

Departure with a Belly Chapter 321

Departure with a Belly Chapter 321

Chapter 321 Five Years of Neglect

Chapter 321

Even from afar, Victoria saw a few familiar silhouettes standing outside the entrance.

When she got closer, she recognized who they were. West, Norwood, and... Claudia.

The sight of Claudia reminded her of their meeting at the auction. Since then, she had never seen her around Alaric, until now. My kids are still in the house, and she's here now...

The look on her face changed and she hurried to the villa, but when she got closer, she saw West trying to get inside the house only to be tossed out by Alaric. He fell down right in front of her. Norwood and Claudia froze for a long while before they helped him up, then they saw her shadow on the ground. They looked up and met her eyes, then everyone's attention fell on her.

The sight of Victoria sent an electric current coursing through Claudia's veins, and her eyes went wide in disbelief. Even though Alaric didn't want to date her for the last five years, there hadn't been any women around him, so Claudia thought she was the most special of them all. As time went by, she began to worry if Victoria might break their accord and come back. If she did, Claudia knew she would never win this battle of romance.

Years went by, and Victoria never did show up, much to Claudia's relief. She thought that Victoria would never come back and that she would already be married to

1

11:45 Tue, 4 July

Chapter 321 Five Years of Neglect

someone else after five years. Five years isn't a short time. Anything can change.

However, when she saw Victoria again, Claudia knew she had no chance of winning. Five years had gone by, and Victoria looked even more mature than ever. Her maturity made her alluring, and perhaps because she had given birth, she looked gentler than ever.

2/4

Even Claudia found herself mesmerized by this woman, let alone men. But more importantly, why is she here? Is that girl really her daughter? If that's the case, then why

is she in Alaric's house? A dozen questions raced through her mind, and Claudia connected them to form a clear storyline of what must have happened.

Norwood had his suspicions too, and when Victoria showed up, his suspicions were confirmed. West was lying on the ground. He knew his friends were going to help him up, so he was waiting for them. In fact, he was waiting for Claudia so he could have skin contact with her. Yet, for some reason, they stopped and stared at something behind him. Since West was fine anyway, he quickly got up, then he looked behind as

well.

“Victoria?” he gasped. “Why are you here?”

Alaric was about to close the door. I just left a bad impression on her, but I’m fine. I don’t care. I just want them to be safe. And then Victoria showed up as if on cue, making things worse.

11:45 Tue, 4 Jul

Chapter 321 Five Years of Neglect

Victoria looked at the crowd, then at the irritated Alaric, and she had a guess of what might have happened, but she had no intention of dealing with this crowd. She just wanted to take her kids back. Anyone who was not related to her or her children was none of her business.

3/4

Just as Victoria walked ahead so that she could take her kids back, West pointed at her and roared, “Why is she here? I thought you two are divorced? And who are those kids?”

“Are they yours?” He screeched like a madman, clutching his chest in pain. “How could you do this to Claudia?”

Claudia teared up and bit her lip tightly, but Alaric looked at West like he was a fool. The

look in his eyes infuriated West, and West turned to Claudia. The tearful lady riled up something within him. He liked this woman and he wanted to spoil her all he could, but

Alaric was treating her like a ragdoll. The thought of that enraged West. "You're going to

explain yourself, or there will be hell to pay,

Alaric!"

West tried to grab Alaric by his collar, but Alaric shot him an icy look before West could get close. "Don't touch me," he said icily, the air around him getting colder.

Shocked, West froze and stopped in his tracks. "Fine, but you must explain yourself."

"Why?" Alaric looked at him coldly. "I don't remember having to report to you about my business."

Chapter 321 Five Years of Neglect

4/4

West's eyes went wide. "Your business? This is also Claudia's business. You know how

much she loves you, and you're going to betray her for this woman? How could you?" he

roared so loud that the resident next door might be alarmed.

Victoria didn't want any part in this. They could argue for all she cared, and she would wait until they were done before she went inside, but then she caught sight of her kids coming closer. They were standing on their tiptoes behind Alaric and looking around, their interest piqued by the argument.

Victoria's face fell. I can't let the kids hear this. It's going to corrupt them. She couldn't

wait any longer, so she walked forward. This has nothing to do with me. I'll just take the kids and leave. They can sort it out among themselves.

For some reason, her sudden movement enraged West, and he grabbed her shoulder.

"She left you on a whim and didn't even care about you for five years. She didn't even come back for Griselda's funeral, and yet you're betraying Claudia for her? Are you mad?"

Victoria frowned. Just when she was about to break free, Alaric flew into a rage. He strode over, the look on his face dark. "Get your f*cking hand off her, West!"

Chapter 322 Absolute Defeat

Chapter 322

1/5

West was already mad because Alaric embarrassed him right in front of the girl he liked and because Victoria was here. Now that Victoria was ignoring them, he vented his fury on her, but he didn't expect Alaric to be enraged as well. When he saw Alaric storming over to him, he was actually afraid. Just when he was about to let Victoria go, he felt a fist slamming into his chin, and he tumbled over.

Before Victoria could do anything, she felt Alaric pulling her into his embrace, and the air was filled with his scent. Then she looked at him in shock, for she couldn't believe he would get so angry just because West grabbed her shoulder.

The punch infuriated West, and he leaped back up to hurl a punch too. "You would hit me for her? D****n you!"

Alaric c***lly pulled Victoria behind him and easily caught West's fist. Shocked by how easily Alaric stopped his attack, West froze.

“Don’t throw a tantrum at my place.”

“I’m throwing a tantrum?” West flew into a rage. “You cheated on Claudia! You must be mad!” Since he couldn’t move his hand, he swung his other hand at Alaric. Alaric suffered a blow to his chin.

Chapter 322 Absolute Defeat

Concerned, Victoria tried to move, but then Claudia screamed. A tearful Claudia

2/5

charged ahead, shouting, “Don’t hit him, West!” She threw herself at them and grabbed West’s wrist. “Talk it out. Don’t fight over me.”

Victoria looked at Claudia speechlessly. What did she say? Why does she think they’re fighting over her? Man...

Norwood stepped in. He gave Victoria a conflicted look before turning to his friends, and then he sighed. “Let’s talk things out. We’ve known each other for years, so let’s not fight.”

West gritted his teeth. “He did it first.”

Norwood retorted, “And he wouldn’t have if you hadn’t touched Victoria.”

“What’s that supposed to mean? I just grabbed her shoulder. It’s not like I hit her.”

“Yeah, but you still hurt her. Besides, she was just trying to pass through. Why did you have to grab her? That is so ungentlemanly.”

West rebutted, “Ungentlemanly? You think she’s some sort of goddess I can’t touch?”

The moment he finished speaking, he noticed that Alaric was giving him an icier look.

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Chapter 322 Absolute Defeat

“You think you can touch her?”

West only cared about helping Claudia now and was about to blurt something without thinking when Norwood said with a darkened face, "Enough. Stop fighting."

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Norwood tried to pull West away, but West refused to cooperate as he didn't want to let this slide, so Norwood turned his gaze to Claudia. Claudia wanted to look away at first, but in the end, she nudged West's arm. "Let go, West. Let's talk things out."

With the woman he loved telling him to let go, West calmed down and slowly let go.

However, Alaric still was still looking at him coldly and wasn't about to let this slide. He was still holding West's fist in an iron grip with his lips pursed.

"Alaric..." Noticing that, Claudia said, "Let him go and we can talk things out, alright?"

Alaric ignored her and continued glaring at West.

"Alaric," said Norwood. "We didn't mean to cause any trouble. We're just worried about you."

Alaric smirked. "And yet one of you tried to start a fight."

Norwood said, "That wasn't what we meant, trust me."

Chapter 322 Absolute Defeat

Alaric snickered, but he didn't let West go. No one could make him step down, so Norwood looked at Victoria, hoping she could help. However, even after Victoria noticed his look, she ignored him and looked away.

4/5

So, she's going to ignore this? If I ask her to do it, she's going to say no, isn't she? But if I

say nothing, we'll be in a stalemate. He knew Alaric too well. Once he had set his mind on something, no one could change his mind. Yet with Victoria around, she might be able to do something about it, so he needed her help. But...

Just when Norwood was trying to come up with a plan to defuse this situation, a little head popped out from behind, then a child's hand tugged on the hem of Alaric's shirt. Alaric froze and tensed up, then he looked down and saw Nicole peeping from behind. Curiously, she asked, "Are you guys going to fight, Mr. Night?"

Everyone looked at her. She was so cute and adorable, even West and Norwood were staring at her.

Eventually, Victoria frowned and pulled her aside. "Stay out of adult business, Nicole." Nicole looked at her mother-who was crouched down-and blinked in confusion.

"Where's your brother? Call him. We're going home."

Chapter 322 Absolute Defeat

"He's right behind, Mommy."

Besides Alaric, everyone looked in the direction of the voice, and when they saw Nathan, they froze. He looked just like a young Alaric.

He has a son too? Claudia was clenching her fist so hard that her nails dug into her palm. How? She was already scared enough when she knew he had a daughter, but when she saw his son, she knew she would never win this battle of romance.

Chapter 323 They're Yours

Chapter 323

How is this possible? Did she get pregnant with twins? A boy and a girl, too? But it's been five years. She couldn't have raised them alone. There's no way anyone could raise two children all by themselves. It's exhausting. Maybe she's remarried. That thought was the only thing calming Claudia down.

The moment Nicole came up with that question, Alaric pulled his hand back and

stepped back. Norwood noticed that. It might seem like Alaric was letting the matter slide, but he was trying to protect Victoria and the kids.

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Nathan looked at everyone and stood behind Victoria with his sister. Just when Victoria was about to take the kids and leave, West flew into another fit of rage. “What the hell is

this? Are both of them your kids? So, you already have kids with her? Then, why didn’t you let Claudia go?! Why’d you waste her time?!”

While West went into another tirade, Alaric looked down and met Victoria’s gaze.

Victoria didn’t trust him much and would start mocking him the instant they met. She wasn’t particularly interested in his affairs, either. Thanks to that, he didn’t get to explain

things to her. However, this was a good chance to explain things, and he would seize that chance.

Pursing his lips, he said coldly, “You’re her good friend. Didn’t she tell you I had made

Chapter 323 They’re Yours

things clear five years ago?” He was staring at Victoria firmly while saying that.

Why is he staring at me? Victoria wondered.

“You made things clear with her?” The answer surprised West, and he froze for a

moment before turning to Claudia. “What is the meaning of this? What did he tell you?

Have you kept a secret from me?”

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Claudia had just managed to calm down a little, yet this happened. What little color she had left was drained, and she stood petrified, biting her lip. She never thought Alaric would bring that up. Barely anyone knew of that episode. She forced him to show up for the engagement party, but he didn't. When she went to see him, he told her, "Don't ever do anything like that again, Claudia."

They were in his office, and he was standing in front of the French window with his back turned to her. She didn't even get to see his face, and she bit her lip. "But you promised I'd be your only woman. Now, you two are divorced. So, why can't we get engaged?"

Alaric was silent for a long time before saying, "Sorry. I'll try my best to repay my debt with something else."

"Why?" Claudia asked. "We were going well, weren't we? Why did this happen? Why?"

Chapter 323 They're Yours

3/5

Unable to hold herself back, she grabbed the hem of his shirt, tears streaming down her

cheeks. "Are you mad because I went abroad? But I didn't mean to refuse you. You know how rare that chance was. If I refused that, someone else would snap it up."

The man pursed his lips, still refusing to answer.

“Say something, Al. Even inmates on death row have the right to know why they are put

to death. So, tell me. Why can't we get engaged? I saved you, so for that sake, can't you

tell me why?”

The mention of that episode tugged on Alaric's heartstrings. He turned around and gazed at her. “I wanted to marry you back then because of gratitude, but now I realize if I do that, it'd be unfair for both you and me.”

“Unfair?” Claudia looked at him in confusion. “Why would it be unfair to me?”

He looked at her c**ily. He didn't need to say anything, as she already knew the answer

in her heart. Still, she couldn't believe it.

Noticing the embers of her determination still flaring, Alaric said c**ily, “No couple will be happy without love between them. You deserve someone better, Claudia.”

No love? But I love him. So, is he talking about himself? He... doesn't love me?
Claudia

11:46 Tue, 4

Chapter 323 They're Yours

thought.

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“If you ever need anything, tell me. I'll try my best to give whatever you want, except for marriage,” the man added.

She bit her lip, tears filling up her eyes. "What if that's the only thing I want?"

Alaric looked at her for a while. "Then, I'm sorry."

Claudia whipped up a storm for a while after that. She would come to his company to rile up an episode every day and even got her parents to help her out, but Alaric had a strong will. No matter how much she cried, he didn't get angry since she did save his life. Still, that didn't mean he'd entertain her.

Since the news of his absence during the engagement party made its rounds, Claudia became a laughingstock. Eventually, her mother told her to stop fighting fire with fire.

"Are you stupid? He doesn't even care about you right now, so whatever you do is useless. And he might hate you more if you continue this farce. At this rate, you'll lose, so you should back down a little."

"Back down?"

"Yes, tell him you're sorry for what you did. Even if he doesn't like you, it's fine. Just stay

11:45 Tue, 4 July

Chapter 323 They're Yours

5/5

with him and say you're friends. After that, try to find out everything about his life. As a friend, of course. He's bound to fall for you eventually, and then he'll marry you."

Claudia thought her mother had a point. She was in too much of a hurry, and the tighter she tried to hold on, the further he would stay away from her. She took her mother's

advice to heart and sought out Alaric. "I think you're right, Al. A relationship without love is unfair for both of us."

Alaric stared at her dubiously. To get rid of his suspicion, she continued, "I've been limiting myself because of you, but now that you've made things clear, I'll make things clear, too. I can marry someone else. If you don't like me, I won't make you marry me. I won't use that favor to force you into anything."

Chapter 324

Her mother was right. The moment Claudia said her piece, Alaric let his guard down. Since she did save his life, he would always keep her around. Not to mention Victoria was already gone, so Claudia had five years to spend. She thought she could become Alaric's lover one day if she grabbed her chance and made her moves well.

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However, she didn't expect him to stand firm with his decision for five years. Even after five years, they were still friends. Nothing more. Whenever she tried to cross that line, he would stop her. Every time that happened, she would have to take a step back and find another way to advance.

"Claudia?" West called out to her again, snapping her out of her stupor.

She saw West standing before her, his hands on her shoulders. "What happened? What

did you say to Alaric?"

Claudia pursed her lips and pushed his hands away, refusing to speak. I can't. I can't tell

them I promised Alaric that we'd be friends. Not when there's a crowd. No way. That was only a pretext for me to get closer to him. I didn't really mean what I said. That was

not my plan.

While she was still hesitating, Alaric told Victoria seriously, "There's nothing between

Chapter 324 No Right to Chastise

1. We're just friends."

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Claudia stared at them, wide-eyed and in disbelief. She bit her lip so hard that it almost

drew blood. He hasn't cared about me at all for five years, and now he's going out of his

way to explain himself to her?!

Victoria knitted her brows. At this point, I don't think I can play dumb and say I didn't hear him.

The reason for that was that Alaric was holding her hand with his eyes fixed on hers.

"Trust me. I had made things clear with her five years ago."

The kids stared up at them in curiosity. Nicole blinked her eyes and turned to Nathan, asking, "Nathan, do Mr. Night and Mommy know each other for a while?"

The boy held his sister's hand and pulled her aside. He knew his mother was trying to get the kids to stay out of this.

Victoria looked at her hand, then at Alaric, before she flung his hand away. "So? What does that have anything to do with me?" She didn't even hesitate when she did that, uncaring and indifferent toward what Alaric had to say.

Claudia couldn't believe what she was seeing. How dare she treat the love of my life like

7146 Tue,

Chapter 324 No Right to Chastise

trash!

Alaric looked at his hand and frowned.

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Victoria didn't think things would spiral out of control so hard. She stood up and looked around before saying, "We've been divorced for years. He's nothing but a stranger to me

now, so I'm staying out of this." She then turned to her kids. "Let's go home."

The kids followed her. Victoria gave everyone a courteous nod and got ready to leave.

Claudia was surprised Victoria was cutting ties with Alaric so cleanly, but she didn't stop her from leaving. That was what Claudia had always hoped for, after all. She'd better keep her word and stay away from him. Forever. That was what she thought, and

that was what she wanted Victoria to do.

However, when Victoria went by West, the buffoon suddenly grabbed her arm. Angrily, he said, "A stranger? You make it sound like that, but if that's truly the case, why did you

and the kids show up?"

Victoria hated it when people accused her of something she never did, and West was slandering her right at this moment. Her face darkened, and she sneered. "West, you think Claudia and Alaric are a great match, right?"

11:46 Tue, 4

Chapter 324 No Right to Chastise

4/6

Alaric was about to come over, but he stopped in his tracks upon hearing her words. He

stared at the back of her head with narrowed eyes and wondered, What is she trying to say?

“Of course!” West gnashed his teeth. “She’s a thousand-no, ten thousand times better than you! She’s the only one worthy of Alaric!”

“So, they’re a match made in heaven. That’s what you’re trying to say, right? Yet, you still want to steal her.”

That response took West by surprise. Victoria looked at him, and a smirk curled her lips.

“I wasn’t the one who brought the kids here, but even if I did bring them here, what makes you think you can accuse me of stealing him away when you’re trying to do the same thing with Claudia?”

Her retort hit hard, and West froze, unable to answer. When he finally snapped out of it, she flung his hand away and left. The man then turned to Claudia and tried to explain,

“Claudia, I-”

Though, what he got in return was a look of resentment from Claudia. It seemed like she was mad at him for having such thoughts.

West panicked. Sh*t! She won’t take that to heart, will she? Oh, no. She might hate me

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Chapter 324 No Right to Chastise

and start staying away from me now. When he looked at Victoria again, the look in his

5/6

eyes changed, replaced by anger. You did this! If it weren’t for you, I could still stay with her.

“Hold it right there!” He went ahead and tried to grab her shoulder again.

An annoyed Nicole frowned and leaped back, opening her arms as she tried to stop

him. “Stop bugging Mommy, you meanie!”

The sight of this child, who bore so much resemblance to her parents, filled West with rage, and he swung his leg down on her. "Piss off! You think you can stop me, brat?" Horrified, Alaric strode ahead, trying to stop West. Claudia was shocked that West would fly into that kind of rage.

"Nicole!" Before anyone could react, Victoria leaped forward and held the girl in her arms, taking the kick for her.

Since West put a lot of force into that kick and Victoria came to shield Nicole from the attack in haste, Victoria fell to the side and hit her head on the flowerpot when the kick connected.

"Mommy!" Nathan called out in panic and darted to his mother.

11'46 Tue,

6

Chapter 324 No Right to Chastise

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West froze up on his spot when he saw Victoria hit her head against the pot. Before he could do anything, someone shoved him aside, and he fell to the ground again. When he got back up, he could only watch as Alaric took the unconscious Victoria away in a hurry. The kids were following him, crying. West snapped out of it, and the weight of what he did was finally sinking in.

Chapter 325 Trouble

Chapter 325

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I... Was her forehead bleeding? Did I just try to kick a child? What was wrong with me?

Thoughts raced through his mind.

Norwood came to West and shot him an icy look. "Are you mad? Do you have any idea what you were doing?"

"I..." West wanted to deny it, but he held his tongue upon having the flashback of Victoria's bleeding forehead. He knew what he did was wrong, but... He then turned to Claudia, hoping she would take his side. He wouldn't have done this if it weren't for her. At this moment, Claudia's heart was racing. She hoped against hope that Victoria would die, but what Norwood said made her snap out of it. She tucked her evil thought away and looked at West in disappointment. "Honestly, you shouldn't have done that." She paused for a moment before continuing, "That was a child. How could you be so heartless?"

West froze for a long while. Then, he croaked, "B-But I did it for you!" If it weren't for her,

he wouldn't have gotten so mad. He had no grudge against Victoria or her children, after all. Why would he attack them?

Claudia looked even more disappointed after hearing his words. "It'd be more believable

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Tue, 4 Ju

Chapter 325 Trouble

if you told me you did it on impulse. To think you would say you did it for me instead.

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What would people think if they heard that? That I told you to harm a child? I didn't even

know the kids existed until moments ago, nor did I expect Victoria to show up."

She had a little scheme behind that answer. Norwood was Alaric's closest friend. If what West said left a bad impression on him, he might stop helping her get Alaric's

love. Even though West did help her out a lot, she had to ditch him for now. He's always

been a simp, anyway. All I have to do is sweet-talk him, and he'll come right back to me.

Norwood is a different case, however. He is an opinionated man who doesn't fall for my tricks. It doesn't matter if I act gentle, weak, dainty, or understanding; he won't even get close to me.

More importantly, even though Norwood refused to get along with her, he was willing to chat Victoria up. Claudia thought he was trying to woo Victoria, and she wondered if his opinion of her would change if she matched them up. She figured she could get rid of a potential competitor in the process and upped her chances of getting Alaric. However, when Claudia did that, he declined her attempts. She had no idea what he wanted, but he was good friends with Alaric, so she didn't want to get on his bad side. Her only choice was to be on friendly terms with him.

Norwood looked at her, and a moment later, he said, "I'll go check things out."

Claudia responded, "I'll go with you."

11:46 Tue, 4 July

Chapter 325 Trouble

"No," he declined. "This is far enough. You and West go home. We'll talk tomorrow."

3/5

She bit her lip. A moment of hesitation later, she said, "But I think part of this accident is my fault. I should go with you and check things out."

"We're all responsible. Alaric must be furious right now, so take my advice and don't come." The man gazed at her.

It made Claudia nervous for a while. For a moment, she thought Norwood would see

through her soul, and she kept her mouth shut out of fear. “I-I see. But call me if anything happens. Even though it’s been five years, I’m still worried about her.”

He grunted and left while holding his phone, leaving the two behind. Once Claudia was sure he was gone and wouldn’t return, she quickly went to West and helped him up.

“Get up now.”

West was still sad about what she said to him, so he was surprised when she came to give him a hand. “Claudia? But I thought-”

“We’ll talk after you get up.”

With her help, he slowly got up, and Claudia asked, “Are you alright? Hurt anywhere?”

Tue, 4

Chapter 325 Trouble

He shook his head silently, staring at her with a dumbfounded look.

“Don’t give me that look. I was doing it for your own good.”

“For my own good?”

“You attacked them all of a sudden. Of course, they wouldn’t take your side. If I took your side, they would think something was wrong with you. That was why I had to pretend to chide you. After this, you can pretend you turned a new leaf, and things will blow over eventually.”

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Pretend to turn a new leaf? What’s that supposed to mean? West was dumbfounded.

When he finally calmed down, he realized what he did was a bit too much, so he made a m***I note to himself to change. But she doesn’t seem to think that way. No, no way.

She’s such a kind person. There’s no way she’d want to hurt them. In the end, he said,

“Don’t worry. I don’t blame you. This is my fault, and I promise nothing of the sort will

happen again.”

What a fool! Claudia rolled her eyes quietly, feeling a bit angry. In reality, she thought West should've gone down harder on them so that she could finally get rid of the one obstacle to obtaining the heart of her true love. However, she wouldn't say that in front of him, or he might think she was a wicked person. I've got to keep up some appearances. As long as Victoria tries to stay with Alaric, there's bound to be a chance

Chapter

to kill her.

Alaric took Victoria into the car, and the kids followed him, still crying. There was no one around, and with Victoria unconscious, he didn't have time to get anyone to look after the kids, so he took them with him. “Get in the car.”

He then turned to Nathan. “I'm going to put your mother in the back seat. Can you two keep an eye on her?”