

Chapter 981

Zeta took out a pistol "Protect Madam Knowles!"

Several bodyguards were shot and dropped to the ground as men in black with dark complexions emerged from the shadows. They were shooting everyone on sight with the submachine guns in their hands.

Zeta pushed Madam Knowles onto the cruise ship, grabbed her gun, squatted on the steps, and shot at the approaching men.

Several bodyguards covered Madam Knowles as she boarded the ship and yelled at the crew, "Get the ship moving, hurry up!" The crew was about to get back into the cabin but got shot instantly, and blood stained the glass on the deck as the crew's bodies fell straight into the sea.

Madam Knowles saw someone aiming at her in the dark and pulled the bodyguard behind her to block the shot. The bullet shot through

the bodyguard's head, and blood splattered all over her and stained her body.

Madam Knowles crawled into the cabin and locked the door, but she was surrounded by the ocean and the ocean only, so she could not escape at all. Zeta was injured and ran onto the ship while applying pressure to her wounds. While she was doing so, a crew member was pushed over and off the second floor of the deck and dropped right in front of her. She looked slightly pale, raised her head, and saw Tristan standing on the second floor of the deck, smoking a cigarette. He then pulled out a pistol and pointed it at her head.

"Tris-" Zeta stared at him shudderingly, while Tristan's expression looked calm as he pulled the trigger.

The bullet pierced her chest and went straight through the heart, and Zeta fell back slowly as her pupils dilated gradually. Hearing that the gunfire outside had subsided, Madam Knowles, who was squatting and leaning against the door, stood up slowly.

'Who were those people? Has Thomas sent his men to make a move against me? 'But that's impossible. They don't look like Thomas' men.'

She wanted to see what was going on outside, so she slowly undid the door bolt.

However, she wanted to lock the door bolt again when she heard footsteps coming from the other side of the door, but the door was kicked open from the outside.

Madam Knowles staggered backward, and the man who entered the room was none other than Tristan.

Madam Knowles was stunned, but thinking of something, she calmed her tone. "Tristan ... Tris, you're here to save me, aren't you? I know it's my fault. I shouldn't have treated you like how I did, and I shouldn't have projected my hatred toward your father onto you."

Tristan stood in the room, looked around, and could not help but laugh after listening to Madam Knowles' statement. "What makes you think that I'm here to save you?"

“Y-You’re my son.” Madam Knowles’s expression changed slightly, and she gradually became more and more emotional. “I’m your mother, and I’m the dearest person that you have in the world now! Are you telling me that you’re going to leave me to die here, or are you planning to kill me?”

“I won’t kill you.” Tristan took out a handkerchief and wiped the bloodstains on the back of his hand expressionlessly. “I did tell you that you’re growing old by the day, and it’s time for you to start thinking about the later stages of your life.”

Madam Knowles stumbled backward. “You, what do you plan to do? Tris, you can’t treat your mother like this!”

Two men in black appeared at the door. Tristan waved, and they stepped forward and covered her head with a black hood before taking her away.

When Madam Knowles woke up again, she found herself being locked in a room that looked like a prison cell, and a lot of noise surrounded her.

The door of the room was pulled open, but there was an iron gate on the outer side of the door, and Madam Knowles saw Tristan through the window of the iron gate.

She realized something and rolled out of the bed as her body trembled to the point that her legs and feet felt slightly stiff and clumsy. “Tris, Tris, are you going to lock me up? How are you going to explain this to the public when they find out that I’ve disappeared? And are you planning to imprison your mother in this strange place?”

Tristan smiled. “Don’t worry. I’ll tell the media that you were attacked and were traumatized mentally, so you have to stay here for treatment.”

“Tris...” The blood was drained from

Madam Knowles’s cheeks. “No! Don’t leave

me in an asylum! I beg you!”

A hint of emotion flashed across Tristan’s eyes, but it disappeared as soon as he recalled the past. “You can enjoy the rest of your life here.”

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Tristan turned around and left. Even though Madam Knowles yelled and cursed hysterically from inside the room, he did not even stop for a second. At the same time, all of Yaramoor’s media reported that Madam Knowles had been assaulted and was caught in the middle of the crossfire. Since then, she had been diagnosed with PTSD and had been sent to a sanatorium for treatment. As for the facility’s exact location, not even one reporter was curious enough to get to the bottom of that piece of information.

At Bassburgh, at the private primary school

The winter break would start in three days. All the students in the school were looking forward to these. Four or five students were even discussing what they should do during the break.

Lisa looked back and saw Daisy lying sullenly on the desk, so she walked over and asked, "Daisy, are you not feeling well?" Daisy looked up at her, then lay back down. "I'm fine. I just don't feel like moving."

Lisa chuckled.

Colton appeared at the classroom door with a basketball. "Daisy." Daisy sounded dispirited. "What do you want?"

"Let's go. I'll bring you out there to play basketball. Didn't you say you wanted to challenge me in a one-on-one match? So do you want to learn how to play or not?" He spun the basketball on his fingertips, lifted his eyebrows, and looked handsome and a little disdainful.

Their classmates envied the stunt that he had just pulled off, and several girls were even dumbfounded by his charm.

Colton was the vice class president, had good grades, and was also good in sports. Not to mention that he had finally regained his position as the top student in the class ever since Noilace left.

Daisy seemed indifferent.

Lisa was about to try to persuade Daisy, but Colton knew his sister better than Lisa did, so he grabbed the basketball and provoked her, "Daisy, are you telling me that you don't dare to learn it now because you're afraid of losing to me? Wayion is about to come back home already, and TH definitely call you a coward when he's

back."

Daisy propped her palms against the desk and stood up. "I'm not a coward! I'll go and play with you now!"

Colton grinned as he had successfully diverted Daisy's attention.

Time flew by, the winter break had already started in a blink of an eye, and Wayion had finally returned to Zlokova.

Maisie and Nolan brought the two kids to the airport to welcome them, and they saw Hans escorting Wayion out of the arrival terminal not long after they arrived at the airport.

Quincy had not seen Hans for more than three years. Thus, the brothers hugged each other when they met.

"Wayion!

"Waylon!"

Daisy and Colton ran toward Wayion. They then stood in front of Wayion and stared at him for a long time. Daisy tilted her head. "Wayion, why have you gotten so tanned?"

'He looked so fair when he left three years ago, but he has such a healthy complexion.'

Colton was very envious of his brother." Wayion, your complexion makes you look so cool, and you seem to have grown taller!" Colton was eight years old, and he was already standing at 5 feet in height, which made him a tall boy in the class, but he was still half a head shorter than Wayion!

One wanted to know more about his skin complexion, while the other wanted to talk about his height- all that rendered Wayion slightly speechless for a short while.

Hans walked toward the three of them and explained with a wide smile, "Master Wayion has spent most of his time being trained abroad , so getting tanned and growing taller and bigger is normal. Let's not forget that these traits make him look like a macho teenager. Your father looked even more tanned than Wayion when he underwent the training back then."

The two kids snorted and laughed.

Nolan narrowed his eyes. "Hans."

"Huh?" Hans returned to his senses, scratched his head, and smiled. "Hah, you heard it all, Mr. Goldmann."

Maisie walked up to Wayion. She did not even have to bend over in order to rub his head. "Are you tired?"

Wayion shook his head. "Nope."

Nolan came over and placed his hand on his shoulder. "Hmm, this kid has become more handsome and more like me now that he's tanned."

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Colton's self-esteem was a little hurt. "Does that mean that I'm not handsome?"

Hans laughed out loud and patted Colton's head. "You look handsome too. It's just your elder brother has the slightest edge over you, hahaha.

The family left the airport happily. The Goldmanns' family estate regained its lively atmosphere once again. Nicholas listened to Hans telling some interesting stories that they encountered abroad and laughed happily in the living room.

Nicholas beckoned, asking Wayion to approach, took a good look at this young but handsome boy, and felt extremely satisfied. "This is what I would expect from a child of the Goldmanns. You must've suffered a ton when you were abroad, Wayion."

Wayion smiled. "I didn't suffer much, Grandpa."

Nicholas' eyes turned bloodshot, and he patted Wayion's shoulder heavily, "Your great-grandfather has the highest hopes for you. He's a very tough old man to please, so it must've been difficult for you to endure all the hardships that he threw at you while you were by his side."

Nolan and Maisie entered the living room, and Nicholas asked, "Where are Colton and Daisie?"

"They're outside in the courtyard," Maisie replied with a smile.

Nicholas nodded. "These three kids haven't been together for such a long time. So since they're having a winter break, we should let them relax to the fullest. And

Nolan..."

He looked at Nolan. "I suggest that we hold your wedding during spring, around the Easter holiday, Zee has been married to the Goldmanns for three years, and you two are stepping into the fourth year already, so that's something that we owe her." Nolan and Maisie looked at each other.

Nolan then held Maisie's hand and laughed. "Don't worry about that, Dad. I certainly won't let Maisie down when it comes to our wedding ceremony. We've already come up with plans for it."

"It's nice to hear that." Nicholas continued generously. "Money has never been an issue to the Goldmanns, so we have to come up with something grand and glamorous in order to let everyone know about it."

Maisie smiled in embarrassment.

'They're indeed father-and-son. They even share the same thoughts.' The winter evenings got dark relatively quickly, and the fields and the forest that had a yellow and orange gradient were covered with a thin mist.

The town was very boisterous at night, especially since Christmas had just gone by. Christmas trees and decorations could still be seen all over the place.

Maisie strolled around in the quaint town with Nolan and their three children. She looked around at the lively streets and was surprised. "I haven't visited this place at night before."

Nolan grabbed her hand. "This town will only look this lively around Christmas, New Year's, and the Winter Festival."

Maisie stared at him. "Are you saying that I've missed this over the past three years?"

Nolan chuckled. "You've definitely missed it, but we can always make it up later on in life."

When Daisie saw a cotton candy seller, it felt novel and piqued her curiosity, so she ran over while Colton and Wayion followed her.

Maisie stopped and pulled Nolan. "I want some too."

Nolan nodded. "Okay."

The owner of the small vendor made some cotton candies for the family of five. Daisie grabbed hers from him and gave off a sweet smile. "Thank you, mister." "It's so sweet!" She took a small bite out of the huge cotton candy, took a look at the

huge flower made out of cotton candy, and became reluctant to finish it. Maisie held the cotton in her hand, tasted it, and looked at Nolan. "I've never eaten cotton candy before this."

Nolan stared at her. "I tried it when I was a child. My mother was the one who brought me here to buy it."

"Dad, did Grandma bring you here frequently?" Daisy asked.

Nolan responded with a faint nod and a slight smile on his face. His expression no longer looked tense when he mentioned his mother.

There was a bridge further ahead. An old man was playing the cello on the bridge, and the lights on both sides of the bridge looked dim as the water was gurgling under the bridge.

Daisy and Colton ran to the bridge, and the cold winter breeze gusted toward them, causing the two to retract their necks deeper into their jackets.

Chapter 984

"Colton, what are those?" Daisy pointed to the stall under the bridge that was selling river lanterns. The lanterns looked colorful -some looked like animals, while some looked like flowers and plants, but all of them were very delicate and beautiful.

Maisie walked up to them. "Those are river lanterns."

"Mom, I want to set some lanterns off the river." Daisy blinked, looking very curious.

It could be seen that Daisy's mood had improved recently, so Maisie agreed to her request in order not to kill her mood. "You can go. but be careful. Don't play by the river." Daisy dragged Wayion and Colton along and ran under the stone bridge. Maisie looked at them. "They look so energetic."

Nolan wrapped his arm around her. "Do you want to go with them?"

Maisie refused to do so, but Nolan pulled her along, and both of them went under the bridge. There were many children under the bridge with their parents. Many wishes were written on the river lantern. Although doing so would not get them fulfilled, those people were doing so for a sense of comfort.

Nolan chose a puppy-shaped lantern for Maisie, but she asked after receiving it, "Why give me a puppy lantern?"

"It looks like you." He leaned closer to her ear while saying that. "You'll bite whenever you're pissed off."

Maisie pushed him away, and the old lady who was selling the lanterns laughed. "You two look like a young couple. You really are made

for each other."

Nolan smiled. "You do have impeccable eyesight, madam." Maisie picked up a black crayon and wrote something on the river lantern. Nolan tried to lean over to peep, but she blocked him. "Don't

look."

He scoffed. "You're so stingy."

Maisie pouted. "No wish will actualize as soon as others read them."

Nolan smiled.

Maisie then walked to the bank with the river lantern after she finished writing her wish. At this time, dozens of river lanterns floated down from the upper stream, and they made the river look like a galaxy.

She set the river lantern off, watched the lantern go with the drift, and chuckled like an innocent child as if a flower had bloomed in her heart.

Nolan stood at the side and stared at her, she was the only thing that had occupied all his attention at this moment.

A few days later, Barbara visited the Boucher manor with Helios. She looked a little uneasy before walking through the entrance.

Helios clenched her hand and comforted her, "It'll be fine."

She nodded and stepped into the living room with him, and the butler and servants nodded to welcome him.

Elder Master Boucher, Yael, and Christina were all sitting on the couch. Seeing that Helios had brought Barbara back. Christina could not conceal her smile for even a split second. Barbara walked up to the elders and greeted them very cautiously under their direct gaze. Yael smiled and said, "Take a seat. Your father and I have been acquaintances since way back, so there's no need for you to be so nervous."

"Yeah," Christina added and glanced at Helios. "Helios, be a gentleman."

Helios brought Barbara to the couch to sit down. Barbara straightened her posture and did not dare to act too casually,

She then recalled something and hurriedly placed the tea box that she had brought with her on the table. "Oh, by the way, I've brought you the best-scented tea that Asperia has to offer. I don't know what you and Elder Master Boucher like, but I heard from Helios that you like to drink tea."

Christina accepted it. "We'll accept anything happily. After all, it's the thoughts that matter."

Richard cleared his throat and put down the newspaper. Compared to his son and daughter-in-law, he behaved relatively indifferently. "Helios, why didn't you tell us about this in the first place?"

Christina explained on behalf of her son, 'Father, Helios and Barbara have just decided to be together, so they're still busy with all dating and getting to know each other.'

LITOPIC 707

Helios added, "Yes, besides, I had to wait for Barbara to get mentally more comfortable about paying you a visit too." Richard snorted and turned his face away. "If it weren't for your mother's continuous urging, would you even bring her? I'm afraid that you would choose to continue to hide her from us."

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Helios took a glance at Barbara and placed his hand on the back of hers. "It wouldn't take long before I disclosed our relationship. Even if Mother didn't find out about it. I'd still announce that I have a girlfriend when I quit the entertainment industry."

When Elder Master Boucher was about to say something, Yael interrupted him and spoke first. "Since everyone's back, just stay here for dinner tonight. Helios, show Barbara around the house and get her acquainted with everyone when you have the time."

Helios nodded but took Barbara back to his room first.

Barbara looked at the posters on the wall, almost all of which were his, and the countless trophies that were being displayed on the bookshelf, which were all the awards that he had won in the film industry over the years. There were also magazines, interviews, and newspaper article cutouts about him.

She picked up a book and flipped through it. It documented Helios' journey when he became famous at the age of 18.

She laughed. "This boy looks nothing like you."

Helios walked behind her and grabbed the magazine from her. "Do elaborate."

Barbara turned around. "I even watched your youth drama when I was 15 years old."

Helios closed the magazine and chuckled. "Oh really?"

Barbara walked around him, approached the desk, picked up a photo frame, and placed it in front of Helios. "This is still rather surreal to me. I actually own the nation's dream lover."

Helios carried her abruptly, placed her onto the desk, and propped both his arms against the desk, clamping her in the middle. "Then are you happy?"

"Yeah." Barbara put the photo down and wrapped her arms around his neck. "Then doesn't that make me the public enemy of hundreds of millions of ladies?"

Helios kissed her. "But you still have me."

Barbara lowered her gaze, pushed him away gently, and drew a straight line with her fingers down across his eyebrows, the bridge of his nose, and his lips. "I used to think that I would never marry anyone. That's because I might not have encountered a man I wanted to marry." Helios grasped her hand and held it against his left chest. "Then what about now?"

Barbara looked at him and chuckled. "That's not necessarily true now. Perhaps I might want to marry myself someday."

Helios smiled and took her into his arms. Barbara sank into his embrace, and her cheek rested on his shoulders as she hugged him tightly.

She told him that she would not have blamed him if he did not choose to protect her when they were Tony's captives, but she would never have chosen to be with him.

That was because she had once looked forward to it but was disappointed. Thus, when such a person did what she had expected him to do, she would think that he must be her soulmate.

But when they had been in the hospital, he wanted to be responsible for her only because of guilt. So how could she allow it? That was why she thought about how to get closer to him and came up with the idea of grabbing a drink at a bar.

Before the Winter Festival, Maisie took the three rugrats to Kennedy's house for a meal.

Daisie hugged Sapphie and stared at the baby in her arms in amazement with her pretty eyes. "Are all babies so tiny?"

Maisie was helping in the kitchen when she turned her head and said to Daisie, "You and your brothers were so tiny too when you were babies." Daisie blinked while Sapphie sucked her own thumb as she curled up in Daisie's arms. The baby's eyes looked so innocent and pure as she stared at Daisie curiously, giggling from time to time.

Daisie experienced what it felt like being an elder sister, and it felt very novel to her. However, when Colton and Waylon approached, Sapphie started crying all of a sudden.

"Waylon, Colton, you're scaring Sapphie." Daisie protected Sapphie in her arms. The two brothers felt extremely wronged and aggrieved as they had not done anything. Kennedy looked at the children and laughed. "Just try to smile at Sapphie.

She'll stop crying when you do so."

Colton realized what he was doing wrongly and laughed at Sapphie. As such, Sapphie stopped crying and closed her mouth, but the corners of her lips then twitched, and she started crying even louder.

Chapter 986

Daisie was rendered speechless.

Colton was such a weirdo.

When Waylon heard the doorbell ring, he turned around to get the door and saw that it was Ryleigh and Barbara, both carrying some food. Barbara had never seen Waylon before and thought that he was Colton, but there was a difference, "Why do you have a tan?"

Ryleigh laughed. "He's not Colton. That's his brother. Colton is over there." Barbara looked over and saw Colton and Daisie in the house. It wasn't surprising as they did look too much alike.

"Godmother, Aunt Barbara, you're here." Colton waved.

Once the food was nicely seasoned, they started preparing for dinner-barbecue.

Barbara and Daisie were playing with Sapphie while Colton and Waylon helped their mother start the fire. Ryleigh skewered the beef and got closer to Waylon when he saw how serious he was, "Have you been undergoing military training for three years?" Waylon looked at her. "Something like that." Ryleigh

nodded and patted his shoulder." But boys look better with a tan. Look at Colton, he's as fair as a girl. I just want to pinch him."

"Godmother, it's not nice to talk about me behind my back!" Colton suddenly appeared next to Ryleigh and made her jump. "Oh, I'm sorry, I'll be more discreet next time so that you won't hear it."

Colton was rendered speechless.

"Oh no!" Maisie's voice caught everyone's attention.

She laid Sapphie down on the couch and sounded annoyed. "She pooped!

Kennedy stopped what he was doing and went to check. "Oh, no, I forgot to change her diaper." Then he carried her to change her. Ryleigh walked next to Maisie. "It's tough for Kennedy to care for the baby alone. He's a great dad now, taking the role of both parents. I think he should find a partner."

Barbara walked over. "That sounds easy but is actually tough. He has a baby now, so he has to find someone who doesn't mind."

Ryleigh paused because it made sense.

Maisie didn't say anything as she was contemplating.

Kennedy fed the baby in the room to put her to bed.

Maisie entered, "Uncle Kennedy."

Kennedy was holding Sapphie as he turned to look at her and smiled. "What is it?"

Maisie spoke. "It's probably pretty tough for you to take care of Sapphie. Do you want to hire a nanny?"

Kennedy shook his head and placed the sleeping Sapphie into the crib. "No, I'm fine. There's no need to spend that money."

"Aunt Samantha hasn't been around for a while now, has she?" He paused, then smiled. "I can't keep bothering her, right?"

Maisie nodded. "That's true." She remembered something when she turned around. "It's the Winter Festival tomorrow. I guess she'll be spending it alone. Why don't you invite her for dinner with us?"

Kennedy remained silent for a while." Alright," he finally said.

When it was time for dinner, everyone sat near the barbecue pit. The table was covered with food.

Maisie had given Samantha a call.

Thus, Maisie opened the door for her when she got there.

"Aunt Samatha, I'm glad you came. Come i n." Maisie was going to bring her in when Samantha suddenly grabbed her and stood at the door. "I won't come in. Could you get Mr. Fannon to come outside? I'd like to

Speak to him."

Chapter 987

Maisie was curious but didn't ask anything. She went in and yelled something.

Kennedy put down his food and walked to the door. Samantha asked if he could speak with her, and he nodded.

Maisie watched them walk into the courtyard, and her curiosity was piqued. Ryleigh and Barbara immediately approached her, especially Ryleigh, who was very surprised. "Why is Aunt Samantha here?"

Maisie smiled and touched her chin. "Why can't she be here? But what happened between Uncle Kennedy and Aunt Samantha?"

Samantha loved Sapphire and would come to visit her when she had time, yet she hadn't been around a lot lately.

And looking at the two of them speaking outside but not knowing what they were talking about, the entire atmosphere felt weird.

Barbara put her arm over Ryleigh's shoulder. "I think it's best not to speculate. Let's eat."

Ryleigh agreed, and since she was hungry, it would be a good time to have a great meal.

Maisie stood there and took a few more glances when the two walked back.

The cold wind was blowing in the courtyard. Although Samantha was wearing a coat her face was pink from the cold. They were both quiet for a few minutes, and Samantha broke the silence. "I don't know what's on your mind. I might have misunderstood."

Kennedy stared at her, intending to say something but stopped. Samantha put her hands in her pockets and revealed a sad smile while she lowered her face.

"It's best if we don't keep in contact. I can't pretend I don't see how good you are to me, but you're a great man, and I'm a divorcee.

"Women are funny, huh? We'd be touched just because someone treats us a little better, but we're in this situation because I misunderstood. Thus, it's best if we stop contacting each other."

Samantha turned around and walked away.

Kennedy balled up his fist and ran after Samantha when she was about to get into the car. "Hold on!"

Samantha paused and turned around to see Kennedy, who was walking over. He looked down and spoke slowly. "I'm sorry. I'm not really good at expressing myself. I don't know how to handle this relationship the right way. I admit that I was surprised when you said that to me. I chose not to face it because I didn't know how to face you."

Samantha was quiet.

Kennedy looked away. "I'm not pushing you away because you're a divorcee. You're a kind and wonderful woman. It's my fault because I'm afraid that I might not be able to give you what you want."

“What I want is simple,” Samantha looked at him, her eyes welled up in tears and red.” I gave up on the life I wanted 30 years ago and lived the way others wanted me to live, but now I know that it’s not hard. What I want is really simple.”

Kennedy paused.

She looked down and chuckled. “I don’t need luxury. All I need is stability, a simple but happy family with a husband with whom I can spend the rest of my life.”

“Everyone wants some thrill when they’re younger, but I realized that happiness is just having the basic things after all this time. It looks simple and dull, but at least I’ll have my husband and children by my side. This simplicity may seem dull, but it’s what I desire.”

Samantha then got into the car.

Kennedy stood there and watched the car drive away while looking somber.

Chapter 988

When Kennedy returned, he bumped into Maisie and was surprised. “Why are you out here, Zee?”

Maisie walked toward him. “Uncle

Kennedy, what do you think about Aunt Samantha?”

She had overheard their conversation.

Something had happened between the two of them, and that was why they were ‘avoiding each other.

Kennedy didn’t say a word.

Maisie sighed. “If you really don’t have feelings for her, you should tell her sooner rather than later. However, if you feel the same, I think you should be a little braver.’

Kennedy looked away and slowly said, “I don’t know what’s on my mind. I’ve always been focused on work and never thought about getting married or if I could really do that, taking care of both my family and career. Samantha is a great woman. She had a failed marriage, but I never had one.

“I can’t promise that I’ll be able to give her stability, and I definitely can’t guarantee I won’t disappoint her. I’m afraid I might fail.”

Maisie smiled. “How do you know that you’ll fail if you never try?”

Kennedy fell silent. She smiled again. “No one would know how their marriage would turn out and what they would have to face, the good or the bad. But how would you know the outcome if you never tried? Aunt Samantha had a failed marriage, but she still hopes for happiness. Uncle Kennedy, you deserve it as well.’

Kennedy was stunned. He never thought that someone younger would be giving him life lessons. He helplessly smiled. “I was being too harsh to myself.”

“It’s alright to be harsh. I believe you do that because you want to take good care of your family, and you’ll be able to do that.” Maisie tapped his shoulder.

Kennedy smiled too.

The children changed into new clothes for the Winter Festival, and Nicholas gave each of them a little present.

“Thanks for the present. Grandpa!” Daisy flashed a bright smile with a gift in hand.

When he gave one to Maisie, she smiled. “I’m not a kid anymore, Dad.”

Nicholas pushed the present into her hand. “Take it. I’ve never given you a present before.”

Maisie held it in her hand and didn’t know how to react.

Nolan made her keep it. “You weren’t here three years ago, so just take it.”

Maisie couldn’t reject him, so she nodded and smiled. “Thanks, Dad.”

At that moment, Mr. Cheshire walked in. “Sir, we have guests.”

Nicholas picked up the teacup and asked who the guests were, so Mr. Chesire replied, “It’s Elder Master Clifford from Octavia.”

Nicholas paused and looked up curiously, “Clifford from Octavia?” He had no memory of ever coming across the Cliffords of

Octavia.

Nolan looked toward him. “Dad, you’ll understand when he comes in.”

Nicholas nodded.

After a short wait, Thomas walked in with bodyguards and Jackie. Surprisingly, the bodyguards were carrying huge gifts.

Nicholas stood up and greeted them courteously, “Such a big surprise for Mr. Clifford to visit us, and you even brought so many gifts.”

Thomas smiled. “These came too late. I only learned that we are in-laws after so many years.”

Nicholas was startled. “In-laws?”

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Nolan was trying to explain when Daisy ran down the stairs. “Great-grandpa!”

Nicholas was stunned when he heard Daisy call Thomas ‘Great-grandpa’ and looked at Nolan curiously.

Nolan nodded. “That’s right, Dad. Elder Master Clifford is Mom’s father.”

Maisie turned to look at them and suddenly recalled that Nolan had said 'We might become relatives' and realized that was what he meant.

Thomas was Natasha's father, meaning Natasha was a Clifford as well.

Thomas and Nicholas sat in the middle of the room and talked. That was when Nicholas found out that Natasha's mother was Madam Knowles' sister and that Natasha wasn't an orphan. Instead, Simone had been attacked soon after giving birth to her.

Madam Knowles had adopted Natasha, knowing who she was.

Madam Knowles had been in love with Sam Knowles, but she had been forced to marry his father. She had adopted Natasha, hidden her relationship with Simone, and used the information about his daughter to make Thomas a pawn in her revenge plot.

Thomas sighed. "If I knew that my daughter was with the Knowles, I would have done everything I could to get her back so she wouldn't have to go through any sad encounters." It had never crossed Nicholas' mind that Thomas Clifford was his father-in-law. He remembered that when he had suggested to Natasha to help her reconnect with her family, Natasha had sadly smiled and said, "If they wanted to find me, they would have done it already."

It wasn't that they didn't want to. They had just been misled and missed the opportunity to do so.

Maisie walked into the courtyard, and Jackie called to her. She stopped and slowly turned around. "Mr. Clifford... Oh, who are you to me now?"

She put her hand under her chin and pondered. "Younger cousin?"

Jackie was stumped by the word 'younger'. He adjusted his glasses. "I remember that we're the same age." "But Nolan is your older cousin, and I'm his wife, so ain't I your older cousin-in-law?" At that point, Maisie smiled. "So it's not wrong to call you my younger cousin, right?"

Jackie hummed and put his hands into his pockets. "I wouldn't know about this if Grandpa didn't tell me. It's funny that the daughter Grandpa had been looking for was Nolan's mother."

"Yes, no one knew.". Maisie looked toward the branches with no leaves in the courtyard. "I guess these are all part of fate. Out of the billions of people in the world, we turned out to be related. If we had never met Noilace and Tristan, we would have never found out about the relationship between Natasha and the Cliffords. It's just like how if I met someone else instead of Nolan, I wouldn't know where I would end up and how my life would turn out."

Jackie followed her line of vision and looked toward the tree in the cold wind. "A simple choice could easily change the outcome of things and the course of events. If I didn't choose to change all those years ago, I would still be that chubby boy that people looked down on."

Maisie looked at him, raised her brows, and smiled. "You're quite the melancholic one. I'm actually curious why you stayed in Bassburgh."

She initially thought that Jackie was trying to intervene in the affairs of the Knowles, but he didn't. Students who studied in private schools in Bassburgh were mostly from affluent families, and Zeta had

driven his car into their private school during Christmas so that people would think this car with a foreign license plate simply belonged to one of the parents.

Clapel –

Chapter 990

Jackie probably had his own reasons for staying in Bassburgh,

Maisie suddenly remembered bumping into Zeta at the restaurant and that the latter had said she was going to meet a friend. “Were you the friend Zeta met at the restaurant that day?”

Jackie turned to look at her. “Why?”

Maisie crossed her arms and said it was nothing, then added, “Zeta was someone Madam Knowles arranged to get close to Mr. Knowles. Did you... not know?”

After saying that, she raised her brows and smiled. “You didn’t get involved in the affairs of the Knowles, nor did you ask why Zeta borrowed your car. You might be pretending to be ignorant, but since you lent her your own car without question, it means that you were very close.”

People would usually only lend their cars to the people they trusted and had a good relationship with. Otherwise, would they lend them their cars?

Jackie chuckled. “Are you an investigator?”

Maisie shrugged.

The wind blew the last leaf off the tree while Jackie stayed quiet and talked about Zeta.

Jackie had been a chubby boy that people looked down on back in school. Even during the three years in high school or after getting into the University of Yaramoor, he had had good grades but had been self-conscious about his looks, so he studied hard and never thought about making friends.

Maisie asked if his father or grandfather didn’t care.

Jackie explained that they had a rule in their family. To become a rightful heir, they had to become independent once they turned 16 and were not allowed to just rely on their family. They needed to solve their own problems unless it was a lifethreatening one.

This rule meant that as soon as a boy turned 15, they had to go out and survive by their own means. They were old money, but everyone knew how tough it was to get there and would appreciate their riches more. It was very different from other old-money families that would let their descendants squander their wealth.

Thomas had been inspired by the elders in the family. His father had climbed up from the slums, and when it was his time, he had to leave the family when he turned 16 and was only summoned back when it was time to inherit the family business.

That was why everyone had been in the dark about Jackie’s identity in the three years they were in the same class.

He said that during his time at the University of Yaramoor, on top of his scholarship, he had had to work while he studied. He had met Zeta while he was working part-time.

He had still been chubby at that time and a wallflower, but Zeta didn't laugh at him because of his looks but instead went to the gym with him and encouraged him. It had taken him an entire year to become fit by hitting the gym. His coursemates had been stunned by his 180 change, and even those who had never talked to him started approaching him.

The friendship he had gained after changing his looks was definitely not as sincere as the one he had with Zeta.

A girl who didn't discriminate against him based on his looks when he was in a foreign country and who gave her encouragement and support was a huge blessing to him.

Maisie looked at Jackie. "If that was the case, why didn't you date?"

Jackie chuckled but looked sad. "You said she worked for Madam Knowles and knew Grandpa. So she knew who I was."

That meant that everything Zeta had done was because she knew who he was. Jackie sighed again. "I might have thought that this was fate if not because of that. She was honest with me about approaching me because she knew who I was, but she didn't intend to use me. I convinced myself to forgive her and told her how I felt, but she turned me down."