

The Divorce 411

Chapter 411 The Switcheroo

There was a sense of urgency in his quick, forceful movements. I was shocked at how audaciously Dylan shoved Atlas's girlfriend.

He quickly cautioned, "Ms. Chloe, please find shelter in the inner room. Once things calm down outside, leave the building quickly, and don't mention that you were at the hospital!"

After Dylan left, Carol glanced at the consultation room and saw the small inner chamber. She quickly pulled me inside.

We could hear bustling footsteps from the corridor outside. Carol and I dared not make a sound, fearing that someone might discover us.

I was clueless about what was going on outside. Why would such a maneuver be necessary? Still, since Atlas had arranged it that way, I had to comply.

Carol and I hid in the inner room for half an hour, waiting until it grew quiet outside. Only then did we venture outside.

She led the way, making sure there were no strangers in the corridor before motioning for me to follow.

Finally, we left the hospital and returned straight to the company.

The perfume scent on Harmony's clothes was overwhelming, making me lightheaded. I really could not understand the appeal of this stuff.

Luckily, I kept spare clothes in my office. I quickly changed out of Harmony's dress.

Just as I left the rest area, Carol hurried in. "Chlo, look at this!"

I glanced at her phone. It was a video clip of Atlas escorting a frail Harmony donned in my clothes.

Harmony appeared pale and feeble in the footage as she leaned against Atlas. I had to admit, she was quite the actress

As soon as they emerged from the consultation room, they were besieged by a crowd of reporters. It was a difficult passage, and the journalists bombarded them with questions.

Later, a large group of his bodyguards arrived, forcibly dispersing the encircling reporters. They walked the couple to Atlas's Maybach and drove away. I narrowed my eyes and then looked at the headlines.

Film and TV Star Harmony Suddenly Faints. Financial Tycoon Stands Guard Throughout Emergency

"Influential Star Rushed to Hospital. The Dominant Figure Remains by Her Side."

They turned my fainting at ATL Empire into an elaborate ruse, with Harmony taking center stage.

What was Atlas's intention in doing this? I had a sneaking suspicion that there was an unnamed factor here that I hadn't figured out.

Carol asked tentatively, “Even though you were the one who fainted, Mr. Atlas did this for a reason, right?”

My mind rapidly churned as I shook my head. I couldn’t help but touch my head, and Carol immediately said, “Never mind. Let’s not dwell on it. You should rest a bit!”

I understood that Carol was worried I might get another headache.

I didn’t understand why Atlas would want to shift everyone’s attention, even though it was the only answer that made sense. Was it to keep me safe?

My phone rang. Seeing that it was a call from Lauren, I quickly answered.

Lauren asked, “Why did it take you so long to pick up? Has the contract just been signed?”

“What time is it?”

“It’s almost 2 p.m., Chio! You had me worried. I thought something had happened to you.”

“Not at all,” I replied absentmindedly. “Let’s find a place to rest and talk in person. How about the Arkadia Spa?”

“Alright! I’m nearby, so I’ll head over. I was getting anxious!” Lauren said before promptly ending the call.

I sat for a while longer, but I could not get my head around Atlas’s actions. Eventually, I gave up and called for Carol, asking her to take me to Arkadia Plaza.

When we met Lauren, my pale complexion alarmed her. Since others were present, I couldn’t explain the details. After the spa treatment, I dismissed the masseuse and shared the morning’s events with her.

Lauren took the phone, scrolling through the contents once more.

“Chlo, Atlas’s intentions were definitely to protect you! Look here. The reports have escalated again.”

Chapter 412 False News

I looked at the phone, and there was new information. It stated that Harmony had acute cholecystitis. Even the attending physician had given an interview.

Atlas had successfully removed me from this incident entirely. It was clear he intended to show the world that Harmony was ill, with no connection to me.

I couldn’t understand why he would go to such lengths. Why did he bring me to the hospital if he didn’t want anyone to know we were connected? Was it really necessary to conceal my medical condition and change the doctor? 1

It seemed like an inconsequential detail. What would it matter if everyone knew about my illness? It wasn’t even really an illness, just a case of amnesia.

I paused. Could this be related to my amnesia? No, it couldn’t be.

My mind was filled with surreal images, various versions of what I might have missed as a child. There were pictures of Annalise and Stella, scenes from when I fell off a motorcycle, and more...

Those images were strange, and they gave me a slight headache. I took a deep breath to calm myself down.

I feared triggering a severe headache. The pain was dreadful. Yet, the images gradually appearing before

me filled me with an inexplicable dread.

Seeing my complexion change again, Lauren quickly changed the subject, saying. "Let's switch topics. You're planning to meet Jared, right? It might not be so easy."

I might have forgotten about it if she hadn't brought it up. This was something that needed to be resolved

quickly.

"Why?" I looked at Lauren.

"He keeps a low profile, and very few can contact him. It's not like you can just arrange a meeting with him as you please," Lauren explained. "Even if you had his number, there's no guarantee you'll be able to

reach him. It's tricky!"

Well, how will we know if we don't try? If we find his number, I'll call him!" I refused to back down. "He can't stay hidden forever."

"We found his number Lauren checked her phone and sent it to me. I dialed his number immediately.

The phone rang for a long time with no answer: I was getting nervous as I waited for a response.

Just as I was about to give up, there was a click, and someone picked up. A magnetic baritone voice.

came through. "Hello?"

It was a simple word with a powerful presence. For a moment, I was stunned until he asked again. "Hello?"

I quickly responded, "Hello! Is this Mr. Jared?"

"It is," came the brief reply.

"I'm a friend of Ivanna's, and I'd love to meet with you!" I said it politely, but I did not reveal what kind of

friend I was to Ivanna.

There was a brief silence on the other end before he agreed to my request. "Alright. Let's meet at

Vanderberg Palace. 5 p.m."

I cast a glance at Lauren. I hadn't expected him to choose Vanderberg Palace.

"Alright!" I agreed readily.

After hanging up the phone, I got up and told Lauren, "It's set! He's arranged to meet at Vanderberg

Palace!

"Vanderberg Palace?" Lauren repeated it in surprise. "He's going there too?"

We exchanged a knowing look. Vanderberg Palace was indeed a place with its share of stories.

"Ivanna holds a significant weight in his eyes."

“I’ll go with

you. After you’re done talking, we can grab a bite there!” Lauren prepared to leave with me.

“It looks like Bella is something! You were right—she’s not to be underestimated,” I said while putting on

my clothes.

“All those big shots call her Snoopy,” Lauren said with a meaningful look. “In the industry, when they talk

about Snoopy, they’re talking about her!”

“I’ve met her!” I told Lauren. “Guess what happened?”

Lauren narrowed her eyes at me, surprised. “You met her? Please don’t tell me you... instantly hit it off!”

It was exactly that!” I smiled at her. “But I never expected that Jared would choose this location.”

Lauren raised an eyebrow. “Bella is a player in this game! Chlo, keep in touch with her. It’s better safe than

nens statement rang true. Deep down, I felt Bella might be my benefactor. I

I arrived at Vanderberg Palace ahead of time. To my surprise, Jared had already reserved a room. This room was not open to the public, showing that in this place, Jared held even more sway than Atticus.

I walked straight into the room, waiting for Jared’s arrival.

Chapter 413 Face-to-face Interrogation

I had already brewed the tea when Jared entered the room.

I looked at the refined man, his eyes brimming with the depth and wisdom that only time and experience

could bring.

He didn't seem surprised to see me, merely giving me a subtle quirk. "Hello. We've met before."

I nodded and got up. "Yes, we have. I'm Chloe, Ivanna's closest friend."

"She mentioned you."

I was a little uneasy about his composed manner. After all, this man was enigmatic. I felt the vast

disparity in our status as a woman watching out for my best-friend.

Both of us sat looking calm, but there was a faint air of distance. Neither of us rushed to speak.

It wasn't that I didn't want to start the conversation, but I had never interacted with someone like him

before. I had no idea how to begin.

I gestured toward the tea I had poured for him. "Please, Mr. Jared."

He got straight to the point. "Do you know what you wanted to discuss with me?"

“Ivanna,” I replied directly.

What else was there to talk about with him? Of course, it had to be Ivanna. Why pretend otherwise?

I had only regarded Jared as a man my best friend trusted enough to entrust with her life. Not the mysterious big shot it rumored him to be. I felt oddly at ease.

“I’m all ears.” He didn’t ask for more details or offer any answers. These three words were spoken with great humility.

“Ivanna and I are very close friends, and I think you already know how deep Ivanna’s character is. For the

past two years, she has taken care of me, and she has become family to me.”

What I said was not an exaggeration. Ivanna was not just family to me—she was irreplaceable.

Jared looked at me with questioning eyes, though it was fleeting. I must have seemed like an open book that was easy to read. But I had to get my point out.

I want her to be happy above all else. That’s why I spoke with her about your relationship last night

Honestly.. Ldisapprove of it. I said boldly, lacking eyes with him.

I

His gaze remained steady. His demeanor was calm, and he didn’t interrupt me. It was as if he were

genuinely listening.

This calmness was far from the elevator kiss I once witnessed between him and Ivanna. It was difficult for me to picture this man as having both such refined moments and passionate ones.

Love was truly hard to understand.

“You understand why I’d think that. She may feel safe and attached to you, which every woman wants, but you have put her in a difficult situation. Mr. Jared, would you say I’m being unreasonable?”

I looked at Jared. His flawless skin and scholarly air made him incredibly captivating.

“Not at all,” Jared replied calmly, lifting the tea I had poured for him. He took a sip, and his deep, mysterious eyes met mine. “It’s clear that you care deeply for her.”

His choice of words was measured. He used “care deeply for instead of simply “friend”

“That’s why I wanted to meet you today.” I felt surprisingly calm like I had stepped into a role. My mind was getting clearer. “I’ve only heard rumors about your reputation. After seeing you and your wife last

night, Ivanna told me how you met.”

Then I added, “I should be grateful to you for saving Ivanna. She is kind and has a strong sense of what is right. She would do anything for her friends. I hate seeing her hurt, even a little. You saved her, but you

also caused her a lot of trouble

To be honest, I don’t know Trinity. But you do. You hold the most authority to speak about what kind of person she is. I want to know how you will protect Ivanna.”

My question was straightforward, bordering on sharp, as I looked at him with determination.

I knew my gaze would not deter him. I was perhaps overestimating my abilities. But for Ivanna's sake, I had to press on, I needed to draw out his true feelings.

"I believe I must understand this issue clearly. That's the purpose of my rather roundabout journey to find you today." I added.

Jared calmly took another sip of tea, then raised his eyes, locking onto my face.

Chapter 414 A Face Off

I started to feel nervous. His eyes were bottomless as he scrutinized my expression.

"Ms. Chloe, for Ivanna, I will do everything in my power," he stated, with no unnecessary words.

Although it sounded concise, coming from a man of Jared's stature, it held weight.

"Are you willing to let go?" I persisted.

"I never once thought of letting her go," he affirmed firmly.

I felt moved. Such words, especially when spoken by someone like Jared, were a powerful tool for

touching a woman's heart.

What more was there to ask? I had intended to ask if he could keep that promise, but how could I even

ask such a question to a man like him?

I coolly stated, "Honestly, your answer doesn't satisfy me. These words may be significant to you, but they appear superficial. Everything can change in the blink of an eye, especially in Trinity's case.

"Perhaps one day I will ask you to protect Ivanna's life, but you might not be able to. Even if Ivanna is willing to give her life for you, I am not willing to take that risk. How could I bear it?"

I had to express the thoughts that were bothering me. It almost sounded like I was competing with him

for Ivanna

Jared lowered his eyes, and his long fingers gently swirled the cup. "So, Ms. Chloe, do you need me to promise it to you?"

"Perhaps I'm just a woman who appreciates hearing promises," I conceded.

"But you understand that any promise can be broken, especially mine. As you mentioned, the variables with Trinity are too great." Jared was equally frank.

His words caught me off guard. Indeed, any promise he made now would be hollow. Trinity was at certainty, an indomitable presence that existed in Jared's life long before Ivanna.

I felt a sense of powerlessness. Negotiations, demands, or requests to Jared were all futile. There was no

way to bypass Trinity.

was genuinely worried about Ivanna's unwavering determination.

Jared seemed to read my thoughts. He took the teapot with practiced grace, then poured a cup of tea for

gently set the teapot down

"Ivanna and I are connected by fate. And with Trinity, we are partners, inseparable."

In an instant, I stared at his face. At first, his words sounded like nonsense. What did he mean by "

inseparable"?

Then, the words flashed through my mind—fate and partners!

The former referred to Ivanna, while the latter was Trinity.

I lowered my eyes, gradually comprehending his meaning. What was this, if not a promise? Who wouldn't

chase after fate?

Partners could be chosen, discarded, and even destroyed. They could be severed cleanly with a single stroke. Perhaps his true self could only coexist with Trinity. They were mutually dependent.

I couldn't help but think of Atlas. What was I to him? For now, it seemed like we were just partners.

My eyes stung, and an uncontrollable emotion overcame me.

"So, Mr. Jared, you must cherish your fate," I advised, a mixture of emotions in my voice.

“Without a doubt,” he replied, still as calm as ever.

There was no need to continue the conversation. He had already given me a satisfactory answer. To ask further would only be redundant.

I stood to bid him farewell. Besides Ivanna, there was nothing else to talk about.

He stood up and thanked me in the most polite way possible—a real gentleman. I hoped this demeanor would last forever, never revealing the other side of him. But little did I know I’d soon witness that other side.

As I exited the room, a whirlwind of emotions swirled within me. I couldn’t decide whether I should be happy or sad.

I collapsed onto the mat when I walked into Lauren’s room.

Lauren hurried over, asking, “How did it go?”

I stared at Lauren for a long time. Then, I said with a bitter smile, “Why didn’t I meet the right person at the night time?”

Chapter 415 Black and White

My response threw Lauren off guard. She couldn’t quite grasp what I was getting at.

“What do you mean?” She tilted her head to look at me. Perhaps my despondent expression had slowed her train of thought.

“If we had met the right person at the right time, we wouldn’t face these complications. You, me, and Ivanna. Why didn’t we meet the right person at the right time?”

Lauren suddenly understood what I meant. She shrugged, looking resigned.

“If I had realized that Ryan had been with me from the start, we could have fallen in love, married, and had children. We would’ve led a simple and fulfilling life.” My expression softened.

*Just like you met Oliver at the right time, how fortunate! If Ivanna had met Jared at the right time, she wouldn’t, have to be so anxious, would she?’ I leaned against the wall.

“How do you know this isn’t the right time?” Lauren countered. For most people, there are two types of romantic situations. Love at first sight and growing affection. We’re not ordinary people, so we can’t escape from these two scenarios.”

She leaned closer to me. “Neither of us can escape this. Ultimately, no matter our feelings, they can all be

boiled down to these two. I belong to the latter, growing affection.”

Lauren spoke with weariness, “You and Ivanna... are most likely in the category of love at first sight. It’s an

active experience while growing affection is a passive one. But familial love is what remains.”

I told her, “Jared had said, “Ivanna and I are fated! Trinity and I are partners, inseparable!”

Lauren’s mouth twitched.

“That moved me. It’s no wonder Ivanna will go through hell for him.” I let out a sigh.

We both fell into silence. Perhaps we were both contemplating what our respective people thought of us.

Lauren patted me on the back. “Regardless of who we are, people need sustenance. Let’s focus on

feeding ourselves, or else we’ll be worse off!”

I smiled. “You’re right! Maybe this world isn’t just black and white. Perhaps we’re overthinking about Jared or Trinity. We’re making it too complicated.”

Lauren nodded.

added. “There must be a way, Just like how we can’t simply judge a person as good or bad. Who’s to say

“You’re right. It’s impossible to define someone solely as good or bad.”

She reached for her phone and called Ivanna, asking her to join us at Vanderberg Palace.

It was already late when I got home that night. As I opened the door, I could not help but look back at the

empty parking spot.

Throughout the night, I kept asking myself—what was I to him?

The next day, I made preparations to head to the capital. During breakfast, I explained my plans to my parents.

My mom looked at me with some concern. “You just recovered. Are you sure you’re up for this?”

Ava sat there swinging her legs, taking small bites of her food as she spoke. “Mommy, why are you always

going on business trips? Daddy and Uncle Atlas are always on business trips, too.”

Sheb

I felt a pang in my heart. She had always held onto Atlas, and I was sure she also missed Matthew.

It made me sad that I couldn’t fill that void for her. I could only do my best to compensate for the fatherly

role, but I knew it would never be enough.

“Once this busy period is over, I’ll take you, Grandma, and Grandpa to the ends of the earth!” I promised.

I

Our island trip had been postponed for far too long.

“Really?” Ava looked at me with wide-eyed innocence. “Will Uncle come with us?”

Chapter 416 Totally Different

Ava’s questions surprised me, and I responded vaguely before quickly getting up. “Ava, Mommy doesn’t have time to take you today. You can take a walk to the kindergarten with grandma, okay?”

“Mommy, when will you get home? When are we going to the island?” Ava slid off her chair and approached me excitedly.

I knew I couldn’t make promises, or she’d question me endlessly. I almost slapped myself for bringing it up. Even if we were going, I should’ve kept it a surprise. But now, I couldn’t fulfill my promise. I had to make it happen no matter what, or I would let my family down.

I looked at her excited expression and thought before saying, “We’ll go when I return from Solaris, okay?”

I thought taking my parents on vacation would be perfect since Matthew derailed our plans last time. Afterward, I put my small suitcase in the trunk and said goodbye to Ava before leaving for work.

However, I saw someone standing at the neighborhood entrance. The woman appeared much skinnier since I last saw her. She had graying hair and a worn-out expression as she looked toward the gate anxiously.

I was surprised to see the woman. Although we were once familiar, Grace had become a stranger now.

She had visited in the morning, anxiously scanning the area. I knew she was waiting for Ava. Her desperation was evident from how she kept glancing inside the house.

She didn't notice my car passing as she craned her neck to look inside. I considered ignoring her, but my heart couldn't bear to do it. After all, she wouldn't recognize my new car.

I parked near the gate and stayed in my car to consider the situation, I knew Grace must be longing to see Ava, so she might do something if I ignored her. I couldn't bear to imagine what Grace would do.

I also considered calling my mom and telling her not to come out. However, I understood the longing one

could have for one's family. Grace was.

and I couldn't stop her from seeing her granddaughter

forever.

With these thoughts in mind, I opened the door and exited my car to approach her. Still, she didn't notice

1. me. I realized she looked so worn that I barely recognized her. She didn't look like the plump and well-groomed Grace I used to know.

I didn't resent her much in the past. After all, she had cared for me and Ava, especially when I was with

Matthew. She had genuinely cared for Ava because of her maternal instincts. I would have done the

same if I put myself in her shoes.

This drama had hurt everyone involved. After the pain, I couldn't hold onto grudges forever.

"What are you doing here?" I asked quietly, without any form of address. I tried to keep a neutral tone but

couldn't call her "Mom" anymore.

However, Grace still looked toward my house and did not hear my words. I felt upset seeing this, so I grabbed her arm, asking again, "Why are you here?"

This time, she flinched and jerked backward. When our gazes met, she nervously struggled to escape my grasp.

She looked wary as she said, "What's it to you?"

I fell silent before asking. "Are you here to see Ava? She hasn't come out yet—you'll have to wait a little longer."

Chapter 417 The Unfortunate Are the Most Resentful

Grace was petrified as she stared at me, trying to determine if I was telling the truth. She also observed

my expression to see if I was being nice. She looked skeptical as she gazed at my seemingly gentle

demeanor.

I realized why some people hated others. It was because of the things they did in the past.

Finally, Grace looked away and mumbled, "I—I just... want to see her."

My heart softened as I looked at Grace. It had been nearly half a year since she saw Ava. The last time might've been when they stayed at my place before my divorce. They probably hadn't met since then.

I knew it must've taken a lot of courage for Grace to stand here now. I calmly said, "You have my number,

so you can call me whenever you want to see her."

She looked at me doubtfully and said, "Y—you'll... allow me to see her? You're not going to... stop me?"

I answered, "I never said you couldn't see Ava. I just don't want you to disturb or hurt her normal life. I won't stop you if you can do that."

Grace became teary-eyed and dropped her guard. She looked at me pitifully as she trembled. "How could

I hurt her? She's my..."

She glanced at me before continuing. "She's my granddaughter.

I led her to the shade of a tree and gave her a pack of tissues from my bag. Then, I fetched a water bottle

from the car. She had been waiting for quite some time and was sweating profusely.

Grace still seemed wary of me, maybe even resentful. I realized she had always resented me living in this

house. She had lived through hard times and had developed a strong attachment to this type of house, which she watched me “occupy” with envy.

I took out my phone and called my mom, asking if they had come out yet. I informed her that Grace was waiting at the gate and wanted to see Ava.

My mom remained silent on the phone, but I understood her reluctance. After all, the harm the Murphys

inflicted on us was hard to overcome.

Grace observed my expression as I made the call. She looked sad as she gripped the water bottle, crumpling it. Finally, my mom reluctantly agreed, and I sighed in relief before asking my mom, “Should I

come in and get you?”

No need. We’re coming out now, my mom still sounded reluctant.

I hung up the phone and looked at Grace, comforting her, “They’ll be out in a moment. Don’t worry.”

“Ah... okay...” Grace nodded as if relieved of a burden. She checked herself over and smoothed her hair before wiping the sweat off her forehead.

It pained my heart to see that. If Grace were my mom, seeing her so sad would have killed me. I felt her sadness from a mother’s perspective. She seemed embarrassed in my presence, so she moved back under the scorching sun and stood at the gate.

She craned her neck to peer inside while I watched from afar. I noticed Grace looked anxious and modest, but I couldn't leave for fear the situation might turn unpleasant.

Finally, I saw Grace smile as she stood still, as if she feared losing sight of Ava. As my daughter got closer, Grace grew more anxious. The latter was eager to enter the gate but had no key card.

A moment later, Ava noticed her. It seemed my mom hadn't told her that Grace was waiting at the gate. Ava was surprised and held my mom's hand. My daughter was hesitant and unwilling to greet Grace,

looking conflicted.

Ava looked up at my mom, unwilling to take another step.

Chapter 418 Some Things Cannot Be Undone

Grace knelt at the gate and reached through it as she waved at my daughter. "Ava, come here! Ava..."

Even my deepest grudges vanished at that moment. After all, Grace was an elderly woman who had a troubled life. Now, she had to face such a thing in her old age. Still, someone had to be responsible for

causing this tragedy.

I felt a tear in my eye as I turned away and gulped. I noticed Ava retreating while Grace cried, "Ava, please

come here. Don't you want to see your grandma?"

She appeared frantic, looking around as if seeking help to get inside. I could no longer bear it and

approached the gate. Ava saw me and called out, "Mommy!"

She let go of my mom's hand but didn't run toward me. Perhaps she was scared, or Grace's changed appearance made Ava think she was a stranger.

When I reached Grace, I reassured her, "Don't worry. I'll talk to her first, okay?"

Grace looked at me tearfully as I spoke.

Meanwhile, my mom softly spoke to Ava, presumably encouraging her to come over. I knew no one in my

family was heartless.

Grace pleaded, "Chloe, let me hold her. Ava, come here and let Grandma hug you. Don't you want to see

me?"

I entered the gate, picked up Ava, and said, "Let's

respect your elders, okay? She just wants to see you."

you, and you should

Ava grew stern as she scolded me, "But she bullies you! I don't want to see her!"

I tried to reason with her, "People make mistakes sometimes, so we should give them a chance to learn

from it. What do you think?"

Ava leaned into me and looked toward the gate.

"Ava..." Grace continued calling for my daughter.

Ava's eyes filled with tears, and I felt pained. "Go on, sweetheart. You're a good girl. Grandma came to see you because she knows she was wrong. Don't you remember? Grandma used to make your favorite food for you.

She nodded while looking at Grace.

I stood up and led my daughter to her grandmother. Ava's small hand still clutched mine as we approached, revealing her conflicted thoughts

As we stepped outside the gate, Grace lunged forward. However, Ava recoiled and looked at me in a

panic, perhaps because Grace's actions were overwhelming. Immediately after, I encouraged Ava, "Go to

Grandma, okay?"

Ava weakly called out, "Grandma?"

Grace burst into tears, drawing the attention of onlookers

I quickly reassured her, "Don't scare her. She's already here to see you. Be happy."

I nudged Ava closer to Grace, and she hugged Ava, saying, "Oh, Ava I've missed you

miss Grandma?"

Tears welled in Ava's eyes, and she even asked, "Will you still bully my mommy?"

so much! Do you

Grace knelt and sobbed. She shook her head vigorously, saying, "No, no, Grandma won't do that anymore. Ava, you're my beloved granddaughter! Did you miss me?"

I was speechless while watching the duo interact. Ultimately, Ava wrapped her little arms around Grace's neck. I only approached them half an hour later and said, "Let's stop for now. It's time to take Ava to

school."

Grace looked at me with a tear-stained face and whispered, "Can I follow? Just this once."

She looked humble, so I sighed and agreed, "Okay, get in the car."

When we arrived at the entrance, Grace told Ava, "If you want me to make your favorite food, don't forget.

to tell me, okay? I'll cook whatever you want."

"But my grandma already made me food," Ava replied, "I have to go now."

"Okay, I'll come see you again next time, dear. Be a good girl at school, okay?" Grace said while still

holding onto Ava.

I

Soon after, I left the car and approached them, saying, “You can visit again next time, Grace.”

She reluctantly released Ava and watched her go inside. Ava even turned back several times to look at Grace. Later, my mom told me she was going to the market and left. I knew she had been quite patient with Grace around.

Even though Ava had already entered, Grace was still staring toward the school entrance. Grace wiped her tears and glanced at me, saying, “Thanks for everything. I’ll go home now.”

“W—Would you like me to... I could give you a ride home if you’d like,” I offered.

“No, no! You’re busy, so just go ahead with your work.” Grace wiped away her tears before hurrying away from my sight.

Chapter 419 A Client’s Unexpected Visit

I looked toward the departing Grace and felt a sense of oppression. We were once a close-knit family who shared everything, but it had come to this. I realized how unpredictable life could be.

I recalled Grace angrily defending Melanie at the baby’s full moon party. Looking at Grace now, I understood her life must be far from ideal, given how worn and aged she looked. After getting in the car, I

drove to the office feeling gloomy.

I dealt with some urgent matters and told Ryan I needed to go to Solaris. After some thought, he said, “Can you postpone it for a day? We can go together tomorrow.”

“You want to come?”

Ryan smiled at me, saying, "I mentioned wanting to visit a few friends there last time. I can't leave yet since we have clients from Canta coming to discuss business."

I thought about it and realized postponing the trip wouldn't make much difference. After all, I felt unsettled after what happened in the morning. I considered Ava, knowing she wouldn't be happy today,

either.

I nodded and said, "Okay, I'll tell Carol to reschedule my flight."

Coincidentally, Elanor arrived, too. While her office was here, she was always busy in the building materials market. She only checked in during the mornings and evenings and sometimes wouldn't visit

for several days.

Still, I trusted her wholeheartedly. Elanor had handled the market's affairs efficiently since joining. Although Grayson initially delegated the market to her, he actively pursued new business opportunities. I

found great comfort in that.

My employees were excellent, and I had no difficulty managing them.

Since Elanor came this time, she had something important to discuss. She entered my office and said, "

Melanie has been busy contacting suppliers lately."

Eleanor had obtained a list of suppliers Melanie had secretly contacted. I wasn't sure what Melanie was

planning. I examined the list and felt a sense of clarity. Judging from the names on the list, I knew she

was making moves.

If we could determine the number of their orders, we could determine where the building materials were

going.

Eleanor looked at me and asked, "What do you think? Is it useful?"

"You did perfectly!" I exclaimed excitedly, "I was just looking into her materials usage, and now I have this

information."

Eleanor smiled, saying, "She hadn't frequented the market before, but she's been coming often lately. I thought something was up, so I watched her. It's strange since Melanie never has discussions with

anyone at the market.

"One day, I met her at Nova while hosting and having lunch with a manufacturer. I knew the client she met with. He told me everything, so I paid closer attention to Melanie."

Eleanor's quick thinking impressed me. She pointed to the list and said, "I noticed the clients on this list like making a quick buck. Some companies have a fair scale, but their products aren't impressive, which

caught my attention.

"I was there when the last incident between her and Tobshampton Group happened. She must be up to

something similar this time. Melanie hasn't changed her ways," Eleanor said severely.

I reminded Elanor, "Matthew was always concerned about costs. He must've gained much from it initially.

Just watch a few key areas. Petty squabbles won't be convincing."

Elanor mentioned, "They haven't introduced any new products recently. It seems they don't care about the

smaller markets anymore."

I advised Elanor, "Everything starts with the basics. What they don't value might be the capital we need.

We must remain focused on high-quality products, so watch for any new ones." 1

Elanor passed me several lists and sample catalogs, saying, "Look at these latest products I'm

researching."

I glanced through them and suggested, "Why don't you follow me to Solaris? You can check out the

materials at Pinnacle Group. They're market leaders, and I'm sure they must have some new ideas. Also,

you can check out the order meeting at Fort Greauu."

"Sure!" Eleanor and I continued discussing until nearly noon. We had planned to have lunch together, but she had to leave when a client arrived.

The visitor was a developer, a slick middle-aged man whom I didn't particularly like. I wanted to pass him

off to Ryan initially, but I noticed Ryan was busy with clients from Canta.

offered him a seat, and he gave me his business card. His name was Jeremiah Schaefer, a developer from Bourdemun. He revealed a humble smile, which somehow looked familiar. "Ms. Chloe, I've heard much about you.

On? What brings you here, Mr. Jeremiah? Do you have friends in Faswood? I smiled back faintly, thinking

Chapter 420 A Creeper

Bourdamun was a neighboring city to Muborough. However, the former's economy couldn't match Muborough. Although close, Bourdamun lacked a coastline, which slowed its development.

Matthew hadn't taken projects in Bourdamun in recent years because of its sluggish development. I hadn't even considered anything in Bourdamun. A client from there visited today, and I was curious to

Yearn about it.

Jeremiah smiled sincerely, but his words were doubtful. He said, "Yes, we're in the development business. I heard Tanum Corporation's interior design and construction are leading in Foswood. I've always wanted

to work with you, but the timing was never right.

I smiled calmly and responded, "That's an overstatement, Mr. Jeremiah. Tanum Corporation is just an ordinary company. It's been a rough year, so I wouldn't dare claim it's leading in anything.

"We do our best to uphold honesty and quality to satisfy our clients. Do you have any ongoing

construction projects?" I didn't want to stall. Instead, I cut to the chase.

"Oh, you're being modest, Ms. Chloe," Jeremiah never broke eye contact, making me uncomfortable as he

continued, "There's a project we consider key in Bourdamun this year. However, the authorities request

we build a benchmark for Bourdamun.

"Naturally, we must raise our standards with different plans, so we must be cautious. That's why I wanted

to meet you today."

I was curious when he mentioned the key Bourdamun project. "Thank you, Mr. Jeremiah."

Still, I couldn't help but feel Jeremia was unfit to be associated with such a significant project. It wasn't

that I judged him by his appearance, but one's appearance often reflected one's inner qualities.

I thought the slick middle-aged man before me didn't possess the integrity he claimed. How he looked at me made me doubt his intentions even more. Unless he referred to his dad when he mentioned the "

authorities."

We continued discussing and exchanging empty promises for a while. Then, I asked Jeremiah for relevant

materials. However, he mentioned the project documents were still undergoing process and would send

them to me as soon as he returned.

felt annoyed because Jeremiah had come to discuss a project yet arrived unprepared. I thought it

wasn't a pleasant joke, It seemed he thought I had plenty of time to waste. Even if I did, I wouldn't want to

t

entertaining someone like him.

Fortunately, Carol entered.

I took the chance and said, "Mr. Jeremiah, please bring the relevant documents for a more detailed discussion. We haven't worked on anything in Bourdamun, so I look forward to our potential

collaboration."

Carol understood my underlying tone and said, "Ms. Chloe, the meeting at 10 o'clock is all set."

Perfect." I nodded and told Jeremiah, "I apologize, Mr. Jeremiah, but we'll have to end our discussion today. I have another meeting soon."

π

"Uh, oh, of course!" He quickly stood up and extended his chubby hand toward me. "T-That's fine. I won't trouble you further, Ms. Chloe. I'll make sure to bring the documents next time."

I felt slightly disgusted but couldn't ignore him since he was a guest. I reluctantly shook his hand, but he surprisingly held it firmly, saying, "I'm sorry for bothering you. We'll meet again soon. I'm confident we'll work together successfully."

I raised an eyebrow and gazed at his hand coldly. Then, I withdrew my outstretched hand and said, "Carol,

Please see Mr. Jeremiah out for me. Goodbye."

Carol quickly stepped forward and gestured for him to leave. Once he left, I hurried to the lounge

restroom to wash my hands. When I came out, Carol returned from sending Jeremiah off. She looked at

me and asked, "What's with that guy?"

"Ugh! He's creepy, and his words were weirder!" I complained, tossing Jeremiah's business card to Carol. Tell Grayson to look into him. I feel something's off about Jeremiah. Check if Bourdamun has any key projects this year, too."

"Sure, I'll get to it right away." Carol turned and left. I sat back in my chair, thinking about Bourdamun and its 'key' project.