

The Divorce 241

Chapter 241 A Silent Resolve

I entered the house, and my parents were still awake, waiting for me.

When my mom saw how tired I looked, she grabbed my bag and asked, “Why are you so late? Have you eaten? Why do you look so pale?”

“I haven’t eaten yet, Mom. I’m starving!”

It’s true what they say—a mother’s child is always her treasure. No matter how old you are, as long as your

mother is by your side, you’re still her child.

“Alright, I’ll heat some food for you!”

“Dad, I’m going to change my clothes!” After saying that, I went upstairs.

In truth, I longed for my daughter and went straight to Ava’s room.

Seeing her sleep so peacefully was heartwarming. Her chubby little legs were poking out from the blanket.

I smiled and tucked them back in.

She turned over, and her little hand grabbed my shirt. It was as if she sensed something and slowly

opened her sleepy eyes.

With a sweet smile, she called out, "Mommy!"

At that moment, I felt more fulfilled than I ever had. What else could I possibly wish for? I had a well-

behaved, beautiful, and smart daughter by my side. This was more than enough.

I patted her gently a couple of times, and with a smile, she fell back into a peaceful sleep.

Deep down, I still felt guilty. I hadn't given Ava a complete family and couldn't always be with her.

My eyes welled up with tears. I sniffed and silently resolved to spend more time with my daughter. I needed to stop dwelling on those unrealistic dreams.

After changing my clothes, I quickly went downstairs to eat. The feeling of being full made me incredibly happy.

My mother looked at me with a contented expression. The warmth of home strengthened my determination to distance myself from those elusive things that didn't belong to me.

"Look, your complexion looks much better after eating! My mom said as she cleared the table, "Don't overexert yourself Do as much as you can, but don't push too hard.;"

I nodded obediently and said, "Soon, I'll get some good rest. Oh, I told Ryan today to have his parents

come over for the New Year. We'll celebrate together! The more, the merrier!"

Upon hearing this, my mom immediately sat down next to me. ‘Really? You told Ryan that?’

“Yes! Let’s have everyone come to Foswood! He’s been in a hurry every time he goes back. Besides, his parents have never been here, so it’s a great opportunity for them to visit.”

I knew she would be happy.

“I also told them to stay at our place!” I added.

“Of course! With such a big house, where else would they stay?”

She was overjoyed.

“He said staying at our place might be inconvenient, but I insisted they stay with us. It’s better than going back and forth. They can squeeze in with us. They’ll stay downstairs, and we’ll stay upstairs. Also, Lauren will come too!” I shared.

She was even more thrilled now. She didn’t bother with the dishes and immediately told my father about my decision.

My father was naturally overjoyed, wearing a massive smile on his face.

It had been so many years, and we’d never had such a lively celebration. Watching my parents chat happily together, I couldn’t ask about the old wounds.

I couldn’t find the words. “I’m going to bed now. I’m exhausted!”

My mother turned around and said, “Go on. Get some rest. You work too hard! Don’t worry about anything else. Your dad and I have got it covered!”

I smiled bitterly and murmured, “Goodnight.”

Back in my room, just as I was about to draw the curtains, my hand froze mid-air...

Chapter 242 A Special New Year's Day

Suddenly, I noticed a car parked outside the main door, and my heart skipped a beat. The soft night light.

in the room would show my silhouette, so I pulled the curtains and turned off the light.

I leaned against the window, straining to hear any sounds from outside. My eyes grew teary, and I cursed

myself for this display of emotion. Wasn't it better for us to stay in our own worlds?

Only the faint sound of the car moving away could be heard, and a few tears escaped. I quickly pulled the curtains open and looked outside, but all I could see were the fading red tail lights disappearing from

view. My heart tightened.

to

He left even though it was late. He did not come in eagerly like he used to.

I

I slowly drew the curtains again and sat blankly on the bed. Eventually, I got under the covers and tried to

sleep.

It was already close to noon the next day when I woke up.

I woke up close to noon the next day, feeling refreshed. After getting ready, I went downstairs for lunch. I

considered visiting the office since there was much to take care of before the holiday, and I couldn't

leave everything to Ryan.

After getting ready, I went downstairs to let my mother know.

They were planning to go to the market, and I teased, "You're going to the market now? Is there a

celebration tomorrow?"

Beaming, my mother replied, "Your dad and I want to see what they're selling. We'll get a head start so we won't be scrambling later. We can't afford last-minute forgetfulness since more people will join us this year!"

They both had broad smiles on their faces, showing that they were genuinely happy. I knew they were excited to prepare for this event.

Outside, I noticed my car had been returned and appeared in good condition. This unexpected gesture touched my heart. They even replaced the seat cushion. The car had a pleasant scent, probably from excess perfume, but I found it enjoyable.

At the office, everyone was busy with preparations. Carol discussed the holiday duty schedule and financial reports with me. They showed that the early return of funds was enough to cover costs. I was pleasantly surprised,

spent the entire afternoon without a break, only finishing when it was time to leave. Just as I was

we decided to repay a portion of them first.

I asked Ryan when he planned to bring his parents over. He smiled at me and asked, “Are you sure about having them join us?”

“What kind of question is that? Do you think I’m joking? My parents are already shopping in preparation!” I teased, and Ryan laughed heartily.

“Then I’ll book their plane tickets.”

“Since they’ll arrive on Sunday, make sure they’re well-rested!” I commanded him. “That’s all.”

I was worried Ryan would procrastinate, so I immediately called Carol to book the tickets for Sunday.

This New Year’s had a special significance, and I prayed that everything would go as planned.

Chapter 243 Alone in a Crowded Room

This New Year was unlike any other before. I stayed home, enjoying the joyful atmosphere family gathering filled with laughter and chatter. Little Ava became the center of attention.

f a large

Even Ivanna joined us after just a few days away. Our family showcased their culinary skills, preparing their signature dishes and creating a festive atmosphere with bright lights in the yard.

During the day, I pretended to be carefree like everyone else, but at night, my thoughts couldn't help but drift to that person. Had he left town? He hadn't called, and I didn't reach out. I wanted to test my self-

control.

Fortunately, I had Ivanna and Lauren to keep me company.

Ivanna quietly whispered, "Harmony seems to be fading. She's been saying she spent Christmas overseas,

but it's all a lie. She's my artist. I know she worked on a shoot the whole time. Is Atlas getting tired of her?"

Lauren quickly nudged her and shot her a meaningful look.

I calmly responded, "It's none of my concern. I've already decided to step back."

Ivanna looked at Lauren and whispered, "Did you hear that? We both need to pay close attention. Let's

see how strong Wonder Woman's heart is."

The two of them burst into laughter while I silently cursed. My heartache was something only I knew, and

it was pretty painful.

I often thought about him standing alone in the crowd, wondering if he missed the feeling of home during these festive seasons. The livelier it was here, the more my heart ached, and his image forcefully entered

my mind

I questioned if he was the person I imagined, which caused me pain. However, my strong-willed side reminded me that he didn't celebrate the New Year, providing some relief.

Ryan had donned an apron in the past few days and bustled about. I felt guilty and often reached out to

help him.

This delighted the four elders, who would huddle together to talk in hushed tones. Even without listening.

I knew what they were discussing I didn't mind as long as it brought them joy.

Besides, I had to play the role of a good host.

Everyone ate, drank, and merrily drove around town. The city was filled with laughter and joy. These few

o a lifetime of laughter.

Online trends about Atlas and Harmony disappeared. Ivanna and Lauren would sometimes gossip, with Ivanna boldly declaring, "I told you it was over! Let's see how she flaunts herself after the holiday."

I didn't engage in their conversation. It wasn't my place.

Atlas's in-person response to Harmony's call was less passionate than the rumors claimed. His questions.

replayed in my head.

Is being with me truly making you that unhappy? Do you not understand everything I've done? I told you, no matter what happens, just trust me. Can't you do that? What happened to your intelligence?"

Every word, every sentence, I analyzed and savored. I also sensed that he had something more to say.

But so what? Deep down, I knew that I wasn't worthy of him. Being with him brought too many reservations, uncertainties, and fears.

Ava occasionally asked where Atlas was. "Is he still on a business trip? Why hasn't he taken a day off?"

Her questions were endless, and I had no answers.

One evening, I spotted a car parked in the bushes from my balcony. It made my heart race, and I rushed downstairs, driven by an irresistible urge.

Chapter 244 A Delayed Confession

As I rushed out and ran toward the row of potted plants, I found nothing there. I stood there in confusion, knowing it wasn't just my imagination.

Ryan suddenly appeared beside me. "Want some company for a walk?"

I looked up at his face. He was smiling warmly. A pang of guilt washed over me, so I nodded. "Sure."

We walked together through the yard, side by side. Ryan made me feel at ease, never once mentioning why I had dashed out in the first place.

He chatted about our school days. Suddenly, I asked him, "Ryan, why can't I remember my childhood?"

"Which part are you referring to? If it's something related to me, I'll help you recall it." He looked at me with a smile.

I shook my head. "No, it's from when I was younger. I remember everything with you, like when we first met in the teacher's office. My dad asked Mr. Thomas to tutor me in physics."

"Ah, yes, in Mr. Thomas's office. You were wearing your school uniform and looked different from the others. Your hair was dark, your eyes were big, and you had long eyelashes. Some classmates started calling you Lash Princess."

"Really? Why didn't I know that?" I laughed. "Lash Princess" sounded a bit exaggerated.

"It was in the second semester of our sophomore year," he recalled.

"That's right! I'm talking about memories from before junior high. I don't have any recollection of what came before. Have you ever experienced something like that?" I turned around and walked backward.

"Watch your step! Then he shook his head. "I haven't. My memory has always been good."

"It's not that it's bad, but..." I pondered, unsure of how to express myself.

Suddenly, I stumbled a bit. He swiftly reached out, catching me and pulling me into his arms. "Be careful!"

"You're a mother now. Don't be so mischievous!"

His tone was remarkably gentle.

Tell me, after all these years abroad, you haven't met a girl you like? You're so handsome! There must've been plenty of girls who liked you."

He laughed, his eyes sparkling. "There was a girl who always had a crush on me!"

"Spill the beans!"

"She studied architectural design at the same college as me. She was my junior. When I was about to leave the school, she had just enrolled. She's mixed blood..."

"She must be very pretty."

I suppose so."

"What do you mean, suppose so? Is your taste in aesthetics that questionable? You can't even tell if she's

pretty or not?"

"Is my taste that bad? I just didn't pay much attention." He glanced at me, smiling with a hint of shyness.

"What do you mean you didn't pay much attention? What were you paying attention to then? You weren't

even friends with her, right? Wait, if you weren't friends, how can you say she had a crush on you?"

I knew exactly what was going on, but I played dumb.

"The thing is, my heart was already taken. Another girl has occupied the space!" He looked at me, his

smile affectionate.

He continued, "Her name is Linda. She is very talented. Her work made it into the top ten, so she must have a bright future."

"Has she graduated now?" I asked, feeling a pang of regret.

"She should be graduating soon. While I was working abroad, she was already starting her thesis. After I returned, I bid farewell to her, and then I got busy. We haven't been in touch since."

"You really know how to handle things. She had deep feelings for you, yet you just brushed her aside.

That's not good. You'll hurt people!" I patted his shoulder.

Maybe because I was so familiar with him, I didn't feel any sparks.

"You noticed, too?" He looked at me affectionately.

I realized too late that I had misspoken. This rascal was insinuating something.

Chapter 245 Stuck in the Middle

I was caught off guard by his words and boldly retorted, "You're being sarcastic, aren't you?"

"Your turn." He looked at me meaningfully.

"My turn?"

I suddenly felt nervous. This guy was trying to trap me.

“Is it because of the news online?” He was surprisingly perceptive. I thought he only buried himself in work, but he had quite a high emotional intelligence.

He actually paid attention to the trending news.

“It’s nothing to do with me. Many things are out of our hands. Swimming to shore rather than struggling in

a whirlpool with no end in sight is preferable.”

I collected my thoughts. He had always been like a brother, irreplaceable.

“Ryan, I know you’ve been good to me. You’re an irreplaceable older brother, whether it was in high school

or now. As long as you’re around, I feel secure.

“I’ve been feeling lost these past few days during my break. I always thought I was clear-headed, but I can’t seem to move on. I’ll focus on getting the company in order first before making any decisions.”

“Alright, I’ll be by your side the whole way! After speaking, he pulled me into his arms and gave me a firm

embrace—more like a brother giving strength.

“Ryan, don’t waste your time on me. Our parents are getting older. This is their concern, and I know. I owe

you too much in this aspect, but I’m not worthy of you! I...”

This time, he really hugged me, speaking gently, “No more nonsense! Everything I do is out of my own will.

Ever since I saw you for the first time, I liked you. But I was too cowardly. I didn’t dare confess to you.

That’s why I missed my chance with you! It’s something I can’t forgive myself for.”

I let him hold me tightly. I didn’t struggle. In some ways, perhaps I owed Ryan a heartfelt embrace.

However, I couldn’t give him that as I couldn’t deceive him. My heart still held someone else. That person

was far away, but he was deeply rooted in my heart.

He couldn’t reject me yet. Give me a fair chance, even if you still don’t choose me. In the end, at least I know

and I won’t regret waiting for you. Chlo, it hurts to wait like this, especially when I can’t see

him. Filled with desolation.

How could I not understand what he was feeling? I hesitated, then raised my hand and patted his back.

Eventually, I hugged him. “Ryan, promise you won’t leave me no matter the choice. I know I’m being

selfish, but I need you to stand by my side!”

Ryan smiled and gently put me down, looking into my face. “You really are a little brat. You won’t choose

me as your husband, yet you won’t let me leave? Why should I?”

He playfully pinched my nose. “Alright! I promise you, even if you don’t choose me, I won’t leave you! I’ll just suffer for a lifetime! I’ll drown in my unrecruited love, you tyrant!”

I threw myself into his arms. “I knew you’d agree. Once you promise, you can’t go back on it!”

“Am I that foolish? I chose against money and love!” He joked with a serious face.

I laughed and fell into his arms, forgetting everything.

A loud bang startled the silent night. Both of us were stunned and turned abruptly.

Chapter 246 Mad Dog

Ryan and I turned to see where the sound came from and saw a few people hurrying back into the yard. We exchanged a smile, and he said, “Uh—oh, they caught us!”

I chuckled and playfully took his arm. “Let’s go home.”

Once inside the house, everyone acted as if nothing had happened. However, we knew they were curious.

Laughter and chatter filled the room once again.

Vacations always seemed to pass quickly because they were full of joy and laughter. Before we knew it, the vacation ended, and it was time to return to work. This time, we were swamped.

Ryan's parents had returned to their small town with plans to reunite for the next celebration.

Ryan and I had developed a better understanding of each other. We had different roles this time: he was in charge of the projects, I handled the suppliers, and Grayson assisted Ryan with his projects and market

analysis.

I hadn't received any news from Atlas in a while. I avoided thinking about him and ignored anything

concerning him. But deep down, I knew he was still in the background. I still carried the pen he had gifted

1. me.

It remained in my hand as long as I was in the office.

The first time I saw Matthew after the vacation was at the hospital. I went for an ultrasound to check my gallstones. I occasionally felt some discomfort, perhaps due to the meals that were too oily during the

celebration.

The ultrasound room was a shared space, and he had brought Melanie for her prenatal checkup. Melanie's belly had grown significantly this time, and she hobbled by Matthew's side.

Melanie clung to Matthew's arm as soon as she saw me. It was as if she feared I would steal him away.

Matthew was still in a suit, looking dignified and attracting a few glances. His eyes were restless when he entered the corridor and saw me.

He searched for an opportunity to make eye contact with me and speak. However, I deliberately avoided.

looking at him

Melanie's current appearance was unflattering, and I couldn't help but question life. I wondered if I looked

ke that when I was pregnant. After some thought, I knew I looked better than her,

had brown spots on her face and looked highly unattractive without makeup. Her curly hair was despite her trendy hairstyle. Her maternity clothes matched her hair color, which was

I couldn't bear to look at her. She was different from the rest in a crazy way. Melanie fixed her vicious gaze on me the whole time.

Ivanna had always told me to care for my appearance since my divorce. With Lauren in my life, my sense of fashion had improved significantly. I looked refined and elegant in my fitted professional attire, neatly styled hair, and radiant skin.

I couldn't tell if Melanie envied or hated me, but she rolled her eyes and occasionally made several

sarcastic remarks.

“I can’t believe someone still has the guts to seduce other people’s man, even after getting dumped multiple times. She’d still get dumped, no matter how she dresses up!”

I wondered what she meant since anyone would dress up well before leaving the house. I remained calm

and utterly ignored her. However, a woman beside me observed the situation, asking, “Do you know her?”

I shook my head lightly and replied, “No, I don’t. Just ignore her. She’s like a mad dog.

The woman smiled. “You’re right. People these days aren’t self-aware. What kind of child do you think someone like her would raise?”

Melanie couldn’t hear us since she was pretty far away. She only saw us laughing. Still, Melanie could guess it wasn’t anything positive. She shouted, “Chloe, what are you laughing at?!”

She let go of Matthew’s hand and approached me. Matthew was shocked and quickly followed her.

Chapter 247 Acting Together

Melanie rushed toward me while Matthew followed with a displeased expression. “What are you doing?

Be carefull

“Chloel What were you laughing at?” She pointed at me.

I acted shocked and looked at her thoughtfully. "Are you asking me? We were just chatting about how there are so many dogs nowadays. If you don't leash them, they bite people. Rabies vaccinations are in high demand. Haven't you heard?"

The woman beside us suppressed her laughter and nodded. "Exactly! Mad dogs are running wild these days. It's hard to guard against them."

Melanie grimaced angrily.

Suddenly, the doctor's assistant called, "Chloe Hartz, you can come in now!"

I stood up with my paperwork and approached the nurse. I handed her my documents before entering the

examination room.

I smiled when I entered, which delighted the doctor performing the ultrasound. "Oh my, a beautiful lady

like you with such a sunny disposition. I've been seeing frowns all day, and you're the only one who comes

in with such radiance."

Still smiling, I lay on the examination bed and replied, "Happiness is the source of good luck."

My words put the doctor, her assistant, and the nurse in high spirits. They conducted the examination carefully. "Don't worry, the gallstones are just two small pieces inside the gallbladder. The gallbladder walls look normal. You just need to watch your diet."

I was pleased to hear that. It turned out that the gallstones had moved from the bile duct back into the gallbladder. The doctor had mentioned that if they were in the bile duct, it could cause more pain, while the gallbladder pain would be milder.

It seemed like the heavens were looking out for me..

"You see, isn't happiness the source of good luck?" I smilingly remarked before thanking them and leaving

the examination room.

Outside, only Matthew remained in the corridor. He hurried over, asking. "How'd it go? Did you come for a

lstone checkup? What did the doctor say?"

ed expression made me recall when he accompanied me for checkups

"C-Chlo, I considered visiting Ava during the holidays, but..." Matthew stammered.

“That’s not necessary. Just take good care of your child,” I said indifferently, leaving it at that. A grown man didn’t need to explain why he wanted to see his daughter.

As we conversed, the woman I spoke with earlier had not yet gone inside. She looked at us with some

Surprise. I waved at her. “I’m going now!”

She also bid me farewell.

“Eleanor Wallist!” Just then, the nurse called her name. I couldn’t help but remember it as it was a pretty

name.

“Chlo... How about we bring Ava out for dinner tonight? I miss her! Matthew seemed anxious, wanting to

reach out to me, but stopped himself. “Chlo...”

‘Matthew!’ Just then, a shout interrupted Matthew’s attempt to continue. He withdrew his hand and turned around, scolding, “Why are you yelling?”

“Chloe, do you have no shame? Why are you everywhere? You can’t even give up on this chance to seduce him? You’re shameless!” Melanie’s tone was nasty.

I turned to look at Melanie. “Have you developed a delusional disorder or something? Did you see me seducing him?”

Then I scolded Matthew, “Can you educate your wife? I know you as someone who values dignity. How did you become so shameless with her? You’ve lived under the same roof as siblings for many years and are now married. Why aren’t you on the same page?”

I took the opportunity to expose their affair.

“Ask everyone if I’ve bothered you two. Can’t you pretend we don’t know each other and mind your business? Be careful with your unborn child. Don’t give birth to another freak like yourself.”

The people waiting for their checkups agreed with me. “Yeah! She didn’t bother you two. Why is that woman so arrogant, even with such a big belly? She has no manners at all!”

Matthew’s face reddened as he pulled Melanie away hastily.

I gave those people a thumbs-up and left with a bright smile. I didn’t know why, but I felt terrific today.

Chapter 248 Stumbled Upon Something

As I returned to the lobby, I spotted Stella in the crowd. The person with her was Liora. They seemed close as they chatted and laughed while approaching the ward.

I wondered if someone we knew got hospitalized but couldn't think of any friends we might share. Judging by their closeness, they had become quite intimate recently.

I paused, then turned to leave since it would be inconvenient for me to follow. Instead, I called Grayson and asked him to find out who was in the hospital.

On the way back, I couldn't help but wonder if Stella was visiting Celine. If she were, why would Liora come to visit her? Did they have a connection? If so, it would be interesting. I would have to dig deeper to discover when and how they had become acquainted,

That might explain why Celine had given up on the land near Operose during that critical moment. Did

Celine have some dealings with Atticus?

Back at the office, Carol informed me that Tobshampton Group had sent a representative. They wanted to discuss us becoming their agent. However, I heard they had already chosen an agent not long ago.

I hadn't rejected working with this company since I reclaimed Tanum Corporation. After all, they had a

long-standing partnership with us and had not caused any trouble during our transition. Moreover, their

reputation had always been good. Given they were an established brand, many customers preferred them.

I had been busy with many things then and was upset when I discovered they had already chosen their

agent. I told Carol to arrange a meeting, so she called their representative.

The representative agreed to have dinner together in the evening. For some reason, I asked Carol if the

representative was male or female.

Carol understood my meaning and laughed cheerfully. “Ms. Chloe, I’ve noticed a change in you since you returned from the vacation. You’re so entertaining and cheerful. It makes me happier than receiving a bonus!

“It seems like I didn’t give you enough bonus during the New Year. That’s why you’re flattering me like this, right?”

She giggled. “Oh, please! So many other companies in this building envy us. They can’t believe how lively.

it is here, and we even get year-end bonuses despite everything that happened. It’s like a miracle. Many of

them just receive gifts”

boasted, “Let’s make them even more jealous by the end of the year. If I’m in a good mood, I might buy

I felt like I was s on cloud nine while Carol laughed heartily, slapping the table. “Whenever you say something, it always comes true. When you buy the whole building, I’ll be on top of the world.”

I chuckled with a sense of satisfaction. “Hurry up and arrange the meeting! With my mood today, I might

hit the jackpot!”

Carol turned to make arrangements, but I asked her, “Hey! You haven’t told me the gender of the representative!”

“It’s a woman.” Carol grinned. “Her name is Eleanor Wallist.”

“Oh... Who?” I got into character. “You said her name was what?”

“Eleanor Wallist,” Carol repeated.

I slammed the table and burst into laughter. “It’ll be a piece of cake! I realized my ideas are working today. It seems this year’s going perfectly. My luck is unbelievable.”

Carol looked at me, somewhat surprised. “Do... you know her?”

“I met her this morning, but you can still arrange the meeting. We’re the hosts, after all. We should treat her well,” I said to Carol.

Carol made the arrangements while I thought about Eleanor’s appearance. I knew she was savvy and hadn’t expected to meet someone like her. Our meeting was undoubtedly unique. We’d have a good chat

tonight.

Grayson walked in before I could settle down. He smiled slyly, saying, “Ms. Chloe, I found out who got admitted to the hospital. Care to guess?”

Chapter 249 An Effortless Negotiation.

I awaited Grayson’s answer, but he just smiled without a word. My heart pounded as I guessed, “Don’t tell

me it’s Celine?”

Grayson snapped his fingers. “It is! The old lady has acute appendicitis!”

I leaned into my chair, my mind racing. It seemed Liora was involved with Celine. I immediately told

Grayson, “Continue the investigation and find out if Celine is connected with Atticus or Liora.”

Grayson looked at me understandingly. The difference between Celine’s connection with either of them was significant. After Grayson left, I picked up the pen again. The image of that man appeared in my mind,

and my heart skipped a beat.

I couldn’t help but think about the car parked in the woods, wondering if it was him. I took a deep breath, shook my head, and forced myself to dismiss the thought. After all, how could it be him?

I

I got up to find Benjamin to learn more about Tobshampton Group. I planned to secure this contract.

tonight. I gripped the pen tightly, determined to sign that contract.

I checked the time and went to the restaurant with Carol. Even though we were the hosts, I wanted to arrive early. Surprisingly, I was still late. Eleanor was already waiting in the private room.

As I entered, she looked at me in astonishment. I smiled confidently.

I

“Hey... It’s you?!” Eleanor exclaimed in a friendly manner.

“Surprising, right? Fate works in mysterious ways!” I said as I approached her, and we shook hands. “It’s incredible how things turn out.”

“Yeah! I didn’t expect it to be this easy,” she smiled, “I have gallstones-”

“Whoa, we even have the same health issue!” I interrupted with a laugh. “I have gallstones, too!”

After we laughed, she introduced her assistant to me. I knew she held a high position in Tobshampton

Group since she had an assistant. Eleanor handed me her business card. Sure enough, she was the marketing department’s manager,

After I introduced Carol, Eleanor said, “I didn’t expect you to be Tanum Corporation’s legendary owner.

“Yeah, my reputation precedes me,” I joked, “You saw what happened today. The guy’s my ex-husband.

“Wow, that explains it,” She chuckled awkwardly. “What a coincidence.”

They’re everywhere I go.” I shrugged.

Soon after, we transitioned into discussing business. Eleanor provided detailed information about the Tobshampton Group and their goals. I emphasized my thoughts and my market’s

current status and ongoing projects. I even outlined my expected objectives.

I

Eleanor was proactive and quickly reported our discussions to her superiors. I knew she was eager to make this deal happen, However, my demands might have exceeded her authority in making decisions.

Still, I wasn’t in a hurry. I knew business negotiations took time and believed in my market share. I was confident they did their research and would know that the few companies we worked with were on par with Tobshampton Group.

They eventually called back, made significant concessions, and accepted my requests. I smiled at Carol, and her eyes sparkled with joy. We hadn’t even started dinner, yet we had already closed the deal.

“Ms. Chloe, we can sign the contract tomorrow,” Eleanor said, genuinely eager to make this cooperation happen.

“10 a.m. at my office,” I invited her sincerely, “All right, let’s relax and enjoy our dinner now. I’m having such a great day today.”

“Here’s to our successful partnership!” Eleanor raised her glass, and we clinked them.

However, some things wouldn't always go as planned.

Chapter 250 Change of Plans

I arrived at the company early the following day to sign the contract with Tobshampton Group.

Benjamin was pleased since he had been eyeing Tobshampton Group and Synergy Solutions. That was because they were easy to work with and offered good profits. Moreover, Tobshampton Group's brand dominated Foswood's market.

It was one of my primary demands in my discussion with Eleanor last night.

I agreed to a slight price increase, understanding that the costs of raw materials were rising. They offered

us the goods at a cost price, and I wanted our sales to speak for themselves.

I had laid the foundation for many of our clients when I reclaimed Tanum Corporation, even though

Matthew took away most of them. Several clients had already informed me before the celebrations that they would sign with us in the new year.

Of the 80% of clients Matthew had taken, 60% had returned. It was a significant show of support. The remaining 40% who hadn't returned even assured me they would go with the new brands I signed. That

effectively meant a 100% return rate.

I didn't want to be like Matthew and take everything. In business, it was essential to maintain good

relationships, and I didn't want to bully others. The feud between Matthew and me was an issue between

us and shouldn't affect others.

I had everything prepared. However, by 10 a.m., Eleanor and her team hadn't shown up. I asked Carol to call them in case of an issue, but they didn't answer the call. I had a feeling that something had gone

wrong.

Sure enough, Eleanor called me. She sounded uneasy and stammered for a while, saying her superiors had decided to give the contract to another company. It turned out my gut feeling was correct.

I took the news gracefully and politely replied, "That's okay. Don't feel bad. In business, it's all about fate. Maybe our fate in business just hasn't aligned yet. We'll have more opportunities to meet in the future. If

you're willing. I'd happily consider you a friend."

"I have no problem with that. Still, I feel terrible about this, Ms. Chloe. I've been in this industry for years

and have never faced such a situation. I genuinely liked and wanted to work with you, but I never

expected our first attempt to fall so badly. It sucks!" Eleanor expressed her frustration over the phone.

"Don't take it to heart. Even if we didn't sign this time, I welcome you to visit our company whenever you

have the time.' I replied sincerely.

Eleanor hesitated and asked, "You don't want to ask... who signed the contract... with us?"

"I won't put you in a tough spot," I said openly, "Whoever it is, there must be a reason."

I had a vague sense of who it might be, but I couldn't be sure.

Hearing my response, Eleanor sighed and laughed bitterly. I knew she felt conflicted.

"All right then, until we meet again," Eleanor said before we hung up.

Carol stomped in frustration. "Damn it! We got played, didn't we? Who conducts business like that? We didn't want to sign the contract, but they insisted and then backed out. What kind of trick is this? Benny

even said they were trustworthy!"

"There's something wrong here. Get Grayson for me," I said thoughtfully. I wasn't angry because I didn't sign the deal. It was more about someone interfering with my business, and I wanted to find out who they

were.

I didn't want to ask Eleanor directly because it could've put her in a tough spot. Still, I needed to know.