that he forgot about the preparations to remove Cooper’s son from the household registry. He had to be smart and careful about it throughout the process. If it was done in a way that was unnatural and was discovered by Cooper or Linus as a result, Michael would be digging his own grave. Not only would Michael be punished severely, but it would also drag Justin down with him too. Therefore, Justin had to make careful preparations to ensure everything went naturally. Still, he had been too busy these past few days and had been postponing the issue as a result.

Mulling over it, he walked toward Linus. “Mr. Michel, why are you here?”

Linus stood without moving. His handsome face had an unspeakably lonely and worried expression. “Recently, Fass has been extremely upset over Annabel’s affairs. He has completely collapsed mentally... He seems... emotionless, but he’s actually just the most determined. The shock he experienced this time around is too huge.”

Justin did not understand what Linus was trying to say and chose to remain silent.

Then, Linus continued, “Thank you for your hard work during this period. I’m very sorry that I couldn’t help you with anything.”

Cooper had given all authority to Justin and Sophia, be it in the search for Annabel or the search for his son. For some reason, Linus had not been involved in these endeavors. Perhaps he felt that he shouldn't trouble Linus with his personal matters. Thus, Justin calmly replied, "Mr. Michel, you're a busy man. I can deal with these matters myself. Besides, I've been doing tasks like these for the past few years.

After the two exchanged greetings, Justin entered the Edwards Residence. He decided to keep quiet about that for now and went to meet Celine first. Celine had been very anxious recently because she couldn't get a hold of Michael. Therefore, Justin wanted to rush back to keep her company. To his surprise, he received a phone call while he was on his way to her...

It was 10 PM as Sophia anxiously paced about in her room. Justin mentioned that he was heading to Johnson Family Village today to search for other leads, but he had yet to return. Logically speaking, he should have arrived home before dark. However, it was already 10 PM, and he was nowhere to be seen. When she tried calling his phone, it was switched off. His Dragon Eye phone had been fully charged before he left the house. Even if he gamed on his phone the entire day, it should not have run out of power. Moreover, the management system did not display any relevant prompts.

Pacing about in her room, she couldn't get through to Justin's phone. When she tried Michael's phone, the signal on the other side was so terrible that it kept breaking up throughout the call. In the end, the call dropped before she could tell him about her discovery today.

After hanging up the call with Michael, Sophia lay on the bed and stared at the ceiling in a daze. If Justin found something during his investigation today and confirmed my suspicions... won't it be extremely cruel to Cooper?