

## **Kissed AOM 1751**

### Chapter 1751

Joey was a little surprised. He raised his head and looked at Corinne. "I..."

Corinne reached out to pat his head. "Will it be the amusement park? Or would you prefer to go home? You can choose somewhere else if you want. I'm taking the rest of the day off, so we'll just spend our afternoon having fun."

Joey blinked and glanced at Corinne in disbelief. "But Mommy, I... I got into trouble. Aren't you angry with me?"

Corinne raised an eyebrow. "What sort of trouble did you get into?"

Joey answered in confusion, "I... I bullied someone..."

"It's not bullying if you're defending someone else." Corinne smiled. "I saw what happened from the surveillance footage, and you did a good job when you stood up bravely for your classmate! That is the right thing to do."

Joey could hardly believe the praise that he was receiving, and he stared at Corinne uneasily. "Mommy... Are you sure I didn't do anything wrong?"

Corinne cupped his little face in her hands and kissed his forehead. "I'm sure. What you did was the right thing to do. You're a good role model for Bryan and Christine. I'm very proud of you!" Joey blushed. "But I got you in trouble and troubled you..."

Corinne frowned and said, "What do you mean, you got me into trouble? You're my son, and it is my duty to protect you and be responsible for you. Everything I do for you is out of my love and obligation to you as a mother! Don't ever say that you're a burden to me, understand?"

Joey pursed his lips and tried not to cry. He had expected his mother to be angry with him and blame him like the principal did.

Bryan and Christine were clueless as to what happened, so they leaned over and began asking questions.

"What are you and Joey talking about, Mommy? Did Joey beat up someone?"

"What did Joey do, Mommy?"

Corinne turned and then said solemnly to them, "Joey did a very brave thing today. He protected a little girl who was being bullied by a nasty boy, and he beat the bully up. Isn't that something a hero would do?"

Bryan and Christine gasped in admiration and looked at Joey as if he was a superhero.

"How did you beat that bully up? I want to learn how to fight the bad guys too!" Bryan said.

"You're so cool, Joey! I don't need to be afraid of anyone in kindergarten because you'll be there to protect me! I'm going to have to count on you, Joey. Bryan is unreliable because he runs off faster than I do whenever he gets into trouble!"

Bryan folded his arms. "Hey! Couldn't you just praise Joey without dragging me into this? When did I run off and leave you behind?"

Christine raised her chin and snorted. "I know you won't protect me because you don't think of me as your sister."

Not to be outdone, Bryan retorted, "Have you ever thought of me as your brother? You're always saying bad things about me!"

"Hmph!" "Hmph!"

The two children got into an argument again, as usual. They turned away and angrily ignored each other.

Corinne was dumbfounded by their antics. "Cut it out, you two! Can't you learn from Joey and channel all your negative energy into dealing with bad guys?"

The two children looked at Corinne, then at the blushing Joey.

"Fine," Christine said. "I... I'll make up with Bryan, but only for Joey's sake!"

"Then I'll do the same for Joey's sake too!" Bryan assented.

Corinne massaged her temple and looked at Joey. "Let's ignore them for now. Have you decided whether you want to go to the amusement park?"

Joey blinked and hesitated for a moment before nodding vigorously. "I... I want to go to the amusement park..."

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Corinne smiled. "Then the amusement park, it is! We'll enjoy ourselves there until the evening and watch some fireworks after that. Does that sound good?" "Yeah!" the kids said in unison. Christine and Bryan set aside their differences for the moment and focused solely on going to the amusement park.

Not wanting his hunger to ruin their excitement, Joey rubbed his tummy to try and cover his rumbling stomach. However, Corinne's sharp ear picked up on it. "Are you hungry, Joey? How about we go get some food first?"

Joey blushed and smiled. He felt a little embarrassed but happy at the same time.

Bryan and Christine were riding on his hunger, too.

"Mommy, Mommy! We're hungry too! I want some pizza!"

"I want a cheeseburger!"

Corinne ignored them and asked Joey, "What would you like to eat, Joey? You did a good deed today, and you deserve today's rewards. I'll let you decide!"

The lingering sense of uneasiness and inferiority dissipated from Joey's expression, and he said sprightly, "I want a cheeseburger and some pizza, too. Let's get some of that with Bryan and Christine!" Corinne's heartstrings were tugged when she saw Joey give in to his siblings' requests. "Okay. Cheeseburgers and pizzas, then!"

"Yay, cheeseburgers!"

"Yay, pizza!"

"Yay, both!"

Elsewhere, Sophia brought Zachary and Benjamin to visit some of the more iconic places of interest in the city before preparing to return to Molomia. She was very absent-minded throughout the day as Corinne's presence had left her feeling uneasy all the time.

Zachary and Benjamin were very cooperative. They walked with her after getting out of the car and got back in cooperatively when it was time to go home.

Sophia planned to have lunch with them before returning to the hotel, but she was wary that anything untoward might happen and she would run into Corinne again. Going back to the hotel seemed to be a much safer option.

It was 2 p.m. when they returned. Two men were standing guard outside Adam's suite a sign that Adam had returned after doing some errands in the morning.

Sophia decided at a moment's notice to visit Adam, so she said to Zachary, "You can bring Benjamin back to the suite. I'll go say hi to my dad and tell him we're back."

Zachary had no objection to that. He nodded and went ahead with Benjamin.

After confirming that Zachary and Benjamin had entered the suite, Sophia knocked on Adam's room door and entered. As soon as Sophia entered the door, she stepped on a hard item and nearly slipped.

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Luckily for Sophia, she grabbed the shoe cabinet near the door and managed to stabilize herself. She sighed in relief and looked down, only to find she had just stepped on a

cellphone fragment. That was just one of many cell phones lying on the ground, and they were all Adam's.

'What happened here? Why did he smash all his phones?' Sophia had a bad feeling, and she glanced with a frown at the sofa in the center of the living room. There, she saw her father sitting sullenly while smoking a cigarette.

Sophia walked over and asked, "What happened, Dad? Why did you smash your phones?"

Adam raised his eyes and glanced at his daughter. "Why are you calling me 'Dad'? Didn't you say you don't want me to interfere with your life? You should mind your own business too, then!"

Sophia knew her father was simply saying that as he was angry. She sighed and sat next to her, saying, "Shouldn't we move on from what happened? You're still my father, and I'm still your daughter! I just didn't want you to interfere when it comes to things involving Zachary and myself. It's not like I want to disown you as my father!"

Adam took a big puff of his cigarette and snorted.

Sophia then pleaded, "Please tell me what happened and why you're so angry. I won't worry so much if you just tell me! Is it because of Aunt Melinda and Lilin?"

"No," Adam said worriedly. "It has nothing to do with your Aunt Melinda and Lilin. Don't associate every little negative thing with them!"

Sophia was not too pleased to hear that. "Is that how you see me right now? I'm only asking because I care about you! Are you going to put a gag order on me now to stop me from mentioning Aunt Melinda?" Adam was already in an irritable mood, and he became even more frustrated at the thought that his wife was going to divorce. "I didn't meet her today. I went to deal with work matters."

"Did some problems pop up?" Sophia frowned.

Adam stubbed out his cigarette butt and said, "Financial and tax-related discrepancies were found in the companies that were supposed to be sold. They've been seized!"

Sophia was shocked. "How did that happen?! Why would anyone dare to seize your property?"

Adam has had a great influence in Molomia over recent years as he focused mainly on developing his business there. Though he did not have as much of an influence back in his home country, few would dare to make an enemy out of him. Having his companies seized was thus very unusual, and he suspected someone must have caused this trouble.

Adam then said, "Now that those companies have been seized, I'll have to stay in the country to cooperate with their investigation. It's a pain in the neck!"

Sophia thought for a while and suggested, "Why don't you just abandon them? It's not like those small businesses mean much to you anyway. Let's just go back to Molomia!"

Adam lamented, "This is no longer a question of whether I can do what I want with them. I am forced to stay here and cooperate with the investigation. I've been put on a travel restriction because of those alleged financial discrepancies."

"What?!" Sophia never expected things would be so serious. "What should we do now? Does that mean you'll have to stay here? How long will it take to complete the investigation?"

"How would I know? The government's revenue department hasn't informed me of the specific amount that I owe them in overdue taxes. They might just put me in jail if the amount is too large!"

'No, no, no! How is this happening?' Sophia thought to herself in a panic. She then turned to Adam and said, "I don't think they'll do that! The government is obliged to extend some courtesy to you. If worse comes to worst, we could just give them some hush money!"

Adam lit another cigarette and felt increasingly irritated. The department had new blood, and his past connections were no longer there. Things would be much trickier because of that. Sophia became less optimistic about the whole situation with every passing thought. "Maybe I could take Zachary and Benjamin back to Molomia and wait for you to wrap things up here? It looks as though things will take some time here, so I'd like to have some peace of mind for myself and bring Zachary back as soon as I can."

Adam frowned at her suggestion. "And does that peace of mind come from leaving me behind so I'll deal with this stupid investigation alone? Is your disabled husband more important than me?"

Sophia quickly waved her hand and explained, "No, no, that's not what I meant! I'm just saying I have faith in your ability to deal with all this. It's Zachary's side that's a little more troublesome. We ran into Corinne when we went out today, and I'm worried she'll want to take him away from me if her feelings for him are reignited! I think it's safer for me to bring Zachary back to Molomia at the soonest possible opportunity!"

#### Chapter 1754

Adam frowned. "Whether or not I agree to that is beside the point. You are restricted from leaving the country as well! You'll have to stay here and cooperate with the investigation too!" Sophia was overwhelmed with surprise as she asked, "What?! Why am I being put on a travel ban too? What does it have to do with me?"

Adam took a big puff of his cigarette and said, "Have you forgotten what happened three years ago? You returned to the country for Jeremy's sake and managed several of our companies here. Some of the tax discrepancies occurred during your management. You're also required to cooperate with the investigation!"

Sophia frowned, wondering how everything turned out this way. If she was restricted from leaving the country, then her plans to bring Zachary back to Molomia had hit a wall. It would give Corinne ample time to try and take Jeremy from her again!

The bad feeling that Sophia had intensified even more, and she started to become suspicious of the unexpected seizures. They could not have been just a coincidence.

Zachary and Benjamin had entered the suite. After closing the door, Zachary got up from the wheelchair and removed his coat before tossing it on the bed. He, like Sophia, was in a petulant mood ever since he saw Corinne earlier. He had many questions he wanted to ask her. 'Why would you go to such a scenic place with Jason? Is his presence absolutely necessary?' The doubt and frustration he experienced were suffocating him.

Benjamin stood to one side and glanced admiringly at Zachary's tall stature. "You're so tall! Can I be as tall as you in the future?"

Zachary lowered his eyes and looked at Benjamin, whose face bore some semblance of Corinne. He reached out to pat Benjamin's head, saying, "You need to eat healthy food if you want to grow up well." Benjamin nodded. He blinked and asked, "Are you in a bad mood?"

Zachary kept quiet. 'Is it so obvious that even Benjamin could see it?' he thought to himself.

His silence only served as further confirmation that Benjamin's guess was right. Although Zachary was generally expressionless in most situations, the aura he exuded when he was in a bad mood tended to be much different. Many might not be able to sense the subtle changes, but his biological son was one of those who could.

"You seem to be in a bad mood ever since you saw Mommy Corinne. Are you unhappy because Mommy Corinne is with another handsome guy?"

Benjamin had hit the nail on the head with that guess, and Zachary narrowed his eyes at the little boy. "You're calling that devilish-looking man 'handsome'? Does he fit your idea of a handsome man?" Benjamin was stunned for a moment, but he immediately felt amused by the moody and somewhat childish reaction Zachary had. He had to cover his mouth and suppress his laughter.

Zachary became even more annoyed when he saw Benjamin's reaction. "What are you laughing at?"

Benjamin could not hold back his laughter anymore. "Hahaha! You look super funny when you're jealous!" Zachary was speechless.

Once Benjamin had laughed his fill, he comforted Zachary, "You don't need to get jealous! Mommy Corinne isn't interested in that man at all. I saw it with my own eyes when my brother and I switched. Mommy ignored him all the time."

Zachary felt a little better after hearing what his son said, but that did not reduce his bad mood in the slightest. "Why would she go sightseeing with him if she's not interested in him?"



Benjamin did not know the full details of the situation, but he believed that Corinne was not the kind of person who would casually accept another man's advances. "You should just ask her if you have any questions about her. You can contact her, can't you?"

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Zachary did not answer. He could contact Corinne, but he did not want to do so because he was still in a bad mood. He had already read the message Corinne sent him and decided not to reply because she asked him where they were going instead of explaining why she was with Jason.

Corinne could easily have explained the situation and clarified the matter to avoid any misunderstanding, but perhaps she just could not care less as to whether or not there was a misunderstanding in the first place. Simply thinking about that made him more frustrated.

He had been trapped by Sophia for more than three years, and heaven knew how many men had approached Corinne to try and win her heart. His temper was fast flaring up when those thoughts flooded his mind.

At that point, the sensible Benjamin handed his phone over and said, "Just ask her already! You're obviously concerned about the whole thing, so why don't you just ask her about it? I wouldn't want you to worry about it all night and lose sleep because of it!"

Zachary looked at Benjamin before shifting his gaze to the phone.

Benjamin then urged, "Hurry up! You won't get to contact her anymore if Sophia comes back!"

Zachary held the phone for a few more seconds before making an encrypted video call to Corinne. The call rang for a while and was finally picked up. The video was blurry, and it sounded a little noisy on Corinne's end. Corinne switched the camera to focus on her face and raised an eyebrow at the man in the camera. "Took you long enough to reply to my message!"

Zachary looked at her coldly. "Where are you? Haven't you gone home yet?"

What he really wanted to ask was, 'Are you still with Jason? Do you two have that much to talk about?'

Corinne faced the camera to her surroundings and showed him several cartoon costumes walking among a crowd of people. "I'm still out! Can you see the crowd? Guess where I am!" Zachary's expression sank even more. "You're at an amusement park?"

He got so angry that he started to clench his fists. 'D\*mn it! I've never even been to the amusement park with her yet, so why does Jason get to go with her? He's getting all sorts of funny ideas about my woman!'

Corinne nodded. "Bingo! The situation today is a little different, so I took the kids to the amusement park! We're planning to stay here until the evening before going back to see the fireworks display! They've never watched a fireworks show before!"

'Amazing! They're going to watch a fireworks show together too! How romantic! Why would you do that with another man, though? You're mine!' Zachary's blood was boiling even though he remained expressionless.

Benjamin overheard what Corinne said and jumped on the bed. He stood on his toes and looked at Corinne through the phone screen. "Mommy! I've never seen a fireworks show before! I want to watch one with all of you!"

Corinne felt a complex mix of emotions when she saw Benjamin. "You will, Benjamin, I promise! Once you and your dad come back home, we'll all watch a fireworks show together! You'll get to see the best and most awesome fireworks show ever! For now, you have to be obedient and listen to your dad. Can you do that?"

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Benjamin nodded. He knew Corinne had her problems, so he decided he would be understanding.

Corinne truly wished Benjamin could stay by her side, but the situation did not allow it. She could not bear to let Benjamin just watch them play outside while he was out of the loop, so she said to Zachary, "Hey, it's too noisy around here, and I can't hear you clearly. Let's stop for now. Bye!"

Their video call ended.

'How dare she hang up just like that? She hasn't even clarified whether or not she's with Jason!' thought Zachary while staring at the phone screen.

Benjamin tugged at his father's clothes with his tiny cute hand and whispered, "Daddy, I think Sophia is back!"

Zachary snapped back to the present, got back to the wheelchair, and cleared all the records from his phone.

When Sophia pushed the door open, she only saw Zachary picking out loungewear for Benjamin from the wardrobe. Troubled by the travel restrictions, she remained oblivious to any peculiar behavior from her husband.

"Zachary, are you hungry? Should I get the hotel to send up some of your and Benjamin's favorite dishes? I'm a bit worn out today and not in the mood to cook."

Zachary nodded. "Yeah, just go for a rest if you're tired. We're fine with whatever you order."

"Alright, I'll call room service," replied Sophia absent-mindedly as she walked away.

Zachary took out a tank top and shorts from the wardrobe for Benjamin, instructing him to change on his own.

He then maneuvered the wheelchair out of the room. He narrowed his eyes, trying to figure out what might have happened to Sophia when he saw her sitting alone on the sofa looking unusually weary and sighing deeply.

He wheeled himself over and asked, "What's wrong? You look pale. Did something happen to your father?"

Sophia snapped back to attention, pleasantly surprised that Zachary was concerned about her. However, she could not really find the enthusiasm to be happy about this. She only forced a smile and said, "Oh, nothing! Really. I'm just feeling a bit tired..."

A hint of thoughtfulness flashed across Zachary's deep eyes as he probed, "If you're tired, just take a nap in your room. There's no point for you to sit here and sigh. We're leaving for Molomia in two days, right? We should start packing the luggage tomorrow."

When bringing up the topic of returning to Molomia, Sophia's expression turned somewhat unpleasant. "Um... Zachary, we're not going back to Molomia for the time being." Zachary was slightly confused. "Why not?"

Sophia sighed frustratedly. "It's just... Dad's company is facing some tax issues, so I need to stay here to help him handle it. He's getting old, and Melinda is giving him a hard time as well. I'm just worried about him..."

She intentionally concealed the fact that she was restricted from leaving the country.

Having already sensed that something was amiss, Zachary had his own answer. "Well... It's fine with us if you're staying here to help your father with the company. I'll just head back with Benjamin first. We'll wait for you there."

"You're going to bring Benjamin back first? You're not going to stay here with me?" asked Sophia in shock.

Zachary smiled wryly. "It's not like I can help you with anything, given my current situation. Plus, your father doesn't like me. He thinks I'm an eyesore. Wouldn't it be better for me to go back with Benjamin back first? This way, you can fully focus on dealing with the tax issues."

Sophia's eyes flickered as she looked at Zachary hesitantly. "But..."

Zachary cut in, "But what? Is the company issue really that complicated? Will it take a super long time?"

Sophia shook her head. "No, not really."

"Then it shouldn't be a big deal for me and Benjamin to head back first. We're not really settling in well here."

Upon hearing Zachary's words, Sophia reconsidered. "Um... Alright. I'll have my dad arrange for you and Benjamin to go back to Molomia first. I'll go back too once everything is sorted out here."

Sophia would not have let Zachary and Benjamin go back to Molomia first if she were not so worried about Corinne stealing them. Sophia believed it was best for her to keep them in her sights, but she had to deal with the tax investigation then and would not have the time to look after them.

'Well, I suppose it should be fine for Zachary and Benjamin to head back to Molomia for now. As long as Dad's people are keeping an eye on them, things should go smoothly once they're there,' thought Sophia.

Zachary nodded. "So, now that's settled, just go and rest. I'll wait here for the room service to come."

Sophia felt grateful and pleasantly surprised by the unexpected care he was showing her. "Thanks, Zachary. It means a lot to me to have you here. I'll definitely miss you and Benjamin when you go back to Molomia."

However, Zachary simply ignored her.

Right at that moment, there was a knock on the door from room service.

Thus, Zachary maneuvered the wheelchair to open the door.

The fireworks show had started, and Corinne and the three kids were enjoying it from the VIP platform.

Bryan and Christine were excitedly jumping around, completely overjoyed and thrilled. Lost in the enjoyment of the day's festivities, they were oblivious to everything else.

Joey, being sweet and well-behaved, nestled close to Corinne. However, the observant boy sensed that his mother seemed preoccupied, so he leaned in close to Corinne's ear and asked with concern, "Mommy, what's wrong? Are you sad?"

Corinne was staring dazedly at the fireworks above. After snapping out of her daze, she smiled and shook her head. "Sweetheart, I'm okay. Just a little tired."

Joey instantly lowered his head like a guilty child. "This is all my fault. I insisted on coming to the amusement park. If it weren't for me, you'd be resting at home now."

Corinne frowned and stroked Joey's head. "Nonsense. I'm really glad I came with you guys. I never had the chance to come when I was little, so this is like a dream come true."

The self-blame in Joey's eyes faded away, replaced by a puzzled expression as he blinked and looked at Corinne. "Why not, Mommy? Was it because no one was free to take you here?" "Yeah. For a long time, Mommy was all alone."

Joey had no idea what Corinne's childhood experience was like, and it was the first time he heard her talk about it. He moved closer to her and hugged her.

"It's okay, Mommy! From now on, you're not alone. I'll be with you, and Bryan and Christine will also be there. Even Daddy too...when he's back..."

Corinne stroked his head again. "Thank you, sweetheart! Please remember that you're never alone too. You have me, Bryan, Christine, and Daddy with you too."

There was a newfound brightness in Joey's eyes; it seemed like the reflection of the fireworks in the sky and also of hope.

It was already late at night by the time they got home.

The fireworks show did not actually end very late, but due to the crowded conditions, Corinne worried about losing the children in the peak hours and darkness. After all, she had brought the kids alone and had no assistance. Thus, she waited until the very end in the amusement park before finally leaving with the kids.

Chapter 1758

As soon as Corinne and the kids entered the house, Francine hurried over. "Corinne, why did you come back so late? I was so worried!"

Francine then bent down and gave each of the kids a kiss. "Do you three little troublemakers have any idea how worried I was? Did you convince your mommy to take you out again? She worked so hard all day long. Can't you cut her some slack?"

"No, Aunt Francine! It was Mommy's idea to take us to the amusement park!" said Christine.

"That's right. Mommy decided to reward us!" Bryan added.

Christine rolled her eyes at Bryan. "Mommy is rewarding Joey. We're just riding on his coattail."

Bryan shot back with a glare. "I know! Mind your own business!"

Christine scoffed and ignored him.

Francine had long grown accustomed to the twins' bickering, so it did not surprise her. Instead, she turned her curious gaze to Joey, reaching out to rub his round little face.

"Did you get a reward from your mommy today? Tell me what happened. Did you get first place in the kindergarten again?"

Joey blushed sheepishly. Even though Corinne said he did not do anything wrong, when he thought about it calmly, he still felt hitting someone in a fit of anger was not a wise move. Thinking that Joey might be too shy to share, Christine and Bryan eagerly chimed in to explain to Francine.

"Aunt Francine, I know what happened. I'll tell you! Joey bravely came to the rescue today. He saved a girl who was being bullied and got praised by Mommy!" Christine said excitedly. "Yeah, yeah! He was super awesome. He gave that bully a beating, and now the guy's all bruised up!" added Bryan.

"What?" Francine frowned and quickly gave Joey a once-over. "You fought with somebody? Are you hurt?"

Joey shook his head. "No... I'm not hurt."

However, Francine could not shake off her concern. She kept checking Joey all over, lifting his sleeves to look for any signs of injury.

Corinne patted Francine's head. "That's enough, Joey wasn't hurt. I've checked."

Hearing Corinne's words, Francine felt a bit more at ease and stood up with her hands on her hips. "So what exactly happened? Joey got into a fight with someone, and you didn't even let me know? I'll go to the kindergarten and find out which brat dares to mess with my nephew!"

Corinne chuckled at how protective Francine was being. "If you go, you might end up fighting with the other kid's parents. Things will just get even messier."

Francine looked indignant. "What? Are the parents really that arrogant? Did they bully you too?"

Corinne shook her head lightly, urging the kids to go inside before addressing the matter.

However, Francine was still in a hurry and continued to ask, "Tell me, Corinne! Are that kid's parents troublemakers too? Did they give you a hard time?" "No, they didn't. Do you really think I'd let someone walk all over me? You know me better than that."

'She's right. She's not someone that can be easily messed with. Back then, I was bewitched by Anya and set traps everywhere to make things difficult for her. She didn't even hold back at all!' thought Francine. Despite this realization, Francine could not completely shake off her concern. She frowned and pouted. "Hmph! Even if you weren't bullied, I still want to meet those parents and that spoiled brat. They must've done something really out of line to push our sensible Joey to the point of violence."

Corinne patted her shoulder. "Alright, let's just stop this topic. It's time for rest now."

"I'm not tired! To be honest, it looks like you're the exhausted one here! You took the three of them to the amusement park without any help. I bet you were in hyper-alert mode all the time, playing with them and everything. Must be pretty draining, huh?" asked Francine.



Corinne shrugged. "It's bearable. They don't dare to misbehave or run wild with me. They were actually quite well-behaved."

"Corinne, if you find yourself in a situation like this next time, call me. I can go to the amusement park with you and help keep an eye on them!" grumbled Francine.

Corinne raised an eyebrow. "You've become quite a bit more responsible these days. Alright, I'll definitely call you next time!"

Francine pouted. "I'm not being responsible. I just don't want to see you burning the candle at both ends! With Jeremy away, I want to help share some of his responsibilities."

Chapter 1759

Corinne smiled and pinched Francine's cheek. "Okay, I get it. If anything comes up next time, I'll make sure to share the load with you."

'She's just teasing me again. How I wish Jeremy would come back now. Only he can pamper my sister-in-law with all his love and attention. He'll surely help her unload some of the responsibilities she shouldn't be shouldering alone,' thought Francine.

She understood and sympathized with Corinne. After all, Corinne's greatest strength was her independence and resilience, but it was also her biggest flaw.

"I wonder what Jeremy is doing now?" said Francine with a worried sigh.

Corinne narrowed her eyes. "It's late. He's probably asleep."

Francine scoffed. "How can he sleep knowing that you've been shouldering everything alone while he gets to live a good life?"

"Okay, you should go to bed. I need to get these three washed up and put to bed. Oh, and try not to disturb Grandpa and Grandma." Francine nodded and headed upstairs, but her mind was occupied with various thoughts and concerns.

'Has he gone to sleep?' Corinne turned her head, gazing at the moon in the night sky outside. She stood there alone, lost in her thoughts. Shortly after, Corinne led the kids

upstairs. After getting Christine and herself ready for bed, she instructed Joey to help Bryan with washing up. While blow-drying her daughter's hair, Corinne noticed her phone vibrating twice. It was an encrypted message, no doubt from Jeremy.

'He's still not asleep?' Corinne's heart skipped a beat.

She decrypted the message that read, [Are you not home yet?]

For some reason, even though it was just text, Corinne could hear Jeremy's disapproval.

She replied, [I'm home now. Why aren't you sleeping yet?]

A few seconds later, she got a reply from him. [Who did you go to the amusement park with today?]

Finally, he asked. Otherwise, he probably would not be able to sleep.

Corinne found this message quite perplexing. 'Didn't I have a video call with him at that time? Why is he asking such a question?' She frowned and replied, [By myself.]

This time, there was a bit of a delay before Jeremy responded, [You took three kids to the amusement park by yourself?] [What's the matter? Can't I do that?]

[How did you manage?]

Corinne laughed out loud. [What do you think? I've been managing for the past three years!]

Late at night, Jeremy laid in bed, staring at the message she sent, feeling a bitter pang in his heart.

After a while, he typed two words in response, [I'm sorry.]

Corinne did not reply. She was busy blow-drying her sons' hair.

## Chapter 1760

It was only dawn when loud knocks coupled with the sound of insistent doorbell ringing could be heard coming from a typical residential neighborhood in New Capital City. Melinda and Lilin instantly woke up. Lilin groggily rubbed her eyes and sat up. "Who is it? Why would anyone knock on our door so early in the morning?"

Melinda had already gotten out of bed and was looking for something to wear. "Lilin, go back to sleep. I'll see who it is."

Although Lilin had just woken up and her mind was still a bit fuzzy, she was still alert. She got out of bed and grabbed her mother, who was about to go to the door.

"Mom, this isn't our home, and your friend hasn't lived in this house for a while! Who else will show up at someone else's door this early in the morning? We need to be cautious; it could be someone with bad intentions!"

Melinda glanced at the clock on the wall and noted that it was only four o'clock in the morning. Being sought out at this hour was indeed very unusual.

Lilin also quickly put on her clothes. "Mom, wait for me. I'll come with you to see who it is! Even though Dad's not here, he surely has arranged for his people to keep an eye on us. His people wouldn't let strangers come knocking on our door! My guess is that if it's not Dad's men, it's the bad guys who've already taken down Dad's lackeys."

Hearing her daughter's speculation, Melinda could not help but start to feel nervous.

'I don't think I've offended anyone, so who could these bad guys be? Could it be someone sent by Sophia to deal with me and Lilin?' With these thoughts in mind, Melinda took her daughter's hand, ready to protect her in case anything happened.

The knocking outside grew louder and more urgent.

Melinda and Lilin tiptoed to the door without turning on the lights, fearing they might be discovered by whoever was outside. Subsequently, Melinda cautiously approached and peered through the peephole. Shock and surprise immediately riddled her face.

Lilin noticed her unease and anxiously tugged at her hand, whispering, "Mom, did you see something? Who's outside?"

It was only then that Melinda snapped out of her shock. Without answering her daughter's question, she reached out and turned on the lights. The room suddenly lit up, casting an unsettling glow that left Lilin even more uneasy.

"Mom, why did you turn on the lights? Won't we be exposed like this? Who's out there?"

Melinda patted Lilin's head gently. "Don't worry, it's not a bad person."

With that, Melinda slowly opened the door.

Just as Lilin was teetering between nervousness and curiosity, she spotted a striking figure darting in, accompanied by a subtle, cool scent of roses. This mysterious person, upon entering, immediately embraced Melinda.

It took Lilin a full minute to snap out of her daze. "Miss Emily? What are you doing here?"

Emily released her grip on Melinda and looked down at her student. "Did I startle you, Lilin?"