

## Departure with a Belly Chapter 501

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Chapter 501 A Stalker

Jessie told Victoria about the news after she came back.

“He wants to see me?”

“Yes, but Mr. Morison looked... off when I saw him.”

That snapped Victoria out of her thoughts, and she looked at Jessie. “Can you elaborate?”

Jessie nodded. “He was acting differently from how he used to, and he had this weird look on his face.”

Victoria pursed her lips. She didn't think it was odd that Bane would do this, as she had refused to see or talk to him for days. She was sleeping most of the time, and when Bane came over, she would ignore him. So, he could do nothing but stand by the bed in silence. Sometimes, he would stand for half an hour. Sometimes one hour. Sometimes the whole morning.

Victoria, on the other hand, had no idea about this. Jessie only told her about it after she woke up. And now he wants to see me? Has Bane finally had enough? Is he finally going to confront me?

Jessie changed Victoria into casual attire—a white turtleneck wool sweater paired with long pants and a grey jacket. Her hair was tied up, making her look perky. Victoria had been eating up the last couple of days, but she was still weak, and the weather was chilly.

She was bloodless down to her lips, obviously still out of it. At first, she wanted to walk over, but Bane got her a wheelchair, planning to let her sit on it and have someone push her to the destination.

Victoria was reluctant at first. She thought she was healthy enough to walk, so there was no need for

a wheelchair.

However, Jessie said, "Miss Selwyn, he's probably worried you've gotten weak from not eating well. Walking might drain too much of your energy, so it'd be better if you go in a wheelchair. I'll take

there. You don't have to exhaust yourself."

you

Oh, so that's why. Victoria nodded. "I see."

She then sat in the wheelchair. It was then she realized she was getting dizzy from all the standing. The complications were still lingering around. The wheelchair could really save her energy.

up.

Since they would only meet at night, they had a lot of time to prepare. Once they were done, Jessie pushed her out, and it was already nighttime by then.

Victoria was surprised they would be going out. "Why is he seeing me outside?"

Jessie shook her head, confused as well. "I initially thought he'd meet you at his place but was told he'd meet you outside just moments ago. And judging from the address, it's... on the rooftop?"

Victoria's heart skipped a beat when she heard that. On the rooftop? Why is he meeting me on a rooftop? Knowing that they would meet on a rooftop made her heart race. She pursed her lips and gripped the armrest tightly.

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"Oh, the stars are beautiful tonight. Look."

She looked up and was greeted by a river of stars hanging in the night sky. It had been so long since she took a good look at the night sky, and the sight mesmerized her. She could find no words to describe her feelings. Still, she was uneasy.

Jessie, however, was oblivious to this. She loved stars and wouldn't stop staring at them. Even after they got into the car, she would lean on the window and stare up into the sky, excitedly babbling away. Victoria would smile and nod at her.

She checked the rearview mirror and frowned. There was a black car behind them, and it had been following them for a while now. Most people wouldn't notice that, given that the traffic was heavy and the roads were intertwined. However, Victoria paid attention to detail, and every time she checked the rearview mirror, she would still see the car following them.

It wasn't tailing them closely, but it was obvious they were following them. Victoria then looked around. Jessie was still leaning on the window, staring at the stars. Ethan had his arms crossed, and his eyes were closed. The driver was driving ahead.

Aside from her, no one knew they were being tailed. She wasn't surprised that the driver and Jessie would be oblivious to the car, but Ethan should've noticed. She pursed her lips and was wondering if she should tell Ethan about it, but then the car swiveled another corner.

She checked the rearview mirror again, but the car was nowhere to be found. Suspicion flared in her eyes. It stopped following us. Why? Did I imagine things?

Just then, Jessie blurted out, "We're here, Miss Selwyn."

We're here already? Victoria turned around and noticed a luxury hotel standing before them. Ethan opened his eyes as well once the car came to a stop. The car doors opened, but the driver didn't go with them. He'd be waiting in the underground parking lot.

Victoria held Jessie's hand and got out of the car. She looked at the wheelchair and frowned, suddenly thinking she didn't need it. "The wheelchair-"

"Worry not, Miss Selwyn. Once we get to the top, we'll tuck the wheelchair away. There'll be chairs waiting for you. We'll help you with it. Don't tire yourself out."

After some persuasion from Jessie and Ethan, Victoria plopped down on the wheelchair, letting them push her inside.

They garnered a lot of attention on their way, but Victoria pretended that there wasn't anyone around.

Ethan and Jessie flanked Victoria as they waited for the elevator to arrive. Victoria looked around and pursed her lips. Odd. There were a lot of people when we came in, so how come only three of us are waiting for the elevator? And there's no one around.

A man turned the corner and approached them, holding a suitcase. He then stopped before the elevator.

Victoria pursed her lips and massaged her forehead. I've been feeling uneasy all day. Maybe I should go out more. It's been a while since I went around.

The elevator arrived, and they went inside. Jessie pressed the top floor's button, whereas the man, who came in after them, pressed the button for the eighteenth floor.

As they went up, Victoria felt a chill settle in, and she pulled her collar tighter. I wonder what Bane going to talk about.

Suddenly, the elevator screeched to a halt. Shocked, the passengers looked at the indicator and realized they'd just ascended two floors.

"What's wrong?" Jessie pressed the 'open' button, but the elevator doors wouldn't budge.

"Mr. Hudson, I think the elevator's malfunctioned."

## **Chapter 502 Take You Away**

Ethan pressed a few buttons, but the elevator wouldn't budge.

Since she was sitting down at the back of the elevator, Victoria couldn't see what they were doing. Though, when the elevator had gone a while without moving, she had already guessed what had happened. "Has the elevator malfunctioned? Why don't we take the stairs? Or another elevator next door?" This is a luxury hotel. It should have a few elevators running at the same time.

Jessie blurted, "No can do, Miss Selwyn. We can't even open the doors, so we can't even get out. Oh, no! That might scare her. She whirled and assured, "But don't worry. We've just climbed two floors, and with the security measures in place, we'll be fine."

Oh, she's worried I might be scared. Victoria wasn't too concerned, however. She was a city girl, and the place was teeming with buildings. Elevators were a must, and she was using them every day. Malfunctions were normal, and with elevator tech being as advanced as it was now, she wasn't worried about herself. "I'm fine. Don't worry," she assured.

"They have an emergency elevator. I'll make the call," the other man in the elevator blurted and made a call.

The man looked like a foreigner, yet he was speaking in Corynthean, much to everyone's surprise. Ethan watched him make the call, and the man told the staff about the malfunction. He pursed his lips and looked at the man intently.

"The staff's coming over soon, so stay calm." The man hung up and noticed everyone was staring at him, and he smiled. "Odd hearing me speak Corynthean, huh? I was an exchange student in Corynthea, so I learned the language, and I learned it for a while."

Victoria wasn't fazed, but Jessie got excited and started chatting up the man. About a couple of minutes later, some staff members came to fix the elevator.

"It's stuck. Once we open the doors, you guys come out," the staff member announced, and they started fixing the elevator.

Once a crack big enough for one person to go through was made, the staff member said, "Alright,

you may come out now."

Ethan looked at the man who had made the call earlier. He was going to move ahead, but then he realized something, and he looked at Victoria. "Ah, the lady seems unfit to walk. I think we should let her out first."

Hmm, nothing suspicious. Though, Ethan couldn't let Victoria go first, as he was worried. However, he could not leave her behind either. Thus, he told Jessie, "You go first and wait for Miss Selwyn outside."

Jessie was going to let Victoria leave first, but Ethan's suggestion was not a bad idea, so she nodded. With the help of the men and the staff members, she got out of the elevator. Jessie confirmed that the coast was clear, and she shouted, "Mr. Hudson, you can let Miss Selwyn out now."

"Alright." Ethan held Victoria up. "I'll be giving you a leg up. Just step on my shoulders. You don't have to worry about anything."

"Thank you." Victoria had little strength left in her body, so she needed help with even the most minute of labor. With Ethan and the other man's help, she was pushed up. Then, a pair of hands extended down toward her.

They were beautiful hands, their fingers slender, and there was a silver ring around his finger. Huh. I've never thought hotel staff would have such handsome hands. She might have lost her memories, but whenever she ran into any case of the malfunctioning elevator, she remembered that the staff members didn't have hands this beautiful.

Something was odd. Victoria figured she shouldn't extend her hands, but for some reason, she still

put

her hand into the man's palm. The moment their skin touched, the man held her tight, and a surge of warmth traveled across her hand.

There was no time to think, for the man pulled her up without hesitating. As she was yanked back up, she felt something familiar coming from this man. When she got out, she wanted to see who the man was, but someone's hand reached her waist, and she was swept off her feet.

The speed made her wobble a little, and her hand slithered upward. When she made the landing, she noticed that she had her arm wrapped around the man's neck, and her face was buried in his

chest.

A familiar yet unfamiliar scent assailed her nose. She wanted to look up, but the man held her in a princess carry.

“Let’s go,” the man said coolly, but he sounded so familiar. Before she realized what was happening, the man was already running with her, and her arms were still wrapped around his neck.

The familiar sensation from the man-made her realize something, and she looked up slowly. The first thing she saw was his tense jaw, and there was stubble around it. Then, she moved her his nose, then his terse, icy eyes, and finally, his neatly-cropped hair.

gaze to

When she finally saw who this man was, her heart started to race. When she went through her phone to check her photos, she noticed a photo of them, though he was standing in the distance. She wasn’t sure if he was the man in the photo, but she had a feeling this man had close ties to her.

Even though she couldn’t see the man clearly in the photo, she knew he was the same man in that photo when she came face to face with the man holding her in his arms. He was also the one she wanted to find. Alaric... Realization sank in, and Victoria’s breathing was starting to get ragged.

Why is he here? I thought he was supposed to be in a coma. Did he wake up? And how did he show up at the right time? Was he the one who’d been following me the whole night? Her mind was a mess. As Alaric took her away, she said, “A-A minute, please.”

Alaric looked at her. When Victoria met his gaze, she teared up. He was as handsome and dashing as usual, but there was listlessness swimming in his eyes, and dark circles covered the skin under his eyes. “Don’t talk. We have to get you away from here first.”

Chapter 503 He Abused You

There was a group of people behind him, too, including Terrance. With a worried gaze, he looked at Victoria. “Is your leg hurt, Miss Selwyn?”

Alaric looked at her leg for a moment before staring ahead once more. He didn’t want to risk tripping and causing harm to her, so he had to keep his eyes on the road. “Not the time for that. Once we leave this place, I’ll take you to the doctor.”

He held her tighter, almost merging them into one. Victoria kept trying to tell him to wait, but he didn't listen. All he cared about was taking her away. He knew she would be here, so the whole street was evacuated for them. No one came to stop them as they went through the street, and before long, Victoria was tucked into a car-the very same one that followed them.

But the car turned to the other junction on its way here, so how did it come back that fast?

Once they were in the car, Alaric said coldly, "Go."

The car whizzed ahead, and a motorcade followed it. Victoria settled in and recalled Ethan and Jessie were still in the hospital, so she turned around. She then felt something tighten around her shoulders, and the air cooled. It was Alaric holding her in his embrace.

"Good to see you safe," he whispered. Victoria's chin was resting on his shoulder.

He was holding her firmly in his embrace, his arms like vines enveloping her, refusing to let her go.

Victoria teared up. She might have lost all memories of him, but the feeling that came from him was something she would never forget. She wasn't averse to his touch. Even when she had lost her memories and Bane had claimed that he was her fiancé, she would still stay away from him and avoid his touch. She did not feel repulsed by this man, however.

She loved everything about him, and she had longed for him; his touch, his warmth, and even the sound of his breathing. A few moments later, Victoria slowly returned his hug. A long, long while later, she caught a whiff of blood, and she scrunched up her nose, thinking she must've gotten it wrong.

Yet, the stench worsened. Noticing that something was off, Victoria pushed Alaric away. At first, he wouldn't let go of her, still holding her tightly, but then he realized there must be a reason for this, so he let her go and stared at her closely. "Are you hurt somewhere?"

Oh, he's let me go. Victoria shook her head. Just when she was about to ask him a few questions, she noticed the blood on his shirt, and she extended her hand, trying to touch it. "You're hurt?"

Before she could touch his wound, he grabbed her hand. "I'm fine." A beautiful smile curled his lips. "Just an old wound. Nothing big."

She frowned at that. "An old wound? But it's bleeding."

Alaric froze and raised his other hand, trying to hold the wound down, but then he noticed something off, so he stopped himself. Terrance, too, noticed what he wanted to do, so he quickly handed Alaric a folded handkerchief. "Mr. Cadogan."

Alaric took it and held it down on his wound, saying, "I'm fine. Must've pulled on it just now."

"Is that so?" Victoria gave him a doubtful stare. "Are you sure you're fine?"

"I'm fine," he reassured, but he still wouldn't let her go, as if he was afraid she might get a closer look.

Displeased, the woman tried to break free, but he wouldn't release her hand, and she frowned. "Let me go."

"No." Alaric shook his head, his eyes glimmering with tenderness, the neon lights and silvery moonlight raining down on him. "I've missed you. Let me hold you for a bit longer."

Hearing his response, Victoria didn't know what to say.

Terrance felt awkward, and he turned around. I can't believe he's this awkward. He wouldn't let her see his wound, and he came up with a lame excuse for it.

Victoria wasn't that easily tricked, however. Even though she did feel a little touched when he said he missed her, she still wanted to know about his wound. She struggled again. "I know, but at least let me check your wound or deal with it."

For some reason, Alaric wouldn't let her hand go, refusing to let her check his wounds. Instead, he looked down. "Are you hurt anywhere? And what about your legs?" Moments ago, he noticed she

exited her car and sat in a wheelchair.

Victoria froze for a moment as she recalled something. He must think my legs are hurt or something. So, she explained, "My legs are fine. I just went with the wheelchair because I'm

weakened.”

“Weakened?” Alaric narrowed his eyes. “Did he abuse you?” As he said that, the air around him turned tense, dangerous, and sharp.

That feeling did not escape Victoria, and she sighed. “It’s not him. It’s me.”

“What happened?” Alaric asked nervously.

Victoria didn’t answer. Instead, she looked at him silently. “I’m fine.”

The man frowned upon hearing her reply.

“I mean, you told me you’re fine, too. If you won’t let me see your wound, I don’t think I’m going to tell you my story.”

Oh, she’s annoyed that I wouldn’t let her see my wound. Alaric pursed his lips and said, “I’ll get the doctor to give you a full-body checkup when we get home.”

Dam mit, he’s not going to show me his wound, huh? The man held her hand in one hand while the other was on his injury. Victoria noticed that the handkerchief was slowly turning red while they spoke. And he says he’s fine?! He’s bleeding so much! She pursed her lips in displeasure. “Even if you don’t want me to see it, at least get someone to deal with the bleeding.”

Alaric froze for a moment, hesitation flitting in his eyes.

“At this rate, you’re going to black out due to blood loss. Are you trying to make me feel guilty

At this point, Terrance piped up, “She’s right, Mr. Cadogan. I know you’re worried about her, but now that she’s insisting, I think you should get your wound looked at. We have a medical kit in the

car.”

A moment of silence later, Alaric finally nodded.

Chapter 504 He Won’t Take You Away Again

Alaric was thinking of letting Terrance deal with the wound, but the moment he came back with the medical kit, Victoria took it from him. Terrance looked at her for a brief moment before turning his attention to Alaric. He only moved to the back seat when he got a nod from Alaric.

“Still not letting me go?” Victoria looked at the hand that was holding her wrist.

Alaric looked at her wrist as well. It was so slender that it looked almost like a twig. A beautiful one, though. Still, he frowned. It had only been a while, but she had gotten sickly thin. He looked at her and blamed himself for what happened. If he knew this would happen, he wouldn't have relented. He gnashed his teeth and slowly let go of her wrist.

Victoria opened the medical kit without saying anything and whipped out the meds needed to treat his wounds. While she was doing that, the man kept his eyes on her.

He didn't notice it at first since they were in a hurry, but now that he had time, he realized that her face had gotten smaller, and the bones were almost jutting out. She was bloodless down to her lips. Something squeezed his heart tighter and tighter, filling it with regret.

Victoria found the meds she needed a while later. There weren't a lot of items in the kit, so she could only clean his wounds in the simplest way possible. She huddled closer to him and tried to take the handkerchief away, but Alaric stopped her out of instinct.

She looked at him, and he said with resignation, “Why don't you let him do it?” By him, he meant

Terrance.

“Why? Can't I do this?” she asked.

“I don't want to scare you.”

“If you keep this up, you'll faint. In the end, I'll still be the one dealing with you,” said Victoria.

A moment of silence later, Alaric finally moved his hand away and unbuttoned his shirt. It was a fresh wound located in a different place, and it almost killed him, too. Due to this wound, the doctor forbade him to leave the hospital, but he was unstoppable. Still, right after he left, the injury wouldn't stop bleeding, so he had to try his best to staunch the bleeding on his way here.

At this moment, Alaric didn't look too good himself, too. Victoria tended to his wound in silence. A long while later, she looked up. “Done. However, this is just a crude handling of it; you still need a professional to treat your wound. Where are we going, by the way? And when will we get there? You should get a doctor to help you with this.”

“We're going to the airport,” said Alaric.

The woman looked at him in surprise. "The airport?"

"Yeah. We're taking you home." After he busted her out last time, they were held back by something, and then one thing led to another. This time, he would not make the same mistake again. This time, he would take her back home.

As for Bane... Well, since he broke his word and almost killed me, I guess we're even now. The next time we meet, we'll be strangers. No, worse than that... The look in his eyes darkened, and he pulled

Victoria closer. "No one's going to take you away from me this time."

Is he seriously planning to go to the airport? Victoria was against his idea. He is badly injured, What if no one at the airport can deal with his wound? And I bet flying back is going to take a lot of time. What if his injury gets worse? Her frown deepened. "Are you sure you don't want to get that checked before you leave?"

"I am sure."

"But-"

"No buts. Let me handle this." He would not let himself fall. Sure enough, he wanted to save her, but he also had to keep himself safe if he wished to protect her.

Victoria had wondered how he would deal with the wound, but she had gotten her answer upon arriving at the airport. It seemed that Alaric had told a doctor to wait for him beforehand, so the moment they arrived, the doctor swiftly dealt with the wound.

Victoria heaved a sigh of relief. As the tension melted away, exhaustion swarmed her. While Alaric was getting treated, everything around her turned black, and she fell sideways, oblivious to what was happening around her after that.

"Is she alright? When will she wake up?"

"Is this malnourishment? Or a burnout?"

Beeps and noises blared around her, and a stab of pain flared up Victoria's arm.

“She’s fine. Not injured either. She just needs to rest up after she wakes, and she’ll be fine.”

Then, she heard more noises. Sometimes clear, sometimes vague, sometimes near, sometimes far. And then... nothing. For a long time, she was plunged into darkness.

God knew how long had gone by when she regained consciousness. It was daytime when she woke up. Her head and body felt heavy; it was as if she had a ton of lead stuffed into her. Someone was resting their head on the edge of her bed-it was Alaric. He was sleeping, but one slight movement woke him up.

When he realized she had regained consciousness, he stood up. “Are you feeling better?” He huddled closer.

Victoria blinked and nodded. “Yeah. I feel alright.” At this distance, she noticed his bloodshot eyes. He looks exhausted, she thought as she felt the tickle of his breath on her face.

“Are you sure?” He didn’t believe her, so he didn’t move back and stayed in position, millimeters

from her.

away

Victoria felt nervous, and her face flushed at their proximity. She tried to move away, but the moment she did, Alaric closed in and pressed his lips against hers.

She stopped breathing for a moment. Alaric didn’t move and held the kiss for a long time, his eyes

gitaning withi

A while later, Victoria found the silence unbearable, so she looked away. The man paused for a moment before moving back while pursing his lips. “Are you thirsty? Do you need any water?” he asked hoarsely.

She gulped for a bit and realized she was parched, so she nodded.

“Alright.” He got up and went to get some water for her. It was only then she could finally breathe easier. With him gone, she could ease up a bit, then a while later, he came back with half a glass of

water.

He held her up and put a pillow behind her back. When she insisted on drinking the water by herself, he got a little upset and was adamant about feeding her. She couldn't refuse him, so she relented and took little sips from the glass.

At the same time, Alaric stared at her. Eventually, her cheeks burned up under his gaze, and she broke the ice. "Were you guys behind the elevator malfunction?"

The look in Alaric's eyes softened. "How'd you know?"

### **Chapter 505 You Took Me Away**

How did Victoria notice it? She had probably sensed something was off since the moment she noticed someone tailing them on the road a while ago, though that car had left them halfway. And after she left the hotel, the car she entered was the same car that had tailed her earlier. She put two and two together and guessed the gist of it. "The guy in the elevator was working for you, too, wasn't he?"

Since she had stopped drinking, Alaric wiped her lips and nodded. "Mm-hmm."

*I see. No wonder there was barely anyone waiting for the elevator. That shouldn't be the case for a packed hotel. And just when I was questioning things, a guy showed up. Then, as if by coincidence, the elevator broke down right after it started ascending. The man then made a call, and then Alaric showed up. That could only mean one thing: it was all orchestrated.*

Alaric was delighted that she could talk about that little accident with a clear mind. While she was out cold, the doctor had told him that even though she suffered no visible injuries, she still had to be put under observation to see if she had sustained any injuries to her innards or brains. If she could hold her own in a conversation like a normal person, then she should be fine.

Fortunately, she was fine, aside from the fact that she had to get more nourishment. However, Alaric's smile didn't stay for long.

Victoria looked around and asked, "Where am I?"

Alaric froze and looked at her. "I'm sorry?"

Hmm, the tone *changed*. The woman frowned. *Was it something I said?* She looked around and asked softly, "I just want to know where I am."

Alaric's smile faltered at first because of the question. He thought it was just a lapse in memory, but now that she was asking him the same question again, his smile disappeared. This was where they lived. After he had woken up, he found out that Victoria and the kids used to live in this place, so he took her back home, thinking she could meet the kids.

However, his father said that Mary took the kids to see their great-grandmother, so Alaric figured he would let her stay until she woke up, then they would talk. She woke up eventually, though she didn't seem to recognize this place.

His breathing quickened, but he didn't show his panic. Instead, he looked at Victoria, asking, "This is your home, or have you forgotten about it?"

Victoria didn't look fazed at all. She nodded, absorbing the information. "I see." Just then, she remembered something. Quickly, she asked, "What about the lady and the man who came out with me after I was rescued?" Jessie had no idea about the mess she was in. The girl was just doing her job, and Ethan had helped her a lot. If he hadn't told her that she had kids, she wouldn't even have the motivation to leave, much less escape.

*And if I hadn't left the ward, Alaric wouldn't have the opening to save me.*

Noticing her concern for the pair, Alaric said, "My men's job was to bust you out. They won't harm the two of them, but I'm not sure what happened to them."

Victoria heaved a sigh of relief. As long as they weren't harmed, then everything was fine. Once Alaric's men were gone, Jessie could probably help Ethan out of the elevator. They should be fine, though she couldn't help but wonder if Bane would punish them.

"I wouldn't harm them, not when Ethan has saved you before."

Victoria sighed. "So, he's saved me before." No wonder she felt closer to Ethan when she saw him. Even when her memories were gone, her body still remembered the people who were nice to her.

Alaric frowned and narrowed his eyes. "You forgot about that?"

Just then, Victoria realized something. Alaric probably had no idea she had lost her memories. She did recognize him the moment they met, after all. She was pondering on the option of telling him about her memory loss when he posed a question.

“What’s wrong with your memories? Did you hurt your head?”

Victoria nodded. “Yes.”

Alaric guessed as much, but getting the confirmation still made his heart bleed. “Did you lose all your memories?” The look on his face darkened. “No. If that’s the case, then how did you recognize me?”

“Because I searched your photos on my phone,” she replied. “And Ethan told me about you.”

*Is this a joke? “What?” He stared at Victoria in disbelief. She came all the way here, and now she’s telling me she had lost her memories?! And she only recognized me because Ethan told her about me and showed her my photos?*

“It’s hard to find your pictures. You’ve kept yourself hidden well. We only got a vague photo of you where you were standing in the distance. I couldn’t even see your face.”

Alaric was starting to feel suffocated. *So, she’s lost her memories.*

*Wait, does that mean she didn’t even remember me when I was saving her? She came with me based on nothing but her instinct, huh?* He gritted his teeth. “You came with me even when you weren’t sure the man in the photo was me? What if I was a villain?”

Victoria was surprised he would question her. A moment of pause later, she responded, “I didn’t come with you. You took me away.”

*Oh, she’s right.* Alaric froze for a while and sputtered, “So, you’d just let

anyone

take

you away?”

“Of course not,” she denied without any hesitation.

And he felt a little better hearing that.

“I couldn’t see your face clearly, but the moment you showed up, I felt...” She paused for a moment, thinking how she should describe the feeling.

Alaric couldn’t wait to hear it. “Felt what?”

“Felt like you were different. That you’re the one I’ve been waiting for.”

The man felt something gouging his heart. He felt for Victoria, and he pulled her into his embrace: “Next time, don’t run off with anyone you see, even if you feel they might be good people. Don’t run off with anyone aside from me.”

Victoria tasted his scent. It felt cool and calming, and there was a hint of meds fused within. She frowned. “I thought you were badly hurt and fell into a coma. So, why and how’d you show up?”