

I! Cleaner 54

Chapter 54 Family Portrait with Protagonist (Two in One)_1

Of course, he had to do some persuading. Though Anna's condition had stabilized, she had just been discharged from the hospital not long ago; breaking down wouldn't be good for her health.

After patting his little brother on the head, who was clever yet naive, Leon put down the newspaper he was holding, got up, and left the small bedroom, heading towards Anna's room.

This old house on Veteran Lane wasn't the original home of Leon and his siblings. It was an old house that the military assigned to them after withholding part of their pension, and it was almost five times their age.

The whole house was old and worn out, with mediocre lighting and no bathroom. Except for a small living room connected to the kitchen, it only had one master bedroom and one small bedroom.

The smaller bedroom had always been occupied by Leon. As for what was called Anna's room, it was actually the master bedroom shared by her and her two younger siblings.

"Squeak."

Accompanied by the rusty, grating creak of the old door hinge, Leon pushed open the door of the master bedroom and immediately saw his sister sobbing into the bedding.

Like the small bedroom where Leon stayed, this tiny master bedroom also had only one single bed. When William and Melanie were younger, they could barely fit, but as the two mischievous ones grew a bit older, it became somewhat cramped.

So, Leon had picked up some planks and bricks from outside and extended the old bed, laying down a mattress and their parents' old clothes, hoping that his younger siblings could sleep more comfortably. However, due to the material used, the makeshift part was slightly unstable, and the bed board often wobbled.

Anna was lying on this part of the bed board. With each muffled sob she let out, the newly added half of the bed wobbled twice, causing her bottom to jiggle along with the sobs, making the sight amusing enough for Leon to stifle a laugh.

"Brother! You're laughing!"

Upon hearing Leon's muffled laugh, Anna, who was lying on the bed, got even angrier and, in a rare show of temper, kicked her small white feet in the air in frustration. Then, unable to hold back, she started to complain:

"It's all because of you spoiling them! When they used to make trouble, you always stopped me from beating them! Now they're stuffing horse manure into someone's mouth! And you can still laugh about it!"

"Uh..."

Embarrassed to explain why he was laughing, Leon had to avert his gaze and, while surveying the room's setup, distractedly said,

"I just think that spanking might not be enough. They need to know why they're being punished so they don't think getting a beating makes causing trouble okay.

If you don't believe me, look at William. He's already figured out from experience how many spankings to expect for different types of mischief. It proves they still need good reasoning."

"But only after getting spanked will they listen to your reasoning!"

Anna, who was always gentle and barely opinionated in front of Leon, was exceedingly strong-willed when it came to educating her younger siblings.

After wiping her tears with the back of her hand and stopping her sobbing, she turned around, pouting dissatisfiedly as she argued,

"You spend too little time with them to know how annoying those two can be!

Melanie isn't clueless about right and wrong; she just thinks she can get away with it by being sly! William worries me even more. Though he's not much for causing trouble himself, his ideas are always bizarre, like... like..."

She thought for quite some time, unable to find the words to describe her little brother's peculiar train of thought, before pounding the bed board in frustration and summing it up,

"Anyway, they need discipline! If we don't, it's too late once they're grown!"

"Yes, yes, discipline! Definitely need discipline! Next time, I absolutely won't stop you!"

Echoing her words, Leon walked over and sat on the edge of the bed, gently stroking his sister's back as he softly comforted her,

"But you should also try to look on the bright side. Although they are indeed a bit naughty, they've never bullied anyone on purpose. In several previous incidents, it wasn't entirely their fault either... Let me think."

After recalling the few situations he remembered, Leon spoke with a slightly complex expression,

"This time they caused trouble because someone said you weren't coming back; the last time was during a game when a kid called William a wild child; and before that, they stopped that chubby kid named Jack from bullying others;

Even earlier, I was driven away while working as a longshoreman because I was too weak to do the job, and there was gossip in the alley; and even before that, it was because your coughing at night was too loud and disturbed the neighbors' rest, and they called you a sick freak..."

The more they recalled why the younger siblings caused trouble, the more uncomfortable Leon and Anna looked.

They hadn't thought much of it before, but now they realized that although those two were very naughty, almost every time they caused trouble, it was not without reason. So, rather than calling them "naughty," it might be more accurate to say they were trying, in their own way, to protect their fragile little home.

If only he, as their older brother (or sister), could've been more capable and shielded them from life's malice, maybe the younger ones wouldn't have needed to be so "naughty," and they could happily be two lively, innocent kids...

"Let's not think about all that right now."

Seeing the tears welling up in his sister's eyes again and realizing his attempts to comfort her weren't working, Leon quickly changed the subject. He reached for a yellowing old photo album on the shelf beside the bed, wrapped his arm around Anna's thin shoulders, and said,