



SENTIENCE

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As the wooden doors swung closed behind us I peered up at the patrons. Forkrul was right after all, it was packed in here. With cream of mushroom being the soup of the day, I might even have to pull triple shifts tonight. Those were always tough. By the third go, you always know that you needed longer in the sink.

Especially if you had a lick in the crowd; and there seemed to be quite a few of those around today by the looks of it.

As Jamal carried me and Bowlerika to our designated table, I spotted some regulars among the crowd. Mr. Rafi was sitting at his usual table, sipping his *malai cha* from Cuprina. She looked very pleased in his grip, and my suspicions about her slight crush grew stronger. Mr. Rafi was probably the only customer who would have hot beverages for dinner in summer. It was sweltering hot these days too, so this was probably the only time Cuprina had been out of the kitchen today. *Lucky her.*

Jamal swerved left and placed me softly on a table in front of a woman. Jamal was always nice to us. Kalam on the other hand, who was placing all twelve of the Plate brothers in front of a table full of office workers from the telecom headquarters beside our restaurant, always overestimated his abilities. In doing so he would more often than not leave us messy on the tables. Customers just don't treat messy dishes the same, I thought with a sigh, as I remembered that one time our favourite Instagram food blogger decided I

wasn't good-looking enough for a photo-shoot. Left me devastated, that did.

The woman I was now sitting in front of didn't seem too interested in me either. Her eyes didn't light up as I was put down, and that's always a bad sign. I would have felt self-conscious, but then I noticed that Bowlerika didn't get as much as a glance from the man she was serving either. They began eating their soup in silence.

After a while, I noticed that she was beginning to scoop the soup rather violently with Spoonib and it was starting to hurt me. I was just beginning to think that spilling some soup on her would teach her a lesson when I noticed something. They had been speaking rapidly about something before the waiter showed up, and now the woman's eyes were swimming with moisture.

"I can't believe I actually thought you'd apologise to me. I bet you don't even think you did anything wrong," she said in a heated tone.

"Are we going to start this again? Can't we have one dinner in peace? I don't think I have had one proper night's meal since the engagement," the man retorted. *Oh dear boy. You know better than to say that.*

"Oh, of course. All your problems are completely my fault. Why marry me when you have so many problems with me, huh? You were oh so happy before you met me, with your perfect family, especially your sweet mother!" she said in a deadly whisper. Bowlerika and I shared a groan. *That was rule one: Never bring up the mother-in-law. It never ends well.*

"You keep my mother out of this. All

she wants is for our family to stay peacefully together. If she does say or do a few things that seem too controlling, it's only because she has good intentions. My one true sorrow is that you never try to understand her."

"Understand her?! The woman has to have a say in every aspect of my life! She won't let me get a haircut for heaven's sake! How does the style of my hair affect your family's peace?" she said, slamming Spoonib down on the table hard. I could feel the remaining soup in me wobble around as I heard a muffled *ouch* coming from Spoonib's direction.

"So my mother can't say a word about your life but if I'm casually talking to a friend of mine at a party, after five years of us dating, that's still a problem with you?!" *Wait, what friend? This sounds interesting.*

Just as the woman was about to retort, Jamal came back to the table. They both stopped their whispered yelling immediately and said they were done with the appetizers. *Blast! And things were just starting to get spicy.* I sighed as Jamal whisked me away towards the kitchen. Bowlerika looked upset as well. We lived for this kind of drama.

The usual routine began as we reached the kitchen. Empty, soap, wash, dry (*ooh that tickles*), fill, and out we were again. I get placed in front of a baby this time, which immediately put me off. Babies are the worst customers. They have no sense of how to eat like civilised human beings, splashing my contents everywhere, repeatedly hitting me with members of

the Cutlery family. Furthermore the Cutlerys were always an overtly apologetic family and reassuring them that the abuse was not their fault got exhausting after a while. However, regardless of the matter of the neophyte, at least I was in viewing distance of the couple now.

I noticed that Kniftekarak was at their table now, which was great news for us all. He was one of the biggest gossips of the bunch, and was probably chronicling the entire fight in his sharp mind right now. On the other hand, as the woman's voice began to get loud enough to carry over to my table, I thought I might not have to wait till closing to get the full scoop this time.

All of a sudden the woman abruptly stood up; loudly pushing back the chair she was on. All eyes were on her now, ours and the humans.

"Don't make a scene?! That's all you care about isn't it? Your image! In front of your friends, in front of your mother, but not in front of me! Of course not. Since the engagement it's like you think you've got me in the bag. Well, I don't care anymore! You can stay here and eat your image!" she yelled, and threw the contents of Glassan, which looked like lemonade, all over his shirt, before storming out of the restaurant.

As I heard the Plate brothers cheering wildly, I knew there would be one hell of an after party in the kitchens tonight.

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