

## **Ex Convict 2171**

### Chapter 2171

"Alright, shall we?" asked Philip Barlow as he led his son into the car. However, he glanced at the mansion and smiled faintly before getting in.

Moments later, the car slowly drove away from Reed Residence.

In the mansion, Jason received a call from the security guard at the gate. "Young master Reed, William has been taken away."

"Okay, I see." Jason put away the phone.

Grace, who had already fallen asleep, drowsily opened her eyes when the phone rang. "Who's calling? It's already so late."

"Sorry to disturb you. Go back to sleep. It's just the security guard at the gate reporting that Philip Barlow has picked up William," said Jason as he helped his wife with the covers for fear she would catch a cold.

"What?" The sleepy Grace woke up instantly. "William left?"

"Yeah, he made a phone call in the middle of the night to get Philip Barlow to pick him up," said Jason. It was easily noticeable since William had made the call from the landline in the living room.

Therefore, Jason had the gate unlocked so William could leave easily.

2/3 "Why would William suddenly..." Grace frowned. "Is it because he was beaten up by the servants' children yesterday?"

"Whatever the reason, at least he willingly left with Philip Barlow. Isn't this a happy ending? He'll be raised by his biological father, so he'll lead a good life. And we don't have to worry about whether he'll hold any grudges against the Reed family because he's Lily's child," said Jason.

"But..."

"Alright, no buts. Go to sleep first. We'll talk tomorrow morning," said Jason as he got into the covers and embraced

Grace.

Grace sighed. "I wonder how sad Jasper will be once she finds out William has left."

After all, as Jasper's mother, she could tell how fond she was of William.

"She's just a child. She'll only be sad for a while," Jason said indifferently, not thinking his daughter would have any attachment to William. "Doesn't she get bored with her new toys after a few days?"

"William isn't a toy. It's different," said Grace.

"There doesn't seem to be any difference to me," Jason said

while embracing Grace tighter.

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It was a good thing to him that the kid was gone. If his daughter was really upset, he could always find new toys to distract her.

After all, children always loved new things!

The next day, Jasper did not see William at breakfast, so she could not help asking, "Where's William? Why didn't he come down for breakfast?"

"William has gone back with his father," said Jason.

Jasper blinked her eyes in a daze. It took a while for her to react. "He... He's gone?"

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"Yes, he's gone," said Jason.

Mick Reed also froze and blinked. Although he thought William would leave sooner or later, he did not expect it to be so sudden.

Jasper jumped down from her chair and ran toward William's room.

When she came to the room door, she pushed it open, only to see a desolated room.

The blanket was folded as neatly as she had seen it when she came in yesterday. Nothing in the room had been touched. If anything was missing, it was the doll he usually placed beside the bed.

It was a doll she liked very much, and she gave it to him after he came to the Reed family's house!

Looking at the room that was the same as yesterday, Jasper thought of what she had said to William in the room yesterday.

'Is... Is he really gone? Did his biological father come to see him yesterday? So he left?'

Jasper suddenly burst into tears.

Grace and Jason came over too. When she saw her daughter

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crying, Grace immediately hugged her daughter and comforted her gently. "Alright, stop crying. It's a good thing William went back with his daddy. He has a father, so he can't stay with us forever."

"Boo-hoo... He told me he'll always be here, and we'll always be together. Why did he..." Jasper wailed as tears trickled down her cheeks.

"But William wants to be with his daddy too, just like you. Don't you like being with your daddy, Jasper?" Grace tried talking with her daughter.

However, the little one would not listen. She just kept crying. "I want William. I want William. Boo-hoo... He left without telling me. Is... Is he mad because... because I said I hate him and wouldn't be his friend anymore... Boo-hoo..."

Grace instantly knew why William called Philip Barlow in the middle of the night and requested to leave after hearing this.

It seemed it had something to do with her daughter.

Therefore, Jasper did not go to kindergarten today. She kept crying while Mick Reed accompanied his sister. At the end of the day, the little one's eyes were red and swollen from crying. It made Grace's heart ache.

At night, Jasper insisted on sleeping in William's room because she thought William would come back. They were best friends, and he would not leave without saying a word!

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Mick Reed thought about it and went to William's room with his blanket. He said sternly to the worried Grace, "Mommy, I'll sleep with my sister and take good care of her!"

Grace looked at her thoughtful elder son and her daughter who had swollen puffy eyes. She said, "Alright, take good care of your sister tonight, Mick."

Mick Reed nodded his little head solemnly.

At night, as the two little ones lay in bed, Jasper said with a nasal voice, "Brother, I miss William. Even... Even though he pushed Nelson down the stairs and lied to me, I still miss him. I don't want him to leave... Boo-hoo..." She felt like crying again as she spoke.

"If you really miss him, let's go and bring him back then," said Mick Reed.

Jasper Reed's eyes lit up, but the glimmer in her eyes dimmed again. "What if William's daddy refuses to let him come back? His daddy won't let him come back after taking him away, right?"

"We can sneak him back without his daddy knowing," said Mick Reed.

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'Yeah! We can sneak him out!' Jasper accepted Mick Reed's suggestion and smiled a little. Then, she became frustrated. "But how do we know where William's daddy took him? If Daddy and Mommy take us to William, they won't let us smuggle William back!"

"Then we'll go by ourselves." Mick Reed gave his sister a reassuring look. "I'll find out where William is."

Jasper Reed's eyes were full of trust. "Thank you, Brother!" With that said, she gave him a kiss on the cheek.

Mick Reed touched his cheek where he was kissed. 'Umm... It feels good to get a kiss from my sister.'

Besides, he loved how his sister had looked at him with trusting eyes just now! Since he was the elder brother, he would try his best to help her!

William followed Philip Barlow to the Barlow family's house in Deer City.

Although the noble Barlow family was wealthy, they had few family members. It had always been a problem for the family. Philip Barlow was also not interested in relationships.

Charlie Barlow and Chelsea only wanted their son to get a wife when it was almost time. They had no requirements for her family background and social status. They just wanted to have someone to carry on the Barlow family's bloodline.

However, someone unexpectedly harmed their son and caused him to become infertile. It was a devastating blow to the old

couple.

Chelsea even cried every day.

Fortunately, every cloud had a silver lining. Their son found out that he might have a child out there.

Therefore, he tracked it to Lily. He later took William's blood for a DNA test, and he turned out to be an heir of the Barlow family.

The old couple was so thankful that they worshipped all the deities in Deer City and instantly wanted to go to Emerald City to fetch their grandson.

Philip Barlow was afraid that having too many people over would make the kid panic, so he let the old couple stay in Deer City while he picked up the kid himself.

Their precious grandson had finally arrived at the Barlow family's house. Charlie Barlow and Chelsea were smiling from ear to ear as they held their precious grandson in their arms. They spoke about feeding him and how he had suffered with teary eyes. Then, they started talking about how William looked like Philip Barlow when he was a kid!

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William looked blankly at the two kind-looking elders in front of him. 'Are these... my grandparents?'

They were unlike his maternal grandparents, whom he had met once before.

When his maternal grandparents saw him, they were disgusted with him, but his paternal grandparents seemed to.... like him a lot.

"Here, here, here. This is a present for you, William. May you live a long life and be always safe," said Chelsea as she took out a longevity lock. It was made of solid gold and had exquisite workmanship.

Chelsea put the longevity lock on William's neck, while Charlie Barlow summoned all the servants to the main hall. He said in front of everyone, "This is your little young master William. If any of you dare to neglect or fool him, don't blame me for being strict on you!"

The servants immediately turned to William and greeted respectfully, "Little Young Master!"

Then, Chelsea took William to see the room they had prepared for him. It was much bigger than the room he had in the Reed family's house. The furniture was decorated in a style that little boys nowadays liked. There was a playroom next door with many toys in it.

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At the end of the corridor was a piano room with an expensive piano in it.

Looking at the piano, William's eyes darkened as if he recalled something.

Chelsea said, "What's the matter? Don't you like the piano? I heard from your daddy that you like playing the piano very much, and you play it very well. We prepared this piano room for you. If you don't like this piano, we can go to the piano shop together and you can choose one yourself. We'll buy whichever piano you like."

William looked down and said, "No, I'm okay with it."

It was just that it reminded him of Jasper. From now on, even if he could play the piano in this piano room every day, he could never play it with Jasper again.

'What about Jasper? I'm gone now. Is she going to miss me? Or is she just glad that I'm gone?'

"Alright, William has just come back. He must be a little tired. Why don't I take him back to his room to rest first?" said Philip Barlow.

Hearing this, Charlie Barlow and Chelsea quickly said, "Oh, he should have a rest. William is still so young. He must be tired

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from the long drive back."

William followed Philip Barlow into his bedroom. Philip Barlow said. "This is your home from now on. You're going to live here and inherit the Barlow family."

William looked at the person in front of him. "I only came back hoping that I can get what I want someday."

Philip Barlow smiled and saw a glimmer of ambition in his son's eyes.

'Yeah, even though my son looks sensitive and has low.

self-esteem, he has the Barlow family's blood flowing in him. Of course, he would have high ambitions.'

Members of the Barlow family would make sure they achieved their goals once they made up their minds!

"I told you, you can only get what you want if you come back to the Barlow family. Look, no one in this house will look down on you. Those servants will only treat you as their young master, and no one will dare to beat you up. I'll also hire teachers so that you can learn more. The more you know, the better

your chances are for getting what you want. I'll pave the way for you. Whether you can achieve your goal is up to you," said Philip

Barlow.

William's long lashes fluttered gently as determination flickered in those pretty eyes of his.

He would work his way up until he got what he wanted one day!

Grace came to Lina's place to visit the baby. Tina Stephenson had been eating and sleeping well. She was no longer as thin as when she was just born. She began to gain weight as her cheeks were chubby. One could not tell that she was born prematurely.

"Does Jasper still cry these days?" asked Lina.

When she learned that William's biological father had taken William away, Lina was quite surprised.

She even had a video call with Jasper. Jasper's eyes were red in the video. As her godmother, her heart broke.

"She's stopped crying these days, but she still sleeps in William's room with Mick every day. Otherwise, there's nothing much going on. She's also obediently going to kindergarten," said

Grace.

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"She's probably just sad that her friend left. She must have calmed down by now and will probably sleep in her own room again in a few days," said Lina.

"I suppose so?"

While they were talking, a maid suddenly screamed on the stairway of the second floor.

Lina looked up and shouted, "What happened?"

The maid said, "Something made a small hole in the wall behind this vase."

Lina and Grace looked at each other. They quickly walked up the stairs to where the small hole was.

It was a hole that looked like it had been shot by something. There was a large vase with a plant here, so it had covered the hole. Therefore, they only saw it now.

Grace crouched down and looked at the plant. Sure enough, one of the leaves had a hole. It was the same size as the hole in the

wall.

Lina asked, "What's going on? Why is there a hole? Who's in charge of cleaning this?"

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The maid quickly said, "I am, but I usually just wipe the vase. I would only move it every two weeks to sweep the dust near the wall. This hole... wasn't... here before this."

Grace looked at the hole, her face full of suspicion. Moments later, she said to Lina, "Lina, call the police. I think the police need to come over."

"Huh? The police?" Lina was startled but called the police like what her best friend said.

The police arrived and removed the air gun bullet lodged in the wall. It would not kill but would definitely injure.

One could even be crippled for life if hit in certain spots.

Lina shivered and turned pale. "Why is there such a bullet here? Who did it? If someone had walked by and gotten shot, wouldn't they..."

At this point, Lina suddenly looked at Grace as if she thought of something.

Grace seemed to have recalled something as well. She looked at Lina. "Is it possible that William pushed Nelson because of the sound the air gun made?"

"It's possible. Maybe Nelson didn't hear it but William did," Lina speculated.

Taking a deep breath, Grace said to the police, "I hope the police can conduct an investigation to find out the time and date this

incident took place. Maybe it can help catch the culprit."

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If the investigation turned out as she thought it would, then all of them... had misunderstood William.

William had saved Nelson instead of harming him.

Thinking of the injustice and grievances William had suffered, Grace felt a pang of pain in her heart.

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William was only five years old. He was still so young...

Looking at the remorse on her best friend's face, Lina naturally knew what was on her mind. "Alright, it's a good thing if we can clear William's name. Don't blame yourself. You've been trying to help William find evidence to prove his innocence, haven't you? You should be glad that you have evidence now. He didn't betray your trust."

"Yeah, I should. William probably is innocent. He didn't push Nelson," Grace murmured.

The police soon came out with the results of their investigation, and Nelson cooperated with the police. The conclusion was that Nelson did not hear the air gun when it was fired, but children with sensitive hearing could.

Besides, judging from where the bullet was found and the angle when it was shot, Nelson would have been the target due to the spot where he was standing. One could say that William had pushed Nelson

Corbyn toward safety, but Nelson Corbyn had subconsciously dodged, which caused him to fall down the stairs in the end.

The investigation vindicated William, so to speak.

Nelson Corbyn seemed guilty. "I'm sorry, aunt Cummins. It's all my fault. I didn't hear the sound, so everyone misunderstood

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William. I'll apologize to William. Without him, I might still be lying in the hospital."

"It's not your fault. It's just a strange combination of circumstances," said Grace. Not only was it because of the sound and Jasper and Mick's testimonies but also the fact that it took so many days for them to find the bullet.

The series of coincidences caused everyone to get the wrong idea.

"William is no longer with the Reed family. He's gone back to Deer City with his father. I'm afraid we won't be seeing him for a while," said Grace.

Nelson Corbyn froze. Then, he showed a look of disappointment. "Then... I'll apologize to William in person when I see him next time. I'll... thank him too!" Nelson Corbyn said sternly.

Kyla seemed apologetic. "I'm sorry. I misunderstood William too. He's a good kid. Nelson and I owe him big time."

"Alright, Kyla. Don't overthink it. I'll make time to visit William later. I'll tell him then! As you said, William's a good kid. He'll understand."

In the evening, Grace looked at her son and daughter standing in front of her. She said with a stern face, "I've looked into William's case. He didn't push Nelson down the stairs. Someone shot an air gun. William heard the noise and tried to push Nelson away. You happened to see this scene and misunderstood."

Grace shared the results of the police's investigation with her two children.

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When Jasper heard the result, her eyes instantly widened and she seemed happy. "William was trying to save Nelson, not push him down the stairs?"

"Yes, we've misunderstood him," said Grace.

"That's great. William did nothing wrong. He didn't!" said Jasper Reed. However, her expression instantly sank as she remembered how she had called him a liar and that she would never be friends with him again.

"William kept saying he didn't push Nelson down the stairs. I... I even called him a liar and said that I hated him and didn't want to be friends with him anymore. He must hate me and not want to be friends with me now. It must be why he left with his daddy!" Jasper said with a nasal voice.



She regretted it so much. Why did she not trust William at that time? They were best friends!

Thinking of the times she did not defend him when the servants' children criticized him and caused him to be beaten until he was covered with bruises... Jasper instantly burst into tears.

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"Boo-hoo. Mommy, what should I do? I misunderstood William. I don't want him to hate me. I don't want to be unable to see him again. I... I miss him. I want to apologize to him! Boo-hoo..." said Jasper as she wept. Big teardrops kept falling from her face.

Grace gently hugged her daughter and comforted her gently. "Alright, stop crying. Stop crying. William isn't that petty. He'll forgive you if you apologize to him sincerely."

"Yes... Yes... I'll apologize... I'll apologize to him sincerely..." The little one cried and nodded her little head. She was a little out of

breath.

"I'll take you to Deer City to visit William someday. Then you can apologize to him, okay?" said Grace.

Jasper answered, "Okay. When... When are you taking me? Mommy, I want to see William as soon as possible. I want to quickly apologize to him and make up with him!"

"I have to find out where exactly William is staying now and speak to William's daddy before we can go over. I'll arrange it as soon as possible," said Grace.

Just then, Mick Reed suddenly said, "I want to go too."

Grace paused. "You want to go too?"

"Since Tristas and I misunderstood him that day, we both have

2/3 to apologize, of course," replied Mick Reed.

Grace thought about it and said, "Okay, we'll go together, then."

Grace told Jason about William being wronged and that she wanted to take their son and daughter to Deer City to see William.

"Now that we've found out the truth, we have to let William know about it even though he's no longer in Emerald City. Also, Jasper and Mick want to apologize to him. I think it's a good thing that they're apologetic, so I want to bring them there," said Grace. It would be an unforgettable experience for the children.

The children would soon understand that what they saw was not necessarily true and would think more before making conclusions.

"If you want to go, I'll go with you," said Jason.

"You'll go with me?" She paused. "But your work..."

"If you can take a break from work and go to Deer City with the kids, why can't I?" He smiled. "Besides, I'll take care of the company. Don't worry."

Grace thought for a moment, nodded, and said, "Do you have the Barlow family's contact number? I want to call them and fix a date for a visit."

Jason smiled. "Leave it to me. I'll contact the Barlow family."

Once Grace went into the bathroom, Jason picked up his phone and dialed Philip Barlow's private number.

This number was also the number Philip Barlow had given to William.

When the call got through, Jason said, "It's Jason."

"Young master Reed, why are you calling me out of the blue?" asked Philip Barlow, who was on the other end of the line. He had a certain fondness for Jason, who had taken care of his son for a while despite having bad blood with Lily. Otherwise, his son would have been in a worse situation when he found him.

"You picked up William without saying a word. I'm calling to ask for an explanation, of course," said Jason.

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"Young master Reed, if you didn't want me to pick him up, wouldn't have been able to pick him up, would I?" asked Philip Barlow.

Both men were sensible enough that some things could be left unsaid.

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"My wife, our two children, and I are planning to go to Deer City soon and visit you. You're not going to say no, are you?" said Jason.

Philip Barlow was silent for a while. "I don't want my son to return to Emerald City before he even gets familiar with Deer City."

"Don't worry. Since he's a member of the Barlow family, he should stay in Deer City, of course. I'll just be bringing the children there to visit him. Nothing will change," said Jason.

Then Philip Barlow said, "Okay, come over anytime."

The two men ended the call after setting a date.

Philip Barlow came out of the study, looked at the time, and went to the piano room.

He knew that his son should be practicing in the piano room at this hour.

His son's piano talent was even better than he had expected. Even a famous pianist in Deer City whom he had found for his son had said that he had great talent after listening to his son's performance. Although he was a little weak at emotional expression, he was still young, after all.

Besides, his mastery of piano skills was far beyond his peers.

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If it were not for the fact that his son was the sole heir to the Barlow family, Philip Barlow would focus on nurturing his son's piano talent.

However... what the Barlow family wanted was someone who could inherit the Barlow family and lead the Barlow family to greatness in the business world-not a pianist.

He could let his son play piano for a few more years, though. After all... he could treat it as a hobby.

Philip Barlow gently pushed the door to the piano room open and saw William's small body sitting in front of the piano. He was playing a tune with a blank expression.

However, compared to his expression, the tune was a cheerful one. Philip Barlow was amazed by how his fingers moved on the piano keys.

He wondered what kind of expression William would show if he heard that Jasper was coming to visit him.

William was probably willing to leave the Reed family only because Jasper had hurt him.

However, Jasper was coming over now. He wanted to see how important she was to William. It would not be a good thing if she was too important.

During the weekend, Jason and Grace took Mick Reed and Jasper to Deer City.

It took two hours by plane to arrive at Deer City's airport. It was almost noon when they arrived in Deer City.

Jasper was full of anxiety during the entire trip. She was hoping

to see William as soon as possible. She had even written an apology card, on which she wrote many things to express how sorry she was.

She must apologize properly and ask William whether he wanted to return to the Reed family's house with her.

She would be very nice to him and would never misunderstand him again.

Jason and Philip Barlow did not meet up at the Barlow family's residence but the most luxurious restaurant in Deer City that was owned by the Barlow family.

When Jason and the rest arrived, someone immediately came up to them and said, "You must be Mr. Reed and Mrs. Reed. Mr. Barlow asked me to wait here for you. Please come with me."

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The person took Jason and the rest to a private room. They respectfully opened the door.

However, when Jason, Grace, and the rest went in, they found that Philip Barlow was the only one in the private room. William was not there.

Jasper Reed's expression, which had been full of expectation, instantly sank. "Where's William? Why isn't he here?" Jasper asked anxiously.

"William has a class today and can't come, but he knew you were coming and asked me to take good care of you," Philip Barlow replied to Jasper with a smile.

Jasper said, "Where is he having his class? I'll go to him. I have something to give him in person, and I want to apologize to him. I... I found out he didn't push Nelson down the stairs but saved him instead. Otherwise, Nelson would have been shot with an air gun."

Philip Barlow raised his eyebrows and looked at Jason and Grace.

Grace then told Philip Barlow about what exactly had happened. "It's a misunderstanding. Everyone misunderstood William. I came over to talk to William about this, and the two children want to apologize to him as well."

Philip Barlow smiled slightly and said, "It's good that everything has been cleared up. I'll tell William that you apologized when I get back."

With that said, he looked at Jasper Reed. "If you have something give to William, I can pass it to him."

'Pass it?' Jasper froze for a moment before shaking her head. She wanted to hand her apology card to William in person.

More importantly, she wanted to see William.

"Uncle Barlow, I want to see William. Tell me where he's taking his class. I... I'll go and find him!" Jasper pleaded with him. Her big almond-shaped eyes were already a little wet with anxiety.

Philip Barlow gazed at the little girl in front of him. She was pretty but not exactly stunning. However, his only son cared very much about this little girl.

'Does my son long for this kid because she... showed my son kindness when he was at his worst?

'It seems a little dangerous.'

Then, Philip Barlow said slowly, "Let's just say that William doesn't wish to see you right now. I had arranged for him to come here with me today, and I helped him take a day off from his class, but he would rather go there than come here. You needn't go look for him."

Jasper widened her eyes with surprise on her face. "1e... He doesn't want to see us?"

"Yeah, even though you've found out you misunderstood him, what's done is done. He's upset that he was misunderstood, so he doesn't want to see you for a while. How about this? I'll ask him if he wants to meet you after some time. If he wants to meet you, I'll bring him to Emerald City to meet you. What do you think?" Philip Barlow spoke kindly, looking just like a kind uncle.

Jason narrowed his eyes, understanding that Philip Barlow was trying to cut off contact between the children so that their affection for each other would fade naturally. When they saw each other less, they would be less important to each other.

Speaking of which, Philip Barlow had the same idea. Neither of them wanted their children to be close with each other.

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Jasper looked shocked and was at a loss for words for a long time. Grace hugged her daughter, feeling sorry for her. Then, she looked at Philip Barlow and said, "Why don't you let me talk to William, Mr. Barlow? Maybe he'll be willing to meet us afterward."

"I don't think that's necessary. William might be a child, but he's sensitive. He might need some time to recover from this injustice. I don't want him to suffer any emotional damage if you were to bother him too much. He's my son, and I should protect him, right?" said Philip Barlow.

"But we mean no harm, Mr. Barlow! We just want to tell him the truth and apologize to him," said Grace.

"I'll tell him the truth and send him your apologies. I suppose that should be enough," said Philip Barlow before getting up. "I've ordered some specialties of Deer City. You should try them since you don't come here often. I have other things to attend to, so I won't be joining you. You can talk to the restaurant manager if you want to explore Deer City. He'll arrange a tour guide and transport for you."

Philip Barlow walked out of the restaurant once he finished talking.

Grace did not expect the trip to Deer City to end like this.

Jasper looked up pitifully. "Daddy, Mommy, boo-hoo... William doesn't want to see us. Is he still mad at me? Are you sure we won't get to see him?"

Grace was just about to say something when Jason spoke first, "Maybe next time. We'll ask William if he would like to see you after Uncle Barlow conveys your apology and William's anger has subsided. Won't that be better?"

"But..."

"When you misunderstood William and were angry with him earlier, you didn't want to talk to him either, did you? Didn't you always turn your head and ignore him? He won't want to talk to you now that he's angry," added Jason.

Jasper wanted to retort, but she was at a loss for words. At that moment, she did not know what to say.

"Alright, why don't we eat first?" asked Jason. Grace looked at her husband in doubt.

They came here to see William, but what Jay said made her think he would rather not have them see William.

Jasper was absent-minded during the meal. When Jason arranged for their flight back home, Jasper refused to leave Deer City and insisted on spending the night here.

“Even if you stay in Deer City for the night, you still won’t be able to see William if he doesn’t want to see you,” said Jason.

I... I want to stay here anyway!” The little one hugged Jason’s waist and said affectionately, “What if William wants to see

3/3 me after he finishes his class? He won’t be able to find me if we leave. Daddy, why don’t we stay for one night and go back tomorrow?”

His daughter looked up with her face that was similar to Grace’s. Those almond-shaped eyes of hers were especially similar. Her aggrieved and pitiful eyes seemed to cause Jason’s words of protest to be stuck in his throat. He was unable to say them out.

It was as if was looking at a mini Grace begging him.

If it were his two sons, Jason might have refused without hesitation and insisted on going back to Emerald City.