

The Divorce 51

Chapter 51 An Emergency When I awoke, I found myself lying in an emergency room.

Everything seemed normal, and the excruciating pain vanished, leaving me numb.

Atlas was beside me, looking concerned.

It appeared he had brought me to the emergency room.

My sudden condition must've startled him, and I felt apologetic "Did I scare you? I'm sorry," I chuckled awkwardly, "You always seem to catch me at my worst.

Thank you! for saving me again." "Do you feel better now?" Atlas scrutinized my expression with a hint of worry in his eyes.

"I have gallstones, an old problem," I replied.

He called the doctor, and I underwent another examination.

The doctor gave me a detailed report of my condition and provided some instructions before informing Atlas that I could leave after finishing the IV drip.

When the doctor left, I reassured Atlas, "Don't worry, it's how this condition is.

The pain is terrifying, but I feel nothing afterward." He nodded and asked, "Should I inform your family?" I shook my head and thought the only family I had around was too young.

Besides Ava, I had no family nearby.

It seemed no one genuinely cared about me anymore, so why bother pretending? I didn't even know when or how I had ended up in this situation.

I wondered what I did wrong to deserve such betrayal from Matthew.

The most heartbreaking thing was having someone you trusted most deceive you.

Atlas noticed my silence and added, "If you need anything, let me know." After the IV drip, he insisted on driving me home, so I reluctantly let him take me to Ava's preschool.

He didn't ask much during the drive, and when we arrived, I kindly asked him to leave first.

He only drove away after confirming I was okay.

When I picked Ava up, I was surprised to see Matthew's car there.

Ava happily jumped into his arms, and he held her close.

Ava's excited laughter echoed through the air, attracting many parents' attention.

Matthew told me his mother had invited us to have dinner at their place.

Initially, I felt reluctant since I had to face Melanie.

However, I saw Ava's excitement about visiting her grandmother and didn't want to disappoint her.

After all, they were her relatives, too.

I wondered how much longer this situation could continue.

+15 BONUS Johnson called me when I entered the car.

I glanced at Matthew, who was driving, and answered the call.

Johnson told me that the woman who came to the company building to find Matthew was Lauren Burton, a confidante of a CEO.

“Got it, thanks!” I cut Johnson off, not wanting him to say more.

Matthew was perceptive.

As soon as I hung up, he asked who was calling.

[“I was looking for a pair of shoes for your mother.

They didn’t have her size then, but now they do,” I said offhandedly.

“Should we go pick them up? It’s on the way to my mom’s!” He stared at me in the rearview mirror.

I looked back at him and said, “Maybe another time.

It’s not convenient right now.” “Where is it? It’s just a short drive.” He seemed genuinely interested in verifying my claims.

“Hobbits Shop of Shoes on Shebster Street,” I replied.

He studied my face momentarily, then exited the next intersection.

I clenched my fist tightly, silently cursing.

Damn it! What a jerk! The car sped along, and we soon arrived at the shoe store.

He parked the car and looked at me.

"I'll follow you in." I scoffed softly, realizing he didn't believe me and wanted to

Chapter 52 The Murphy Family Dinner I exited the car without waiting for him, holding Ava's hand as we headed inside.

Meanwhile, Matthew followed us with a smile.

Usually, he would have let me go in alone, especially in times like these.

I knew he wanted to see if I was lying.

I glanced at the shoes on display when we entered the shop.

Matthew was watching me closely, waiting for me to embarrass myself.

Surprisingly, the sales associate recognized me, saying, "Mrs.

Hartz, are you here to pick up the shoes?" I smiled.

"Yes." "All right, let me get them for you!" She hurried into the storeroom and soon handed me a shoebox.

"Size 8, brown!" I took the box, opened it to look inside, and handed it to Matthew.

I thanked the sales associate as well.

Matthew blinked in slight surprise as he took the box.

He hugged me and thanked the sales associate.

On the way back, he seemed unusually energetic, chatting nonstop.

I simply responded with a few words.

I barely ate during the meal.

Firstly, the afternoon's gallstone pain had me avoiding greasy foods.

Secondly, sitting near Melanie ruined my appetite.

Sitting with this family made me feel nauseated like never before.

Matthew had been busy serving me while Melanie's piercing gaze dug into me with displeasure.

She finally couldn't hold back and said, "Chloe, weren't you less fussy when you ate at home? Why is it harder to please you than Ava now?" "Well, your brother always caters to you, right?" I smiled at Melanie.

Her eyes narrowed as she scrutinized me.

"What do you...mean?" I pushed the plate of food Matthew had served me to her.

"Nothing.

I didn't touch the food.

You can have it.

Just because your brother likes a certain dish doesn't mean I have to like it, too.

His taste is too heavy." Then I looked at Matthew.

"You better attend to your sister.

I've been having gallbladder issues and am a little nauseous.

I went to the hospital this afternoon, and the doctor warned me about my diet." I noticed Matthew frowning, and he stopped his utensils midway to look at me ambiguously. Melanie glanced at Matthew and pushed the plate away, muttering, "I'm not picking up your leftovers." I chuckled and purposely asked, "Really? What's there to fear in leftover food? It's not from a random +15 BONUS I inwardly mocked her.

Melanie wasn't willing to take my leftovers but was more than willing to take Matthew.

I found it hilarious when she said she wouldn't eat my leftovers.

Grace looked at Melanie and said, "With your temper and wits, who'd be able to tolerate you in the future?" "Well, if no one can, I won't find anyone.

I never planned on leaving this house.

Is that a problem?" Melanie spoke with confidence.

I almost burst into laughter when she spoke with such conviction.

I wondered what Grace would think if she knew about the relationship between her two children.

“What do you mean by ‘won’t find anyone? You want your brother to support you for a lifetime?’” Grace couldn’t comprehend what her daughter meant.

I smiled lightly instead of getting involved.

Too much talk led to mistakes; it wasn’t time to reveal my intentions.

However, pacifying wouldn’t work because someone on the table was relentless.

1 “It’s never good news whenever you come here,” Melanie pointed at me, “Don’t think you’re one of us just because you married Matthew.” She sounded like the wife, and I was the mistress.

I calmly looked at her and responded, “Are you talking about me?” “If not you, who else?” Melanie didn’t hold back.

“Oh, I see,” I answered, putting down my utensils.

The rest of the family stared at me blankly.

Chapter 53 Hidden Meanings Matthew and Grace wanted to reprimand Melanie, but Henry impatiently said, “All right, let’s eat!” His attitude didn’t surprise me.

After all, he had excessively indulged his daughter and never denied her anything.

I knew he was aiming his impatience at me.

Ava shivered from Henry's shout and dropped her spoon with a clang.

The sound snapped me out of my thoughts, and I repressed my anger before picking up the spoon and giving her a new one.

Afterward, I looked at Melanie and asked, "Are you saying I'm an incompatible factor in this family? Otherwise, you wouldn't have said that.

Let's see what the rest of us think." Matthew's expression grew grave, and he patted my shoulder.

"Don't listen to her nonsense.

Let's eat." Grace also hurried to mediate.

"We're family, so don't nitpick at words.

That's what Mel is like.

She's just one to hold onto old grudges." I've never taken Melanie's words to heart.

Still, that doesn't mean she does either, right? I've never considered whether or not I'm an outsider here.

I'm just Matthew's wife, brought into the family through marriage- "So what? Divorcees are plenty," Melanie rolled her eyes, interrupting me.

i was puzzled and looked at Matthew, my expression darkening.

I cursed inwardly.

What the hell?! “Shut your mouth!” Matthew scolded Melanie.

“You’re not wrong.

Maybe your brother will grow tired of me one day.

Only then can you call me an outsider.

Unlike you, who will always be a part of this family.

However, even if your brother wants a divorce, he probably hasn’t decided yet.

Why are you so anxious?” I glared daggers at Melanie and saw Matthew’s expression worsening.

He also glared at Melanie, scolding her.

“What do you mean? I won’t get a divorce! Mel, don’t believe everything you hear.” I smirked and raised an eyebrow at Melanie “Even if your brother doesn’t want me, you can’t claim the Uitle of Mrs.

Murphy.” You Past actions speak louder than words.

I don’t need to explain it.

The truth will come out in time.

I also don’t want to stoop as low as you.

Everyone present knows our history.

No need for me to feign ignorance like you” My words carried hidden meanings, hinting at Matthew’s parents +15 BONUS I couldn’t keep some things unsaid.

Even though I didn’t have the upper hand in the current situation, I couldn’t afford to lose.

“Why didn’t you call me when you went to the hospital?” Matthew suddenly asked.

“Do you believe everything she says? You’ve spoiled her!” Melanie retorted.

“I’m still his wife.

Who should he spoil if not me? Doesn’t he spoil you too?” I took out my diagnosis from my bag and placed it before Matthew, “Why didn’t I call you? You were busy having lunch.” Matthew paled, and his eyes flickered for a moment.

Ava quietly reached under the table and tugged at my shirt.

She said timidly, “Mom, let’s go home.” “All right, baby.” I stood up and carried Ava with me as we walked out.

“Honey...” I breathed in the fresh air as we left the residence.

I couldn’t help but sigh and vow that they would pay for their words Matthew caught up and took Ava from me, saying, “Honey, don’t be mad.” “I’m not.

Do I look mad?” I smiled faintly and looked at Ava.

“Let’s go home.” After Ava fell asleep that night, Matthew pulled me close.

“Does it still hurt? Do you still feel sick? Is that why you’ve been vomiting lately? I’m sorry for not being there for you, honey.

I had a business lunch today.

Please call me next time.

You're the most important person to me." I was speechless, sighing inwardly.

That night, I couldn't stop thinking about Lauren Burton

Chapter 54 The Big Showdown I couldn't wait to get to the office in the morning.

I called Johnson and asked for detailed information about Lauren.

I picked up on the hidden meaning behind his words and learned that Lauren had her sights on Matthew.

Considering what I witnessed between them the other day, I remembered Matthew looking slightly shifty.

After all, once a man stole a kiss, he would likely crave more.

My heart stung again.

I once thought overcoming difficulties would solidify our love.

I never expected Matthew not to be my soulmate.

Still, I didn't have time for sorrow and had to take matters into my own hands to save myself.

The information Ivanna uncovered shocked me even more.

Indeed, all three Murphys had accounts.

Melanie owned properties and had a construction and renovation company registered with a capital of 1.5 million dollars.

Though the company didn't have many projects, its cash flow was substantial.

It was clear where the money was coming from.

With a registration amounting to 1.5 million, it was evident that Matthew had been profiting over the years.

The deposits under Henry and Grace's names even exceeded seven figures.

I burst into laughter when I saw the data.

Matthew was ruthless and calculating.

It was an all-out family affair.

All their accounts were full except for mine, the legally wedded spouse.

His intentions were apparent to everyone else, while I remained oblivious.

A chill ran down my spine because he had deceived me so mercilessly.

Even if I forgave him, I had lost my youth, marriage, and deep affection for him.

I clenched my teeth as I slammed the table.

Since I couldn't salvage our marriage, I would have to fill the void with material possessions.

Before seeing this information, I was conflicted about keeping a complete family for my daughter.

I couldn't bear the fact that my family was collapsing before me.

I clung to that warmth.

Even if love was gone, familial affection remained.

However, the harsh truth forced me to admit it.

There was no trace of familial affection left.

The Murphys saw me as an obstacle now.

My role and value had disappeared in their eyes.

couldn't stop thinking about my daughter.

People loved her, and her smile could light up a room.

How could she have such a sick bastard for a father? My heart ached, and I felt helpless +15 BONUS
Unfortunately, I received a message on WhatsApp from Melanie.

It contained a picture of her at a car dealership, so I bolted to my feet and headed straight to Matthew's empty office.

I clenched my teeth and called a private investigator.

I brought Ivanna along when I went to meet him.

I briefed him about Lauren and asked him to dig deeper into her background, particularly her frequent interactions with Matthew.

I told Ivanna, "Even if they've never interacted, we must create them." Ivanna stared at me in disbelief, then exclaimed, "You want to set up a dogfight?! How can we make two people who have nothing to do with us follow our plan? That might be tricky!" Ivanna raised a valid concern, so I said, "I can manage that."

It's only a matter of time before something goes wrong.

They're both a couple of rotten apples anyway." "If you can make those two comply, I can help spread the word," Ivanna promised me, "I guarantee it'll cause a storm throughout the city." I "No, how are we going to enjoy the show then? If it creates a city-wide storm, we must include Melanie to make it more exciting." I looked at Ivanna meaningfully.

"Do you want to see Matthew and Melanie being bystanders, or would you rather see all three of them fighting?" "Hahaha, that's a big showdown!" Ivanna understood my intentions.

"We need Melanie to stir things up with them, then I'll be free to act.

Otherwise, Matthew will always be suspicious of me.

I can't seem to keep track of his movements," I said, "Aaron, can you help- Aaron interjected, "Consider it done."

I've got something good for you.

"I'll tell you his whereabouts at any time!" He handed something to me, leaving me utterly stunned.

After leaving the cafe, I received a call from my mother.

She told me that my father's condition had improved and that he wanted to see me and Ava.

I told her I would bring my daughter to visit once I settled a few things at home.

Although autumn wasn't too cold in the city, falling leaves still marked the season.

The bright yellow trees made a striking contrast, and scattered leaves covered the ground.

I received a call from Matthew, informing me that he had some last-minute out-of-town business.

By now, I knew that phrase meant something else.

I clenched my phone as my heart turned colder, I knew Matthew had likely completed his car purchase and was off to the city for a passionate night chucked as if no one was around, attracting alarmed glances from passersby

Chapter 55 Someone to Entertain I wandered and found myself by the river again.

I had brought some wine and arranged for my mother-in-law to pick Ava up.

Then, I settled by the river to pour myself a drink.

I realized the company had become an empty shell, its sole purpose to fill the Murphys' wallet.

Meanwhile, I was empty-handed.

No wonder Melanie could taunt me so confidently.

Although I married into the family, I wasn't part of their world.

Even now, Melanie and Matthew didn't spare my meager possessions.

They would invade my space and commit vile acts on my bed whenever I was away.

I thought I was strong-willed at the Murphys' residence last night.

However, my repayment was a car for Melanie.

When I asked him to send my parents some money, he lashed out at Erica.

The more I thought about it, the more my heart ached.

It was like a stabbing pain suffocating my chest.

My phone kept ringing, and I didn't know what I said when I answered.

I was starting to feel a little tipsy.

I saw the buildings across the river light up as night fell, but none shined for me.

I had nothing left.

I raised the wine bottle toward the lights, only to have someone swipe it away.

A low voice followed, Chloe Hartz." I turned to look in a daze and saw the man who had witnessed my consistent misfortunes.

I shook my head and chuckled, saying, "How'd you know I was here? Did I leave something behind?" "Weren't you in pain yesterday? Have you forgotten your doctor's orders already?" Atlas scolded.

"Forget about doctor's orders.

You're a buzzkill." I looked at him and tugged at his sleeve.

"Come on, join me for a drink." I felt a little playful, likely from him interrupting my loneliness.

It was either that or my inner teenage girl was excited.

Atlas stood there for some time, just watching me.

I shook his arm, urging him, "Come on!" Finally, he leaped onto the riverbank and sat beside me.

He opened two cans of beer, handed me one, and toasted to me.

I laughed, "Thank you for being here with me." "Tell me, why are you drinking?" he asked.

Do I need a reason to drink?" I took another sip.

"Is being happy a good enough reason?" Like a fool, I stared at the lights on the other side of the river.

+15 BONUS "I'm celebrating the fact that I've seen it all now.

I have nothing left.

The man I thought was my soulmate had slung a web for me, and I walked right into it, trapped for years.

“How naive of me! Haha... The company’s gone, the money’s gone.

Oh, I have a daughter, so it’s not a complete loss.

I lost everything, but I still have my daughter.” “What do you plan to do?” Atlas asked without looking at me.

Instead, he stared at the lights across the river.

“I want a divorce to ruin him completely!” I gritted my teeth.

“You?” He turned to look at me.

“Is getting wasted and making a scene your plan for revenge? I never expected you to be this foolish.”
“Why are you trying to discourage me?” I was a bit annoyed at how pessimistic he was.

“Am I discouraging you? Can’t do anything but get drunk here and call it a night, huh? Didn’t you just see him move everything away, drive a new car, and go to Operose for the weekend? Meanwhile, you’re just here getting drunk.

What can you do? Yell at them as revenge?” Atlas’s words struck my weakest point, and I felt ashamed.

My low self-esteem made me hysterical.” You... Do you have the right to say that to me? I’m the one embarrassed, but it’s not your place to remind me.” “Is that so?” He was so close I could feel his breath.

My heart raced as I looked at him, imagining him embracing me.

I shook my head, trying to clear my thoughts.

Suddenly, Atlas leaned in and murmured, "It seems you still care about him" His warm breath grazed my face and sent shivers down my spine.

I instinctively moved back, only for him to pull me into his embrace.

He looked at me intensely and asked, "Do I scare you?" I looked at Atlas's profound eyes, firm jawline, and thin lips.

At that moment, it felt like I was falling into an abyss.

Chapter 56 What Did You Do To Me? Our eyes locked.

His arm tightened around me so much that I couldn't breathe.

My hand grew weak as i pushed him, eventually resting gently on his waist.

I felt him tense for a moment.

He tilted his head and locked his lips with mine.

He kissed me passionately.

I felt as though I'd been electrified, too weak to resist.

He held my head, deepening the kiss.

I could hardly breathe as strange images of Matthew and Melanie's intimate moments played in my mind.

It fueled my desire for this thrill.

Alcohol, rage, and revenge probably drove my response.

I pressed up against him, kissing him passionately in return.

Gradually, those images faded, and I only wanted to prolong my desire for him.

My mind went blank.

I Finally, Atlas released me.

I took a deep breath, not daring to look at him.

I picked up the wine, intending to take another sip, but he swiftly took it away.

"You can't drink anymore!" His voice turned stern.

I squinted my eyes.

"Why do you care? I bought it with my money.

Do you think I'm rich?" I was drunk, so my tongue was stiff.

I used to drink a lot, but now it makes me sad, bitter, and numb.

"I want to toast to the past! I want a fresh start!" After shouting these words at the rushing river, I giggled and collapsed into his arms.

"Stay conscious!" He insisted, lifting me into his arms.

"I'll help you." His words confused me.

My brain had grown sluggish.

I floated as though in a dream as Atlas carried me.

My subconscious reminded me to avoid this man.

I woke up the next day.

My head pounded, and I rolled over, exhausted.

I didn't want to open my eyes, but I was unbearably thirsty.

"Are you awake?" I heard a gentle voice say.

Startled, I opened my eyes and anxiously looked toward the voice.

When I saw the chiseled face, I shrieked.

I scrambled backward but was swiftly pulled back.

“You’re going to fall!” I closed my eyes, my mind racing to figure out what had happened.

How could it be him? W—What had +15 BONUS The sheets were comfortable, and I cautiously felt myself and groaned.

When have I ever slept naked? “Are you scared now?” Atlas’ voice contained a hint of playfulness and warmth.

“Atlas, y—you, we...” My words came out incoherent.

“Do you regret it?” His eyes were electric and fixed on me.

They were even softer now.

He wore a loose bathrobe that hinted at his solid chest.

I averted my eyes as I tried to recall what happened last night.

It frustrated me, as I didn’t want this.

I didn’t want to be like Matthew.

My dignity was more important.

Atlas watched my expression and did not release his hold on me.

Feeling his intense gaze on me made me shiver.

I then grew angry.

“What did you do to me?” I “What do you wish I’d done? A smirk curled on his lips.

He was entirely different from the Atlas I knew, but I didn’t really know him.

As I swallowed dryly, I inwardly cursed.

This Atlas was genuinely unpredictable.

How did he find me? How did he know my whereabouts? He let go of my arm and asked in a warm voice, “Do you want some water? You must be thirsty.” His smile seemed almost devilish.

What did he have to say it like that? It was natural for me to be thirsty.

We did nothing? Come on, who was he kidding? If he was telling the truth, why would I be naked? I was highly frustrated.

I didn’t want this.

There went my dignity! Suddenly, the doorbell rang.

I quickly hid under the covers.

Chapter 57 Tossing Him Aside I heard Atlas leaving the room.

Then I heard voices outside the door, the door closing, and someone walking back in.

“Don’t you feel suffocated? Atlas’s voice sounded again, I slowly lifted the corner of the blanket to find him looking down at me from above, his smile radiant.

He looked handsome in a different way.

Is this still the calm and reserved Atlas I knew? He pulled me and the blanket toward him, holding me in his arms.

I felt my heart racing.

“Hey... what are you doing?” I struggled to breathe with him so close and his handsome face coming closer.

Suddenly, I remembered the wild and passionate kiss we shared on the riverbank last night.

It was utterly embarrassing.

People could be reckless when drunk.

His stare was intense.

“You’re overthinking.

Relax! I’d never take advantage of an unconscious person.

I helped you out of your clothes and showered you.

You were too stinky after vomiting.” My head spun from embarrassment.

What did I do last night? Was I the one who had been stuttering? And he was the one I poured my heart out to? "Well... maybe I should put my clothes back on!" I babbled, struggling in his arms.

He tightened his grip on me and said, "You're ungrateful.

How could you toss me aside after everything I did for you?" "No one would toss someone as handsome as you," I blurted, almost biting my tongue off as the words left my mouth.

He chuckled arrogantly, stating, "That's not entirely inaccurate." Still, he was quite the gentleman.

He let go of me, picked up his clothes, and left the room.

I quickly wriggled out of bed, shivering slightly as I dressed.

I examined myself carefully, making sure nothing was out of place.

I grabbed my bag, left the bedroom, and thought about running away.

He expected that.

Atlas swiftly caught me and pulled me back.

He was so forceful that I crashed into his chest, banging my head against it. I felt dizzy for a moment. "117 Hey! Keep your hands to yourself," I protested, struggling against his hold.

+15 BONUS "I spent the night drinking with you, sleeping with you, and caring for you.

Shouldn't you reward me a little?" He smirked with a hint of playfulness.

I pressed my hands against his chest, glaring at him.

“W—What reward? Don’t push your luck!” His deep gaze met mine like a pitch—black abyss, almost magnetically capturing my gaze.

He kissed me again, unrelentingly.

I suspected I was under some sort of spell.

After a while, he released me.

“Stay clear—headed.

I’ll help you.” I looked at him in bewilderment.

He kissed me again, but it was brief this time.

I turned around, opened the door, and ran out before he could say anything.

It all felt like a dream.

I felt confused by all these circumstances and feelings.

Was I doing this out of revenge? I couldn’t deny the sense of intoxication and excitement I felt.

I rushed downstairs, hailed a taxi, and headed straight to the office.

Even sitting at my desk, I couldn’t completely calm my heart.

My emotions were confusing.

I took a few deep breaths to remind myself not to lose sight of things.

This was not the end of my battle.

I needed to keep working hard.

I needed to provide a bright future for my daughter.

Before I could fully gather my thoughts, Matthew burst into my office.

Chapter 58 A Subtle Battle I was surprised to see him.

Wasn't he supposed to be in Operose for business? Why was he here now rather than in the arms of his mistress? I remained silent, observing him.

He smiled softly and asked, "Honey, what should we have for lunch? "I haven't decided yet!" I replied casually, showing no hint of surprise.

He walked closer.

"We talked until really late last night.

I rushed back this morning because I didn't want you to worry.

I didn't even have time for breakfast.

Let's go for an early lunch, and we'll have whatever you want.

It's on me!" I watched him act charmingly.

Oddly enough, I couldn't get angry.

It was as if I were having a different pleasure, a sensation.

Out of nowhere, I thought about Atlas.

"Did you drink?" He asked, probably noticing the scent around me.

But he did not smell like alcohol himself, despite attending a late-night social gathering.

"Yeah." I said, "How about the Italian restaurant opposite Glenmarie Plaza?" His eyes narrowed briefly, then he nodded, "Sure, whatever my wife wants!" Life was full of dramatic twists.

I had not expected to see Lauren as soon as we entered the restaurant.

When I saw her again, I paid close attention to her.

She was dressed elegantly in a fashionable knit dress.

She wasn't an ordinary competitor in this game.

I had a secret satisfaction when I thought about Melanie's shallowness.

This game appeared to be stacked in my favor.

Seeing her again today gave me a good feeling.

She could be of use to me.

Matthew was surprisingly open about introducing me, and I lowered my guard, politely greeting her.

After we sat down, I commented to Matthew.

“Ms.

Burton seems to be a very competent person.

‘I’m quite impressed with her!’ “Being overly cunning is not necessarily a good thing for a woman,” Matthew replied casually.

“I prefer someone like my honey—understanding and virtuous.” Are you saying I’m foolish?” I addressed his comment.

ghed, reaching out to pinch my nose.

“Silly girl, who were you drinking with last night?” +15 BONUS “Who do you think?” I countered.

“Besides, you stayed out too.

I need to entertain myself when you’re away on business trips!” I spoke lightly, as if the topic wasn’t a big deal.

However, my mind wandered to Atlas.

“I won’t be on business trips often.

It was an exceptional situation yesterday!" he explained.

"Where were you guys drinking?" "Ivanna's place!" I answered casually.

"Did you go to the car dealership yesterday?" I "Huh? I didn't.

After I visited the construction site, I went straight to Operose." Matthew clarified.

"Oh! There must've been a misunderstanding then!" I said it absentmindedly.

Before we finished eating, Johnson called Matthew to let him know that ATL Empire was holding a meeting at 2 p.m.

Matthew glanced at me and asked about the situation with ATL Empire.

He didn't invite me to accompany him to the meeting.

Instead, he went with Johnson.

I received a document on my phone after picking up Ava.

It was the ATL Empire's meeting minutes.

One key point stood out.

All participating companies had to undergo a financial assessment by the end of the month.

It would include a thorough evaluation of the entire organization.

That includes projects, capital, assets, and even personal checks.

This was because this contract covered ATL Empire's collaborative projects for three years.

ATL Empire's projects were supposed to be all government-backed initiatives during that time.

If we secured the contract, we'd significantly boost our business over the next three years.

What surprised me was the emphasis on the new type of thermally broken steel windows, a Tanum Corporation patent. My mind was racing with questions.

What did this mean? I quickly looked up the document's sender, which turned out to be Atlas. My heart raced even faster.

Tanum Corporation had an opportunity to improve its reputation.

Unfortunately, the company was in Matthew's hands.

I knew we could become industry leaders if the company truly capitalized on this opportunity.

This could be a once-in-a-lifetime chance for rapid advancement.

However, that would also mean losing control of Matthew.

+15 BONUS I hailed a taxi and rushed home with Ava.

I put on cartoons on TV for her while I quickly prepared food.

I needed to make time to look into our competitors' information.

I had to take advantage of this opportunity.

Before I could finish preparing the food, Matthew's call came in.

He told me to freshen up quickly, as he'd pick me up soon.

We were attending a dinner later this evening.

Chapter 59 A Stroke of Luck I hesitated before telling him I'd rather not attend.

I also had Ava with me, so I couldn't go.

He mentioned that he had already arranged for my mother-in-law to watch Ava and that she would be arriving at my house soon.

His attitude struck me as odd.

He had never been eager to take me to social events, but it turned out that ATL Empire organized it.

During the afternoon's meeting, Nick asked about the manager who had represented Tanum Corporation before.

Then he questioned my absence.

Matthew quickly arranged for me to attend the dinner and even gave me pointers on what to say.

1 Representatives from three other companies, all major players in Foswood, would join us.

Each company had strengths, but Tanum Corporation was outmatched and did not belong on the same level.

Tanum Corporation had stumbled upon a stroke of luck.

Among the representatives from ATL Empire was Atlas Seeing him again after only a few hours made me a bit nervous.

Although I had just seen him this morning, it felt like decades ago, He had returned to his aloof self.

He followed Nick without displaying much emotion, only offering me a casual greeting when he entered.

There was nothing exceptional about it, but it did put me at ease.

I didn't feel comfortable saying too much with so many people around.

During the meal, Atlas asked me about the steel windows in front of everyone.

It was surprising that he asked me instead of Matthew.

Nick remained in charge, but something seemed off.

Atlas was his assistant, yet Nick appeared to have discussions with him.

This assistant was not to be underestimated.

Tanum Corporation's thermally broken steel windows were something I had pushed for, but Matthew had consistently refused due to the high cost.

He had never been optimistic about it, because he believed the new metal plastic windows were more cost-effective and had higher profit margins.

was adamant about using thermally broken steel windows as a foundation for high-end projects.

At the recent ATL Empire meeting.

Tanum Corporation's financial strength clearly lagged behind its competitors I strategically promoted the steel windows project as an alternative.

This move surprised the competition and set the company apart.

+15 BONUS Toasts were exchanged with the ATL Empire's representatives.

Matthew quickly pulled me over to make a toast as well.

I felt incredibly uncomfortable.

I forced myself to make the rounds, and Nick took me aside to discuss the steel windows in detail.

This visibly boosted Matthew's image.

Today, he seemed genuinely happy.

The opportunity to negotiate further with ATL Empire and be considered a key player lifted his spirits.

He practically floated on air.

I noticed him toasting Atlas, who appeared to be sober.

Nick asked me to prepare a report on the steel windows, focusing on its performance, design possibilities, and construction techniques After speaking with Nick, I had a plan in mind.

I kept calm and responded to Matthew's inquiries.

The dinner concluded, and Matthew had arranged for a driver.

Matthew sat in the back seat, holding my hand.

He praised me as a visionary, remarking on my unique insights.

He kept calling me his "lucky star," asking how I had known to push for the steel window project.

His overly enthusiastic demeanor made him seem like Foswood's industry leader.

His boasting seemed to indicate that he had achieved his goals.

"Don't celebrate too soon.

You weren't particularly interested in the windows before.

Nick wants a detailed report, so research design options heavily.

Detail the benefits of thermally broken steel windows.

This difficult task will determine our success." "Don't worry about that.

I'll have the manufacturer provide a detailed manual." He reassured me.

“Your amazing husband will handle everything.

I hate seeing my dear wife work so hard!” He kissed my hand.

I appreciated his kind words, but why didn’t he care about my struggles when he insisted I attend the dinner? He knew I had been drinking the night before but still made me participate in the toasts.

This was all to avoid me getting involved in the project.

He was a master at dismissing people after they had served their purpose.

I remained silent.

I knew he would not listen to anything I said now.

I’ve been thinking about taking Ava to see my parents.

My father is getting better, but I want Ave to sen them.

I’m planning to make a quick trip,” I said, seizing the opportunity amidst his excitement Sure! Go ahead! Spend some time with your parents!” Matthew, readily agreed “In that case, I’ll arrange everything and leave tomorrow.

I’ll be back soon,” I continued. “There’s nothing you need to arrange.

Just tell Ava’s teachers that she’ll be absent.

We can keep in touch about company matters.

You don't have any major projects on hand right now anyway." Matthew seemed genuinely supportive.

"All right, then help me book the flight tickets," I said absentmindedly.

In reality, a plan had already formed in my mind.

Chapter 60 Ulterior Motive The next day, I boarded the flight back to my hometown with Ava, I called Ivanna on the plane to let her I know about my trip.

I also emphasized the importance of completing the tasks I had assigned her.

Every step of my plan had to be executed flawlessly.

I told Ivanna that I had tracked Matthew's whereabouts and asked her to keep an eye on him.

After ending the call, I held my phone tightly, battling the urge to make another call.

Ultimately, I took a deep breath and turned off my phone.

I couldn't get too close to that man.

Ava was excited the entire trip, but I reviewed my plan meticulously.

Atlas had told me to stay alert and that he would help me.

Could this be his way of helping me? I didn't want to ask him.

The early autumn in my hometown was chilly.

I had not told my mother when I left so she would not be worried.

I After landing, I took a taxi to the hospital, and my parents were overjoyed to see us.

My father's condition was good, but he had some facial paralysis, which made his speech awkward.

My heart ached, and tears welled up in my eyes.

I had not seen my father in over two years.

His hair had turned completely gray, as had my mother's.

My emotions were all over the place.

Ava's enthusiasm amused my dad to no end.

She danced around, constantly asking the doctors to let us go home.

I inquired about my father's health and met with the doctor.

The doctor agreed to release him but gave him medication and told him to take it on time.

We all went home that evening.

Ava was too young to remember her last visit, so she looked around wide-eyed.

She quickly adjusted, though, chatting nonstop and getting comfortable.

My parents were focused entirely on Ava, leaving me to cook.

I went straight into the kitchen.

My dad insisted on ordering takeout, but I told him not to worry.

I had spent years serving that ungrateful family, so I was more than willing to cook for my parents.

After a day there, I told my parents I needed to go to a steel window manufacturer in the capital city.

That was the real reason I rushed back to my hometown.

warned my mother not to tell Matthew where I was because he could check on me anytime! +15 BONUS
She looked worriedly at me.

I briefly explained that we had different priorities and that I was prioritizing securing a project while he wasn't.

I never mentioned our relationship issues.

My dad was very supportive.

"Just go.

We know what to say.

We'll tell him to call you if he asks!" I advised against telling Ava too much because she was too bright.

In the capital city, it was pouring, and the autumn wind was cold.

I recalled my first visit here four years BOO.

The company I was heading to didn't work with Tanum Corporation.

It was another company I had engaged with back when I came to Solaris.

They were called Urban Builders.

This company was bigger than the one Tanum Corporation worked with and made better quality products.

However, we missed the opportunity to work together because of an incident.

It had always haunted me.

Of course, few people knew about it.

It was suppressed back then, and not even Matthew knew.

They didn't collaborate with Tanum Corporation because their pricing had always been too high.

Ultimately, Matthew chose Westridge Holdings to save costs and ensure profits.

After four years, I was back here, and the factory had expanded.

However, the image of four years ago was still vivid, making it feel like I was in a different world.

I hesitated for a while, took a deep breath, and was determined to face my fear for my future as well as