

## **ABANDONED 991**

Chapter 991 Severely Ill Lucian's rejection was cold and indifferent. "Mind your own business." After uttering that, he took Estella's hand and went inside.

Aubree's expression darkened as she stared after their retreating figures. However, she quickly adjusted her expression and chased after them.

Catalina had already prepared dinner, and when she saw Lucian entering with Estella, she heaved a sigh of relief. "Dinner is ready, Mr. Farwell, Ms. Estella. Come eat!"

Just as she finished speaking, she noticed Aubree coming in the doors. Catalina's expression stiffened slightly, but she forced herself to maintain a cordial smile. Aubree ignored her and made a beeline straight for Lucian and Estella.

Lucian, too, ignored her. The only reason he did not outright drive Aubree away was that he did not want to aggravate his mother, who would, in turn, trouble Roxanne.

However, if they expected anything more from him, then they would be sorely disappointed. Meanwhile, Lysa brought Archie and Benny home.

Roxanne was already waiting for them when they arrived. As they were eating dinner, Archie and Benny exchanged glances, attempting to broach the subject of Estella.

"Mommy, how much longer will you be busy?" Roxanne paused, lifting her head to smile at the kids. "I don't know. It will probably take a while. What's the matter?"

Benny asked in a childish voice, "Can Essie come over to play with us?"

Roxanne's expression turned conflicted. Avoiding his eyes, she muttered, "Perhaps some other time. can't take care of you all at the moment."

The two children were visibly disappointed after hearing her words. "Essie's been feeling down because she hasn't seen you in so long."

Benny frowned. "Archie and I tried to cheer her up, but she refused to lighten up." Archie added, "She was even close to tears today!" Roxanne furrowed her brows and asked worriedly, "What happened?"

Archie glanced at Benny as he replied hesitantly, "Essie told us that Mr. Farwell is sick." Roxanne's hand, which had been in the midst of serving more food, hung motionless in the air. Lucian is sick?

"Mr. Farwell came down with a cold and has a high fever. Essie is very worried about him, but he refuses to let her near him because he doesn't want to infect her."

Archie added pitifully, "Essie must be incredibly distressed. Benny and I were so worried when you got sick, Mommy." Roxanne's resolve began to waver after she heard the boys' words.

I know that Archie and Benny were worried sick when I fell ill. After all, I am all they have, so they must've felt so helpless. In other words, Essie must feel the same. I wonder how sick Lucian is.

Seeing their mother's apprehension, Archie and Benny purposely exaggerated, "He didn't look too good when he came to pick up Essie earlier. He was coughing fitfully too."

Benny furrowed his brows. "Mr. Farwell would usually accompany us while we waited for Ms. Lane to come, but he didn't today. He must be feeling pretty terrible."

Since Roxanne had not been picking them up from school for some time, she was unaware of that fact. At that, she turned to Lysa for verification.

Lysa nodded in response. "Yes. No wonder I didn't see Mr. Farwell and Ms. Estella today." Still, Roxanne was slightly doubtful. "He drove himself?" Archie and Benny shook their heads. "We saw Mr. Farwell and Essie get into the back seat."

That meant the driver was the one who drove them.

Acrease appeared between Roxanne's eyebrows. Prior to this, Lucian would usually drive himself when he went to pick up Estella. Since he actually let the driver chauffeur them...

At that thought, Roxanne felt as if something was not right. "Is Catalina not around? Why would he personally go pick her up if he was unwell?" Roxanne looked at Archie and Benny in confusion. Her question caused Archie and Benny to think of Aubree.

Perhaps Mommy would visit Daddy if she knew that the evil woman was loitering around him... On second thought, if Mommy went to visit, maybe that woman would even leave, and Essie won't have to fear her anymore.

With this in mind, Archie began to explain the situation. "The evil woman was going to bring Essie home, but Essie refused to go with her. Mr. Farwell arrived before things escalated."

Archie's tone was quite cheerful as he said, "Mr. Farwell knows that Essie doesn't like her." Naturally, Roxanne was aware of the "evil woman's" identity, but she couldn't be bothered to correct their term of address at the moment.

can't believe Aubree had the audacity to go to the kindergarten. This means that she must be aware of Lucian falling sick. In fact, she may have come from the Farwell residence! At that thought, Roxanne recalled the incident with the bacterial infection.

Although they did not have solid evidence, they knew that Nancy had once worked for the Pearson family's research institute. That fact alone was enough to pin the suspicion on Aubree.

If Aubree dared to lay a hand on Estella, not once, but twice, what was stopping her from harming Lucian? A chill ran down Roxanne's spine at the thought.

I've known Lucian for so many years, but I've never seen him fall sick, ever! It must not be an ordinary illness...

“Mommy, are you listening to us?” Archie and Benny anxiously inquired when they saw that Roxanne was deep in thought. Roxanne snapped back to her senses and forced a smile. “It sounds quite serious. Has he gone to the hospital for a checkup?”

“I think he was seen by the family doctor, but it wasn’t enough to reassure Essie,” Archie replied. Roxanne, too, did not feel reassured.

It would be too easy to misdiagnose the bacterial infection with a simple checkup. Archie’s and Benny’s eyes glittered when they saw how worried Roxanne looked.

Benny urged, “Mommy, why don’t you check up on Mr. Farwell? I’m sure Essie would feel better if you went over.” Archie hurried to add, “Yeah! Essie says that you’re the best doctor in the world!” In addition to her own speculation, Roxanne was convinced by the two children’s coaxing. Finally, she agreed to it.

“I will pay him a visit after dinner,” she said. Truth be told, Archie and Benny had not expected their mother to agree to it so easily. It took them several seconds to recover from their shock.

“We want to go too!” Roxanne frowned. “No, you boys should stay home. It would be bad if he passes the cold to the both of you.”

Archie and Benny insisted, “We only want to visit Essie. We promise not to go inside!”

They were worried about their father and wanted to see how he was doing too. Roxanne assumed that the kids truly wanted to play with Estella. Hence, she did not give the matter further thought.

As soon as they finished dinner, the kids urged her to depart quickly.

## Chapter 993 Grim Expression

At the Farwell residence, Aubree was having dinner with Lucian and Estella. While they were eating, Aubree tried her best to engage in a conversation with the two, but she received no response.

This angered her. Indeed, Lucian did not kick her out this time. However, he was acting as though she did not exist, as he had never looked at her once.

They finally finished dinner. Aubree stood up first and turned to Catalina. She kindly said, "Catalina, let me help you clean up." Catalina was surprised and wondered why Aubree had a sudden change in attitude.

Before she could say anything, Aubree had started cleaning the table. Since Lucian would not accept her affection, she could only swallow her pride and try to impress him by doing little things. "Daddy..."

Estella carefully tugged on her father's sleeve. Lucian looked down at her. "I want to see the flowers." She glanced at Aubree as she spoke.

She did not want to stay with Aubree. If Aubree were to stay at their place, then Estella would rather go out to play. Lucian knew what Estella was thinking. He gently patted her head and said, "I'll accompany you."

Upon hearing that, Estella hurriedly shook her head. "I can go by myself. I'll just be in the garden. Daddy, you shouldn't go outside since you're sick."

Lucian smiled and calmly replied, "It's just a cold. I can still see the flowers with you." After saying that, he stood up and held out a hand to Estella. Estella's eyes lit up.

Although she said she wanted to see the flowers because she was trying to hide from Aubree, she did not expect Lucian to want to follow along.

This is my first time seeing the flowers with Daddy! A huge smile tugged at Estella's lips as the thought crossed her mind.

On the other hand, an icy glint flashed across Aubree's eyes as she watched the two leave. She put the plates in her hands back on the table.

"Ms. Pearson?" Catalina was confused upon seeing Aubree put the plates down.

Seconds later, she returned to her senses. This person is simply acting in front of Mr. Farwell. Whatever “help” she wants to provide is just an excuse to butter up to him. Since Mr. Farwell and Ms. Estella left, she’s too lazy to keep up her act.

When Catalina realized that, she did not say a word and continued to clean up.

Estella squatted at the stairs in the garden and looked at the flowers around her feet earnestly.  
“Daddy!”

She suddenly noticed something and excitedly tugged on the hem of Lucian’s pants.

Lucian could hear the excitement in Estella’s voice as his gaze followed where she was pointing.

A ring of white flowers surrounded a cluster of pale yellow flowers.

“Ms. Jarvis previously made a flower wreath for me that has the same small yellow flowers as those in it!” Estella’s tone was full of surprise.

When Lucian heard that, he raised an eyebrow, and a smile tugged at his lips.

Just then, Aubree came out of the mansion with a thick coat in her hands.

“Wear this. Otherwise, your flu will get worse tomorrow.” As she said that, she reached out to place the coat around Lucian’s shoulders.

Lucian turned around. The smile on his face remained, though his tone was cold as he said, “Thanks.” After saying that, he took the coat from her before she could touch him.

Aubree’s hands were frozen in mid-air, and her expression turned grim.

Suddenly, she noticed something and looked toward the entrance of the manor.

In the dark of the night, a familiar car was parked at the entrance, but it seemed that no one had gotten out.

#### Chapter 994 No One Can Steal Him From Me

Roxanne's car came to a stop at the entrance of the Farwell residence. She shut off the engine and hesitated momentarily, wondering if she should call Lucian.

After all, she was visiting him at night. Even if it was to check on him, the visit was too sudden. As that thought crossed her mind, Roxanne reached out to grab her phone. She could see the mansion's entrance from the corner of her eye.

It looked like two people were standing there. She stopped her actions and frowned as she stared at the entrance of the mansion. Though hidden behind the trees, she could vaguely see Lucian and Aubree standing there.

In Aubree's hands seemed to be a coat. After some time, Lucian turned and smiled as he took the coat from her hands. From afar, the atmosphere between them looked harmonious.

Although it was hard to see clearly from this distance, Lucian's smile was an eyesore. Lucian kept saying he'll win me over, but he's never smiled at me like that before...

As she also thought of what Lucian said about settling his relationship with Aubree, a piercing pain stabbed her in the heart. Is he so-call handling the relationship by flirting with her like he's doing now?

In the end, the words Lucian used to butter me up were so that he could use me and compete with Jack in business. I'm nothing but a tool of his.

"Mommy?" Archie and Benny suddenly called out as she got lost in her thoughts. They were in a rush to get out of the car to meet Lucian, but Roxanne had kept the doors locked.

Roxanne snapped back to her senses and tried to suppress the change in her emotions as she asked, "What is it?" Benny was puzzled. "Aren't we going to check on Mr. Farwell? Let's go down!"

Upon hearing that, Roxanne looked down, and her hand reaching for her phone returned to its position at the steering wheel. "I suddenly remembered that I still have work to finish, so there's no time to visit him today."

After saying that, she started the engine. Archie and Benny exchanged glances, their eyes filled with confusion. "But..."

Mommy had already promised us, so it meant that she didn't have any more work. Why is there work that she needs to finish all of a sudden?

Archie and Benny thought of their mother's actions and followed her gaze to look at the manor.

However, they could not see anything due to their short stature.

Roxanne had already started the car and turned, driving toward the road she had come from.

Archie and Benny wanted to say something, but they noticed that Roxanne was in a bad mood, so they stayed quiet. Meanwhile, at the Farwell residence, Aubree stared at the car slowly driving off, and a smug smile appeared on her lips. So what if Roxanne came? Lucian is mine. No one can steal him from me!

Aubree was satisfied as she watched the car drive further into the dark before her gaze switched to Lucian, and she said, "Lucian, it's getting late. The two of you should rest. You need to get going too."

Lucian nodded, not sparing a glance toward her.

Aubree did not get angry either as she made her way toward the entrance of the manor.



Although her efforts for the day were wasted, she had to admit that Roxanne's action just now made her feel much better. She could accept everything, including Lucian ignoring her.

believe that after today, that b\*tch will understand her place and stay away from Lucian!

At the entrance of the mansion, Lucian frowned as he watched Aubree leave.

He thought he might be seeing things as she had left in a seemingly good mood.

What did she do this time without me knowing?

#### Chapter 995 Full Of Worry

When they arrived back home, Archie and Benny wanted to cheer Roxanne up, but she did not give them a chance to do so as she headed straight for the study.

When they saw Roxanne's retreating figure, they felt disappointed and worried. They kept thinking that something must have happened at Lucian's house that they did not know about.

Roxanne closed the door to the study. She had a conflicted look as she sat at the desk. The truth was, she did not have any work. That was just an excuse she came up with at the very last minute.

She thought of how she felt when she saw Lucian and Aubree together and felt a strange feeling tug at her heart.

What's wrong with me? knew that Lucian was using me as his tool to compete in business. His previous pursuit was all talk. But why does my heart feel heavy when see him with another woman...

Roxanne had no idea how to face this version of herself. Suddenly, the ringing of a phone tore her away from her thoughts. She snapped back to her senses and looked down at the phone screen.

It was a call from Jack. wonder why he's calling me at such a late hour. "Mr. Damaris, what's the matter?" On the other end of the call, Jack's voice was gentle as he said, "Did interrupt your rest?"

Roxanne bit her lip. “No. just came home.” Upon hearing that, Jack finally felt relieved and switched the topic. “I heard from Dr. Galloway that the medicinal herbs from Herbscape Group were also burned in the fire at the research institute.”

Roxanne was taken aback. She did not expect Colby to tell Jack about it. Jack continued without waiting for her to answer, “I found another way to get more. I'll send them to you tomorrow.”

Roxanne frowned and instinctively refused, “Since they were burned at our research institute, we'll find a way to get more ourselves.”

After all, this batch of medicinal herbs was to be used for a project. Jack had found a way to get the previous batch, but they were burned at the research institute.

Logically, they should be the ones to think of a way to get more medicinal herbs this time.

However, Jack did not mind as he said, “As long as the project can proceed successfully, it's nothing but a batch of medicinal herbs. You don't need to take it to heart.”

Roxanne still felt guilty. “But...” Jack had already spent so much money on Herbscape Group. It was inappropriate for Damaris Group to continue doing so.

On the other end of the call, Jack could hear the hesitance in Roxanne's voice. He smiled and said, “Damaris Group originally led this project. You all are just researchers. Hence, it's only right for Damaris Group to fork up the costs. If you still feel guilty about it, how about you treat me to lunch?”

Since he had spelled things out so clearly, Roxanne had no reason to refuse, be it the medicinal herbs that Damaris Group would be providing once more or Jack's suggestion of treating him to lunch. “When are you free, Mr. Damaris?” she asked frankly.

Jack was surprised as he did not expect she would agree to it so quickly. He was silent for a few seconds before he smiled and answered, “I'm free anytime.”

Nodding, Roxanne mulled over it before she suggested, "Since you'll be sending the medicinal herbs here, how about tomorrow?"

Jack agreed without a single moment of hesitation. The two of them chatted for a while before ending the call. It was getting late, and Roxanne remembered that she had work tomorrow. She calmed herself down and left the study.

As soon as she opened the door, she saw Archie and Benny standing outside with faces full of worry.

#### Chapter 996 Faking His Illness

"Why aren't you two asleep yet?" Roxanne was stunned for a moment as she stared in confusion at the two boys standing in front of her.

Archie and Benny exchanged glances and said, "We thought you seemed in a bad mood, Mommy." Upon hearing that, the emotions Roxanne had tried to suppress were no longer under control as they rose up within her once more.

"Mommy, what happened at the entrance of Mr. Farwell's house?" Archie stared at her seriously. His words hinted that he somehow knew what had happened.

Yet, in reality, he had not seen anything. Roxanne patted Archie's head as though nothing had happened. "It's nothing. suddenly remembered that had work that needed to be done."

Archie and Benny were persistent. "Then how about we visit Mr. Farwell tomorrow?"

Roxanne's expression stiffened when she heard that. The boys stared at her with wide eyes, trying to see if they could find anything by studying her expression.

It took some time before Roxanne spoke again. She forced a smile and said, "I have something important at work that needs to be settled tomorrow. Besides, Mr. Farwell only has the flu and fever. I'm sure he'd have recovered by tomorrow."

Initially, she was worried that Aubree might have done something to Lucian. However, when she saw that scene unfold before her just now, all her worries disappeared.

Judging by how Lucian treated Aubree, Aubree must have already reached her goal and wouldn't do anything unnecessary anymore. Archie and Benny had predicted Roxanne's refusal.

Benny was still unwilling to give up as he grabbed the hem of Roxanne's skirt and complained, "But, Mommy, when you were sick, Mr. Farwell would always come to visit you."

In other words, they should visit Lucian, even if it meant using the excuse of returning the favor.

It would have been fine if Archie and Benny did not bring up that matter. Once they brought it up, Roxanne felt a stabbing pain in her heart.

Every time she was sick, Lucian would always be by her side.

Roxanne could not help but feel touched by his gesture.

However, now that she thought about it, those were nothing but a part of his strategy to get in her good books.

Archie and Benny noticed their mother's mood turn sour and did not dare to say anything more.

Roxanne did not have the energy to explain further to them, either. "It's getting late. The two of you should go to sleep. If you're worried about Mr. Farwell, think you'll be able to see him when you go to school tomorrow."

With that, she walked past Archie and Benny.

The siblings lowered their heads in disappointment but did not stop her from leaving.

“Archie, should we not have pressured Mommy to visit Daddy?” Benny asked guiltily as he looked at Archie after Roxanne left.

Archie also regretted what they had done. “We already went to Daddy’s place. Let’s come up with an idea to make Mommy feel better.”

Benny frowned. “But Mommy seems to be angrier than before. Could it be that Daddy is faking his illness?” Maybe Daddy isn’t truly sick and is just trying to trick us. Mommy found out about it, which is why she’s so angry. However...

Archie shook his head. “Daddy is really sick. Essie wouldn't lie to us.”

As for what had happened, the two of them were not sure.

Archie and Benny could not come up with an answer no matter how much they thought about it, so they had no choice but to return to their room.

At the same time, Roxanne was lying on the bed, trying to fall asleep. However, her mind was filled with memories of her and Lucian.

## Chapter 997 Win Her Over

After staying up the entire night, Roxanne got up super early the next morning. She wanted to leave as soon as possible for the research institute because Jack was scheduled to deliver the medicinal herbs on time.

Hence, she did not want to keep him waiting. With that thought in mind, Roxanne tried to stay awake. Upon getting dressed, she went downstairs, only to be greeted by two concerned children at the dining table.

Roxanne sat down next to Archie and Benny. Then, she gave them both a peck on the cheek like she always did. When she lifted her head, she noticed faint dark circles under the kids’ eyes.

She frowned immediately and asked, "You two didn't have a good night's sleep?" The boys shook their heads, feeling guilty. Benny answered in a piping voice, "I had a nightmare and caused Archie to sleep poorly."

Though feeling groggy, Roxanne could tell that it was just an excuse. She snapped her brows together and said, "You can come over and look for me the next time you have a bad dream."

The little boy nodded obediently in response.

Thereafter, Roxanne said nothing as she started eating her breakfast.

She wanted to finish it as fast as she could in order to leave for the research institute.

Just as she finished eating, the doorbell unexpectedly rang.

She froze for a second before standing up to get the door.

When she found out who it was, a deep frown instantly marred her countenance. "Mr. Damaris, why are you here?"

He should be preparing the medicinal herbs at Damaris Group right now.

Jack flashed a smile. "I hope I didn't disturb your morning."

Confused, Roxanne shook her head.

Jack explained, "Well, it's still early, so I'm here to pick you up while my assistant looks after the preparation of the herbs."

He scanned behind her and added, "Also, I wanted to swing by to see Archie and Benny. You mentioned they were unwell some time back, and I felt really bad for not visiting them for the longest time."

The boys seemed to have heard him. Within seconds, they dashed out from the dining area.

“Mommy, are Mr. Farwell and Essie here?” They sounded extremely excited.

Roxanne darted a glance at the man standing before her, then at the kids. For a moment, she did not know how to respond. She recalled the children disliking Jack.

As the kids thought Lucian and Estella were here, they were all beaming happily, but the smiles on their faces froze when they saw who was at the door. They failed to hide their disappointment.

“Hi, how have you been? It’s been ages.” Jack ignored the utter disappointment on the boys’ faces.

Snapping back to their senses, Archie and Benny greeted him courteously, “Hi, Mr. Damaris.”

Benny could not help but ask, “Are you here to drive Mommy to work?”

As far as he could remember, each time Jack appeared, Roxanne would follow him to work.

Jack nodded noncommittally. “You are such a clever boy, Benny! Yes, I’m afraid your mommy has to go soon.” Just then, Roxanne was ready to leave.

Since the children had guessed it right, she caressed their heads and said gently, “I’m going to work. Ms. Lane will take you both to school in a bit.”

Subsequently, she gave Jack a nod to indicate that she was ready to go. However, the boys were very reluctant about it.

Mommy and Daddy haven't patched things up yet, and Mr. Damaris is now in the picture. Will he win Mommy over? What if Mommy doesn't want Daddy anymore?

The thought of it made Archie and Benny stare at Roxanne with recrimination.

Roxanne was rendered speechless.

As Jack entered the car, she bent down and gave the boys a solemn promise.

“This is nothing but work. Rest assured that I'll seek your agreement first should have any plans to find you a daddy.”

At that, the boys had no choice but to let her go.

#### Chapter 998 Do Not Pressure Yourself

After receiving her blessings from her children, Roxanne headed toward the garage. Although Jack came all the way to pick her up, she had no intention of being his passenger.

More importantly, she did not want to upset her sons or create any misunderstanding. Jack watched her drive the car out from the garage without saying a word. Smiling, he ignited the engine and led the way.

With that, the two of them set off to the research institute one after another. By the time they arrived, the staff from Damaris Group were offloading the medicinal herbs at the main entrance. Colby was there to welcome them.

When the latter saw the two come in separate cars, his expression darkened. “Thanks for your hard work, Dr. Galloway,” uttered Jack.

He was the first one to get out of his car before striding toward the entrance. Colby recomposed himself and asked nonchalantly, “Mr. Damaris, Dr. Jarvis, you guys...?”

Roxanne's house was in the opposite direction than heading to the research institute from the Damaris residence. Seeing them both arrive from the same direction made Colby suspect that Jack had gone to visit Roxanne in the morning again.



If that's really the case, they are getting a tad bit too close. "Oh, detoured to Ms. Jarvis' residence. Initially, intended to drive her here, but..."

Jack arched his brow and dropped the topic. Yet, Colby was able to figure out that Roxanne had declined the former's good intentions.

When he came to that realization, Colby felt much better. Roxanne quickly got out of her car and jogged toward the entrance of the institute. "Sorry, I'm late." She flashed a smile at Colby, looking apologetic.

The latter was not too fazed by the matter. "There's nothing much to do besides supervising the delivery of the medicinal herbs. Moreover, these are from the Damaris Group. can definitely handle this alone."

As he spoke, he took a casual glance at Jack, who responded with a gentlemanly nod. The delivery was almost completed by the time Roxanne got there. It did not take long for the truckload of medicinal herbs to be transferred to the storage area.

Learning from her past experience, Roxanne improved the remaining storage rooms at the research institute by adding fireproof materials to them.

Even so, she could not stop worrying about it. She had to check it personally to be assured that everything was in order.

"bet the Damaris family has spent a fortune on these medicinal herbs," Colby commented inadvertently.

Hearing so, Roxanne instinctively gazed at Jack.

When the latter brought it up during conversation the night before, she was sure the Damaris family would pay a lucrative amount for the herbs. However, she did not know how much exactly.

Now that Colby mentioned it, she felt a strong urge to find out more. Jack laughed it off. "It's just a favor. Money is secondary. Please receive it gladly with open arms."

Frowning, Roxanne replied in a serious tone, "I'll make full use of these medicinal herbs, and won't let the Damaris family pay for nothing."

For a big and prominent family like the Damarises, relationships and ties were far more important than money. Therefore, Roxanne knew she had to utilize the herbs to their maximum value.

Jack nodded satisfactorily as he patted her shoulder in hopes of comforting her. "Don't pressure yourself too much." Roxanne remained solemn and said nothing.

Exasperated, he went on, "Didn't you say that you wanted to treat me to a meal as a token of appreciation?"

#### Chapter 999 The Mastermind

There was a slight change of expression on Colby's face when he heard that. Instantly, his eyes were fixated on Roxanne. She wants to treat Jack to a meal? Since when? How come know nothing about it? Did they contact each other privately?

Intrigued, he blurted, "Really? When was that?" Roxanne replied, "I made that suggestion when Mr. Damaris and were talking about the medicinal herbs last night."

Turning to Jack, she added, "Mr. Damaris has helped our institute fix a huge mess. This meal is nothing significant compared to the favor received."

In other words, she made it clear that the meal was not meant to pay Jack back for his generosity. Jack did not seem bothered by her words.

He glanced at Colby and teased Roxanne, "How then does Ms. Jarvis plan to return me the favor?" Jack's gaze, coupled with his question, made Colby's heart sink.

He quickly turned to Roxanne, impatiently waiting for her response. Putting on a serious expression, she stated, "I'll definitely make your sacrifice worthwhile."

Jack raised an eyebrow and gestured for her to continue. "I'll use them to achieve our desired research outcome," Roxanne promised.

Upon hearing that, Colby heaved a silent sigh of relief. Jack smiled placidly. "I believe in you, Ms. Jarvis." Subsequently, the trio checked the herbs sent. When it was nearly noon, Roxanne suggested going for lunch, to which Jack agreed happily.

"Do join us, Dr. Galloway." She turned to Colby. Taken aback, the latter subconsciously looked at Jack, who gave an indifferent response.

"Let's go together. You've worked hard throughout this project, Dr. Galloway."

With that, Colby nodded. They did not go far but simply settled in a nearby restaurant. After taking their seats, the gentlemen let Roxanne do the honors.

She did not reject the idea and placed orders for all of them before handing the menu back to the server.

"By the way, how's the fire investigation coming along?" Jack brought up the matter like a bolt from the blue.

No one noticed Colby's body stiffen briefly as soon as Jack popped the question.

Furrowing her brows, Roxanne said, "We only know that an internal staff was bribed to do that, but nobody knows who's the mastermind."

At that thought, a headache started assailing her.

Colby slowly recovered his senses and took a sidelong glance at Jack. He relaxed further upon realizing that the latter was not focusing on him.

This is supposed to be a lunch between Jack and Roxanne, but he let me tag along and even bring up the matter in my presence in a seemingly casual manner.

At first, Colby suspected Jack had discovered the truth. But after those words, it seemed his concerns were unwarranted. Jack was just genuinely concerned about the case.

At that thought, Colby chimed in, "I've checked all the staff at the research institute, and I can guarantee this won't happen twice. Therefore, you don't have to worry about the medicinal herbs."

Jack quirked his lips and nodded. "I hope so. Anyhow, it's best we catch the culprit as soon as possible."

Roxanne nodded in agreement.

#### Chapter 1000 Saved By The Bell

After that, a long pause ensued. When the dishes were served, they started eating. As Colby observed the two sitting next to him, a strange light glinted in his eyes.

"I was thinking we might need Mr. Damaris' help in catching the one who orchestrated the fire." His sudden remark caught everyone by surprise. Jack stopped eating and inquired with an arched brow, "What do you mean?"

Colby explained, "The staff who was bribed encountered some family issues. Though the matter was only made known within the research institute, the culprit was able to find that out and take advantage of his weakness. It goes unsaid that the person has investigated the background of everyone at the research institute.

His tone of voice grew to become more serious. "He must have done his homework before selecting that particular employee." This was the first time Roxanne had heard of this speculation, and it caused her heart to skip a beat.

The fire happened one day after the medicinal herbs were delivered to the storage. If the person has carried out a thorough investigation on all the staff, then... How powerful is he to identify Jason within such a short period?

Roxanne fell into a slight daze when she recalled her earlier suspicions. Amused, Jack asked further, "So, Dr. Galloway, what are you saying?"

"The mastermind is no ordinary person to achieve all these. I doubt we could locate him with the mere resources available at the research institute. Hence, we most likely need some help from you, Mr. Damaris." Colby's tone was resolute.

At that, Jack stared at him meaningfully. Just when Colby thought his trick was working, Jack posed an unexpected question. "Is there a possibility that the fire was started by someone who works in the research institute? That's why it was done so effectively?"

Colby's expression stiffened imperceptibly at that. Judging from his words... Does he really not know the truth? "That's impossible," said Roxanne.

The gaze she shot Jack was one of utmost confidence. "No one at the institute would commit such a crime to harm others without benefiting oneself unless one was desperate."

Jack then looked away from Colby. "I was just taking a wild guess, Ms. Jarvis. Forget what I said since you're very sure about that. I'll help to investigate further."

Roxanne grinned. "Thank you, Mr. Damaris." Jack bobbed his head in response. Those short minutes of conversation had Colby breaking out in a cold sweat, thinking that he might have been exposed.

Fortunately, he was saved by the bell. Had it not been for Roxanne, he would have shot himself in the foot.

As he recalled Jack's words, Colby was overwhelmed by conflicting emotions.

Could it be that Jack has noticed something? Was he trying to test me? He forced himself to stay calm and await the next chapter to unfold.

However, Jack never mentioned the fire anymore, whereas the troubled Roxanne did not initiate any conversation for the rest of lunch.

In the end, the trio left the restaurant harboring different thoughts.

Roxanne assumed Jack would take his leave after eating. On the contrary, he stayed back at the research institute till evening. Throughout the afternoon, they engaged in discussions about the usage of the medicinal herbs.

Thankfully, they arrived at a satisfactory answer before knocking off work.

The three of them left the research institute at the same time.

Upon bidding goodbye to the two men, Roxanne made her way to her vehicle.

As she tried to start the car, she realized the engine would not turn on.