

My Dreamy Old Husband Chapter 1201

Throughout the years, Sandra had always taken great care of her public image. She tried her best to publicize her acts of charity, but now, she was criticized for exaggerating her charitable acts. She was caught faking a number of donations, and there were several charities and events where she simply showed up so that the press and media could snap images to prove her presence—she even took back the funds she had donated after the event. Sandra was one who enjoyed chasing after trends; her actions were dependent on all of the hottest topics and trends. She was eager to portray herself as a thoughtful intellectual and a generous, loving public figure. However, her plan ended up backfiring on her.

The videos of her cursing Linus and shouting for women to stay home and care for their kids had successfully angered all of the citizens in the country; both her past and new scandals surfaced on the Internet all within a day. This time, her entire image was truly collapsing. Sandra was extremely displeased by this, and she quickly performed a series of acts in order to mend the issue—she got her connections to remove the online posts and posted a quick apology video on the Internet, sobbing pitifully in the video as she gave a speech apologizing for her mistakes. She then paid a number of Internet ghostwriters to clear her name. They started rumors about how there were unknown reasons for the controversial things that Sandra had said, but they never specified the details of it. They made it seem as though Sandra had no other choice but to give the speech, and they created the illusion of her being unable to clear her own name after being wrongfully accused by the public. They even left a few stories hanging so that other netizens could form their own guesses, and they later announced that Sandra was about to reappear in the field of sports and participate in a swimming competition. Sooner or later, Sandra was definitely going to get blacklisted and canceled by the public. Sophia was well-prepared for this to happen, and she was just waiting for the right opportunity to expose all of Sandra's acts and destroy her once and for all. However, another incident surfaced before this scandal came to an end.

Winter had arrived, and it was that time of the year when all northeastern Cethosians began to dress in mink and fur coats. The annual debate between luxurious fashion brands and environmental protection associations began once again. In recent years, Cethosians who were slightly well off were quick to hop on the trend of dressing up in mink and fur coats. While there were more people dressing up in it, there were also more people going against it. As usual, there were activities being organized to encourage Cethosians to go fur-free.

These campaigns kicked off slightly later this winter, but they were also a lot more aggressive.

Once again, Sandra was quick to be a part of the craze. She supported the act of saying no to fur products, and she led the group by being the first one to ruin all of the mink and fur products she owned. She promised that she would never dress in any such products in the future, eager to use these acts to restore her righteous image in the eyes of the public.

There were a number of supporters for the anti-mink and fur activities that year; even the Ronney Group and several other fashion brands in Bayside City responded to it. Globally, an increased number of luxurious brands began to announce their usage of artificial fur. They swore to stop using materials made from actual animals, and many celebrities began to take part and show support in these acts against mink and fur.

The anti-fur movements were crazier than ever that year; it came to a point where an individual's entire family would be viewed as criminals if they were found guilty of dressing in fur clothing. Famous celebrities and public figures who didn't step forward to show their support even had their names thrown into a long list made by some passionate individuals. They were then called out and criticized as the list went viral on the Internet. Some of the public figures were forced to step down, but a few well-respected and god-tier individuals like Taylor and Harry remained unharmed. One outdated male celebrity's wife was caught and brutally criticized by environmental activists after she purchased factories that manufactured luxury mink and fur products; she was even criticized for being the wife of an unknown male actor. There were banners and posters stuck all over the outsides of her new factory, eventually forcing her to apologize and shut down. They even asked her to donate all the products that the factory had manufactured.

"That's f*cking insane." Sophia had picked the paper up on her way home, and she saw her husband's name being listed on the news as one of the celebrities who deserved to be criticized. They even included a picture of Sophia showing herself off in a luxurious leather and fur coat without blurring her face out. Meanwhile, Cooper felt a little confused to see the whole trend in the newspaper. Aren't these people eating meat sliced off of animals while they restrict others from wearing animal skin? Humans are weird.

However, Linus didn't find this odd at all as there were a bunch of protesters who lingered outside the Michel Group's office all year round. They protested against the Michel Group's meticulous and advanced developments of artificial intelligence as they were afraid that the Michel Group's robots would someday surpass the abilities of mankind. In other words, they were afraid that humans were going to turn into the slaves of robots.

The fur factory farm that Sophia had purchased was located in the northeastern region. The factory itself bred its own minks and sables; it was an old factory that provided fur for a large number of luxurious brands. It was a legal organization doing legal work, and there were no acts of abuse, skinning the animals alive or anything of that sort. Sophia had no idea what the people were protesting against; regular farms killed chickens and pigs as well, and some evil humans even used fertilized chicken eggs as food, facial products and other things. Wasn't that just as terrible? In general, humans were the ones who deserved to be boycotted, and Sophia couldn't care less about the protests that were going on. The minute she got home, she threw her bag aside and ran to the kitchen. She wrapped her arms around Michael, who was busy cooking. "Hubby!" She used her nasal voice to ask for affection as she wrapped her arms around his waist and pressed her body against his, taking two steps whenever he moved.

Ever since Michael went on 'Where Are We Going, Dad?', he learned a few skills so that Carmen wouldn't get hungry on the show. Recently, he had been tinkering around in the kitchen to cook up a few mouth-watering meals.

"I'm running out of handbags, hubby. Buy me a new one..." Sophia urged.

Michael was busy cooking when he felt a sweet burden clinging onto him from behind. However, he couldn't help but frown when he heard what she said. "It's enough. You already have so many bags." Her wardrobe was stacked with bags, and all of them were branded items. The Ronney Group had given her a huge number of bags during their previous collaboration, and the bags Sophia purchased herself were worth enough to feed her an entire year of meals.

However, Sophia continued to cling onto her husband as she acted cute in front of him. "Buy me a bag, hubby..." Receiving a bag from my husband has a different feeling to it; buying bags for myself is nothing in comparison to that amazing feeling of receiving a gift! Once Carmen saw this going on, the young girl quickly ran over to cling onto Michael's leg. "Buy me a bag too, Daddy!"

Despite their demands, Michael felt a surge of warmth within him as his wife and daughter held onto him. "Alright, I'll go shopping tomorrow." Michael finally gave in in the end. However, Sophia wasn't done yet. "I also want clothes, shoes and a skirt!" She continued to cling onto him. "I want a new dog, Daddy! I want a corgi!" Carmen seized the opportunity to ask for more stuff as well.

"You'll have to pick up your own dog poop, then!" Michael surprised her with his stern voice. Carmen was dumbstruck, and she fell silent for a second before she quickly ran away.

Sophia continued to pester Michael in the kitchen, and Cooper could hear her sweet voice all the way from the living room where he was reading his paper. He felt loneliness creeping into him. My little sweetheart has been snatched away from me. She's gone now... If my daughter is a warm, padded jacket, my son is a reliable pair of small leather boots. I can't lose either one of them; I'd feel insecure without my boots and cold without my jacket. I want both of them!

"Why are you so greedy?" Michael asked Sophia in the kitchen.

After dinner, Michael watched as Carmen pestered Cooper to bring her out. Cooper took a glance outside and rejected her after he saw how cold and dark it was. Michael knew where Carmen wanted to go; she had repeatedly expressed her desire for a corgi, but she had been afraid to deal with corgi poop. Hence, she enjoyed going to other houses to play with their corgis. There was another large family near them that had loads of animals; they had 17 dogs, and 12 of these were corgis. They also had more than 10 cats, and it was clear to see that they were a rich family. They were the Yards, and the house belonged to Anna. The assumption that interests and hobbies were inherited had to be true, for both these large families inherited traits of being animal lovers.

My Dreamy Old Husband Chapter 1202

Carmen walked over to Anna's house almost every day. The young girl often spent her time hanging out there—it was probably because she had the intention of adopting a corgi once she got closer to the family. That day, she dragged Cooper along with her. "Come on, Grandpa. We can invite Miss Beautiful over to my kindergarten's year-end performance."

Cooper frowned at this before he turned around and forcefully edged himself away from the exit. He didn't want to have any interactions with Anna; he didn't want Carmen talking to Anna either, but Carmen insisted on visiting her house almost every day. Seeing that Cooper refused to go along with her, Carmen stuck her lips out into a pout. "I'm going to start rolling on the ground and throw a tantrum, Grandpa. Are you scared yet?"

Ah, she's going to throw a tantrum. How scary. Cooper unwillingly followed behind Carmen as the young girl dragged him over to Anna's house. She was familiar with the route heading toward their place, and she knocked on the door upon her arrival. Both Callum and Cade

were home, and they fought to open the door once they realized that Cooper was paying them a visit. In the end, Callum was the one who greeted Cooper with a wide grin on his face. "Do come in, Mr. Mitchell."

Cooper didn't want to go in, but Carmen dragged him inside nonetheless. She walked around as if it were her own house, and she quickly went over to the shoe cabinet before pulling out a pair of pink indoor slippers for herself. Then, she got one for Cooper as well.

"Miss Beautiful!" Carmen excitedly ran around in search of Anna. She ran around the place as if she had lived there all her life, and she even brought a corgi into her arms before showing it to Cooper. "Look, Grandpa. Its name is Buns! Look at how adorable its butt is." Carmen turned the dog around and faced its butt toward Cooper, extending an invitation for Cooper to admire the corgi's butt with her. Cooper furrowed his brows as he wasn't interested in looking at a corgi's butt. He didn't want to sit around either, but Cade had already walked over with a cup of tea for him. "Don't worry, Mr. Mitchell. Anne isn't here today."

Indeed, Anne wasn't around that day as she had learned her lesson after getting beaten the last time; she no longer dared to pester Anna any longer. Soon enough, Anna came down from the second floor in a pearl-white long gown that suited her elegant aura. She was dressed in a casual and simple outfit, but it made her look classy and chic at the same time.

"Carry me, Miss Beautiful." Carmen reached her arms out, and Anna lovingly lifted her up before she walked toward Cooper and sat down beside him on the couch.

"Mr. Mitchell." Anna felt an inexplicable sense of joy within her when she saw that Cooper had come to visit.

"I'm sorry for disturbing you, Mrs. Yard," replied Cooper as he nodded without forgetting his manners. After sitting around for a while, Anna made the first move to initiate random topics of conversation with Cooper. Meanwhile, Carmen's babysitter pulled a small, delicate little basket out. There was a pink cloth draped over the basket, and there were bacon slices wrapped in paper underneath the pink cloth. Oddly enough, there was a ribbon tied around the basket of bacon strips, and there were two odd roses placed in the basket—the roses were even pleasantly scented. What is this odd combination of bacon and roses all about? Cooper wondered.

Carmen slowly placed the cloth over the basket and covered it after she took a peek. She then turned to Cooper before blinking at him with her large, watery eyes. Cooper was a little slow, and he widened his eyes to indicate that he didn't understand what the young girl

meant by that. Carmen responded by looking beside him before winking twice. Cooper got it then—Carmen wanted him to present the bacon as a gift for Anna. He was shocked. How can this young brat steal all the bacon from our house just to give it to someone else?!

However, Anna already saw the pink cane basket in the room, and she eyed it curiously. “Did you bring something delicious over for me again, Carmen?” Carmen dropped by to play with the dogs every once in a while, and she always brought some snacks as a token of appreciation for allowing her to play with the dogs. Since Cooper didn’t make a move, Carmen personally placed the basket on the coffee table. “This is freshly made bacon from our house. My Grandpa came here just to give this to you, Miss Beautiful,” Carmen said in a sweet voice.

Cooper felt the muscles in his face twitching as color filled his cheeks. Now that the bacon is already in Anna’s hands, I can’t take it back anymore, can I? Furthermore, she seems pretty glad to see the gift. Despite living a life of luxury, she had never tried it before. “Bacon?” she asked curiously. However, she was even more surprised to see the two roses in the basket when she uncovered the gift. She froze for a moment as she felt her heart fluttering in her chest. “Thank you,” she said gently as she picked the roses up.

Cooper looked extremely embarrassed right then. He abruptly got onto his feet. “Sorry for disturbing,” he muttered as he picked Carmen up and walked out of the house hastily. Carmen acted quickly and picked up one of Anna’s corgis, refusing to let go of it even as her grandfather picked her up.

“Mr. Mitchell, you should leave after having some food!” Callum quickly ran toward the door, but Cooper had already disappeared onto the streets at that point. There seemed to be a huge, dramatic story hidden behind the man’s hasty footsteps.

Coincidentally, the Yards hadn’t had their meal yet, so they washed the bacon and prepared a simple dish of fried bacon. Although the Yards were extremely rich, they had always enjoyed eating simple meals. It was an odd sight for them to see a dish of bacon placed on the middle of the table. None of them had ever tried eating bacon, but Anna felt an oddly familiar sensation as she glanced at the slices of red, salted meat. The bacon melted in her mouth and gave off an extremely special taste. The taste of it felt familiar; it felt like it had awakened something deep within her. She felt like she had tasted it somewhere, but she simply couldn’t remember where. Could I have tasted this in my past life? This texture and taste... Even the saltiness of this bacon feels familiar.

“Mom!” Cade called for his mother and snapped her out of her daydream as he realized that she was acting in a rather odd manner. Anna only realized that her cheeks were soaking wet

with tears when she came back to her senses. "Sorry. I forgot my manners." She quickly dried her tears. While she usually didn't have much of an appetite, she surprisingly wolfed down two bowls of rice before she quietly went up to her room after that.

Callum and Cade exchanged glances with one another after watching her leave the table. Just by looking into each other's eyes, they both knew what the other was thinking. Their mother was acting really weird as of late; she had been daydreaming a lot, and she even had nightmares from time to time. What's going on? She always acts a little strange after seeing that guy, Cooper.

Meanwhile, Cooper was acting odd as well after he arrived home. Sophia gave him a warm greeting when he first entered. "Come over and watch some TV with me, Daddy. This channel is showing 'The Winter Breakthrough' again." Everyone was huddled in front of the TV just then, but Cooper remained silent as he placed Carmen down. He then walked up to his room and stayed inside for a long time. Sophia found this odd, and she soon found out that Carmen had brought Cooper over to Anna's house. This infuriated Sophia, and she immediately gave Carmen a harsh scolding. "No more playing at the Yard Residence from now on! Look at you—you even brought their dog home! Take it back!"

Carmen put on the most innocent expression she had. "Why? Miss Beautiful is so nice to me. I want to play with her!"

Sophia gave it some thought before she responded to Carmen's words by saying, "That's because... Miss Beautiful is an angel, and you're just a normal human. Humans can't be friends with angels!" Michael, who had been patting Celine's baby's back for her to burp, burst into laughter when he heard Sophia's sorry excuse.

To their surprise, Carmen was dissatisfied with this excuse. "Daddy said that Mommy's an angel too! I'm Mommy's baby, so I'm an angel too! Angels and angels can be friends!" she cried indignantly.

Sophia's eyes widened as she realized that she had no way to argue against this. Meanwhile, Carmen began to tear up in a pitiful manner. "Mommy, you used to call me an angel too... Have you been lying to me this whole time? Does that mean I'm not an angel?"

Sophia was utterly speechless.

My Dreamy Old Husband Chapter 1203

Sophia had initially planned on teaching Carmen a lesson, but the little girl turned the situation around and made herself the victim first. "Alright, my good girl. Who said you aren't an angel? You're still the princess of angels; you're the prettiest angel among the thousands of angels in the sky." Carmen finally stopped crying after Sophia coaxed her for a little while more. The young girl then picked the corgi up and invited everyone to admire its butt with her.

Once Carmen fell asleep, Sophia got her babysitter to send the dog back. She glanced up toward the third floor wearily, which remained silent the whole time. Cooper must be feeling terrible right now. He really wants to see Anna, but he's also afraid of seeing her—after all, she has completely lost all memories of him. She's now the wife of another man, and she even has four sons... Michael might be the only person who can understand this torturous experience...

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Meanwhile, it was past midnight in the Yard Residence when Anna found herself caught in a hypnagogic state. She had a really odd dream which had been troubling her ever since she returned to Cethos. In the dream, she felt a splitting pain in her belly. Amidst all the suffering she was in, she felt the emergence of new lives as two babies tore themselves away from her flesh and wiggled their way out of her body. She barely caught a glimpse of the two newborn babies before someone picked them up and raised the babies toward the sky. "You'd better hand the right of succession and all your shares over. Otherwise, I'll drop your son onto the ground right now!"

"Ah!" Anna woke up from her nightmare and felt someone's arms around her. "What is it, Annie?" A man's deep voice came from beside her. She felt his strong arms curling around her, but for some reason, that only made her feel more afraid than ever. "Ah!" Right then, Anna lost control of all her emotions. She threw away all the things that she could lay her hands on; all she wanted to do right then was to throw out the person who had just wrapped his arms around her. "Go away! Get out!"

The man caught everything that Anna had been throwing as he explained himself and said, "Annie, it's me..." However, Anna couldn't hear anything he said right then. The disgusting scent of a male body lingered in her nostrils; it was a repulsive scent that triggered her

desire to break everything that she could grab onto. She threw her belongings onto the ground as she screamed like a crazy woman.

Her loud screams caught the attention of Callum and Cade, and Callum turned the lights on to see the room in an utter mess. The pillows, vases and Anna's cell phone were on the ground, and her hair was an utter mess as she continued to throw things out. Meanwhile, Jordan pathetically took a few steps back to avoid getting hit by something.

"Mom!" Callum cried out in surprise before he quickly ran forward to hold his mother in his arms. Anna began to thrash around in his arms, looking like a pitiful woman who couldn't seem to escape from her own nightmare. When Anna saw Jordan trying to edge closer to her, she lost her mind even more than before. "Ahhhh!" she shrieked at the top of her lungs.

This came as a shock to Jordan; he took a few steps back, his eyes filled with hurt and terror. "Dad, Mom's having a relapse of her illness. Please go out for a while," Cade quickly said.

"Annie..." Jordan tried to call his wife, but Anna was completely out of control. He had no choice but to bitterly step out of the room. Callum continued to tighten his grip around his mother in the room. She was crying and wailing as if she had just experienced the most traumatic incident in her life, and her face was soaked with tears of terror.

"It's Callum, Mom! I'm your son!" The look on Anna's face flickered for a moment as she seemed to regain some consciousness after seeing Callum's face. She quickly threw her arms around Callum. "My son... My son, my darling Callum... My son... Don't hurt my son! No! No!" She clung onto Callum tightly, as if she was afraid that someone would snatch him away from her. He returned the hug and began to tear up as he listened to her muffled sobs and incoherent sentences. "It's okay. It's alright. I'm here now, and no one's going to hurt me. We're all grown up, so we can protect ourselves now!"

However, Anna was still extremely emotional. She couldn't seem to detach herself from the nightmare she had, and she was having a complete mental breakdown. Eventually, she began to quiet down a little after Callum soothed her emotions. She then moved to the guest room for the night while the maid tidied the messy room.

Cade picked the two roses up from the shards of glass that had once been a vase. The roses were a gift from Cooper, and Anna had carefully placed them in the vase earlier that night. She threw the vase onto the ground and it shattered into pieces when she lost her mind moments ago, so the roses were left in a puddle of water on the floor. Cade picked

them up and placed them into a new vase before gently putting it by Anna's bedside once again.

After taking two sleeping pills, Anna went back to sleep. Callum tucked her into bed and gazed at her tear-stricken cheeks as she slept. The public only saw how great their lives were, but they had never seen all the pain and struggles that the mother and her two sons had to go through. Callum and Cade's childhood were filled with fear and terror; everyone wanted them dead back then. Direct and distant relatives of the Yard Family wanted them dead, and all of Jordan's other women wanted them dead too. The survival of Anna and her two sons had a huge impact on the potential benefits of others around them, so everyone wanted them gone! On the outside, they were threatened by the Yard Family; on the inside, they were controlled by Jordan. They never once had the freedom and right to direct their own lives, and it felt like they were constantly living under the shadow of everyone else's power.

Callum and Cade could never forget the day they had been kidnapped while they were still asleep. Those men laughed heartily as they tortured Anna and forced her to kneel in front of them. They found joy in hearing her bitter cries; they wanted her to pick a son to fall to his death so that she could live the rest of her life blaming herself for what she had done. Callum always remembered how helpless Anna's cries sounded back then. She continuously bowed down and pressed her head onto the ground; she kept begging until the skin around her forehead split apart. Her face was covered in her blood and tears, but she still didn't manage to get her son back. Callum felt like he was forced to grow up after that night.

Although they were eventually saved later, Anna became extremely anxious over everything. Every night, she would wrap her arms around her sons tightly, using her frail and skinny body to protect them. Anna would coax them to go to bed by singing them to sleep and trying her best to provide them a sense of security. However, once they fell asleep, she would stay awake for the entire night. Her bloodshot eyes were alert to every tiny movement around her, and she was afraid that someone would come and snatch her children away from her.

Even until today, Anna would occasionally have such nightmares of the worst night of her life. No one knew how the mother and her two sons had managed to survive until today. Some people were born into a world where they were given all the greatest pleasures of life, while some others had to sacrifice everything just to keep themselves alive. The very fact of life was a luxury to them. Despite their struggles, they insisted on surviving; they wanted to be the happiest people on earth.

“Callum.” Callum only came to his senses when he heard Cade calling for him. Callum turned the lights off and quietly shut the door behind him before he wiped his tears and calmed himself down. When he walked to the living room, Jordan had already been sitting there for a while.

“How’s your mother?” Jordan asked.

Callum put on a relaxed expression. “She’s the same as before. It’s just an old habit; she can’t be triggered, and she can’t have any men near her. This also happens when she sleeps with me or Cade beside her sometimes.”

Jordan seemed a little dejected to hear this, but he quickly changed the topic. “When are you and Cade going to return to Ronney City?”

My Dreamy Old Husband Chapter 1204

“Mom wants to recuperate in Bayside City for a while, but the Yard Family wants to amend the family tree and shift the ancestral grave, so there are quite a number of things to be done. We thought we’d stay around and help out since Mom isn’t emotionally stable, so we might not be returning so soon,” Callum replied. He spoke in a respectful and meticulous manner, as if he was reporting to his supervisor; there wasn’t a hint of intimacy in his tone.

To the boys, Jordan was practically a stranger. Apart from the contribution of his sperm, he had never given them anything more. During the toughest periods of their lives when they were younger, Jordan would disappear and leave them with their mother. Furthermore, Jordan had other women and children outside that often bullied them. Callum lowered his gaze after answering to Jordan to conceal any hint of distaste in his eyes.

Jordan seemed a little disappointed by Callum’s reply. “We still need you boys to handle the matters over at Ronney City.”

“I’ve dealt with everything before I left. I left Henry and Ryan in charge of the fashion week, and there haven’t been any other large events happening recently. We can handle the rest of

it remotely, so you don't have to worry about it, Dad," Callum uttered. It seemed like Jordan had begun to grow suspicious of Anna and the twins recently, and they decided that they'd simply leave him behind and let him continue being suspicious if that were the case. But Jordan didn't notice anything then, as he simply nodded before he went up to rest in another guest room.

After a restless night, Anna was extremely weak the next morning. Their personal doctor dropped by to check on her before prescribing medication for her. Her sickness wasn't a physical one but a mental one; she was easily triggered, and her mental health was deteriorating. This left her susceptible to all sorts of mental illnesses, so she had to depend on long-term medications to stabilize her emotions. The doctor said that such cases like hers were due to a traumatic incident that occurred in the past, but this illness had been with Anna for her whole life, even before she gave birth to Callum and Cade. She couldn't recall anything from her past, and she didn't know what she had been through then.

The doctor had a long discussion with Jordan before they both left. Jordan didn't return after that, and no one knew when he'd ever reappear again. They didn't look forward to his visits, anyway. Carmen dropped by again that afternoon, with a basket carrying some food and two nearly frozen roses. The roses were from her grandfather, and the food was her way of showing her appreciation to them for allowing her to play with the dogs.

Carmen was shocked to see Anna with an IV drip the moment she stepped into the house. "Are you sick, Miss Beautiful?"

"Miss Beautiful's sick, so she can't play with you today," Callum quickly said.

"Well, should I sing her a song, then? I have a great voice!" Carmen offered. Callum was worried that the young girl might be disturbing Anna, but Anna gestured for him to allow it. Although she wasn't feeling too well, she was still pleased to see Carmen around. "Come over here and sing me a song," she uttered.

Carmen placed her basket down before she began to sing and dance cheerily. "The fields are soaked and the rain's over... The trees are growing faster than ever... La la la la, I'm a little boss who sells the newspaper..."

Callum leaned his body against the doorframe with a cup in his hand as he listened to the young girl's song. He was surprised to hear how great her voice sounded; it felt like his ears were filled with honey when he listened to her sing. Carmen's grandmother, Elizabeth, had a voice that had left a mark on the last two generations of Cethosians, and Carmen's father had an amazing voice himself; hence, it made sense that this young girl inherited the same

talents. Her voice was like some sort of magnet that attracted everyone's attention. Since God had blessed her with such wonderful talents, it'd be a shame if she didn't grow up to be a star. But conversely, it'd also be a shame if she became a star—she had such a huge family business that she could take over if she wished to.

Anna beamed happily as Carmen hopped and pranced around the room while singing. The splitting headache that had been bothering Anna the entire day miraculously disappeared; she felt like she finally found peace as all the anxiety and fear seemed to have left her body. Right then, Sophia knocked on the front door of the Yards Residence. She was furious after she found out about Carmen walking over here, and she paid them a visit to drag her daughter back home. Cade was the one who opened the door. "Where's my daughter?" Sophia asked as she stuck her head inside.

"Shh." Cade pointed up to the second floor, and they both heard Carmen's sweet voice coming from the room. "Sophia, my mother has been sick for the past two days. Your daughter's voice is really helping to cure her headaches! Can I beg you to leave your daughter here for a while more? Just a while more; I'll send her back to you by noon." Cade's eyes were filled with sincerity.

"Your mother's sick?" Sophia felt her heart aching upon hearing that Anna had fallen sick. She glanced up to the second floor and lowered her voice without even realizing it herself. "What... illness is it? Is it serious?" she asked in a whisper. When she looked into the house, she caught a glimpse of someone who looked like a doctor gathering his medical equipment.

"It's nothing; just an old illness that she's been dealing with for a long while. She just needs a lot of rest," Cade explained. "I see." Sophia no longer seemed interested in dragging her daughter home, and she absent-mindedly walked away. She didn't even turn around when Cade called out for her. Should I tell Cooper that Anna's sick?

Sophia went straight to Villa No. 2 after going home, as Cooper's office was located there. Cooper and Linus would often have their meetings and do their work there before they would return to Sophia's to eat and rest. When Sophia went in, Cooper was having an online conference call with people from the Michel Group. She exchanged glances with Linus outside the meeting room, and he threw her a warning stare while gesturing for her not to enter the room. She didn't push the door open, but instead stood outside and listened to the contents of discussion between Cooper and an elder of Michel Group.

"She's the fiancée your ancestors had picked for you. If it weren't for her help, you wouldn't have managed to obtain your position here so easily. Like the old Cethosian saying goes,

don't bite the hand that feeds you," the elder uttered. Cooper has a fiancée?! And he relied on her to obtain his position? Sophia perked up her ears as she was shocked to hear this. The elder spoke in a stern tone, and he had a thick and posh British accent that was hard to understand. "She's on the way now. You have to be well-prepared; I hope you can get married to her as soon as possible."

Get married? Does that mean Cooper is going to get married soon? Am I going to have a stepmother? But Cooper didn't seem interested. "I have no plans of doing so," he muttered. Sophia felt a rollercoaster of emotions within her after listening to their conversation. Is Cooper really thinking about marriage? Will I have a stepmother? No! I don't want a stepmother!

The elders lost their temper and began to criticize Cooper on breaking his promise. Unconcerned by this, Cooper casually hung up on them before he walked out of the room with a cold expression. He was surprised to see Sophia outside. "What are you doing here, my darling?"

Sophia felt a little uneasy. She previously hoped for Cooper to find himself a wife, but she now felt a little unhappy to hear that he was about to marry someone. I have a mother now...

"She's... sick. Carmen's visiting her now," Sophia muttered. Once Cooper heard that 'the woman' was sick, the cold expression he wore quickly fell apart to reveal the anxiety between his brows. He patted Sophia on the shoulder before he rushed off without saying anything more.

He clearly hadn't let go of her. They were together for 30 long years, after all; he couldn't just let go even if he wanted to. They were deeply in love, but they simply weren't fated to be together...

My Dreamy Old Husband Chapter 1205

A loud sigh came from behind Sophia as Linus patted her shoulder before resting his arm on it. "Dad still can't forget about her," he stated. He saw the video himself, and he knew how cruel fate had been toward their mother. Her memories had been stolen from her.

Sophia glanced toward the direction where Cooper had walked off and zoned out for a while before she turned back to Linus. “That fiancée of Dad’s that they were talking about on the call earlier... What was that all about?” Linus maintained his neutral expression upon the mention of Cooper’s fiancée. “You know how it is. Dad’s handsome, rich, and tall; the women who are interested in him could probably form a whole line all the way from here to the Eiffel Tower. It’s pretty common for there to be a few women who are a little more aggressive.”

The siblings later walked out of Villa No. 2 and headed toward Villa No. 8 for lunch while Linus continued to talk about Cooper’s fiancée. Apparently, 20 years ago, the family head of the Michel Group found out that he was ill and realized that he didn’t have long to live. The old man then thought of his daughter, Beyoncé, who had gotten married to an Easterner and hadn’t kept in contact with him since. He ordered for someone to hunt her down, only to find out that his daughter had been dead for years. He also found out that he had a grandson, Cooper, who was practically a carbon copy of him—they shared the same skills and boldness. Back then, the Michel Group still appeared to be grand and impressive, but the old family head found out that they were deep in debt after he fell ill. The family members were all scheming against one another, and the Michel Family, which had existed for thousands of years, was at risk of falling apart. There were several other financial groups back then that were equally powerful; they could have taken over the Michel Group anytime. The old family head didn’t manage to find a suitable successor back then, as he simply couldn’t see anyone in the family having enough power to turn the tides to get them out of their predicament. His grandson, Cooper, was therefore the perfect heir. Furthermore, as a dying man himself, the old family head longed to take a look at his Easterner grandson. He therefore invited Cooper over to the Michel Group for a secret meetup.

Coincidentally, Cooper was planning to leave the Mitchell Family right then, so he agreed to abandon his identity as a part of the Mitchell Family after he found out about his mother’s family and his grandfather’s identity. Cooper then took over the role as the family head of the Michel Group and began to work there. The company was saved from its near demise after Cooper took over, and it began to reclaim its position at the peak of its field. Cooper managed to deal with all the internal affairs of the family while also saving the entire business. He ran around playing two roles back then—he had just begun to take over the Michel Group while he was also planning his great disappearance from the Mitchell Family. That was also when he found out about Linus and adopted him as a son.

Back then, the old family head was concerned as Cooper didn’t seem to have established stable foundations in both the Michel Group and Michel Family. The old man was afraid that Cooper wouldn’t be able to go against all the greedy, ferocious enemies that were fighting for his spot once the old man passed away. The old man decided that Cooper needed a

stronger support system, so he found him a fiancée with great talent and an impressive background to help support him.

Cooper didn't actually need anyone's support, but the old man's judgements were a little off since he was on his deathbed. He claimed that he wouldn't be able to die in peace if he didn't get to see Cooper getting married, so Cooper made an agreement with the fiancée that the old man had chosen. They agreed to put on a show in front of the old man, just so that he could die in peace. The woman agreed to it, so they ended up faking their engagement in front of the old man's sickbed. The old man died with a smile on his face after they exchanged their wedding rings.

After that, Cooper thought everything was over as he had clearly stated that he wasn't interested in getting married to his 'fiancée'. Unfortunately, the woman fell in love with him and continued to pester him after their fake marriage. This went on for the past 20 years—the woman waited for Cooper from her early adulthood all the way until she was past 40.

"How loyal of her." Sophia hesitated and let out a sigh after listening to the story. Quinton, who had been playing his handphone on the couch, perked up his ears when he heard Linus talking about Cooper's fiancée. Sophia thought about it for a while more. Well, I guess Anna and Cooper no longer have a chance with one another. That fiancée of his has already waited for 20 years; I guess it'd be worth a try if she is truly a decent woman.

When Sophia expressed her views, Linus simply sniggered in response. "That woman is a crazy person who doesn't care about anything else. She doesn't truly love Daddy; she's just fixated on him because she can't get him. If she weren't afraid of our father's status and position in society, she might just kidnap him and force him to get married to her." Linus then threw Quinton a glance. "That woman's the same type of person as the man who's playing with his phone on the couch now," he muttered.

Quinton stared at him speechlessly. Sophia couldn't properly picture how crazy the woman was at first, but when Linus made the comparison with Quinton, Sophia felt her skin crawling with goosebumps simply at the thought of it. "Eeeek!" That's how abnormal and crazy she is?! "What's her name? Where's she from?" Sophia asked.

"She got married once in the past, but her husband then passed away. Her ex-husband was a count, so she's commonly known as 'The Countess'. She's a bigshot in the field of insurance and has some relations to the Western armies," Linus replied.

Thunk! Quinton was so shocked that he dropped his phone on his face. He didn't even cry out in pain; he was too surprised to do anything else. The Countess! Sophia had been learning more about the circles of Western aristocrats, and she had heard of this woman as well. That woman is Cooper's fiancée?!

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Meanwhile, Carmen was drinking some milk during her break; she had just completed the first half of her singing performance. She sucked on her milk while having a chat with Anna on the bed. "Grandpa said that being a performer isn't a proper job for me. Daddy promised Grandpa that I'll have to take over the family business if I don't show any career success in this field." Carmen was sharing her own life plans and struggles with Anna.

Anna felt a lot better after listening to Carmen's voice. The young girl had a beautiful voice that sounded like larks chirping by her ears. It was magical—all of Anna's pain and worries evaporated into thin air after listening to Carmen's voice.

"Well, what do you want to do, Carmen?" Anna asked cheerily. The older woman was genuinely envious of the young girl. Carmen is loved, and she isn't pressured to do anything that she doesn't want to do. She could sing if she wanted to, and she could run a business if she wanted to. Although most people might think that taking over the family business is a better option, you can also earn huge sums of money as a performer!

Carmen gave Anna's question some serious thought. "I want to sing, act, and earn money, all at the same time!"

Anna stroked the young girl's hair lovingly upon that. "You should do whatever you enjoy the most, darling. Your future depends on the hard work you put in now. I'll support you no matter what you pick!" she uttered gently. Carmen nodded firmly in response to this.

She's really a flawless little angel! Anna thought as she glanced at the young girl. Right then, the maid placed the fresh roses that Carmen had brought into the vase, and the petals fluttered in front of Anna's eyes. "Grandpa picked these up specially for you, Miss Beautiful! I saw him picking them out with my own eyes! We have more roses that are blooming in the greenhouse. You can tell me if you like them, then I'll get my Grandpa to send some over every day!" Carmen said sweetly. Anna was aware that the roses weren't from Cooper, but she felt happier whenever she imagined that he was actually the one gifting them to her.

Someone knocked on the door right then. Cade was the closest to the door, and he glanced at the surveillance cameras to see Cooper standing outside. What?