

My Dreamy Old Husband Chapter 1031

The child of around two to three years of age leaned pitifully in Sophia's arms. She was scared, anxious, was too afraid to speak, and had her lips pressed together tightly. Despite having suffered, she did not dare to say a word. Michael was a father himself and did not have the heart to turn the child away.

"Okay. If you like her, we will buy her."

After they paid for the child, Sophia stopped going in further and went to a rest area with the child in her arms instead.

She knew that she was not fit to go in there. She feared that she would not be able to control herself and end up buying all the children in the market.

Meanwhile, Michael and Quinton went into the specialized area where they were selling children and asked around for a while before they got a definite answer—the Yard Family had bought the child.

"D*mmit! It had to be the Yard Family!" Michael cursed.

After finding out that it was the Yard Family, he thought it was fortunate but also a pain.

At least, the child was not sold into the pornographic industry or a killer organization. She was not sold to gruff old men as a plaything either. It was the most fortunate outcome in that wretched place.

The Yard Family was of imperial descent and they still carried on the imperial family's traditions. Every year, they took in children of unknown origins and trained them to become bodyguards from a young age. They were similar to shadow guards in ancient times.

But, why did it have to be the Yard Family?

The Fletcher Family turned them from a flourishing entity to being left with only one son for generations. It was going to be a lot of work to bring that child back.

Suddenly, a frown appeared on Michael's forehead and he ran out of the specialized area toward the rest area. When he got there, however, he did not see Sophia but only Hale with five to six children. Hale looked at Michael helplessly with his palms in the air in front of him.

Not long after, Sophia came back with two more children. Now, there were eight of them in total.

Both Michael and Quinton gaped at her.

I knew I shouldn't have brought her here! She is going to buy all the children in the market at this rate!

The eight children were all around the same age as Carmen. Each one of them looked pitiful. Michael felt his head start to ache at the sight.

If that had been eight cats or eight dogs, or even eight alpacas, it would have been better. These were eight children!

While other people splurged on bags, she splurged on children.

His wife did have a very peculiar way of squandering their family fortune.

"Hubby—"

Sophia knew that he was mad. She simply looked at him pitifully with a child in her arms.

Giving in to her, he quickly paid for the children and left that precarious place.

Once they brought all the children back to the hotel, Sophia had people buy bags of necessities for the children.

The children should have been at an age where they were lively, adorable, and cheeky, but none of them uttered a single word. They listened to everything Sophia said without making a sound or crying. *How much did they suffer to become so traumatized?*

When she bought the children, she was completely furious and could not bear to see them in misery. Who knew what they would go through after today?

Looking at them, they all seemed healthy. They probably had parents who adored them but were somehow sold off to a place like that.

The children were all of different races—Caucasian, Black, and Asian. If Sophia wanted to find their parents, she would have to search the entire world, which did not seem possible. It looked like she would have to take them all in, but she did not regret it.

It did not matter if she had to take them all in. She wanted to find them adoptive families once they returned home. If no one adopted them, then she would raise them.

At the same time, Michael and Quinton were having a discussion in the study.

“We have to get the child. Let me do it instead. It won’t be good for you to show up there. I’ll make a deal with them as a member of the Phantom Wolf and bring the child back. The animosity between the Fletcher and Yard Families runs too deep. You shouldn’t go there. I’ve made a deal with the Yards before. They paid me to kill one of their enemies. I have had some history with them.”

After a moment of hesitation, Michael decided to entrust Quinton with the matter. Even though he did not trust him completely, he felt like he could, at least, trust Quinton on this.

“Okay, but I want to come along.”

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The following day, after their visit to the black market, the two men went to the Yard Residence to find the child.

Sophia did not go with them this time. She felt like she would ruin things if she went with them again. She did not go anywhere and only stayed in the hotel to care for the children.

She was looking after eight children by herself. If that had been eight Carmens, she would have been exhausted, but these eight children were unusually obedient. They ate as they were told, slept as they were told, and did not speak a word. That, in turn, left her emotionally drained.

Even though she did not know the experiences they had prior to this, she knew that it had left them scarred for life.

She planned to bring the children back to the country. Trying to find their biological parents did not seem possible now, so she might as well find a reliable family to adopt them. She also wanted to adopt one of them too.

Last month, she went for another medical checkup at the hospital, took a lot of medicine, got multiple shots, and went through a lot of suffering. Yet, she was unable to conceive. She had almost given up completely. Because Carmen seemed lonely by herself, however, Sophia wanted a second child. If she could not conceive on her own, then she could adopt!

After Michael and Quinton left to go to the Yard Residence, Sophia brought the children out to eat. There was a Crimson House branch in the area and she walked in without a second thought; she ordered children's meal sets and since there were no private rooms, they had to sit in the main dining area. But since she had the V-card, the place they sat at was also quiet.

The part of the restaurant next to the windows only had two tables.

She and several bodyguards sat with the children at one table while the other was occupied by a charming Cethosian lady in her thirties. She was wearing a jade ring, and her black hair was pulled back behind her head. The traditional Cethosian dress she wore complemented her very well. She was currently reading the newspaper. There was a slight hook on her chin and her swan-like neckline was very elegant.

Indeed, she was a charismatic and beautiful lady.

Sophia sat down with a child in her arms and said gently, "We're going to eat soon. Aren't you all excited?"

Silence was all she got in return.

The eight children were still afraid to speak or even cry. They simply had frozen expressions on their faces.

Sophia felt saddened. Letting out a sigh, she held the youngest girl in her arms and spoke to her.

Suddenly, the lady at the next table put down the newspaper and looked over. "Excuse me, ma'am. You bought those children, didn't you?"

Sophia had eight children with her, but none of them made a sound. If she wasn't a seller, then she was someone who had just bought from a seller. However, sellers did not usually bring children to these places where the rich wasted money or dress them in high-quality clothes.

Sophia knew that she could not hide where the children had come from. Moreover, they still had the imprint on their wrists from where the wristband used to be. It would not disappear in such a short amount of time.

But still, she did not know who that lady was, and she did not want to reveal too much, so she denied it. "No."

The Cethosian lady did not refute but simply gave her a warm smile. "That is not a place a woman should go to."

It seemed like she had seen through everything.

Sophia did not say anything else and silently fed the child in her arms.

After a while, the charming Cethosian lady put down the newspaper, picked up her bag, and left the restaurant.

Suddenly, her bodyguard turned back halfway and presented a name card with both hands to Sophia. "Ma'am, the lady of the house is very fond of you. If you have some time, you can come see her for a chat."

Sophia took a look at the card and saw an extremely eye-catching word printed clearly on it—Ronney.

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The lady's identity was revealed on the card—Anna Yard, president of the Ronney Group.

This can't be right. Did I really bump into such a significant person while having a meal? No, she must be a swindler.

How was it possible that the lady Sophia had met on a casual day out was also a member of the Yard Family? Not to mention, the president of the Ronney Group?

Before Michael went to the Yard Residence, he repeatedly reminded her not to let her guard down and not to trust strangers so easily, especially the Cethosians.

Many Cethosians who had traveled a long distance away from home could not help but feel a sense of familiarity with other Cethosians they met here and would willingly believe everything they said.

But in actuality, those swindlers were only taking advantage of this sense of familiarity to swindle Cethosians.

Some of the Cethosians in this place were atrocious. They had originally followed the Yard Family over centuries ago and were now foreigners in disguise as Cethosians. Nonetheless, they were still against mainland Cethosians.

It was possible that the numerous Cethosian children at the black market were taken from their parents by those people.

While Sophia carefully fed the child in her arms, she was also thinking of a way to bring these children back to their parents.

Michael did not want to get the police involved as the police force here was also heavily corrupt and might also be part of this dark industry. If they made a report, it could ruin the business and lead those people to seek revenge for destroying their wealth.

Michael and Sophia were foreigners here. They had no power in someone else's territory, so they were better off laying low.

Moreover, it might not be helpful to report these children here since their parents were probably no longer in the country. The local underworld was quite reasonable. They did not attract the attention of tourists and consumers. Hence, these children were probably sent in from somewhere else.

Essentially, finding their parents was like finding a needle in a haystack.

They could only take the children back to Cethos for now and worry about other things later.

Michael and Quinton returned at night.

“How did it go? Did you find the child?”

Sophia rushed out excitedly to ask them. Unfortunately, both of them came back empty-handed; not even a strand of a child’s hair was seen.

As expected, they did not manage to bring the child back.

How could it be that easy to convince the Yard Family to surrender one of their people? Even though Quinton had killed someone for them before, it was not much use.

Quinton’s mentor, the former Phantom Wolf, was once a security guard for the Yard Family.

No, he was not just a security guard. The Yard Family came from an imperial background. The former Phantom Wolf was probably an armed guard in the palace or the chief of the palace guards.

After that, for various reasons, he left the Yard Family and became a first-generation Phantom Wolf disciple; he became an assassin.

To the Yard Family, however, that friendship was completely worthless. To them, Quinton and his mentor were no more than dogs.

Michael was also a bit worn out. After coming in and taking off his coat, he asked, “Where are the children?”

Simultaneously, he went to open the bedroom door and found eight new small beds laid out with eight small children lying on each one.

Bubbles and Snowball were also sleeping inside the room. There was also a Ragdoll in the cat cage. The cat was a model Sophia had brought with her when she planned to work with the Ronney Group to launch a series of pet luxury goods. Since she was not looking to work with them anymore, the cat was used to keep watch on the children.

Looking at each of the children sleeping soundly, Michael felt satisfied and fulfilled.

Since they had already bought those children, they might as well find them a good home.

Later, Quinton stayed and the three of them had a drink and a midnight snack on the balcony. They also thought over ways to bring the child back.

Sophia was grilling some meat on the barbecue in the enclosed balcony where there was an air circulation system.

Quinton took a sip of beer and said, "I want to find a way to meet the head of the Yard Family, Anna Yard. My mentor saved her life before; perhaps she will help us out."

Anna Yard?

Sophia recalled the name card she received today.

Was she the president of the Ronney Group or the head of the Yard Family?

Michael ate a piece of meat on a skewer. The meat skewers in Ronney lacked slightly in flavor compared to those in Bayside City. They are probably still adhering to the taste of the Yard Dynasty. It tastes awful. He inquired, "What connection does your mentor and Anna share?"

Quinton was getting a bit tipsy. After he put down the beer bottle, he looked at Sophia who was staring at him with her big round eyes and waiting to hear the story. "I think the Fletcher Family is still to blame for this."

Michael raised an eyebrow. "Oh?"

Quinton chuckled. "That year, our ancestors led troops to attack the Yard Family's mail boat. They killed the foreigners and the Imperial Yard Family!"

He was probably a bit drunk to talk about their ancestor's feat all those years ago, but it showed that he still had some pride for being a Fletcher.

"That night, the Imperial Yard Family's ministers and generals held a court on the mail boat to settle state affairs. Their emperor, empress, princess, and crown prince were all present. They were planning on setting off to Bayside City under the protection of the foreigners and

enter the imperial palace there to make their comeback. But, the Fletcher Family rushed in unexpectedly and killed all of them.”

“That battle was truly horrendous. The Fletchers wiped out the Yard Family’s direct line of descent, only letting a group of women and children go. In the end, they only had one son in their family for generations. Now, Anna Yard is the only one left. But, the branch families were growing steadily, so of course, those extended families plotted something.”

“The Yard Family had internal strife. Anna was being hunted and my mentor was the one who saved her. She has secured her place in the Yard Family and even has two capable sons. But, without my mentor, she would have been dead by now.”

Sophia and Michael finished hearing the whole story and could not help but feel astonished. They did not know that she had such a history.

If Quinton could meet Anna, there was bound to be a solution. The problem was that he could not meet her.

They could not even meet her sons, much less Anna, who was constantly attending to important matters every day.

“I can meet her!” Sophia was eating meat skewers at the side and listening to them when she interrupted, “The reason I came here was to meet the Ronney’s twin representatives and get a chance to work with them. The appointment is tomorrow. I can go and talk to them!”

The two representatives of the Yard Family were twins and they turned out to be Anna’s sons!

Quinton and Michael thought that it was a good idea. Since they could not have a private meeting, Sophia could go and meet them under the pretense of discussing a business deal.

The three of them talked late into the night before Quinton finally went back to rest. He had a good conversation with Michael and even had a lot to drink. He was not walking straight anymore by the time he left.

That was the first time the two brothers drank together.

They were actually very much alike since they shared the same genes.

The next day, Sophia set off to the Ronney Group. Michael and Quinton also followed along inside the car. As they drove in the city center, Sophia admired the busy streets outside. "The Ronney Group has made this place into the capital. Look over here and over there—these are all ancient imperial city plans."

"If this were ancient times, who would dare plan a city like this? Their whole clan would be implicated!"

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The Ronney Group headquarters was on the northern side of Ronney City. Once they got there, Sophia did not see modern skyscrapers, but a stretch of bright yellow palatial buildings.

'Stretching over 150 kilometers, it covered the sun in the sky. From the north of Mount Abbey, it meandered west, reaching all the way to Islesbury. The two rivers flowing gently penetrated the palace walls. At every five steps there stood a storeyed building, and at each ten, there stood a pavilion with corridors winding like waving silk and projecting eaves turning up like birds' bills. Each of the structures possessed its vantage above the ground, but they were all brilliantly interlocked together, or set against one another.' This ancient passage popped up in Sophia's mind.

A moat, vermilion red palace walls, and an endless stretch of palatial buildings. This is basically a palace! It was even bigger than the Imperial Palace Museum that used to be next to their house. No, it was way bigger. But, this was not an imperial palace because it did not get destroyed during the war. In fact, it had incorporated the essence of ancient traditional buildings and modern technology. This structure was huge!

It looked like the Yard Family was still scheming. Were they getting ready to stage their comeback?

If it were not for the cars coming in and out of the palace entrance and those busy workers of Ronney Group, Sophia would have thought that she had traveled through time.

Outside the palace walls, there were several subway stations and several tourists taking photos.

Centuries ago, the Yard Family declared that they were the legitimate Cethosians. They even brought Cethos into the United Nations. After that, however, Cethos became more developed and slowly grew in power. Eventually, they forced the Yard Family out of the United Nations.

Dressed up as a bodyguard, Michael had a pair of sunglasses on and a dog in his arms. When he saw the imperial palace that stretched on endlessly, he scoffed, "The Yard Family... They were abandoned by Cethos like a rat on the street then they rushed to pack up all their valuables and jewelry to escape to this place. How dare they call themselves legitimate?"

Even though he had passed the age of an angry youth, Michael, as a fellow soldier, could not stop himself from disparaging the Yard Family.

"They are the biggest Cethosian conglomerate in the world. Their influence on the international front is big, but they have never thought about using it to help the social position of Cethosians abroad. In fact, they colluded with foreigners to suppress Cethosians. In what way are they considered legitimate?"

Four centuries ago, the Yard Family was a debauched monarch while the Fletcher Family was a loyal servant. When the Fletchers saw how reckless the Yards were getting, they overturned the imperial court and became rebels, chasing the Yard Family out of Cethos.

A century ago, the Yard Family became traitors who colluded with foreign entities. At the time, the Fletchers were warlords. While the Yard Family was attempting to stage their comeback, they were completely wiped out by the Fletcher Family.

In the present day, Cethos and the Yard Family were working together again. The Fletchers and the Yards could not kill each other at first sight like they used to anymore, but they were undoubtedly unhappy about that.

They drove over the moat and through the opened palace entrance. Sophia was even more amazed to see the more distinct palace buildings inside.

"Wow! It's even bigger than the house we had in Africa. Look at this city gate—the Michel Military Enterprise built it! Look at how they've made it!"

“Look over there; they even have eunuchs. Wow! Palace maids in ancient clothing. They’re still adhering to the style of the Yard Dynasty!” Sophia exclaimed while taking pictures on her phone.

In fact, Michael had been there before. He was not like Sophia who was taking in everything for the first time, but he also could not help himself from looking around.

It was funny. To prove that they were the imperial family and preserve their sense of superiority, they still maintained the ancient dynasty’s ritualism and solemnity.

The previous dynasty fell a century ago, and the imperial court was now a museum. Paying fifty for a ticket would allow people to walk for a whole day inside. With another fifty, they could even put on the imperial robe and take pictures on the throne. Not to mention, students paid half to enter! What were the Yards trying to do?

A fallen imperial family; it was funny and sad at the same time.

Michael felt his rebel intentions stir up. If he could destroy the Imperial Yard Family one day just like his ancestors did, he would rent this place out as a filming site or sell tickets for people to visit the place. And, he would ask for a ticket price of 150 at least.

On the other hand, Sophia was so excited that it looked like it was the first time she had entered a city. Who knew Ronney City had such scenery?

Once they got out of the car, she was still taking pictures on her phone. Michael and Quinton were both dressed up as bodyguards and had their hands full with dogs and cats as they followed along quietly.

Judging by how much fun she was having, she probably had forgotten that they were there to look for the child.

The meeting location was at the Ronney Group’s lobby which was also where the Imperial Yard Family once dealt with state affairs—the Exalos Hall.

Sophia had rushed to learn more about the Imperial Yard Family recently. The Yard Family had a distinct feature that set them apart from the other dynasties. Normally, if an imperial family had twins, it was seen as inauspicious, and one of the two was gotten rid of in secret. The Yard Family, however, was different. Because their founding emperor was a set of twins, they viewed twins as the chosen ones.

Therefore, twins gained the right to inherit the throne. The Yard Family had passed on the throne for generations, and they always had twins succeeding it. They excelled in literary and martial arts. They supervised and helped one another. During the last emperor's reign, the twins also killed each other and led to the downfall of the Yard Family.

Now, the Ronney Group's representatives were also a set of twins, and Sophia was scheduled to meet with one of them.

She was excited. If this were in ancient times, I would be meeting with the emperor!

Once Sophia entered the place called the Exalos Hall, she saw two golden dragon chairs placed inside. She then went to sit where the ministers sat. This doesn't feel too bad.

While waiting for the Ronney Group's representative to come, she wondered, Do they still have to hold a court regularly? When the emperor—no, the representative comes, do I have to kneel down?

The palace was actually quite modern. They even had high-speed Wi-Fi. When they walked in, they noticed the Ronney Group's workers all dressed in modern clothing. They got to work and got off work conscientiously. It was convenient that they could go straight to the subway station after getting out of the company. This palace was just an office that was built a bit bigger. The main hall was used as a place for them to work, while the Rear Palace was used as the Yard Family's private living quarters.

The Michel Family's old nest in Africa was a bit bigger than this, but it was almost on the same scale.

Once Sophia sat down, her eyes darted all over the place. Meanwhile, Michael and Quinton were hiding among the other bodyguards. When the assistant secretary instructed them to stand behind Sophia, over a dozen people went over.

Finally, the representative arrived.

Surrounded by a crowd of assistants and bodyguards, a man dressed in a black suit strode over. He still had an Eastern appearance. Though, if he did not, he would not have been able to inherit the Yard Family.

After living in a foreign environment for an extended period, however, it would undoubtedly influence a person's demeanor. This man might have an Eastern face, but he carried the mysterious and foreign mannerisms of a Western man.

He was truly of imperial descent. Even though his family was no longer in power, he still had an unparalleled honorable presence and charisma.

Sophia and the man exchanged greetings. "Mr. Ronney, I've been looking forward to meeting you!"

The person who came to meet Sophia today was Callum Yard, the vice president in charge of the luxury goods business at the Ronney Group.

Besides luxury goods, the Ronney Group also had other businesses in military arms, mineral deposits, and so on that were being taken care of by the other twin.

"Oh, come on. Your reputation precedes you." He spoke so fluently, that Sophia even thought that he was going to speak in old Cethosian.

Once they sat down and exchanged greetings, they started to talk a bit about their collaboration.

Pet luxury goods was a newly emerging industry, but the Ronney Group had yet to enter the market. They probably looked down on the profit margins for that small niche, but pet luxury goods had been steadily growing over the years and they could not afford to ignore this industry any longer.

Sophia talked about her business seriously. She wanted to bring up the child once she was done, but, ten minutes later, someone came in from outside and said, "Mrs. Yard has invited Miss Edwards to the Royal Garden for some tea."

Royal... Garden? Her eyes exuded reluctance and shock.

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Royal Garden... Who do they think they are? They really think they live in the imperial palace now just because they have a big company! Such peculiar people!

When Callum was informed, he put down the collaboration plan in his hand and said, "Since it's my mother's invitation, please come to the Royal Garden, Miss Edwards."

She had no choice but to agree now that they had invited her. When she stood up to leave, she looked back at Michael and saw him motion for her to stay calm.

Following them out of the Exalos Hall, she went to meet Mrs. Anna Yard. No, she should be the empress dowager, or the empress herself. Callum and his brother are only princes now.

Why did Anna want to meet me?

She doesn't even know me.

Unless the Cethosian lady at the restaurant yesterday was really Anna Yard?

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Once they were out of the Exalos Hall, a limousine arrived before them. Callum let her in the car first then went in after her.

Michael, Quinton, and the interpreter went in a different car. Several cars began moving toward the Yard Family's living quarters—the legendary Rear Palace.

The Ronney Group was enormous. They did not have skyscrapers like the Michel Group did—where there were elevators to take them to the dining hall. All the buildings here were no more than ten storeys high, and the functional departments were probably all separated.

They passed by several palace doors and drove for ten minutes from the office to the Yards' living quarters before arriving at the Royal Garden; it was the Yard Family's private garden that mimicked the ancient imperial family's landscape design. Sophia also had a garden like that, but it was not as big.

Michael and Quinton were kept out of the garden while Sophia went in with Callum and an assistant. In the gazebo in the middle of the pond, several girls who looked like servants were waiting on a noble lady drinking tea.

The servants' clothes still had the allure of the previous dynasty, but they had been modified to adapt to modern life. Unless there was an important imperial festival, the Yard Family still kept to modern-day clothes and lifestyles.

When Sophia entered the gazebo, she recognized the Cethosian lady she saw at the restaurant the day before.

It really was Anna Yard!

Anna was drinking tea with a young man. The young man looked so much like Callum that they were almost indiscernible.

That must have been the other vice president of the Yard Group, Cade Yard.

"You're here. Please have a seat."

Anna looked up at Sophia and motioned for her to sit in the seat across.

Sophia greeted them and proceeded to sit down.

The four people sat at the square tea table.

Sophia was feeling very nervous. After taking a sip of tea to clear her mind, she looked briefly at Michael who was being kept outside of the garden before bringing her attention back.

Anna spoke in such a gentle tone that it was not apparent that she was the head of the Yard Family. But, Sophia knew that this woman was not as harmless as she seemed on the surface.

"The Crimson House in Cethos sells western food, but the one in Ronney City sells authentic Cethosian cuisine. It fits my taste. I go there at least once a week."

Sophia added, "The best Cethosian dish at the Crimson House is probably the steamed garlic prawns. It's been their bestseller for over thirty years. I highly recommend that dish."

"Yes, I once sought the recipe of that dish, but the cooks in the palace just couldn't replicate the same taste." Anna also seemed enthralled by that dish. The two of them quickly found a common talking point.

Sophia and Anna began to discuss the delicacies of the Crimson House. Anna was also eager to continue the conversation now that they had found a shared interest. They seemed to be having an amiable conversation, but as for how they truly felt, only they knew the answer to that.

Anna had high emotional intelligence. She knew what Sophia wanted to say beforehand and quickly found common topics to talk about.

Once they finished talking about one thing, they started talking about something else.

After taking a sip of the aromatic tea, Anna put down the cup and looked intently at Sophia. "Does Mr. Taylor Murray have any upcoming movies?"

As expected, Sophia and Michael's relationship could not stay hidden. After all, he was a global celebrity.

Sophia answered, "He's been working on a science fiction movie recently. It's not complete yet."

Anna laughed. "Not complete yet? Then, shouldn't he be busy filming now? Why do I see him and his brother holding a dog on a leash and waiting for you outside the garden?"

Crap!

She noticed!

Both Michael and Quinton were in disguise, but it was no use. Perhaps they had already seen through their act from the start.

This was Ronney City, the Yard Family's territory.

But, Sophia did not expect Anna to know that Quinton was also one of the Fletchers. Thinking about it, the second-generation Phantom Wolf saved her life once, so perhaps they already had a strong friendship—finding out Quinton's information was probably not a difficult task.

Sophia did not act flustered from being exposed. Instead, she smiled calmly and said, "He's a public figure. Every move he makes must be kept secret. If he acts hastily, it will attract the attention of fans. Things will get complicated if a mass incident were to happen."

Anna seemed to believe her. "You're right."

Just like that, the subject was dropped.

Even though the Ronneys would not do anything to Michael, it was not going to be that easy to ask for the child back.

Sophia was thinking of a way to bring up the child when Anna asked, "To my knowledge, the child you're looking for is a killer's child. How is she related to you guys?"

While she spoke, she filled Sophia's teacup with more water.

Sophia's mind was racing again as she tried to think of an answer.

Should I hide it? Should I come clean?

Having a conversation with the Yards was mentally draining.

After pondering for a while, Sophia decided to answer honestly.

"That child is a descendant of the Fletcher Family."

It was evident that they had not discovered this. When they found out that the child was the descendant of the Fletcher rebels, Anna and her two sons showed looks of detest and unease.

The Fletchers were a clan of rebels who killed countless members of the Yard Family. How could they bear to have one of the Fletchers' descendants in their security team?

Nonetheless, they would not harm the child. The Fletchers and the Yards did not impose on one another now. If they were to harm the child, then they would be declaring war.

This step might have been risky, but it also provided more chances.

After a brief moment of shock, Anna returned to her easygoing nature and picked up her teacup.

"I see. It's no wonder you guys came all the way here to look for her."

But, Anna was unwilling to give the child up so easily. "I heard that the child has good genes and will do great things in the future. We chose her very meticulously. She did not come at a cheap price. You can take her back if you want, but you have to give something in return."

"What would that be?" Sophia looked calm, but she was already panicking on the inside.

Anna took another sip of the aromatic tea, then put the teacup down with poise. "You can have her in exchange for the eight children you just bought. How does that sound?"

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In exchange for those children? Sophia started to frown. Isn't that rather unreasonable?

The Yard Family bought that child because of her good genes, but it was clear that Sophia did not buy those eight children for the same reason.

The price of the eight of them did not amount to that one child; the Yard Family was suffering a loss.

Sophia's eyes shifted, then she let out a smile. "Mrs. Yard, you should know how much that child is worth. She will prove to be very useful in the future if you keep her. However, even if you doubled the total worth of the eight children that I bought, it is still lower than hers. Why don't we settle this in a more direct manner? I'll give any amount you want for the child."

At the mention of money, the Yards started to laugh.

Money was no more than a number to them.

They had long passed the stage of looking at price tags.

Anna pinched the teacup in her hand and admired its exquisite jade pattern. Her long eyelashes were elegant beyond comparison. Callum and Cade looked around the same age as Sophia, but Anna still looked very young. She should be the same age as Cooper!

“Miss Edwards, I think you’ve misunderstood. I don’t want money. I just need you to make a choice. What if I insist that you give me those eight children in return for the one?”

Her gaze fell on Sophia’s face. Those bright eyes looked like they were piercing through Sophia’s body and looking into her soul, making her feel tormented.

Sophia lowered her head and did not make a choice right away.

She bought those eight children and promised to find them a home. The Yard Family might look lavish and magnificent, but they were the biggest financial backer of the human trafficking ring in Ronney! If I put those eight children in their hands, who knows what will happen to them?

But, I must get Katrina and Blade’s child back!

Sophia was stuck between those two options. Seeing her hesitation seemed to please Anna. With a smile, she mocked, “Isn’t it hard to choose? One is your guilty conscience and the other is the Fletchers’ child. Do you want to stand for your conscience and justice or do you want the child of the Fletchers? I think you already know the answer.”

“In your heart, the Fletchers’ child is more important, isn’t that right? If you leave those eight children behind, I will put them back in the human trafficking market immediately where they can find new buyers. Meanwhile, the Fletchers’ child will be able to go back to the Fletcher Family with you. Those eight children have nothing to do with you. Naturally, blood is thicker than water. As for your supposed conscience, how much is it really worth?”

Anna seemed very proud of herself as though she had managed to destroy Sophia’s hypocritical altruism with just a flick of her finger. It proved that she was no different from those people who trafficked children.

Was there anyone out there who wasn’t selfish? Those who fought for justice were hypocritical for the most part. They were born as predators, yet they insisted on wearing a mask of good-naturedness. If they were to encounter a favorable situation for themselves, they could just as easily suppress any kindness and conscience they had in the back of their minds.

Anna had personally come across many 'kind' people like Sophia.

Suddenly, Sophia looked up and stared back at Anna with a sharp and unwavering gaze.

Neither one wanted to give way.

A smirk appeared on Sophia's face and a ferocity grew in her amicable eyes.

"I did save those eight children out of the kindness of my heart. As a mother, I couldn't watch a girl around the same age as my own child get sold off to the pornography industry and become a sex slave from such a young age."

She made herself clear. "I'm not a philanthropist. But, since I have bought those eight children, I will give them a perfect home. I will also bring home the child that belongs to our Fletcher Family! If you want to prove my true nature with this one choice, then you're sorely mistaken, Mrs. Yard. I won't choose."

The surface of the tea in the teacup that she was holding trembled lightly. With scorn in her eyes, she said, "Mrs. Yard, don't you think that your question isn't any different from the idiotic questions that an ignorant hag teases children with in the marketplaces in Cethos?"

Anna's brows raised up, but she did not respond right away and continued to listen.

Sophia continued, "There are people who ask my child this question too—if either one of your parents must die, and you can only save one, who would you save? I didn't think a gracious entity like yourself would be the same as those ill-informed housewives to be able to ask such a distasteful and ignorant 'either/or question'. Looks like I've really overestimated you."

As soon as she said that, the twins slammed the table and stood up at the same time. "Miss Edwards, please watch your words."

They had the exact same movements, expressions, and words. Indeed, they were twins.

On the other hand, Anna was not angry. She asked the twins to sit back down and posed a question for Sophia. "How would your child answer?"

Sophia scoffed. "I will tell my child that it isn't her fault whoever she chooses. No matter who she picks, the other will die, but it isn't her fault. The culprit is the person who forced

her to make that choice and killed her parents. When she grows up and becomes capable, she must kill that person in return!"

Sophia's outburst left Anna dumbfounded.

That was the first time she had heard such a pointed answer. Sophia might have looked young, but she had an exceptional sense of moral integrity. It did not match her delicate and weak outer appearance.

Sophia stood up and gave a biting remark. "Mrs. Yard, I don't have time to be answering these silly and crude either/or questions, but there is something I must say before I go." Her hand was pressed against the table. "If something happens to the Fletchers' child under the Yards' jurisdiction, they will come for you. They won't come for me, their daughter-in-law who didn't exchange those eight children for one. I hope you get the picture now."

Anna slowly looked up at Sophia with the same smirk on her face. "You should know that because of your rash behavior, I might send that child back to the black market. Her future will be much worse than being a guard for the Yard Family. Aren't you afraid of being condemned for it?"

"Condemned? Huh! If it doesn't hurt the conscience of the great Mrs. Yard that brutally pushed her into that hell pit, then why should I be afraid?" Sophia had gathered all her things and bid a merciless farewell. "The Yard Family should be aware of the Fletcher Family's power in Cethos. It has only been a few years since Ronney's brand entered the country. The market has just opened up with high prospects. If you don't want sales to rely solely on surrogate buyers in the future, then you better not make an issue with the child."

With that, she stormed off.

The Yard Family did not want to let the child go so easily. It was no use to try to be nice; they should have been brutal from the start.

Once Sophia was far off into the distance, Anna stood up and casually watched them leave from the gazebo.

Looking at Sophia dressed in exquisite business attire from behind, she suddenly let out a smile that reached all the way to her eyes. It was a smile that came from a genuine sense of admiration.

“Mom—” Callum suddenly called. He could see that Anna was very fond of Sophia.

Sophia and the others were long gone, but Anna remained standing there without moving as she looked at the scenery. The wind blew through her white chiffon blouse, making it flutter in the air. As she admired the beauty of the garden before her, she turned back to Callum and Cade and said, “When you two were younger, you were once kidnapped by the extended members of the Yard Family. I went to ask them to return you, but they humiliated me. They forced me to choose between the both of you and said the other would be dropped right in front of me.