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The dishes served by Mrs. Berry were all favorites of the children and Charlotte. These were complemented by a few French flavors prepared by Mrs. Rawlston.

Everyone within the household was buzzing when they took their respective places at the table.

Mrs. Berry spoke self-consciously. "I understood from Mrs. Rawlston that you enjoy French fare so I've asked her to prepare some. I don't know how to make them, but I'll be learning from her starting tomorrow. Hopefully, I'll be able to make some for you next time."

"It's fine, Mrs. Berry. I'd like to try some of your own specialty too."

Zachary pulled out a chair for Charlotte before he took his own place by her side.

"Alright then. Let me know if you like them."

Mrs. Berry placed a piece of beef into Zachary's plate.

"Thank you." Zachary nodded in appreciation as he savored it. "It's really good."

"Really? I'm so glad to hear that." Mrs. Berry beamed. "I was a little worried that you might not be used to my cooking."

"I like it." After he got Charlotte a piece as well, he turned back to find Mrs. Berry and the children looking at him. "Well don't just sit there watching, go on ahead and help yourself to the food too."

"We're digging in now, Uncle Zack, Mommy, Mrs. Berry!"

The children then tucked in and marveled at Mrs. Berry's fantastic culinary skills.

Mrs. Berry was extremely pleased, and reiterated her desire to avoid the hospital so that she may stay at home in order to continue cooking for the family.

Charlotte filled up a bowl with soup and beseech the older woman to take care of her own health so that she may be better able to watch the children grow.

The housekeeper smiled with a tear in her eye as she nodded.

Although Zachary ate quietly, his demeanor was unusually affable.

Enjoying a meal together with a large family like this was something that he had never experienced for as long as he could remember.

In all his twenty-eight years, he had more or less grown accustomed to a solitary existence.

The atmosphere was dreary even during the occasions he was with his grandfather.

His upbringing under Henry was strict, with countless rules set out for him to adhere to. Amongst them, were the forbidding of conversation and laughter during mealtimes.

For him, this conversely joyous and harmonious vibe better characterized how family life ought to be.

After dinner, Zachary took the kids out to the children's play area.

Charlotte had not stepped outside the house over the past couple of days. She was aware that a clinic was built to the rear of the house, but did not know about the play area that had been added to the garden.

The sight of it almost had the three children jumping for joy.



As Jamie tumbled toward the ground, a shadowy figure blazed across and caught him securely.
The boy was ashen-faced and breathed heavily as he reclined inside Zachary's arms. He began to choke up from the ordeal. "Ugh, Uncle Zack"
"That was nothing. Big boys like you shouldn't cry," Zachary said authoritatively.
"Yes, sir." Jamie pursed his lips as he forced back his tears. "Thanks Uncle Zack!"
"Call me Dad," Zachary said.
"Dad!" The boy's mouth was left agape when those words were uttered.