

18:22 

Chapter 4 The illness

Six years later...

In a hospital...

Natasha waited in the queue in front of a billing counter for her turn to pay. She was dazedly staring at the invoice in her hand. The bill was more than half her monthly salary.

Her son had a congenital heart problem and had to rush to the hospital once again. It was his second hospitalization this month. It took him a week to recover this time.

The doctor suggested surgery as soon as possible. If not, his condition would worsen. But Natasha could hardly manage his medications. She had no idea how she would arrange the money for the surgery.

Because of surrogacy, she couldn't complete her drama major. Her dream of becoming an actress never came true. She wouldn't have faced this money problem if she had fulfilled her dream. Now she was working as a typist in a small company to feed herself and her son.

She never complained about her misfortune as she thought she would have a happy life with her son. But her cruel destiny didn't show her mercy. It had so much in store to make her suffer.

A lone tear rolled down her cheek. Natasha was not sure if she would ever be able to see her son healthy.

Tap-Tap-Tap...

"Madam, I have been calling you for so long," the young man on the counter yelled.

"Uh..." Natasha blinked, startled. She was so engrossed in her thoughts

18:22 

that she didn't notice the people in front of her had already left.

"Hurry up if you are going to pay the bills," the man continued. "If not, please step aside."

"I am paying." She pushed the bill and her debit card through the hole in the glass wall that separated the counter from the rest of the public.

After a while, the man handed her the payment receipt and said, "You will get the discharge summary soon."

"Thank you." She slipped the receipt into her purse and made her way to the general ward.

She saw her six-year-old son, Jack, playing with his dinosaur stuffed toy on a sickbed. She felt a pang of pain in her heart. Tears pricked at the back of her eyes. But she pulled a smile over her lips as she approached him.

"Boo-Boo-Boo..." She heard him making some buzzing sounds.

Jack dropped the toy on the bed and grinned at her. "Mommy, you are back." His dark green eyes sparkled with joy.

Natasha looked into his eyes in a trance. She had no idea what his father looked like. But his eyes always reminded her of how green and cold his father's eyes were.

"Hmm." She sat down beside him. "Guess what? The doctor discharged you."

"Wow! I am finally going back home." Jack threw his arms around her neck. "I was getting tired of staying here."

Natasha laughed and wrapped her arms around him. "Then we should have some fun today. What do you say?"

"Yeah, yeah, yeah... I want a party. I will invite Tony."

A glimmer of sorrow crossed her face. However, it only lasted for a few

18:22 

seconds. She resumed her smile and said, "We will have the party next time. I want to have fun with you. No Tony, no other friends."

Jack sagged on the bed, hanging his head down. His excitement waned right away.

Natasha felt awful, looking at his glum face. She forced a smile and drew him into her lap. "I promise to throw a party when I get my pay next month. You are welcome to invite Tony and other friends. But today, you and I will have fun. How about we go and eat some pastries?"

A smile gradually appeared on Jack's face. "Pastries sound yummy," he squealed.

"Isn't it?" She hugged him and kissed him on the cheek. She put him on the bed. "Let me pack the bag." She pulled a duffle bag from beneath the bed and stuffed his belongings inside.

In the meantime, a nurse came over and handed her the discharge summary. "You are now free to leave."

"Thank you, sister." Natasha thanked her with a smile.

"You are welcome." The nurse left after waving goodbye to Jake.

Natasha finally finished packing and zipped the bag up. "Let's get out of here." She walked out with his tiny hand in hers.

Several minutes later...

They arrived at a small bakery not far from the hospital. Jack came to a halt and looked at the other side of the road.

Natasha also stopped on the track and looked down at him. Her amber eyes narrowed as she pondered what he was looking at.

"What is the matter?" she asked.

"You always bring me here. Why don't we go to that shop?" Jack

18:22 

pointed to the other side of the road.

Natasha looked in the direction he was pointing and saw a luxury bakery. Red lights illuminated the word 'Cake World'.

It was one of the largest and costliest bakeries in the city. A single cake would cost more than her weekly grocery budget.

She blinked in a daze, looking at the shop.

"Mommy. Let's go there." Jack tugged on her hand.

She pulled her gaze down to him. "I will take you there the next time," she said, mustering a smile.

"You always said that," Jack sulked and added, "but your next time never came." He turned aside, crossing his arms over his chest.

Natasha opened her mouth to say something but paused. She felt awful for not being able to meet his request. She took some time to stare at him. Then she squatted in front of him and stroked his cheek. "I promise I'll get you a cake from there the next time. I didn't bring enough money today to buy a cake. Let's get some pastries here. I saw new flavored pastries in the morning. Don't you want to try some?"

Jack threw her a sidelong glance, still sulking. "Promise?"

"Pinky promise." She linked her little finger with his.

Only then did Jack smile and say, "Okay. I will have some pastries."

Natasha breathed out a sigh in secret. She smiled as she stood up.

"Come on." She held his hand and went into the shop.

Jack's eyes sparkled as he looked at the different kinds of pastries in the glass case on the counter.

"Which one do you like to eat?" Natasha asked.

"That one." He pointed to a rectangular, moist, and fluffy pastry with yellow and white layers and a cherry on top.

18:23 

"Alright." Natasha held up her hand and called the shop owner. "One pineapple pastry please."

"You want to eat here. Or shall I pack it?"

"I want to eat," Jack chimed in.

"Okay." The shop owner laughed. He put the pastry on a disposable plate and gave it to him.

"Yum, yum..." Jack licked his lips, gaping at the pastry.

Natasha couldn't help but smile, watching his delight. She led him to one of the tables outside the bakery after paying the bill.

Jack sat on a chair and began to eat.

"Do you like it?" She asked, taking a seat across from him.

"Yeah. It's tasty. Mm..." He cut off a piece of pastry with a wooden spoon and then extended his hand to her. "Try it."

Natasha ate it. "Mm... It tastes good. Let me feed you." She took the spoon from him and fed him.

Jack grinned gleefully and ate with zeal.

That scene captured the attention of a young boy of Jack's age inside a Rolls Royce parked on the opposite side of the road in front of Cake World. He put his tiny hands against the windowpane and watched them.

However, his expression gradually darkened. His dark green eyes, which usually shone bright, dimmed with sorrow. He found that cheap pastry was delicious and wanted to eat it. He was also envious of the lovely relationship that the boy and his mother shared. He looked away from them, sulking.

"Uh... Your chocolate cake is here." Meanwhile, a young driver in his twenties stepped into the car and put a large cake box on the

18:23 

passenger seat. He grinned at the boy and asked, "Would you like to have some?"

The boy shot him a stern glare, his tiny fists tightly clenched in his lap.

The driver's smile faded straight away. He remembered his boss's cold green eyes when he looked into his fiery eyes.

'Like father, like son,' he murmured to himself. He mustered a smile and said, "No problem. You can eat when we get home." He started the engine and drove off.



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