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"Where were you?" Larry stared at her sternly, repressing his emotions and forcing his voice to sound calm.

"Um, I went for lunch with a friend," she slowly answered.

Oh, so a junior from school is a friend now? Is that friend going to turn into a boyfriend at some point, too? A gloomy expression on his face, Larry gradually neared Joan, who hung her head and looked at everywhere but him as she fiddled with her fingers.

"Which friend was it? Do I know him? How long did you eat for? Where did you eat?"

The sudden barrage of questions irritated Joan.

What is this, an interrogation? Why should I tell him? He didn't tell me in advance when he left the country for work, either!

"A meal is just a meal. What's up with all the questions?" Joan picked up her purse and made to leave the ward. "Ms. Young, I'm heading out to buy some fruits for you."

Maybe it was guilt that was causing her to act out like this, but she had no idea why she was feeling guilty in the first place. There was nothing between her and Caiden, yet she'd made it seem as if she'd done something wrong.

Sighing heavily, she exited the room and hit her own head with a fist.

What are you doing, Joan? Why didn't you just tell him the truth? What's the use of getting angry at him? Why did I think that was a better option than letting him find out about Caiden?

Whatever. I'll explain to him when I get back.

The supermarket was full of people who had just gotten off of work and were doing their grocery runs.

Taking a look at her surroundings, Joan ended up picking out a lot of things that Delilah, Larry, and Lucius liked. There wasn't much in the shopping cart for herself, probably because she hadn't had much of a good appetite recently.

"The cookies that Lucius likes to eat..." Joan mumbled to herself under her breath, scanning the aisles carefully.

Got it!

She rushed towards that particular aisle, but the cookies were placed on a shelf too high for her to reach. She was wearing sports sneakers instead of heels, so there was no way that she'd be able to reach it. Placing everything down, she jumped over and over, stretching her arm out as much as she could to no avail.

"Did you want this?" A large hand suddenly appeared above hers.

"Yes, it's that box!" she excitedly replied.

She hadn't thought to take a look back at the kind stranger, nor did she recognize his voice.

"How many do you want?" The man's voice was low, and there was the faint scent of his cologne mixed in with his pheromones.

"Two should be enough," she said, a fond smile growing on her face.

"Here. Is there anything else you need help with?"

"Nope. Thank you..." She turned her head to look at him, her jaw dropping when she realized that it was Caiden.

"Caiden? Didn't you go home?"

"Yup," he grinned at her again. "I was just dropping by to buy something before I headed home." Why do I keep bumping into him everywhere I go? Is this some sort of black magic?

"Are you sure you don't need anything else?" insisted Caiden.

"No, thank you. Goodbye," Joan told him curtly, hurriedly leaving.

What a weird guy. How does he always end up sticking to me in one way or another? This won't do. I've been around him too much lately. I need to stay away from him.

Back in the hospital ward, Larry was sitting on the couch flipping through a magazine absentmindedly, his chest still heavy with a tangle of emotions.

"What are you being so down for?" sighed Delilah. "Just say what's on your mind. Who knows what might happen if you don't. Besides, communication is key in a relationship."

She had a point. He needed to have a good talk with Joan.

But how do I start the conversation? And what do we talk about? If she doesn't take the initiative to tell me herself and I have to ask the first question, wouldn't she accuse me of being suspicious of her again? Larry hung his head, his shoulders slumped.

"Oh, it'll all be fine. I'll make sure to talk with Joan when she returns, so don't look so down," reassured Delilah. "Relax. Nothing is going to happen between Caiden and her. It's just that things have been really chaotic recently."

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What kind of "thing" would cause them to interact with each other daily? Even Lucius would occasionally bring Caiden's name up when he was with Larry. It would seem that Caiden had done his homework.

"I'm back, Ms. Young," Joan called out, pushing the door open and heading straight for the kitchen.

"You bought so much! How did you carry it all?" fretted Delilah.

"A handsome young man helped deliver the items," one of the nurses behind Joan unhelpfully supplied.

Larry instantly turned his sharp gaze towards her. Was it Caiden again?

Noticing Larry's change in mood, Delilah quickly changed the topic by loudly saying, "Thank you so much, Joan. What do you plan on cooking?"

"Let's see. I might make a few regular dishes, and then fry some fish..."

Larry didn't have the appetite to listen any further.

"Oh, Larry! Lucius is going to come back from school soon. You should spend some more time with him. He seems a little stressed lately, apparently because of a competition he's joining," Delilah pointed out purposefully.

"Alright." Larry got to his feet and walked over to the window, staring sadly at the scenery outside.

Joan, busying herself in the kitchen, completely failed to notice his behavior.

"Don't worry, Grandma," Lucius later told Delilah comfortingly. "You'll definitely get better!"

"That's right, Ms. Young! You're a good person, and you deserve good things. We're all cheering you on!"

"We'll always be here for you, Ms. Young!"

A small group of people from the village had gathered in the hospital ward. When they'd all caught wind that Delilah was about to undergo surgery today, they'd immediately paused what they were doing and rushed to the hospital to visit her.

Everyone in the village had formed a connection with Delilah over the years. She'd received a high level of education, yet was very humble and lowkey in personality. Even though she used to be rich, she never looked down on them and lived her daily life with them like an ordinary person. Her kindness and selflessness had also moved their hearts on more than one occasion.

"Oh, stop it. It's just a small surgery, there was no need for all of this," Delilah smiled gratefully, although she did think that this reaction was a little too over-the-top. "Thank you all for coming."

"No problem, Ms. Young! You're one of the most important figures in our little village; we'd all be lost without you! Just take your time to recover. We're all looking forward to eating your buffalo wings again!" The group erupted in joyful laughter.

Delilah's cooking skills had become sort of a legend within the village, especially her buffalo wings. Although she had passed on her skills to Joan as well, no one else had ever eaten any of Joan's cooking before.

"You're all mere foodies, aren't you? I'll host a small get-together at my place after I get better and treat you to my cooking then," Delilah chuckled.

The atmosphere appeared cheerful and bright, but each of them was secretly suppressing their true emotions of uneasiness and concern. After all, who wouldn't be worried about surgery? No one said it aloud, but they were all afraid that Delilah wouldn't come out of the operating theater after going in.

Joan stood off to one side, hiding in a corner as she watched everything in silence. She was stubbornly trying to prevent herself from bursting into tears, and everyone understandingly gave her own space.

"Okay, okay, that's enough. Ms. Young's surgery will definitely go well," a nurse walked over and told them. "The professionals that Dr. Silverman has invited are the best in their fields. There's no need to worry so much."

Dustin slowly walked over to the bed, and the small crowd parted to make way for him.

"It'll be alright, Ms. Young," Dustin reassured Delilah, gripping her hand in his. "It's just a simple procedure. Just grit your teeth and get it over with."