

My Dreamy Old Husband Chapter 961

After pulling away from the hug, the two of them walked out of the garage laughing and saw Michael in front of them.

“Linus, you’re back.”

Michael spoke as if he never treated himself as an outsider at all.

Looking at the matching shirts Sophia and Michael were wearing, Linus subconsciously shifted his gaze. “Yes, I’m back.”

However, Michael thought there was something different about Linus today, but he could not put his finger on it.

Since it was the new year’s, it was great that he was back to celebrate with everyone. It would not be the same without Linus.

After his return, he went to meet Cooper, who was in his study.

“I’ve met with the Family Elders Council and told them about Sophia’s situation. I managed to buy some time for her and Carmen to prepare.”

In fact, the council was getting impatient. They wanted Sophia and Carmen to return to the Michel family as soon as possible, but Cooper had not settled their registries yet.

However, the Fletcher Family certainly would not let Carmen go easily, and Cooper did not know how to tell Mark about it.

As for Sophia... He was more worried about her. If she returned to the family now, she would have to undergo DNA tests. She was the daughter of Fass Michel, so she would naturally be the focus of the council. They were hoping for her to be Fass’s second in command, and that she would take over the responsibilities soon. However, with Sophia’s current situation, there was definitely no way she could take over the responsibilities of the Michel Family so soon.

While Linus and Alice both grew up receiving elite education from the Michel Family and Cooper’s guidance, Sophia was too inexperienced compared to them.

To Cooper, she was still his dog-leash-selling baby. If she returned to the Michel family now, she would have to compete with Linus and Alice. She was still lacking in terms of resources, experience, and connections.

This time, Linus had gone back just to buy a little more time for them.

After hearing Linus's report, Cooper patted his shoulder and said sincerely, "You've done well."

In fact, Linus had never let him down. Although he had gone astray once, he found his way back to the right path. How Cooper wished Linus was his son.

Meanwhile, Linus also asked about Cooper's son, to which Cooper replied there was no progress at all. They had investigated all the possible high-profile local couples who had left the country, but they still found nothing.

His child seemed to have just disappeared.

Looking at the dejected Cooper, he comforted him. "We'll find him."

Cooper smiled helplessly.

He was overwhelmed by everything that was going on, and he could only feel a deep sense of helplessness.

Just then, Linus was about to say something, but he hesitated and decided not to say anything,

It was bizarre that Cooper's son could not be found for such a long time. With Cooper's capability, as long as his child was still alive, he could definitely find some clues. But now, other than the leads from Michael, he made no progress.

Now, Cooper was hoodwinked by Daniel. He believed that everything was up to fate and that his son would just magically appear out of nowhere.

However, Linus was still a little wary.

This matter had not been progressing for a long time, and he suspected there was someone else behind this who was trying hard to hide something. On top of that, there weren't many people in Bayside City that could keep something hidden so well that not even Cooper could find it, and Michael was one of them.

Recently, he crawled through dog doors, endorsed stainless steel basins and sanitary pads, and he appeared on a local TV drama. He was tarnishing his own reputation again and again, which caused Cooper's impression of him to become progressively worse. To Cooper, he was just a sleazy and lowly son-in-law. However, Linus thought he was deliberately acting this way to lead Cooper to forget that he was Mr. Nobody—who, along with Harry, dominated Bayside City's underworld!

He was a mafia boss, so how could he not be able to find Cooper's son? That was unless he was doing that on purpose. But, why? Was he afraid that the return of Cooper's son would jeopardize Sophia's position?

Even so, Michael should know that Cooper would not treat Sophia poorly even if his son did return.

As for Sophia's position, there was no need to worry at all. She was capable, and no one could threaten her status. If she wasn't, then it didn't matter whether Cooper's son returned, because she would be threatened by many.

At that moment, Cooper noticed that Linus was hesitant to speak, but seemed to have something important to say. "Is there something else, Linus?"

Coming back to his senses, he answered, "I've told the elders about my intention to marry Sophia, and all of them approved of it."

At once, Cooper fell silent.

At this point in time, Linus and Sophia getting married would be the simplest and the most mutually beneficial way.

However...

A few days ago, Mark's passing was all over the news!

As soon as they heard the news, the entire Edwards residence was shaken. Everyone rushed to the military compound, only to see Mark and his friends doing Tai Chi exercises in full spirit.

He mischievously said to everyone who had rushed there, "Shh! Keep this a secret. Everyone is always accusing Mikey of using me to climb to the top, and I'm starting to become a taboo to Mikey. So, I deliberately told them to spread the news. Once everyone believes that I'm dead, no one will question Mikey's success anymore."

"Besides, the promotional period for 'The Winter Breakthrough' will be starting soon. With the entire country shocked by my passing, the film could ride on the wave of this news and it surely will be a box office hit!"

Upon hearing this, everyone was at a loss of words.

This old man was actually quite generous in a way.

He really worked hard to hype up Michael's new film.

Ever since Michael claimed his ancestry and his identity as Mark's grandson was revealed, all his hard work seemed to have been invalidated.

When his debut film blew up, everyone assumed the Fletcher Family was behind the high box office sales, and that the good reviews of all his subsequent films were written by ghostwriters that the Fletcher Family hired.

Even when he won the Academy Award for Best Actor, many speculated that the Fletcher Family had pressured the organizing committee to present the award to him.

Furthermore, they all thought they were behind every blockbuster that he worked on.

Since he was the favored grandson of Mark Fletcher, all his achievements must have been the result of his grandfather's influence and affection!

As a matter of fact, the old man was a hundred years old, and this should be the time for him to enjoy his remaining years. Instead, he was being dragged through the mud. As such, he was annoyed and thought it was best to just play dead.

Realizing it was a false alarm, everyone breathed a sigh of relief. Since they were already there, they thought they might as well have a meal together before leaving. Before that, Michael brought Sophia and Carmen to Joel's place while Cooper and Mark played a game of chess.

During their game, Cooper wanted to tell Mark about changing Carmen's name, but everytime he wanted to, he changed his mind.

"Is there something bothering you, Coop?" Mark's wise eyes were still sharp. He knew at a glance that something was stressing him out.

When he was about to speak, Mark hurriedly said, "No, no, don't tell me. I'm already a dead man, so just pretend that I don't exist anymore. Settle your problems on your own!"

Hearing this, Cooper was speechless.

Was Mark giving him the greenlight?

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After returning from the Fletcher Residence, it was almost New Year's. Meanwhile, the news of Mark's 'passing' was spreading throughout the country, and it made a huge impact on the entertainment industry.

In the final three hours before the voting period of 'Light of Cethos' closed, someone's votes exceeded Michael's by several thousands and pushed him to second place in the 'Best Artist' category.

Some time ago, Sophia and Michael had been travelling abroad and were busy getting it on.

If making love for others was rolling in the hay, then instead of rolling, Michael would be doing somersaults. What was more, he never said no to Sophia's 'requests'.

With Sophia's busy schedule, it was rare that she could even take time out to deal with work, let alone pay attention to that competition. Thinking that Michael had the upper hand, she never realized that someone else was catching up to him.

In the final three hours, Sophia saw someone named 'Nicholai Gates' from second place overtake Michael and bagged the top spot of the Best Artist category. Meanwhile, Michael lost by only a few hundred votes and came in second.

She was baffled.

In fact, Nicholai Gates was a popular pretty boy many years ago. His real name was Nicholas Yates, and he was almost thirty. He was getting older, and the audience all got bored of him. Meanwhile, there were many new, young and fresh faces making their debuts. He was losing popularity, so he changed his name and went through a transformation. In a few years, he sharpened his acting skills and became a hunk. He also starred in a few blockbuster movies and became an example of an impressive transformation.

Not only that, but it was also reported this year that he was married and had a child who was now four years old. He even appeared on the reality show named 'Where Are We Going, Dad?' and attracted countless fans. As such, his popularity exceeded Michael's.

Once the list was confirmed, the internet was full of negative comments about Michael.

'The incompetence of the actor who faked his death is finally exposed without his grandfather around.'

'Taylor Murray is only mediocre at best. I told you his acting skills aren't good at all, and he's not attractive anymore. It's a wonder that he still received that many votes. I'm just waiting for 'The Winter Breakthrough' to flop.'

'What is this sleazy old man still doing acting like an idol? He's old news, and he's now endorsing stainless steel basins, how low! Hurry and retire already, and stop hurting my eyes!'

'He was probably just making Mark Fletcher happy. He's over thirty and he's still wearing makeup and entertaining his grandfather, how disgusting! Now that Mark Fletcher is dead, the Fletcher Family will never promote him anymore because they have long known that he's not that great. 'The Winter Breakthrough' may not even be released! Even Scarlett divorced him a long time ago. Now all he has left is a miserable life and stainless steel basin endorsements.'

'I've seen him in real life, and he's ugly as h*ll. Even if he was twenty years younger, he'd still be ugly. I really can't comprehend how he became a national idol.'

...Screw you, you're ugly! Your whole family's ugly!

It was just a couple days before the new year, and Sophia was so infuriated that she jumped out of her bed in the middle of the night to look for her computer. She wanted to fight those haters!*How can I let you slander my beloved idol?*

In fact, she was so angry that she wasn't even interested when Michael tried to fool around with her.

At that moment, she was sitting in front of the computer. Michael sulked while he watched Sophia having a virtual catfight with the haters, and he snuck a glance at the vicious comments.

Evidently, it was as if he had lost his protective shield since Mark's 'passing'. All the dirt on him seemed to have popped up, including groundless accusations that he bedded a male model from years ago.

It was as if the haters had all come to life as soon as Mark was not around to protect him and wanted to punish him to death.

Now that Mark was gone, Michael's protective shield was gone along with him. He was not included in the Fletcher Family's genealogy record book until he was in his thirties. On top of that, after he finally managed to marry into a rich family—to Miss Scarlett Mitchell a.k.a Sophia, he was still dumped in the end. Subsequently, he resolved to endorse stainless steel basins.

He was the epitome of a middle-aged, sleazy, washed-up celebrity.

At that moment, Michael also felt that Taylor Murray was very pitiful.

Not only that, but he also fooled around with numerous female celebrities that led to one of the female celebrities dying from miscarriage. During filming, he used special effects makeup, and he was simply bad at acting. If his acting was good, it was because he used a stand-in actor. Moreover, the claims that he performed all his own stunts were accused to be fake. Even his gender was fake, and he was actually a woman. In short, everything about him was fake.

After Sophia shot down the slanders of Michael's acting skills and using a stand-in actor, she shot down rumours about his involvement with male models and female celebrities, box office fraud, and paedophilia. After that, a wave of false rumors about his gender surged again. Everyone was talking about Michael like they personally knew him!

At this moment, Sophia was exhausted.

She went from using her official account and speaking respectfully, to creating new accounts and talking vulgarly. In the end, she decided to quit when she got tired.

Pulling her onto his lap, he turned off the computer and comforted her, "That's enough, online arguments are boring anyway. We should go to sleep. It's New Year's Eve tomorrow!"

Sophia was so frustrated that her dark eye circles were starting to appear. She wrapped her arms around Michael's neck. "Maybe you should skip the award ceremony."

After the news of Mark's passing, everyone was bullying him thinking that he'd lost his protection. Things could get worse if he attended the ceremony!

How could she tolerate anyone bullying her idol?

Michael kissed the back of her hand. "It's fine. I've been in the industry for more than ten years, and there's nothing I haven't faced. Besides, if they want to insult me, they will. You can't control them."

Sophia was sullen for the rest of the night. The next day, Maddie came to apologize. This contest was organized by their company in collaboration with dozens of other media agencies, and she had invited Michael to the award ceremony. She did not expect that this would happen, and now she was embarrassed.

"I think maybe Taylor should skip the ceremony this time round and wait for things to die down."

In fact, it didn't matter to Michael whether he attended or not as it all depended on Sophia.

Sophia refused and snickered, "No, he should go. Why shouldn't he?"

She thought this was an extensive scandal that was organized and well thought-out as it even came all at once. Someone must be orchestrating all this.

Besides, Michael had been a hit for many years, and other celebrities could never reach his level. When he finally 'died', they were relieved. However, he had returned and was more

popular than ever. As soon as he came back, 'The National Treasury Action' was released and it was a box office success and won many awards. Then, he immediately started filming 'The Winter Breakthrough', which was also a huge production.

In addition, he was set to film 'Doctor Invincible 2' and a whole series of Hollywood superhero movies. It was said that he had signed a contract for four movies, which caused a lot of jealousy among the male actors.

How could they not hate him?

However, he used to have Mark as a shield, so they did not dare to be reckless. Now that Mark had 'died', they thought Michael no longer had protection and that it wouldn't be long before he lost his popularity. So, they revealed their true colors.

It looked like his attendance at this award ceremony would be absolutely necessary.

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"Make sure Mark never finds out about this. Also, I'd like an invite. I want to attend this award ceremony with Taylor and see who would dare to disrespect my man in front of me!" Sophia said grimly.

Upon hearing this, Maddie was impressed!

How domineering!

Then, she nodded hastily.

Nicholai Gates's team was too nasty this time round!

Not long after, Sarah came by, followed by Harry who looked helpless.

"Sofie, did you see? It's outrageous! How dare they say my husband was ugly?"

Sarah huffed and puffed. Her dark eye circles were prominent and it was clear that she didn't have a good night's rest.

It wasn't just Michael who was dragged through the mud, but Harry too. Originally, he was in the lead in the Best Actor category, but he lost by about a hundred thousand votes in the span of a day afterward. They were saying that Harry was riding on Michael's success, and that he flattered and buttered him up. Now that Michael was losing his popularity, Harry's popularity would go down as well.

At this point, Sarah was furious. "I'm ready to egg some of the hater's houses!"

The new year was coming, and this incident was attracting a lot of attention.

Even Cooper thought it was a bit too much when he saw the news. In fact, Michael was accused of being gay, and that he tried to seduce his handsome father-in-law who was only a few years older than him. The newspaper also wrote that when his father-in-law found out, he forced Michael and Sophia to get a divorce.

Meanwhile, some accused him of being a woman.

Even though this son-in-law of his was a fool, these rumors were unnecessarily vicious.

When Daniel saw the well-off Nikolai Gates in the news, he said, "I remember him. He was a washed-up celebrity back then, and he came to see me for a fortune-telling session. He wanted to change his name so that his luck would increase. When I examined his bones, I could only feel fillers and implants all over his face. I could hardly feel any of his bones."

Hearing everyone discussing among themselves, Sophia remained silent. She looked up Nikolai's team on the web and found that he was under an agency called Glory Entertainment Agency.

Glory Entertainment was currently owned by the Mitchell Group, which was partially managed by Sandra.

Not long after Sandra made a fool of herself at King's new product launch last summer, she took over Glory Entertainment that managed a few successful artists, including Nikolai.

It was Sandra again!

It seemed that Sandra had been informed of Mark's 'death' and anticipated Michael's fall from stardom. As such, she orchestrated this series of events.

All this while, Sophia had been busy with her relationship and had not been dealing with the reports from her spies she planted in Mitchell Group. Today, when she caught up with them, she realized that Sandra had been busy.

As a matter of fact, she was still being cheated by fake Lucile and Abbie. Not only did the fake Lucile cheat her family, but lots of other families too. She took the money she had cheated from Sandra and used it as capital at another family, and took the money she'd cheated there and used it to gain Sandra's trust.

Moreover, fake Lucile had gotten a lot of resources dishonestly for Glory Entertainment, and Sandra even gave 10% of the company shares to her and Abbie.

Upon seeing the news, Sophia's face became fierce and stern...

The ground work was done, and all she had to do now was wait for the perfect opportunity.

Looking at Sophia who was worried for him, Michael was moved and couldn't help but kiss her cheek.

It was as if they had gone back in time, when she was still a fanatic teenage girl who would be mad the whole day about any negative comments about him.

At that moment, he held her hand as he joined her in her online arguments and analysed the situation. "Based on our previous experience, this is just the beginning. They must have other tricks up their sleeves."

Judging from how diligently they were in insulting Michael and Harry, there must be something else that was coming.

Meanwhile, Sophia kept an eye on them as she slowly laid out her plans.

On New Year's Eve, everyone gathered at Edwards residence to watch the New Year Dinner Gala.

This year, Nicholai was performing at the Dinner Gala with his son, who were both among the five pairs of father-daughter and father-son duos that had become famous because of their appearance in 'Where Are We Going, Dad?'

Meanwhile, Carmen was full of envy as she watched their performance, while Hope scoffed at her and the adults who were playing mahjong.

Alice and Casper were at the Edwards residence too. However, Alice and Daniel didn't even greet each other and acted like they didn't know each other. She thought that speaking to that liar would be a waste of energy.

On the other hand, Casper was trying hard to tell Corrado's fortune. He examined its head, paws, and its nipples. Unfortunately, Corrado was a male and Casper struggled to find its nipples. After he was done examining Corrado and reading all the signs, he came up with the prediction that Corrado's love life would blossom next year!

Who would have thought that on the first day of the new year, which was the next day, Corrado would be given three pure black Labradors to be his wives. He was a happy dog!

Upon learning this, Casper was amazed and even more convinced that he was on the right path.

Sophia was also shocked to see Cooper walking four black Labradors in the garden in the morning. "Dad, where did you find so many black dogs?"

Cooper reached down to pat the dog. "Black dogs are able to ward off evil. Since we have a big house, Corrado alone isn't enough to do that. So, I got three more black dogs. This ought to do it."

Just then, Sophia wanted to say something but stopped herself.

What was up with Cooper lately?

She brought Daniel over just to give some suggestions and evaluate their house using feng shui, but now, Cooper was convinced that this was a haunted house and became superstitious. Even when Sophia's succulent plant died, he believed it was because of negative energy from the house.

Meanwhile, Michael beside her looked deep in thought on the surface, but inside, he wanted very badly to throw his head back and laugh.

No, don't laugh. Be serious, come on...

As for Michael's scandal, Sophia didn't go anywhere during the new year's holiday as she was busy preparing for the award ceremony. Now that Michael was known as a washed-up celebrity who was abandoned by his rich and beautiful wife and had to resort to endorsing stainless steel basins, Sophia must look her best to support him at the ceremony!

Meanwhile, she was observing Nicholai to catch any signs of activities, but he had been quiet. Instead, Michael and Harry caused a stir a few days later. Someone had been spreading the news that Harry and Taylor were joining forces to endorse an international high-end mobile phone brand—Michel Group's new mobile phone. There were rumors that Michel mobile phones were officially entering the Cethosian market, and that they were releasing a special edition for Cethos. Thus, they were looking for ambassadors for the first time in the country.

However, this was an extremely high-end endorsement. In an instant, the news blew up and since the negative news of Michael and Harry had been causing a wave, everyone was saying that they were too cheap and were not suited to bring out the quality and value of Michel mobile phones. They also said that their endorsements would only cause Michel mobile phones to lose their value!

At once, Sophia figured out their ultimate plan.

It turned out that their motive was to get Michel Group to suspend Michael and Harry's endorsements for the mobile phone!

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Sophia knew very early on about Michel Group entering the Cethos mobile phone market. Michel Group used to sell high-end mobile phones that cost tens of thousands each, and their customers were gold-collar workers and successful business people. But now, Michel mobile phones were starting to enter the Cethos market. In addition to their usual sales of high-end business phones, they were also going to release a mid-end phone globally, including in Cethos. The price was similar to those sold by Apple in the same range. At present, although their official website had pictures of the phone, details of it were still kept confidential and it was not available for sale yet.

The mobile phone's insignia was a dragon eye, and the Michel mobile phone was called "Dragon Eye".

If one wanted to sell Dragon Eye in China, a well-known spokesperson was needed to bring in the sales. Becoming the spokesperson for Dragon Eye was also beneficial for a celebrity. It could help them raise their fame and status in the entertainment world. Sophia thought of her 'wild husband' when she found out there was such a good opportunity.

Alice had also said that the spokesperson would be selected from a pool of male artists with a particular reputation and temperament. Among this pool of artists were Michael, Harry and Nicholas.

But here was the problem. Cooper would not allow Michael to accept this endorsement.

Both Michael and Harry would not accept the job, so Alice had to select another person from that pool of male artists. Her staff had already contacted Nicholas and the other artists' agencies, but they hadn't reached a decision yet.

A few days later, another gossip appeared online, saying that the spokesperson for the Michel mobile phone had been chosen, and it was to be Nicholai Gates. Taylor Murray and Harry

Winston were just hearsay, or rather, these two thought that they could win the endorsement, so they had released the news in advance to build hype. Unexpectedly, the company thought that they were not popular enough, and that as old male stars, they no longer had any appeal, so they were not good enough to be spokespersons.

After it was reported that Michael and Harry were going to be the spokespersons, their popularity rose and they were often the topic of conversations. Now the winds had turned, and all of this had paved the way for Nicholas to take over the endorsement!

The previous news was actually released by Nicholas's team deliberately. They rode on Michael and Harry's fame, but they attacked them at the same time!

It was truly disgusting!

"Dad, just let Mikey take over this endorsement, ok? Dad—"

Sophia almost got down on her knees and begged Cooper. She behaved like a spoiled child and shook his arm.

Cooper, however, was unmoved. "No, he isn't suitable for the role! I won't agree to it!" he said.

Even though Michael was sitting right there at the side, Cooper was still direct with his words.

Michael had been staying over at Cooper's home for New Year celebrations. Right now, he was scratching his nose and didn't dare to say anything. Before, when he needed to go abroad for filming, he was afraid that Sophia would really forget about him, so he accepted a lot of moronic endorsements. Although playing the fool succeeded in making Sophia remember him, this had also caused Cooper to have quite the impression of him, and not the good kind.

Does he dislike me so much?

Even if he did endorse a stainless steel wash basin before, it was still a stainless steel wash basin produced by a world-renowned bathroom brand.

A normal celebrity wouldn't have been able to get such an endorsement!

Even the Queen of England used stuff from this brand. It was a very big brand!

It wasn't demeaning at all!

Of course, he just complained inwardly. He then looked at Carmen, and his eyes motioned to Carmen for help. After all, two was better than one.

With a pitter-patter of footsteps, Carmen ran toward Cooper and started acting cute. “Grandpa, please let Daddy have this endorsement. Daddy will be able to earn lots of money and buy tons of candy for me.”

Cooper knew that Michael would send Carmen over, but this time round, Carmen had no effect on him.

“Come here, Carmen. Let Grandpa tell you a piece of good news!”

Cooper hugged Carmen and said happily, “Grandpa specially had a children’s watch made for you. You can use it to make calls. It will be available for sale this winter and when the time comes, Grandpa will let you be a junior spokesperson!”

Carmen was overjoyed and she said happily, “Then can I bring Ashton with me?”

Cooper nodded, and Carmen ran away happily. She wanted to share the news with her friends and had thrown Michael to the back of her head!

Michael was speechless.

All that effort raising her was a waste.

Sophia spent a long time trying to persuade Cooper, but Cooper refused to budge, making her frustrated.

She also didn’t feel like going to Alice. Although the situation from before had been cleared up and it was revealed that Cooper had been behind it, talking with Alice had become awkward for Sophia, and she was too embarrassed to ask Alice directly.

This was the first time she was using her identity as Lucile Michel to ask for something, but unexpectedly, it didn’t go well.

She could only blame herself for not having any influence!

Seeing Nicholai Gates in the news riding on Michael’s fame while slandering him, Sophia was furious!

*Fu*k this sh*t!*

I will get this endorsement no matter what!

Michael just loved to watch his dear wife getting all furious for himself. She was so cute that he just wanted to lay on top of her in bed and get all sweaty and passionate with her.

After she got it out of her system, Michael comforted her. “Forget about it, let me deal with this. You don’t need to worry.”

Michael had seen plenty of fierce competition in the business. Things like using others as stepping stones were very common, and the entertainment industry was full of fence-sitters. You could get rid of one, but there would always be more.

He made movies because he liked it, and because he wanted to inherit his mother's mantle and become a successful movie star. He always let the box office performance of his movies speak for themselves, and he never participated in scheming behind the scenes.

He made movies for entertainment and accepted endorsements for fun. Other people, on the other hand, did it to make a living. It was natural that others would hate him for stealing their jobs.

If one wanted to make it big in the business, it was impossible to not get mixed up in some sort of struggle. The only way to not get involved in stuff like this was to get rid of all the competition.

Sophia also knew that it was impossible for a celebrity to not step on the toes of their peers in the business when trying to make it big. Some people didn't dare to do anything publicly, so they put on an anonymous mask on the Internet and made up all sorts of scandals. It was a waste of time to deal with these people. If they dealt with Nicholai, another person would pop out and pick a fight with Michael.

However, this time, she needed to get this endorsement for Michael!

Did they think they could mess with Michael with her around?

It was unforgivable!

After resolving herself, Sophia started to plan.

On that night, everyone was watching television during family time. Sophia and Michael were sitting in a pile of wrapping paper and small gifts. They were working hard to wrap the small gifts and put bows on them. Carmen and Casper also worked hard and helped them put bows on the presents.

Cooper was at the side, watching them work for a long time. He saw that they had prepared a lot of small gifts that children liked, such as dolls, Transformers figures, Lego bricks, and game console books. After they were wrapped, Sophia even wrote New Year's greetings on the presents.

"Baby, what are you doing?" Cooper finally couldn't help but ask.

As she carefully wrapped the presents, Sophia replied, "I'm going to Nicole's orphanage tomorrow to give warmth to the children. Dad, do you want to come with me?"

Cooper had no interest in doing something like spreading cheer, but he had been having trouble putting aside his pride and approaching Sophia after having a little fight with her because of the

matter of Michael's endorsement. Giving warmth to the children seemed like a good remedy, so Cooper quickly agreed.

Because they wanted to give warmth to the children, Sophia and Michael personally prepared the gifts. All of the gifts were bought according to the children's wish list, were wrapped by them, and they even wrote the blessings. It was full of sincerity.

The next day, the gifts were packed till the car was full, and off they went to Nicole's orphanage outside the city.

They traveled low-key and there were no reporters to accompany them, so they invited Maddie over to write an interview about the charity drive. Joel came over as well.

Naturally, Harry and Sarah came too. Sean and Stanley were also summoned to help. After everyone had gathered, they set off together. Sophia, full of confidence, treated today as a team building exercise as she wanted everyone to spend some quality time with each other.

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Every year, the kids from the orphanage would write a wish list for the New Year, and Sophia and Michael would prepare gifts for them. Later, when Sophia left, Michael still continued on with this tradition every year. Harry and Sarah would also help out a bit. Last year, even Joel had joined in.

The orphanage was located in the suburbs. It was not a particularly prosperous place, so they had a large area to themselves. It used to be a dilapidated place. After making money in these years, Nicole Walker, with the support of everyone, moved the orphanage to new buildings that had better facilities. There used to be only a few volunteers, but now that there was money to pay wages, there were more full-time staff.

Nicole relied on her influence and connections to find better homes for the orphans. Some people, attracted by the orphanage's reputation, came to adopt children, while others would leave their children at its doorstep.

Sophia set off very early today. When she arrived at the entrance of the orphanage, there was no one nearby, but just as the car was being parked, she saw someone abandoning their child in the trash can at the entrance of the orphanage and running away.

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It was the New Year, but her heart turned cold at this.

When everyone got out of the car, Michael hurried forward and picked up the child. The child was crying very loudly, but there was nothing wrong with it. The child was a girl. She was wearing a pair of thin socks, and her feet were red from the cold.

Cooper was furious too. To think someone would throw away such an adorable child! They were less than beasts!

Curses rang from the group at the doorway of the orphanage. They each picked up the child and had a good look, and unknowingly came to a common ground.

They carried the child into the orphanage, and she was taken away by a staff member there. Everyone was very upset to have something like this happen just when they arrived at the orphanage, but seeing the lively and lovely appearance of the children, everyone still felt a little comforted.

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Nicole was usually busy with work and didn't visit the orphanage often, but she had a few days off work during the New Year and had been staying at the orphanage. Since there were some distinguished guests coming today, Nicole had been waiting for their arrival.

Because it was a charity work, everyone wanted to take part in the work themselves. Michael wanted to play movies for the children and had brought all the needed equipment over. Several able-bodied men installed the equipment in a classroom. Sophia urged Cooper to go with him and work together, hoping that maybe it could improve their relationship. She thought of it as team building today.

The women, on the other hand, went to experience making breakfast and pastries for the children.

But unexpectedly, Sophia actually saw an unexpected person in the orphanage.

"Master Sam, what are you doing here?"

Not long ago, Sam Edwards wanted to hook up with Sophia, but Cooper found out and chased him away. He had also snatched their dog away. Sam hadn't appeared in front of Sophia since then, and she didn't expect him to be in the orphanage today.

Sam was being pestered by a few kids. They were calling him "Papa Sam".

“I’m here to help,” Sam chuckled.

Sam busied himself in the kitchen, then went to the classroom to help install the film equipment.

Everyone in the kitchen continued to bake bread and make a nutritious breakfast. Nicole put on a facemask and had her head bowed down, preparing breakfast seriously, but Sophia could tell that she had something on her mind. Ever since Sam came, she had been keeping silent.

Sophia couldn’t help but ask, “Nicole, what’s the matter? Is it because of that abandoned baby girl just now?”

Any humane person would be furious if they saw someone abandoning a child at the doorstep in the early morning.

But Nicole shook her head. Even though she was not wearing any makeup, she still looked very young and beautiful. “I’m used to such things,” Nicole said. “The orphanage picks up children every month, and the relevant departments will also send children to us that no one wants. I will work hard to find suitable families for them...”

She paused for a moment, then continued, “Sam and I got married a year ago.”

As soon as the words came out of her lips, the kitchen instantly grew silent. Everyone gaped.

Nicole and Sam... They weren’t close to each other at all! How did they get married to one another? And there had been no news of this whatsoever!

Sophia was also shocked. From Nicole’s words, she could hear her desolation and helplessness.

Although she didn’t know how Nicole and Sam got together and got married, she knew that the one Nicole liked was Cooper.

She had liked him for more than a decade already. After the encounter abroad that year, Cooper held a place deep in her heart. Although she had never forgotten him even after so many years, she was now getting married.

Nicole was about thirty-five years old this year. For a successful movie star, this was still her golden age. She was also at the pinnacle of her career, so it was a bit weird that she would suddenly get married.

Was she after Sam’s power and influence?

But Nicole was not that sort of person at all. As an Oscar winner, although she had a dark history, she was born in an orphanage and had reached where she was today through hard work. From a local drama heroine to an Oscar winner, everyone had seen the efforts she put in. She had always been low-key and had little to no scandals to her name. There were few people who would besmirch her, and she was very popular abroad and had outstanding box office

performances for her movies. Many foreign blockbuster movies wanted her to play the female lead, while many domestic famous A-list celebrities could not even take a slice of it.

Besides that, Nicole also had many successful people who were not weaker than Sam who wanted to pursue her, so how did she end up getting married to Sam?

It wasn't to say that Sam wasn't worthy of her. Their household and status were a match for each other, so there wasn't a problem if they got together, but it was so sudden that Sophia was caught off guard.

She really wanted to ask Nicole if she was really over Cooper.

But in the end, she didn't ask. The two continued to quietly bake bread.

Sophia had also once thought of working hard to bring Nicole and Cooper together. Cooper was only forty-five years old this year. For a successful man, this was also his golden age. Her mother, Annabel Johnson, only lived in his memories up till they were eighteen, which meant he had been alone for more than 20 years. He was still young and had about forty-five years to live. He shouldn't just live alone like this.

But Sophia also understood in her heart that Cooper's love really only lived when he was eighteen. That year, his heart died. With her mother's departure, he had lost his ability to love.

It was pointless to try to get them together, and it would only delay Nicole.

It was also a good thing that Nicole had now found a harbor for herself.

Once she accepted the fact they were married, Sophia found that the two of them were really a good match. Their ages were not much different, and marrying an Oscar winner was also very helpful to Sam's career. It would help spread his career all over the world and not be confined only to Cethos. Nicole's fame was greater abroad than at home, and she was a leading figure among Chinese actresses in the world. The two were a powerful combination, and they would be impeccable together.

Nicole had a lot of dark history, but she was helpless at the time and had no other choice.

Not everyone could be with who they wanted, and regrets would always exist.

"Congratulations on your wedding!" Sophia managed to say.

Nicole was wearing a mask and had her head bowed as she baked bread. She didn't have the time to spare, but she still took the time to answer, "Thank you, but unfortunately, we hid our marriage, and we only got the certificate. The Edwards Family hasn't been notified yet. We haven't planned for the wedding and the banquet either, but I will definitely invite you to dinner another day."

After she baked the bread, she went to the kitchen next door to check on the nutritional porridge.

After looking around and making sure that there was no one else, Nicole raised her head. Two streams of tears that could no longer be held back flowed from the corner of her eyes.

How could she have stopped loving someone whom she had loved for more than ten years in just a few days?

However, she understood. Even if she continued to love, it wouldn't bear any fruit.

This would be the last time she shed tears for Cooper.

She didn't make a sound as she cried, letting the tears fall down her cheeks. The veins on her forehead bulged, and the pain in her heart seemed to have flowed away with her tears.

Ever since seeing him at that airport more than ten years ago, this peculiar man had become her belief—her belief for living.