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Before Zachary could pick her up, Charlotte stopped him. "I can go to the hospital myself. You don't have to come with me, Mr. Nacht," she said coolly.

"Can you stop putting on an act?" Zachary snarled, his teeth gritted angrily.

"You—"

"Shut up!" Zachary didn't give her a chance to speak as he picked her up and stalked out.

"Zachary Nacht, let me down this instant!" Charlotte hissed. "Let me down!"

Ignoring her cries, Zachary brought her to his car. He was about to get in after her when Ben reminded him, "Er, Ms. Gold is still here."

It was only then that Zachary remembered Nancy's existence. He turned at his shoulder and said apologetically, "I'm sorry, but I have to go to the hospital now."

"It's fine. I understand." Nancy flashed a smile. She urged, "You should hurry and send Ms. Lindberg to the hospital. We can meet up another time."

"Mm," Zachary grunted in response. He told Ben, "Give Ms. Gold a ride home."

"Yes."

Lupine drove the car to the hospital, and Raina occupied the passenger seat.

By then, Charlotte was already shaking like a leaf. Her face was as pale as a sheet, but she forced herself to stay quiet by biting down hard on her lip.

The dagger was extremely sharp. If she had held it any tighter, her right palm would've been sliced off.

A fresh swell of rage rose in Zachary at the sight of her trembling figure. "Are you a fool? Why did you grab the dagger with your bare hand? Do you think I'm not his match? Even if he tried to attack me, I could've pinned him down easily. There was no need to act foolishly."

"Don't overthink. I wasn't trying to protect you," retorted Charlotte in a disdainful tone. "I don't want this to escalate into a fight. If I don't stop him, and one of you gets hurt, the consequences will be horrible."

"You..." Zachary trailed off, speechless. He couldn't bring himself to blame her, for she was already wounded.

Soon, they arrived at the hospital. Raina promptly got to work on Charlotte's wound as Lupine and Zachary stood aside silently. Ben and his men showed up later on.

Finally, when the clock ticked past nine at night, Charlotte's wound was stitched up neatly. Raina prescribed some oral medicine and ointment before reminding Lupine to take good care of her. She also offered to pay a visit a few days later to check on Charlotte's wound and change the dressing.

Arrangements were made, but Zachary wasn't satisfied. "What if your wound gets in contact with water? What if it gets infected? Raina, bring a few nurses with you and stay with her until she recovers completely."

"But I have an important surgery tomorrow," Raina replied, torn. "And Dr. Wright is arriving a few days later."

"Won't you listen to my order?" Zachary frowned.

"Well..." Raina caved in. "All right. I'll make the arrangements now."

"No need," Charlotte interjected. "It's just a superficial wound. You don't have to trouble her."

"Charlotte—"

"Thank you for your help, Raina. You can leave now," Charlotte told Raina.

Raina shot a timid glance at Zachary, her feet rooted to the spot.

"You may leave now." She only made to leave when Zachary made the order.

On the way back home, Charlotte leaned into the seat weakly with her eye shut.

Zachary's expression was grim. A heavy silence hung in the air.

Both Ben and Lupine dared not utter a word.

Ring, ring!

Right then, Charlotte's phone rang.

She tried to use her left hand to take the phone in her right pocket, but it proved to be a difficult mission.

Furrowing his brows, Zachary took her phone out and glanced at the screen. It was a call from Robbie, so he answered it promptly. "Robbie!"

"Daddy?" Robbie was shocked to hear his voice. "Are you with Mommy right now?"

"Yes. Mommy's right beside me." Zachary turned on the loudspeaker.

"What's wrong, Robbie?" asked Charlotte.

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"Mommy, when are you going to come back?" came Ellie's voice from the other end of the line.

Then, the three other younger children began butting in. "Aunt Charlotte, Aunt Charlotte, come back quickly to tell us bedtime stories!"

"All right. Aunt Charlotte will be back soon. I'm on my way," Charlotte coaxed gently. "Shower first, okay? Then you can wait for me to come back to tell you stories."

"Okey-dokey!" the three children sang in unison.

"Mommy, are you with Daddy?" Even Jamie had come over to ask. "Will you be coming back together? Could you ask Daddy if he can bring my Transformers over?"

"We won't—"

"Of course," Zachary interrupted. "We'll be there in half an hour. I'll bring your Transformers over."

"Okay, thanks, Daddy!" Jamie cheered.

"My laptop too, Daddy," Robbie reminded. "I've forgotten about it this afternoon because I was in a rush."

"Got it," Zachary said to the children. Unbeknownst to him, the look on his face had softened. "Shower first. Daddy will be there soon."

"Okay. Bye, Daddy."

"Daddy, Mommy, we'll be waiting for you."

"All right."

After the call ended, the gentle smiles remained on their faces until they looked at each other. Almost immediately, their expressions turned solemn.

"Who told you to say yes to them? I didn't agree to let you come to my house," Charlotte hissed out.

"Then are you planning to walk back?" Zachary retorted.

"I..." It was then Charlotte recalled that she was not driving; She and Lupine were riding Zachary's car.

"So what?" Charlotte then turned to Lupine and instructed, "Call Morgan and tell her to pick us up."

"Understood," Lupine answered as she took out her phone.

"Do you really have to do this?" Zachary frowned. "Firstly, this will waste your time. Secondly, it'll affect the children's moods. Moreover, your hand's hurt. You can't even hold a book, so do tell me how you're going read them bedtime stories."

Charlotte realized that he was right. When Zachary heard nothing else from her, he instructed Ben, "Get someone to send Robbie and Jamie's stuff over."

"Yes, Sir." Ben chanced a glance at Lupine before making a call.

Charlotte did not stop him, thinking, I guess it'll be good to have the kids be happy for a night. Zachary's only doing this for the kids. All we need to do is to make sure we keep a distance from each other.

Soon, they reached Northridge. By then, the Nacht family's bodyguard had brought Robbie and Jamie's stuff over.

After Zachary stepped out of the car, he turned around to help Charlotte out.

Nevertheless, Charlotte rejected his offer. He rolled his eyes at her before walking straight toward the house.

"Daddy!"

Jamie and Ellie were waiting in the living room. When they saw Zachary and Charlotte entering the house, they ran toward them.

The two were exceptionally excited, a stark contrast against Robbie, who seemed calm. In fact, Robbie seemed to be quietly studying Zachary.

"Mommy!" Ellie beamed at Zachary before launching herself into Charlotte's arm. However, Zachary swiftly pulled her toward him. "Mommy's hurt, so Daddy's going to be the one to read you your bedtime stories tonight. Don't disturb Mommy, okay?"

The three children quickly huddled over to anxiously ask, "What? What happened to Mommy?"

"Mommy's fine. It's just a scratch," Charlotte reassured them. "Don't worry. It's all right."

"Ah! Mommy's hand is hurt!" Ellie shrieked when she saw Charlotte's bandaged hand, her face white as sheet.

"Let me see!" Robbie and Jamie then took Charlotte's hand and carefully checked it. "What happened?"

"Your mommy was really brave. She was the damsel who saved the hero, and that's why she's hurt," Zachary joked.

"Was that hero you, Daddy?" Jamie asked curiously, his head tilting upward to look at him.

"That's right. It's me." He nodded.

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"Daddy, you're bad!" Ellie complained as she pouted. "You're a man. You should be protecting Mommy. How could you let Mommy protect you instead?"

"Ellie's right," Jamie agreed.

"I want to protect her too, but your mommy was adamant about playing the hero. Before I could do anything, she had rushed headlong into the situation."

At that, Zachary cast a disapproving look at Charlotte.

"You—" Charlotte was furious. She did not know why he was telling the children that.

"Mommy, don't play the hero next time. You have to protect yourself first and foremost," Robbie said to her. "It pained us to see you hurt."

"Yes, yes." Ellie then grabbed Charlotte's hand and gently blew on it. "Mommy, the bandages are wrapped around your hand tightly, so I'm sure it must hurt a lot."

"It's fine. It doesn't hurt," Charlotte answered lightheartedly. Seeing her children had lifted her spirits.

"Mommy, who's the one who hurt you?" I'll beat them up for you," Jamie exclaimed as he swung his little fists. "I'm going to teach the naughty person a lesson."

"It's okay. We've dealt with the person." Charlotte pinched his cheek. "Okay, it's time to go back to your room. It's late now."

"Yes, go back to your rooms. I'll read you the bedtime stories," Zachary chimed in.

"Daddy, are you not going to leave tonight?" Jamie asked, excited, as he held Zachary's hand. "Are you going to be staying here tonight?"

Even Robbie and Ellie were looking at him.

"I'll leave after reading the stories to you." Zachary ruffled their hair. "Hurry upstairs now."

"All right," the children replied, crestfallen.

"Aunt Charlotte! Aunt Charlotte!"

Just then, Danrique's children rushed out of their room with bottles in their hands and diapers around their waists.

When they spotted Zachary, they skidded to a stop before watching him with wary eyes.

"Why is this Angry Uncle here?"

Alpha then quickly hid her bottle behind her as if Zachary was there to snatch that from her.

"Maybe he's here to see Robbie, Jamie, and Ellie," Beta quietly replied. "He's their daddy."

"Hmph!" Gamma then stepped forward and pointed her bottle at Zachary. "Meanie, why are you here?"

"Alpha, Beta, Gamma, don't be rude to my daddy."

Ellie stepped out from behind Zachary's legs before solemnly replying, "Daddy's here to tell us bedtime stories."

"What?" The other three children widened their eyes. "This fierce meanie is going to tell us bedtime stories? Really?"

"Duh!" Jamie grinned smugly. "My daddy tells great stories."

Alpha sniffled before answering dumbly, "Oh. So is he going to tell us stories too?"

"Can we listen to your stories?" Beta tilted her head back to look at the tall man.

"I-I want to hear stories too." Gamma's face was red. and her hands were clenched into fists as she nervously looked at Zachary.

"All right, come on." Zachary then motioned to them to go up the stairs.

"Yay!"

The three smaller children hurried behind Ellie their bottles. Like a line of kindergarten children, they entered the room.

In the meantime, Charlotte smiled when she saw the scene.

Zachary was rather skilled at taking care of the children; he was even getting along well with the three more difficult children.

"Ms. Lindberg, let me help you back to your room." Once they were back in the room, Lupine said, "You haven't had a good dinner, so I'll get the kitchen staff to make something for you."

"No, it's fine. I'm not hungry." Charlotte tiredly leaned back on the sofa. "Pour me a glass of water instead. Then you can leave. It's been a tiring day, so you should rest earlier."

"What about yo—"

"I'm fine by myself." Charlotte wanted some time alone.

"All right." Lupine then poured her a glass of water. After putting it beside her, she left.

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Charlotte stared at numerous missed calls and messages on her phone, all of them from Louis.

Without needing to look at the messages, she knew what they were about. Apologies, then expressions of his love. He would ask for her forgiveness before telling her of his wish to start over with her.

Charlotte was in a world of frustration. She did not know what she could do to make Louis give up. It felt like he refused to listen to whatever she said to him as long as it was not the answer he wanted.

Right as she was lost in her train of thoughts, someone called. The number seemed familiar, but she did not have it in her contacts. After a moment of hesitation, she picked it up. "Hello?"

"Hello, Ms. Lindberg, I'm Nancy Gold."

Nancy's voice was always as soft as cotton. It was as if she was someone who did not have a temper nor ever experienced negative emotions; it was as if her control over her emotions was impeccable.

"Hello," Charlotte greeted back, uncomfortable to hear that name.

"I just wanted to ask how you're feeling today," Nancy uttered. "There were many people at the restaurant today, so I didn't get a chance to ask you that."

"It's nothing serious," Charlotte replied politely. "Thank you for your concern."

"I'm glad to hear that. Rest well, then," Nancy said before ending the call.

Charlotte did not know why she had made that call. What can she possibly do with a few polite questions? Is she trying to remind me about her existence?

Maybe that's that.

After the call, Charlotte had indeed been reminded that Zachary was dating Nancy and that she should be more firm in keeping her distance away from Zachary.

In other words, Nancy was asserting dominance.

At that thought, the discomfort in Charlotte's heart grew. She rose to her feet, planning to look for Zachary to get him to leave earlier.

"The little prince climbed onto the top of the snowy mountain to look for the legendary Angel's Flower. As long as he finds the flower, he'll be able to save his beloved princess. Although it was cold here, and there were many beasts around, he was still brave as ever. The little prince knows that his princess is waiting for him back at the castle."

Zachary was sitting on a chair, telling the children a fantasy tale with his magnetic voice.

Meanwhile, the six children were sitting in odd poses—some were sprawling and lying down—as they listened to his storytelling intently.

A while into the story, Ellie cocked her head to the side and said, "Daddy, this isn't right. I'd read this book before, and I remember that the little prince goes to the moon and not a snowy mountain."

"That's right. The little prince isn't looking for Angel's Flower, but a sapphire. Also, the little prince doesn't have a princess..."

"Just listen to the story. Why do you have so many questions?" Robbie chided them as he cut them off. "It's more original if Daddy changes it up a little."

"Oh." Both Jamie and Ellie lowered their heads before falling silent.

"That's right, that's right. Go on, Angry Uncle!"

Alpha, Beta, and Gamma were all fascinated by the story as they stared at Zachary with wide, eager eyes.

"What did you call me earlier, hmm?" Zachary furrowed his brows in a mock solemn look.

"Oh." Alpha, Beta, and Gamma shared a look before answering in unison, "Uncle Zachary!"

"That's right. Good girls." Zachary smiled in satisfaction. "All right, it's late now. It's bedtime."

"No! Finish the story," the three girls whined.

They were no longer afraid of him, and they even dared to whine to him now.

"Yes, Daddy, finish the story," Ellie muttered as she rested her chin on her hands. "I've never heard of this story. I'd like to know what's the ending."

"Yes, yes. Did the little prince find the flower in the end?" Jamie asked.

"We'll continue another day." Zachary put the book down as he turned off the table lamp. "All right. Sleep now."