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Selena let out a dejected sigh. "Should we just eat something else?" "We'll eat noodles!" He held onto her hand and led her into a small alley.

"Where are you taking me? It's five miles away, isn't it? Are we going to walk all the way there?" she cried. He led her through an intricate network of passages and somehow managed to find a noodle store hidden in one of the alleyways. It was a tiny stall set up in a residential area, and it didn't look like a legitimate restaurant. The store was dim and quiet as they looked into it from outside—it didn't look like a nice place at all.

"Is this the place?" Selena asked. "Yeah. Do you have a problem with it?" Pierre asked in return.

She rubbed her rumbling tummy. "No! Let's go!" The two of them strode into the shop. A couple ran the place, and one of their children was sitting at the corner of the shop while doing her homework. The lady owner was carrying another young child on her back as she walked over to serve them. Selena and Pierre could immediately tell that their family of four was struggling to make ends meet—the restaurant was probably their sole income.

"What would you guys like to eat? We serve homemade noodles here. Would you like to take a look at the menu?" The lady gestured toward a menu hanging on the wall.

"I'll have some beef noodles," Selena said after glancing at the menu.

"Same for me," Pierre said as the lady turned toward him. "Alright. Do you guys want anything else? We have shrimp, fried chicken, and cabbage as side dishes. Would you like to try some of those?"

"We'll have one of each, then." Selena ordered an unnecessary amount of food.

"Alright!" The lady beamed as she hurried off to prepare their food. Once all the orders were served, Selena and Pierre's table was filled with dishes. Fortunately, the lady owner was sensible enough—she served them smaller servings of each dish as she thought that they wouldn't be able to finish their food otherwise. Even their beef noodles were smaller than the usual serving size. "Enjoy your meal," the owner said.

There were barely any customers in the store. Selena and Pierre figured that they could spend their time hanging around in the restaurant as they still had an hour to waste before the Civil Affairs Bureau was open. The two of them slowly munched on their food while they watched the restaurant owners going about with their lives. The lady owner checked on her elder daughter's homework once she finished cooking, and she then got some snacks to feed her younger child. The male owner didn't have much to do either—he stepped out of the kitchen and sat around as he watched his daughter doing her homework. The way their family came together was a heartwarming sight to Selena. She could tell that they weren't locals, and she knew how hard it was for foreigners to settle in a town like this. But I love how their whole family is in this together—life might be challenging and tiring for them, but at least they'll be energized by the support they get from their own family.

"What is it? Do you want to start a noodle restaurant yourself?" Selena had been zoning out as she watched the family, and she only snapped out of her daze when Pierre spoke to her.

"That's exactly what I'm thinking about." She gave him a side-eye. Finally, she accepted the fact that she would never get the chance to experience the joy and happiness of being a regular person—she knew that she would have to live in fear for the rest of her life. It's okay. I'll still do my best to protect our family while waiting for Pierre to come home to us.

After they finished their meal, the lady owner came over to give them the bill. "It's a total of 33, but you can just give me 30."

"That doesn't sound right. Did you miss out on something? How could it only be 30?" Selena glanced at the prices on the menu—it was evident that the lady had miscalculated and charged them a lower price.

"No, I didn't. I only charged you half the price of the items since I gave you small servings. You can just come back for a meal in the future if you enjoyed your food today," the owner replied.

Selena paid through her phone before they left the store. As they stepped out onto the street, Selena turned around to address the lady owner once more. "Madam, do you know if there are any other noodle stores around the Civil Affairs Bureau?"

"No. We're the only ones around. Most of the people who go to the Civil Affairs Bureau are there to register for their marriage, and many of them would want to eat noodles after that to ensure that their relationships last for a long time. However, we simply don't have enough money to rent a store that's any closer to the bureau, so we had to open it here instead. All we can do is hope that those who come over to get married might hear of our store."