

## New Beginnings Chapter 21 - 30

### Chapter 21

Before Samantha finished speaking, she suddenly saw a familiar silhouette emerging from behind the ward. “Mom.” The little girl’s childish voice made Samantha’s face change.

When Victoria looked in the direction of that voice, she saw a young lady whom she thought was likely Samantha’s daughter—Sandy Rogers. At that moment, Sandy was holding what seemed like a medical report with a pale look on her face, which indicated that she might not be in good health. Before Sandy could react, Samantha, who was still trying to piss Victoria off, immediately turned around and took her daughter away.

Although Samantha’s hasty footsteps gave her away, Victoria decided not to pry into Samantha’s privacy as she was not a busybody. Nevertheless, Samantha returned a few minutes later alone, and Victoria believed she must have left her daughter somewhere she thought to be safe.

She then walked up to Victoria with airs and graces, showing an arrogant

### Chapter 21 How Dare You Threaten Me?!

look on her beautiful face that she had tried so hard to maintain as she aged. “Miss Selwyn, I believe you’re a clever person, so you should know what you can and cannot say.”

Having expected Samantha's return, Victoria smiled and played with the hair around her neck. "Miss Keith, I'm a clever person only when I live comfortably. If someone pisses me off, my mental condition may put me under a lot of pressure. I might even have an outburst, going around shouting what I should not. If that happens, there is no telling if I'll be in my right mind," Victoria replied calmly, knowing Samantha was also in the hospital for the very same reason as she was.

At Victoria's words, Samantha was unhappy. "How dare you threaten me, Victoria?!"

"Oh, I wouldn't dare to. Consider it a deal instead."

## Chapter 21 How Dare You Threaten Me?!

glared at Victoria.

"Is that so?" Victoria remained unconcerned. "If my memory serves me right, your daughter isn't in university yet, is she? Are you sure now?"

Samantha was completely taken aback by what she heard, for it seemed as though Victoria was pointing a gun at her forehead. While staring at Victoria, Samantha wished she could just rip the woman apart to unleash her anger.

After all, she thought she could finally turn the Cadogan Family upside

down with the news, having been jealous of Mary's happy life a long time ago. However, things immediately took an unexpected turn when her daughter, Sandy, suddenly showed up and ruined her plans.

Sensing the bitter look on Samantha's face, Victoria grew even more frustrated as she was starting to feel worn out with everything that was going on lately. Thus, she refused to engage in a conflict with Samantha

#### Chapter 21 How Dare You Threaten Me?!

and directly made herself clear. "Go ahead and tell the whole world my secret if you're so unhappy, Miss Keith. After all, I know I won't be alone since your daughter will be with me."

"You!"

Nevertheless, Victoria closed her eyes and responded calmly, "I need to get going, Miss Keith. Do what you must." Unconcerned about Samantha's feelings, Victoria no longer cared whether she was mad or frustrated.

When Samantha stomped off angrily a few seconds later, Victoria was relieved upon hearing her footsteps. In reality, what Victoria said to Samantha was just to intimidate her so that she would stop threatening her. Even if Samantha exposed Victoria's secret, there was nothing much she could do either since she wouldn't harm Sandy with her words.

After all, she understood that many young ladies around Sandy's age were gullible when it came to romance and relationships. Due to their

#### Chapter 21 How Dare You Threaten Me?!

immaturity and unfirm principles, they often ended up as victims of their failed relationships without a clear vision of their future.

Furthermore, Victoria also knew that a young lady like Sandy couldn't do much in her power due to her age, empathizing with her for her decision of resorting to such extreme measures to get out of trouble. Because of that, no matter how desperate she might be, Victoria wouldn't do Sandy any harm; after all, she knew Sandy had already suffered enough.

Two minutes later, Summer returned. "I bought you some sandwiches and milk, along with some candies. There weren't many choices at the cafeteria, so I'm sorry that you have to bear with these." Summer unwrapped the food and passed it to Victoria. "Come on, help yourself. Don't go starving."

Victoria looked Summer in the eyes and smiled. "Thanks." Summer seems to be even more worried about me than my mother would.

#### Chapter 21 How Dare You Threaten Me?!

"Nonsense!" Summer glared at Victoria. "We're friends. There is no need to

thank me. I should be the one thanking you. If it hadn't been for you, I wouldn't even have made it into university.”

Victoria smiled without saying a word.

Summer and Victoria knew each other when they were in high school.

They were close friends who happened to enroll in the same university by chance, much to their delight. Nevertheless, things took a turn for the worse when Summer's father gambled and got himself into a lot of heavy debt.

Because of that, loan sharks constantly disturbed Summer's family and kept asking for their money back, which forced Summer to quit school and work to pay back her father's debt. When Victoria learned about that, she paid off the debt on Summer's behalf and took her back to school.

Chapter 21 How Dare You Threaten Me?!

across her mind. After that, she gazed at Victoria and said, “I wish you'd know how grateful I am to you. If it weren't for you, I would probably be living a miserable life somewhere else; I might even be dead because of those loan sharks. Because of that, you're not only my bestie but also someone to whom I owe a debt. I will never forget what you did for me.”

Meanwhile, Victoria listened to Summer's recount of their story happily until she heard the words, ‘I will never forget what you did for me’. At that

moment, she was reminded of Alaric, wondering if he would never forget about Claudia just like how Summer would never forget about her.

Absorbed in the thought of that, she gazed at Summer and asked, “Would you marry me if I was a man?”

Without reading too much into that question, Summer blurted, “What are you talking about, Boo? Of course, I would. I’d woo you if you were a man, but since you’re a woman, we can only be besties.”

I see. Victoria looked down, her eyes darkening in a pessimistic manner.

## Chapter 21 How Dare You Threaten Me?!

That was what Alaric thought. Perhaps it’s normal for everyone to have feelings for someone who has helped them before, not to mention the fact that it was someone who saved his life.

“What’s wrong?” Summer sensed something wrong with Victoria and became nervous. However, it was only after she finished her question that something flashed across her mind. “I’m sorry, Boo. I didn’t mean it.” As Victoria’s best friend, Summer was aware of the relationship between Alaric and Claudia, having laughed at Victoria about that all the time.

“Damn it! Being indebted to someone and being in love are two different things. How could I mix them up? This is unacceptable!” Summer meant

what she said, regretting her impulsive response of answering Victoria's question without thinking it through. However, she continued to explain herself, saying, "Please don't read too much into it, Boo. I only said that because I think you're a good person, which is why I'd marry you if you were a man, but..."

## Chapter 21 How Dare You Threaten Me?!

"Yeah, I get you." Victoria nodded, feeling rather depressed. "He probably thinks Claudia is a good person too."

Fine, I shouldn't have said that. Summer was speechless upon hearing Victoria's words, thinking her explanation had done nothing but seemingly made things worse.

## Chapter 21 How Dare You Threaten Me?!

"Yeah, I get you." Victoria nodded, feeling rather depressed. "He probably thinks Claudia is a good person too."

Fine, I shouldn't have said that. Summer was speechless upon hearing Victoria's words, thinking her explanation had done nothing but seemingly made things worse.

## Chapter 22

Victoria didn't have much appetite, but under Summer's urging, she managed to drink the milk and eat a few mouthfuls of sandwiches.

Summer finally stopped forcing her when she saw how hard it was for Victoria to take another bite.

She came to sit down after she cleaned up a little.

"How do you feel?" she asked. "Feel any better?"

"Yeah."

81%

Summer let out a light cough and tentatively asked, "Should we go back first tomorrow?"

Victoria didn't say anything.

## Chapter 22 Powerless at Defending Him

Seeing this, Summer held her hand and announced firmly, "Let's go."

"Okay..."

It was as though Victoria was in a fog now. She needed someone to give her a push no matter what decision she was making.

She then got up and left with Summer.

When they were passing by a corner, Victoria heard a dispute.

A devastated young lady was crying out loud, "But Momma, I like him!"



“Shut your mouth!” The furious and mean voice of a woman yelled in return. “What nonsense are you going on about? Do you not remember what I taught you? Do you understand what I’m saying? You have been tricked by him!”

“Momma...”

## Chapter 22 Powerless at Defending Him

“I don’t want to see you have any contact with him after this. A poor bum like him isn’t worthy of you. You won’t be able to find someone good if people knew about him, okay?”

Listening to the woman’s threatening voice, the girl lowered her head and did not speak anymore. Her eyes were hidden behind her fringe.

Victoria only took a glance before she looked away.

Summer obviously saw that scene as well. After they left the hospital, she couldn’t help sighing, “That girl looks like she is only a student. Oh, silly girl.”

Victoria didn’t say anything in reply.

Just then, her phone began to vibrate.

Summer immediately huddled over when she heard the ringtone go off.

“Your phone is ringing. Is it Alaric? Is he regretting it?”

## Chapter 22 Powerless at Defending Him

Seeing the unsaved number on the screen, she asked again, “Who’s calling?”

For some reason, Victoria had a feeling she knew who it was when she saw the phone number.

She only hesitated for a few seconds before she took the call.

“Victoria Selwyn, yes?” A slightly aggressive female voice rang out from the other end of the call.

This wasn’t a voice Victoria was familiar with. “Whom am I speaking to?” she asked in return.

“I am Claudia’s friend. I know a little something, and I would like to meet you to talk about it. I will send you the address through text in a while.” The caller came to a short pause before she chuckled. “You will come, won’t you, Victoria Selwyn?”

## Chapter 22 Powerless at Defending Him

She then hung up without waiting for Victoria to answer.

Beep... Beep...

As Victoria didn’t put the call on speaker, Summer didn’t get to hear what the other woman said. She could only ask after the call ended. “Who was

that? What did they say?"

Victoria had nothing to hide from Summer. She took a moment before answering, "Claudia's friend."

Summer froze for a second upon hearing that.

"What?" she growled. "What is her friend calling you for?"

"She said she knows something and wants to see me."

A short ringing came from her phone as soon as she said that.

## Chapter 22 Powerless at Defending Him

It was a text from the woman. She had just sent Victoria the address to a coffee shop in the center of the city.

Summer's sleek eyebrows were now pulled together into a frown. "She said she knows something? Well, what is it? Do you think..." She turned to Victoria in shock. "Maybe she knows about it too?"

"Judging by how things are so far, that seems to be the case."

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"F\*ck!" Summer cursed angrily. "How did Claudia know about this? Alaric told her? Victoria, even if he is someone you like, I really want to curse him out right now. Why would he spread the word when he has already decided he doesn't want the child? Did he do it just so Claudia can treat you like a joke? Why is he acting like some kind of trash?"

Hearing Summer's harsh words against Alaric made Victoria subconsciously want to defend him. However, her words were stuck at the tip of her tongue.

Chapter 22 Powerless at Defending Him.

She parted her lips only to realize how powerless she was.

Should she defend him?

But what was the point of that when the truth was right in their faces?

Thinking of this, she lowered her gaze and fell silent.

81%

Summer, however, made a decision for her. "Don't go. If they want to see you, let them come to you. Why do you have to go there just because they called you and sent you an address?"

Seeing how enraged Summer was, Victoria had to comfort her instead. "I don't plan on going. Don't be mad, okay?"

"Mad? My heart breaks for you!" Summer hissed in a hatred-filled voice.

She seemed to have remembered something when she squinted. "For Claudia to get her friend to talk to you... She must be worried that you decide against getting rid of the child and eventually fight over

Chapter 22 Powerless at Defending Him

Alaric with her. Ha! So, she isn't all that confident in herself."

Victoria put away her phone and ignored the text message. She wouldn't go even if Summer hadn't warned her against it. This is between me and Alaric. No one else, Claudia's friend and Claudia included, has anything to do with this.

After bidding farewell to Summer, Victoria went back home.

She had a lot of free time, considering how long her annual leave was. The next few days would be a perfect chance to organize her thoughts.

She needed to think about what she wanted.

In a coffee shop in the city center, Claudia picked up her coffee cup to take a sip. However, she hadn't even drunk it when she hurriedly put it back and looked up at her friend sitting across from her.

## Chapter 22 Powerless at Defending Him

"She will come, right?"

The friend scoffed with contempt. "She will, unless she doesn't want to get to the bottom of this matter. She will be scared for sure. Let's just wait here. When she is right around the corner, you should go and hide inside. Don't show yourself just yet."

Listening to the plan her friend made for her, Claudia bit her lower lip

lightly. “How are you going to tell her? I’m sure she didn’t want this to happen. Try to talk to her nicely later. If she needs compensation, I can also-”

“Claudia!” The friend looked at her in disbelief. “Stop being so kind. What do you mean she didn’t want this to happen? How can Alaric touch her and get her pregnant if she didn’t want it? That sl\*t must have seduced Alaric. You can’t go easy on her, or you will be in serious trouble in the future.” Claudia sighed. “I know that you’re doing this for my own good, but... her

## Chapter 22 Powerless at Defending Him

family has gone bankrupt. She’s pitiful. Let’s give her some money if we can. She has helped Alaric a lot in the last two years.”

Another friend echoed, “Look at how kind our Claudia is. She is nothing like that b\*tch. She knew that Alaric is your man, and yet she got herself pregnant with his child. She trying to take the opportunity to get to a higher position. We warned her last time.”

“Exactly.”

“We’ll give a few more warnings when she gets here. We’ll let her see what we are capable of.”

Unfortunately for them, they didn't see Victoria even after a 30-minute wait.

“That skank actually stood us up! Give her a call and ask her what the hell is she thinking.”

## Chapter 22 Powerless at Defending Him

Claudia's fingertips curled slightly when she heard her friends' words.

Once she deleted Victoria's text on Alaric's

Victoria told Alaric through a *text* message was

Mare to tell Alaric the news in person.

planned to ask Alaric out that night.

A overtime work to do so he could not leave his job.

was still worried. She accompanied him at work, and when he

work, she dragged him to a gathering with her friends.

By the end of the night, he had so much to drink he was barely conscious.

While he was out of it, Claudia gave Victoria a call.

## Chapter 23 What Do You Want

Victoria hanging up after losing her cool filled Claudia with unspoken joy.

Such a reaction from Victoria showed that she was starting to get

disappointed. She will probably stop having ideas if I reveal how Alaric wants her to have an abortion. She will even get a sum from me as compensation.

But Claudia couldn't bring it up herself, lest Alaric blamed her when he found out someday.

Therefore, she innocently brought it up to her friends in hopes that they would stand up for her.

As expected, her friends agreed to do it.

What was unexpected was that Victoria actually stood them up!

What the hell does she want? Claudia fumed.

## Chapter 23 What Do You Want

Is she really going to threaten Alaric with the child?

Even though she didn't think Alaric would be any different because of the child, she still had to deal with it as soon as possible. Better safe than sorry.

Thinking of this, she suggested, "Actually... We can go to her if she is not coming to us."

"We go to her? Why should we after what she has done?"

"I agree, Claudia. Let that shameless skank come here."

Claudia let out an embarrassed smile. "We have to put an end to it no



matter what.”

Seeing her forcing her smile, her two friends had no choice but to relent.

“Fine. We’ll go find her.”

## Chapter 23 What Do You Want

Victoria stayed in her room after she got home.

She was the only one at home since Alaric was at work.

Her phone began to ring not long after.

She took a glance at her phone, only to see that it was a call from the woman who called her before.

She quietly watched until the ringtone ended and sounded again after a while.

A few seconds later, Victoria declined the call and blacklisted the woman’s number.

Claudia’s friend, huh? What’s this got to do with her friend?

## Chapter 23 What Do You Want

What came to her mind was actually Sandy’s figure back in the hospital.

Sandy was such a thin and weak young girl, but she seemed to have infinite power when she told her domineering mother how strong her feelings for the boy she liked were.

She appeared to know herself well.

But me...

Victoria subconsciously rubbed her lower belly.

It was still far too early for Victoria to feel anything. However, she was sure that the first thing she felt when she learned of her pregnancy was happiness. She wanted to share the news with Alaric.

And when she was in the consulting room, she felt a flash of dull pain in her chest the moment she realized that she was going to have an

## Chapter 23 What Do You Want

This could only mean that she was looking forward to having her child.

What's the reason for me to get rid of it? She tried to reason with herself.

She could take care of the child on her own. She had a tough time keeping herself afloat two years ago, but things were different now. She had the means to be responsible for a child.

But... a single-parent household...

She weakly closed her eyes. I'm still stuck in the same circle.

Her phone began to ring again, but this time, it was from another number she didn't recognize.

She didn't even need to think to know that this was Claudia's friend again.

She was about to tap the decline button, but she took the call instead as

certain thoughts came to her mind. ?

## Chapter 23 What Do You Want

Both she and the other end of the call were quiet after she accepted the call.

Claudia's voice only rang out after a long minute.

“Victoria, it's Claudia...”

Ah, so she's making a move herself after her friend failed. “Yes?” Victoria smiled.

“Do you have time to meet me?” She seemed to be worried that Victoria would reject her as she quickly added, “You can just give me your address. I'll drop by and see you.”

After mulling over it, Victoria answered through pursed lips, “I'm at home.”

The other end of the call was quiet for a long minute before a stammer came, “W-What do you mean?”

## Chapter 23 What Do You Want

“You can come here.”

Following another long silence from Claudia's end, Victoria pressed her lips together again. “I'm tired. I don't feel like going out.”

“Alright.” Claudia replied after a while, “I'll come to see you.”

Suddenly, Victoria decided after the call ended.

She wanted to keep her baby!

She knew the reason Claudia wanted to see her now. Claudia, who still wanted to come despite Victoria saying that she was at the Cadogan Residence, could only have one purpose.

Not even 15 minutes had passed when a servant came up to Victoria's room to announce Claudia's arrival.

## Chapter 23 What Do You Want

"I got it."

Victoria took a shawl and went downstairs.

"Have some tea, Miss Johnson."

The servant served Claudia a cup of tea. As she thanked the servant, she lifted her chin and happened to see Victoria walking down the stairs.

Victoria had lost a lot of weight in just a matter of a few days. The pure-white shawl and her sky-blue dress made her look like a literatus.

Without makeup on, she looked so fair she was translucent. The plum blossom pinkness to her pale lips made her look like a sickly yet beautiful woman.

Just one glance at her and Claudia was already twitching in her fingers.

To have a woman like her stay bu

She was still in the middle of her musings when the servant calling Victoria

“Mrs. Cadogan” brought her back to her senses.

She then saw the servant serve Victoria a mug of hot chocolate smilingly.

“Mrs. Cadogan, the hot chocolate today should taste good. Its

temperature is just right as well.”

Victoria picked up the mug and took a sip before she praised, “As you said,

it’s pretty good.”

“Thank you for the compliment, Mrs. Cadogan. I should go and get busy

with work now.”

“Alright.”

After the servant received a compliment from Victoria, she cheerfully

hopped off with the serving tray in her hands. Other than serving Claudia

a cup of tea, the servant didn’t

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Chapter 23 What Do You Want

Claudia had to take a look at her and Victoria’s seats and outfits.

She was hit by realization then.

To everyone, Victoria was Mrs. Cadogan.

All of this should have been mine, but now...

Claudia's face immediately soured.

I would've been Mrs. Cadogan if I didn't leave the country!

With that in mind, she forced a smile and commented, "The servants respect you a lot, don't they?"

Victoria cast a strange look at her and nodded upon hearing that ".

They are nice people."

## Chapter 23 What Do You Want

the rest of them were chosen by Victoria.

Claudia's forced smile only grew strained.

"I'll have to thank you beforehand, then."

"Thank me?"

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"Yes! For training the servants so well. It will make my life easier in the future."

Victoria's hand holding her mug of hot chocolate briefly jolted when she heard those words. Her elegant eyebrows then raised ever so slightly.

## Chapter 24

There she goes again, talking like that.

Victoria used to think of Claudia as a gentle and sweet person because of how generous and modest she was in public.

But this was the second time she said something like this after her recent return to the country.

The first time was about Alaric, and now it was about the house's servants.

What appeared to be gratitude was actually her staking her claim.

But the reality was Claudia had no right over either Alaric or the servants.

It would be reasonable for her to say these words now if she and Alaric were lovers before.

#### Chapter 24 Hint

But they were never even together, Victoria thought. So, what gives her the right to talk to me this way?

What's more, if they were a couple back then, Victoria wouldn't have agreed to this fake marriage no matter how much she liked Alaric.

However, Claudia did help her before.

And so, Victoria could only bite her lip to calm herself down while she repressed the discomfort in her chest. She only let out a small smile without saying anything.

Her lack of discomfort, or even reaction, was as frustrating as pouring water into a leaking bowl for Claudia.

However, Claudia knew that she couldn't delay this any longer. "Shall we talk in the mini garden?" she asked with a smile.

It was probably due to how Victoria completely ignored Claudia's friend

#### Chapter 24 Hint

before that made Claudia panic. So, after she finished speaking, she lowered her voice and added, "Walls have ears. Let's not talk here."

"Okay." Victoria nodded and stood up to walk outside.

If possible, she didn't want to waste even one minute talking to Claudia.

However, "favor" was probably the hardest thing to return to someone.

When they reached the mini garden, Victoria led Claudia to a remote and secluded area.

Claudia finally felt more relaxed after she took a look around. Talking here shouldn't be a problem.

Still, she wasn't completely at ease.

"No one will eavesdrop on our conversation here, right?"

#### Chapter 24 Hint

Victoria came to a short pause before she shook her head. "The servants rarely come here. The gardener usually comes in the morning to water and maintain the plants."



It was almost afternoon now.

“Good,” Claudia sighed, relieved. She then flashed Victoria a friendly smile as she took out an envelope from her pocket and handed it to Victoria.

“This is for you,” she said.

Victoria only took a glance without accepting it.

Seeing her standing there without moving, Claudia took a step forward and placed the envelope in Victoria’s palm.

It was a thin envelope that Victoria had a feeling she knew what was inside.

## Chapter 24 Hint

With her fingertips pinching the envelope, she felt her heart continue to sink.

The corners of her lips pulled into a smile as she looked at Claudia. “What is the meaning of this?”

“Ahem...” Claudia had a guilty glint in her eyes. “Victoria, you are a smart woman. I’m sure you know what this is. I won’t put it into words.”

“Oh, yeah?” However, Victoria seemed to have a fixation on something as she bit her lower lip with her pearly whites. “I may not know what you mean if you don’t say it outright.”

Claudia’s face darkened immediately.

She didn't want to directly mention Victoria's pregnancy.

Alaric was still clueless about this.

#### Chapter 24 Hint

Now that she came to Victoria to solve the problem, she could only hint at it instead of being straightforward about it.

She didn't trust Victoria. If Victoria had a recording device with her and recorded Claudia's words, the beautiful image that Claudia created for herself would crumble in an instant the moment Victoria sent the recorded content to Alaric.

She could never let that happen.

She thought that Victoria would be an easy opponent to handle before she came here.

But she didn't think that now.

Victoria wouldn't have gotten pregnant if she was easy to deal with.

Thinking of this, Claudia stepped forward and opened the envelope for Victoria, showing a 7-million check.

#### Chapter 24 Hint

Claudia uttered softly, "You have worked hard in the past 2 years. You helped Al a lot both in and out of the company, and he told me that you

are a capable woman who can endure hardships. I'm sure it hasn't been easy on you to live a life like this when you were brought up as the young miss of the Selwyn Family. This isn't a lot of money, but I'm giving you this sincerely. You can buy what you like and get some healthy food for yourself."

When she mentioned those last few words, she deliberately tightened her grip on Victoria's wrist and gently pressed the palm of Victoria's hand with her fingertips.

Victoria raised her gaze and looked directly into Claudia's eyes.

Claudia nodded at her and let out a soft, regretful sigh, and she even reached out to lightly pat Victoria on the shoulder.

She looked as though she couldn't say any more than this.

#### Chapter 24 Hint

Victoria suddenly felt suffocated looking at her.

Alaric asked her to take a vacation in the office yesterday. Just like

Claudia, he was hinting at her to take good care of her health.

For them to hint at something like this... They care about their dignity a whole lot, don't they?

Victoria's cherry lips moved a little.

What should I say?

Should I thank them for worrying about my body? For giving me a break from work and giving me money to let me recuperate?

Will I disappoint them if I don't accept any of those?

Suddenly, she noticed how ridiculous all of this was. Here she was, struggling with making a decision, and yet someone else was deciding

Seeing the grief and indignation in Victoria's eyes, Claudia wanted to say something, only to see Victoria push the check back to her.

"Victoria..."

Does she not want the check? Why won't she take it? Panicking, Claudia urged, "Is the sum too small for you? This is all I can give you for now. If you think it's too little, I can-"

"It's all right," Victoria coldly cut her off. As she shook her head, she firmly stated, "I don't want money."

Claudia was frozen in place.

"You don't want money?" she repeated.

What does she want then? Alaric?

Chapter 24 Hint

A mean look flashed in her eyes when she thought that Victoria was exactly like what her friends said. She refused to give up her position as Mrs. Cadogan, now that it had been 2 years since she held onto the title! Victoria nodded and insisted, "I don't want money."

She had already made a decision she herself didn't think she would make before Claudia came.

She wanted the child.

She would give birth to it and raise it well without relying on anyone else.

The child had nothing to do with anyone but her.

Since she had decided to do that, it wouldn't make sense for her to take Claudia's money.

Not only Claudia's, but Victoria also wouldn't even take Alaric's money if he

Chapter 24 Hint

gave her any.

She would be indebted to Claudia again if she took the money.

What if Alaric wants the child back? What if Claudia can't accept the existence of the child someday?

Because of that, she wanted neither Claudia's nor Alaric's money.

Chapter 25

It was clear that Claudia was starting to panic hearing Victoria didn't want money.

After returning to the country, she noticed Alaric's attitude toward Victoria was elusive.

He doesn't know about Victoria's pregnancy now. But If he found out...

Claudia wasn't sure what Alaric would do.

Her sixth sense was telling her that he wouldn't let go of the marriage so easily if he knew that Victoria was pregnant.

With Victoria still in front of her, Claudia had no choice but to force a smile.

"Victoria, are you worried about what people would think? Believe me, they won't even spare a thought on this. This is my own money. No one else will

## Chapter 25 Camaraderie Between Husband and Wife

know about this. Also, I'm giving you the money because I care about you.

After all, you are-"

"Miss Johnson," Victoria sighed. Thank you for your concern. My family is bankrupt, but I have been keeping my nose to the grindstone for the past two years. Our current situation hasn't returned to what it used to be, but I can support myself and..."

She came to a pause and smiled. "Money is not a problem. Also, you helped me a lot before. I can't take your money anymore."

"It's okay. I'm giving this to you of my own free will."

"Miss Johnson, I really can't take your money."

She put the envelope back in Claudia's hand and took a step back to keep a distance from her.

Claudia seemed to realize something from the way Victoria stepped back

Chapter 25 Camaraderie Between Husband and Wife

and spoke.

She rejected my money. Wait, the way she paused...

Even though she didn't say it, Claudia understood that Victoria was implying that she could support both herself and the child.

Does this mean she will give birth to the child?

Just thinking of the possibility immediately drained the blood from Claudia's face.

Even if she had a good reputation, it was difficult for her to maintain the smile on her lips at this moment. Her eyes were cold when she asked, "Are you serious about this?"

Victoria looked up at her upon hearing that.

Claudia's reaction was big, but that wouldn't change Victoria's decision.

Chapter 25 Camaraderie Between Husband and Wife

Victoria pursed her lips and nodded.

"Yes. I'm sorry. I have already decided before you came here."

“Heh.” Claudia couldn’t help the laugh that slipped then. “Why? I don’t understand why you’re doing this.”

Her scoffing surprised Victoria. A hint of puzzlement flashed in Victoria’s beautiful eyes, but she soon had an understanding expression on her face. It was only natural for Claudia to feel upset about how things had developed.

“It probably doesn’t make sense to you, but this is my body. It is up to me to decide.”

“You...” Not knowing what to say, Claudia could only step forward and hold her by the shoulder. “Why don’t you think about it again, Victoria? I’m not doubting or picking on you. It’s just that... there are consequences you need to know if you go down this path.”

## Chapter 25 Camaraderie Between Husband and Wife

“I know, and I’ve made up my mind.” Victoria fixed her gaze on Claudia. “It’s final.”

Seeing the determination in her eyes, Claudia gradually loosened her grip on Victoria.

At last, she limply lowered her gaze and turned around to leave the mini garden with hurried steps. She was unlike her demure self.

Victoria glanced at the envelope that had fallen to the ground, and she let out a mocking smile as she bent down to pick it up.



When she returned to the living room, the servant told her that Claudia had left. Victoria had no choice but to give up on returning the envelope to Claudia.

would never take the money.

Guess I'll pass it to Alaric when he gets home tonight and have him return

Chapter 25 Camaraderie Between Husband and Wife

it to Claudia.

It took her no time to make her decision.

Alone in the room upstairs, she noticed how she felt much more relieved now. It was as if she had suddenly solved a problem she had been agonizing over for the longest time.

Her relief only began after she decided to keep her child.

She couldn't help but reach out and rub her lower abdomen with a small smile on her face.

I'll have one more family member from now on.

My baby, even if you only have your mother, I will treat you well.

Victoria was packing up at night while wondering if Alaric would be home

Chapter 25 Camaraderie Between Husband and Wife

when she heard the residence's gate open.

She went to the window and took a look, and she saw a beam of

headlights illuminating the gate. Her palm resting on the railing balled up then.

It was Alaric's car.

Just in time. I have to talk to him tonight, she decided before going back to her room to continue packing.

She didn't have many possessions because she had never enjoyed buying things, which was why she initially thought that packing up wouldn't be hard.

But when it was time to sort out her things, she realized that her life and her habits had slowly fused into every corner of the room in the past two years.

#### Chapter **25** Camaraderie Between Husband and Wife

The wardrobe, bed, dresser, washstand, all kinds of trinkets on the couch and coffee table, ornaments on the shelf...

It was a lot of effort to pack everything up.

In the end, she only packed her clothes and daily necessities.

Clack-

Victoria paused when she heard the turning of the doorknob from the outside and the heavy footsteps that followed.

She didn't turn to look.

She knew that Alaric had helped her many times, and she might never

fully repay him her entire life. So, no matter how angry she was, she couldn't give him attitude.

That didn't stop her from feeling sorry for herself with how Alaric and

## Chapter 25 Camaraderie Between Husband and Wife

Claudia were jointly dropping her hints.

Victoria could feel his footsteps close in on her before they suddenly stopped.

She took a deep breath to hold her emotions in.

I have to face what is inevitable.

Alaric, on the other hand, frowned when he saw the scene before him. He almost thought he had gone to the wrong place.

Two light-colored suitcases were placed beside the bed. One had already been packed, whereas the other was about to be full. The closet was open, and half of the clothes inside that belonged to Victoria were already gone.

For a moment, he wondered if she was packing her luggage because she was going on vacation on her annual leave.

## Chapter 25 Camaraderie Between Husband and Wife

But when he saw the half-empty wardrobe, a frown formed on his

handsome brow.

“What are you doing?” he demanded.

Victoria, who stood with her side toward him, turned around and opened the cabinet to take out an envelope. She then handed it to him.

Instead of taking it, he asked, “What is this?”

“Checks,” she coolly replied.

“Checks?” His eyes were locked on her. “What is the meaning of this?”

“The three 14.5 million checks you gave me and the 7 million from Miss Johnson are in here.”

“Why didn’t you spend any of it?” This was his first reaction after hearing that the 43.5 million he gave her was in the envelope.

## Chapter 25 Camaraderie Between Husband and Wife

I gave it to her a long time ago, didn’t I? Has she been keeping it all along?

No, my money isn’t the main point here. “Why is there a 7 million from Claudia?”

Why? It should be me asking why. Why would you tell her about my pregnancy? Even if there is no camaraderie between us as a married couple, we are at least friends, right?

And yet, he didn’t show her even the tiniest bit of respect.

Unfortunately, she didn't answer his question. She only indifferently informed him, "I will stay in the guest room upstairs from tonight onward. After Grandma has her surgery, we will sign the divorce agreement, and I will leave."

## Chapter 26

Victoria's words were like a blow to Alaric's head that he couldn't recover for a long time.

When he came back to his senses, he saw her contemptuous and pained gaze.

Before he could take a closer look, she lowered her head and continued to pack. She was packing much faster than before. She didn't even fold the clothes properly as she kneaded everything together and stuffed them into the suitcase.

Alaric suddenly held her slender wrist when she was turning around. His cold voice came from above her head. "Why are you moving to that room today? You can't wait, huh?"

There was even a hint of sarcasm in his tone. "Let me guess. It's because of the meal you had with your dear Noel at noon today?"

## Chapter 26 Do You Not Want a Divorce?

Upon hearing this, she abruptly raised her head and looked at him in

disbelief.

“No need to take a dig at me like this. Shouldn’t you know best what sort of relationship there is between Noel and me?”

She then forcefully tried to shake his hand off of her.

However, he was too strong for her to fight off. The moment she flung his hand away, he squeezed her tight, preventing her from moving out of his grip even a bit.

His thin lips were pursed, and the corners of his lips pressed into a straight line, clearly proving his displeasure.

“What? Am I wrong? If he’s not the reason, what’s your reason for packing up today? Is it not because of him?” He then sneered. “I’ve been keeping you trapped in this marriage for two years, haven’t I?”

Chapter 26 Do You Not Want a Divorce?

Rendered speechless, she stopped struggling for a second and gaped at him.

“Get your facts straight, Alaric. You were the one who wanted a divorce!”

“Oh.” His face showed no emotion as he continued to mock, “My requesting a divorce is exactly what you want, hmm? You’re so eager to have lunch with him and move out of this room!”

Victoria didn’t say anything at that.

If she hadn't known about his feelings for Claudia, she would have thought that he was jealous. Why else would he overthink just because she had lunch with someone anyway?

He must be acting this way because his self-esteem as a man has been challenged. After all, they hadn't officially divorced yet, but his wife was now wanting to sleep in a separate room.

#### Chapter 26 Do You Not Want a Divorce?

That must be why his possessiveness as a man is acting up.

Not wanting to waste her time arguing with the man who was suddenly acting possessive in case she was swayed by the false impression that he was being jealous, she kept quiet as she tried to break free from his grip again.

Her not saying a word only made his face turn as black as ink. His jaw was tightly clenched as he insisted, "Why aren't you saying anything? Are you agreeing with what I say? You have always wanted a divorce, haven't you?"

When she continued to keep quiet, he mocked, "I got it right again, didn't I? You have always wanted a divorce, but you chose to wait until I bring it up instead of telling me it yourself, yes?"

Victoria finally couldn't take it anymore.

"Alaric." She lifted her head. "What are you trying to say? Do you not want a

## Chapter 26 Do You Not Want a Divorce?

divorce?”

He came to a pause upon hearing that.

It was probably because of Alaric's actions today and Claudia's 7 million that Victoria's heart was as hard as steel now. Even the way she spoke was harsh.

“Surely you didn't forget that this was a fake marriage right from the start? Don't you remember what you told me when you first found me back then? You wanted me to play along with you to please Grandma.”

Alaric's eyes were darker than the night sky when she said that.

The corners of his thin lips stretched after she finished her words. “So, you have been playing along and acting with me the last 2 years? Is that what you're saying?”

“So, what if I was? Weren't you doing the same?”

## Chapter 26 Do You Not Want a Divorce?

He went completely silent when she answered his question with a question of her own.

He quietly looked at the beautiful woman with delicate features in front of him as he recalled how she was a hundred times more indifferent and



calmer than now on the night he proposed they get a divorce.

She showed no reluctance to move out of his room.

Thinking about this, he gradually released his grip.

Now that she had regained her freedom, Victoria turned around to resume packing up.

Alaric pulled on his tie and reminded her in an annoyed and impatient voice, “The servants will notice something is wrong if you move to the guest room now.

Victoria had already thought about this. She promptly countered, “It

Chapter 26 Do You Not Want a Divorce?

doesn't matter, doesn't it? We are getting a divorce soon.”

“What about Grandma?”

“Grandma won't notice.”

“How do you know that? You think Grandma doesn't have someone on her side among the servants?”

Victoria stopped moving about when she heard that.

She hadn't considered this.

After a long minute, she uttered, “In that case, I'll decide what to do after Grandma has had her surgery.”

She couldn't rush this. Griselda's health was still their priority.

Alaric scoffed then. "You look like you have complaints about this

Chapter 26 Do You Not Want a Divorce?

arrangement."

"Not at all. I've lived my life this way for two years now, anyway."

"Oh? You mean you've been feeling wronged for two whole years?"

She only looked at him without a word. This was the first time she had noticed how unreasonable he was.

She turned away, clearly not wanting to speak with him anymore.

She knew that nothing was going to come out of this conversation.

She was upset, and he was being possessive for some reason. However, nothing would change even if they continued to talk.

He quietly stood there scanning her for a moment before he jeered again.

"What's with the look on your face? I won't come back if you don't want to see me."

Chapter 26 Do You Not Want a Divorce?

He immediately turned around and left after throwing that out.

Victoria was standing straight at first, but as soon as he left, she weakly sat down on the bed as though her energy had been sucked out of her.

As she listened to the sound coming from the gates downstairs, she lowered her gaze, and her face was almost ashen.

After 2 minutes, Hector, who had worry written all over his face, rushed to her.

“Mrs. Cadogan, why did Mr. Cadogan leave again right after he came home? And he looked upset when he left. Did something-”

The butler’s words came to an abrupt end when he noticed how pale Victoria looked.

“Mrs. Cadogan! Are you alright?”

## Chapter 26 Do You Not Want a Divorce?

Victoria didn’t want to vent her feelings to other people.

She gave Hector a mirthless smile before reassuring him in a soft voice.

“I’m alright. I’m just a little tired. I should be fine after getting some sleep.”

Hector’s heart ached. Still, he knew better than to further comment, and he finally settled with a sigh.

“Alright then, Mrs. Cadogan. Have a good rest.”

“Will do.” She nodded and let her head hang again.

Before Hector went out of the room, he was shocked when he suddenly noticed the half-packed suitcases in the room.

What's going on?

Why is Mrs. Cadogan packing up? Is this why Mr. Cadogan stormed off right after he came home?

## Chapter 26 Do You Not Want a Divorce?

Hector was suddenly reminded of Claudia who came to see Victoria this afternoon.

He had been with the Cadogan Family for many years. In a way, he had watched Alaric grow up. He was grateful that Claudia rescued Alaric, but he never thought that Alaric would have feelings for Claudia.

After all, Claudia was not Alaric's type of woman.

It's just that... things had developed in a way no one had expected.

When the Selwyn Family declared bankruptcy, Alaric and Victoria had gotten together. He thought that this marriage would turn out to be a good one, but now...

What a quirk of fate.

## Chapter 27

Alaric invited two of his friends to join him for a drink.

He drank alcohol as if it were plain water.

When Norwood and West saw Alaric doing it, they were terrified.

“Can *you* stop him?” Norwood gave West a look.

However, West helplessly shrugged when he heard that. “Do you think I’ll be able to stop him?”

Norwood pressed his lips together solemnly. “He’s already had a lot to drink. His health will suffer if he continues to drink.”

West nodded approvingly. “You’re right.”

The next second, the two stepped forward to stop Alaric tacitly.

## Chapter 27 I’m Not Reluctant

“Al, please stop drinking.”

“That’s more than enough if you’re trying to get drunk. Just wait for the alcohol to kick in and you’ll be out.”

Despite their efforts to stop Alaric, they did not dare to touch the man.

They only used words to try to stop him.

Alaric sneered and didn’t respond when he heard that. He had consumed too much alcohol, so he was acting all hostile and his eyes were red.

“What is his issue?” West blinked. “I thought Claudia had returned. Why isn’t Al spending more time with her instead of drinking his life away?”

Norwood figured it out. “I think because she returned that he couldn’t accept it,” he said after some thought.

West was initially perplexed. However, after some thought, he realized

what was going on.

## Chapter 27 I'm Not Reluctant

His eyes widened as he asked, "Do you mean..."

Norwood confirmed his friend's suspicions with a nod.

West couldn't help but frown when he saw the nod.

"That's true. Since Claudia has returned, Al will have to divorce Victoria.

After all, the couple has spent a significant amount of time together. Al must be reluctant to part with Victoria."

While they were talking, Alaric's dark gaze fell on West. His eyes were as sharp as knives.

West felt a chill on his back and tremblingly asked, "W-What's the matter?"

Alaric's face was ferocious, like that of a wolf. "Did you say I'm reluctant to part with Victoria?"

West was stunned for a moment before pointing to Norwood. "No, I was

## Chapter 27 I'm Not Reluctant

referring to Norwood."

Norwood was irritated when West turned Alaric's attention to him.

Alaric grunted because he was confused.

"I'm not referring to you. Norwood is hesitant to part with his girlfriend, as I

stated.”

With that, West poured Alaric another glass of alcohol and coaxed, “You are free to continue drinking. Please do not interrupt us while we are speaking.”

Usually, West would not dare to do such a thing.

However, when Alaric was drunk, he was much easier to fool than sober.

West had previously observed Alaric when the man was intoxicated.

Although Alaric’s gaze was fierce, he was not unusually sober. That was

## Chapter 27 I’m Not Reluctant

when West knew that Alaric was getting drunk.

Today, however, Alaric proved to be more difficult to deceive than West had anticipated.

“Are you trying to order me?”

West was too stunned to speak. What exactly is going on? Is he still not sufficiently drunk? Why does his mind remain clear?

“I–I didn’t. You want to drink, so I pour you a glass. Am I mistaken?”

Alaric frowned at the glass of alcohol before him and curved his lips in displeasure. Then, he picked up the glass and drank it once more.

Norwood couldn’t help but reach out his hand. “Don’t drink. Nothing will be solved by drinking.”

Alaric came to a halt and turned to stare coldly at Norwood.

#### Chapter 27 I'm Not Reluctant

Despite their friendship, Norwood couldn't stand Alaric's rage.

As Norwood pursed his lips and was about to withdraw his hand, Alaric thudded to the table.

"What the f\*ck?!" West couldn't help but be surprised. "He dozed off? No way! Really?"

Alaric, who had collapsed on the table, did not respond. He appeared to be out of it.

"I believe so," Norwood said.

"Damn it! I assumed Al was still sober when he asked why I had ordered him. I was perplexed as to why his drinking capacity had increased. It turns out that nothing has changed."

With that, West used Alaric's current situation to exact revenge on the man. However, Norwood couldn't take it any longer. "If you don't want Al to

#### Chapter 27 I'm Not Reluctant

be mad at you after he's sober, you should stop now."

As such, West hurriedly stopped. "What should we do now? Should we send him home?"



A gleam flashed through his eyes as he thought of something. Then, he looked in Alaric's pocket for his cell phone.

"We never get to hold his phone when he's sober. Let me check his phone to see if he has any secrets and if he has talked to my goddess, Claudia."

West liked Claudia because of her appearance and personality. However, because everyone was aware of Claudia and Alaric's strange relationship, West did not make a move on her.

He was curious about Claudia and Alaric's chat history. However, when he clicked on it, a pair of hands blocked the screen.

When West raised his head, he noticed Norwood's steady gaze. "Although

## Chapter 27 I'm Not Reluctant

we're best friends, you can't intrude on Al's privacy."

Norwood's words had a forewarning tone to them.

As a result, West succumbed to fear and came to a halt.

"I know that and I'm not going to peek. It's all just a joke. Jeez!"

"Give me the phone." Norwood extended his hand to West.

Despite his reservations, West handed the phone over. "What are you going to do?"

"Call his family and have them pick him up." Norwood exited WhatsApp and opened the contact app.

“His family? Who?”

“Victoria,” Norwood said calmly.

#### Chapter 27 I'm Not Reluctant

West disapprovingly frowned when he heard that. “Why Victoria? You should contact Claudia. Only she can stop Al. He refuses to listen to anyone else.”

“Is that so?” Norwood did not refute and mentioned lightly, “We'll see.”

Then, Norwood called Victoria.

“What are you doing? You know Al-”

Beep!

West was interrupted by the phone's tone. He decided to stop talking because Norwood had already called Victoria.

However, West was confused. He was perplexed as to why Norwood seemed to prefer Victoria over Claudia.

It would have been better to call Claudja, but Norwood called Victoria

#### Chapter 27 I'm Not Reluctant

The phone rang for a long time without being answered.

West said impatiently, “She did not answer the phone. She must have slept already. After all, it's late-”

Victoria answered the phone before he could finish his sentence.

However, there was only silence wherein no one spoke.

Norwood understood what was going on. If Alaric went to a bar to drink, it must be because he fought with Victoria. As a result, Victoria would not be the first to speak after answering the phone.

He cleared his throat before saying, "Hello, it's Norwood Oaks."

After that, Victoria was surprised. "Norwood?"

#### Chapter 27 I'm Not Reluctant

"Yes, it's me. Alaric is drunk, so I used his cell phone to contact you,"

Norwood said softly while glancing at the man in question, who was lying on the table.

#### Chapter 28

At this time, Victoria had already changed into her pajamas and was about to fall asleep.

She didn't let her dark mood interfere with her daily routine.

She would face a difficult battle if she chose to keep her child.

As such, she had to keep her energy levels high to prepare for the battle.

She would lie in bed to rest even if she couldn't sleep.

However, her cell phone rang at this time. She glanced at the screen and

saw that the call had come from Alaric.

Victoria was perplexed when she saw the name on the screen.

She had a heated argument with him earlier. When he rushed out, Victoria

assumed he was going to find Claudia.

That was why Victoria was surprised when Alaric called her.

She was about to answer the call but remembered the previous call he had asked Claudia to make.

Maybe he will inform me of the same thing again.

Victoria didn't want to pick it up because of that.

However, she accepted the call as the phone kept ringing. Then, she heard a male voice she didn't recognize.

After a while, she eventually got out of bed and resignedly changed out of her pajamas to go outside.

The temperature had dropped after dark.

As a result, she shrank back subconsciously as soon as she walked out.

Everyone was asleep by then, so Victoria didn't bother calling the driver.

Instead, she went to the garage with the keys.

Norwood's words rang in her head as she drove away.

"Alaric doesn't appear to be in good shape. Please come over here as

soon as possible.”

Why is Alaric not in good shape? Will his possessiveness turn him odd?

Victoria did not imagine that Alaric would want to get drunk.

More importantly, she resumed her erratic thinking.

Could Alaric have been acting strangely because he is jealous? No, he loves Claudia, so how can he be jealous because of me? He must believe (that his masculinity has been attacked, which is why he’s acting strangely.

As Victoria was thinking, a beam of light appeared ahead of her. She came to her senses and hurriedly swerved to one side before slowing down and stopping on the side of the road.

She then leaned on the steering wheel while gasping in surprise.

That was dangerous...

She would have collided with that car if she didn’t react quickly enough.

After adjusting her breathing, she resumed her journey.

To ensure her safety, she stopped her thoughts from running wild and drove seriously for the rest of her journey. She soon arrived at the bar Norwood had mentioned.

Although it was already dark, many couples hugged and kissed each other outside the bar.

Victoria could only find a parking space and rush to the bar because the establishment did not allow vehicles to park *at* the entrance.

However, as she was about to enter, she noticed a familiar figure running from the street.

Victoria fixed her gaze on the figure. It was Claudia.

Claudia had missed Victoria. She dashed into the bar while clutching her bag.

It was apparent why Claudia was there.

What am I doing here? To make a joke about myself?

Even so, Victoria couldn't move and stood motionless.

After an unknown time, a few familiar figures emerged from the entrance.

Victoria instinctively hid in the shadows the moment she saw them.

“What’s the problem? Why did you suddenly start drinking so much? Why didn’t you stop Alaric from drinking, West?”

Claudia and West helped Alaric out of the bar, followed by Norwood, who maintained a calm demeanor.

West was upset as Claudia blamed him. He went on to say, “I tried to stop him, but you know he never listens to us. If you were present and stopped him, he might comply.”

Claudia let out a sigh. “Alaric, you’re an adult already. Why do you continue to consume so much alcohol?”

They collaborated to get Alaric into the car.

Victoria stood in the shadows and watched quietly.

Suddenly, the inebriated Alaric sensed something. Grabbing Claudia's thin wrist, he babbled, "D-Don't g-go."

Claudia was taken aback but she returned to her senses to lightly pat him on the shoulder. "Alright, alright. I'm not going. Please be good."

Victoria couldn't take another look at them at that point.

She gritted her teeth, regretting coming to the bar late at night.

I should not have answered the phone. Instead of rushing here to humiliate myself, I should have laid in bed. I don't know why I'm doing this.

Do I have to let others break my heart to give up Alaric?

In the end, Victoria walked away with an indifferent expression.

She didn't care about them any longer, so she didn't notice Alaric shaking Claudia's hand away after the woman told him to be good.

It was a powerful push.

Claudia stumbled after being thrown and nearly fell to the ground. West rushed to her aid because he was nearby.

"Are you okay, Claudia?"

Claudia was dazed because she had not recovered from the shock.

Did Alaric just shove me away? she grumbled to herself. No, he shook me off. Is this an unintentional action on his part?

Claudia regained her footing and returned her gaze to Aldric, whose eyes were tightly closed. A frown on his face indicated his discomfort.

He also reeked of alcohol.

Despite the fact that Claudia was embarrassed in front of West and Norwood and looked like a mess, she calmly brushed her hair aside and forced a smile. “I believe he drank too much. He has no idea who anyone is.”

But as soon as she said that, they heard Alaric growl, “Norwood, send me back!”

For a brief moment, it was deafeningly silent.

Claudia had previously assumed Alaric shook her away because he was too drunk to recognize anyone. As a result, she couldn't hide her embarrassment after Alaric's words.

West had not anticipated this. He could only comfort Claudia in a low voice when he saw how sad she was. “Don't overthink it, Claudia. Al has had too much to drink and can't recognize you, but he must recognize your name.”

At that point, Alaric exclaimed, “Norwood Oaks!”

Norwood took a step forward and said to West, “I'll take care of him. You should send Claudia back.”

West turned to face Norwood and said, “Alaric is drunk. Can you handle him on your own?”

Before Norwood could say anything, Claudia suggested, “You can send



him to my place.”

When they heard that, the two men paused and looked at her.

Claudia looked both of them in the eye and smiled lightly. “He’s too drunk to care for himself, so someone else must do it. I’ll take care of him, so you can send him to my house.”

## Chapter 29

West nodded immediately. “You’re when he’s drunk, so how about we- “Let’s bring him to my place.” Norwo

deep voice. “You’ve heard him calli word, he’s going to come after me Norwood and Alaric were longtime knew West and Claudia.

Coupled with his reserved nature, h during conversations and would ge up, though, his tone made it hard f Just like now.

Meanwhile, Claudia was staring at always felt disliked by him for some reason. But he’s good friends with Al, so maybe it’s just my imagination.

West was at a loss for words and spoke up for her, “Al’s drunk and might not even remember what he said when he wakes up. Why do you have to

take it so seriously?” After he said that, he giggled and looked toward Claudia. “Plus, you’re also a man, so you can’t be as meticulous as Claudia when taking care of Al. I think we should send him to her place.”

Norwood did not say anything further and looked at West with his dark gaze. “I said, send him to my place. If you’re worried, you can stay at my place to take care of him.”

At that, West argued, “Norwood, why are you-”

“It’s fine, West. Let’s just go with Norwood’s idea and send Al to his place.”

Claudia smiled. “Norwood is more mature than us, so it’d be better if he takes care of Al tonight. I wasn’t thinking straight earlier.”

Once she finished her words, she gave Norwood a kind smile, but inside, she was furious.

Norwood was one of Alaric’s best friends, so she did not want to offend him, as doing so would only make things hard for herself. Naturally, she would not hinder herself like this.

Following that, everyone helped Alaric to Norwood’s home. Once they finally helped the drunken man settle down, Norwood said, “It’s the middle of the night, and it’s not appropriate for a young woman like you to stay with three men. West, send her home.”

West was dumbfounded. “But didn’t you say that we can stay over to take care-

Before he could finish, Claudia interrupted him. “West, let’s go. Norwood’s right. It’s not appropriate for me to stay here.”

While scratching his head, West sent her home accordingly without another word.

After sending Claudia home, he plopped onto the couch at about 2.00AM.

When he saw Norwood coming out of the room, he asked, “How’s Al? Is he doing okay?”

Norwood grabbed a bottle of cold water from the fridge and drank it before setting it down. “He seems fine. He hasn’t woken up.”

“Cool.” West felt relieved but soon thought of something and pouted.

“Norwood, I can’t seem to understand what you were thinking tonight. You knew Claudia likes Al, and Al likes her back, but why did you stop us from bringing him to her place?”

While sweeping his gaze across West, Norwood replied, “If your brain is still intact, you wouldn’t think of sending a married man to a single woman’s home.”

“So, what if we did? It’s not like you don’t know what’s going on with Al. He and Victoria aren’t exactly married anyway.”

Norwood stared deeply at West and questioned, “How do you know that?”

After a scoff, West replied, “Of course, I know. Let’s not talk about anything else but what happened tonight. You called her and said Al was drunk,

right? Then, you asked her to come over, but what happened? Did she appear? I didn't even see her shadow."

When mentioning this matter, Norwood felt confused. When he suggested Victoria come over, her attitude did not sound like she was unwilling to do so, so why did she not show up?

The truth was, while West was sending Claudia home, Norwood phoned Victoria again. This time, it took him two to three calls before reaching her. Then, he noticed her voice had turned cold, and her attitude was completely different from before.

"What's the matter?"

While he was surprised by her sudden change in attitude, Norwood seemed to have caught on to something and asked, "Did you come over? What did you see?"

The other side was silent for a moment before speaking up again, "I didn't head over. Since you're with him, please take good care of him." After saying that, she hung up.

At first, he thought Victoria was a relentless woman, but it took him a while before he finally realized the meaning behind her words and began analyzing what had happened.

If Victoria did not head out as she said, she would have asked about what she 'should have seen' when he asked her that question instead of

keeping quiet. Also, she would not have said she never went out in such a tone.

When he returned to his senses, he heard West still complaining about her.

“How can such a cold woman compare to Claudia? Claudia is Al’s savior and almost gave up her life to save him back then. The scar from that incident is still on her hand. If I were Al, I would marry her.”

“Are you combining favor with feelings?”

“Why can’t I? Claudia is so pretty. Any man would fall in love with her, let alone a man she saved. So, what if I mixed them up?”

At that, Norwood did not intend to argue with him and returned to his room.

The long night passed.

When Alaric awoke the next day, he felt a dull pain in his head. Even his ability to think had turned sluggish as he looked at his unfamiliar surroundings and sat up.

“You’re awake.” Norwood placed a glass of warm water before him. “Drink up.”

Seeing that it was him, Alaric felt a little disappointed but also relieved. He pursed his lips before finishing the glass of water in one go.

After he finished, he held the glass in his hand while frowning. Moments

later, he looked at Norwood. “What happened last night?”

“Have you forgotten? You were drunk, so West and I brought you here.”

Alaric was dissatisfied with that answer and frowned, but he did not say anything. Since he did not speak up, Norwood did not say anything either and simply stared at him. As his good friend, he was eager to see how long Alaric could hold in his question.

Like how Norwood envisioned, Alaric looked up at him after not hearing what he wanted to hear. Something was concealed in his eyes as he parted his thin lips *to* ask, “What happened next?”

Norwood answered seriously, “What happened next? Nothing.”

Alaric stared at him with his dark eyes upon hearing that.

At that moment, Norwood seemed to have suddenly remembered something and said, “That’s right. She came.”

“She?” When Alaric heard that, he perked up his ears, and his previously dimmed eyes suddenly brightened a little.

“Yes. She said she wanted to look after you, but you asked me to bring you here, so I did.”

Alaric frowned. “When did you become so obedient?”

“I have no choice but to listen to you.” Norwood exasperatedly added,

“After all, bringing a grown man like you to her home will affect her image.”

Hearing that, Alaric finally realized something was amiss. “Who is the ‘she’

## Chapter 30

“Who do you think she is?” Norwood asked him back. Their gazes intertwined in midair, and they stared into each other’s eyes before he suddenly asked, “What’s the matter? Are you disappointed that it wasn’t her?”

As for who that ‘her‘ was, both knew precisely whom they were talking about.

After a moment of silence, Alaric snorted. “Who’s disappointed? What’s there to be disappointed about? She can come as she wishes.”

“Really?” Norwood raised an eyebrow. “Since you don’t care about this, I won’t say anything more.” He kept his word.

Alaric’s eyebrows were scrunched tightly as he looked at him unhappily.

“Just say whatever it is that you know. Why do you have to be so mysterious?”

## Chapter 30 Raising a Child Is Fun

“Me being mysterious?” Norwood put on a shocked expression. “I thought you didn’t want to know and that you’re tired of listening to matters about her, so I stopped talking. What’s that? Do you want to know now?”

Alaric was speechless. F\*ck. Why am I friends with him?

Not feeling like talking to Norwood anymore, he removed the covers to wear his shoes and get out of bed. His actions were rough, and he was

pulling a long face.

When he was done tidying up his attire, the door was pushed open, and West entered the room. Seeing that Alaric was awake, West immediately greeted him before telling him how worried Claudia was when she rushed over last night.

Alaric's expression became gentler upon hearing her name.

"Al, Claudia just called to ask about your condition. She said to tell her once you're awake because she's worried about you."

"Sure." Then, Alaric took out his phone, but when he looked through his call log, he discovered there were calls with Victoria. His pupils contracted slightly as he asked in a raspy voice, "Did you guys call her? Or was it she who called?"

"Who are you asking about?" West peeked at the screen of Alaric's phone and understood what he was asking about when he saw the name. "Oh, Victoria. It was Norwood who called and told her you were drunk."

Hearing that, Alaric glanced at Norwood, who shrugged and smiled without saying anything.

West and Norwood had different personalities; West was the type to blurt everything out without being asked to. Hence, without waiting for Alaric's questions, he started telling him what he needed to know.

"Al, I don't mean to sow discord between you two, but Victoria has gone



overboard. You were so drunk, and Norwood had called her, yet she never appeared. Claudia, on the other hand, was anxious after I called to tell her about your condition and rushed over immediately.”

At first, West thought Alaric would be happy to hear that, but his thin lips were pressed into a straight line, indicating his bad mood. “W–What’s the matter?”

Alaric suddenly laughed self–deprecatingly. “Nothing.”

“Oh.” West scratched the back of his head in confusion. “I bought breakfast. Would you guys like some?”

“You can have it.” At that point, Alaric had no appetite because he was filled with frustration over Victoria’s behavior.

Following that, West asked Norwood and received the same answer, **so** he left with a dumbfounded expression. He also commented before closing the door, “Why are they acting strangely so early in the morning?”

Once the room returned to silence, it made Alaric feel even more frustrated, so he tugged on his already messed–up tie and took it off.

Meanwhile, Norwood stared at him while he stood on the side and finally spoke up after a while, “Although it’s just a guess, I’d still like to help someone defend her case.”

When Alaric heard that, he looked at him. “What?”

“Victoria.”

Norwood replied with a name before explaining clearly, “Though she didn’t show up last night, her reaction seemed strange after I called her again later.” Then, he told Alaric what happened last night, and Alaric fell silent. Watching his quiet state, Norwood continued, “Could there be a possibility that she did come over but bumped into Claudia and us outside the hotel and decided it wasn’t appropriate for her to show up?”

That explanation went straight into Alaric’s heart, and he slightly narrowed his eyes before denying it. “That’s impossible.”

With a raised eyebrow, Norwood asked, “Why?”

“She and Claudia have no grudges, so why would she retreat after seeing her?” When talking about that, Alaric laughed self-deprecatingly. “She just doesn’t want to see or care about me.”

Norwood stopped talking and pursed his lips while falling into deep thought.

The two were quiet for a long time. Subsequently, Alaric’s phone rang from a call by Claudia. As Norwood was standing beside him, he saw it too.

The moment before Alaric went out to answer the call, Norwood sighed and asked, “Up until now, are you still unclear about what you want?”

Once he said those words, Alaric stopped walking abruptly. When he turned around, Norwood had already gone outside, leaving him alone inside the room while still holding his ringing phone.

“Have you made up your mind?” Summer was still worried about Victoria last night but did not expect to receive such good news today.

“Yes.” Victoria was smiling faintly.

Now, it felt like she was experiencing the rainbow after the storm. As one would say, the path became clearer when you made a decision.

While she was lost, she felt like her future was a never-ending blank canvas. Now that she had made up her mind, she discovered things had suddenly turned clear. For example, she now knew what she should do next and what to strive for in the future because she had a goal she could work hard to achieve.

“That’s great.” Summer smiled while holding Victoria’s hand. “Victoria, I’m happy for you. So, have you thought of a name for your baby?”

Hearing that, Victoria felt her lips twitch. “Woah. We’re thinking this far ahead already?”

“How is that far ahead? If you come up with names first, you can just choose one after giving birth. Also, you have to buy a house to raise your child, right?”

“Yes, I’m planning on buying a new house after getting divorced, but... that’s just my initial plan. I still have to find a way to break it to my family. They’re all staying abroad, so if they’re willing to accept my child, I can move in with them, but...”

She had thought about it. If her family could not accept the newcomer, she would find a city without Alaric and buy a new house so she could start a new life with her baby.

Before, she had never imagined what it was like to have a child, and there were even more instances where she thought she had not grown up yet because there were still many things she could not understand. Yet, now, she had begun imagining her life with her child.

The baby inside her might be a boy or a girl. There was a huge difference between both sexes and varying methods of raising them, so she had to research and devise a plan.

“Don’t worry. Mr. Selwyn loves you dearly, so I’m sure he’ll agree with your decision. Plus, raising a child is fun, isn’t it?”