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The next day was a weekend, so the kids didn't have to go to kindergarten.

Roxanne planned to take the boys to the research institute with her.

Right after she packed everything and was about to head out the door, she heard the doorbell ring.

Thinking it was a visit from Madilyn, Roxanne got up and went to get the door.

Her brows furrowed with confusion when she saw the person standing at the door.

"Essie? What are you doing here?"

Roxanne instinctively swept her gaze at the surrounding, thinking Lucian would be standing and waiting somewhere within sight.

Yet, shockingly, she didn't see anyone else but Estella outside her door.

Roxanne decided to focus her attention back on Estella. She bent down to the little girl's eye level and asked, "Estella, tell me how you got here? Did your daddy send you?"

Judging from Lucian's attitude at the kindergarten yesterday, I highly doubt he'll let Essie meet me, but there's no other possibility for now.

Estella was wearing a white dress and carried a small backpack on her back. It was the one she brought to kindergarten the day before. Hearing Roxanne's question, Estella reached for the notebook in her backpack, flipped it open, then started writing something.

She wrote: I came here myself.

Roxanne was stunned. "Yourself? How did you find your way here?"

Estella scribbled across the page: I took a cab here.

Roxanne was still suspicious, but after checking her surroundings a few times, she finally believed Estella's words.

So Lucian's daughter took the cab in the early morning all by herself to my house. This situation is giving me a headache.

She suppressed the mix of feelings in her heart and asked tenderly, "Is there a reason you're looking for me?"

The girl answered in writing: I wanted to be friends with Archie and Benny, so I came to play with them. Is that okay? Estella raised her notebook and gazed at Roxanne with anticipation.

Just for this reason?

Roxanne didn't know how to answer her at that moment.

Yesterday, the boys' teacher did tell me Estella liked following the boys around.

However, I never

thought she'll be bold enough to take a cab to my house alone just so she can play with them. Moreover, she can't speak. If she met some bad people on the way here...

Roxanne didn't dare to think about what would happen.

"Mommy?" Archie and Benny had been waiting inside for a while and didn't see

Roxanne come back in, so they came out to have a look. When they saw the little girl at their front door, they had the same reaction as Roxanne. "What ... are you doing here?" Estella was about to scribble in her notebook when Roxanne explained on her behalf, "Essie just wanted to play with you guys." Archie looked around at Roxanne's explanation, thinking he would see his dad, but there wasn't an adult man anywhere. "How did she get here?" Archie flitted his gaze to Roxanne. Roxanne replied resignedly, "She took a cab here alone." Even I have a hard time believing the words that just came out of my mouth. However, the two boys accepted the truth readily.

Benny looked at Estella with a puzzled look. "You came here yourself? Did you run away from home again?"

If I remember it correctly, the first time we met Essie was when she ran away from home.

On the contrary, Estella didn't think her behavior was strange and nodded.

Seeing her calm demeanor, the boys exchanged a look speechlessly.

Why does this daughter that Daddy raised keep running away from home? More importantly, why is she always coming to our house?

At the same time, Lucian was working in the Farwell Group CEO's office when suddenly his private phone started ringing.

The second the call connected, the butler's voice came through the phone urgently.

"Mr. Farwell, Ms. Estella is missing again."

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Lucian's hands paused. "I'm coming back now."

Hanging up the phone, he drove back to the Farwell residence.

"What happened? There's so many of you watching her, so how can she go missing?"

Lucian questioned once he stepped foot in the mansion.

In the living room, all the household staff stood nervously. Lucian's anger was burning so brightly that they didn't dare to lift their heads.

The butler answered cautiously, "We're not sure. Ms. Estella had gone back to her room after having breakfast this morning. When Catalina went upstairs a few hours later, she couldn't find Ms. Estella anywhere."

Lucian's brows furrowed with displeasure. "What about the surveillance cameras?"

The butler responded with a defeated look on his face, "Mr. Farwell, the surveillance cameras... we're not sure when they turned off. Coincidentally, there's no recording of

this morning.”

Hearing that, Lucian’s expression had darkened tremendously. The living room fell into dead silence.

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The staff all bowed their heads with dread, hunching their shoulders, making themselves as small as possible. They even hoped they could hide within the crack of the tiles.

Who could’ve thought we would lose Ms. Estella twice in such a short period. Furthermore, she slipped away right under our noses. If anything happens to Ms. Estella, Mr. Farwell will fire us.

Lucian looked up and saw the bodyguards he sent to protect Estella were among the staff. The sight just fueled his rage. “What are you guys standing there for? Get moving and search for her! If you can’t find her, then all of you are fired.”

The bodyguards immediately obliged and strode out of the mansion urgently without a backward glance.

Distress filled Roxanne as she looked at the little girl in front of her.

It’s getting late. I should be taking the boys to the research institute, but Estella’s sudden appearance has messed up my plan. Furthermore, she took a cab here by herself. I can’t exactly send her back on her own.

After a short silence, Roxanne huffed out a resigned sigh as she stood to let Estella into the house. “Come on in.”

Estella’s eyes sparkled as she nodded fervently and followed Roxanne into the mansion.

“Have you had breakfast?” Roxanne asked.

Estella sat on the couch and nodded obediently.

Roxanne and the boys took a seat beside Estella. After a brief hesitation, Roxanne asked. “Can you tell me if you’re really here to play with Archie and Benny? Or are you running away from home like last time? Does your family know you’re here?”

Estella tilted her head to the side and scribbled on the notebook.

Archie’s and Benny’s faces were staid. “Do you know someone can kidnap you if you meet a bad person when you take the cab? Didn’t our teacher teach us not to leave the house alone?”

By the time they finished speaking, Estella had already done writing and showed the notebook to them.

She wrote a sentence across the blank page: I want to meet Ms. Jarvis, Archie, and Benny.

Roxanne frowned. “You... you ran away from home because of us?”

Estella nodded her head firmly before she started to write in her notebook again. She scribbled:

Like.

Roxanne was confused this time.

Like? Like what?

“You like us?” Archie guessed.

Estella nodded again.

Roxanne’s heart softened at Estella’s admission.

This little girl is so sweet. Honestly, I really like her. Even though she is Lucian's child with another woman, I can't bring myself to hate such an obedient child after getting to know her for the past few days. However, it's still too dangerous for her to do what she did.

"Thank you for liking us, but it's wrong for a child to run away from home. Your dad must be worried sick. Is it okay if I inform him?" After contemplating, Roxanne asked for Estella's opinion softly.

Even though I really don't want to have any contact with Lucian, it's a fact that his child is with me. As a parent, I knew he must be terribly worried.

Estella cast her eyes downward, hiding the unwillingness that rose within her.

Daddy is a big meanie. The beautiful Ms. Jarvis, Archie, and Benny are all so good to me, but Daddy doesn't let me talk to them. What am I going to do? Ms. Jarvis' voice is so gentle.

A few seconds later, Estella finally nodded obediently.

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Roxanne looked up Lucian's number from her contact list.

She had saved it only because she didn't want to miss his call back when Estella had wandered off from home.

It was now that the woman remembered she had saved his contact name as just "A." After changing it to his actual name, Roxanne dialed the number.

Lucian was about to head out and look for Estella on his own when his phone rang.

Seeing the name on his screen, his eyes narrowed as he answered the call.

"It's me." Roxanne's voice came from across the line.

Lucian scoffed internally at the thought of how she had escaped his previous antics.

"What do you want?" he asked in the same frigid tone the woman used.

Roxanne glanced at the little girl beside her. What's with that tone? I would've hung up right away if it weren't for the child!

"Essie came looking for me first thing in the morning. Come and get her if you're free. Or you can tell me your address, and I'll take her there."

Upon hearing that, Lucian furrowed his brows slightly. "Give me your address."

"32, Durwest Garden."

The man hung up right after that.

Roxanne breathed an internal sigh of relief as she watched her screen turn black. She turned toward the little girl standing beside her, saying, "Your daddy's coming over to pick you up. Be a good girl and go home with him, okay?"

Estella nodded but secretly began pondering over her next move.

She had finally gotten the chance to be with this pretty lady and didn't want to have to leave so soon.

But Daddy's on his way here. What should I do to be able to stay
Unfortunately, Archie saw through her intentions immediately and crossed his arms.
"Your daddy hates my mommy, so he's definitely not going to let you stay. I suggest you give up on the idea."
Estella's gaze darkened as she heard that.
It's true. Daddy doesn't like her. He even argues with her in front of me.
But I like Ms. Jarvis!
The girl had left home early this morning just to see Roxanne.
She didn't know why, but she just liked this woman so much.
The two hadn't spent much time together, but Estella adored Roxanne so much more compared to Catalina, her everyday caretaker.
That's right! The child's eyes lit up again.
She had brought gifts for Roxanne and the two boys when she left home this morning. Remembering that, she swiftly jumped off the couch and rummaged through her little backpack. Then, she took out a tiny yet exquisite crystal ball and held it in front of Roxanne with two hands.
The woman stared at her in puzzlement.
Estella took another step forward while continuing to hold the gift, her eyes full of anticipation.
Roxanne slowly took the crystal ball from her. "Is this... for me?"
Estella nodded and wrote in her notebook: For you. I like you!
Roxanne couldn't help but laugh. "Thank you, Essie. I like you a lot too," she responded, caressing the girl's head.
Archie and Benny hadn't expected the little girl to bring gifts, and they, too, jumped off the couch. "You gave Mommy a gift? What about us? Do we get any too?"
Estella nodded with a smile and dug around in her backpack again. Soon, she took out two racecar figurines and trotted over to the boys.
Archie's and Benny's eyes twinkled instantly.
They had always enjoyed playing with these since they were young, and Roxanne would often buy such toys for them.
In fact, they had had their eyes on these two particular car models for a while now, but they hadn't come up with a good reason to ask their mother to buy them. These figurines were also a little expensive.
And yet, Estella had bought them.
The boys could easily confirm that these figurines were genuine.

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Given how well-raised the boys were, they shook their heads despite liking the toys, knowing how expensive these things were. "We can't accept these. They're too expensive."

Estella tilted her head in confusion before placing the toys next to them and scribbling on her notebook again: For you. Thank. Help.

Benny peered at her writing in bewilderment.

She can't write a complete sentence. What is she trying to say?

Archie was initially perplexed as well, but realization quickly dawned on him. "Are you trying to say you're thanking us for our help that day?"

Nodding fervently, Estella put the book down and held the car figurines in front of them once more.

Roxanne thought back to what her sons' kindergarten teacher had told her about Archie and Benny having protected Estella.

I remember the teacher mentioning it. What on earth could've happened between mere children, though?

But judging from Essie's behavior, whatever Archie and Benny did for her seems like a really big deal to her.

"What happened that day?" Roxanne couldn't help but ask.

"Essie got hurt after another student pushed her," explained Archie. "Benny and I got that student to apologize to Essie, and then we took Essie to the school nurse."

Roxanne nodded in enlightenment.

"Can we accept these gifts, Mommy?" Archie felt sorry to see the little girl continue to hold the toys in her hand.

Roxanne chuckled. "Okay. Give her something of yours in return."

The boys finally took the toy cars from Estella, not forgetting to express their gratitude.

"Thanks, Essie! Wait for us here, okay? We'll get you some gifts too!"

Then, they scurried upstairs and began searching their room for something they could give the little girl in return.

Now, only Roxanne and Estella remained inside the living room.

Seeing how obedient the girl looked. Roxanne couldn't resist showing her concern.

"Does your hand still hurt?"

Upon hearing that, Estella walked toward Roxanne and raised her hand, showing the injury she had received that day.

There was a visible bruise on the girl's pale-colored hand, and that tugged at Roxanne's heartstrings.

The woman felt relieved only after examining the bruise closely and making sure there were no internal injuries. "Did you use any ointment?"

Estella stilled for a few seconds. Then, she shook her head innocently after seeing how worried Roxanne looked.

That made Roxanne's heart ache even more.

There's no way Lucian would've missed such an obvious bruise, but he didn't give her any ointment?

Then, the woman thought of how Estella would run away from home every now and then.

Lucian, you're a terrible excuse for a father!

Not aware that she had inadvertently made her father look bad, Estella stared at the woman before her eagerly.

If I told her I haven't used any ointment, would she help me?

Noticing the child's gaze, Roxanne returned to her senses and ran her fingers over the bruise. "Wait for me here. I'll be back with a medical kit," she cooed.

Estella nodded excitedly, her eyes sparkling.

Roxanne's heart melted at the sight, and she got up to retrieve a medical kit before carefully treating the girl's bruise.

The woman was a doctor, after all, so she would naturally be more careful and gentler. "Does it hurt?" she asked, rubbing some ointment on the girl while glancing at her in concern.

Shaking her head, Estella gazed down at her hand, observing how Roxanne tended to her.

Ms. Jarvis' hands are so pretty too.

And she's so much gentler than Daddy. I don't feel any pain at all.

I like her even more now!

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After Roxanne was done tending to Estella, Archie and Benny returned downstairs while carrying Estella's gifts.

They each had a strange-looking stuffed toy in their hands and walked up to the little girl. "We bought these with our pocket money. You can have them."

The dolls looked adorable yet hideous at the same time and didn't seem to suit Estella at all.

However, this was the girl's first time receiving gifts from peers her age whom she liked very much. Thus, she joyously accepted the stuffed toys and hugged them more tightly than she did her previous doll.

After a long while, Estella finally put the toys down and scribbled a massive word of thanks on her notebook, showing her writing to Archie and Benny.

This was the boys' first time seeing her beam like that.

They used to avoid her because she was a child their father had with another woman. But after they saw how adorable she looked, their hearts skipped a beat as they exchanged glances and scratched their heads sheepishly.

She's such a cute half-sister!

I don't want to hate her anymore.

Meanwhile, Roxanne's heart softened as she saw the three children interacting with each other. "Why don't you play with Essie for a while?" she suggested to her sons while stroking Estella's head. "I have to call the research institute and let them know I'll only be heading over a bit later. I just applied some ointment on Essie's hand, so be careful."

The boys nodded obediently.

Then, Roxanne went upstairs to make the phone call.

“Shall we play some Lego?” The boys didn’t know what girls enjoyed playing, so they could only invite her to play with their usual toys.
Even so, a bright-eyed Estella readily nodded in agreement.
I was right to come here today. I got to have Ms. Jarvis tend to my wound, and Archie and Benny are now asking me to play with them!
Both Archie and Benny’s intelligence far exceeded that of a normal child, so Roxanne would buy them Legos for adults, which could usually be stacked into huge models. Their current project was about halfway done.
“If you don’t know how to do this, you can watch us first,” Archie said kindly.
Estella nodded and solemnly watched them connect several Lego bricks. It wasn’t long until she picked up a few pieces and began doing the same.
Seeing that, Archie and Benny stopped and prepared to guide her, only to realize that the girl seemed to be catching on quickly,
Soon, she began to match their speed – at a high level of accuracy too:
The boys were dumbfounded momentarily.
Their mother had bought them these because they were highly intelligent, but now, Estella was doing as well as they were.
Is it because we share the same father?
Just as astonishment filled them, the doorbell to the mansion suddenly rang.
The boys glanced at one another as they thought of the same person.
“I’ll go get the door. Keep Essie company,” Archie instructed while getting up and heading toward the entrance.
He then opened the door to see a tall man dressed in an elegant suit – the man who was his father in name.
“Hello,” Archie greeted politely, albeit with a hint of detachment.
A frosty-looking Lucian had thought it was Roxanne who would open the door for him, and he frowned upon realizing it was a child.
He must be Roxanne’s kid.
For some reason, the boy seemed to harbor some feelings of enmity toward him.
“Estella’s here with us. Come on in.” Archie shot the man a glance before turning around and walking back into the house coolly

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Lucian gathered his thoughts and followed Archie into the mansion.
As soon as he entered, he spotted Estella sitting on the carpet with her full attention on the Lego bricks before her. There was also a little boy next to her who looked just like the one who had opened the door for him.
Twins, huh?
With a darkened gaze, Lucian looked away from the boys and scanned the rest of the

living room instead.

Roxanne was nowhere to be found.

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"Your daddy's here," Archie called out to Estella coldly after walking back in, his once-friendly demeanor having vanished completely.

Upon hearing that, Estella stopped whatever she was doing and glanced up at Lucian who stood not far from her.

But right after seeing him, she retracted her gaze and began to write something in her notebook.

Lucian and the boys stared at her.

Both Archie and Benny were reluctant to see her leave, but now that her father had arrived, there was no reason for them to let her stay.

Lucian's browed knitted. He knew what the little girl was about to tell him.

Soon, Estella raised her notebook.

I don't want to go home yet.

As he had expected.

The crease between Lucian's brows deepened as his voice soon became laced with displeasure. "Estella Farwell, you left home without a word. Don't you think you ought to give me an explanation? This is the second time you've run away from home this month. Why on earth did you do it?"

Estella met his eyes stubbornly before looking down to scribble on her notebook again: I like Ms. Jarvis. I like Archie and Benny. I want to be friends with them!

A look of mockery flashed in Lucian's eyes as he read that. "You like them, but have you ever asked them if they like you? You came running to their house like this and disrupted their lives. Don't you know how rude that is?" he asked sternly.

Estella pursed her lips and turned to the two boys carefully.

She knew she would bother them by coming over early in the morning.

But she couldn't help it. She liked them so much, yet her father wouldn't let her play with them.

We've even already exchanged gifts, and they also invited me to play with them.

Doesn't that mean they like me too?

Benny's heart wavered as he saw the pleading look in Estella's eyes. "She's not bothering us," he chimed in, putting down his Lego. "In fact, we were just playing Lego together until you showed up. It was a lot of fun!"

Estella smiled upon hearing the way Benny stood up for her. Then, she turned back to her father furiously.

Lucian appeared conflicted at the boy's response.

However, Archie quickly leaned over and gave his brother a nudge.

Benny turned to the other boy in a daze, but he immediately came to a realization upon meeting the latter's warning glance.

Right! We can't show this guy how much we like Essie!

Remembering that, Benny hastily shut his mouth, using only his eyes to express his discontent.

Lucian took notice of everything the boys had just done.

Still, he didn't know what they were thinking. Assuming he had frightened them, he fell

silent for a moment before softening his expression.

They might be another guy's kids, but they're still young. Lucian knew he shouldn't take his annoyance out on the children.

"In any case, the fact that Essie showed up at your door early in the morning must've caused you some trouble. Thank you for playing with her," he tried his best to state calmly.

The boys nodded icily in response.

Then, the living room fell into silence.

"Where's your mommy?" Lucian asked in frustration a while later, rubbing his temples. Despite having a daughter, he wasn't particularly good at interacting with children.

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The boys instantly grew wary at the mention of their mother.

"Why are you asking about her?" Archie demanded, glaring at the man like a puppy that could strike anytime.

He didn't have much strength, but he was still adamant about putting on a vicious front: Noticing the boys' hostility and caution, Lucian felt curious and amused at the same time but paid no attention to it. "Well, you all watched over Essie twice now, so it's only natural that I give your mother a word of thanks."

Archie sighed internally as he heard that, but his expression remained tense. "There's no need for that. My mommy's in the middle of a phone call. She doesn't need your thanks anyway."

Then, he dragged Benny back to the carpet and turned to Estella. "Your daddy's here now, so you should go with him. My mommy will be leaving for work soon. She won't have time to keep you company anymore."

Estella, who was initially still jubilant from how the boys backed her up, slowly returned to her senses after hearing that. Although she didn't want to leave, she eventually nodded upon learning that Roxanne had to work.

Archie remained on high alert ever since Lucian mentioned their mother. I don't want him to see Mommy.

Seeing the girl agree to go home, he quickly gave Benny a tug before kneeling down to keep all their Lego bricks.

Lucian said nothing more, merely watching the three put the toys away.

But the more he gazed at them, the weirder it felt.

They're all around the same height.

Come to think of it, they're also classmates in kindergarten.

That means they're about the same age too.

But taking the timeline into consideration, even if that woman were to birth these twins right after having Essie and getting divorced, the boys shouldn't look too similar to Essie in age.

Could it be... that it's because they're boys, so they grow faster?

But she also put them in the same grade as Essie. Was that a coincidence too?

A wave of doubt swept through Lucian.

Unable to come up with an answer, he shifted his gaze from the three children and observed his surroundings nonchalantly.

This was a rented building, but Roxanne had evidently taken the effort to decorate the place.

Then, a neat and cozy setting entered Lucian's line of sight. As he looked closer, he noticed that there were many areas adorned with photographs.

With his focus now on the picture frames, the man walked over and glanced at them carefully.

After a while, he frowned slightly.

Every picture contained only Roxanne and the two boys.

Despite the three of them smiling warmly, Lucian felt something was amiss.

There's no sign of the boys' father in any of these pictures.

Or was he the one who took all these pictures?

But that can't be. How could he not be in a single photo?

Just as Lucian fell into thought, a flurry of rapid footsteps came from the stairs.

That jolted the man back to reality, and he put the picture frame down before walking back to the carpet.

A panic-stricken Roxanne quickly made her way down the stairs, her expression nothing but frantic.

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Roxanne had wanted to call the research institute just to mention that she would be heading there a little later today.

Yet, the one who answered the phone was Colby, who proceeded to consult her on a project they were rushing the past two days. He had sought her help on some group data before she could even say anything.

As Roxanne delved into a long discussion with him, she eventually lost track of time.

The woman only remembered to end the call after hearing Lucian's voice coming from downstairs.

That was when she quickly drew a conclusion, hung up, and hurried down the stairs. She had nearly forgotten that Lucian was showing up soon and that her two sons were still keeping Estella company downstairs.

If Lucian were to see her boys...

She instantly grew flustered at the thought.

Alas, by the time she arrived downstairs to prevent both sides from meeting each other, it was already too late.

As soon as she turned at the corner of the stairs, she saw the man standing next to the carpet, and the three children were almost done keeping their toys by now.

Lucian turned around coldly after seemingly having heard her come down.

Roxanne's expression stiffened as their eyes met, but she squeezed her palms in an attempt to calm down before greeting the man casually, "You're here."

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Lucian nodded chillingly but kept his gaze on her. No one could tell what he was thinking deep down.

Thinking that he had already figured out who the two boys were, Roxanne couldn't hide her guilt. "So... are you going to take Essie home now, or..."

She was terrified that Lucian might want to sit down and talk after finding out the boys' origins.

To her luck, the man merely thought she was hinting him to leave. "We'll be leaving now. Don't worry. I won't stay here much longer," he replied glacially.

Then, he turned to look at Estella, who was still slowly keeping the Lego bricks. "Are you done packing up? It's time to go."

Estella had deliberately tried to keep her movements slow since she didn't want to leave, but Archie and Benny were so quick that the area was now almost spotless.

Upon hearing her father's prompting, the little girl stood up reluctantly and gazed at Roxanne

with tears in her eyes.

Povonne's chest tightened at the sight, but with Lucian here and whatever happened yesterday, no words of comfort could come out of her mouth.

"Thank Ms. Jarvis, then we'll go home," Lucian instructed frigidly.

Estella's expression softened more as she heard that, and she stared at Roxanne expectantly, hoping that the woman would invite her to drop by again next time.

Yet, after all that waiting, she received not a single word of response.

The girl looked down dejectedly.

"Ms. Jarvis has to go to work. We shouldn't bother her anymore," Lucian urged.

Estella finally picked up her notebook and began to write in it again.

It seemed to take her a long time just to write "Thank you."

Yet, when she was done scribbling, she raised her notebook at Lucian instead.

Daddy, can I come to see Ms. Jarvis again next time? I want to be friends with Archie and Benny.

Everyone saw what she had written.

Roxanne and her two boys felt sorry for her, but they dared not say anything due to

Lucian's sullen expression.

Noticing their reactions and seeing how clingy his daughter was with them, Lucian gritted his teeth. "No."

Estella's face fell the moment he said that. With her eyes reddening, she pursed her lips and began to cry silently.

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Given that it was Catalina who always tended to Estella, Lucian didn't have much experience dealing with children and thought his daughter was throwing a fit.

A look of panic flashed in the man's eyes as he saw the little girl weep, but ultimately, he glared at her sternly.

"Stop crying," he ordered, thinking he didn't sound harsh at all.

Yet, he sounded especially fierce in the child's ears.

With that, Estella began to cry harder. Tears gushed down her ashen cheeks like a river escaping a dam as she broke into an uncontrollable sob.

Lucian's brows creased at the sight. He didn't know how to react.

Meanwhile, Roxanne couldn't watch how cold the man was toward his weeping daughter any further.

"Is that how you treat a child? She's already in tears, and you're still talking to her like this? Can't you just talk to her nicely?"

Lucian froze at the woman's sudden admonition.

Roxanne quickly strode over to Estella and knelt down to pull the little girl into her arms.

"There, there, Essie. Don't cry! You can come over to play whenever you like, okay? I'll give you my number, so just let me know whenever you're thinking of dropping by," she assured tenderly. "Don't cry anymore, okay? You won't look pretty if you do."

Meanwhile, Archie and Benny stood next to them with tissues in their hands. While coaxing Estella, Roxanne reached out for a piece of tissue and wiped the child's tears. IS.

The little girl slowly stopped crying and buried herself in Roxanne's embrace.

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Feeling her heart wrench, Roxanne held the child tightly and patted her on the back. Archie and Benny were livid to see Estella having burst into tears like that, and they turned to Lucian indignantly.

"Why won't you let Essie be friends with us?" Archie couldn't help but question. "We've never been mean to her! For the past two times she ran away from home, my mommy's the one who took care of her really well, and we'd play with her too. She has fun playing with us, and she likes us a lot, so why can't she be friends with us? It's not like we're bad guys!"

Certainly not expecting to be reproached by two little boys, Lucian remained stone-faced, not knowing how to respond. He didn't want Estella to be friends with them just because he was being considerate, yet they were now blaming him instead. "Essie doesn't have many friends at school. Only Archie and I like her and let her hang around with us. When someone bullied her at school, we were the ones who helped her. If she can't be friends with us, she'll be all on her own! Is that what you want?" Even Benny couldn't refrain from lashing out at Lucian. The man felt extremely conflicted to be questioned like that. Seeing him remain silent, the boys grew even more frustrated, thinking they had hit the nail on the head with their words. After holding back for a while, Archie eventually said what was on his mind, "We protect her and play with her, but you're being so skeptical about us. What kind of people do you think we are?" Benny nodded in agreement, and the two stared at Lucian in disappointment. This man was their father, but he had abandoned their mother before they were even born. And now, on top of not liking them, he wouldn't even let his daughter be friends with them.

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Lucian was taken aback by the two little boys' angry reaction and knitted his brows. They outright reprimanded him, yet somehow, he felt sorry for Archie and Benny. He was even overwhelmed by a pang of guilt.

Roxanne, who was carrying Estella in her arms, was dumbfounded when she heard what her two boys said. She, too, felt a prickly pain in her heart.

Thank God they don't know the man standing before them is their biological father.

They might be even more upset if they knew the truth...

After keeping quiet for a while, Lucian looked away apologetically. "I'm sorry, but I don't see you two as bad guys. I feel it's inappropriate for your mommy to be in contact with her ex-husband. Your daddy might get upset if he finds out about it."

Roxanne and the two boys froze for a moment when they heard that.

Archie and Benny exchanged glances. Oh, right! Daddy doesn't know our relationship with him yet!

Benny spoke his mind. "It's okay! We don't have a daddy!"

The remarks the two boys made kept rendering Roxanne nonplussed. She wanted to stop her youngest son from spilling the tea, but it was too late.

She could only anxiously wait for Lucian's response.

The man's eyes narrowed with suspicion. There's something fishy about the things he

said and the pictures.

“What do you mean by you don’t have a daddy? Where’s he?” Lucian could not help but ask.

Benny looked at the confused man and explained, “Daddy didn’t want us anymore. He abandoned Mommy, and he didn’t like us. We grew up living with Mommy, so we have not seen our daddy before.”

Upon hearing that, Lucian frowned and gazed into Roxanne’s eyes. His eyes flickered with complicated emotions.

So all these years, this woman raised these two kids single-handedly?

He could not imagine the hardship they had to endure.

Besides, the woman had such an impressive résumé when she was abroad.

How on earth did she manage to juggle between the kids and her work? And how could that man abandon them just like this? Damn it!

Roxanne noticed the man was overwhelmed with emotions. She could even predict what he was about to say next.

Before he could say anything, however, Roxanne shut her eyes for a bit to conceal all her emotions and interrupted their conversation nonchalantly, “All right. Essie is not crying anymore, so it’s time for you to go home. I should get to work soon, too.”

She then released the little girl and gently stroked her head. “Go home with your daddy, all right? You can always come and visit Archie and Benny next time.”

Pleased with Roxanne’s assurance, the teary-eyed Estella broke into a smile and nodded before returning to her father.

Lucian’s eyes darkened for a second. He decided not to ask further since it was clear that Roxanne did not want to continue the topic.

As the little girl with red-rimmed eyes walked toward him, he rubbed her head quietly and toned down his voice. “Say goodbye to Ms. Jarvis.”

Estella raised her hand and waved Roxanne and the two boys goodbye.

The mother and sons responded with a hand wave.

Lucian bobbed his head and said to Roxanne, “We’re gonna go now.”

Before Roxanne could react, Lucian held Estella’s hand, turned around, and left.