

## Departure with a Belly Chapter 286

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Chapter 286

“So, you just didn’t want to waste food? You don’t like hamburger buns?”

Nathan looked a little in disbelief. Who in their right mind would choose hamburger buns as their favorite food?

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“I see. Sorry, Nathan. I’ll finish the bun myself next time.” The thought of having to eat the buns made the girl cringe. She didn’t just hate the buns; she disliked the greens too. Nathan would eat them every time, and she thought that was because he liked them. The kids were talking about hamburgers, and Alaric listened in. In the end, he burst into laughter. “If none of you like it, I can help you out.” Even though I don’t like it either. Hamburgers were nothing but junk food for Alaric, though a lot of kids and young people loved it.

If Terrance had the power of a certain esper in a certain anime, he would have heard that thought, and he would scoff. Sir, you’re young yourself too.

The kids looked at him. Nathan was still cautious, and he didn’t say anything to the proposal. Nicole, however, was a different beast altogether. The girl was either great at socializing, or she just didn’t have a sense of danger, and she said, “Yay, yay. That’s a promise, Mr. Night. Nathan and I will finish the meat, while you take the buns and

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greens.”

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Alaric was about to say yes, until he heard the last part of the sentence, and he frowned. “Why don’t you eat your veggies?” It’s fine she doesn’t eat buns, since that’s not a good thing anyway, but veggies?

“Aw, but veggies are so bad.”

“Still have to eat it, or you’re going to miss out on some important nutrients,” he said

without thinking. He was just worried about his kids.

And then Nicole pouted. "You're so like Mommy, Mr. Night."

Alaric paused for a moment. Ever since he came back the day before, he hadn't contacted her, and he didn't even text her as Silent Night. He was annoyed that she avoided him just to text Silent Night, and he felt miffed. Disappointment fell upon him, and his emotions took him for a whirl. A long while later, he smiled. "Is that so? Your mother's right."

"Still not going to eat my veggies," said Nicole, then she played with Zack. "Let's go." Zack liked the girl, so he followed her right away. Once they were gone, Nathan frowned. When he noticed Alaric staring at him, he looked at the man. Then Alaric

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patted his head. "Go. I'll come back at lunchtime." Nathan was about to say something, but Alarie said, "Don't worry. As long as I'm here, I won't let you eat any more hamburger

Nathan blushed. "I don't care." And he ran off.

Alaric smiled. A while later, he took on the mantle of Silent Night and texted Victoria. Victoria got the message before she went into the meeting room, and she whipped her phone out.

Sorry, I had something to do yesterday, so I couldn't make it."

He didn't go, and neither did I. We both apologized, so... Victoria couldn't stay angry, since she had no right to, so she asked, 'Do you need the cash? I can transfer the money online

She thought Silent Night would say no, but he agreed, then he gave her an account number and a name. "Hopson Anderson?" He's an Anderson, huh? Victoria transferred the money into that man's account, then she told him about it and entered the meeting room.

Alaric checked the transaction record and told Terrance about it. Terrance told Hopson,  
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and Hopson gave him the money. Even though he'd love to take the money for himself, he could feel that something bigger was happening. He'd been working for years, and even though he wasn't smart enough to be in management, he could still realize a few things.

The Cadogans never showed up in this city, making it impossible for anyone to hook up

with them. Suddenly, a member of that family showed up and helped him and his wife change jobs, move houses, and send his kid to the best school in the city. There must be a reason for that, but he didn't ask, nor did he need to. He had faith that someone like Alaric wouldn't harm him. All he had to do was enjoy his life.

Terrance then transferred the money into Alaric's account. The money Victoria gave him had to go through a few hoops before he could get it. It wasn't much, but Alaric still stared at it for a long time.

Terrance then said, "Time to go, sir."

Because of this event, he'd been delaying work. Fortunately, Jasea had a branch company, so he could work there. Alaric snapped out of it and left with Terrance.

Noon came, and Alaric bought a cake, some hamburgers, and the snacks the retail

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assistant recommended. She said that kids loved it. There were fries, popcorn, and  
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tarts. All were things Alaric hadn't eaten before. He thought they smelled okay, though. It was recess, and the kids went to the cafeteria for food. Only Nathan, Nicole, and Zack were waiting for someone. When Nicole caught a whiff of her favorite snacks, her eyes shone, and she tugged on Alaric's sleeve. "Mr. Night." She didn't say she wanted to eat, but the look on her face told Alaric what he needed to know.

Alaric felt like she resembled someone. Victoria. She was just like her mother when she was little. Victoria would never tell him what she wanted to eat. She would just tug on his sleeve and stare at him.

Alaric was silent for a long time, and Nicole looked at him curiously. "Mr. Night?"

Alaric snapped out of it and gently asked, "What would you like to eat?"

"Cake? Nah, I want a hamburger."

Alaric whipped out the food and laid it out on the table. Noticing that everything was her favorite, Nicole gasped in delight. "Thank you, Mr. Night!"

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*Compared to his sister, Nathan looked calm, while Zack was gulping. He didn't come from a poor family. His parents made good money, but most of that was used to cover*

*the mortgage, so snacks like these were a luxury for him. He could only have them once a month or so.*

*Nicole took a hamburger and gave it to Zack. Zack was going to take it, but he remembered something, so he stopped and looked at Alaric. Even though Terrance told him to call Alaric his uncle, he stopped calling him that after that one time in the morning. He had a feeling this man was fierce. If he toed the line, this man would whoop him.*

*She noticed what he was doing, and she looked at Alaric too. Alaric's smile froze. Why are you looking at me? You need my permission to eat? What will the kids think of me? Terrance, you did a sh\*t job at teaching him what to do..*

*"Mr. Night?" she asked.*

*Alaric snapped out of it and looked at Zack. "Did you say thank you?"*

*Zack realized what he must do. He quickly took the hamburger and whispered a thank you. Nicole didn't think much about it, since Victoria told her that she should say thank*

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*you if she were to receive anything from anyone. She took another hamburger and picked out the buns for Alaric without missing a beat.*

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*Nathan quickly stopped her. "That is rude, Nicole."*

*Nicole looked at him, bemused. "But he said he'd help us with the buns."*

*I... Nathan had no idea how to explain things to her. Maybe he was just fooling around.*

*There's no way he would help us. We haven't even talked that much.*

*Just when Nathan was about to take the buns, someone else took them, and the kids.*

*looked at Alaric.*

*Alaric smiled. "I made a promise, so give this to me. I'm getting hungry anyway."*

*Nicole smiled. "Told you he'd do it." She was about to pick out the veggies too, but*

*Alaric frowned.*

*"You can't pick out the veggies."*

*Nicole wouldn't listen, so Alaric held her wrist. The moment he did, he felt something*

*squeezing his heart, and he froze. The girl's wrist was as soft as a marshmallow. He*

*had a feeling if he even held it a bit tighter, her hand would break. A few moments later,*

*he pulled his trembling hand back and sternly said, "You can skip on the bun but not the*

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*greens."*

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*Nicole pouted and asked Nathan to help her out, but Nathan ignored that. "Mr. Night is right. You need your veggies. And fruits."*

*"You're a meanie," Nicole grumbled and went back to her hamburger.*

*After that meal, Nathan was no longer on as much guard around Alaric. He did take the food Alaric bought him, after all.*

*Alaric cleaned things up and told Zack, "I won't be coming after school. The driver will take you home. You still remember him, don't you?"*

*Zack nodded.*

*"Then, that's the car you're going with."*

*"Okay, uncle."*

*Alaric said goodbye to the children and left the school. Once he was out, his face fell,*

*and he covered his mouth, a frown furrowing his forehead.*

*Terrance quickly handed him a cup. "Sir, your stomach is still healing. Junk foods are going to hurt you."*

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*Alaric took the cup and sipped from it, then Terrance handed a few tablets.*

*Alaric looked at the tablets, but he didn't take them.*

*"Sir, you need this. What if you get too sick to see the kids?"*

*Convinced, Alaric took the tablets and gulped them down, much to Terrance's delight.*

*Cool. He never wanted to take his tablets. Thought he could handle things. Now that there's a reason to convince him to take his meds, things will be a lot easier.*

*After taking his medication, Alaric leaned on the car seat to catch a break. Still, his stomach felt queasy. Ugh, junk food. Next time I'm buying something else for the kids.*

*4/6*

*"You don't look good, sir. I think you should stay in the hospital for a bit longer. Your last bout was serious."*

*"No," said Alaric. "I can handle this."*

*"But..."*

*"But what? Medication and healthy eating aren't enough?"*

*"They are, but..." Terrance was just worried about him.*

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*"Then shut up and drive."*

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*Victoria clocked off early to get her car. Once she did, she went to pick up the kids. Even though she could still drive okay, the traffic here was still a bit too much for her comfort, so she slowed down while she drove. When she came to school, she saw a boy standing with her kids.*

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*The boy was standing beside Nicole, blabbering on and on like he could talk forever. A new friend? Victoria stopped the car and opened the door. Since she drove that day, he*

*kids didn't see her until she came near them.*

*"Mommy!"*

*Victoria approached the children.*

*"Zack, this is my mommy."*

*Oh. They seem to be best friends already.*

*Zack looked at Victoria and meekly said, "Hello, miss."*

*"Hello." Victoria gave him candy.*

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*Zack froze, but Nicole quickly stuffed the candy into his hand. "Take it. We're friends now, so don't be a stranger."*

*Nathan looked on and pursed his lips, while Zack sheepishly took the gift. "Thank you, miss."*

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*"Mommy." Once she gave Zack the candy, Nicole said, "He's Mr. Night's relative's kid. Mr.*

*Night took him to school today.”*

*Victoria paused for a moment. “He’s Mr. Night’s relative’s kid?”*

*“Yeah.”*

*Oh, no wonder everything feels like a coincidence. This might be it. She knew he must be a famous man in Jasea, judging by how much he donated, and this school was the best one in town. Of course, he would take his relative’s kid here. Still, the only odd thing is that he wants to see me no matter what.*

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*Victoria looked at the boy and asked, “What’s your name, boy?”*

*“Z–Zack. Zack Anderson.”*

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*Zack Anderson? Same last name as the guy I gave the money too. Must be really close.*

*“Who’s the guy who took you to school? What’s your relationship with him?”*

*Zack knew what to answer. Terrance told him about it. “He’s my uncle.”*

*Is that so? Explains the same last name. She asked, “Will your uncle pick you up?”*

*Zack shook his head. “He’s busy, but his driver will pick me up.” Zack still remembered what Alaric told him. He was usually forgetful, but Alaric was a scary man, so he wouldn’t forget what Alaric told him.*

*“When’s the driver coming?”*

*“N–No idea.”*

*Victoria wasn’t keen on the idea of gossiping, but she was curious about Silent Night, so she asked, “Why don’t I take you home?”*

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*An expensive car came from behind, and a bespectacled driver quickly came to Zack. Just when he was about to say something, he saw Victoria and froze for a moment, then he bowed and greeted her. "Hello, Miss Selwyn."*

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*Victoria paused for a moment, then she looked at the driver, surprised. "You know me? Who are you?"*

*The driver's heart sank, Sh\*t. Alaric had been working on this matter for a while, and he knew what he should do to help out, but when he saw Victoria, the only thing he remembered was that the boss thought greatly of this woman, so he bowed to her instinctively. And that's going to cost me a lot. "I..." Just when the driver was almost out of excuses, he noticed the kids standing beside Victoria, and an excuse came to him. "You were standing with the kids, so I thought you might be their mother."*

*Victoria looked at the kids, and she didn't buy the story. "Is that so?"*

*The driver was a little sheepish. "Yeah. I don't know your name, but since the kids are named Selwyn, I made the assumption they took after your name. If that's not it, I apologize."*

*"It's alright."*

*"I'll be taking the boy now."*

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*"Sure. Goodbye."*

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*The driver quickly left with Zack, while Victoria saw them off. After they were gone, she asked the kids to go with her. While she was buckling herself up, she was reminded of*

*the excuse the driver gave her. It sounded reasonable, but her gut told her things were more than met the eye. He knows me, and I know why. We've never met, nor have we ever talked, but his driver knows my name. He must have looked into my case. This is why I hate this circle sometimes. Whenever someone wants to know someone, they wouldn't meet up with the person themselves. Instead, they just tell their underlings to make a file for them.*

*These people could easily find out everything about her if they wanted to. She had no secrets to hide, but she hated that someone was looking into her case. When she came back home, she told the kids to do their homework, then she texted Silent Night. 'Mr. Anderson, my kids told me they've met you.'*

*Silent Night didn't answer her at first. Ten minutes later, she checked her phone, and there was still no message, yet she was in no hurry. The ball was in his court now, and he must answer eventually. She texted, 'Your boy was there too.' The nanny called her, and Victoria said something. She was about to tuck her phone away and leave, but it beeped. Silent Night answered immediately.*

*'That's not my boy.'*

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*Victoria was surprised that he answered so quickly, and she cocked an eyebrow. He replied instantly? So, he must've seen my text and chose to ignore it. Why? What's he*

*4/6*

*hiding? Victoria narrowed her eyes, and her interest in this man was piqued. What is he trying to do?*

*Silent Night added, 'That's my relative's kid. I take care of him from time to time.'*

*Victoria smirked. 'Is that so? You seem to be a busy man.'*

*Silent Night was quiet for a while, then he texted, 'Yeah. I've been busy lately.'*

*'Do you have time now?'*

*Alaric was about to get himself a glass of warm water, but he narrowed his eyes and dashed that thought. Then he asked, 'Why?' It's late, and she asks a stranger if he has time?*

*'There's something I want to ask you.'*

*Is that so? Alaric's anger subsided. 'Ask away.'*

*'You haven't answered my question. You've seen my children, haven't you?'*

*Silent Night was quiet for a while, then he texted, 'Obviously.'*

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*Obviously? Victoria's face fell. 'So obviously you know I'm a Selwyn.' She knew that if this man was quick to temper, then he would either fire that driver who greeted her or make his life hard. Sorry, but there are things I must make clear, and someone has to take the fall for me.*

*Silent Night was surprised by the answer. A long silence later, he texted, 'What do you mean?'*

*'Oh, I just think you should meet up with me if you want to know more about me, Anderson.'*

*Mr.*

*5/6*

*Gah, so that's what she's getting at. The driver must've let something slip. That fool, he cursed, but he didn't show it. Alaric had no idea what the driver told her, but the fact she*

*still called him Mr. Anderson told him that she had no idea about his real identity. Must be offended because she thinks I investigated her.*

*A while later, he asked Terrance for advice.*

*Terrance curtly said, "Apologize."*

*"Apologize?"*

*"Yeah. If you don't do that, it's going to seriously hurt your reputation game with the*

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*kids."*

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*He hung up and considered that for a moment, then he texted Victoria, 'I'm sorry. I didn't.*

*mean to offend. I just asked around about the kids' parents.'*

*Asked around? 'And who did you ask?'*

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Victoria didn't expect him to apologize so quickly.

'The school's staff

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Victoria paused for a moment. It's normal he has someone he knows in the school, and if they see him talking to the kids, they'd probably bring up the conversation about their parents. But everyone at school thinks Bane is the kids' father. Does he know that? If he does, then why does he want to meet up with me?

The more she thought about it, the weirder this affair seemed. Things aren't that simple, but I'm not going to ask more questions. First, I need to get him off my tail. She texted, I see. Then that's all I have to ask. Good night."

That's all? Alaric frowned and pursed his lips. He grew up with Victoria, and he knew her too well. If she had any suspicion about anything, she would never leave it unanswered just like that. The fact she dropped it meant she had something else in mind, so she wanted him to let his guard down.

If it were someone else, Alaric couldn't have cared less about what they thought. They could think whatever they wanted to, but not when it came to Victoria. He quickly called Terrance and told him to lay some groundwork.

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After Victoria took the kids to school the next day, she didn't leave immediately. Instead, she followed them into the school.

The teachers loved the twins since they were nice kids. The moment Victoria went into the school, a teacher walked up to her. "Miss Selwyn. Taking the kids to school again?"

Victoria nodded. "Hello, Ms. Jameson. I'd like to talk to you about my kids."

Ms. Jameson asked the kids to get into their classroom, then she turned to Victoria.

"Ask away, Miss Selwyn." It was normal for parents to ask about their children.

"I heard my kids made a new friend. Zack Anderson, is it?"

"Yes. He's a new student at our school."

"A new student?"

"Yes. His uncle took him here." Ms. Jameson looked a little red when she mentioned Zack's uncle. It lasted barely a moment, but Victoria noticed it.

Hm... She cocked her eyebrow. "Who is that boy's uncle, Ms. Jameson? My kids have lived overseas for some time, and they just came back to the country, so I'd like to know

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more about their friend's family."

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"Ah, that's understandable." Ms. Jameson nodded. Some families were like that. If their kids' friend came from a good family, they would try to build a connection through the little ones.

Anything could happen in this prestigious school. "But I do not know much

about his uncle. Still, judging from his looks, he's no commoner."

Yeah, that narrows it down by... nothing at all. Still, judging from her reaction just now, he must be really handsome.

"He gets along well with your kids too. They had lunch together yesterday."

Victoria paused for a moment. "They had lunch together?" I must have been thinking

too much yesterday and forgot to ask the kids. I can't believe they didn't tell me something that important.

"Yes. Zack's uncle bought some food and came to see the boy, and your kids went with him. Zack's uncle didn't mind them, so we didn't say anything about it."

Victoria asked a few more questions, but she gained no useful answer, so she gave up asking. Everything seems fine, but for some reason, something feels off. Something is

wrong with Zack's uncle. Something is wrong with this whole affair. She told Summer about it on the way to work, but Summer didn't think much about it.

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"You might be reading too much into this."

"Really?"

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"Even if he did look into your background, it's possible because everything that happened to you two seemed too big of a coincidence, so he got interested and looked into your case."

Really? A moment of silence later, Victoria blurted, "That sounds like something straight out of a TV drama."

"Maybe because art imitates life? He's rich and powerful. What does he want from you?"

I know we both know that. There's only one thing men want, and it's disgusting."

Victoria was silent again. She had no other answer for Silent Night's actions anyway. After all, she wouldn't approach a man if she didn't have a goal in mind. Well, one guy was an exception. Was. I won't do anything like that again.

"Either he wants the snu snu, or you're reading too much into this."

Summer was still blabbering on and on, and Victoria was about to say something, but she heard a man ask, "What are you doing?" The voice was cool and stern. Summer's boss.

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"Nothing. Just calling a partner, that's all."

"In the staircase? If I didn't know better, I'd think you're up to something."

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"Hey, this is my quirk, alright? I can call them wherever I want, even if it's in the loo. Not like you can do anything about it."

Ah, lovers' quarrel. Victoria smiled. "Talk to you later." And she hung up. Victoria started considering the possibility Summer told her. If he looked into my case out of curiosity, then all is fine, but what if he has something else in mind? I'm a single mother of two. If someone is after me, then... What can I do? Perhaps I can ask him out and see what he's up to, and I will know what he looks like.

She made up her mind, and then it was time to pick her kids up from school, but Ms. Jameson whispered, "Miss Selwyn, Zack's uncle came again, and your kids shared a meal with them."

What? Victoria was a little embarrassed. I've taught my kids to be better than that. They can't just take advantage of someone else's kindness. Okay, Nicole is one thing, but even Nathan?

Before they went home, Victoria stopped her car at the roadside and sternly asked, "What happened? Why'd you ask for your friend's food when the school has enough for you? I demand an explanation, kids."

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Realizing she'd been naughty, Nicole hung her head low and poked her fingers together.

"Sorry, Mommy. I was a bit greedy."

Nathan couldn't blame Zack's uncle, since he did treat the kids to nice food. Victoria couldn't believe Nathan would say nothing too, and she laughed mirthlessly. "You were being grubby too, Nathan?"

Grubby? Nathan blushed. "No, Mommy. I..."

Victoria sighed. "What's up with you two? I told you never to take anything from strangers."

"But you said we're friends with Zack, and you gave Zack candy too even when you were a stranger to him."

I... The girl has a point. If I see Zack's uncle as a stranger to the children, then I'm also just a stranger to Zack. A moment of silence later, she said, "I'm sorry. I should have phrased that better."

Nicole quickly said, "No problem, Mommy. I'm not angry at you."

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"Sounds like someone's expecting a thank you, hmm?"

"Ah, you're welcome."

Victoria patted her head, and the look on her face changed. "But taking food from your friend two days in a row is still a bad look. Care to explain?"

Again? Nicole felt a little nervous, but she said, "M-Mr. Night isn't a stranger, Mommy." Isn't he a stranger?

Silent Night had been there with the kids for a long time, though they hadn't seen him once. He did give them a lot of gifts on LIVE. Still, the affection they had for him was bursting at the seams. If they saw him, they would love him.

Nathan said, "He's nice to us, Mommy."

"Elaborate, please."

Nicole quickly raised her hand. "He helps me with the hamburger buns. Eats them for me!"

What? Victoria thought she heard it wrong, but then Nathan nodded.

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"That's true, Mommy."

Oh, so that's how it is. They took his side just because he helped them with their hamburger buns? But that's odd. He'd help someone else's kids out with the food they don't like? Who'd do that?

"Mr. Night is really nice to me." Remembering something, Nicole covered her mouth and chuckled. "And he's really handsome too."

"He's handsome?"

"Why don't you marry him so I can have a daddy?"

The look on Victoria's face changed. "What are you talking about?"

Nicole poked her fingers together and pouted. "I don't have a Daddy anyway, and Mr. Night is nice to me and Nathan."

Victoria poked her daughter's head. "Oh, what are you thinking? He might just be nice to you because you're cute. Doesn't mean he wants to be your dad."

And Nicole put on a puppy-eye look. "So, you're saying I'm not good enough? Is that why he doesn't want to be my daddy?"

Nicole... My \*\*\*, she twists my answer into the interpretation she likes, huh? "That's not what I mean. I mean, he might have a wife and kids too."

"I see." Nicole nodded, but she quickly added, "But what if he's single? Can he be my daddy then?"

What's going on with you, Nicole? Bane was also nice to her, but she never asked Victoria to make him her father. Silent Night had just spent a few days with them, and she was already trying to make him her dad. Why? Because he helped them finish the food they don't like? Victoria was shocked. "Nicole, tell me the truth. Did Mr. Night say something to you?" Why else would she have that thought?

"What do you mean, Mommy?"

"Um, something like he wants to be your dad?"

Nicole shook her head. "No. I want him to be my daddy."

"Why?"

"Because he's nice to me and Nathan."

Victoria blurted, "But Mr. Bane was nice to you too." And she regretted that. She

shouldn't have used Bane as a comparison, since she did reject his advances.

Fortunately, the kids were too innocent to think too much about that question, and Nicole blurted, "But Mr. Night is hotter than Mr. Bane."

Wut? Nicole, I didn't take you as a girl who'd judge someone by their looks, so why now?

She then calmed down and thought about that answer, and she found herself shocked.

Bane was handsome and very well-built. And he was the leader of a powerful company, so not many people were better than him. And Nicole thinks Zack's uncle is hotter than Bane?

Victoria looked at Nathan. "Nathan?"

Nathan had been listening in silence. When Victoria looked at him, he looked at her as well. "Yes, Mommy?"

"Is it true, what she said?"

Nathan had no idea what his mother was asking, but he recalled the last part of the conversation, and he nodded.

I see. If even Nathan says that, then this must be true. And then she was reminded of Zack. Particularly his face. She wasn't trying to attack anyone, but if Zack's uncle was

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really his uncle, then Zack should be a really handsome boy. However, Zack just looked like a normal kid, and he was timid when he was met with strangers. Guess I should set this aside for now. "Nicole, don't ever tell Mr. Night about your ideas and opinions of him, understand?"

"Why?" Nicole was confused. "He's a really nice guy, Mommy."

Victoria had no idea how to explain it to the girl. She just told Nicole to listen to her and keep quiet, then she turned to Nathan. "Keep an eye on her, Nathan. Make sure she doesn't blabber to Mr. Night, alright?"

"Yes, Mommy."