

# Love Me Or Leave Me

## #Chapter 171 - Read Love Me Or Leave Me Chapter 171 CHAPTER 171

Lillian dashed over to Stacey joyfully, tugging at her pants. With curious eyes, she gazed up at Jeremy, who was cradled in Stacey's arms. In a sweet, innocent tone, Lillian asked, "Mommy, who is he?"

Kevin, equally curious, chimed in, "Yes, Mommy, where did you find him?"

Stacey's lips twitched when she heard this. She thought, 'Where did I find him? Indeed, I found him right outside our door. At the moment, Jeremy was still crying, and Stacey wasn't sure how to explain things to Lillian and Kevin. She carefully placed Jeremy on the couch as they reached the living room.

As soon as Jeremy settled onto the couch, Lillian and Kevin eagerly leaned in with their eyes sparkling with curiosity. Jeremy felt a pang of embarrassment, wondering. How can I embarrass myself in front of them?' He hurriedly turned his head away and reached out to quickly wipe his tears. The children's curiosity had no limits. When Lillian and Kevin saw Jeremy turn away, they quickly scampered in front of him.

Kevin's eyes

widened as he remembered something. He exclaimed, "You're Jeremy!" Jeremy froze, thinking. My identity has been exposed Kevin was thrilled. He knew Jeremy, as Stacey often had video calls with Jeremy: Stacey always described Jeremy as an exceptionally adorable child.

Jeremy didn't want Lillian and Kevin to know that he cried, so he quickly took out his writing tablet and wrote: [I'm not.] Jeremy quickly denied it, not wanting to embarrass himself in front of Lillian and Kevin. He thought, It's not me! I'm not Jeremy!

Kevin stared at the writing tablet, confused. He wondered, 'What did he write? I don't know what he wrote. Lillian, suddenly remembering too, shouted, "I remember now! You are Jeremy."

Jeremy thought, 'My embarrassment has just doubled.' Panicking, he quickly wrote on the board: [I'm not Jeremy. I'm Jeremy 1.0! As Stacey poured water for Jeremy and kept an eye on the kids, she caught sight of Jeremy's writing and felt her mind go blank. She wondered, Jeremy 10? What does that mean

Jeremy noticed Becky looking back at him, and his ears suddenly turned bright red. However, the words he had written could not be taken back. Jeremy quickly steeled himself and drew on his tablet. He explained that the version that used to be called

Becky was Jeremy 2.0, the upgraded version. He was currently 1.0, the original version, and a bit worse. The upgraded version wouldn't cry, but since he was the original version, he did. Jeremy thought, 'I'm three years old, so I should be version 3.0. He quickly erased and redrew, correcting himself with a serious expression. Jeremy clarified that he was mistaken and that the version that had called Becky before was Jeremy 3.0, not 2.0.

Lillian and Kevin were puzzled, exchanging confused glances before turning their attention to Jeremy's writing tablet. Nothing made sense to them. After Stacey poured the water, she realized that the Hoggard family dealt with robots. Jeremy might have been exposed to various programs since childhood. She mused, 'So, 1.0, 2.0, 3.0. these are version numbers for system upgrades? How adorable. Hahaha!' Stacey wanted to laugh but remembered Jeremy had been crying earlier, so she tried to suppress her laughter. "Would you like some water?" she asked; smiling as she held out the glass.

Jeremy hesitated for a moment before nodding. Stacey watched as he gulped down several sips before stopping. "Are you hungry? Would you like me to make you something?" she asked just as Stacey finished speaking, Jeremy's stomach growled audibly. Lillian and Kevin, having never heard a stomach growl before, were fascinated and stared curiously at Jeremy's tummy. Jeremy's face

flushed again as he quickly covered his stomach and shook his head, Stacey, amused, nodded. "Well, Jeremy isn't hungry, but I'm a little hungry. I'll go to the kitchen and see if there's anything tasty. How about I make something delicious later?"

Jeremy, surprised, looked at Becky. He wondered, 'Is she hungry? Dinner needs to be served. Becky has to eat so she won't get hungry! Jeremy quickly wrote: [Have the housekeeper cook Stacey chuckled, adjusted Jeremy's slightly wrinkled collar, and then headed to the kitchen.

Carter Villa had a housekeeper, but Stacey felt a sudden urge to personally cook something special for Jeremy since it was his first visit. After seeing him cry, she especially wanted to comfort him. Grace, who was in the kitchen, smiled as she spoke to Stacey. "Ms. Carter, what would you like to eat? Shall I do the cooking?"

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Stacey

cook today? Could you please teach me some of the

ey came back to her senses and shook her head. 'Grace, can family's favorite dishes?' Stacey knew how to cook, but she was as familiar with her family's favorite dishes as Grace. Since she was going to cook today, she wanted to make something everyone would enjoy, not just Jeremy. Her parents, Lillian, and Kevin all needed to be

considered. Adrian had been busy with his love life lately and wasn't home much, so she didn't have to think about him for now.

Jeremy's stomach growled in hunger. Stacey first washed an apple, peeled it, and handed it to him so he could nibble on it and not feel so hungry while waiting for dinner. Jeremy suddenly received

an apple. He blinked blankly. Lillian immediately shouted, "I want one too!"

Seeing Jeremy with an apple and Lillian wanting one, Kevin also wanted one. He eagerly chimed in, "I want one too!"

Stacey looked at them and then grabbed another apple. She washed, peeled, and cut it into small pieces, placing them in two bowls. She handed one to Lillian and the other to Kevin. Jeremy, being three years old, could manage to eat a whole apple. However, Lillian and Kevin were still too young and could choke on an entire apple, so they should have slices instead. With their own bowls of apple pieces, Lillian and Kevin were instantly delighted.

Stacey looked at the three children. With a smile, she said, "Jeremy, could you take Lillian and Kevin to the living room to play for a while?" Jeremy understood that Becky needed him to look after the two. He nodded and wrote on his writing tablet: [Okay.] Stacey let the children go outside. She turned her attention back and began thinking about dinner. Just then, her phone rang. Confused, Stacey took out her phone and saw that it was a call from Hayden. She instantly understood and answered the phone with a smile.

## **CHAPTER 172**

"Is Jeremy at your place?" Hayden asked, sounding a bit exasperated.

Stacey glanced outside to ensure Jeremy was still in the living room with Lillian and Kevin. Seeing that he wasn't coming into the kitchen for the time being, she then lowered her voice. Yes, he just arrived. But Jeremy started crying as soon as he got here. Did something happen?"

"There's been some trouble at home, and the situation is a bit complicated. Could you take care of Jeremy for a few days? I'll come to pick him up soon and explain everything then, Hayden asked.

Stacey was momentarily taken aback, but she quickly agreed. "Of course. That's no problem. Lillian and Kevin seem to enjoy playing with Jeremy. The three of them can keep each other company."

Hearing this. Hayden smiled and nodded. "Okay." The call was brief since Hayden seemed busy, and he quickly hung up. Stacey felt more at ease, knowing that Hayden was aware of Jeremy's whereabouts. She didn't have to worry about it

anymore.

Grace already bought the groceries. After thinking for a while, Stacey began to prepare dinner. Grace helped with washing the ingredients. The two of them made dinner together, which made the task much easier. Debra didn't know how to cook, but Stacey was preparing dinner. Debra was so excited that she hovered nearby, eager to help. Patrick peeked in from the doorway, smiling warmly before returning to the living room to keep an eye on the three children.

Jeremy soon finished his apple, and Patrick asked the butler to go upstairs and take down the children's toys. A few minutes later, Jeremy was in the living room, playing with toys alongside Lillian and Kevin. Lillian and Kevin were still quite young and didn't know how to play with many

toys. However, Jeremy was very patient with them, patiently teaching them how to play. Watching from a distance, Patrick was increasingly pleased Jeremy's good manners clearly reflected the Hoggard family's upbringing, demonstrating that their family traditions remain as strong as ever. Patrick thought, 'If Becky were to end up with that guy from the Hoggard family in the future, it would be a good match.

An hour and a half passed quickly. After a flurry of activity, dinner was ready. Debra was particularly happy. She enthusiastically carried the dishes to the dining table and excitedly called everyone to eat. Stacey, emerging from the kitchen, noticed that Jeremy's mood had significantly improved since his arrival. He was no longer teary-eyed, which was a relief.

Stacey brought out three small bowls, one for each child. Each bowl was filled with a serving of pasta, accompanied by a portion of meat and a variety of colorful vegetables. "All right, everyone. Let's eat," she said with a beaming smile, looking at the three children. Jeremy's eyes lit up as he looked at Becky, nodding eagerly. Stacey mused, "He's so adorable!" She felt her heart melting from his cuteness. "Eat plenty, and make sure you're full. Don't go hungry," she reminded.

Jeremy quickly took out his writing tablet and wrote: [Okay.] Debra marveled at Jeremy's writing skills. "Jeremy, you can write so many words already? That's incredible!" Debra's praise was deeply heartfelt, stemming from her genuine admiration for the Hoggard family's approach to educating their children. The more she interacted with Jeremy, the more her affection for him grew. He was exceptionally smart, obedient, and remarkably sensible for his age. The only downside was that he couldn't speak. The Carter family had heard some troubling rumors regarding Jeremy's background. They learned that Jeremy's mother had secretly taken medication during her pregnancy with the aim of terminating it. This action had unfortunately led to the condition Jeremy

now lived with. It was no wonder that the Hoggard family lost their temper and didn't like Jeremy's mother.

Jeremy's mother had been pregnant for six or seven months when she chose to terminate the pregnancy, despite the baby already being well-developed. She made this decision for the sake of

what she claimed was true love. The Carter family found this irresponsible behavior unacceptable and would have felt similarly outraged and disappointed if such a situation had happened to one of their own. Rumor had it that the Hoggard family had spared no effort in seeking the best possible care for Jeremy. They had consulted numerous doctors over the years and engaged a specialist family doctor who continually worked to improve Jeremy's health. Despite their efforts, it remained uncertain whether a complete cure was attainable. As Debra pondered these defilements, her heart ached more and more for Jeremy.

Unable to restrain her nurturing instincts, Debra began serving dishes onto Jeremy's plate. She carefully included a little bit of everything from the array of delicious dishes laid out on the table. "Jeremy, eat more. Make yourself at home here, and

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you

don't have to be polite, Debra said gently. Jeremy nodded vigorously in response. After a moment of thought, he quickly grabbed the serving fork and, albeit clumsily, began to serve some food to Debra in return. When she saw the food that Jeremy had taken for her, Debra's heart melted. She thought. How could this child from the Hoggard family be so sweet and endearing?"

After adding some food to Debra's plate, Jeremy then helped to take food for Patrick and Becky. He remembered what Hayden had told him before about the importance of teamwork. Jeremy was determined to work hard to help Hayden win Becky's heart so that she would agree to marry him. If Becky married Hayden, she would become his mother, and he would have the chance to call her

"Mommy. The entire Carter family received Jeremy's thoughtful service, and they couldn't control the smiles growing wider on their faces with each passing moment. They were clearly delighted. Lillian and Kevin, not wanting to miss out, eagerly held out their plates and looked up at Jeremy with expectant eyes. Jeremy didn't disappoint Lillian and Kevin and finally added some food to their plates.

However, after serving food to so many people all at once, Jeremy felt a bit exhausted and quickly sat down. Lillian, upon receiving her food, excitedly waved her little spoon, trying to mimic Jeremy and give him some food in return.

“Lily!” Stacey hurriedly held her hand. Jeremy was three–years old and sensible. He could help to take food for everyone, but Lillian was different. As a one–year–old baby, she could barely manage to pick up her own food without making a mess. If Lillian tried to give her food, it was likely that the dishes on the table would end up in a mess. “Lily, please be careful not to mess up the dishes on the table, okay?” Stacey asked gently.

Confused, Lillian protested, saying, “Give.... to Jeremy!” As Stacey was attempting to coax Lillian, Kevin suddenly reached out with his spoon. He quickly scooped up a portion of food from the table, moved, and tried to put it onto Jeremy’s plate. Jeremy quickly pushed his small plate closer to Kevin to make it easier for him to transfer the food. Debra, Patrick, and Stacey watched anxiously nearby. As Kevin successfully placed the food in Jeremy’s bowl, she hurried to stop him from serving any more. “Key did it!” Lillian was not convinced and protested from the side.

Stacey was at her wit’s end. In the end, she allowed Lillian to serve Jeremy food once, but she ensured that a serving fork was used. Stacey explained to Lillian and Kevin that using their own spoons was both impolite and unhygienic. They needed to use the serving utensils to demonstrate proper manners and maintain good hygiene.

## **CHAPTER 173**

Dinner took a long time, mainly because Lillian and Kevin ate slowly. They would eat for a while, then start playing, unable to stay still despite the adults’ reminders. However, the good news was that although Lillian and Kevin liked to move around during meals, they were both well–behaved eaters. They ate whatever they were given and finished everything without being picky. Jeremy was even more obedient. He did not need any urging from the adults and proactively finished all the food on his plate.

After the meal, Stacey decided to take the three little ones for a walk in the residential area. Jeremy was very curious and looked around with wide–eyed wonder as soon as they entered the residential area garden. Quietly, Stacey snapped a photo of Jeremy, Lillian, and Kevin playing together in the sandbox at the children’s playground. She opened WhatsApp and sent the picture to Hayden. Jeremy was only three years old and staying at someone else’s home without him, so she figured Hayden might be worried. Stacey thought that sending him a few photos of the children having fun would put him at ease.

At Hoggard Technologies, the nighttime lights had been switched on in the CEO’s office on the top floor. Hayden had returned after dinner to continue working overtime. He needed to finish his tasks before he could make time to pick up his son from the Carter family. Although Hayden was the boss, working overtime to catch up with the schedule was exhausting. However, he didn’t expect that tonight’s overtime would be different from any before.

His phone in the drawer suddenly chimed with a special alarm he had set exclusively for messages from family. Instinctively, Hayden took out his phone to check. He was



initially stunned but then pleasantly surprised Hayden had nearly forgotten that he had set a special alarm for Becky, so this distinct sound would play whenever she sent him a message. Opening the message, he saw a

photo of three children playing in the sandbox. It seemed Becky sent it to reassure him about Jeremy. She might be afraid that he would worry about the child, so she sent him photos.

A faint smile appeared in Hayden's eyes as he examined the photo closely. Jeremy was playing joyfully with Becky's children, and it was clear even from the photo. It seemed that the incident from a few days ago had affected Jeremy less than before. Looking at the photos, Hayden couldn't help but imagine the angle and appearance of Stacey taking photos of the children with her phone. Since she captured the children so adorably, she had to have been full of maternal love and very gentle while taking the pictures. With this thought in mind, Hayden opened his office drawer and took out a small wooden duck, covered in bite marks, to play with. He then replied to her Jeremy looks really happy—

On the other side, Stacey saw Hayden's message and quickly responded: [Yes, Jeremy is very well-behaved. He's nice to Lillian and Kevin when he's with them. Jeremy is so considerate.

Hayden mused, Jeremy's nice to Lillian and Kevin?' He chuckled at her words, and his gaze fell back on the photo. Indeed, Jeremy and Becky's children looked very harmonious together. Hayden thought, 'It seems that Jeremy really likes Becky and everything associated with her, including her children. Hayden texted in response: [Yes.] After a moment of thought, he took a photo of his office and sent it to Becky.

Stacey was surprised to see that he was still working and texted him: [Are you still working?]

Hayden texted back: [Yes.]

Stacey quickly replied: [I won't disturb you further then. You can focus on your work, Jeremy is doing great here, so there's no need to worry about him.]

Hayden replied: [Okay.]

Their chat ended, and Stacey glanced at the chat box before looking at Jeremy, who was still playing. She suddenly felt a pang of sympathy for Hayden, realizing that he had it tough and even had to work overtime. Stacey put her phone away and sat on a nearby bench, watching the three children play in the sandbox.

Although Jeremy was intelligent, he was still just a child. Back at Hoggard Villa, he likely didn't have many playmates his age. Now, playing with Lillian and Kevin, Jeremy had naturally become more "childish," leading the other two to build sandcastles, Jeremy's

practical skills were impressive. He quickly built a small castle, earning admiring glances from Lillian, whose wide eyes were filled with awe. Kevin also thought Jeremy was amazing and looked at him with joy. "I want to build one too!" Kevin shouted in his sweet and innocent voice.

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Jeremy glanced at Kevin and nodded. He went over to teach Kevin how to build a castle. Stacey couldn't resist moving closer, pulling out her phone to capture the best angle of Jeremy's creation. Jeremy noticed Becky was secretly taking a picture of his castle and shyly turned to look at her. Stacey waved him over Jeremy, come here and stand in front of your castle. Let me take a picture of you with it, okay?"

Jeremy hurried over and stood nervously in front of his little castle. When Lillian and Kevin saw that Stacey was going to take a photo of Jeremy, they quickly joined him. They squeezed together obediently, waiting for Stacey to take the picture. Stacey smiled as she aimed the camera at the three children, capturing the moment. As soon as the photo was taken, Lillian excitedly ran over. "Mommy, I want to see!" Even though she was only a year old, Lillian was quite familiar with the process of having her picture taken. Thanks to Debra, who loved dressing her up and capturing the moments, Lillian knew that she could see the photo right after it was taken.

Lillian wasn't the only one eager to see. Jeremy and Kevin were also curious, and soon all three children gathered around Stacey. Quickly, Stacey crouched down, clicked on the photo, and showed it to them. "It looks good!" Kevin exclaimed happily as he looked at the photo.

Jeremy's eyes also sparkled. With bright eyes, he looked at Becky with a smile and thought, I like it. "Do you think it's nice, Jeremy?" Stacey asked with a smile. Jeremy nodded vigorously. She grinned and said, "I'll save this photo and send a copy to your dad. When you want to see it in the future, you can ask him to show it to you, okay?"

Jeremy's eyes lit up, and he nodded eagerly. Stacey instinctively thought about forwarding the photo to Hayden, but it occurred to her that he was at work and sending it might disturb him. "I will send it to your dad later tonight, okay? He's busy working overtime right now," she explained as she looked up at Jeremy. Stacey smiled, put away her phone, and said, "All right, the photo has been taken. You guys can go back to playing now." Lillian's face lit up at her words. She wanted Jeremy to teach her how to build sandcastles, just as he had taught Kevin earlier. It was going to be her turn now.

## **CHAPTER 174**

Stacey took the children to play in the residential area's playground for a long time and only headed home at eight o'clock in the evening. Upon arriving home, Stacey gave Marie and Gwen extra pay for their overtime and asked them to help look after Jeremy while also caring for Lillian and Kevin. She needed them to bathe Jeremy ton, Marie and



Gwen had been working at Carter Villa for over a year and were quite comfortable in their jobs. The pay was good, and they were treated well. So, when Stacey offered them extra pay and asked them to look after Jeremy, they readily agreed. After making these arrangements, Stacey asked Marie and Gwen to give the kids a bath. Lillian and Kevin were washed first, with Jeremy being the last. The Hoggard family's driver had delivered Jeremy's clothes half an hour earlier, so they didn't have to worry about him not having anything to wear.

Stacey also went back to her room and took a shower. When everyone was done with their baths, it was time to sleep. Stacey thought, Jeremy is only three years old, so it will be impossible for him to sleep alone in a room. What if he got scared? Besides, he's very clingy to me! The thought of how Jeremy had cried when he came here made her heart ache.

After careful consideration, Stacey decided that all three children would sleep with her at night. Her bed had already been replaced with a larger one. Although it would be a bit more crowded with an additional person, there was still enough space. Jeremy was thrilled at the thought of sleeping with Becky at night. His eyes sparkled with joy as he settled into bed with Lillian and Kevin, behaving exceptionally well. Stacey smiled, climbed into bed, and took out a storybook. She began reading a bedtime story to the three children.

Lillian, the most lively one, frequently interrupted with her endless questions. Kevin, who was very obedient, enjoyed listening to the story and would become a bit upset by her interruptions. He would gently pull at her to stop so Stacey could continue reading. This was Jeremy's first time hearing

Becky tell a bedtime story. He didn't fuss or make a scene. He simply sat quietly, filled with joy. After finishing the story, Stacey gently reminded the children that it was time to sleep, as usual.

Lillian and Kevin, already accustomed to this routine, quickly lay down without fuss. Jeremy also lay down obediently but couldn't help but notice the comforting scent of Becky's body wash on the blanket. He found it soothing and thought of it as a motherly fragrance. He longed for a mother like Becky and not that woman. As he thought about this, Jeremy pressed his lips tightly together, as if making a silent vow.

Stacey, unaware of Jeremy's thoughts, noticed that the children had fallen asleep. She turned off the room light before lying down beside them. Soon, she was asleep as well, likely due to exhaustion. However, it wasn't an easy task sleeping with the children. Kevin woke her up in the middle of the night, needing to go to the bathroom. Stacey rubbed her sleepy eyes.. turned on the light, and took Kevin to the bathroom.

When Stacey finished taking Kevin to the bathroom and carried him back, she suddenly heard crying. Startled, she quickly went to check on the child in the bed and found

Jeremy crying in his sleep. "Jeremy?" she called softly. Stacey nudged him gently and used the most soothing voice she could manage, asking. Jeremy, what's wrong?"

Jeremy groggily woke up from her nudge and stared blankly at Becky. Jeremy's eyes resembled black grapes, but at that moment, they seemed freshly washed and still glistening with moisture. Hurriedly, Stacey carefully wiped away his tears. She climbed onto the bed, lay down beside him, and asked softly, "Did you have a nightmare?" Jeremy mused, 'A nightmare? He thought about the woman in his dream and nodded.

Stacey, unsure of what exactly Jeremy had dreamed, instinctively wanted to comfort him and asked, "Did you have a bad dream? Can you tell me about it?" As she spoke, Stacey reached for the writing tablet on the nightstand and gently handed it to Jeremy. Jeremy held the writing tablet

but instinctively hesitated. He didn't want to discuss that woman with Becky. Stacey waited for a while, noticing his reluctance. Without pressing him she remained silent for a moment before leaning down to kiss Jeremy gently and comfort him. She whispered, "Don't be afraid, Jeremy. I'll stay with you tonight. We'll chase the nightmare away together, okay?"

Jeremy looked at her. He thought seriously and then nodded heavily. Stacey gently kissed his forehead once more and said softly, "All right, go back to sleep. Don't be afraid. I'll stay right by your side." Jeremy looked at Becky once more and nodded again.

Kevin curiously watched Stacey comforting Jeremy. He thought. How strange! Jeremy is crying again. He's just like Lily, who always seems to cry: Stacey had finally managed to soothe Jeremy, but she noticed Kevin staring at her intently as she turned. Her heart skipped a beat from the sudden surprise. Quickly, she reached out and gently pressed Kevin down,

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whispering, "Kev, it's time to sleep too, okay?" Kevin was somewhat speechless. He rubbed his eyes, wondering why he didn't produce tears like Lillian's and Jeremy's. He thought, 'If my eyes water, will Mommy comfort me the same way she does with Jeremy?"

Stacey noticed Kevin rubbing his eyes, which seemed a bit unusual. She wondered, 'Does Kevin have something in his eye? Is he feeling uncomfortable? Feeling a bit nervous, Stacey quickly asked, "Kev, is something wrong with your eyes? Are you feeling uncomfortable?"

Kevin, being an honest child, replied, "No." Stacey didn't know how to reply to that. Kevin thought about it and asked Stacey seriously, "Mommy, why don't my eyes produce water?"

Stacey was momentarily puzzled and asked, "Water?"

Kevin nodded earnestly. "Yes. Lily's and Jeremy's eyes produce water. When there are tears, Mommy, you become especially nice!" The last part was said with a serious tone, and Kevin's eyes reflected the pure, unmasked envy of a child.

## **CHAPTER 175**

There was a buzz in Stacey's head. She was stunned. Realizing something, she hurriedly wheeled around and hung her head low to give Kevin a hug while cooing. "Hush, Kev. I also love you the same."

She was so used to appeasing crybabies that she almost neglected Kevin. Never would she expect Kevin to be envious of Lillian and Jeremy simply because they were coaxed when they cried. Stacey suddenly felt sorry for Kevin.

Kevin's eyes widened as he eyed his mother in astonishment.

Stacey kissed Kevin again and uttered with a smile, "Be good and get some sleep, will you?"

The boy's eyes shone with elation upon receiving a kiss from his mother, hence agreeing, "Alright!"

Beaming, Stacey gently tucked Kevin in and cooed, "Night-night

"Night-night. Mommy." Kevin was pleased.

"Sweet dreams. Kev, Stacey added sweetly. After putting all of them to bed, she turned off the lights once more.

At the other end of the bed. Jeremy turned over and looked at Kevin enviously, thinking, 'If only I'm also her kid.

As the night deepened. Kevin and Jeremy fell into slumber. Stacey listened to the children's light breathing and slowly fell asleep, too.

The next day, Stacey was all ready to go to work. Jeremy wished to follow her to work, for he used to follow his father to work back home. Unless he were to be at the kindergarten, his father would send him there first before departing for work.

Gazing at the little boy, Stacey fell silent for a moment. In that split moment, she recalled how Jeremy had sobbed in his dream the night before, so she took the initiative to help him into the car.

It was not a big deal for Stacey, for Jeremy was always well-behaved in the office; he had never made a fuss, so she reckoned, that his presence would not affect her work.

Never in her wildest dream would she expect Lillian and Kevin to follow suit the second they saw Jeremy hop into the car. It was as though a door to a new world had been opened for them.

Gwen and Marie panicked, darting over to hold the two munchkins back.

That sight made Patrick smile as he told Gwen and Marie, "It's okay. Get Lily and Kev their things and some toys. Let them visit the company today."

Stacey was helpless to see how her father spoiled the children.

Patrick then asked the driver to wait until Gwen and Marie packed up some stuff for Lillian and Kevin.

With that, Stacey helped Lillian and Kevin into the car. Still, she squatted down and set some rules with them upon thinking about her work later. "Lily, Kev, if you wanna go with me to work you have to promise me three things, okay?"

That got Lillian curious. "What kind of promises?"

Stacey held out a finger and pronounced seriously, "First, when I'm working, there'll be no noise and no asking me to play with you. You must play by yourselves"

Lillian was stumped, for that proved to be challenging.

Kevin, though, was confused. "Why can't we ask you to play with us?"

That threw Stacey into a dilemma. She enunciated solemnly, "Because I have work to do."

Lily hurriedly chimed in, "Then, you shouldn't be working anymore!"

Stacey's mouth twitched slightly. She was speechless.

Patrick, in turn, chuckled, pretending to be mad. "So, Lily, you don't wanna play with me! Hmph! I'm so mad now that I know I'm not your favorite."

Hearing that, Lillian widened her eyes in shock. She quickly tugged at her grandfather and explained, "I'll come play with

you!

Kevin fixed his gaze on his mother firmly. "I wanna play with you, Mommy!"

Kevin's eyes were sparkling as he looked at Stacey delightfully. He still remembered what she told him the night before. Even though he did not shed tears, Stacey would still love him the same.

Jeremy watched Lillian and Kevin. Although he was only three, he grew up spending plenty of time with his father at work, so he knew that when adults were working, children should never make noise, otherwise they could not perform well at work

Quick as a wink, Jeremy fished out his writing tablet and wrote four words before hitting the read key of the system.

Out of the blue, the AI of the writing tablet spoke at Jeremy's behest. "I'll play with you!"

Gwen and Marie came to the car with the kids' toys, clothes, diapers, and baby bottles. The driver then revved up the engine and set off for the company.

In the car, Jeremy continued to write and then communicated with Lillian and Kevin using the reading function of the tablet. "When your mommy's working, you can't ask her to play with you. It'd disturb her work."

Lillian and Kevin did not get what Jeremy meant, but they found it amusing that his writing tablet could actually speak. The tablet attracted their attention like a magnet. They continued to stare at the tablet curiously,

"Jeremy, it can talk!" Lillian said in surprise.

She had seen electronic products talking, but that was her first time seeing Jeremy's writing tablet speaking. Previously, she only saw Jeremy write words she could not read on it, yet that was the first time she heard the sound it made. It was all too magical for her.

"So cool!" Kevin looked all curious as well.

Jeremy stole glances between Lillian and Kevin, continued to write, and then activated the reading function. Then came the electronic voice from the tablet. "This is my voice."

"Wow!" Lillian was surprised, her mouth agape.

Out of curiosity, Kevin reached out for the writing tablet. Jeremy noticed that, thus generously let the boy touch it. Lillian, too, was curious and wanted to lay her hand on the tablet just the same.

Beholding the kids, Stacey could not help reminding. "Be careful, Lily and Kev. Don't mess with it or drop it. That tablet is super important to Jeremy. Make sure not to break it"

Hearing that, Jeremy immediately raised his eyes to look at Becky. He smiled, appearing happy that Lillian and Kevin adored his belongings.

Brooding over something. Stacey turned to Gwen and Marie and reminded them, "Keep an eye on them, Gwen and Marie. Don't let Lily and Kev break Jeremy's tablet."

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Since Jeremy could not speak, the writing tablet was his only means of communication. It was paramount for him.

Gwen and Marie acknowledged that at once.

At that thought, Stacey unwittingly focused on the brand of Jeremy's writing tablet. She had an urge to get more of it and keep them at home just in case.

Moreover, should Lillian and Kevin truly fancy playing with the tablet, it would not hurt to get each of them one. In her book, Lillian and Kevin might even learn to read and write alongside Jeremy.

## **CHAPTER 176**

Stacey searched high and low all over the internet, but she could not locate the very brand of Jeremy's writing tablet. Perplexion hit her. Yet, refusing to throw in the towel, she pressed on. Again, she glanced at the logo on the tablet in Jeremy's hand and continued the search.

Jeremy noticed Becky stealing glances at the logo, not to mention the confusion marring her face. The boy felt odd, having no idea why the woman kept peeking at the tablet.

However, it was not long before he figured it out. In a jiffy, he wrote down some words and activated the read function. "My daddy made this tablet. It's not in the market."

Stacey was first speechless and shocked before she piped up admiringly, "Wow! Your dad's amazing!"

To think that Hayden could even make a writing tablet for his son, she thought he must love Jeremy with all his heart. As she pondered that, Hayden's serious, frosty face popped into her head for some reason.



While thinking about that, though, she soon remembered that a person of his stature had not been entrusting Jeremy to others. Instead, he watched Jeremy all by himself and even brought the boy to work.

Relating that to herself, Stacey suddenly felt that she was not as good as a mother, paling in comparison to Hayden's care for Jeremy when it came to taking care of her own kids.

When she went to work, Gwen and Marie were mostly the ones watching the kids. Only after she got off work would she spend time with the children.

On the contrary, Hayden, who had his plate full day in and day out, managing such a big company, still willingly took his son with him to work. Stacey was happy for Jeremy to have such a marvelous father.

Thinking of that, Stacey turned to Jeremy and could not help reaching out to gently pinch the little boy's cheek. "You're so blessed, Jeremy, you know? Your dad really loves you." She beamed.

Jeremy was flabbergasted. He looked at Becky and thought for a while. Then, he lowered his head, wrote on the tablet, and held it up to show her the text: [Do you like this writing tablet Daddy made?]

Stacey read the words and nodded at Jeremy, "Yes, your dad's super amazing. This tablet he made is just as awesome as well

That speech lit Jeremy's eyes up. No longer could he suppress the glee within him. He wondered if Becky was starting to fall for his father, considering that she had called him amazing.

Stacey looked at the boy's bright eyes and thought that he was cute. To be that happy when hearing her praise his father, she reckoned that the boy must love Hayden a lot. "What an enviable father- son relationship!" she mused.

"Is Jeremy's daddy super amazing?" Lillian looked at them curiously and asked.

When Jeremy heard Lillian's question, he suddenly thought of what his father had told him back home.

If he wanted to make Becky his mother, not only should he let Becky fall for his father and be willing to tie the knot, but he must also make sure both Lillian and Kevin accept his father like their own.

Only if Lillian and Kevin both wished to have his father as their stepfather would Becky be more likely to marry his father.

In other words, that would increase the chance of Becky becoming his own mother.

As Jeremy recalled what his father had said to him, he eyed Lillian, picked up the tablet, wrote anxiously, and finally pressed the read button. "You bet my daddy's awesome! He dots on us kids a lot. He's the best daddy in the world!"

Stacey listened to that and was extremely surprised. She never expected Jeremy to peg Hayden as the best father in the

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world, but soon, she smiled because Jeremy was right- Hayden was indeed a dutiful parent.

"Wow!" Lillian's eyes lit up. She looked at Jeremy enviously. "I also want him as my daddy!"

"Me, too!" chimed in Kevin upon hearing the exchange between Lillian and Jeremy. His voice was meek as he put his heart into shouting, "I, too, want him as my daddy!"

At first, Jeremy was shocked. Then, it turned into surprise and pure joy because Lillian and Kevin had agreed to accept having his father.

Stacey only felt a buzz in her head, wondering what just happened. She was baffled as to how things abruptly turned out like

that.

Patrick sat beside them, witnessing everything. He could not help smiling. Indeed, children were innocent souls, not to mention adorable, or so he thought.

All in all, he, too, shared the sentiment that Hayden was a competent father through and through.

From Patrick's perspective, if Hayden was really into Becky, it would be great for them to walk down the aisle and parent Lillian and Kevin together.

Before they knew it, the car arrived at the company amid the chatters.

☐

The staff saw their boss and Stacey there with the three linle munchkins. Their eyes lit up. They could not help but peek at the kids secretly.

As soon as Jeremy stepped into the company, he subconsciously became serious. His expression resembled that of Hayden when he was at work – a little serious, cold, totally an embodiment of a mini-boss.

It was the first time that Lillian and Kevin came to work with their mother. When they set foot inside, their gazes darted across every corner curiously as they wandered about, Cute would be an understatement to describe those kids,

Finally, they reached Stacey's office. Stacey went to the lounge to clean up and had Gwen and Marie lead the children there, Fortunately, the lounge was spacious enough to accommodate the children.

After that was finished, Stacey went to settle some work. She could try to get cracking on her work all she wished, but Lillian and Kevin simply could not sit still. After some time playing in the lounge, they wanted to look for Stacey.

Jeremy saw Lillian and Kevin's whim to disturb Becky, so he tugged at Lillian and Kevin straightaway and took out his writing tablet, trying to teach Lillian and Kevin writing

Lillian and Kevin had zero idea how to write yet, nor did they have the intention to learn. They were still far too young. Fun was all that they had in mind.

Luckily, both Lillian and Kevin were intrigued by Jeremy's writing tablet. In their hearts, they painted the tablet a highrend toy. Seeing how Jeremy had been writing on the tablet, they believed that that must be how the toy worked

All kids liked to have fun, especially when they first encountered new toys. Lillian and Kevin were soon swayed by Jeremy's "new toy and happy to play some writing games with him.

Patrick also loved children. He only worked for a few minutes before he sneaked over to see the kids when nothing important was up

Witnessing the kids learn to write with Jeremy, Patrick ordered his assistant to buy two more writing tablets on the spot.

In less than half an hour at work, Lillian and Kevin each had a tablet in their hands.

It was then that all three children happily started to play some writing games in the lounge of the office.

Jeremy, Lillian, and Kevin had a happy day playing together at Hoggard Technologies.

In the evening, Hayden had rushed back to Hivalis overnight. He even brought gifts as he stepped into Carter Villa. One of them was a smart massage robot.

This gift is far too precious, Debra and Patrick thought in shock. They knew that Hoggard Technologies' products were not cheap. It was not that the Carter family could not afford it. It was the fact that the massage robot was too pricey to be given as a gift.

Knowing this, Patrick and Debra hurriedly refused, but alas, at Hayden's continued insistence, they had no choice but to accept it. Subsequently, after receiving his gift, they became far more hospitable to him.

Hayden not only brought gifts for Patrick and Debra but also for Lillian and Kevin. The gifts were two writing tablets just like Jeremy's. Besides the handwriting function, it had educational tools for children and could teach them how to read and understand things. It was a great tool to guide their learning.

When Lillian and Kevin saw the gifts Hayden had gotten them, their eyes lit up. They were overjoyed.

Jeremy took his writing tablet, wrote something, and pressed the button for the tablet to narrate it. The tablet made a sound. "Lily. Kev, I told you, right? My Daddy is the best Daddy in the world. He treats us kids the best!"

Hearing Jeremy's voice, Lillian and Kevin nodded quickly. Then, Lillian looked at Hayden and exclaimed happily, "Mr. Hoggard. I want you to be my Daddy!"

In a hurry, Kevin followed, saying, "Mr. Hoggard, I want to be your Daddy too."

"Pfft. Stacey couldn't help but burst into laughter. "Hahaha!" "Key's still young and isn't that eloquent in speech yet but him saying that he wants to be Mr. Hoggard's father... I really... Ah, I can't help it!" she thought in amusement.

Patrick and Debra also chuckled to themselves secretly, thinking "Ah, silly Kev. He's torturing us with laughter. Lillian then frantically reminded, "It's not like that. You're not becoming his Daddy. He's becoming your Daddy!" Kevin quickly realized his error and corrected himself, "No, I said it wrongly. I want you to be my Daddy too!" Hayden looked at Lillian and Kevin. He was surprised. 'Have Key and Lily accepted me?' he wondered while glancing at Jeremy, and the moment they looked at each other, he understood what was going on. However, even though he understood, he was still shocked yet pleasantly surprised. Huh, I didn't expect Jeremy to be so persuasive. He's gotten Lily and Key on board so quickly. This makes things much easier for me to pursue Becky too, Hayden thought.

"Do you want me to be your Dad, Kev and Lily?" Hayden asked in the most gentle tone possible while crouching down and embracing them in his arms.

Lillian and Kevin were still young, so they couldn't truly understand adults' expressions. To them, Hayden's features made him appear considerably fierce. Despite that, they listened to Jeremy and believed him. From the bottom of their hearts, they thought that

Hayden was an excellent father. Besides, Hayden was Jeremy's father, so they also wanted him to be theirs.

"Yeah!" Kevin nodded immediately.

Lillian examined Hayden's handsome face and was stunned. She stretched out her soft fingers, touched his nose, and then said playfully, "Mr. Hoggard, you look good, just like the uncles in the paintings!"

Wow, I didn't expect Lily to admire my looks, Hayden mused as he chuckled uncontrollably. "Yet, she's so similar to Becky when she was younger. I still vaguely remember that Becky said something similar to me before back then, but she was too young. She certainly doesn't remember it now," he thought. "Well, I am quite handsome, so will you let me be your daddy and Kev's daddy, too, Lily?" Hayden asked Lillian, looking at her and smiling dotingly,

"Yes!" Lillian immediately affirmed loudly with starry eyes. She was jubilant at the thought of Hayden becoming her father.

Stacey was speechless. Embarrassed, she hurriedly explained, "Mr. Hoggard, Lily, and Key are still young. There are many things they still don't understand. Some of what they said is just playful nature. Please don't take it seriously

Debra and Patrick exchanged glances with each other. As parent they smiled wordlessly and thought, 'Hasn't Becky figured it out yet? Mr. Hoggard most likely has such an idea; he's interested in her. Hearing the children say all this must be having him writhing in delight.

Moreover, Patrick and Debra's gaze toward Jeremy had changed, especially Patrick's. I've been praised for my intelligence and perceptiveness all my life. Few can play tricks and schemes before met he thought.

'Earlier, in the car. Jeremy suddenly enticed Lily and Key to take Hayden as their father but I didn't think much about it. I just regarded it as an accident. Nevertheless, now adding the previous time and this time together... I can't help but overthink it! Mr. Hoggard has deliberately convinced Jeremy to help be their matchmaker, hasn't he? He's a little cunning schemer, but not bad-hearted. He's pretty smart, Patrick mused. Regardless, Patrick and Debra were satisfied with the Hoggard family anyway. Thinking this, they stood up in sync and left quietly instead of staying in the living room as third wheels

Noticing Patrick and Debra leave, Hayden knew they understood what he was doing and approved, so the biggest problem was Stacey. As long as she was willing, they would become an item.

Im not kidding. I want Mr. Hoggard to be my Daddy!" Lillian retorted Stacey's words. Then, she stretched out her little hands, hugged Hayden, and declared, Jeremy says that Mr. Hoggard is a good Daddy. He says he's the best Daddy in the world, so I want him to be my Daddy too!"

Pleased. Hayden reached out to pinch her cheeks. Aw, she's so cute he thought

Kevin was a follower. He wanted whatever his sister Lillian wanted and shouted, "Yeah, I want Mr. Hoggard to be my Daddy' too!!

Stacey was speechless and abashed to no end watching this. "When did you arrive here in Hivalis? Are you tired? Why don't you sit down and rest for a while?" Stacey changed the subject.

"I just arrived," Hayden answered sincerely.

Stacey was stunned momentarily but soon figured it out. She thought, Mr. Hoggard must have been very worried about Jeremy while he was staying here the past two days, so that's why he rushed over so quickly.' Thus, she reported, "He's been very well-behaved, obedient, and sensible these two days. He also had a good time playing with Lily and Kev."

Hayden nodded. "Yes." "Huh, as soon as Lily and Kev saw me, they kept going on about wanting me to be their father. It seems like Jeremy made good use of his two days at Carter Villa. That's my son, my highly efficient son, he thought proudly. "You must be tired having taken care of three children at the same time, right?" he then greeted Stacey with concern.

At the mention of caring for children, Stacey thought of Hayden's dedication to Jeremy. She felt ashamed yet admired him simultaneously. "You really do care for Jeremy well," she said sincerely, "He's very lucky to have a father like you, she praised, smiling

Hearing this, he smiled and asked tentatively, "So am I qualified to be Lily and Kev's Dad?

Stacey was stunned. She looked at Hayden, bewildered and surprised. Meanwhile, Hayden simply looked at her, waiting for her response,

Stacey was speechless. It took a while for her to process what Hayden meant. 'Does he like me? It can't be, right? Given that I'm a divorced woman with a child, I expect it to be difficult to find someone who loves me. Wait. Hayden is also divorced and has a child. Could he really be interested in me? she pondered.



Stacey's divorce may have subconsciously made her believe that love and marriage were no longer a part of her life. So, throughout her interactions with the Hoggard family, she never considered that possibility. Stacey began to panic, unsure if she understood what Hayden meant. "M—Mr. Hoggard, I don't think we're suitable for each other," Stacey said nervously, her voice stuttering a bit.

"I'm just kidding," Howard replied. He had anticipated her rejection. After all, she had just divorced and had probably not considered remarriage yet.

Nevertheless, from her nervousness and the slight reddening of her ears, he could tell that she didn't dislike him. If she didn't dislike him, that meant there was hope. As long as he was patient, there would be a day when she would accept him.

Seeing Stacey remain silent, Hayden sat on the couch as he said, "Jeremy's mother has returned."

Stacey was stunned at Hayden's words, looking at him in surprise.

Hayden paused for a moment before telling how, when his grandfather was critically ill, he desperately wanted Hayden to marry before he died. As a result, Hayden was forced to go on a frantic series of blind dates in less than a month, eventually marrying a girl he barely knew and had no feelings for.

"At that time, our family was all worried about my grandfather's condition. The marriage happened so quickly that we didn't have time to investigate the background of the girl's family," Hayden explained.

Stacey was taken aback when she learned the truth about Hayden's previous marriage.

Hayden looked at her and said, "Because we didn't have time to investigate, we didn't know that Queenie Leavey didn't want to marry me. She had a boyfriend she loved very much, but her family forced her to break up with him and marry me to climb the social ladder. When we first got married, she told me she wasn't mentally prepared, so she didn't want to have intercourse with me."

He added, "I didn't have any feelings for Queenie either. I married her just to put my grandfather at ease, so I didn't mind her request. We agreed to live in separate rooms from the start. Later, my grandfather's health gradually improved, and everyone was happy."

"One day, Queenie suddenly told me she wanted to try for a baby via in vitro fertilization. I was quite surprised, but she was very anxious, saying her parents were pressuring her to have a child. At the time, I thought that since we were already married, having a child didn't seem like a problem, so I agreed. We went to the hospital together and had a baby by artificial means," Hayden continued.

"But later, when she was six or seven months pregnant, she suddenly told me she couldn't take it anymore, she wanted to abort the baby, and she wanted a divorce. That's when I realized something was wrong, he resumed.

Stacey was surprised and thought, 'Six or seven months pregnant? By then, the baby was already about to be born. I've heard from somewhere that babies born at seven months have a high chance of surviving, while those born at eight months have a higher risk of not making it. At seven months pregnant, the child is already alive. Terminating the pregnancy at that point is essentially the same as killing a living baby!

Hayden carried on. "Queenie confessed everything to me, and I had someone investigate. It was then that I learned she hadn't willingly married me. But by then, the child was about to be born. There was no way I would agree to her aborting the child. It wasn't just her child. It was mine too."

As Hayden spoke, he subtly observed Stacey's expression. Seeing that she didn't seem repulsed, he continued, "I took some measures to prevent the hospital from allowing Queenie to have an abortion. Her family also forbade her from aborting the child. Everyone was keeping an eye on her every move."

"But none of us expected that Queenie would secretly take abortion pills to get rid of the baby. Fortunately, someone realized the situation soon after she took the pills, and she was rushed to the hospital where the drugs were induced out of her system, barely saving the baby," Hayden explained.

"I promised Queenie that as long as she delivered the baby safely, I would divorce her immediately and give her family a large amount of compensation. This would allow her parents to consent to her being with her boyfriend. She agreed to this and promised to take care of herself and deliver the baby. Later, when the child was born, I kept my promise. I gave her parents a major business project and negotiated conditions with them, allowing her to be with her boyfriend," he added.

"After she gave birth, we scheduled the divorce. As soon as she finished her postpartum care, we got the divorce license. Right after that, she left with her boyfriend. That's the story of my past with Queenie, Hayden said solemnly.

After saying that, Hayden took a sip of water and continued, "But a few days ago, she came back. I had someone investigate, and the results showed that she had a bad time with her boyfriend these years. Her boyfriend turned out to be a gold digger. From the beginning, he only valued her because she was a rich heiress. He used her to provide himself with connections in the business world."

"But after she completely severed ties with her family, the Leavey family stopped giving her any money and refused to help her boyfriend in his career. At first, Queenie's boyfriend treated her well, but after a year, when he realized that she was truly cut off

from her family and wouldn't receive any more benefits, he gradually changed," he stated.

Two years ago, her boyfriend started dating another woman from a wealthy family. Initially, she didn't know about it, after six months, she found out, and they constantly argued. After a year and a half, she finally saw her boyfriend's true color. She broke up with him completely, returned to her family, and apologized to her parents," Hayden said.

After listening to that, Stacey couldn't help but ask, "Did she meet with Jeremy?"

Hayden looked at Stacey and nodded. "Yes." He was silent for a moment, then said, "She wants to remarry me. She said she was the one in the wrong and that she would live a good life from now on and take good care of Jeremy.

Stacey was speechless. She didn't know how to judge Jeremy's mother, and it seemed she didn't have the right to do so either. "What are your plans?" Stacey asked politely after some thought.

Hayden didn't respond. He just looked at her quietly.

Stacey smiled awkwardly, took a sip of coffee, and said, "I'll go check on the kids."

When Hayden came over, he gifted Lillian and Kevin each a writing tablet. At that moment, the three children were happily playing with the writing tablets. Although Stacey had left in a rush, Hayden wasn't worried. He leisurely finished the drink Stacey had poured for him, then slowly got up and walked toward the children.

Hayden had personally taken care of Jeremy until the latter was three, so Hayden was quite experienced with young children. As he approached, he began guiding the three children on how to use the writing tablets for learning.

Lillian and Kevin were at an age where they were curious about everything. Seeing that Hayden, whom they considered to be their father, was willing to teach them, they immediately became happy and joyfully followed his lead in learning.

Nevertheless, Lillian and Kevin were still too young to fully understand what a father was to them. They thought a father was something they could have if they wanted, as long as the other person was willing. To them, Hayden was their father.

After a while, Stacey found herself becoming the odd one out. She had little experience in teaching children, unlike Hayden, who naturally found the right approach and started teaching the children how to read. Standing nearby, Stacey eventually realized she couldn't do anything and quietly left.

Outside, Debra and Patrick had been secretly watching. Seeing their daughter come out, they immediately smiled at her. When Stacey looked at her parents, she instantly knew that she was probably the last one in the family to learn about Hayden's feelings for her. Stacey felt helpless, knowing that Hayden was a good man and a great father to the children, but she hadn't considered remarrying after her previous marriage with Theodore.

When Stacey walked outside, Debra gently said to her, "Becky, Hay is a good man, and we've investigated his past with his ex-wife. It's not his fault."

When one is in doubt about having a second marriage, they often fear character issues with their partner. However, if both parties were kind-hearted people, two single-parent families coming together could be beneficial for everyone, especially the children.

"I know he's a good man, but..." Stacey hesitated. After a moment of silence, she said with a complicated expression, "Mom, I just don't want to get married again right now." The days of struggling in marriage were too painful for her. She had finally escaped from Theodore's grasp and didn't want to get into another marriage so soon.

Hearing that, Patrick quickly stood by his daughter's side and responded, "If you don't want to remarry, then don't. It's okay. To him, his daughter's happiness was the most important."

Stacey's previously tense expression relaxed as she looked at her father. She was grateful for her parents' love and understanding.

Debra glanced inside the house, feeling a bit regretful. If Becky doesn't cherish Hay, others might take him away soon. However, if Becky truly has no feelings for him, forcing her wouldn't bring her happiness. After all, things like love shouldn't be forced, Debra commented inwardly.

Debra sighed and said, "All right. As long as you've thought it through. You've known Hay for a while now. You understand his character, family background, and personality. It's your decision."

Stacey nodded. "Okay."

After a moment's hesitation, Debra couldn't help but advise, "But Becky, I still want to remind you. Before rejecting him,

make sure you understand your feelings. Do you have no feelings for Hay at all? Some chances, if missed, are gone for a lifetime. Every decision should be made seriously and carefully to ensure no future regrets."

Stacey remained silent. "You're right," Stacey agreed solemnly after a long silence. She wasn't a child anymore. She understood the meaning of her mother's words.

Although Stacey said she didn't want to remarry for the time being, Patrick and Debra still warmly invited Hayden to stay in the guest room at Carter Villa that night.

The following day, Hayden departed with Jeremy, who was hesitant to leave. Jeremy, at the age of three, was already attending kindergarten. Despite everything, he had to attend kindergarten. Due to his mother's sudden return, he felt wronged and upset. After crying, he wanted to run away. However, after adjusting his mood, he went back to kindergarten.

Stacey took Lillian and Kevin to see them off. At the airport, Jeremy held onto Becky's hand, looking reluctant to part, tears welling up in his eyes, about to cry.

Meanwhile, Stacey felt a pang in her heart as she watched Jeremy's sad expression, so she gently coaxed him. In the end, she even impulsively promised Jeremy that she would visit him when she had time. Seeing that the tears in his eyes had vanished and he was happy again, she finally felt relieved and was no longer uneasy.

"Mommy, what's a kindergarten?" Kevin asked curiously after Jeremy left, looking up at his mother,

Stacey lowered her gaze to Kevin and explained, "Kindergarten is a place where little kids go to learn. When you and Lillian turn three, you can go to kindergarten."

Lillian was delighted. "Then I want to go to kindergarten too!"

Stacey laughed and agreed, "Yes. When you turn three, you can go."

Lillian didn't understand and stubbornly said, "Why do I have to wait until I'm three? I want to go now."

"You're still too young," Stacey explained.

"I'm over a year old!" Lillian argued.

"You have to be three, Stacey repeated.

On the way back in the car, Lillian and Kevin kept arguing with Stacey about why they had to be three to go to kindergarten. Patiently, Stacey explained over and over again until she was parched. Finally, she had no choice but to take the children to a restaurant for a delicious meal.

The appearance of delicious food successfully distracted the children, and Stacey was finally free from the endless debate about why they had to be three to go to kindergarten. Little did she know that she would encounter Michael, Gifford, and Gifford's mother, Pamela, at the restaurant.

If Stacey hadn't been aware of their relationship, she might have mistaken them for a happy family of three. They were standing in the restaurant lobby, engaged in conversation with a group of people.

Without further ado, Stacey turned around and left with her two children. She felt unlucky and didn't want to face anyone from the Edwards family.

As Stacy tried to leave, Gifford noticed her and immediately chased after her. Stacey quickly pulled Lillian and Kevin behind her, watching Gifford warily.

Gifford hesitated for a moment, then quickly said, "Don't be nervous. I mean you no harm."

Lillian and Kevin peeked out from behind their mother, curiously looking at the strange man in front of them. Michael and Pamela also noticed Stacey and the two children at the entrance. They were momentarily stunned, especially Michael.

However, Michael quickly regained composure, his expression turning to one of displeasure, an ominous aura surrounding him. Six months ago, he still had hopes for the Carter family. However, after being schemed against by Theodore and forced to hand over the Edwards family's shares, he would be irritated every time he saw anyone related to Theodore.

"I didn't expect to meet you here. Can I invite you and the two children for a meal?" Gifford asked cautiously, looking at Stacey.

Stacey's expression was cold, and she said with displeasure, "There's no need. We're not that close." With that, Stacey turned to leave with Lillian and Kevin.

Anxious, Gifford called out as he followed, "Ms. Carter, I know you won't remarry Theodore. You don't need to be nervous."

Stacey looked at Gifford, who was blocking their way, and asked irritably, "What exactly do you want?"

Gifford looked into her eyes, and after a moment of thought, he made up his mind. He immediately said, "Theodore and Jenny are getting married. You still don't know Jenny's true color, right?"

Stacey frowned, displeased. "If they want to get married, go ahead. Jenny's character has nothing to do with me"

Gifford laughed. He looked at Stacey and continued, "On the surface, it seems unrelated. But once Jenny gets pregnant and gives birth to Theodore's child, do you



think she will let your two children live peacefully? Your two children are legally entitled to inherit Theodore's property!"

When Stacey heard that, her heart skipped a beat. She stared at Gifford.

Gifford stared back at her and smiled. "I know the Carter family is wealthy and willing to give these two children inheritance rights. You might not care about the Edwards family's assets, but just because you don't want them doesn't mean Jenny believes you don't."

"What harm can she bring to Lily and Kev?" Stacey sneered.

Gifford was silent for a moment, then said, 'I had someone investigate some information abroad about the Smith family and Jenny. Ms. Carter, if you're interested, we can have a meal and discuss it in detail. How about it?"

Stacey stared at Gifford as the latter smiled at her. After a long silence, Stacey said, "I need to take Lily and Kev home first."

Gifford was surprised, then smiled and nodded. "Okay. Do you need me to escort you back?"

Stacey was rendered speechless. Naturally, she didn't let Gifford escort her. She took Lillian and Kevin home, entrusted her mother and the two nannies to take care of the children, and then left for the restaurant where she had agreed to meet Gifford.

Sitting down in the private room, Stacey cut to the chase and asked, "What problem does Jenny have?" Gifford took out a printed document and pushed it across the table to her. Curious Stacey took the document and began reading. Her expression darkened as she read through it. Gifford's information revealed that Jenny had a previous marriage before her encounter with Theodore.

In Jenny's previous marriage, her ex-husband Jeffrey Thatcher had an adorable daughter named Sophie Thatcher, who was conceived with his ex-girlfriend before he met Jenny. But after Jenny married Jeffrey, Sophie died in a car accident just six months later. According to Gifford's investigation, the accident was not a simple mishap. There was a high possibility that Jenny had tampered with the car Sophie was in beforehand. At least, that was what Jeffrey believed.

Unfortunately, Jeffrey could never find concrete evidence to prove that Jenny had deliberately caused Sophie's death. The couple's constant arguments over the matter eventually led to their divorce.

"Why are you telling me this?" Stacey asked, regaining her composure as she looked at Gifford.

Gifford handed her the menu, inviting her to order.

“No thanks,” Stacey declined instantly.

Gifford hesitated for a moment and decided not to insist. He said solemnly, “I have no ulterior motive. I just want to establish a good relationship. When I want to expand my company in the future, I hope the Carter family knows that I’ve nothing to do with Theodore and will not suppress me along with him.”

Over the past year, the Carter family had been marginalizing and suppressing the Edwards Group in both connections and the market. Many business owners who wanted to cooperate with the Carter family were now hesitant to deal with the Edwards family, making it much harder for the Edwards Group to expand its business domestically.

“You started your own company?” Stacey was surprised.

Gifford smiled bitterly and said. “Yes. There’s no other way. Theodore seized all the Edwards Group’s shares and kicked me out. But I can’t just give up, can I? I worked hard for so many years to become the deputy CEO. If it weren’t for the fact that Theodore is my father’s son with his first wife, I believe that with my ability, I would have been the CEO of the Edwards Group, not Theodore

“That’s your business. It has nothing to do with me,” Stacey said as she stood up. Then, she looked at Gifford and added, “father understand about Jenny’s past now. Thanks for the warning. I’ll have someone keep an eye on her. And I’ll tell my about what you said.”

Gifford was overjoyed and quickly expressed his gratitude, saying, “Thank you!”

Stacey picked up her bag and left the private room. As soon as she stepped out, two bodyguards approached her. Debra was worried about Stacey’s safety, so she sent them to ensure Stacey’s safety. With the bodyguards escorting her, Stacey soon returned home.

Debra, worried about Stacey, hurried out to greet her. “How did it go? He didn’t trouble you, did he?”

Stacey handed Gifford’s document to her mother. After reaching the living room, Debra began to read the document carefully. When she finished, her face turned pale. “Tomorrow—No. I’ll arrange for more bodyguards right now. From now on, bodyguards will accompany Lily and Kev everywhere, and their vehicles must be thoroughly checked. We cannot give Jenny any opportunities,” Debra said.

“Are we going to live with constant vigilance forever?” Stacey felt weary. Suddenly, she thought of something and said. “Mom, I want to have someone investigate Jenny

and her ex-husband. If Jenny truly caused her ex-husband's child's death, we should be able to sentence her to jail according to the law." Once Jenny was imprisoned, they wouldn't have to worry about her scheming against Lillian and Kevin anymore.

## Chapter 177

Jeremy, Lillian, and Kevin had a happy day playing together at Hoggard Technologies.

In the evening, Hayden had rushed back to Hivalis overnight. He even brought gifts as he stepped into Carter Villa. One of them was a smart massage robot.

This gift is far too precious, Debra and Patrick thought in shock. They knew that Hoggard Technologies' products were not cheap. It was not that the Carter family could not afford it. It was the fact that the massage robot was too pricey to be given as a gift.

Knowing this, Patrick and Debra hurriedly refused, but alas, at Hayden's continued insistence, they had no choice but to accept it. Subsequently, after receiving his gift, they became far more hospitable to him.

Hayden not only brought gifts for Patrick and Debra but also for Lillian and Kevin. The gifts were two writing tablets just like Jeremy's. Besides the

handwriting function, it had educational tools for children and could teach them how to read and understand things. It was a great tool to guide their learning.

When Lillian and Kevin saw the gifts Hayden had gotten them, their eyes lit up. They were overjoyed.

Jeremy took his writing tablet, wrote something, and pressed the button for the tablet to narrate it. The tablet made a sound. "Lily. Kev, I told you, right? My Daddy is the best Daddy in the world. He treats us kids the best!"

Hearing Jeremy's voice, Lillian and Kevin nodded quickly. Then, Lillian looked at Hayden and exclaimed happily, "Mr. Hoggard. I want you to be my Daddy!"

In a hurry, Kevin followed, saying, "Mr. Hoggard, I want to be your Daddy too." Pift Stacey couldn't help but burst into laughter. "Hahaha!" "Key's still young and isn't that eloquent in speech yet but him saying that he wants to be Mr. Hoggard's father... I really... Ah, I can't help it!" she thought in amusement.

Patrick and Debra also chuckled to themselves secretly, thinking Ah, silly Kev. He's torturing us with laughter. Lillian then frantically reminded, "It's not like that. You're not becoming his Daddy. He's becoming your Daddy!" Kevin quickly realized his error and corrected himself, "No, I said it wrongly. I want you to be my Daddy too!" Hayden looked at Lillian and Kevin. He was surprised. 'Have Key and Lily accepted me? he wondered while glancing at Jeremy, and the moment they looked at each other, he understood what was going on. However, even though he understood, he was still shocked yet pleasantly surprised. Huh, I didn't expect Jeremy to be so persuasive. He's gotten Lily and Key on board so quickly. This makes things much easier for me to pursue Becky too, Hayden thought.

"Do you want me to be your Dad, Kev and Lily?" Hayden asked in the most gentle tone possible while crouching down and embracing them in his arms.

Lillian and Kevin were still young, so they couldn't truly understand adults expressions. To them, Hayden's features made him appear considerably fierce. Despite that, they listened to Jermy and believed him. From the bottom of their hearts, they thought that Hayden was an excellent father. Besides, Hayden was Jeremy's father, so they also wanted him to be theirs.

"Yeah!" Kevin nodded immediately.

Lillian examined Hayden's handsome face and was stunned. She stretched out her soft fingers, touched his nose, and then said playfully, "Mr. Hoggard, you look good, just like the uncles in the paintings!"

Wow, I didn't expect Lily to admire my looks, Hayden mused as he chuckled uncontrollably. "Yet, she's so similar to Becky when she was younger. I still vaguely remember that Becky said something similar to me before back then, but she was too young. She certainly doesn't remember it now," he thought.

"Well, I am quite handsome, so will you let me be your daddy and Kev's daddy, too, Lily?" Hayden asked Lillian, looking at her and smiling dotingly,

"Yes!" Lillian immediately affirmed loudly with starry eyes. She was jubilant at the thought of Hayden becoming her father.

Stacey was speechless. Embarrassed, she hurriedly explained, "Mr. Hoggard, Lily, and Key are still young. There are many things they still don't understand. Some of what they said is just playful nature. Please don't take it seriously

Debra and Patrick exchanged glances with each other. As parent they smiled wordlessly and thought, 'Hasn't Becky figured it out yet? Mr. Hoggard most likely has such an idea; he's interested in her. Hearing the children say all this must be having him writhing in delight.

Moreover, Patrick and Debra's gaze toward Jeremy had changed, especially Patrick's. I've been praised for my intelligence and perceptiveness all my life. Few can play tricks and schemes before me he thought.

‘Earlier, in the car. Jeremy suddenly enticed Lily and Key to take Hayden as their father but I didn’t think much about it. I just regarded it as an accident. Nevertheless, now adding the previous time and this time together... I can’t help but overthink it! Mr. Hoggard has deliberately convinced Jeremy to help be their matchmaker, hasn’t he? He’s a little cunning schemer, but not bad-hearted. He’s pretty smart, Patrick mused. Regardless, Patrick and Debra were satisfied with the Hoggard family anyway. Thinking this, they stood up in sync and left quietly instead of staying in the living room as third wheels

Noticing Patrick and Debra leave, Hayden knew they understood what he was doing and approved, so the biggest problem was Stacey. As long as she was willing, they would become an item.

Im not kidding. I want Mr. Hoggard to be my Daddy!” Lillian retorted Stacey’s words. Then, she stretched out her little hands, hugged Hayden, and declared, Jeremy says that Mr. Hoggard is a good Daddy. He says he’s the best Daddy in the world, so I want him to be my Daddy too!”

Pleased. Hayden reached out to pinch her cheeks. Aw, she’s so cute he thought

Kevin was a follower. He wanted whatever his sister Lillian wanted and shouted, “Yeah, I want Mr. Hoggard to be my Daddy’ too!!

Stacey was speechless and abashed to no end watching this. “When did you arrive here in Hivalis? Are you tired? Why don’t you sit down and rest for a while?” Stacey changed the subject.

“I just arrived,” Hayden answered sincerely.

Stacey was stunned momentarily but soon figured it out. She thought, Mr. Hoggard must have been very worried about Jeremy while he was staying here the past two days, so that’s why he rushed over so quickly.’ Thus, she



reported, “He’s been very well-behaved, obedient, and sensible these two days. He also had a good time playing with Lily and Kev.”

Hayden nodded. “Yes.” “Huh, as soon as Lily and Kev saw me, they kept going on about wanting me to be their father. It seems like Jeremy made good use of his two days at Carter Villa. That’s my son, my highly efficient son, he thought proudly. “You must be tired having taken care of three children at the same time, right?” he then greeted Stacey with concern.

At the mention of caring for children, Stacey thought of Hayden’s dedication to Jeremy. She felt ashamed yet admired him simultaneously. “You really do care for Jeremy well,” she said sincerely, “He’s very lucky to have a father like you, she praised, smiling

Hearing this, he smiled and asked tentatively, “So am I qualified to be Lily and Kev’s Dad?

## Chapter 178

Stacey was stunned. She looked at Hayden, bewildered and surprised. Meanwhile, Hayden simply looked at her, waiting for her response,

Stacey was speechless. It took a while for her to process what Hayden meant. ‘Does he like me? It can’t be, right? Given that I’m a divorced woman with a child, I expect it to be difficult to find someone who loves me. Wait. Hayden is also divorced and has a child. Could he really be interested in me? she pondered.

Stacey’s divorce may have subconsciously made her believe that love and marriage were no longer a part of her life. So, throughout her interactions with the Hoggard family, she never considered that possibility. Stacey began to

panic, unsure if she understood what Hayden meant. “M—Mr. Hoggard, I don’t think we’re suitable for each other, Stacey said nervously, her voice stuttering a bit.

“I’m just kidding. Howard replied. He had anticipated her rejection. After all, she had just divorced and had probably not considered remarriage yet.

Nevertheless, from her nervousness and the slight reddening of her ears, he could tell that she didn’t dislike him. If she didn’t dislike him, that meant there was hope. As long as he was patient, there would be a day when she would accept him.

Seeing Stacey remain silent, Hayden sat on the couch as he said, Jeremy’s mother has returned.”

Stacey was stunned at Hayden’s words, looking at him in surprise

Hayden paused for a moment before telling how, when his grandfather was critically ill, he desperately wanted Hayden to marry before he died. As a result, Hayden was forced to go on a frantic series of blind dates in less than a month, eventually marrying a girl he barely knew and had no feelings for

“At that time, our family was all worried about my grandfather’s condition. The marriage happened so quickly that we didn’t have time to investigate the background of the girl’s family, Hayden explained.

Stacey was taken aback when she learned the truth about Hayden’s previous marriage.

Hayden looked at her and said, “Because we didn’t have time to investigate, we didn’t know that Queenie Leavey didn’t want to marry me. She had a boyfriend she loved very much, but her family forced her to break up with him and marry me to climb the social ladder. When we first got married, she told me she wasn’t mentally prepared, so she didn’t want to have intercourse with me.”

He added, "I didn't have any feelings for Queenie either. I married her just to put my grandfather at ease, so I didn't mind her request. We agreed to live in separate rooms from the start. Later, my grandfather's health gradually improved, and everyone was happy."

"One day, Queenie suddenly told me she wanted to try for a baby via in vitro fertilization. I was quite surprised, but she was very anxious, saying her parents were pressuring her to have a child. At the time, I thought that since we were already married, having a child didn't seem like a problem, so I agreed. We went to the hospital together and had a baby by artificial means, Hayden continued.

"But later, when she was six or seven months pregnant, she suddenly told me she couldn't take it anymore, she wanted to abort the baby, and she wanted a divorce. That's when I realized something was wrong, he resumed.

Stacey was surprised and thought, 'Six or seven months pregnant? By then, the baby was already about to be born. I've heard from somewhere that babies born at seven months have a high chance of surviving, while those born at eight months have a higher risk of not making it. At seven months pregnant, the child is already alive. Terminating the pregnancy at that point is essentially the same as killing a living baby!

Hayden carried on. "Queenie confessed everything to me, and I had someone investigate. It was then that I learned she hadn't willingly married me. But by then, the child was about to be born. There was no way I would agree to her aborting the child. It wasn't just her child. It was mine too."

As Hayden spoke, he subtly observed Stacey's expression. Seeing that she didn't seem repulsed, he continued, "I took some measures to prevent the hospital from allowing Queenie to have an abortion. Her family also forbade her from aborting the child. Everyone was keeping an eye on her every move."

“But none of us expected that Queenie would secretly take abortion pills to get rid of the baby. Fortunately, someone realized the situation soon after she took the pills, and she was rushed to the hospital where the drugs were induced out of her system, barely saving the baby,” Hayden explained.

“I promised Queenie that as long as she delivered the baby safely, I would divorce her immediately and give her family a large amount of compensation. This would allow her parents to consent to her being with her boyfriend. She agreed to this and promised to take care of herself and deliver the baby. Later, when the child was born, I kept my promise. I gave her parents a major business project and negotiated conditions with them, allowing her to be with her boyfriend,” he added.

“After she gave birth, we scheduled the divorce. As soon as she finished her postpartum care, we got the divorce license. Right after that, she left with her boyfriend. That’s the story of my past with Queenie, Hayden said solemnly.

After saying that, Hayden took a sip of water and continued, “But a few days ago, she came back. I had someone investigate, and the results showed that she had a bad time with her boyfriend these years. Her boyfriend turned out to be a gold digger. From the beginning, he only valued her because she was a rich heiress. He used her to provide himself with connections in the business world.”

“But after she completely severed ties with her family, the Leavey family stopped giving her any money and refused to help her boyfriend in his career. At first, Queenie’s boyfriend treated her well, but after a year, when he realized that she was truly cut off from her family and wouldn’t receive any more benefits, he gradually changed,” he stated.

Two years ago, her boyfriend started dating another woman from a wealthy family. Initially, she didn’t know about it, after six months, she found out, and they constantly argued. After a year and a half, she finally saw her boyfriend’s

true color. She broke up with him completely, returned to her family, and apologized to her parents,” Hayden said.

After listening to that, Stacey couldn’t help but ask, “Did she meet with Jeremy?”

Hayden looked at Stacey and nodded. “Yes.” He was silent for a moment, then said, “She wants to remarry me. She said she was the one in the wrong and that she would live a good life from now on and take good care of Jeremy.

## Chapter 179



Stacey was speechless. She didn’t know how to judge Jeremy’s mother, and it seemed she didn’t have the right to do so either. “What are your plans?” Stacey asked politely after some thought.

Hayden didn’t respond. He just looked at her quietly.

Stacey smiled awkwardly, took a sip of coffee, and said, “I’ll go check on the kids.”

When Hayden came over, he gifted Lillian and Kevin each a writing tablet. At that moment, the three children were happily playing with the writing tablets. Although Stacey had left in a rush, Hayden wasn’t worried. He leisurely finished the drink Stacey had poured for him, then slowly got up and walked toward the children.

Hayden had personally taken care of Jeremy until the latter was three, so Hayden was quite experienced with young children. As he approached, he began guiding the three children on how to use the writing tablets for learning.

Lillian and Kevin were at an age where they were curious about everything. Seeing that Hayden, whom they considered to be their father, was willing to teach them, they immediately became happy and joyfully followed his lead in learning.

Nevertheless, Lillian and Kevin were still too young to fully understand what a father was to them. They thought a father was something they could have if they wanted, as long as the other person was willing. To them, Hayden was their father.

After a while, Stacey found herself becoming the odd one out. She had little experience in teaching children, unlike Hayden, who naturally found the right approach and started teaching the children how to read. Standing nearby, Stacey eventually realized she couldn't do anything and quietly left.

Outside, Debra and Patrick had been secretly watching. Seeing their daughter come out, they immediately smiled at her. When Stacey looked at her parents, she instantly knew that she was probably the last one in the family to learn about Hayden's feelings for her. Stacey felt helpless, knowing that Hayden was a good man and a great father to the children, but she hadn't considered remarrying after her previous marriage with Theodore.

When Stacey walked outside, Debra gently said to her, "Becky, Hay is a good man, and we've investigated his past with his ex-wife. It's not his fault."

When one is in doubt about having a second marriage, they often fear character issues with their partner. However, if both parties were kind-hearted people, two single-parent families coming together could be beneficial for everyone, especially the children.

"I know he's a good man, but..." Stacey hesitated. After a moment of silence, she said with a complicated expression, "Mom, I just don't want to get married again right now." The days of struggling in marriage were too painful for her.

She had finally escaped from Theodore's grasp and didn't want to get into another marriage so soon.

Hearing that, Patrick quickly stood by his daughter's side and responded, "If you don't want to remarry, then don't. It's okay To him, his daughter's happiness was the most important.

Stacey's previously tense expression relaxed as she looked at her father. She was grateful for her parents' love and understanding.

Debra glanced inside the house, feeling a bit regretful. If Becky doesn't cherish Hay, others might take him away soon. However, if Becky truly has no feelings for him, forcing her wouldn't bring her happiness. After all, things like love shouldn't be forced, Debra commented inwardly.

Debra sighed and said, "All right. As long as you've thought it through. You've known Hay for a while now. You understand his character, family background, and personality. It's your decision."

Stacey nodded. "Okay."

After a moment's hesitation, Debra couldn't help but advise, "But Becky, I still want to remind you. Before rejecting him,

make sure you understand your feelings. Do you have no feelings for Hay at all? Some chances, if missed, are gone for a lifetime. Every decision should be made seriously and carefully to ensure no future regrets."

Stacey remained silent. "You're right, Stacey agreed solemnly after a long silence. She wasn't a child anymore. She understood the meaning of her mother's words.

Although Stacey said she didn't want to remarry for the time being, Patrick and Debra still warmly invited Hayden to stay in the guest room at Carter Villa that night.



The following day, Hayden departed with Jeremy, who was hesitant to leave. Jeremy, at the age of three, was already attending kindergarten. Despite everything, he had to attend kindergarten. Due to his mother's sudden return, he felt wronged and upset. After crying, he wanted to run away. However, after adjusting his mood, he went back to kindergarten.

Stacey took Lillian and Kevin to see them off. At the airport, Jeremy held onto Becky's hand, looking reluctant to part, tears welling up in his eyes, about to cry.

Meanwhile, Stacey felt a pang in her heart as she watched Jeremy's sad expression, so she gently coaxed him. In the end, she even impulsively promised Jeremy that she would visit him when she had time. Seeing that the tears in his eyes had vanished and he was happy again, she finally felt relieved and was no longer uneasy.

"Mommy, what's a kindergarten?" Kevin asked curiously after Jeremy left, looking up at his mother,

Stacey lowered her gaze to Kevin and explained, "Kindergarten is a place where little kids go to learn. When you and Lillian turn three, you can go to kindergarten."

Lillian was delighted. "Then I want to go to kindergarten too!"

Stacey laughed and agreed, "Yes. When you turn three, you can go."

Lillian didn't understand and stubbornly said, "Why do I have to wait until I'm three? I want to go now."

"You're still too young," Stacey explained.

"I'm over a year old!" Lillian argued.

"You have to be three," Stacey repeated.

On the way back in the car, Lillian and Kevin kept arguing with Stacey about why they had to be three to go to kindergarten. Patiently, Stacey explained over and over again until she was parched. Finally, she had no choice but to take the children to a restaurant for a delicious meal.

The appearance of delicious food successfully distracted the children, and Stacey was finally free from the endless debate about why they had to be three to go to kindergarten. Little did she know that she would encounter Michael, Gifford, and Gifford's mother, Pamela, at the restaurant.

If Stacey hadn't been aware of their relationship, she might have mistaken them for a happy family of three. They were standing in the restaurant lobby, engaged in conversation with a group of people.

Without further ado, Stacey turned around and left with her two children. She felt unlucky and didn't want to face anyone from the Edwards family.

#### Chapter 180

As Stacy tried to leave, Gifford noticed her and immediately chased after her. Stacey quickly pulled Lillian and Kevin behind her, watching Gifford warily.

Gifford hesitated for a moment, then quickly said, "Don't be nervous. I mean you no harm."

Lillian and Kevin peeked out from behind their mother, curiously looking at the strange man in front of them. Michael and Pamela also noticed Stacey and the two children at the entrance. They were momentarily stunned, especially Michael.

However, Michael quickly regained composure, his expression turning to one of displeasure, an ominous aura surrounding him. Six months ago, he still had hopes for the Carter family. However, after being schemed against by

Theodore and forced to hand over the Edwards family's shares, he would be irritated every time he saw anyone related to Theodore.

"I didn't expect to meet you here. Can I invite you and the two children for a meal?" Gifford asked cautiously, looking at Stacey.

Stacey's expression was cold, and she said with displeasure, "There's no need. We're not that close." With that, Stacey turned to leave with Lillian and Kevin.

Anxious, Gifford called out as he followed, "Ms. Carter, I know you won't remarry Theodore. You don't need to be nervous."

Stacey looked at Gifford, who was blocking their way, and asked irritably, "What exactly do you want?"

Gifford looked into her eyes, and after a moment of thought, he made up his mind. He immediately said, "Theodore and Jenny are getting married. You still don't know Jenny's true color, right?"

Stacey frowned, displeased. "If they want to get married, go ahead. Jenny's character has nothing to do with me"

Gifford laughed. He looked at Stacey and continued, "On the surface, it seems unrelated. But once Jenny gets pregnant and gives birth to Theodore's child, do you think she will let your two children live peacefully? Your two children are legally entitled to inherit Theodore's property!"

When Stacey heard that, her heart skipped a beat. She stared at Gifford.

Gifford stared back at her and smiled. "I know the Carter family is wealthy and willing to give these two children inheritance rights. You might not care about the Edwards family's assets, but just because you don't want them doesn't mean Jenny believes you don't."

"What harm can she bring to Lily and Kev?" Stacey sneered.

Gifford was silent for a moment, then said, 'I had someone investigate some information abroad about the Smith family and Jenny. Ms. Carter, if you're interested, we can have a meal and discuss it in detail. How about it?'

Stacey stared at Gifford as the latter smiled at her. After a long silence, Stacey said, "I need to take Lily and Kev home first."

Gifford was surprised, then smiled and nodded. "Okay. Do you need me to escort you back?"

Stacey was rendered speechless. Naturally, she didn't let Gifford escort her. She took Lillian and Kevin home, entrusted her mother and the two nannies to take care of the children, and then left for the restaurant where she had agreed to meet Gifford.

Sitting down in the private room, Stacey cut to the chase and asked, "What problem does Jenny have?" Gifford took out a printed document and pushed it across the table to her. Curious Stacey took the document and began reading. Her expression darkened as she read through it. Gifford's information revealed that Jenny had a previous marriage before her encounter with Theodore.

In Jenny's previous marriage, her ex-husband Jeffrey Thatcher had an adorable daughter named Sophie Thatcher, who was conceived with his ex-girlfriend before he met Jenny. But after Jenny married Jeffrey, Sophie died in a car accident just six months later. According to Gifford's investigation, the accident was not a simple mishap. There was a high possibility that Jenny had tampered with the car Sophie was in beforehand. At least, that was what Jeffrey believed.

Unfortunately, Jeffrey could never find concrete evidence to prove that Jenny had deliberately caused Sophie's death. The couple's constant arguments over the matter eventually led to their divorce.

“Why are you telling me this?” Stacey asked, regaining her composure as she looked at Gifford.

Gifford handed her the menu, inviting her to order.

“No thanks,” Stacey declined instantly.

Gifford hesitated for a moment and decided not to insist. He said solemnly, “I have no ulterior motive. I just want to establish a good relationship. When I want to expand my company in the future, I hope the Carter family knows that I’ve nothing to do with Theodore and will not suppress me along with him.”

Over the past year, the Carter family had been marginalizing and suppressing the Edwards Group in both connections and the market. Many business owners who wanted to cooperate with the Carter family were now hesitant to deal with the Edwards family, making it much harder for the Edwards Group to expand its business domestically.

“You started your own company?” Stacey was surprised.

Gifford smiled bitterly and said. “Yes. There’s no other way. Theodore seized all the Edwards Group’s shares and kicked me out. But I can’t just give up, can I? I worked hard for so many years to become the deputy CEO. If it weren’t for the fact that Theodore is my father’s son with his first wife, I believe that with my ability, I would have been the CEO of the Edwards Group, not Theodore

“That’s your business. It has nothing to do with me,” Stacey said as she stood up. Then, she looked at Gifford and added, “father understand about Jenny’s past now. Thanks for the warning. I’ll have someone keep an eye on her. And I’ll tell my about what you said.”

Gifford was overjoyed and quickly expressed his gratitude, saying, “Thank you!”

Stacey picked up her bag and left the private room. As soon as she stepped out, two bodyguards approached her. Debra was worried about Stacey's safety, so she sent them to ensure Stacey's safety. With the bodyguards escorting her, Stacey soon returned home.

Debra, worried about Stacey, hurried out to greet her. "How did it go? He didn't trouble you, did he?"

Stacey handed Gifford's document to her mother. After reaching the living room, Debra began to read the document carefully. When she finished, her face turned pale. "Tomorrow—No. I'll arrange for more bodyguards right now. From now on, bodyguards will accompany Lily and Kev everywhere, and their vehicles must be thoroughly checked. We cannot give Jenny any opportunities," Debra said.

"Are we going to live with constant vigilance forever?" Stacey felt weary, Suddenly, she thought of something and said. Are "Mom, I want to have someone investigate Jenny and her ex-husband. If Jenny truly caused her ex-husband's child's death, we should be able to sentence her to jail according to the law." Once Jenny was imprisoned, they wouldn't have to worry about her scheming against Lillian and Kevin anymore.