

Departure with a Belly Chapter 361

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Did he just pass out right after kissing me? There was still a lingering warmth on her slightly swollen lips, but Alaric, who had been kissing her passionately, lay unconscious on the couch. Victoria narrowed her eyes as she observed his handsome face. She couldn't believe that he would collapse right after she gave him a gentle push.

With that, Victoria extended her hand and gently patted his cheek. "Stop pretending and get up," she urged. However, there was no response from him which concerned her. She touched his forehead and realized that he was running a fever again. She couldn't help but wonder if the intensity of their previous kiss had worsened his condition...

Reflecting on how passionate he was earlier, Victoria couldn't help but imagine what might have followed if he hadn't suddenly fainted. She might have been completely consumed by him tonight, and as she lightly bit her lower lip, a sense of regret came upon her. How could she allow herself to surrender to such desires?

Suddenly, she thought about Summer asking her if she still had feelings for Alaric, and there was a dramatic change in Victoria's expression. Do I still like him as Summer has said? Victoria's face instantly turned grim at the thought of it.

"Mr. Night, Mr. Night!" The next day, Alaric woke up to the sound of a child's voice. As

he opened his eyes, he was greeted by a small figure in front of him. Nicole was pushing and shoving him with all her might.

Seeing him wake up, she smiled. "Mr. Night, you're finally awake."

Originally, Alaric woke up with a splitting headache and a bad mood, but after seeing the little girl's smile and hearing her soft voice, it had somewhat dissipated.

A faint smile appeared at the corners of his lips as he reached out and touched Nicole's head before saying softly, "Yeah, I'm awake." With that, he propped himself up with his hand and saw Nathan sitting across from him. He pinched his forehead, then looked outside while asking, "Where is your mommy?"

Hearing that, Nicole immediately replied, "Mommy went downstairs to buy breakfast."

"Downstairs?"

"Yeah, she went out a few minutes before you woke up, Mr. Night." Alaric glanced at the

time and noticed that it was still early.

Meanwhile, Nicole looked at him curiously with her head tilted while asking, "Mr. Night, why did you sleep over at our house last night? Are you going to marry Mommy?"

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Alaric and Nathan were speechless as neither of them expected Nicole to come up with such a surprising question.

After a moment, Alaric chuckled softly. "Marriage? I would like that. If possible, could you help me persuade your mommy?"

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Suddenly, Nathan, who had been sitting still, rushed over and covered Nicole's mouth before interrupting, "Mr. Night, Nicole and I have something to do, so we shall return to our room."

"Nathan..."

"Let's go." Although Nicole didn't know what was going on, she placed her trust in her brother whom she usually spent time with. He quickly took her away, and Alaric was left.

alone in the living room. As he watched them leave, he pursed his lips and let out a silent sigh. It seemed like Nathan was still cautious around him.

He could clearly sense Nathan's heightened guard against him since Victoria's injury.

Fortunately, her injury wasn't severe. When he visited her last night, he noticed that her forehead appeared better, which indicated there wouldn't be further complications. As

Alaric reflected on the events of last night, he couldn't help but recall certain ambiguous scenes.

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He wasn't in a clear state of mind throughout the night. Whether it was when the drug took effect or after it subsided, his memories of last night seemed hazy now. Only specific moments remained vivid in his mind, such as when Victoria initially locked him out, only to later open the door and let him in. He also remembered how he refused to

accept the blanket when she offered him the one from her bed.

Not only that, the scene where he trembled as he kissed her forehead, as well as the scene where they became entangled in a passionate embrace and shared an intense kiss. These images continuously appeared and spun in Alaric's mind, gradually igniting warmth in his heart. As he was lost in his thoughts, he slowly lifted his hand and touched his lips.

Following that, his lips curled upward. Last night, he could feel that she was reciprocating his kisses. In other words, she doesn't dislike me that much, right? Just thinking about it made him feel much better. The previous headache and discomfort in his chest had vanished, and Alaric felt much better.

Victoria... Snowball...

Alaric had made up his mind earlier that as long as she showed even the slightest hint of affection, he would never let go. Now, it had happened; he could truly sense it from her. Despite feeling physically weak after the effects of the medicine wore off and experiencing some discomfort from the cold water, Alaric coughed a few times as he

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sat up. However, when he reminisced about what happened last night, his heart fluttered while all the physical discomfort melted away.

It was at this moment that Alaric truly realized that his feelings for Victoria were

genuine, romantic feelings. He should have realized it sooner, but he hadn't been able to differentiate it in the past.

They had grown up together since childhood, and he had grown accustomed to sharing Victoria's joys and sorrows as if they were his own. When she was happy, he would laugh with her; when she was sad, he would console her. He would buy the things she liked as if they were his own preferences and give them to her.

Outsiders would often comment on their close relationship, speculating, "The young master of the Cadogan Family and the little girl from the Selwyn Family seem incredibly close. Could it be that he treats her like a sister?"

"I heard that Mrs. Cadogan wanted to have another daughter back then, but her poor health didn't permit that, and she couldn't conceive later on. The Cadogans and Selwyns have a good relationship, and the girl's mother passed away when she was young, which is why they treat the little girl from the Selwyn Family as their own daughter."

At that time, Alaric also overheard such comments. When he first heard the word

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'sister', he felt somewhat uncomfortable. Who would treat her as a sister? However, he then considered that since she was younger than him, shouldn't he treat her as a

sister?

The young Alaric grew increasingly confused over time, especially after the incident with Claudia. If only he had realized it sooner, perhaps none of these circumstances would have happened, and he and Victoria wouldn't have been separated for years.

As Alaric was lost in his thoughts, he heard a noise from outside and immediately got up before heading toward the entrance. Just as he walked over, he saw Victoria walking in with two bags, and she seemed surprised when she saw him. "Are you awake already?" she asked.

"Yes," Alaric replied and moved closer to take the bags from her hands. However, Victoria instinctively took a step back and opened the door.

"Now that you're fine, you can go back. I won't ask you to have breakfast with us," she said while standing by the door, seemingly eager for him to leave. Hearing that, Alaric paused for a moment, then walked past her. She thought he was going to oblige and leave, but to her surprise, he walked over and directly closed the door with his outstretched hand.

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Victoria frowned as she watched Alaric's actions. "What are you doing?"

He remained silent and took two steps forward, getting closer to her. Instinctively, she stepped back.

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Instead of stopping, he continued to advance until her back was against the cabinet at the entrance. To maintain distance, she could only slightly lean back.

Alaric rested his big hands on her waist naturally and stared at her with his deep eyes.

“Since you won’t continue welcoming me here, I can only overstay my visit.”

At once, she was speechless. He is truly shameless.

While she was in thought, the hands on her waist began to move up an inch. She instantly became guarded, widening her beautiful eyes. “What are you trying to do?”

Contrary to her reaction, he lowered his head and chuckled softly in the crook of her neck, exhaling hot breaths that tickled her. “Snowball,” he called her by her nickname with his deep voice. “I discovered some things I didn’t know before, so I won’t leave.”

Not only will I not leave, but I will be more insistent in pursuing you.

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After that, Alaric let go of her waist. “Let’s go and have breakfast.”

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Left alone standing in place, Victoria couldn’t quite understand the meaning behind his words just now. What did he mean by discovering some things he didn’t know before?

What exactly did he discover?

With pursed lips, she wanted to catch up with him while holding the bags. However, just as she took a few steps, Alaric suddenly turned back and took the items from her hand. “I’ll do it.”

Before she could refuse, he forcefully took the bags from her. Then, he took out the breakfast from the bag and placed it on the table while she watched without expression. Victoria only realized something after Alaric finished arranging the

breakfast, but it was already too late.

After everything was placed on the table, he raised an eyebrow as he looked at the four breakfast meals. "Isn't this my portion? Weren't you asking me to leave moments ago?"

His voice was slightly hoarse, which was probably a result of last night's fever.

With her arms crossed in front of her chest, she looked at him calmly and said, "Am I not allowed to have extras?"

At her words, he chuckled softly. "Nothing's wrong with that, but you'll have to give me
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one portion today. I'll make it up to you with extras tomorrow, okay?"

Just as she was about to say something, she caught sight of Nathan and Nicole approaching. As such, she had no choice but to lower her voice and say, "No need to make it up. Just finish your meal and leave."

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While Alaric was still wondering why her attitude had changed so dramatically, Nicole's voice sounded. Oh, so it's because of the children again. Never mind, as long as I know

what her feelings are. Everything else isn't important.

After finishing breakfast, Victoria thought Alaric would linger around and not leave.

Unexpectedly, he said, "I have something to do later, so I won't be giving you a lift."

At his words, she looked up at him. "Okay, you can keep yourself busy at this rate from now on."

When she said that, his phone rang, so he answered, "Are you downstairs? Got it."

"Are you leaving, Mr. Night? Are you not going to accompany Nathan and me to school today?"

"Yeah." Alaric nodded. "I have something important to take care of today." Suddenly, he

paused before continuing, "After I finish dealing with it, I'll come and accompany you

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two every single day."

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At his words, Victoria couldn't help but glance at him, her delicate eyebrows gently furrowing. She couldn't tell if it was her imagination, but she seemed to sense a hint of determination in his words. What important matter does he have to attend to?

Soon, she connected this matter to what happened last night when he was drugged. Is he going to settle the score with Claudia? Well, whether he's willing or not is one thing, but can he actually lay hands on the person who saved his life? Back then, when Claudia helped me, I owed her for five years and agreed to many of her conditions.

Now, we're talking about Alaric's life that she saved. How can he repay her in a way that will settle the debt? Unfortunately, favors like this can never be settled with money alone.

While Victoria was lost in thought, a figure suddenly walked up to her and bent down. before she could react, leaving a kiss on her fair forehead.

Nicole quickly covered her eyes with her hands, pretending to be shy. Nathan, on the other hand, stood still in place. I didn't expect that things would progress so quickly between Mommy and Mr. Night just after one night.

Not only Nathan, but even Victoria herself was stunned; she had no idea what had gotten into Alaric. He fell asleep after kissing me last night, but now that he has woken

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up, he actually kissed me in front of the two children! Is he insane, or am I insane?

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After Alaric kissed her forehead, he was about to step back but hesitated, not wanting to part. He then pecked her forehead again and whispered, "Wait for me to come back." With those words, he let go of her hand before she could push him away. Then, he pretended to be calm and walked away quickly.

Bang! When the door was closed, Victoria looked at the two children in front of her, still unable to react.

Instead, it was Nicole who widened her eyes and asked joyfully, "Mommy, are you going to marry Mr. Night? Will he be our daddy?"

"It's not like that, Nicole. Let me explain," Victoria replied.

"Mr. Night slept at our house last night, though. If you don't want him to be our daddy, why did you let him sleep over?"

Victoria showed a helpless expression and struggled to explain, saying, "That's because"

"Yay, I'm going to have a Daddy!" Nicole jumped off her chair and stood on the ground, stretching her arms and cheering. "No one in school can say that I'm a child with an absent father anymore!"

This statement stopped the words in Victoria's mouth. Her expression changed, and she walked up to Nicole. "Nicole, what did you just say? Who said those things?" Children usually don't know phrases like that.

At the sight of her serious expression, Nicole was startled but quickly reported, "It was,

the teacher from the junior class. During our break one time, she whispered to the teacher from the senior class, and Nathan and I overheard it.”

“Huh?” Victoria’s expression turned serious. “When was that?”

Nicole scratched her chin. “Um, I don’t remember.”

Victoria had to turn to Nathan and ask, “Nathan?”

“It was last week,” Nathan replied obediently.

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When Victoria heard that it was something that happened last week, she felt bad for them. “Why didn’t you tell me earlier about something like this?”

“Don’t be angry, Mommy,” Nicole said in her adorable voice as she rushed over and hugged Victoria’s arm. “It’s already difficult for you to take care of Nathan and me alone.

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Nathan said that if we tell you what the teacher said, you will be very sad, so we made a pinky promise to keep it a secret.”

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If it had been a case of forgetting to mention it, then it would have been fine. However, the children refrained from telling Victoria out of fear of hurting her feelings, which made her feel even worse for them.

I raised my children with all my heart, but they were subjected to such hurtful words from others. Yet, these two little ones were considerate enough to think on my behalf.

At this thought, ripples of emotion and tears welled up in her eyes.

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Nicole, on the other hand, looked at her with adoration and said, "Mommy, we don't have to worry anymore. Nathan and I are going to have a daddy soon. If the junior class teacher says anything bad about us again, I will ask Daddy to scare away the bad guys."

Children at this young age always had innocent thoughts.

In truth, Victoria knew that these two little ones were keeping this matter from her because they didn't want to trouble her and were considering her well-being. They are already acting like this when they are so young, let alone when they get bigger. During their long process of growing up, if they encounter such a situation again, will they have to consider me every time and bear this injustice?

She had experienced such injustices in her childhood, but back then, the target of everyone's attacks was her mother. Although she had Alaric protecting her at the time,

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she still minded the rumors and gossip when it was quiet at night. Am I... going to let my

children endure the same thing I went through?

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These thoughts made her swallow back all the words she had intended to say. Let's wait and see how Alaric handles the situation. If he handles it well, maybe it wouldn't be impossible for the children to call him Daddy. At least he is their biological father, and based on what I've seen so far, he has shown great care and affection for them, and that includes the contract and everything else. It's evident that he values them and likes

them a lot. Otherwise, he wouldn't have frequently given them gifts during their live streams before knowing that they were related to him. He genuinely likes these two children from the bottom of his heart. I'll wait and see how he behaves.

On the other hand, the driver was waiting downstairs, while Terrance stood outside the door.

Last night, he rushed to the villa in a hurry after receiving a call from Alaric. However, when he arrived, the place was already empty. It wasn't until this morning that he learned what had happened.

After learning about the situation, he was shocked beyond belief. He never expected that Claudia, who appeared so innocent on the surface, would do such a thing. He

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could hardly believe the things he knew, so when he received Alaric's call, his expression immediately turned serious.

"Mr. Cadogan." As Terrance spoke, he opened the car door for Alaric.

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Alaric got into the car expressionlessly. "Did you manage to contact her?" His voice was cold, devoid of the gentleness he displayed in front of Victoria and the children, and his eyes were filled with nothing but frigidness.

When Terrance saw that, he couldn't help but shiver. Having followed Alaric for so long, it was the first time he saw such an expression and gaze on Alaric's face. What was even more terrifying was that his calm demeanor at this moment felt like the calm before a storm.

After he swallowed a mouthful of saliva, he honestly said, "We did manage to contact

her, but... we reached Miss Johnson's family instead. They said her condition wasn't good last night, and she still hasn't woken up."

"She hasn't woken up, you say?"

"That's right. Apparently, she was alone on the road last night and encountered..."
Terrance hesitated, but after some consideration, he decided to explain the whole situation.

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It turned out that Claudia also took the drug last night. Upon chasing after Alaric

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yesterday, the drug took effect while she was alone on the road. Then, she encountered

a young man nearby. The young man saw her stumble while walking and thought she was

drunk, so he kindly approached her to send her home. However, as soon as he tried to support her, Claudia clung to him. Afterward, they booked a room, and by the time she woke up, it was too late for regrets.

She called her parents, wanting to suppress the incident. Surprisingly, the young man who initially didn't want to sleep with her turned out to be a prominent figure in Jasea.

He had recently returned from abroad and wanted to take responsibility for Claudia.

Her parents weren't in Jasea, so they had her cousin come and check on the situation, but the news had already spread like wildfire, and the Johnson Family couldn't contain

it anymore. In just one morning, everyone knew about Claudia and this man. The socialites' circle was already buzzing with gossip, mocking her in various ways.

"Isn't Claudia in a relationship with Mr. Cadogan? There was even news that she forced

the engagement, How could she get involved with another man so quickly? Perhaps she was abandoned by Mr. Cadogan and, in anger, took the wrong path.”

“Now that such news is out, it’s even more impossible for her to continue her relationship with Mr. Cadogan, right?”

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Terrance relayed all this information to Alaric, then cautiously said, “It’s fortunate you left early last night, Mr. Cadogan. Otherwise, you might have fallen into her trap. If

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anything happened between you and her, it would be impossible for you to pursue Miss Selwyn anymore with your stained body.”

When Alaric heard those words, he instinctively glanced at Terrance.

Yet, Terrance fearlessly continued, “Did I say something wrong? You’ve been a model of

integrity all these years. Wasn’t it all for Miss Selwyn?” What’s the problem with me saying that? Mr. Cadogan has always upheld his moral virtues.

Alaric pursed his lips slightly, and after a moment, he nodded instead of refuting.

“You’re right. Luckily, I didn’t fall into the trap. Otherwise, I can never expect her to return

to me in my lifetime.”

“Well, Mr. Cadogan, allow me to gossip a little. When you visited Miss Selwyn last night, did anything happen between you two?”

“No.” Alaric instinctively denied it. “Don’t make baseless speculations and tarnish her reputation.”

Hearing that, Terrance pursed his lips. I was only asking. How would that tarnish Miss

Selwyn's reputation? He couldn't help but mutter, "There are only a few of us in this car.

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As long as nobody goes out and talks, how could it possibly tarnish her reputation?

You're too biased toward Miss Selwyn, Mr. Cadogan."

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Alaric chuckled coldly. "If I'm not biased toward her, are you expecting me to be biased toward you?"

"It's okay. How could I dare ask you to be biased toward me? However..." Terrance's tone shifted. "How did you endure it, though? You were drugged last night, yet nothing happened between you and Miss Selwyn. Are you..." At this point, he swallowed nervously, afraid that he might be silenced for saying it.

At this moment, Alaric shot him a deadly glance. "Finish your sentence."

Terrance chuckled. "Well, if you insist. You were with the woman you were interested in when you were drugged, yet nothing happened between you two. If that were to be known, people might start suspecting if you're actually capable or not."

"Are you itching for trouble?" Alaric responded.

"I'm just joking." Terrance realized that no matter how outrageous his words were, Alaric's tolerance was incredibly high when it came to Victoria.

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Thus, there was a lot that Terrance did not dare speak of. However, as long as Victoria was involved, he would seize the chance to shoot his mouth.

For example, when he wondered if there was something wrong with Alaric's virility, he

had not meant anything by it and only mentioned it to scratch an itch in him.

If he had said that at any other time, he would be punished through a reduced annual bonus and so on. Now....

At that thought, he lost all mood to joke around as a solemn look was painted across his face.

“What do you plan to do about Miss Johnson, Mr. Cadogan?” he asked.

He pushed his spectacles higher on his nose. “Based on the current situation, Miss Johnson should not bother you any longer even if Mr. Cadogan does nothing. The rumors are spreading like wildfire. The man she had sex with even released a statement saying he would take responsibility. Well, he must have been eyeing the Johnsons’ resources and network, hoping to use this chance to reach for the stars.”

While the man’s family was quite powerful, they were still very much weaker than the

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Johnsons in this day and age.

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After all, the Johnsons had successfully tied themselves to the Cadogans during the past few years. They were now of a different social standing. In fact, one might say they soared to the top.

The chance to get a foot into the Johnson Family’s door was equivalent to getting a foot into the Cadogan Family’s door. The man was not a fool. There was no way he would give up on a fantastic opportunity.

Claudia had started a huge mess this time.

She would not be able to get away unscathed.

With all that was happening, was it even possible for her to have the time to bother Alaric? It would be near impossible for her to shake off her followers. Furthermore, everyone knew what had happened. Would she not be ashamed to continue stalking Alaric like she did before?

Even if she did do that, Terrance knew that Alaric would not do anything to Claudia because she was Alaric's savior.

To his surprise, Alaric coldly responded, "Tell my parents to get back by today."

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Terrance stared at him in shock before nodding. "O-Okay."

Alaric was calling for his parents. It was evident that the situation was truly dire. Thus, he did not dare to fool around any longer and swiftly did as he was ordered.

When the Johnsons arrived at the hotel, Claudia was hiding in her room.

The man with whom she had sex the night before was currently speaking with her parents outside her room.

The man had smiled when he spotted them rushing into view. "Mr. and Mrs. Johnson," he greeted.

The man's parents were present as well, standing next to him with fawning smiles on their faces.

Scarlette scanned the man up and down before scoffing. "You are Christopher Drevel, then?"

Christopher nodded.

Slap! To everyone's shock, Scarlette immediately slapped him across the face.

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Her reaction startled Christopher's parents so much that they dashed over.

"H-How can you hit him?" they cried out.

She looked down her nose at them and haughtily smirked. "What are you going to do?

I'm also planning on hiring a lawyer to sue you for hurting my daughter."

It was clear that she did not want a marriage with the Drevels to happen.

Unfortunately for her, Kristen Fry, Christopher's mother, was not a pushover. She had assumed everyone could get along, but now that Scarlett would deny them any respect...

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At that thought, Kristen stepped forward with a fake smile. "Mrs. Johnson, you're misrepresenting the facts. Your daughter and my son are both adults. He was only minding his own business when he spotted her acting weird on the side of the road. He assumed she was drunk and was going to send her to the hospital. Your daughter refused his help. She kept throwing herself at him."

Kristen glanced at the door behind her.

"If we must name someone as the victim, we think it is Christopher. Miss Johnson cannot deny all responsibility for taking advantage of someone just because she's a

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woman. Of course, I'm a very progressive parent. The kids will have their own opinions.

I have no objections if the two fall in love with each other."

There was a stormy look on Scarlett's face.

Ever since the Johnsons allied themselves with the Cadogans, their social standing

had soared through the roof. No one had dared to disrespect her all these years. She never had to bow her head to anyone else but Mrs. Cadogan and everyone would let her have her way.

She had not expected to be rebuked by a woman from a company that was not doing all too well. This woman was even foolish enough to desire Claudia as her daughter-in-law.

Scarlette glared at Kristen with intense scorn. "Who do you think you are to speak to me?" she scoffed.

Kristen casually tucked a hair behind her ear while maintaining a smile on her lips.

"Mrs. Johnson, before your family allied yourselves with the Cadogans, your husband would solemnly greet my husband in a rather demure manner. You might have risen in power, but your power is borrowed. Don't think so highly of yourself. Now, everyone knows what happened between the two children. We should sit down and properly

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discuss this. The Drevels used to be your equals, so it would be perfect if our families are tied together through marriage."

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"Bah!" Scarlette could not resist spitting out her opinion. "Perfect? Only for you! Scram!"

Kristen was about to speak, but Christopher stopped her. "Mrs. Johnson, why don't you talk to Claudia first?"

Scarlette glanced at him, gritting her teeth in anger. Where did this man come from?

How dared he...

She was seething with anger upon recalling what happened.

Before, Christopher might be an okay match. He was quite handsome, after all. However, through the years since Claudia saved Alaric, Scarlett had thought of him as her future son-in-law. Her disappointment was immense upon realizing the outstanding man she had been eyeing had suddenly been swapped with another man. These two men were as different as night and day. How was she supposed to accept that?

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She shot him another scornful glare before entering Claudia's room.

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Claudia had been sobbing her heart out. When Scarlett stepped into the room, Claudia flung herself into her arms. "Mom..."

Before she could finish her sentence, she was slapped across the face.

"Mom?" Scarlett huffed.

"You useless fool! Everything was ready for you, but you can't even complete one simple task. Not only that, but you've also let yourself be taken advantage of. Everyone knows about this now. You have shamed the entire family!"

Claudia froze. She had been so traumatized from what happened that she was caught off-guard by the slap. Tears welled in her eyes.

"Do you think you can marry Alaric now? Look at what you've done! You will be stuck watching him spending the rest of his life loving another woman while you are tormented by a useless man!"

Scarlett was beside herself with anger. Every word she screeched was exceptionally

hurtful.

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Success or failure, Claudia was the one at fault.

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When Claudia heard that she could not marry Alaric and that she would be stuck watching him love another woman, she burst out into ugly sobs. She cried and told Scarlett everything that had happened.

The ugly look on Scarlett's face only grew uglier and stormier when she heard what happened.

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"I thought you had simply failed. I did not expect you to have him in your grasp and still let him escape. What did you even do? It has been so long, so why can't you capture the

heart of one man?" Scarlett demanded.

"Mom... I didn't want that to happen either. I don't know how he found out about it. He suddenly took off. He must have gone looking for Victoria. What do we do now? I don't want to spend the rest of my life with Christopher Drevel. I only love Alaric!"

Upon hearing Claudia's response, Scarlett shot her a frustrated glare.

"Don't worry. I won't let you spend your life with him," Scarlett said.

For the sake of the Johnsons, Claudia had to marry Alaric.

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Pursing her lips, Scarlett came to a decision.

"Well, no risk, no reward. There is only one way to resolve this situation."

“W–What do I need to do, Mom?”

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Scarlette’s haughty attitude faded away after her talk with Claudia. She was now much more polite to the Drevels.

“Mrs. Drevel, my daughter is not feeling well. Now is not a good time to discuss this. We’ll bring her home and get to the bottom of this,” she stated.

Kristen knew that Scarlette would not agree to marriage right away. Still, she found Scarlette’s changed attitude satisfactory. She nodded and replied, “Very well.

Christopher is also feeling unwell. After all, it was his first time encountering something like this. We’ll have to get his side of the story as well. Shall we meet tomorrow?”

Scarlette glanced at Christopher. The man did not look unwell at all. In fact, he seemed to be glowing with pride as though he was about to marry the woman of his dreams.

His appearance left her seething. She nearly caved into the urge to slap him once more.

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However, as her goal had yet to be achieved, her only choice was to suppress her anger

and agree to let the Drevels leave.

Once they were gone, Mr. Johnson, too, came to discuss the solution to this conundrum.

As for the Drevels, Kristen was smirking as she walked into the elevator.

“The Johnsons would never just hand their daughter over to Christopher. Rumors are not enough. We must spread the word and exaggerate the story. Since they’ve handed themselves to us on a silver platter, they should not be allowed to leave.”

Christopher nodded. "I'll do as you say, Mom."

"Good boy," Kristen said, happily ruffling his hair.

When the Drevels stepped out of the hotel, they were suddenly surrounded by a group of men in black suits.

Their unfriendly aura had the Drevels assuming the Johnsons had sent their men.

"You are the Drevels? Follow us," one of the men said.

Mr. Drevel stepped forward to defend his family. "Who are you? If the Johnsons sent

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you, then I warn you to be careful about what you do next. We have proof of what happened last night."

The leader who spoke glanced at them and asked in an astonished voice. "Who told you the Johnsons sent us?"

"Then, you are...?"

"Ha! You don't deserve to know that yet. Get in the car."

The Drevels exchanged glances. While they were worried the men were sent by the Johnsons to hurt them, the scorn in the man's eyes and voice upon hearing the Johnson Family seemed to be a clear indicator that the Johnsons were nobody to these men and that the men did not want to be associated in any way to that family.

All these years, the only ones who could look down on the Johnsons were...

The Drevels glanced at each other once more before getting into the car.

4/8

Victoria was distracted the entire day. Not long after she arrived at the office, Henry told her to prepare for a meeting later that day. He even said to her, "I think you should hire

an assistant soon. Otherwise, I'll have to take on the job."

"Every cent saved is worth it since the company has yet to take off," she promptly shot back.

He let out a tsk and teasingly said, "Saved through me? You're a cruel boss, Miss Selwyn."

She smiled. "Yes. I won't forget all that you have done for me, Mr. Poole."

"Fine. I'll take that for now and look forward to the day when the company does take off."

5/8

Despite the jokes she exchanged with him and the astute points she brought up during the meeting, she still spaced out. No one noticed it at first, but eventually, everyone noticed it when she continued to space out.

Once the meeting was over, Henry approached her.

"What happened? You kept spacing out during the meeting."

She shook her head. "It's nothing."

"Do you need to take a break, Miss Selwyn?"

A break?

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She chuckled. "I have taken too many breaks since you started working. If I take another break, this company might not actually take off."

"You're the boss. What does it matter?"

6/8

"That's even worse. A boss should never ignore their duties. If everyone thinks that, the

company will soon collapse.”

He chuckled. “That’s true. Still, you have to get everything in your life sorted so that you can properly focus on your work, right?”

She did not respond to that. Soon, he wandered off to deal with his own work.

Alone in her office, she sat there and pondered. She wanted to deal with the issue, but what happened today had nothing to do with her.

She was merely someone who would be watching what Alaric would do next. As for the solution and the efficiency of that solution, it was all Alaric’s job.

The results of his actions had yet to show themselves, so why was she worrying?

If she continued to worry, she would have utterly lost in their game.

With that in mind, she stopped thinking about the matter and threw herself into her

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work.

That evening.

7/8

Everyone thought the Johnsons would rise to the top once more, but they failed in their attempt. However, when everyone wanted to laugh at the Johnsons, they released some horrible news.

Claudia had committed suicide.

Her parents found her in her bathtub. Thankfully, she was discovered early enough that she survived her attempt. She was hospitalized since she had yet to calm down. Her family was keeping a close eye on her to ensure nothing bad happened to her again.

Later on, the Johnsons made a public announcement about the incident. Staring into

the camera, Scarlett said with red eyes, "Last night, my daughter was drunk and was helped by Christopher Drevel. We are grateful to him for what he has done. I am not sure why everyone is saying they had sex. Nothing happened. Everyone knows just how

important a young woman's reputation is. Moreover, everyone knows about the relationship between Alaric and Claudia. Still, everyone is spreading wild rumors about this matter. Claudia is just a young girl. She was unable to accept what was happening and thought that the rumors would cause so much trouble for Alaric that she wanted to

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clear the air with her death. Thankfully, we discovered her early in her attempt.

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Otherwise... I might have lost a daughter today. I would very much like to ask; just who is this vile person who is spreading all these lies?"

8/8

Her response shocked everyone.

There was a moment of confusion when people wondered if Claudia having sex with Christopher was just a rumor.

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As soon as they heard the news, a few young women from high society began enthusiastically discussing the incident involving Claudia in the group chat.

1/7

'A failed suicide attempt? Timely rescue? Who knows if she actually tried to kill herself,

someone said.

'I think it's a ploy for pity and to clear her name. She just doesn't want to admit it happened. How else can she marry into the Cadogans?'

'Enough. It has been years since Mr. Cadogan was divorced. Claudia would be married to him by now if it were possible. If I were her, I would give up on him and stay on as his savior. Then, I'll find a man who loves and worships me. Isn't that so much better?'

'Yes, but it's Alaric Cadogan. If you have the chance to spend one night with a man like him, every other man will seem like a downgrade.'

After that message, there was radio silence in the group, as if everyone agreed with the sentiment expressed until someone responded.

'There's no use in persisting, though. I hear from a little bird that Victoria Selwyn is back in the country.'

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That statement caused widespread gasps of surprise.

'Victoria Selwyn? Alaric Cadogan's ex-wife? She's back?'

'That's right. I heard she started her own business, and the Cadogan Group even invested in it. My cousin's university classmate worked there. That's where I heard it from.'

'Investing in the company as soon as she started it? It looks like their relationship isn't over yet.'

'Please. Alaric clearly loves Victoria. Why else would he marry her? After all, they'd grown up together, and all Claudia did was take advantage of being his savior. He

hadn't dated her since Victoria left him five years ago. Now that Victoria is back, that possibility is even more impossible.'

With the return of Victoria as the main topic of conversation, the initial two-person conversation expanded to include another participant.

Meanwhile, at the hospital ward, Claudia glanced at the gauze wrapped around her slender wrists before turning her attention to Scarlett. "Well, Mom? Did Alaric answer the phone?"

2/7

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On the other hand, after making over a dozen calls that went unanswered, Scarlett's

3.7

expression became increasingly gloomy. A public announcement concerning the incident has been released. Even if Alaric is upset about the scheme from the night before, my daughter is still his savior. Does he not care about her? "Ungrateful brat!" she

angrily spat out. "If we had known he would act like this... You should not have saved him."

When Claudia heard that, a pang of guilt began to form in her heart.

Nonetheless, Mr. Johnson, standing next to his wife, immediately jumped to Alaric's defense. "In fact, the Cadogans treated us quite kindly. We would not be where we are today if it weren't for them." As the family's breadwinner, he had the best grasp of that logic. Previously, he had to be the one to do the fawning and flattering, but now it was the other way around. Hence, he could sense the difference in treatment he received based on his social standing in the past and present. "Also, if Mr. Cadogan truly intended to wed Claudia, he would have done so long ago and would not have waited

until now. Why don't we know our place and stop bothering him?

As soon as he said that, Scarlett rolled her eyes and responded scornfully, "What sort of nonsense is that? Are you helping an outsider? Claudia saved Alaric's life. Of course, he would marry her."

When her husband heard that, he slumped over, upset. Then, he rebuked, "That's not

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right. If everyone had this mentality, no one would be willing to rescue others. If survival meant adding another burden to Alaric's shoulders, I'd rather he died at that time."

Suddenly, Scarlett's anger was sparked by his words, and she yelled and screamed at Mr. Johnson. Soon, her fervent admonishment silenced him, and he slinked out of the ward.

After the door closed behind him, Claudia lowered her eyes and asked miserably,

"Should I do as Dad says? Should I stop bothering Alaric?"

"Don't listen to your father. He doesn't understand what men are like. Claudia, capturing

Alaric's heart is already a hard task for you. You are the only person who has ever saved

his life, and no one else has. Thus, you will always be the most special person in his

heart. When he arrives, you must threaten him with your life and tell him he must marry you or you will commit suicide."

"Would he... Care?"

"He must unless he wishes to be known as ungrateful," Scarlett said with a sneer.

Claudia bit her lip in response.

“Mother knows best. You only have one chance to force him to marry you. Even if he

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spends the rest of his life angry at you, it would be easy enough for you to win him back once you’re married. Men are all like that. Once you control his body, he will not remember how you forced him into it.”

Claudia was so swayed by her mother’s words that she fantasized about a happy future with Alaric.

Unfortunately, Scarlett was still unable to contact Alaric.

Following that, the mother and daughter patiently waited until their hopes winked out.

In the late hours of the night, Mr. Johnson, who had been waiting outside the door, burst unexpectedly into the room to announce the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Cadogan.

Scarlett narrowed her eyes when she heard that and asked, “Alaric’s parents? Aren’t they supposed to be abroad?”

“Yes. They flew back today. When they heard what happened to Claudia, they rushed over as soon as they landed,” Mr. Johnson explained.

When she heard the Cadogans couple had rushed over, hope sparked to life once more in her heart. “Let them in. Hurry.”

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After that, Mr. and Mrs. Cadogan were led into the room.

As soon as Claudia saw Mrs. Cadogan, she immediately flung herself into Mrs.

Cadogan’s arms with a sob. “Mrs. Cadogan!”

However, Mrs. Cadogan's body went stiff upon contact. Her arms hovered in midair for a few moments before lowering so that she could run her hands through Claudia's hair.

"Life has been hard on you, child." She didn't dare to say anything else, and even though

she knew Claudia had saved Alaric, she didn't particularly like her. Moreover, she did not

despise Claudia but didn't understand why she experienced an innate rejection of her closeness whenever Claudia acted affectionately toward her. In contrast, she did not feel the same way about Victoria and loved being affectionate with her. Still... Mrs.

Cadogan sighed to herself whenever she thought about Victoria. After all, Alaric and Victoria were the perfect couple, and yet they ended up getting divorced.

After that, Scarlett gave Mrs. Cadogan a quick rundown of what had transpired. Then, Claudia chimed in, "Nothing is going on between me and Christopher! Although I appreciate his assistance, I don't understand why he wants to frame me like this. My heart and body belong to Alaric. He is the only one I will marry."

"Don't panic, child," Mrs. Cadogan said. While smoothing out Claudia's locks, she added,

"Al had told us to rush back because of what happened to you. Don't worry. Our family owes you a debt. We will not let you suffer."

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On the other hand, the Cadogans couple did not know why Alaric called them back.

However, as soon as they landed, they learned of Claudia's suicide and the events that transpired on their way to the hospital. Hence, they assumed their son called them

back to help Claudia.

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When Claudia found out Alaric had called his parents back from abroad, she immediately felt anxious. So, he knows about the news? Though it is not improbable, he is still unwilling to meet with me and has refused to answer my phone call. Nonetheless, he told his parents to return home, so it does not appear that he called them back about my suicide attempt. Could he have called his parents back to talk about what happened the night before? Soon, panic rose in her as she considered that possibility. All she could do was cling to Mrs. Cadogan and sob about her ordeal so that Mrs. Cadogan would believe her.

Following that, Mrs. Cadogan spent a few long minutes comforting her before leaving the hospital.

Meanwhile, the Cadogans couple exited the hospital and got into their car.

With a frown, Adrian waited for his wife to enter the car before he asked, "How did this happen?"

The worried look on her face instantly melted away, leaving behind a stern expression. "Something's wrong with this. No matter how much our son dislikes Claudia, he should be paying her a visit after such a serious incident. However, there was no trace of his presence in that ward."

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When he heard that, he narrowed his eyes and said, "You're implying that there's

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another side to the story. Do you think he didn't call us back because of what happened to her?"

After hearing that, Mrs. Cadogan's face had taken on a deep, thoughtful expression. Then, she suggested, "Let's first inquire with our son as to why he called us back."

Later that evening, Alaric stood in the living room with his hand in his pocket as Mr. and Mrs. Cadogan sat beside each other and looked at their son. His face was extremely expressionless, and his lips were so tightly pursed that they had turned white.

Soon, tension filled the room as he said, "I will be cutting off all ties with Claudia tomorrow." After he finished his sentence, the mood in the room immediately shifted.

However, his parents' expressions remained unchanged, as if they had anticipated this outcome. After the couple exchanged glances with each other, Adrian asked, "Have you

thought of the names people will call you once you cut off all ties with her?"

A disdainful grin formed on Alaric's face upon hearing that.

Mrs. Cadogan knew her son well, so that smile told her he was fully prepared for the outcome. Her son had always been an opinionated young boy who could never be swayed once his mind was made up. Then, she sighed and stated, "Since you told us to

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rush back, you must have a plan in mind. So, if we try to dissuade you from this, it will only ruin our relationship. In that case, we will keep quiet. Still, you have to tell us what happened."

After that, Alaric briefly summarized what happened that night. His words were blunt and direct, as he did not hold back because they were his parents, nor did he attempt to protect Claudia's reputation.

When they heard the end of the tale, the couple exchanged glances and noticed the disbelief in each other's eyes.

A few minutes later, Mrs. Cadogan's heart wrenched in agony when she recalled how Claudia had sobbed pitifully in her arms. Then, she commented, "I can't believe she would do such a thing." Indeed, I shouldn't have judged a book by its cover. Claudia appears so innocent and pure, yet she would use such shady means to steal a man, and now that her scheme has failed, she has committed suicide to spread rumors. If not for the life debt that bound our families together all those years ago, I would have no mercy for them. Still, we are indebted to the Johnsons. Despite saving my son and putting on a polite facade, my true feelings remain strongly negative toward her.

Whenever I experience such feelings toward Claudia, I always attribute them to my paranoia. Nonetheless, after hearing all of this, I am convinced that my intuition was right all along.

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Then, Adrian said calmly, "You shouldn't feel like you owe her anything. Ever since she saved your life, we have been secretly helping the Johnsons over the years. Without us, they would not be able to get to where they are now. Otherwise, they would have gone bankrupt."

"Yes. Mr. Johnson nearly bankrupted the company with the last project. They survived because of your father's frantic efforts. They have also been using our family's name to gain a lot of things. While none of this compares to the value of your life, we have already fulfilled our obligation to them. Hence, we can cut off all ties as long as we give them a few more benefits and properly talk this out," Mrs. Cadogan said in agreement.

No matter what happened, Alaric's opinion was always their highest priority.

Meanwhile, concern flashed across his mother's face as she recalled something

important. "If this had not happened, Claudia would have been a good match for you. She did save your life. However, that is impossible now. Once this has been resolved, you should focus on yourself. As for those from the past... Leave them in the past." She had been reluctant to say that in the first place.

Mrs. Cadogan had adored Victoria then, and she could feel the tension when Alaric and Victoria divorced. Hence, when Victoria left, all she could do was sigh. To her, it seemed

like some loves were meant to be perfect but only temporary. She also noticed that her son's demeanor had visibly darkened after Victoria's departure. He looked like a plant

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that had lost vitality and passion and was slowly withering away. Consequently, her son even ended

up

with gastritis.

Mrs. Cadogan became increasingly concerned as his condition deteriorated, and she wished for her son to move on from his previous relationship. At that time, she observed that Claudia appeared to be so sincere and that Claudia had vowed to remain by his side regardless of the circumstances. While she had not expected much from Claudia, the thought of her son's depressing situation made her wish for a miracle. The realization that Claudia was not the one finally dawned on her.

Unexpectedly, Alaric turned to his mother and looked her in the eyes. "I will take care of

my own affairs.”

She sighed upon hearing that. “How will you do that? Don’t tell me that you’re still in love with Victoria. It has been five years. She might be married by now. What’s the use of being hung up on her?”

He pursed his lips and eventually replied, “She’s not married.”

At that moment, something about her son’s answer felt off to Mrs. Cadogan, so she gazed at him with a suspicious look. “What do you mean by that? Who is not married? Have you met Victoria? Is she back?” As soon as she finished speaking those words, she got to her feet and walked over to her son. She seemed more excited than him by

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the prospect of Victoria’s return. “Is it true? Where is she now? Can I see her?” It’s been

five years, and I still long for her.

Faced with his mother’s excitement, Alaric merely replied, “Control yourself, or I’ll be worried that you can’t sleep from excitement in the future.”

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Just

the mention of Victoria excited her that much. If he told her Victoria gave him two kids, s he would probably faint from delight, but Alaric wouldn’t tell them that just yet,

since Victoria hadn’t accepted him.

She was still worried that he might take the kids from her, but Alaric's mother would be so over the moon about the kids, she might want to see them. There was no way Alaric could stop her, not to mention Mary's enthusiasm might scare her. I should keep things a secret.

But still, Mary suspected something. "And why would I be so delighted that I would stay up all night? Did something happen? Did you two get back together?"

Uh...

Before he could say anything, she was already coming up with her own explanation. "I see. So, that's why Claudia's trying to trick you into getting back with her, isn't it?"

Alaric was a little surprised that his mother saw through Claudia's schemes right away, even though he still hadn't gotten back with Victoria just yet.

"That's it, isn't it?" Mary grabbed his shoulders and swayed him back and forth, eager to

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know.

He sighed. "No."

2/6

"No?" Mary didn't believe it at all. "If that's not the case, then why did Claudia do what she did? She's been with you for five years. Acting rashly isn't like her, so there must be a reason for that."

"Ah, just take it that she rejected my advances of getting back together, alright?"

She looked at him in silence for a while and clicked her tongue. "I don't blame her. I mean, I would kick you in the head too if you had done to me what you did to her."

His mother saw through him, and he smiled dryly. "Yeah, I deserve this." There was nothing to be ashamed of. He truly deserved this.

"Talk is cheap. Action is not. Deal with the matter and show her what you're made of. I bet she only got the divorce because you were too much of a wuss to cut ties with Claudia."

Alaric said nothing. If his mother had told him that before he met Victoria again, he would deny it. She didn't get the divorce because he didn't settle his past. Their marriage was fake, and she liked someone else. But now that they met again and he

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found out about the kids and what happened that led to their conception, he couldn't just ditch them, or he would be scum. "I know. That's why I'm dealing with the matter."

Mary's smile faded and was replaced by a solemn look. "And deal with it by tomorrow.

Do you need my help with anything?"

3/6

Alaric was happy his mother took his side firmly. "It's all right. Just show up, and it'll be fine."

That confused Mary. "What? If you don't need our help, then why did you call us back?"

A smile curled his lips. "To make a grand entrance.

Even after the Cadogan couple had gone home, Scarlett still couldn't reach Alaric. He

didn't even call or text her to ask about Claudia. It was like he didn't care about Claudia's

suicide. She thought that the suicide attempt would at least elicit some sympathy from him, but it proved to be useless.

Claudia looked at her mother, miffed. "Mom, I thought you said this would work, but he won't even take my calls. He hates me now, doesn't he? He won't want to see me again, huh?"

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Scarlette bit her lip. "I can't believe he'd be this hard to tackle."

"This is your fault." Claudia cried. "If you hadn't told me to drug him, none of this would've happened. I could've stayed with him."

4/6

Scarlette was annoyed by her crying. She's blaming me? She narrowed her eyes. "If you'd been a smarter woman, I wouldn't have asked you to do this. It's your fault you couldn't keep him, not mine. Do you think you can stay with him when you're this much of a fool? Stop dreaming."

And Claudia was reminded of the night before when she was doing it with a man she didn't like at all. Hatred flared in her heart—hatred for her own incompetence and her mother, who gave her useless ideas. She clenched her fists so hard that her nails dug into her palms.

The night was growing old. Before they went to sleep, Nicole asked, "Will Mr. Night come over tonight too, Mommy?"

Victoria almost screamed, but she calmed down quickly. "He's sleeping at his own place."

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Nicole looked a little disappointed. "I see."

"You want him to come over?"

5/6

Nicole quickly nodded, smiling sweetly. "Yeah. He's going to be our daddy, right? Then he can scare off all the bullies," said Nicole. Children tended to speak their minds out loud anyway. "And he's nice to you. You need someone to take care of you too."

A smile curled Victoria's lips and she patted Nicole's head. "I don't need anyone to take care of me. All I have to do is take care of you two. Now go to sleep."

"So, when's he coming?"

Victoria was reminded of what Alaric said before he left. "Wait for me," he said. So, she thought he must come back soon.

She said softly, "After he's done with his business."

Nicole blinked. "I see. Good night, Mommy."

"Good night."

"Good night."

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*Victoria kissed her forehead and left. Then, she checked on Nathan and tucked him in
6/6*

before going back to her room. The bedroom was quiet. She didn't really have a lot of feelings for Alaric. He wanted to show his love, fine, but she wouldn't fall for it that easily. She calmed down and was about to lie down, but then a few memories flashed in her mind. First was a young Alaric struggling to float in a river, and the next was her charging straight ahead and jumping into that river. She froze and stood rooted to her spot.

Chapter 369

The memories buried in the recesses of her mind slowly surfaced, riling up a storm in her head. That day, Alaric fell into the river. Since he almost drowned when he was a child, Alaric always had a phobia of water, and he never learned how to swim. She wasn't in the same class as him, so she was with her classmates during that outing. Her deskmate said they wanted to fish for some shrimps, so they went to the river, but then her classmate said they had to get something, so she told Victoria to go ahead and wait for them. Victoria went ahead while her deskmate went back to take something.

Even though it was already spring, the riverside was still a chilly place. The winds made Victoria shiver, and she had half the mind to turn back and tell her deskmate to ditch the plan due to the weather. If they went ahead with their plan, they might come down with a cold. Just when she was wondering what she should do, she heard cries for help.

Victoria looked in the direction of the cry and saw Claudia shouting for help. "Help! Someone's fallen into the river!"

Claudia? Why is she here? Victoria looked around, but there was no one to be found. So, who's the victim? Victoria quickly took off her shoes and ran ahead, looking around.

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When she realized the victim was Alaric, she almost died of shock. What? How did he fall into the river? I thought he had a phobia of water.

2/5

The thought was fleeting. Victoria took off her coat, leaving only a thin shirt on. She then whizzed past the screaming Claudia and jumped into the river. Every cell in her body screamed out in pain from the cold. She felt her limbs freeze the moment they hit the water, but she pressed on anyway. There was someone to be saved. Still, the currents were powerful, and it took everything she had just to swim up to Alaric.

Alaric had fainted from gulping too much water, which made things easier for her. If he was still conscious, he might grab onto her too tightly, making it hard to save him.

Victoria held him and swam back to the shore with much difficulty. She felt her body slowly getting stiffer. When she finally reached the riverbank with Alaric, Claudia came and hauled him up.

Claudia quickly tended to Alaric and ignored Victoria. Victoria was about to tell Claudia to help her out, but her strength left her and a current washed her away. Claudia didn't even look at her. The current washed Victoria far, far away, her body getting colder. She was losing consciousness fast, and just when she was about to give up and close her eyes forever, something hit her, and she gained some fighting spirit back.

I can't die after saving him. The river's cold and fast. I need to get to the shore. At least I have to get back to land before I rest. She mustered the last of her strength and

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climbed onto shore, and not a moment too soon. The last of her strength fizzled out, and she lay on the ground, breathing and shivering violently. Then she closed her eyes, and everything went black.

Memories flooded her head, playing out like a movie. Everything she couldn't remember became so clear When the memories were done playing. Victoria was breathing heavily, and she clutched her chest, gulping for air What? So, I was the one who saved Alaric? Then what about Claudia? They said she was the one who saved him. If that's the case, then why do I have these memories? Am I imagining things? Or did Claudia take credit for what I did? If I'm imagining things, there's no way these memories would feel so real.

Her breathing was getting ragged About fifteen minutes later, she got up and quickly took out her phone. She wanted to call Alaric right away, but the moment the call went through, she regretted her decision and quickly hung up, then she held her forehead in frustration. What am I doing? What am I supposed to tell him? Oh, I was the one who saved you, not Claudia? Like hell he's gonna believe that. It's been years since then.

There's no way he's going to believe me at all. If anyone else told me that Claudia wasn't

the one who saved him, I wouldn't believe them either, let alone Alaric. Unless I can find proof, that is, how can I even find proof?

The reason Alaric believed Claudia saved him was because he was unconscious, so he

had no idea who saved him. Victoria was washed away, and Claudia was the only one by his side, so everyone thought she saved him. If Victoria were to tell everyone she was the one who saved Alaric instead of Claudia, everyone would probably call her a liar.

Her phone suddenly rang. When she noticed who the caller was, her face fell Alaric Must be because of that call. She had nothing to say, but eventually, she picked up the phone anyway

“You called me, didn’t you?” Alaric sounded like he was in a hurry. “Why did you hang up?”

Victoria wanted to say something, but she hesitated for a moment. I called the wrong number.”

“You called the wrong number?” Alaric didn’t believe it at all.

“Yeah. If nothing else, I’m hanging up.” Victoria hung up before Alaric could say anything.

Alaric looked at his phone, a frown furrowing his brows. She called the wrong number? There’s no way she would make a mistake like that, and even if she called the wrong number, there’s no way she would hang up right away. Then when I called her again, she didn’t seem to want to talk to me. She was also panting a little...

Alaric tucked his phone away and picked up his coat and car key, then he quickly left. He ran into his parents on the way down. Noticing that he was leaving, they asked, “It’s late. Where are you going?”

“I have something to do. You two go to sleep.” He left right after that.

Chapter 370

Victoria put her phone away. It was time to sleep. I need to find something to prove that I saved Alaric, or no one would believe me just because I told them that was what happened. It has been many years since then. Proving this is going to be hard. She lay down, but the desire to sleep did not come. All she could think of were the memories awakened within her. The thought of them annoyed her.

Because Claudia saved him, Alaric gave preferential treatment to her. They were childhood friends who spent most of their time together, but after that, Claudia was added to their group. Most of the time, Victoria was jealous of her, and sometimes she wished she was the one who saved Alaric. Now, she got her wish. She did save Alaric, but Claudia took the credit. She took the credit, huh? Victoria narrowed her eyes. After I saved him, Claudia not only didn't help me up, she took the credit for saving Alaric even when I was getting washed away. So even though she knew I was washed away and potentially drowning, she didn't get anyone to help me, nor did she tell anyone I was washed away.

The more she thought about it, the scarier Victoria thought Claudia was. Sweat was even starting to drench her back. Now that I think of it, did she already have ulterior motives when she helped our family out of bankruptcy?

Just as she was spacing out, she felt her phone vibrating. She snapped out of it and looked at her phone. Alaric? I thought the conversation was over. Why is he calling me again? Since there was nothing to talk about, she stared at her phone until the call was over. It's late. If I don't take his call, he won't call me again.

The call ended, and Alaric didn't make another one, but he texted her. 'I know you're stil
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awake. I'm outside.'

Victoria froze, surprised that he was outside waiting for her. So that's why there was an interval between his calls. He was on his way here. A frown furrowed her brows. It was just a call, and I told him it was the wrong number. Why did he come over?

She wanted to ignore him, but he was already outside, so she got out of bed and draped a coat over herself, then she went to the porch. Through the surveillance camera, she saw a slender person standing outside the entrance. He was waiting for her silently, checking his phone.

A while later, she texted, 'I'm in bed.'

She saw Alaric checking the text, and then he remained silent for a long while. Then he texted, 'Can we meet?'

I told him I'm already in bed, but he still wants to meet. If it were anyone else, she would be calling the cops on them right now.

Alaric texted again, 'I know you're in there.'

Damn it. In the end, Victoria opened the door. Alaric raised his head and cocked his eyebrow. The look on his face said, 'Called it.'"

Victoria was about to say something, but Alaric walked straight into her house and closed the door. He then closed in on her and pinned her against the wall. "You were looking for me?" he asked quietly, the look in his eyes captivating. His eyes glinted as if he was looking at prey.

Hmm, he's getting bolder. He wouldn't have dared to do this to me last night, and he kissed my forehead before he left this morning. Victoria pushed him away. "What are you doing? I told you I called the wrong number."

"Like hell it was." Alaric held her fingers and held back his urge to flirt. "You're a smart

woman. *There's no way you could've called the wrong number at this hour.*"

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Victoria paused for a moment.

"So that must mean you wanted to talk to me," he said softly. "You didn't want to talk over a call, so I came."

He knows me well enough. Victoria looked at him, but she said nothing. Noticing her urge to talk, Alaric cocked his brow. "What? Cat got your tongue? Oh, is this about-" He's up to something lewd again. Victoria quickly said, "No. This is about something else."

Alaric gave her a look that said, 'Knew it.'

Since they had started anyway, Victoria asked, "Do you believe everything I say?"

"Of course," said Alaric without hesitating.

"Then who are you going to trust more? Claudia or me?"

Oh, this again? Alaric held the back of her head. "You, of course."

That made Victoria feel more at ease. If he had hesitated, she wouldn't tell him the truth. He wouldn't believe her anyway. But so far so good. Still, she didn't let her guard down easily. He might trust her, but this was something big. He might change his mind if she were to tell him that.

"Even when I tell you that she did not save you from drowning?"

Alaric froze for a moment, then he narrowed his eyes.

"You don't trust me?" Victoria's face fell.

Alaric quickly said, "I do. I told you I'd believe everything you tell me."

Victoria stared into his eyes. "Then what's with that look?"

Alaric heaved a sigh. "If Claudia wasn't the one who saved me, then who did?" Since he

knew Victoria wouldn't lie to him, this revelation came as a shock to Alaric. That drowning happened years ago, and he had always thought Claudia was the one who saved him. So, she wasn't?

*Victoria took a deep breath. "Me." Worried he might not trust her, she looked away. "Yo
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don't have to tell me if you don't believe it. I won't force you or anything, but if that's the case, you can leave now. And don't-"

Just then, Alaric leaned down, closing in on her.

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