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Facing his suspicious expression, Anthony rubbed his little head and said, "I've investigated the fight. The twins being hospitalized wasn't your fault. I was wrong to blame you."

"Really?" He was overjoyed. "Then who caused their injuries?"

Anthony shook his head. "Uncle Malcolm from the National Investigation Bureau is investigating it. If bad guys intentionally framed you, Uncle Malcolm will catch them."

"That's great!" He lowered his head and looked at his own injuries before whispering, "So... did you wrongly accuse me?"

"Yes, I accused you wrongly and even punished you. I didn't handle it well and I'm sorry. Can you forgive me?" Anthony apologized sincerely.

Alistair felt thrilled to hear that his father had taken the initiative to apologize to him for once in his life.

"Since your attitude is quite decent this time around, I can reluctantly forgive you but on one condition."

"What condition?"

"Can we skip this week's math test? And then can you take me to an amusement park for a day?"

"... You're still too playful," Anthony thought.

After a moment of silence, he finally nodded and said, "Okay! This week we'll take a break so that you can play without any worries."

"Yeah!" He cheered excitedly, almost jumping up with joy.

Anthony straightened up the little guy's shoulders before giving him some words of advice, "I won't hold today's runaway incident against you but such behavior isn't acceptable as it makes your great-grandma, auntie and me all worried sick about you! There cannot be another time like this. Remember that!"

"I know," he replied obediently.

Anthony patted his small shoulder then stood up while extending a big hand towards him, saying, "Let's go home."

However, he raised both arms instead saying, "Daddy, my hands hurt too much. They won't let me hold your hand so please carry me."

Anthony indulged him by bending down and lifting him up into his arms, while leading them towards their luxury car without forgetting to remind Molly and Spencer, "It's getting late now. Your father should have finished handling things by now, so he'll come pick you guys back home in ten minutes at most."

Don't wander off!"

"We know! Godfather, hurry back with milk tofu!" Molly smiled happily seeing father-son conflict resolved and feeling proud as she waved goodbye at Anthony departing with his precious godson in tow.

Spencer remained aloof as always, his hands in his pockets and no words to offer. The luxury car quickly drove away, its red taillights gradually disappearing into the night.

Molly watched the car disappear into the distance with great satisfaction. "He finally found out the truth and sincerely apologized to milk tofu. That's great," she said.

As she was feeling emotional, Spencer's eyes were full of coldness. "It's a waste of time watching hypocritical people put on a show of father-son love," he said.

He had originally wanted to watch a good drama about strict parenting and a son who decided to leave after becoming disillusioned with it all, but Anthony's performance tonight left him unsatisfied.

"Spencer..." Molly wanted to say something but felt that she wasn't involved enough in their family affairs nor could she truly understand her brother's feelings after enduring years of illness. She sighed instead.

Spencer didn't show much expression on his face, despite being only eleven years old. He looked very similar to Malcolm in appearance except for those icy-cold eyes that gave off an air of world-weariness beyond his age. His pale skin and thin frame made him look sickly yet mature beyond his years.

Under the moonlight, he spoke schemingly, "I prefer seeing widowers living alone rather than families living harmoniously or obedient son."

But given Alistair's current status as an obedient son, this would be quite challenging for him.

However, Spencer enjoyed doing difficult things like this.

Molly thought he was just joking around and didn't pay much attention as she sat on the steps outside the villa with her chin resting on her hands while waiting for Malcolm to pick them up.

Meanwhile, at Suham's forest villa located near the border mountains area where they held a simple funeral service...

All furniture was covered in white cloth while men and women dressed in black lowered their heads solemnly, creating an atmosphere filled with dignity and respectfulness.

Sheldon who had aged considerably over time lit three sticks of incense before bowing down reverently three times.

In front of him hung a black-and-white photo showing a woman who was smiling gently. When looking at it, one could see how similar Jacqueline looked like Lyra when smiling too.

Next to it stood one subordinate trying hard, not knowing what else could be done other than consoling Sheldon by saying, "Mr. Alford, please take care yourself first."

Sheldon turned cold instantly as if wielding sharp knives from within his eyes. "Jacqueline has barely been dead long enough for me not feel grief-stricken! As her adoptive father, how can I possibly find solace?"

The subordinate couldn't understand why Sheldon acted so harshly towards them, "But... Jacqueline has suffered from severe depression these past few years which led up until now... She committed suicide...who should we seek revenge against?"

Sheldon stared closely at the black and white photo of Jaqueline, with monstrous anger brewing in his chest, hating a certain name over and over again in his heart.

"If it wasn't for that man, how could she have been depressed all day after returning to me, and finally chose to end her life?"

The subordinates stopped talking.

The other subordinates in the surrounding circle lowered their heads one after another, for fear of being implicated by Sheldon who was angry.

Sheldon's eyes were red with hatred.

"Anthony Callahan!"

"Jaqueline died because of him. Why can he still sit in the Callahan Group? I have no children in my life. Why can he still have a son?"

"The Callahans deserve to die, and Anthony deserves to be chopped up and fed to the dogs."

Speaking of anger, Sheldon took out a pistol from his waist and fired three shots at the ceiling.

Bang bang bang-

The gunshots were deafening and terrifying.

The others all turned pale and took a few steps back silently.

His subordinate Apollo Sutton stood up again and said, "Mr. Alford, the twins who fought with Alistair Callahan a few days ago have now been targeted by NIB, and the matter has also been suppressed by Anthony with money. The case is currently being investigated by NIB. We should be more careful recently."

"What are you afraid of? They don't dare to confess me."

Apollo nodded and bowed, complimenting again and again, "Yes, Mr. Alford, you are very wise and powerful, and you can handle them. NIB can't find our trouble."

Sheldon fetched a stack of hell money, lit it with a lighter, and personally burned it to the deceased. He calmly arranged, "Let the people below prepare for it. We will find a way to make more troubles to the Callahan Group. While

he can't take care of himself, we will find another opportunity to continue to deal with the kid next to him."

"Once a person has the biggest weakness, it's easy to handle."

Even if he could cut off one of Alistair's fingers, Anthony would be in pain for a long time, right?

As long as it made Anthony unhappy, he was happy.

Apollo bowed, "Mr. Alford, you are wise."

Sheldon laughed, grabbed a stack of money and threw it on the ceiling, "Jaqueline, I know you miss him all day long. I'll make you happy, and let him accompany you soon."

...

For two or three days in a row, Alistair's life finally returned to its usual calm. He had already dropped out of the previous kindergarten, and the Callahan family was busy finding him a better aristocratic school.

Anthony took his upcoming elementary school enrollment very seriously. Even though Alistair was at home all day, Anthony arranged for him to have a private tutor so that he wouldn't fall behind on any important subjects.

Alistair was lazy and slept all day long. Finally, after waiting for what seemed like forever, the weekend arrived.

Early in the morning, before Anthony had even woken up, Alistair climbed onto his bed and snuggled up next to him.

"Daddy, it's time to wake up~ Great grandma has already helped me get ready for the day. We're just waiting for you~"

Anthony raised his bleary blue eyes and spoke lazily, "What could possibly make you so excited that you'd wake up at 6:30 in the morning?"

Alistair furrowed his little brows and stared mournfully at him, "Daddy, you forgot about today? It's an important day!"

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He was stunned for several seconds before his brain finally kicked into gear, but he couldn't remember anything. "What day?"

Alistair was not pleased at all and pouted, crossing his arms and turning away. "Daddy, you said just a few days ago that this weekend we would take a break from math homework and go to the amusement park together."

Anthony suddenly realized what he had forgotten. Callahan Group had been busy with projects lately, so it slipped his mind. He rubbed Alistair's head and said, "I remember now. We'll go after breakfast."

“Yay!” Children’s emotions always come quickly and leave quickly too. “Daddy hurry up and get ready! I can’t wait anymore!” With agile short legs, Alistair jumped off the bed happily like a playful little puppy running downstairs.

Anthony watched the small figure disappear down the stairs with a sigh. His son lacked ambition. All he ever wanted to do was play games. It made him feel uneasy inside, but since he had promised Alistair beforehand, he didn’t say anything about it as he got out of bed to wash up.

An hour and a half later...

After finishing breakfast alone with Alistair in tow, Anthony left home.

“Alistair slow down! Save some energy for when we get to the amusement park,” Paloma beamed happily while looking back at Anthony.

“It’s rare for father-son duo to have fun outside together like this. Consider today as your own vacation day instead of thinking about work.”

Anthony nodded in agreement, “I understand.”

He sat in the back seat with Alistair buckled up safely, while giving their driver an approving nod before their luxury car drove away from Callahan Residence.

The amusement park on weekends was always bustling with parents bringing their children over for playtime. Laughter filled every corner of it.

Alistair also caught onto this atmosphere immediately. Grabbing onto his daddy’s big hand, he dashed towards the amusement park entrance without hesitation!

There were cotton candy stands along the way as well as ice cream vendors.

Alistair pointed excitedly towards them shouting, “Daddy! I want some too!”

Anthony silently calculated how much food his little stomach could handle.

“You can only have one small cotton candy because eating too many will rot your teeth. The ice cream is also off-limits because cold foods are bad for your stomach. You can’t drink milk tea or eat chocolate either since they’re high in sugar. Finally, the hot dogs are unhealthy...”

He went on explaining everything until finally Alistair pouted angrily asking, “Then what can I eat?!”

Anthony took a look around at the street vendors. “You can eat hawthorn slices. They’re refreshing and appetizing.”

“I’m tired of eating hawthorn slices at home. I don’t want to eat them outside,” Alistair pouted.

“Okay then, how about some fruit? Do you like strawberries?” Anthony suggested.

Alistair pursed his lips and didn’t say anything. He had been looking forward to this day with his dad for so long, but now he couldn’t even eat anything.

Going out with dad was boring.

Without waiting for Alistair's response, Anthony took charge and bought him a small cotton candy and a box of strawberries. Alistair could only watch as all the tempting snacks in the amusement park passed him by while he nibbled on one small strawberry.

Anthony planned to take him on the carousel next. But just as they arrived at the entrance without buying tickets yet, Anthony's phone rang in his pocket.

Looking up at his father expectantly with big eyes blinking rapidly, Alistair heard him say, "Wait here for me for a moment. I have to take this call."

It was Zack calling. It must be something important since he called during their outing time.

"Mr. Callahan," Zack sounded anxious over the phone. "Our project with RU International Trading Company has fallen through."

"What happened?" furrowed brow appeared on Anthony's face as he asked urgently.

"I'm not sure what exactly went wrong either," Zack replied quickly. "We were supposed to sign contracts today but RU suddenly backed out, saying that Callahan Group lacks business ethics and it refused cooperation with us anymore! Besides that... there is also an issue regarding construction work on South City land. There was apparently a murder case reported from there, causing chaos among workers..."

Zack continued reporting non-stop over the phone while Alistair stood beside him, staring blankly at his father who seemed preoccupied dealing with something beyond his understanding or interest right now...

Hurry up! He really wanted to ride on that carousel! Come on, Dad, finish your call so we can buy our tickets!

The conversation lasted two minutes which felt like forever for little Alistair who couldn't comprehend any of it anyway...

Finally when it ended, Anthony slowly crouched down next to him apologizing, "Alistair... something came up unexpectedly regarding Callahan Group today... I won't be able accompany you anymore today... we'll come back again another time okay?"

Although spoken lightly by his father's tone of voice – those words felt like cold water being poured onto hot embers inside young boy's heart – extinguishing all excitement within seconds...

"Daddy, you have promised me..." he protested, feeling a bit resentful.

Anthony tried to offer an alternative, "Okay, today is still your day off. I can have the driver or bodyguard accompany you if you want to do something fun while I'm away. But don't eat too much or you'll get a stomachache later."

Alistair hung his head and lost all interest in the idea.

The driver and bodyguard weren't his father. They were more like surveillance cameras than companions. What was the point? All he wanted was for his dad

to spend time with him.

Anthony felt sorry for him and ruffled his short hair as he emphasized, "There really is an urgent matter that needs my attention, Alistair. Can you be a good boy and understand?"

He had already said enough. There was no room left for refusal now.

Dejectedly nodding his head, Alistair replied, "Okay then, Daddy, you can go take care of business since I don't feel like playing anymore."

"Alright then," Anthony agreed before adding after checking his watch, "There's still plenty of time left this afternoon, so if you're bored, just work on your math homework instead. We'll come back here another time."

"I understand," replied Alistair as Anthony helped him into the car where he buckled up again before leaving the amusement park behind.

When they arrived earlier that day, Alistair had been excited beyond measure but now as they drove away from it all, his spirits were crushed by disappointment.

In silence, the only sounds came from their breathing until finally, the driver spoke up through the rearview mirror trying to comfort him, "Don't be sad, Alistair. Mr. Callahan must have had some very important business matters to attend to which is why we had to cancel our plans today."

Alistair didn't respond but instead fidgeted with his clothes out of boredom while thinking about what Spencer had told him earlier.

For his Daddy, the Callahan Group seemed more important than anything else in life.

The driver continued trying to console him further, "It's because Mr. Callahan works tirelessly guarding over both the Callahan family and their industries that allows you all this comfortable lifestyle. Alistair, you should try understanding things from your father's perspective."

Feeling downcast, Alistair suddenly blurted out everything on his mind, "Everyone thinks that since birth, I've been blessed with privilege, luxury living, best education, mansions, cars, and designer clothes. I should be grateful. I should behave myself, and become an excellent child. But none of them ever considered whether or not I wanted any of these things. Why doesn't anyone ask me whether or not I'm happy?"

The driver looked at him through the rearview mirror with some surprise. He couldn't believe that a five-year-old child could have such understanding. He asked, "So what do you want?"



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“I...” Alistair wanted to say something, but as the words reached his lips, he sighed and swallowed his thoughts back. “Never mind, it doesn’t matter what I want anyway. My Dad won’t agree.”

What he wanted was seen as a waste of time in Anthony’s eyes and saying too much might even get him a beating. As an observer, the driver could only sigh and gently advise, “Alistair, Mr. Callahan has high expectations for you so it’s natural that he demands strictness. Don’t take it to heart. Fathers often express their love in different ways. Look at all the things he’s done for you.” Alistair pouted and turned his head to look out the car window at the scenery passing by.

His father had done plenty of things like supervising his studies, personally correcting his math papers and punishing him if they weren’t good enough. He had to learn piano, taekwondo... even if he held the tableware wrong, he would be scolded.

Even his diet was strictly controlled. If he got sick from eating something forbidden or sneaking food behind his father’s back, then another scolding would ensue.

He rested both hands on cheeks while hanging his head dispiritedly. “Being me is just too hard! Just when I finally managed to get a day off, it gets ruined.”

He still had homework waiting for him when they got home. His father would definitely check on it tonight.

Ugh! He tugged at strands of hair in frustration while the driver shook his head helplessly.

...

For several days straight now Anthony left early in the morning and came home late at night because there were many issues with Callahan Group recently. Projects that were supposed to be signed suddenly fell through on signing day due to sudden changes from other companies who took over instead. Someone died on one of their construction sites which attracted police attention, causing them have no choice but suspend work temporarily. All these matters kept Anthony busy with worry but deep down inside knew someone was sabotaging Callahan Group and trying suppress its market share rights.

Meanwhile Alistair started attending a new elite kindergarten where drivers and bodyguards picked him up every morning and evening, so there wasn’t



much concern from Anthony about safety issues anymore...

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One afternoon two weeks later...

Most of the children had already left kindergarten when Alistair sat outside, holding onto his small backpack and waiting patiently near entrance gate. He hoped Molly would come soon with some snacks Malcolm made especially for him since today was Friday. And Molly had weekends off.

The principal and teachers showed some concern towards Alistair before but found that although he was well-behaved, his overall attitude seemed somewhat distant towards others around him.

Just as he was getting used to his new environment, he still wasn't familiar with the other kids. After waiting for almost ten minutes, he finally saw the luxury car belonging to his family parked on the side of the road.

"Momo!" Alistair was excited and ran over with his short legs.

The car door opened and a boy with a cold temperament walked out, wearing an icy expression. Alistair froze. "Spencer, why are you here? Where's Momo?"

Spencer lazily glanced at him and impatiently replied, "Molly has something going on at school and might be late picking you up. She asked me to bring you something." He took out a delicate box from the back seat of the car and handed it to him with a sneer on his lips.

"Is my dad's rabbit cookies really that good? Can't Anthony even make these small snacks?" Alistair grabbed Spencer's hand holding onto the cookie box while defending Anthony, "My Daddy is too busy working. He doesn't have time for this."

He opened up the box revealed fragrant milk cookies that made Alistair lick his lips unconsciously. They were sweet but not cloying – delicious! Spencer stuffed his hands in his pockets and spoke disdainfully, "He just doesn't care enough. My dad works for both NIB and White Corp., yet still manages to find time to spend with family while cooking gourmet meals. Being busy is just an excuse."

Alistair didn't want to argue anymore so continued sitting on steps, eating cookies obediently while being extremely cute.

"Alistair, how many times has your father personally picked you up from kindergarten in these past few years?" Spencer asked suddenly.

Alistair froze again mid-chew of cookie crumbs. His father rarely came unless there was trouble or someone had complained about him doing something wrong...

He couldn't remember more than five times when his father had come himself...

But in front of Spencer, he lifted his chin proudly, defending, "My Daddy

comes all the time! So many times I can't even count them!"

Spencer scoffed lightly, "You're deluding yourself."

Alistair lowered his head silently, continuing eating little cookies without saying anything else.

Originally, it never occurred to him that his father not coming himself was such a big deal since he had drivers or bodyguards who could pick him up instead, but today when Spencer brought it up like this, it made him feel sad deep down inside.

Still unwilling give up hope completely though, he gathered courage, asking, "Spencer, did Uncle Malcolm often come pick you guys home often before?"

"Not often," Spencer said, his lips curling into a cold smile. "Every day."

Alistair blinked in surprise. Could Uncle Malcolm really manage to pick them up and drop them off almost every day despite being so busy? A jealous feeling rose in his throat, and even the taste of the cookie he had just eaten turned bitter.

Spencer stuffed his hands into his pockets and ignored the little boy's expression. His attention was focused on their surroundings at the kindergarten. Was someone following them from the corner? Were they Callahan family bodyguards or White family bodyguards?

His dark eyes deepened as he considered this for a moment before suggesting, "Alistair, it's Friday today and Molly and I are going to watch a football game at school later. Do you want to come with us?"

"Sure! Where is it?" Alistair closed the cookie box and hugged it close to him as he ran up to Spencer.

"It's very close by, only about seven or eight hundred meters away. So, we can walk there," Spencer replied.

Alistair followed obediently as they left together but then suddenly stopped when Spencer turned around again.

"I told you not to follow us," Spencer said firmly towards Eleven and Twelve who were guarding Lyra before, turning back around without waiting for their response.

Eleven and Twelve exchanged an awkward look between themselves before saying hesitantly, "Spencer... Mr. White and Mrs. White are worried about your health. So, we have no choice but to follow."

They had been instructed not leave him alone since leaving home in case something happened unexpectedly that could cause him harm or make him ill. Spencer glared coldly at them before holding up his wrist, which showed readings from a monitoring device attached there. "This device clearly shows my blood pressure levels along with my heart rate. If anything happens, it will automatically notify my father without any need for your interference."

Feeling dismissed by this statement, Eleven and Twelve looked embarrassed

but still managed weakly saying, "Please take care of yourself, and let us know if anything happens."

With an impatient grunt from Spencer, they walked away without looking back, while Alistair happily skipped alongside him through an empty park area where few people passed by.

After walking for ten minutes straight, Spencer couldn't even see the two luxury cars parked in front of the kindergarten anymore. But he kept on walking without any intention of stopping.

Alistair scratched his head in confusion. "Spencer, where is the competition venue? This place should be bustling with people. Why does it seem like there's no one around?"

Spencer's tall and thin figure continued to walk as he answered nonchalantly, "We're almost there."

"Spencer, can you slow down a bit..." Alistair didn't finish his sentence before someone covered his mouth from behind and sprayed something on his face that made him dizzy and itchy.

When Spencer heard the commotion and turned around, he saw several tall men wearing masks standing nearby while carrying Alistair who was unconscious.

He sneered at them. "It's not even dark yet and you guys are already following us. Now you dare to snatch him directly? You're really bold."

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Several men looked at Spencer, who was in his early ten years, and immediately approached him aggressively.

Spencer raised his left hand calmly, "I'm not in good health, and I can't stand your drugs. I wear a medical monitoring watch. If I lose consciousness, the watch will automatically alarm."

Several men glanced at each other, and the leading man narrowed his eyes and asked, "What do you want to express?"

He pointed to Alistair that was carried on his shoulders, "I am with this kid. Where are you going to take him to? Don't forget to take me with you."

Several people were dumbfounded.

This was the first time anyone wanted to be kidnapped these days.

Was this kid out of his mind?

To be on the safe side, several people took out the rope, quickly tied Spencer's hands, and took away with Alistair who was unconscious.

The van which had fake license quietly left the park and drove all the way to the desolate outskirts.

Spencer walked a lot today, and still had to walk in the suburbs.

Spencer's physical strength couldn't support him long and the kidnappers were afraid that he would faint, so they carried him into the top floor of a abandoned building.

The sky was red like fire.

And the sun was almost setting.

Spencer was sitting on the edge of the balcony, next to Alistair who was not awake.

Several kidnappers gathered in a corner, smoking and discussing something in a low voice.

The choking smell of smoke drifted over with the wind, and Spencer coughed with an expression of hostility between his brows.

Within a few minutes, the leading man suddenly walked towards him incredulously, squatted in front of him and observed him, "I called to ask your identity. Are you really Spencer White of the White family?"

"Yes."

The kidnappers looked at one another.

"Kid, we have no intention of offending Malcolm White. What happened today is only for the Callahan family. We can let you go. As a deal, you don't want to reveal our location. How about it?"

Spencer sneered when he heard it, "You've caught me and have already provoked him. Do you think you could get away with it?"

The leader frowned, and the person next to him quietly made a gesture of wiping his neck, signaling that they would kill the two together.

When Spencer saw it, he remained calm and began to talk about conditions, "Are you Anthony's enemies? Kidnapping Alistair to get revenge on him? What are you going to do?"

The leader was honest, took out his pistol and put it on the ground, "When the connector comes over, we can negotiate a price for the body parts, and then find a place to bury him, or throw him back to the Callahan family."

Spencer narrowed his eyes. His expression immediately became serious, but soon, he chuckled, "The things in his body are only worth a few dollars, so you should have a bigger picture."

Several people looked at one another, stared at him vigilantly, and did not answer.

He continued, "As the son of the Callahan family, you use him as a bargaining chip, and the Callahan Group can take out hundreds of millions of dollars. When the time comes, you will kill him and run away. You can complete the task and get the money. You can have it both ways."

It was not unreasonable, so several people were a little moved.

“Also, I’m Anthony’s godson. If you use me as a bargaining chip, it will be more effective than using this kid. Do you want to try it? Do you want to make a big money?”

There was silence on the rooftop, and only the sound of the wind could be heard.

Several people looked at Spencer in surprise, somehow feeling that this child was a bit unpredictable.

Obviously, he was only about ten years old, but his words were well-founded, well-organized, and his thinking was clear.

Spencer said lazily, “Don’t doubt my intentions. Although I am Anthony’s godson in name, I also want to take revenge on him.”

...

Less than 20 minutes after Spencer and Alistair disappeared, the bodyguards who stayed at the kindergarten gate immediately discovered the problem.

The bodyguards on both sides notified Malcolm and Anthony respectively.

Anthony knew about it first because he received a text message.

[Your son and godson are in my hands. If you want their safeties, 100 million cash. Send them to the abandoned building of No. 23 western suburb. Come alone and can’t alarm NIB. Otherwise, whichever son’s little finger is received first? I will send it to you.]

Anthony read the entire text message with a sullen face, the corners of his eyes were stained with scarlet, and he dropped the document on the corner of the table on the spot.

In less than a minute, he received a call from an unknown number.

The other party teased and asked, “Mr. Callahan, what do you think?”

Anthony gritted his teeth sullenly, suppressing his anger, “If you dare to touch a hair of them, I will make you feel worse than death.”

This was not a threat. Even if he couldn’t do it, if Spencer was injured, Malcolm would probably go crazy on the spot.

In the other end of the phone, the man laughed and didn’t take it seriously, “100 million cash, one person, help me block NIB. If you can’t do it, I can make you feel worse than death, and send your son’s body to you.”

The veins in his clenched arm bulged, and Anthony was on the verge of an outburst of anger.

Endured, he talked about the conditions in a low voice, “At this point in time, the bank is closed, so I can’t get so much money out. Moreover, the cash is too heavy, and I can’t get it by myself.”

The man sneered, “You’re a big shot in Suham. How can such a small matter trouble you? Anyway, if I don’t see you and money for an hour, I will randomly pick one and push him downstairs. You can figure it out.”

The phone was hung up.

Anthony clenched his fists, holding back his anger.

Zack stood aside and asked worriedly, "Mr. Callahan, at this point in time, where can we get 100 million in cash? After all, this matter involves the White family. Should we first notify Mr. White and ask NIB for reinforcements? "

"No."

The weakness was controlled by the other party. Alistair and Spencer must not be hurt. Otherwise, he would never forgive himself in this life.

He calmly ordered, "Arrange a few people to find Mr. White, and ask him not to make a move. Arrange people to surround this address within three hundred miles, and wait for me to go first."

"In addition, immediately assemble all the security guards of the Callahan Group. All go to the nearby bank to withdraw money. Use special passages. Collect as much as you can, and speed up."

Zack said, "Got it!"

...

The sun was about to set.

The view from the old rooftop was beautiful.

Alistair had woken up and figured out the current situation of being coerced as a hostage.

It was the first time he experienced this kind of thing, and he was tied up so that he could not move. He was so frightened that he shed tears.

Spencer frowned, disgusted, "Manly man, bleed but not cry. You always cry. That's what Anthony taught you?"

"I'm sorry..." Alistair pursed his mouth, tears were still dripping from the end of his eyes, and his blue eyes were shining. If it wasn't for the short hair, he would be more delicate and beautiful than a girl.

"Spencer, will my Daddy come? Will Uncle Malcolm come? Will we... will we die?"

Spencer looked as indifferent as ever, "They will come, we may die."

Alistair was even more frightened. His tears kept dropping on his little face, which made people feel sorry for him.

Spencer said casually, "Alistair, I know you don't like me, and I hate you, too."

"Do you know Anthony loves you very much? Would you like to guess who he would choose to save first in a real danger situation?"

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Alistair stopped his tears in an instant and shouted firmly at him, "Daddy will save me! He will definitely save me!"

The wind on the rooftop was very cold, and Spencer's face was almost bloodless pale.

The boy had handsome eyebrows and eyes, and his extremely pale skin made him look like an angel. However, the corners of his weak lips were curved with a mocking smile. "I also think he will save you."

In this way, he can continue to retaliate without restraint.

Didi –

There was a car honking not far away, which was particularly noticeable in the quiet environment.

Several bandits chatting in the corner immediately straightened up and stood at the edge of the rooftop, gazing into the distance.

"The person who is giving money has arrived, and he moves really fast."

Several people burst into laughter.

On the country road, 200 meters away from the abandoned building, there was only Anthony.

One hundred million cash was too much, so Anthony brought a cart and piled it high with black cloth-covered stacks.

The road in the suburbs was flat and easy to walk on. Anthony only walked up to a distance of 30 meters from the abandoned building when he was ordered to stop by someone on the rooftop.

Several kidnappers wearing masks laughed wildly, "Anthony Callahan, you come very. Sure enough, to seize your son is equal to seize the whole Callahan Group group. This feeling is really cool."

Anthony's face turned cold and he paid no attention to anything else, getting straight to the point, "The money you wanted has been delivered. Release them."

The leader laughed even more wildly, grabbing Alistair's collar from behind and pressing him against the porcelain tile fence at the edge of the rooftop.

"Daddy! Daddy, save me! Waaahhh..."

Alistair had never seen such a scene before, with the distance of eight floors high. He was so scared that his face turned pale, afraid of being pushed down.

Anthony's eyes turned red with anger, and he immediately wanted to go upstairs.



“Stand there. If you move forward, I’ll push him off!” “yelled the leader. Anthony stopped, his blue eyes seemed to contain hurricane, and his fist quivered under his cuff. “I’ve given you what you want, and if he gets hurt, I’ll make your life a living hell.”

The leader laughed heartily, not taking it seriously, and grabbed Spencer’s collar from behind, making him stand up and block in front of him.

“Anthony Callahan, you may have misunderstood me. One billion can only release one person.”

The red glow on the horizon gradually faded, but Anthony’s expression could still be clearly seen from the rooftop.

His handsome and cold face was ravenously insidious. He restrained his anger, gnashing his teeth, “You release them two. I will continue to be your hostage. I am in charge of the Callahan family. If you can hold my life, you can hold the whole Callahan Group.

The leader was not fooled. “Everyone knows that you used to be the director of the Security Agency. You’re very skillful. I know I can’t handle you.”

He took a sharp dagger out of his pocket and put it around Spencer’s neck. “If there’s only a hundred million, you will have to take one.”

“Should you take your biological son or godson?”

Alistair struggled as he was held down by the bandit beside him, with his hands and feet restrained. He was also pushed one inch closer to the edge of the rooftop.

As night approached, the wind grew stronger and Alistair screamed in terror. His fear of heights had turned his face pale.

“Daddy! Daddy, save me! I’m about to die!”

In contrast to his panicked and fearful demeanor, Spencer remained surprisingly calm and composed, even with a knife held to his neck. His gaze was contemptuous and indifferent.

“Anthony, make your choice.”

Anthony’s eyes turned crimson, and his brows furrowed tightly as he answered without hesitation, “I want both of them.”

“If you’re too greedy, then you won’t get any of them. You must make choices!”

The leader got angry and moved the tip of the knife against Spencer’s neck an inch closer. The sharp blade left a faint mark of blood.

Spencer gritted his teeth in pain and closed his eyes in resignation.

Anthony saw it, his veins bulging on his forehead and his eyes turning deep red with anger. “I choose Spencer, let him go.”

As soon as these words were spoken, everyone on the rooftop was stunned. Alistair stopped calling for help and struggling, tears streaming down his face as he stared blankly at Anthony below.

In the face of life and death, did his father really choose to spare Spencer's life and let him die?

Was he not as important to his father as Spencer, even though he'd been around for longer?

Alistair experienced despair for the first time at the age of five.

Beside him, Spencer opened his eyes and stared at Anthony in shock.

The leader lowered his knife and loosened his grip on Spencer. "You even give up your own son. Anthony, you are really cruel.

He spoke and directly picked up Alistair, without even blinking his eyes, and threw him off the eighth floor rooftop. You don't seem to like your son very much, so let me kill him for you."

He said, picking up Alistair and throwing him off the eighth floor roof without blinking—

"Ah!!"

The shrill screams of immaturity and terror echoed.

Anthony immediately ran over and caught Alistair with his body before he hit the ground. The huge inertia caused them to fall to the ground together and roll two rounds without hurting any vital parts.

His arm was somewhat dislocated, and his jawline was tight as he always protected the little kid in his arms, ensuring that Alistair didn't suffer any harm.

Alistair had been scared unconscious and was now limp in his arms.

The bandit on the rooftop saw this, immediately grabbed a pistol, aimed at Anthony and fired several shots.

Bang!

It was a gunshot from a distance. A sniper shot hit the leader in the heart, blood splattered, and he fell on the spot.

The other kidnappers were frightened and immediately lay down, hiding in the blind spot of the sniper.

The entire rooftop was empty except for Spencer, who was still standing.

White clothes were elegant and he was independent from the world.

With his hands tied behind his back, his cold and indifferent expression revealed a calmness beyond his years.

He looked coldly at the several bandits lying on the ground and said, "My dad is coming. You can't beat him with those things in your hands, and you can't take the money either. It's better to run away quickly."

Life is the most important thing.

Several kidnappers exchanged glances and seemed to silently agree on a decision.

The next second, Spencer was tackled.

The man pressed him to the ground. "I'm afraid Malcolm White has set an ambush. We're going to have a hard time getting out. Kid, give us another

ride.”

Spencer looked indifferent and sneered, “To the Palace of Hell?”

His words always made people uncomfortable, but now the kidnappers didn’t have time to argue with him. They grabbed him and lifted him up.

The kidnappers hid behind him, used him as cover, held the muzzle of their gun to his back, and shouted across the open countryside, “Malcolm White! Our lives are worthless, but your son’s life is the most precious. If you don’t want him dead, remove your men, let us take the money, and prepare a car for us!”

“If you agree, let the sniper fire three empty shots into the sky!”

The air was so quiet that only the sound of the wind can be heard.

One second, two seconds...

Two brief minutes passed, and then three loud gunshots were heard in the distance.

They were empty shots, and Malcolm agreed.

Their joy only lasted for two seconds, and a flexible figure flashed into the roof, speedy extremely to knock out one of the kidnappers and snatch away the pistol.

By the time the other two kidnappers reacted, Anthony had turned the tables on them, shooting them twice in the hand.

The guns dropped, and the kidnappers had no choice but to surrender, “Don’t kill me. We’re just paid to do this.”

Anthony confiscated the guns, his deep eyes filled with a murderous intent, yet he still maintained some rationality and did not pull the trigger.

Spencer raised an eyebrow and casually looked at the kidnappers, “It seems like you’re not going to the palace of hell, but to the interrogation room instead. That’s a fun place to be. Congratulations.”

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Within two minutes, Chad and his team arrived at the scene and quickly handcuffed the kidnappers. Alistair, who was unconscious, was placed by Anthony on the corner of the stairs on the first floor.

Seeing that everything was under control and Spencer was okay, he turned around to go find his son.

“Anthony,”

Spencer had been untied by Chad himself. His dark eyes were brewing with complex emotions as he coldly questioned him, “Why did you choose to save

me? Out of guilt or pity?"

Pity for growing up with medicine since childhood and being tortured by viruses until almost broken physically? He suffered from congenital heart disease without ever attending kindergarten. The pain would continue until he turned eighteen years old. It accompanied him throughout his entire childhood.

Anthony blinked his eyes lightly but didn't say anything.

"If you hadn't caught him just now, Alistair would have really fallen to his death. Are you so cruel to your own son? Do you think choosing me will make me grateful to you? Not hate you?"

Anthony's fists clenched tightly as they trembled with anger while deep redness crept into the corners of his eyes. "It was an emergency situation. I didn't have time to think about these things."

At that time, one of the kidnapper's knives had already been placed against Spencer's neck, leaving a bloody mark. But, if Alistair had been pushed down from upstairs, then he could still try hard enough to protect him.

There was no other way except choosing Spencer – it was just a gamble.

"The resentment between Malcolm and I hurt innocent people like your over these years. I regret every moment of it... I'm truly sorry."

"Although I know this phrase is palest and most powerless possible, you won't accept any compensation from me. Except an apology, I leave nothing else for me except my life."

He looked at the gun in his hand which already contained one bullet.

"Alistair knows nothing about our grudges. Whatever punishment or compensation is necessary for what I've done wrong before. And you can kill me but please don't involve Alistair anymore."

The gun was steadily passed over towards Spencer who stubbornly refused, saying, "Don't pretend like you care! You think I wouldn't dare shoot?"

Anthony directly handed over the gun into his hands while slowly kneeling down on one knee, maintaining a height convenient enough for him take action if needed. Then he held onto Spencer's hand, guiding where exactly should be aimed at himself and gently teaching,

"You haven't learned how to use a gun yet, right? Just hold it like this. Lightly pull your finger here. It's very simple. Try it?"

His fingertips trembled slightly –

"Spencer!"

Chad stood nearby, worried that Spencer might do something extreme. "This is murder, and with so many NIB officers around, if you act, it will be a stain on your life that even we can't protect you from."

When Malcolm arrived at the rooftop, he heard Chad's words and didn't say anything or stop him. He just watched his son from afar and waited for him to

make the right decision.

Anthony continued speaking with red eyes. "Don't be afraid. You're still young, and this can be considered me leading you astray. The Callahan family's lawyers, the White family's lawyers, and the Lloyd family's lawyers will all defend you. You won't have any problems."

Spencer hesitated as he looked at the gun in his hand but ultimately didn't pull the trigger.

"Anthony," he said as he withdrew his hand. "I'd rather see you suffer than take your life today. You saved me today so I don't owe you anything anymore. Our past grievances are settled now without any debts owed between us. But don't expect me to treat you differently than before because I'll never acknowledge your godfather status."

Anthony lowered his injured eyes without responding.

Malcolm had been quietly watching all along until Spencer resolved his personal grievances before walking up to pick up his thin son.

"Chad, personally escort the suspects back to NIB while I take Spencer and Alistair to hospital," Malcolm said.

"I understand," Chad replied as they quickly evacuated from the abandoned building.

Anthony soon suppressed complex emotions within himself before getting up to go to hospital with them.

Fortunately, Alistair only fainted due to shock. There was nothing wrong with him physically except for some potential psychological trauma after almost falling off a building at such a young age.

The doctor prescribed some medication through an IV drip which would help him wake up normally once it was time for discharge.

Even though it was late at night when they arrived at hospital, Paloma still came over anyway.

As soon as she entered Alistair's ward, she saw Anthony sitting by Alistair's bedside guarding him. His eyes were dull without light, and out of focus.

"You've had a long day. Don't stay here anymore," she said softly. "Go home and rest. I'll watch over Alistair."

"I'm fine," Anthony replied. "You're not in good health. Don't stay up late. Alistair isn't seriously hurt. I'll watch over him."

Paloma sighed then sat down beside her great-grandson's bed.

"I want to keep company with Alistair. He must have been terrified after experiencing something so serious."

Alistair lay motionless on the hospital bed, still unconscious. Paloma held his tiny hand with tenderness, her eyes red and moist from tears.

"Grandma," Anthony hesitated before speaking softly, "do you know everything that happened today?"

“Yes, I know everything that happened,” replied Paloma with a heavy heart.

“My poor Alistair had to suffer at such a young age...”

Anthony lowered his head in guilt and self-blame. “It’s my fault. You can scold me or hit me if you want.”

But Paloma shook her head gently and looked at him with the same compassion she had for Alistair.

“How could I blame you? You were faced with an impossible choice. No matter what decision you made, someone would have been hurt. Even if it were me in your shoes, I couldn’t guarantee making a calm decision like that. And besides, you saved both children! You did well. There’s no need to blame yourself.”

Anthony’s eyes were filled with sorrow as he hung his head low. He was unable to shake off the feeling of regret.

Paloma tried to comfort him by saying, “I understand how difficult your choice was back then. And someday Alistair will understand too.”

If Anthony chose to save his biological son instead of Spencer, he would have been ridiculed by the kidnappers who would taunt him about how being a godfather was not as good as being a real father, which could further worsen Spencer’s hatred towards him.

Moreover, Malcolm and Lyra wouldn’t be able to justify his actions if Spencer suffered any serious injuries.

No matter which way he chose back then, it was like walking into death trap for Anthony because he didn’t have time to weigh up pros and cons.

“Anthony, I’ll stay here tonight. You should go get some rest.” said Paloma kindly

But Anthony refused. All he wanted was to stay by his son’s side until he woke up again.

“Listen to me,” urged Paloma patting gently on Anthony’s left shoulder but even this light touch caused him pain.

He winced slightly, and unconsciously shrunk away from her touch. It was clear that it hurt badly but despite this pain, he remained stoic.

Paloma finally noticed the sweat on his forehead and realized something wasn’t right about his complexion.

“Are you injured?” she asked worriedly.

“Why didn’t you let the doctor check it out? Don’t try toughing it out alone. Go see an emergency doctor immediately!”

“It’s nothing serious, Grandma. Just dislocated my arm. I already put it back myself. It’ll be fine in two days,” replied Anthony calmly.

“That won’t do! What if your injury gets worse? You must let the doctor examine it!” exclaimed Paloma firmly.

Anthony felt helpless against her insistence . A small injury like this meant

nothing compared what soldiers endured during training, so why made such fuss over something so trivial?

In the eyes of Paloma, she still regarded him as a child. Alistair was a kid, and he was a big kid.

“You listen to me now, let the doctor examine you properly. I’ll watch over Alistair here. I slept half the afternoon and I am not sleepy at all. But you need to rest up well. Callahan Group needs you at the helm and the Callahan family needs their backbone in good shape. You must take care of yourself and recover fully,” she insisted.

Anthony couldn’t argue with her and allowed himself to be taken for a physical examination by the nurse.

\*

That night, Alistair remained unconscious but he had a terrible nightmare – one that was truly terrifying...

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In the darkness, he felt his body falling down and down...

The weightlessness made him scream in terror, and he was calling out for his father.

But all he could hear was Anthony’s cold, heartless voice.

“I choose Spencer. Let him go.”

“You can always remarry a wife and have another son. But there’s only one Spencer.”

For the first time, Alistair felt his heart ache so much that it was almost hard to breathe. Tears flowed freely from his eyes, each drop carrying an indescribable sense of despair.

Anthony’s voice mixed with truth and lies. Alistair couldn’t tell which was which or see anything clearly.

He didn’t know how long the weightlessness lasted before he felt like he had fallen into water and created huge splashes around him.

But when he opened his eyes again, everything was blood red. He was submerged in blood water – suffocating, painful – as if his heart were about to explode under pressure.

And still Anthony spoke in that low tone of voice,

“When Spencer was your age, he could already solve middle school math problems while you couldn’t even get 80% correct on elementary school ones.”



“Your piano practice for half a month has resulted in this? You can’t even play scales at racing speed but instead sound like you’re dragging a donkey along!”

“Alistair, if only you had half of Spencer’s intelligence and diligence, I wouldn’t have to supervise your mediocre studies every day.”

“I choose Spencer...”

His vision blurred as Alistair completely broke down inside himself.

Suddenly sunlight shone through the darkness. It was too bright for him to open his eyes properly but enough to clear up some of the confusion inside him bit by bit.

His long eyelashes trembled slightly with beads of sweat still clinging onto them. His blue irises gradually regained focus while fear lingered on his pretty face after he woke up from such a nightmare.

“Alistair, you finally woke up! Are you feeling okay? Are you hungry? Do you want something to eat?” came Paloma’s lovingly concerned voice beside him. Alistair blinked away tears that rolled off from the corners of both eyes.

Paloma gently wiped them away with her soft hands.

He remained silent for quite some time as memories from last night’s nightmare kept flooding back into mind, making it difficult for him distinguish what was real anymore.

“Is this heaven or hell? And why are you here too?”

Paloma chuckled helplessly then pinched Alistair’s little cheek, “Silly boy! This is Earth! You’re alive and well, so that’s why I’m able to see my dear great-grandson.”

Gradually coming back into consciousness again after being saved from falling off building last night... But who saved him?

A question without answer lingered within Alistair...

He surveyed the white hospital room, quiet and empty except for Paloma sitting by herself at the bedside. There was no sign of that person. Was his father with Spencer? Busy comforting him?

He could already imagine Anthony by Spencer’s side, offering words of comfort and support. The image made his nose tingle with sadness and helplessness, like a tidal wave crashing over him.

“Grandma,” he choked out as he threw himself into her arms, crying uncontrollably until his voice grew hoarse and his emotions overwhelmed him.

“My little heart,” she said in sympathy as tears streamed down her face.

But Alistair refused to say anything at all. He just cried inconsolably like never before in years.

...

When Anthony came back carrying Alistair’s favorite pumpkin porridge, Alistair was still asleep on the bed with traces of tears still visible on his soft fair

cheeks. Meanwhile, Paloma kept wiping away her own tears from beside him. "What happened?" asked Anthony when he noticed something was wrong. "Alistair woke up ten minutes ago crying and holding onto me tightly," replied Paloma sadly.

"I asked what happened but he wouldn't tell me anything."

"It's only 6:30 am," she added after glancing at the clock. "Why did you come here again? You didn't sleep all night."

"I couldn't sleep," replied Anthony.

He figured Alistair probably wouldn't like hospital food so he went to a nearby five-star hotel to get some takeout for him.

Anthony put down the food container before sitting next to Alistair on the bed. He took out a wet tissue paper and gently wiped away those pitiful tear stains from his son's face while Paloma rubbed her chest uncomfortably due to emotional distress. She finally mustered up enough courage to ask, "How is your injury?"

"It's nothing serious, Grandma. Don't worry about it." Anthony reassured her. He had taken an X-ray last night which showed no bone damage but there was severe swelling around his shoulder blade.

Anthony iced it last night, and the doctor recommended using a brace or bandage tied around his chest for several days in order not cause any further damage. However, Anthony worried that this would scare Alistair so decided against it.

After cleaning up Alistair's face, Anthony noticed that something wasn't right with Paloma's condition.

"Grandma, you should go rest. I'll stay here," he suggested kindly without waiting for any objections.

"I've already called our butler who will come pick you up soon. You need take good care of yourself too. Grandma, you're protecting me by doing so."

"Okay, if there are any issues that Alistair can't handle here, just give me a call."

...

Another ward.

Spencer had always had poor physical stamina, and he was even more exhausted last night. He slept until dawn before waking up.

Malcolm sat on the chair beside his bed, with a stern expression on his face. He rubbed his wristwatch with his fingertips, lost in thought and unaware of what he was thinking about.

Spencer lowered his guilty expression and blinked, "Dad, are you not busy with NIB?"

Malcolm furrowed his brows slightly and said, "I'm busy, but there's nothing more urgent to worry about. Don't try to come up with any devious ideas to

make me leave.”

“...”

Spencer slowly propped himself up and sat up, with a bandage wrapped around his neck where the bloodstain had been. This made his already pale face look even more like that of a sickly and melancholic young boy.

“It seems that you’re going to hold me accountable today. Tell me about it, I’m listening.”

Malcolm sat upright with a serious expression on his handsome face.

“What exactly happened yesterday?” he asked sternly.

“You went to the scene personally, so you should be very clear about the ins and outs of the matter.”

“I want you to retell the whole thing again.”

Spencer squeezed the sheet slightly, still looking calm, “Alistair and I were attacked and kidnapped in the campus. They were going to dismember Alistair. I talked them into extorting Anthony, but they wanted more money, so they asked Anthony to take one of us. Anthony chose me and Alistair was thrown off the roof...”

Malcolm listened quietly and waited until he finished before asking, “Are you sure this is the truth about the whole thing?”

He pursed his pale lips and remained silent.

“You deliberately tricked Alistair into going to a non-existent game, and distracted the two bodyguards, which gave the kidnappers a chance to strike. The investigation found evidence of drugs used to incapacitate Alistair, but your electronic monitoring device did not alert me or your mom. You were not drugged.”

“It was your idea to use Alistair to blackmail Anthony, and it was your idea to put a knife to your neck and force Anthony to make a choice.”

“You were the one pushing everything behind the scenes, treating yourself and Alistair as pawns, wanting to embarrass Anthony, am I right?”

Several kidnappers had confessed to all the details of the incident last night. Originally, it was a case targeting only the Callahan family. The kidnappers knew Spencer’s identity and had no intention of harming him.

Spencer opened his eyes wide and bit his lip in silence.

Malcolm looked at his face, which looked very much like his own, in disbelief.

“You’re only eleven years old, and you have this kind of planning and scheming. Have you ever thought about risking your life and Alistair’s, what the price would be if the rescue failed?”

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Spencer hung his dim ink eyes, his fingers twisted the sheets into wrinkles, and his cold pale complexion looked extremely gloomy.

The ward was quiet for a while.

After a long silence, Spencer finally spoke up, "I'm sorry. I know I shouldn't have done that and it's not fair to Alistair. Yesterday's incident may leave an indelible shadow and nightmare on him who's so young."

"But Dad, I have also suffered for eleven years because of Anthony. The S404 biochemical virus is an indelible shadow and nightmare for me as well. I am just... passing on the pain he brought to me, making his son suffer once. I..."

As he spoke, his voice grew quieter and he gradually lost his confidence. He was completely oppressed by the pressure brought on by Malcolm, feeling as if he was being suffocated.

Malcolm was shocked.

His son had been pampered by his side for eleven years, but he only realized today that he had never truly understood his son's thoughts.

He used to think that his son was just a bit aloof, but he forgot that he was too intelligent. At the age of five, he could solve high school level math problems and had won various academic competitions every year. He had always been interested in reading adult materials such as psychology, criminology and economics since he was young.

This time what he did was the craziest, risking even his own life and Alistair's as a bet.

"Spencer, your irrationality and scheming make me feel very unfamiliar."

Spencer's heart skipped a beat. He bit his lip for a while before asking with teary eyes, "Yes, I was wrong. I had already noticed that those people were secretly following and monitoring us, yet I still led Alistair into the fire pit. So... will you take action against me?"

Malcolm choked and stopped speaking.

"Did I violate your principles this time?"

He lowered his eyes, his lips pursed and turning white. His fingers twisted the sheets incessantly, concealing his unease.

"Take me to the ancestral hall. I accept any punishment."

To be that place meant to be punished by the family law, which was too vicious. With Spencer's physical condition, it was estimated that he could not endure five strokes, and his life would be finished.

Malcolm had always taken pity on his infirm health, and had taken care of him

for a long time when he was a child, not to mention whipping or slapping. Moreover, Malcolm never even considered laying a hand on him.

“Spencer, you’re much more mature than Momo. Your mom and I don’t need to worry so much about you, so I have never cared about the grievances between you and Anthony. I give you 100% trust and let you decide it yourself.”

Spencer had a docile face, lowered his head and listened carefully.

“But Spencer, your behavior yesterday disappointed me. I’m very angry that you risked your life and Alistair’s life to play this game, especially since you are very aware of your physical condition, but you still want to play so hard and crazy.”

“Those are scumbags who specialize in shady activities. A group of desperadoes with weapons and guns in their hands. They are uncontrollable and quite dangerous.”

“But you still use them to toss your body at will, and you don’t have awe for life. You never thought about how your mom and I would feel if you made any mistakes? How sad would Momo be?”

“If Alistair really died in this kidnapping case, will there be troubles in the Callahan family? You can really get Anthony involved, but Alistair is also involved. Can you really feel at ease? Have you considered these things?” Spencer was red-eyed by the words, and nodded in a very understanding way, “I know I was wrong.”

“You will never, ever be allowed to take your own and other people’s lives insignificantly again. Can you do it?”

“Yes, there will be no next time.”

The worry between Malcolm’s eyebrows eased a little, “I believe you this time. If you can’t do it in the future, I won’t tolerate you anymore, and I will really take you to the ancestral hall. Do you hear me clearly?”

He nodded again, “Understood, I dare not.”

Malcolm sighed, and his face softened a lot, “Although the final result of this incident is good, you almost made a big mistake that cannot be made up, and you still have to be punished.”

Spencer didn’t have time to relax.

Malcolm looked at him, thought for a while, and then said in a stern tone, “Before tonight, write me a 2,000-word self-criticism. Also, when Alistair is better, find time to apologize sincerely to him and calm him down.”

This was already the most acceptable punishment for his weak body, and he couldn’t refuse it, “Understood, I will honestly review my mistakes.”

...

Alistair was having another nightmare.

As long as he closed his eyes, the feeling of weightlessness followed him

everywhere, and his whole little heart was so frightened that it almost stopped suddenly.

Now, he dreamed that he was floating in the air, watching Anthony take care of Spencer meticulously.

In the ward, Anthony was feeding Spencer, patiently blowing it cool spoon by spoon.

He sighed and said, "Spencer, you're such an excellent and well-behaved child. Why aren't you my biological son?"

In his dream, Spencer asked back, "Don't you like Alistair?"

Anthony shook his head. "He's foolish, clumsy and playful. He doesn't deserve to be my son."

Alistair floated in the air silently listening and watching with a heart so broken it felt like suffocating.

Tears flowed down his cheeks like a stream that couldn't be stopped no matter how hard he tried to wipe them away with his small hands.

His eyes were swollen from crying as he desperately approached Anthony and hugged his legs begging him, "Daddy, please don't abandon me. I'll be good. I'll listen to you from now on."

"Daddy please..."

Anthony frowned in disgust as he kicked him away.

Alistair was tossed around like an abandoned ball rolling several times on the ground before finally hitting the corner of the wall.

The misty fog blurred his vision but he could still see clearly Anthony's cold expression of indifference.

"I have chosen Spencer. Whether you live or die has nothing to do with me. Get lost!"

Waaah!

Alistair hugged himself tightly while trembling in despair at the corner of the wall.

The nightmare was too scary that it woke him up crying out loud,

"No! Please don't!"

Tears streamed down his face as he helplessly grabbed onto the bedding while kicking uncontrollably with short legs.

Anthony sat beside Alistair's bed looking startled by sudden awakening of this son who had been having a nightmare. He quickly leaned over rubbing Alistair's little head asking,

"Alistair, did you have a bad dream?"

Alistair's little hand wiped off tears haphazardly while he was blinking wet eyelashes trying to focus on Anthony's face.

Realizing it was Anthony who stood before him made him scream out fearfully, then he curled up into a ball under covers covering himself entirely,

“Don’t kick me! Daddy no more please... scared waaaah...”

His voice muffled due to sobbing too much, making words unclear for Anthony.

Not hearing clearly what Alistair’s problem was caused concern for Anthony, so he carefully pulled back covers only finding curled-up body shivering uncontrollably accompanied by faint cries.

Seeing how emotional his son had become prompted Anthony press call button located near bedside table, which summoned doctor within two minutes time.

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Alistair refused to let the doctors examine him and only cried, not answering any questions. The doctors, nurses, and Anthony were all at a loss for what to do. After two minutes of this standoff, Alistair’s emotions became more and more intense. Worried that he would choke on his tears, the doctor signaled to Anthony and they all left the room.

In the hallway, the doctor sighed. “At such a young age, Alistair probably already has serious psychological trauma. At this stage he is very resistant to treatment; we can only try to stabilize his emotions for now and seek help from a psychologist later.”

Anthony lowered his eyes with some regret but was helpless in this situation. They had only been outside for two or three minutes when they heard Alistair’s crying become quieter – it seemed like he had calmed down somewhat.

Anthony immediately wanted to go back into the room but was stopped by the doctor. “He has suffered too much trauma. You should observe him first so as not to trigger another emotional reaction.”

“Okay.”

The door of the hospital room wasn’t closed completely – there was still a crack left open.

A small figure remained hidden under blankets inside; faint sobbing sounds could be heard coming from within.

Those cries seemed able to pierce straight through Anthony’s heart, making him feel uncomfortable enough that it hurt in his chest cavity.

He pinched himself tightly while silently listening beside him for over ten minutes until those cries gradually faded away.

Had he cried himself out?



Afraid that little guy might suffocate under all those covers if there were no movements inside anymore, Anthony gently entered into the ward without making any noise.

Lifting up his son's cotton quilt revealed once again that face which used to smile so often now covered in tear stains. His eyes were swollen shut, and he was gasping slightly as if unable catch breaths.

Anthony sat down next to him on bed side, patiently wiping away tears with wet tissues.

Even though asleep, little one still appeared somewhat resistant towards being touched by his father. He was murmuring softly,

"Daddy... don't go... I don't want ..."

Even while sleeping he continued hiccuping while talking nonsense words. Anthony squeezed tightly onto wet tissues held within hand, causing jaw line muscles stiffen slightly before asking softly,

"Do you not want me here? Do you want grandma instead?"

Little one kept both eyes closed tightly, holding onto dampened corners of blanket even tighter than before, appearing quite insecure.

Mumbling unintelligibly even though half asleep,

"No... don't want Daddy.... waaahhh...."

Although was unable to hear clearly what exactly he said yet could guess general meaning behind words spoken. Most likely he didn't want see his father at present moment.

Yesterday's scene of falling from the building was truly horrifying. Alistair clearly had a strong aversion to him. Otherwise, he wouldn't have screamed and cried when he woke up and saw him, then hid away.

With downcast eyes, Anthony thought for a moment before sending a message to Paloma and Rebecca.

Alistair fell asleep, so Anthony sat quietly by his side, silently watching his watch without making any noise or waking up his son.

After about fifteen minutes, Paloma and Rebecca should be arriving soon.

Anthony quietly left the hospital room.

In the hallway, he happened to meet Paloma and Rebecca who were hurrying over.

"Anthony, how is Alistair?"

"There's nothing major wrong with him physically but he hasn't eaten anything all morning. He wakes up crying then sleeps again when he gets tired."

He forced a bitter smile while pulling at the corners of his mouth slightly before saying, "I think it's because he doesn't want to see me around. Please help me take care of him more often. Grandma, Rebecca, if there is anything, just send me a message."

After speaking, with heavy footsteps Anthony turned around and left.

“Anthony,”

Rebecca called out but Anthony had already entered the elevator without looking back, leaving behind only a slightly desolate figure in her view.

Inside the hospital room, Alistair slept restlessly as tears continued to fall from tightly closed eyes. He was trying anxiously to grasp onto something.

“Daddy... don’t go daddy... don’t leave me alone... I’m good...”

His murmurs were disoriented like they had been soaked in jealousy; full of grievances that could barely be heard by Paloma or Rebecca who had just walked into the room.

...

Lyra went abroad on business for two or three days but upon returning home, she heard about what happened: her own son Spencer along with Alistair both being kidnapped for ransom, which led them both ending up in hospital beds now...

When she arrived at the hospital, Spencer was sitting upright on top of the bed writing an apology letter obediently. Malcolm told her everything about what happened including how much their son was involved in it all and what plan he made etc...

Seeing her son now, Lyra felt angry yet heartbroken as she pinched his cheek hard.

“What you did this time is simply unreasonable! You knew your body wasn’t well yet you still acted recklessly!”

Spencer interrupted softly, “Daddy has already scolded me once as well as punished me too... do you really need to scold me again?”

Lyra paused briefly before responding nothing.

Her son found her nagging annoying so didn’t want listen anymore...

As someone who gave birth after carrying this child inside herself for ten months, Lyra understood him quite well. He always had too many ideas going through his head. His thoughts always seemed more mature than those other children around his age group did anyway...

As a child, he went to the lab every day for intravenous treatment. She and Malcolm took turns accompanying their son, wanting him to have someone by his side every day so he wouldn’t be lonely. But their son always found ways to get rid of her and Malcolm. He liked peace and solitude.

Now that he’d grown up, he kept everything to himself and didn’t tell Lyra or Malcolm anything. He lived a disciplined life, studied conscientiously, and didn’t need them to manage anything.

Even if she wanted to manage something for him, Spencer would find all kinds of excuses to deal with it. Unfortunately, he was so excellent and well-behaved that there was no way for them to do anything to him.

The more she thought about it, the more depressed she became. She lightly

pushed their son's forehead with slender fingertips.

"You should be grateful this time around. Anthony and Malcolm handled things properly so nothing major happened."

Spencer slightly hooked his lips. "I'm not stupid. I naturally trust Dad since the kidnappers were fierce and uncontrollable."

Lyra furrowed her delicate eyebrows again as she pushed his head once more. "Are you still proud?"

"I'm sorry. Please don't scold me anymore. I really know I was wrong." His voice was soft as he spoke in combination with his cold pale face, which made for an extremely rare sight of submission.

Lyra had just wanted to give some advice when Spencer used being tired as an excuse before sending her off see Alistair.

In Alistair's hospital room, the atmosphere had been somewhat gloomy at one point in time.

As soon as Lyra pushed open the door though, she could feel it immediately. Rebecca explained softly, "The impact from falling off a building is not small. Alistair is probably scared out of his wits since. Even while sleeping all night long, he has been talking in his sleep. Sometimes calling out 'Daddy,' other times calling out 'Mommy.' It really breaks my heart listening."

Lyra felt tightness in chest upon hearing this, because having raised children herself, she could understand what the Callahan family must be feeling right now too.

She slightly opened her mouth but then heard music ringing from inside her bag which startled everyone due its suddenness within such quiet surroundings. She didn't want anyone getting upset or waking up any patients due its loudness, thus she made an apologetic expression before leaving the room quietly instead

It wasn't until Lyra reached end of hallway that she took out phone from bag, checking who called. It turned out be very familiar number without name attached

When she answered, she said carefully, "Mavis? Why are you calling at this hour? Is there something wrong with that trade contract?"

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On the other end of the phone, the woman's voice was tinged with anxiety. "Lyra, has something happened in Suham? A kidnapping case? Is Alistair in the hospital?"

Lyra was taken aback. "How did you know?"

Even she had only just received news from Malcolm after landing an hour ago, and yet Mavis seemed to already be aware.

Mavis sighed. "I've been worried about him for these past two years, so I've been bribing journalists over in Crana for information. That's how I found out. But I don't know any specifics. All she told me was that the NIB and the Callahan family have suppressed any media coverage on this matter. Can you tell me what happened?"

"Of course." Lyra knew that as Alistair's biological mother, Mavis had a right to know.

"I hope you won't get too upset," Lyra began calmly before explaining everything that had happened without showing any bias towards her son.

"Mavis, I'm sorry it's my fault along with Malcolm's for spoiling Spencer too much, which led him to do such crazy things."

After hearing everything that had transpired, Mavis remained composed and said, "It can't all be blamed on Spencer. He was also once an innocent victim himself. The root cause of this whole mess is that man. He caused harm to your family in the past and now he must face his consequences."

That man... for these past few years, Mavis hadn't even wanted to utter his full name.

"Alistair is likely suffering from psychological trauma now. His condition has been poor all day today," Lyra continued.

There was silence on the other end of the line for a moment before Mavis made up her mind, "Lyra, I want to go back to Crana."

"Are you sure about this? What if you accidentally run into him again? And what about our trade business overseas? Are we going to give up on it?"

"No," came Mavis' immediate response. "I'm not planning on staying there permanently."

...

Alistair couldn't leave because he still wasn't mentally stable enough yet so Paloma and Rebecca stayed by his side constantly. Anthony visited five times throughout one day but never went further than standing outside and smoking in silence before leaving again shortly after.

The mastermind behind kidnapping still hadn't been caught yet, so Anthony needed frequent trips down NIB while also dealing with piles upon piles of work waiting for him at Callahan Group during these last few days.

Feeling restless and agitated, Anthony could only smoke to calm himself down.

...

It wasn't until that evening that Alistair became more lucid, able to distinguish between dream and reality, and even sat up to eat his dinner.

He held the spoon in his hand, stuffing food into his mouth one bite at a time. He didn't let Paloma or Rebecca feed him; he ate obediently on his own. However, despite his previously lively and outgoing nature, he now seemed emotionally low-spirited with drooping eyelashes while eating absentmindedly without any focus or direction.

Paloma and Rebecca dared not disturb him nor ask what was wrong for fear of triggering another emotional outburst from him. They sat quietly beside him with cautious movements.

After about fifteen minutes of eating only half a bowl of rice, it was clear that both enthusiasm and appetite were lacking as Alistair said weakly, "Grandma, I can't eat anymore."

Paloma lovingly rubbed his head saying, "If you can't eat anymore, then don't force yourself. When you're hungry again, we'll make sure there's something for you to eat. We'll get your desk cleaned up. Why don't you get some sleep?"

Alistair nodded in agreement.

While Paloma and Rebecca were busy cleaning up after dinner, Alistair tilted his head slightly towards the door, glancing outside with hopeful eyes and trying to catch sight of someone. But soon the light in those eyes faded away as he felt suffocated by emotions, causing himself to bury under the covers and continuing sleeping instead.

The next day, Lyra took Molly who had no school on Sunday, to visit Alistair at the hospital.

Alistair's condition improved significantly when he saw Molly, and he finally agreed to talk with her for a bit.

To avoid disturbing their conversation, Lyra sent Paloma along with Rebecca away, leaving them alone together in the ward.

Alistair asked, "Momo, what would you do if Uncle Malcolm doesn't want you as a daughter one day?"

Molly listened intently but couldn't quite grasp what Alistair meant by this question,

"How is that possible? Although I love getting into trouble which makes my dad angry sometimes, I know how much he loves me. He would never sever our father-daughter relationship."

Since Molly wasn't aware of all details regarding kidnapping case, Alistair did not know how best express himself without being too obvious, so he moved onto another topic instead.

Molly had long black hair tied up high into a ponytail. She looked stunning standing near window where sunlight shone on her fair skin, making her look like an angel.

A few moments spent quietly together made Alistair feel healed. But, Molly

kept looking at her watch throughout their conversation.

After chatting with him for only half an hour, Molly got up and said, "Milk tofu, my mom called me to go see my brother for a while. If you're tired, just lie down and rest. I'll come back to find you soon."

He felt a bit reluctant and said, "You must come back, promise me."

Molly smiled brightly and nodded before leaving the room.

As soon as she left, even the air seemed to become cold and empty.

Alistair felt uneasy being alone; his mind was filled with images of Anthony and Spencer. Spencer was still weak; he hadn't been discharged yet. Was daddy still over there keeping him company? Comforting him?

Since waking up yesterday morning until now, he hadn't seen his father at all...

No wait... did he come by once?

Or maybe he was dreaming because it didn't feel real at all.

Was his father really going to abandon him?

Waaah... lost in thought, Alistair lay on the bed crying into his pillow for a while.

After just a few minutes had passed since Molly left the room, the door slowly opened again with light footsteps walking in. A person reached his bedside and sat down.

He blinked his eyes then focused them on what appeared before him: it was a young woman wearing white nurse's clothing along with a medical mask covering her face.

Without taking notice of who she really was, Alistair quickly buried his face into the pillow, saying in muffled tones, "Miss nurse, do I need an injection? I don't have fever."

The woman put down her medical tray, then gently sat beside Alistair, asking through her mask, "No injection needed but can you sit up so that I can check your blood pressure and heart rate?"

Hearing that no injections were necessary made Alistair more cooperative as he slowly turned over onto one side, then leaned against the headboard sitting upright.

The woman noticed that even around his eyes were red-rimmed from crying earlier, which made her heart ache with pity; unable to resist, she reached out touching his cheek gently.

A puzzled expression crossed Alistair's face as this action surprised him greatly.

Although he had visited hospitals several times before for health check-ups, other nurses would praise how cute he looked but never dared touch or hold onto him due to the Callahan family status.

This nurse not only touched but also pinched his cheeks!

Lowering her head quickly after realizing what she did wrong, she opened up a device used for measuring blood pressure.

Alistair watched intently thinking aloud, “Your hair color is so pretty unlike any other nurses.”

It wasn’t like Molly’s either...

This nurse had very beautiful golden hair.

The woman was taken aback, and her lowered gaze lifted slightly to meet Alistair’s. Her exquisitely blue eyes and golden hair gradually merged with the image of the woman on his father’s marriage certificate.

He opened his mouth in disbelief, rubbing his eyes repeatedly as he confirmed what he saw. “Are you... mommy?!”