

102 Arwen has moved on.

Zero Bar was part of an expensive hotel that had both the bar and restaurant parallelly running for the customers' experience, 1

Daniel was on his way inside when he spotted Arwen talking to someone off to the side. His brows furrowed in confusion. Walking to her, he casually asked, "Arwen, you are here?"

Arwen smiled at him before raising her finger, signalling for him to wait for a moment. Daniel nodded, watching as she continued her conversation with the man. She seemed serious about whatever she was discussing, her tone calm but firm as she spoke. He had never witnessed her talk so professionally before. But now that he had seen, he could say that she carried a tone of natural command that was hard to miss.

Once she finished, the man gave her a respectful nod before walking away. Turning to Daniel, she greeted him with a warm smile, "Daniel! Did I make you wait long?"



Daniel smiled and shook his head, "Not at all. I was just a little surprised to see you here." He, then, looked around and asked, "Was it something important?"

Arwen laughed lightly. "I had some things to take care of. What about you?" She checked her watch, then glanced in the direction Daniel had been heading before —the bar. "It's still early. You are not working today?" It wasn't unusual, but given Daniel's habit, he would never engage himself at places like this during the work hours.

Daniel's smile faltered, but he kept his tone casual. "I am here to pick Ryan. He is ... well, a bit drunk inside."

Arwen paused for a moment, processing that, but then nodded. "Oh, I see. In that case, I won't hold you up. I still have a few things to wrap up myself. No need for the formalities."

Daniel nodded, taking a deep breath. "Alright then. I will head in. Take care."

Arwen nodded. "Thanks, Daniel. You too, take care."

With that, she gave him a parting nod and turned



to walk in the opposite direction.

Daniel watched her walk away for a moment. In the past, Arwen wouldn't have been so cool about Ryan getting drunk, but today, it felt like she didn't even care enough to ask about his situation. His thoughts lingered on her calm demeanour before he turned to head inside the bar.

Inside, it wasn't difficult for Daniel to spot Ryan. Since it was still early in the evening, the bar was mostly empty. The moment Daniel walked in, he saw Ryan sitting at the farthest table in the corner, slouched, clearly in a miserable state.

Walking over, Daniel took in Ryan's disheveled appearance —his shirt slightly untucked, tie loosened and hair in a mess. There was a half-empty glass sitting in front of him, untouched for some time, while other empty bottles littered the table, narrating a tale that wasn't hard to guess.

"Ryan, what are you doing here like this? And why the hell are you so drunk?" Daniel's voice was sharp, but laced with concern.

Ryan, who was still under the influence of

alcohol, blinked up at him with hooded eyes. "D-Dan, brother ...is that you?" His speech slurred. "Why it's you? Did you call Arwen? Call her ... ask her to come here ..."

At that moment, a server who had been nearby stepped forward to explain. "Sir, Mr. Foster has been drinking here since last night. Though I started my shift in the afternoon, the previous server told me he had already had quite a lot."

Daniel frowned, concern creasing his brows, but he nodded to the server. "It's fine. I will take care of him. Can you bring me fresh lime soda?"

The server nodded and left immediately to get the drink. Once he returned, he handed the glass to Daniel and quickly left again.

Daniel sat down across from Ryan and slid the glass of fresh lime soda toward him. "Here, drink this and you will feel better," he said firmly. But when Ryan made no effort to touch the glass, Daniel reached out to grab his hand and made him hold it. "Don't act like a kid. Drink it, now."

But Ryan still didn't respond. He sat there as if he couldn't hear Daniel.



Feeling his patience slipping, Daniel raised his voice, "Ryan !"

And at that, Ryan finally reacted. He looked up, his tear-filled eyes meeting Daniel's. "Daniel, how can Arwen have someone else now? How can she have someone else?" His face was pale, and his expression looked lost and broken. 1

Daniel was taken aback. He hadn't expected this.

"Ryan," Daniel began, his voice softening. "Arwen ... she has moved on. You need to —"

"No," Ryan interrupted, slamming his hand on the table. "This must all be her lie. Her way of making me feel like ...like this."

"Feel like what?" Daniel knew this day would come sooner or later, but he hadn't expected that when it would, Ryan would still take the escape door of denial.

"Feel like I am losing a world. Feel like I am losing everything —everything that I had worth fighting for." Ryan answered, lifting the glass of his whisky to take another sip. 1

But just when it would have touched his lips,



Daniel reached out to snatch it from his hands.

"Don't drink anymore. You already had enough," he said.

Ryan shook his head, denying Daniel's attempt.

"Don't. Please don't take that away. It's making all this bearable. Let me have it a little longer."

"Ryan!" Daniel sighed, his patience thinning. He wanted to make Ryan see sense, but he knew that in such a drunken state, it would be of no use. Whatever he would say would only fall on deaf ears, and by tomorrow, it would all be forgotten. "Let me get you back home. You need rest to get better, not this," he said, putting the glass of whisky away.

Ryan was about to shake his head and refuse, but his boy was no longer capable of handling the alcohol. Before Ryan could comprehend what was happening, he was already lost in the abyss of darkness, along with the fear and pain he had felt all along.

Daniel would have reached out to help, but before he could react, Ryan's head already hit the surface of the glass table hard.

"Sir, should I help?" the server approached. But



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Daniel shook his head.

"It's fine. I will take him back home." With that, Daniel got up to help Ryan. In that moment, he felt a pang of sympathy for his friend, but still, he couldn't bring himself to comfort him.

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