

# The Day I Kissed An Older Man 1551-1560

Annie nodded and said, “Yes. Our family used to be considered normal working class people, but Uncle Jeremy’s protection enabled US to become quite well off. You could even say that I was the daughter of a rich family. Now that Uncle Jeremy isn’t around, those who used to do business with our family for my uncle’s sake no longer do so anymore. That’s life, am I right? One look at the men that my family’s been introducing to me on these blind dates, and you’ll be able to see just how far we’ve fallen. They never would’ve dared to introduce someone like that to me when Uncle Jeremy was around.”

Aaron’s initial focus was on Annie’s situation, but he did not realize how big of an impact Jeremy’s disappearance had on her family. Things had become very challenging for them.

“Now that your uncle is gone, perhaps you can ask your parents if they’re interested in having a son-in-law who can turn things around?” Aaron suggested. “I might not be as influential as Jeremy, but I do have some connections and influence in the city’s business scene.”

Annie was bewildered by his suggestion, and she turned away in embarrassment. “Stop with your jokes!”

“I’m not joking! Why do you always think I’m joking with you?” Aaron frowned.

“Because I’ve heard you say so many sweet nothings to so many women,”

Annie said, averting her gaze from him. “I can’t tell the truth from lies, so I’m not even going to bother trying! And I don’t want to get hurt again. All the men I’ve had the bad fortune of encountering are jerks!”

Aaron was a little helpless when he heard that, but he smiled and said, “Well, I am a bit of a jerk, so I don’t blame you if you don’t believe me.

However, I’m not lying when I say I can help your family in this crisis. Are you sure you’re not going to take advantage of my offer?”

Annie hesitated and glanced at his irresistibly handsome face. However, she looked away at once, fearing that another lingering look might lead her to agree.

After all, her self-control was very weak! “I’m sure. I don’t want to owe you any favors.”<sup>1</sup> Aaron looked into her eyes. “What if I don’t see this as a favor? I’m more than willing to make myself useful to you, even if only to make amends for any harm I might have caused you.”

“No.” Annie shook her head. “You don’t have to make amends because you never hurt me in the first place. I did it to myself. If you truly want to help me, I hope you’ll leave me alone right now and stay as far away from me as possible!” Aaron seemed a little hurt as he asked, “Do you hate me so much that you won’t even look at me? Can we at least be friends if you don’t want to accept my help?”

“I don’t hate you,” Annie clarified, “but I don’t want to be friends with you either.”

Rather than becoming upset, Aaron smiled. “Then tell me why. Give me a reasonable explanation, and I’ll respect your decision.”

Annie could not offer a logical explanation as she was unsure of herself. She was afraid that her emotions would spiral out of control, thus beholding her to his charm. The last thing she wanted was to catch feelings again. The hurt she suffered from each successive failure was too agonizing for a romantic like her!

“I... I just don’t want to be friends with a jerk like you. Do I need to give you a reason?”

Aaron smiled and said, “You don’t, but I can’t bring myself to watch after knowing that your family is having it rough. Setting aside my history with you, I still must look out for you because you’re technically my boss’ niece.”

“To put it bluntly, Corinne only acknowledges me as her niece because of Uncle Jeremy, otherwise, I’m not worthy of calling her my aunt. Corinne has suffered a lot because of Uncle Jeremy, and no one knows where he is right now. So, I hope you won’t feel compelled to help me just because of that.”<sup>1</sup> Aaron then argued, “You can refuse my offer to help, but you can’t refuse Corinne’s help, right?”

Annie then pointed out, “Don’t tell her about this! Didn’t you hear what I just said? She’s suffered a lot because of Uncle Jeremy’s disappearance, and I don’t want to burden her any further.”

“I don’t think you grasp your aunt’s character very well,” Aaron replied with a smirk. “Let’s look at it from a different perspective. You might be reluctant to accept help from strangers, but does your family share the same view? Can you bear to watch your parents constantly endure the pressures of the family business? These issues can all be resolved very easily.”

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“But there isn’t-“ “Let’s go,” Aaron cut Annie off and stood up before going over to hold her hand.

“Where are we going?” Annie was lifted from her seat.

Aaron smiled and said, “To your home!”

“What?!” Annie’s eyes widened. She then thought to herself, ‘Doesn’t he feel an ounce of shame?’ Back at the Holdens, Corinne contacted a certain secret number and used advanced encryption methods to send a text.

[She doesn’t suspect me of knowing what I know. I can cooperate with you during this time, but in the meantime, you must take good care of my son. I’m trusting you, so don’t let me down again!] A reply came several minutes later. [He’s my son too, so you can rest assured I’ll take care of him. Please extend the same courtesy to me for Benjamin.] 1 After replying to this message, Zachary deleted the conversation history from his phone and glanced at the computer screen. Inside a secret inbox, he received an email from a rehabilitation doctor with detailed instructions and various other advice of note.

Zachary went through it rapidly, memorized the instructions, and closed the computer. After glancing tenderly at Bryan napping on the bed, Zachary wheeled himself to the bedroom balcony. He then proceeded to stand up and commence his physiotherapy exercises according to the doctor’s instructions.

It was already 4 p.m. when Sophia returned to the hotel. As soon as she entered, she sat on the sofa with a troubled expression. After resting for a while, she looked around and realized that neither Zachary nor ‘Benjamin’ were in the living room. She frowned and called out in the direction of the bedroom, “Zachary, I’m back!”

Sophia then waited for a while but soon began to feel that something was amiss when no one came out. Just as she was about to get up and go in, the bedroom door opened, and Zachary came out in the wheelchair.

Sophia sat back down on the sofa with a sense of relief. “What were you doing in the room?”

Zachary remained calm, and no one could tell what he was thinking.’ Benjamin was taking his nap, and I fell asleep by accident while watching over him.”

“Oh,” Sophia mumbled as she rubbed her temples with concern.

It was not often that Zachary saw Sophia looking so dejected. He positioned his wheelchair next to the sofa and asked casually, “Is something bothering you?

You look worried.”

Sophia took the opportunity to confide in him, “I thought two weeks was enough to settle the assets that my father had told me to handle, but several buyers who already agreed to go ahead with the purchase backed out all of a sudden. They gave all sorts of excuses, saying that they’re reconsidering it! I’ve already made plans to bring you and Benjamin back to Molomia!”

Zachary's expression turned sullen, but he tried to comfort her in as neutral a tone as possible. "There's no need to rush this. Everything takes time."

Sophia came closer to him and said, "But I want to go back to Molomia as soon as possible! Dad bought a small island for the two of us, and he's already planning a spectacular wedding! I want our family to live worry-free on our island."

Zachary was not as enthusiastic about the island as her, and his mood at that moment remained an enigma. "The island isn't going anywhere, so you don't need to be in such a hurry. We need to resolve

everything before we return."

Sophia felt a little disappointed, wondering when she would finally be able to see a slightly different emotion from him.

Then, Sophia asked, "Is Benjamin still asleep?"

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"Yeah. He's tired after playing all afternoon," replied Zachary.

Sophia had strong reason to suspect that the boy was Bryan-whom Corinne raised-and not Benjamin. Perhaps he felt compelled to play all day and not come home as he felt that it was too strict at home. The boy might be innocent and immature, but he could still be a potential source of trouble. After all, there was always a possibility that he might say the wrong thing to Zachary.

She needed to figure out a way to resolve the situation, and fast. The two children under Corinne's care were an issue that had to be addressed as well.

Sophia could not accept the existence of children that Jeremy had with another woman.

After pondering for a while, Sophia asked, "Would you consider having another child to keep Benjamin company?"

Fathering Jeremy's child would make it much easier for her to get rid of Corinne's child.

Zachary froze for a moment as his expression sank. "What do you mean by that? Why would you even suggest that to me? Do you think I'm in any condition to have a child?"

Sophia explained, "Zachary, technology has advanced so much that we could even explore in vitro techniques! I'm still young, and I want to have another child..." "We can talk about this later," Zachary responded coldly. "Your priority right now is to focus on handling your father's affairs."

“Okay.” Sophia dropped the topic. However, she could not help but notice the faint traces of sweat on Zachary’s head. She found it a little strange, so she asked, “Why are you sweating so much?”

A fleeting dark expression crossed Zachary’s face within a second. “I guess the room was just a little warm.”

Sophia still found it somewhat odd. “Is it? But no matter how hot it was in Molomia, I don’t remember ever seeing you sweat there...”

Since Zachary spent most of his time in a wheelchair and rarely exercised, it was indeed a very unusual sight to see him sweating.

Zachary explained, “I slipped when I went to the bathroom earlier. I sweated because I had to exert myself a little to stand up.”

He could not let Sophia know that he was doing his rehabilitation exercises; that would only serve to heighten her suspicions.

Sophia accepted his explanation and no longer suspected anything.” Please don’t hesitate to ask me for help if something like this ever happens again. I’m your wife, so it’s okay for US to look at each other’s bodies from time to time.

There’s nothing to be shy about!”

Zachary responded, ‘Til let you know if it happens again. Anyway, you should rest. I’m sure you’re tired after being out the entire day. I’ll go check if Benjamin is awake.”

Sophia still wanted to talk to him, but Zachary had turned his wheelchair and headed back into the room.

She then received a call on her phone.

Rather than following Zachary in, Sophia sighed and answered the call. It was from her father, Adam. “Sophia! Melinda and I are about to wrap up our trip.

We’re getting ready to return home now. When will you and Zachary come back?”

Sophia sighed and said, “We might not be able to return just yet. I still haven’t been able to finish doing what you asked me to do here. It’s taking longer than expected.”

“Is it that difficult to sell some assets?” Adam’s voice grew stern. “What’s taking you so long? Did you run into any issues in the country?”

“The companies that initially showed interest in acquiring them changed their minds at the last minute and backed out for unknown reasons,” Sophia complained.

“Hmph!” Adam huffed. “Those sly old foxes must be giving you a hard time because you’re a woman. Well, Melinda and I have just finished our trip, so we’ll take a flight there right away. I will handle everything myself, so just leave it to me.”

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Sophia was overjoyed to hear that. “Yay! It’ll go smoothly if you’re here, Dad!

We can then return to Molomia together, and I can finally start preparing for my wedding to Zachary!”

“That’s my girl!” Adam replied. “I’ll be there soon!”

Sophia then ended the call, confident that her father’s intervention would put an end to any further complications. She was certain that no one would dare to back out of a potential deal again if her father handled everything, The door to the master bedroom had been closed softly. Zachary—who was Jeremy—turned the wheelchair around and saw that Bryan had woken up. The

boy had been watching him from behind.

“What were you secretly looking at earlier?” Bryan asked curiously.

Zachary placed a finger to his lips and whispered, “You must always call me ‘Daddy’ from now on, even if there’s no one else in the room.”

Bryan blinked and asked, “I can call you that now? I thought you didn’t like me calling you that.”

Zachary narrowed his eyes and asked, “Why would you think that?”

“Because I’m not your biological son. No father will be happy if someone else’s child calls them ‘Daddy1...”

Bryan was the spitting image of Benjamin, and the only discernible difference was that of their personalities and expressions. Even so, he was no less Zachary’s child, and Zachary patted Bryan’s head. “I feel happy when you call me ‘Daddy’.” Bryan appeared pleasantly surprised. “Is that true? Does that mean you don’t hate me?”

“Why would I hate you?” the man retorted, pursing his lips.

Bryan smiled gleefully and approached Zachary. “So, Daddy... You don’t seem to like Sophia very much, do you?”

The question was so blunt that Zachary was a little taken aback by it.” What makes you say that?”

Bryan whispered, “Because you don’t smile when you see her! My Mommy says it’s normal to smile whenever we see someone we like. We will unconsciously look at the person we like too! But you never smile or look at Sophia.” <sup>1</sup> Zachary remained silent. He held no romantic feelings for Sophia, and their three years together never sparked any emotions. Though he could not recall anyone from his past, his heart seemed to resonate deeply with Corinne whenever he saw her. It was as if everything that Lucas said that day was true that Corinne once shared a profound connection with him, and that he loved her very much.

“Kids shouldn’t jump to conclusions when it comes to matters between adults,”

Zachary deftly avoided answering the question.

Bryan was quick-witted enough to say, “I’ll introduce my Mommy to you when you break up with Sophia. My Mommy is very beautiful!”

Zachary chuckled and teased, “Aren’t you concerned that your father might get upset if you introduced your mother to me?”

Bryan then pursed his lips. “My Daddy isn’t going to come back! Mommy thinks about him every day, but it’s useless to miss someone who’s gone! Me and my siblings just want Mommy to be happy. That’s all that matters to us. I think you’re a handsome father and a very nice person, so it’ll be great if you can help my Mommy forget about my father!”

“How do you know that your Mommy thinks about him every day?” Zachary asked in surprise.

Bryan scratched his chin and explained, “Hmm... I know because she spaces out in my dad’s study every day! Who else could she be thinking about if it’s not Daddy? Mommy is a very gentle person. She never tells anyone if something is bothering her because she doesn’t want her sadness to be a burden to others

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-‘Gentle?’ Zachary fell silent. He recalled that little girl’s hand on his neck that day, and it seemed as though she wanted to strangle him to death. Perhaps gentle was the right word to describe that incident, because at least she did not strangle him to death.

When the door handle turned, Zachary immediately became alert and returned to his usual calm demeanor.

When Sophia entered the room, she immediately saw ‘Benjamin’ talking to Zachary. She had a slightly gloomy look in her eyes, but she nevertheless

greeted them with a smile. “Benjamin! You’re awake! What are you two chatting about?”

Zachary replied, “Nothing much. He told me he was hungry.”

Sophia did not suspect a thing and said with a smile, “I was just about to ask what the both of you want for dinner. Our refrigerator is running empty, so I thought of getting some groceries.” In a rare gesture of gentleness, Zachary looked at her and said, “Don’t trouble yourself. You’ve had a busy day today, so we can just have some room service.”

Sophia felt touched by his kindness. “I’ll be fine. I’m more than happy to cook for you and Benjamin.”

Zachary replied, “There’s always tomorrow. You should get some more rest after a busy day out. Besides, Benjamin said he’s hungry now, so it’d be quicker for you to order food from the hotel.”

Sophia’s smile froze right away. She thought that Zachary was concerned about her, but she soon realized that his main concern was that she might take too long to cook a meal for ‘Benjamin’. “Okay. I’ll ask the hotel to send up some of Benjamin’s favorite food.”

Zachary nodded.

Sophia prepared to call the hotel, but the boy’s presence was like a thorn in the flesh for her.

“Come here, ‘Benjamin’! Let’s go get room service from the hotel. You can tell them what you want to eat, and they’ll bring it to you!” she said to ‘Benjamin’, faking a smile.

Bryan did not take kindly to Sophia’s offer and replied defiantly, “I don’t want to go with you! I want to be with Daddy!” 1 Sophia’s face soured for a moment, but she made an effort to keep smiling. “Be a good boy and come with me. Well go order some room service.”

Bryan remained close to Zachary and ignored Sophia.

Worried that Sophia might have any suspicions, Zachary raised his hand and rubbed Bryan’s head. “Go ahead, ‘Benjamin’. Just tell the hotel staff what you want, and they’ll bring it up for you. Order some beef pasta for me, too.”

“Okay.” Bryan nodded obediently at long last and walked toward Sophia with a swagger. “I’ll go with you!”



Sophia wanted to slap him, but she could not do so as she wished because the child was not Benjamin. As a result, she could only quell her irritation and keep smiling. “Okay, come with me!”

Zachary narrowed his eyes as he watched Bryan leave with Sophia. He then turned his attention to the balcony, in particular the wicker chair he knocked over during his physiotherapy exercises. Fortunately, Sophia did not notice it.

Sophia brought the child to the phone, but she stared at the child with a sly smile instead of dialing the hotel’s room service number. “Why are you so reluctant to be around me nowadays?”

Bryan stared back at Sophia and replied angrily, “Have I ever been super excited to be around you?”

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Sophia smiled superficially. “You won’t even let Mommy hug you? Mommy can’t help but feel like you’ve changed. You’re not Mommy’s Benjamin anymore.”

Bryan would only feel guilty toward the people he liked. Thus, the only emotion he felt toward Sophia was disgust.

‘She obviously knows I’m not Benjamin, so she’s trying to make me slip up by acting all nice. What a hypocrite,’ thought Bryan.

Bryan remained calm and said arrogantly, “I’m a big boy now! What’s so weird about me not wanting to be hugged by a woman? Hmph!”

Sophia came closer and looked at him fiercely. “Are you really Benjamin? You do know Santa doesn’t bring little boys who lie to their parents presents, right?”

Benjamin already hated Sophia in the first place, and her threat just served to make him hate her even more. In fact, he thought she looked like an evil witch.

“Can’t you even tell whether the kid you gave birth to is your own kid? I can’t help but think you didn’t even really give birth to me!” shouted Bryan.

Sophia was speechless.

“So are you going to call room service or not? If you’re not, I’m going to look for Daddy!” urged Bryan impatiently.

Sophia snapped out of her shock and smiled superficially again. “Okay, calm down. Mommy’s going to call room service now.”

“Hmph! Hurry up! I’m starving,” said Bryan.

Sophia took a deep breath and swallowed down her pride. ‘One day, I’m going to spank that kid until his butt is as red as a baboon’s!’ She assumed that the little boy who was not Benjamin probably wanted to stay there because he did not go to kindergarten and there were lots of toys for him to play with.

‘He probably doesn’t know Zachary is his real dad or told him anything because he’s worried we’d send him home if he did that. Ugh. Forget it. I’ll let his behavior slide for the time being. After all, what good can come from a kid born by Corinne?’ Many days later, Corinne was busy at work when Lucas suddenly came to find her. However, he did not go up to her office but instead called her from his car downstairs.

“Corinne, I’m parked in front of Holden Group’s entrance. Can you come down for a while? It’s urgent,” he said.

Corinne put her document aside and got up to leave. It was scorching hot when she got downstairs.

Edmund opened the car door for her. She nodded, thanked him, and got into the car.

Lucas was resting with his eyes closed. He slowly opened his eyes when he heard Corinne get into the car.

Turning sideways to look at her, he asked, “Did I interrupt you working?”

Corinne shrugged. “Yes. If you don’t mind, Mister Lucas, can you please give this short?”

Lucas’ eyes darkened a little. “Do you remember the painting I gave you last time?”

Corinne’s eyes immediately lit up. She nodded and said, “Yes, of course! You said it might be Nellie Nymphaea’s recent work since the paint wasn’t even dried yet.”

“Yes. That painting. My friend contacted me just now, and she said her art teacher is back from her field trip.”

Corinne’s eyes trembled. “Does that mean I can finally meet Nellie Nymphaea?”

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Lucas nodded. “That’s right. I’ve already asked my friend to set up a meeting.

I’m going to fly over to Molomia to meet her soon, so I’ve come to ask you whether you’d like to join me.”

“Yes! Of course I’d like to join!” said Corinne without hesitation. However, she suddenly remembered something, and...

Lucas could tell what Corinne was worrying about. He patted her head and said, “You’re worried about the kids, right?”

Corinne sighed and nodded. “Yeah. I mean, it’ll be a hassle to bring them with me, but I’m going to worry nonstop about them if I don’t. And now...”

She suddenly stopped talking, and Lucas knew why.

She was afraid she would lose Jeremy again if she flew away to Molomia.

“You should stay if you have so many concerns. I’ll go there first. Who knows?

The art teacher might not be our mother.” 1 Lucas patted her head lightly again.

Corinne looked up at him. There was no doubt that she wanted to go. No matter what the outcome was, she would still like to meet the art teacher.

“Is it possible to ask the art teacher to come here? I’ll foot all of her expenses, of course,” said Corinne.

Lucas shook his head. “My friend said her art teacher would never agree to fly out of the country. She’s not even willing to meet strangers. The only way for US to meet her is to go to my friend’s house since she didn’t tell her art teacher that we’ll be there, too. Otherwise, she wouldn’t have gone.”

Corinne frowned. “Then...”

Lucas understood what she was feeling at that moment. “Like I said, you should stay here if you have so many concerns. I’ll go meet her first. No matter what the outcome is, I’ll take a photo of her for you, okay?”

“Please give me more time to think about it. When do you plan to leave for Molomia?”

“Tomorrow morning.”

“Okay. I’ll give you an answer before midnight tonight.”

“Sure.”

“Mister Lucas, no matter what, thank you for coming to tell me the first instance you received the news,” said Corinne sincerely.

Lucas smiled bitterly. “What are you talking about? We’re siblings, and this concerns our mother. It’s only natural I’d tell you the first thing I received news from my friend. Corinne, when are you going to stop being so formal with me?

When are you going to see me as your brother?”

Corinne’s emotions were still all over the place. She really did not have the bandwidth to think about whether she wanted to accept Lucas as her brother.

“I still have some work to do. You should head back to work too, Mister Lucas.

I’ll give you a call tonight after I’ve made up my mind.”

“Oh, alright. I’ll be waiting for your call,” said Lucas helplessly.

Corinne got out of the car and walked back to the building thoughtfully.

Edmund closed the car door and turned to make sure Corinne had made it back safely to the building before getting into the front passenger seat.

“Mister Lucas, do you think Miss Corinne will go to Molomia with you?”

Lucas shook his head. “Nope, I don’t think she will.”

Edmund nodded. He did not think she would either.

After all, Corinne still had her kids to think about. She would never feel at ease leaving them at home while she flew to Molomia.

That was the biggest adjustment she had to make after being a mother. She could never come and go as she pleased anymore.

“Mister Lucas, your friend, Miss Yvette... She said that her art teacher is quite a private person, so she might not be willing to meet with you. Are you sure you want to leave first thing tomorrow morning?”

“I don’t care if she’s willing to meet with me or not, but I sure as well will meet her. It’s been so many years since my mother went missing, so nothing’s going to stop me from finding out whether the art teacher is really her!”





That evening, Corinne went to fetch the kids from the kindergarten as usual.

While waiting for the automatic gate to open, a man holding cartoon balloons walked past their car.

Christine's eyes immediately lit up when she saw the cartoon balloons.

"Mommy, can I get a pink balloon?" she asked.

Corinne looked up from her phone, and a hint of doubt flashed across her face when she saw the balloon seller outside her window.

However, she still agreed to Christine's request. "Sure. You three can each choose one."

"Thank you, Mommy!" said the three kids in unison.

After that, they all got out of the car to choose the balloon they liked. Even though they were just outside the mansion, Corinne made sure she kept her eyes on the kids.

While the kids were choosing their balloons, she looked the balloon seller up and down. The balloon seller was a man around the age of 40, and she did not find anything odd about him.

He smiled kindly at the kids and asked them what balloon they wanted.

Very quickly, the three kids finished selecting their balloons, and they were all smiles as they held their balloons.

"How much do I need to pay you for the balloons?" Corinne asked the balloon seller.

"It's two dollars each, so the total is six dollars."

"Okay." Corinne took out her phone. "Where should I scan?"

The balloon seller was a little taken aback. "Can you pay in cash? I forgot to bring the QR code with me today," he said awkwardly.

Corinne did not have any cash on her. "It's fine. You can just use the one on your phone."

"Umm... Sorry, but I've forgotten to bring my phone too. It's still best to pay in cash..."

Corinne frowned and looked at the balloon seller with suspicion in her eyes.

After that, she asked Joey to take the other two kids into the mansion compound first.

She then went to borrow some cash from the driver to pay the balloon seller.

While the balloon seller was counting out change, Corinne narrowed her eyes and asked, "Is this your first time selling balloons?"

The balloon seller stopped counting for a second. He then gave Corinne four dollars back in change. "Yeah. I was recently let go by my company, and it's hard to find a new job at my age. I thought I should sell balloons until I find a new job. Sorry for being so unprepared. You have no idea how nervous I am."

1 "Don't worry about it. All the best yeah," said Corinne as she took the change.

She then walked into the mansion compound.

Francine, all dolled up, was just on her way to a date when she bumped into Corinne.

She looked at the balloon seller, who was walking away, and asked Corinne, "Why would a balloon seller be selling his balloons here?"

Corinne turned around and glanced at the balloon seller once more. "You think it's weird too, right?"

Even though their mansion was not located in a gated community, there would rarely be vendors peddling their wares there.

“Yeah, it’s weird. Maybe someone told him we have three kids here, so he thought he’d try his luck in earning some money.”

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Corinne felt like her nerve had been struck when she heard what Francine said.

She narrowed her eyes at the balloon seller again.

The balloon seller was out of sight by then, but she could still see the balloons flying high above the mansion walls.

“Corinne, I gotta run. Bye,” said Francine in a hurry.

Corinne snapped out of her trance. “Are you going out on a date with Chester?”

she asked with a smile.

Francine turned bright red. She was too shy to admit it, so she stammered, “I...

I’m just going out for dinner... Bye!”

Francine sped away in her high heels.

Corinne chuckled and turned to go back to the mansion with the kids.

Suddenly, Christine grabbed her hand and asked cutely, “Mommy, is Aunt Francine going out on a date?”

Corinne looked down at her and laughed. “Yes, your Aunt Francine is going out on a date. You’ll probably have a new uncle soon.”

“I know who my new uncle is going to be! It’s the man that had a picnic with us at the park that day, isn’t it?”

“Yes, you adorable little genius. Nothing gets past you, huh?” said Corinne, squatting down to pinch her little button nose.

Christine rubbed her nose and said, “Mommy, even Aunt Francine has a boyfriend now, so when are you going to get one too?”

Corinne's lips twitched. I don't need a boyfriend when I have you three."

"No, Mommy. You should still get a boyfriend, or you're going to feel really lonely," said Christine seriously.

Corinne pulled Christine into a tight embrace. "No, darling, I won't. I have you and your brothers, so I'm never going to feel lonely."

Christine pouted. "That's different! All the kids in my class have both mommies and daddies, so I hope Mommy has a Daddy to keep her company as well."

Corinne was a little taken aback, not because her youngest daughter was worried about her lifelong happiness but because she worried Christine would feel left out without a father.

After all, it was the wish of every parent in the world to give their kids a complete home.

"Are you missing your Daddy?" Corinne asked Christine softly.

Christine first nodded, then shook her head. "Yes, I miss him. But if he doesn't come back, I hope you'll find a strong man to love, care, and protect you, Mommy!"

'What am I going to do with her?' thought Corinne dotingly. She stroked Christine's cheek and said, "But Mommy's strong herself. Not only can I protect myself, but I can protect you and your brothers too!"

With the balloon still in her hand, Christine wrapped her arms around Corinne's neck and pouted. "Don't change the topic, Mommy. If a handsome man wants to be with you in the future, you must at least consider him! Don't turn him down because of US. Me, Joey, and Bryan all want you to be happy."

"Okay! I promise you I'll accept if a handsome man wants Mommy to be his girlfriend, okay?" said Corinne dotingly. She then picked Christine up, and the two of them walked into the mansion together.

After dinner, Pamela and Greg played with the kids in the living room, while Corinne went upstairs to her room.

It was summer, so the sky did not begin to get dark until much later. At that moment, it was still light out.

Corinne stood in front of the floor-to-ceiling window in her room, and her perfect eyesight allowed her to spot several suspicious people hiding outside the mansion compound.



# The Day I Kissed An Older Man 1510

Corinne narrowed her eyes, which were filled with caution and speculation.

‘Looks like I wasn’t wrong to think that someone has been secretly spying on me and the kids for the past two days. The balloon seller from this afternoon must be in on it, too,’ thought Corinne.

After all, how could someone who was selling something forget important things such as a QR code and his phone? It also did not make sense that he would choose to sell his balloons at a high-end residential area instead of the commercial area, which had more foot traffic.

‘Sophia must have her eyes on Bryan and Christine after she found out I gave birth to triplets three years ago,’ speculated Corinne. ‘I was right not to fly out of the country. I must protect the kids at all costs!’ Corinne looked up at the bright moon hanging in the sky and sighed. She took out her phone and called Lucas.

“Mister Lucas, I’m afraid I won’t be able to go to Molomia with you to meet the art teacher,” she told him.

“I see. Don’t worry, I’ll call you to give you an update as soon as I’ve met with the art teacher,” said Lucas.

After she hung up, she suddenly felt unbelievably tired. Thus, she turned and went back to her room.

The next day, Lucas took the morning flight to Molomia, where someone was already waiting for him.

Back at the hotel.

Sophia prepared some simple meals for Jeremy and ‘Benjamin’ and sat down to eat with them before she left to go to a meeting.

It was not until she went out that the atmosphere in the room became less tense.

Bryan put down his fork and sighed in relief. “Finally, she’s gone.”

Seeing the tension leaving Bryan’s face, Jeremy wiped the corner of the little boy’s lips and asked, “Do you hate her that much?”

“Yeah! I really don’t like being in the same room with her. I miss my Mommy.

Daddy, can you send me home now that Sophia's gone out? That way, I can introduce my Mommy to you too."

Jeremy raised an eyebrow. "It's not that I don't want to send you back home, but there's no way we'll be able to step foot out of the hotel. Sophia has bought off the staff here, and she has planted bodyguards around the hotel to make sure we can never leave the hotel. Plus, it's not like I can go anywhere with my crippled legs."

Bryan glanced at Jeremy's wheelchair and sighed again. "Daddy, I kinda pity you for losing your freedom. If only Mommy knows I'm here. She'll definitely get you and me out of here."

Suddenly, his eyes lit up. "Oh! How could I forget? I can just call her and ask her to come pick US up!"

He then jumped down from his chair and ran to the landline phone.

"Don't touch that phone!" shouted Jeremy.

Bryan stopped in shock. "Why not? Sophia's not going to know."

"You can kiss seeing your mommy goodbye if she finds out who you've been calling. Listen to me. Don't touch that phone."

Bryan pouted. "Fine..."