

## Unbreakable 2161

### Chapter 2161

---

Oh, Vicki, are you in a rush to go see Mr. Schultz? Deniz suddenly asked.

Vicki immediately rolled the window back down, wide-eyed. What did you say? she asked, staring at him.

I just saw Mr. Schultz. He was driving off, he replied.

Deniz looked at the time on his watch and said, Mr. Schultz left less than twenty minutes ago. If you ask the driver to hurry, you might catch up with him.

But Vicki was skeptical. If it was true that Jarrod had just left, why would Alec say Jarrod had gone on a business trip? Why did they manage to hide the cause of Jarrods sudden leave from her?

Mr. Miller, can you just explain everything clearly once and for all? I really dont understand what is going on. Vickis strategy was now starting to fall apart. Unlike Lowe, she couldnt maintain her composure. A trace of panic was written all over her face.

Miss Hampton, you know I was thrown to a place far away since I somehow offended Mr. Schultz. I cant even come near Ardlens until now. But I really want to return to Ardlens. Deniz opted not to answer Vickis questions.

The more desperate Vicki appeared, the calmer Deniz became. He was skillfully manipulating the situation.

Mr. Miller, if you want to say something, just say it. Tell me directly what you want. Dont beat around the bush, Vicki said straightforwardly.

Miss Hampton, cant you still tell? Deniz asked back. I desperately want to return to Ardlens, and I need your help.

Is that all? No problem, Vicki quickly agreed. Ill discuss it with my father. By then, Jarrod wont be able to stop you from returning to Ardlens.

Deniz smiled. After I return, can I still manage my previous projects?

Vickis expression changed. Deniz was incredibly greedy. He didnt only want to return but also reclaim his previous business ventures.

His greed reminded her of a parasite.

Vicki wasnt in a position to make decisions and the thought of convincing her father to support a man like Deniz made her feel repulsive.

Deniz was not in a hurry. He said casually, Miss Hampton, you know Im on your side. After all, we are relatives and I cant stand to see you mistreated. Your fianc is on his way to meet another woman.

The news hit Vicki like a thunderbolt. Her face turned pale. How could Jarrod be rushing away to meet another woman? What kind of a woman was worth him leaving her in the middle of the night?

Deniz grinned. I guess you already know who she is.

.

Of course, Vicki knew. After all, Nicoles past relationship with Jarrod was a constant thorn in her side. However, since Jarrod was engaged to her, he hadnt seen any other women.

Vicki had initially been worried and suspicious. But she didnt find any signs of infidelity. Jarrods movements were transparent. And if she asked, Alec would surely tell her everything.

Jarrood once promised to let her know all his whereabouts. It was a privilege he ensured her as his fiancée.

Because of this, Vicki had always been proud, believing she had made the right choice.

But now, she was no longer sure. Her mind was a mess. But when she spoke, she still tried to sound confident. Maybe Jarrod has other matters to attend to. Since we got engaged, Ive always been aware of all his movements and whereabouts. And there have been no other women around him all these months. I trust him. He will never cheat on me.

Interesting! Suddenly, Deniz burst into laughter. Miss Hampton, you are so naive. There are no men in this world who dont cheat. The way Mr. Schultz treated that woman in the video didnt look Like someone who abstained.

Chapter 2162

---

Vickis lips turned purple. She didnt want to hear any more words from Deniz, so she mumbled, Stop. I I choose to trust Jarrod. I trust him You are just here to stir up trouble.

But Deniz remained unfazed. He looked at Vickie with narrowed eyes and said slyly, Miss Hampton, have you ever considered that maybe Mr. Schultz doesnt touch those women because he doesnt like them?

His words were a wake-up call for Vicki.

Indeed, Jarrod had never been involved with other women. He ignored even those who threw themselves at him. Vicki always thought Jarrod remained virtuous because he was committed to her. Never did she think that his lack of interest in those women might be because he didnt like them. And the person he truly liked was Nicole

Vicki didnt dare to think about it. She stared at Deniz with fierce eyes. I agree to your terms. I will give you the projects if you tell me where Jarrod is.

Deal. Thank you, Miss Hampton, Deniz replied.

Deniz gave the address to Vicki. Then, he watched her car speed off like a rocket, leaving a cloud of smoke and dust. He was extremely pleased with himself because he won big in this negotiation.

Although Lowe was physically drained, he still kept a few tricks up his sleeve. It was Lowes idea that Deniz approached Vicki to negotiate terms after informing Jarrod of Nicoles whereabouts.

Sure enough, Deniz got what he wanted. Victory was his.

Deniz believed that Vickis agreement was more reliable than Lowes.

After all, Jarrod might not respect Lowe, but he would have to respect his fiance.

Deniz spat on the ground disgustedly and muttered, What a mess. This time, Im going to settle everything once and for all. I will let you taste the sufferings Ive endured.

Jarrod parked the car at the airports parking lot and directly arranged a chartered flight. He had no idea that Vicki followed him to the airport to stop him from leaving.

At this moment, Jarrod was waiting inside the VIP boarding lounge.

.

When he was about to board, Vickis soft voice sounded behind him.

Jarrod

Jarrod stopped and turned around. His brows unconsciously furrowed.

He looked at her and asked coldly, What are you doing here?

Instead of answering his question, Vicki asked, Where are you going?

Jarrod paused for a few seconds and asked, Are you sure you want to hear the truth from me directly?

Vicki felt like her heart sank. Jarrod, you promised you wouldnt lie to me.

Jarrod replied calmly, I havent lied to you. Ill tell you everything you want to know.

Jarrods demeanor suggested he meant his words. But when Vicki was about to open her mouth, she choked up. She was overwhelmed by fear.

What if their relationship would be over if she asked?

Chapter 2163

---

Vicki felt a lump in her throat. But finally, she found her voice, although it was trembling. Jarrod, I dont want to know anymore. Please dont go. Just go home and have dinner with me, okay?

However, Jarrod refused firmly. No, Im not going back.

Jarrood, I wont ask where you are going. But can you leave me some dignity? Just this once, listen to me. Then, after that Vicki struggled to finish her words. But finally, she said slowly, After that, you can go wherever you want. I wont ask anything.

She wanted to buy time to figure out a way to deal with Nicole.

Right then, the flight attendant came over and urged, Mr. Schultz, its time to board the plane.

Jarrood raised his arm and checked the time on his watch. He nodded and said, Give me five more minutes.

The flight attendant nodded and stepped out of the lounge.

Jarrood walked up to Vicki and reached out to steady her trembling body. Then, he said calmly, Do you remember what I told you the night you came to see me?

Vickis face turned pale. Of course, she clearly remembered it.

When Jarroods scandal first broke out, Vicki confronted him immediately to verify if it was true.

Jarrood didnt deny it. Although he didnt say a word, he nodded to confirm it was him.

Tears streamed down Vickies face. She asked, Jarrod, Nicole has ruined you. She only wants to destroy you and the Schultz Group.

Jarrood nodded. I know.

Vicki was shocked. You know? And you still let her?

Jarrood looked at Vicki with tiredness on his face. I cant live without her, so I have to lock her by my side.

Vicki could only stare at Jarrod speechlessly. But he didnt explain further. He just turned around and walked away.

.

During the days when Jarrod was under investigation, Vicki lived alone in agony and realized she couldnt hate Jarrod. But she despised Nicole who had caused Jarrod so much pain. She never thought it was Jarrod who trapped Nicole by his side and later acted out of desperation to escape.

No matter what, Vicki couldnt force herself to forget Jarrod. So, when he was released on bail that night, she couldnt stop herself from rushing over to find him.

As soon as they met, she got straight to the point. Jarrod, I can help you.

But unexpectedly, Jarrod refused without even listening to her. He said, I cant give you what you want. My love and hate have all been given to Nicole.

Perhaps Jarrod had been so tired from dealing with the scandal exposed by Nicole. He refused the idea of taking advantage of others.

However, Vicki didnt give in. Jarrod, I dont need your heart. It doesnt matter whether you love or hate her. I just need you by my side. You know as well as I do that your current predicament can only be resolved by marriage of convenience.

Vicki thought her offer was enticing enough. After all, she was beautiful with a good family background. Most importantly, her father adored her. Since her father doted on her so much, any man she married would definitely gain the Hampton familys support. Who wouldnt want to add such an icing to their cake?

Moreover, those big companies understood very well that powerful alliances through the marriage of convenience were the nutrients for stable development.

Chapter 2164

---

Jarrood was silent for a while. Then, he said, I cant accept it.

Vicki was stunned for a moment. She stared at Jarrod with her mouth gaped open before she finally managed to say, Jarrod, am I that bad? You know I only want to help you. I will never harm you.

Vicki really couldnt understand why Jarrod refused. She wanted nothing but a title. Why was he so unwilling to give it to her?

Its not that youre not good enough, Jarrod said. Its just that I dont want to complicate our relationship. If you make a deal with me, you will only end up hurting yourself.

Nicoles escape from him was a heavy blow to Jarrod. His mind was a mess, and he could no longer think of anything else. Vickis words had a point. The marriage of convenience could offer him great support. But he still didnt want it.

Jarrood, do you know that all the shareholders are conspiring to oust you? Vicki said anxiously. Once you are kicked out of the company and lose your position, it wont be easy for you to find Nicole again.

Jarrood remained silent, his disturbance evident in his quiet.

Vicki knew it was useless to say more since convincing him seemed out of the question. So, she threw out her one last bait. Jarrod, our union means nothing. It is merely to resolve the current crisis and solidify the relationship between the Hamptons and the Schultzes. If one day Nicole appears again, its fine with me. I can tolerate her. I hope you can think it over.

After saying this, Vicki left, heartbroken.

Jarroods ruthlessness in dealing with things resulted in many enemies.

After the setback brought by the scandal, these enemies focused their attention on the Schultz Group,

exerting all efforts to take it down until it was totally destroyed.

The Schultz Group was Jarrods creation. He couldnt let it fall while he was in charge.

A month later, the news of the Hampton-Schultz union spread out. The wedding date was announced on the day of their engagement ceremony.

Because of this, Jarrods name was boosted, and he quickly returned to the Schultz Group. After several months of decisive measures, he recovered his position in the company and eliminated his rivals.

Vicki thought this would be the beginning of a happy life for her to live on with Jarrod.

But while she was celebrating, Nicole entered the picture again.

Jarrod pressed Vicki down on the seat and then withdrew his hand.

Ill keep my promise to marry you. But thats all I can do. I can only give what we have agreed on from the start.

Time was running and he was desperate to rush to Nicoles whereabouts, so he didnt elaborate further, hoping Vicki would come around.

But Jarrod Not reconciled, Vicki tightly clung to the hem of his coat.

However, Jarrod shook off her hand mercilessly. Whether you choose to continue or end our agreement, I respect your decision.

Vicki froze at his words. She could only watch him walk away helplessly, unable to do anything. The pain in her eyes turned to resentment, having forgotten the agreement before their engagement despite Jarrods reminders.

She clenched her fists tightly and murmured while staring at Jarrods back fiercely, Jarrod, how can you treat me like this? I love you so much.

Vicki cried even harder, but it didnt change anything. No matter how hard she cried, she could no longer bring back the man who had left.

Chapter 2165

---

Having always been spoiled and arrogant, however, Vicki had never done anything outrageous.

But most often, people like her were capable of doing things that would shock everyone if they felt betrayed.

Jarrods chartered flight had already taken off.

Jarrod was sitting on the seat and looking at a photo of a man and a woman. The woman was eating with her head down while the man was serving her food. They looked warm and cozy, like a couple.

He had guessed it right. Nicole had run away with Roscoe. His blood boiled in an instant. Nicole did not hesitate to destroy him and herself just to escape from his grip and be with Roscoe.

Marvelous, Nicole! Jarrod snapped.

Suddenly, there was a sharp snapping sound. The phone in Jarrod's hand was crushed to pieces. The sharp shard of the LCD cut into his hand, and blood immediately oozed out.

A chilling smile crept across Jarrod's handsome face. His scholarly demeanor was all gone, replaced by a menacing coldness.

This time, Jarrod swore he would never let go of Nicole again. He would break her wings so she could never fly away again.

Nicole finally finished the scarf she had been knitting for days.

She had Roscoe try the scarf on. Roscoe was tall and had a long neck.

She had not estimated the length properly, so it was too short.

She wanted to unravel and knit it over again. However, Roscoe liked it so much that he didn't want to take it off for now. He said he would just take it off later in the evening when he came back.

Nicole didn't argue with him, so she let him wear it.

They agreed to visit the town today since it was the village fair.

.

There would be lanterns at night, and villagers from different villages had set up stalls, creating a festive atmosphere.

When they arrived in town, Nicole was tempted by the snacks they saw in the different stalls.

But since she had a weak stomach, she couldn't eat too much. Roscoe allowed her to taste a small amount of each food.

She loved mochi. However, it was sticky and hard to digest. So, after allowing her to digest one piece, Roscoe grabbed the rest and gobbled them up.

They had no idea that a pair of deep and cold eyes had been watching their playful tussle over food not far away.

Nicole was unaware of the eyes on her as she stomped her foot at Roscoe in irritation, exclaiming, Why didn't you just buy your own?

Eating yours is tastier, Roscoe replied cheekily, popping another piece into his mouth.

Turning away, Nicole walked off, declaring, I'm really angry now.

Deep down, she knew Roscoe was just being mindful of her sensitive stomach. She was merely joking.

Chapter 2166

---

Nicole advanced several paces into the dark night, not noticing a man dressed in black blending into the shadows. She accidentally walked into a surprisingly broad chest.

Sorry.. She said automatically but then stopped, her senses alert to a familiar scent. This unmistakable scent It was just like Jarrods!

Nicoles heart skipped a beat as she raised her eyes to meet a face, cold and expressionless. A metaphorical thunderclap shattered her calm.

Its been a while, Jarrods mysteriously calm voice sounded, his features shrouded in the dark, unreadable.

Nicoles scalp prickled, a sensation like ants crawling over her, goosebumps spreading. Her mind screamed, Run, just run! Yet, her legs were as heavy as lead, rooted to the spot.

Jarrod effortlessly lifted her into his arms, heading to a secluded area of the building.

Nicole didnt resist, aware that any objection might put Roscoe at risk.

Jarrod wasnt alone. Two muscular men were with him.

Nicoles foremost thought was to protect Roscoe.

From their hidden spot, Nicole saw Roscoe below, anxiously looking for her, his concern evident. Yet, he

.

refrained from shouting her name, wary of the consequences. He approached each passerby, describing her features.

Nicole had never seen Roscoe look so desperate. Tears rolled down her cheeks, her heart wrenching painfully.

Does that hurt? Jarrods cold voice rang out next to her.

Facing him squarely, Nicole replied, You better not touch him!

Jarrods smile was thin and chilling. Do you think youre in any position to talk to me that way?

Nicole looked notably better than when they were together before.

Back then, although pretty, she constantly seemed troubled, hardly ever smiled at him, and appeared painfully thin, almost fragile.

Now, she looked vibrant and healthy, glowing with the warmth of someone well-loved, reminiscent of her college days when they were in love.

A surge of anger rose within Jarrod. Nicole had truly moved on It was clear she loved someone else.

So, youve been enjoying yourself since you ran away, Jarrod commented, his voice dripping with venom.

Nicole knew that shouting or trying to escape would be pointless.



Jarrold had found her and had no intention of letting her go.

Resigned, she said, Jarrold, I dont want revenge anymore. I tried to get you locked up behind the bar last time but failed. Lets call it even. Cant we just go our separate ways and live our own lives?

Even? Jarrold scoffed, holding her chin forcefully. How do you justify your stabbing me? How will you make things right for what you did to me before?

Nicole grimaced in pain as Jarrolds grip tightened, her voice faltering. Jarrold Why cant you let me go? Youre engaged You have a fiance. What else do you want from me?

Chapter 2167

---

What do I want? Jarrold smirked, his hand sliding inside her jacket, Theres much I could do

You monster! Nicole shoved him back forcefully, yelling, Youre inhuman!

Jarrolds eyes grew colder, his grip firmer. You knew exactly what I was long before now.

Nicole shook her head violently. I will not go with you, Jarrold. Id rather die than go with you. If you want to take me, youll have to take a corpse.

Jarrolds smile was faint, unfazed. Dont be so sure of that.

Nicoles eyes widened in terror. What are you planning to do?

With a sly smirk, Jarrold asked, Has he been close to you?

Feeling humiliated and physically overpowered, Nicole realized escape was impossible this time. Roscoe had narrowly escaped death before.

This time, Jarrold seemed intent on leaving no one alive.

Determined, Nicole understood that begging would only provoke Jarrold to be more ruthless. She turned to him, intentionally adopting a calm expression to counter his evil intentions. Wasnt he just waiting to see her distressed and suffering, to justify his abusive actions? She would not let him have it his way!

Nicole said coldly, Thats none of your business.

To Jarrold, her response almost confirmed her closeness with Roscoe.

He gritted his teeth, his eyes flashing with fury. Did you enjoy betraying me?

Nicole laughed. Jarrold, Ive decided to marry him. My relationship with him is legitimate, not a betrayal.

Jarrold was left momentarily speechless, consumed by rage. After a brief pause, he exploded, Nicole, what about your heart? Ive been kind to you and made every compromise for you, and this is how you repay me, by planning to marry him?

Why shouldn't I? Nicole shot back coldly. Your kindness? Do you mean ignoring my feelings, forcing your way with me in his presence, making me a woman who can no longer face society? Is that your idea of a compromise? Jarrod, such kindness are outrageous, and frankly, they're unbearable.

.

Jarrod was furious yet unreflective of his own actions. In his view, Nicole was his to control. She had no right to betray or leave him.

He sneered, If you had been obedient, I wouldn't have had to act that way. What else have you done besides defy me?

Obedient? Ha! Nicole burst out in mocking laughter.

Am I some pet you've trained, Jarrod? Why should I be submissive to you? If you were seeking a compliant woman, that wouldn't be difficult to find. You just haven't conquered me. Once I gave in, you'd find me dull and unremarkable. In the end, it's always my fault. You excel at making excuses and are, frankly, despicable!

Nicole spoke with intensity.

Jarrods face turned even more somber. He smirked and questioned, I'm despicable, and he isn't?

He respects me, protects me, treats me kindly, and would never hurt me. He is the finest man alive. In our relationship, I'm the one unworthy of him. He's so genuine, and I'm so flawed, Nicole expressed this with a slight smile. She and Roscoe had decided to overcome the obstacles together. Jarrod was merely another obstacle they would surpass.

Determined, she announced, In my heart, Roscoe is already my husband. If he dies, I will join him. We'll wait together in heaven, watching your downfall.

Chapter 2168

---

Her words deeply enraged Jarrod. He pushed her against the railing, holding her tightly, and yelled, You think you'll die together? What a fantasy!

Nicole chuckled amidst her tears, resigned to whatever came her way.

Luckily, she had set aside sufficient funds for Austin. Once she was gone, the lawyer she trusted would find the nanny on her behalf to await a donor for Austin. She had also left behind years of salary and various insurance policies for the nanny. She had prepared thoroughly.

Nicole had seen through it. Roscoe was too stubborn. He couldn't bear to let her go. Rather than him dying for her, they might as well leave this world together.

On the street below, Roscoe was still earnestly questioning passersby, trying to locate Nicole.

Observing the emptiness in her eyes, Jarrod's fury intensified, and he grabbed the back of her neck, demanding, Why don't you look up?

On the rooftop of the nearby building, a shadowy figure held a Large flowerpot, ominous and threatening as if it might topple over at any second.

Nicoles face drained of color as she looked up in shock. Jarrod, youre insane!

Someone dared to touch my woman, so shouldnt I teach him a lesson?

Jarrodd tugged at his lip, offering a cold smile. Where should this flowerpot land? On his head, neck, hand, or leg

As Jarrod listed each option, his icy hand traced these areas of Nicoles, ultimately grabbing her leg harshly and pressing down painfully.

Nicole gasped in pain, her face drained of color in the moonlight.

Youre insane! You wont meet a peaceful end!

Her eyes brimmed with hatred. If she had a knife, shed not doubt using it on Jarrod.

Arent you indifferent to death, wanting to die with him? Jarrod tilted Nicoles chin up, forcing her to gaze downwards. Then shout for him. See how frantically hes looking for you.

.

Nicoles lips remained firmly sealed, refusing to utter a word.

Jarrods voice, dripping with derision, whispered in her ear, Let him come. Hes seen us together before.

Nicole felt numb all over, tears falling silently. I wont beg for mercy. She said firmly, Jarrod, you cant defeat me. We wont beg you for mercy.

The setup on the rooftop had been planned meticulously. Nicole was aware that Jarrod had intended to kill Roscoe from the beginning and then make her suffer. Giving in would only inflate his ego. She wouldnt grant him that pleasure.

Go on. Do it, you killer! Nicole suddenly screamed, provoking a laugh from Jarrod.

Jarrods hand gently stroked her cheek, his tone chilling yet soft as he said, Nicole, are you trying to provoke me? If I plan to kill someone, it will seem like an accident, just like this flowerpot

Nicole Roscoe finally spotted Nicole alongside Jarrod. His expression instantly hardened, and he rushed forward.

Jarrodd laughed and said, Such a good-looking face. It would be a pity to ruin it.

No Nicole didnt even get to finish her word.

Chapter 2169

---

There was a smash sound, marking the noise of the flowerpot shattering.

Roscoe, rushing toward them, crumpled to the ground.

Nicoles vision went fuzzy, and she couldnt make out anything clearly. No! She screamed in anguish and shoved Jarrod away forcefully. She then lunged for the balcony railing, intending to leap off.

Jarrods eyes narrowed into slits, and he grabbed her sleeve, clutching it tightly. He hadnt thought she would actually go through with it. She was genuinely prepared to die for Roscoe! How could she

How dare she!

At that moment, jealousy ignited a fiery rage in Jarrods eyes. A wave of fear washed over him. Nicole truly seemed beyond his grasp now He pulled her back forcefully, embracing her tightly, and screamed, Are you out of your mind?!

A fall from three stories wouldnt be lethal, but for someone as fragile as Nicole, it either killed her or left her severely injured.

She was truly willing to jump off without hesitation. She was serious about her vow to die with Roscoe.

Nicole, resembling a lifeless doll, had an empty stare, her eyes devoid of any spark. After everything with Jarrod, to reach such a point, who wouldnt feel despair?

Jarrod was livid. Just for this man, youre willing to die? Nicole, have you lost your mind?

He simply wanted her to surrender. Why was that so difficult? The flowerpot didnt strike Roscoes head. He had it aimed at Roscoes legs, merely as a warning. As for Roscoes collapse, it merely highlighted how weak he was.

Although Jarrod deeply desired to kill Roscoe, somewhere within him, he hesitated. It wasnt the fear of committing murder.

Jarrod was accustomed to dealing with corpses back in his days abroad, his hands stained with blood. He never flinched on this regard. What he truly feared was that Nicole might actually follow through on her vows. He was merely gambling on this, and evidently, he had lost, completely.

Jarrod, compared to him, you are nothing. Nicoles voice was hollow, devoid of warmth, crisp, and clear.

For Nicole, Roscoe represented a beacon of hope in her new life, a light in her darkness, an oasis in her desert. His compassion and steadfastness had slowly healed her, a person too shattered to really live. Now, with her last hope taken from her, life seemed pointless.

Nicoles eyes lacked any glimmer of light. Darkness enveloped her.

.

She felt like a solitary boat in a tempest, capsizing and plunging into the abyss. Her entire world turned utterly dark.

In the hospital room, Nicole lay motionless on the bed, deep in slumber for the past three days.

Jarrold kept a vigilant watch, ensuring the doctors checked on Nicoles condition hourly.

Nicoles condition hung precariously in the balance. The doctors forecasted she could only live over a decade if all went well, yet her life could slip away at any moment.

One particularly frank doctor, speaking of Nicoles fragility, faced Jarrods fury with a brutal assault.

Jarrods accusations of incompetence flew as he stripped the doctor of his medical dignity.

Alec intervened swiftly, brokering a million-dollar settlement to quell the storm.

For the average person, such a sum was life-altering, and the doctor, overwhelmed, accepted it readily.

Chapter 2170

---

The hospital staff learned a hard lesson. Jarrold couldnt stomach the truth. Responses became vague, especially regarding mortality, to avoid Jarrods wrath.

Some lucky souls escaped with their lives and a hefty settlement.

Others werent so fortunate, meeting a violent end for their honesty.

As a result, everyone tiptoed around Jarrold, fearing the consequences.

Regarding Nicoles prolonged unconsciousness, the doctors offered vague explanations, hinting at the power of will to sustain life.

A strong belief can fuel survival, one doctor remarked, Leaving the rest to speculation.

Jarrold listened intently, seated beside Nicoles bedside, gently holding her hand. Nicole, dont you want to see your mom?

Nicole drifted in a beautiful dream. In it, her parents were alive, and she remained the cherished heiress of the Lawrence family. She was wedded to Roscoe, and Austin brought boundless joy.

But then Jarrold intruded, a shadow in her heart, the root of her anguish and fury. She writhed in torment, screaming. Everyone vanished, including her parents, Austin and Roscoe.

Then, a whisper urged her awake. Do you want to see them? Open your eyes if you do.

Nicoles eyes fluttered open, and Jarrold loomed over her. Waves of pain and sorrow crashed over her as memories flooded back. She winced through demanding, clenched teeth, Wheres Roscoe? Where is he?

Jarrods expression froze, joy replaced by a sneer. Waking up and immediately asking for that man?

Nicoles frail hand clenched Jarrods, desperation evident. Where is he? Wheres Roscoe?

Jarrods lips twitched, his temper rising, tempted to lie and claim Roscoe had met a miserable end. But he held back, opting instead for a softer approach, wanting to give Nicole hope to live on. Hes

nursing a leg injury, recovering in the hospital. When youre feeling up to it, Ill take you to see him, he reassured, a hint of concern in his voice.

The doctors had warned against shocking Nicoles fragile state.

.

The days of waiting before Nicole finally woke up had transformed Jarrod. He no longer harbored a desire to torment Nicole to her demise. Now, he simply wanted her alive, by his side.

Nicole remained silent, wise enough not to provoke Jarrod when he was trying to be nice. Angering him yielded no good.

Jarrod, did you mention my mom? Nicoles voice lacked vitality.

Back before Nicole left Ardlens five years ago, Dora had been declared brain dead by the hospital. Nicole had made arrangements, ensuring enough funds sustained her mothers life support before resigning herself to fate.

Since her return, she learned her mothers ashes resided alongside her fathers, courtesy of Jarrods assistance with the arrangements.

Yet, this token did little to quell the vast sea of animosity she harbored against Jarrod.

The dream Nicole had lingered vividly. Dora appeared alive beside her.

Nicole couldnt shake the nagging doubt. Was her mother truly gone?

Were those truly her mothers ashes in the urn?