

New Beginnings Chapter 41 - 50

Chapter 41

Victoria remained silent. On the other hand, Claudia's heart was pounding. She pretended to be calm but wasn't sure if her words could intimidate Victoria. Claudia didn't know much about Victoria, except that she had a very high opinion of herself. So, Claudia decided to take a gamble and approach the situation from that angle. When Victoria didn't respond, Claudia's hands started to sweat under the table. She forced a smile and asked, "What, you don't agree?"

Victoria looked at her lightly and said, "You seem nervous. Why is that?"

"No, I'm not nervous. I just..."

Claudia almost revealed her true feelings but quickly stopped and continued, "Fine. Take your time to think about it."

Just as Victoria mentioned earlier, Claudia really wanted Victoria to make a quick decision. However, Victoria fell into deep thought. Truth was,

Chapter 41 I Don't Owe You Anymore

whether she signed the agreement or not didn't matter much to her. Even if she didn't sign it, everything in the agreement, except for the first condition of going abroad and not returning for five years, was something she wanted to do. As for the first condition, she hadn't decided where she

would settle down yet, but it would definitely be far away from Alaric.

“What do you think?” Although Claudia had asked Victoria to take her time, Claudia had been waiting for a while and couldn’t help but ask.

Victoria didn’t know if Claudia was being deliberate, but she couldn’t help saying, “I thought you were not nervous. Why are you in such a hurry? Is there something wrong with the agreement?”

Claudia was speechless. She tried her best to maintain a smile before

Victoria signed the agreement. “Okay, then take your time to check it out.

Indeed, I’ve been rushing you. Sorry.”

Victoria glanced at her and calmed down. She then asked, “Okay, as long as we follow the conditions in the agreement, we’ll be even?”

Claudia nodded immediately and said, “Yes.”

“Okay,” Victoria said.

When Claudia heard this, she handed her a pen and said, “Then, sign it.”

Victoria stared at the pen for a moment before taking it. But instead of signing with it, she played with it in her hand. She spun the pen in various patterns. Seeing that, Claudia was getting more and more anxious until

Victoria finally smiled and said, “I won’t sign this agreement.”

At that moment, Claudia’s eyes widened. “What do you mean? You won’t sign it?”

Victoria put down the pen with a snap on the table and leaned back

calmly. “No, I won’t sign this kind of private agreement.”

Without legal protection and without a lawyer by her side, Victoria couldn’t sign such an ambiguous agreement. Did she owe Claudia a favor? Yes, but that did not mean she would need to sell herself out just to repay it.

Claudia was visibly upset. “Victoria, what’s your deal? Are you trying to play me?”

“No,” Victoria replied seriously as she shook her head. “Although I won’t sign the agreement, I will still fulfill all the requirements you mentioned.”

She paused and continued slowly, “If you didn’t make this agreement to trick me, then it shouldn’t matter whether I sign it or not.”

Claudia restrained her anger, but her smile was anything but pleasant.

“Victoria, are you overthinking things? How could I possibly trick you? If I wanted to, I wouldn’t have helped you in the first place. Don’t misunderstand me, okay?”

Victoria smiled and asked, “Is that so? Then, what are you afraid of?”

Claudia didn’t understand what she meant. “Afraid of what?”

“You’re his savior, right? You must lack confidence in yourself to ask me to sign this agreement.”

Hearing this caused a trace of viciousness to flash across Claudia’s face.

When she heard Victoria mention the matter, she felt wretched and afraid that those fragmented memories of Victoria’s would suddenly return.

Claudia wasn't sure if it was because she was suppressing her anger, but her usually beautiful features were twisted. "If you didn't insist on keeping this child, would I need *to* prepare this agreement?"

After saying that, she quickly regained her gentle demeanor and said to Victoria, "Just trust me. I won't trick you."

Victoria didn't expect to see such a quick change in attitude. She hadn't seen it before, and she couldn't help but marvel at Claudia's ability to turn on a dime. Thinking of this, she curled her lips and said, "Then, please trust me too. Even if I don't sign this agreement, I will still do everything you mentioned."

"You!" Claudia didn't expect her to be so sure she wouldn't sign. "If you don't sign, how do I know you won't change your mind?"

"Even if I do sign, how do you know I won't change my mind? If I really want to do something, do you think the small amount of penalty on the contract will stop me?"

Claudia stared at her. "What exactly do you want? You don't want to terminate the pregnancy, and I agreed. Can't you just sign the agreement to ease my mind?"

Victoria furrowed her brow. "Miss Johnson, I hope you understand one thing. What happens to the child is up to me, not you. To put it bluntly, Alaric and I are legally married, and others don't have the right to interfere.

As for you...”

Claudia’s face turned pale. “What do you want?”

“I don’t want anything. It’s just a matter of goodwill. I will fulfill all the requirements you mentioned,” said Victoria flatly.

“That’s not good enough. I don’t trust you. How do I know you won’t change your mind later on?”

“Well, then there’s nothing I can do.” Victoria shrugged, looking indifferent.

“If you can’t trust me, then you shouldn’t have helped me in the first place or asked me for any favors, right?”

After hearing this, Claudia finally calmed down a bit. She initially thought that Victoria was easy to deceive. All she had to do was present Victoria with impossible conditions, and after Victoria refused, Claudia would produce the agreement. When that time came, Victoria would sign her name when her guard was down. Who knew that Victoria would be so vigilant?! I really miscalculated things.

Claudia gritted her teeth as she looked at Victoria. “Are you sure you can keep your promise?”

Victoria smiled. “It’s a simple matter. If I can’t keep my promise, I wouldn’t have come out today. And if I’ve already made up my mind, why would I waste time sitting here with you?”

“Okay, that’s what you said.”

There was no other way. Victoria refused to sign the agreement, and Claudia couldn't force her to sign it. Her main task was to keep Victoria from speaking nonsense in front of Alaric anyway. That conversation just now should be useful to prevent that.

She stretched out a hand toward Victoria, restored her smile, and said, "I hope you will always keep your promise. Let's have a pleasant cooperation."

Victoria stared at her hand but didn't move. She just said calmly, "From now on, I won't owe you any favors."

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After speaking, Victoria couldn't be bothered to waste any more time with her. She packed up her things and quickly left the cafe. However, she didn't notice that after she left, the man, who was referred to as Carlo, sat down in front of Claudia and began to inquire about Victoria. After leaving the cafe, Victoria did not go home. Instead, she stood on the side of the road, looking at the passing vehicles. The huge boulder in her heart finally fell to the ground.

She couldn't help but call her father, Tony, to share the news that she had returned the favor. However, the phone rang for a long time and the call went unanswered. Victoria glanced at the time and guessed that her father was probably busy with work, so she didn't call again.

For the rest of the **day**, Victoria continued to accompany Griselda at the nursing home. As she had talked to Claudia for a long time, she was delayed and arrived at the nursing home a little later. When she arrived,

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the caregiver said, “Mrs. Cadogan, you’re more than half an hour late today. Old Mrs. Cadogan has been waiting for you for a long time.”

Hearing this, Victoria felt a little guilty. “I had something to do on the way. I got delayed.”

“Then go in quickly.”

“Okay.” Victoria quickened her steps and soon arrived at the ward.

All the caregivers had probably left at the same time, and there was only Griselda in the room. When Victoria was about to walk in, her footsteps suddenly paused. She saw that Griselda was holding a photo and staring at it in a daze. Although Victoria could only see her profile from a distance, she could sense the heavy sorrow coming from the old woman.

“Grandma...” Victoria called out to her softly and walked in.

Hearing the sound, Griselda snapped back to reality and looked toward

the source, her emotions disappearing from her face. “Victoria, you’re here.”

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Victoria walked up to her, apologetically explaining, “Sorry, Grandma. I ran into some trouble on the way here. I just got here. Did you wait for me long? Next time, if I’m late again, I’ll make sure to call ahead.”

“Silly Victoria, it was only a little while. How long could I possibly wait? Besides, there’s nothing to do at the nursing home, so it doesn’t matter if I wait a little longer or shorter.”

“No, that won’t do.” Victoria shook her head, crouched down, and leaned her head on Griselda’s leg, softly saying, “I want to tell you so that at least while waiting for me, you know I’m on my way to find you.”

“You little dear...”

Griselda was soothed by Victoria’s gentle voice and reached out to tidy Victoria’s hair, asking, “Then why don’t you tell me what happened on your way here?”

Victoria paused for a moment, then smiled and said, “It’s just work stuff and it’s very boring. Grandma, there’s not much to talk about that. How about you tell me a story instead?”

After speaking, Victoria touched the photo in Griselda’s hand and said, “For example, the story behind this photo.”

Griselda hesitated for a moment before gently tapping Victoria’s fair forehead. “You little clever brat.”

“Mm,” Victoria hummed, leaning her forehead toward Griselda. “I want to hear your story, Grandma.”

“Alright, I’ll tell you.”

By noon, Victoria received a message from Alaric asking her where she was. Victoria replied briefly, ‘At the nursing home.’

Shortly after the message was sent, Alaric replied, ‘I’ll come over for lunch.’

Victoria was surprised and asked, ‘Aren’t you busy at the company?’

Alaric replied, ‘Yes, I’m still in a meeting. I’m taking some time off to come over.’

Victoria didn’t say anything more and just said okay. She had nothing to say about him taking time out of work to come to the nursing home to see his own grandmother.

The meeting finally ended. After experiencing several hours of Alaric’s sharp tongue, all the high-level executives in the conference room walked out with pale faces, looking at each other with grief. Then they shook their heads, sighed, and left in embarrassment.

was about time. If he went to the nursing home now, the timing should be about right.

He walked out of the conference room expressionlessly. Suddenly, a beautiful woman in a white dress and fluttering long hair walked up to him.

“Al.” The woman’s voice was soft and clear, causing the other high-level executives to look over at her.

Alaric paused and saw that Claudia was holding a thermal food container while walking toward him. His eyes softened when he saw her, and he walked over. “What are you doing here?”

Since the other executives were still around, Claudia looked a bit shy as she said softly, “You’ve been busy with work lately. I don’t think you’ve been eating properly. So, I personally made some food that you like.”

The people around them couldn’t help but sigh with envy. Two spots of red crept up on Claudia’s fair face. She looked a bit embarrassed as she lowered her head. The people around them couldn’t help but stop and watch the drama unfold.

“Mr. Cadogan, you’re really lucky today.”

“Yeah, we all envy Mr. Cadogan for having such good fortune.”

They were trying to flatter Alaric, but little did they know that he didn’t like their jokes about him and Claudia. In fact, he gave them a stern look and glared at them with his sharp eyes. “Do you have nothing better to do? Or did your performance earlier not embarrass you enough? Do you want to have another meeting to continue this?”

The people around them were instantly intimidated and didn’t dare to make a sound. In just a moment, everyone left quietly.

Claudia, who was standing in front of Alaric, was shocked to see him suddenly become angry. She looked up at him with surprise. Why did he suddenly become angry? They didn't say anything wrong, did they? But it seems that Alaric doesn't like it when people *joke* about him and me.

Most importantly, Claudia felt that she had been humiliated in front of the company's executives. She thought she was special, *so* she dared to wait for him at this time. She also intended to assert her dominance in front of his colleagues by doing this. In fact, she wanted everyone to know that she was the one who would be the lady boss of the company, not Victoria. Nevertheless, she didn't expect Alaric to suddenly get angry...

"What's wrong with you, Al?"

Hearing her words, Alaric paused and came back to his senses, feeling a bit dazed. He didn't know why he had suddenly lost his temper just now. Now, he was extremely annoyed. He pursed his lips and said, "Nothing. Why did you come here today?"

Claudia was speechless. She had already told him, but he forgot. She had
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no choice but to awkwardly repeat what she had just said. However, Alaric still seemed distracted and absent-minded.

Finally, he frowned and said, "Claudia, thank you for going to all this trouble, but I have something to do today and I *have* to go *out*."

Then, he added while turning to his assistant, “I’ll *have* someone take you **back.**”

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“W–What?” Claudia couldn’t believe what she was hearing. This was not what she wanted at all. She had hoped that after she made Alaric lunch, she would show him her injured finger when she went to his office. Then, he would be moved and concerned for her. Following that, the two of them could be alone together and deepen their relationship. But now, it seemed like that wasn’t going to happen.

Claudia tried to hide her disappointment and said awkwardly, “Al, what are you going to do? If it’s not going to take too long, I can wait for you in your office.”

“Sorry, Claudia, I’ll be gone for a while. You should go back first,” replied Alaric.

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please.”

Claudia didn’t want to leave just yet. She bit her lip and turned to look at Alaric, her eyes slightly red.

How about this? Would he still be indifferent to me if I act like this?

However, Alaric did not notice her tearful look and had already left with long strides as if he had some urgent matter to attend to. Claudia could only stand there and watch as he disappeared.

Alaric's assistant spoke again, "Miss Johnson, are we leaving?"

Claudia glanced at Alaric's assistant who had an impassive look in his eyes and an unfriendly tone of voice. She felt like he didn't like her. Her intuition was right though; Alaric's assistant didn't like her because everyone in the company knew about Alaric and Victoria's relationship. As Claudia had deliberately come to the meeting room with a lunch box, (which made her intentions obvious.

After hanging around Victoria for so long, the assistant thought that she was a really capable yet friendly woman, so it was annoying to see Claudia act this way around Alaric. Although the assistant was annoyed by Claudia's actions, he didn't say anything since he was only there to help Alaric with his work.

Nevertheless, Claudia was reluctant to leave at the moment. She had put so much effort into cooking and injuring her finger. If she were to leave

now, what was the point? The injury would heal very soon, and it wouldn't do if she had to deepen her wound to show Alaric later. She couldn't let this opportunity go to waste.

So, she smiled and asked the assistant, "Where did Al go? Will he be back this afternoon? If he'll come back, can I wait for him in his office?"

The assistant had no expression on his face as he spoke in a monotone voice, "I'm not sure about Mr. Cadogan's schedule. As for you going to the office, I'm sorry, Miss Johnson, but that's not possible. The office does not allow outsiders to enter when Mr. Cadogan is not there."

Claudia almost couldn't hold back her anger. She tugged her lips stiffly and said, "I'm not an outsider."

The assistant replied, "I can't be sure of that."

This assistant is so annoying. The first thing I'll do when I become the lady boss of the Cadogan Group is to replace this assistant of Alaric's. He's such a blind idiot.

Claudia cursed in her mind, but on the surface, she still maintained her calm and beautiful appearance. "Well, then, can you please take me back? By the way, I made this lunch with great effort. Since Al didn't have a

chance to eat it, you can have it.”

Although she hated the assistant, he was still working by Alaric’s side at the moment, so she had to suck up to him for a bit. It would be even better if she could win him over to her side. However, the assistant took a big step back and shook his head. “Miss Johnson, I can’t accept something for nothing.”

Claudia was so angry that she almost exploded. In the end, the assistant sent Claudia back home.

When Alaric arrived at the nursing home, the time was almost right. His tense mood when he came here was also relaxed when he saw the scene of Victoria lying beside Griselda and leaning against Griselda’s leg.

When Griselda heard the noise, she looked over at him. The two of them looked at each other, and then Griselda made a gesture for him to be quiet. Only then did Alaric notice that Victoria was actually sleeping next to Griselda’s leg.

As Griselda’s legs were feeble, Alaric went up to Victoria, bent down gently, picked her up, and placed her on the small bed beside them. She was probably in deep sleep as she didn’t even wake up when Alaric moved

her. She even subconsciously rubbed her head against the soft pillow, and then fell back asleep again, hugging the covers in her arms.

When Alaric saw her like this, he couldn't help but reach out and gently pinch her soft cheek. She was so cute even when she was asleep. Her skin was so soft and smooth; Alaric couldn't help but pinch it again. Just as he was about to extend his other hand to continue pinching her, Griselda said in a soft voice, "Now, now. Are you trying to wake her up?"

Hearing this, Alaric's movement paused, and then he awkwardly cleared his throat. "No, Grandma. I'm not."

Griselda then motioned for Alaric to take her outside in her wheelchair. He obliged, and as soon as they left the room, Griselda's voice returned to its normal volume. "That little girl said she wanted to hear me tell a story, but she fell asleep before I even got halfway through. I don't know if it's because I'm a boring storyteller or if she hasn't been getting enough rest lately."

"It's probably because she hasn't been getting enough rest," Alaric responded. "She's got pretty bad dark circles under her eyes."

Earlier, when he pinched her cheeks, he noticed that her dark circles were

especially pronounced. It was probably because she had pale skin.

“What’s going on?” Griselda asked. “Why hasn’t she been getting enough rest? Have you been bullying her?”

Alaric was dumbfounded. “Bullying her? Me? I wouldn’t dare. If only she didn’t bully me. Since we were kids, she’s always been the one to get the upper hand.”

“Ha!” Griselda snorted. “You’re a boy. So, what if you’re bullied? You’re even acting like you’re the one who’s been wronged.”

“No, that’s not it,” Alaric protested. “I’m just telling the truth.”

“Anyway, you’re not allowed to bully her. That girl is really dear to me. Even though she’s not my real granddaughter, I swear she’s just as important to me as if she were.”

Alaric didn’t argue with that. Everyone could see it for what it was.

“Mmm.” Victoria didn’t know how long she’d been asleep. She just felt really tired and the bed was comfortable. When she woke up, she hadn’t even opened her eyes yet when she stretched lazily. After she was done stretching, she suddenly realized something and opened her eyes wide, only to be met with Alaric’s smiling gaze.

“You’re awake?” he asked.

Alaric?

Victoria was surprised to see him sitting on the edge of her bed. When she looked around the room, she recognized it as Griselda’s.

“Where’s Grandma?” she asked while placing her hand on her forehead, feeling annoyed at herself. “How did I fall asleep?”

“Grandma went for a medical examination,” Alaric explained while looking at her. “How could you fall asleep while she was telling you a story? No one else does that but you.”

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The story...

That managed to jog Victoria’s memory.

She had been listening to stories of Griselda’s youth and was enjoying herself too, but all of a sudden, she started feeling drowsy.

However, she didn’t have the heart to cut Griselda off, so she forced herself to stay awake and carry on listening.

Victoria had no idea when she fell asleep.

She began to feel bad about it.

I didn’t mean to fall asleep. Do you think Grandma is upset with me?”

“Grandma loves you so much. What do you think?”

Chapter 44 Taking That Tone with Me

Alaric told Victoria about Griselda not letting him wake Victoria up when he came over.

Victoria lowered her eyes and chuckled lightly.

“That’s true.”

In her newly awakened state, Victoria seemed rather naive and clueless.

Alaric noticed this and tapped her on the forehead. “What goes on in that head of yours all day long?”

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Victoria stiffened. She was still feeling a little bleary-eyed earlier, but her head was clear now. She gently massaged her forehead as she stared at Alaric with a blank look in her eyes.

There were times when Alaric’s gestures confused her. She would even get the illusion that he might begin to develop a tiny bit of feelings for her after being with her for **so** long.

Chapter **44** Taking That **Tone with Me**

This illusion appeared frequently in the past two years, but it would only last for a brief moment as Victoria would swiftly be reminded of the reality. However, as time passed and the two of them started forming a connection, she began to lose herself in the relationship and truly believed

that they would be together forever.

Alas, she was hit in the face with reality.

As long as Claudia came back, she would always be Alaric's first choice.

Victoria's gaze grew colder as she set her hand down and lowered her eyes without saying anything.

Alaric's smile grew faint as well.

Even though she didn't speak, he sensed that her attitude had turned icier.

"What's the matter?"

Victoria shook her head. "It's nothing. I just feel a little hazy after my nap."

She wanted to get out of bed, and upon noticing this, Alaric raised his hand to pull her up.

However, as soon as he stretched his hand out, Victoria immediately pulled back as if she had been stung.

All at once, both Alaric and Victoria froze.

"Is this what you mean by ending the fight?"

Victoria looked up and saw the cold smirk on Alaric's face, and the coldness in his eyes. "I'm sorry. I won't do it again."

She sat up by herself.

Nevertheless, her apology accomplished nothing as the atmosphere between the two became chilly again due to the way she avoided him.

She glanced at Alaric's unpleasant expression and secretly sighed to herself.

Things might even get worse between the two if they both stuck around until Griselda was done with her medical checkup, so Victoria suggested, "I shouldn't have done that earlier. But anyway, Grandma should be coming out soon, right? Why don't you head back first?"

The air around Alaric became even colder. "What did you say?"

After a pause, she explained, "I'm not trying to chase you away, but do you want Grandma to see you this way? You'll still have to work this afternoon anyway. I'll explain things to Grandma for you."

The room became eerily silent.

Victoria looked down. She didn't say anything else.

Eventually, Alaric walked off.

He was most likely fuming, but even when he left, he managed to rein himself in and didn't slam the door behind him. Victoria took a deep breath and tried her best to compose herself.

Seems like it'll be hard to call a truce when the cracks have already appeared. I just need to bear with it for a few more days. Everything will be fine after that.

Victoria hoped that when the time came, Griselda would be able to accept the news calmly.

When Griselda came back and asked about Alaric, Victoria told her that he went back to the office, and she nodded understandingly.

She even commented, “My guess is he wouldn’t have even bothered to come over today if you hadn’t been here.”

Victoria was startled. Is that true? Did he only come over because I’m here?

However, she quickly denied that possibility. It wasn’t important whether or not he did. Either way, they were going to get a divorce.

There was no point in dwelling on the things that would not change the final decision.

Alaric headed back to the office with a grim expression.

His anger festered inside him throughout the journey, and as soon as he got back to his office, he took off his jacket and flung it onto the couch.

His assistant, who had followed him in, jumped in fright. He was considering turning right back out when a thought occurred to him, so he remained standing where he was.

It took Alaric a long time to calm himself down. When he turned around and saw his assistant standing in his office, he snapped, “What are you doing here?”

His assistant cowered ever so slightly before putting a lunchbox on the table.

Alaric frowned. “What’s that?”

He was frazzled enough as it was.

“It’s lunch that Miss Johnson lovingly prepared for you, Mr. Cadogan. I was dropping her off and she shoved it over to me when I wasn’t paying attention. She told me to bring it back to you.”

Alaric’s assistant was disgruntled when he brought this up.

He was about to leave after dropping Claudia off when she shoved the lunchbox to him and said it was for him before scampering off.

The assistant didn’t know what to do since he had already declined it earlier.

He figured he couldn’t possibly throw it away. In the end, he brought it back.

Lovingly prepared?

Alaric had been in such a funk that he didn’t even get the chance to grab lunch. Initially, when he got to the nursing home and took Griselda to lunch, he purposely avoided eating because he wanted to have lunch with Victoria when she woke up. He didn’t think he’d get the cold shoulder from her instead.

He didn’t get to have lunch, but he filled up on anger instead.

A lovingly prepared lunch wouldn’t cut it. Even if a three–star Michelin chef came over to cook for him, he would still be too enraged to eat anything.

Alaric loosened his tie and said darkly, "I've already eaten. You can have it."

"Oh." His assistant eyed him before shaking his head. "I better not, Mr. Cadogan. Miss Johnson lovingly prepared this lunch, especially for you. I wouldn't dream of even having a bite."

Alaric didn't expect that response.

He looked at his assistant through narrowed eyes as he asked icily, "Who allowed you to take the sarcastic tone with me?"

His voice was so chilly that his assistant lost all his spunk and clammed
"Get out."

The assistant pursed his lips and walked out of the office.

Alaric yanked off his tie and tossed it onto the couch before taking a seat as he snorted coldly.

What a fine day it is today, Alaric thought sarcastically. Not only did Victoria brush him off, but even his assistant was beginning to talk back to him.

Unexpectedly, his assistant knocked on the door just minutes after his departure.

"What now?" Alaric eyed his assistant coolly.

His assistant held up an exquisite takeout bag and gulped. "Someone from a restaurant just delivered this to the office. They said Miss Selwyn ordered lunch for you."

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“Do you have nothing better to do or did you suddenly decide to become a deliveryman? Do you want to switch-”

Alaric’s sentence came to an abrupt halt when he finally registered what his assistant said earlier. His assistant said the name ‘Miss Selwyn.’

“From whom did you say? Miss Selwyn?”

His assistant nodded blankly. “That’s right. That’s what the deliveryman said.”

At the same time, Alaric’s phone buzzed. It was a text from Victoria.

“Grandma said you didn’t have lunch, so I ordered some food for you. I just got a message from the restaurant saying that it has been delivered. Did you get it?”

Chapter 45 You’re So Good to Me

Alaric’s foul mood improved immensely when he saw the text, but even so, he murmured stiffly, “Aren’t you trying your best to avoid me? Why are acting all concerned about me now?”

Then, he looked at his assistant.

“Bring it over.”

“Oh.”

His assistant set the bag down on the table right beside Claudia’s lovingly prepared lunch, which was an irksome sight, for some reason.

After thinking about it, Alaric’s assistant asked, “You said you’re giving me the lunch Miss Johnson made, right, Mr. Cadogan?”

“Mmhhh,” Alaric hummed curtly.

Then, his assistant intentionally queried, “But, since I’m full, can I give the food out to the others in the office instead? It wouldn’t be good to waste food.”

Alaric frowned at this question.

His assistant thought the frown meant a rejection, but instead, he heard his boss retorting in irritation, “I’ve already given it to you so you can do whatever you want with it. Do you need to check with me over such a simple matter?”

“I understand.”

Alaric’s assistant immediately took the lunchbox out with him as if he was afraid that his boss might regret it.

Claudia came back again when it was nearly time to get off work.

Chapter 45 You're So Good to Me

After going home, she kept mulling things over and felt uneasy still.

It was noon. He was supposed to be having lunch then. Why did he go out? Most importantly, he neglected me.

Am I not the person he's indebted to? Am I not the most important person in the world to him?

He didn't even tell me what he was going out for. Claudia felt extremely on edge.

When she walked past the assistants' area, she spotted Alaric's assistant and other employees busy at work, so she went in.

"Mr. Levane."

Alaric's assistant was a man named Peter Levane. When he looked up and saw Claudia, his mood soured.

Why's she here again?

Nevertheless, Peter stood up and greeted coolly, "Hello, Miss Johnson."

"Hello," Claudia replied with a smile. "So sorry to disturb you, but is Al back?"

She tried her best to give a good impression because she wanted Peter to think favorably of her, lest he badmouthed her in front of Alaric.

Peter paused before responding, “Mr. Cadogan got back to the office at noon.”

Claudia was taken aback.

“He was already back at noon?”

Why didn’t he tell me that he was back in the office?

Feeling embarrassed, Claudia chuckled dryly and said, “I’ll go in to see him then.”

She turned to leave.

“Wait, Miss Johnson.”

Peter took out the lunchbox he kept under his desk and went after Claudia.

“This is what you asked me to give Mr. Cadogan.”

Claudia managed to smile again when she saw the lunchbox. She reached out for it.

“Since he came back at noon, did he eat the food? Did he mention how it tasted?”

Peter’s expression became a little strange.

“Mr. Cadogan said he had already eaten, Miss Johnson, so he gave the food to me. It wouldn’t be right for me to have it all to myself, so I shared it

with the others in the office.”

Peter paused and reflected for a moment before adding, “Everyone thought it tasted pretty good.”

“What...”

Claudia could barely keep the smile from sliding off her face when she heard what Peter said.

Initially, she wanted to give it to Peter. She figured that since Alaric was busy and wouldn’t be coming back, she would use it to curry favor with Peter instead.

She didn’t think that Alaric would end up coming back to the office so quickly.

But he didn’t eat the food I made. He even... gave it to his assistant and the other employees.

Claudia felt as if someone had trampled upon her efforts and sincerity.

“Miss Johnson?” Peter looked at Claudia. “Are you alright?”

Claudia snapped out of her reverie and forced herself to nod with a smile.

“I’m fine. I’ll go in and see Al then.”

“Alright, Miss Johnson.”

Once Claudia disappeared into the office, the smile on Peter's face instantly vanished.

Knock–Knock–

“Come in.”

The cool, indifferent voice rang out from the office.

Claudia opened the door and went in. She immediately saw Alaric, who was sitting at his desk with an aloof expression.

Alaric gave off a different kind of attractiveness when he was working. The sleeves of his black shirt were slightly ruffled, his tie had been tossed somewhere, and he had even undone two of his buttons, which allowed his collarbones to peek out. His dark eyes, which were fixed on the screen in front of him, looked even more piercing than usual.

Claudia had always known that Alaric had one-in-a-million looks. He was flawless in every way.

Every part of his face from his features to his chiseled jaw was exquisite.

His unblemished face was matched with an equally perfect physique, and he came from an incredibly elite background.

Only a man like him was worthy of her.

Claudia ended up standing in a daze for quite some time. It was only when Alaric noticed the silence and looked up with a frown that she came **back** to her senses and walked over to him.

“Claudia?”

Alaric’s brows had furrowed as he focused on work, but when he saw Claudia, they smoothed out a little. “Why did you come?”

Alaric’s cold, untouchable aura slowly dissipated.

Claudia chuckled and said, “I saw you leaving in a rush when I came to see you at noon, so I was a little worried and wanted to check on you before you got off work. How’s your day been? Is everything alright?”

Alaric’s gaze became shrouded when he recalled what happened earlier.

His tone became a lot cooler too.

“Everything’s fine. Next time, you don’t need to come over in person. You can just give me a call.”

Claudia stiffened before lowering her head. Her mood dipped.

“Al... did I cause trouble for you by coming over to your office?”

When Alaric saw Claudia looking despondent, he recalled the way she fearlessly jumped into the river to rescue him. As a result of that, she had

gotten injured, lost consciousness, and nearly sacrificed her life. His heart softened at the recollection.

“You can come over any time you want. Why would you be any trouble?”

Upon hearing the way Alaric’s tone softened, Claudia raised her head again and asked pitifully, “Are you sure? You won’t object to my presence?”

“What are you talking about? Why would I object to your presence?” Alaric refuted.

She was the one who saved his life.

“In the future, you can come over to the office whenever you like.”

Since Claudia got what she wanted, she wisely stopped the display and rushed over to grab his hand. “You’re so good to me, Al.”

“I would’ve died in the river back if it wasn’t for you, so you can go ahead and ask anything of me. As long as it is within my means, I’ll make sure it gets done.”

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As long as it’s within his means...

Claudia nearly blurted out her request, but she managed to stop herself.

I can't bring it up now. I need to keep my cool.

Thus, she asked about Griselda instead.

"I haven't had a chance to visit her yet ever since I got back. I want to visit her a few days from now. Is that okay?"

Alaric frowned and opposed the idea.

"Wait a little longer first. I'm worried that it might affect Grandma's condition."

Claudia's smile grew faint. Things were still the same. For some reason,

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Griselda didn't seem fond of her.

However, as she saved Alaric before, Griselda did treat her with courtesy, but that was all. Griselda was pleasant and polite to her solely because she was Alaric's savior.

Yet, Griselda treated Victoria as if the latter was her own granddaughter.

This was something that Claudia could not accept.

In the end, Claudia nodded obligingly.

"Alright. I'll do as you say."

It wouldn't be for much longer anyway. She just needed to be patient.

Victoria came back to the office after her break.

She had taken her annual leave in a rush, so even though she did her best

Chapter 46 Thoughtful and Attentive

to hand off her work before going on her break, the person who took over from her wasn't skillful enough to handle everything. When she got back, she realized a lot of things had been overlooked.

Thus, she was swamped with work as soon as she got back to the office.

A whole pile of work was waiting for her.

It was only at noon did Victoria finally have the time to take a break.

Throughout the morning, Yasmin came in a few times to bring some drinks for her. At first, Yasmin brought her coffee and Victoria had absentmindedly taken a sip, but the moment the bitterness hit her tongue, she was reminded of something and set the cup down again without drinking anymore.

When Yasmin came in again, she saw that the coffee hadn't been drunk yet and had gotten cold.

"I'll get you a new cup of coffee, Miss Victoria," Yasmin said.

Victoria looked up from her work and said, "From now on, bring me water instead of coffee, Yasmin."

"Huh?" Yasmin thought she had misheard Victoria. "Y-You're not drinking coffee anymore?"

"Yeah. I'm not drinking it anymore."

Yasmin was a chatterbox, and when she heard Victoria's reply, she naturally asked, "But why, Miss Victoria? Water won't help you stay alert."

Victoria didn't answer. She simply looked at Yasmin with a smile.

Yasmin realized belatedly that she was prying, so she scratched her head awkwardly. "Sorry about that, Miss Victoria. I'll get you water from now on."

"Thanks."

Victoria buried herself in work again.

Now that she thought about it, she knew she couldn't be drinking coffee anymore, and tea wasn't an option either. Her workload was heavy and if she did have any caffeine, she might end up consuming quite a lot throughout the day. Her best choice *was to* stick to water.

At last, when Victoria finally had time to take a break, she leaned back on her chair and closed her eyes in exhaustion.

A few moments later, her phone started ringing.

Victoria glanced at the screen and saw that it was Alaric calling.

She answered the phone. "What is it? If it has to do with work, you can just use my office landline."

There was a short pause on the other end of the line as if her words stopped him in his tracks.

Then, the cool voice rang out. "It's not work. Have you eaten lunch yet? If you haven't, then come over."

He spoke quickly and curtly.

Victoria didn't expect him to invite her over for lunch. She glanced at the

looming pile of work on her desk and was just about to decline when she heard another voice coming through the phone.

“You should use a gentler tone, Al. I made lunch for you too, Victoria. We’re waiting for you.”

Victoria’s gaze hardened, but her voice sounded the same. “That won’t be necessary. You two can go ahead. I still have work to do, so don’t wait for me.”

She ended the call immediately after.

asked, “Are you going out for lunch, Yasmin?”

“Yes, Miss Victoria. Do you want to come along?”

“Sure. Let’s go together.”

Victoria got her phone and purse before following Yasmin to the office cafeteria.

Yasmin felt rather flattered as she walked beside Victoria. It was her first time having lunch with Victoria at the office cafeteria.

She was thrilled and kept striking up a conversation with Victoria.

“Are you sure you’ll like the food at the cafeteria, Miss Victoria? We can go out and eat too if you prefer.”

“It’s fine.” Victoria smiled. “The cafeteria’s the closest so it’s most convenient. We can head right back to work after eating.”

“Oh…” Now that work was brought up, Yasmin felt guilty. “I’m sorry. It’s all my

fault. If I'd been able to do a better job, work wouldn't have piled up so much.”

Victoria eyed Yasmin and didn't try to comfort her.

She was bound to resign once the divorce happened, and the only person under her supervision was Yasmin, so when she left, Yasmin would be promoted to replace her.

In the past, Victoria had been *quite* lenient with Yasmin. She handled most of the work herself and allowed Yasmin to slowly learn on the job.

However, that was no longer possible now.

“If you feel bad about it, then you should put more effort into learning this afternoon,” Victoria *replied* shortly.

“I will. I'll do my best to ease your burden, Miss Victoria.”

The two of them lined up to get their food.

While waiting in line, the crowd around them began whispering among themselves when they saw Victoria.

Once she sat down, they began making comments loudly without regard for her presence.

“My, my. The wife of the president is having lunch at the cafeteria with everyone else. Does she think she's being so humble for coming down from her pedestal?”

“Humble? Oh, please. Don't even call her the wife of the president. Have

you ever seen the wife of the president working as a secretary? The future wife of the president is currently in Mr. Cadogan's office, okay?"

They didn't bother keeping it quiet. It was as if they assumed that Victoria had fallen from grace and were purposely demeaning her in front of her.

"You're talking about Miss Claudia Johnson from the Johnsons, right? I saw her yesterday. She brought lunch for Mr. Cadogan yesterday and she came over today too. She's so thoughtful and attentive."

"I heard that she's the one that Mr. Cadogan actually wants to marry. Not only does she come from a good family, but she's also so beautiful, and most importantly, she saved Mr. Cadogan's life before."

"As **for** that other person? She has nothing. Not only has her family gone bankrupt, but she even had to rely on Mr. Cadogan to get a job as a secretary here at Cadogan Group. She can't do anything for Mr. Cadogan."

Victoria quietly listened to the fervent discussion going on around her.

She even agreed with the last thing she heard.

It was true that her family wasn't of any help to Alaric when it came to the business.

Clang!

Yasmin, who was sitting opposite Victoria, couldn't take it anymore. She slammed her cutlery down and declared, "They've gone too far! I'm going to confront them!"

She stood up in a huff.

However, Victoria commanded coolly, “You’re not allowed to go.”

“Miss Victoria!”

Victoria’s tone was indifferent but firm all the same. “Sit down.”

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In the end, after staring at Victoria’s unaffected expression, Yasmin reluctantly took her seat. That being said, she couldn’t help but vent her dissatisfaction as she bit her lip and fumed, “Didn’t you hear what they said, Miss Victoria? They went too far! I wish I could rip their tongues out.”

“And?” Victoria asked calmly. “Start a fight just over a few words they said?”

What will they say next? Is it going to be that not only was I forced to eat lunch at the cafeteria, but I even got into a fight with the other employees at the cafeteria because they hit a raw nerve?”

Yasmin frowned.

“That wasn’t my intention, Miss Victoria.”

“I know that, of course, but do you think you can accomplish anything by confronting them? Regardless of whether or not you fight back, there’s no way for you to control what comes out of someone else’s mouth.”

Chapter 47 Tell Him to Come Out

Yasmin bit her lip.

“Well, I can’t just sit back and listen to others spreading slander about you,

Miss Victoria!”

Victoria was quite touched to see Yasmin getting furious on her behalf.

She never thought that her cowardly-seeming assistant had a dominant

side to her as well.

She let out a helpless sigh.

“It doesn’t quite count as slander.”

Yasmin’s eyes widened in disbelief. “What are you saying, Miss Victoria?”

“They’re not wrong. My family went bankrupt and we can’t be of help to

Alaric

“That’s not true...” Yasmin continued to defend Victoria. “You being in the

company is the greatest help there is, Miss Victoria. With your capabilities,

any company would soar to even greater heights with you around. What

they’re saying isn’t true.”

“That’s enough.” Victoria cut Yasmin off and said, “Just get on with your

lunch. If you have so much energy, you might as well spend it on learning

the job.”

Since Victoria seemed completely unbothered, Yasmin didn't want to comment further, so she suppressed her anger and carried on eating.

Once they were done, Victoria and Yasmin walked through the crowd and left. All the while, Victoria's expression remained perfectly calm.

“Look at her acting as if she's unbothered. It looks as if she doesn't care that Mr. Cadogan's with another woman right now.”

“Tch. What do you mean she doesn't care? But even if she does, would it matter? She'd still be abandoned anyway. She might as well keep her cool and maintain her dignity.”

“I bet she'll start crying her eyes out as soon as she gets back to her office.”

The crowd at the cafeteria continued gossiping.

Alas, Victoria was about to disappoint them. When she got back to the office, she didn't have any time to wallow in tears and self-pity. She didn't even have time to dwell on these things that were supposed to upset her.

There was too much work and she was about to resign soon, so she had to find someone to replace her.

Even though she didn't plan on having anything to do with Alaric in the future, he **did** help her during her time of crisis, so she wanted to have an amicable separation.

Therefore, the moment the two women got back to the office, Victoria began assigning a lot of tasks to Yasmin.

Yasmin was shocked. "T-That much? What if I can't finish everything?"

Victoria didn't show her any empathy.

"You'll have to stay late then."

Yasmin kept quiet.

She dared not say anything, but she didn't think that Victoria was being hard on her either.

Victoria was the one who hired her and mentored her. When the secretaries and assistants in other companies went out for business meetings, they would have to drink on their superior's behalf, and sometimes, they might even have to bear the brunt of other forms of harassment by unsavory and immoral people at such meetings.

However, she never experienced any of these things when she followed Victoria around.

Initially, she assumed that the people who were too afraid to touch

Victoria would target her instead, and sure enough, the first time she went to a meeting with Victoria, she was the victim of verbal harassment.

It was Yasmin's first foray into the workforce and her first encounter with such an incident, but as the other party was a client, she couldn't show her displeasure.

She was so mad that she turned scarlet, but she couldn't say anything.

It was then that Victoria, who was sitting beside her, eyed the other person coldly before stating, "**If** you're not interested in discussing business, Mr. Weasel then we won't sit here and waste any more time."

Victoria pulled a startled Yasmin up with her and left the hotel despite the The night breeze blew against them as Yasmin stared at Victoria in shock.

"I-Is it okay for us to just leave like that, Miss Victoria?"

Victoria glanced at her. "What should we be doing then? Do you want to stick around?"

Yasmin fervently shook her head.

"N-No."

"Exactly. Let's go."

Victoria flagged down a cab and left with Yasmin.

“When you work with me, you don’t need to hold back whenever you encounter these things. Otherwise, these sleazy men will keep takina

Therefore, in the time that Yasmin spent working with Victoria, she barely had to suffer any grievances.

She knew that Victoria had to be giving her a mountain of work to do because the latter wanted to train her up. I mustn’t let Miss Victoria down!

After cheering herself on, she threw herself into her work.

Knock, knock!

All of a sudden, there was a knock on the door. Yasmin looked up and saw a pretty woman standing there.

She was wearing a white dress, and her long hair cascaded elegantly down her shoulders.

“Hello, I’m looking for Miss Selwyn.”

It’s that woman, Claudia Johnson—the one who stayed in the office with Mr. Cadogan when Miss Victoria was having a fever, and the subject of the latest company gossip.

Yasmin’s attitude was cold as she recalled how frequent Claudia’s visits to

the office had been, which resulted in Victoria being ridiculed for having lunch at the cafeteria.

“Hello?” Claudia repeated when she didn’t get a reply.

Yasmin snapped out of her thoughts and responded curtly, “Do you have a reason for wanting to see Miss Selwyn? She’s busy with work right now and might not have time to entertain you.”

Claudia heard the hostility in Yasmin’s tone and her eyes flashed viciously.

She was just about to retort when a voice rang out.

“Come in.”

When Claudia went in, Victoria was still busy with work. She looked up and saw Claudia walking over with a lunchbox in hand.

“Are you swamped with work today, Victoria? No matter *how* busy you are, you should still have your lunch. Since you didn’t come over, I set some food aside for you.”

Claudia placed the lunchbox on Victoria’s desk.

Victoria stiffened and said, “Thanks, but I’ve already eaten.”

Claudia lowered her voice.

“You can’t be worried that I’d harm you, right? I won’t do something as silly

as that, Victoria. I just brought along some food for you.”

Victoria eyed her coolly.

bring me lunch either. I’ll do as I said. You don’t need to keep such a close eye on me.”

After a pause, Victoria pursed her lips and added, “If you’re so worried about it, you can just keep an eye on your Alaric every day. I won’t be able to get close to him if you do that, right?”

She didn’t want to get close to him anyway.

Claudia’s smile faded a little.

“Do you think I don’t want to? Unfortunately, I can’t enter Cadogan Residence yet.”

“Oh,” Victoria remarked unhurriedly. “You can’t go in, but that doesn’t mean you can’t tell him to come out, right?”

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Claudia froze.

It wasn’t as if she didn’t think of that. She tried dropping hints, but she didn’t know whether Alaric didn’t pick up on them or whether he was merely pretending to not notice them.

Either way, he didn’t agree.

Claudia couldn't be too forward either. What if he thinks I'm an easy woman?

Therefore, she had to just swallow this bitter pill.

Victoria raised her eyebrows when Claudia didn't respond. In fact, she looked ashen-faced.

“Or are you picking on me because you can't get him to go out and meet you?”

Claudia raised her head and glared at Victoria.

Victoria simply looked back at her in amusement.

“Am I wrong? You don't need to do all these unnecessary things. You obviously despise me, and yet, you brought me lunch. Are you trying to prove to him how generous and magnanimous you are? My advice would be to save it. If the person you like doesn't like you simply because you don't seem magnanimous enough, then you should hurry up and switch to a different person.”

Victoria's words hit Claudia's sore spot.

Claudia clenched her fists. It was as if she wanted to smash Victoria into a pulp.

Victoria's lips curved into a sweet smile. “I still have work to do. If there's nothing else, then you can leave now.”

Claudia was infuriated. She was beginning to regret her attempt at pretending to be a generous, open-minded person. She wanted to mock Victoria, but at the same time, she was afraid that Victoria would be pissed enough to run her mouth in front of Alaric, so she forced herself to smile again.

“You don’t need to be so hostile toward me, Victoria. You agreed to my request, so we’re even now. I just want to be friends with you and take care of you. After all, going by our ages, you could consider me an older sister-”

Before she could finish, Victoria cut her off coldly. “I’m the only daughter in my family, Miss Johnson.”

Claudia remained silent for a moment before saying, “Alright. I guess today’s menu isn’t to your taste. I’ll get going then.”

She took her lunchbox and left.

As soon as she was gone, Yasmin rushed in and asked angrily, “Why did she come here, Miss Victoria? Did she bully you?”

Victoria was startled. “You don’t like her?”

Yasmin nodded heavily.

“Of course! If it wasn’t for her, those people at the cafeteria wouldn’t have said those things about you, Miss Victoria. I hate her!”

Victoria briefly stared at Yasmin in silence before asking, “Do you plan to

stay at this job for long?”

“Yes!” Yasmin declared with a smile. “I like it here. As long as Cadogan Group doesn’t fire me, then I’ll keep working here.”

Victoria’s expression turned grim.

“Since you like it here, you should keep your emotions in check.”

Yasmin was startled by the way Victoria’s expression and tone became cold so abruptly. “W–What?”

“Do you know what relationship she and Alaric will have in the future? Do you know whether you can afford to offend her or not? If you want to keep your job here, rein in your emotions. Don’t put them on full display all the time.”

Victoria’s tone was so harsh and merciless that Yasmin was in shock. Her eyes slowly turned red as she stood frozen in place. She couldn’t understand why Victoria was berating her when she was just taking Victoria’s side.

“M–Miss Victoria, I’m not trying to let my emotions show, I just... I just don’t like hearing other people saying bad things about you, and that woman–”

Victoria’s frown deepened and her tone became even harsher.

“It seems to me that you still don’t understand what I’m saying, so listen carefully now. At the end of the day, you’re just an employee at Cadogan Group. How are we related? Why would I need you to stand up for me?”

Yasmin's eyes were filled to the brim with tears, but she bit down hard on her lip to stop them from falling out.

The office fell into **pin**-drop silence.

After a while, there was the sound of someone clearing his throat.

“Ahem!”

Victoria looked up and realized that Noel was standing outside the door.

She didn't know when he came over.

Thus, Victoria turned back to Yasmin and commanded curtly, “Go back to work.”

Yasmin nodded. She didn't dare to disobey Victoria.

As she brushed past Noel, he could see her pitiful drops of tears finally rolling down her cheeks.

Once she left, Victoria asked, “Did you need something, Noel?”

Noel came in and closed the door behind him.

He looked at Victoria a little helplessly. “Did you have to speak so harshly?

Even though you meant well, you run the risk of getting your intentions misinterpreted.”

Victoria lowered her eyes. Her expression remained indifferent.

“It doesn't matter whether or not she misunderstands it. Either way, I'll be leaving soon enough.”

If I didn't take a harsher tone with her, then she'd still be stuck inside her

naive world. How will she survive if she doesn't become more mature?

Victoria spoke with a matter-of-fact tone, but it was enough for Noel to pause ever so slightly. After placing the document that he brought with him on her desk, he pretended to ask offhandedly, "Are you getting ready to leave? When?"

She didn't keep anything from Noel, apart from her fake marriage to Alaric and the baby.

She pressed her lips and said, "I haven't decided exactly when yet, but it'll happen soon."

Noel cocked an eyebrow and said nothing.

Even though she hadn't fixed a time, she said it was happening soon, and the attitude she took when she scolded Yasmin today was a solid clue as well.

She's probably leaving the company within a month. Seems to me that it's time for me to make my plans too.

Upon noticing that Noel was silent in thought, Victoria couldn't help but frown. "What are you thinking about, Noel?"

Noel quickly snapped out of his thoughts. He looked at her without saying anything.

Victoria was apprehensive.

"Don't tell me you're thinking about resigning."

The very possibility of this startled her.

However, Noel simply gave her an unreadable smile. “Don’t worry. I wasn’t thinking about that.”

Victoria didn’t want to press him on the subject. Some things were beyond the realm of their relationship, and she didn’t want to dive deep into Noel’s thoughts.

Seeing that she fell silent, Noel said reassuringly, “It’s alright. Don’t worry. Just focus on your matters first. Do you really plan on leaving just like that?”

Noel’s gaze flashed enigmatically.

“I’m not trying to criticize you, but you spent two years with him. Are you leaving the moment she comes back? Isn’t that a bit too weak of you? It makes it seem as if you’re a pushover.”

Noel paused before he frowned and slowly continued, “Victoria, you’ve never been the type of person to allow anyone to bulldoze over you like that. Why is it that whenever he’s involved, you become...”

Victoria lowered her eyes.

Chapter 48 Meaningless to Try and Fight

It was true. Whenever the situation involved him, she would shrink back and become entirely helpless.

It wasn’t that she couldn’t come up with a way to stand up for herself, but

she knew that she wasn't the one he held in his heart, *so* she thought it was meaningless to try and fight for his affection.

She knew that Alaric wasn't going to give up on his feelings for Claudia simply because of her own attempts to win his heart, and she had more self-respect than to love someone who didn't love her.

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After staying in Victoria's office for long enough, Noel decided it was time for him to make a move, but when he walked out the door, he ran into Alaric and Claudia as they were about to leave their office as well.

Alaric seemed a little tense the moment he saw Noel, his body giving off a cold and chilly aura as he glared at him unhappily. At the same time, Claudia could also sense Alaric's hostility when she saw Noel exiting Victoria's office not far away. "It seems that Mr. Javier and Victoria are pretty close to each other. As far as I can remember, they even hung out together for a meal a few days ago."

While Alaric only raised his eyebrows and pursed his lips in silence, Claudia went on with her opinion upon noticing the emotionless look on the man's face. "If you ask me, Mr. Javier seems to treat Victoria pretty well. Ever since the Selwyn Family went bankrupt, everyone else avoided her like she was an alien, but he got into the same company as her, not to

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mention the fact that he continued to keep in touch with her. Back then, I thought it was just a rumor when they said Victoria's father treated Mr. Javier like his son-in-law, but now... I might've been wrong."

Claudia didn't press on any further after speaking her mind, thinking she had done enough to sabotage Alaric's impression of Victoria. Since I can't do much to stop Victoria, I must do all I can to sway Alaric into forgetting about her.

As Claudia expected, Alaric's face darkened the moment she finished her words, which implied that her words had gotten to him. However, she didn't appear to be happy at all, for Alaric's reaction was something she didn't expect. Because of that, she didn't dare let Alaric know that Victoria was pregnant. It looks like I have to speed things up a little.

Later that night, Alaric exited the bathroom in a bathrobe covering his lower torso. With his upper body revealed, he grabbed a towel and dried

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his wet hair. When he entered the bedroom, he noticed the light inside was still on.

In the meantime, Victoria was still busy with her work, typing away on her laptop while wearing a pair of wireless earphones as she sat in bed. "Yes, please look into that and send it back to me after amending it." She spoke faintly and gave out instructions every once in a while, her fingers tapping

the keyboard rapidly at the same time.

Seeing that, Alaric stopped drying his hair, feeling unhappy. It wasn't until Victoria finished her call and stopped that he approached her and asked, "Couldn't you have finished your work earlier today?"

Victoria didn't even look up as she replied, "I didn't manage to." Because of that, she had to work overtime so that Yasmin could catch up at work.

Despite the sacrifice, she reckoned it was necessary for the sake of her assistant.

Victoria had her head down, and her long eyelashes happened to block Alaric from observing her eyes. She then looked up and *took* her eyes off the laptop screen, fixing her gaze on the man's face upon hearing his indifferent voice. At the same time, Alaric, who was standing, set his eyes on her from above like he was Victoria's master, radiating a chilly aura that implied that he was unhappy.

Nevertheless, she quickly understood the meaning behind his words with just one look in his eyes. She soon closed her laptop and tapped one of her wireless earphones. "Ah, you want to go to bed now, don't you? I'll head to the study now."

As soon as Victoria finished her words, she immediately got off the bed with her laptop in hand. Little did Alaric know Victoria was as calm as a cat

in that instant, for all she wanted was to finish her task and see Yasmin improve at work.

Nonetheless, when she walked past him, she heard a sarcastic question from him. “Was it because you didn’t have enough time? Or was it because there was something else more important than the work that you had to spend all your time on it?”

Victoria stopped in her tracks. “What do you mean?” She was standing a few steps away from Alaric, their backs facing each other. Without turning around, the woman clamped her laptop under her armpit.

“What do you mean by that? Are you trying to say that I wasn’t being serious at work?”

“Were you?” Alaric sniggered. “If you were serious, you wouldn’t have to work overtime at home.”

At Alaric’s words, Victoria couldn’t help but wonder what was wrong with the man. For the next few moments, neither of them turned around as they stood with their backs facing each other in a stalemate. Not long after that, Alaric sniggered again and asked, “What’s wrong? Cat got your tongue? Did you have a good time chatting with Noel?”

When Victoria heard Alaric’s words, she quickly realized the reason for his strange behavior. Haha! His ego is playing tricks on him again. As usual, Victoria had no intention of engaging in an argument with Alaric, so she

walked away without bothering to explain.

Nevertheless, Victoria immediately felt a strong grip on her wrist and was pulled backward in the next second. Before she could react, she found herself in Alaric's arms just as her laptop fell onto the ground. Then, she was pinned down on the bed by the man with her hands restrained by him above her head.

"What are you doing, Alaric?" She struggled in an attempt to free herself, but that only made Alaric tighten his grip even more and place his knee on her legs to stop her from kicking wildly. On the other hand, Victoria grew so angry that she sank her teeth into Alaric's arm. Despite the man's firm muscles, they did very little in protecting him from the lady's sharp teeth. In a matter of seconds, he quickly felt the pain that ran through every nerve in his arm, raising his eyebrows high in agony.

Chapter 49 Let Go!

"Let go."

"Never!" Victoria replied vaguely.

"Snowball! Let go!" Alaric responded irritably.

Victoria unknowingly loosened her jaw, stunned by the nickname. At the same time, Alaric seized the opportunity and grabbed her chin. He then held her chin tightly and forced her to look him in the eye.

Deep down, only Victoria knew it was because of the recent incident that

she bit Alaric's arm until it bled. Therefore, blood could be seen dripping from the corner of her mouth, and her fair skin made it seem even scarier. On the other hand, Alaric looked at his arm and saw an obvious bite mark on his skin. He smiled glacially at Victoria. "Did you have to bite so hard, Snowball? Where is your conscience?"

"Speaking of conscience, you should let me go if you're a man of one,"

Victoria replied, surprised to hear Alaric calling her nickname. After all, he hadn't done so in a while. Before they became a couple, Alaric would call her that whenever he lectured her after she pissed him off, but now, that nickname simply felt different, considering the circumstances.

Looking at the man who tried to intimidate her, Victoria smiled and asked, "What does it concern you about me and Noel? Your desperate look tells me you're jealous, but are you?"

Chapter 50

Jealous?

As Alaric thought about it, he was startled. Then, he pressed her lips with his finger and said deeply, "So what if I'm jealous? Don't forget that you are still my wife." His voice was raspy and alluring. As he spoke, he slowly leaned in closer to her. He was so close that Victoria could feel his hot breath against her face.

Just as their lips were about to touch, Victoria spoke up. “So, what if I’m legally your wife? What right do you have to be jealous?”

Alaric stopped in his tracks upon hearing her words.

Looking at his reaction, Victoria smiled disdainfully. “Let me rephrase that.

If you get jealous because of me, what will become of Claudia?”

When Alaric heard her talking about another person, his lust vanished.

Chapter 50 Why Are You Jealous?

Since he didn’t expect her to bring Claudia up, his eyes turned cold as he spoke. “Why are you bringing her up?”

“Am I not allowed to? Why must you bring up Noel, then?”

After he heard her words, Alaric kept quiet.

After looking at each other in silence, Alaric released her and got out of bed. On the other hand, Victoria propped herself up and looked at her wrists. Both her wrists were red from where Alaric had grasped her.

“That’s rough of him,” Victoria mumbled as she got out of bed and picked up the laptop on the floor.

Since the device had been thrown to the ground, she opened it to check if everything worked fine. A minute later, she realized her laptop was broken since she couldn’t get it to start.

That’s just great. It looks like I can’t work tonight.

Thinking about this, she sighed and took out her phone. ‘Let’s stop here since something’s wrong with my laptop. We’ll continue tomorrow at the company,’ she wrote. Then, she sent the text to Yasmin and kept her laptop in the bag.

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While she was tidying up, Alaric stood beside her the entire time. Although he was emitting a cold aura, he didn’t leave the room. Seeing that she had kept her laptop away, he asked, “Aren’t you going back to work?”

When Victoria heard his words, she glared at him angrily and bellowed, “How can I work when my laptop is broken? What am I supposed to work with?”

Alaric was startled when he heard her words. After a while, he approached her and reached his hand out. “Let me have a look at it.”

“No.” Victoria refused. She didn’t want him to touch her laptop when he was the one who had broken it.

Hearing the angry tone in her voice, Alaric gulped and said sincerely, “I’ll give you a new one.”

At that, Victoria found it funny. “Do you think I can’t afford it?” Then, she realized that she needed the money after having a child. The cost of a laptop is enough to buy a bunch of diapers and toys for my baby. As she thought about it, her words took a turn. “Send the money to me on PayPal.”

When Alaric heard her words, he was surprised by the change in her attitude. After all, she was suddenly willing to accept several thousand from him when she refused his checks worth millions back then.

Thinking about this, he took out his phone and wired her seven grand. He would have given her more money if there wasn't a transaction limit.

Once Victoria received the notification on her phone, she took it out and read it. When she realized Alaric had given her seven grand, she frowned and said, "This is way too much money."

Alaric pursed his lips and quickly found an excuse since he was afraid that she wouldn't accept the money. "This is compensation for what I did."

Victoria clicked her tongue and accepted the money. Then, she returned 6,000 to him and said, "I only need 1,000 for the laptop. I only take what I need."

When Alaric saw that she had given him back the remaining money, he lowered his eyes without saying a word. She's trying to keep things clear between us all of a sudden. Does she have to do this? Is it because of... him?

The next day, Victoria spent a few hundred dollars to repair her laptop. Since she wouldn't be staying in the company for long, she decided she wouldn't need to buy a new laptop. After all, it would be a waste of money. With that, she had breakfast with Yasmin. While they sat in the breakfast

shop, Victoria was still talking about work.

While Yasmin heard her talk, she drank her soy milk resignedly as she looked at Victoria.

For some reason, she felt that Victoria had been working hard as of late.

Moreover, she had been teaching her remarkable things.

As Yasmin thought about it, she swallowed her food and asked, “Can I ask you something, Miss Victoria?”

Victoria glanced at her when she heard the question and said, “Go ahead.”

Then, Yasmin looked around carefully and leaned closer to Victoria as she spoke. “Are you leaving the company?”

She catches on quite fast, thought Victoria. Thinking about it, she pursed her lips and didn’t say anything.

On the other hand, Yasmin was nervous when she saw Victoria’s expression. “I–I didn’t mean to pry into your business, Miss Victoria. It’s just that you’ve been working hard lately and teaching me many things. That’s why I’ve made such a conclusion.”

However, Victoria reckoned it was fine to tell Yasmin about it. “Yes.” She didn’t deny Yasmin’s words. “That is why you have to pay attention to what I have taught you since there isn’t much time left.”

“Miss Victoria...” Yasmin widened her eyes in disbelief.

After Victoria completed her work, she closed the laptop and said faintly,

“Don’t tell the others about this.”

Yasmin nodded dumbly. At that moment, she felt a huge wave of sadness overwhelming her. No wonder Miss Victoria was so angry with me yesterday. I was dumbfounded and didn’t know what I had done to make her mad. Now that I know, she must have known she was leaving and feared that she couldn’t protect me anymore. Thus, she didn’t want me to offend the others.

Thinking about it, Yasmin bit her lip and looked at the expressionless Victoria. “Are you going to get a divorce with Mr. Cadogan, Miss Victoria?” she whispered. After all, why would Miss Victoria leave the company if they aren’t getting divorced? Is it because of Claudia?

Victoria glanced at her resignedly and said, “It looks like you did not remember anything I told you yesterday.”

“No... I... It’s just...” Yasmin bit her lips harshly, almost drawing blood. “I don’t want you to leave.”

Listening to her words, Victoria fell silent momentarily before saying,

“There’s nothing to be sad about. This is just how life works.”

“_”

Before she could finish her words, Victoria cut her off. “Hurry up and finish your food. We still have work to do in the company.”

When Yasmin heard her words, she could only lower her head and stuff

the food in her mouth, looking depressed. Before she knew about this matter, she had been eating happily. However, the delicious food tasted bland now.

After breakfast, the duo went back to the company. When Victoria entered the building and saw the calendar on the big screen, she slowed down.

There are still six days left before Grandma's surgery. Ah, time flies. I hope everything will be alright, be it Grandma's surgery or the divorce between Alaric and me.