

ABANDONED 531

Chapter 531

"Put your hands together as we invite the champion to receive the prize on stage!" The host smiled and looked toward Roxanne and the others.

Roxanne glanced at Lucian, hoping he would go up.

However, Lucian remained seated calmly and showed no intention of standing up.

Roxanne had no choice but to get up on stage to receive the vouchers for a hot spring vacation from Jeffrey.

As she walked up the stage, everyone shot her envious looks.

Thinking that the people might have seen their kiss, Roxanne couldn't wait to get off the stage. She hurriedly took the vouchers, thanked the presenter, and turned to step down from the stage.

The three children looked at the vouchers in her hand with faces full of excitement.

Roxanne, however, was distracted.

The long wait for the event to end was exhausting. And as soon as it ended, Roxanne immediately got up, wanting to leave with the children.

As they walked out of the hall, Estella said gingerly, "Ms. Jarvis, let's go together!"

Roxanne was shocked to hear that from Estella and couldn't react for a moment.

Estella had already run up to her. Her face was flushed red, and she was staring at Roxanne with eyes brimming with anticipation. "Let's go to the hot spring together!"

She had never been anywhere that far with Roxanne, and she was looking forward to

After all, they had worked hard to win the vacation vouchers, and it was only natural that they went to the hot spring together.

Roxanne's heart softened when she took in Estella's expectant eyes,

Lucian walked out and stood beside Estella silently while looking at Roxanne with an incomprehensible gaze.

When she felt Lucian's line of sight, Roxanne hesitated for a moment before rejecting Estella firmly. "I will be busy. You go ahead with your daddy."

Hearing that, the children felt disappointed,

They were all looking forward to having fun together, but Roxanne didn't seem to think the same.

Lucian's eyes darkened, and the atmosphere became tense.

Estella looked at Roxanne with her puppy eyes, then at Lucian.

She knew that Roxanne would continue to avoid them as before after the play.

Her eyes turned red as she looked at the two adults, who were silent.

Having spent time with Roxanne and the boys during this time, she felt even more reluctant to part ways with them.

She didn't want Roxanne to avoid them again.

At that thought, Estella grabbed the corner of Roxanne's clothes and pouted. "Ms. Jarvis..."

Looking at Estella's sorrowful look, Archie and Benny exchanged glances and felt sorry for her. "Mommy, let's go with Essie!"

Roxanne's heart was in turmoil. She raised her head and looked at Lucian, who was in front of her.

Lucian frowned and said coldly, "Ms. Jarvis, if you don't want to go with me, I can stay, but you'll have to take care of Essie."

Roxanne was slightly taken aback by Lucian's statement.

Estella turned around, grabbed the corner of Roxanne's clothes with one hand and Lucian's with the other, and choked out, "Together..."

She was about to break into tears.

Roxanne's heart ached. She gritted her teeth and remained silent for a few seconds. "Don't cry, Essie. I'll go with you."

As she spoke, she reached out and patted Estella's head.

Estella was still skeptical about it.

Roxanne had no other choice but to look at Lucian and ask, "When will you be free, Mr. Farwell?"

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When Estella saw Roxanne confirming a date with Lucian, she knew that Roxanne had agreed to go together, and her face lit up with excitement. Although there were still some tears in her eyes, she was smiling brightly.

Seeing that the children were so excited, Roxanne felt relieved and looked at Lucian indifferently.

Lucian said in a deep voice, "How about next weekend? Will you be free, Ms. Jarvis?"

Roxanne nodded, and the two didn't say anything more.

After bidding Estella goodbye, Roxanne took Archie and Benny back home.

On the way home, the children called out to Roxanne, "Mommy."

Roxanne had yet to get over the incident during the play. When she heard the children's voices, she took a few seconds to respond. "What's wrong?"

Benny was about to speak, but feeling a little timid, he looked at Archie.

Meeting Benny's eyes, Archie nodded and asked, "Mommy, do you not want to go on

a vacation with Mr. Farwell?"

Having witnessed the kiss and noticed Roxanne's hesitation, they could more or less guess her thoughts.

Roxanne didn't know how to respond. Hence, she asked in return, "Why would you

say so?"

Archie and Benny looked at each other, and Archie answered, "You've been avoiding Mr. Farwell, and you promised to only chauffeur us until the end of the anniversary celebration. Is that not because you want to stay away from Mr. Farwell? When Essie invited us, you were hesitant as well."

Roxanne looked at the children in the backseat through the rearview mirror and felt distressed.

They could not have been any more naïve when they were watching the play earlier, yet now they were so clever.

Before she could speak, Benny added, "Mommy, your nose will grow longer if you tell lies!"

Roxanne swallowed her words and went silent for a while before replying ambiguously, "Don't you want to go with Essie? Essie wants to go with her daddy, so

we'll go together."

When they heard her answer, they finally understood.

Mommy didn't answer us directly. She must not want to be with Daddy. Mommy will most likely continue to avoid Daddy in the future. If that happens, Essie will not see Mommy again...

At that thought, the boys secretly came to a decision. They wanted to treat Estella better and let her spend more time with Roxanne during the vacation.

Roxanne was oblivious to their plan. However, she was glad that they weren't asking any more questions.

Back at the mansion, Lysa had already prepared dinner and was waiting for them to come home.

Lysa welcomed their return with a smile. "How was the play today?"

Roxanne, who had finally put the play behind her, became moody again when Lysa brought up the topic. Archie and Benny glanced at Roxanne cautiously, knowing that she was disturbed by the kiss on the stage. Seeing that they did not answer for a long time, Lysa asked in concern, "What's wrong? Did it not go well?"

With that, she noticed the contorted expression on their faces. Just as she wanted to comfort them, the boys beamed. "We won the first prize!" Lysa couldn't help but feel puzzled when she heard the children.

They won the first prize, but what's with their expressions? Roxanne, especially, seemed a little unhappy.

Afraid that Lysa would ask about the play again, the children quickly pushed her to the living room. "Ms. Lane, we're hungry!"

Lysa quickly nodded and led them to the dining room.

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Meanwhile, while Lucian and Estella were on their way back, Estella had mixed feelings written all over her face.

She was happy that Roxanne could go on the hot spring vacation with them.

However, Roxanne's attitude gave her the impression that she would definitely avoid them as she had before.

When she thought of that, she began to feel sad.

Naturally, Lucian, too, thought of Roxanne's attitude after that, and his face turned cold.

Estella was utterly depressed when they returned to the manor.

During dinner, she would glance at Lucian from time to time, hoping he would say something

After all, Roxanne's intention was to avoid Lucian.

There was even a hint of resentment in Estella's eyes.

When he finally noticed Estella's gaze, Lucian raised his eyebrows and put some food on her plate.

The resentment that Estella had in her eyes turned to confusion.

"Essie, why do you want Ms. Jarvis to go on the hot spring vacation together?" Lucian asked in a deep voice.

Estella pursed her lips and said seriously, "I want to be with Ms. Jarvis!"

Lucian nodded in acknowledgment. He thought of Estella's performance in the past few days and smiled. "Then do you want to be closer with Ms. Jarvis?"

Without hesitation, Estella answered loudly, "Yes!"

"Then you'll sleep with Ms. Jarvis during the hot spring vacation. Are you okay with that?" Lucian looked at Estella.

Estella nodded eagerly.

Roxanne smelled great and pleasant. Also, she would tell Estella bedtime stories. She was Estella's favorite person to sleep with.

However, Estella was suspicious when Lucian said that. "But can I? Ms. Jarvis is.."

Ms. Jarvis only agreed to come along to the hot spring because she pitied me. She clearly wants to stay away from Daddy and only rehearsed because she had no choice. She'll probably still keep her distance from us this time....

Lucian could tell Estella's concerns and smiled reassuringly. "Ms. Jarvis likes you a lot. As long as you ask, she won't refuse."

Estella tilted her head in confusion.

When I invited Ms. Jarvis, she only agreed to come when I was about to cry.

Lucian's eyes turned dark. He continued to explain, "Ms. Jarvis just doesn't like being with me. If it's just you, she will definitely say yes."

Estella nodded obediently, indicating that she would tell Roxanne.

However, she still had some concerns. "Daddy, will Ms. Jarvis ignore us after the hot spring vacation?"

Estella could still remember the feeling when Roxanne had avoided her and felt sad when she thought about it.

Lucian frowned and said, "That depends on you."

Daddy said the same thing as before.

Estella pouted. I've been trying my best recently, but Ms. Jarvis still wants to avoid us after the play. It clearly depends on Daddy! I'm not the one Ms. Jarvis doesn't like.

At that thought, Estella didn't agree with Lucian. Instead, she stared at him resentfully.

Her inner feeling was written all over her face.

Looking at Estella's expression, Lucian did not know whether to laugh or cry. He nodded and said, "Okay, I'll do my best too, all right?"

Only then did Estella nod in satisfaction.

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Early in the morning that weekend, Roxanne had just woken up when she heard a knock at the door.

She didn't think much about it and thought it was Archie and Benny who had come to wake her up. She rubbed her eyes and let them in.

Unexpectedly, when the door opened, she saw the three of them, Estella and the boys, standing at the door. Estella was wearing a pink skirt and carrying a small bag, looking particularly adorable. Roxanne was caught off guard when she saw her. She thought she was hallucinating because she didn't sleep well the night before.

The night before this, Roxanne had been brooding over the fact that she was about to go on the hot spring vacation with Lucian. She didn't even know when she finally fell asleep.

Although she had fallen asleep, she didn't sleep well and felt as if she was constantly in a dream.

Her mind was still a little hazy at that moment.

"Ms. Jarvis!" Estella greeted her from the door in her piping voice.

Roxanne finally returned to her senses and confirmed that Estella was indeed standing in front of her.

"Essie..." Roxanne got off the bed, walked toward Estella, and instinctively looked around the room. Lucian was nowhere to be seen. "Why are you here? Where's your daddy?" Estella pointed downstairs. "He's waiting downstairs!"

Roxanne's face turned a little red.

They had agreed to go to the hot springs together, yet she had only just woken up when Lucian had already arrived.

Given anyone else, they would definitely feel embarrassed about it.

Archie and Benny explained, "We heard a knock on the door and saw Essie, so we brought her up!"

As for Lucian, the boys had ignored him, knowing that he would follow them in by himself.

Roxanne patted their heads and said, "Okay. Go wait downstairs. Mommy will be ready in a bit."

The children nodded obediently, turned around, and went downstairs.

Watching them disappear down the corner of the stairs, Roxanne hit herself in the head in frustration and quickly got up to clean herself up.

Lysa had already prepared breakfast, and the children were already sitting obediently at the table when Roxanne finally got ready and walked down the stairs.

Roxanne looked around for Lucian, only to see him lounging on the couch in a casual coat, lost in his thoughts. He casually looked up when he heard her walking down the stairs. When their eyes met, Roxanne panicked.

Just as she was about to retract her gaze, Lucian said, "Ms. Jarvis, did you not sleep well last night?"

Hearing that, Roxanne instinctively touched the dark circles under her eyes.

When she was washing up and noticed something greenish around her eyes, she had put on light makeup to cover it up. Did I not cover it nicely?

In a gentle voice, Lucian added, "It's almost eight o'clock."

Her hand that was under her eye froze. Suppressing her embarrassment, she responded apologetically, "Sorry to keep you guys waiting."

Looking at how the woman was behaving, Lucian realized that she didn't sleep well last night and didn't say anything further.

Only when Roxanne finally walked down to the living room, sat by the dining table, and didn't hear a word from Lucian did she breathe a sigh of relief.

The children began to pile food on her plate the moment she sat down.

Seeing that Estella was eating with them, Roxanne asked with concern, "Essie, did you not eat in the morning?"

Estella nodded meekly.

She had been so excited to see Roxanne that she had urged Lucian to rush over as soon as she had gotten out of bed.

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"Daddy hasn't eaten either." Estella's mouth was stuffed with food as she pointed at Lucian on the couch.

Roxanne stiffened, and mixed feelings rose within her heart.

Upon consideration, she turned and looked at Lucian. "Mr. Farwell, come and join us if you haven't had breakfast. I think the hotel is pretty far away."

"Why, thank you, Ms. Jarvis," Lucian responded to her invitation and got up unhurriedly.

Lysa quickly prepared the cutlery for him and placed them opposite Roxanne.

After having a simple breakfast, they walked out of the house to the car and began their journey.

Roxanne was about to get in her car when she heard Lucian say, "Let's go in my car."

Roxanne stopped in her tracks and turned toward Lucian. "It's okay. I'll drive there with the children."

Hearing that, Archie and Benny ran to Roxanne's side.

Estella hesitated for a moment before turning back to hug Lucian's thigh.

She wanted to be with Roxanne, but she wanted Lucian to be with Roxanne even more.

If she followed, Roxanne would definitely not take Lucian's car.

Looking at the sensible Estella, Lucian raised his eyebrows discreetly and patted her head. Then, he said to Roxanne, "I think Essie wants to be with Archie and Benny too."

Roxanne looked at Estella. Just as she was about to invite Estella to join her, Lucian added, "Besides, the place is a popular resort, and it's a weekend today. There may not be any parking spots." "Ms, Jarvis..." Estella gave Roxanne a pitiful look.

Roxanne's heart melted, and she agreed.

Well, we have agreed to go together. There's no need to bother about such details.

Roxanne took the children to Lucian's car and wondered if she should take the

backseat with the children.

After all, she wasn't sure if the passenger seat was exclusive to Aubree.

Estella, who was in the car, noticed Roxanne's intentions and glanced at Lucian. Then, she said to Archie and Benny, "It's so cramped in here."

As soon as they heard her, the boys hurriedly scooted to both sides of the car.

Roxanne paused, knowing it wouldn't be nice of her to squeeze in with the children.

For a moment, the atmosphere was awkward.

Roxanne stood outside the car, glancing at the passenger seat and the expressionless Lucian.

"Ms. Jarvis, come on in," Estella urged innocently.

Roxanne forced a smile and nodded, then moved to the passenger seat and opened the door. "Can I sit here?"

Lucian looked over, frowning slightly. His voice was cold, and he seemed a little unhappy as he said, "Where else are you going to sit? It's getting late. If we don't leave now, I'm afraid there won't even be any parking space left."

He knew that Roxanne wanted to avoid him, but he didn't expect her to resist him to this extent.

There's only one seat left in the car, and she doesn't even want to sit next to me.

Lucian felt a burst of anger in his heart.

Roxanne, however, thought he was angry because she was wasting too much time, so she hurriedly got into the passenger seat.

As soon as she fastened her seat belt, he slowly started the car and drove toward the resort.

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On the way, the three cheerful children were constantly chatting in the backseat.

At first, Roxanne was a little restrained. However, after listening to the joyful voices of the children, she slowly put on a smile on her face. Once they arrived at the hotel, Roxanne got out of the car first and carried the children out of the backseat one by one.

The children held each other's hands and obediently followed the two adults into the hotel.

The hotel lobby was decorated magnificently. A fish tank in the corner caught their attention as soon as they walked into the hotel.

"It's beautiful!" Estella's eyes sparkled.

Roxanne followed her gaze, only to see a few tropical fish swimming in a colorful and eye-catching fish tank.

"Let's go and have a look!" Archie and Benny wanted to satisfy Estella's wish, so they led her to the fish tank. Looking at the children running around happily, Roxanne lifted her head to look at the man at the side. Lucian frowned and said in a deep voice, "You go with them. I'll get the rooms."

Roxanne hesitated for a moment before finally nodding her head. Then, she went after the children.

With a straight face, Lucian walked up to the front desk.

Roxanne caught up with the children and watched as they pointed at the fish in the fish tank. She felt gratified and couldn't help but take out her phone and snap a picture of the children with the tropical fishes. In the photo, the three children were smiling brightly, looking very innocent.

Roxanne looked at the photos on her phone and couldn't help chuckling. Then she stepped forward and stood behind them quietly.

"Look, Mommy, They're kissing!" Benny pointed at a pair of pink fish and looked back at Roxanne in excitement,

Roxanne looked over and saw a pair of kissing fish swimming together intimately.

It was Benny's first time seeing this kind of fish, and he was amazed. "Mommy, what kind of fish is this?"

Roxanne introduced the fish to them and said, "If you like them, we can raise some at home, but you have to take care of them."

The children nodded fervently.

After looking at the fish for a while, they turned around reluctantly.

When Roxanne led them to the front desk, the children kept looking back at the fish tank as they walked.

Seeing that Lucian was still standing at the front desk and frowning as if he had encountered a problem, Roxanne quickened her pace, walked up to him, and asked, "Have you not booked the rooms?" Lucian nodded slightly and gestured for her to look at the staff at the front desk.

"Hello, because of the peak season, there's only one presidential suite available in the hotel. Would you like to take it?" the staff asked as she looked at Roxanne respectfully.

Roxanne was stunned, and she couldn't help but stare at Lucian.

How can there be such a coincidence?

However, Lucian's stern expression made it difficult for her to suspect that he had anything to do with this matter. She had no choice but to believe that it was indeed a coincidence.

"I'm very sorry. If you had arrived ten minutes earlier, we would have two presidential suits available. There's only one left now," the staff said apologetically.

Hearing that, Roxanne felt a sudden sense of guilt. She felt it was because of her they couldn't get another room.

Chapter 537 "Let's take this one," Lucian said.

Of course, he was asking for Roxanne's opinion.

Roxanne looked back at him with eyes filled with hesitation.

After all, the reason they couldn't get another room was mainly because of her.

However, the thought of being in the same room with Lucian was somewhat unacceptable to Roxanne.

"Or we could come back next week?" Roxanne asked hesitantly.

"Your vouchers are limited for a period of time. If you don't use them this week, they will be voided." Roxanne's eyes trembled, and she looked troubled.

Just when she was at a loss, Estella carefully tugged the hem of her clothes and said, "Ms. Jarvis..."

She looked up at her expectantly,

Roxanne's heart wavered.

Meanwhile, although Archie and Benny wanted to play with Estella, they knew that Roxanne might not be comfortable staying in the same room as Lucian. Hence, they stood quietly and waited for her to make her decision.

Lucian noticed her hesitation and frowned. "I asked. The presidential suite is a duplex. There are rooms upstairs and downstairs. If you're not used to it, we can just stay separately."

As he finished, he looked down at Estella.

Estella immediately understood and nodded vigorously. "We'll sleep upstairs, and Daddy will sleep downstairs!"

The staff chimed in as well, "Our presidential suite's well soundproofed. You won't disturb each other. It's like having separate rooms. Your vouchers also include the price of the accommodation, so you can experience staying in our presidential suite for free. I highly recommend that you take the presidential suite."

After listening to them, Roxanne could only purse her lips and agree.

Not knowing what Roxanne was feeling at that moment, Archie and Benny looked at each other with mixed feelings.

Estella, on the other hand, was filled with excitement. She looked at Lucian with glistening eyes.

Lucian patted her head and asked the staff to check them in.

After checking in, Lucian took them to the elevator.

As they got into the elevator, the staff at the front desk heaved a sigh of relief and wiped the cold sweat off her head.

Since the day she started her job, she had been told that Farwell Group owned the hotel

Therefore, when she saw Lucian at first glance, she immediately recognized him as the owner of the hotel.

Although there were still vacant rooms in the hotel, Lucian had hinted to her to tell Roxanne that only a presidential suite was left available. Hence, she could only comply with his wishes. Evidently, Lucian wanted to convince Roxanne to stay with him, and she could only help him to persuade her.

Fortunately, she didn't make any mistakes, and Roxanne decided to stay in the end.

Lucian took Roxanne and the three children to their room.

The presidential suite was on the top floor. The entrance was facing the elevator directly, which made it look extremely luxurious.

Although the children were young, they had seen a lot. Even so, they were amazed as soon as they pushed open the door to the presidential suite.

The decoration in the presidential suite was grand. There was a floor-to-ceiling window, and they could see the view of the mountains in the distance.

Roxanne stood behind the children, looking at their backs and the breathtaking scenery. The sight of such a heartwarming scene made her feel inexplicably relaxed.

Lucian knew Roxanne was uneasy about his presence, so he went straight to the couch and quietly read his emails right after he entered the room.

Roxanne was playing with the children when a few knocks on the door grabbed her attention. She got up and went to get the door.

When she pulled the door open, she saw two waiters pushing a cart, and beside them stood a man who seemed to be the manager. The man was looking at her respectfully. Roxanne was puzzled about the crowd outside her door since they did not order any room service. She instinctively turned to glance at the man sitting quietly on the couch. "Good afternoon. I'm the manager of the hotel, and this is the lunch included in your vouchers. Enjoy your meal," the manager said with a courteous smile. Comprehension dawned on Roxanne. She immediately thanked the manager and stood aside to let the waiters push the cart into the room.

Roxanne called the children over to have lunch after the waiters had set up the table.

Lucian, however, was still seated on the couch, going through his emails with a deadpan expression.

Upon deliberation, Roxanne went up to him and said, "Mr. Farwell, come and have lunch with us."

Lucian lifted his head at her invitation. She got up from the couch and sat beside Estella at the table.

With Estella sitting between them, Roxanne didn't feel as uncomfortable.

However, recalling that their outing was to accompany the children, she didn't want to be a wet blanket. Hence, she suppressed the uneasiness within her and focused on the children.

"Eat, Ms. Jarvis." Estella clumsily speared some of the food and placed them on Roxanne's and Lucian's plates with a bright smile.

Seeing her enthusiasm, Roxanne couldn't help but giggle. "Thank you, Essie. But you don't have to look after me. You should eat more instead."

Estella's body had always been weak, and Roxanne was worried.

Estella nodded obediently, then flashed Roxanne a toothy smile. "I'll eat! You eat too, Ms. Jarvis!"

Roxanne ruffled Estella's hair with a chuckle.

Archie and Benny followed suit by scooping food for Roxanne and Estella. They even advised Estella, saying, "You can only grow taller if you eat more." Estella nodded obediently.

The atmosphere among the quartet was harmonious. Lucian, on the other hand, was like a stranger at the table.

Noticing the man's silence, Roxanne hesitated for a while before scooping some food onto his plate. "Thank you for bringing us here this morning, Mr. Farwell."

Since they came together, Roxanne didn't want to spoil the mood.

There was a flicker in Lucian's eyes, and he smiled at Roxanne. "Don't worry about it. I should thank you for agreeing to share a room with us, Ms. Jarvis. Otherwise, Essie would've been disappointed." Estella nodded at the cue.

Roxanne smiled faintly in response to Lucian's words.

Archie and Benny looked at Roxanne, then at Lucian, confused.

Mommy doesn't like Daddy, no? Why did she scoop some food for Daddy, then? Were we wrong about Mommy hating Daddy?

They exchanged glances and scooped some food for Roxanne and Lucian after a brief hesitation. After that, they cautiously looked at Lucian from the corner of their eyes.

Seeing that, Lucian arched his brow in surprise and said, "Thank you."

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After lunch, the children made a fuss about going out to play.

Roxanne knew staying in the hotel room was boring for them, so she agreed to take them out.

The resort they stayed at was famous in Horington. Roxanne didn't forget to grab a travel booklet when they passed by the front desk.

The children were fighting to look at it.

Roxanne gave them the booklet and left them to decide on the destination.

"Let's visit the marine park."

The children were still mulling over the options when Lucian's deep voice sounded from behind them.

Roxanne and the children were stunned by the sudden suggestion.

It was the first time Lucian had spoken since morning, and it was to give them suggestions on where to go.

Roxanne snapped out of her daze and eyed Lucian in confusion.

Meeting her gaze, Lucian said casually, "I've been here before. The marine park is a good place for them to visit. Don't they like looking at fish?" Roxanne was stunned again.

So he noticed the children admiring the fish in the fish tank when he went to the front desk to reserve the room this morning?

Lucian looked down at the children, waiting for them to decide silently.

The children flipped through the booklet and turned to the page with information about the marine park.

After a short discussion, the children came to a decision. "Let's visit the marine park, then!"

Roxanne agreed and brought the children to the marine park.

As the resort was right by the beach, the size of the marine park was massive and so was its fish collection,

The children had an affinity for anything colorful. They were so amazed at the fish in the viewing area that they couldn't bring themselves to walk away.

Estella's eyes sparkled as she watched the beluga whales swimming in the water through the glass. Hoping to feel the elegant creature, she touched the glass with her fingers.

As though the beluga whales could sense her intention, they swam to her side when they saw her fingers.

Suddenly, three beluga whales were swimming in front of her.

Estella's eyes brightened, and she couldn't help plastering her face to the glass.

The next second, a beluga whale landed a kiss on her cheek through the glass.

Seeing that, Roxanne reached for her phone and snapped a photo of Estella with a smile.

Lucian's heart warmed when she took in Estella's and Roxanne's expressions.

Benny was fascinated by Estella's interaction with the whale.

When he finally withdrew his gaze and turned to the tank in front of him, he saw a

shark swimming toward him with a wide open jaw.

Benny screamed in fright, turned around, and ran away, hiding behind Lucian, who was closest to him, his fingers gripping the hem of Lucian's shirt. Lucian's heart lurched when he heard Benny's scream.

When he turned to look, he saw Benny racing toward him in fear.

Amusement flashed across Lucian's eyes, but he didn't say anything and let Benny continue to use him as a shield.

Once Benny calmed down, he belatedly realized that he had hidden behind Lucian and seemed to have heard the man chuckle. Benny's cheeks turned red. He instantly released his grip and walked away from Lucian, acting as though nothing had happened.

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At the side, Roxanne had also heard Benny's screams, but by the time she turned, it was too late. The boy had already sought refuge behind Lucian.

The sight of the smile on that man's face while the two of them were together left Roxanne with mixed feelings.

As much as she had done for the children, certain forms of security were something only a father could provide. Oblivious to her sentiments, the boy excitedly tugged at her as he wanted her to admire the fish alongside him. Out of nowhere, a mermaid dove from above and waved at them through the glass.

Wide-eyed, the boys asked Roxanne, "Is this real, Mommy?"

Amused by their innocence, Roxanne patted them on the head. "Of course not, but she does look pretty, though."

"Could you dress up like a mermaid too, Mommy?" Benny looked at Roxanne in anticipation

Taken by surprise at first, Roxanne then went on to explain smilingly, "Well, I could, but I think that'd be a paid program."

When the children heard her saying that she could, they stared at her with wide eyes as though that would make her agree to get into the water.

Meeting their eyes, Roxanne kicked herself for having said that. Had she been alone with them, she certainly would not have minded going in for the children's amusement.

The issue for her was that Lucian was also around.

Although Lucian had not spoken much along the way, she still could not overlook the fact of his presence, and the notion of having to masquerade as a mermaid in front of him made her feel quite conflicted inside.

"Ms. Jarvis." Estella cautiously tugged at her sleeve with a hopeful look on her own face,

Considering how good that mermaid she just saw looked despite not being as pretty as Roxanne, she was convinced that Roxanne would surely look even more beautiful in the same getup. Roxanne's dilemma was palpable on her face.

Oblivious to her reservations, Archie and Benny, too, looked at their own mother expectantly.

Just as Roxanne was hesitating, one of the crew members approached them.

"We're running an event that offers our visitors the experience of dressing up in our mermaid costume for free. Might you be interested to participate? I think you'd look absolutely smashing in it." The children's eyes lit up when they heard that.

Sensing their eyes on her, Roxanne found it hard to say no.

Lucian came up to them. "Go on ahead. I'll watch over them."

He spoke as though she had already agreed to do it.

Seeing how Roxanne remained unresponsive to Lucian's words for some time, the crew member took her silence for consent and went on to half-nudge her toward the changing room.

Thinking that since she had already stuck one foot in, Roxanne decided to work with the crew member despite her own continued hesitance. She went on and got changed and, with the crew's guidance, slowly went down into the water.

The children sat docilely beside Lucian with their heads raised to watch the space above them.

It did not take long before Roxanne showed up donning a slivery blue fishtail. A brilliant gleam of light was reflected off her body as she swam steadily toward them, making her appear as though she was really some mysterious mermaid that hailed from the bottom of the sea.

Her appearance had the children rushing forward elatedly to the front of the glass.

There Roxanne was, smiling and waving at them.

Lucian stood behind the children and regarded the swimming woman on the opposite side with an unfathomable gaze.

All around them, tourists marveled at the sight of such a lovely mermaid as they thought Roxanne was one of the staff who worked there.