

The Divorce 151

Chapter 151 An Unreachable Star

I then met with all my employees and told them the farce was over.

As for Matthew, I was sure he and Echelon Group were too busy to target me. To be safe, I called Lauren and asked her to look into the company. I needed precautions to know how to act in the future.

Lauren impressed me with her ability to gather information. She was good to me, and I trusted her.

However, I was still reeling from last night's shock. Although Carol was all smiles, I felt troubled.

I called Ivanna that afternoon and asked when she could get off work. She knew something was up and agreed to meet up.

I got some beer after work and met her by the river. When she arrived, she exclaimed, "What a lovely spot!"

She then went to her car and changed into long pants. We drank while sitting on the riverbank. Being my

best friend, Ivanna knew I was troubled.

She asked me about Atlas. Seeing that I was silent, she admitted, "I don't think you're right for each other.

You live in different worlds, and even if you try to make it work, it will take a toll on you. You're both too

different, Chlo.”

I knew it all along, but hearing it aloud by a third person made me feel worse. Though I couldn't deny that

he was like a bright star in the sky, we did share something.

Ivanna asked drunkenly, “Do you know why Ryan returned?”

I looked at her, puzzled. “Why?”

“He came back for you!” she said.

“What are you talking about? Don't play Cupid, okay? I've got enough problems to deal with.” With a

troubled look, I said, “I can barely cope now.”

“Hey, I warned you about Matthew, but you never listened!” Ivanna took a swig of beer and choked on it.

I looked across the river at the dreamlike structures. Ivanna was right. I thought she was being too picky.

which was why she couldn't find a suitable partner.

Now that I had come to my senses, I agreed that women should be picky and realistic.

Ivanna noticed my silence and turned her gaze to those tall buildings. “He was into you, but you ended up

with that asshole. That was why he left the country!” Ivanna seemed indignant on Ryan's behalf.

“If he finds out you asked me to investigate him, he’ll be heartbroken. And I feel sorry for him. He’s been waiting for you, but when you finally divorced, you fell for someone else.”

She sounded resentful when she said, “Can’t you consider him? He’s no bright star, but he’s a more practical choice!”

Feeling dizzy, I lay down.

“Passionate love doesn’t last, okay?” She lay down beside me.

I stared at the stars. Atlas truly belonged to another world, didn’t he?

Too drunk to drive, we each called a designated driver to take us home. I passed out that night.

All the troubles made me dread waking up the next day. Fortunately, Ryan brought some good news.

Chapter 152 The Cousin Reveals

He called and said he’d return to Foswood on Friday. Although he had been gone for over 20 days, he only

called me three times.

He told me over the phone that the trip was fruitful, and over at

and I was collaud Atlas only gave mittle

week to complete the task.

Ever since Atlas went to Quillbrooke, I had only seen him at the press conference from a distance. He

hadn't called me since his return, and I didn't want to disturb him.

After meeting a client, I spotted Stella coming out of Galar Tower.

She was excited to see me. "You're back, Ms. Chloe!"

I asked, "Were you looking for me?"

"Yeah. I was at E-Times, so I stopped by to ask you out for lunch. So much for trying to surprise you."

Disappointed, she let out a gentle smile.

"Hey, I wanted to treat you the other day, but you weren't around. Come on," I said, gesturing for her to get

into my car.

I took her to the restaurant that Lauren and I went to. Although Josh and Melanie spoiled my appetite

back then, the food made quite an impression.

Stella loved it, too. She said she rarely had food like this growing up in Nocturnia. I could imagine that she

came from a wealthy family.

"I'll take you to more places like this, in the future." I chuckled and said, "They aren't fancy, but the food is

great."

my face.

"I can't wait, Ms. Chloe!" Whenever Stella was with me, she always stared at my

"Just call me Chloe," I said casually. "Anyway, why do I get the impression you knew me before this?"

Stella winced. "No, it's just that you look so much like someone."

I

"Really?" I asked curiously. I always felt there was a reason she tried to be close to me.

"Yes, very much alike. Hasn't Atlas told you before?" Stella asked casually.

"No, does he know the person too?" I asked, tensing up.

"I think so." Stella's answer was oddly evasive.

"How much do you know about Atlas?" She tried to change the subject.

I looked up at her and said, "Almost nothing. We've only known each other for a short time."

She nodded and said, "That must be why you thought Atlas was an assistant.

I let out an embarrassed smile. “Yes, I mistook him to be Nick Wright’s assistant. Of course, I wasn’t the only person who thought so.”

“Well, I can’t blame you guys. ATL Empire.” She hesitated. “It’s a long story. Outsiders could never imagine how complicated the things are, and the family.

Glancing at me, she shrugged.

“Did you ever wonder about the ‘ATL’ in ATL Empire?” Stella said, trying not to reveal too much.

ATL... as! It was his name!

I finally caught on. Why hadn’t I thought about it before? I was so dumb!

Stella saw my expression and smiled. “Well, not even I could fully understand.”

“Why is that?” I was intrigued because she seemed to have said it on purpose. “Aren’t you his cousin?”

“Did he tell you that?” Stella asked, looking at me.

Chapter 153 The Inside Story

Something felt off. Stella reached for a wet wipe and cleaned her hands before saying, “He always says

I’m his cousin.”

“You’re not?” I felt uneasy, thinking that Atlas had lied to me.

“Technically, I am. But I was adopted,” Stella said, smiling at me.

My heart skipped a beat. So she's not blood-related to him! Not again.

I waited for her to continue. However, I regretted being indiscreet. Atlas wouldn't have told me she was his cousin if we weren't close, would he?

"My mom is Atlas's aunt. She's a strong woman and the former CEO of ATL Empire." Stella wiped her slender fingers meticulously.

She did everything perfectly. Even her fingernails were flawless.

"Former CEO?" murmured.

"Yes, my mom used to run ATL Empire. She had only just handed over the company back to Atlas."

Wait a minute. Hadn't the power struggle lasted for quite some time? Was it between Atlas and his aunt?

If so, why would she give up control of the company? On what terms?

"Hand it back?"

"ATL Empire belonged to my uncle, who was Atlas' dad. Oh, his parents had passed away in a plane crash when he was little." Stella paused and said, "He hates people talking about this. I better stop."

I was curious, but I couldn't ask any further questions. She then talked about other things until her phone

rang. She whispered that it was Atlas, then went to pick up the call. When she returned, she said she had

to attend to something urgent.

We returned to Galar Tower together, and she drove off quickly.

Stella said little, but what she did say was informative. The Pierce family kept many secrets that no one else knew about.

Everything she said about her mother's former position as CEO and the plane crash was new to me. I was

sure there were many more stories I didn't know about.

When I got back, Benjamin walked into my office with a smile. "Mr. Ryan has done a great job. Based on

1/2

"That's wonderful I was relieved. Now, I could finally fulfill Atlas's requirements.

"To be honest, some of the previous suppliers weren't bad. Surface Solutions, for example. Their reputation is as good as their flooring. They also didn't gang up with Matthew, Would you like to consider

their request to work with us?"

I glanced at Benjamin. "Have you forgotten about Josh? I worry they'll bring us trouble."

“Well I’ve compiled a list. Take a look when you’re free. I just feel that It’s a pity not to work with them, as their products are good. Anyway, it’s your call.” Benjamin handed me the document. “I better get busy

now.”

I browsed through the list, and I could tell Benjamin had put much effort into it. I decided to discuss this

with Ryan first

As I relaxed, I thought about what Stella said. I imagined there must be a story behind the handover of

ATL Empire

Atlas.

My phone suddenly rang beside me. I picked it up and was stunned to see the caller ID. It was Atla

Chapter 154 Without Saying Goodbye

I was flustered when I saw his name, I wasn’t going to pick it up, but my finger slipped and I hit the answer

button.

“What took you so long?”

I rolled my eyes at his commanding tone.

Getting no answer, he asked, “What’s the matter?”

“Nothing...”

“You don’t sound happy hearing my voice,” he said.

“Should I be happy?” I asked. Happy that he finally thought of me? Come on.

He said, dissatisfied. “I haven’t heard from you. Don’t tell me you didn’t know I was back

“Hey, did you check your phone? Don’t assume it’s my fault, alright? Also, why should I keep calling you?

People gossip about divorced women all the time. You should stay away from me, shouldn’t you?”

I caught myself sounding upset because he hadn’t called me. Just as I wanted to explain, he hung up.

What the hell was wrong with this man? Why did he have to hang up on me all the time?

I nearly threw my phone away. How could he not even say goodbye?

Two days later, Ryan returned to the office. I almost couldn’t recognize him. He had grown a scruffy

beard and looked sunburnt.

“Ryan, you look awful!” I felt sorry for him, as I could easily imagine the hardships he had gone through.

Hearing my concerned voice, he froze a bit but soon recovered.

Then he pulled over a suitcase. “Give me half an hour to freshen up. Meanwhile, take a look at what I’ve

got for you.

He then turned and left my office. I tried to pull the heavy travel case but failed. When I opened it, the case was filled with supplier information, samples, certificates, and such.

Everything was neatly organized. I quickly got Benjamin's help to separate suppliers that had already signed contracts with us.

Half an hour later, Ryan returned to my office, looking much more refreshed. He then talked in detail about the suppliers he had met.

F15 BONUS

I secretly called my mom to tell her to prepare dinner. When Ryan was away, my mom asked me several times to invite him over, and I promised her I would.

My mom was thrilled when I told her about it and asked me to fetch Ava.

After the meeting. Benjamin said, "Why don't we all grab a nice meal today? This is worth celebrating."

"We should, but not today. Help me book somewhere nice for dinner tomorrow, okay? To celebrate that we've reached a new milestone!" I said, "Every staff member is invited."

Everyone then left the conference room in excitement.

I asked Ryan, "Would you like to have dinner at my place tonight? My parents are in Foswood, and they've

been eager to see you again.”

He smiled widely. “They’re in Foswood, too? That’s perfect. I missed your mom’s cooking!”

Chapter 155 A White Lie

This was the most joyous dinner ever since I moved here. My parents hadn’t laughed so heartily in a long

time.

My dad even drank a can of beer. I was worried, but he insisted it was okay.

After dinner, Ryan stayed with us for quite a while before he got up to bid farewell. I offered to give him a ride home, as the apartment unit he rented wasn’t too far from my place.

As we walked to my car, Ryan asked, “Would you like to take a walk? I’m too full, and you can tell me what

Josh did.”

I said yes, and we walked out of Amethyst Apartments. I brought him up to speed. Since I brought Ryan into the company, I considered him my partner, so I didn’t want to hide things from him.

My phone started ringing in my pocket, and I took it out to see who the caller was. It was Atlas.

I rejected the call, continued our walk, and talked about the company. That was what we had in common.

The phone rang again and Ryan looked at me. “Why don’t you answer it?”

I smiled and did so. Atlas's voice rang out, "So lost in the moment, huh?"

Stopping in my tracks, I looked around. "Where are you?"

A car pulled over beside us, and his upset voice came from inside, "Get in the car."

I lowered my phone and grew somewhat angry. He was being a dick. Couldn't he see I was with someone?

Ryan saw my expression and glanced at the car. Catching on, he asked, "You have to go, right?"

I nodded apologetically. "Yeah, I was supposed to meet him but forgot."

To avoid awkwardness, I made up a white lie.

Then go. Just look after yourself and call me if you need anything," he said, trying to be considerate.

"Take a cab home, okay?" I said,. "And don't worry about me."

Ryan nodded. "Just go. I better walk home. I ate too much."

I looked over my shoulder at Ryan as he left before I got into Atlas' car. I noticed the privacy partition in

front was raised, and I was suddenly pulled into Atlas' chest.

Why didn't you answer my call? His voice was cold and upset.

+15 BONUS

I struggled free from his arms and sat up. "Can you stop being a jerk about it? You called at a bad time."

Hell, why must I pick up his calls?

"Give me a reason!" he said, sounding sterner. "Why was it a bad time?"

I was speechless as he snapped, "Tell me!"

"We were discussing stuff about the company. He had been trying to secure suppliers and had only just returned after more than 20 days—"

"Hadn't you talked enough over dinner? Have you really got so much to say to him? You're never that talkative when you're with me," he said with a hint of frustration.

Over dinner? How did he know we just had dinner?

I could tell he looked upset when the intermittent light shone on his face. "You were following me?"

He asked without hesitation, "So what if I was?"

The CEO of ATL Empire was following me? What the hell?

Chapter 156 Reunion After a Long Separation

Atlas brought me to the resort again, but he strode away alone after getting out of the car. I mumbled, "He was stalking me, yet he acts like I'm wrong?"

The driver exited the car and whispered, "Ms. Chloe."

I stopped and looked at him. He glanced at Atlas, who had walked out of earshot, and said, "Mr. Atlas had

a busy week, and he rushed back from Operose just to meet you. He hasn't even had dinner--"

"Hurry up!" Atlas's voice startled me.

The driver quickly shut up, wanting to say more but couldn't. Meanwhile, I realized why Atlas was upset and felt terrible. Then, I nodded at the driver and chased after Atlas, softening my attitude.

After entering the room, Atlas walked toward a sofa and removed his jacket. Immediately after, he stopped to look at me, and I collided with him. He pulled me along and then pinned me to the sofa.

He kissed me passionately, and I couldn't breathe. I felt a trace of anger in his kisses. After a long while, he stopped and stared at me, asking, "Did you miss me?"

I was flustered and looked away, not knowing how to answer. Finally, I said, "Let me make you some

food, okay?"

"Did you miss me?" he asked again.

I rolled my eyes. "I can't breathe with you on top of me, okay?"

"Answer me!"

I yielded. "Yes, I did...."

He got off me and carried me upstairs. Despite my protest, he brought me to the master bedroom. Afterward, he tossed me onto the bed and kissed me again. As his hand ran up my skirt, I grabbed his

hand and said, "Let me make you something to eat, and-"

I'm just hungry for you," he said before making love to me.

We lay close together when we finished, our fingers intertwined. We could only hear each other's breathing. I said, "I'll cook you something while you shower. You must eat no matter how busy you get,

okay? Also, why didn't you call me when you came to my place?"

"Well, you didn't invite me to dinner, did you?" Atlas sounded like a child.

Although he didn't ask me who Ryan was, I was sure he knew.

+15 BONUS

All my doubts and frustration about our relationship disappeared when Atlas and I were together. I also felt terrible that he had waited outside my house with an empty stomach until I finished dinner.

I let go of his hand and tried to get up, but he pulled me back into his chest and kissed my cheek, saying, "There's no hurry. Just accept my calls next time, okay?"

I wanted to tell him never to hang up on me again, but I refrained myself.

He turned me over and lifted my chin. "Have you been overthinking about us again while I was away?"

I blushed at his gentle gaze and kissed his lips. "I missed you, but I know I shouldn't. I'm just a- .He interrupted me with another kiss.

Chapter 157 A Natural Talent for Cooking

I saw a sparkle in Atlas's eyes when he saw the food I made. He took the knife and fork from me to start eating. He ate a lot this time, and I could tell he was starving. I stayed beside him and looked at him with

my chin in my hand.

We locked eyes when he looked at me, asking, "Haven't you seen enough of me? You have a talent for

cooking, that's for sure."

I smiled. "Thanks!"

I got up to clean the dishes, but he stopped me and held my hand. "Let's go for a walk. I can't let that man

beat me."

I chuckled. "Get over it, okay? It was not that I had sex with him."

"You did think about it, didn't you?"

I laughed, and he kissed me hard. "You're mine, okay?"

"Hey!" I pulled away and palmed my lip when he bit it.

"That should teach you a lesson." He removed my hand and kissed me again. "Does it still hurt?"

I pouted. "Of course!"

After showering, he put on silk pajamas that looked great on him. They matched a long nightgown he had prepared for me, and I noticed they were a couple's outfit. Everything felt so surreal.

Suddenly, I realized we weren't in the same resort as I thought. I looked at the beautiful yard and said, "Is.

this your house? I thought it was a resort."

"Well, it is a timeshare resort, so there aren't many guests here. My house in Foswood isn't complete yet,

so I stay here for now."

I leaned into him as we took a stroll. I noticed how nice he smelled.

"What time is it? I have to get going." I said after hesitating for a long while.

"Do you have to be such a party pooper?" He gazed at me. "You have to stay here tonight."

"But-

"No butts, okay? Didn't you say you miss me?" He looked into my eyes. "Or you didn't mean it?"

"Of course I did!" I retorted.

Chapter 158 The Interrogation

Atlas's words deepened

my helplessness, and I became uneasy. I looked down and realized I didn't just like him a bit. Instead, it seemed I had fallen into his trap. I was puzzled about why he always knew my thoughts, but I knew nothing about him.

Furthermore, I couldn't determine what Atlas meant when he said he liked me. After all, I wasn't good enough for him regarding my background, status, looks, and age. I should be older than him and was a divorced woman with a four-year-old kid.

A man like Atlas could easily find a better woman, yet I always thought of him despite myself. I didn't know what to do but knew I should stop seeing him. Otherwise, I'd end up heartbroken.

"That was why you refused to answer my call. You were trying to avoid me," Atlas's tone and gaze lost their warmth.

I couldn't help but step backward and look at him. "You're right. I wanted to stop seeing you and still do because I'm not good enough for you. Perhaps I've been overthinking, but guys like you can get any woman they want.

"What about me? I have nothing. I'm just a single mom who's also older than you. I know I've fallen for you, but you said I can't afford to get my heart broken again. So..." My eyes were full of tears as I looked at him.

"So?" He gazed at me with his arms crossed.

"So...I couldn't finish my sentence as a tear rolled down my cheek.

"Say it!" He glared at me.

“So, we should stop seeing each other,” I tried to sound assertive, “You return to your world, and I return

to mine. Maybe we can still be friends.”

I wasn’t even sure what I was talking about.

“And?”

I looked up with tears all over my face. I felt ashamed of myself, but I couldn’t help it.

“And... I thank you for all your help. You lent me a helping hand when I needed it most, and I’ll repay you.”

Immediately after, I turned and left.

I could no longer face him as I shouted inwardly, telling myself it was best to get it over with.

+15 BONUS

However, Atlas pulled me back before I could escape and kissed me passionately while holding the back of my head.

Chapter 159 Highly Unusual

After a long while, Atlas stopped kissing me and whispered, “Don’t I want to hear your bullshit excusest

again, got it?"

I looked at him in a daze as he wiped my tears. Then he wrapped his fingers around mine and led me

deeper into the courtyard.

arrived at an elevator, and he pulled me inside. As we reached the top, I realized it was an

observation deck with a magnificent view. A bottle of red wine was already there for us. He poured me a

glass and said, "Drink it. It's good for you."

I

Still in a daze, I looked at him and downed the wine. I felt much calmer after taking a deep breath. He pulled me to the railing, and we looked at the bright moon. Then, he embraced me from behind, saying,

Get rid of all your negative thoughts."

After a pause, he continued, "When I saved your

don't care about the past, only the future, I mean it,"

the riverside, I told myself I'd look after you forever. I

I leaned into him and stared at the moon that seemed so close I could touch it. I stayed at the resort that

night, and we drank wine until I fell asleep in his arms.

It was nearly noon when I woke up. Alarmed, I sat up and searched everywhere for my phone. However, Atlas held me, saying, "Let's pretend we're on vacation today."

Still, I panicked, thinking people must be trying to reach me right now. After getting out of bed, we went to a small restaurant to have lunch before he gave me a ride back to the city area. On the way, Atlas asked if

I had completed my task.

I smirked and told him not to disturb me that evening since there was a company gathering. As I entered my office, Carol hurried in after me. "Why didn't you turn on your phone? Everyone's been looking for you!"

"My phone died," I said, "Also, I was wasted last night and woke up late."

"Matthew called and wanted to meet you," Carol reported.

Tell him to fuck off," I said.

Afterward, Carol told me about the calls I had missed this morning, "Fred wants you to return his call, and

the representative from Surface Solutions still wants to talk to you."

I nodded, and she left. However, I called my mom first since I didn't want her to worry. Of course, I lied

about what had happened. I then told her not to worry if she couldn't reach me next time because I would

be with my assistant.

After hanging up the phone, I called myself a shameless woman for implying it might happen again. Soon,

I returned Fred's call and learned that Urban Builders was ready for us to start work.

They also s

sent me the blueprints with colorful renderings. After going through them, I asked that company to make several sample windows. I then had a brief meeting with Ryan to finalize the blueprints.

After that, I handed the design plans to Carol and told her to deliver them to ATL Empire for approval. Before I could take a break, Carol knocked on my door and came in. "Damian Blackwood, Echelon Group's marketing manager, wants to see you."

"Echelon Group?" I was puzzled. "The real estate developer?"

Carol nodded and handed me a business card. "This is his."

I looked at it in disbelief. Tanum Corporation was a mess, and I wondered why he would ask to see me now if they didn't bother with a company like mine before. I thought it was highly unusual.

Chapter 160 Testing Him

Carol awaited my decision. After some thought, I looked at her and said, "Since he's already here, let's meet him."

Carol smiled. "He might be up to no good, you know."

It's u

up to us to decide whether to work with them, right?" I said dismissively, "Let's see what he says."

"All right, but please be careful." Carol left, and I watched her go with a raised brow, feeling fond of her.
A

while later, she led Damian into my office.

The chubby man appeared to be in his late thirties. He smiled and shook my hand to greet me, "Nice to meet you, Ms. Chloe." 1

"Nice to meet you too, Mr. Damian. Have a seat." I gestured toward the chair before my desk instead of the sofa.

Thanks!" He sat on the chair. "I heard so much about you. People keep telling me how well your company is doing."

I chuckled. "I'm sure every contractor in Foswood has heard of how I almost ran the company to the ground. I'm afraid you're misinformed, Mr. Damian"

Damian blushed and smiled embarrassedly. "You're being modest, Ms. Chloe."

I asked, "So what can I do for you?"

“Oh, yes.” Damian dropped his smile. “I’m here to seek your help.”

He told me Echelon Group had several unfinished duplexes due to particular circumstances in the preliminary construction phase. However, other buildings in the same project had been completed and handed over.

The situation was awkward because the more prominent companies were unwilling to handle the units. In

contrast, Echelon Group didn’t want to risk engaging smaller companies for quality sake.

Since Tanum Corporation had a good reputation regarding work quality, Damian wanted to see if we

would handle the remaining units. Moreover, Tanum Corporation used tiles from Surface Solutions and floorings from Clayton Interiors, which other contractors might be unable to secure.

I considered what he said and noticed he had come prepared. I had just eliminated most of my

company’s suppliers, except those two that were still undecided.

Since I only listened and did not say much, Damian couldn’t figure out my thoughts and looked at me

awkwardly.

After a moment, I asked, “How many square meters in total?”

“Oh... there are eight units, each with 4,800 square meters. That makes it approximately 50,000 square

meters altogether.” Damian looked at me with urgency. It seemed he was determined to make this happen.

In other words, Echelon Group was eager to strike a deal with Tanum Corporation.

I pondered momentarily before asking, “I’m unsure how much you know about Tanum Corporation, but Matthew Murphy has always managed it. However, we got divorced, and I got the company back.”

“Yes, I knew about that Damian nodded.

I hated how fast bad news traveled. I guess everyone in Foswood had learned about our divorce. I smiled.

and continued, “Anyway, I repositioned our business to target the mid to high–end markets when I resumed control of the company.”

Damian nodded.

I just terminated our previous suppliers’ contracts. I’m afraid I might be unable to use the products from the companies you mentioned just now.” That was just an excuse, but Damian’s expression remained

unchanged.

I continued, “Our pricing will be much higher than before. After all, costs have increased, and I must

ensure I can still profit.”

I purposely said that to test Damian.