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"Naturally, it was likely that he later fell for you, but his initial objective was to seek dukedom. Driving a wedge between us, hurting me... All that was necessary for him to have you and become a duke," said Evan.

Evan had just finished speaking when a series of claps rang up.

All three were a little surprised when they turned around and saw that Levant had doubled back.

"You are right, Evan Seet. I went to search for Nicole because I wanted to bring her over and surprise Dad. However, I later heard about his plan to give her the title instead, so I started paying attention to her. I thought about killing her. After all, there will be no other competition for dukedom once she's dead. I'm not inhumane, though. The duke took me in and raised me so I can't bring myself to kill Nicole. After that, I fell for her. It's too bad that fate won't allow it. No matter how hard I tried, I simply can't get her to fall for me. Now that everything is clear, please pass the dukedom over to me. Our paths will not cross again after that," confessed Levant.

Stephen's eyes shone with disappointment as he stared at Levant.

He never dreamed that Levant would do so many vile things just for power; the latter even went so far as trying to kill Evan.

"I will never pass the title over to you, Levant! I refuse to hand the Musgrave family over to a despicable creature like you."

"Is that so? I wouldn't be so sure if I were you. I have a trump card up my sleeves, after all, and I am certain that you will end up doing what I say."

"What trump card are you talking about?"

Levant scoffed and shifted his gaze to Evan and Nicole.

"I have your very soul and life! Four lives in exchange for a duke's title. It's a pretty good deal, isn't it?"

Four lives? The kids?

Evan's eyes turned cruel. He sprang up suddenly and zipped to Levant's side. Evan pressed his blade against Levant's neck and threatened, "Let the kids go!" Evan's voice was hellishly terrifying.

Levant laughed without even a hint of fear in his voice. He said, "You want to drag me to hell with you? I'm good with it if my death means the destruction of your entire family!"

Evan couldn't speak. He was so livid that he was tempted to run his blade through Levant's neck.

Nicole had everyone in the estate search the entire place, but she couldn't locate the kids anywhere.

She hurried back and stared at Levant with terror in her eyes. Her voice trembled as she demanded, "Where are my children? Where did you take them? T-they are innocent! I don't want the title. Give my kids back to me! Give them back."

Levant was secretly delighted to see Nicole being that anxious.

She will convince Stephen to do as I say. All she has to do is insist on getting her children back, and Stephen will cave in sooner or later.

Levant reached out to push Evan's blade away before tossing a glare at Evan.

As much as Evan wanted to skin the b*stard alive and tear up the guy limb from limb, Evan knew that he couldn't act impulsively because the kids were still missing.

Nicole would die if anything were to happen to them.

Evan, on the other hand, would have no reason to continue living if his wife and kids were gone.

Hence, Evan couldn't deny that Levant's move had everyone cornered.

"Tell me when you've discussed among yourselves and reached a decision. I'll bring the kids back to you then. Do hurry up, though. They are just kids and they can't handle going hungry for long," said Levant.

No one could speak.

F*ck! He's going to starve the kids until he gets what he wants?

"Levant, please. I'm begging you. Please don't hurt my children."

"Nicole, you should be begging your father instead. Their lives are in his hands," replied Levant while wearing an evil smile on his face. He turned and strolled away with his head held high.

Evan immediately had Jeremy tail Levant.

Nicole turned to Stephen. She understood that dukedom was important to Stephen because it determined the future of the Musgrave family.

However, the kids were her life... No, it would be more accurate to say that they were more important to her than her own survival.

She would be happy to die for her children.

Nicole struggled, but maternal love drove everything away in the end. She walked to Stephen and knelt down. "P-please save my kids," begged Nicole.

"Nicole, don't do that. Get back up."

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Stephen clenched his fists. Handing the title over meant that he would be handing the Musgrave family over as well.

The family's wellbeing would no longer be within Stephen's control.

If Stephen acted impulsively and did the extreme, generations of hard work would be instantly destroyed.

However, if he refused to let go, Nicole and the kids would...

"Give me some time. Let me think about it," said Stephen, before he dragged his feet and walked into the study room.

Nicole lay in Evan's arms and sobbed.

"Do you think Levant will bully them?"

Evan shook his head lightly and promised, "No, he won't. They're smart and can handle Levant."

"They are my life. I won't want to live if anything were to happen to them. My Juan, Maya, Kai, and Nina..."

Nicole gripped Evan's shirt and cried while calling out her children's names.

That f*cking assh*le! He took all four children away. B*stards like that should be struck by thunder and die a horrible death.

"It's fine. They'll be safe," cooed Evan while hugging her to comfort her.

"Will they? No, I can't risk it. I have to go beg Stephen again. I have to get him to save the kids!"

Evan stopped her and advised her, "Give him some time. After all, the dukedom affects the rise and fall of the Musgrave family."

Nicole couldn't refute.

She understood all that, but she was still too worried about her children.

Her heart felt like it was being stabbed by countless needles and placed in the oven. Every second she spent worrying about the kids was excruciating torture.

Meanwhile, the four children stared at each other in confusion.

They received a lot of presents from the robot when they played with it, which delighted all of them.

However, the robot later told them that they could travel through time and space if they crawl into its tummy.

They didn't trust the robot, but they crawled in anyway. They thought that it was best if they could travel through time, but if it didn't work, they would just regard it as a game.

But why did the robot sway so much and only let us out after half an hour? Also, why are we in a place like this now that we're finally out? Did we travel through time and space? This doesn't look right.

Nina looked disappointed. She complained, "I was thinking about the biggest shopping center with tons of make-up products. Why am I not there?"

Maya's big, round eyes blinked. She added, "I was thinking about a kingdom full of candies, but we're not there, either."

Juan and Kyle realized that something was wrong.

Space and time travel were lies. The culprit used the robot to trick us to this place!

Kyle's tiny face turned grouchy as he pointed out, "Looks like we're conned."

Juan sighed, "Yeah, they got us to leave the estate without causing a fuss. I'm guessing both Daddy and Mommy are unaware of us being kidnapped. They will be so worried when they can't find us."

"Don't worry about that. They are already aware of it."

Levant's voice rang up from behind the four kids. They turned around, surprised to see him there.

Maya was the first one to speak up. She asked, "Mr. Levant, what are you doing here?"

"The robot is my gift to all of you. Do you like it?"

At first, Maya nodded, but she later shook her head.

"It lied. It can't travel through time and space."

Nina kept her guard up as she scanned Levant. She demanded, "Y-your robot got us here. When will you take us back?"

"Calm down. Your parents know that you are with me, so you can stay here for a few days without worrying about anything," lied Levant.

Juan and Kyle turned to one another before scrutinizing Levant silently. The boys guessed that Levant must have an ulterior motive for conning them into going to an unknown location. He did not even ask for their consent before leaving.

"I'll call Daddy."

Levant's gaze darkened as his eyes shifted to Juan. Huh? What's going on? Why can't my smartwatch make any call?

"There's no signal?"

We can't even make a call here. That means Levant doesn't want us to contact Daddy and Mommy. What does he have in mind?

Levant's eye remained distant even as fear shone on the four children's faces. He scoffed and ordered, "Give them a place to settle down."

"Yes, Sir."

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The children were taken to a room. As soon as they entered, the door was closed and a crisp click told them they were locked in.

Maya's eyes glowed with terror. "I'm scared. I want Mommy!"

"Stay strong, Maya. Mommy and Daddy will come to rescue us," promised Nina as she held Maya's plump hand tightly.

Juan and Kyle examined the place. They were inside a room with three solid walls and one glass door that led to a balcony. Unfortunately, bodyguards had that glass door heavily guarded so that not even a bug could fly out without them noticing. It was virtually impossible for the kids to flee under those circumstances.

Kyle couldn't figure out the motive so he asked his siblings, "Why do you think he brought us over?"

Juan sighed and guessed, "Maybe it's because he likes Mommy and wants to force her into marrying him."

Nina scolded angrily, "Stealing another man's wife and kidnapping children. How despicable!"

Maya was upset as well when she heard how Levant wanted to take their mommy away from their daddy.

Her round eyes burned with fury as she growled, "How can Mr. Levant do something like that?"

"Why are you still calling him Mr. Levant? Call him 'meanie' from now on!"

Maya was a little out of it after being scolded by Nina, but the former still nodded.

Kyle suggested, "We should focus on getting out of here. Daddy and Mommy must be worried sick now."

Juan chimed in, "That will only happen if we can fly. Actually, scratch that. Even a bug can't get out under these circumstances."

"Nevertheless, we still have to try. We can't be sitting ducks here."

The four little ones ended up staring at the walls as they thought long and hard about how they might be able to escape.

At the estate.

Evan and Stephen had been working on it for half a day. They were surprised by the amount of effort Levant had put in to keep the kids' location a secret.

Neither Stephen's bodyguards nor Evan's subordinates could find even a clue of where the kids might be.

Jeremy, who had been tailing Levant, also failed in his mission and lost the guy. Despite being ashamed of his defeat, Jeremy returned to the estate with his head down.

The situation prompted Stephen and Evan to take an alternate route to solve the problem. They would first trade the dukedom for the kids' safety. After that, they would work together and somehow reclaim the title from Levant.

"It's a little risky, but that is our only option now."

Evan considered the situation for a bit before turning to Stephen and saying, "I've always been curious about something, but I'm not sure if you'd feel comfortable sharing that information."

"What is it?"

"Who are Levant's birth parents? I'm guessing you looked into his past before you took him in."

That question got Stephen's eyes to dim.

"My wife told me about his family, but I can't uncover anything about them despite having my people to work on it."

"You don't know who his birth parents are?" blurted Evan in astonishment. This guy's a duke, but even he has no idea whose kid he was raising? Nicole must've inherited her kindness from him.

Stephen sighed and explained, "My wife couldn't get pregnant, so she suggested to adopt a kid. I thought she was just joking at the time, but a few days later, she actually brought a child over. She said that the child was pitiful and was being bullied in the orphanage so she wanted to take him home. I owed my wife too much, and I wanted her to be happy, so I agreed to it. I later sent my men to the orphanage to investigate the matter, but the child seemed to have suddenly shown up at the orphanage. There was no clue as to where he came from."

An unknown past? I didn't think that even Levant's identity is a mystery.

"Does your wife know who his parents are?"

Stephen's face gloomed over. He answered, "She said that she doesn't know."

Evan was speechless. She probably won't share the information even if she knows the truth. I had John investigate the matter some time ago. I wonder if his investigation resulted in anything?

"Alright then. Go check on Nicole. I'll deal with the matters at hand."

"Thank you. I promised I will help you reclaim the dukedom," said Evan firmly.

Stephen nodded.

Evan went back to his room to tell Nicole their plan. He calmed her nerves when he promised that the children would return safely and soundly.

Nicole's heart was in a mess when she asked, "Do you think Stephen will hate me for this?"

"He won't," replied Evan, who was certain of it. He looked into Nicole's eyes and explained, "The two people who love you the most in this world are Stephen and me. His fatherly love towards you is likely as deep as my love for you."

Nicole suddenly realized that she should be nicer to Stephen. He had spent his entire life missing Nicole's mother, and when Nicole considered everything from his point of view, she realized that things weren't easy for him, either.

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Nicole decided that she must thank Stephen after everything had settled down.

The sun had just risen when Stephen called Levant to inform the latter of the good news. Stephen would hand the title over to Levant in exchange for the children's safe return.

Levant was ecstatic.

The children were Nicole's everything; holding them hostage was equivalent to hanging Nicole's life on the balance. That was way more effective than threatening Stephen's life, and Levant was sure that Stephen would agree to his terms.

I thought he'd take at least two days to think things through. Who would've thought that I'd receive the news that quickly?

After having his breakfast, Levant brought his bodyguards and returned to the estate with a gigantic smile on his face.

Nicole's heart ached when she saw that her children were not with them.

"Where are my children?"

"Don't worry. I will bring you to them as soon as I get what I want."

How devious! He's probably worried about sudden changes occurring.

Stephen handed the relevant paperwork and stamps over to Levant.

"Are you happy now?"

"Yes. After all this time, the estate is finally mine! Ever since I set foot in this place, your wife has been telling me that I will be the duke one day. I have been training myself to be its master ever since. After twenty years, I finally got my hands on it!" Levant exclaimed gleefully.

Stephen turned grim upon seeing Levant's excitement. As Levant's father, Stephen had failed to teach the boy, which resulted in him being that evil.

"Where are my children? Where are they?"

"Leave the estate right away. My men will take you to them as soon as you leave."

Nicole was eager to see her children so she packed up quickly and left the estate in a hurry.

Stephen stood outside the estate and stared at the Musgrave family legacy. His heart was aching.

He never thought that he would live to see the day when his adopted son chased him out of the place.

They say a man's greed was as vast as the sea. Stephen wondered if that was true. Does he really not care about the past twenty years I spent taking care of him and raising him? Are title and power really that important to him?

Evan saw how miserable Stephen's aging face looked and how the latter's eyes glowed with immense reluctance. The former walked over and promised again, "Trust me, I will settle this score with him once I settle the kids and Nicole."

Levant still owed Evan a life, after all, and it was time Evan settled that debt.

Stephen nodded and added, "When the kids are safe, I will take you to the hidden passage, and we will hunt him down together!"

A hidden passage?

Evan was surprised to hear that. It never even occurred to him that the estate had a hidden passage.

"Hurry up. I'm worried that Maya is hungry. Nina might be bullied as well, and Juan and Kyle could be suffering. I want to see my sweethearts as soon as possible," urged Nicole anxiously.

Evan and Stephen turned to one another and smiled simultaneously before hurrying over.

The children were discussing how they would feign being sick in order to escape when, to their surprise, they saw their parents there.

"Daddy! Mommy! You guys are so quick to come to our rescue!"

"Mommy was worried about you guys being bullied, so we hurried over."

"Did that meanie, Levant, force you to marry him?"

"No," replied Nicole while shaking her head.

"Then why did he use the robots to trick us into coming over?" asked Kyle, who was curious as well.

"He didn't do that to marry Mommy. He was after something else."

"What was he after?" interrogated Nina.

Nicole turned and looked apologetically at Stephen before answering, "He wanted the title. Come on, let's get out of here."

The children turned to each other. They had no idea what their mommy meant by title, but they stopped asking questions.

The four youngsters returned to the hotel safe and sound.

Evan immediately ordered John to take Nicole and the kids back to their country. Evan would stay on to help Stephen regain his dukedom.

I will also be settling the score with Levant.

"Daddy, we can stay and help you out."

"Yeah, we'll help you!"

Evan put a stern expression on his handsome face before turning to the kids. "No. It's too dangerous for you kids to stay here. You will go home with Mommy right away!"

Nicole turned from Evan to Stephen.

Stephen had a warm smile on when he looked at her. His eyes oozed of fatherly love and he reminded her, "Have a safe flight. Take good care of the kids."

Conflicting emotions rose in Nicole's heart.

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Stephen would not end up in that terrible state if it hadn't been for saving the kids.

Nicole felt like she owed Stephen.

She suddenly felt the urge to call him "dad", but she hesitated. She rubbed her fingers nervously as the word "dad" went back down her throat just as it reached the tip of her tongue.

Nicole thought about her mother being dazed while looking at the sky, falling into depression, and living a life in misery because of that man...

She knew that none of it was Stephen's fault, but she still couldn't get herself to call him "dad".

John stepped forward. "Mrs. Seet, it's time. I'll take you and the children to the airport now."

"Can I stay?" asked Nicole as she looked at Evan.

"No!"

"No!"

Evan and Stephen rejected her simultaneously.

Nicole stared at the two men. She understood what they were trying to do——it was too dangerous for her to stay there and they didn't want her to get hurt.

She could relate to their concern: she would also wish for her children to be far away from any dangerous place.

"Both of you, be careful, okay? We'll be leaving now."

Nicole waved goodbye to the two men. The four little ones pouted. They weren't happy about leaving, but Evan had made things clear and they knew there was no point in arguing. Daddy has tons of ways to force us to leave. Hence, the kids waved goodbye as well.

Stephen glanced at his daughter; he was very reluctant to see her leave.

Still, all he could do was pray silently in his heart. Please, God. Please keep Nicole safe and happy for the rest of her life.

Nicole took her luggage. When she turned the corner with her kids, she vaguely caught Stephen's eyes reddening with tears.

She walked out of the hotel and took a deep breath before pausing.

"John, wait."

Nicole turned to her children and couched down to whisper to them.

The kids turned to one another, not understanding why their mommy had asked them to do that.

"He sacrificed everything for the four of you, so you should do that for him. Go on now."

The children were stunned; nevertheless, they walked back the way they came.

Stephen and Evan were strategizing their next move when the door to the room opened.

They shifted their attention to the entrance of the room, and Evan was surprised to see four tiny people standing there.

"Did you forget something?"

The children shook their heads.

"Then why did you come back?"

The quadruplets walked to Stephen and bowed to him simultaneously. "Thank you for rescuing us, Grandpa," said the children.

Stephen was shocked beyond words.

The kids called me Grandpa?

The sudden surprise knocked Stephen off his feet. After taking some time to gather himself, he felt his heart thumping with glee. He looked at his grandchildren and reached out to stroke their tiny heads.

"Good. You're all such adorable kids."

Too bad I've lost everything. I don't even know what gift I can offer them now.

"The next time we meet, Grandpa will get you all an amazing gift."

"Thank you, Grandpa."

Evan smiled at his obedient and intelligent quadruplets.

Ambushing Stephen with an emotional bomb like that... Nicole must've been the mastermind behind this.

Evan suddenly thought that in addition to being smart, his wife was also a master at tossing such emotional bombs. I gotta praise her for this after I get home.

"Alright now. Off you go, kids. You'll miss your flight if you stay any longer."

The quadruplets nodded and bid their goodbyes again before walking out of the room single file.

Nina found it strange, so she asked, "Why did Mommy tell us to greet Sir Musgrave as grandpa?"

Kyle deliberated before replying, "Maybe he's the dad that Mommy has been looking for, and that would make him our grandpa."

The mischievous Juan was taken aback and blurted, "Huh? In that case, don't we have yet another powerful figure backing us up?"

Maya thought about the luxurious estate and the army of servants and bodyguards there. It's so nice to have a grandpa that powerful.

"Haha, monsters and demons should move aside, for I have Grandpa next to me!"

Kyle was speechless.

And so was Juan.

And Nina, too.

All three of them turned to Maya and wondered, When did that plump idiot learn to exploit others?

Still, it was rather nice to have a grandpa that capable.

"But I feel that Grandpa is in trouble."

"It's fine. Daddy is here, so the issue will be dealt with soon."

"Good point. We should listen to Daddy and go home. It's been days since we last went to school, and I miss our teacher and classmates."