

Departure with a Belly Chapter 276

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Hopson remained oblivious to Terrance's identity, but when it came to the Cadogan Group, ignorance seemed implausible. After all, Alaric's name held substantial weight within their company.

Janice possessed the same awareness as she stood beside Hopson, and their expressions immediately changed.

"Are you looking for us?"

Seeing the couple's shocked demeanor, Terrance took out several documents from his briefcase and repeated their names.

"Hopson Anderson and Janice Xenon. That's both of you, correct? The photographs match," he remarked.

Intrigued, both of them leaned in, confirming their personal information and images portrayed on the documents.

"Yes, it's us. May we know why you are looking for us?"

"This is not an appropriate place for discussion. Shall we move inside for a

“Absolutely, please come in,” Hopson swiftly responded, extending an invitation into the sanctuary of their home.

Once within, Terrance swiftly surveyed the surroundings, aligning his observations with the information outlined in the documents. Indeed, their living conditions appeared average—their struggles were evident as they managed to scrape together funds for a down payment but found it challenging to meet their monthly mortgage payments and their child’s school fees. Moreover, additional expenses for household items remained beyond their financial reach.

Seeking to extend hospitality, Janice poured a cup of tea for Terrance.

After declining the offer, Terrance promptly produced the documents, ready to delve into the purpose of his visit.

“Considering that both you and your spouse have afternoon commitments, I shall not detain you for long. Let us proceed directly with the matter at hand.”

At that, Terrance proceeded to explain the purpose behind his visit, leaving the couple momentarily stunned, their gazes locked in a shared moment of disbelief.

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"Did we hear you correctly? Are you being serious?"

Terrance nodded in affirmation.

"You heard me correctly. Alaric intends to provide financial support for your child's education."

Puzzled, Janice couldn't help but express her confusion. "Why, though? Isn't sponsorship usually reserved for children in rural areas or those with impoverished circumstances? Our family's situation doesn't seem that dire, does it?"

"Indeed, sponsorship is usually provided to children from rural regions, but there is a reason why Mr. Cadogan is offering support to you. It's not because your family is impoverished, but rather because there is a distant connection between your ancestors and the Cadogan Family."

He certainly wouldn't mention that Alaric was doing it to get closer to his own children.

Janice was perplexed. "A distant familial connection?"

Upon hearing this, Hopson suddenly slapped his thigh.

"No wonder my great-grandmother used to talk about our ancestors having some

relationship with the Cadogan Family in Gandra. I thought she was just rambling in her old age, but it turns out it's true."

"That's right. If you agree to it, you need to sign this document. I'll head to the school this afternoon and send your child to the other school."

"Which school?"

Terrance mentioned the name of the school where the two little ones were studying. Upon hearing the name of the school, the couple's jaws dropped in shock.

"Isn't that an elite school?"

"Of course, if we are providing support, it should naturally be for the best school. The same goes for the future. As long as your child performs well, Mr. Cadogan will sponsor their studies at any university they get admitted into."

"Regarding the inconvenience of your child traveling home after school, we have a solution for that as well. Starting tomorrow, both of you can directly report to the Cadogan Group and start working there. We have also found a house for conveniently located near the company."

you, which is

11:00 Sat, 1 Jul

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Now, the couple was completely dumbfounded.

Supporting their child's education was one thing, but finding jobs for them and arranging a house? Could such good fortune truly exist in this world?

Hopson couldn't believe it.

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"You're not trying to deceive us, are you? Are you some real estate developer trying to use this scheme to get us to buy an expensive house?"

In the next moment, Terrance slapped a property certificate in front of them. "The house has been fully paid for. The both of you just need to move in."

Twenty minutes later, the couple bid farewell to Terrance with gratitude and sent him off downstairs. They promised to resign from their jobs and arrange for their child's withdrawal from school in the afternoon, ensuring that they would allow their son to join the new school immediately the day after.

Terrance was satisfied. "Remember not to delay the arrangements. I expect to see you tomorrow morning."

"Don't worry, it'll be no problem. We'll move tonight, even if it means not getting any sleep."

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After completing everything, Terrance finally left, feeling satisfied.

Victoria went to the bank and withdrew 7,000 bucks. Since she had to carry various items for her kids, her charming little bag had long been replaced with a larger one, abandoning the one she used to carry during her teenage years.

The money fit comfortably inside her bag.

She never expected the other party to ask for 7,000 bucks in cash.

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He had been so generous with his tips, so what could he possibly do with a mere 7,000 bucks?

Now, Victoria truly understood that demanding repayment was just a pretense; the real intention was to meet her.

As for why he wanted to meet her...

Victoria reserved two seats and offered the one by the window to the other party.

She planned to follow Summer's advice and see what the other party truly desired.

At the same time, Alaric sat upstairs in the restaurant with a dark expression, his

fixed on the entrance downstairs. The atmosphere around him was undeniably gloomy.

Terrance could also feel the chill in the air as he sat beside him. He subconsciously adjusted his clothes and looked at Alaric.

“Mr. Cadogan, Miss Victoria has agreed to meet you. Why are you still angry?”

As soon as the words left his mouth, Alaric responded with a cold and eerie laugh. “Is she here to meet me or another man?”

Upon hearing this, Terrance couldn't help but display an expression of speechlessness.

“Regardless of who she's here to meet, aren't you the guy?”

Alaric pursed his lips tightly and remained silent.

Although he didn't utter a word, Alaric's demeanor made it clear that he was still upset.

As such/Terrance asked, “Mr. Cadogan, are you still jealous of yourself?”

Of course, the silence was the only response he received.

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In truth, Terrance could somewhat understand why Alaric would be angry. Victoria agreed to meet a man whose identity she didn't even know, yet she would never agree to meet Alaric; such a disparity could make one feel uneasy.

However, Terrance could only offer a gentle reminder, saying, “Mr. Cadogan, I don’t mean to criticize you, but from Victoria’s perspective, both of you haven’t seen each other for five years. It has been a tough journey for her to raise two children on her own during this time, and she left when you already divorced her. As such, her feelings toward you would be diminished, not heightened. It’s not surprising that she would refuse to see you.”

As he spoke, Alaric suddenly cast a piercing gaze at him, startling Terrance before he immediately became silent, not daring to utter another word.

However, after a while, Alaric furrowed his brows and continued to stare at him, “What were you going to say next? Go on.”

Terrance chuckled inwardly and continued, “Therefore, Alaric, you must adjust your mindset. Instead of being mad at her, you should be grateful that she has spent these five years raising the children alone without getting married. That’s the only reason you have a chance now. After all, it has been five years.”

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One would find it hard to remain logical when they got angry—their emotions would consume their rationality.

Alaric was no different, especially when encountering his lover. However, he seemed to regain his sensibility after hearing Terrance's words, and his anger died down after that. Alaric lowered his gaze to conceal the grim look in his eyes. That's true. I don't have the right to be mad, do I? As Terrance said, it has been five years. I should be glad that she isn't married and that I even got the chance to ask her out. I shouldn't care about who the man is as long as he isn't someone else. At that thought, Alaric looked up to meet Terrance's gaze. "Alright. You're a pretty impressive guy," Alaric commented.

"I know, right?" Terrance was quick to request for a reward. "Well, in that case, can I get a pay raise, Mr. Cadogan?"

Alaric burst into laughter upon hearing Terrance's words. "We'll talk about that later. Have you completed all the tasks I gave you?"

"Yes, it's all done. They're moving houses tonight, and we can pick the kid up tomorrow. But... Mr. Cadogan, are you planning to pretend that the child is yours in front of those two kids? I don't think that's a good idea, is it?"

"Of course not," Alaric replied in a flat tone. "Why would I claim to be the father to someone else's child? There's no way I'd do that."

Mr. Cadogan has a point. He would never allow someone else to call him their father, even if it's just for acting purposes, Terrance thought. "Have you thought of the role you're playing, then?" Terrance asked.

"I just have to be family, right? I can just claim to be one of the kid's relatives," Alaric replied.

Terrance was quick to come up with a solution. "Why don't you get the kid to refer to you by your last name? You could be their uncle or an elder."

Uncle or elder, huh? Well, those two kids call me Mr. Night, anyway. Alaric nodded eventually. "That works."

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Then, Terrance pulled his phone out to take down some notes. "I have another suggestion, but I'm a little afraid to tell you about it, Mr. Cadogan," he added after he recalled something.

"Spit it out."

"Well... Maybe you could allow that kid from the Anderson Family to stay at your place

for a bit, at least until those two kids trust you a little more," Terrance suggested.

Alaric frowned upon hearing the man's words. "What are you talking about?"

“I know you don’t like when there are outsiders, but I think you can just get the nanny to prepare a room for the kid. The kid won’t bother you at all,” Terrance added.

Alaric’s brows were still furrowed as he kept his lips pressed together.

“Haven’t you ever considered inviting your kids over to your place with the use of the Andersons’ kid as an excuse? Wouldn’t you guys be able to bond more with such private and intimate interactions?” Terrance asked.

Alaric’s brows seemed to relax a little after hearing Terrance’s full explanation.

“Yeah,” Alaric replied icily while nodding. He pressed his lips together for a while, and he

looked like he was about to say something when a familiar figure showed up at the front door.

Terrance noticed the newcomer, and he let out a surprised gasp. “Miss Selwyn’s here!”

“Shh. Don’t let her find out,” Alaric whispered.

Terrance hastily clamped his hand over his mouth before he instinctively crouched

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down. He was afraid that Victoria would notice them the moment she looked up.

“There’s still 30 minutes until her appointment. Why is she here so early?” he asked.

Alaric glanced at his watch. He had relaxed his facial muscles earlier, but he knitted his brows again as he thought, Yeah, why did she come earlier? Is she that eager to meet this stranger? That thought made Alaric clench his fists at first, but he quickly calmed himself down when he recalled what Terrance had said earlier. Forget it. I need to keep

my cool. 'I'm' the guy she's supposed to meet, anyway.

Victoria entered the restaurant with her handbag hanging off her shoulder. "Hello, Miss," the waiter greeted.

"Hello, I made a reservation for..." After telling the waiter about her reservation, the waiter led her into the restaurant. Alaric, who was sitting upstairs, glared at the woman with a cold look in his eyes. She had reserved a window seat. Alaric's expression had been hard at first, but it turned into confusion when he saw that the waiter didn't bring Victoria to a window seat and led her in the opposite direction instead. What's going on? Did the waiter forget where her seat was, or did she get it wrong? As Alaric was contemplating the situation, the waiter had already led Victoria to the stairs.

Alaric's expression wavered when he heard Terrance's cry. "Oh, no. The waiter isn't going to lead her upstairs, is he? What should we do, Mr. Cadogan?" There was only one way up, so they had no other way to go down.

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Terrance was panicking at that point. "What should we do? Miss Selwyn is going to notice us, isn't she?" After all, they weren't supposed to meet that day—they had only invited her over to match her up with another guy. Wouldn't Mr. Cadogan's identity get exposed if she saw him now? Terrance thought.

“What’s the worry about?” Alaric shot Terrance a heartless side-eye when he saw how anxious Terrance was. “Calm down.”

“Mr. Cadogan...” Even though Alaric told Terrance to calm down, Terrance couldn’t do it on demand. “She’s just coming upstairs. Is there anything wrong with her bumping into us at a time like this? Do you think she’d associate us with that man?” Alaric explained.

Terrance felt himself calming down as he listened to Alaric’s cold and monotonous voice. “That’s true. We’re not sitting downstairs, so she wouldn’t have noticed us earlier,

anyway. We should keep our cool.” Terrance lifted his cup of coffee to take a huge gulp of it. Before he could swallow his drink, he turned around to see the waiter leading Victoria over to their seats. The closer Victoria got, the harder Terrance found it to swallow his drink. The waiter ended up stopping at the table right beside them.

“This is the spot you booked, Miss Selwyn,” the waiter announced.

Alaric, Terrance, and Victoria were all speechless for a moment. It was obvious that Victoria had already noticed Alaric and Terrance when she was walking over. She felt

utterly speechless, and questions flashed across her mind when she first saw them.

What’s he doing here? Then, she was reminded of what Alaric had told her on the

phone when she was at the airport. “Do you think I won’t be able to handle you after you

arrive at Jasea?” Alaric’s words had a clear meaning to them—he meant that he wasn’t

about to let her go that easily.

However, Victoria hadn't expected him to show up at a place like this. What is he trying to do? Is he just going to continue following me around and pestering me? A hint of disgust surfaced in Victoria's chest before she turned around and apologized to the waiter. "I'm sorry. I've decided I don't like this spot. Can I change my seat?" she asked. The waiter was confused. "What?"

"Are there other available seats downstairs?" Victoria asked.

The waiter nodded slowly. "Yes, there are available seats."

"Great. Please get me a seat-" Before Victoria could finish her sentence, she sensed a tall, slender figure standing beside her.

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Alaric was extremely tall, and he was practically just inches away from Victoria, so Victoria could feel his icy yet strong aura envelope her. Her instincts told her to step back and keep her distance from him. Unfortunately, she tripped on something as she tried to step back, and she toppled backward until Alaric reached out and wrapped an arm around her waist. He pulled her toward himself, and she felt his strength tugging her in his direction.

Victoria's fragrant scent shot up Alaric's nose as her body pressed against his chest. As

he felt her frail figure against his body and her soft and supple skin against his hands,

he tugged his lips into a slight smirk. "Are you that nervous to see me?" he uttered as he raised an eyebrow to eye her playfully.

Victoria immediately pushed him away once she regained her footing. "Let go of me." However, the arm around her waist was like a steel clamp, and she couldn't seem to push him away no matter how hard she tried. He was like a mountain that she couldn't move. When the waiter saw this entire scene, he widened his eyes with amusement and curiosity as he took a few steps back. "Since we know each other, you can just share the table with me. You don't have to go back downstairs." Alaric led her to his table, his arm still around her waist.

"What makes you think I'd want to share a table with you? Let go of me!" Victoria was Chapter 278 Wasn't Claudia Enough?

still trying to resist him as she shot him a fierce glare. "Also, what are you doing here? Are you stalking me?"

"Do I look like a stalker?" Alaric curled his lips into a smirk. "Why don't you ask this waiter over here, Victoria? Ask him what time we arrived," he uttered. Victoria froze upon hearing him. I assumed that Alaric was stalking me and pestering me, but I completely forgot that I came here later than him, she thought.

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Terrance took this chance to stand up and greet Victoria. "What a coincidence, Miss Selwyn. Are you here for a meal? It's pretty late in the afternoon now—why are you only eating lunch at this hour? You must've been really occupied. Well, since we bumped into each other, I guess fate must be telling us to have a meal together. Why don't you

sit with us?" he asked.

"It's fine." Victoria rejected him without any hesitation. "I'm not going to eat with you guys." "Are you saying that you won't eat with us even though we've invested in your company?" Alaric uttered.

Victoria was speechless for a while. She bit her bottom lip as she stared at the man who still had his arm around her waist. "Are you threatening me right now?"

Alaric raised an eyebrow at her. "Well, it is whatever you think it is."

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"Fine." Victoria smiled. "You can retract your investments, then. Do you think I'm afraid of that?"

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The smile on Alaric's face faded away as he heard the woman's words. "Do you think I won't do that?"

"Yeah. I'm not the one who put so much effort into all of this. What do you think?" she replied.

Terrance could sense the conversation turning sour, so he quickly ordered the waiter to serve some food. "The three of us will share a table. Bring us some of your signature dishes, please. Hurry up." The waiter gradually made sense of the three people's relationship with one another as he listened to their conversation. They seem to know each other, but it also seems like they don't get along too well. Well, everything's fine as

long as they know each other. The waiter nodded and went down to prepare the food after that.

After the waiter left, Victoria shot Alaric with an icy glare. "Let go of me." Terrance went over as Alaric continued to hold onto the woman. "Oh, Mr. Cadogan and Miss Selwyn, why don't you guys calm down a little? Since we're all here, let's just have a meal together." Terrance tried to pull Alaric's arm away from the woman, and Alaric immediately furrowed his brows. However, after hearing Terrance's whispers for him to let go, Alaric eventually loosened his grip on the woman.

After Alaric let go of Victoria, Victoria found a lot more freedom in her movements, and she hastily took a few steps back to keep her distance from Alaric. Alaric continued to stare at her intently. "Well, why don't we sit together, Miss Selwyn? Let's all be a little more pleasant with each other, shall we?" Terrance said.

Victoria stared at Terrance, who had always been polite to her. She couldn't bring herself to say something mean to him, so she tried explaining herself instead. "It's fine. I'm supposed to meet someone else."

"Who?" Alaric asked.

"Is that any of your business?" she snapped in return.

"Is it a man?"

“Why do you care?” she asked again. Even though Alaric knew whom she was meeting,

he couldn’t contain the jealousy that he felt in him. Terrance could feel sweat forming on his forehead as he listened to their conversation. What is Mr. Cadogan trying to do? He said that he wanted things to be pleasant and amicable, but now that they’re face-to-face with each other... Terrance took another glance at Victoria. Well, she’s being really resistant, and she looked like she wanted to leave without even talking to us earlier. I’d probably lose my cool if I was Mr. Cadogan, he thought.

“Are you meeting Bane?” Alaric asked with a scoff. Deep down, he was curious to know if Victoria would have gone out with Bane if he hadn’t used his identity as Silent Night to force her out on a date. Victoria had no intention of telling them whom she was meeting, but she let out a cold scoff when she saw the look on Alaric’s face. “Yeah. I’m meeting him for lunch, and we’re going to go look at cars later in the afternoon. I’ll leave now if that’s all you have to say,” she uttered.

Then, Victoria walked off while pulling her phone out to act as if she was calling Bane. Right then, Alaric reached out and grabbed her wrist before she could walk past him. “Let go of me!” she hissed.

“You’d like to take a look at cars, huh? I’ll go with you.” With his grip firm on her wrist, he

tugged her down the stairs, and Terrance was left on his own. He was dumbfounded and only returned to his senses when they had reached the bottom of the stairs. “Are we not going to have a meal first, Mr. Cadogan?” However, his question came a little too

late—the two figures had already disappeared by then.

Terrance stared into space for a while. Fine. I guess I’ll have to taste all the signature dishes on my own. Terrance knew that he wouldn’t be able to finish all the dishes, so he phoned a few of his other friends in Jasea to drop by.

After dragging Victoria down the stairs, Alaric forced her into his car and held onto both her hands as he ordered his driver to start driving. The driver had no idea what was going on, but he figured that it wouldn’t be appropriate for him to ask any questions, so he simply started driving. Victoria continued to wrestle against the man after they got into the car. “Let go of me! I came here today because I had other matters to handle!”

Victoria couldn’t believe her bad luck. How did we bump into each other here? Is this really a coincidence? Did we really end up choosing the same spot? Now that he’s taking me away, what am I going to do when Silent Night asks me for cash again?

“Oh,” Alaric replied flatly. “What matters do you have to handle?”

“It’s none of your business.” Victoria didn’t want to tell Alaric anything about herself, especially when it had to do with her kids.

“None of my business, huh?” Alaric chuckled. “Well, since you don’t want to tell me about it, I’m sure it’s not that important. Let’s go take a look at cars first, then.”

“Alaric!” Victoria shouted his name in exasperation. The rage in her gaze made her seem like she could kill anyone she laid eyes on. “We cut all ties about five years ago. I only went to Gandra with you recently because of the exchanges made between you, Grandma, and me. We shouldn’t be related to each other now that all of that is over. Who are you to continue pestering me like this? Who are you to stick your nose into my

business? Don’t you have tons of girls around you, including Claudia?” she hissed

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The air in the car felt oddly tense after Victoria’s mention of Claudia’s name. It also seemed to have forged an unbridgeable gap between Victoria and Alaric. Upon hearing the woman’s name, Alaric narrowed his eyes a little. “Her and I...”

Victoria turned away before speaking in an emotionless tone. “I don’t care about you and her. I just want you to stop pestering me.” Alaric’s expression hardened after hearing her words. “Weren’t you the one who said that you wanted to keep things pleasant between us? Is this your definition of an amicable relationship? Or... Are you hiding something from me? Is that why you don’t want to remain on good terms with me?”

Alaric fixed his stern gaze on Victoria's face after he finished speaking. It was just as he had expected—although Victoria managed to keep a calm expression on her face, there was a hint of panic in her gaze. It was so brief that Alaric might not even have noticed it if he hadn't stared at her so intently. Victoria took a while to calm down before she met his gaze. "Have I ever said that? Why don't I remember saying that?" She seemed calm

and collected as she looked at him. "Do you have any evidence of me saying that?"

Alaric didn't know what to say for a while, but he eventually let out a scoff when he saw the cold look in her eyes. "Are you playing dumb?"

"I can't play dumb if I genuinely don't remember saying those words," Victoria argued.

"Fine." Alaric tugged his lips into a smile. "We can assume that you've never said those things. It doesn't matter, anyway—your words have no influence on my decision." It was Victoria's turn to feel speechless after that. He's right. If he wants to pester me, then I'll have no way of escaping him no matter what I say. He's not going to stop just because I tell him to.

At that moment, Victoria wondered if it had been a wrong choice for her to return to her homeland to expand her business. Maybe I should've left the kids abroad and returned

to start my business instead. However, I can't bear the thought of having my kids so far away from me. They lacked love and care at a young age, and if their mother leaves them now... Victoria no longer bothered talking after that. She simply turned away from the man before she pulled her phone out to drop Silent Night a text. She told him that she wouldn't be able to make it for their meeting, and that she might only be able to meet later in the day.

She was immersed in drafting her text for a while. When Alaric saw how quiet she was, he pulled out his own phone and turned his body away from her as well. From the corner of his eye, he could see her exiting the WhatsApp application. Alaric was calm at the start, but the look on his face changed when he realized what Victoria was about to

1. do.

Alaric didn't have the habit of keeping his phone on silent mode. If Victoria were to send Silent Night a text... Right before she could hit the 'send' button, Alaric shouted her name at the top of his lungs. "Victoria!" Victoria was shocked by his loud cry, and she jumped so hard that her phone nearly fall out of her hand. She then knitted her brows as she shot him a fierce glare.

Alaric seemed rather glum after that. "Whom are you texting?" he asked, Victoria's expression flickered for a moment before she looked her phone and put it away. "Why is

that any of your business?" she hissed. Initially, Victoria had expected Alaric to snatch

her phone away he seemed to her like the sort of man who would do such unreasonable acts. To her surprise, he simply glared at her for a while without trying to take her phone away.

The driver took their silence as an opportunity to speak. “Where are we heading, Mr. Cadogan?” he asked.

Alaric looked away from Victoria. “Take us to the nearest automobile sales gallery,” he ordered. After sitting in the car in silence for a while, Alaric subtly pulled his phone out and put it on silent. That way, he wouldn’t have to worry even if she started texting him. Victoria, on the other hand, had no idea what was going on in Alaric’s mind. She didn’t have the time to pay attention to him as she was occupied with her own little scheme. We agreed to meet for the trade. I might have gotten there earlier, but if he doesn’t see

me when he arrives, he’ll probably call me. If I’m still in the car when he calls... Well, if Alaric insists on staying with me, then I won’t be able to pass any of my cash to that person. However, I don’t have a choice—my children matter more than anything. In the end, Victoria put her phone on silent as well.

Victoria already knew what she wanted before they even arrived at the automobile store. She had decided on a car that was priced in the mid-range. It was relatively cheap, and it was one of the best options for the price range that Victoria was able to afford. However, when they got to the store, and when Alaric saw her choice, he immediately shot her down. "That's not going to work. It has really poor performance abilities," he uttered. Then, he told the salesperson the name of another car brand. Victoria frowned when she heard the brand that was mentioned. "I can't afford that," she announced. "I'll give it to you," he replied without hesitation. She frowned when she heard his offer being stated in such an effortless manner. "I don't need your gift." "Why not? If my company's partner owns a good vehicle, doesn't it also give me the reassurance that your work will be of better quality?" he asked in return. Victoria shot him a blank look after that. "Is that so, Mr. Cadogan? In that case, do you buy a car for every single one of your business partners?"

Alaric gazed at her for a while. "If they're similar to you, then I wouldn't mind doing that for them."

The corner of Victoria's lips twitched with frustration. Eventually, she decided to stop arguing with the man. "I'm sorry, but I'd like to test drive the vehicle I chose earlier," she uttered to the salesperson. The salesperson was a witty woman, and she knew that the richer person would always have the final say in these purchases. After hearing bits of the conversation between Alaric and Victoria, the salesperson gathered that he wanted

to buy a new car for her and that she didn't want to take it. They don't seem like they are

lovers, and it sounds like they are business partners. It's obvious that the guy is interested in the girl, but the girl isn't interested in the guy. She also doesn't seem to be playing hard to get—something tells me that she really isn't interested in him.

With that thought in mind, the salesperson came to a conclusion. "Please come with me, Miss." The salesperson decided that she would respect the buyer's wishes. As much as she wanted to sell off a more expensive car and gain more commission from it, she knew that it was also important to consider the buyer's desires. Victoria was pleased to hear the salesperson's response, and she hurried after the salesperson. "I'll make payment for the car as long as I don't find any issues with it."

The salesperson nodded with a smile. "Great."

Alaric, on the other hand, was left alone with a grim look on his face. Moments later, he

walked after them. "This is the car you were asking for, Miss. You can take a look at its exterior. If everything is fine-

"Yeah, it looks good on the outside. I'll test drive it now, and I'll pay as long as there are no issues, okay?" It was rare for the salesperson to encounter someone like Victoria.

Victoria was obviously in a hurry to make her purchase. The salesperson was stunned for a bit, but she quickly nodded after that. Once Victoria got the car keys, she opened the car door only to realize that there was already someone sitting in the passenger's seat.

"Why won't you leave me alone?" She glared at Alaric. He slowly buckled his seatbelt as

he spoke. "How are your driving skills?"

Victoria let out a cold scoff upon hearing his question. "I'm not great. I have the potential to become a murderer on the roads."

"Is that so?" Alaric raised an eyebrow. "I've never sat in a murderer's car. I guess I'll get to experience that today."

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After staring at him for a long while, Victoria eventually got in the car. She slammed the door shut and put her seatbelt on, her actions conveying how annoyed she was. She shot him with an icy glare as she stuck the car key into the ignition. "Are you sure you want me to drive you around?" she asked.

He tugged his lips into a smirk. "What is it? Are you going to kill me?" Victoria didn't answer his question—she simply started the engine before stepping on the brakes and turning the steering around. When she lowered the window, she found the salesperson staring at her worriedly. "Miss, Sir..."

Victoria gave the salesperson a faint smile. "Don't worry. I have a license," she stated. When the salesperson eyed her with disbelief, she pulled her license out to show it to her. The salesperson heaved a sigh of relief after that. "That's great."

“I’ll just drive around to get a feel of the car, and I’ll be back soon,” Victoria said. Alaric sat in the passenger’s seat with a blank look on his face as he watched Victoria steering the car. Victoria learned to drive about five years ago, and she used to drive to work all the time. She didn’t have superb skills, but she was fine to drive on relatively empty roads. She found it harder to manage things when the roads were too busy, and her car seemed rather unsteady during those times.

I wonder if she improved her skills in the past five years, Alaric thought. Before he had **the** time to process the situation, the car had already zoomed out of the sales gallery. Victoria didn’t speed, but the way she maneuvered along the roads seemed much smoother than the way she drove in the past. She drove the car as if she were an experienced driver. Alaric was stunned to see how good she was. This is so different from the way she used to drive... It’s obvious that she has gotten really used to driving in the past few years.

This was supposed to be something worth celebrating, but Alaric simply pressed his lips together as he stared at the roads with a grim look in his eyes. When he first encountered her after five years, he felt as if he hadn’t seen her for centuries. However, there were also times when he noticed the similarities in her actions, and he would then feel like they hadn’t been apart for long—like he had just met her days ago. However, when Alaric recognized how smooth her driving was, he was struck by reality.

So much has changed in the past five years. I’m the only one who’s still stuck in the

past.

Victoria safely brought the car back to the sales gallery after taking it out for a drive. "I'll get this. I'll pay for it now," she announced as she handed the keys back to the salesperson.

"That sounds good. However, there are some necessary procedures to go through, so

you won't be able to collect your car immediately," the salesperson explained.

"Yeah, I know. You can just call me when the car is ready," Victoria replied. As Victoria walked off with the salesperson, Alaric got out of the car. He watched silently as she did.

Victoria only realized that Alaric hadn't come along with her after she went through all the procedures with the salesperson. "Excuse me, where's the washroom?" she asked the salesperson. After the salesperson showed her the way, she hurried off into the washroom with her phone in her hand. Her phone had been on silent mode earlier, so she had no idea if she received any messages or calls.

One hour had passed since the time that Victoria had agreed to meet with Silent Night.

When she pulled her phone out, she had expected a text from Silent Night. She expected him to question her absence or to even blame her for not showing up. To her surprise, when she opened their conversation, there were no new messages—her draft of the text that she had meant to send was still there. She didn't get to send her text earlier, and the man didn't contact her either. It was almost as if he had just disappeared into thin air. What's going on?

After considering the situation, Victoria decided to delete her earlier draft. She wrote a new text explaining herself. 'I'm so sorry, Mr. Night. Something came up earlier, so I didn't manage to meet you at our agreed location. However, it seems like you didn't text

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me either. Are you busy as well?' After sending the text, Victoria waited in the washroom for a while more. She didn't receive any response,

After a short while, Victoria figured that she couldn't do much since the man wasn't responding. She headed out of the washroom to find Alaric waiting for her outside, However, he seemed rather different than before. The aura around him felt hostile and icy—he was like a walking air-conditioner that made the air around him turn cold. Even though Alaric was a stunning man with gorgeous looks, the icy aura that he gave off was enough to make everyone maintain a distance of at least three feet away from him. The man seemed to warm up a little only when he saw Victoria walking toward him. He shifted his gaze to look at her, but his lips were pursed the whole time. He didn't seem like he wanted to speak to her at all. Victoria was done with all the necessary procedures, and she didn't bother to greet him as she walked past him. She grabbed

her bag and was about to head out the front door when Alaric went after her. “Come on. I’ll send you home,” he suggested.

“It’s fine. I can head home on my own.” Victoria rejected him once more.

Alaric frowned at her. “Do you want me to go to your office and wait for you every day instead?”

Victoria froze upon hearing his words. She stared at him speechlessly, but the man

then avoided her gaze and opened the car door instead. “Are you getting in or not?”

Victoria stood in her spot and stared at him silently for a while before she shook her head and walked off. I don’t think he’ll actually come over to wait for me every day just because I don’t get in his car now. If that’s the case, he wouldn’t have to work, and he wouldn’t have to manage the company or earn money anymore. He can do whatever he wants if those are things that he thinks he can sacrifice! Victoria thought.

Alaric watched as Victoria turned around to walk away. His expression was as gloomy as a graveyard, but he didn’t go after her in the end. The change that he saw within her earlier had made him feel especially conflicted, so he simply stood in his spot and watched as she walked off. He only went back into his car a long while after she disappeared from his field of vision.

The driver took a glance at Alaric’s expression before speaking in a cautious tone.

“Miss Selwyn is long gone, Mr. Cadogan. Should we go after her car?” Alaric pinched the bridge of his nose as he felt a dull ache forming in his head. “It’s fine. Let’s head back,” he uttered in a strained voice.

Right before getting into the car, Victoria turned around and took a glance behind her. She only saw a few random strangers walking behind her—Alaric was no longer anywhere to be seen. She felt some relief in knowing that he wasn't following her, yet she couldn't help but feel somewhat disappointed. However, the disappointment she felt was so minute that the emotion disappeared before she got a chance to acknowledge it.

Victoria took a cab to the nearest train station before buying tickets. Coincidentally, Bane rang her on the phone then. She took a glance at the caller ID and recalled what Summer had told her before picking up the call. "I'm at the lobby of your office, Victoria, but your staff told me that you left earlier in the afternoon. Where are you now? Shall I come over to pick you up?" Bane didn't sound annoyed, although he didn't see her at the office. He sounded gentle and warm on the phone.

Victoria felt especially guilty when faced with Bane's tenderness. He's always like this.

He never gets mad at me, no matter how badly I treat him... This is precisely why I find it

so hard to reject him or throw a tantrum in front of him. But now...

Victoria shut her eyes for a while before responding in a cold voice, "It's fine. I don't feel like looking at cars today," she replied.

Bane was stunned when he noticed the iciness in her voice. "Did something come up for you? Should we meet another day instead?" he asked gently.

"I don't want to go on a different day either." Victoria bit on her bottom lip for a while before she forced herself to speak. "I don't need you to go with me even if I do end up going in the future."