Never Late, Never Away Chapter 2321 - 2330

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Larry was lying on the sofa with his eyes half open as he massaged his temple.

God knows how many bottles of wine this idiot downed last night... Had it not been for Caspian, I would've left him by the side of the road!

"Huh? Oh, yeah, I'm fine..." Larry mumbled as he staggered to his feet.

"All right, I'll be on my way, then." With that, Jessica left his office.

Larry felt his heart ache at the thought of what happened last night. I can't believe Joan attended the event with another man...

"It's official, Larry! The directors have agreed to transfer the shares to Dustin!" Caspian shouted anxiously as he came bursting through the door.

"Got it..." Larry replied weakly.

"What do we do now, Larry? Norton Corporation will fall into Dustin's hands if he becomes the largest shareholder!"

Now that he's mentioned it, how was Dustin able to accomplish all that while working his butt off in the supermarket? He knows everything that happens in our company, and even bribed the directors into transferring their shares to him! Heh... So much for them claiming to be Dad's loyal comrades in the corporate world...

"Don't worry; I'll go talk to them about this. I won't let Dustin have his way," Larry stated as he got up and left his office.

He then whipped out his phone and called up the directors.

"Ah, Mr. Norton! I'm a little busy at the moment, so I can't meet up with you right now. Let's talk about this some other day!"

"Sorry, Mr. Norton. I'm too old to get involved in some power struggle, so I decided to sell my shares to Dustin. He is the second largest shareholder of Norton Corporation anyway, so it only makes sense to sell it to him!"

"Apologies, my grandson is calling me, so I have to go now."

The directors all refused to meet up with him, and Larry felt like a fool as he stood by the side of the road. First, my loved one betrays me, and now these directors betray me too? Is this how it all ends for me?

"Oh, my! Look who it is!" A woman's voice came from behind.

This woman... I've seen her before... Don't know much about her though...

Larry ignored her and carried on staring off into the distance, seemingly in deep thought.

"What are you doing spacing out at a time like this, Mr. Norton? Your wife is going to run away with another man soon!" Noelle taunted him deliberately, but Larry knew Joan must have been really angry for her to run off like that.

"Is that what you came to tell me? If so, you can leave now," he replied.

"Are you kidding me? You're going to stand here and do nothing while your wife is hooking up with another man?" Noelle shouted angrily.

"Watch your mouth!" The look in Larry's eyes was so vicious that Noelle took a few steps back in fear.

What the hell is wrong with this guy? Screw this! I'm out of here! Noelle thought to herself as she walked away.

Larry looked up at the sky and took deep breaths to calm himself down.

With more pressing matters at the company to take care of, his relationship issues with Joan would have to wait.

"Caspian, find out what the shareholders are up to the next couple of days. I'm going to confront them in person and get to the bottom of things. Make sure to be discreet so you don't startle them!"

Larry hung up the phone after that, but he wasn't quite sure where he should go next. It's still early... Should I go back to the office? I think I've pretty much taken care of everything there is to do... Do I go home then? Hmm, I don't think Joan wants to see me right now...

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Right as he was contemplating his next course of action, a familiar figure in the distance caught his attention.

Is that who I think it is? Hmm... Nah, it can't be... I'm probably seeing things because I'm too tired... With that in mind, Larry turned around and was about to leave.

"Why are you avoiding me, Lars?" Gabriella shouted out loud while running towards him. Larry was very surprised to hear her voice as he thought she was overseas.

"No reason," he replied coldly as he recalled what she had done to him and Joan in the past.

She's tried to hurt Joan countless times, but each attempt ended in failure. Why did she return? What is she up to this time?

"Aww... Why are you being so cold to me, Lars?" Gabriella pouted.

Has she lost her mind or what? Does she not remember what she did? What a joke!

Larry shot her a vicious glare. "Anything else? If not, I'll be on my way now."

However, Gabriella simply stared at him in confusion as she had no idea why he was being so cold to her.

Unbeknownst to Larry, Gabriella had lost a part of her memories.

"Please tell me if I did something to offend you, Lars... I don't want you getting upset like this... I want you to be happy..." She shook his arm as she pleaded with him.

That was the last straw for Larry, and he lashed out at her in response.

"Drop the act, Gabriella! What are you up to this time, huh? Who are you trying to hurt? Me? Or Joan, perhaps?"

Gabriella's eyes began to tear up as she looked at him in bewilderment.

"What are you talking about, Lars? Since when have I ever tried to hurt you? Also, who is Joan? How could I possibly hurt her if I don't even know who she is?" she asked in a trembling voice.

Larry was dumbfounded.

What the hell is going on here? Is she all right in the head? Or is this all just an act?

Suddenly, a young woman ran up to them and grabbed the woman by the arm. "I'm terribly sorry for the trouble Ms. Ward has caused you, sir! Please excuse us!"

"Hold up! What happened to her?" Larry asked the young woman curiously.

The young woman stared at them both and let out a helpless sigh.

"She got into a car accident overseas and lost a part of her memories as a result. It's possible that she may never recover those memories."

I see... That's why she doesn't remember Joan... Ha! Fate sure has a wicked sense of humor! Here I was, worried that she had come back to hurt Joan again, only to find out she doesn't even remember who Joan is! Honestly, I don't know whether to feel relieved about this or feel sorry for her... Oh, well... Everything happens for a reason, so I'll just leave it at that! With that thought in mind, Larry walked away.

"Why don't you give up, Larry? It's pointless for you to struggle anyway!" Dustin said as the two of them sat down inside a café.

He was feeling extremely confident as Norton Corporation would soon fall into his hands.

No matter how hard Larry tried, the shareholders were dead set on selling their shares to Dustin.

"I won't give up," Larry said confidently, sipping on his coffee and staring out the window.

So what if you won't give up? You'll still lose in the end! It's a pointless waste of time and effort!

"What are you trying to achieve, Dustin? Acquire Norton Corporation? And then what, hmm? The company was never yours, to begin with, and it will never be yours to own," Larry said.

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Whatever his reasons are for acquiring Norton Corporation, winning Joan over is not one of them. Should I end up losing everything, I won't let Joan suffer with me even if she's willing to! As such, it's safe to assume that Dustin is simply waging psychological warfare.

"Nothing in particular, really. I just want to see you lose everything and leave Norton Corporation, that's all!" Dustin snarled viciously.

Larry sneered in response and looked away.

Heh... Given what I've been through, he's underestimating me if he thinks he can take me down like this! Even if he does somehow succeed this time, I'll still be able to take it back in the future!

"What are you laughing at, Larry? Aren't you afraid that you're about to lose both your wife and your company?"

After everything I've come across so far, what else is there to be afraid of? Larry took a deep breath and calmed himself down.

They then had a few more exchanges before leaving the café with tension in the air.

Larry knew full well that Dustin had no intention of making any compromises, so he had no choice but to fight that battle with everything he had.

"What is this, Larry?" Caspian exclaimed in shock when he saw the document on his desk.

Larry walked up to him and took a look at it.

What the... This is a divorce agreement! I didn't expect her to actually file for a divorce! Is she really that sick of me? Does she hate me that much?

Larry trembled slightly and felt like his head was about to explode when he saw the divorce agreement on his desk.

"Um... Larry, someone may have brought the wrong document over... Here, give it to me. I'll take care of it," Caspian said as he reached out to take the divorce agreement from Larry.

No... All employees of Norton Corporation are always cautious in carrying out their duties, so there's no way they'd make a silly mistake like this! This won't do... I'll have to ask Joan about this!

"I'll go talk to Joan about this, so you stay out of it." With that, Larry ran out of his office and drove straight home.

Delilah was the only one in the living room when he arrived at the house.

Larry searched all over the place for Joan, but the woman was nowhere to be found.

"She's not in, so you can talk to me instead. Oh, and that divorce agreement you're holding? I was the one who delivered it," Delilah said straightforwardly.

What the hell? What right did she have to do that? Since when have I said anything about getting divorced from Joan?

Larry tried his best to suppress his emotions as he asked with a hint of helplessness in his eyes, "What on earth are you doing, Ms. Young?"

What does it look like I'm doing? I'm helping you two get divorced so you can both live your own peaceful lives without bothering each other! Isn't that a win-win solution?

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"Exactly what you think I'm doing," the older woman replied calmly.

"But, why? Why would you want us to get divorced? We've been through so much just to get where we are today! We can't give up on all that!"

Larry was both anxious and afraid of Joan leaving him.

"And where exactly are you two now? You two get into a fight, and you can't even be bothered to talk to each other anymore? What's the point in staying married, then? Might as well let go of each other and be free from this bullsh*t you call marriage!"

Everything she said was true. Delilah wouldn't have gotten involved if Joan and Larry had kissed and made up after a while, but the couple had been going at it for almost three months. There was no way a relationship could withstand such a huge blow without taking a toll on those in it.

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"Take some time to really think about what I said."

Delilah then walked out of the living room while Larry slumped against the sofa and fell into deep thought.

Am I really in the wrong here? Must I be the first one to apologize?

"Ms. Young, come take a look at this! Will this do?" Joan called out to Delilah in the garden.

"Yeah, that'll do fine! Keep up the good work, and you'll probably be a master at this!" Delilah replied with a smile.

Joan had been thinking of becoming a florist, so she felt excited when Delilah complimented her.

"I've sent Larry the divorce agreement," Delilah brought it up all of a sudden.

Joan froze for a moment, but she quickly regained her composure and continued watering the flowers.

"I see," she mumbled.

Why do I feel like I'm starting to regret this? Was it a mistake to have agreed to the divorce Ms. Young suggested? Hmm... Screw it! Maybe my relationship with Larry really has come to an end, after all...

With that in mind, she dusted the dirt off her clothes and carried on with what she was doing.

"Have you ever regretted your decision?" Delilah asked.

Of course, I have! But, what good would that do? Maybe we simply aren't fated to be together, so why should I regret letting go?

"Nope, I trust you!" Joan replied with a smile.

Delilah's plan was simple. If Larry truly cared about Joan, he would do everything in his power to keep her by his side. If he didn't, then a divorce would still be the best solution anyway.

"Look, Ms. Young! This flower is amazing! I thought it was done for when it began to wilt the other day, but it's blooming now!" Joan exclaimed.

Larry had never expected things to take such a complicated turn.

"Larry, they've already sold him their shares, so you and Dustin are evenly matched right now. As of the moment, there's still one remaining shareholder who has yet to transfer his shares. We have to get it before Dustin does, or Norton Corporation will be lost!" Caspian told Larry anxiously, truly feeling afraid for the first time.

"But no one has ever seen that shareholder, right?" Larry asked while staring out the window with a depressed look on his face.

There's a mysterious shareholder in Norton Corporation that even Dad had never met in his entire life. Norton Corporation urgently required a huge amount of capital for its inception.

That man wrote Dad a letter expressing his willingness to lend a helping hand, and they never contacted each other again after that...

With that thought in mind, Larry slumped against the sofa and sipped on his tea. He hadn't slept well in a few weeks, and it pained Caspian to see Larry in such a haggard state, but the former didn't know how to comfort him.

"Hey, how's it going? Has everything been taken care of?" Jessica asked as she came in through the door.

She knew quite a lot about what was going on in Norton Corporation, so she was able to understand how Larry felt and came to check on him.

"Shh!"

Caspian motioned at her to keep quiet. Things were complicated enough as it is.

Jessica slowly sat down beside Larry and shot him a helpless look.

"Larry, let me know if there's anything I can do to help out. I will be sure to give it my all!"

Caspian smacked his lips in disdain and turned away when he heard that.

Please... What can you possibly do to help? It'll be a miracle if you don't cause us any more trouble!

Jessica gave Caspian a nudge as she shouted at him, "Hey! What's with that attitude of yours? I'm very serious when it comes to getting things done!"

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Frowning, Larry flipped through the documents in silence and fell into a deep thought.

Something about that elusive shareholder from Norton Corporation was bugging him. Since nobody knew of his whereabouts, it was almost impossible to acquire his shares. Apart

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from that, Larry could foresee Dustin blindsiding him. He couldn't let his guard down in the face of such a cunning and manipulative foe.

"Caspian, our options are limited if we don't find that shareholder."

"Yes, sir!" The bodyguard left after he received his orders.

Larry and Jessica sat on the sofa. Unnerved by the silence, she started chattering nonstop, to his annoyance.

"Jessica, you're not young anymore. You lack the demeanor and maturity of women of your age. I really wonder how you are going to cope after you're married," Larry blurted out with great concern.

His words dumbfounded Jessica.

The next moment, a wave of fury surged within her.

"What's the matter with you, Larry? You're criticizing me for trying to cheer you up? I'm really disappointed with you. Where's your conscience?" Jessica refuted in displeasure.

Larry was at a loss for words.

No sh*t! You always appear at the wrong time when I'm busy or I need some a moment to myself.

Regardless of his frustration, there was nothing he could do to Jessica. Caspian was his buddy, and he loved her.

In fact, Larry's extreme tolerance towards her didn't escape Caspian, who was both touched and appreciative for having such an understanding buddy. For Joan, however, the show of affection for another woman was an act of betrayal to herself.

"Alright, thanks for your concern. But, can you go to Caspian? I have something to attend to," Larry tried to coax her.

He's chasing me away again! Jessica pouted unhappily.

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Her displeasure was short-lived due to her easygoing nature. "What do you feel like eating? I'll buy you lunch," she asked Larry eagerly.

"I'm not hungry." It was a flat out refusal.

Jessica shrugged. It's the same response every time.

She knew he was not a fussy-eater. Even though he always turned her down, he would finish whatever she brought for him to fill his stomach. He's so busy he doesn't even have time to go for lunch. He'll starve if I don't feed him.

"Are you leaving now?" Caspian asked the moment she stepped out of Larry's office.

"I'll be back in a while with his lunch."

"Oh... How about me? I'm starving too?"

Jessica rolled her eyes, speechless by his jealousy. What's the matter with this man? How could he forget that I always include him whenever I buy for Larry?

"It's a bit late now. I have to go. See you then." She gestured to him and left at once.

At the main entrance of Norton Corporation, a woman was pacing back and forth in one corner, lost in her thoughts. It was Joan who wanted to talk it out with Larry. She was disappointed to see Jessica exit the building.

I bet Larry must be happy to have her around! Joan clenched her fists, feeling defeated.

Jessica is indeed a caring woman. Look at how she always ensures Larry is taking his meals regularly. She's definitely a better wife for him compared to me!

Forget it. I'd better go back first. She left without another glance.

Honk! Joan froze in shock. A car sped past, almost knocking her down when she was preoccupied with other thoughts.

"Are you alright? Are you hurt?" Jessica dashed toward her and asked anxiously.

Huh? Why is she here? Joan was stunned and looked at her quizzically.

"I was buying lunch, and I saw you here," Jessica explained softly.

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Joan looked at the two lunch boxes in Jessica's hands bitterly. These must be for both Larry and her. How nice of them to have their meals together! As his wife, I don't even get to do that.

"Oh, I-I'm fine. You go on. I need to go now."

Jessica sighed at her vanishing silhouette. My goodness! Both of them are still on bad terms till now. I wonder what issues they're having.

"Here's your lunch." She tossed Caspian one of the lunch boxes.

"Larry, this is yours." Then she added casually, "Oh, I bumped into Joan just now."

Larry looked up at once and waited for her to continue.

"She was almost knocked down by a car just now."

Larry's heart skipped a beat. His face turned pale as he jumped out of his chair.

"What happened after that? Was she hurt?"

"Argh! Since you're so concerned about her, why don't you go back and have a look? I really don't understand what's going through your mind," she grumbled impatiently.

Jessica never doubted Larry's love for Joan, no matter how angry he was.

D*mn their pride! Why can't one of them give in and apologize?

The supermarket was packed as usual. Dustin was occupied in his office while Joan assisted the other employees with the stock check.

Suddenly, she noticed one employee was missing.

"Louis, is anyone on leave today?"

"No. Everyone is here. Why're you asking this?" Louis answered.

Huh? Everyone is here? But that pretty young lady isn't here. Where is she?

"I remember there's a young lady.."

"I know who you mean. Dustin fired her." Louis cut her off.

What happened? Dustin fired her? Is it true? He wouldn't be so ruthless. Even though she is materialistic and stubborn, her work performance is still quite satisfactory. How could he just kick her out of the supermarket?

"Why did Dustin fire her all of a sudden? Has she done anything wrong?" Joan probed.

"Joan Watts, why don't you worry about yourself more instead of the others? Even if you knew about it earlier, what could you have done? Nothing! Don't forget, Dustin's the manager now, and we're all working for him," Louis snapped, rendering her speechless.

He can't just fire anyone like that! I must confront him now!

She put down the things in her hands and walked towards Dustin's office.

"Joan, just mind your own business. Don't stir up trouble!" Louis tried to stop her.

Nothing could hold her back as her rising anger clouded her mind.

Bang! The door to Dustin's office burst open and Joan marched in grimly.

He looked up at her and broke into a smile.

Then he stood up slowly and approached her. "What's going on? Are you angry?" he asked affectionately.

"Why did you fire that young lady?" Joan cut to the chase.

What? How did she find out about this? Dustin turned away to avoid eye contact.

He knew Joan hated it when he dismissed an employee from the supermarket. Furthermore, all of them became very close to each other after working together for quite some time. Needless to say, she hoped they could be colleagues forever.

However, the girl only had herself to blame. If she did her job, he would not have kicked her out without a second thought.

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"Why? You pity her?" Dustin asked.

"Of course! We have worked together for so long. Many of them were here before we came. Now that you have fired one of them, how do you expect the others to feel?" Joan yelled.

A few employees huddled outside the manager's office and whispered among themselves. Their eyes widened in disbelief.

"What's going on? The manager and the supervisor are having an argument?"

"I'm not sure. Will they end up fighting with each other?"

"What are you talking about? Our manager is a gentleman. He won't hit a woman. Stop your wild guess and get back to work!"

Minutes later, they reluctantly went back to their respective tasks.

Dustin was amused by Joan's agitation.

She's letting her emotions cloud her judgement. Again.

"Fine, let me tell you why. She came to my house late one night and threatened to kill herself if I refused to marry her. Instead of pressing charges, I let her off. Besides, I also spoke to the other employees. She wasn't well-liked by her peers and she couldn't blend in. Do you think I should let her continue to work here?" Dustin explained patiently.

So this is the reason! Joan knew she had barked at the wrong tree.

I have wronged him!

"I-I'm terribly sorry. I yelled at you without getting the facts. Please forgive me," she apologized.

Dustin didn't feel offended. He knew she was a kind-hearted and righteous person.

"It's alright. Why don't you buy me dinner tonight to make it up to me?" he leaned closer to her abruptly and teased.

Joan raised her head and chuckled in relief.

"Sure, no problem!" She patted the man's shoulder hard and promised sportingly.

After some small talk, she went back to work.

A worried Louis approached Joan as soon as she came out of Dustin's office.

"Are you alright? Is everything fine?" he asked.

"Yeah, I'm fine."

Phew! I thought the manager would lash out at her. I'm glad nothing happened. Heaving a sigh of relief, he continued with his task.

As dusk fell, the employees called it a day and gradually left for home. Meanwhile, Dustin's eyes were glued to the monitor. Joan sat and waited patiently so as not to interrupt him.

He finally stretched his back and glanced at his watch.

Oh no! I didn't realize it's so late. I hope she's not pissed off with me. He immediately picked up his phone to call Joan, who had dozed off while waiting for him.

To his surprise, Dustin heard her phone ringing outside his office.

He opened the door to see an exhausted Joan sleeping.

He hung up the phone at once, crouched in front of her, and scrutinized her features.

Joan wasn't just beautiful, she was also the most compassionate woman he knew.

After quite a while, she rubbed her eyes and rose from the chair slowly.

"You're done?" She yawned.

"I didn't know you were waiting for me." Dustin scratched the back of his head in embarrassment.

"Of course not. I promised to buy you dinner. Let's go now." Joan gestured to him and walked out at once.

"Joan, wait a minute!" Dustin grabbed her elbow.

She turned and looked at him inquisitively.

Then he darted into his office and came out with a scarf that he had kept hidden like a treasure.

"Put this on. It's too chilly outside." He wrapped it around her neck.

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His gentleness warmed Joan's heart like the morning sun. Nonetheless, she saw her relationship with Dustin as strictly platonic.

"I'm really impressed by how well-prepared you are!" she complimented him with an exaggerated laugh to ease the awkwardness between them.

Little did she know he had specifically prepared the scarf for her.

"How about we go for a pizza? If I'm not mistaken, the pizza joint has just come up with their new menu!"

"Sure, let's go!" Dustin replied gleefully.

Both of them left the supermarket in high spirits and headed for the pizza joint not far from them.

Probably due to the chilly weather, the pizza joint was more packed than usual.

"Waiter, I want to add two appetizers!"

"Waiter, get me the tabasco!"

"Five cans of beer, please!"

The place was crowded, but everyone was having a good time.

"Look, there's a vacant table in the corner. Is it fine for you?" Dustin whispered with concern.

He knew Joan was an introvert who preferred a quieter environment.

"Yeah, let's take the seat." She made a beeline for the table.

Dustin was in a good mood lately. Having Joan to himself like tonight only made things better.

Norton Corporation would be his soon. He wondered what Larry would do when he loses his company. I guess it's only a matter of time before Larry and Joan file for a divorce. Then she will be mine forever! Dustin couldn't wait for his dream to come true.

Contrary to the joyous atmosphere at the pizza joint, loneliness shrouded Larry. Sitting on the sofa in his dimly lit office, the haggard man smoked as he stared sorrowfully at the moon.

He was exhausted and lost.

Feeling helpless was a new experience for Larry. Thinking of Joan was driving him insane. He yearned to seek solace in her warm embrace, but he didn't know where to find her. To make things worse, he had received the divorce papers. His world was falling apart. He knew Delilah wouldn't send him the papers without Joan's consent.

"Larry, you haven't left?" Caspian entered his office and asked softly.

"To where? Home?"

My wife is divorcing me? Do I still have a home? There was a self-deprecating smile on Larry's face.

"Larry, I'm sure Joan did it in a moment of anger. She just needs more time to come around. When she does, everything will be fine. You'll see."

Caspian knew how stressful it was for Larry to resolve the matters in the company. The divorce agreement from Joan was another great blow to him. The challenges had one by one plunged him into a bottomless pit of despair.

"Did you locate the shareholder's whereabouts?" Larry asked solemnly.

In an instant, Caspian stared at the floor, thinking of a way to break the news.

The other shareholders failed to track him down throughout all these years. How could I do it in such a short time? It's mission impossible!

"There's still no sign of him. But Larry, don't worry. We won't give up searching for him. Once we find a lead, I'll notify you immediately." Caspian tried to cheer him up.

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How long do I need to wait? One year? Two? Three years? Perhaps we might never find him again? Larry felt down at the thought.

Caspian had never seen him in such a miserable state. Larry used to be fearless. He would forge ahead even under extreme circumstances. This time, he's really powerless no matter how hard he tries. There's nothing much we can do if the shareholder refuses to show up.

"What's the matter with both of you? It's almost midnight. Do you intend to stay awake the whole night here? Even machines can't operate non-stop. Do you want to end up dying of fatigue? Go back to sleep now!" Jessica came and roared at the men.

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She knew Larry and Caspian were burning the midnight oil in the office.

"Why are you here?" Caspian stared at her in bewilderment.

Jessica rolled her eyes and mocked, "Why can't I be here? What kind of logic is that?" Next, she turned to Larry. "Come on, Larry, go home. No point racking your brain the whole night. It won't change anything. It's better to rest and recharge your mind for the next day. If not, how about buying me a meal?" Her lips lifted into a mischievous smile.

She's nuts! Having meal when it is almost midnight? I thought women are obsessed about keeping slim? This woman is an exception! She isn't afraid of putting on weight and despised by men? Caspian threw Jessica a silent but contemptuous look.

"Mr. Norton, what do you think? We can go to the pizza joint?" she asked excitedly.

Meanwhile, Larry was still chain-smoking. He was too engrossed in his own thoughts to hear a single word. His mind was focusing on locating the shareholder who had disappeared.

Since Larry did not respond, Jessica approached Caspian. "Hey, Caspian, you treat me a meal."

"At this hour? I need to go home to rest now. It's too late. Larry, I'll see you tomorrow." He moved forward slightly and planned to slip away.

"Hey, you can't go home now. Come with me so you can pay for my pizza!" Jessica yanked him aside and pinned him on the sofa.

"No way! I'm not craving for pizza. I haven't slept much lately. Please... let me go! I miss my bed so much." Caspian pouted.

Jessica's eyes lit up.

I never knew he can look so adorable! Oh, he's pouting like a little boy; it really melts my heart! She leaned closer to him to have a better look.

"Hey, Jessica! What are you doing? Are you trying to molest me?" he yelled anxiously and crossed his arms on his chest to protect himself.

Pfft! This man is really a narcissist! Larry is a lot more good-looking than him! She trotted to Larry and stared at him with her big, bright eyes.

"Larry, are you joining us? If you're not going, we will leave without you!"

The men were no match against her persuasiveness, and she dragged them to the car. On the way to the pizza joint, none of them spoke. Caspian, who was driving, felt awkward. Larry stared out of the window, lost in his own thoughts, while Jessica played games on her phone and hummed joyfully.

"Hey, can both of you cheer up? We are heading for a delicious meal, not attending a funeral? Oh, the silence is unbearable! Jessica grumbled.

Life is stressful enough. Why take on more pressure and torture ourselves?

"Mind your words and zip your mouth," Caspian snapped at her.

He knew Larry was bottling his emotions to himself. Instead of speaking to someone, the latter chain-smoked. Caspian was clueless of how stressed up Larry was until he saw the amount of cigarette butts in his office.

"Larry, cheer up. Fine, I'll foot the bill later," Jessica held onto his arm and said coquettishly.

Larry was used to her affections because he treated her like a younger sister all this while. Jessica, too, saw him like an older sibling. Even though she liked Caspian, she found it embarrassing to confess her feelings to him.

"There are other pizza joints nearer to our office. You must be out of your mind to insist on going to the one in the village?" Caspian mumbled in bafflement.

Out of my mind? How dare he say that in my face! Suddenly, a glint of hostility flashed across her eyes.

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"I want it! I want the pizza from the pizza joint in the village!" she exclaimed.

Caspian sighed and shook his head in exasperation.

He knew he would always relent, no matter how unreasonable Jessica's demands were because he loved her.

"Hey, are you okay?" she asked Larry solemnly.

She had never seen him so depressed.

Is he having a fever? She instinctively placed one hand on his forehead and the other on hers.

Nope. His temperature seems normal.

"Larry, please buck up! Are you going to wallow in despair over a minor disagreement with Joan?" she yelled and pounded on his back.

You got to learn to let go! A man should prioritize his career instead. Besides, Larry did nothing wrong.

"Hey. Stop talking for a moment," Caspian warned Jessica as he glanced at Larry.

What? How dare he! She said all that out of her concern for Larry. He was a straightforward man who spoke his mind. It was only natural that he disliked those who beat around the bush.

Little did she know that at that moment, Larry was not only thinking about Joan, the identity of the elusive shareholder also troubled him.

"Hey, stop spouting nonsense! Larry has a lot on his plate recently. Give him a break!" Caspian explained.

Jessica could not believe Caspian was upset with her as he tried to defend Larry. She narrowed her eyes at Caspian in disbelief.

Shouldn't he be supporting me in such situations? How could he defend Larry instead?

The saying bros over hoes seemed to be proven to be true. From the first day she knew both of them, they had a strong mutual understanding between them. They had a relationship that others were envious of, including Jessica.

The car soon arrived at the lively pizza joint.

All the customers were enjoying their pizzas while the boss counted the wads of cash.

The trio didn't know that Joan and Dustin were there, too.

"Would y'all like a private room?" Caspian deliberately asked Jessica.

"Definitely. The private room would be good in case someone gets drunk and embarrasses all of us," she pointed out with sarcasm.

What is she talking about? She's usually the first to get drunk and embarrass herself. Caspian eyed her with disdain, but kept his silence.

"What happened to you? What's with your change in attitude?" she asked loudly while pulling his ear.

"Alright. My apologies. Please stop humiliating me in public!" Caspian whispered in frustration as he turned his head to check his surroundings.

The three of them entered a private room beside the one Joan and Dustin were in.

"Joan, what do you think?" Dustin snacked on some fries.

How else could I think? Joan took Delilah's advice to divorce Larry, gave him space to calm down, and clear his thoughts. Till now, he hadn't called or showed up. Not even once!

"I should let nature takes its course," she muttered.