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Never Late, Never Away Chapter 2281 - 2290

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 2281

Since when has she become so smart? She's even playing such a trick on me! If she can focus on developing her career, she'll be successful very soon.

"By the way, I've got your money, and it's in my office now. Don't forget to take it tomorrow," Larry said in a deep voice.

"Okay. Thank you very much, Larry. Let me propose a toast to you with tea." With that, Jessica gulped down her drink.

She behaves like a boss! Why didn't I notice this before?

Larry's lips curled into a smile.

Unbeknown to them, Joan was looking at them dejectedly from the window not far from them.

She purposely bought many things and made adequate preparations to go on a trip with Nancy. Unexpectedly, she happened to see her husband and the woman, who always appeared on the news, having meals and chatting happily.

They look like a sweet couple and are having a nice chat.

As Joan's expression grew dim, she realized that Larry probably hadn't laughed heartily for quite some time. Suddenly, she admired Jessica—at least she could make Larry laugh and feel happy for her.

Forget it. I should go home now.

Joan slowly turned around and left.

On the other hand, Larry and Jessica kept laughing at the jokes they made. Ever since Larry and Jessica became god siblings, they seemed to be more open to one another.

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“By the way, how will Joan react when she knows that you have a godsister?” Jessica looked up and asked Larry.

“I don’t know, but I think she will be delighted. However, I have not seen her lately,” Larry replied and while shrugging his shoulder helplessly.

“Don’t worry, Larry. Your problems are my problems as well. I’ll help you coax her!” Jessica gave a forceful pat on his shoulder.

“Jessica, don’t do that. Please don’t stir up trouble for me. I can solve the problems by myself,” Larry declined her offer directly.

“Come on. You might not understand women like me. Don’t worry and leave this to me!”

Why should I not worry? You behave just like a man but claim that you’re no different from a woman. Larry glanced at Jessica and shook his head helplessly.

Perhaps due to the death of her parents, Jessica had stopped being melodramatic. She swore to herself to be brave and stary strong whenever she faced difficulties.

“Do you not believe me? Larry, I promise to fulfill the task perfectly!” Jessica pledged confidently.

Upon hearing it, Larry felt a little headache coming. Why does she look like a drunkard now even though she didn’t have alcohol?

“Well, should I drive you home?” he asked.

“No, I want to have more wine. Cheers!” Jessica suddenly lifted her glass and yelled.

What’s going on? Where’s the wine? Could it be that there’s wine in her cup? Larry immediately grabbed the glass from her.

Just as I thought! Why is she playing such a trick?

“Jessica, didn’t I say that we mustn’t have alcohol?”

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Larry was truly mad and offended. He didn't want any unexpected events to happen again for he had learned a lesson that he would never forget for the rest of his life.

"Larry, you got me. Hehe, it's fine. I just had a little wine. I'm not drunk. See, I'm still conscious. Rest assured that I won't kiss you again," Jessica said while waving her arms wildly.

Larry felt a little embarrassed as a few diners around them were staring at her, probably thinking that she was crazy.

This damned woman just can't stop stirring up troubles.

"That's enough. Stop eating, and let's go home. We can come here again next time." With that, Larry wanted to help her up.

"I'm not leaving. Besides, I'm not full yet. Larry, are you reluctant to spend on me? How can the president of a large corporation be so stingy?" Jessica shrank away from him when she was talking.

What nonsense is she talking about? Since when have I been stingy? Haven't I been paying the bills every time she wanted to treat me to dinner?

Since she's Caspian's future wife, I should let Caspian deal with her!

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"Hey, don't vomit!" Larry supported Jessica while standing at the door and waiting for Caspian's arrival. Meanwhile, he kept an eye on Jessica as he worried that she would throw up all over him like how she did previously.

"Larry, do you agree that they are bad guys?" Jessica murmured while her eyes were partially closed.

"Of course! You're always right! Hang in there. Caspian will arrive soon," Larry played along.

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“Hmm, why did you ask him to come here? No way! He can’t see how I look now. He’ll be pissed off, and I’ll embarrass myself before him. I don’t want that to happen!” With that, Jessica began to run off.

“Hey, where are you going?”

Perhaps Larry was too loud, Joan heard his voice before she left. She couldn’t help but turn around and glance at them some distance away.

“Stop making trouble, will you? Jessica, stay where you are and don’t leave!” he yelled furiously.

This woman is a tough nut to crack!

“Hey, you don’t have to be so fierce! Even Caspian has never yelled at me. How can you be so rude?” she screamed disgruntledly.

Am I rude? I’m treating you patiently, am I not? I would have left you by the roadside long ago if it wasn’t for Caspian! If that happens, who will take care of you?

“Larry, are you angry? Please don’t get mad. I’m still counting on you to help me establish my career. Please don’t be angry at me. I promise not to drink any alcohol from now on, okay?” As Jessica was talking, she wrapped her arms around his waist and refused to let go.

“Let go of me. What are you doing in public? Let go now. I’m already married and I have a family.” Larry tried to pull her arms away.

However, he failed to wriggle free from her as she was unexpectedly strong.

Whatever. I’ll just let her have her way since Joan isn’t here.

Larry heaved a sigh and calmed himself down. He decided to stop resisting because the more he tried to wriggle free, the tighter she locked her arms around his waist.

However, Joan witnessed everything clearly.

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I can accept the explanation that he accidentally kissed Jessica last time, but what about this time? Is he going to just let her hug him? Joan sneered.

This is my husband, Larry Norton, who kept saying that he loves me!

Why is my life so miserable? Joan kept coming up with reasons to forgive him. However, it seemed clear to her that he was even happier without her.

Thump! Joan dropped the things in her hands and left disappointedly.

“Hey, you have to sober up!” Larry said.

“No, I want to sleep.”

After some time, Caspian finally arrived. However, he couldn't help but eye them with suspicion.

What's happening? Jessica is hugging Larry, yet he doesn't resist her? Are they deliberately acting like a loving couple? Fury rose in Caspian upon seeing that.

Larry has a family and a wife. In that case, why does he want to get involved with Jessica? I mean, he can't do whatever he wants to my loved one even if he's my good friend.

“Caspian, it's not what you think. Please drive her back, and I'll explain it to you afterward.” Larry carried Jessica into Caspian's car when he was talking to Caspian.

“What about you? How are you going to get home?”

“I'm fine because I didn't drink. She was the only one who had wine. Besides, she's too crazy. I'll hit my head against the wall for having dinner with her again!” Larry yelled.

Once Larry finished, Caspian let out a small chuckle.

Caspian was amused, for Jessica was probably the only one who could make Larry feel irritated. Nevertheless, he also believed that there was nothing between them.

Caspian left after driving Jessica home and tucking her in bed.

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Meanwhile, Larry was still busy with work and reading documents in the office.

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"Larry, are you not going home?" Caspian knocked on the door and ambled in.

"I'm not going back tonight because there's a lot of unfinished work," Larry replied directly without looking up at him.

"Okay." Caspian sat down on the couch.

Larry lifted his head to stretch his neck after quite some time and realized that Caspian was still sitting on the couch.

"Hey! Why are you still here?" Larry asked.

"I'm waiting for your explanation," Caspian scratched his head and said awkwardly.

What explanation do you need? Larry felt slightly bewildered.

"About what happened between you and Jessica..."

Sure enough, he is asking about that.

"Caspian, you're my good friend. Rest assured that I'll never lay my fingers on my friend's wife. Besides, Jessica and I are god siblings now. So, don't worry about it. I'm waiting to attend your wedding!" Larry explained with a smile.

We're indeed good friends! Caspian's lips curled into a satisfying smile.

He knew that Larry wouldn't have any ill thoughts toward Jessica. Besides, Larry definitely wouldn't abandon his relationships with Joan and him.

"How is Joan? What does she think about you?"

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Once Caspian asked the question, Larry felt rather frustrated.

It's been a long time, and I wonder if Joan is still angry at me now.

"I haven't contacted her lately," he replied slowly.

Meanwhile, Joan was tossing in bed, too high-strung to fall asleep. All she could think of was the moments when she snuggled up to Larry.

Why has he betrayed me? Why does he get involved with that woman? Why isn't he satisfied with what he has? She curled up and sobbed pitifully.

It turns out that love can't stand the test of time. Also, one can easily break the promises he makes to the other.

Why are human beings so complicated?

Why is life so ruthless?

She gripped and rubbed the blanket tightly as though she was clutching at straws.

As her phone rang suddenly, Joan wiped her tears away and answered the call.

"I heard that you'll be going on a trip with Nancy. Is it true?" Dustin asked gently and looked forward to her answer.

"Yes," she answered succinctly.

Although she replied in merely one word, Dustin could feel that something wasn't right about her.

"Joan, what's wrong? Did you cry?" Dustin asked anxiously.

"No, it's just a cold. I'll be better after getting some rest," she immediately replied.

She's lying to me again! She's a vulnerable girl deep down, but why must she pretend to be strong?

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Dustin heaved a sigh and squinted as though he was pondering over something. "Did you miss your dinner again tonight? I'll deliver..."

"Dustin!" Suddenly, Joan cut in in a high-pitched voice.

"It's okay. You don't have to come over. I'm fine now and can take care of myself. Don't worry about me. Anyway, I'm rather tired and going to sleep now." With that, Joan hung up the phone.

"Well, I'm sorry, Larry. I didn't get drunk on purpose last night," Jessica lowered her gaze and said softly.

Did she not do it on purpose? How could she have the cheek to say so after she changed her tea to wine? Does she think that I was born yesterday? Larry's face darkened instantly. He ignored Jessica who was standing in front of him and kept reading through the documents.

"Please don't do that to me. Talk to me," She came up to him and said in a soft and apologetic voice.

"I'm busy now. Go and talk to Caspian," Larry replied without looking up at her.

What does that mean? I'm here to apologize to you, yet you asked me to look for Caspian. Since I didn't do anything wrong to Caspian, why should I go to him then?

"Larry, are you a man? How can you be so petty? I have made a small mistake, yet you have been ignoring me ever since I got here," Jessica pursed her lips and said in a coquettish tone.

That's right. I don't want to talk to you! Exasperated, Larry turned around and didn't look at her.

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Are you really that ignorant? Since I'm irritated, you're supposed to give me some time to calm myself down.

"Mr. Norton, can you tell me what I should do to obtain your forgiveness?" Jessica continued.

Why are you so irritating? Larry felt his head throbbing.

"I'll feel better once you get out and disappear. Can you do that?" Larry laid out his terms.

Apart from being occupied with piles of work, he was even more agitated because Jessica kept pestering him.

"That's enough. You should leave the office now." With that, Caspian, who stood next to Larry, pushed her out of the office.

"What's wrong with him? Is he in a bad mood?"

"Be more considerate toward him because he's occupied with work lately. Leave now and do your work," Caspian waved his hand at her as he said.

Humph! How dare he brushes me off like this? Does he have balls of steel or suffer from a concussion? How dare he behave so arrogantly and bossy before me?

"Caspian, are you joking? I'm..."

"What?" Caspian interrupted.

What? Am I not the daughter of a manufacturer who was once a partner with Norton Corporation? Unfortunately, my father had terminated his partnership with Norton Corporation a long time ago. Oh well, I have to listen to him this time.

Humph! I let it pass now and punish him in the future. Jessica turned around and left Norton Corporation.

Meanwhile, Joan had fallen asleep on the bed. She had a sleepless night and only fell asleep at about 5 a.m. Her phone had been buzzing for some time, yet she didn't hear it at all.

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As the sunlight shone into the room, she slowly opened her eyes.

“Mmm!” She stretched her body to make herself more comfortable.

“Hello, Joan. What happened? What took you so long to answer my call?” Nancy asked nervously.

She was worried that Joan would do some silly things due to the problems in her relationship.

Women could be vulnerable at times. Besides, they could feel dejected the entire day due to an action, a word, or even a facial expression alone.

“I’m fine. Don’t worry about me because I have just overslept. What time should we depart?” Joan thumped her head and asked in a soft voice.

“How about departing now? I mean, we’re free and have nothing else to do now anyway,” Nancy replied.

The earlier we go, the better. At the very least, Joan wouldn’t stay at home alone and overthink her problems.

“Sure! Give me some time. I’ll pack up now.”

As she was about to hang up the phone, Nancy added, “Joan, you don’t have to pack up. We can just grab our phone and start our journey.”

After looking around the room, Joan thought she really didn’t have anything to bring along except for some clothes. Also, she could buy whatever she needed along the trip. As such, she didn’t have to trouble herself to pull the luggage with her everywhere she went.

“Alright, we’ll meet up straight away. By the way, I hope no one knows about our trip,” Joan highlighted.

Nancy certainly understood that Joan didn’t want Larry to be aware of it.

Soon, they arrived and met up in the airport. They felt relaxed as they only brought their phones.

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“What do you think? Do you feel free like a bird without bringing any luggage?”

“Yes, I feel like I have let go of my burden,” Joan replied smilingly.

With that, they traveled abroad happily. Even Jory didn't know where they went.

“What? Have they gone abroad? When did she leave? Where is she now and who's with her?” Caiden asked frantically.

Jaden was taken aback too but regained his composure very quickly.

Does he not know about this? Is this a prank? What is he busy with these days? Why does he look confused when his loved one has run away?

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“Did you contact Joan lately?” Jaden asked cautiously.

“No. I'm busy lately and don't even have time to go out. Tell me where she is now,” Caiden asked coldly as he grabbed Jaden's arm.

This is a tough question. If he doesn't know it, how on earth will I have the answer? He might be fond of Joan, but I'm not! Why would I pay attention to what she does?

“Well, I really don't know. She went abroad, but no one knows where they are now. I think even Larry isn't aware of it. So, she probably doesn't want anyone to find her,” Jaden explained.

Caiden was a little fumed. How could I miss such a golden opportunity? It's all because of the damned urgent work. I've finally completed it, but my loved one has left!

“It's okay. You don't have to feel dejected. Don't worry because she's not leaving forever,” Jaden comforted him.

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"You know nothing. Since she needs someone to comfort her now more than ever, I should always stay by her side to motivate and support her," Caiden yelled.

Wow, since when has he become so sentimental? I've never seen him so emotional towards anyone before, not to mention a woman! Well, it looks like love trumps all! Unfortunately, Joan doesn't love him. What a shame!

Yet, given that Larry and Joan had fallen out, Caiden might still have a chance. Jaden chuckled quietly.

"I have to look for her." Suddenly, Caiden stood up as though he wanted to leave.

Is he crazy? Where does he want to go and find her? Since no one knows which country Joan is in now, how can he possibly find her?

"Hey, Caiden, please stay calm and don't act rashly," Jaden reminded him.

There had to be at least a good reason to look for someone. Moreover, Joan went abroad on a trip and wasn't missing. Hence, there was nothing to worry about. Furthermore, Caiden wanted to fly abroad and look for her like a lovesick guy even before her lawful husband Larry acted.

"But I've to look for her anyway," Caiden replied stubbornly.

Argh, I'll stop persuading him. He can do whatever he wants. Since I don't have any say when it comes to Joan, I should save my energy to work on something else instead.

"Do whatever you like," With that, Jaden left the office.

Even though his idea of finding someone in a haystack sounded absurd, Caiden was willing to give it a try.

Wait, I can check the footage of the surveillance cameras! There must be surveillance cameras in the airport! Once the thought flashed through his mind, Caiden ran out excitedly as though he just had a jab of adrenaline.

"My god, you're really going to find her!" Jaden yelled from behind.

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"Yes, I'm going to do that!" Caiden replied loudly.

Meanwhile, Larry stood near the window and squinted as he stared at the lighthouse not far from him as though he was deep in thought. After much hesitation, he finally grabbed his phone and made a call.

However, no one picked up the phone, no matter how many times he called.

"What's wrong, Larry?" Caspian came in and asked.

"How's Joan doing now?" Larry asked straightforwardly.

So, he is worried about Joan.

"Nancy said she's fine, and they are having fun. However, she didn't want to tell me where they are right now. I guess it's Joan's idea," Caspian answered slowly.

She hasn't forgiven me yet. When will she finally calm down and listen to my explanation? As Larry was anxious, he unknowingly gripped the side of his shirt tightly. He didn't know that Joan had witnessed everything when he kept Jessica company and waited for Caspian's arrival.

"Larry, has it ever come to your mind that Joan doesn't trust you now?" Caspian suggested carefully.

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They are a husband and a wife, not an ordinary couple. Trust is the foundation of every marriage. Once lost it can never be found again. How then can they live together?

"Caspian, don't talk nonsense. She's only jealous now," Larry said seriously.

Yes, I can understand if she's jealous. However, don't you think it has been going on for too long? Caspian knew that women loved to engage in cold wars with their loved ones. However, such cold wars definitely wouldn't persist forever.

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Hence, Caspian thought that if Joan really trusted Larry no more, getting a divorce was probably the best option. Although it wasn't something that Caspian wished to see, he believed that love couldn't be forced. Instead of tormenting each other, they probably ought to let go and pursue their own happiness.

Isn't it how life is supposed to be? If you don't love or care about her, someone else will. After all, Larry can still live without Joan. Nobody ever truly needs another person forever in life. Besides, one will eventually forget that person as time goes by.

In fact, Caspian wasn't being unreasonable, for his only wish was that Larry wouldn't be mentally drained anymore due to his strained relationship with Joan. Furthermore, Larry was already troubled by tons of work in the company. As such, he would be even more irritated as his wife would throw a tantrum when he went home.

"Larry, I'm serious. If nothing works, I think you two should separate. It's not the end of the world," Caspian murmured and dared not look up at Larry.

"Caspian, shut your mouth! Remember this: Joan will be my one and only wife, and I only love her. I won't change even if she doesn't love me and leaves me," Larry said resolutely.

"But have you ever thought about how you should be together if there is no trust between you two? Besides, a few men are waiting for her out there."

Instantly, Larry had lost all hope.

Is he referring to Dustin and Caiden? Yes, the two men are stubborn and never stopped waiting for and courting Joan. Nevertheless, Joan is too naive in this regard by treating them as ordinary friends.

"That's enough. You may leave now. I want to be alone." With that, Larry sat down on the couch and closed his eyes to clear his thoughts.

He felt utterly spent and craved for a good rest.

Caspian could feel that Larry was exhausted. Despite this, he had no choice but to leave the office quietly.

After quite some time, Larry took out his phone again to make a call.

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"Hello, Nancy. How's Joan? Is she alright? Is she in good health?" Larry asked a series of questions hastily.

"Larry, I'm surprised that you're calling to ask about her! What are you doing now? Are you dating that woman?" Nancy replied harshly.

Ever since she read the newspaper, her attitude toward Larry had changed.

How dare you betray Joan! Humph, I'm going to teach you a lesson! With that, Nancy hung up her phone.

"What's wrong? Was it Jory? Did he ask you to go home?" Joan came up to Nancy and asked as soon as she hung up.

"No, it wasn't him. Don't worry. Jory would want me to go on a trip badly so that he can have some peace of mind."

After that, they strolled toward the seaside.

For most women, having fun at the seaside was the easiest way to relax. Hence, it was the first destination that Joan and Nancy chose to visit. Coincidentally, Caiden made the right guess.

"I mean, where do you want to look for her?" Jaden stopped Caiden and asked.

He didn't want Caiden to fly around the world aimlessly. Besides, given that some countries were crisis-ridden, he was worried that his friend would be in danger.

"Move aside now!" Caiden screamed.

"Can you sober up? Are you aware of the situation abroad? How can you be that reckless? Don't worry too much because Joan is only on a trip and will be fine. Please don't look for her. I'm worried that while she's safe and sound, something untoward would happen to you instead," Jaden persuaded him.

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Caiden naturally understood the situation then but he was more worried about Joan's safety.

"No, I must go, so don't try stopping me!" As he said that, he forcefully shook off Jaden and promptly left.

"Hey, be careful! Let me remind you that you're the only son of the Owens. Your parents will definitely be out for Joan Watts' blood if anything happens to you!"

"Excuse me, have you seen this person?" Caiden asked a passerby while holding a photo in his hand.

"No, I haven't; sorry."

"Excuse me, have you seen this person?"

He traversed every single street. Not only did he fail to find any signs of Joan, but even the passersby claimed that they had not seen her.

Could it be that she's never been here? But that's impossible. Surveillance footage at the airport indicated that the flight she boarded was indeed headed here. He thumped his head hard as helplessness inundated him.

"Are you looking for someone, mister?" asked a little girl who suddenly came over to him.

Upon hearing that, Caiden slowly opened his eyes. Looking at the child in front of him, he nodded helplessly.

"I saw that lady but she has already left," the little girl continued.

Huh? What did she just say? Caiden instantly whipped out the photo and sought confirmation while showing it to her.

"Little girl, you're sure you've seen the person in the photo?"

"Yup, I'm sure! She even won a balloon for me two days ago, but she has left. She said she's only here for a vacation with a friend," the little girl asserted.

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The lady she spoke of wasn't alone, so it must be Joan, no doubt! If I remember correctly, Jaden told me that she set out with a friend.

"Did she tell you where she was going next?" Caiden inquired eagerly.

"No, but she said she was going to another country."

"Baby!" a woman abruptly shouted a near distance away.

"Mister, I've got to go since my mother is calling me." The girl then waved at him and left.

At that moment, Caiden was exceedingly dispirited.

Why couldn't she go a little slower? And why didn't she wait for me? We could've traveled together. With the photo in hand, he then continued chasing after Joan.

"Ow..." Nancy whimpered on the sofa with both hands clutching her stomach, her face contorted with pain.

"What's wrong, Nancy? Are you not feeling well?" Joan asked worriedly as she hastily dashed over.

"It hurts, Joan. My stomach hurts so badly!" Nancy groaned.

In no time, cold sweat beaded on her face. At that, fear struck Joan and she immediately snagged her cell phone and called for help.

"Hang on, Nancy. The ambulance will be here soon, so don't panic. Come on; take a deep breath," Joan comforted as she grasped Nancy's petite hand.

Perhaps the food we had yesterday was too stimulating that it gave her an upset stomach today?

Nancy lay on the hospital bed with her eyes closed; she was in deep sleep. Beside her, Joan was on pins and needles, afraid that something would happen to her.

"How is she doing, Doctor?"

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“She’s fine but she needs to be careful about her diet. Also, it’s best that she stays home during this time as she needs adequate rest,” the doctor stated solemnly.

Oh, goodness, it’s all my fault! Guilt swamped Joan, and her eyes brimmed with regret. No, I can’t have her continue to accompany me like this! Otherwise, it’ll affect the baby inside her!

“What’s the matter, Joan? You seem rather downcast,” Nancy queried softly as she opened her eyes slowly.

“Let’s go home, Nancy,” Joan suggested.

“What are you talking about? No way! We’re finally on vacation; why are you now going back on your word? There are still a lot of countries left on our itinerary!” Nancy exclaimed in agitation.

Joan considered Nancy’s current condition and determined that they should not continue their trip.

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“I’m fine, so don’t worry. I’m perfectly well.”

Perfectly well, she said? Her agonized expression in the hotel earlier was so terrifying that my heart almost pounded out of my chest!

“No, we must go back. Your health is of priority!” Joan declared resolutely while clutching her petite hands tightly.

“How about this, then? I’ll just rest here while you go out and have fun. I’ll wait for you here, okay?”

At that very moment, a rush of warmth overcame Joan. She knew that the woman before her merely wanted to keep her company, but she couldn’t be so selfish.

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“Oh, my! I’ve finally found you both! You two simply moved from place to place too quickly!” Caiden clamored as he barged in.

At that, the two of them eyed the man in front of them dubiously, their curiosities piqued.

“Why are you here, Caiden? And what are you doing here?” Joan hurriedly asked.

“What else could I be doing here if not traveling? What a coincidence that I actually bumped into the two of you here!” Caiden replied jokingly.

What a load of b*llshit! That wasn’t what he said when he charged in just now!

“Well, what’s happening here? Don’t tell me you came after us all this way?” Nancy demanded with a trace of disdain in her eyes.

Hah! He’s obviously a far cry from Larry! After casting him a glance, Nancy turned away and ignored him altogether.

“Yup, you’re right! You really moved fast, Joan. You were always one step ahead of me. By the time I stepped foot in a country, you would have left just a moment before. Jeez, you should have waited for me!” Caiden deliberately groused in a low voice.

“Still, you’ve found her now!” Nancy muttered.

That’s true. I’ve found her at long last, so it wasn’t at all a waste of my time flying around the globe!

But truth be told, Caiden’s arrival was fortuitous to Nancy.

Joan has been urging me to return to Chanaea, but I kept worrying that there would be no one else to take care of her. Now that this guy has suddenly appeared, I can take a flight back with peace of mind.

“Why don’t you go back, Nancy? I’ll be fine with Caiden,” Joan suggested out of the blue.

After deliberating for a long time, Nancy finally relented. Caiden, on the other hand, had no idea what the two of them were discussing. Nevertheless, excitement imbued him when he heard that he could stay with Joan.

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"I'm warning you, Caiden Owens! You're not allowed to bully Joan. Also, she's a married woman, so you're not to have any ideas about her. Otherwise, you'll be getting it from me," Nancy threatened coldly.

Good heavens! Where did this bratty side of her come from? She's being aggressive as hell! But whatever! As long as she goes back to Chanaea, there'll be no problem. After all, it's out of my control whether something should happen between Joan and me later on!

"Joan is my senior, so I naturally won't bully her. You're speaking as though I'm a despicable person," Caiden griped.

Hah! Are you not a despicable person? From the look in your eyes, I can clearly tell that you have feelings for her!

Soon, the three of them reached a consensus. The very next day, Nancy boarded a flight back to Chanaea.

"Where are we going next, Joan?" Caiden inquired softly.

As Joan stared at the man in front of her, a pounding headache assaulted her. In reality, her suggestion of having Caiden accompany her for the rest of the trip was merely an excuse to convince Nancy.

"Go home, Caiden," she murmured. Lifting her head, she gazed at him seriously.

What does she mean by that? Is she kicking me away? But didn't we agree on finishing this trip together? Why is she going back on her word now? Could it be that I've displeased her in some way?

"What's wrong, Joan? Are you displeased with me? Tell me what I've done wrong and I'll change, okay?"

No, that's not it. Honestly speaking, you're great. You've got a handsome face, an amicable personality, an influential and affluent family background, as well as outstanding capabilities. You're really amazing, but regretfully, I don't even want to be friends with you right now.

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“No, it has nothing to do with you. I just want to be alone. I’m sorry, Caiden, but you should go back.” As Joan said that, she whirled around to leave.

“No! Tell me what exactly the problem is, Joan!” Caiden demanded loudly as he grabbed her arm.

“There’s no problem. I just don’t want to be with you! Do you get it now? Please don’t waste your time on me anymore. It won’t do you any good!” Joan roared while forcefully shaking him off. Then, she left.

What the hell happened just now? I traveled thousands of miles and exhausted myself to come here all the way just to hear her telling me to go back? Caiden’s eyes were filled with utter chagrin.

No! I certainly won’t go back! Even if she doesn’t want me to follow her, I’ll still secretly protect her!

Meanwhile, Joan went back to the hotel right away. Plopping down onto the sofa, she closed her eyes and composed herself.

I’m sorry, Caiden, but I don’t want anyone to disrupt my life now, including Larry.

A long while later, she packed her bags and left.

Very quickly, the plane landed and she arrived in another country. It was a place with beautiful scenery and simple folks.

“Hello! Welcome to our village!” a villager greeted, bowing to her all of a sudden.

“Hello, and thank you,” Joan replied.

The villagers had gathered; they seemed to be having an event. The mood was very lively. Driven by curiosity, Joan went over.

“Is there anyone else? Are there any more tourists here?” the person on stage asked loudly.

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Is he referring to me? As Joan darted her eyes around, unease slithered into her. What's the deal about tourists? Are we not allowed here?

"Yes!" a man beside her suddenly hollered and shoved her onto the stage.

All at once, terror engulfed Joan.

Oh dear, what's happening here? What exactly are they doing?

In a corner some distance away, Caiden watched the turn of events with concern written all over his face.

"Uh... Did I do something wrong?" Joan queried cautiously on stage.

Upon hearing that, raucous laughter instantly rang out below the stage.

"Jeez, this woman is really strange!"

"Exactly! No one asks such a thing as soon as they go on stage!"

"What an oddball! But she's rather pretty, so she's my cup of tea."

Among the audience, several men kept chattering and poking fun at her.

What's this? Aren't the people here supposed to be simple and honest? Why do I sense reprehensible and appalling attitudes all around? Joan panicked. Have I made a mistake coming here?

The truth of the matter was, she had indeed made a mistake traveling to that place.

"You didn't do anything wrong, Miss. The thing is, we've recently launched an activity for tourists, to let them experience local customs here. So, how much do you think you can contribute?" the man on stage asked forcefully.

Hmm? What does he mean by contributing? Why do I feel as though I'm about to be held ransom?

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“What do you mean? I don’t quite understand,” Joan questioned softly in return.

Huh? Is she for real? Don’t tell me she’s so dense that she can’t even understand a simple sentence?

Below the stage, the spectators went into an uproar once again.

“Well, this woman is going to be mine henceforth, so none of you are allowed to fight me for her!” a man abruptly thundered, jumping onto the stage.

“What gives? I want her, too, so she’s got to choose!”

“Hear, hear! You’ve got no right to monopolize her!”

At that exact moment, Joan trembled. She was dead certain that the group of men were all heinous people.

“Listen here, lady. Keep me company tonight and I’ll pay for you. How about that? You can ask for however much you want since money is the last thing I lack!” the man who had leaped onto the stage asserted loudly as he sauntered toward her, patting himself on the chest.

“Why would you pay for me? I’m not buying anything,” Joan countered in a low voice.

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The moment Joan’s words came out, the man instantly doubled over with laughter.

“Say, are you really that slow-witted or merely faking it? What the host meant earlier was that you’ve got to donate money since you’re a tourist!”

Oh, so that’s what happening here. Donating should be a voluntary choice. Why are they blatantly coercing me to do so? Ah, never mind. I’ll just donate to avoid further trouble!

Thus, Joan took out her purse at once and gave the host all the money she had left.

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However, the host was abruptly irked.

“Don’t you think this is too little? You’ve got to donate at least a thousand or so,” the host chided tersely.

Even so, I’ve already donated all the money I have on me!

“I’m sorry, but... that’s all I have on me,” Joan explained in mortification.

“Ah, you’ve got no more money? Ask me for some, then. The amount you donated didn’t even meet the minimum standard,” the man beside her scoffed.

What? There’s even a standard? At that, Joan’s eyes promptly darkened. They aren’t soliciting donations at all! This is blatant blackmail!

“Let’s go. Come with me, and I’ll donate on your behalf.” The man then dragged her down the stage.

“Hey, what are you doing? Let go of me! I don’t need your help!” Joan struggled wildly.

“Don’t be shy. This is no big deal because it’s entirely normal here.”

Argh! This is not a matter of being shy or otherwise! Damn it, why is he so strong?

“Ahh!” the man screamed all of a sudden. Joan had clamped her teeth hard on him.

“Haha, you’ve been bitten by a woman!”

“How useless of you to be bitten by a woman! Hah! You’re just going to be bossed around all your life!”

Everyone around them mocked and derided the man. Enraged, the man crouched and threw Joan over his shoulder before striding away.

“Ahh! Let go of me! Help!” Joan shrieked.

“How dare you bite and rebuke me?” The man slapped her butt forcefully.

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“Let her go!” A familiar voice was suddenly heard.

“Who the hell are you? How dare you give me orders?” The man placed Joan down and rolled up his sleeves as he took up a fighting stance.

“I’m her boyfriend!” Caiden proclaimed loudly.

All at once, Joan was stumped. When did he become my boyfriend? And didn’t I tell him to go back?

The man snarled. “Ah, so he’s your boyfriend, huh? He’s indeed quite handsome, but alas, he’s just a pretty face!”

“Come here, Joan!” Caiden surreptitiously beckoned Joan.

Without the slightest hesitation, Joan rushed over to Caiden and ducked behind him. Then, she peeked at the menacing man in front of them.

“Don’t be afraid. I’m here, so don’t worry,” Caiden whispered in consolation.

“How about we make a run for it, Caiden? They far outnumber us,” Joan whispered into his ear.

How I wish! But that won’t do us any good. This is their territory; where can we go even if we do make a break for it?

“When the fight breaks out later, seize the opportunity to escape. Do you hear me? Don’t bother about me. I’m a man so I can easily take a beating.”

Joan stared at Caiden; she was overwhelmed with gratitude.

Actually, that was also the first time Caiden uttered such a manly declaration. Throughout the years, he reserved all his devotion and heroism for her, and today, he could finally put them to use.

“No way! I want to stay with you,” Joan rebuffed vehemently.

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Is she crazy? If she doesn't make her escape later, the consequences will be dire considering the sordid state of affairs here!

"Remember that you're a woman, so you're different from me. Do you get my drift? If they capture me, I'll only suffer a beating at most. However, it's different for you!" Caiden snapped in a low voice, truly incensed.

I'll never allow the woman I love to be sullied by other men!

"Well? Beat him up! What are you doing there, wasting time?"

"Hear, hear! Beat him up! Go on! Pummel him!"

"Quick! We still have to go home to eat!"

Several people around them started hollering, all wearing expressions of anticipation.

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