

Departure with a Belly Chapter 596 - 600

Chapter 596

No Family

Now that Erik had put it that way, Summer was reluctant to roll down the window again, given that she wasn't the only passenger.

"Feeling hot?"

"Not really..." She smirked at him mid-sentence and added, "I just wanted to open the window for some fresh air."

Even if she was feeling hot, she wouldn't tell him. After all, who would feel hot in this kind of weather? It would be like admitting that something was wrong with her in front of him."

Nonetheless, he did

not doubt her and simply stated calmly, "If you feel stuffy, you can take off your jacket."

Summer was stunned to hear this and hesitated momentarily before retorting, "Why

should I take off my jacket if I feel stuffy? I'm not feeling hot."

Then, Erik chuckled softly and explained, "I know, but taking off your jacket might make

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you feel more comfortable.”

She was rendered speechless by his reply. Despite not directly contradicting me, I perceive his low chuckle as a deliberate attempt to make fun of me, as if he knows what I am thinking. There’s not much point in arguing with him, as he’ll never admit this and instead just sit back and watch me make a fool of myself. Ah... Forget it.

Suddenly, he asked, “Where are we going?”

Even though Summer had somewhere specific in mind, she dithered before responding,

“Aren’t you the one who came to find me? How would I know where to go?”

Erik smirked in response. “True. Then, shall I make the arrangements?”

“Where to?”

“To the city center. How about that?”

Similarly, she also wanted to go to the city center, so she nodded in assent.

“Sure.”

“When you left, did you inform your parents?”

“No-” Since her parents were not at home when she left, she did not notify them.

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“Send them a message later so they know not to worry about you,” Erik advised her like an experienced senior.

“Oh, okay.” Summer had no objections, and after sending a message to her mother, she put away her phone.

“Done.”

“Mm.”

As soon as she put her phone away, silence fell between them. She spent a brief moment casting a glance out the car window, after which she looked at her own fingers for a moment before finally breaking the awkward silence. “Where will you be residing when you return?”

“I’m staying at a hotel for now, as it’s more convenient.”

After hearing this, she found it odd that, aside from New Year’s Eve, Erik visited her home nearly every day and finally decided to ask him about

it. “Don’t you need to go home and see your family? Are they not here?”

“I have no family.”

These words caused Summer to pause, turn her head to look at him, and her eyes to wi

den in shock. No family? He stated this matter-of-factly as if it were a given, and when I look at his face, it lacks any expression. Even though we've worked together for a long time, he's never once spent the New Year in his home country. I assumed this was because he was too busy with the company to take time off, but I never expected it to be because he had no family. Hmm... Not even a single family member? At this thought, she decided it would be inappropriate to ask him that question. However, Erik spoke up in a calm voice. "You don't know about my family background, do you?" "Well, I suppose not." "Then, let me tell you now. There's only me in my family and no one else." Even though she had guessed it, hearing him admit it personally shocked her. So, he has no one in his family. Did he go through all these years alone? Then, she uttered, "That explains why you never return home for the New Year." Despite my shock, I now feel a

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twinge of compassion for him. How does it feel to have no relatives in the country? How could he feel a sense of belonging without a family, even if he grew up there? With that in mind, she said impulsively, “If you don’t mind, you can come to my house for the New Year in the future.” She swore that her words were spoken out of pure sympathy and that she had no other intent. However, she did not anticipate Erik to pause briefly and agree with her. “Well, Summer, does that count as an answer?” Summer was taken aback, and while she wanted to say it didn’t count, she felt he was too pitiful after hearing his confession. She couldn’t deny her compassion for him, so she simply bowed her head and said, “Well, it does, and it doesn’t count. After all, I can’t agree to anything so quickly.” After hearing this, Erik chuckled softly and replied, “Understood.” After that, he didn’t say anything else, giving

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her some breathing room.

On the other hand, she reaffirmed her belief that he merited his success. His intelligence and insight were astounding, and her innermost thoughts were being laid bare before him.

After entering the city, Summer decided not to pretend anymore, and she planned to be braver and more direct. “A few days later, Victoria and her children are coming back. I plan to bring them some gifts.”

As expected, Erik wasn’t surprised to hear her words. “Where are you planning to buy them?”

When she mentioned a location, he turned the vehicle around, and she was astounded by how familiar he was with the direction. Hence, she asked, “Why do you seem so familiar with the roads here?”

“I used to work here for a few years, and I also studied the map during the past few days since I came back.”

Ah! That explains why he doesn’t even need to look at the navigation. Then, she asked

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again, “Have you always lived alone before?”

“Yes, I’ve been living alone since around ten.”

Ten... How young is that? Summer thought that if she had to live alone at the age of ten, she felt that her willpower might have been worn away by the hardships of life, let alone starting a large corporation from scratch.

During their conversation, she noticed something profound about Erik’s dogged persistence.

If I’m with this resolute man, he won’t feel lost or sad even if we break up. He is

too sensible that anyone leaving his life would not affect him, and he would undoubtedly

shrug it off as nothing significant. As she considered this, she pursed her lips and found

herself at a loss for words.

Soon after, they arrived at their destination; he parked the car in the parking lot, and the

two walked side by

side into the mall.

While walking, she noticed many people staring at them because of his striking appearance.

nce.

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When she used to accompany him on business trips, she was used to such scenes, but this time she wondered if their appearances didn't match at all in the eyes of others. After all, he's so outstanding, and I'm... No, no... She immediately shook her head vigorously in her mind, denying those thoughts. / like myself a lot and shouldn't think badly of myself just because I like an exceptional man, right? Besides, if such an outstanding person like Erik could like me, it means I must be excellent in certain aspects. Self-brainwashing was good, and Summer quickly regained her confidence. Bonus Reached First Top-UP

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Chapter 597

Your Gift

Meanwhile, Summer spent a long time shopping for gifts for Victoria and her children, and as she was shopping, Erik offered to pay for them on her behalf.

However, she refused, “No need, I’m the one who wants to give them the gifts. I can’t let someone else for pay them.”

After hearing this, he paused momentarily and realized she had a point, so he proposed

, “Then, I’ll also give them a gift in my own name.”

“Why? The gifts I’m giving them have a purpose, but what purpose could you have? Besides, you’re not close to them-”

However, Erik looked at Summer intently and interrupted, “Well, I have my own purpose

. What’s your relationship with the children?”

”

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guess... I'm like a godmother to them." While saying this, she blushed as if she already

knew what the man would say.

"Well then, I'll give them a gift in the name of my future role as a godfather."

After hearing this, her blush deepened, and she uttered, "I haven't agreed to that yet."

"I know. I took the liberty."

Without giving

her a chance to respond, Erik went to get the gifts, and Summer had to follow him and o

ffer her input on what they should get.

As soon as they had everything loaded

into the cart, he swiped his card to make the payment. When

the staff asked him to sign, he casually took a pen from his pocket and signed his name

with flair.

However, the staff noticed that his pen looked slightly worn out and couldn't help but su

ggest, "Sir, your pen seems a bit old. We have some new pens in stock. Would you like

to take a look?"

Meanwhile, Summer, who had been looking at the gifts, couldn't help but notice Erik's p

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en when she heard the suggestion. Hence, she took a glance and was immediately frozen in place. That pen... Isn't it the one I had given him? She recognized it right away because it was a discounted purchase she had made. After all, she couldn't afford the pens designed by famous designers, and she thought that even if it was expensive, he wouldn't necessarily appreciate it. In addition, she assumed that he wouldn't even look at it and would simply throw it away, but she didn't expect him to use it until the pen's exterior showed significant signs of wear and tear. Suddenly, Summer felt her throat tighten, and she couldn't find her voice. It's been a long time since I gave him that pen. Previously, I may have questioned whether Erik's visit to my home to propose to me was an act of impulsivity or insanity, but now I have no such doubts. After all, the age of that pen represents a multitude of things. Back then, he already felt something for me ...

As soon as he noticed her gaze, the steady and level-

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headed man suddenly realized what she was pondering, and he discreetly put the pen a

way. “No need. I have no plans to replace my pen for now.”

Nonetheless, after seeing his determined expression, the staff didn’t know what to say.

Biting her lip, Summer took the initiative to suggest, “Why don’t we get a new one? That

pen is so worn out and a bit unsightly.”

Erik glanced at her when he heard this. “It’s not unsightly. I like how it is now.”

Her cheeks reddened, and she insisted, “Let’s buy a new one. You’ve been using that o

ne all this time, and it’s embarrassing for me.”

“Why?”

“For no particular reason.” She turned her head away and continued, “I’ll get you a new

one, so you don’t need this anymore.” This time, I

will choose a pricey option rather than a discounted one.

On the other hand, the nearby staff had been a little confused by their conversation, but

upon

hearing this, she finally realized why this tall and handsome man was using an old pen t

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hat didn't match his status. She was good at reading the situation and immediately smiled, saying, "So, this pen was given to you by your beloved. No wonder you cherish it so much." Since they have purchased so much from me today, I won't mind flattering them a bit, even if they don't buy a pen. Maybe I could even make a positive contribution to their relationship!

Sure enough, Erik glanced at the staff, and this time, the look in his eyes was much friendlier.

Then, the staff continued, looking at Summer. "Miss, you're so lucky. It seems that this gentleman likes you."

In the meantime, Summer, already shy due to the flattery, felt even more embarrassed and awkward. "It's not what you think." While saying this, she turned to him. "Anyway, let me buy you a new one. Don't use that anymore." After saying that, she looked at the staff. "Where are the pens? Can you show me?"

"Of course." The staff immediately nodded and led her to check them out.

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Hence, Summer followed her, leaving the man behind.

Afterward, the staff showed her the new styles of pens that had come in, and just as she

was picking one, Erik

also came over.

“There’s no need to pick a very good

one,” he whispered in Summer’s ear, and as he spoke, his warm breath tickled her ear,

making her tremble slightly.

“Who said I wanted to pick a good

one for you? I just thought the old one looks worn out, so I want to get you a new one.”

He curled his lips and replied, “Yeah, thanks.”

After much deliberation, Summer bought a new, more expensive, aesthetically pleasing

pen. However, he did not

mention paying for it; instead, he merely observed in silence as she made the payment,

and she handed

him the box after she had done so.

“Here’s a new one. Don’t use the old one anymore; it doesn’t suit your status.”

She coul

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dn't imagine how a man like him could go around signing things with that worn-out pen on various occasions. It is so incongruent with his elite image that the staff at the counter has suggested he get a new one.

Then, Erik took the pen from her and said, "Thank you."

"No, don't mention it. It's just a pen, after all."

"As a return gift, I'll give you a gift too."

.

Summer quickly waved her hand and uttered, "No need. I gave you the pen without expecting anything in return."

"Well, I want to give something in return. Let's go."

"Where?"

"To choose your gift."

In the end, she was taken to a jewelry store.

Erik chose a diamond necklace for her, and when it came time to pay. Summer was in awe of the number of zeros behind the price.

She finally realized why he had said that if they were together, she could live any life she

e desired. He was wealthy, and he was so generous to her... Also, she realized that the

price of the gift he gave her was almost equal to her salary for all these years.

When he handed her the necklace, she was reluctant to accept it. "I can't accept this-

"While saying this, she furrowed her brows, refusing it.

"Why?" Erik remained calm and said, "This is just a token of my affection for pursuing yo

u. Even if you don't agree to be with me in the future, you don't need to return it."

Summer shook her head and explained, "It's not about that. I just think it's too valuable."

"Valuable?" He

looked at her intently and added, "Then, you should start getting used to it from now on.

After all, if you end up with me in the future, you might receive gifts like this frequently."

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Chapter 598

How Am I Supposed to Answer?

“When I see something nice, I can’t help but buy it for you.”

Erik previously had no reason to give Summer gifts, but after expressing his feelings, he had nothing to hide. Naturally, he wanted to provide her with

everything he had and devote himself entirely to her. However, since he put his thought

s into words, he spoke candidly, often

catching her off guard. Again, before she could object, he

stepped behind her and put on the necklace. While doing so, his hand brushed against

her neck, giving her a tingling sensation similar to an electric current and causing her to

flinch.

After putting on the necklace for her, he placed his hand on her shoulders and turned he

r to face him. “Looks good.”

“Really?” Summer blushed. Initially, she didn’t want to accept it, but now that it was alre

ady around her neck,

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she decided

she had no choice but to do so. Nonetheless, she was embarrassed and said,

“Thank you.”

“No need to be so polite. After all, it’s a gift in return,” Erik said.

“Still, your gift is too expensive,” she stated. What I gave him was nothing compared

to what he gave me as

gifts. This expensive necklace makes me regret buying him a discounted pen in the past

. I feel so tacky...

“Let’s go.”

After buying the gifts, he planned to send her home.

Perhaps feeling sympathetic, Summer thought it was a bit pitiful for him to stay alone in

the hotel, so as they were about to leave, she said to him, “If you feel lonely staying alone

in the hotel, you can come to our house as a guest. My parents would welcome you.”

Erik looked at her intently and replied, “Okay.”

Then, she asked, “So... I’ll go now?”

“Mm.”

Just as she turned to leave, he exclaimed in a cold tone, “Summer!”

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After hearing his voice, she paused and turned to look at him. “What’s wrong?”

“Can I have a hug?”

Summer was stunned by Erik’s unexpected request, which caused her to freeze in plac

e. Just a hug... it doesn’t seem too much, right? Still, why do I feel like things are progre

ssing too quickly?

Perhaps, she dithered too long, and by

the time she responded, he said, “Sorry, that was inappropriate of me. You can go.”

As such, she swallowed the word “okay” that was about to leave her lips. She nodded, t

hen took the gifts and walked away slowly.

Meanwhile, Erik stood there, watching the petite figure disappear from view before starti

ng the car and driving

away.

After spending several days abroad, Victoria and the others finally decided to return ho

me.

As they were about to leave, Tony looked at his daughter and two little great-grandchildren reluctantly. “When will you return?”

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She raised an eyebrow and replied, “After going back, they have to go to school, so even if I want to visit, it’ll probably have to wait until after the holidays.”

After hearing this, he realized that seeing them in the near future would be impossible unless he flew to their country himself. Hence, he said, “Then, I’ll come to visit you when I have some free time.”

Victoria immediately took advantage of the situation and uttered, “Dad, you better keep your promise. If you don’t come, I’ll hold you accountable.”

“Okay.” Tony gently patted his daughter’s head. “Once things settle down with the company, I will come back and spend some time with all of you.”

She smiled in response, then looked at Sasha beside him. “Sasha, you should come and visit us too.”

Sasha was pleasantly surprised and taken aback upon hearing this. “Sure, I’ll come.”

“It’s almost time for boarding. Hurry and go through security. The airport is huge, so you

don't want to get lost," Tony quickly reminded them.

"Wishing you a safe journey," Sasha said.

Victoria stepped forward

and embraced her father, her eyes slightly red and her voice choking up. "Dad, you pro

mise you'll come to visit, right?"

Tony was initially reluctant to let Victoria leave, but when he heard his daughter's choke

d voice, he couldn't help but feel sad. "Snowball, my dear... Of course, I'll keep my pro

mise and go visit you. Why are you crying?" After saying this, he looked at Alaric standi

ng beside him and said, "Come on, comfort her."

Alaric smiled and approached, pulling her into his embrace and gently wiping away the t

ears from the corner of her eyes. "There, stop crying. If you want, I can bring you back t

o see them. With advanced transportation nowadays, we can meet whenever you want.

»

When she heard this, her tears finally stopped, and she shot a playful glare at him. "Do I

need you to accompany me if I want to pay them a visit? I can come

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on my own.” After that, she turned to Tony and said, “Dad, we’re leaving. Take care of yourself and Sasha.”

After the father and daughter finished their conversation, it was time for the elders to bid farewell. After a heartfelt farewell, they finally parted ways.

On the way back, Victoria leaned against Alaric’s embrace. “I’m so tired from all the fun,” she said, putting all her strength on him. Meanwhile, he stood there, letting her lean against him with one hand around her slender waist. “Rest well when we get back,” he said.

“Mm.” A low rumble of assent came from her lips, and she added, “Summer will come to pick us up at the airport.”

“Mm.” A low rumble of assent came from her lips, and she added, “Summer will come to pick us up at the airport.”

Alaric raised an eyebrow and asked, “Did you tell her when we’re returning?”

“Yeah, I told her. We didn’t get to see each other during the New Year, so she’s holding a grudge. She’ll be upset if I don’t tell her when we’ll be back.”

“Tsk, why is she so clingy to you?”

Remembering that night when her best friend came over and slept together, Victoria felt

a hint of jealousy from the man. Hence, she said, “Even if she wants to sleep with me a gain, what’s wrong with that? She’s a girl. Are you even jealous about another girl sleeping with me? Your jealousy is too much.”

“I’m not happy about it.” Alaric spoke frankly.

Seeing his reaction, she could only mutter a few words of disdain and then said, “Don’t worry, she probably won’t have time to spend all her time on me now.”

“What do you mean?”

“I think she’s going to start dating.”

Alaric had

no interest in other people’s love lives, even if it was Victoria’s best friend. So, when she

mentioned it, he didn’t ask any further questions, but he knew if she wanted to talk abo

ut it, he would listen.

As expected, his wife didn’t seem to mind if he asked any questions as she provided a b

rief summary of Summer’s recent happenings.

“Her boss is pursuing her, and he even went to her house to propose.”

Then, Alaric recalled for a moment and mentioned a name, “That Erik guy?”

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Hearing his words, Victoria was taken aback. “Yes, how did you know?”

He pursed his lips and said, “I’ve met him before.”

“I see. Since you’ve met him before, according to your observation, did he have feelings

for Summer even before she joined the company?”

This question made him feel slightly helpless, and he stated, “Snowball, how am I supposed to answer that kind of question?”

Chapter 599

As Long As You Like

Victoria didn't think anything was wrong with her question, so she asked,

“Why is it difficult to answer?”

“Do you think I divide my attention between you and other men and women?”

When she heard this, she raised her head in his embrace and blinked her eyes at Alaric

. “It's not just anyone. She's my best friend. Do you need to observe so closely, though? Just a little insight would do, wouldn't it? How about it? Is there anything worth considering?”

When he noticed her persistence, he said helplessly, “Yes.”

“Really?” Victoria's eyes brightened. “So, does he like Summer?”

Alaric couldn't help but pinch her nose, speaking in a doting tone. “When did you become so nosy?”

“Wasn't I nosy before?”

“Yes. Let's not talk about this topic and focus on ourselves.”

“That won't do. I'll just talk about this once.” Afraid that he would change his mind, she c

ontinued to ask, “You said you noticed something, so what is it?”

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Alaric fell silent for a moment before speaking quietly. “There was a time when you were in danger abroad, and Summer wanted to go and find you, but her boss was worried about her safety, so he accompanied her.”

Victoria widened her eyes upon hearing this. “Really?” She finally understood why he said that this matter was worth considering. How many superiors would be willing to accompany their employees across countries out of concern for their safety? From this point of view, it could indeed prove Erik’s feelings for Summer.

“Well, someone in his position values time as money, so if he didn’t care, he wouldn’t waste his time with something so trivial.”

Based on what Summer had told her, she had no idea about this and didn’t learn about it from others. Yet, she was surprised and happy for Summer.

“That’s great. Her boss genuinely cares about her; his words aren’t just lip service.”

“Yes, it seems he has a decent character, and we’ve had some professional interactions before. He’s a self-made

man.”

Nonetheless, she was happy that her best friend had found a good man.

“Hmmm, I hav

en’t met him yet. I’ll

meet him when I return this time and keep an eye on him for Summer.”

Initially, Alaric agreed with

Victoria, but upon hearing this, he furrowed his brow and said, “Why do you

seem so ex

cited?”

“Of course I’m excited. Why shouldn’t I be excited?”

Then, he narrowed his eyes and tightened his grip on her waist.

“When the time comes, you’re not allowed to look at that man.”

However, she asked, confused, “Huh? I have to look at him to keep an eye out for Sum

mer, right? I must observe him closely and maybe even invite him for a meal.”

Without g

iving him a chance to object, she added, “You should come along

too, and we can keep an eye on him for Summer together.”

Alaric thought Victoria wanted

to go alone, but he didn’t expect her to invite him. After feeling awkward for a while, he s

aid, “Fine.” As long as I am going along, I can put my worries to rest.

“Great, it’s settled then. We’ll go together when the time comes.”

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Despite the chilly weather outside the airport, Summer found solace in the cozy warmth of the car. She tucked herself into the coat Erik had so graciously removed from himself and offered to her. Since her home was so far away, they had to leave early to avoid missing Victoria's flight. In the meantime, they still had over an hour before the plane landed.

There were no shops near the airport, and even if there were, they would be closed by now. Thus, the two of them could only stay in the car.

At first, she felt a bit awkward and said to him, "We might have to wait for a long time. How about you go back first?"

As soon as Summer said that, Erik glanced at her indifferently and asked, "I'll leave you here and go back first?" Then, he spoke with some helplessness, "Summer, do you have any awareness that you are currently being pursued by me?"

As soon as she heard this, she pursed her lips and said nothing. "Shouldn't you be observing how the other person acts at this time?"

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“I guess so? Still... It feels like I’m wasting your time by making you send me here in the middle of the night and wait here with me.”

“I don’t feel like it’s a waste of time.” While saying this, he took off his coat and handed it to her.

Then, perplexed, she held his coat and inquired, “W-What’s the matter?”

“Put it on,” he said lightly. “There’s still over an hour left. Rest in the car for a while.”

“I’m not sleepy-”

“Then, just close your eyes and rest them.”

Erik cared for Summer like an experienced adult, and she couldn’t help but think he must have had a different upbringing than children raised by attentive parents. Still, she could feel that how he cared for others was quite domineering.

On the other hand, she said nothing, blushing as she slowly draped the coat he gave her

over herself before leaning back in her seat and closing her eyes to rest. She briefly closed

her eyes when she realized something wasn’t quite right and asked, “You gave me your

coat, but what about you? Aren’t you cold?”

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“I have a good constitution,” he said lightly.

“Oh.” Then, Summer closed her eyes again and considered the possibility that Erik was making fun of her weak constitution.

She fell asleep in a daze, and when she awoke, the night had grown darker outside, and she was still curled up. She was still sleepy but felt a chill come over her, and she instinctively snuggled into the man’s coat. Thankfully, he gave me his coat so I won’t have to worry about getting a chill in my sleep. Oh, hold on! If this kept me warm, what about him? Her eyes snapped open at this realization, and she saw him resting on the steering wheel.

Never before did I notice that even with his eyes closed, his long eyelashes created distinctive shadows around each of his eyes. Even though he is leaning there, he does so gracefully, and it is impossible to tell that he grew up in the countryside. Even so, he has a

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striking good look about him from this angle. Since the first time we met, I have known that he is attractive, but I have never given it much thought because I know he could never be mine. Hence, I can only occasionally appreciate his good looks while working. Things are different now... After all, I may one day marry this man. With this in mind, she experienced a new range of emotions when she looked at him. She found him even more charming than she had anticipated. Then, she looked at him intently, transfixed by his physical features. “Am I handsome?” Suddenly, the man with his eyes closed abruptly opened them, and his thin lips parted. Caught red-handed, Summer’s face instantly turned red. “Yes. Wait... I wasn’t intentionally trying to sneak a peek at you. I was just looking at you sleeping, so-” “It’s okay.” Erik curled his lips. “Anyway, if you’re willing, I’m yours from now on. You can keep looki

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ng at me as long as you
like.”

His words made Summer’s
ears turn so red that she felt they might start bleeding. This man seems to
become incre
asingly flirtatious after expressing his true feelings!

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Chapter 600

How Should I Watch Out for Her?

Confronted with Erik's straightforward question, Summer was helpless as she avoided h

is gaze and asked, "What time is it? Are Victoria and the rest arriving soon?"

The way she changed the subject was awkward, but

he didn't press the issue. Instead, he raised his hand and glanced at his wristwatch. "Te

n more minutes."

"Ten more minutes?" Summer exclaimed

as she placed both hands over her face in disbelief, frustrated by her

extended slumber. Due to her inability

to change the past, she could only grab the coat and return it to him. "Here's your coat.

Thank you-"

"Don't mention it." With an indifferent expression, Erik uttered, "You can take the coat."

"Won't you get cold when you leave the car later?"

"Didn't I mention that I'm not afraid of the cold?"

"Me neither. Besides, I'm already wearing a coat. It'll ruin my fashion if I wear yours on t

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op of mine.” She

promptly tossed the coat back to him as soon as she said this.

On the other hand, he noticed that she genuinely didn’t want the coat anymore, and sinc

e she was awake then,

he accepted it and put it on.

Meanwhile, there were still ten minutes until the flight arrived, and they would have to w

ait for Victoria and the rest to get off the plane to collect their luggage. Hence, Erik and

Summer waited another fifteen minutes. before exiting the car.

While waiting at the exit, he frowned upon seeing her trembling from the cold. “Didn’t yo

u say you were not afraid of the cold? Why are you shivering?”

“Who said I was shivering?” she retorted.

With that unyielding response, she

saw him take off his coat and quickly stopped him. “Don’t take it off. I’m not talking to yo

u anymore if you do.”

When Erik heard this, he stopped what he was doing and looked at Summer.

Then, she pulled a straight, stern face and warned him, “Don’t take it off!”

“Aren’t

you cold?”

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“I’m telling you not to take it off. If you do, I will stop talking to you!”

He

gave her a brief glance before chuckling and pulling his coat open. “Alright. I won’t take i

t off. How about you come inside and take cover?”

However, she was stunned by his offer, clearly taken aback by his abrupt move.

“You-”

In an indifferent

tone, Erik uttered, “Either come inside and take cover, or I’ll take off my coat and give it t

o you. Choose your pick.”

After contemplating for a while, Summer slowly started to move her feet.

Given his pers

onality, she knew he would take off his coat and give it

to her if she declined his offer. Even though the car is toasty, he risks getting a cold if he

hands over his coat because of the brisk wind outside! This realization left her with no o

ther options, so despite her reluctance, she inched toward him slowly. With only a few

paces separating them, he reached out his arm and drew her toward him.

At this instant, she stumbled under his pull and fell into his arms awkwardly.

Instinctively

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, she grabbed the hem of his coat to prevent herself from falling. Due to this, the ambiguous atmosphere between them instantly heightened as she bit her lip while nervously lifting her gaze to look at him. Meanwhile, Erik calmly wrapped his arm around Summer's waist, pulling her closer until they were nearly pressed against each other. "This way, you won't feel cold while we wait." Her face had turned crimson after hearing this, but she didn't resist. She had to concede that his coat did make her significantly warmer. At this instant, she could feel the warmth of the man's body radiating off her while she was wrapped in his coat, keeping the chilly wind at bay. Consequently, she no longer felt the chill of the breeze and even felt warmer due to his presence. After some time, Summer whispered, "Why don't we just stand separately? What if... Victoria and the rest see us?" "Do you mind being seen by them? Or do you think it's embarrassing to do this?" Erik asked.

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“That’s not it.” She shook her head in denial.

“If not, what are you worried about?”

Then, she pursed her lips, seemingly not overly concerned, but since she hadn’t officially agreed to date him yet, she started wondering about possible scenes of them being seen.

At that thought, she jolted herself out of her fantasy. “Forget it. Before we officially start dating, let’s not show them this side of us.”

After uttering these words, Summer attempted to leave Erik’s embrace. However, the arm around her waist tightened unexpectedly. “You’re too late. They already saw us.”

“What?” His statement stunned her, and it took some time for her mind to register what he said.

Then, she turned her head in the direction of his gaze and noticed Victoria and Alaric walking side by side.

Also, she saw several people, elders, and children trailing behind the couple. As soon as Victoria spotted Summer, she waved at her.

When Summer noticed this, she subconsciously bit her lip and hurriedly left Erik's

embrace. Then, she asked, "Why didn't you tell me in advance?"

"It was too late. Right after I talked to you, I noticed them coming."

"Liar! You did it on purpose, didn't you?"

Erik smirked and explained, "Although I'd love to say that I did it on purpose, unfortunately,

when I pulled you over, my attention was entirely focused on you, so I genuinely didn't notice them coming. The outcome doesn't make a difference anyway."

Summer was about to rebuke Erik when Victoria and the others approached, so she kept

her mouth shut in

case he later said something shocking. Even though she didn't think he would do that, she

was concerned as

he became more flirtatious with her these days.

Meanwhile, Victoria had noticed her

best friend taking cover under a man's coat from a distance. At this moment, she was unaware

of the identity of any man. After losing her

memory, she had no recollection of Erik's appearance, so her impression of him was based

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sed solely on Summer's descriptions. Eventually, Alaric was the one who noticed Erik, so he told his wife about him. She finally realized who the man was and didn't miss the scene before her. She was sure that Summer would have jumped out of the man's embrace if she had arrived on the scene a fraction of a second later. The last time they spoke, Summer told her that she needed to be more reserved because it just couldn't happen between them. At this instant, Victoria was perplexed about how they could have grown so close in just two days. Nonetheless, she couldn't wait to see how her best friend's relationship developed. "Does that make you happy?" Alaric asked when he noticed the smile in her eyes. "Of course. Shouldn't I be happy for my best friend who has found the one for her?" As they got closer, Victoria couldn't help but look at the man from head to toe. However, this was merely a polite observation, and after a few seconds, she averted her gaze. Even with just those few glances, she

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could tell that the man was exceptional, and she thought highly of her best friend's taste in men. However, she did not anticipate her husband becoming envious despite her restrained glances, as he lightly pinched her waist and whispered, "Stop looking." After saying this, he gently tightened his grip on her waist to draw her attention. She couldn't help but return her attention to him as she said, "Don't be petty. I only took a quick glance." "No, you didn't. You took a few glances at him," Alaric retorted. Victoria was speechless at that. After a brief pause, she muttered disdainfully, "Childish brat!" "What's wrong with being childish? You're not allowed to look at anyone else besides me." "How am I supposed to watch out for Summer, then?" "I'll help you."

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