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He did not know what to do. Looking at the sick son in his arms, he felt a wave of anger and bitterness grew in him.

That fury intensified when he saw the photo of a glowing Sasha next to a bespectacled man in a posh city.

How could you be so cruel, Sasha?

Do you only think of the Wands and the Blackwoods? What about us? What about your three flesh and blood? Don't we mean anything to you?

Sasha had a fruitful day. She was surprised Andy had asked her back to work after the humiliating confrontation the day before. Moreover, he also handed her a lucrative deal that enabled her to earn more than a million.

It was unbelievable, but she decided not to think too much about it. After all, she got the commission in hand.

"Tell me, Lennie, what do you want? I'll buy it for you today." Sasha happily asked Lance, who was just behind her, as they walked out of Wall Street with the commission safely in her account.

It was a promise she made to him at the hotel the day before, but she had been too busy to fulfill it.

Lance politely rejected her offer. "It is not necessary. I don't need anything. Keep the money for future investment."

Sasha was puzzled by his change in attitude.

He was elated when she agreed to reward him the day before, but now he declined her offer so formally.

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She felt awkward by his behavior since she preferred his earlier carefree and easy interaction.

She suspected Solomon had lectured him again, causing the change in his attitude.

That night, Sasha transferred the million to Jackson's account again.

Lance saw that but kept quiet and just headed back to his room for the night.

They went through the same routine over the next few days—working at Andy's office in the day, and transferring the commissions they earned to Jackson in the night.

A week later, she received a call from Jackson.

"What are you trying to do, Sasha? Why do you keep sending us money? Are you trying to make up to us with money? Do you think this will make us forgive you?" he howled.

"No... no, Uncle Jackson. I... I can explain." She was flustered by his accusation and tried to explain herself.

However, the infuriated man would not give her the chance to defend herself. "If you have the time, why don't you spend it on your kids? Fancy abandoning them and then trying to act like a saint to us. Do you think we will appreciate this?" he added, before slamming the phone on her.

For a long while, Sasha stood there in a daze as her eyes brimmed with tears. His harsh words echoed in her ears.

My kids...

Like a volcano eruption, the suppressed feelings and longing she had for her children poured out uncontrollably. With trembling hands, she made a call.

"Hello? Wendy? I'm Sasha."

"Ms. Wand? Fancy receiving a call from you. It is about time."

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Sasha was taken aback by the hostile and sarcastic attitude from Wendy, who had always been on good terms with her.

She took a while to recompose herself, then softly asked, "I'm sorry, but I was really busy lately. How are the kids?"

"Oh, you still care about them? I thought it would be out of sight, out of mind after you left."

"No, no, that is not true. I am their mother. How could I not care about them?"

"What were you doing during this period, then? Where were you when Vivi was hospitalized? What were you doing when Matt nearly died? Huh?" Wendy interrogated.

It pained her to see how the children had suffered. She also felt sorry for Sebastian, who was both emotionally and physically drained.

Sasha was crestfallen.

Vivi was sick?

And Matt nearly died?

When did that happen? Why wasn't she informed? What happened?

A dreaded wave of worry and fear threatened to bury her. Her hands were trembling so badly she could not hold on to the phone, so she hung up.

Lance came into the room at that moment and shocked to see her in a state of panic. "What's wrong, Sha?"

"Oh, Lennie! I... I gotta make a trip back. Can you help to take care of business here? Tell Andy... say... tell him I have to take a few days off to attend to some urgent matters."

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She dashed into the room, grabbed a bag, and mindlessly started packing her belongings.

Lance did not utter a word. He headed back into his room and booked her a flight. He had long wanted to buy her that ticket home.

Sasha boarded the plane that very night and arrived in Avenport at daybreak.

She hesitated about heading straight to Frontier Bay as she suspected Sebastian would still be there.

She avoided him because she wasn't sure if she wanted to see him or she was too guilty to face him after what happened to the kids.

She waited until after eight before she rushed over to the villa. To her surprise, the gate locked.

Why is it locked?

Panicked, she ran to the security post to check with the guard there. "Excuse me. May I know why the gate for Royal Court One is locked?"

"Oh, Royal Court One. Mr. Hayes has already moved out. It has been vacant for some time. It will probably be put on sale soon," the security guard said with a sense of regret.

It was disquieting news to Sasha!

Moved?

Where to? Why did he move?

"Do you know where he has moved to? I need to find him," she pressed anxiously.

The security guard shook his head. "I have no idea. I heard they had lots of unfortunate incidents during their stay here. The kids fell sick, one after another. I presume they found another place with a better environment for the kids."

A better environment for the kids?

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His comment was like rubbing salt on a wound, adding to her guilt.

The fact that the kids taking turns to fall sick reverberated in her mind.

I'm sorry, my sweeties. Mommy did not mean to make you suffer.

Teary-eyed and out of desperation, she sought help from Brandon to find out her kids' whereabout.

"They moved because of Matteo. Since he fell sick, he has been getting treatment at Roxanne's research laboratory. Sebastian bought a small house nearby for a temporary stay so it would be easier for him to care for Matteo." Brandon reported his find over the phone.

When Sasha heard that, she was overwhelmed and allowed her tears to flow uncontrollably.

Brandon waited in silence to say something, but in the end, he quietly hung up.

Twenty minutes later, Sasha arrived at the small house.

Compared to Royal Court One, it was tiny without a garden or pool. The garage of Royal Court One was bigger than that house.

Sasha clenched her fingers around her luggage handle more tightly, nervous.

"Vivi, stop playing. Come and wash your hands before you take your breakfast, okay? We gotta go to preschool soon."

"Okay!"

Just as Sasha anxiously stepped up to the gate of the house, she heard that familiar voice.

Before she could blink her eye, a little figure in pink crawled out from the bush and dashed toward the house.

Vivi! That is my little Vivi!

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Tears filled her eyes again, and she immediately sprinted forward, shouting, "Vivi, Mommy is back!"

The running little girl stopped abruptly, then turned around in confusion.

Yes, that is my little girl, my sweetie!

Sasha was overwhelmed. She dropped her luggage bag and rushed forward in tears to hug Vivian.

Unexpectedly, her little sweetie, who used to stick to her like a leech, looked at her with wide-eyed shock. Suddenly, she turned around and ran away from Sasha!

"Ms. Dolivo, come quickly!" Vivian screamed in fear and wept loudly.

Sasha stopped in her path, dumbstruck, while she tried to make sense of what had just happened.

What's happening?

Why did my precious little sweetie run away in fear? She should be running into my arms, not away!

Sasha felt a piercing pain in her heart, so painful she felt she could not breathe.

Wendy heard Vivian cry. After carrying the girl, she came out to investigate with the other two children in toil.

When the children and mother met, they all froze.

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It had been almost two months since she left them. When she finally saw their adorable faces after a long sixty days, she wanted to rush over to hug them all in her arms.

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However, her worst nightmare came true. Her two sons behaved like their sister.

She expected them to rush toward her ecstatically, just like how she felt about them. Sadly, that did not happen. Instead, the boys looked at her coldly, as if she was a fragment of their imagination. Perhaps they were disappointed in her and did not wish to get close to her anymore.

They don't want me anymore?

She felt the stinging pain in her heart again. Then she swayed briefly and stumbled toward them.

"Little Ian, Matt, it's Mommy! I'm back! Can you come over and let me hug you? I'm really sorry. I shouldn't have left you," she cried.

At that moment, she was truly remorseful.

Why did I leave? These are her kids, and they did no wrong.

Weeping uncontrollably, Sasha kneeled in front of the children.

Finally, Matteo stepped forward and looked at her, tears all over his sunken cheeks. He chokingly asked, "Why... did you... leave without a-a word? Why did you... stay away for so... long?"

"[..."

"You don't want me anymore, do you?" the boy piteously questioned her.

"No, no, that's not true! I would never abandon you. Matt, they have to kill me to take me away from you." She shook her head violently in denial.

She was desperate to explain and to seek their forgiveness.

Vivian came forward and chipped in, "Then why did you not call us? Don't you know I was sick? Why did you not ask for me?" Her child-like voice was cracking, and she was choking on tears, too.

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Sasha's face paled. She badly wanted to hug her girl, but under that tearful gaze, she lost her courage to do so.

Indeed, she lost the right to seek their forgiveness, and she had to earn their love again.

She had left them and told Sebastian she did not want them anymore. For two whole months, she did not bother to call or check on them.

Sasha collapsed on the floor in devastation.

The atmosphere was stifling and filled with sorrow.

Wendy was watching them and wanted to step up to help.

Before she could do that, the remaining kid stepped forward to his mother. He gazed at her, then stretched out his little hand to wipe the tears off Sasha's eyes.

"Don't be sad, Mommy. They were upset because they missed you too much," Ian said.

"What?" Sasha looked at her eldest son in disbelief.

lan continued to wipe her tears gently while adding, "It will be alright so long as you promise you won't leave us again."

What a big relief after that horrifying experience!

Sasha stared gratefully at Ian, who was wise beyond his age. Her tears flowed uncontrollably again, and she held him tightly in her embrace. Matteo and Vivian joined them, and the four wept in joy.

She was grateful to be blessed with such sensible and lovable children.

Wendy was relieved as she, too, could not help but weep.

lan really had the characteristic of an eldest child. He was more sensible and mature, just like their father.

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Sebastian was poring through a pile of documents when he heard the news. His pen tip snapped under pressure as he clenched his fist in anger.

His horrifying fury caused Luke to freeze in silence.

"Who gave her permission to see the kids? Throw her out!" he barked through tightly clenched jaws.

"Yes, Mr. Hayes. I will see to that immediately." Luke shuddered and instantly left to make the necessary arrangement.

He could understand his boss' anger.

Sebastian was stretched thin during this period, taxed by a busy work schedule and Matteo's illness. With the support of his staff, work was still manageable. However, even under Roxanne's care, Matteo had not fully recovered, and the sleepless nights drained him further.

It was preposterous and arrogant for Sasha to sashay in at her own whim to visit the kids after being away for two months. Who did she think she is?

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Sasha sent Vivian and Ian to their preschool.

It was the same one, but the Hayes had brought in a brand new team to run the school.

"Remember to come to pick us ya, Mommy!" Vivian reminded her repeatedly at the gate. She had gotten over her disappointment and was back to being the little clingy angel she used to be.

"Of course! I will bring a strawberry cake for my sweetie. And Ian, I will make you your favorite berry pie, ya," Sasha joyfully promised them.

"Yes!" The cool little guy, Ian, could not hide his excitement and nodded happily.

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After they entered the school compound, Sasha immediately went back home. She was extremely worried and wanted to examine Matteo herself to find out what was wrong with him.

Unfortunately, there were already a few men in black guarding the gate when she arrived.

"Ms. Wand, Mr. Hayes has given instructions that you are not allowed into the house."

"Why? I am the children's mother. Why can't I go in?"

"He said you should know the reason. He wants you to leave immediately or we will have to throw you out." The men coldly gave her the ultimatum.

Sasha did not expect this brutal blow.

I should know the reason?

Did he mean the time when I said I don't want the kids anymore?

But it was an impulsive comment I made in the fit of anger. I never meant it!

Sasha panicked and hurriedly tried to explain to the men. "Please, listen to me. I said those words during a heated quarrel with him. It was said in the fit of anger; I did not mean it."

"We do not need to know your conversation. We are only acting on Mr. Hayes' instruction. Please do accordingly, Ms. Wand." The men did not mince their words and had no intention of giving in.

Sasha was ashen-faced because she had not expected Sebastian would be so harsh on her.

However, she could not blame him for doing that. She had indeed said she did not want the kids anymore and then disappeared from their lives for a full two months. It wasn't wrong of him to be angry or to stop her from seeing them now.

Sasha was utterly devastated. She stared longingly at the house for a long while, then listlessly dragged herself away.

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After she left, the men made a call., "Mr. Scott, we have gotten rid of that woman."

Luke was at a loss for words. He glanced toward the closed door of Sebastian's office and silently hung up.

His boss was reacting abnormally, which made him worried. Although he had fumed when he heard Sasha was back and met the kids, he was unusually calm after that.

If Sebastian was his usual self, he would have raged at everyone who crossed his path and traumatized all the staff.

Why the calmness?

Is this the quiet before the storm? Or is he waiting for the right moment to seek revenge on her?

Luke was deeply disturbed.

"Mr. Scott, the receptionist at the lobby called to say a Ms. Wand is requesting to see Mr. Hayes. Should they let her in?"

"What?" Luke sputtered out the tea in his mouth in shock.

OMG! It really is Murphy's law at work.

"Why let her in? Don't you know one needs an appointment to meet Mr. Hayes?" He panicked and chided the clerk.

Stunned at his reaction, she could only hold back her tears and kept apologizing for her mistake.

"Damn..." Luke swore.

A moment later, the door to Sebastian's office swung open, and Luke immediately stood up. "Mr. Hayes, are you heading out?"

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"Yes, come along with me. I have an appointment at World Trade Center," Sebastian listlessly said. His bloodshot eyes and tired look were evidence of the lack of a good rest.

There was no sign of anger in him, though.

Sebastian's total lack of anger dazed Luke, but the latter soon snapped out of it as he grabbed the car keys and followed behind his boss.

Maybe he has really let go of the matter...

Sasha waited outside the building for a long time.

She did not know what happened or why the clerk suddenly turned hostile and chased her away when all she did was ask to meet Sebastian.

Anyhow, she decided she could wait on the street outside the building.

Sasha waited from morning to noon, then from noon till the office was about to close. Still, there was no sight of the man she had been waiting for.

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The people started gossiping about Sasha, for she had stayed too long outside.

"Who's that woman? Why is she standing outside our company?"

"I have no idea, but I heard she's here for our president."

"She's here for Mr. Hayes?"

Upon hearing that, the people gasped. The next moment, they started eyeing Sasha up and down disdainfully.

"Are you kidding me? A woman like her is here for our president?"

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"Pfft! She should take a look at herself in the mirror!"

Sasha had closed her ears to those harsh and derisive words.

Suddenly, she recalled that she had promised to pick the kids up when she sent them to school in the morning. Hence, she grew agitated as the sky darkened.

Oh, forget it. I better fetch the kids first. I can't break my promise again.

In the end, she left the company, her legs sore and aching. She then hailed a cab and headed toward the preschool.

Meanwhile, Sebastian had been working for some time in his office when his phone beeped.

It was a message from Karl: Mr. Hayes, Ms. Wand is gone.

Attached with the message was the photo of a woman's back view as she left the company.

Seeing that, Sebastian let out a sneer before putting his phone aside and resuming to work.

Half an hour later, he received a phone call from one of the bodyguards from the preschool. "Mr. Hayes, Ms. Wand came to fetch the kids just now. We came into conflict with her and accidentally injured her."

Hearing the news, he raised his voice and asked in disbelief, "What did you say?"

The man's composure had come apart, and his face darkened without him realizing it.

On the other end of the line, the bodyguard couldn't help but shudder in fear.

"W-When we tried to leave after getting the kids into the car, she suddenly rushed over like crazy. S-So, we accidentally knocked her over."

Sebastian's mind went blank. Without a second thought, he hung up, grabbed his keys from the drawer, and rushed out of his office.

Seeing that, Luke, who was preparing to get off work, gaped.

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What happened?

Sasha had been knocked down by the car, but her injury was not serious. She only suffered some scratches on her leg and a small cut on the forehead.

The kids struggled to get out of the car. Vivian trotted toward Sasha and threw herself into the latter's arm. Her eyes reddened when she saw the injury on her mother's forehead.

"Why did you knock Mommy down? All of you are bad guys! Get lost! I don't want to see you guys here!" she cried out.

lan's face, too, had turned grim.

"Scram!" the boy uttered through gritted teeth.

The bodyguards exchanged glances with each other in the face of the kids' anger.

Meanwhile, Sasha got up on her feet and casually wiped the blood off her forehead with her sleeve. She took the heat off the bodyguards by saying, "Vivian, Ian, don't be mad at them. I'm fine"

"But..." Ian was about to say something when Sasha picked up a cookie box on the floor and handed it over to him.

"I'm sorry, Ian. I was busy earlier today, so I didn't get to make berry pie. But, I bought almond tarts for you from a pastry shop in Old Town. I ate these all the time when I was young."

lan, however, didn't care a bit about the treats. All he wanted was to see his mother.

Nevertheless, he opened his mouth and ate the almond tart his mother fed him. After finishing the tart, the boy said while gazing at his mother's wound, "Let's go to the hospital."

"Huh? I'm fine. It's just a small scratch. There's no need to go to the hospital. I can treat it when I get home." After a short pause, Sasha finally brought up the heavy topic. "Ian, actually, I have something I want to tell you."

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That was actually one of the reasons for her to insist on coming to the preschool.

Now that Sebastian refused to let her meet the kids, she needed to explain to them beforehand in case they misunderstood that she had abandoned them.

She put on a good front and pulled them closer to her.

"Little Ian, Vivi, perhaps... perhaps I can't live with you guys for now. Something has happened between your Daddy and me, and we need some time to solve it. I promise I won't leave you guys. We will solve the issue between us as soon as possible."

Hearing that, despair surged within lan.

As for Vivian, the little girl had broken into tears. "No! Mommy, please don't leave me! I want Mommy!" she sobbed out while wrapping her arms around Sasha, clinging to her.

Sasha was at a loss, not knowing how to comfort the kids.

Just then, a black Bentley appeared on the road outside the preschool. The man in the car stomped on the brakes and stopped the car not far away from them.

Sasha was already distressed by Vivian's sobbing, and when she saw the Bentley, her face turned paler.

He's finally here!