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"Mr. Hayes!"

Sebastian uttered a response as he got out of the car, his face impenetrable. He had worn a dark grey suit, which complemented his near-perfect physique and accentuated his distinguished air.

Sasha was feeling dazed as she subconsciously held her breath.

"Sebastian..."

Without sparing a glance at her, the man ordered coldly, "Take the kids away."

His words knocked Sasha sideways.

No way! They can't take my kids away from me!

She hugged the kids tightly in her arms. Her ashen face, the fear in her eyes, and the bloodstain on her forehead made a dreadful sight.

"No! Please, don't! Sebastian, can't we talk about this?"

The kids began crying out loud, "No! I don't want to leave Mommy! I want Mommy!"

Seeing that the bodyguards hesitated to do as he said, the cold-hearted Sebastian went over to snatch the kids from Sasha.

Sasha had lost her cool. Disregarding her injury, she lurched forward to grab the man's arm and pleaded, "No! Sebastian, please don't take them away from me! I admit I was wrong, and I shouldn't have said something like that. I'll take it back! Please..."

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Yet, Sebastian was unmoved. Ignoring Sasha's pleading, he stuffed the kids into the car. Soon, the bodyguards got into the car and drove off.

Sasha could do nothing but watch as the car sped off into a distance.

At that instant, the feeling of despair descended on her. She experienced a temporary blackout of vision and was about to collapse onto the ground.

Suddenly, Sebastian pulled her into his arms and encircled her. With his bloodshot eyes boring into hers, the man uttered harshly, "Oh, drop the act, will you? Don't you remember how nonchalant you were when you said you didn't want the kids? You've lived a carefree life without caring about them. So, there's no need to act pitiful now."

Sasha's mind was buzzing. Those words had pierced through her heart, tearing it into smithereens.

"No... I... I didn't act pitiful. If I could travel back in time, I would never say something like that."

Hearing her words, Sebastian hit the roof, and he retorted sarcastically, "Do you think you deserve forgiveness just because you regret your actions? Does that mean you can forgive what my dad had done to you if he regrets it? And that you'll treat Xenia's death like it has never happened before?

"Look, you can't even do it yourself! Then, how can you ask for someone else's forgiveness? Don't you think it's funny?"

The man thought the problems between them were irreconcilable. Slowly, he loosened his grip around her.

There was not a trace of emotions in his eyes as the feeling of hopelessness, anger, and disappointment dissipated.

As for Sasha, the man's cutting words hit her hard.

She wanted to tell him that what she did was totally different from what Frederick had done to her, yet she eventually swallowed her words.

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After all, the man was telling the truth. It was too late for regrets.

Be it the hurtful words that she said, or the things the Hayes family did, what was done could not be undone.

When she herself couldn't forgive them, how could she, a woman who abandoned her kids, ask for Sebastian's forgiveness?

Sasha's heart wrenched in pain while her ears buzzed. She could taste a metallic taste in her mouth.

Without bothering to talk to her anymore, Sebastian turned away and got into his car.

Just as he started the engine, he saw the petite figure staggering to her feet from the corner of his eyes. The woman had supported herself against the flowerbed by the roadside, staring blankly at her palm.

The next second, she fainted.

When she collapsed onto the ground, he could clearly see blood on her palm from the rearview mirror.

Sasha was dreaming again.

In her dream, she was a little girl. Her parents had brought her to Avenport. Yet, she didn't get to see the little boy who was five years older than her again.

"Sasha, want to go to your Uncle Jackson's house? There's a girl about your age. She's your cousin."

"Sure!"

Then, her parents brought her to Jackson's house.

She was happy in the dream. It felt like she was brought back to her childhood, once again experiencing those lovely memories. All those problems and worries were gone, and all that was left were the Wand and Hayes family.

How nice this is...

Meanwhile, Wendy was cleaning up the room when she saw Sasha shedding tears in her sleep. She couldn't help but sigh.

When she left the room, she saw that Sebastian's study was still brightly lit. Being a soft-hearted person, she entered the study to tell Sebastian about it. "Oh, Mr. Hayes, why would you take Madam's words to heart? I can tell that Madam is not a cold-hearted person. She only said those words out of anger."

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There was a pile of documents before Sebastian, but the man was smoking instead of working. The cigarette crackled amidst the silence, and the ashtray was loaded with cigarette butts.

"Out of anger?" He curled his lips into a sneer. "That woman doesn't even want her kids."

"How is that possible?" Wendy's eyes widened in disbelief.

"Madam loves the kids so much! Why would she abandon them? There's just too much going on in her life. She's shouldering too many burdens, so she probably wasn't in the right state of mind." Wendy had been taking care of Sebastian since he was a kid, so she wouldn't want to see him make any wrong decisions. Hence, she advised him earnestly, "Mr. Hayes, you need to give her some time. If you force her, it will only make the matter worse. If anything happens to her, what are you going to do with the kids? She's their mother, after all."

In fact, Wendy could see through the matter better than Sebastian. She could tell Sasha's suffering and all her struggles. The latter's current mental state was no better than a person walking at the edge of a cliff, to say at least.

No one could tell if anything might happen to her if Sebastian continued to force her.

After Wendy left, the light in the study remained lit for a long time.

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The next morning, Roxanne dropped by.

"Ms. Rocke, you're here so early today!"

"Well, I have something I need to attend to later, so I've decided to come earlier to check on that woman. How is she now? Was she doing okay last night?"

Roxanne made herself at home. As soon as she entered the house, she grabbed an apple from the table before heading upstairs.

Wendy quickly followed suit.

"Everything was fine, and she was quiet last night. Does this mean she's alright now?"

"She only vomited a little blood after getting hit by the car. She'll be fine as long as she doesn't suffer any head injuries," Roxanne explained calmly while walking toward the guest room located on the second floor.

As soon as they opened the door, both of them jumped at the sight of Sasha standing by the window.

"Ms. Wand, you're awake? Why are you standing by the window? The wind is blowing hard outside. You should put on a jacket."

Wendy was badly frightened. It was eerie to see Sasha dressed only in her thin pajamas while standing still with her hair cascading down her back.

Roxanne, too, was so shocked that she had forgotten to swallow the apple in her mouth.

Don't tell me this woman has suffered a brain injury and lost her mind!

Fortunately, when Wendy came back with a jacket, Sasha, who had been staring outside the window for a long time, finally returned to her senses.

"I'm fine. I was only looking at the sky to tell the time," she replied nonchalantly.

Then, she went back to sit on the bed with Wendy's help.

Gazing at her pale face, Roxanne swallowed the food in her mouth and then entered the room. "You scared the hell out of me! I thought you lost your mind. How do you feel?"

Standing by the bed, she reached out her hand to examine Sasha.

Yet, the latter, whose energy was being sapped by her injury, discreetly shunned away from her touch.

"I'm fine. There's no need to trouble you, Ms. Rocke."

Instantly, Roxanne's face fell. She turned and left the room, munching on the apple on her way out.

Seeing that, Wendy panicked. "Ms. Wand, why didn't you let Ms. Rocke examine you? She was the one who treated your injuries yesterday."

Sasha cast her eyes downward and reassured Wendy, "I'm fine. Besides, I'm a doctor as well. I know my condition well, so there's no need to worry about me."

"Oh, right! I forgot about that!"

Wendy eventually cast her worries away.

The two then chatted for a while in the room, and Wendy told Sasha about the things that happened after the latter fainted.

Wendy left the room after a while. It was not long before she came back with the three kids.

"Mommy, are you all right? You scared me yesterday. Let me have a look at your injury."

"Vivi, Mommy hasn't recovered yet. Don't climb onto the bed, or you might hurt her."

"Be a good girl. Come down now."

Sasha had almost thought it was a dream to see the kids in the room, showing their care for her. "Why..."

Wendy explained apologetically, "Ms. Wand, I need to go to the supermarket to do groceries. Can you help look after the kids? Since I'm the only housemaid, I usually send the kids to Ms. Rocke's when I need to go shop for groceries."

Instantly, Sasha's eyes widened in surprise while her body trembled in excitement. Her desolated heart had once again come alive. Without a second thought, she nodded in agreement.

"You can definitely leave them in my care. There's no need to send them to Ms. Rocke's. I'll take good care of them."

"Alright then."

With that, Wendy smilingly left.

How could a nice lady like Sasha have bad intentions? She's just a mother who wishes to be with her children and a poor woman who needs to shoulder all those burdens in life.

That day, Sasha finally got the opportunity to spend time with the kids.

Though, she was worried that Sebastian might appear and kick her out. Hence, she pretended that her leg hadn't recovered and would occasionally fake headaches and dizziness.

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The clever Vivian had found out about it. When there was no one around, she sneakily asked Sasha, "Mommy, did you really have a headache?"

Sasha was a little awkward when she heard that question being posed.

Nevertheless, she admitted, "No, but I'm acting like I do to stay with you guys."

Hearing that, Vivian's eyes brightened up.

"I'll go tell Ian and Matt about this. We will inform you when Daddy comes back."

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With that, she scampered out of the room to find her brothers.

For the entire day, Wendy noticed that the kids were acting weird.

When they were playing, Ian would go and take a peek at the door. As for Matteo, the boy would suddenly grab his tablet and secretively tap on it, acting as though he was on some sort of secret mission.

Vivian, on the other hand, was acting even funnier. The little girl had started tiptoeing in the house. There was even a time when she shushed Wendy when the latter called out to her.

"Ms. Dolivo, don't talk, or Daddy might come back if he hears us."

Wendy was left scratching her head. What does she mean? Doesn't she want her Daddy to come back?

Nonetheless, she didn't think much about it and soon went back to her chores.

In the afternoon, Sebastian came back as expected.

Since he had moved in because of Matteo's illness, he would come home in the afternoon to check on the boy and spend time with the kids.

At that time, he was the only one who could keep them company.

As soon as he arrived home, he noticed the kids were all in the living room. He was surprised, for it was rare to see them gathering around.

"What's going on? Why are you guys all here?"

Vivian trotted toward him. "We're waiting to have lunch with you. Daddy, have you eaten?" she asked while looking up at him.

Instantly, Sebastian's heart melted at his daughter's adorableness.

He picked her up and pecked her on the cheek. "Not yet. I'm actually back to have lunch with you."

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"Daddy, I'll help serve the spaghetti for you." Matteo then ran into the kitchen.

As for the cool and collected lan, he said nothing as he went into the kitchen to get the cutleries.

Later, Sebastian noticed that the boy was back with only a fork in his hand. What are they up to?

Meanwhile, Sasha felt on edge as she lay on the bed upstairs.

She was afraid that the kids might fail to handle Sebastian. If he came in and found out she was pretending to be sick, she would be in big trouble.

Hence, Sasha was feeling extremely nervous, hiding under the blanket.

"Mr. Hayes, have you finished eating?"

"Yes."

Sasha heaved a sigh of relief when she heard his deep voice from downstairs. Since he's done with his lunch, he should be going by now.

Feeling relaxed, she lifted the blanket and got out of the bed to see if Sebastian was gone.

To her shock, she saw the man standing outside the room as soon as she opened the door. It was as if the man had suddenly appeared out of nowhere, for she didn't even hear his footsteps.

It was beyond her expectation that he would show up so soon.

"Haven't you left already?"

"Why? Were you waiting for me to leave?"

"No! I didn't..." Sasha was quick to deny, yet that only further showed how nervous she was.

Sebastian didn't believe her words at all. He let out a sneer and made his way into the room.

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"I heard you didn't let Roxanne examine you? So, you've recovered?"

"No!" In the blink of an eye, Sasha climbed onto the bed and laid down.

Then, she stuttered, "I... I haven't recovered yet. I'm suffering from some chest pains. And also, my leg still hurts, and I can't really walk."

As she spoke, she even clenched the blanket and plastered a painful look on her face to make her words more convincing.

Sebastian's eyes twitched, for he found it hard to put up with her bad acting.

Eventually, he decided to ignore it. "Since you haven't recovered, why didn't you let Roxanne examine you? Or, do you want me to take you to the hospital?"

"No! I'm not going to the hospital. I... I'll get Wendy to call Ms. Rocke later," Sasha quickly promised.

Fortunately, Sebastian finally let go of the matter.

The man glanced coldly at her before he left the room.

Sasha heaved a sigh of relief.

Now that was terrifying! I almost got kicked out by Sebastian.

Unbeknownst to her, the man had halted his steps at the staircase and was staring at her room door. It seemed like the coldness in his eyes had faded a little, replaced by a tinge of warmth.

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Sasha was finally able to stay thanks to her quick thinking.

The kids were incredibly happy and ran up to her right after Sebastian left.

"Mommy, Mommy! I was the one who stopped Daddy earlier! Did Vivi do a good job?" Vivian asked while throwing herself into Sasha's arms.

Sasha gave her a big hug and a few kisses on the cheek.

"Yes, sweetie! You're the best!"

"What about me, Mommy? I was the one who discovered Daddy's car and informed them to come over!"

"Me too!"

The other two tried to gain Sasha's compliment as well when they heard her praising Vivian.

Naturally, Sasha did just that, and the four of them were having a great time in the room until Matteo went pale all of a sudden.

"Ugh..."

Sasha was quick to notice that groan. She hugged him as she asked worriedly, "What's wrong, Matteo? Are you not feeling well?"

"Matt's having a stomachache, Mommy! He's been having them every now and then," Vivian explained while rubbing his tummy.

Stomachaches every now and then? What's going on? Does gastroenteritis last that long in children?

Remembering her original goal, Sasha carried Matteo in her arms and ran off frantically looking for Wendy.

"Wendy, what's going on with Matt? Why isn't he getting better? What exactly is his condition? Does the hospital have some sort of medical record I can refer to?"

"Huh? Oh, Mr. Matteo didn't go to a hospital for his condition. Ms. Rocke is the one in charge of his treatment. Mr. Hayes handed him over to her when the hospitals couldn't treat him."

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Wendy, who was busy in the kitchen at the time, told Sasha everything.

Roxanne was the one treating him?

Sasha had a bad feeling in her gut upon hearing that. "Even the hospitals couldn't treat him? Is it that serious?"

Wendy frowned. "I'm not too sure about that, but Ms. Rocke says it's a fungal infection and has been working on finding the right medicine for it."

Sasha felt a shiver down her spine.

Roxanne's a genius when it comes to psychology and is obsessed with medicine! If she's still unable to find the cure, then... What on earth is this illness Matteo has?

Unable to contain her worries, Sasha handed Matteo over to Wendy and headed over to Roxanne's research laboratory by herself.

"Sasha? What are you doing here? Thought you didn't even want to let me see him this morning?"

Roxanne was the type to hold grudges and denied Sasha entry when she saw her at the door.

"I'm terribly sorry for my rude behavior earlier, Ms. Rocke. I came here to ask you about my son's illness."

"Illness?"

Roxanne's attitude worsened when she heard her mention that.

"You switched professions halfway through and didn't even go to a medical university! How could you possibly understand a thing I'm researching?"

For the sake of her son, Sasha humbled herself and swallowed her pride. "It's true that I'm not as good as you are in certain aspects of medicine, but please show it to me anyway."

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Fortunately, Roxanne was satisfied and let her in upon hearing that.

"Don't worry; I'll make sure to get your son treated. In fact, I've already found a lead."

Sasha looked at her and asked, "You mean that fungal infection? But those are pretty common, no? Can't we just treat it with antibiotics?"

At that, Roxanne sneered and said, "That depends on the type of fungus. Do you have any idea what your son is infected with?"

Sasha felt her heart sink once she heard that remark.

What does she mean by that? What is Matteo infected with?

As she followed Roxanne into the laboratory, Sasha noticed a microscope on the table with a blood sample on it.

"I'm going to take a look at this."

Realizing that the blood sample belonged to her son, Sasha went over to take a look at it before Roxanne could even say anything in response.

Although Sasha wasn't well-versed in western medicine, she had been a doctor long enough to view blood samples.

Usually, the number of white blood cells would increase in the event of inflammations. However, the blood sample she saw had an abnormally low amount of white blood cells in it.

"What's going on here? Has his blood always been like this?"

"Yeah. It's gotten a lot better lately, though. There were barely any white blood cells when it all started!" Roxanne said with a cold snort.

Sasha turned pale instantly.

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Barely any at all? That's impossible! She's probably exaggerating, but even so, it must've been really bad back then!

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I can't believe Matteo's condition's that bad... An extremely low white blood cell count signifies a severe infection, so this isn't just a normal inflammatory response... In fact, it could lead to a blood disorder like septicemia or leukemia if his immune system can't stop the infection!

Sasha shuddered at the thought of that and asked in a trembling voice moments later, "How did this happen? What exactly happened to him?"

"How would I know? He was already like this when they brought him over from his grandpa's!"

"His grandpa's?"

Sasha froze.

Why would he be at the Hayes residence? What was Sebastian doing? Did he not watch over him?

For some reason, Sasha had a really bad feeling when she found out that Matteo had gotten sick while staying at the Hayes residence. Matteo had gotten sick during his last visit there, so she didn't like the place one bit and didn't want her kids anywhere near it.

With a grim look on her face, Sasha left Roxanne's laboratory and went home.

Her kids had been waiting for her and ran up to her the moment she came through the door.

"How did things go at Ms. Rocke's, Mommy? Did she manage to find a cure for Matt?" Vivian asked worriedly.

Sasha forcefully suppressed her feelings of despair and sat down with Matteo on the bench in the yard.

"Tell me, Matt. Did you eat anything nasty at your grandpa's place before you got sick?"

"No, we only ate the food Grandpa prepared for us himself."

"Why did you get sick all of a sudden, then? There's something wrong with your gastrointestinal tract, so it must've been something you ate. Try your best to recall what you've eaten during your time there."

Sasha tried to help him remember what happened back then, but Matteo kept quiet.

lan, who had been quiet the whole time, stood up all of a sudden.

"He ate it for me, Mommy."

"What?" The look on Sasha's face changed instantly. "What did he eat? What on earth were you two doing?"

She was so agitated that she grabbed Ian by the hand and squeezed it till it turned red.

Matteo noticed Ian's painful expression and quickly stopped Sasha as he said, "It's not Ian's fault, Mommy! I volunteered to do it because I wanted to know if what Ian said was true!"

"What do you mean? What's true?" Sasha was still confused.

The two then told her everything about what really happened.

According to them, Matteo had suddenly fallen ill after going to the Hayes residence. As a result, Ian got into a huge fight with Frederick and refused to let Matteo visit the Hayes residence ever again.

Matteo asked Ian about it when he found out later on, and the latter told him he had gotten sick whenever he visited Roderick.

"lan said I would get sick whenever I visited Great-uncle. He suspects I got sick after eating what Great-uncle gave me."

Sasha's eyes were filled with shock when she heard that. "R-Really?"

Matteo nodded. "I didn't believe him at first, so I tried eating the stuff they gave me when we visited Grandpa to prove it. I ended up getting sick afterward, so I'm not sure if this is just a coincidence or they're trying to make me sick on purpose."

Sasha felt as if the air in the yard had stopped; it felt like everything around them was frozen in place.

Her mind was in turmoil, and her entire body emanated an icy-cold aura as a mixture of anger, shock, and fear enveloped her. Her hands were trembling so hard that she couldn't even hold on to lan's arms.

There's no way this is a coincidence! Matteo was never sick, and yet he falls ill on both occasions that he visited the Hayes residence? If that's true, then... That means they're responsible for Matteo's poor health condition all this while!

Sasha couldn't bring herself to think about it any further.

All she wanted was to head over to the Hayes residence and find out for herself if someone was indeed trying to harm Matteo.

"Come on, you two. We're heading over to the Hayes residence."

"Huh?" both of them exclaimed in surprise.

Oh, no... Are we in trouble now?

Having made up her mind, Sasha handed Vivian over to Wendy and left the house with her sons in tow.

Sebastian, on the other hand, hadn't concerned himself with the situation at home.

The trip home earlier had eased his worries, and he had a lot more urgent matters at work to take care of, especially the anonymous report on him that the board of directors had suddenly received.

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