

My Dreamy Old Husband Chapter 1046

Carmen had gone to bed early. She and Lorelei & Co. had been running about all day. The little rascals were so cheeky that they were about to tear the house apart. As a result, she usually went to bed early after tiring herself out.

Meanwhile, Sophia lay on her bed, tossing and turning. She was unable to fall asleep when she suddenly heard footsteps coming from downstairs.

“Sophia, it’s so late. Why are you still awake?”

Opening the window, she saw Linus standing on the lawn downstairs in his pajamas. He was looking up at her. Under the streetlight, he was enveloped in a soft yellow glow that made him seem angelic. Lifting his head, his handsome features were very dazzling.

Leaning out the window, she greeted him, “Uncle Linus, you’re not asleep either!”

He replied, “I couldn’t sleep, so I came out for a walk. Are you having trouble sleeping too? Why don’t you join me for a stroll?”

She considered it briefly, then quickly put on her shoes and went downstairs. Too many things had occurred over the past two days. It felt as if her beliefs had been severely tested, and the things that she had taken pride in were on the verge of shattering into pieces. Feeling distressed and hurt, she wanted to vent her worries to somebody.

Soon, the two of them took a walk together in the Edwards Residence. The cool breeze that blew across the small lake at night was very comfortable. Moreover, the insects were chirping softly. It was quiet and peaceful—the entire Edwards Residence felt warm and beautiful. They walked over to the small lake and sat down on a bench. However, she said nothing as she ate a popsicle.

“What’s wrong? Did something troubling happen?”

She finished eating her popsicle and gave a small sigh. Looking at him, she hesitated to speak. In the end, she did not tell him about the matter. She had a terrifying conjecture—one that she desperately hoped was simply her imagination running wild. She also hoped that Justin failed to find anything concrete. At the same time, she was also eager to know the truth, even if it was extremely horrifying.

She believed that Annabel Johnson was a beautiful pawn sent by Jordan to deal with Cooper. No; to be precise, Annabel was specifically sent to target Sam. Unexpectedly, Sam and Cooper were friends, and so Cooper was dragged into the plan too.

At the time, Sam had just received his first business from the Edwards Group. That was the restaurant, which was now known as the world-renowned chain restaurant 'Crimson House'. What would have happened to him if he had caused the business, which was handed over to him by his family, to fail? Everybody knew that it was a test. If he passed, he would receive even more attention and resources from the Edwards Family in the future. But, if he failed, he would have been labeled as trash. He might have been looked down upon by his family, or worse, thrown aside.

At the most critical point of his life, an exceptionally beautiful and innocent girl came to his shop. Sam, who was young and frivolous at the time, was so enchanted by her that he nearly forgot all about his business... In the end, the one that was completely smitten wasn't Sam, but Cooper.

Cooper was originally a genius with limitless potential. He held a double Ph.D. at the tender age of 18. However, the future head of the Mitchell Family was willing to give up on his promising future and position as the head of the family for Annabel's sake. Eloping with her to the South, he was ready to become an anonymous person for the rest of his life. If their elopement had succeeded back then, the Mitchell Family might have let them get away. If that had happened, Jordan would have successfully gotten rid of one of his potential opponents without any bloodshed.

Sophia continued to imagine the worst.

Sam was the young master of the Edwards Family while Cooper was the only son of the Mitchell Family. Although they were young, they held noble statuses. They must have met countless women before, but for some reason, both of them coincidentally fell in love with Annabel, who had neither educational background nor ability. All she had was her beauty.

The devil in her heart was going wild, and her head was filled with countless unruly thoughts. Could it be that my mother was not as kind and innocent as I had imagined? They were attacked when they were trying to escape. But, only the three of them knew about their elopement. So, who was it that leaked the news? Sam? Cooper? Or... had Annabel tipped them off?

She had an even more terrifying thought.

What if Annabel and Cooper's elopement was actually a ploy to get Cooper away from the protection of the Mitchell Family? They wanted to take the opportunity to assassinate him, but before they could do anything... Sam tattled on them to the Mitchell Family in a fit of jealousy, and the Mitchell Family made their move. As a result, Cooper was caught just in time while Annabel was given a death sentence...

On the other hand, Annabel failed to complete the mission given to her by Jordan—she failed to seduce either Cooper or Sam. Thus, she was also abandoned by Jordan and had no choice but to work under the Edwards Family. Later, Jordan visited her again for some reason when she returned home. Moreover, he appeared once more after her death.

Sophia pulled her hair back softly and massaged her scalp. Her head felt like a mess. She was extremely scared that the truth would turn out to be just as she had imagined. If so, the beliefs she had firmly built up and the pride she took in them would shatter just like that. She had always believed that she was the product of the great and beautiful love between her parents. She had always believed that her parents were the best in the world. But, everything I believe in... might be completely destroyed once this riddle is solved.

In the end, she couldn't bring herself to voice her concerns to Linus. Perhaps she was thinking too much into it. Perhaps, that hooked-nosed man was simply a bigshot who was lusting after Annabel.

Feeling exhausted, she leaned against the strong shoulder that just happened to be beside her. When she leaned against his shoulder, she immediately felt much better. It was a very comfortable feeling. She had tossed and turned all night; she had been unable to fall asleep in her bedroom. Yet, as soon as she leaned against his shoulder, she felt her sleepiness washing over her as she vaguely felt herself falling asleep.

Linus held her by the shoulder and looked down at her tired little face. Then, he gently whispered, "Sleep, sleep... Sleep for a while and all your worries will be gone."

She gazed at his sexy lips moving slightly and soon fell asleep. After that, he simply watched her quietly as she slept beside him. The tenderness in his eyes did not disappear. He wished that he could watch her for the rest of his life. No matter how much he looked at her, he would never get bored of it...

The next day, Sophia woke up in her room. Rolling over, it took her a long time to recall the events of last night. No, I need to ask Justin about it. However, she couldn't find Justin anywhere no matter how much she searched. Reportedly, he received a phone call after he arrived home last night. Then, he rushed out again in a panic as if something urgent had come up.

Unable to find Justin anywhere, Sophia brought the documents with her as she searched for Cooper. "Dad! Dad!"

When Linus heard her calling for Cooper, he reminded her, “Fass went out for a change of pace early this morning. He’s not back yet.”

A change of pace? Cooper, that recluse, would actually take the initiative to go out for a change of pace? He normally found it troublesome just to take his dog out for a walk—so much so that he specially created a robot to walk the dog on his behalf. Ever since they moved Annabel’s grave, Michael’s signal had been cut off, Justin had rushed off in a panic, and Cooper suddenly went out for a change of pace. Everything is so strange! Don’t tell me; did moving the grave bring about bad luck?!

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It looks like we didn’t do a good job at choosing the feng shui. We should’ve hired a professional for something as major as the relocation of a grave. Unfortunately, Daniel was traveling the world, and nobody could locate him. Nobody even knew which part of the hemisphere he was in, plying his scamming trade.

It was late at night. Not only did Cooper not return, but Justin did not return either. In the meantime, Sophia spent some time playing mahjong with Sarah and lost 2,000. As it was the World Cup season, she also made some bets on the games. However, whomever she betted on would lose. Thus, she lost more than 200,000 over the next few days. Even the prices of the stocks she bought fell. It feels like I’m doing everything wrong these past few days.

She still couldn’t get through Justin’s phone whenever she tried to call him. Moreover, she couldn’t locate his phone either. Feeling anxious, she continued trying to call him. Just as she was about to raise a commotion and send somebody to search for him, he finally answered the phone.

His voice was very gloomy. “Sophia, I... know about Lorelei... Please give me some time; I need some time alone.”

Her heart sank. At the end of the day, he found out anyway. The matters involving Katrina and Blade, as well as that child's existence—he found out everything. I knew we couldn't keep this matter hidden... I'm sure Justin must be suffering greatly right now.

No man could accept that his wife had been in love with another man and even had a child with that man—not even if it was something Celine had no control over. Although Katrina had been a temporary and insignificant personality that existed within her, she and Katrina were completely different people. Even so, Lorelei had been adopted into the Fletcher Family. Moreover, she often spent time with Nathan. Needless to say, Justin probably found it difficult to accept everything that had been thrown at him.

If I think about it from another perspective... Supposing Michael had an illegitimate child and the Fletcher Family took the child in. Not only that, but that child also constantly spent time with Carmen in front of me... I think I would die of heartbreak on the spot. Even if I know Michael never meant to betray me, and that child was an unforeseen outcome... something like that is still extremely difficult to accept...

“For now, why don't you take a few days off to calm down?”

Justin might have had trouble accepting it, but Celine needed him—their little family needed him. He couldn't keep running from reality forever. Therefore, he would surely return, sooner or later.

Sophia told him to take several days off. Then, she tried calling Michael again. The call connected for a mere three seconds. “Chica... halfway done... miss you...”. In the next moment, the call disconnected again. What a terrible signal!

Sigh. She tossed her phone aside, feeling frustrated. Seeing that it was getting late and Cooper had yet to return, she changed her clothes, rode on a Yamaha bike, and sneaked out the back door. Cooper had not returned for two days now, and she had an idea where he went. Thus, she drove there to look for him.

It was very late, and the park near Bayside University was very quiet—not a person was in sight. Under the cover of night, the crescent moon was reflected on the dark surface of the lake while the calls of the insects and the frogs mixed into the gentle night breeze. It made her agitated nerves calm down instantly.

Searching around, she found Cooper by the lakeside, just as she expected. He was sitting quietly in a corner, watching the peaceful surface of the lake. Like a stone-carved statue, he stared ahead in a daze. This park was filled with beautiful memories of the time he had spent with Annabel.

30 years had passed, and Bayside City had undergone a huge change during that time. The stone-paved road they walked on together had turned into a shopping district; the river in the

village they played in had been flattened and covered with high-rise buildings. Everything they experienced together had disappeared among the bustling city of Bayside City, becoming part of the unrecorded past and vanishing without a trace. Only this old park that had existed for 60 years remained.

This place remained the same as it had 30 years ago, but it was also facing demolition. For that reason, he had bought over the entire park so that he could maintain the park as it had always been back then. It was also his holy land. Whenever he missed Annabel, he would come here and sit quietly, just as he was doing right now. Looking at the places he had walked together with her, his heart was filled with a sense of satisfaction and sweetness.

After arriving, Sophia said nothing as she sat down beside him. Then, both father and daughter simply sat there quietly, watching the night scenery. As they sat there, 30 minutes passed. She switched her phone off as she enjoyed the peaceful silence to her heart's content. She knew that the disappearance of Annabel's body had been a huge shock to him. Moreover, they failed to locate Annabel's remains even now. Hence, she did not disturb him and left him alone. Everybody needed some peace right now.

Besides, she had no idea how to bring up that matter with him. Until now, he was unaware of the hooked-nosed man's existence. How could anybody accept something like that?

Another half an hour passed when the motionless Cooper moved suddenly. He reached out, stroked Sophia's hair, and sighed. "My daughter..." Turning his head, he looked at her. Even now, he believed that Sophia was a gift from the heavens—a gift he obtained in exchange for all the happiness in his life.

Sophia leaned her head against his shoulder, then looked up at him and said cheekily, "Dad, can you tell me stories about Mom?"

Upon hearing her request, he fell silent for a minute or so. He was organizing his words in his head, wanting to use the most beautiful words he knew to describe the love of his life. "Your mother was the most wonderful person in the world. She was kind and gentle. Also, she sang beautifully. I felt like I was looking at all the good in the world whenever I looked at her."

He occasionally smiled or frowned when speaking about Annabel, just like the young man who was deeply in love back then. Despite all these years, he, who had experienced all sorts of things in life, was still the same young man he had been back then.

On the other hand, Sophia listened carefully. She had never heard Cooper speaking about Annabel in such detail before. As she listened, she tried hard to look for clues hidden in his memories.

Cooper said, "At the time, Sam was still known as Andrea. He had just taken over a restaurant and changed its name to Crimson House. And, your mother was among the first batch of employees at Crimson House. Your mother was very intelligent and capable." His eyes shone with a gentle light as if he was telling the most touching story in the world. "As a business, that

restaurant wasn't doing particularly well. Your mother was promoted from part of the ordinary wait staff to the head waitress, before becoming the floor manager, in a short span of time. Together with Sam, they worked on the restaurant and business boomed. Thus, Sam asked me to develop a cash register system for his restaurant." At this point, his eyebrows were dancing, and a smile hung from his lips. "Back then, computers were rare while people who knew how to operate computers were even rarer. When I installed the cash register system in the restaurant, none of the service staff in the restaurant knew how to operate it. Hence, I spent some time every day teaching them how to log in and operate it. That was when I met your mother for the first time. She was incredibly beautiful and intelligent. I only taught her once, yet she understood it immediately. She was such a smart lady!"

He looked at Sophia, trying to find a shadow of that person from her similar facial features. "You are similar to her. Both of you are icy but intelligent. Unfortunately, her family forced her to drop out of school to work before she could finish her primary education. As a result, she worked as a salesperson and a service staff. She even sold mineral water at the train station before. Despite her youth, she suffered through all sorts of hardships. Even so, she was optimistic, determined, and filled with hope in life. She might have been young, but she was very talented. She quickly became Sam's right-hand man and worked with him to expand the Crimson House. Haha... Your mother was only 17 or 18 at the time. If she were not living in that era or born into that family... I'm sure she would have achieved something big."

Sophia listened seriously, but her heart was filled with doubt. Why is the woman I'm hearing about different from what I discovered during the investigation?

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Sophia had always thought of her mother as nothing but a kind and beautiful woman similar to those dumb blondes that successfully tamed the heart of a domineering president in most modern romance stories. However, it turned out that her mother was a strong and independent woman. No wonder so many of her photos were hanging in Crimson House.

As a result, the image of Annabel in Sophia's heart changed again and again—so much so that she herself didn't know which one to believe anymore... Perhaps, there was a story hidden behind what happened back then. If Annabel had truly appeared before Cooper with a malicious

purpose, Cooper would have noticed it. It was Cooper after all; how could he fail to see through such tricks?

If not for love, why would she be so determined to give birth to their child despite the rumors swirling around her? All of a sudden, Sophia felt extremely guilty. I shouldn't have doubted Annabel. After all, she is my mother! Besides, 30 years had passed. Stories about her mother had turned into myths. Who else would remember a pitiful young woman that had died at a young age, aside from Cooper, Sophia, and those few who cared about her?

If not for Sophia making a name for herself over the years; if not for Michael, who was such an amazing husband; if not for Cooper, who returned to recognize Sophia as part of his family, Annabel would still be considered a slut that returned home pregnant after failing to become the mistress of a bigshot. Similarly, Sophia would still be an illegitimate child without a father.

Besides, nobody could even clearly recall the exact date Annabel had dropped out of school. Some claimed that she was never educated; others claimed that she dropped out of primary school; some claimed she was illiterate; and others claimed that she was a top student that received a scholarship and was only forced to drop out of junior high school. Perhaps stories of that hooked-nosed man that drove the BMW were stories of other people that the villagers had tacked onto her name. It had been 30 years after all!

One wouldn't even be able to recall how many trees were planted in front of their house after 30 years; how could they possibly recall how old somebody else's daughter was when she dropped out of school? However, the Annabel that Cooper knew was the closest to the truth. That was because he truly cared about her—so much so that even if 30 years had passed, he could still remember everything about her clearly...

At that thought, Sophia breathed a sigh of relief, and the gloominess that shrouded over her for the past few days dissipated. I'm still the product of love between my parents. I'm so glad.

The father and daughter pair sat at the park until midnight before they got up to return home.

"Dad, let's get some barbecue!"

The father and daughter pair walked under the street lights. The streets near the park were still very lively. Many people came out for a jog or to walk their dogs in the coolness of the night, and the stalls along the streets were operating in full swing. Cooper felt slightly repulsed by the sight of the street stalls. Even so, he saw that Sophia was very excited. Thus, he went over, found a place to sit, and took out his phone to deal with some business matters. Occasionally, they talked to each other too.

Sophia took out her phone and tried to call Michael again. Unfortunately, the results were the same as before—the line kept breaking up. Out of 10 calls, only one would connect. Moreover, the call would only last for several seconds before it disconnected again. Still, she felt satisfied even though she only managed to exchange a few words with Michael and happily wolfed down her barbecue after ending the call.

Looking at the way she was immersed in love, he couldn't help but think that she was very similar to how he was in the past.

Then, she suddenly asked, "Dad, if I really faked a marriage with Uncle Linus, will it be awkward in the future?"

He replied, "It'll be fine. It's just a piece of paper. With this marriage certificate, Linus will officially be entered into the Michel Family's genealogy record book."

This matter was giving him a huge headache. The Michel Group was advancing with the times because it had to constantly be innovative to remain at the forefront of the times. It was the only way to maintain its dominant position in the market.

However, the Michel Family remained stubbornly conservative. Despite the era they were in, it was still implementing rules from hundreds of years ago. He once tried to initiate a change in the past, but the resistance was too strong. This family that had been passed down for hundreds of years was very sensitive to change. It would never accept any changes easily. Even if he was the head of the family, even if he controlled the Michel Group, many people still stood out to oppose any changes that were proposed.

As they ate, they chatted.

"Master Sam told me that he bought the first Crimson House for my mother—"

"How could you believe what Sam says?! He was a jerk at the time! He had nothing but money. Everything from big to small matters was dealt with by your mother! She was the one who managed his restaurant and created a turnover of several hundred thousand for him. Yet, he only paid her a salary of 800 each month. How dare he try to woo her after doing that?! He must be dreaming!"

"The barbecue at this stall is delicious. I'm going to buy some to bring home. I wonder if Uncle Linus will eat it."

"Yeah, he will. I always see him coming out for barbecued meat while walking the dog alone in the middle of the night."

"What?! How could he eat such delicious food behind my back?!"

...

After they finished eating, Sophia tried to take out her wallet to pay only to discover that she... did not have her wallet with her. All she had on her was a fiver. Thus, she said to the shopkeeper, "I didn't bring any money. Can I pay by Venmo?"

The shopkeeper was extremely busy and simply said, "The total comes up to 98. The QR code is on the table."

Wiping her mouth, she took out her phone and scanned the QR code on the table. With a soft 'beep', she successfully scanned the code and keyed in '98', which was the amount that was to be transferred. Just as she was about to press on the 'confirm' button, her hand suddenly froze mid-motion and she stared blankly at the screen...

Cooper noticed that something was amiss and glanced at her phone. After scanning the QR code to make the payment, the name of the receiving party was displayed on her phone—Annabel Johnson. The profile picture was that of a middle-aged woman. She had her hair tied up delicately and wore a white apron. That person looked almost identical to Sophia, except that she was slightly older, had wrinkles, and her eyes were more relaxed than Sophia's.

When both father and daughter saw the profile picture, they were completely taken aback.

Then, the shopkeeper walked over and asked, "Was your payment successful? The Venmo account belongs to the owner, so I can't see the notification from my side. Please show me your receipt of payment..."

Cooper had taken Sophia's phone out of her hands and stared at it with an expression of disbelief. It was as if he couldn't recognize the words 'Annabel Johnson'!

Noticing that they had yet to pay and were just staring at the owner's account, the shopkeeper immediately felt angry. He was about to speak out when he saw a woman approaching on an electric bike. The bike stopped by the side of the barbecue stall, and the woman walked over with a satchel. Her hair was tied up high, and she looked slightly aged. Her skin was relaxed and wrinkled, but she still had a noble air around her. She did not seem like the owner of a barbecue stall by the roadside at all.

"Heath, how is business tonight?" The middle-aged woman spoke with a foreign accent.

Upon hearing that voice, Cooper felt as if he had been struck by lightning. He stood up blankly and stared at the woman in a daze.

Walking over, the woman talked to the shopkeeper for a bit. Then, the shopkeeper pointed toward them, and the woman glanced over. As soon as she saw Cooper, her expression changed drastically. The calm smile on her face stiffened, then it was slowly replaced by a dumbstruck look before becoming one of shock and disbelief. All of a sudden, her eyes were filled with great joy as she exclaimed in non-standard Cethosian, "Coop, is that you?!"

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She rushed toward Cooper, tears of joy running down her jubilant face.

On the other hand, Cooper stared at her with trembling lips. A name was on the tip of his tongue, but he didn't dare to call out the name. He was afraid that it would turn out to be a dream. He was afraid that if he called out that name, he would wake up from the dream.

Seeing that he was not saying anything, the woman wept as she threw herself into his arms. "I remember you. You're Cooper! Cooper, you're alive! You're alive..."

When that familiar yet unfamiliar body pressed against his, he felt like he had woken up from a dream. I'm not dreaming! It's really her! It's the person I've been thinking of all my life, yet couldn't be together with due to a stroke of fate! "Anna... Is that you?"

She lifted her face and looked at him. Her wrinkled face was filled with both bitterness and delight. "It's me! It's me! I'm Anna! Coop, you're still alive! You're alive!"

"Anna! Oh, my Anna!" He fiercely pulled her into his embrace, using a lot of strength; it was almost as if he wanted to pull her into his body. Is this a dream? If this is a dream, I don't want to wake up from it. I want to keep dreaming forever!

Looking at the two people crying tears of joy, Sophia felt very shocked. Is this person my mother? Annabel Johnson? She's back?!

Afterward, the Edwards Residence was in an uproar as everybody came out to watch. Sure enough, they saw Cooper bringing a middle-aged woman home. Moreover, the woman looked very similar to Sophia. Thus, Cooper's family was reunited, and they celebrated happily. Sophia felt like a blessed child—not only did she get a father, but she also had a mother now.

According to what Annabel said and some guesswork to fill in the blanks, Annabel did not die back then. At the time, the hospital she gave birth at was no different from a small clinic, and many facilities were limited. She gave birth in the afternoon and suffered from amniotic fluid embolism. Despite several rescue attempts, the doctors failed to rescue her and eventually announced her death.

Due to the hot weather, her body could not be preserved for long. As an unmarried pregnant woman, her death was considered 'disgraceful'. Moreover, somebody had offered to purchase her corpse. Therefore, she was hastily buried on that night itself. Even her tombstone was added later. Unexpectedly, her remains were dug up again several hours after she was buried and sold as a match for necrogamy. However, she woke up midway and was rescued. Afterward, she was sold to a bachelor overseas and became his wife. As a result, she was imprisoned for 20 years without any means of escape!

Then, she was rescued a few years earlier and finally returned to Bayside City. Unfortunately, everything had changed even though it was still the same city. Upon learning that Cooper had been dead for more than 10 years, she wanted to go home to her daughter and her family. That was when she discovered that the changes in Bayside City were greater than she imagined. Moreover, she no longer remembered where her home was nor how her hometown accent sounded... Unable to locate her home and thinking that Cooper was dead, she left Bayside City. She finally returned to the city half a year ago and started this barbecue stall to earn a living.

Looking at the family of three who was immersed in their joyous family reunion, everybody felt happy for them too. However, Sean couldn't help feeling that something wasn't quite right. Cooper had just relocated the grave and discovered that Annabel's remains were gone. And now, she appeared before them alive and well? Glancing at Linus, he noticed that Linus was standing by the side without saying anything. Moreover, the look in Linus' eyes seemed rather solemn. When their gazes met, he realized that they both harbored the same suspicions. Everything about this matter felt extremely strange. It was like a bizarre dream—it felt unreal.

On the second day after Annabel's return, Cooper brought both Annabel and Sophia back to the Johnson Family Village to visit their relatives. Watching as the family of three merrily left the house, Sean finally had the opportunity to talk to Linus alone. Michael was not around, Justin was taking some time for himself, and Sean was still recuperating from his injuries. Therefore, Linus was the only one Sean could rely on to investigate this matter.

The two of them silently watched as Cooper and his little family left the house. Then, Linus let out a long sigh. "This is too bizarre."

Cooper and Sophia were giddy from the joy of their family reuniting again. However, Sean and Linus were able to look at the matter objectively as they were outsiders. Putting aside whether that person was genuinely Annabel, everything else was still too strange.

”

They were silent for a moment. All of a sudden, Sean asked grimly, "What do you plan to do?"

Linus glanced out the window. The light reflected off the surface of the lake shone on his face through the window, and the glare hurt his eyes. Narrowing his eyes under the glare of the light,

he finally answered, "Forget it; who cares if she is real or fake? It's been a long time since Fass was this happy."

Sean did not respond. Cooper was very happy right now... even if the happiness was simply an illusion. He might have noticed it from the start, but he chose to ignore it, even if he knew that the other party's sudden appearance was too coincidental.

"I will keep an eye on her," Linus said, closing the window for Sean before walking out of the room quietly.

Sean was almost fully recovered after recuperating for quite some time. His face had a healthy flush to it, but he was still very weak and spent most of his time resting in bed. In the meantime, he ruminated over the recent incidents. He couldn't shake the feeling that something was amiss. It felt like the calm before a storm—something was about to happen...

In contrast, Cooper seemed like the happiest man in the world. He spent all his time with Annabel. They visited all the places they used to go to in the past, including the park and the restaurant, reminiscing all the beautiful memories they had together. Similarly, Sam was also incredibly astonished to learn that Annabel was back.

At first, Sophia was very happy. However, she later discovered that their family of three gradually began to change. Cooper constantly disappeared without saying anything. Sometimes, he was gone for several days on end without coming back to visit her even once or giving her a call. It felt like her father had been snatched away by somebody else...

She became Cooper's one and only precious treasure since the moment he found her. Even when Carmen was added to the mix later, both she and Carmen were the treasures he greatly cherished. However, she couldn't help feeling that both she and Carmen had fallen out of his favor ever since Annabel returned. Sigh.

In the past, nighttime was family time. Sophia, Cooper, Linus, and Carmen used to gather in front of the TV and chat every night. But now, only Sophia and Linus were left. Carmen had gone to bed early; Cooper wasn't around and neither was Michael. Thus, Sophia let out a long sigh again.

"Alright; stop sighing." Linus walked over in his pajamas. Sitting down next to her, he said, "This is the general event schedule for the banquet that's taking place in two days. Have a look at it."

The banquet that Sophia had been planning for a long time was about to take place in two days as scheduled. Due to several changes to the plan, many extra events had been added. For example, Cooper was going to introduce Annabel, as well as... the engagement between Sophia and Linus.

"No way..." Sophia frowned. Must we announce it during the banquet? I thought we were only going to privately and secretly obtain the marriage certificate. It's enough if we can bring back proof to fool the Michel Family, right? Shouldn't something as shameful as this be done in

secret? Besides, not many people know about our intention to have a fake marriage. Not even Sean and Sarah, our best friends, are aware of it.

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“Isn’t this a little...” Sophia was starting to feel unsure. If we announce this to the public, all my friends will learn about it. How awkward will it be when we meet up to play mahjong or games? Moreover, I’m going to remarry Michael in the future. If my marriage to Linus is made public, won’t it seem like I’m taking marriage too lightly? At the very least, I need to think about Michael’s reputation! Also, Carmen is going to film ‘Where Are We Going, Dad?’ with Michael soon. As a mother, how can I act like marriage is such a trivial matter? Can I be certain it won’t affect Carmen?

“Is there a problem?” Linus frowned as he glanced through the event program.

She said in a troubled voice, “Michael is a public figure. No matter how small a matter it is, it can turn into a huge scandal. So, I’m worried things might get out of hand!”

Although he seemed rather disappointed, he said, “It’s okay. Let’s cancel that event.”

She nodded in agreement. After that, they discussed other details regarding the banquet. All of a sudden, Linus asked after Carmen. “I heard Carmen is sick. How is she? Did you bring her to see a doctor?”

When the topic of Carmen came up, Sophia looked very worried. “She ate something bad and had diarrhea. The doctor has examined her. He said that she’ll be fine after taking some medicine and having a good rest.”

Upon hearing that, Linus felt relief. The two of them watched some TV together before heading back to their respective bedrooms.

Sarah’s injuries were almost fully healed. Therefore, Harry came to bring her home. Before they left, she didn’t forget to promote her well-endowed son as much as possible. “Look; look! Sour

Face has such a large penis! Are you sure you won't consider an arranged marriage between our children?"

Carrying Hope, she kept pushing him in Sophia's face. The three-year-old was wearing a pair of open-crotch pants. Moreover, his face was impassive and expressionless. As a result, both his lower body and upper body were radiating murderous intent. Sophia reached out and pressed it against his stomach, diligently trying to push his looming appendage out of her face as she irritably said, "Let's leave the talks about marriage between our children until they're older."

Carmen's relationship status was relatively interesting recently. She was currently in a stable relationship with the female black giant poodle, Dusky, who was only several months old. Besides, Hope didn't seem to be her type. Rather, she seemed to regard him as her younger brother. So, it didn't matter how well-endowed he was—it was meaningless.

Afterward, Harry left with Sarah, Hope, and Poppy, the child they adopted not too long ago.

Once her friends were gone, Sophia felt very empty inside. Feeling much better, Sean would get out of bed occasionally and take his adopted daughter for walks. Meanwhile, Justin had yet to return, and Michael still couldn't be contacted.

The atmosphere in the house had changed. Ever since Annabel came back, Cooper only had eyes for her. He seemed to have forgotten about his daughter and granddaughter. It was probably because he had lost her for such a long time that he cherished her even more now that she was back.

Before this, he would have stayed by Carmen's side 24/7 whenever she was sick. He would have taken care of her, hugged her, and pampered her. But now, he only visited her once in a while. Even the young girl had noticed the change in him and complained that her grandfather only loved her grandmother and no longer loved her.

After Sophia recovered from her initial joy of having a mother, she discovered that it wasn't quite as joyous as she imagined. Once the initial delight died down, she felt extremely depressed and disappointed instead. She didn't seem to like her newfound mother very much, but she didn't know why either. It seemed like she subconsciously felt a sense of animosity toward Annabel from the beginning. Still, she was her mother; she knew she shouldn't be feeling emotions like these. Unfortunately, that feeling slowly spread and grew in her heart like creeping ivy. She couldn't control it no matter how hard she tried to conceal and suppress it.

Although Annabel seemed to be trying very hard to be a good mother, and Sophia was also trying very hard to be a good daughter, it felt like the atmosphere in the house was becoming more and more depressing by the day, ever since Annabel came back. Combined with the fact that Carmen was sick, Sophia became very irritable and short-tempered. As a result, she would fly into a rage from time to time.

At noon that day, everybody was sitting down together for lunch. All of a sudden, Annabel tentatively asked Sophia, "Sophia, when will you and Carmen move back into your husband's house?"

As soon as Sophia heard those words, she became upset. I'm living here just fine. Why should I move out? Thus, she continued eating as she answered, "I have no plans to move out!"

In an earnest voice, Annabel said, "You married into the Fletcher Family and became part of their family. So, you should be living in the Fletcher Residence. It's only appropriate that you live with your husband. Besides, living with your natal family will invite gossip."

No matter how Sophia thought about it, those words seemed incredibly harsh. Why shouldn't I live here? Is your daughter no longer family once she gets married? Is it embarrassing for your daughter to return to her natal family after her divorce? Is this really my mother?! Forget it; she's older and more conservative. It's normal to have a generational gap between us. Thus, she grunted perfunctorily in response. "Let's talk about this next time."

However, Annabel seemed hung up on it. She continued in an exasperated voice, "Listen to me; women shouldn't act so tough. You are way too career-oriented for your own good. Women should take care of the hearth and home while men are in charge of making a living. I'm sure that's the reason why Michael divorced you. You should reflect on it. Besides, you need to reconcile with him as soon as possible and have a good life with him. Living with your natal family is not a permanent solution. You're an adult now; living with your natal family is embarrassing. Hurry up and give birth to a son. That's the only way to keep your husband by your side. If you have a son, the two of you can finally remarry each other as soon as possible... You don't have much time left; you're already approaching your thirties. In another two years, you will be worthless since you are no longer young. It will be very hard for you to remarry then."

Sophia focused on eating as she frowningly thought to herself, Do all mothers talk like that? It was the first time she had a mother, so she was confused.

Cooper probably felt that there was a huge illogical flaw in that statement too. However, he was very forgiving of Annabel. He did not object to what she said. Instead, he placed some food on her plate and took the opportunity to cut her off. "You should worry more about yourself. The children can worry about themselves. It's not our place to decide for them."

After that, Annabel said nothing more even though she still felt very worried about Sophia.

That night, Sophia opened her bedroom window and saw her parents taking a stroll by the lakeside. From the distance, she heard Annabel saying to Cooper, "She's already 27, yet she's still staying with her natal family after the divorce. This is not good for her; girls shouldn't act so tough. Coop, why don't we talk to the Fletchers? We should ask them to take both Sophia and Carmen back. A daughter will have to marry into another family and take on their surname, sooner or later. Coop, you've given her so much of your assets; don't you think that's a little ill-considered? Furthermore, she was violated as a child. It's a good thing someone is even willing to marry her, yet she can't even produce a son—"

For a moment, Sophia seriously doubted her own ears. Did I really hear that?! Then, she slammed the window shut with a loud bang. Make me move out? No f*cking way! My name has been written on the land title ever since Michael bought the Edwards Residence! Why should I move out?! Is it so embarrassing for me to come back here?! This place is my home! I'm the owner! I'm not going anywhere!

Although it was the first time she had a mother, she quickly lost interest in a few days. All that was left was an inexplicable sense of disgust and hatred.

Carmen had a specialized baby-care team and a medical team on standby at all times. All her daily necessities were taken care of by specialists. Five or six highly educated personal nannies watched her, and three nutritional experts prepared all her meals. The costs for these services every month were astronomical. However, Annabel seemed extremely dissatisfied with these services and constantly complained about them.

She claimed that daughters would be married out of the family, sooner or later, so there was no point in raising them so well. She also criticized Sophia for not taking better care of her body, claiming that it was better if she could give birth to a son and tie a man down to her compared to spending so much effort raising Carmen. She also reprimanded Sophia for being way too career-oriented. She said that it destroyed the harmonious atmosphere between a husband and a wife. In her opinion, women should quit their jobs to focus on the children and the family.

Truthfully, even Cooper felt that Annabel's views were problematic. However, he believed them to be trivial matters and was not bothered by them. He knew that Sophia would not be influenced by Annabel, so he simply ignored the issue. Unfortunately, the dissatisfaction in Sophia's heart slowly piled up, little by little. The day before the welcome banquet, her patience finally snapped after enduring it for so long. She lost her temper and caused a huge ruckus in Carmen's room—so much so that Carmen started crying out of fright.