

I! Cleaner 55

Chapter 55 Family Portrait with Protagonist (Two in One)_2

"Brother has a job at the police department now, and by the end of the year, when he becomes a permanent employee, William and the others will be able to attend school for free. They won't have to fight with the kids in the alley anymore. So let's leave the past behind! Our family will definitely get better and better in the future..."

"By the way, the last time we looked at the photo album together was more than two years ago when I had a high fever. It's still not too late today, so if you're not feeling unwell, would you flip through it with me again?"

"Mm..."

Anna leaned into Leon's shoulder lightly, following his gentle nudge. She accepted the photo album with reddened eyes, nostalgically caressed the damaged cardboard cover, and then started to flip through it softly.

"This is Mother when she was young."

On the first page of the album, Anna pointed at a faded group photo where a woman who bore some resemblance to Leon, exuding vigorous spirit in her military uniform, was present. She explained softly, "When I was little, Mother told me... told us that this was when she got into the Mechanic Academy and was assigned to the artillery adjustment class. And then here's Father..."

Anna's soft finger moved up slightly, pointing to a tall, handsome man with black hair in the back row, smiling warmly.

"Father and Mother were originally classmates. After graduation, they were drafted into the same unit, so they gradually got to know each other. Then they had... you, and the following year, they had me..."

As Anna gently and slowly turned the pages of the album, Leon's mood improved while looking at the unfamiliar man and woman, from acquaintance to love, eventually in formal attire and wedding dress, emotionally embracing in a small chapel with happy tears.

Unlike the cold and harsh reality, the happy moments captured in the album appeared so warm. Even though they had severely faded with time, they did not diminish the brilliance and radiance of those smiles at all.

Could it be that Anna was such a lively child when she was younger?

The enviable happiness continued in the album. Leon could not help but reach out and gently stroke little Anna's bright golden hair as he looked at the photo of the little blonde girl with an incredibly bright smile.

In his memory, aside from softly nodding and smiling with gentle eyes, the Anna he knew only left the coughing misery behind her covered lips and the occasional deeply furrowed brows. *He had never seen his sister smile so happily before... What had taken that smile away from her?*

As he realized that more than half of the album was flipped through, with no sign of Melanie or the others, the unspoken answer naturally emerged in his heart.

"Uh... I just remembered, I still have some unfinished work!"

Knowing clearly the cruel end that awaited the incredibly beautiful family in the album, Leon's body couldn't help but stiffen slightly. Annoyed at himself for suggesting such a foolish idea of looking at the album, he apologized to Anna with a hint of regret, "Perhaps we should stop here? You must be tired today as well; it's best to rest early!"

"Mm..."

The slender girl responded softly, seemingly unaware of Leon's abnormality, and directly closed the album in her hands, lightly nodding with a gentle smile.

However, after Leon hurriedly left, Anna did not get up. Instead, she reopened the heavy old album and slowly turned to the last page.

On the already yellowed back cover of the album, where the most important photo was supposed to be, an old, torn photo was attached.

The person who tore the photo must have exerted a lot of force, ripping it into pieces and then crumpling them forcefully, resulting in many raised cracks. Even though it seemed carefully handled, it still couldn't be flattened completely, and even the faces in the portrait were incomplete.

In this strange photo, the couple who appeared several times earlier in the album and had been deceased for six years, still smiled blissfully at the camera, embracing each other under a sign that read "Family Portrait" in cursive.

However, instead of two brothers and two sisters in front of them, there was just a single child around eight or nine years old, holding the father and mother's hands on either side, flashing an incredibly happy smile at the camera.

Reaching out to touch the child's face in the photo, pressing down the raised parts of the cracks, which revealed golden hair as bright as the mother's, Anna couldn't help but bite her lips forcefully as she looked at the girl's face, which now seemed so unfamiliar to her.

Then, as if making a firm decision, she used her nails to scrape off the glued-together torn photos one by one, later finding a matchbox and a small bucket in the room, throwing all the pieces into the iron bucket.

After turning her eyes reluctantly, Anna struck a match with a scratching sound, lighting a tuft of cotton and tossing it into the bucket, burning the last photo of her parents and herself to black ash at the bucket's bottom!

...

Ugh... There seemed to be something I forgot to do yesterday.

Unaware of what transpired after he left last night, as an employee with no vacation, Leon crawled out of his small bed as soon as dawn broke.

After taking out a scrawled piece of paper he used as a memorandum, he helplessly realized that, due to worrying about making Anna recall sad memories, he had slipped away midway through the photo viewing and forgot to confirm his birthday with her.