missed calls

by hyacinthis

Summary

“You’re a good kid, Nicaise.” Laurent says coolly. “And I’m not going to sit and let you be treated like that.”

“Thank you.” Nicaise says.

“I’m very proud of you.”

Nicaise laughs again then looks out the window. He breathes onto it then draws little stick figures on the fog. Laurent glances over to him and smiles to himself.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.

The sound of the phone ringing is one of the worst noises Laurent has heard. Normally, he wouldn’t mind, but it’s so quiet in the library and he was so relaxed. It’s such a shrill, harsh noise. Luckily, someone picks it up, and he looks back at his computer screen. A coworker behind him answers and speaks softly, so as to not interrupt the inhabitants of the library.

“Oh, yes, he’s in today.” Comes her soft voice. “Mhm. Alright, yes sir, let me grab him.”

She tilts the phone away from her and puts her hand over the end one would speak through. She cranes her neck a little before her eyes land on Laurent.

“Laurent.” She whispers to him. Laurent looks over at her. “Phone call.”

Strange. He thinks as he stands and walks towards the phone.
Laurent rarely gets phone calls at work. When he does, it’s usually Damen asking him if he needs to go ahead and start on dinner or something silly like that. He wouldn’t be surprised if Damen had tried to call his cell phone, then called work when he wouldn’t pick up. Laurent is notorious for not checking his phone.

“Hello?” He says into the phone, crossing an arm over his chest.

“Good afternoon, is this Mister DeVere?” Comes a woman’s voice from the other side of the phone.

“It is, how can I help you?”

“This is Karen Bentacourt, your son’s counselor at the middle school.”

Oh, that was never good.

“I have Nicaise in my office currently after some… Events that transpired in the lunchroom not long ago. If you’re available, would you mind coming to the school to pick him up?”

Laurent pinches the bridge of his nose. “What happened?” He asks.

“It would be easier if you came to the school, Mister DeVere. But, if you can’t, I can call your husband.”

“No, no. It’s fine.” He says, pausing to inhale slowly. “I’ll be right there.”

He hangs up the phone then shakes his head, he walks over to one of the coat hangers behind the front desk and grabs his scarf, wrapping it around his neck, then his coat.

“Lorraine?” He pokes his head around a corner. “I have to pick up my son from school, I’ll be right back.”

The woman gives him a thumbs up then Laurent walks out from behind the desk and exits the library. He pulls his phone from his coat pocket. Two missed calls from Damen, one missed call from the school. He unlocks it, then dials Damen’s number as he climbs into his car.

“Shouldn’t you be working?” Damen teasingly says once he picks up.

“Do you know what’s going on with Nicaise?” He asks.

“What?”

“The school called me, I’m leaving work to go pick him up right now. I was wondering if they happened to call you.”

“No, they didn’t. What’s going on?”

“Not sure,” Laurent sighs as he stops at a red light. “His school counselor called me.”

“Oh god,” Damen breathes. “And she didn’t think to tell you what was going on?”

“Well I asked. She just said it would be easier if I came to the school.”

“I haven’t heard from them,” Damen says, scratching the back of his head. “Sorry, love.”

“No, it’s okay.” He answers. “I’m not upset, I just thought they might have called you too.”
“No, they haven’t…”

Laurent can hear Nikandros call Damen’s name through the phone and he clicks his tongue.

“I’ll let you go, I didn’t mean to interrupt you guys.”

“No, don’t worry.” Damen says. “You didn’t. Do I need to leave work so he has someone at home with him?”

Laurent is quiet for a second. “Let me figured out what’s going on, then I’ll let you know.”

“Alright, drive safe. Love you.”

“Love you too.” Laurent says, then hangs up.

He listens to the weather for the rest of the ride to the middle school. A blizzard is supposed to be coming their way by the end of the week, which means Laurent is going to need to pick up groceries before they’re all out. He pulls into a parking spot by the front then climbs out of his car. He locks it then walks into the middle school, making a stop by the front desk.

“Hi,” he says quietly as a woman looks up at him. “I’m Laurent DeVere, I’m here for my son Nicaise.”

“Yes sir, just one second,” she says, typing something out on her computer before handing him a visitor’s pass. “If you go down the main hall, then take a left, Misses Bentacourt’s office will be the third room on the right.”

“Thank you.” He offers her a polite smile then leaves the office, following her directions.

Being in a school again brings him a nostalgic feeling he isn’t sure he wants to experience. When they adopted Nicaise twelve years ago, he knew he would have to show up at his school when needed. But each time, it was such a strange experience.

Laurent pauses outside of the counselor’s door, glancing around to make sure he’s in the right place. He glances at the door and notices the silver plaque with the woman’s name, then an inspirational poster beneath it. Yes, he’s where he needs to be. He goes to open the door, but pauses as he hears his adoptive son’s voice through the door.

“You’re not listening to me!” He says angrily. “He called me something I didn’t want to be called and when I asked him to stop, he didn’t!”

“I know, Nicaise, but-”

“You don’t even care, do you?” He snaps.

“Of course I care, Nicaise, but you have to realize that violence wasn’t going to fix that situation.” She sighs. “You’re not in here because someone called you a name, you’re in here because of the way you reacted.”

“How was I supposed to react?!”

Laurent knocks on the door twice before pushing it open, adjusting his glasses as he does. Misses Bentacourt looks at him then stands, offering her hand to shake. Laurent takes it, shaking it firmly as she introduces herself.

“I’m sorry we have to meet on such… Tense circumstances.” She says as Laurent closes the door.
“Oh, no worries.” He says, taking a seat on the couch next to his son. “I’ve met people in worse circumstances, believe me.”

The woman smiles some as Nicaise angrily crosses his arms. She looks down at her clipboard in front of him as Laurent looks down at Nicaise. The thirteen year old looks back up at him and Laurent can see the fire behind his eyes.

“Nicaise, would you care to tell your father why you’re here?” She asks gently.

“I didn’t do anything wrong!” Nicaise answers vehemently.

The counselor sighs and closes her eyes for a moment. She takes a deep breath then looks over at Laurent, glancing down at her clipboard.

“Today, as Nicaise was leaving lunch, he punched another student.” Laurent glances down at Nicaise. “The child isn’t too badly hurt, but we just can’t let something like this slide.”

“Of course,” Laurent says.

“So, due to the circumstances, I’m afraid we’re going to have to suspend your son off of campus for two days.”

Laurent stares at the woman in front of him for a moment before he looks down at Nicaise again. His arms are crossed and he’s staring at his legs, refusing to make eye contact with anyone else in the room. Laurent has been Nicaise’s father for long enough, he can tell just from his body language that there’s more to the situation than that.

“That’s just fine,” Laurent says, adjusting his glasses then pushing some hair from his face. “But, forgive me if this is out of line, but my child isn’t violent by nature. He reacts when provoked, as does anyone else, but he wouldn’t do something like this without justification.”

“Nicaise claims-”

“It’s not a claim, it’s true!” Nicaise pipes up defensively.

“Nicaise.” Laurent says gently, putting a hand on top of his.

“Nicaise claims that the boy called him a slur.”

Laurent looks down at Nicaise, looks down at his red cheeks. He’s fighting mad, like a snake ready to strike. Laurent glances at the counselor then looks back down at his son.

“Nicaise, is this true?”

“Yes!” Nicaise says. “And I asked him to stop several times but he wouldn’t listen! And then his friends started saying it too and-”

“Is there any action being taken against the other young men?” Laurent asks.

“Right now we need to settle the matter at hand, Mister DeVere.”

“I understand that, but did you hear him?”

“Yes sir, I did but-”

“So you understand why he reacted the way that he did?”
“Yes sir, I do, but the problem is-”

“Misses Bentacourt, I would like for you to answer my question. Is there any action being taken against the young men that called my son a slur?”

“No, sir.”

Laurent looks down at Nicaise and sighs slowly. His blood is boiling but he keeps his cool, for Nicaise’s sake more than his own. He sighs slowly, pausing to pinch the bridge of his nose.

“I understand that the way Nicaise reacted is unacceptable.”

“Thank you.” The woman says.

“But,” Laurent continues. “He said he asked the boy to stop more than once and he didn’t. He asked the boy to stop more than once, then his friends joined in. I understand why he reacted the way he did. Are we on the same page?”

“Yes sir.”

“I don’t want you to persecute my son when those boys did something wrong as well. And if you’re not going to do anything about the way they treated him then, believe me, I will.”

The counselor stares at Laurent for a second, then looks down at her clipboard. She takes off a sheet of paper and hands it to Laurent.

“His suspension papers.” She says.

“Thank you.” Laurent answers.

He stands and Nicaise does the same, sending the woman a nasty look. Laurent opens the door for him and he sulks out, arms crossed over his chest. Laurent pauses to look back at the counselor, stare ice cold.

“If this isn’t settled by the time his suspension is over, Nicaise will not be returning to this school. Do I make myself clear?”

“Yes sir, I will do what I can to resolve the situation.”

“Thank you.”

He closes the door and start to walks towards the front of the school. He stops by the office a second time, returning his visitor’s pass and signing Nicaise out. They walk to the car in silence and once they’re both in and the doors are shut, Laurent hears Nicaise sniffle.

“I’m not mad, Nicaise.” He says.

“Okay.” He answers quietly.

“I’m not encouraging your behavior by any means,” he continues. “But you did the right thing. You know I would have done the exact same thing.”

Nicaise laughs, wiping his eyes with the sleeve of his sweater. Laurent pulls out of the school parking lot then reaches over to take his hand. Nicaise laces their fingers together then squeezes Laurent’s hand tightly.
“You’re a good kid, Nicaise.” Laurent says coolly. “And I’m not going to sit and let you be treated like that.”

“Thank you.” Nicaise says.

“I’m very proud of you.”

Nicaise laughs again then looks out the window. He breathes onto it then draws little stick figures on the fog. Laurent glances over to him and smiles to himself.

“How about we go get some lunch?”

“That sounds really nice.” Nicaise answers. “Can I pick where we go?”

“Of course, dear.”

Nicaise pauses to think about it then decides and Laurent takes him there. He glances at his phone as they walk into the restaurant. Another missed call from Damen while he was in the school. They were just going to have to talk about it when they all got home. He wants to spend time with his son with no distractions.

End Notes

i couldn't decide if i wanted modern!laurent to be a psychologist, an artist, or a librarian so for right now i settled on librarian,,,, i love modern captive prince au's they have all taken my heart
anyways, if you enjoyed this please leave me some feedback in the comments! i always love hearing from you guys :)

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