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"Where's Dad? Why isn't he here yet?" Lucius asked.

As a matter of fact, no one informed Larry about the dinner, so it was unlikely that he would show up.

"Your father is busy today. He couldn't make it," Joan replied.

She knew about the grievance Larry had with Caiden, so she figured it was best not to inform Larry about what was going on.

"Lucius, here you go." Caiden proceeded to place a slice of pizza on the kid's plate.

"Thank you!" Lucius accepted with a smile.

The mood of the dinner seemed to be very lively, but it was mostly due to Lucius and Caiden. Meanwhile, both the women had awkward looks on their faces.

Then, Joan told them that she needed to go to the washroom, leaving her phone behind on the table.

Before she returned, it rang. So, Lucius took a look, picking up the call without a moment's hesitation.

"Hello? Dad? Mom's in the washroom right now." He ate while he spoke.

On the other end of the line, Larry was surprised to hear the child's voice.

He could also hear the hustling and bustling of Lucius' surroundings. "Lucius, where are you?"

"I'm having pizza at the pizza joint with Mom, Grandma, and Mr. Caiden!" Lucius answered innocently.

There's nothing wrong with eating pizza... but why is Caiden with them? A cold glint flickered in Larry's eyes.

"Did your mother drink any alcohol?" he asked.

"Nope. Grandma didn't let her." Lucius' answer gave Larry some relief.

Caiden noticed what was happening and curled his lips.

That scumbag Larry is definitely jealous right now.

After that, the four of them continued their meal as though nothing happened, not knowing what Larry was doing at the moment.

"Head down to the pizza joint and settle the bill for them," Larry exclaimed in his office, stumping the assistant beside him.

"Mr. Norton, which pizza joint are you referring?"

Larry raised his head and looked towards the assistant for a bit before taking out his phone and dialed in a number. At the same time, he gestured for him to leave the office.

"Hey, Caspian. Take a trip to the pizza joint..."

Caspian had been by Larry's side for a long time. Thus, he knew everything that went on with Larry and Joan.

Soon, it got late, but Lucius was still very much indulged in the lively atmosphere.

"Lucius, it's time to go. You have school tomorrow," Joan reminded her son.

"It's alright Mom. I've done all my homework."

Meanwhile, Delilah was getting anxious as she looked at the moon outside.

"Let's go home, Lucius. It's getting late," she spoke. Lucius had never gone against anything Delilah said in the past. But this time, he was clearly unhappy about it.

"It's okay." Caiden patted him on the shoulder. "We can always come here again in the future." After the lot dilly-dallied for about half an hour, they finally left their seats.

"The bill please," Caiden called out to a waiter

"Table six, right? It's already paid for," the manager answered, confusing Caiden.

When did that happen? Did Joan pay for it?

He turned around and looked at her. "Didn't I tell you it's my treat?"

"I never said I was going to pay for it," Joan replied.

With that, their heads turned towards Delilah, who was just beside them.

"It's definitely not me. I'm only here for the free food and drinks," Delilah explained as soon as their gaze met.

Everyone was looking at each other with, suspicious.

"Could it be Dad by any chance?" Lucius asked out of the blue.

That's impossible! Larry was never here!

"Excuse me, can you help me check who was it that paid for our meal?" Caiden asked the manager.

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"It was a Mr. Caspian."

It really was him!

Caiden's blood boiled as soon as he heard that name.

God dammit! Who knew he'd do something like this!

"Alright then. Since Larry has paid for it, let's go home!" Delilah exclaimed and walked out with the child's hand in hers.

"I'm sorry, Joan. I didn't know... " Caiden was at a loss for words.

In fact, he was not the only one who was surprised. Joan was also astonished that Larry would do something like that.

"Dad!" Lucius suddenly called out outside the pizza joint.

He gave Joan quite a shock. What time is it? Why is he here?

"Lucius, did you have fun?" Larry greeted gently and picked him up.

"I did! It would have been even more fun if you were with us." Lucius was elated.

"Alright. Let's go then. Oh, and thank you for accompanying them, Mr. Owens," Larry said after getting Lucius into the car.

"You're welcome," Caiden replied in a clipped tone.

"We'll be on our way then," Joan said before she headed towards the car.

Looking at them all happy made Caiden extremely jealous, giving off a cold vibe.

"You came just at the right time, Larry," Delilah praised him in the car.

Larry smiled and gave Joan a side-eyed stare while driving.

"You're amazing, Dad. You actually knew where we were!" Lucius exclaimed.

Of course! I'm Larry Norton! There's nothing I can't do.

"Where have you been, Caiden?" Noelle shouted from the living room with a coquettish tone.

Caiden eyes widened, dumbstruck. "Why are you here?"

He was sure that she and Jaden left for their hometown. Why did she come back?

"I came to see you of course. Do you miss me?"

"That's not going to happen, so you better stop wasting your time on him," Jaden said as he came down the stairs.

"Jaden! Can't you give me some encouragement instead!"

"He's just stating facts," Caiden chimed in.

Caiden had lost count of the times he rejected the woman in front of him, but Noelle was relentless.

She kept on thinking that, Caiden would be moved by her relentless pursuit one day. She did not know that Caiden's heart had no room for anyone else besides Joan.

"Joan!" A loud greeting stunned her in place.

"Huh? Don't you remember me?" Jake ran towards Joan.

No way! It hasn't been that long, right? He looked at Joan attentively, waiting for her response.

"I remember you. But what are you doing here?" Joan asked in a soft voice.

"I'm here to look for you." Jake smiled.

He's joking, right? What does he want with me? At that moment, a vague uneasiness slowly crept up of Joan.

"Am I not welcomed?" Jake asked.

He was unwelcome, but Joan was worried that he might be there to cause problems.

Nowadays, people were not what they seemed to be. A lot were cruel and merciless yet disguised it under a facade of kindness.

Joan already had a lot on her plate with Caiden and Dustin, so she did not want another man to cause her more trouble.

"Why are you here? Is there something you need?" Joan got straight to the point.

Anyone could hear that she was not pleased to see that man from the way she spoke.

"I'll be living here from now on." Jake smiled.

Suddenly, Joan's mind went blank. It was like she was struck by lightning out of nowhere.

"Is that so?" she muttered.

She was at a loss for words, not knowing what to say to the man before her. Happy? I can't tell him that because I'm definitely not. But I can't say I'm sad either! That'd be too much!

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"Since it's your first day here, I'll treat you to a meal." Joan finally mustered up a reply.

No matter how she put it, there was no reason she should not show some common courtesy, especially if they were to become neighbors.

"Sounds good!" Jake immediately accepted her invitation. He was dying to grab any opportunity to spend time with her.

The two of them went to have a simple meal together at a restaurant nearby before going their separate ways.

As far as Joan was concerned, it was better to distant herself as soon as possible.

Jake, on the other hand, was already planning in his head on how he should approach her.

"Caiden! Your mother wants you to go home and have dinner!" Jaden shouted from the living room.

"I'm not going." Caiden's answer was swift and decisive.

"You have to go back tonight. Aren't you being too cruel? She has been hospitalized for so long but you never visit! You're her son and you'll regret it if something really happened to her!"

Bam! Jaden slammed the door and left.

"Caiden, you should really go home and see how your mother is doing," Noelle advised.

Having heard what she said, Caiden raised his head and stared into the sky outside the window. There was sympathy laced with the hint of hatred in his eyes.

That's true... I've not gone home once since I came back. Am I too ruthless... Fine, I'll go back. What's the worst that could happen?

After Caiden made up his mind, he went home.

"Caiden! You're back! I've missed you so much!" A woman hurried over with a smile, welcoming her son.

Nevertheless, his response was brief and guiet.

From afar, it looked like the living room was rather lively.

Huh? Why are there so many people? Caiden looked around and was surprised.

"My friend came to visit, so I figured I might as well ask them to join us," Olivia explained.

Is that really all there is to it? There was a flash of doubt in Caiden's gaze.

"Come, you're just in time. Dinner was just served," Olivia told him and dragged him straight into the dining room.

"Let me introduce my son, Caiden."

His father, Keith, sat at the side and stared at Caiden with a stern look on his face. He's most probably mad at me for not coming home for so long...

"Let's eat."

However, as soon as Caiden sat down, an awkward silence ensued.

It was because he did not greet his father, Caiden even ignored the lady on the side, as well as her daughter.

In fact, Caiden knew that his mother was indirectly setting him up for matchmaking. I'm not stupid!

"Here. Yelena. Have some of your favorite pork ribs. Try it out." Olivia proceeded to place a piece of meat on the young lady's plate.

"Thank you."

"There's no need for that." Olivia took a glance at Caiden and whispered, "We're all family here."

With that, the shy young lady blushed.

"I'll let Caiden take you out for a walk when we're all done eating," Olivia continued.

"I still have things to do, so I'm leaving as soon as we're done here." Caiden denied bluntly, making it more awkward.

"I'm sure your things can wait. It's not often that Yelena gets to visit us, so please spend some time with her," Olivia spoke into his ears.

"Don't we have a butler? I'm sure he knows the place more than I do." Caiden replied nonchalantly while working away on the food on his plate.

"It's alright, Mrs. Owens. Caiden's a busy man. So I would rather not bother him and walk around on my own," Yelena quickly interjected.

Olivia wanted to say more, but she felt embarrassed and held her tongue.

After that, the meal went on, unpleasant as it may be because Caiden constantly refused his mother's requests and propositions. Caiden did not like others planning out his life. So, he absolutely hated that the family would butt in and pick out a wife candidate for him.

It was clear that Yelena was also a victim of the messed-up marriage arrangement their families abide by.

"Caspian, how is Jessica now? Better?" Larry asked, sitting on the sofa.

"She's fine. It was a just a bump."