

## Departure with a Belly Chapter 436

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*Mary's decision to move to Jasea came as a shock to Victoria, but at the same time, she felt very respected. "Aren't the roots of the Cadogan Family based in Gandra? If you move to Jasea, won't that—"*

*"Don't be silly. We're already old, and our children are our only concern. Now that we have two more grandchildren, we have to put you guys as the priority. Moreover, we can live no matter where we are, and the environment is better in Jasea. Didn't you already set up a company over there? If you run into any problems, just ask Adrian for advice and focus on your career. Don't worry about the kids. With me and Adrian around, they'll be well taken care of."*

*After that, Mary said no more, busying herself with ushering the kids into their room and discussing with Adrian about moving.*

*On the way back to the room, Victoria pondered over this. Setting aside the fact that her company had just started to take off, it would be nothing compared to the Cadogan Group, even if it did become a success. Nevertheless, they did not mind that she had a*

*small company and were willing to move to her city to help her babysit. Is the company unimportant to them anymore?*

*While pondering over this, she reached the door she was familiar with. When she came to a stop, she suddenly realized that her motor memories had brought her here easily, even though she had not been here for five years; plus, she was deep in her thoughts.*

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*Opening the door, she saw a familiar view and walked in with a blank face, staring at the furnishings, which were almost unchanged in the past five years. Except for the beddings, everything else in the room—from the biggest pieces, such as the curtains, to the smallest decorations on the table—remained the same. Looking at the furnishings in front of her, she felt a sense of familiarity encapsulating her because nothing had changed, and it took her back in time to five years ago when she and Alaric were still married to each other.*

*Without realizing it, she paced to the bed and smiled at the new sheets. Just then, her phone vibrated, and she saw that she had received a text from Alaric.*

*'Are you free now?'*

*After disembarking the plane, she had already contacted him but only for a while, as she needed to meet up with Mary and Adrian. Is he texting me because he thought I'd be free now?*

*'Yeah, everything is settled. I just got back to the room,' she replied.*

*At first, she wanted to shower, but Alaric texted her before she could, and she sent him another text after replying to him. 'How was your day?'*

*A few seconds after she hit the send button, Alaric made a video call, and when she saw it, she picked it up hesitantly after contemplating it for a while.*

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*If it was a regular call, she would have answered without second thoughts, but she needed some time as it was a video call. After answering, his handsome face entered her view. Even though the high-definition lenses, his features, and skin were impeccable.*

*At the beginning of the call, there were not many expressions written on his face, but when he saw her, the aloofness on his face evaporated, the look in his eyes turning tender. However, it changed again soon as he saw her background. "Are you home?"*

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*For some inexplicable reason, she felt a little guilty as he scrutinized her background. Maybe she did not want him to find out that she had forgiven him, which was something that she could not reconcile with. Although there was a misunderstanding between them back then, the truth was—he did hurt her, and she did not want to forgive him so quickly, even when she wanted to be with him.*

*When she was quiet and even avoided his eyes, he looked a little dejected. Very quickly,*

*he recollected himself and changed the topic. "Are Nicole and Nathan asleep already?"*

*After hearing a new topic, Victoria raised her eyes again. "I think they are. Tonight, they're sleeping with-"*

*At the mention of this, she came to an abrupt stop, and Alaric finished her sentence after giving it a thought. "They're sleeping with Mom and Dad, aren't they?"*

*She nodded. "Yeah, they love the kids."*

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*Maybe it was because she was tongue-tied twice earlier, the atmosphere between them turned a little odd, and they slipped into silence when the topic ended.*

*After a long while, Alaric pursed his lips, stared at her, and said softly, "Don't worry about Mr. Hudson. Even though there's no news today, I'll keep a lookout for it and inform you once I have any information."*

*She flashed him a smile. "Okay."*

*Noticing that she was still in the same clothes from the morning before she left, he asked, "Haven't you showered yet?"*

*"Yeah, I was just about to when you called."*

*"Did I interrupt you?"*

*"No." Victoria shook her head. "It's just a video call, and it doesn't matter if I shower a little later." She did not have the habit of going to bed early, and although she was a little tired after a day of flying, she was not so tired that she could not handle a video*

call.

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*Although Alaric saw how full her cheeks were while radiating a healthy glow, he still found a trace of tiredness in her eyes through the screen when she said she was fine. If I continue this call with her... After some contemplation, he said, "Take a shower and rest early for the night."*

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*Startled, she uttered, "You-"*

*"I'm fine. Once you're awake, I'll call you again."*

*She wanted to tell him it was fine to continue chatting, but when she opened her mouth, she could not help but yawn and squeeze the sleepy tears from the corners of her eyes.*

*"Aren't you going to shower now?" he urged, seeing that she was so tired that she was crying tears of drowsiness.*

*Out of wits, she nodded. "Okay, I'm going to shower now. You should sleep early, too."*

*Before hanging up, he piped up, "Victoria."*

*"Yeah?"*

*"Will you adjust the camera so I can look at the room?"*

*Surprised, she switched to the back camera and showed him around the room. "Are you seeing this?"*

*On the other end, he watched her move the camera around before chuckling. "Yeah, I see it. It's a very familiar room. Alright, let's hang up. Hurry to your shower and rest for the night."*

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*Slowly, she nodded and ended the call. Then, she looked around at the room filled with familiar furnishings and recalled what Alaric looked like in the call earlier. In the end, she let out a sigh.*

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*After a shower, Victoria lay on the bed, wrapped in soft, comfortable sheets.*

*She thought she had almost forgotten about everything that happened five years ago. In the beginning, every night after she left, she would always recall the things that had happened here, especially the moments between her and Alaric. As time passed by, she found it harder to jolt these memories. Later, some would not even pop up in her mind anymore, and she simply lived peacefully.*

*She thought she had forgotten about them, but when in bed, all the memories she shared with Alaric came crashing into her mind like a tsunami. Like walking down memory lane, she watched the images as they played through her mind, and she remembered that she had done the most intimate actions with him on this bed.*

*Without realizing how much time had passed, she gradually fell asleep, and it was Nathan who came into her room to wake her up the next day. Checking the time on her phone, she saw that it was already 10.00AM.*

*“You’ve been asleep for a long time, Mommy,” he whined, looking at her.*

*Grabbing her messy hair, she said in embarrassment, “Yeah, I forgot to set an alarm last*

*night and overslept without realizing it.”*

*He trotted to the bedside, grabbed her arm, and said softly, “Mommy, Grandma asked*

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*the chef to prepare a lot of delicious food, but we ate first because you were still*

*asleep. You must be hungry now. Would you like them to have the food brought*

*upstairs?”*

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*“It’s alright.” She shook her head and turned down his offer, thinking that she was not doing so awful that she needed to have her meal delivered to the room. “Head down. I’ll be right there after changing.”*

*“Okay.”*

*After he left, a sigh escaped her lips. She did not expect herself to sleep so deeply, either. Did I sleep so soundly because I returned to a familiar place? I don’t remember sleeping like this in the past.*

*Downstairs, she had breakfast and saw Nicole sitting in Mary’s arms with a pretty bracelet around her wrist. “Where did you get that?” she asked.*

*“Grandma gave this to me!” Since Victoria had noticed her bracelet, Nicole kept showing it to her and mentioning that it was a gift from Mary.*

*“Did you thank Grandma, then?”*

*“I did, Mommy.”*

*Mary chuckled at her ways and pinched her soft cheek before turning to Victoria.*

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*“We’re almost done preparing for the move. Let us know when you’re free, and we’ll move right away.”*

*As the distance was near, they wanted to take a flight at first, but after safety considerations, they decided to travel in their private cars with bodyguards.*

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*Victoria agreed to their idea and said considerately, “I’m alright with any timing and can go now.”*

*“Don’t you need more rest?”*

*“It’s okay, Mom. I’m not tired.”*

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*“Then, let’s go back earlier since the kids still have school to attend.”*

*“Sure.”*

*The Cadogan couple might be getting on in years, but they were pumped up and efficient when they wanted something done. On the same afternoon, Victoria was already on her way back to Jasea in the same car with them.*

*In the car, she whisked out her phone and sent Alaric a text. ‘I’m with your parents...’*

*She came to a stop, thinking that the way she addressed Adrian and Mary was a little problematic. Although she still did not want to forgive Alaric, addressing them as his parents sounded like they were strangers to her. Hence, she deleted her sentence and started again.*

*‘We’re on our way to Jasea today.’ This should sound alright. She read through it a couple of times to ensure it was okay before hitting ‘Send’.*

*However, she received no reply even after a long time. Without any incoming texts, she kept her phone away and did not think much about it.*

*As there was a time difference between both countries, messages and calls might not always arrive at appropriate times, so she reckoned that he was probably sleeping or busy when he did not answer her. Well, he'll probably answer once he's free.*

*It was already nighttime when they arrived in Jasea, which was glowing brightly with lights and high-rise buildings. This kind of view was nothing new to Mary; maybe because she wanted to give Victoria some face to reduce her anxiety, she said, "The buildings here are comparable to Gandra, and I just found out this city is a good choice to live in after checking the weather data. If you'd like to move here for good, tell Alaric to move the company here, too."*

*She said everything to please Victoria, who simply replied awkwardly, "That depends on him."*

*"Not him, but us," Mary said, holding her tiny wrist and assuring Victoria. "He must be willing to move for your sake. If not, I'll help you."*

*Is he willing to move because of me? Victoria wondered. Somehow, she could bring herself to believe this. Judging from how he was acting recently, she thought he would do something like that. Nevertheless, moving the company was a big issue because many of the employees in Cadogan Group were Gandra citizens. If they moved, not only*

*the entire company, even all the employees would be in serious problems.*

*"We'll see how things go."*

*"Sure, let's see how things go. It will take him some time to return, anyway."*

*Out of consideration, Mary did not ask her why he was still abroad. In contrast, Victoria was a little embarrassed. Everything was already settled, but he remained abroad because of her selfishness, and nobody knew when he could return.*

*As the Cadogans had properties in Jasea, they moved into one close to Nicole and Nathan's school. Their servants and butler had arrived before them and cleaned up the place, and after spending some time settling in, Victoria finally had the opportunity to check her phone.*

*To her dismay, Alaric still had not replied to her text, eliciting a frown on her. It would not have been weird if someone else ignored her, but it was rather odd when it was him.*

*Setting aside how uptight he was over her, she reckoned that it was a dangerous task to search for Ethan abroad. Although he had help by his side, the other party was quite a big number, and he was also injured. At the thought of that, she tensed up and clutched her phone tightly. Is he in some trouble?*

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*Right after this thought flashed past Victoria's mind, she opened her call records and wanted to call Alaric. As soon as she did, she hesitated and canceled the call in less than two seconds. Since he didn't reply to my text, it means he's probably busy right now, or it's inconvenient for him to answer. If I call him at this time and interrupt him... Forget it. For his safety, I better not call him for now. Once he's free, he'll reply to my text.*

*With this thought in mind, she kept her phone by her side, taking it with her wherever she went. Even when washing up, she placed it on the counter next to her so she could always see the notifications.*

*She was distracted by the fact that she did not receive a reply from Alaric, and while in the shower, she was also waiting for his answer. Whenever her phone vibrated, she would hurriedly dash over, pick it up, and check it. Upon realization that it was not him,*

*she would place it down again in disappointment.*

*That happened a few times until she finished her shower almost an hour later.*

*Standing in the room, she had mixed feelings in her chest as she dried her hair, her eyes*

*glued to her phone and never left it until she had laid in bed and stared at the white ceiling instead after blow-drying her hair.*

*Only then did it suddenly hit her that she cared too much about him. It's just one text,*

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*right? Why am I so nervous that I can't do anything normally? How can I test him in this state? She tossed around, staring at the dark screen on her phone and sighing softly.*

*Even so, she could not stop her mind from wandering. After a long while, she could not take it anymore and called Terrance's number. When he answered her call, his voice sounded sleepy. It was obvious that she had woken him from his sleep. "H-Hi, Miss Selwyn. May I help you?"*

*Upon checking the time, she realized it was already past midnight in a blink of an eye.*

*That's right. It was already late when we arrived in Jasea. She smacked her lips and asked softly, "I'm sorry to call you at this hour. Did I wake you up?"*

*"It's fine, Miss Selwyn. I work for Mr. Cadogan, and he pays me extra to be on call round*

*the clock. Otherwise, you probably can't get me through my phone."*

*Nevertheless, she did not take this for granted and asked in a gentle tone, "I'd like to know if Alaric contacted you today. Do you have any news about him?"*

*Hearing that, Terrance nodded but realized that she could not see him. "I see. So, you're*

*worried about Mr. Cadogan. Don't worry, Miss Selwyn. I contacted the men from his*

*side in the morning. He's okay," he hurriedly said.*

*"Morning?"*

*"Yeah."*

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*act Him Again?*

*"Do you mean this morning?"*

*"Yes."*

*Her nose wrinkled at his reply. If he had contacted Terrance in the morning, why didn't he reply to me?*

*"Miss Selwyn, I meant that I've contacted the men on his side, not Mr. Cadogan himself," he added, worried she would misunderstand.*

*"What about afterward?" She was not quite done with her questioning. "Did you guys contact again after morning?"*

*"Well... Mr. Cadogan has something important to do today, so I didn't bother him."*

*Something important? Why didn't he let me know about it? she pondered but came to terms with it a few seconds later. That explains why he didn't answer me. It's because he's busy. Then, did my text bother him?*

*"Fret not, Miss Selwyn. Mr. Cadogan will be fine, and it's getting late. Why don't you turn in early?"*

*Despite his assurance, she had a bad feeling, which she failed to verbalize. Since it was late, she felt guilty about bothering him. "Okay. Good night."*

*"Just call me if you need anything. As for Mr. Cadogan's side, I'll inform you the second I find out anything new."*

*“Thanks.”*

*The call ended, and she turned around in bed again with her phone in her hand, unable to fall asleep. Biting her lower lip, she felt that her heart was in a mess, but there was nothing else she could do.*

*In the end, she drifted off to dreamland with messy feelings in her chest and her phone in her hands. It was the vibration of her phone that woke her up later, and when she opened her eyes, she saw that it was the alarm she had set.*

*Since she had overslept the day before, she set an early alarm this time. Unsure whether it was because the sound was too loud or the vibration was jarring, she felt her eyelids twitching when she woke up. Not only that, even her heartbeat felt off.*

*After shutting off the alarm, she leaned against the wall and composed herself, her heartbeat tuning comfortably after she rested for a few minutes. However, her eyelids continued to twitch from time to time.*

*She was never superstitious or believed that something ominous would happen when it came to that. Still, she had a strong premonition and felt that something was about to happen.*

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*Checking her phone again, she saw that her conversation with Alaric remained at the last text she sent him; there were no new messages after that. So much time has passed since yesterday until now. Even if he’s busy, it shouldn’t have kept him preoccupied this long. Did something happen to him?*

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*Instantaneously, she flipped the sheets aside, grabbed a jacket, and left the room. Mary*

*was playing with the kids when Victoria found her, and she looked at Victoria quizzically*

*when she rushed toward her frantically.*

*“Oh, are you up, Victoria? Why didn’t you stay longer in bed?”*

*Opening her mouth, Victoria wanted to ask her the question straight away but swallowed her words when she caught sight of Nathan and Nicole at the side.*

*Mary, who had observed her actions and the look in her eyes, immediately understood that she had something to say and suggested, “Let’s speak outside, shall we?”*

*Instantly, she nodded. “Sure.”*

*After that, Mary explained something to the children and followed Victoria out of the room. Outside, she asked her what was happening, after which the anxious lady expressed concern. “Mom, I just want to ask whether you have contacted Alaric for the past two days.”*

*“Alaric?” The question caught her by surprise, and she answered after racking through her brain. “That night before we moved here, I contacted and told him about moving to Jasea with you.”*

*“What about after that? Did you contact him again?”*

*She shook her head. “He’s busy with his stuff, and we can’t bother him all the time as his parents.”*

*Her reply was clear to Victoria. In other words, she was out of contact with Alaric, too.*

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*Now that Victoria thought about it, Alaric wouldn’t have contacted anyone else since he hadn’t contacted her. She was the first person he turned to nowadays. Although she was aware of that, she couldn’t stop herself from asking and was disappointed after*

*receiving an unfavorable answer.*

*Mary could guess what was on her mind when she caught sight of Victoria's downcast eyes. After all, she had watched Victoria growing up and could take a gander at what whispers were taking root in her mind. So, she carefully approached her as she asked tentatively, "Victoria, are you worried about Alaric because he hasn't been in contact with you for the last two days?"*

*Perhaps Victoria felt safe in the knowledge that Mary was also a woman like her. Thus, she didn't feel the least bit defensive as she nodded in admittance. "Yeah. He'll usually reply to my texts."*

*"You're right." When Mary understood her concerns, she muttered pensively, "How long has it been since he last contacted you?"*

*Then, Victoria briefly told her about her text to Alaric and that she hadn't received a reply from him.*

*"So, from yesterday until now... Although it seems like a long time, have you considered the time difference between both countries? Maybe he has just returned home after he*  
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*was done with his business and didn't contact you because it was already bedtime in our time zone? It's still early now. Why don't you wait a few more hours?"*

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*She said all these to assure Victoria, and it sounded reasonable. Alas, Victoria felt nowhere close to assured because her eyelids had been twitching restlessly ever since she woke up, as though foreshadowing something terrible. She had been on the edge for hours, but she had no way of reaching Alaric.*

*"Have you given him a call?" Mary asked, seeing how worried Victoria seemed.*

*Victoria bit her lower lip before hesitantly sharing her thoughts with Mary.*

*Mary eventually realized something as she murmured, "The business he has to attend to abroad... Is it dangerous?"*

*At first, Victoria thought that Mary was aware of what Alaric was doing abroad, but when she posed such a question, it seemed like he told everyone absolutely nothing at all. Should I tell her the truth? Will it just make them worry if I tell them? Still, she steeled herself and decided against it. "It's nothing like that. I'm just worried because he's abroad and we haven't been talking."*

*Mary understood her worries based on her answer and gave her a pat on the shoulder. "I see. Don't worry. I'm sure he'll get in touch with you once he's free."*

*All of a sudden, Mary reckoned that Victoria was worried because Alaric seemed rather*  
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*distant even though they had just gotten back together. I'd better call and give him a lecture after Victoria has gone home. He should take more initiative lest he loses her again after spending all that effort to win her back.*

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*"Oh, look at you! You haven't even gotten dressed yet! Would you like to return to bed or*

*have some breakfast?"*

*Victoria tilted her head as she thought it over and said, "I'm going downstairs for breakfast." Suddenly, something else popped into her mind, and she added, "Mom, I'm going out today. As for Nicole and Nathan-*

*"Worry not. Just leave them to us. We'll drop them off at school later and pick them up after school. Don't you worry about a thing. By the way, remember to bring a bodyguard*

*with you when you're out and about so that Alaric doesn't worry about you."*

*Mary wasn't suspicious that Alaric would hire bodyguards to protect them, simply thinking that his rather excessive need for security was due to the children. Something similar had happened a few times within their circle before. Some kidnappers specially targeted children to blackmail their families for money and would kill the hostages if they didn't receive the ransom. There were also those that would take the money and kill the victims just so they could evade the law enforcers. After all, dead men tell no tales.*

*However, this didn't happen as often as those television series would love to portray as wealthy families tend to prioritize their children's safety. Regardless, it would only take Chapter 439 I'm Going to Look For Him*

*one slip-up to provide would-be criminals a chance to strike. As these families were 4/6*

*already affluent, money wasn't an issue in the face of their children's security. That was why Mary wasn't surprised to find bodyguards dogging their steps.*

*"Okay, I understand," Victoria answered and left.*

*She returned to her room to change before going downstairs. Initially, she had intended to leave right away, but a servant stopped her and made her stay for breakfast. So, she took a seat and had her breakfast absentmindedly while browsing on her phone.*

*Although the breakfast spread the cook had prepared was scrumptious, she had no appetite. Nevertheless, she was trying to finish her breakfast when she received a call from Terrance.*

*Her heart skipped a beat when she saw Terrance's name flashing across the screen, and she quickly answered it, saying urgently, "Hello, Mr. Levane. Do you have any*

news?”

*On the other end, Terrance was quiet for a few seconds before replying, “Miss Selwyn, please remain calm. Even though I haven’t been able to contact Mr. Cadogan, there’s nothing to worry about because I’m sure that he’s fine.”*

*When she picked up the call, she thought that he would finally give her some good news or shed some light on Alaric’s disappearance. Thus, the light in her eyes dimmed after hearing his words. “What do you mean? Are you still unable to get in contact with him? What about his men over there? When we left, I remember seeing quite a few men*

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*tagging along. You can contact at least one of them, right?”*

*“Yes, I did...” Terrance’s voice took on a rather cautious note as he trailed off. “But...”*

*“But what?” Victoria raised her voice, sounding a little irritated. Maybe it was because she had been feeling anxious and uneasy since last night as she had unknowingly raised her voice.*

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*By the time she noticed that she was being pushy, it was already too late. However, she quickly calmed herself and apologized, “I’m sorry I’ve just been so worried. Just tell me what happened after you contacted them.”*

*“Well, Miss Selwyn. I heard from the men there that Mr. Cadogan went out last night and left only two men in the house to pass the message. Yet, when they left, the two men couldn’t reach Mr. Cadogan and the others when it was time for them to check in.”*  
*They couldn’t be reached? she repeated in her head.*

*“Regardless, there’s no need to panic, Miss Selwyn. The place where they were going i  
s*

*well known for its terrible connection. So, it's normal that both parties couldn't get in touch during that period of time. Besides, Mr. Cadogan had brought so many people with him. I'm sure he's alright."*

*She couldn't help but bite her lower lip and didn't even notice it when she started bleeding. If anything untoward happened to Alaric on this trip, she would truly die of*

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*guilt.*

*"Miss Selwyn, are you still there?" Terrance called her a few times before she finally snapped back to her senses.*

*"Yes."*

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*"Although I believe that Mr. Cadogan is okay... I'm still taking the earliest plane to check things out just in case."*

*Victoria's heart turned cold when this news struck her, and she wondered whether he was keeping the truth from her because she would worry. "Are you going alone?"*

*"No! Of course not. I'm bringing some men along with me so I can send for backup in case something does happen."*

*"Okay, then... I'm leaving this to you," she uttered reluctantly in the end. Her lips parted a*

*few times and she really wanted to tell him that she wanted to tag along. Yet, this issue started because of her, and she would only cause more trouble if she decided to join the party. So, she could only swallow all the words that she wanted to say and silence*

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*Victoria set her phone aside and lost all interest in the food in front of her. She had planned to leave the house, but there was no need for that now that she was aware of the situation at hand.*

*“Miss Selwyn?” Her emotions were on a rollercoaster ride while she was on a call earlier, so the servant in a corner didn’t dare to make a sound. However, when the staff noticed that she hadn’t touched a single morsel on her plate after ending the call, she tentatively reminded Victoria, “The food is getting cold.”*

*Victoria lowered her head and glanced at the food before turning to the servant. Her lips parted and she wanted to tell the woman to take it away because she couldn’t stomach anything right now. After a few moments, she turned her attention back to the food and decided to finish it in a few mouthfuls before leaving the room instead. She had to set an example for the children as she was always telling them not to waste food.*

*Then, she returned to her room and dialed Alaric’s number. Although she heard from Terrance that due to the bad reception in Alaric’s area, her calls wouldn’t be answered, she simply couldn’t find it in herself to give up so easily.*

*Beep, beep.*

*The call beeped twice before disconnecting and there was no notification that Alaric*

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*had switched off his phone; it was simply not connecting. As she listened to the monotonous dial tone, she couldn’t help but wonder, What exactly is happening?*

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*Just then, her phone started ringing across the quiet room, which made her jump in surprise. She thought it was a call from Alaric but was disappointed when she saw the*

caller ID.

*“Hello.”*

*“Miss Selwyn, why do you sound so sad?” Henry’s voice echoed into Victoria’s ears since the last time she heard it days ago.*

*Right now, besides Alaric, anyone else who called her couldn’t bring her any joy. So, she*

*replied to his question in a sad, dejected voice, “It’s nothing. What’s the matter?”*

*“What else could be the matter? Miss Selwyn, when was the last time you came to the office? You weren’t answering your phone earlier and I wouldn’t have found out that you’re out of the country if I hadn’t asked Mr. Levane about your whereabouts.”*

*Office... That’s right, I still have a company to run, she recalled absentmindedly. A long*

*time had passed since she was kidnapped by Bane, and she hadn’t made a single trip to*

*the office since that fateful day.*

*“I’m sorry. Recently, I’ve... I’ve got a lot to deal with.” As she didn’t plan to tell him the truth, she fabricated some random excuse.*

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*“Okay, I can understand that you may be busy, but when do you plan to come to work?*

*Although I’m experienced, I’m not the boss of your company, and can’t make certain decisions without you giving the green light. Why don’t you free up some time and pop over to check things out?”*

*“I’m coming right now.” After she hung up, she left the house quickly. When she arrived at her office, she happened to bump into Henry discussing a collaboration with someone.*

Henry immediately caught sight of her after sending the guest off, told her about the details of the collaboration, and passed the agreement to her. "This project is not bad, but there are some things that need your personal touch as I don't have the authority to agree to them without getting your approval. So, you should look it over personally."

"Okay." She took the file from him and flicked it open. Even though her eyes were staring at rows upon rows of dizzying words, her mind was preoccupied with images of Alaric's face.

Next to her, Henry was looking at her expectantly as she stared at the first page of the agreement in her seat. One minute passed, two minutes, and then, five minutes, but she didn't even flip the page. As he found her behavior odd, he tilted his head and looked into her eyes. He quickly noticed that they weren't even focused on the words in front of her. Thus, he reckoned that her mind should have wandered elsewhere. Oh, she

seemed professional at first glance, but she was clearly not ready to handle work at the moment.

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Nevertheless, he rapped the table and said, "Miss Selwyn?" He repeated her name several times before Victoria finally snapped back to her senses.

After that, she stared at his exasperated face, feeling incredibly sorry. "I'm sorry. My mind was elsewhere."

4/6

"Miss Selwyn, I know that there's a good reason behind your strange behavior right now, but... all I need from you is to spare some time to go through this agreement. Your mind can go wherever it wants once you're done reading this. Is that okay?"

*She twitched her lips into an approximation of a smile and nodded wearily. This time, she had an iron grip on her traitorous mind, focusing on the agreement instead, and left her signature at the end once she was done with the whole thing. Then, she returned the agreement to him. "Thank you for your hard work for the past few days."*

*"Don't mention it. I'm your administrator, you know?" He smiled and was just about to leave with the agreement in his hands but couldn't stop himself from gossiping one second before he left. "Miss Selwyn, are you having a problem in your relationship?" However, his question received no reply because Victoria had slipped into her own thoughts yet again after handing the document to him.*

*In the end, he could only stare at her and sigh helplessly as he mumbled, "Forget it. Watch out when you're going home later and don't run into any accidents."*

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*He turned around and walked away but was surprised to run into half a dozen tall and bulky men in black suits and sunglasses at the door.*

*"Who are you guys?"*

*The man who was the leader glanced at him coldly. Nonetheless, he was aware that Henry was a manager in the office, so he was rather polite to Henry. "Hello, we're Miss Selwyn's bodyguards."*

*5/6*

*Henry was dumbfounded. Victoria reappeared with so many bodyguards around her after her brief disappearance. Even though she hadn't told him what happened to her in the past few days, given his intelligence, he could tell from the current situation that things were not looking good.*

*It seems like she wasn't dealing with things the past few days but had run into some*

*trouble, he thought. Otherwise, she won't have so many bodyguards in her retinue at the moment. No wonder she couldn't focus on the agreement, he thought and sighed silently.*

*Even though he had no idea what happened, he reckoned that he had a vague idea about what was going on. Nevertheless, it would only cause her more trouble if he pestered her about it now. Therefore, he tossed this matter to the back of his mind and quickly left the room with the agreement.*

*When he walked out, the lead bodyguard knocked on the door, stepped in, and found*  
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*Victoria seated at her desk with a blank look on her face.*

*Meanwhile, Victoria was deep in her thoughts. When she heard the knock on the door, she instinctively raised her head, asking, "What's the matter?"*

*The leader of these bodyguards nodded at her. "We have to ensure your safety, Miss Selwyn. If you're going to work here today, we have to be in the room to keep you safe."*

*As though worried that she wouldn't agree, he added before she could say anything, "There are windows everywhere in this office, and their men may break in through the windows."*

*Her eyes reflexively darted toward the full windows, and he continued, "As well as the air shafts."*

*She stared at him wide-eyed and thought, Fine, if one can get through the air shafts, windows seem possible. "Okay." After she gave her consent, a group of people poured in, and her spacious room immediately appeared cramped as the well-built men filled up the room. Perhaps it was her mind playing tricks on her as she felt that the air was getting stale and stuffy.*

*Hence, she got up and wanted to open the windows but had barely taken a few steps when a bodyguard stepped forward, blocking her path. “Miss Selwyn, please don’t go close to the windows. It may be dangerous.”*