

Departure with a Belly Chapter 151

Departure with a Belly Chapter 151

Chapter 151

Alaric narrowed his eyes dangerously. "Who are you to tell me she doesn't want to follow me?"

"You're right." Bane smiled but was not angry, so he looked at Victoria instead. "If that's how you want it, let's get Snowball to tell you herself." Snowball. That's Victoria's nickname. Alaric glared at her. Was it possible that the person she chose was Bane? Was that why she let him call her by her nickname?

Meanwhile, Victoria felt a pang in her heart. She knew Bane was helping her by letting her end things with Alaric so that she could successfully get divorced.

Yet, when she looked at Alaric, she pursed her lips. She should take this opportunity, but just as she moved her lips, wanting to say something, he gritted his teeth and glared at her. "Victoria, you'd better think about what to say."

Having been interrupted, she was stunned.

Bane raised an eyebrow and said, "Al, should I remind you that you guys are Chapter 151 Don't Touch Me

in a fake marriage? What you're doing now is threatening and intimidating her." Once he finished, he smiled and turned to Victoria. "Snowball."

She knew Bane called her name to urge her to make a decision. Otherwise, there was no telling when such a chance would appear again. However, she could not bring herself to say anything while looking at Alaric. I wanna say it, but I just can't.

In the end, Alaric grabbed her hand and demanded, "Follow me home, and I'll forget about all of this."

Victoria was pulled a few steps forward when she felt a tight grip on her wrist-Bane held her back. At that moment, he seemed less gentle with his glasses on. It was also then that she noticed a trace of harshness hidden in

his eyes.

When Alaric saw Bane's action, he narrowed his eyes and roared, "Let her go!"

Perhaps it was Victoria's constant urge to get a divorce and the fact that Alaric had watched Bane hugging her; she did not push him away and even let him call her by her nickname, Snowball. Also, Alaric might have been provoked by this incident, causing him to lose his calm.

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Seeing that Bane was not letting go, Alaric frowned while approaching them, wanting to pull Bane's hand away. He had only raised his hand when a small figure blocked him, prompting his fingers to hang in midair.

His cold eyes were calm but looked sharp and red from anger. "Are you protecting him?"

When facing Alaric's piercing gaze, Victoria took a deep breath and spoke, "That's between us. You have no reason to hurt him."

Alaric looked at her with his gloomy eyes. "Are you heartbroken because I'm about to hit him? Is that why you're protecting him?"

After a silence, she suggested, "Let's talk about this at home, okay?"

He had been avoiding her recently, and they needed to talk, but it seemed like they could not end on good terms.

Smiling, Alaric released his grip and gave her a sarcastic smile. "Sure. I'd like to have a chat with you too."

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Seeing that he had agreed, Victoria finally felt relieved. She could notice his unstable state, and if this situation persisted, he might get violent with

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Bane. Since she was asking for a divorce, it made no sense for Bane to keep getting beaten up because of her. She already felt sorry for him when he took those two punches earlier.

At that moment, Alaric swept his gaze across Bane's face and fixed it on his wrist. "I'll say this one last time. Let go."

When Victoria heard that, she immediately turned to Bane and explained,

“Let me deal with this myself.”

At that, he quietly looked at her for a moment before smiling again. “Sure. I’ll wait for you.” Once he was done, he let go of her, after which Alaric dragged her away.

Once they were gone, Bane’s assistant entered and gave him a handkerchief. “Mr. Morison, are you all right?”

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Emotionlessly, Bane took the handkerchief and wiped the corner of his lips as his eyes filled with coldness and anger. The spot Alaric hit him was wounded, but he erased it heavily again as though he could not feel any pain. His act of a painless corpse caused his assistant’s gaze to waver when noticing how Bane was acting. There he goes again. Mr. Morison looks like...

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The assistant dared not speak, so he stood by the side and quietly waited for Bane. A while later, Bane threw the handkerchief into the trash and asked coldly, “How are the preparations for the things I asked for?”

The assistant nodded. “Don’t worry, Mr. Morison. There won’t be any delays.”

Everything went past like a gust of wind when Victoria was dragged away.

Before she could make sense of the situation, she was already inside Alaric’s car, speeding all the way home.

Upon arrival, she remained in a state of shock. However, the man gave her no time to rest or recover. He held her hands and brought her to their bed before pinning her struggling arms to both sides. Then, he gnashed his teeth while looking at her angrily. “Trying to divorce me so that you can be with Bane? I don’t think so.”

Once he finished, his hot breath came down on her. Just as his lips were about to touch hers, she turned her head in time, and his soft but cold lips landed on her cheek.

He stopped for a second before moving to the side in search of her lips, but

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she dodged while chastising, "Alaric, what are you trying to do? Don't touch me!"

In the end, he would follow her everywhere she dodged. After a while, the entangled bodies began to grow warmer.

She panted. "Didn't you say you want to have a good chat with me?"

When Alaric heard that, he looked at her and replied sarcastically, "Aren't we currently in a deep chat?" While speaking, he pinched her jaw to stop her from moving. Then, he looked at her tightly pursed lips with his black eyes before roughly covering them with his.

"Ouch." Victoria felt the pain and used her unrestrained hand to push him. However, all of that was nothing before an angry Alaric. Moreover, her strength was nothing compared to him. He added more force to his actions, and everything got out of control. The deep kisses rendered her unable to breathe.

After who knew how long, he finally retreated briefly to give her some space to breathe, afraid she would suffocate. Meanwhile, she took the opportunity to inhale deep breaths.

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When the man leaned in again, she slapped him. "I hate it when you act like this. Do you know that?"

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His face was struck to the side.

"Who do you think you are? Do you think you can kiss or touch me at will?"

What right do you have to do that? Our whole marriage is a facade!"

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The ambiguous atmosphere in the air instantly disappeared, and Alaric took a while before averting his gaze to Victoria. Seconds later, he thought of something, and his eyes filled with desire. He grabbed her chin again, and pressed his thumb on her swollen, red lips. "Our marriage might be fake, but what about our sex life?"

She could not believe what she was hearing. "What?"

"You heard me." He moved his fingers down her beautiful neckline and

finally stopped on her collarbone. He felt his breath hitch as he said something vulgar in his low voice, "You weren't acting like this when you begged me to s**w you."

Victoria's irises contracted slightly before she delivered another slap, striking Alaric's face to the side again. He sneered. "You've hit me twice. Do you think I won't hit you, Snowball?"

Despite that, she slapped him again.

Slap!

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His face instantly fell, but when he looked at the angry Victoria with reddened eyes under him, he could not do anything about her. Seeming to have thought of something, he tugged his lips. "It's fine. The harder you hit me now, the more I'll make you pay."

She knew he was speaking inappropriately again and wanted to give him another slap, but it was a pity that he had grabbed her hand this time. "You really are something, aren't you? You didn't show mercy when hitting me, yet you protected Bane after I touched him. Hm?"

After her futile struggles, Victoria realized she could not do anything if the furious Alaric was determined to restrain her. So, she gave up and looked at him, asking, "Do you know I hate it when you're acting this way?"

The stunned man gave a sarcastic smile. "Then, who do you like? Bane Morison?"

"Yes!"

The certainty in her voice shut him up, and the sarcastic smile on his face disappeared. A few seconds later, he questioned with a gloomy expression, "Come again?"

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Even Victoria went quiet for a long while, not expecting that she would admit it just like that. She and Alaric were about to get divorced anyway, so rather than prolonging their relationship, it would be better to rip off the Band-Aid.

While thinking of that, she closed her eyes and admitted. "I like him and want to be with him. So... let's get divorced."

She felt her chin being grabbed by a strong force. Then, she heard Alaric's cold voice. "Say it while looking at me."

Following his words, she opened her eyes and peered into his dark eyes, enunciating, "I like him and want to-"

"Enough!"

Before she could finish her words, Alaric seemed intensely provoked and released her chin before springing to his feet. He stood beside the bed, and the emotions and desire in his eyes earlier had vanished, leaving only endless coldness and darkness.

Such a gaze made Victoria feel chills run down her spine. Finally, she heard him say,

“You want a divorce, don’t you? Fine.”

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At that moment, she could feel her heart breaking. She lay in bed unmoving and did not look at him. Instead, she watched him leave out of the corner of her eye.

The door slammed closed.

The previously intense atmosphere had suddenly quieted down, but there seemed to be remnants of the man’s cold breath in the air.

She closed her eyes and told herself, That’s it. It’s better this way.

Half an hour later, Bane called Victoria, sounding apologetic. “I’m sorry. I meant to help but seemed to have ruined things. Are you all right?”

He got beaten up and might fall out with his best friend because of this, but he was now apologizing to her, doubling on her guilt. “You didn’t ruin anything.” She assured him, “I’m fine, and I should be the one apologizing because I caused your injuries.”

Hearing that, he chuckled softly. “That’s nothing. I can take a few punches.”

“But you and him—”

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“Don’t worry. We were best friends, so he might just ignore me for some time, and even if he does, I’ll just apologize to him.”

She felt more relaxed after hearing that. “That’s good.”

“So, is everything going smoothly?”

She subconsciously nodded but realized it was a phone call, so she verbalized it. “Yes. It’s settled for now.”

“How did it go?”

Frustration overcame Victoria because she had reached her limit by taking the initiative to apologize to Bane first. She did not feel like doing an interview, and if he had not helped her before, she would have hung up long ago. However, she had to maintain her cool and requested, “Bane, I want some time alone. Is that okay?”

The caller on the other end stayed quiet for a long time before saying,

“Sure. Take some time to cool down. You can call me if you need anything.”

After the phone call ended, she threw the phone aside and curled up in bed. Her stomach churned uncomfortably because of her emotion, so she gently

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rubbed her belly while silently comforting the fetus inside. Baby, be good.

We’ll leave this place once I get divorced. After that... We’ll live our lives together.

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She fell asleep while lying on the bed. After some time, she woke up groggily and found herself in the same position, yet for some reason, a large wet patch was on her pillow. Staring at it, she fell into a daze and gently touched the corner of her eye.

It's wet. Had I been crying in my sleep?

She sat there for a long while before removing the wet pillowcase and exchanging it with a new one from the cupboard. Once that was done, she sat up in bed and continued to daze off. It would have been better if she had not slept because now that she had woken up, a massive void took over her heart. The feeling was uncomfortable, but she could do nothing about it.

While lost in thought, she heard footsteps from outside, causing her to sit up nervously and wipe the corner of her moist eyes. When she got off the bed, she saw Alaric entering the room with an icy expression.

He looked at her with frosty eyes and a cold expression. Even the way he spoke was void of any emotion. "Are you free?"

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Victoria was surprised and then nodded. "Yes."

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After a moment's silence, he asked, "Are the identity documents with you?"

She continued to nod.

"How about the divorce papers?"

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She froze before answering, "They're with me too."

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As if he were trying to confirm something, Alaric finally put on a sarcastic smile after hearing her response. "Well, it seems like you've got everything ready to go." With that, he turned around and left, leaving a stunned Victoria in the room.

What does that mean?

"Don't you want to get a divorce? Come on. We're going to the Civil Affairs

Bureau."

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On the way to the Civil Affairs Bureau, the two were silent. It was chilly inside the car, probably because Alaric was so angry that he forgot to turn on the air conditioning. Since Victoria left in a hurry, she came out with only a coat. At first, she was unbothered by the temperature, but as time passed, she felt her surroundings colder. She then shivered and wrapped her coat tightly around her.

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Meanwhile, the man seemed lost in thought as his lips were constantly pulled into a thin line. From the corner of his eye, he saw her pulling on her coat without saying anything. Hence, he turned on the air conditioning with a cold expression.

Not long after, the temperature inside the car rose, and Victoria could not help but glance at Alaric. His chiseled side profile looked so delicate that it resembled an artist's detailed sketch. Also, the defined features on his face seemed mesmerizing from the side.

The only flaw to that face was the tense expression.

Having known him for many years, Victoria knew he was upset, furious even. But even when he was mad, he noticed my tiny reaction and turned
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on the heater for me.

She withdrew her gaze and bowed her head. The air inside the car suddenly felt so stuffy that it became suffocating.

It was the same situation as before when they arrived at the Civil Affairs Bureau—they were required to queue. While waiting for their number, Victoria whispered to Alaric, "I'll tell Mom and Dad when we return home."
Hearing that, he gave her a cold glance and replied with two words, "No need."

She fell silent. It seemed like they no longer needed to talk with each other anymore. Just like that, they stayed speechless while waiting in line.

Suddenly, a familiar couple came to greet Victoria, who instantly

recognized them as she met them here last time. During their last meeting, the couple was happy and were stuck together like glue. It was like they never wanted to separate from each other.

Yet, this time, they stood so far apart as though they hated each other's guts.

"Are you guys..."

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Although Victoria was gloomy, she was still shocked because it had not been long since their last visit, which meant the couple had not been.

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married for long. They could not be divorced so soon, could they? However, the words the woman spoke frightened her.

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"We're here to get divorced."

Before Victoria could regain her composure from the shock, the woman crossed her arms and gave the man a death stare. After that, she complained, "Do you know how disgusting that man is? We were only married for a few days, and I found out he had a mistress."

Victoria was speechless.

"The things he said before we got married painted such a pretty picture in my mind, but it was all a lie. How can there be a third party?"

She's right. How can three people fit into a romantic relationship?

Victoria agreed with that but was not in a good mood, so she did not respond.

However, the woman seemed to have found an outlet for her emotions and

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continued to vent, "Why are men in this world so awful? If he can't let go of his ex, why get involved with me? Can't he just marry that woman? Instead, he insisted on marrying me and kept her on the side. Does he think I can't live without him?"

After ranting, she thought of something and asked Victoria, "If I remember correctly, you guys came to get divorced last time, right? But you left after something came up. Are you here for that again?"

Victoria nodded. "Yes."

"Oh, so what's the problem with your man?" Perhaps because the woman was about to get divorced, she greatly resented men in general. Before Victoria could answer, she began chastising, "Could your husband be like mine and have a mistress too?"

Unluckily, she was right again.

Victoria was cloudy inside, but when she heard that woman criticizing Alaric, she suddenly felt... happy. Still, he was different from other men because they had agreed to a fake marriage. It was she who secretly fell in love with him.

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I can't blame him for being too excellent, can I? Sigh. I can't curse him out,

but someone else can.

“To me, men are scumbags. Why marry someone you don’t like and end up having to come here for a divorce? Isn’t it ironic?” That woman also saw Alaric as an enemy and kept throwing sarcastic remarks at him.

At first, he remained unfazed and ignored her, but that woman was too talkative, prompting him to frown and shoot her with a cold gaze.

The woman was terrified by the cold gaze and immediately shut up. She even subconsciously gulped. What’s going on? This man has a strong presence, and even his glare looks scary. For a moment, I thought he was going to kill me.

Similarly, Victoria also noticed Alaric’s gaze; even she was terrified by it from the side. It was then she remembered he had been emotionally unstable throughout the day. What if his emotions get the better of him, and he does something irreversible?

Having thought of that, Victoria dared not stand by and watch anymore.

Instead, she secretly moved closer to Alaric. Fortunately, that woman seemed to be terrified of him and stopped speaking. She even stopped

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criticizing her husband, whom she was about to divorce. Even though she stayed quiet, Alaric kept his cold expression like someone owed him big time.

The people before them finished their business accordingly, and it was soon their turn.

When the clerk saw the displeased Alaric and the depressed Victoria, she asked, "Getting divorced?"

The man stood there motionlessly, not even a flickering gaze. As for Victoria, she barely squeezed out a smile and gave the clerk their documents while nodding. "Yes. Please proceed."

During the process, Alaric was cooperative and did whatever the clerk mentioned, executing everything neatly without any complaints. It was until the last stage that the clerk looked at them. Perhaps she could not bear to see such a good-looking couple separated, so she asked, "Are you certain about your decision? Once I stamp this, there is no going back, and you guys will become strangers."

The word 'strangers' rendered the two at a loss for words.

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Watching their reaction, the clerk reasoned, "It won't always be a smooth

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sailing journey within a marriage. Think about all the good times you share.

You guys must've really adored each other to get married in the first place, right?" With that, she smiled. "Why don't you head home and think about this again?"

Alaric frowned and tightly pursed his lips without a response. Perhaps, he was waiting for something until a soft voice sounded beside him and

crushed all his hopes. "Thank you for your advice, but we've already thought it through. Please proceed to the final steps."

At that moment, the faint glimmer of hope dimmed in his eyes. We've ended up here, so what was I hoping for?

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Not expecting such an answer, the clerk looked at Victoria and then at Alaric while asking carefully, "What about you, sir?"

When she was asking, she saw a glimmer of hope in the man's eyes.

However, he did not even look up and replied coldly, "Just do as she says."

That was it. It seemed like she could not change their minds anymore. As such, the clerk said nothing and quietly helped them finish their divorce.

Thud! Thud!

Once the divorce document was stamped, the clerk pushed them toward the two. Victoria and Alaric stood there, dazedly looking at the papers for a long while before retrieving their copies. Then, they left the Civil Affairs Bureau.

After exiting the building, she felt the cold winter breeze coming at her, blowing her hair and scraping her cheeks like paper cuts. While clutching the divorce papers, she reached out to Alaric and spoke calmly, "Thank you for taking care of me all these years."

However, he did not hold her hand or even look at her. Instead, he left after

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saying, "You're finally free."

There stood Victoria alone as the entrance of the Civil Affairs Bureau seemed to become noisier.

Her soft hair was a messy creation of the winter breeze; it even felt wet and cold as it slapped against her face. Unknowingly, tears raced down her cheeks uncontrollably like an open faucet.

She had spent recent days mentally preparing herself and thought she would not care, but when it came to this moment, she felt like her heart had been ripped out of her chest. It was suffocating.

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People were coming and going from the Civil Affairs Bureau. Some happily got married, while some dejectedly got divorced. It was common for people like Victoria, who were bawling their eyes out, to appear there. There were quite a lot of couples who ended up as enemies, but even if they had gotten divorced, they would still cry over the happy moments they had spent together in the past. Therefore, it was not peculiar for people like her to sob in front of the building.

The tiny difference lay in her beauty. She wore a white coat with her hair draping over her shoulders and had snowy–white skin. When she cried, her
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eyes and cheeks turned red, which made her look delicate and fragile. That rendered all the passersby to glance at her.

When Summer called her, Victoria was crying hysterically into the phone.

“Yes... W–We got divorced. We just did.”

Summer was in the middle of work, but when she heard Victoria sobbing,

she immediately stopped her action and went to ask her boss for a leave.

“Boo, stop crying, okay? Where are you now? I’ll come to get you.”

Victoria remained right where Alaric had left her. “I’m at the entrance of the Civil Affairs Bureau.”

“Okay. It’s cold today. Why don’t you find somewhere warm nearby? I’m coming over now.” After hanging up, Summer immediately ran to find her boss.

On the other hand, Victoria stayed where she was and did not listen to Summer’s advice about finding someplace warm. At that moment, her legs felt like they were made of lead. It was not because she did not want to leave but because she could not move her legs.

She stood in place, thinking she could only walk after Summer arrived.

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After some time, a figure suddenly appeared beside her. She glanced up upon hearing the scuffles. In her blurry gaze, she could only make out that the person before her was thin and tall, but it was a pity that she could not see who it was. However, she looked back down after discovering that it was not Summer.

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Seconds later, an oversized warm coat draped over her, followed by a sigh.

“You must love him so much to be crying so hard.”

It’s... Bane’s voice.

Victoria raised her head and looked at him with blurry eyes, sobbing. "I thought you were a stranger."

Hearing that, he chuckled softly. "A stranger wouldn't be so nice to give you a coat." Then, he took out a handkerchief and wiped away her tears.

As her vision became clear, she could finally make out Bane's visage. His eyes were filled with worry, and there was a bruise on his chin and the corner of his lips from when Alaric punched him.

Not long after that, her vision became blurry again. The tears that had been wiped away surged in guilt. It was fine when she was alone, but now that

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Bane was here, she felt rather embarrassed. While crying, she apologized to him. "I'm sorry. I think... I can't control myself at the moment."

A strange glint flashed across Bane's eyes as he continued to wipe away her tears. However, her tears kept returning, and the handkerchief he took out was soon drenched with her tears. Since the weather was cold today, the handkerchief felt both wet and chilly. He could not help but suggest, "It's cold out here. Why don't we head to my car?"

Victoria was still silently crying and did not give him a reply.

Seeing her state, he wanted to carry her to the car but was afraid that might startle her. So, he put his arms over the coat and wrapped it around her

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shoulder, urging, "Come on."

With him leading her, she finally moved. However, her feet felt extremely painful after just one step. Perhaps she had been standing too long, and her feet had gone numb. She almost fell, but Bane managed to catch her just in time.

“What’s the matter?” he asked out of concern. Seeing her tears–encircled eyes, he added, “Forget it. Don’t say anything. I’ll bring you to the car, but your legs are numb, so pardon me for what I’m about to do.”

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Once he said that, he picked her up in his arms. A few moments later, they finally made it to the car. Victoria’s legs felt much better after she found a more comfortable position.

“I think you’ve been standing in the cold wind for too long, which is why your legs are numb.”

I guess. She did not reply to Bane. The car’s air conditioning was functioning well, so the warm temperature soothed her chilly body but not her rollercoaster emotions.

When he saw her condition, he gently persuaded her, “Stop crying. Even if you’re sad, you should control your emotions. Don’t forget. You’re pregnant.”

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Victoria, who had been sobbing, heard that and immediately stopped crying. That’s right. I’m pregnant. I need to act like a mom. My baby’s gonna feel uncomfortable if I keep this up.

When she thought of that, she quickly wiped away her tears and leaned against her seat to calm her emotions. Her tears remained surging, so she could only close her eyes and rest. In the end, her tranquilized state brought her to dreamland.

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While listening to her even breathing, Bane stared at her snowy–white cheeks and tried to wipe away the tears at the corner of her eyes, whispering, “If only you were willing to look at me.”

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The car was parked beside the Civil Affairs Bureau’s entrance. Bane quietly watched her for a while and was about to drive away when Victoria’s phone suddenly rang. Since she was asleep and did not hear it, he could only grab it and answer the call.

“Victoria, I’m at the entrance but don’t see you anywhere. Where are you?”

A lively female voice came from the phone.

Hearing that, Bane looked toward the entrance and saw a woman with a black down jacket and a sling bag standing by the door, looking around for Victoria. He remembered her; she was Victoria’s best friend, Summer Jones. Then, he replied in his deep voice, “Hello. I’m Bane Morison.”

The young woman scrutinizing the entrance heard that answer and stopped, asking tentatively, “Bane Morison? Who are you? Where’s Victoria?”

Speechless, he wondered how she could have forgotten him. “Did you

forget about me? I used to be around Victoria a lot when we were young.”

When Summer heard that reply, she thought about it momentarily before

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recalling who it was. “Oh, it’s you. Is she with you now?”

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“Yes. She’s tired from crying and is sleeping in my car.”

“Car?” She hesitated momentarily before looking around again. Then, she looked in Bane’s direction, and he rolled down the window to signal to her.

“I see you. Is that your car?” she asked.

“Yes.”

After confirming the right vehicle, Summer ran over. Bane thought about it and got out as well, meeting her outside the car. When she arrived, she leaned against the window to check on the sleeping Victoria. After a while, she suddenly turned her head, asking, “Is she asleep, or is she avoiding me?”

That question surprised him as he laughed resignedly. “What do you think?”

Makes sense. Why would Victoria avoid me? Of course, she’s asleep. With that, she relaxed and began observing the man before her. She thought Bane’s name sounded familiar when he mentioned it but could not remember who he was or where she had met him before.

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After meeting the man, she realized he was Alaric's best friend, a handsome man that went abroad. It had been so long since then that she had forgotten about him. Now that they met, she was dumbfounded at how forgetful she was. Bane is such an excellent and elegant man. How could I have forgotten him?

"Hello." While she was lost in her thought, he nodded as a greeting.

Then, Summer returned to her senses and greeted the man. "I'm sorry.

Victoria must've brought you some trouble, but why are you here?"

Oh, give me the tea. Victoria has just divorced, and you appeared the next second?

Smiling, Bane gave her an ambiguous answer. "I just happened to pass by and saw her."

She was at a loss for words. Just happen to pass by, eh? It was not her place to say anything since Victoria had fallen asleep in his car. She was hesitating about whether she should wake her friend up. Although Victoria knew Bane, Summer did not, so letting Victoria sleep inside a man's car felt inappropriate.

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Still, the way Victoria cried hysterically on the phone caused Summer to

hesitate. Victoria finally caught some shut-eye, and if she woke her up now, would she start crying again? As she thought of that, her conflict deepened.

At that moment, she heard Bane's voice. "Get in the car."

Hearing that, Summer was startled and turned around to look at him.

He smiled. "I'll send you to where you're going, and we can let her get some rest."

How could Summer not understand what was going on after listening to that?

"Thank you." She quickly put away her phone and entered the car. Since Victoria was asleep in the passenger seat, Summer could only get in the back and watch over her from behind.

Bane got into the car, and it soon disappeared from the Civil Affairs Bureau's entrance. After moving steadily ahead and ensuring Victoria slept soundly, he asked, "Where to?"

Summer immediately answered from the back seat, "Bring her to my house."

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That was the best option at the moment. After all, she and Alaric were divorced, so they could not bring her home.

Soon, Summer told Bane her address, to which he affirmed and changed their route. She looked at the driver and then at the sleeping Victoria. She pursed her lips, wanting to say something but decided against it. Forget it. I'll wait until Victoria wakes up and ask.

Soon, they arrived, thanks to the close distance. When it was time to exit the car, Summer noticed Victoria was still asleep and sighed. This heartbroken woman is sleeping so soundly.

She wanted to wake Victoria but was stopped by Bane. "Don't wake her up. Let her sleep it off."

At that, Summer could only hold back. Once the two got out of the car, Bane carried Victoria in his arms while Summer helped him close the car door and lock the car. Then, they headed upstairs.

She was sprinting in the lead, pressing the elevator button and opening the door with her keys. Finally, she watched him carry Victoria into the house. She wanted to close the door but kept it open after thinking about it, followed by removing her shoes and entering the house.

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Gandra was developing quickly, but the place Summer lived in was considered an old residential area. Since Victoria had helped her pay off her family's debt, she only had to make money to maintain her life. Perhaps because she had lived through disparity, she still lived like she was walking on thin ice despite being debt free. She would rent the cheapest homes available and save the money she had left every month. Several years later, those savings had accumulated into a hefty amount.

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That was on the basis that she was living alone. Now that Victoria would stay with her, such an environment was inappropriate for them. Although

the Selwyns were bankrupt, Victoria was still a young lady from a wealthy family. When Summer watched Bane placing Victoria on her ugly, small bed, she silently made a decision.

Okay. Even if it's to repay Victoria, I must find a larger house immediately.

After placing the sleeping beauty on the bed, Bane was gentlemanly enough not to look around the room and left. Considering that Summer might feel uneasy staying alone with a man, he soon excused himself and left.

After sending him away, she closed the door and lamented, "What a decent

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man."

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As dusk settled, Victoria slowly regained consciousness after being asleep for a long time.

After waking up and taking in the dim yet somewhat familiar surroundings, she silently looked around for a while. Once she realized where she was, a warm feeling flooded her chest.

She was at Summer's house.

While she was lost in her thoughts, she heard a sound from outside.

Summer soon pushed open the door and walked into the room. When she noticed the silence in the room, she murmured to herself, "She has been sleeping for so long, so why hasn't she woken up? Nothing happened to her, right?"

Right after she said that, Summer heard Victoria calling her name.

"Summer."

She lit up upon hearing her name, and she immediately rushed toward Victoria. "My precious, you are finally awake!"

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While speaking, Summer quickly turned on the bedside lamp.

Victoria had previously only relied on the light from the outside to see the furnishings in the room. Now that the room was suddenly illuminated by the bright light from the lamp, she squinted uncomfortably and only relaxed after taking some time to adjust.

"Mhm."

"I'm so glad! Are you hungry? I cooked ramen."

Victoria didn't notice that she was hungry after she had woken up, but she felt an emptiness in her tummy after Summer mentioned it. Even though didn't have the appetite to eat anything, she was sure that the child in her was hungry.

And so, she nodded and said, "I am."

"Get up and eat something, then."

After saying that, Summer reached out to help her up.

Victoria followed her movement and sat up. However, she felt a sharp, dull pain in her chest right when she got up.

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"Ugh." The sudden pain prompted Victoria to involuntarily let out a soft cry as she immediately covered her chest with her hand, her face turning pale from the pain.

Startled by her friend's appearance, Summer anxiously asked, "What's wrong?"

However, Victoria was in so much pain she couldn't even straighten up her torso. Seeing this, Summer had to gently lower her back down. "What's the matter? What is going on? Should I get an ambulance?"

As Summer spoke, she anxiously reached for her phone to call for an ambulance.

However, Victoria stopped her as soon as she took out her phone. "No! There's no need for an ambulance. It's just that my chest suddenly doesn't feel that good."

Victoria froze in place when she said that. For some reason, she suddenly realized how familiar this all felt. It was as if she had experienced something similar not long ago.

Suddenly, she remembered the last time when Alaric seemed to be in a

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similar condition in the car. The sudden pain and cold sweat made him look off, but the man recovered not long after. She still remembered how frightened she was as she watched him from the side.

Could it be that he and she had experienced the same thing?

"What's going on?!" Summer's voice brought Victoria back to her senses.

The pain only subsided after a while.

"I feel much better now."

Although she was no longer in any discomfort at the moment, her voice had changed and her forehead was covered in cold sweat.

Summer's heart was breaking as she looked at her friend. As her eyes turned red, she immediately used her sleeve to wipe away Victoria's sweat.

"I'm just glad that you are okay. You almost scared me to death."

Seeing Summer's pale face, Victoria knew that she had probably given Summer the fright of her life. If she wasn't feeling so weak and powerless right now, she would have gotten up to compare and see who had a paler face.

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Thinking about this, she unhesitatingly voiced her thoughts to Summer.

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Summer became angry after hearing those words, but she didn't dare to hit

her weakened friend, even if she would only do it playfully. She muttered indignantly, "You are still in the mood to joke around, huh? You almost gave me a heart attack just now! Getting chest pains like this is no joking matter, you know?"

"I know." Victoria nodded. "I read the instructions. I have to go to the hospital if the pain is severe and lasts for a long time, but I'm fine now, right?"

"What do you mean by fine? Pain is a symptom of an underlying problem! Why would it hurt otherwise? You must have been resting poorly recently or have too many worries. This won't do. I'll accompany you to the hospital for a thorough examination in a few days. That will put my mind at ease."

"Okay, okay." Victoria could only agree when Summer started to nag. She realized that her not insisting Alaric go get an examination was not a smart move. I don't know if he has experienced any pain after that incident...

As she thought about this, her facial expression suddenly became strange, and she started to bite her lower lip.

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Even though they were supposed to be strangers ever since the divorce, she was still thinking about him at this moment for some reason.

When she saw him at the entrance of the Civil Affairs Bureau today, he refused to shake her hand or even spare her a glance.

So, why am I still thinking about him? she quietly scolded herself. It's time to come back to your senses, Victoria Selwyn! You and he couldn't be together from the start.

“What are you thinking, Victoria?” Summer asked curiously when she noticed Victoria’s wandering gaze.

At that question, Victoria snapped back to reality, and a shallow yet incredibly bitter smile appeared on her lips.

“I was thinking about things I shouldn’t be thinking about.”

There were no secrets between the best friends.

Hearing her words, Summer immediately understood what Victoria was thinking.

“Since you know you shouldn’t be thinking about it, then stop.” Summer

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sighed, her voice sounding frustrated. “After all, you’re both divorced now.

It’s better to think about how you’ll live your own life from now on.”

“You’re right.” Victoria lowered her gaze.

Seeing her this way, Summer couldn’t help but reach out and pat her head.

“Alright now. You have me no matter what happens. Also, you are not alone now. You have a baby, and the baby will give you strength.”

“You are right. I have my baby.”

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If it weren’t for the baby, Victoria didn’t think she would have the courage to go through all of this.

After sorting out her emotions, she raised her head again and smiled at Summer. “Could you accompany me to the Cadogan Residence tomorrow to pack my belongings? Some of my things are still there.”

“Sure,” Summer replied with a nod. “Are we not going tonight?”

“Not tonight. Let’s go tomorrow. I want to visit Grandma at the hospital after I’m done packing.”

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The elderly lady probably didn’t know about the divorce. Victoria wasn’t even sure if she would be able to accept it once she found out. Still, she felt the need to go and see Griselda.

After all, it could very well be the last time they would ever meet.

Victoria probably wouldn’t come back after she left this place.

“You can rest at my place tonight, then. It’s not the best place to stay, but hey, the neighbors upstairs and downstairs are not noisy, and they won’t make any loud noises. You can have a good rest.”

“Okay.” Victoria nodded slightly. “Thank you.”

“By the way, what about you and Bane Morison...”

It was only when Summer mentioned him that Victoria suddenly remembered he was the one who picked her up and drove her when they were at the entrance of the Civil Affairs Bureau. She didn’t know what happened next after she fell asleep, but seeing as how she woke up at Summer’s house, she could guess that he was probably the one who brought them there.

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Sure enough, Summer briefly explained the situation. She then peered at

Victoria with curious eyes but did not ask anything because she didn't want to upset Victoria.

Noticing Summer's reaction, Victoria sighed helplessly. "There's nothing between me and him. He helped me solely because he wanted to play matchmaker. Got it?"

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"Play matchmaker?" Summer's mind went blank before she blurted out without thinking, "For who?"

Victoria fell silent for a moment. "Alaric and Claudia," she eventually uttered.

After a brief pause, Summer grumbled, "Seriously, I just want to strangle myself right now."

Knowing why she said that, Victoria looked up and reassured her with a smile. "It's fine. I'm okay. He wasn't wrong in the first place. They are indeed a couple in love."

*"A couple in love, my *ss!" Summer gritted her teeth. "Would Alaric even have paid attention to Claudia if she hadn't saved him? She only has the upper hand because he owes her one!"*

Victoria's eyes dimmed as she lowered her gaze when she heard that.

"Alright, alright. Let's not talk about this anymore. It is what it is."

"My bad." Summer stuck out her tongue. "You should rest up while I heat

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the ramen up for you. You can eat it later."

“Okay.”

The room fell back into silence after Summer left, and that was when Victoria gently wiped away a tear from the corner of her eye.

This was the last time. From now on, she would not shed another tear for Alaric.

Victoria didn't return home that night.

Alaric's mother, Mary, couldn't help feeling puzzled the longer she waited for Victoria. In the end, she went to ask Alaric about it.

Alaric, on the other hand, locked himself in his study after he returned home. When Mary pushed open the door, she found him sitting at his desk, engrossed in something.

“Where's Victoria?” she asked.

Hearing the name, Alaric felt as if something was tearing at his chest.

However, he only pursed his lips and remained silent.

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Mary had always known that the couple didn't have the best relationship.

Now that she was looking at his face, she could tell that something had happened.

She pressed her lips together as well before probing, “What happened? Did your relationship get worse?”

Instead of answering her question, Alaric only stated, “I'm busy.”

“With what, exactly?” Mary pointed to the laptop in front of him and scoffed. “Busy staring at a black screen?”

He hadn't even turned on his laptop since he came home.

Alaric frowned and remained silent.

"Just what is going on between you two? Your relationship wasn't this bad before this, but now she's not even coming back. Did you two fight?"

As if unable to bear hearing more of those questions, Alaric walked away with a stern face.

"Stop right there!"

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Even though Mary called out to Alaric, the man kept defiantly walking as if he hadn't heard her.

Alaric's attitude infuriated his mother, who took a few steps forward to block him.

"I'm asking you where Victoria is."

As if finally reaching his limit, Alaric was clearly upset when he retorted,

"Why don't you call her if you want to see her? Why are you asking me? Am I her guardian? Do I have to be responsible for reporting her whereabouts?"

His words left Mary in disbelief.

"What are you saying? If I can reach her on the phone, do you think I would bother coming to you?"

Upon hearing this, Alaric smirked and mockingly suggested, "You can't reach her? Don't bother calling her, then."

"You... You!" His impatient and indifferent responses were driving Mary

crazy. "What kind of attitude is this? Is this how you talk to your mother? Have I been raising and teaching you for nothing? Are you taking your

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Chapter 157 People Who Had Nothing to Do With One failure to handle your relationship out on your mother?"

After saying that, Mary lost her desire to communicate with her son when she realized that he remained as unaffected as a wall. "Fine! I can't reach Victoria on the phone, and you won't tell me anything. You'd better not regret it if anything happens to her."

She then turned around and left, leaving him alone in the same spot.

As Mary walked away, she felt a throbbing pain in her temples from the anger surging within her.

However, she suddenly stopped in her tracks when something seemed to have come to mind.

Alaric was her son, and as his mother, she knew his personality best. She had seen him get angry from time to time since childhood, but this was the first time she had seen him showing this level of anger.

He didn't even bother to respect her!

With that, her expression instantly became solemn.

Did something... really happen?

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It was quiet in the study after Mary left. Alaric continued to stand there for a

while, but he eventually returned to his original spot.

Although he sat still with a gloomy expression, his mind kept replaying his mother's words before she left.

"You'd better not regret it if anything happens to her."

A voice seemed to be telling him that he would surely regret it if something happened to Victoria, and that he should go out and find her right now.

However, Alaric found it utterly ridiculous.

How can anything happen to her? She was so eager to be with Bane! I have kept her trapped for a long time. The reason she has been impatiently urging us to get a divorce is to be with Bane, right? Now that she is free, she is probably already in Bane's arms. Her not answering the phone must be because she is too busy being with him. What could possibly go wrong? She and I have become people who have nothing to do with one another.

Still, every time Alaric thought about the possibility of her being with Bane at this very moment, he seemed to know what was happening.

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It was easy to imagine what two adults could do together this late at night.

He couldn't control the images that appeared in his head.

*"F*ck!"*

Just the thought of it made Alaric's anger burn beyond control. He soon swept his hand across the desk, knocking everything off.

The room was immediately filled with the sound of heavy objects crashing to the ground and the shattering of glass.

However, not even making things fall and destroying things alleviated Alaric's restless mood. Instead, it intensified his grouchiness. His chest felt like a ball of fire that burned so fiercely he could hardly contain himself. Alaric slammed his clenched fist onto the table.

Ring! Ring!

At that moment, a melodious ringtone rang out from his phone. Alaric's expression froze and he took out his phone.

When he glanced at the screen and saw that it was a call from Claudia, the
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light in his eyes vanished instantly. He promptly tossed the phone onto the table and ignored the call.

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The phone continued to ring for a while and it paused briefly before ringing again. However, Alaric never answered even one of those calls.

After a while, the corners of his lips curled into a mocking smirk.

I can't believe I'm still thinking she would call me now. What can she even talk to me about now that we are divorced? You are delusional, Alaric Cadogan.

That night, no one in the Cadogan Residence could rest peacefully.

It was the first time in the master and mistress of the house's long marriage that their mistress hadn't come home.

Alaric, too, had locked himself in the study and didn't even come downstairs for lunch or dinner after he returned home. When the servants

tried to inform him that the meals were ready, no one dared to approach him the moment they heard the sound of things being thrown around.

Hector went to the study twice, only to return with a sullen face both times.

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The curious servants couldn't help but ask, "Hector, what is going on? Is he still refusing to eat?"

Hector nodded. "He's not even acknowledging my presence. I wonder what happened between sir and madam."

"Right! Madam didn't even come home. Have you called her, Hector?"

"Her phone is off."

"It's off? Why is sir not out looking for her, then?"

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Hector sighed inwardly.

Seeing how bad the conflict must have been and topping it off with Alaric's stubborn and arrogant temperament, it would be difficult to get the man to go out and look for Victoria.

One of the maids whispered, "I could tell something was off between sir and madam when Claudia Johnson visited our house before. I thought that their situation got better after that, but it just wasn't the same as before. They couldn't have gotten a divorce, could they?"

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When Hector heard that, he felt his eyelid twitch and he scolded in a dismissive tone, "Stop it with that nonsense! Don't ever say that word as you please. It's normal for couples to have conflicts. Even if they argued today, they might reconcile tomorrow. Now go and clean the windowsills again if you have nothing better to do."

The others pursed their lips and went their own ways after Hector said that. Meanwhile, he was getting a headache from frustration. He soon waved and said that he didn't care anymore and that he wanted to rest in his room for

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a while.

Once the maids were alone, they couldn't help but huddle together and gossip.

"Actually, I think that sir and madam have gotten divorced. They might not have officially done so yet, but they could be heading in that direction. You just wait and see. I bet the argument this time must have been terrible. We have worked for the Cadogans for so long, but when have we ever seen sir

lose his temper like this?"

"You may be right. You didn't hear how loud it was in the study when I was near the door. Well, it's none of our business anyway. Even if the current madam leaves, it doesn't mean that Claudia Johnson will be easier to deal with. In my opinion, our current madam is nice. She never makes life hard for us."

"True that."

At first, they had reveled in the joy of looking down upon Victoria, the heiress who had fallen into bankruptcy. But when they heard those words of truth, their expressions grew somber and troubled.

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They didn't even know why they were looking down on her.

Even if she were to leave, a new mistress would eventually take her place. However, there was no guarantee that the new mistress would be any better than her.

And if the new lady of the house started giving them a hard time...

Rather than uncertainty, perhaps it would be better if Victoria was the one they served, after all.

Their thoughts shifted back once more, and a collective sigh escaped their lips as they mourned the situation. Hoping against any drastic changes to their current circumstances, they yearned for Victoria's swift return.

Thus, they spent the night in anticipation.

The next morning, their first words to each other were, "Did the madam come home last night?"

"No, she wasn't home at all."

A chorus of sighs echoed through the air.

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"Madam won't just... not come back from now on, right?"

"My goodness, are sir and madam really divorced?"

Once again, the crown sank into a state of melancholy.

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The night passed quietly without the disturbances of noisy neighbors, yet Victoria remained sleepless throughout.

Summer, who stayed by her side, had a restless night too.

Despite that, she got up to prepare breakfast early the next morning.

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Victoria was lying in bed when she suddenly sat up at the thought of giving her father a call.

Her and Alaric's divorce was now an undeniable fact. She figured she should inform her father of this.

As she reached for her phone, she realized it had shut down when it ran out of battery. She then quickly plugged it in to charge.

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She only saw once the phone was on that she had missed numerous calls.

Mary and Hector had both tried to reach her many times. Mary, in particular, had made at least ten calls.

However, Mary hadn't been able to reach her because her phone was off the entire time.

In the end, the older woman could only send her a series of inquiries and comforting messages. Seeing the long stream of words brought about a sour and tight feeling in Victoria's chest.

After reading them, Victoria began to wonder, Did Alaric not inform his parents about our divorce? Why is Mom still talking to me about these things?

Suddenly, she received an incoming call on her phone before she could ponder further.

She was still holding the phone when her heart s***d a beat the moment she saw Alaric's name.

Why would he call me after everything that has happened?

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She began to hesitate whether or not she should take the call.

What can be worse than a divorce, right? It's probably fine to just pick up the phone.

As she took too long to make a decision, the call had already ended by the time she finally decided to answer it.

And so, she took a deep breath and dialed back.

When the phone was picked up, Victoria quickly explained, "Sorry, I was busy just now."

There was a brief silence on the other end of the line after she said that. A sarcastic chuckle then followed. "Busy spending time with Bane? Did I disturb you?"

Victoria was speechless upon hearing that. Considering how she and Bane were nothing more than friends, she instinctively wanted to refute his assumption of her being with Bane.

However, her words were stuck in her throat when she remembered that she had, with her own mouth, admitted to her 'relationship' with Bane to

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him.

He probably thinks that I'm dating Bane now. Perhaps even last night... But there is nothing left for me to explain.

In the end, she chose to stay quiet.

And her silence, as it reached Alaric, became an affirmation.

So, she was with Bane last night... There was a wretched feeling in his chest. Even though his jaw was clenched, he couldn't utter a word.

After a moment, he finally heard Victoria speak. "Some of my stuff is still at the Cadogan Residence. Can I... come over today to pack them up? And about our divorce, have you told your Mom and Dad-"

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As if realizing that her choice of words was inappropriate, Victoria abruptly stopped at those words. She quickly corrected herself, "Haven't you told Mr. and Mrs. Cadogan about our divorce?"

She switched back to how she addressed Mary and Adrian before she and Alaric got married.

Mr. and Mrs. Cadogan.

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Alaric's gaze darkened slightly as he repeated her words in his head.

Grinding his teeth, he let out a nonchalant chuckle and spoke without minding his words.

"Victoria, this is my family affair. Who are you to me? You think it is your place to meddle?"

Victoria's face fell when she heard those words, and she lowered her gaze as she whispered, "I'm sorry. I overstepped."

He's right. We are divorced now. Mr., Mrs., and Old Mrs. Cadogan are no longer my family.

Marriage sure was a strange thing.

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His family had become her family when they got together, but now that they had parted ways, she had also suddenly lost a few of her family members.

Hearing her apologize, Alaric felt a momentary pang of regret. However, it didn't last long before her next words shattered his guilt.

"Um... So, when do you think is a good time for me to go and get my things?"

After all, she had stayed at the Cadogan Residence for such a long time.

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There were still some of her belongings she needed to retrieve.

The man somehow sneered upon hearing that.

"What do you want to come over and pack up? You're already divorced and off to live a new life. So, tell me, does your current partner allow you to bring your past belongings while you stay with him?"

It's those thorny words again. He's always p***g me with those words of his.

Holding it in by biting her lower lip, she uttered, "Some of those things are mine."

"Find a time and come get them yourself, then."

With that, he promptly ended the call.

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Beep! Beep!

The busy tone from the phone that kept ringing in Victoria's ear felt like countless thorns piercing her heart.

For a moment, she truly considered leaving everything behind and not going back at all.

Then again, it was true when she said that she had some personal belongings there. Left with no choice, she decided to find a time when

Alaric wasn't at home and get her things.

After breakfast, Victoria shared her thoughts with Summer.

"You mentioned it to me last night, didn't you? I have the car ready and I even invited my friend to come along. We'll help you move your things, so don't worry. Just focus on packing."

"Thank you, Summer." Victoria hadn't expected Summer to be so thorough in her preparations.

"Geez, what's there to thank between us?"

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Victoria suddenly mentioned, "There's no need to ask your friend to help us, I don't have much to pack. Actually, I can go by myself."

When Summer heard this, she instantly set down what she was holding.

"You're going alone? No! I have to accompany you. What if something happens?"

"What could go wrong? After all, it's a place where I've lived for so long, and our families are old acquaintances. What could possibly happen?"

Summer suddenly realized that the Cadogan Family did hold a prominent position, and she had been overly concerned.

"You really don't need my company?"

"Really. It's just a few things. I'll go to the hospital first and then come back after I get my stuff."

"Well then... Be careful on your own. Don't end up like yesterday."

A hint of sadness flashed through Victoria's eyes at the mention of yesterday's events. She only reacted by giving Summer a faint smile.

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Victoria went to the hospital after she left Summer's place.

Since she didn't come to the hospital yesterday, Griselda asked her about her whereabouts as soon as she saw the younger woman.

Victoria didn't want to lie to Griselda, so she smiled and explained,

"Grandma, I couldn't come because I had an important matter to attend to."

Being the understanding woman that Griselda was, she could tell that Victoria didn't want to go into it after she heard Victoria's vague answer.

She knew that the younger generation had secrets of their own. Instead of pressing further, she held Victoria's hand and changed the topic. "What story will you be telling me today?"

Victoria chuckled. "What kind of story would you like to hear, Grandma?"

"How about a story about family?" Griselda suggested.

Victoria's heart s***d a beat when she heard that. She thought that Griselda might already know about the divorce from Alaric, and this topic might be a subtle hint.

However, when she looked up at Griselda, she noticed that the elderly

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woman's expression was normal and there didn't seem to be anything amiss.

Then again, the Cadogans would consider Griselda's health and probably wouldn't inform her so soon even if they were divorced.

"Alright, then. Let me tell you a family story today."

Victoria carefully selected a story from her repertoire, choosing the most touching one she knew to share with Griselda.

Griselda, who was touched by the story, eventually fell asleep with tears hanging at the corners of her eyes.

Just the sight of the woman made Victoria bend over and give her a big hug before she whispered, "Grandma, I don't think I can come to see you again from tomorrow onward."

Her voice was so soft that she was probably the only one who had heard that.

And it was exactly because Griselda was asleep that she dared to say these words.

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"You have to watch your health from now on, Grandma. There is nothing more important than your health. Also, you will definitely have a better granddaughter-in-law to take care of you in the future."

After saying that, Victoria reached out to wipe away Griselda's tears before planting a kiss on her forehead.

She stood there contemplating for a long minute before turning around and leaving resolutely.

But when she turned around, she saw Alaric standing at the door of the ward.

Time seemed to stop the moment their eyes met.

After a while, Victoria forced a smile and approached him.

"I came to see Grand-" She paused and changed the way she addressed Griselda. "I came to see Old Mrs. Cadogan."

However, Alaric's gaze on her was clear and cold. There wasn't a hint of warmth in his eyes.

He seemed as if he hadn't seen her when he ignored and brushed past her,

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leaving behind an icy gust of wind.

Victoria remained rooted to the spot for several seconds. Knowing that she no longer had a place there, she soon left without making a sound.

Once she was gone, Alaric turned his head and glanced at the spot where she had been standing before he slowly looked away.

Victoria returned home to retrieve her belongings.

As soon as she entered the Cadogan Residence, the housekeeper and s***ts immediately rushed up to greet her as if they were seeing a long-lost relative.

"Madam, you've finally returned."

"Madam, where did you go last night? You didn't come back all night. We missed you!"

"Exactly! Welcome home. Madam, are you hungry? Would you like something to eat?"

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Nobody had treated her with such warmth and enthusiasm before this.

Victoria wasn't sure what everyone was thinking, but she had to handle the situation calmly.

After dealing with their questions, Victoria went upstairs to pack her belongings.

She didn't have much to pack. In fact, she only came back for a few of her personal belongings. As for her clothes, Victoria had no intention of packing them to avoid arousing suspicion from the s**ts when she went downstairs.

Mary wasn't at home today and Alaric was also absent. Victoria would be able to leave quickly once she packed her things.

The servants were currently chatting downstairs.

"The madam has returned today. Does that mean she has reconciled with sir?"

"Maybe! It's only common for couples to argue and make up."

However, as soon as they finished speaking, they saw Victoria coming

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downstairs shortly after. She was holding a small bag, looking as if she was about to leave.

The crowd was puzzled. She had just returned not long ago and now she was planning to go out again.

They immediately approached and surrounded her.

"Madam, you have just returned. Where are you going now?"

Seeing them crowding around her, Victoria felt relieved that she hadn't packed many belongings. They would likely bombard her with various questions otherwise.

And so, she could only smile and tell them, "I have something to take care of."

"Madam, where are you going? You've only been back for a short while. Don't you need to rest for a bit?"

Victoria shook her head. "I'm not tired. There is no need to rest. Alright, now. Please go back to your tasks. Stop flocking around me please."

The truth was, they couldn't shake off a sense of foreboding when they saw

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her with her bag. But since Victoria didn't have any luggage in her hands and didn't seem like she was leaving for good, the crowd could only

disperse in the end.

When they had all left, Victoria started to leave the building.

She did end up bumping into the butler at the entrance.

“Madam.”

Victoria stopped in her tracks. “Mr. Bowen,” she greeted him in return.

During her time at the Cadogan Residence, Hector had taken care of her in many ways. Her eyes soon shimmered slightly and she looked as if she wanted to tell him something.

Hector must have sensed something, as he then glanced at the small bag in her hand and asked softly, “Madam, are you going on a long journey?”

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His question stumped Victoria, and just as she contemplated how to answer Hector, he spoke up. “Mr. Cadogan hasn’t eaten anything since coming back last night.”

But what use is there in telling me this now? Victoria mused.

“I don’t know what happened between you and Mr. Cadogan, madam, but considering how long you’ve been together, if the matter can be resolved…”

“It can’t,” she mumbled, rendering Hector at a loss for words.

Moments later, he said softly, “If you have already decided, Mrs. Cadogan, then I can only wish you a safe journey.”

Victoria was a little bewildered at first, but she smiled in relief moments later. “Thank you, Mr. Bowen. You take care too. As for Old Mrs. Cadogan… I hope you can help take care of her.”

“I’m the Cadogan Family’s butler.” Hector nodded solemnly and sincerely. “I would do so even if you didn’t ask.”

“Yeah… You’ve always been loyal and responsible.”

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And shrewd as well, for only he saw through it when others couldn’t.

“Take care, Mrs. Cadogan.”

Victoria left the Cadogan Residence with a small bag in her hand. Before leaving, she paused and looked back at the place that had been her home for nearly two years.

She always knew she wouldn’t stay for long when she first came, but to her surprise, it had already been two years by the time she came around. Time flew, and the years were truly unforgiving.

Before their fake marriage, she and Alaric were friends-childhood sweethearts-and had a mutually supportive relationship.

But now, it came to a bitter divorce, and their relationship became that of strangers. However… she still felt grateful to Alaric, who appeared and helped her when she needed it the most.

She would remember the kindness forever.

Victoria turned around and left, her slender figure quickly disappearing at the end of the road.

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The cold wind mercilessly blew the fallen leaves on the ground, causing them to spin on the street and eventually return to their original point.

On the other hand, Elaine's life had been a living hell lately.

She had been imprisoned for some time after she was believed to be Christopher's accomplice. Later, considering that they were first-time offenders, and the victim did not suffer any significant physical harm, they were released. However, after her release, Elaine returned home only to discover that her family had been subjected to endless retaliation.

Her family's small company relied on the Johnsons for survival, taking whatever the Johnsons left behind. Hence, Elaine would often flatter Claudia to gain favor. But this time, the retaliation directly led to the bankruptcy of the Sutcliffe Family's small company, leaving them with a massive debt.

When Elaine returned home, her mother embraced her. "Elaine, please beg Claudia for help. Your father is on the verge of giving up entirely. We'll all be doomed if anything irreversible happens. And your younger brother, yes, your younger brother. The school has suspended him too. Just who

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have we offended, Elaine? Why is this happening to us?"

Elaine's heart sank in response, and she knelt on the ground with weak knees. Whom have we offended? The only person who can be so ruthless can only be Alaric Cadogan!

The man had already warned her the time she fought Victoria, telling her never to appear before his eyes ever again. However, she didn't listen.

Worst, she even bullied Victoria, and now, he had come for her.

After coming to herself, Elaine hurriedly went to Claudia, hoping the latter could help her, but to her dismay, she was rejected at the door when she actually visited Claudia.

Claudia didn't want to see her at all, and if she dared barge in, someone would kick her out. With that, Elaine lived a life worse than death.

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Her mother was no better as she was overwhelmed by the pressure. She even contemplated taking sleeping pills to end it all but was luckily stopped by Elaine's younger brother.

In the end, her younger brother kneeled in front of her, begging, "Elaine, please, I'm begging you. Who in the world did you offend? Please go and

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plead for mercy. If this continues, our entire family will be utterly doomed!"

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Even her mother begged on her knees. "Elaine, our family has never mistreated you, even if you're a girl. Our family is now in dire states.

Whomever you've offended, please apologize and make amends. Our family can't go on like this anymore."

Whom had she offended? Of course, she knew who it was.

Driven to desperation, she finally went to the gates of the Cadogan Residence.

She stood outside the gates and gazed at the towering building before her. She bit her lip, thinking about her own broken and impoverished home. Her phone beeped, and Elaine took it out to check. It turned out that someone asked Claudia out for a shopping trip in the afternoon in a group chat, and the latter agreed eagerly.

At that, she checked her chat history with Claudia, where it stopped at Elaine sending Claudia multiple messages with not a single reply in return. No matter how she begged, Claudia would only respond with Chapter 160 He Still Doesn't Know She's Pregnant, impassiveness.

While pondering, she suddenly noticed Claudia had deleted the message, and she couldn't help sneering in response. Looks like Claudia had forgotten I'm also in the group, huh? Did she delete it because she's worried I'd see it?

Elaine had assumed there must be a reason for Claudia's avoidance- Claudia could be injured, or the Johnsons were stopping Claudia because she offended them. At the end of the day, the revelation that Claudia refused to see her on her own accord was devastating.

At that, a malicious idea crossed her mind as she gazed at the Cadogan's gate, and she gave Claudia a call.

As expected, the young woman didn't answer. So, Elaine took her time to send Claudia a text. 'Do you know where I am right now?'

With that, she took a picture of the Cadogan Residence's gate, and not five minutes after she sent it to Claudia that her phone rang. It was none other than Claudia herself.

Elaine smirked in response. She did nothing but watch the phone ring
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silently until it was hung up. Claudia didn't give up either, as her call came seconds after.

Like teasing a mouse, Elaine waited until Claudia called for the fifth time before finally answering.

As soon as the call connected, Claudia anxiously asked, "Elaine, what are you doing at the Cadogan Residence?"

Her tone was filled with urgency, showing no sign of weakness.

At this point, Elaine couldn't even maintain the assumption that Claudia was sick anymore. "Of course, I came here for a reason," she enunciated with a smirk. "What's the matter, Claudia? Why do you sound nervous? Are you afraid I might accidentally say something unfavorable to you?"

Claudia fell silent for a moment before chuckling awkwardly, "What are you talking about? Why would I-"

"Alaric still doesn't know Victoria's pregnant, does he?"