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Chapter 471

Shawn's joints cracked as he stepped closer to Jack, his fists clenched and ready. Suddenly, a loud shout interrupted him, "What the hell's going on here?"

Boris had just stepped out of the private room to use the restroom and stumbled upon the scene.

Shawn paused, then sneered. "You've got ten seconds to get lost, or I'll take you down with him!"

Boris shot him a look of pure disdain. "Try it, dumbass."

Just then, the door to the private room swung open, and Howard rushed out with a group of men. "What's going on? What's happening?"

Suddenly, there were over a dozen men on Jack's side, while Shawn only had a handful of guys with him. The odds were no longer in Shawn's favor.

Shawn was no fool. He could tell Boris and his men weren't to be trifled with. He let out a cold snort. "Fine. You've got guts."

With a wave of his hand, he barked, "Let's go!"

A smart man knows when to retreat. Shawn figured as long as he knew Jack was the one behind this, he'd have plenty of chances to deal with him later.

Seeing Shawn and his men leaving with darkened expressions, Boris turned to Jack and said, "If you need anything, just say the word."

Jack nodded. After saying goodbye to Boris, he headed downstairs with Wesley and Francis.

Wesley, who knew of Shawn's reputation, looked at Jack with concern. "Shawn's not someone to mess with. Maybe we should call the police?"

But Jack assured him he'd be fine; he'd just have to avoid Shawn from now on. After parting ways with Wesley and Francis, Jack began to think things through. Instead of waiting for Shawn to strike, why didn't he just take the initiative?

It was time to settle old scores and new grudges. If he was going to take Shawn down, he'd do it thoroughly-crush him so hard he'd never recover.

An idea formed in Jack's mind. He immediately called Boris and asked, "Are you free in three days? I need you to gather some people for me."

"No problem!" Boris replied without hesitation.

There were plenty of folks from the countryside he could call on, so gathering a group wasn't an issue at all.

Still, Jack wanted to make sure everything was airtight. He asked for Boris' address, planning to meet him in person to hash out the details.

After hanging up, a faint smile played on Jack's lips. If Shawn was planning a wedding, Jack was going to make sure it was one he'd never forget.

That evening, during dinner at home, Joanne announced she had a parent- teacher meeting the next day.

Joanne was about to enter her final year of high school, and her teacher had called the meeting to prepare parents for the challenges ahead. The goal was to get everyone on the same page without putting too much pressure on the students.

Jeffrey and Helena, however, had plans to sell fruits at the market the next day and couldn't attend. They turned to Jack. Now that he was in college, he was practically an adult, and it made sense for him to step in for his sister.

Jack nodded. "I'll go to Joanne's meeting tomorrow. Mom, Dad, you two shouldn't overwork yourselves. Selling fruits doesn't bring in much. Why don't you just stay home and rest? Or I can give you some money to open a small shop or something."

He explained that he'd earned some money from programming, enough to cover Joanne's expenses. Of course, he didn't mention exactly how much he had saved -he didn't want to overwhelm his parents.

Jeffrey and Helena were touched to hear Jack's concern for them. However, the latter shook her head and said, "Keep your money for yourself. You'll need it for the future. Your dad and I are still young and strong. We'll keep working to lighten the load for you and Joanne."

Then, she sighed. "Sometimes, the neighbors say that even though you were the state's top scorer, it's nothing compared to Feena's fame. But in my eyes, you're just as good as her!"

Jeffrey chimed in with a grin, "If Feena and Jack got together, they'd make quite the pair."

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Helena shot Jeffrey a look and said, "Oh, stop it. Who knows if Feena will even show up here again? I heard her grandparents aren't doing well, and they're planning to sell their house and move into a villa."

Jack was surprised. He hadn't heard anything about this from Feena.

Jack was about to help Joanne with her homework after dinner when a melodious voice called from outside.

"Mr. and Mrs. Holland, hello!"

Helena replied enthusiastically, "Oh? Is that our superstar? Are you here to see Jack? Come on in!"

"Thank you, Mrs. Holland! But please, just call me Feena. Calling me a star makes me blush. I have a few questions I'd like to ask Jack."

Helena walked into the room, beaming. "Jack, Feena is here to see you. Come on out."

Joanne's eyes sparkled as she added, "Go on, Jack! I don't have any problems with my homework right now. Go talk to Feena."

Joanne could sense Jack's feelings, and she adored Feena too. Her admiration for Feena had only grown after the success of the fantasy drama Feena starred in. She really hoped Jack could win Feena's heart.

Jack nodded and stepped out of the room. There stood Feena, graceful and radiant, with a guitar slung over her back.

When she saw Jack, her expressive eyes lit up. "There are some parts of the guitar I'm struggling with. Could you teach me?"

Jack agreed without hesitation, saying, "Of course!"

Feena hesitated for a moment, then suggested, "It might disturb Joanne's studying if we stay here. How about we go outside? The riverside is nice and open."

"Let's go, then."

After letting Helena know, Jack walked out with Feena. When she saw Jeffrey's beloved old bicycle parked at the door, she couldn't help but smile.

"Jack, it's a bit of a walk to the riverside. It might be too late by the time we arrive. How about you ride the bike and take me there?"

It was a little past six in the evening, and the summer sunset painted the sky in warm hues.

Though the old bicycle was a bit worn, it was sturdy and reliable.

Jack nodded before hoisting the bicycle upright and wheeling it to the door. Feena happily hopped onto the back.

Jack pedaled along the narrow path toward the riverside, the ride bumpy but steady. Feena gently leaned against his back, her hands resting lightly on his shoulders. Though it was just a casual touch, a subtle, unspoken tension lingered between them.

The cool evening breeze brushed against their skin, dispelling the day's heat and leaving a refreshing sense of calm.

As they rode, familiar faces greeted them warmly, calling out titles like "Superstar" and "Top Scorer".

Thanks to the popularity of her fantasy drama, Feena was becoming a household name. While she wasn't yet a nationwide sensation, she was well on her way, a rising star in the entertainment industry. One or two more hit shows, and she'd truly shine.

As for Jack, though he hadn't made any major waves since his state top scorer achievement, that title alone was legendary. Now, walking side by side with Feena along the riverside path, they made a striking pair-a perfect match of talent and beauty.

The people in the neighborhood joked that Jack and Feena were a couple. They'd grown up together, and now Feena was a stunning beauty with hair cascading down her back, while Jack, the top scorer and a student at the prestigious Alnewgo University, had a bright future. If they ended up together, it would be a story for the ages.

By the time they reached the riverside, the sunset had painted the sky in fiery hues, the clouds ablaze with red and gold. It was breathtaking.

Jack leaned the bicycle against a nearby rock, and the two of them sat by the water, watching the waves ripple under the glow of the setting sun.

Feena's eyes sparkled as she whispered, "It's so beautiful."

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Jack was immersed in the tranquility of the moment, the gentle breeze carrying the faint scent of Feena's perfume.

After a long pause, Jack finally said, "You said there was something you needed help with. What is it? I can take a look now."

"Thank you," Feena said gratefully, nodding as she took the guitar off her back.

It turned out that Feena had written a song, but she wasn't entirely satisfied with it. She wanted Jack's input.

Though Soul had been banned for certain reasons, Jack's talent in music was undeniable. Feena had always loved his songs, especially "Time" and "Heart's Desire", which she used to listen to every night before falling asleep.

Moreover, Luca, who was now a rising star in the music industry, owed much of his success to Jack's guidance. So, when it came to music, Jack was more than capable of offering valuable advice.

Jack suggested that Feena sing a part of her song first so he could identify areas for improvement. She nodded, strumming the guitar and beginning to sing.

Although Feena had been focusing on acting in TV dramas lately, she hadn't neglected her music.

The song she played was a campus folk ballad. Its melody was nostalgic, reminiscing about youthful days, the friends who grew up by the riverside, and the boy she'd known since childhood.

The song was fresh yet tinged with a faint melancholy, carrying the bittersweet ache of parting and unspoken feelings. It was as if the song expressed her reluctance to let go of someone dear to her heart.

Though the song still had its imperfections, its sincerity was undeniable. Often, it was this raw, heartfelt emotion that moved people the most. Jack, too, was deeply touched by the passion in her voice.

Jack eagerly pointed out areas where the song could be improved, wanting to help Feena make it as perfect as possible. His feedback was always precise and insightful, leaving Feena feeling as though a veil had been lifted from her mind.

Finally, she understood why Luca had once revered Jack like a god. In the realm of music, Jack truly was a genius.

"When I get back, I'll help you refine this song some more. It's really beautiful," Jack said sincerely, his admiration evident.

Feena's eyes lit up. "Did you also feel that emotional resonance in the song?"

Jack nodded. "Yeah. It brought back a lot of memories for me."

Feena smiled. "Good. Then you'll help me polish it up when you get back?"

Jack agreed, but curiosity got the better of him. He asked, "Why did you suddenly write such a melancholic song? It feels like it's about longing and separation. Is there some boy here you're still thinking about?"

Every classic song was born from genuine emotion, especially ones with such intense feelings. Feena turned to Jack, surprised that he could pick up on so much from just one song.

It made her feel a deep connection with him, as though she had found a kindred spirit.

She gazed at Jack for a long while as if trying to etch his image into her heart. Instead of answering his question, she simply said, "I'll be leaving here soon."

Jack's heart skipped a beat. "Leaving? But I thought you've been living with your parents in the new district for a while now?"

Feena's gaze drifted toward the flowing river. The sun had fully set, and the stars and city lights reflected on the water, creating a mesmerizing scene.

She explained, "Over the past two years, my grandparents' health hasn't been great. My parents want to move them in with us. Once that happens, we'll have to sell the house here. I think I might not have many chances to come back to this riverside anymore."

Jack was stunned. He hadn't expected Helena's prediction at dinner to come true so quickly.

Feena had moved away with her parents years ago, but because her grandparents still lived here, she would often return to visit.

If her grandparents moved away too, she would no longer have a reason to come back. And there would be no reason to see Jack, Wesley, Eddie, or any of her childhood friends.

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Though they had been childhood friends, they had both grown up. Each had their own futures ahead.

One was blessed with wealth, another doomed to wander, and the third shone among the stars. Their paths differed, and parting was inevitable.

"So, when are you leaving?" Jack couldn't help but ask.

"I might start moving within the next couple of days."

The news weighed heavily on Jack's heart.

He knew that once Feena had a plan, she would leave soon. But he didn't expect her to move away so quickly. Nor did he anticipate that their separation would come so suddenly.

Though they both studied at Alnewgo University, they still saw each other from time to time. However, it wasn't the same as living next door.

A tinge of sadness crept into his heart.

He and Feena shared so many memories. She had once been the center of his dreams, his childhood friend, and there was that heartfelt confession by the riverside that night.

It all felt like it had happened just yesterday, so vivid and within reach. But it was still yesterday—like the waves by the river, vanishing the moment they crashed ashore.

The atmosphere grew heavy for a moment.

Finally, Jack stood up and said, "Well, I wish you all the best in the future. May you find the man of your dreams."

To his surprise, Feena rolled her eyes at him and replied, "Why are you talking like it's some tragic farewell? We're both at Alnewgo University. I'll still come find you to hang out now and then!"

Jack smiled faintly but didn't respond. At that moment, Feena suddenly said, "Jack, how about you take me for a bike ride around the neighborhood? I really miss this place."

After all, this place held the memories of her youth.

"Sure!"

Jack nodded, got on his bicycle, and took her for a ride through the shantytown by the Norhaven River.

To keep her balance, she leaned gently against his back. The evening breeze brushed past them, and a sense of pure contentment spread through her heart.

While Jack was enjoying the tranquility, Feena suddenly asked, "Jack, how are things between you and Bella?"

"We're good. Why do you ask?"

"I'm just checking in on you!" A faint shadow flickered in her eyes, but she quickly smiled again. "To be honest, I've started dating someone too."

Jack's body stiffened slightly. "How come I didn't know?"

She couldn't help but roll her eyes at him, looking incredibly charming.

"Do I need to announce my relationship to the whole world?"

He thought about it and realized his question might have been a bit abrupt.

She looked at him with a teasing smile.

"What? Do you want me to notify you when I date someone?"

Jack shook his head. "It's just that this news is so sudden. You never mentioned anything before."

A woman as outstanding and beautiful as Feena was bound to have many suitors.

It was only a matter of time before she started dating.

He couldn't help but wonder what type of man she would be interested in. Curiosity got the better of him, and he asked, "So, what's he like?"

Feena seemed pleased by Jack's curiosity, her eyes sparkling as she replied, "He's over six feet tall and really handsome. His eyes are especially captivating. He loves playing basketball, he's a passionate guy, and he has excellent grades. His family isn't well-off, but I'm confident he'll work hard to build a bright future for

us."

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Looking at the sparkle in Feena's eyes as she described her boyfriend, she was clearly head over heels for him.

Jack felt a slight pang of bitterness in his heart. After all, she was the woman he had once liked, and now she was truly drifting away from him.

He smiled and said, "Looks like you've finally found your Prince Charming."

He had once heard Feena talk about her ideal type-someone who excelled academically, was tall, had a strong sense of justice, and loved sports. It seemed she had finally found someone who met all her expectations.

Jack felt he could finally put his lingering feelings for Feena to rest. Although a faint sense of regret remained, he knew it was inevitable. Finding the right man, marrying him, and starting a family were simply part of life. It was not something he could stop.

However, her expression didn't seem like that of a woman deeply in love. A subtle hint of regret seemed to linger in her eyes-but what exactly was she regretting?

He didn't know, nor would he ask.

And Feena, with her pride, would never bring it up herself.

"If only time could turn back... if only life could stay as it was when we first met." She suddenly spoke, her tone filled with a faint melancholy.

He didn't respond, focusing on riding his bicycle.

As the night deepened, they slowly moved along the small path once familiar to Feena.

He stopped under a dim streetlight and asked, "Feena, do you want to say goodbye to Wesley and Eddie?"

After all, she was leaving, so it made sense to bid farewell to her friends.

And in Jack's memory, Wesley and Eddie seemed to have a closer relationship with Feena than he did. Saying goodbye was only natural-unless she had already done so before meeting him.

But Feena shook her head and said, "No, it's already late. Just take me to the entrance of the alley."

Jack nodded and reached the intersection. He let her off and asked, "Are you going to the class reunion in a few days?"

Instead of answering, she asked, "What about you?"

"I'll be there," he replied.

"Then I'll go too." She nodded before waving at him and walking away.

As he watched Feena walk away, her figure gradually fading along the winding path, a warmth rose in his heart.

Just before she disappeared, she suddenly turned and called out from afar. "Jack, if one day I were to disappear from your life completely, would you still remember me?"

For a moment, he caught a glimpse of an inexplicable emotion in her eyes, and his heart raced.

Jack suddenly recalled the moments they shared by the river. The moment when he had secretly kissed her when they were lost at sea...

He smiled and replied, "I won't forget."

No matter what the future held, this young woman next door had occupied a special place in his life.

"Thank you." Feena seemed to have gotten the answer she wanted. With that, she turned around and disappeared into the depths of the alley.

Jack rode his bicycle home, replaying the sparkle in her eyes whenever she looked at him. Her final words echoed in his mind, asking him not to forget her.

He couldn't shake the feeling that there was more to her words than met the eye. He even unconsciously put himself in the role of the boyfriend she had described. The more he thought about it, the more he realized how much he resembled the man she described.

However, all of this was just his imagination.

Feena's life was so vibrant. And besides, she had once rejected him. It seemed unlikely that the spark of love would ever ignite between them again.

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But Jack still sincerely wished Feena well, hoping her life and career would be smooth sailing.

It was already past ten at night when he got home. His mother, Helena, had prepared bathwater for him, and his younger sister, Joanne, was still in her room, diligently studying.

Seeing Jack return, Joanne put down her pen and grinned.

"Jack, why are you back so late? Were you out with Feena?"

"We talked about some things," he replied.

Her face was filled with disbelief as she leaned in mysteriously. "Jack, tell me— are you dating Feena?" she asked.

"Don't be silly. How could she possibly be interested in me? She's a big star." He laughed.

"Come on! How can you say that? You're the top scholar in the state-you're way better than you think!" Joanne winked and added, "Besides, I've noticed the way Feena looks at you when she comes to see you. Her eyes just light up. There's no way she doesn't have feelings for you."

Jack sighed at Joanne's confident speculation and helplessly patted her head. Then, he went to take a shower before bed.

The next day, after lunch, Jack rode his electric scooter, taking Joanne to Crestfield High School.

Looking at the grand entrance of Crestfield, he smiled.

Back in the day, Jack had also been a student at Crestfield. However, he was expelled just before the college entrance exams.

Eventually, he ended up at Seaton High School, where he became the top scorer in the state.

Now that his life was reaching its peak, looking back on the past filled him with mixed emotions.

As he rode his scooter to the school gate, he saw that the area was already filled with all kinds of cars.

They were even more luxurious than the cars at the last Vermilion Mountain auto show.

As living standards in Perthter City rose, private cars became common in every household. Crestfield, being the top high school in the city, was no stranger to luxury cars.

The security guard, seeing Jack approach on his scooter, quickly waved him off. "There's no space for scooters here. You'll have to park somewhere else."

Jack frowned. "But this is clearly the parking area for electric scooters!"

The guard replied impatiently, "It's been turned into a temporary parking lot now." Of course, only cars were allowed to park there.

Jack felt a pang of irritation. The security guard clearly looked down on his electric scooter, even though there were no designated parking lines.

Just then, a white BMW rudely pulled into the spot he was about to park in. Two young women inside the car pointed at Joanne and whispered to each other.

"Her parents are just street vendors!"

"How embarrassing to come to a parent-teacher meeting on an electric scooter." Joanne overheard their remarks and turned her face away, visibly upset.

Jack guessed they might be her classmates, and he frowned deeply. Meanwhile, parents stepping out of their cars shot Jack mocking glances as he sat on his scooter.

It was clear that these intellectuals, dressed in jackets and carrying briefcases, held a certain status. Their pride and sense of superiority were overwhelming. The snobbery was on full display.

"Jack, maybe we should park farther away," Joanne said helplessly.

She had encountered this kind of prejudice countless times and was used to it. What mattered now was getting to the parent-teacher meeting on time.

But Jack shook his head. "Hold on, let me make a quick call."

He pulled out his phone and dialed the traffic police. "Hello, is this the Perthter City Traffic Police? I'm at the entrance of Crestfield High School. I noticed a lot of illegally parked cars here. Could you please send someone over to take a look?"

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After hanging up the phone, Joanne widened her eyes at Jack in astonishment before breaking into laughter.

"Jack, you're so mean!"

But deep down, she felt incredibly satisfied.

Earlier, those people had looked at her with disdain, and it had really bothered her.

The school was the worst. Her classmates, green with envy over her intelligence and beauty, never missed an opportunity to snipe at her and her family. It was the only way they could feel better about themselves.

Though Joanne was kind by nature and didn't hold grudges, it still upset her. But now, seeing Jack teach them a lesson, she couldn't help but feel delighted.

Soon after, the traffic police arrived, swiftly issuing tickets.

The once-arrogant car owners were thrown into chaos. Those who hadn't received a ticket hurriedly drove off. Those who did pleaded desperately with the officers for leniency. There was no trace of their earlier arrogance.

Once the road was cleared, Jack parked his scooter properly. Then, he walked into the school gate side by side with Joanne.

The security guard stared at him, impressed. He had to give Jack credit; that was a bold move.

As for those on electric scooters, some were parked illegally by the roadside. However, the police merely glanced at them and moved on.

As they entered the school, Jack suddenly caught sight of an elderly man who looked familiar. Holding a broom, the man was diligently sweeping in front of a storage room.

Upon closer look, it was his former homeroom teacher, Marcus.

"Wasn't he a teacher before? How did he end up sweeping floors?" Jack asked, puzzled.

Seeing this, she chuckled and explained, "Oh, come on! It's because of you! He was the one who expelled you back then. Who knew you'd later become the top scholar in the state?

"The principal was so furious that he demoted Marcus. But out of respect for his years of service, they let him stay on as a janitor."

As she spoke, Joanne shot a disdainful glance at Marcus' back.

She was kind but never let her kindness cloud her sense of justice. It was Marcus who had expelled Jack, nearly preventing him from taking the college entrance

exam.

Now, he was reaping what he had sown.

There was still half an hour before the parent-teacher meeting. Jack decided to take Joanne for a stroll around the school.

After all, this was also where he had once studied.

When they arrived at the stadium, a group of young men were playing basketball. The basketball court, once rough and uneven concrete, had now been transformed into a smooth, rubberized surface.

"Jack, you're pretty good at basketball, aren't you? Go shoot some hoops!" Joanne suggested.

Jack smiled and shook his head but still led her over to the edge of the court.

Suddenly, a mocking voice rang out, "Well, well, if it isn't Joanne Holland! Who's this guy with you? Your new sugar daddy?"

This was followed by a burst of unrestrained laughter.

Jack spotted a group of trendy young men and women squatting, smoking, and eyeing Joanne with blatant disrespect. With his sharp gaze, he quickly spotted two women who had arrived in the BMW earlier.

The snide remark had come from the red-haired woman, Nova Alvarez.

A yellow-haired young man, Cain Cort, chimed in, "Nova, seriously? It's obvious. He looks old, so of course he's her sugar daddy."

The laughter grew even louder.

Then, the green-haired man, Sean Bates, asked, "Joanne, are you blind? Nova already said it. How could you go for a guy on an electric bike? Why not just go with Cain? He's loaded, and his dad's a big shot. He pulls in more in one night than your dad makes selling fruit all month."

Joanne trembled with anger. "This is my brother, you bunch of jerks!"

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Cain sneered sarcastically. "Who even knows if he's really her brother? These days, any rich sugar daddy can pass as a so-called 'brother.'"

Jack's eyes turned icy as he retorted in a deep voice, "Didn't anyone teach you manners? Get up, all of you!"

Cain, with his dyed yellow hair, stood up, puffing on a cigarette. He glared at Jack arrogantly. "What the hell do you want, old geezer? Say your piece and get lost, I ain't got time for this shit."

Jack smirked coldly. "Apologize to my sister, then slap yourself."

Cain let out a mocking laugh. "You think you're so tough? I'll show you who's boss. How dare you ask me to slap myself! You're going to pay for this."

He was the big boss around the school-even the teachers didn't dare to mess with him.

To Cain, Joanne's brother was just the son of a fruit vendor, trying to act tough. Sean stepped forward. "You got a death wish? Get on your knees and apologize to Cain, or you're gonna regret it."

The surrounding young men all stood up, surrounding Jack.

Joanne was terrified. These people were all troublemakers with influential families. If Jack got into a fight with them, he'd definitely be in deep trouble.

She didn't want anything to happen to Jack, so she tugged at his sleeve, hinting that they should leave.

But Jack just smiled. It was a sign that he was about to lose it.

Before Cain could even utter another insult, Jack's fist smashed into his face. The punch landed squarely, and his face swelled up until his eyes were mere slits.

Seeing Cain get beaten, Sean immediately flew into a rage.

"How dare you hit Cain? Everyone, get him!"

The women who were with Cain squealed in excitement. This kind of violent brawling had become their habit, and they loved ganging up on others.

In contrast, Joanne screamed in fear, thinking Jack was surely in trouble.

But he first pushed her aside to keep her safe, then charged at the gang like a beast.

With one punch, he knocked out Sean's teeth. A sweeping kick sent two thugs tumbling 10 feet away.

Two others tried to flank him from the sides, but his fists were like hammers. Soon, both were on the ground, crying for mercy.

The entire process took no more than ten seconds-clean, precise, and impressive.

Joanne's eyes widened as if she were seeing this side of Jack for the first time.

As for the women, they were both in awe of Jack's skills and a little terrified-yet they couldn't help being drawn to him.

A handsome man who could fight like that was bound to make young women's hearts flutter.

Jack walked up to Cain. "Apologize?"

Cain glared at him viciously. "You... Tell me your name, you piece of trash. I'll make you wish you were never born."

"You're a stubborn one, aren't you?" Jack snapped, and his fists came down on Cain like a rainstorm.

Cain was used to bullying others and had always relied on his family's influence to get away with it. He had never encountered someone as ruthless as Jack.

After a barrage of punches and kicks, Cain finally couldn't take it anymore and broke down, crying with tears and snot.

"Stop! Please, no more! I'm begging you. You win! I swear... I won't do it again!"

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Joanne tightly held onto Jack, pleading, "Jack, let him go!"

He was going to beat Cain to death if he didn't stop.

Jack nodded and turned to leave, ignoring Cain and his friends' desperate pleas

for mercy.

After moving away from Cain and his group, Joanne looked at Jack with

admiration in her eyes.

"Jack, how are you this good at fighting? I never realized it before."

He couldn't help but feel pleased at her praise. "If anyone gives you trouble again, just tell them I've got your back."

She cheered, but soon her expression turned worried. "But I heard that Cain's family is quite powerful. You need to be careful, Jack."

He patted her head and said, "Don't worry. I've got this!"

By now, it was almost time for the parent-teacher meeting, so they headed toward the school.

From a distance, they saw an old man with glasses chatting with parents in the hallway. His expression was so serious that it seemed he was on the verge of scolding them.

The parents and their children hung their heads in shame, too afraid to speak.

It was Joanne's homeroom teacher, Edgar O'Donnell.

Edgar turned around and saw Joanne, immediately breaking into a bright smile. "Joanne, is this your guardian?" he asked.

His gaze shifted to Jack. Though he guessed this might be Joanne's guardian, he thought Jack looked too young.

Edgar couldn't help but wonder-could Joanne be dating someone? She was a top student with the potential to get into one of the best universities. He hoped she wouldn't let something like a relationship derail her bright future.

His expression turned serious.

Joanne quickly called out in a clear voice, "Hello, Mr. O'Donnell! This is my brother, Jack."

Edgar suddenly realized, looking Jack up and down with surprise. "So, you're Jack Holland? I've heard about you. Because of you, our school had to modify quite a few rules, and many people were affected. You're practically a legend at our school!"

It was clear that Jack's past actions had caused quite a stir, and Edgar knew all about it. Back then, it caused a sensation at Crestfield High School. The shockwave even spread throughout the entire education system.

Because of Jack, the homeroom teacher wasn't just reassigned-he was demoted to janitorial duties. Even the grade-level principal, the academic dean, and the grade-level team leader lost their positions.

He never expected that the person behind it all was standing before his eyes.

Jack spoke respectfully. "Hello, Mr. O'Donnell. Thank you so much for looking after my sister all these years."

His words were sincere, expressing genuine respect for Edgar.

Over the years, many parents had tried all sorts of tricks to get their children more attention from teachers. Some even went as far as offering gifts.

However, Jack's family wasn't wealthy and had never given any gifts.

Yet, Edgar remained upright and principled. He not only gave Joanne the best seat in the center of the classroom but also took special care in guiding her studies.

Of course, this was partly because Joanne was an exceptional student and a key focus for the school. But more than that, it was because Edgar truly held onto his integrity in a world ruled by money.

According to Joanne, many parents who had tried to bribe Edgar were called to the school. He gave them a harsh scolding. Some who pushed too far even had their children reassigned to the back of the classroom.

Such a teacher was truly worthy of respect.

As more parents arrived, the parent-teacher meeting officially began.

Chapter 480

The parent-teacher meeting emphasized the need for parents and teachers to work together. Since the students were entering senior year, they needed a strong support system, which was a responsibility shared by both the parents and the teachers.

The meeting highlighted the importance of studying diligently and completing homework on time. It also warned against the dangers of online game addiction. This was a critical stage—a final sprint toward their future. Any mistake could lead to serious consequences, something no parent wanted to see.

The school had developed academic plans tailored for senior students. They were reorganized to regular and advanced classes.

The quality of students at Crestfield varied greatly. Some got in not by merit but by offering to contribute to the school's building fund or family influence in Perthter City.

These students often fell short of Crestfield's standards and occasionally disrupted class.

During the first two years, these students might have been tolerated. However, by senior year, it became necessary to separate them from the regular students. This was done to improve Crestfield High School's college admission rates.

This announcement sparked an uproar among parents. Some protested and complained, but most of those who did were parents of academically underperforming students.

Despite the complaints, this long-standing tradition at Crestfield High School was unlikely to change.

Some parents of struggling students began plotting. They looked for ways to get their children into the advanced class.

After this, the teachers shifted their focus to discipline and classroom conduct. They called out students who were falling behind or showed poor attitude toward learning. Parents were then urged to take a more active role in guiding their children.

Edgar commended the students who were diligent and displayed strong self- discipline. He urged parents to stay vigilant and remain committed to their efforts. With this final year being so critical, he emphasized the need to stay on track.

When he mentioned Joanne, the top student bound for elite universities, his face lit up with pride.

The parents cast envious glances her way.

Edgar looked at her with an affectionate gaze. "Joanne, please come up and share your study strategies with the class. Let's help everyone improve together." Thunderous applause filled the classroom as she stepped onto the stage.

She shared her insights on learning. Then, she specifically mentioned that she had always looked up to her brother as her role model.

As soon as these words were spoken, the students and parents were stunned.

A top student like her consistently scored 1580 on mock SATs and occasionally hit

a perfect 1600. How could she possibly say she looked up to her brother as her role model?

What kind of family was this?

Edgar smiled knowingly and said, "Some of you might not know this yet. Her brother, Jack Holland, was the top science scholar in the state that year!"

The room buzzed with astonishment.

It was no wonder Joanne always spoke of her brother with such admiration-he was the top scholar in the state.

After the parent-teacher meeting, the classroom became a place for parents to mingle. The discussion on parenting and education didn't last long. It quickly turned into a lively networking event for the parents.

"Oh, Mr. Humphrey, your daughter is in this class too? What a coincidence! How about we grab a meal later?"

"Mr. Caldwell, I heard you're about to be promoted? That's impressive!"

"Mr. Russo, I heard your company is about to launch a multimillion-dollar project. Perhaps we could explore a potential collaboration?"

Students admitted to Crestfield were either academically exceptional or came from prominent families.

Their children's education was important, but in this setting, it was no longer the main focus. The parents seemed far more invested in their own futures and social connections.

A good education was no longer a ticket to success. College graduates were everywhere. Even top students from prestigious colleges sometimes ended up in unexpected jobs.

But with the right family connections, even mediocre children had an edge. No matter their abilities, they would always have a way to get ahead.