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Afraid that she might wake the man on the bed, she got up slowly and picked up the coat beside her, planning to sneak away.

“Leaving so early?” came Dustin’s groggy voice.

“It’s late already,” Joan replied awkwardly.

Dustin rolled off the bed and offered, “Where are you going? I’ll take you there.”

“No need for that. Uhm, I can walk there myself. You should go back to sleep!” Joan hastily rejected.

It’s already unacceptable that we slept together on the same bed. I can’t get involved with him anymore!

Damn it! Who was it who kept forcing me to drink last night? She knocked her head lightly, trying to clear the fog in her mind.

“Stop it. You’re already not that bright. What if you become dumb by knocking your head like that?”

“Last night, nothing happened between us, right?” Joan blurted out.

“What? You’re really gonna pretend nothing happened?” Dustin raised his brows.

What does that mean? Did something really happen last night? Mortified, Joan stared at the man in front of her with horror in her eyes.

Calming herself, she continued, “Dustin, this isn’t a joke. I’m being completely serious right now.”

“Are you saying that you weren’t serious last night?” he asked.

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This jerk! Why isn't he making any sense? Panic rose his Joan's chest.

"Last night, did we..." she trailed off as anxiety gripped her.

Should I tell her the truth? Dustin was in a dilemma.

If I lie to her, will she leave Larry and come back to me? He hesitated.

"Dustin! I'm asking you a question!" she snapped.

"Alright, alright. Don't worry, I won't hold you accountable for it," Dustin lied.

In an instant, Joan plopped down onto the sofa by the side, a look of disbelief on her face.

Oh no. It seems like something did happen last night!

But I'm obviously still fully-dressed! She turned to eye the man suspiciously, hoping that he could tell her the truth.

Of course, Dustin knew what she was thinking. However, he merely shrugged his shoulders helplessly, not intending to clear up the situation.

"I dressed myself." He deliberately motioned at his own clothes.

Did I dress myself too? Looking down at her clothes, doubt crept into her heart.

But no matter what, I cannot get pregnant!

The next second, Joan snatched up her bag from the side and ran out of his room.

This woman sure runs fast! Dustin sat on the bed, his eyes dimming as he watched her fleeing his place.

Joan did not stop running. As she panted, her features were lined with unease.

What should I do? How should I break this to Larry?

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“Hey, get out of the way!”

“Do you have a death wish, b*tch?”

Joan was currently standing in the middle of the road as she tried to recall the events of last night. Hence, she completely failed to take notice of her surroundings and was cursed at by a few drivers on the road.

Suddenly, her arm was grabbed and she was pulled to safety. “What’s going on with you?” came Jake’s worried voice.

When she didn’t answer, he continued probing, “What the hell happened? Why were you so completely out of it?”

She raised her head in a daze and said, “It’s nothing. What are you doing here?”

“I came out for a run. When I saw you walking across the road so absent-mindedly, I was worried, so I followed you,” Jake explained, then checked her for any injuries, “How are you feeling? Are you okay?”

“I’m fine. Don’t worry,” she reassured with a sheepish smile.

“Where did you go last night?” he inquired.

“Huh?” Joan’s mind was still whirring.

“Based on the direction you were coming from, you didn’t go home last night, right?”

Yes, I didn’t go home last night. How I am supposed to explain it to Larry?

When she remained silent, Jake furrowed his brows and asked, “What’s wrong? Did someone hurt you? Was is Larry?”

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"No, no," she quickly denied.

"Are you free tonight? Let's grab dinner together."

"I can't. I have stuff to do. Sorry." With that, Joan strode forward.

Dustin is already giving me a hell of a headache. I want nothing to do with this man!

Meanwhile, Joan wasn't the only one facing the same problem.

"What the hell do you want?" Jessica snapped at the door.

"You, of course," Jasper replied with a grin.

"I don't like you!" Jessica yelled.

Jasper was unfazed. "It doesn't matter as long as I like you."

This guy is driving me crazy! How can such a shameless man exist in this world? Jessica turned around and closed her eyes, drawing in a deep breath in an attempt to calm herself down.

"Jasper, I will say this one more time. I already have someone I love!"

"That's fine. I can wait for you. I'm going to prove to you that I'm better than that man by a hundredfold."

"Do whatever you want!"

With that, she slammed the door in his face. With a helpless and dejected look on his face, Jasper remained standing on the same spot.

Jessica was the first woman he had fallen in love with, but fate was cruel because he appeared too late.

Upon noticing Caspian hurrying over with breakfast in hand, Jasper asked coldly, "So you're Caspian?"

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The other man stopped in his tracks and sized Jasper up and down, suspicion rising in him.

"Who are you? Do I know you?" he shot back.

"I'm Jasper, and I want a fair match against you," Jasper replied flatly.

A match? What for? What's up with this guy? Caspian peered closer at the other man's expression, as though trying to figure him out.

Mm. I can see that he's a loyal and righteous man who places great value in relationships. Caspian easily gleaned that information from the man's eyes.

"I like Jessica," Jasper admitted.

Suddenly, Caspian's eyes lit up with realization. He's that guy from the other day who was asking for directions!

"And?" Caspian questioned.

"And nothing. I just thought you should know and be prepared for what's coming," Jasper answered nonchalantly.

What a joke! What is there to prepare for? I'm confident that Jessica loves me and won't give this guy the time of day!

"Sure. I wish you the best." With that, Caspian skirted around him and left.

There's nothing more to say. I know for a fact that Jessica will never dump me for him!

Jasper stood motionless with a murderous glint in his eyes.

"There's someone looking for you at the door," Caspian informed in a calm voice while placing breakfast on the table.

"I know," Jessica replied cautiously.

"What are you going to do about it?" he probed.

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“By not doing anything.” Jessica knew that there was no need to explain the situation between Jasper and her because Caspian would understand.

“Aren’t you going to make things clear with him?”

“I have, but he just won’t listen. What else can I do?” The house descended into an awkward atmosphere.

Both of them ate their breakfast in silence and headed out for work soon after.

Although Caspian believed that Jessica’s love for him was genuine, there were still times when he feared that she would leave him.

“What’s going on? You’ve been distracted the whole day,” Larry observed in a low voice and questioned, “Did you and Jessica get into a fight?”

“No,” Caspian answered with a crestfallen expression.

“Spill,” Larry ordered in a clipped tone.

“Larry, when Dustin pursued Joan back then, how did you feel?”

Larry looked up and smirked at him.

“Jealous?” Larry arched a brow at him.

“No, I’m not.” Caspian’s denial came almost immediately.

Yeah, right. His expression says it all. Larry stood up and approached Caspian with a knowing look on his face.

“What? Is someone is making advances on Jessica?” Larry asked.

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"A man by the name of Jasper has been troubling her lately." There was a shred of complaint and lack of self-confidence in the way Caspian spoke.

"What are you afraid of? Jessica doesn't even like him."

"Yes, she doesn't fancy him now but as time passes, there's no guarantee that she won't have a change of heart."

Right then, Caspian finally realized what it meant to feel insecure and miserable.

"Aren't you two living together? What are you still afraid of?" Larry reminded him.

Maybe I'm just thinking too much. Caspian frowned as he ruminated the reasons for his discontent.

Maybe I care about Jessica too much. Maybe I'm mad that she's giving me the cold shoulder treatment. I don't know. I'm just not in the mood!

"Don't fret. You're a man, aren't you? Stop whining then. Look at you, your face looks all weird!" Larry exclaimed.

"You're right!" Caspian replied loudly, and rose to his feet.

On the other side of town, Joan sat on the sofa in the living room, staring blankly at the ceiling above her.

The phone next to her had been ringing for a while, but she refused to pick it up.

The call was from Dustin. She dared not answer.

"Joan! Hey! Are you daydreaming? Your phone's been ringing for ages. Can you just get that?" Delilah pointed out the obvious as she walked over to her.

"It's just one of those spam calls. Some foreign marketing company wants to sell me stuff," Joan simply came up with a lie.

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“Get into your room then. You’re just going to affect my mood if you stay here,” Delilah urged her to leave the living room.

Joan collected her phone and shuffled into her room like a zombie. She flopped onto the bed, feeling resigned, as though all her hopes and dreams had been sucked out of her.

Should I come clean to Larry? What would he think of me if he finds out the truth? All that thinking was making her head throb.

Noises came from outside the house. Delilah was questioning a man who had dropped by, “And what brings you here?”

“Ms. Young, is Joan home?” Dustin stated his reason.

“She’s sleeping in her room. What? Do you need something from her?” Delilah fired another question.

“I called her several times just now but she didn’t answer. I got worried, so I thought I should check on her,” Dustin said with an awkward chuckle.

Oh my, how thoughtful! Delilah felt equal parts relieved and sad to see him.

Joan also heard Dustin’s voice coming from outside. She quickly pulled the covers over herself and pretended to be sleeping soundly.

“Hey! Just what do you think you’re doing? That’s Joan’s room! You can’t just barge in there!” Delilah shouted at the rude visitor.

What a jerk! Does he not know proper manners? How can he just march into Joan’s room like this? That’s not right. Dustin isn’t always like this. He’s the type who means what he says and knows what he’s doing, so what on earth is happening right now?

Delilah scrutinized the man who had come knocking on her property as she tried to figure out what he was on about.

Based on Delilah’s reaction, Dustin deduced that Joan had not told the older woman what happened between them the night before. With that, he did not see the need to barge into the woman’s room.

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“Dustin, you get back here this instant!” Delilah yelled. The volume was loud enough to startle Joan who was hiding in the room.

Damn, Delilah must have sensed something! Joan sat up abruptly, leapt down from the bed, and dashed out of her room.

“Ms. Young!” She shouted at the woman on the sofa in the living room.

Both Delilah and Dustin turned towards her, confusion painted on their faces.

“Yes?” Delilah asked.

Dustin smirked when Joan entered the scene. That creepy smirk sent a shiver down Joan’s spine.

“Um, I’d like to have meatloaf for dinner.” Joan came up with an excuse, hoping to distract Delilah.

“For god’s sake, girl. Look at the time! If you want to place your orders for dinner, do it later! It’s too early for that now,” Delilah ranted as she gave Joan the side-eye.

Well, I don’t want you talking to Dustin!

“Dustin, don’t you have other things to do today? You really should get going! Come, allow me to see you off!” With that said, Joan approached the man and made to drag him away.

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“Hey, but he just got here!” Delilah shouted for attention.

“That’s quite alright, Ms. Young. I really do have business elsewhere,” Dustin responded, going along with Joan.

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"What are you doing here then? You should leave!" At the door, Joan nagged at him.

"What's this? You seem angry. Don't you want me to come see you? Do you loathe me that much?" Dustin muttered as he stroked her hair when they were out of Delilah's sight.

He wanted to give the woman a hug but Joan retreated a few steps, rejecting his advance.

"What do you plan to do about us?" Dustin implored her in all seriousness.

"I, for one, can tell that Delilah doesn't know about us yet. And... I assume Larry doesn't know either? When do you intend to tell them?" He had more questions for Joan.

He understood that he should give Joan some time to deal with it all, but he just could not wait any longer. He did not want such a rare opportunity, which he created from scratch, to go to waste just like that!

"Slow down, will you? Give me some time," Joan replied, with a hint of pleading in her tone.

"Please don't go looking for Larry. I'll talk to him," she added.

Oh, is that so? Can you admit your betrayal to him that easily?

"Alright, then. Can you tell me how you intend to deal with this?" Dustin asked. He slowly approached Joan and, ever so gently, pinched her on the cheek.

"Don't touch me!" Joan yelled upon physical contact.

"What's going on?" Delilah barked at the door from the living room.

"Nothing," Joan quickly answered.

"You don't like me anymore?" Dustin asked indignantly.

I've never liked you in the first place! She glared at him, her face darkened to a gloomy gray.

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Until then, she still could not believe that Dustin, this man in front of her, had the gall to take advantage of her when she was drunk. He even claimed that she made the first move, and that he had obliged because he could not control his urges.

They chatted for a little more before Dustin left the premise.

Delilah sat on the sofa in the living room, munching on sunflower feeds as she watched whatever was on television, with nothing but chilly air as her companion. Joan had a bad feeling about this. She thought she could sneak into her room and pretended that no one had come to call, but Delilah had other plans.

“You have some explaining to do!” Delilah demanded.

It’s such a mess. Where do I even start? Reluctantly, she turned around to face the older woman just inches away from her. She felt guilty about the whole thing, but she still managed to force a smile.

“Ms. Young, I’m tired. I... I need a break,” Joan muttered.

“Then I’ll get you some coffee.” Delilah rose from her seat and headed to the kitchen.

In the end, Joan did not tell her anything.

They talked about other things before Joan retired to her room.

On the other side of town, Dustin lay on the sofa with his eyes wide open, staring blankly at the ceiling.

Perhaps he had indeed crossed the line, but if this was what it took to reel her in, then he would rather be a villain in the story and do a thorough job.

“Joan!” Nancy called, and she was crying over the phone. She sounded like she was hurt.

Joan instantly became alert at the sound of her friend’s cry.

“Nancy, stop crying. Get a hold of yourself. Tell me, what happened?” Joan calmed her down and asked.

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“Joan, Jory wants a divorce! What should I do?”

Impossible! When the two of them were madly in love and started going out, sparks practically flew, and the whole city got into an uproar because of the news. What’s with the sudden talk about getting a divorce?

“Hush. Let’s talk outside.” The women had barely talked for two minutes when they ended their call after swiftly deciding on a meeting place.

“Ms. Young, I’m off!” Joan called out to Delilah as she put on her jacket.

“Get home soon!” Delilah responded from her place in the kitchen.

Gosh, this girl’s been acting so strange lately! Delilah shook her head before proceeding with the task at hand.

When the two women finally met, Nancy was a mess. “Alright, Nancy. You have to stop crying. Out with it. Tell me what really happened,” Joan gently coaxed the weeping woman, asking to hear the whole story. The latter wiped away her tears.

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“Jory doesn’t want me anymore. He hates me. Joan, tell me, do you think he’s seeing somebody else?” Nancy wailed.

“Nonsense! I’m sure Jory’s not like that!” Joan disagreed.

Jory’s just like Larry. He’s the type of businessman who devotes his life to one and only woman. So how can a man like him betray Nancy for no reason? Furthermore, didn’t you just give birth to his daughter? He’s practically on cloud nine, Nancy. Leaving you is the last thing on his thoughts, I’ll bet. Nancy, I think you’re overthinking it.

Joan studied the woman in front of her, trying to get a handle on what was troubling her.

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“Joan, you don’t understand. Sometimes, I get really scared. Jory’s been working overtime recently...” Nancy continued to vent.

After listening to Nancy, Joan came to a conclusion. Nancy, I’m sure you’re overthinking it.

“Alright, alright. Don’t be dramatic, Nancy. First of all, Jory won’t betray your trust. Secondly, you’re reading too much into it,” Joan explained to her as gently as she could.

“No, I’m not! I’m really scared! You don’t understand. Jory has plenty of young, beautiful women at his beck and call. Look at me, Joan. I’m a housewife. I haven’t touched my makeup in ages. Day in and day out, all I do is take care of the baby. I simply don’t have the extra energy to take care of myself!”

In the end, it was about the kid. Joan sighed. This was every mother’s struggle. In the beginning, after the baby was born, the mother had to sacrifice her time to tend to the baby’s needs. As the child grew, the mother would have fewer and fewer matters to worry about.

“You’ve got to keep it together!” was all Joan could say.

“But I don’t want to!” Nancy shouted. Oh, my! When have you become so stubborn? You’re a mother, Nancy. You can’t be throwing tantrums now. No wonder you keep complaining that Jory can’t stand you!

“Hello there!” came a voice. Jake happened to come across the two women.

Joan and Nancy were surprised to see him.

“Joan, is she a friend of yours?” Jake grinned, referring to Nancy.

“Oh, hi! Jake, this is Nancy. Nancy, Jake,” Joan hastily introduced the two.

Well, now that they had met each other, certain procedures were due. Otherwise, it would just make matters worse.

“How did you and Joan know each other? Where did you two first meet? I’m telling you, Joan’s taken, so you better not get any ideas,” Nancy spoke her mind.

Joan cringed.

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Oh my gosh, Nancy! The guy hasn't even said anything yet and there you go spilling all that unnecessary stuff. You seriously need to see a counselor!

Jake just stood there, scratching the back of his head, as he stared curiously at Nancy. The atmosphere turned awkward.

"Nancy, please, drop it. He knows everything," Joan reminded her friend.

The other woman heaved a sigh of relief and said nothing more. She remained silent even after that.

The three of them had lunch together before going their separate ways. Before going home, Joan urged Nancy to keep her temper in check and not unleash it on Jory. The married woman was also told to stop being stubborn and childish. But once Nancy got back, every advice she had received was thrown out the window and she resumed her horrible habits.

"Has Jory come home yet?" Nancy asked the housemaid.

"Welcome home, Mrs. Synder. Mr. Synder just called to say that he has a social event and hence won't be coming back tonight," the housemaid replied.

Another social event? How many of those does he have? It's been days! Nancy kicked off her shoes and, with a frown, slumped onto the sofa.

No! I have to go see for myself! See if he's really socializing with his clients... or someone else entirely!

Without waiting for the housemaid to inform her that dinner was served, Nancy had disappeared from the villa.

Outside, darkness had fallen. Consumed by excessive jealousy, Nancy no longer feared the darkness.

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“Mrs. Synder, what brings you here?” Jory’s assistant uttered in shock when the woman showed up at the office.

“Where’s Jory?” Nancy demanded to know.

“Mr. Synder is attending a social event at the moment. Didn’t he tell you?” replied the assistant.

“Where? Give me the address! Don’t tell Jory I was here!” Nancy got what she wanted and swiftly left the building, stomping her platform heels.

The assistant was still in a state of confusion as she watched the woman storm out.

It’s a bar! Why are they having it in a bar? What’s Jory doing in a bar? Why would anyone discuss business in a bar?

Nancy frowned as she stared at the message she had received, her expression a distorted one.

Jory, if you’ve really betrayed me, I won’t let you get away with it!

In one of the private rooms, Jory was busy socializing with other men. He had no idea of the danger that would soon befall him. His assistant tried calling him many times but he ignored the ringing of his phone.

Around them sat several beautiful women with alluring figures in sexy attire. The scene would only add fuel to the flames of Nancy’s jealousy later on.

Bang! The door was forcefully kicked open.

Everyone’s attention turned toward the entrance.

Nancy was not afraid at all as she announced her arrival, walked straight up to Jory, and sat herself down.

“Why are you here?” Jory glared suspiciously at the woman, his anger slowly boiling.

Oh, am I not welcomed? Or are you hiding something from me?

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“Why can’t I? I’m here to accompany my husband at his social event. Is that so wrong?” Nancy asked as she surveyed the other men in the room.

“No, of course not. We’d be more than happy to have you, Ms. Barrymore.”

“Indeed, Ms. Barrymore. You’re one of the most beautiful women in town. Mr. Synder must be lucky to have you.”

The few men around him kept swaddling her with compliments, while their eyes traced along Nancy’s perfect figure. No one would have guessed she had given birth just a few months ago if they had not already known.

“Stop messing around! Get home! Now!” Jory leaned by her ear and commanded.

“Come on, Jory. These guys don’t seem to have any objections, how can you simply turn me down like that?” Nancy countered, using Jory’s business partners as her shield.

“Mr. Synder, that’s where you’re wrong. You can’t possibly drive away your beautiful wife, can you?”

“That’s right, Ms. Barrymore wants to stay here to serve you. You ought to give her a chance,” said another man, stroking his chin.

Old foxes, all of you! And damn that assistant! Didn’t even bother to warn me!

Jory grabbed hold of his wife’s hand. He looked absolutely furious.

Throughout the course of the event, Nancy had gotten herself drunk, and so did the other men. It seemed Jory was the only one who remained sober in the entire room.

“Tell me, Jory! You’ve been seeing someone else, haven’t you?” Nancy yelled, pointing at Jory’s nose.

“Are you crazy, woman? Get home, now!” Jory made to shove her out of the room.

“Tell me, which one is it?” Nancy turned to the other drunk women in the room, all of whom were sprawled on the table. “Which one of you girls have been seducing my husband?”

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But no one gave her the time of day, as they were all in a state of semi-consciousness. No matter how loudly she yelled, no one would really get what she trying to say.

“Jory, don’t leave me, okay? I really love you!” Suddenly, she went ahead and gave her husband a tight embrace. The next thing she knew, she broke into tears.

Who said anything about leaving you? Who gave you the idea that I’m seeing another woman? The man glared at the woman in front of him and shook his head, feeling resigned.

“Mr. Synder, I’m sorry. It seems I got here too late.” His assistant appeared at the door of the private room, gasping for breath.

“Why did you tell her I’m here?” Jory roared at her. The assistant shuddered, her eyes filled with fear as she stared at her employer.

“Um, sir, I tried to call you, but you didn’t pick up,” the assistant explained, keeping her head low.

“Just get her home!” Jory ordered.

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“No! I don’t want to go home! I want Joan! Joan, let me tell you a secret...” Nancy blurted as she made to slap the man in front of her.

“What are you talking about? Go home!” Jory yelled again.

“No! I’m not going home!” Suddenly, the woman shoved Jory into a corner with all the force she could summon. Pointing a finger at him, her eyes narrowed, she muttered something about going to look for Joan.

This woman’s gone mad! She hasn’t been the same since she’s given birth!

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In the end, Jory was unable to dissuade the drunk woman. Running out of ideas, he took out his phone and called Joan.

Within an hour, a very anxious Joan showed up at the private room.

“Nancy, what’s all this about?” She begged for an answer as she held the woman tight.

“Is that you, Joan?” Nancy lifted her head and asked the woman who had just arrived for confirmation.

“Yes. Yes, I’m Joan. Come on, let me take you home, okay? We can talk once we get back,” Joan gently coaxed Nancy as she got the woman on her feet.

“I said I don’t want to go home! Joan, what should I do? Jory doesn’t love me anymore. I’m sure he doesn’t want me anymore! Do you know that, when I went looking for him just now, he gave me this look of disgust! And, in front of so many people, he ordered me to go home!” Nancy complained to Joan in between sobs.

Jory watched the two women. Despite feeling aggrieved, he stayed silent the whole time, leaving a lot of things unsaid. His assistant felt terribly out of place in a situation like this, especially after hearing Nancy’s drunken speech.

“Mr. Synder, I think I’ll take my leave...” She excused herself and quickly left the private room.

“Then tell me, where do you want to go?” Joan asked Nancy.

“I don’t know! Anywhere but home! I don’t want to face Jory!” Nancy resumed her childish rant.

Jory looked at the drunken woman in front of him, his heart bursting with anger.

Who’s the reason I’ve been working so hard for? Haven’t I been giving it my all so that you can have a better and happier life? And now, you’re here, and for some reason you’re actually complaining about and doubting me?

“Okay. I’ll take her to my place,” Joan told Jory.

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“No! You have a husband and a kid. That won’t do. You should take her to a hotel!” Jory said, controlling his emotions.

“Jory! You son of a b*tch! I gave you a daughter, and yet you’re out here looking for a mistress!” Nancy yelled out loud in a drunken craze, her hands flailing.

Unable to stand her petulance, Jory finally walked off.

“Hey, hey. Take it slow. Be careful,” Joan muttered as she helped Nancy stand up.

Gosh, how much has she drunk? She can’t even stand still!

“Joan, I’m really, really, tired...”

And so, Joan got them a room in a hotel. Nancy lay there on the bed, moaning and groaning, while Joan did what she could to make her comfortable.

Larry had returned home to find Joan nowhere in sight. He asked Delilah, “Ms. Young, where’s Joan?”

“She’s not back yet. Said she’s gone to meet Nancy,” Delilah replied slowly.

What for? Did Nancy get into trouble again? Larry had his phone in hand. He hesitated for a long minute and ended up giving Joan a call.

“Hey, Larry. I won’t be going home tonight. Nancy’s got herself drunk. I’m staying with her,” Joan informed him loudly over the phone while rubbing the woman’s back.

“What does her getting drunk have to do with you?” Larry grunted, apparently displeased.

“Nancy and Jory got into a fight. I’ll explain everything when I get home tomorrow. I have to go.” And then, Joan hung up the phone.

Nancy’s a mother now, and yet she can still be such a pain in the neck! Tired of the drama, Larry hurled his phone onto the sofa and went into his room.

“Joan, I think I miss Caspian,” Nancy blurted.

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No, no, no. Jory's not going to like it if he hears that! Who knows what that man will do to Caspian! Joan quickly brought a hand over Nancy's mouth to stop her from rambling.

"I want to go to bars with him! Caspian won't stop me from drinking! Jory never lets me drink. He thinks I'm an embarrassment!" Nancy complained even more as she kicked the covers away.

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"No! I don't want to go home! I want Joan! Joan, let me tell you a secret..." Nancy blurted as she made to slap the man in front of her.

"What are you talking about? Go home!" Jory yelled again.

"No! I'm not going home!" Suddenly, the woman shoved Jory into a corner with all the force she could summon. Pointing a finger at him, her eyes narrowed, she muttered something about going to look for Joan.

This woman's gone mad! She hasn't been the same since she's given birth!

In the end, Jory was unable to dissuade the drunk woman. Running out of ideas, he took out his phone and called Joan.

Within an hour, a very anxious Joan showed up at the private room.

"Nancy, what's all this about?" She begged for an answer as she held the woman tight.

"Is that you, Joan?" Nancy lifted her head and asked the woman who had just arrived for confirmation.

"Yes. Yes, I'm Joan. Come on, let me take you home, okay? We can talk once we get back," Joan gently coaxed Nancy as she got the woman on her feet.

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"I said I don't want to go home! Joan, what should I do? Jory doesn't love me anymore. I'm sure he doesn't want me anymore! Do you know that, when I went looking for him just now, he gave me this look of disgust! And, in front of so many people, he ordered me to go home!" Nancy complained to Joan in between sobs.

Jory watched the two women. Despite feeling aggrieved, he stayed silent the whole time, leaving a lot of things unsaid. His assistant felt terribly out of place in a situation like this, especially after hearing Nancy's drunken speech.

"Mr. Synder, I think I'll take my leave..." She excused herself and quickly left the private room.

"Then tell me, where do you want to go?" Joan asked Nancy.

"I don't know! Anywhere but home! I don't want to face Jory!" Nancy resumed her childish rant.

Jory looked at the drunken woman in front of him, his heart bursting with anger.

Who's the reason I've been working so hard for? Haven't I been giving it my all so that you can have a better and happier life? And now, you're here, and for some reason you're actually complaining about and doubting me?

"Okay. I'll take her to my place," Joan told Jory.

"No! You have a husband and a kid. That won't do. You should take her to a hotel!" Jory said, controlling his emotions.

"Jory! You son of a b*tch! I gave you a daughter, and yet you're out here looking for a mistress!" Nancy yelled out loud in a drunken craze, her hands flailing.

Unable to stand her petulance, Jory finally walked off.

"Hey, hey. Take it slow. Be careful," Joan muttered as she helped Nancy stand up.

Gosh, how much has she drunk? She can't even stand still!

"Joan, I'm really, really, tired..."

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And so, Joan got them a room in a hotel. Nancy lay there on the bed, moaning and groaning, while Joan did what she could to make her comfortable.

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“Actually... I just want you to pay more attention to me, spend more time with me, and... look at me a little more,” Nancy gently admitted her heart’s desires.

“I see. Thanks for telling me. From now on, after I get off work, I will return as soon as I can, is that alright? I’ll reject all invitations to social events too,” Jory stated.

He certainly could not put it off anymore. For so long, he had been enduring his wife’s suspicion, not realizing that he had been neglecting her as well. Now that Nancy had revealed what had been on her mind, he ought to try his best to amend his faults.

“Really?” Nancy asked excitedly.

Joan liked what she was seeing and hearing. She was happy for Nancy. Hmm, Jory is surely a sensible man!

“Okay, I think I’ll go now,” Joan declared as she got to her feet, ready to leave.

But the other woman was persistent. She tugged on her friend’s arm and pleaded, “Don’t go, Joan. Stay with me a while longer.”

Joan could not quite explain it, but Nancy had a look of grief and misery on her face, and it made her heart ache.

What exactly has Nancy gone through? How did she become so vulnerable?

“Alright. Just a little while longer,” Joan gave in and sat back down again.

Shortly after that, Nancy headed to the kitchen to prepare their next meal. While she was out of earshot, Joan took advantage of the opportunity to inquire Jory about his wife. “I hope you don’t mind me saying it, but I think Nancy’s changed somehow. Did something happen to her?”

Jory sighed first before revealing the truth Joan had been asking for, “Some time ago, our baby fell from the stairs. Luckily, the butler got hold of her in time. The baby wasn’t harmed, but Nancy hasn’t been the same since. She’s constantly on edge and suspicious about things.”

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So that's how it is! Joan turned back to look at Nancy who was busy in the kitchen. After hearing her story, Joan began to pity the woman.

"Mrs. Synder, allow me." The housemaid, who seemed worried, went up to Nancy and offered her assistance.

"That's quite alright. I can do this," Nancy replied and waved her off.

"I understand now," said Joan as she rose to her feet. "I think I've overstayed my welcome. I should get going. If there's anything you need, call me."

"Thanks for everything!" Jory called out to her from behind.

White clouds drifted in the clear, blue sky, like cotton candy floating in the wind. Joan looked up and closed her eyes, feeling the caress of the gentle breeze.

Nice weather we have today! She breathed in deeply, giving herself a moment to relax. If only every day could be as comforting as this one.

"Joan!" Gosh! She punched her head with her right fist in an attempt to clear her mind, but Dustin's appearance was certainly not a dream.

"Where have you been today?" Dustin asked in a hurry.

"I was at Nancy's. What's up?" Joan asked him back.

"Want to grab a bite together?" He tilted his head and asked her out.

What time is it? Joan checked her watch. Oh, it's getting late.

"I've got to run home. There's stuff I need to do. See you!"

"Joan, I really miss you!" Dustin said it on purpose.

Well, I don't! Stunned for a moment, Joan quickly composed herself and tried her best to calm down.

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“Look here, Dustin. I think we really need to talk,” Joan said it to his face.

Talk? About what? Talk about going on a date, perhaps? A mischievous smile crept up the corners of his lips.

“Okay, let’s go somewhere to eat, then we’ll talk,” he suggested cheerfully.

Before he could finish his sentence, Joan had left on her own.

They picked a restaurant and asked for a private room. Inside, it was quiet, perfect for a private chat between two people.

But Joan had not come for the food.

“Dustin, I’m sure you’re well aware, but I want to make it clear once and for all. I love Larry. I love him, and only him,” Joan enunciated her words distinctly as she gave him a serious look.

Right then, a tinge of sadness flashed across his eyes. This man again! Why is it always him? Are you saying that you can’t live without him?

“Joan, I don’t want to hear his name, especially not coming from you,” Dustin declared upfront.

Come on, no man likes to hear the woman he loves mention another man’s name again and again!

“Look, Dustin. You have to face the facts. We are friends and nothing more. I cannot think of you as an intimate partner, and for that, I apologize,” Joan continued, hoping to hammer some sense into him.

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"You can if you're willing to!" Dustin spluttered.

Sorry to burst your bubble. The thing is, I'm not!

"Dustin, I'm sorry. We have to end this! Let's pretend that nothing ever happened that night, okay? Consider this a favor... from me."

Oh, dear Joan. What lovely eyes you have. So sincere, so firm, and so charming! But I cannot allow things to go your way! I want you, and I'll find some way to marry you, Joan!

"Come on, Joan. We can give it a try, you know? I don't care what's going on between you and Larry. You're the only one I want!" Dustin tugged on her arm, for fear she might run away from him.

No matter what, as long as you haven't reconciled with Larry, I still have hope! And even if you get back together with him, I'll keep waiting for you!

"Please don't do this. If you keep this up, I'm really going to scream!" Joan warned him.

Dustin immediately let go of his right arm and adjusted his attitude.

"I came here today to make it clear to you, once and for all. I implore you, don't waste your time on me. It's not worth it!" Joan muttered.

"No! Of course you're worth it. You're the only woman I love, Joan! I won't accept anyone else besides you!"

"That's because you haven't met the right one," she added.

What does "the right one" even mean? Two people who share the same ideals, or two people who fall in love at first sight? But how many matches made in heaven are there on this planet? I've finally met you, Joan. You, who make my heart beat like crazy. And now you want me to give up without a fight?

Thud!

A young man had stumbled into their private room by accident. "Oh, pardon me. I must have the wrong room!" he excused himself.

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“Geez! How can you barge into someone else’s room like that! Get over here, now!” Out of the blue, Jake swung by the private room as he yelled at the intruder. Three sets of eyes met.

Instantly, everything seemed to have come to a standstill.

Joan and Jake exchanged glances. It took some time for them to respond.

“Joan? Why are you here? Who’s this?” Jake demanded to know Dustin’s identity as he pointed at the man opposite Joan. The frown hanging on his face showed that he was not pleased at all.

“Just a friend,” Joan simply replied.

Just a friend? Dustin looked away from the man at the door and turned to face the woman. His expression was one of disappointment.

“And who are you?” Dustin rose from his seat and asked, albeit not in a nice way.

“Also a friend,” Joan repeated.

The same answer... The two men promptly understood the situation.

“I’m telling you, give up on her! Joan’s mine!” Jake fired first.

Exactly who should give up here? What a joke! Dustin turned away in disdain. He remained quiet.

“Stop it! You, just get out of here!” Joan barked at Jake who was just a few steps away.

Jake gave Dustin a fierce look in the eye, before he eventually left the two in peace.

Once more, Joan and Dustin were left to their devices in the private room. An awkward silence ensued.

“So... what’s going on between you and him?” Dustin was first to break the deadlock.

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"Like I said, we're just friends," Joan casually answered.

Do you take me for an idiot? Just friends? Do you think I can't see it? That guy obviously has a crush on you!

"Joan, you have to be careful," he warned her.

Joan, taken aback by his words, looked up at him.

"He likes you," he added.

I know. I just never said yes to him.

"I wonder... Are you rejecting me because of Larry or because of that guy just now?"

What the hell did you just say? Are you seriously thinking that I'm somehow involved with Jake? Joan found his reaction absurd. "Dustin, watch your tongue. Nothing's changed between Larry and I, and it'll stay that way," she exclaimed, loud and clear.

The man in front of her breathed a sigh of relief. Over the course of a meal, Joan's attempt to convince Dustin to stop pursuing her had been unsuccessful. Quite simply, Dustin could be very persistent. He could go to any lengths necessary to get his hands on his prize.

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