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## Chapter 6 The retaliation

"When I was young like you, mamma and papa used to take me to Shihai," Natasha said as she walked to the bus stop, holding Jack's hand. "It is a lovely town in a valley, surrounded by pine trees and away from the city's pollution. I enjoyed visiting there. Uhh..." She sighed deeply. "I haven't been there in years. I am thinking of..."

She stopped talking abruptly when she saw Jack staring at something. She followed his gaze and saw nothing but running cars.

"Are you okay?" she asked, a frown on her face.

Jack shifted his attention to her frantically as if he had just come out of his trance. It made Natasha frown even harder.

"What are you looking at?" she asked.

Jack blinked as if puzzled. He then smiled and asked back a question, "Do you like to ride in a car? A luxurious car?"

Natasha couldn't help but laugh. She put her hand under his chin and said, "Of course, I'd like to ride in a car. We will get a car when you grow up and get a good job."

"Hmm..." Jack nodded and turned aside.

Natasha felt awful, looking at his sullen face. Her heart was heavy with sadness at not being able to fulfill any of his wishes. She wanted to console him, but the ringing of her phone stopped her. She took the phone out of the bag and checked it, only to see her uncle's number.

A smile crossed her face as she clicked the answer button. "Hello..."

"Hello, my dear. How is our little one?"

"He got discharged," she replied, looking down at Jack.

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"It is a relief to hear it. I am sorry I couldn't come to pick you up. I have to attend an urgent meeting."

"It's okay, uncle. Don't apologize, please. We are good."

"I am free now and going back home. How about you two come down here and have dinner with us."

Natasha hesitated for a while. In the end, she agreed with him. "Okay. We will be there soon."

"That's great. See you then."

Natasha hung up the phone and returned her focus to Jack. "Your grandpa wants to have dinner with you," she said with a smile.

"I don't like going there." Jake sulked and turned aside, crossing his arms across his chest.

Natasha's smile faded straight away. She held his shoulders and turned him towards her. "Don't say that. Your grandpa loves you so much."

"But that Nia and her mother don't like us," Jack retorted. "They scold me and bully you. Why do you want to go there, again and again?"

The fury in his eyes stunned Natasha. It reminded her of that pair of dark green eyes six years ago.

"Jack..." She took his hands in hers. "Always remember one thing: your grandpa adores you. If it were not for him, my childhood would have been spent in an orphanage. I know Aunt Caroline and Nia are a little rude. But you shouldn't think about them. Just ignore them and their harsh words. We are going there to meet Grandpa Brandon. Okay?"

"Alright..." Jack finally agreed with her.

"Let's go." They resumed their walk to the bus stop.

Later that afternoon...

Natasha and Brandon were having a conversation in the hall while

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sitting on the sofa after dinner.

"Jack looks pale and frail," Brandon said. "What did the doctor say?"

Natasha pulled her eyes down to her hands in her lap. "He advised surgery as soon as possible."

"Then you should go for it. I will help you."

Natasha forced a smile. She knew Brandon was saying it to give her strength. But she was also aware that he wouldn't be able to bear the expense of the surgery. Even if he had arranged the money, Caroline and Nia would not let him spend it on her.

"I am arranging the money," she murmured.

Brandon nodded knowingly. He patted her on the shoulder. "Remember one thing: I am always with you."

"I know..."

"Ah, mommy..."

Natasha flinched and sprang to her feet when she heard Jack's cry. She dashed out into the backyard and saw Nia slap him.

"Mommy..." Jack cried, holding his cheeks.

"Shut up, you bastard," Nia yelled and raised her hand to slap him again.

Her hand froze in the air. She turned to her right and saw Natasha grabbing her wrist. Her mouth twisted as she tried to pull her hand back.

"Let go of my hand," Nia snapped.

Natasha threw her a hard look, tightening her grip.

Nia winched in pain, her face green. "Natasha, you filthy woman..."

Natasha pushed her away before Nia could finish speaking.

"Ahh..." Nia staggered and fell to the ground.

"Don't raise your hand on my son," Natasha snarled, pulling Jack in closer.

"You..." Nia leaped to her feet. "How dare you?" She rushed over to her in a stormy mood. She lifted her hand to slap her.

Natasha caught her hand again. "Don't force me to beat you. I won't tolerate any more abuses." She threw her hand away.

Nia felt a shiver run down her spine under her scathing glare. She subconsciously took a step back, rubbing her aching wrist. She was not familiar with Natasha's hostile attitude. She wondered how this docile woman had suddenly transformed into a lioness.

Brandon stood on the porch and watched them. He was satisfied to see Natasha stand up for her son. That was what he wanted to see in her all the time. With a smile on his face, he walked back to the hall.

Natasha crouched down in front of Jack and checked his cheeks. Her heart was heavy with sadness when she saw the finger marks on his delicate skin.

"Is it painful?" she asked, wiping his tears away.

"Hmm..." Jack nodded.

"Oh, baby..." She pulled her into her embrace.

Nia became enraged, looking at their melodrama. She stomped her feet and dashed into the house.

Natasha drew back and asked, "Why did she beat you? Have you done something wrong?"

"I was playing a ball. When I kicked the ball, it landed on that pot." Jack pointed to a broken flower pot.

The Daisy plant was on the ground, with soil around it.

Natasha sighed in secret, gazing at the broken pot. It was just a clay pot.

"It's okay." She gave him a reassuring smile. "I will bring a new pot next time we come here."

"I want to go home."

"Hmm. Let's go." She rose to her feet and went out of the house, holding his hand.

Nia rushed to Caroline's room, crying her eyes out. She found her sitting on a recliner beside a window, knitting a stole.

"Mom..." She rushed over to her.

Caroline dropped the knitting needles aside and rose to her feet. Her eyes clouded with worry when she saw her tear-streaked face.

"Nia... Why are you crying, sweetheart?"

Nia threw her arms around her neck. "Mom..." She cried so hard that she couldn't say anything.

Caroline's heart dropped to her stomach as she assumed something terrible had happened.

"Come here." She led her to the bed and made her sit down. "Stop crying." She took a seat beside her and wiped the tears off her face. "Tell me what makes you cry so hard."

"It's Natasha. She bullied me." She showed her wrist, which turned red. Finger marks were evident around it.

Molten anger rolled through Caroline. "She has the nerve to lay her hands on you," she snarled, her jaws tense.

"She pushed me down," Nia said between her sobs. "My tailbone hurts."

"Oh, dear..." Caroline hugged her. "Don't cry." She consoled her, rubbing her back up and down. Her face hardened as she said, "I will not let her

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go easily. She dared to hurt you. I will make her pay for it."

"This time, you should teach her a lesson so she won't dare to look at me."

"Don't worry," Caroline hissed, gritting her teeth. "She is flying high because she has a job. If I don't get her to quit her job, I will change my name." There was a glimmer of wickedness in her eyes.



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