

The Kiss 461

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"But I can't have kids, so I want to adopt one because I really want to be a mom"

Balfour felt a twinge of heartache to see Patricia in pain because of her infertility. How could he blame her?

He just sighed, put his arm around her shoulder and comforted her gently, "Yeah, I know. Let's bring the kid home tomorrow. It's not good for them to always be out there, and you running around all the time isn't good for your health either."

Patricia looked up in surprise, "Really? Will Mom and Dad get mad at me? I'm scared."

Balfour grabbed a tissue and wiped the tears from her eyes, "Don't worry, Mom and Dad know about your situation. They'll understand. They just need some time to accept it."

But you really acted rashly this time, making such a big decision on your own.

Anyway, let's bring the kid home first. Don't worry about the rest, leave it to me. I'll talk to Mom and Dad."

Patricia

acted all sweet and grateful. "Balfour, I knew you were the best! No matter what happens, you'll always be on my side, right?"

"Of course" Balfour replied without hesitation.

Patricia laughed, "Balfour, did you know? The kid has been growing so fast recently! I'm going to buy him some new clothes later, so he'll look cute when we bring him home. Mom and Dad will surely love him when they see him!"

Patricia couldn't stop talking about the child and shared all sorts of stories with Balfour.

But inside, she was really stressed out.

A few days ago, she hinted through a friend in the media that she and Theo were about to get engaged, hoping to put some pressure on Theo and their parents.

Of course, she also wanted to show Ellinor, who was hiding somewhere, that she no longer had a chance.

However, it didn't work. Theo just had all the news taken down and cleaned up.

From the looks of it, Balfour's talk with Theo didn't go well.

Did Theo really not want to marry her?

Just because Ellinor showed up. Theo no longer cared about her as much as before.

Now, what worried her most was that Ellinor had shown up again!

Why did she come back after leaving?

And this time, Ellinor even applied for a secretary position at Balfour's.

Regardless of Ellinor's intentions, once she was in the Howard Group, she was within Patricia's control.

Whatever Ellinor encountered at the Howard Group, she asked for it!

A hint of malice flashed in Patricia's seemingly innocent eyes.

The next day, in the morning

Ellinor arrived to start her job at the Howard Group.

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Balfour wrapped up the contract signing with the Arab chief in the conference room, both standing up for a friendly handshake farewell.

Before leaving the Arab chief had some words for Balfour.

Balfour, not speaking a lick of

Arabic, tilted his head and turned to Ellinor, his translator, asking, "What's he saying?"

With a professional smile, Ellinor replied,

"Mr Howard, this collaboration was a blast for the gentleman. He hopes that the next decade will continue with

friendly cooperation with the Howard Group. They love doing business with a sincere, responsible, and easy going company like the Howard Group, unlike other stodgy companies." Balfour was taken aback. The usually high and mighty Arab corporation rarely showed such warmth

Could this all be because Ellinor's killer translation skills had made the client super pleased?

Balfour pondered

for a moment, then returned the customer's smile and told Ellinor, "Tell him we're also looking forward to the next decade."

Ellinor relayed the message in Arabic, adding a humorous touch

The chief laughed heartily, gave Balfour and Ellinor a big bear hug, waved, and merrily left with his entourage.

Balfour was pleased with this outcome and looked at Ellinor with a trace of admiration in his eyes "Ms. Mendoza, see the client off."

Balfour's command took Ellinor by

surprise, but she quickly got the message and smiled, "Sure thing, Mr. Howard"

She was officially a part of the Howard Group.

After seeing off the client and returning to the building, Balfour had already left the company

Quinton led her to a spot near the entrance of the CEO's office and said, "This'll be your workstation. Mr. Howard will call you by intercom if he needs anything. Don't enter his office unless he calls for you. Got it?"

Ellinor nodded, "Got it."

After the Arab deal, Quinton's impression of Ellinor had somewhat improved and he acknowledged her work ability.

But that didn't mean he liked Ellinor as a person

He remembered how she had been disrespectful to Mr. Howard and how she had bullied Ms. Howard.

After giving Ellinor some work pointers, he turned to leave to attend to his own business.

"Quinton!"

Ellinor called after him.

Quinton stopped, looking serious, "What now?"

Ellinor waved him over, indicating that what she had to say wasn't for loud mouths.

Quinton frowned, thinking that the newly hired Ellinor was a real headache.

But he still moved closer and said, "Spit it out!"

Ellinor asked earnestly, "Does Theo often come here to see Mr. Howard?"

At this question, a hint of wariness flashed in Quinton's eyes. Why was she asking if Mr. Blanchet came here often? Was she interested in Ms. Howard's man?

"Mr. Blanchet almost never comes here. Yesterday was a special case. Why do you ask?"

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Ellinor got the answer she wanted and wore a satisfied smile, 'No problem, as long as that dude doesn't pop up often, I can chill' Quinton found Ellinor a bit odd, and not knowing what was going on in her mind, he decided to leave her be and get going.

"Wait up! Quinton, I have another thing to discuss with you"

Ellinor stopped him again.

Quinton was getting a bit impatient. If you have something to say, just spill it all out!"

"Well, I don't want the Blanchet family to know I'm working here, so could you help me keep my hiring info under wraps? I don't want anyone to know I'm working at the Howard Group, is that cool?"

Quinton stared at Ellinor, puzzled for a moment, then said, "Sure, it's no biggie."

Ellinor bowed deeply to him and said very formally, "I'm counting on you then, thanks!"

Quinton was taken aback by her bow

He suddenly found that this Ms. Mendoza, when at work, really knew how to play by the rules and was not as snobbish as before.

"Alright, focus on your job, stop worrying about irrelevant stuff! Even though you're hired, you can still get sacked! You need to get the hang of the work environment ASAP Mr. Howard might be back any time and give you orders; you better be ready!"

Ellinor nodded, "Thanks for the heads-up, I'll work my butt off!"

Quinton was taken aback again; did he just remind her?

This chick really knew how to pat herself on the back.

After Quinton left, Ellinor sat alone at her desk, taking a breather.

Since she was two months pregnant, standing for too long made her back ache. For the first time, she truly appreciated how tough being a mom was.

Successfully getting hired at the Howard Group was a big step towards uncovering the truth about her past.

Apart from that, she had another task. She had to sneak into Balfour's office when he wasn't looking and snap a photo of the picture on his desk to keep a copy

For some reason, she could never remember her mom's face.

Just yesterday, she saw the photo clearly, but by night, she couldn't recall her mom's face, only the blurred outline from her memory, no matter how hard she tried.

Yet her memory was excellent when it came to other things, which she found strange.

So, she decided to keep a copy of her mom's photo so she could look at it every day and memorize her mom's face.

Maybe her mom was still alive, and if she ever ran into her on the street, she didn't want to miss her because she couldn't recognize her.

Just as she was thinking about her mom, a shrill female voice rang out in front of her, 'Ellinor, what are you doing here? You're sitting at the CEO's secretary's desk!"

Ellinor snapped out of her thoughts, looked up, and recognized an old friend, Haillie Knotts.

Wasn't it said that Haillie was arrested for suspected criminal activities? She hadn't finished her sentence yet, when was she released?

Seeing Ellinor's puzzled face, Haillie gave a smug and flirtatious laugh, "How's that? Surprised to see me? Did you think I was still doing time?"

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Ellinor slouched at her desk, lazily nodding at Haillie, "Yeah, you should be in jail right now"

Haillie had just been sprung out of the slammer yesterday

All thanks to Patricia pulling strings with Balfour, enabling Haillie's release.

So now Haillie wasn't the long-haired beauty anymore, but a short haired jailbird

But she had already dyed her hair a trendy color overnight and still looked as alluring as ever.

Thinking about her time in the joint for a crime she didn't commit, Haillie glared at Ellinor and scoffed at her, "You really thought I'd rot in jail, huh? Ellinor, you should know that Patricia is my best bud. She wouldn't just stand by and watch me take the fall!"

"Really?" Ellinor chuckled nonchalantly

Haillie fumed even more at Ellinor's indifference, "Ellinor you think your little scheme fooled everyone? Patricia has

always stood by me! You set me up, framed me, and made everyone turn against me! Luckily, nobody got hurt and Patricia had no trouble pulling some strings to get me out!

Now that I'm out and about, your good days are numbered! You'll pay for this!"

"I'll be waiting." Ellinor brushed off Haillie's threat and busied herself with some paperwork.

As for what happened in the hospital, someone was indeed pulling the strings.

But it wasn't her, it was Patricia.

Everything was Patricia's doing!

But Patricia was a cunning fox, she had a backup plan in case things went south and let her friend Haillie take the fall.

Now, Patricia playing

the good Samaritan by getting Balfour to help Haillie out of jail was just another manipulation.

Haillie, although crafty, wasn't that quick on the draw.

And Patricia, with her angelic face, was actually a master manipulator, playing everyone around her like a fiddle and making them believe she was just an innocent little lamb

Nobody around Patricia knew the real her.

Haillie eyed Ellinor, who was busy with her paperwork, warily scrutinizing her, trying to figure out her game, then asked guardedly, "Ellinor, are you trying to snag my Balfour because you're not content with your ordinary life after Theo dumped you?"

Ellinor arched an eyebrow, "Hmm? Since when did Mr. Howard become your man? This is news to me."

Everyone knew about Haillie's crush on Balfour, it wasn't exactly a state secret.

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She had been playing her emotional cards long before this, always openly unilaterally declaring her affection for Balfour.

With a confident smile, Haillie announced, "Not now, but definitely in the future! Patricia promised me she would accept me as family in the future! And since Balfour respects Patricia's opinions, isn't the outcome clear?"

"Who's going to be whose family? Balfour's cold voice suddenly echoed.

Haillie and Ellinor both froze, turning their heads to the source of the sound.

Balfour looked like he'd just returned from outside, his coat was casually draped over his arm and his every movement was graceful and dignified.

He strolled over and his eyes landed on Haillie. A slight frown appeared on his face, "What brings you here? Need something?"

Haillie's face was less fiery than when she was questioning Ellinor earlier. She gently and wisely looked at Balfour, softly replying. "Balfour, I specifically came to thank you for saving me yesterday. Also, I guess you haven't had lunch yet, so I brought you some of your favorite dishes. Eat up before they get cold."

Balfour glanced at the food container in her hand. "You don't need to go through all that trouble, the company has a cafeteria."

Haillie shook her head, lovingly saying, "Eating cafeteria food all the time isn't good for your health! These meals are all homemade by me and are low in oil and salt. Patricia suggested this, she said you've been looking tired from working so hard recently and asked me to cook some good food for you. Balfour, you aren't going to reject Patricia's good intentions, are you?"

Balfour then nodded slightly. "Bring it in."

After saying that, he walked past Haillie, coldly heading towards his office.

Before pushing open the door to his office, Balfour stopped, turning his head towards the secretary's desk at the office entrance, "Ms. Mendoza, get me a cup of coffee."

Ellinor stood up, bowing as she responded, "Sure, Mr. Howard."

Once Balfour had entered his office, Haillie once again looked at Ellinor with hostility, grumpily saying, "Do you even know Balfour's taste? Do you know what kind of coffee he likes?"

Ellinor honestly shook her head, "I don't know, it's my first day at work, and I don't know the boss's preferences yet!"

Haillie gave Ellinor a dissatisfied look,

"If I didn't worry about you messing up the coffee and ruining Balfour's mood, I wouldn't tell you! Remember, Balfour likes it sweet, he always adds ten cubes of sugar and two portions of milk to his coffee, got it?"

Ellinor noted it down. "Okay, I got it; thank you for telling me."

Haillie didn't want to bother with Ellinor anymore and she didn't want to waste her precious alone time with Balfour, so she walked with graceful steps into the CEO's office, holding the food container.

The moment she walked in, a hint of anticipation and a cunning smile were on Haillie's face. She gave Ellinor a sideways glance.

Balfour hated sugar and milk in his coffee, there's definitely going to be some drama!

When Ellinor brought in the coffee with sugar and milk, it will definitely upset Balfour, he will scold her and hopefully cause her to leave the Howard Group immediately.

This way, she could prevent the sly Ellinor from seducing her Balfour, just like she did with Theo before.

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Ellinor Mendoza tapped on the office door and then walked in, placing a freshly brewed cup of hot coffee in front of Balfour Howard

"Mm."

Balfour was deeply engrossed in some documents, absentmindedly taking a sip of his coffee without looking away from his work

Haillie, sitting on the office sofa, was eagerly watching Balfour, sure that he would react angrily to the overly sweet and milky coffee and scold Ellinor. But no reaction came. Balfour simply took another sip of his coffee, his face expressionless.

What the hell?

Haillie frowned. Her hopeful expression turned into one of disappointment. Had Balfour changed his taste? Impossible!

Meanwhile, Ellinor stood by Balfour's desk, stealing glances at a certain picture frame.

Balfour took another sip of his coffee and noticed his new secretary still standing there. Annoyed, he said, "What are you still doing here? Get out!" Ellinor nodded and lowered her head "Alright, Mr. Howard

She then walked over to the guest area with the tray, bending over to place another cup of coffee on the table. 'Haillie, have some coffee' She offered with a smile. "Thanks. Haillie awkwardly replied, maintaining her politeness in front of Balfour. But her eyes were fixed on Ellinor as she whispered, "Didn't you add sugar and milk to Balfour's coffee?"

"I didn't." Ellinor replied in a low voice

Haillie gritted her teeth "Why not? Didn't I tell you his tastes?"

Ellinor chuckled. 'Haillie, did you really think I would trust a suggestion from someone who clearly doesn't like me?"

Haillie was speechless, frustrated, but helpless. Ellinor was not easy to fool, she should have known better. Damn it!

Ellinor then explained to Haillie, "Do you know why I brought in two cups of coffee? One cup was made according to your suggestion, with lots of sugar and milk, and the other was black. I didn't completely distrust you, Haillie. In case you were actually being considerate and I misunderstood you, I could switch the coffee so Mr. Howard wouldn't have to drink something he doesn't like."

Unfortunately, Haillie was still hostile.

"So, enjoy this cup of excessively sweet and milky coffee, Haillie!

Haillie's face was turning sour. "You..."

Ellinor stood up straight, smiled at her, and said in a louder voice. 'Haillie, enjoy your coffee. If you need another cup, just let me know."

She then turned away and walked out of the room.

Haillie was fuming and clenching her fists tightly. But she couldn't express her anger.

Hold on

Balfour suddenly called Ellinor back.

Ellinor paused, turning to face Balfour. 'Yes, Mr. Howard?

Balfour tossed a folder onto his desk. 'Translate this document into Arabic and email it to our counterparts"

"Sure, Mr. Howard Ellinor promptly picked up the folder and got to work.

Haillie was left disappointed. She did not see Balfour scold Ellinor as she had hoped and instead was subtly mocked by Ellinor, which left her feeling frustrated,

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But seeing Balfour not being especially nice to Ellinor was a bit of a consolation

Fortunately, Balfour had high standards and was not the type to fall for a country bumpkin like Ellinor

Unlike Theo What did he ever see in Ellinor in the first place?i

After Ellinor left, only Haillie and Balfour were left in the office.

A man and a woman alone in a room

It was the perfect time to bond and chit-chat

However despite waiting for a long time, Haillie didn't get a word from Balfour

Even worse. Balfour seemed to have forgotten her existence

He was busy with his documents or tapping away on the computer keyboard

willie just watched her beloved man engrossed in his work, the more she watched, the more her heart fluttered. She wanted to get closer but didn't dare disturb him

Balfour didn't pause for a break until lunchtime.

Haillie was a bit worried, she couldn't help but say, "Balfour, aren't you hungry? It's lunchtime, why not grab a bite before getting back to work?"

Balfour finally glanced at her, "Alright, thanks. Just leave the food there, I'll eat when I'm hungry. You can go ahead, I'll have Quinton deliver the lunch box to you late

Haillie felt a bit disheartened hearing Balfour subtly ask her to leave, but she didn't want to go. She shook her head, "Balfour, don't mind me. Patricia said she'd be coming over later and asked me to wait for her here."

Balfour was cool as a cucumber, "Alright, suit yourself"

Haillie smiled and continued to sit on the sofa looking at the food she brought and feeling helpless

Although the lunch box was insulated, the food would still cool down over time.

Sigh, Balfour was still so cold towards her

She had liked Balfour since they were kids, but she couldn't get through to his heart

Even though Balfour was somewhat nice to her because she was friends with Patricia, it all felt lukewarm, there was no real warmth.

Thankfully, Balfour was a clean living guy with no other women fussing around him.

So, Haillie always felt that as long as she hung in there, she would eventually win Balfour over

Besides, she had the support of her friend Patricia, which already put her ahead of other women.

Speaking of Patricia, she said she would come to Balfour's office to see her, she should be arriving soon.

Hallie checked the time on her phone, opened the social app and sent Patricia a message, "Patricia, where are you?"

Patricia replied, "Haillie, I'm almost there. I'm a bit slow because I'm with the kid; wait for me a little longer and I'll be there soon."

Outside the CEOs office

Ellinor was busy translating Arabic documents when she suddenly heard a child's voice

At first, she didn't think much of it, assuming it was a false impression from watching too many parenting videos online during her pregnancy

Until she heard Patricia Howard's soft voice again

"Ellinor"

Ellinor was slightly taken aback She looked up to see Patricia pushing a stroller in front of her desk.

In the stroller was a chubby little boy with a pacifier in his mouth, making baby noises

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Was this kid Patricia and Theo Blanchef's kid?

Ellinor stared at the little boy, taken aback for a moment, before raising her eyes to meet Patricia's happy face

Patricia was also grinning at her. "Ellinor, we didn't have a chance to meet properly yesterday. How we you been?"

Ellinor gave a small smile, "Doing pretty well; you seem to be good too

Patricia picked up the little boy from the simler and pulled out his pacifier, 'Come, say hi to Ellinor"

The toddler was barely a year old and was just learning to walk. The toddler mumbled out. "Ellinor..."

Maybe because she was pregnant herself, Ellinar found such a small child absolutely adorable. She nodded in response, 'Hmm, Hi there

The little boy seemed a bit shy, clinging to Patricia's neck and burying his face in her embrace

Patricia chuckled helplessly. "Ellinor, don't mind him. He's a little shy"

Ellinor smiled softly. "No problem. You guys here to see Mr. Howard? Go on in, he's in his office.

Saying this, she lowered her head to continue her translation work

But Patricia didn't go into the office, she was still standing there, holding the child and watching Ellinor at work. Then she asked, 'Ellinor, can you tell me, do you think he looks more like me or Theo? I just can't figure it out!"

Ellinor lifted her head and took another look at the child, studying him for a while before answering. Id say he looks more like you"

Patricia laughed joyfully, "Really? Theo also thinks he looks like me! I heard that boys tend to look more like their moms when they're young, but as they grow up, they start to look like their dads! I hope he grows up to be as handsome as his dad!"

"Hmm, all the best to you guys" Ellinor gave a small smile and went back to her work.

Patricia squinted. "Ellinor, do you really wish us well?"

Ellinor didn't look up, typing away nonchalantly, "What do you think?"

Patricia chuckled. I think you dont Because... you're jealous of me!

Ellinor's hands paused on the keyboard; she lightly smiled and continued typing. "You're overthinking I'm busy I don't have the time or any interest in Theo"

Patricia eyed Ellinor warily for a moment, then said with a hint of seriousness, "I hope you're telling the truth!"

With that, she finally went into the CEO's office holding the child.

As the office door closed, Ellinor stopped translating, gently stroking her own belly

For some unknown reason, seeing the child in Patricia's arms made her stomach uncomfortable.

Gently massaging her belly, she whispered, "It's okay Even if you don't have a dad, I can take care of you by myself. Be good; don't make me too tired; then I'll have time to find your grandma."

After massaging her stomach for a while, it began to feel a bit better, so Ellinor continued typing.

Her feelings toward her own unborn child were complicated. She knew she shouldn't be secretly keeping this child all to herself.

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But her faith made her decide not to ditch the kid

Ellinor had it rough growing up She was pushed around mercilessly by everyone around her, with no one willing to take her in

After numerous twists and turns, she ended up in a monastery, where she grew up under the care of the people there, living a relatively stable life and experiencing the warmth and kindness of the world.

That's why she knew she had to pay it forward.

No matter what, she willingly slept with him that night and the child was innocent in this.

Regardless of what the future held, she decided to keep the child and would do everything she could to take care of it. She was dead set on not letting the child suffer like she did

When Patricia walked into the office with her baby. Haillie jumped up to greet her like she was seeing a long lost pal

"Patricia, you made it! Come in with the baby, you must be beat from the trip."

Patricia flashed a sweet smile and said, "Nah, not at all I pushed the stroller here and just left it outside the office. Haillie, have you been waiting long?"

Haillie let out an exasperated chuckle and shook her head. 'Not too long, it was nice to hang out with Balfour for a bit.'

Patricia could tell by the situation that Haillie was probably given the cold shoulder by her brother again.

She glanced around, noticed the untouched lunch box on the table, and turned to her busy brother, 'Bro, Haillie kindly brought lunch, why haven't you eaten?"

Balfour paused his work, looking up at his sister with a soft tone, "Patri, I'm not hungry yel

Patricia persisted, 'Bro, you can't skip meals no matter how busy you are Eat something before you get back to work, or I'll get mad!

Balfour never backed down from anyone, but he couldn't say no to his sister, "Okay, fine. I'll eat first, let me wash my hands."

After saying that, Balfour got up and headed to the office bathroom

Seeing Balfour finally going to wash his hands and eat the food she made, Haillie looked gratefully at her good friend and sincerely said, 'Patricia, thank you for getting Balfour to rescue me!'

Patricia, ever the empathetic one, comforted her, "Haillie, we're besties! My brother is just a workaholic. Don't take it to heart Besides, I already consider you my sister-in-law!*

Haillie was even more touched Patricia was the best person in the world and she would always be her best friend

Just like before, no matter what happened, she would always stand by Patricia unconditionally. Anything she did for her was worth it

"By the way... Patricia, did you see? That Ellinor is at the secretary's desk outside, she's Balfour's secretary now!"

Patricia pretended to be a bit shy at the mention of Ellinor and nodded, "Yeah, I saw But I think Ellinor is just here to work, she probably doesn't mean any harm." Seeing her innocent reaction, Haillie said, 'Patricia, you're just too kind. That's why Ellinor used to bully you! Dont worry. I'm out now and I'll keep an eye on her for you!' After saying that, Haillie reached out and touched the face of the little boy in Patricia's arms, and warned her, 'Patricia, now that you and Theo have a child, marriage is Inevitable. Now, we absolutely cannot let Ellinor interfere and mess things up'"

Patricia's eyes were sparkling making her seem as innocent as a baby deer.

"Don't worry. Haillie, you're probably overthinking it. Ellinor is a good person."

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"A good person? If she was a good person, I wouldn't have ended up behind bars Haillie sighed, feeling even more worried for her naive friend

"Patricia, you're a mother now, but you're still as innocent as a child, thinking everyone is good. It's really worrisome!"

Patricia smiled a bit awkwardly about to say something else when the bathroom door abruptly opened.

They both instinctively dropped the subject and turned their heads to look at Balfour, who had just come out of the bathroom

Balfour rolled up his sleeves as he slowly walked over, gently addressing his sister, 'Patri, aren't you tired of holding the baby all the time? Sit down and take a break Patricia nodded, cradling the little boy in her arms and sitting on the sofa with Haillie

She then started to gently teach the baby in her arms, "Sweetie, let's say it together, Uncle! This is Uncle!

The little boy looked at Balfour and blinked his big eyes. He obediently opened his mouth to speak, but his pronunciation was off, which made everyone laugh.

Patricia continued to correct him.

The little boy looked bewildered as he tried to pronounce the word correctly again.

This time, even Patricia couldn't help laughing

The little boy seemed a bit confused, unsure why he couldn't get the word right and furrowed his brow as he tried hard to pronounce it again

Balfour reached out and touched the child's chubby face, "Alright, Path. He's so small, how accurate do you expect his pronunciation to be?"

Fate might actually be at play here. Even though the child was adopted, if you looked closely, he did somewhat resemble his sister.

However, Balfour didn't feel any familial affection for the child, just the pity one would feel as an adult when looking at a child.

Haillie had already started to unpack the lunch box she brought, arranging each dish neatly, then kindly handed the utensils to Balfour "Balfour, try it and see if you like it!"

"Thank you." Balfour graciously accepted the utensils, then nodded, "Mmm, tastes good"

Just a simple compliment from him was enough to make Haillie ecstatic, Balfour, if you like my cooking, I can bring you a meal every day!"

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Balfour softly replied. There's no need to go through all that trouble. I prefer to eat alone at work, your visits might disturb me and waste your time."

From being complimented to being rejected Haillie's expression was too awkward to describe.

"Uh... Balfour, I don't mind wasting time! But if it's going to disturb you, I won't come anymore! Just let Patricia tell me when you want to eat my cooking and I'll prepare it right away."