



# The Golden Cage

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Christian sat on the edge of the polished mahogany coffee table, his legs dangling over a drop that felt like a cliffside. Across the room, his mother hummed softly as she adjusted a vase of fresh lilies, her serene face reflecting absolute peace. The acceptance letters to the university sat forgotten and gathering dust in the hallway trash bin.



From his miniature vantage point on the kitchen counter, Christian watched his mother pour a single drop of maple syrup onto a tiny plastic bottle cap. She smiled warmly down at him, her voice a gentle, rhythmic purr as she murmured that he never had to worry about the stressful outside world ever again. The sweet scent of the syrup made his stomach turn with a growing, heavy dread.



As twilight filled the living room, his mother sunk into the plush cushions of the sofa and let out a long, satisfied sigh. Christian stood by the armrest, the fabric towering over him like a velvet mountain, waiting for the quiet cue he had come to anticipate with a sinking heart. Without looking at him, she gently kicked off her designer flats, extending her nylon-clad feet onto the ottoman.



Christian knelt on the smooth leather of the ottoman, his small hands pressing against the massive, looming arch of his mother's foot to begin rubbing the tension away. She didn't thank him, nor did she look down; she simply adjusted her reading glasses and turned the page of her magazine with an air of absolute, natural entitlement. To her, this domestic arrangement was as proper and permanent as the architecture of the house.



During a quiet afternoon, Christian discovered his old smartphone resting on the high mantelpiece, its battery long dead and completely out of his reach. When he softly asked if they could look for a doctor or look into clinical trials again, his mother paused her knitting, looking at him with a gaze of mild, maternal disappointment. She told him it was foolish to chase impossible miracles when he was already perfectly safe and cared for at home.



The next morning, Christian found that his makeshift bedroom inside a repurposed wooden jewelry box had been fitted with a small, elegant brass latch on the outside. His mother gently stroked his hair with the tip of her index finger, her touch incredibly light yet carrying the crushing weight of an inescapable cage. She whispered that the world outside was far too dangerous for someone of his delicate, precious stature.



While his mother was away at her corporate job, the silence of the massive house became an suffocating, physical presence. Christian tried to climb down from the living room couch, but the sheer distance to the hardwood floor below was perilous, stranding him in a vast desert of expensive upholstery. He realized with absolute clarity that his entire existence had been reduced to a localized ornament for her evening relaxation.



When she returned home that evening, her soft-spoken greeting echoed through the quiet house, carrying a chilling finality that made him shiver. She sat down immediately and placed her feet near him, her calm eyes watching him with a self-satisfied pleasure that required no words. Christian stepped forward to tend to her, realizing his compliance had become a survival reflex in her immaculate, quiet kingdom.



Christian looked out the towering bay window, watching the neighborhood teenagers pack their cars for college under the bright summer sun. Behind him, his mother gently closed the heavy velvet drapes, blocking out the light and wrapping the room in a permanent, suffocating twilight. She patted his head, softly noting that they were entirely self-sufficient and needed nothing else from the outside world.



Late that night, nestled in his small wooden box, Christian listened to the rhythmic, peaceful breathing of his mother sleeping in the adjacent room. The gentle, polite absolute control she held over him felt entirely unbreakable, woven into the very fabric of her soft voice and maternal smile. He stared into the darkness, trapped in a quiet, beautiful nightmare from which there was no awakening.