

ABANDONED 391

Chapter 391

Roxanne meant it when she said she would treat Jonathan to a meal.

That very night itself, she booked a room at a restaurant and sent him a message to inform him.

Jonathan agreed to meet her on the weekend. He then sent Lucian a message and asked if he would be joining them.

In any case, the meal was a gesture of appreciation from Roxanne. Since Lucian also lent a hand, it was only right that he attended the dinner.

On Lucian's end, he frowned and hesitated when he saw Jonathan's message.

If he made an appearance, Roxanne might make a run for it.

Just as he was pondering on it, Jonathan sent another message: Dr. Jarvis is giving me a treat to thank me. Although she isn't aware that you have helped, I don't see why you can't enjoy a treat from her too.

As Lucian read the message, his gaze darkened as he replied after a long while: Let's go together then.

Jonathan raised his brows when he saw the reply. He could not wait to see what might happen during the weekend.

Judging from the way Roxanne and Lucian behaved, they must have had some kind of conflict.

Furthermore, with Sonya getting in between them, their relationship must have been difficult of late.

He wondered what might happen when they actually met each other that weekend for dinner.

The night of the dinner came, and Roxanne arrived at the restaurant ten minutes earlier.

Just as she entered the private room, she saw two men sitting in there.

Jonathan was talking to Lucian. When they heard her enter, both men turned and looked in her direction.

Getting to his feet, Jonathan greeted with a smile, "Dr. Jarvis."

Roxanne nodded in acknowledgment. However, she started panicking when she saw the man sitting next to Jonathan.

In that instant, all she wanted was to leave.

Then again, it would make her look awkward.

Roxanne stood at the door and did not know what to do.

On the other end, Lucian was sitting in the private room with a deadpan expression. He stared at Roxanne like a beast targeting its prey.

In that instant, the atmosphere of the room became very tense.

Noticing something was amiss, Jonathan bumped Lucian on his arm discreetly before explaining to Roxanne with an innocent smile, "When I got here, Lucian has just finished his appointment, so I invited him along since all of us know one another. Dr. Jarvis, you don't mind, do you?"

Outwardly, he seemed to be seeking Roxanne's permission. However, in truth, Roxanne did not have a choice.

Since Lucian was already there, it would not be nice if she asked him to leave.

Furthermore, Jonathan had no idea about them. If she showed an aversion toward Lucian, Jonathan might start asking questions.

Roxanne had no wish for anyone to probe her about what had transpired between her and Lucian.

The two men did not know what was on her mind; they only saw her dimmed expression. Noticing that there was no response from her, the two men exchanged glances.

At that moment, Jonathan regretted his decision to bring Lucian along. He realized that it might have been too abrupt. I hope I don't cause more problems between the two of them...

With the same deadpan expression on his face, Lucian got up and said, "Since Dr. Jarvis is here, I won't disturb the two of you."

With that, he was about to leave.

It was only then that Roxanne returned to her senses and uttered, "Wait. You're a friend of Mr. Queen, Mr. Farwell, so you're always welcome. Please take a seat and join us for dinner."

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Ignoring their responses, Roxanne proceeded to sit down in front of Jonathan.

When Jonathan saw that Lucian was still standing there, he stated quickly, "Lucian, since Dr. Jarvis doesn't mind, join us. Recently, Dr. Jarvis' research institute has encountered some problems. You may be able to help her!"

Lucian merely frowned before sitting down.

Since Roxanne did not run away upon seeing him, he decided to stay on as well.

However, Roxanne acted as if Lucian was not there after inviting him to join them. When the dishes were served, she raised her glass and remarked, "Thank you for helping me out with the herb suppliers, Mr. Queen."

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Jonathan did not make a big deal out of it. Clinking glasses with her, he re welcome, Dr. Jarvis. I'm not the only one who has helped you with regard to this issue."

Upon hearing that, Roxanne frowned, as she did not understand what he meant.

Jonathan was about to say more when someone glared at him.

Sensing Lucian's stare, Jonathan acted as if nothing happened and changed to another topic. "If your research institute isn't that great, those herb suppliers won't be bothered with me. So, I think you have yourself to thank. Your abilities are outstanding."

Roxanne smiled when she heard that. "Have the herb suppliers come to a decision yet? If necessary, I can speak with them personally."

After all, they would be working with her research institute even though they were doing that as a favor to Jonathan.

She would be the best person to explain the situation at the research institute.

However, Jonathan shook his head. "There will be no need to. A few of them have already agreed to cooperate with your research institute. However, you will still need to discuss the business proposal with them in detail."

In other words, the deal had been sealed. All she needed to do now was to discuss the proposal with the herb suppliers.

Seemingly pleased, Roxanne let out a sigh of relief. The issue with the herb suppliers had been bothering her for a long time. She could finally relax.

The moment she resolved the issue for the research institute, she could relocate overseas with Archie and Benny without any worries.

No one would ever give her any problems again.

With that thought in mind, Roxanne subconsciously turned to look at Lucian.

However, she met his unfathomable gaze, and it startled her.

Lucian had yet to start eating. In fact, he had been listening to their conversation all the while.

Since they were talking about business, he wanted to see Roxanne's reaction.

He realized that she gradually relaxed as the discussion about the research institute went on.

That was when his eyes dimmed. Once again, Roxanne had been under immense pressure, and he was not aware of it.

When Roxanne turned to look at him, he failed to look away in time.

Their gazes met for a long time before Roxanne returned to her senses. Clenching her fists hard, she averted his gaze.

Her heart skipped a beat when she thought of the way Lucian looked at her.

The notion of her going abroad made her glance at Lucian,

But why was he looking at me?

When Roxanne retracted her gaze, Lucian did the same, albeit unhappily.

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Jonathan noticed the way they looked into each other's eyes and had the sense to say nothing.

Only after they retracted their gazes did he smile and say to Roxanne, "Those herb suppliers that I have contacted only have branch offices in Horington, but they should be able to provide a consistent flow of supply to your research institute. Is that all right with you, Dr. Jarvis?"

Pulling herself out of her reverie, Roxanne put on an appropriate smile. "Since they are introduced by you, I am confident of their capabilities. Furthermore, a small research institute like ours won't be requiring lots of herbs. The branch offices should be able to satisfy our demands."

Raising his brows, Jonathan uttered, "It may be small now, but with you around, who knows what may happen in the future?"

Roxanne smiled and did not respond. Instead, she asked, "What is the plan for the business proposal with those herb suppliers?"

Right now, all she wanted was to resolve the issue before Sonya could react.

Once she settled the supply issue and left the country, she would have nothing to do with the research institute. That way, Sonya would not make things difficult for them again.

Jonathan answered her query, "Their main offices are in Summerbank. It's best that you go there in person whenever you're available, Dr. Jarvis."

Hearing him, Roxanne agreed in a heartbeat, "I can go there anytime. Once they confirm the time, please inform me."

Jonathan nodded.

Once the discussion regarding business was over things were a bit awkward in the private room.

Jonathan began to panic when he looked at the two of them.

Although Roxanne did not chase Lucian away, the both of them had not spoken a single word to one another.

In the end, Jonathan decided to help them.

"Lucian, how has Essie been for the past two days?" asked Jonathan innocently as he took a mouthful of food.

Both Lucian and Roxanne's expressions changed when they heard that.

Not expecting Jonathan to mention Estella out of the blue, Lucian instinctively glanced at Roxanne, only to see she was busy eating. Furrowing his brows, he replied unhappily, "She's fine, but her mood has been unstable. James has been coming to see her quite frequently."

Ever since Estella knew that Roxanne planned to relocate to another country, it had been bothering her. Even though Estella was trying her best to get well, her mood swings were still

evident.

Estella had become like that because of Roxanne. Yet, the latter did not seem to care about her condition.

At that thought, the temperature around Lucian dropped gradually.

The moment Roxanne heard Jonathan mention Estella, she tried her best to keep calm and not ask about the girl's condition.

Upon hearing Lucian's reply, she felt even guiltier.

Roxanne was aware she was the cause of Estella's mood swings, but she still said those harsh words to the latter.

Essie must hate me very much now...

Once again, Jonathan spoke. "What exactly happened? Essie's condition has been stable for quite a while now. In fact, I thought she was getting better. Before we can celebrate the good news, her condition worsens again. At this rate, how is Essie ever going to make a full recovery?"

As he was saying that, Jonathan cast a glance at Roxanne, who was sitting in front of him.

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All the mention of Estella's condition, Roxanne heart clenched. Yet, she couldn't show it in front of Lucian,

Just when she was determined to leipni indifference, Jonathan aborty tumical the subject to her "I remember Essic like you lou back when you came to rent my grandfather, Dr. Jarvis I wonder if her condition will improve it she spends more time with you."

Alier saying that he nonchalantly added, "I was the first time I have ever seen her showing such Giver for someone else that I was shocked them." Roxanne's hand lightened around the fork in de hand. She didn't know how to tell him that she was the reason for listella's gravanced condition At the side, Lucian agreed with Jonathan and stable at her with lirim look in his eyes,

In the past, she'd relent as long as I brought up Essie's torchee. But this time, it's painfully clear that she has already hardened her heart to it all.

Silence reigned at the dining table, and Roxanne could distinctly sense the women's gazes on her. It was as though they were both forcing her to respond.

Verily, she had no idea how the meal turned into such a crisis.

A long while later, she forcefully composed herself. Then, she lifted her eyes calmly and said to Jonathan, "I'm also very worried about Essie's condition, but I don't think I have that much influence over her. In terms of keeping her company, I feel that Ms. Pearson is far more suited to do so. After all, they're going to be mother and daughter in the future."

As her words rang out, Jonathan was inexorably stunned,

He instinctively wanted to refute that, for she was Estella's biological mother despite Aubree wanting to be Estella's stepmother,

However, he then abruptly realized that she had no inkling about it.

At that thought, words eluded him, and he didn't quite know how to reply to her. He glanced at the man beside him in embarrassment,

The instant Lucian heard Roxanne's response, his gaze darkened, and his lips curved into a smirk. "Ms. Jarvis is right. Essie has nothing to do with her, so why should she help to take care of Essie?" Roxanne's expression stilled for a heartbeat when she heard that, but she ultimately didn't contradict him.

At her tacit agreement, fury blazed in Lucian's eyes.

Noticing the tense atmosphere between the two of them, Jonathan felt a touch guilty and regretted having broached that subject.

I initially thought that Roxanne would relent slightly upon hearing about Essie's condition and decide to visit her since she's the latter's birth mother. Alas, I forgot that she's in the dark about the truth. Besides, she was the one who personally told her that she was going abroad. Therefore, she likely knows full well that she's the reason Essie is emotionally unstable. But really, I never thought that she'd be so cruel to that little girl.

Following that line of thought, a scrutinizing look entered his gaze as he studied Roxanne.

I wonder if she'd regret her remark today if she were to learn the truth in the future.

Regardless of his wandering mind, he still remembered to clean up the mess in his wake. He casually cleared his throat. "It was just an offhand suggestion. I forgot that you've still got to deal with the matters concerning the research institute, so you probably haven't the time anyway, Dr. Jarvis."

Roxanne remained silent.

Chuckling sheepishly, Jonathan raised his glass to her. "Let's not talk about this anymore. Here's to a smooth collaboration with the medicinal herb suppliers, Dr. Jarvis! I'll contact you right after they've confirmed the time."

At that, Roxanne forced a smile. "Thank you for acting as the middleman, Mr. Queen."

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Jonathan expended a great deal of effort before he managed to smooth things over. He then kept on engaging Roxanne in conversation about the present pharmaceutical industry in Horington. Roxanne patiently chatted with him.

Meanwhile, Lucian didn't utter a single word further, merely downing his wine silently,

When Jonathan glimpsed more than half the bottle of wine gone, he hastily concluded the meal. "It's late now, so let's call it a day. I'll urge the medicinal herb suppliers to finalize the time as soon as possible." Roxanne didn't want to stay any longer, so she agreed unequivocally.

The three of them went downstairs side by side. Roxanne was going to foot the bill, but Jonathan stopped her from doing so.

"I was merely joking back then. How could I possibly have you treat me to a meal? If my grandfather were to learn about it, he'd skin me alive!"

While saying that, he quickly went over to settle the bill. Subsequently, he quirked a brow smugly after walking back to Lucian.

Lucian frowned without saying anything.

Seeing that Jonathan had brought Alfred up, and the pittance was indeed a drop in the bucket to him, Roxanne didn't insist.

By the time they left the restaurant, it was already close to nine o'clock.

Although they were all acquaintances, Roxanne had drunk quite a bit at the dinner table and was slightly buzzed. As the night breeze blew past, it sobered her up considerably.

Jonathan's voice rang out beside her. "How are you going home, Dr. Jarvis? Would you like to hitch a ride with me?"

In truth, Roxanne drove there. But since she had imbibed, she naturally couldn't drive home.

Hearing that, Roxanne lifted her eyes and scanned the traffic. "Thank you for the offer, Mr. Queen. But it's okay since my place is out of your way back to the Queen residence. I'll hail a taxi myself." After she had said that, she headed toward the side of the road.

Jonathan cast a look at the man beside him.

With a frown marring his countenance, Lucian stared at her fragile back in the night with a dark gaze.

"It happens to be rush hour now, so it'd take eons for you to get a taxi. I'll give you a ride. Anyway, we'll be traveling by car, not on foot," Jonathan hurriedly called out to Roxanne.

Roxanne halted in her steps. It's rather inappropriate for me to turn down such a trivial offer repeatedly when he has just done me such a huge favor:

Clocking her hesitance, Jonathan added, "Don't stand on ceremony with me. My grandfather specifically urged me to take good care of you when he knew that I'd be having dinner with you."

Unable to decline further, Roxanne turned around and walked back to the man. She flashed him a polite smile. "My apologies for troubling you, then."

Jonathan fervently waved his hands in dismissal. "Not at all! It'd only be troublesome if you'd adamantly refused to allow me to give you a ride." As he said that, he glanced at Lucian beside him meaningfully.

However, Roxanne didn't catch the implicit meaning of his words. She thought he was referring to Alfred, so she merely chuckled without replying to that. And so, the three of them walked to the parking lot side by side.

Only when they arrived at the parking lot did Roxanne notice that Lucian had been following them all the way. She promptly found it a tad strange. When they reached Jonathan's car, she noticed Lucian's car parked right next to it. At once, a conjecture popped into her mind.

Earlier, Jonathan's so-called accidental encounter was actually just an excuse. In reality, they came together!

That suspicion flashed across her mind.

But on second thought, he didn't have to tell such a lie. After all, he has no idea about my relationship with Lucian, so such a ploy would be superfluous.. Putting it at the back of her mind, she got into the car with Jonathan.

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"Mr. Farwell?"

When Cayden saw his employer walking over with Roxanne, he subconsciously presumed that the latter would be getting into their car. Unexpectedly, he saw her getting into the car with Jonathan while Lucian stood outside.

After a moment, he decided to call out to the man cautiously.

His brows furrowing slightly, Lucian bent down and climbed into the car.

Cayden slowly started the car and drove out of the parking lot.

Meanwhile, in the adjacent car, Jonathan asked Roxanne for her address and ordered the driver to drop her home first.

In response, the driver murmured an acknowledgment.

He moved to start the car, but it simply wouldn't start.

It still didn't work after multiple tries. "The car seems to have broken down, Mr. Queen," the driver reported helplessly.

Upon hearing that, Jonathan imperceptibly swept his gaze over Roxanne beside him. He wore a grim expression. "It was just fine when we came over. Why did it suddenly break down?"

A conflicted expression manifested on the driver's face. "Uh... I haven't been driving this car much. I didn't take it for maintenance either, so I don't know what happened. How about you wait here for a while, and I'll go back and retrieve another car before coming back to pick you up?"

Following that, Jonathan turned to Roxanne to seek her opinion.

Roxanne similarly didn't expect such an incident. When she heard that the driver had to go to such trouble, she wavered for a while before suggesting, "My car is nearby. We can take my car."

I've got to return to retrieve my car tomorrow, so it makes no difference if I go to the Queen residence instead.

As soon as Jonathan heard that, his expression froze. Unbidden, a headache assailed him,

Gah! I actually forgot that she drove here. If we were to take her car, the arrangements tonight would go to waste!

In the front, the driver wore a troubled expression on his face. He eyed Jonathan, waiting for the latter's instructions.

Frowning, Jonathan countered solemnly, "There's no need to go to such trouble, Lucian is definitely still nearby, so we'll just ask him for a ride."

At his proposal, Roxanne's brows knitted together. At the same time, disapproval stained her features. She was going to demur, but the man had already made the call.

In no time, the person on the other end of the phone answered the call.

Thus, she had no choice but to swallow the demurral on the tip of her tongue.

"What's the matter?" Lucian's alluring voice echoed in the car.

"Where are you now, Lucian? My car has seemingly broken down. Do you mind giving us a ride if you're still nearby?" Jonathan queried.

On the other end of the phone, Cayden tactfully slowed the car without waiting for Lucian's orders. He lifted his eyes and peered at the latter's expression.

Lucian inclined his head a fraction.

Immediately discerning his meaning, Cayden turned back around and drove toward the parking lot.

"Come out. I'll meet you at the entrance of the parking lot," Lucian replied in a deep voice.

Jonathan agreed with a grin.

After hanging up the phone, he turned to Roxanne nonchalantly and exclaimed smilingly, "Let's go! Lucian is at the entrance of the parking lot. He'll drive past your place on his way home anyway."

At long last, Roxanne had the opportunity to turn him down. "I'll just take a taxi home instead of troubling Mr. Farwell."

Having said that, she swung open the car door and alighted from the car..

Taken aback, Jonathan swiftly got out of the car and chased after her. Trailing behind her, he riposted, "It won't be any trouble at all since he's going the same way. Besides, I'll worry if you take a taxi alone at this hour,"

Roxanne's brows creased. Just when she was about to decline again, the man abruptly remarked meaningfully, "By the way, the atmosphere between you and Lucian seemed off at the dinner table earlier. I remember that everything was fine when I last saw you with him. Are you both keeping some secret from me? Did he do something to you?"

At that question, Roxanne regarded him suspiciously.

However, Jonathan remained calm and unruffled.

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Naturally, Roxanne wouldn't tell Jonathan about the matter between her and Lucian.

Apart from that, however, she indeed had no reason to refuse a ride from Lucian.

After mulling it over, she relented in the end. She slowed her pace and walked side by side with the man.

When they reached the entrance of the parking lot, they promptly spotted Lucian a near distance away.

The man was wearing a black trench coat, standing next to his car with his back ramrod straight and his eyes fixated in their direction. The instant his eyes alighted on the woman beside Jonathan, his gaze seemingly darkened imperceptibly.

"Why didn't you wait in the car? It's so chilly," Jonathan commented casually.

Lucian merely ordered, "Get in the car."

Having said that, he swept his gaze over Roxanne before bending slightly and climbing into the car.

Roxanne had made up her mind to hitch a ride with him. But for some inexplicable reason, a sense of apprehension slithered into her when she laid eyes on the man.

Hence, she stood by the car, incapable of moving.

Clocking her hesitation, Jonathan urged, "Quick, get into the car, Dr. Jarvis."

Roxanne snapped back to her senses. Hoping to keep him from noticing any oddity, she nodded impassively and headed toward the passenger seat.

Since she had no choice but to sit in the same car with Lucian, she wanted to minimize her contact with him as much as possible.

Unfortunately, Jonathan had already opened the passenger door when she made to head over and declared, "It'll be too cramped with two men sitting in the back. Make do with Lucian, Dr. Jarvis." Right after saying that, he bent down and slid into the passenger seat.

In a flash, Roxanne was the only one left standing outside the car. She stared at the back seat, caught between a rock and a difficult place.

She wasn't sure whether she was overthinking things, but everything that happened that night seemed too much of a coincidence. Jonathan was behaving very strangely as well.

It was as though he had planned everything.

If she hadn't known that the man had no idea about her relationship with Lucian, she was almost positive that it was all his scheme. After standing outside for several seconds, Roxanne bit the bullet and circled over. Swinging open the car door, she got into the car. When she had settled in, she reflexively glanced at the man beside her.

Lucian seemed to have imbibed a little too much. He appeared rather indolent as he reclined against the seat with a hand propped against his temple languidly. His eyes were closed lightly, and he didn't react to her getting into the car.

Seeing that, Roxanne surreptitiously breathed a sigh of relief. She did her best to stick as close to the car window as possible to keep her distance from him.

The car then started moving slowly.

Roxanne furtively rejoiced that she would be alighting from the car before Jonathan so things wouldn't be overly awkward.

Unexpectedly, Jonathan exclaimed out of the blue when the car passed an intersection, "I suddenly remember that I've got something to do nearby! Just drop me off here."

When Roxanne heard that, her heart instantly clenched.

It's still a distance away from my place, so I'd have no choice but to face Lucian if he were to get out of the car here...

At that thought, the urge to do the same seized her.

Regretfully, that would appear too deliberate.

While she was still hesitating, Jonathan had already opened the car door and climbed out of the car. He even prompted Lucian, "I'm entrusting Dr. Jarvis to you. Make sure to drive her home safely." Lucian nodded non-committally.

Then, Jonathan said to Roxanne with a smile, "Remember to text me when you arrive home so that I can put my grandfather's mind at ease, Dr. Jarvis."

Roxanne murmured her acquiescence stiffly.

When the car door had closed, the car continued driving slowly.

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Dead silence reigned in the car. One could sense that the atmosphere was entirely different from when Jonathan was present earlier, giving off a sense of an impending storm. Roxanne was sitting straight, her gaze trained right ahead. She tried her best to ignore the man beside her.

She wasn't sure whether she was imagining things, but his piercing gaze seemingly locked on her since Jonathan alighted from the car. It had her tensing up subconsciously. All of a sudden, Lucian's voice rang out beside her.

"Have I offended you in any way, Ms. Jarvis?"

Relief suffused Roxanne when she heard his voice. She flashed him a detached smile. "Why would you say that, Mr. Farwell?"

Lucian eyed her with a dark look, his voice threaded with displeasure. "If that's not the case, why are you avoiding me thus, Ms. Jarvis?"

Frowning slightly, Roxanne feigned ignorance. "When have I avoided you, Mr. Farwell? Precisely speaking, I don't have much of a chance to meet you since our work doesn't intersect."

In other words, they didn't have a personal relationship besides a professional association.

lesSlona In fact, they even had no interaction at work.

They had no opportunity to meet anyway, so avoiding him made no sense.

The moment her words rang out, the temperature in the car plummeted.

While driving, Cayden cautiously stole a peek at the two people at the back through the rearview mirror. Inwardly, he worried on Roxanne's behalf.

Why is Ms. Jarvis provoking Mr. Farwell when she knows full well that he's in a bad mood now?

As he was fretting, he noticed Lucian lowering the partition in the back seat.

He silently retracted his gaze, not daring to observe the situation in the back anymore.

When Roxanne saw Lucian lowering the partition without warning, her heart lurched. She instinctively twisted sideways and plastered her back against the car window to put some distance between them. Glimpsing that, Lucian narrowed his eyes in chagrin and questioned icily, "Roxanne Jarvis, why are you shying away from me in such a manner? How when you said I hadn't offended you in any way? Are you afraid that I'd bite?"

A frown marred Roxanne's countenance, and faint wariness showed in her eyes. In a distant tone, she explained, "I merely feel that we're not that close with each other, and your action was rather sudden to me, Mr. Farwell."

At the sight of her wary expression, Lucian smirked scornfully. "What do you think I'm planning to do?"

Roxanne said nothing, but their kiss at the hotel when they first bumped into each other after her return to the country flashed across her mind.

That was the only time he took the initiative with me since we got acquainted. Alas, it was when I no longer needed it.

The current situation was inexplicably similar to the circumstances back then.

Lucian stared at her with a dark look, a storm brewing in his eyes.

Ever since we parted ways at the café back then, she had been avoiding me. That aside, she even had her housekeeper send Archie and Benny to the kindergarten and pick them up. It's only today that I've got a chance to see her again, thanks to Jonathan making up an excuse. But she has been distancing herself from me the entire night, unwilling to even utter a single word to me!

He initially thought he could understand her thoughts, but he merely felt livid after seeing her for real and experiencing her treatment of him.

His plan had been to vent by drinking, but the alcohol coursing through his veins was only fanning the flames within him.

Roxanne could distinctly sense the oppressiveness in the car intensifying. Her hands by her side unconsciously balled into fists, her nails digging into her palms as she forcefully suppressed the panic within her.

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"Please stop acting in such a manner, Mr. Farwell. We're merely strangers, so this is bothering me."

Feigning calmness, Roxanne scowled at the man before her.

The instant her words rang out, an indecipherable smile bloomed on Lucian's face.

In the next second, his cold voice echoed in the car.

"Strangers? Ah, it turns out that you have no qualms treating a stranger to a meal and getting into a stranger's car, Ms. Jarvis. But since that's what you think, Ms. Jarvis, I don't mind getting familiar with you." Roxanne wanted to decline, but when she lifted her eyes, she saw that the man was already mere centimeters away from her.

In the cramped space, Lucian's broad figure carried such an immense sense of oppression that she had difficulty breathing.

"What are you doing?" Roxanne regarded the man in front of her warily.

Lucian smirked unhurriedly. "I just want to introduce myself to you, Ms. Jarvis."

At that, Roxanne rebuffed frostily, "I don't want to listen to it! Nor do I think there's any need for us to be familiar with each other!"

However, Lucian allowed her no room to decline. Ignoring her, he started, "My name is Lucian Farwell, and I'm presently the CEO of Farwell Group. I was once married six years ago."

Hearing that, Roxanne seemingly suffered a blow and dipped her eyes in panic.

Alas, Lucian grasped her chin firmly and forced her head up.

Staring right into her eyes, he continued, "Coincidentally, my ex-wife shares your name. Her name is also Roxanne Jarvis. However, she ran off without a word, leaving a divorce agreement behind. I searched for her for six whole years. I suppose you know her whereabouts, Ms. Jarvis?"

Lucian's grasp tightened all the more.

Such pain racked Roxanne from his grip that she almost suspected her chin would shatter soon. The man's voice started growing muffled.

When she heard his last two utterances, her pupils constricted. She couldn't quite believe her ears either.

He'd searched for me for six years? But why? Why would he look for me? Hadn't he been hoping to marry Aubree? Thus, didn't my departure suit him just right? But then, his marriage to her has stagnated at an engagement in these whole six years. Why is that so?

As she was at a loss, Lucian sensed her distraction. His grasp on her increased in strength once more.

In pain, Roxanne automatically grunted.

Unfortunately, Lucian turned a deaf ear to it. Instead, he resumed speaking. "I also have a daughter, whose name is Estella Farwell. She has been suffering from severe autism since young. There's this woman she likes a lot, who's also known as Roxanne Jarvis. These days, she even had a recurrence because of that woman. Don't you think that we're very much connected by destiny, Ms. Jarvis?"

At the mention of Estella, Roxanne fell into a trance.

He knows all of my sore spots and is rubbing salt on them with every single word out of his mouth, from our marriage in name six years ago to Essie, who's having a recurrence now because of me. A wave of guilt flooded her at the thought of Estella. Her gaze gradually softened as well.

Noticing that she was spacing out again, Lucian increased his force in disgruntlement.

Roxanne jolted back to reality in a flash. Gritting her teeth, she lifted her hand and grabbed his wrist, struggling wildly. "Let go of me, Lucian! Have you lost your mind?" The corners of Lucian's mouth turned up in a smirk. "It looks like my self-introduction was pretty good that you've committed my name to memory so quickly, Ms. Jarvis."

Roxanne was wholly baffled to hear that. When she glimpsed the dark look on the man's face, fear surged within her. She felt as though he would devour her in the next heartbeat.

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Roxanne made every effort to calm herself down. She met Lucian's gaze calmly and stated gently, "With you acting in such a manner now, Lucian, I'll only find you even more of a stranger."

As far as she remembered, he had always been calm and unruffled. In fact, he was rather apathetic.

At least, that was his personality six years ago.

At present, he had become unfathomable to her.

Perhaps that comment of hers worked, for she sensed the grip on her chin seemingly relaxing gradually.

She held her breath.

A while later, Lucian withdrew his hand and sat back in his seat. He gazed at her with a complex look in his eyes. "What exactly do you want?"

That question rang out before Roxanne could breathe a sigh of relief. At once, bewilderment swamped her.

It should be me asking him that. I've already made my stance clear as day. What exactly does he want?

"Never mind that you're avoiding me, but you're not even visiting Essie anymore. Are you really this callous, Roxanne?" Lucian pinned a sharp look on her.

Roxanne's heart sank slightly. Closing her eyes for a moment, she suppressed the strange feeling within her and drawled indifferently, "Let's not talk about this anymore when it's meaningless anyway. Since my presence in the car is upsetting you so greatly, Mr. Farwell, I think I should just get out of the car."

After saying that, she lifted her hand to tap on the partition and signal Cayden to pull over.

No sooner had she stretched out her hand than the man grabbed her wrist forcefully.

Roxanne struggled to break free from his hold. "If you really want to talk, Mr. Farwell, we can set a time and talk someplace else. I'm very uncomfortable in this space right now!"

In that cramped space, she couldn't shake off the feeling that she was powerless to resist, no matter what Lucian did to her.

Following that thought, terror crept into her eyes as she stared at the man,

Sensing her fear, Lucian narrowed his eyes a fraction. He slowly released his grip on her wrist and questioned through gritted teeth, "You're afraid of me? What's to fear about me? What have I done to hurt you?"

He initially felt that it was already infuriating that she was distancing herself from him.

However, her terror of him then hit him like a bucket of cold water. A bone-piercing chill spread

from the depths of his heart.

Never had he wanted her to fear him.

Conversely, Roxanne's expression gradually turned chilly from his repeated harassment. "Don't you find yourself ridiculous, Mr. Farwell? Hasn't it been your wish to marry Ms. Pearson? Now that the two of you are getting married, you should somewhat take her feelings into consideration and keep your distance from other women, especially me, since I'm your ex-wife." Lucian's brows scrunched together slightly. Verily, he didn't expect her to mention their relationship six years ago.

Meanwhile, Roxanne merely felt that it was better for her to put things in the open when things had gotten to that point. I'm going abroad sooner or later anyway and won't have much contact with him anymore. "If Ms. Pearson were to learn that you're being so familiar with me, Mr. Farwell, I'm afraid that there'd be some unnecessary misunderstanding. I hope you won't put me in a difficult position anymore." "You think I'm putting you in a difficult position:" Lucian countered coldly.

At that, Roxanne's lips curved into a self-deprecating smirk. "Otherwise, you can also interpret it as my reluctance to repeat my mistakes six years ago. No one wants to fall into the same trap twice."

In other words, she was telling the man that she wouldn't accept him even if he really had feelings for her.

The incident six years ago had already hurt her deeply, and she didn't want history repeating itself.

As Lucian recalled her conversation with his mother at the café that day, his heart abruptly sank.