

## Kissed AOM 1701

### Chapter 1701

After her adorable little outburst, Christine threw herself coquettishly into her mother's arms.

Corinne lifted her and looked sternly at Bryan. "Is that how you should be talking to Christine?"

Bryan curled his lips and replied, "But you dote on her all the time, Mommy..."

Joey, being the older brother, patted Bryan's shoulder and said, "We're her older brothers, so we should be more tolerant of our little sister."

Bryan was extremely unhappy to hear that. "You're my elder brother! She's my age since she and I were born on the same day! Why should I tolerate her?"

Christine turned and pointed angrily at Bryan. "I don't want you as my brother anymore!"

Bryan responded stubbornly. "Fine by me! I don't want a stubborn sister like you anyway!"

"Mommy, please tell him that I'm no longer his sister!"

"Mommy, please tell her that I'm no longer her brother!"

Corinne was exhausted, and she felt as if her head was spinning when she was asked to 'confirm' her two children's unusual request. Just as she was about to mediate and end their argument, Francine stepped in and pulled the two kids over.

"Wait a second. Something doesn't seem to add up. What do you mean by 'the other Bryan', Christine? And what do you mean when you stayed with Daddy, Bryan? Could you two explain, please?" Christine and Bryan had no idea how to answer. Corinne did

not allow them to say anything about it, yet they had inadvertently let the secret slip during their argument.

Their silence prompted Francine to ask further, "Are you two hiding something from me?"

Corinne took her children back and said, "Aren't you supposed to get ready for your date? Or are you suddenly no longer in a rush?"

Francine frowned. "I'm going to be late anyway, and Chester just told me that he's pushing the time back a little. Anyway, didn't you hear what the two of them were talking about? Doesn't it sound strange to you?"

Corinne heard everything of course, and she knew exactly what the children were discussing as she knew the truth as well. However, she did not want to share too much with Francine because the latter was just as prone as Christine to slips of the tongue.

Corinne stood up and deliberately shifted the topic. "I'll handle whatever conflict they have. You should head upstairs and get ready. Don't you need to spend a lot of time putting on makeup before going to meet your boyfriend?"

Francine looked at the time and grew anxious because she had not done her makeup yet. It was about time she rushed to it, so she made a mental note to ask Corinne about the children's statements after she returned.

"Okay. I'll head upstairs and do my makeup." Francine was about to turn around and go back in when she spotted the red marks on Corinne's neck. Her eyes widened and she froze right away. Francine's gaze made Corinne feel a little uncomfortable. "Is something the matter? Why are you looking at me like that?"

Francine led Corinne to a spot where the children could not hear them. "Be honest with me, Corinne. What did you do when you went out this morning?" Corinne felt that Francine's actions were a little odd at times. "I went out with Sunny to help him with something. Didn't you see me leave with him?"

Francine frowned. "I did, but it's not like I can constantly keep an eye on you to see what you did while you were out! You're not cheating, are you?"

## Chapter 1702

Corinne was puzzled when she heard what Francine said. "Cheating?"

Francine crossed her arms with a frown. She then leaned closer and whispered, "I'm not blind, you know. I can see that mark on your neck!"

'Mark? What mark?' Corinne thought to herself in confusion. Francine took out her phone and snapped a picture of Corinne's neck. She then showed Corinne the picture.

Corinne's face turned red. "Oh... That's..."

Francine put her hands on his hips and said, "Don't try to deny it! I know exactly what this is! How could you and Sunny-"

"Stop making wild accusations!" Corinne raised her hand and knocked Francine's skull. "Don't you know we're related?"

Francine rubbed her head before realizing that it could not possibly be Sunny. After all, Sunny was Corinne's brother.

"Jeremy has resurfaced, and you said you'd find a way to bring him home! This isn't the time for you to fall for someone else!" Francine protested.

Corinne sighed and massaged her temples, "It's not what you think! Go get ready for your date! You don't need to worry about me!" Since she was too embarrassed to admit that she met Jeremy earlier that morning, she was unable to explain that the marks on her neck were his doing.

Francine sounded disappointed. "Corinne..."

Corinne did not want to hear Francine's nagging. "Enough! You won't get to see your boyfriend today if you keep dragging this on!" Francine hesitated for a moment, but the thought that Chester was still waiting for her left her no choice but to head in and get ready.

After Francine left, Christine came over and tugged at Corinne's clothes. "What did Aunt Francine say to you, Mommy?"

Corinne snapped out of her thoughts and looked at her daughter. "Nothing! Let's go back in, sweetie."

Christine pouted and opened her little arms for a hug. "Mommy..."

Unable to resist her daughter's request, she bent down and lifted Christine into her arms. After patting Christine back, Corinne said to her, "I've got you, Christine." Christine rested her head on Corinne's shoulder and said in an upset tone, "I never want to talk to my Bryan again!"

Before Corinne could respond, Bryan snorted and snapped, "I never want to talk to you either!"

Christine then glared at him. "Hmph!"

Corinne was left exasperated by her two kids. "How long are you going to keep bickering? It's just a minor disagreement. Who taught you to disown each other like that?" Christine pouted. "That's how they do it on TV, Mommy. Can't you send this Bryan away and bring back the other Bryan? I like him more! At least he wasn't as mean to me..."

Bryan was angry after hearing that. "See? She's always saying I'm not as good as the other Bryan. Hmph!"

Corinne held Christine in one hand and Bryan's hand in the other. "Enough, you two! Bryan, you need to change your attitude toward Christine. And Christine, you can't say such things about your brother either. That goes for all your brothers. This Bryan and the other Bryan are both your biological brothers. We're a family, and you'll see him again soon."

"Okay..." Bryan and Christine answered simultaneously.

Chapter 1703

As they were walking, Corinne suddenly stopped and turned to look at Joey. "Why are you just standing there, Joey? Come along now. The sun will get very hot now that it's noon!"

Joey blinked. For a moment, he was a little disappointed because he thought Corinne had forgotten him. His heart was filled with warmth when he heard Corinne call out to him. He ran toward her while saying, "Yes, Mommy."

At the same time, Bryan said, "Could you help me pick up the kite? I don't want the rain to damage it!"

Joey did as Bryan asked. "Okay! I'll go get the kite." He then said to Corinne, "You can bring Bryan and Christine in. I'll get the kite and come in soon."

That kite was a gift from Francine, and he liked it very much as well. He and Bryan had left the kite on the ground earlier when they saw Corinne returning, and the wind had probably blown it some distance away.

Joey's determination led Corinne to feel he would not leave the yard. She nodded and ushered the two younger ones inside the house.

Once she was inside, she instructed a servant to keep an eye on Joey. The boy went to the yard and searched for the kite by himself. He soon spotted it near the small fence and hurried over to retrieve it. As he squatted to pick up the kite, he suddenly heard someone talking to him. "Hey there, kid. Would you like to buy some balloons?"

Joey stood up with the kite and saw a man holding a bunch of helium balloons on the other side of the small fence. He shook his head and replied, "No, thanks. My mommy bought us a lot of balloons already." The balloon seller smiled upon hearing this, "What a considerate little boy you are! You're quite careful with money for your mother's sake!"

Joey, who was always a polite little boy, responded, "Thank you for your kind words, sir. You can ask someone else if they want to buy your balloons. I need to go find my mommy now!"

However, the balloon seller called out to him again. "Hold on a second, kid. I have a few more things to say to you."

Joey stopped and turned to look at the balloon seller. He was a little puzzled as to why the man would be so insistent.

The balloon seller beckoned for Joey to come closer. "Come closer. Don't be shy! I just want to talk to you."

Joey remembered his mother's warnings not to approach any strangers, so he cautiously took a few steps back instead of moving closer. "I'll listen from here. I have good hearing, and I can hear you perfectly well."

The balloon seller observed Joey's cautious demeanor and smiled reassuringly. "Don't worry. I'm not a bad person. But I can talk to you from here too if you're comfortable with that." Joey nodded. "Yes, please talk to me from there."

The balloon seller smiled and looked around the yard. "Your family must be quite well-off to live in such a big house. I'm sure they can afford to buy a few more balloons. Or does your family not treat you very well?"

Joey frowned and replied, "They do, sir. My grandparents, my aunt, and my mommy are all very kind to me. We don't buy balloons not because we can't afford them, but because we already have so many balloons that it's not fun anymore."

The balloon seller narrowed his eyes. "Is that so? But I heard a rumor that you're an adopted child. I almost thought a wealthy family like yours might not be nice to an adopted child like you."

#### Chapter 1704

Joey felt a little uneasy after hearing a stranger bring up the fact he was adopted so abruptly. He blinked and asked, "How do you know that?"

The balloon seller put on an honest look and said, "I've been selling balloons nearby recently, and I overheard the neighbors talking about it. The adopted son they were discussing must be you, right? I noticed your family didn't seem to like you very much when you were buying balloons from me before."

Joey was not happy with that insinuation and reiterated, "I am very well treated here. My mom and the rest of the family are very kind to me. Please don't say stuff like that!"

The balloon seller tried to reassure Joey after seeing how anxious the boy was getting. "Hey, don't be upset. I'm asking only because I was concerned for your well-being. If you feel that your family treats you very well, then just forget about what I said earlier."

Joey was a little confused. "Why are you concerned about me?"

The balloon seller raised his head and glanced around to ensure that there was no one around. He then said to Joey, "I'm just worried you might not be receiving proper treatment in this family. I heard you're an adopted child, and I assumed that your biological family gave you up for adoption because they couldn't raise you well enough. Now that you've been adopted into this new family, I'm worried you might be mistreated or even abused by them! You see, some wealthy families like to adopt poor orphans to show off how kind they are. In reality, they're just taking advantage of those little children! That's what I'm worried about!"

Joey shook his head. "Thank you for your concern, but I'm perfectly fine here, and my mommy treats me very well!"

The balloon seller smiled and said, "Well, as long as you're happy and well-treated, I'm glad to hear it. Just remember to be careful, okay?"

Joey tilted his head and asked. "And why should I be careful?"

The balloon seller explained, "Rich families like this one are often biased toward their biological children. I noticed your mother has another son and daughter who seem to be her biological children. When there are valuable assets or family property involved, your mother might prioritize them over an adopted child like you! That makes it even more important for you to study hard and rely on yourself as you grow up. Otherwise, there's a risk you might be abandoned again one day. Then you'll grow up uneducated, just like what happened to me. All I can do is sell balloons on the streets. It's hard work, and I don't earn much money either!"

Joey felt that the balloon seller was overthinking things. He pursed his lips and said, "Mommy won't abandon me."

He had been determined to study hard not out of fear of being abandoned, but because he loved learning and had a deep appreciation for knowledge.

The balloon seller continued, "Do you truly believe your mommy won't abandon you? Just look around you. You've been picking up the kite for a while now, but your mommy hasn't sent anyone to look for you yet. Doesn't that mean she doesn't really care about you? Or at least, not as much as she does about her biological children? Why else would she have you take the kite instead of having her biological children do that? I'm a grown-up, so I can tell when a person isn't being fair to their children!"

Joey looked around and noticed that nobody had come looking for him. However, he still believed his mother's character was vastly unlike what the balloon seller described. He firmly believed Corinne was a very kind person who had always treated him as her own.

Joey was about to raise his head to refute the balloon seller when he realized that there was no one near the small fence in the yard. All he saw were numerous balloons floating into the sky.

Joey stood there in disbelief for a moment before returning to the house with the kite he had taken. He could not help but feel a bit hurt that no one had come looking for him. He wondered to himself, 'Isn't mommy worried about me?'

It was only when Joey went back dejectedly that two maids came out to search for him.

They hurried from the backyard to the front yard.

"Where did Joey go? Why isn't he here?"

"He might've gone in already. Let's go in and check."

The two maids entered the house and spotted Joey carrying the kite upstairs. They breathed a sigh of relief and decided not to disturb him anymore.

Chapter 1705

Joey brought the kite to Corinne's room and knocked on the door. After some time, Bryan opened the door.



Bryan took the kite from Joey and said, "Great! You finally found it! We need to put it away. I'm going to be the coolest kid in the park when we fly it there!"

Meanwhile, Christine expressed her disapproval of him with a scornful snort from inside the room.

Joey entered the room and glanced around, but Corinne was nowhere to be found. "Where's Mommy?"

Bryan had already left the room to put away the kite, and Christine was enjoying some snacks as she sat on the sofa. "Mommy's taking a shower. She said she wanted to cool down with a shower." "Oh," Joey said as he sat down next to his sister. He decided to wait quietly for Corinne to finish her shower. When he noticed that Christine was snacking on something they both liked, he felt a bit jealous and wanted some too. His attention was drawn to another packet on the coffee table, and he immediately reached out to take it.

Before he could touch the snack bag, Bryan dashed over and snatched it away. He brought it to the balcony to play with some paper airplanes after putting away the kite.

Joey was a little stunned when he was left empty-handed. He looked around and realized there were no more snacks. "Why are there only two packs? Where's mine?"

Meanwhile, Corinne had finished her shower. She was standing in front of the bathroom mirror while wrapped in a bath towel. She felt conflicted as her gaze was fixated on the marks Jeremy left on her neck, collarbone, and between her bosom. He had done it on purpose to make things awkward for her in front of her family!

After drying herself and putting on some clean clothes, Corinne used some foundation to cover up the marks. Concealing them was very important, or her children would surely notice and ask all sorts of questions about it.

Christine, in particular, was not easily fooled and had a strong sense of curiosity. She would undoubtedly have a hard time trying to explain everything to them.

Once she was done freshening up, she left the bathroom and spotted Christine and Bryan eating some snacks. Joey, on the other hand, sat quietly. Corinne's expression soured when she saw that. "Who told you two to eat them before I came out? There are only

two packs left, and I've already said that the three of you would have to share them equally!"

Christine licked her fingers and said, "You were taking too long, Mommy! I've already finished mine. Bryan still has some though, so tell him to share his with Joey."

Chapter 1706

Corinne went closer to have a look. There were only crumbs left in Christine's bag of potato chips.

As for Bryan, he was rolling and crawling all over the floor with his toy soldiers as though possessed while shoving the potato chips into his mouth from time to time.

Corinne could never let Joey eat whatever was left in that bag, not after she saw how unhygienic Bryan was. Thus, instead of asking Bryan to share his potato chips, Corinne stroked Joey's head and said, "Sweetheart, Mommy will go buy you some more potato chips afterward, okay?"

Joey simply nodded docilely.

Suddenly, Corinne heard her phone buzzing, so walked over to check on it. It was an encrypted message which could only be unlocked with certain skills.

Decrypting the message was a piece of cake for Corinne. She sat at the side of her bed and started typing in codes. A few minutes later, the message was finally decrypted. It was a message from Jeremy. [Are you home yet?]

Corinne scoffed, but she could not help but smile. She also replied with an encrypted message, [Yes. I'm playing with the kids right now.]

A short while later, Jeremy replied, [You must be tired after a long day. I'm going to make it up to you when I'm home.]

Corinne stared at the message. Somehow, she could tell that he did not mean it literally.

She thought for a while before replying, [Not at all! But you'll be doing me a huge favor by taking care of the kids.]

[No, that's different. The kids are the kids, and you are you. So I'm going to make it up to you in another way, my dear wife,] replied Jeremy almost immediately. The words 'my dear wife' made her heart skip a beat.

'It has been such a long time since he said something so corny to me,' thought Corinne with surprise. She blushed madly, and threw her phone aside without replying to him.

'I shouldn't be chatting with him. He's still with Sophia, and she might find out about us if we talk too much. All our efforts will end up in vain if that were to happen.' Corinne turned to look at the kids, and only then did she realize that one of them was missing. Christine and Bryan were still playing in the room, but there was no sign of Joey. Corinne stood up and asked, "Christine, where's your brother, Joey?"

"He went out to read at the study while Mommy was smiling at your phone," answered Christine.

'Joey went out?'

Corinne took a coat from the closet and put it on. She reminded Bryan and Christine to behave themselves before heading out.

Bryan was so busy playing with his toy that he did not have time to quarrel with Christine anymore, so he simply said, "Okay, Mommy!"

Corinne asked two maids to come in to look after the kids and drove away from the mansion.

Joey, who was in the study, overheard Corinne asking the maids to look after Bryan and Corinne upstairs. He was a bit upset; no one came for him when he had gone out to pick up his kite a moment ago. He rested his head on the table and took out a comic book to read, but his mind kept thinking about what the balloon seller had said.

'I'm adopted, a nobody who has no inheritance rights in this house. I have no right to be jealous of Bryan and Christine...' he thought.

Chapter 1707

Nevertheless, Joey missed the days when he was an only child. That was a time when he had Jeremy, as well as Corinne's full attention. They were so happy back then.

That was the first time Joey experienced what it felt like to have a loving home. Unfortunately, it was a short-lived experience for him because Corinne who was pregnant at that time-ran away from home no long after. Although he did not understand why she had to run away, he knew deep down inside that he was not as important as Corinne's children.

'The balloon seller is right. How can I ever compete with Bryan and Christine?' thought Joey. He told himself he should not think too highly of himself or think he was just as important as Bryan and Christine to Corinne.

The fact that he would be the one to go without when there were not enough potato chips to go around made him realize that. It was not the potato chips he really wanted; he was just disappointed he was left out.

Joey felt miserable, conflicted, and insecure. He wanted attention, but it seemed he did not deserve any of it. He flipped through the comic book Jeremy had bought for him absent-mindedly; his mind was such a mess that he felt like it was about to explode!

Later, he put down the comic book and went back to his own room. Jeremy was the one who decorated that room for him, but he rarely slept there after Corinne came back. Instead, he would sleep with Bryan and Christine in Corinne's room.

He thought it would be better for everyone if he slept back in his own room. That way, he would not take any attention away from Bryan and Christine. He was an adopted child, after all.

He would leave if he had somewhere to go, but he did not. This was the only home he had ever known, so as much as he knew how much of an eyesore he was, he would have to stay put. Sadly enough, he did not even know who his real parents were.

Joey laid down on his kiddy bed, and it was not long before he fell asleep with tears still streaming down his cheeks.

Corinne came back home 20 minutes later. She instructed the servants to carry the things she bought out of the car while she went upstairs to find Joey with two bags of potato chips in her hand.

She had gone out to stock up on potato chips because she saw how sad Joey was when he did not get any. At the same time, she also bought some groceries for cooking dinner later.

She ran up to the study, but Joey was not there. She thus turned and asked the servants whether they had seen him.

They all shook their heads. They were busy cleaning, so none of them had noticed Joey had gone to his own room.

Corinne decided to look for Joey in her room, but she could not bring along the potato chips with her as Christine and Bryan would definitely fight over it.

'Joey is always generous with his food. He'd probably give most of his potato chips, if not all, to his brother and sister,' thought Corinne.

Hence, she asked a maid to hold on to the potato chips for her before she walked into her room. However, the second she stepped into her room, she was greeted with the sight of the two kids fighting over a toy.

"Give it to me!"

"It's mine!"

"But I want to play with it!"

"No! You can't!"

Corinne pinched the bridge of her nose speechlessly. She then cleared her throat and said, "Both of you stop! Have you forgotten what I told you two before I went out?"

Christine and Bryan froze when they heard Corinne's voice. They slowly turned to look at her before suddenly rushing over to snatch on each other.

"Mommy, she started it first!"

"Mommy, he started it first!"

#### Chapter 1708

The two maids assigned to look after Bryan and Christine stood there helplessly.

"Ma'am, Mister Bryan and Miss Christine were fighting over a toy. We couldn't stop them."

"They threw a tantrum when we tried to stop them."

Corinne pinched the bridge of her nose again. She had been so busy recently that she sort of neglected the two kids to the point where they had become even more bad-tempered. "Enough is enough! Both of you stop!" roared Corinne.

The kids stood quietly as they felt their mother's burning rage.

Corinne pulled them closer, scolded them sternly, and forbade them to have any snacks for one month. Christine and Bryan's faces immediately fell when they heard that.

Nonetheless, Corinne stood firm on her decision. She took out the handwriting homework the kindergarten had given them and told them to do it. She would be back later to check on their progress.

Christine and Bryan were displeased with the punishment they received but did not dare to disobey her, so they did as they were told.

After she finished lecturing the two kids, Corinne came out of the room and looked for the maid who was holding Joey's potato chips for her.

The maid was looking for her, too. "Ma'am, Old Missus Holden is asking for you. She'd like to have a word with you."

'A word with me? Did Grandma find out something?' thought Corinne with concern.

After deliberating for a while, she asked the maid, "How about Joey? Have you found him?"

"Yes, Mister Joey is taking a nap in his own room. There's no need to worry about him. Please go and see Old Missus Holden now," replied the maid. Corinne nodded in relief. "Okay, please bring those potato chips to Joey for me."

"Yes, ma'am."

Corinne turned around and headed to Old Missus Holden's room.

After seeing Corinne off, the maid proceeded to Joey's room with the two packs of potato chips. She happened to bump into another maid, who just walked past Joey's room. When the other maid found out that she was heading to Joey's room, she tried to stop her.

"Mister Joey is sleeping, so you shouldn't disturb him. Why don't you bring the potato chips to him afterward? Let's go and clean the stairs first before Mister Greg wakes up from his nap and sees dust in the house!"

The maid agreed with her colleague, so she put the two packs of potato chips on a cabinet with a flower vase on it and went on to clean the stairs.

After the two maids went off to clean the stairs, the maid who was looking after Bryan and Christine came out of the room to get some water for them. She noticed the potato chips on the cabinet and recalled that Corinne had just banned the kids from eating any snacks for one month, so she quickly hid them away.

'Better put these away before Mister Bryan and Miss Christine see them.'

Sophia had finished preparing lunch and was about to invite her father for lunch. However, her father's men told her that he had gone out.

She tried to find out why her father had gone out, but his men kept a tight lip. Nevertheless, she still managed to figure out what her father was up to.

'Dad will never hide anything from me if it's work-related, so he must've gone out to look for Melinda and Lilin. Hmph! I don't know what he sees in that woman. It's as if she had given him a love potion or something. A rich charming man like him could easily get any woman he wants! Even teenage girls would fall for him! Why is he so obsessed with that old witch?!

As much as she was upset with Adam, she knew it was not in her place to criticize her father. She returned to her suite and called Zachary and Benjamin out of their room for lunch.

#### Chapter 1709

After a whole day of investigation, Adam finally tracked down his wife and daughter's whereabouts and got there as fast as he could.

When he arrived at the place, he rang the doorbell. After a while, he could hear footsteps approaching.

"Coming!" said Lilin.

Lilin rushed to the door, thinking that it was the food delivery they ordered.

When she opened the door and saw the solemn face of her father, she was startled for only one second before she slammed the door shut.

"Li..." Adam hardly finished uttering his daughter's name when the door was slammed in his face. He took a deep breath to calm his anger and rang the doorbell again. This time, no one opened the door.

"Mister Adam, should we kick the door open?" asked one of his men when he saw Adam's face had contorted out of rage.

Adam waved his hand and said sternly, "No. She hates it when people do that. Go out and wait for me there."



"Yes, sir!" The men nodded and left Adam alone.

Adam sighed and continued to ring the doorbell repeatedly. He knew they would have to open the door at some point.

20 minutes had passed, but the door remained closed. Adam was running out of patience.

Meanwhile, inside the house, Melinda was watching television in the living room, and the unceasing doorbell ringing was getting on her nerves.

Lilin glanced at the door before turning back to her mother. "Mommy, why don't you let Daddy in and talk to him? He seems to be getting to the end of his patience. He might even kick the door down! You know how short-tempered Daddy is!"

Melinda frowned. She knew her husband very well, and she was in the sentiment that he really would tear down the door when he lost his temper.

She thought it over and waved, allowing Lilin to open the door.

Lilin immediately understood what she meant, so she quickly ran to open the door.

When Lilin opened the door, she noticed that the food delivery had arrived as well. However, the delivery man was a bit frightened by Adam who was banging on the door. He did not dare to go near the door, worrying that Adam might hurt him.

On the other hand, Adam was trying to squeeze a smile onto his gloomy face when he saw his daughter at the door.

"Lilin, my dear girl, I knew you'd open the door for me! Good thing you're unlike your cold-hearted mother."

Lilin rolled her eyes, collected her takeout from the delivery man politely, and entered the house without talking to Adam.

Adam's smile disappeared instantly. Since Lilin left the door open, he took it as he was allowed to go in as well.

Lilin took the takeout to the sofa, planning to enjoy it with Melinda.

Adam walked in and glanced around the interior of the room. When he approached his wife and daughter, who were eating fast food, he frowned and said, "This is where you've been staying with our daughter? Why, it's so cramped and shabby! And how can you let her eat those unhealthy fast foods? I thought you'd be better off without me!"

Melinda was so annoyed by Adam's words that she lost her usual graciousness. She glared at him coldly.

Chapter 1710

"Yes, I received a downgrade in my lifestyle after I left you. But don't worry, Lilian and I will never starve to death. What are you doing here? If you have something to say, say it out now! And if you don't, leave so we can eat in peace!"

Adam was not used to Melinda speaking so harshly to him. He sighed, sat down, and softened his tone when he said, "Mel, that's enough now. You're not young anymore, so you shouldn't act so wilfully. Come back with me after you've finished eating all this trashy food."

Melinda bit into the chicken wing she was eating before putting it down and saying, "Brian Addison, do my words mean nothing to you? Or have you forgotten what I told you that day?"

"Of course your words are important to me. Mel, let's stop this nonsense, okay?" said Adam helplessly.

Melinda took a sip of Lilin's soda and said, "I told you I want a divorce, no? Since we're getting a divorce, we should start with living separately. Why should I go home with you?"

Adam frowned. "Why do you want a divorce? We're fine, aren't we? I admit I was rude to you and Lilin that day, but it was only because I was in a bad mood. Are you really going to divorce me over something so trivial?"

Melinda laughed mockingly. "You think that's trivial? Or do you think me being angry at you is trivial? Brian, I've been with you for so many years, and what did I get? Everyone thinks I'm so lucky to be with you because you are a good provider, but what have you given to me other than material stuff?"

Adam his mouth but no words came out. He was stumped by her question.

Melinda glared at him. "You can't even list out a single thing, right? Because you, of all people, know how difficult it is for me to be with you! Sophia thinks I married you for money and status. Every time she yelled or spoke to me sarcastically, I'd always let it slide or do some things to please her. I didn't want to put you in a difficult position, and I also hope to be a good stepmother to her!

"But look at how she treats Lilin! She keeps on seeing Lilin as the enemy. She thinks I gave birth to Lilin so I can fight for a piece of the inheritance. I've taught Lilin since she was a child not to argue or fight over anything with Sophia. Lilin's a good kid, and she has never thought about fighting over the inheritance with Sophia.

"But you took that for granted! You think Lilin doesn't want anything, so you don't give her anything. You're in so much of a hurry to give everything to Sophia because you're worried Lilin's going to change her mind and fight over the inheritance with Sophia when she grows up! Well, let me tell you something. Lilin and I don't care about your stinky money. But it chills us to the bone of how you can favor Sophia so much that you've lost all reason!"

Adam's expression darkened. He wanted to explain himself, but Melinda cut him off and continued to say, "You must think I'm a hypocrite. After all, I was the one who said we didn't want the inheritance, yet I got mad at you when you didn't give us anything. Heh! You can think whatever you want. I've made up my mind to divorce you and take back what rightfully belongs to Lilin. But we're not going to keep the money. I'll respect her wish to donate the money to charity. I'll just treat it as collecting good karma for her. I can take any suffering that comes my way, but I won't ever let my daughter suffer!" Adam's face was filled with complicated mixed feelings. He took out a cigar box from his pocket, picked out a cigar, and put it in his mouth. He was about to light it up when Melinda snatched the cigar and threw it into the trash can.

"Go out if you want to smoke! You might think this house is cramped and shabby, but it's a house my friend loves very much. I don't want you getting all that smoke on her furniture, nor do I want my daughter to be exposed to second-hand smoke!"