

New Beginnings Chapter 51 - 60

Chapter 51 May Your Wish Come True

Although Victoria had rejected Claudia yesterday, she still insisted on bringing her food. As Victoria watched Claudia act like a good person, she couldn't help but find it hilarious. While she didn't want to expose Claudia, she didn't want to acknowledge her either.

“You must be weak from the illness, Victoria. I made some chicken broth for you. Don't you want to have a taste?”

Hearing her words, Victoria propped her hand against her chin as she watched Claudia.

There isn't anyone here, so why is she still putting on an act? Isn't she tired?

Thinking about this, she put down her pen and looked at her. “Aren't you tired?”

Although she asked if Claudia was fed up with pretending to be a person she wasn't, Claudia ignored the implication of Victoria's words and changed the subject. “Why would I be tired? It is a wonderful feeling to cook for the person you love and watch as he finishes your food.”

Seemingly as if she wanted to make Victoria angry, Claudia added, “When you have someone who loves you, you will know what I am talking about, Victoria. I'm willing to cook for him for the rest of my life if I have to.” After

she finished her words, she stared at Victoria, trying to see if she'd lose her cool.

However, Victoria was calm after hearing Claudia's words. "Oh, is that so? Well then, I hope your wish will soon come true."

At that moment, Claudia felt like she had punched the air and was frustrated by the empty feeling.

Why does this always happen to me? I keep crossing the line, but she always stays calm. It makes me wonder if I'm the one who only cares about this!

At that moment, Yasmin entered the room. When she saw Claudia, she was going to say something but remembered what Victoria had scolded her about. Hence, she held back and said, "Mr. Levane is here to see you, Miss Victoria."

"Let him in."

As soon as Peter entered the room, he looked delighted when he saw Claudia. "Are you here too, Miss Johnson?"

Claudia was slightly surprised by his enthusiasm.

Is he on my side because I treated him to a meal yesterday? If that's the case, that meal didn't cost me much.

"Did you prepare lunch again, Miss Johnson? Are you going to give it to Miss Selwyn?"

Although Victoria didn't know what was happening between them, she

could guess by looking at Peter's reaction. However, Victoria wasn't mad about it. As the saying went, a talented person would choose a patron of integrity. Judging by what was happening, everyone could tell that Claudia would be the ultimate Mrs. Cadogan. Thus, it would only be normal for them to try and get close to her, so Victoria wouldn't get mad over this.

However, what Peter did next was not what she had expected.

Suddenly, Peter pointed at the food container and asked, "Miss Johnson's cooking is the best, Miss Selwyn. Everyone in the office says that it's delicious. Don't you want to have some?"

"No, thanks. I have already eaten," replied Victoria as she shook her head.

"If you don't want to eat it, can I have it instead?"

Hearing his words, Victoria was startled since she didn't expect him to ask for it. Then, she glanced at Claudia before nodding. "Go ahead."

"Don't mind if I do." As Peter spoke, he grabbed the food container and looked at Claudia happily. "Your cooking is the best, Miss Johnson. Say, the others are dying to taste your food again. Would it be fine if you were to make some food for us every day?"

When Claudia heard his words, she was dumbfounded and thought she had misheard him. "W-What?" Are they asking me to bring more food?

"Don't worry, we won't let you do all the work for free. Just tell us how much

it would cost you.” Peter grinned and showed off his teeth.

Hearing his words, Victoria looked at Alaric’s assistant, in bewilderment. At that moment, she wondered if he was trying to get on Claudia’s good or bad side. After all, there was something off with his words.

Meanwhile, Claudia had a grim expression on her face.

How much will it cost me to make the food? What do they think of me? A maid? Claudia thought that Peter already knew about the situation, but she didn’t expect him to mock her. The worst part was that she couldn’t even slash out at him. After all, she still wasn’t Mrs. Cadogan.

In that split second, Claudia forced a smile and said, “There’s no need to pay me for such a small matter. If you guys like it so much, I’ll start preparing lunch for you guys tomorrow.”

“Really?” Peter’s eyes lit up at her words. “Would it be troublesome for you to do so, Miss Johnson? Plus, will Mr. Cadogan agree to this? I’m afraid that he might scold us.”

“Don’t worry. I will talk to him about this,” Claudia said awkwardly.

“Well then, I thank you on their behalf, Miss Johnson.”

After some time, Claudia couldn’t stand being in Victoria’s office and left hastily. After she was gone, the office fell silent, and Peter immediately put the food container on the table in disgust.

Looking at his reaction, Victoria was confused.

“Who wants to eat her food? It’s all processed food, yet she claims that she made it on her own,” Peter said disdainfully.

“If that’s the case, why did you...” Victoria trailed off.

Knowing she was confused, Peter smiled at her and replied, “I’m helping you, Miss Selwyn. I only approve of you as Mrs. Cadogan.”

When Victoria heard his words, she was speechless. After all, Peter was a nice guy. Since they were a secretary and an assistant, they worked independently and **had** tough workloads. Occasionally, they would even go on business trips together. Peter was an outgoing and nice colleague, but she didn’t expect him to be on her side.

“Don’t worry, Miss Selwyn. I will always believe in you regardless of what others say about you. Don’t fail me now.”

At that moment, Victoria didn’t know what to say since she knew she would disappoint him. Moreover, he offended Claudia with his words. Fortunately, he had some authority on Alaric’s side, so Alaric wouldn’t punish him for what he did. However, on second thought, there might be a possibility since Claudia had saved Alaric before.

Thinking about this, she immediately said to him, “Don’t be so reckless about this in the future.”

Peter was stunned when he heard her words. “You don’t have to worry about me, Miss Selwyn. I don’t think I’m being reckless. Plus, I didn’t do

anything to her. She wanted to treat me to a meal, and it tasted fine. Since I think she is kind-hearted, I gave her a proposal, and she accepted it. No one can say anything bad about me.”

“So, what about it?” Victoria frowned. “Do you think you are smart by doing this? You know Alaric’s personality when you have been by his side for many years. Don’t do such things in the future, and don’t say you will be on my side anymore.”

Chapter 52

Claudia left Victoria’s office with a grim expression. Her hands were trembling as she gripped her dress.

She never thought that even Peter, a lowly assistant, would dare humiliate her. Although she didn’t slash out at him, she knew she couldn’t look past this matter either. Thus, as soon as she entered the office, she couldn’t help but spill everything that had happened to Alaric. She wasn’t complaining since she only wanted Alaric to comfort her, but the man didn’t budge after Claudia was done talking.

“Al?” Claudia looked at him in confusion. That was when she realized his pupils were dilated, and he seemed to be in a daze even though he was staring at his laptop.

She called his name with a sigh. Only then did Alaric snap out of his trance and look at her while frowning. “You’re back.”

Hearing his words, Claudia became speechless and thought, I've returned for some time and have been talking to him all this while. Was he oblivious to all this?

As she thought about it, her face turned slightly pale while she forced a smile. "Yeah. I've been back for quite some time. I was talking to you, but you weren't listening. Is something the matter?" she asked cautiously.

At this point, Alaric had already regained his senses. When he heard her words, he shook his head and said faintly, "It's nothing." Then, he frowned deeply when he saw that the food container in her hands was gone. "Did she accept your food?"

Didn't she send it back yesterday? he thought.

Hearing his question, Claudia shook her head. "No, she still doesn't want to eat the food I made. Say, Al, does my food taste bad?"

Honestly, Alaric wasn't picky about what he ate. To him, food was just something for him to gain energy. Hence, he couldn't tell if her cooking was terrible or not. However, since she had saved his life before, he wouldn't simply just give her an answer. Instead, he said softly, "No. Don't overthink it. However, if she didn't accept the food, where did it go?"

Initially, Alaric only wanted to know what happened to the food container.

However, for some reason, he felt at ease when he knew that Victoria refused to eat what Claudia had cooked. He didn't know why, though.

Claudia told him what had happened again.

“I see,” he hummed in response. Turns out that Peter ate the food. No wonder she returned without it.

After that, Alaric kept quiet.

Claudia waited for some time before realizing that Alaric made no move to do anything. Then, she called him again. “Al...”

“What’s wrong?” Alaric looked at her.

When Claudia saw his usual expression, she couldn’t say the words she wanted to. Thus, she held back and replied, “It’s nothing.”

Hearing her words, Alaric went back to thinking. Then, he seemed to be irritated by something as he raised his hand and pinched the bridge of his nose.

At this moment, Claudia saw a bite mark on his arm. Immediately, her expression changed as she asked, “Did you hurt your arm, Al?”

Hearing her words, Alaric paused and followed her gaze along his arm.

When he saw that he had accidentally shown the marks on his arm, he couldn’t help but remember how Victoria had bitten him yesterday. At that moment, his head throbbed in pain.

Then, he tugged on his sleeve and replied faintly, “It’s nothing.”

Lies! Claudia thought. Although she had only seen half of the wound on his arm, she was sure it was a teeth mark. Why did he have a bite mark on his

arm? A guy couldn't have done this, right? That only means...

At that moment, her face turned pale as she realized that Victoria had not kept her promise!

The next day, Claudia went to confront Victoria under the guise of bringing food to her.

"Is this how you repay me, Victoria?"

On the other hand, Victoria, who was waiting for her to put up an act, frowned when she heard Claudia's accusation. "What are you talking about?"

"Stop faking it!" Claudia snapped as she gripped the food container tightly.

Although she was furious, she still kept her voice low. "Do you still remember the third rule in our agreement? You can't have any close contact with Alaric before the divorce. Do you still remember it?"

Hearing her words, Victoria pursed her lips and said, "Yes. What's the matter about it?"

"Did you really, though? Are you sure you have kept your promise?"

"Yes." Victoria nodded. "Other than needing to interact with him in front of Old Mrs. Cadogan, I have never come close to him."

She felt that she did a great job keeping the promise.

"You're lying! You broke our promise!" Claudia barked.

Seeing that she was getting hysterical, Victoria furrowed her brows.

“I saw teeth marks on Al’s arm,” Claudia remarked.

As she brought this up, she could feel the hatred in her boiling.

After all, there could only be a particular instance for a woman to bite a man.

Thinking about it made Claudia enraged.

On the other hand, Victoria was startled when she heard Claudia’s words.

If Claudia hadn’t brought this up, she’d have forgotten that such a thing even happened.

“Why aren’t you talking? Is it because you are guilty? You never wanted to keep the promise, did you, Victoria?” asked Claudia through gritted teeth.

“You’re wrong.” Victoria raised her head abruptly and denied the accusation. Since she wanted to repay Claudia, she would have kept their promise. However, it was indeed her fault for leaving the bite mark.

“Have I been mistaken? If that is so, then why did you...”

Before she could finish her words, Victoria cut her off and sighed. “I think I have to make things clear with you, Claudia. Since I vowed to keep the promise, I won’t break it. However, I also hope you’ll understand that some interactions between him and me are passive.”

“Passive?” Hearing her words, Claudia slowly calmed down.

“Before Old Mrs. Cadogan is done with her surgery, we can’t expose ourselves in front of her,” said Victoria as she nodded.

“I understand this. However, you can’t possibly bite Al’s arm in front of her, can you?”

“Well, you do have a point.”

“Are you finally admitting that you broke our promise?”

“No. If you insist on finding out, I can only tell you I did it out of resistance. I didn’t break the promise.”

As for why Victoria had to resist, Claudia would have to guess it on her own. Since she had promised Claudia that she would keep their promise in the coffee shop, they were even.

As expected, Claudia froze on the spot when she heard her words.

Resistance... Did she bite Alaric out of resistance? From what, though?

As she thought about it, she widened her eyes as her mind went hazy.

“Are you telling the truth, Victoria? Are you trying to drift Al and me apart because you never wanted to divorce him in the first place?”

“Do I have to do that?” asked Victoria expressionlessly. “Do you think it’d be easy to drift you guys apart when you’ve saved his life?”

Chapter 53

“Could it be that you don’t trust him enough?” Victoria smiled faintly. “I don’t have to worry about things on my end, so what are you afraid of?”

Seeing that Claudia wouldn’t budge, Victoria added, “Don’t worry.

Grandma’s surgery is just around the corner. Just wait a few more days,

and you will get what you want. As long as the surgery is successful, I will leave and not return within five years.”

As Claudia heard her words, she gradually calmed down.

She’s right. Only a few days left, and it will be all over. When that time comes, things will be over for her and Alaric, and I won’t need to be scared anymore.

“Fine, I’ll trust you for the time being. I hope you can keep your word.”

was quiet. Victoria lowered her eyes as she put her hand on her belly. “Let’s hope this goes well, baby. After everything is over, Mommy will take you to Grandpa’s place. He will surely take a liking to you.”

Speaking of Tony, he had called her that day. However, he was busy, and Victoria could hear multiple people talking in the background *as* he called her. Thus, she didn’t tell Tony about what had happened since he was busy. In the end, both of them talked for a short while before hanging up.

The day before Griselda’s surgery happened to be a Sunday. Victoria and Alaric spent the whole day in the nursing home with her.

Since Victoria was worried that Griselda would be nervous about tomorrow’s surgery, she bought many trinkets to cheer her up. Then, she told Griselda about all the interesting things and funny customers she

encountered at the company, making the older woman laugh cheerfully.

While they were chatting, Alaric stood beside them and watched. He was expressionless at first, but a tiny smile soon appeared on his face when he heard their laughter.

At that moment, it felt as though everything was going well.

Soon, the doctor came in and talked about preparations for the surgery.

Since Griselda would be having her surgery the next day, Victoria suggested, “Why don’t I spend the night with you, Grandma? I can accompany you if you can’t sleep.”

“No, no, no.” Griselda waved Victoria off. “I’m not a child anymore. I don’t need someone to stay by my side. Just go home and rest with Alaric. You **can** come again tomorrow.”

“But...”

However, Griselda refused Victoria’s idea of staying the night. In the end, Alaric grabbed Victoria’s arm and said, “Since Grandma refuses, let’s just come by early tomorrow.”

“That’s right. You youngsters should get home since it’s getting late. Don’t stay here and interrupt my rest.”

“Alright, then...” Victoria could only oblige. Then, she went up to Griselda and hugged her. “Sleep well, Grandma. We’ll be here first thing tomorrow.”

“I’ll remember that.” Griselda poked Victoria’s nose as she spoke. “You are

a young woman, yet you nag more than I do.”

In the end, Victoria left with Alaric. On their way back, Victoria tried to speak to him but held back since the driver was there too. Meanwhile, Alaric didn't notice her reaction as he talked about what they should do for tomorrow's precautions. His voice was deep and steady. As Victoria heard his words, she hummed in response.

When they returned home, the driver left while the duo returned to their room. While taking off his suit, Alaric said to her, “Go take a bath and get some rest.”

“Okay.” Victoria didn't refuse and grabbed her clothes. After thinking for a moment, she turned around and asked, “There is something I've been meaning to ask you.”

Alaric had taken off his jacket and was undoing his tie. When he heard her words, he stopped what he was doing and stared at her. “What is it?”

“Do we get the divorce before Grandma's surgery or after?”

As soon as her words fell, Victoria could feel a cold aura emitting from Alaric. Then, he stared at her intently.

Looking into his eyes, Victoria shuddered as chills ran down her spine. In that split second, she realized it was bad timing to bring up such a matter.

After all, Griselda was going into surgery tomorrow, so Alaric wouldn't be in a good mood.

After thinking it through, she apologized to him. “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have brought this up. Let’s discuss this after Grandma’s surgery. Get some rest soon, Alaric.”

After talking, she turned around and left when Alaric blocked her path. “Are you dying to get a divorce with me?” he asked, staring at her with a darkened gaze.

“No. It’s just that…”

“I’ll do as you wish.”

At that moment, Victoria was stunned and looked at him dumbly.

Alaric’s eyes were as cold as ice, and his voice was frosty as he spoke.

“We’ll get a divorce once the city hall is open for business.” With that, he turned around and walked into the bathroom.

Didn’t he ask me to take a shower first? thought Victoria.

Bang!

The bathroom door was shut loudly, creating a loud noise. Then, it quickly fell silent.

Victoria stood there and lowered her eyes before taking out their marriage certificates from the safe. The certificates were kept nicely and looked brand new under the light.

Looking at the documents, Victoria recalled the day they registered their marriage. Honestly, she was already nervous during the photoshoot. Her

expression and body froze on the spot, and the cameraman was dissatisfied after taking a few shots. “Relax, lady. This is a wedding photo. You must be happy about it. Come on, smile,” he said to her.

When Victoria heard his words, she grew even more nervous. She was as hard as a rock until a pair of hands grabbed hers. Subconsciously, Victoria looked at Alaric and tried to get her hands out of his grip.

“Why are you nervous? Can’t I touch you?” As Alaric spoke, he smiled and intertwined their fingers together.

Feeling their interlocked hands, Victoria was startled when she felt his warmth. “I’m sorry. My wife is a bit introverted.” She heard him saying to the cameraman.

At that moment, Victoria blushed and thought, Our wedding pictures aren’t even done, yet he’s already calling me his wife...

As she thought about it, Alaric suddenly leaned in closer to her, and she could feel his hot breath against her ear.

“Don’t worry. Just do what the cameraman asks you to. If he tells you to look at the camera and smile, just do as he says. Otherwise, we won’t get our photo done if you keep getting nervous.” He then caught sight of her earlobe, which had turned pink from shyness. At that moment, his eyes darkened, and he gently bit on her earlobe without a second thought.

Chapter 54

If Victoria could refrain from remembering the old days, her days would just go by in a daze.

However, it would only double the pain when the memories came back to overwhelm her.

The affection he casually showed to her in the past turned into knives that cut her skin open at the moment.

Leaning against the safe deposit box, she closed her eyes in despair.

If only he could return her feelings. Even if it was just a little, she wouldn't be as desperate as she was right now.

When she returned home with the marriage certificate, Alaric just got out of the shower. He came out of the bathroom with a gloomy expression.

Just as he was about to pass by Victoria, he noticed the marriage certificate she was holding.

At the sight of her holding their marriage certificate, he stood still and raised his head. The expression on his face only darkened more as his gaze pierced through her body like icicles.

Her hands tightened around the certificate helplessly when she met his gaze.

After a moment of silence, he sneered. "You seem eager."

Victoria was taken aback by his comment. She parted her lips but the knot

in her throat held her back from saying anything. At last, she only held the certificate tighter as her gaze fell to the ground.

What does he expect me to say? There's neither anything I can tell him nor a point in saying anything. After all, it's his idea to have a divorce. The person he truly likes is the one who saved his life back then. Besides, I'm also paying back her favors. We'll leave it at that. I have nothing to tell him. After having him all to myself for two years, I don't have any regrets. The history we have together can make a good compensation for his absence in the future.

At last, Alaric broke the silence. "The surgery is tomorrow, so we don't have to pretend anymore. I'll spend the night in the study room."

Then, he grabbed his pillow and left the room.

Victoria stayed still for a moment before eventually setting their marriage certificate on the bedside table. After that, she took the clean clothes and headed into the bathroom.

The next day, Victoria was woken up by her phone's alarm. Feeling groggy, she rolled to the side and turned off the alarm. After that, she sat up on the bed while massaging her throbbing temples.

She was unable to get a good sleep last night.

Her mind thought of Griselda one moment and the next moment it was replaced by her divorce and another moment by her child.

She had no idea about the time she fell asleep. She was reminded of the same things for the rest of the time as they plagued her dreams.

Taking a moment on the bed to collect her thoughts, she slid down the bed and headed over to the bathroom to wash her face.

After getting into the bathroom, Victoria was frightened by the sight of her reflection in the mirror.

She had visible dark circles under her eyes and her pale face only set them off, Her eyes were red and bloodshot, and her hair was disheveled.

The combination made her a walking definition of an unhappy woman who was living a disorderly life.

Victoria studied her reflection in the mirror without a word.

She didn't like her reflection in the mirror at all. She quickly washed her face and combed her messy hair. Then, she applied a mask to her face and decided to put on makeup after that.

Even though she didn't mind her appearance, she didn't want to worry Griselda.

Around ten minutes later, she peeled off the mask and began to brush her teeth and clean herself. At last, she put on light makeup and got dressed in a casual outfit.

When everything was done, she stood in front of the mirror to make sure she was presentable. Aside from her bloodshot eyes, she had indeed

reached her goal.

However, she didn't possess any magic to make the redness vanish within a second. Thus, she put on a pair of rimmed glasses after a moment of pondering. Let the others think it's an accessory.

At that moment, her phone vibrated. Victoria reached for it and found a new message from Alaric. 'Get downstairs when you are ready. I'll be waiting in the garage.'

His message was simple. She couldn't feel any affection or concern from it. She replied to his message with a simple response before getting up to grab a coat and heading downstairs.

When she was passing by the living room, the butler approached her. "Mrs. Cadogan, you're leaving early today. Did you have enough sleep last night?"

Victoria cast a smile at him. "I have."

Judging from the coat that she was wearing and her passing by the

Chapter 54 Getting a Divorce

dining table without stopping, the butler couldn't help but ask, "Do you need breakfast?"

As expected, she shook her head. "No, thank you. I'm heading out."

This time, the butler kept silent.

Truth be told, he already noticed that something was going on between

Alaric and Victoria. When he woke up in the early morning, he also found that Alaric slept in the study room last night. Noticing the lights in the study room were up, he approached to check on the room and found Alaric inside.

Alaric had circles under his eyes and his expression wasn't the best either. He turned in the butler's direction and asked in a hoarse voice, "What?" The butler was immediately shocked by his boss' look and didn't dare answer.

After that, Alaric skipped breakfast and headed straight to the garage with a cold look on his face.

Watching Victoria walking out of the house, the butler sighed to himself, helpless about being unable to rectify the situation.

She wore her coat on her way to the garage.

It was freezing outside in the early morning, and the garage was colder.

Thus, Victoria was surprised to see Alaric wearing only a dress shirt in such cold weather. There was a cigarette between his fingers as he leaned against the car.

As she approached, she could see the stark contrast between them.

He looked pale after spending a night of lack of sleep. Compared to Victoria, who wore makeup, his emaciated face made a huge difference from hers.

He raised his head in her direction when he heard the echoing footsteps.

His eyes dimmed at the sight of her vibrant face and he broke the silence after a moment. “Did you get any sleep last night?”

The moment he spoke, she found that his voice was unexpectedly hoarse. She was taken aback for a moment before finally nodding. “I slept rather soundly last night. What about you?”

Putting his cigarette out, Alaric fixed his dark eyes on her before answering, “Same.”

“Well, that’s good to hear.” The longer she studied his face, the more clues she found, which were his bloodshot eyes and the dark circles under his eyes.

He looks pathetic, she thought. Luckily, I have the foresight to put on makeup and wear the glasses.

Silence settled between them soon after she answered.

Alaric stood right there, not bothering to speak or get in the car. All he did was watch her without a word, a dark expression on his face.

His gaze was piercing, and Victoria found it uncomfortable from the way he was watching her. At last, she forced herself to speak, “Are we going or **not?**”

He dodged her question by shooting another back. “What’s the rush?”

“I’m not rushing,” Victoria retorted. “I’m simply worried that you’re rushing.”

He cast her an unfathomable glance and sneered. “Why would I be rushing?”

She deflected the question by feigning ignorance. “How would I know?”

Alaric choked on her retort and barely managed to bring himself to say something unrelated to their topic.

“Did you bring all the necessary documents? I don’t want to learn that you forgot to bring anything when we arrive at the state government later.”

Victoria couldn’t help but counter, “I did. I got them ready last night. How could I forget to bring such important documents?”

After that, she turned to him. “You even saw it last night, didn’t you?”

Alaric was speechless. “Snowball, have you ever wondered for once why you are so spoiled?”

Victoria cast a glance at him. “It’s all thanks to my dad.”

Does he expect me to say it’s him? He’s so full of himself!

At that point, Victoria already lost her patience in waiting for Alaric to take the initiative. Opening the door, she got into the car before poking out her head and urging, “Let’s go. I think the state government is already open.

The sooner we get things done, the earlier we can visit the nursing home.”

She fastened the seatbelt as she said that.

After a few silent beats, Alaric finally got into the driver’s seat.

As it was early in the morning, the traffic was smooth. Their car arrived at

the entrance of the state government without any delay.

Today was just another ordinary day so when the pair arrived, there weren't many people around other than a few couples.

Most of them were there to apply for marriage. The couples were huddled together and whispering sweet and affectionate words to each other.

Victoria and Alaric were the exact opposite of the couples around them.

The pair were both good-looking and had tall stature, which made them grab attention all the way. Other than that, Alaric walked inside to building with a dark expression. Thus, the onlookers only needed one look to tell the pair was here to apply for dissolving their marriage.

Chapter 55

Even though there weren't many people in the queue, the pair still had to wait for their turn.

Victoria was extremely tired due to lack of sleep last night, so she found herself a place to sit.

Alaric followed her with a gloomy expression on his face. He didn't sit down next to her after he approached her.

At this point, she was surprisingly calm.

She raised her head to cast a glance at him before asking, "Why don't you take a seat?"

“There’s no need for that,” he replied in a flat tone that betrayed no emotion. He did not even spare her a glance.

Victoria understood what was going on. He wants nothing to do with me. That’s right. Once we divorce, he can get together with Claudia, so what’s the point of giving me attention?

Fortunately, Victoria never got her hopes up about staying friends with Alaric after they divorced.

At first, their lack of interaction didn’t bother them. However, as the pair waited longer, whispers began to reach them from their surroundings.

“Look at them. They must be here to divorce.”

“Divorce? Are you sure? The both of them look like the perfect match and yet, they still end up getting divorced?”

“I don’t understand. Do they think they could find someone with a prettier face than their ex-partners? What’s the point of divorcing? I feel bad to see them separate.”

It was human nature to learn about something they didn’t understand, especially from somebody who was that eye-catching.

Taking Alaric and Victoria as an example, their appearance simply gave the crowd the impression of high compatibility, so it was even more worth discussing.

The whispers reached Victoria from all directions.

If she could hear them, Alaric, who was standing next to her, would have no problem hearing them too. However, he kept a distant look on his face all the time and didn't visibly react to the words.

“By the way, they look so young. Do you think they have children?”

Victoria's heart skipped a beat at the mention of children.

And she had to refrain from rolling her eyes after she calmed down. How did the topic sidetrack all its way to the discussion about children?

“They have such good genes. It would be a shame if they didn't have any children.”

Upon hearing the innocent comment, Victoria involuntarily stole a glance at Alaric.

As expected, his expression darkened.

Ever since she got the message and the implication to take a year's leave from him last time, he never asked her about this matter.

She thought that Claudia must have approached him and dealt with it on their own, so he didn't ask her about it.

After all, he hinted at her getting an abortion so knowing him, he wouldn't confront her about it.

Little did he know, Victoria didn't get an abortion.

Please just drop it, she pleaded.

However, the crowd was immersed in their non-stop gossip. They didn't

even mind the subject's feelings as their conversation turned into a heated discussion.

“They must have children. If I were them, I would like to have more children since I have such good genes. Therefore, even if I get a divorce one day, my children's pretty faces can heal my wounds. Don't you think it's a big accomplishment?”

“I second that. Or else, I won't get anything in the end after the divorce. Besides, time changes everything. Even a pretty woman will end up being an old lady. However, as long as my children's pretty faces are shown, they can prove that I was also that good-looking in the past, don't you think so?”

Children had now become the subject of their discussion.

Victoria almost passed out at that. Just when she reached her limit and readied to get up and leave, Alaric asked in a low voice, “Are you hungry?”

“What?” Thinking that she was hearing things, she raised her head and looked in his direction, surprise on her face.

Even though the man looked as expressionless as ever, she could somewhat tell that his expression had softened.

“Do you want to eat something?”

She answered involuntarily, “Are you talking to me?”

Alaric frowned in annoyance at her words. He continued coldly, “Who else

do you think I'm talking to?"

"Oh! No, thanks. I'm not hungry." She shook her head, declining his suggestion.

After that, she looked down at the ground as thoughts ran through her mind. What's with the sudden change of attitude?

It was clear that he was in a bad mood when they first got here. However, after listening to the people's gossip, he seemed less edgy than before and even expressed concern about her.

Is it because he's feeling guilty after asking me to get an abortion?

"But you skipped breakfast." He persisted on the matter, to which she nodded on autopilot.

"But I'm not hungry."

Truth was, she didn't have the appetite.

"Are you sure you won't get hungry later? We don't have time to stop for breakfast." Now that he finally made it clear, Victoria immediately took the hint. She nodded. "All right. Let's go for breakfast then, shall we?"

"Wait here. I'll get it for you."

After that, Alaric left the building.

When he was standing outside, he didn't immediately leave to buy breakfast. Instead, he leaned against the wall and lit a cigarette. He felt a little fresher as the morning breeze brushed past him.

Putting all his weight against the wall, Alaric looked down at the ground. His lashes covered his eyes, effectively hiding all the emotions within his gaze.

His morning began with Victoria getting on his nerves, and he was barely holding back from holding her by her throat and confronting her for her heartlessness. But at last, he changed his mind by prompting her to eat breakfast.

What's wrong with my head?

Victoria would never expect the gossipers to surround her right after Alaric left. The group took the empty seats around her as if they were friends.

“Hey, pretty lady. Is the man who left just now your husband or your boyfriend?”

“What are you guys here for? Getting married or getting a divorce?”

“I'm curious. Do you have any children?”

Victoria was overwhelmed by their questions.

Don't you think your questions contradict each other?

Besides, it's impolite to pry into one's privacy, especially when I'm right before you.

Victoria pressed her slightly pale lips together and cast a friendly smile at them. “I'm sorry, but it's personal. I find it uncomfortable to share my story with strangers.”

The group was taken aback by her rejection, but they weren't offended by her words at all. Instead, they were slightly embarrassed by their inconsideration.

After all, even though Victoria chose to not answer them, she was friendly and polite. On the contrary, if the group was offended just because she defended her basic rights, it indicated that they lacked both boundaries and manners.

“Of course. Don't force yourself, but we would also like to ask for your forgiveness. It's just that both of you are good-looking, so we can't help but want to learn more about you.”

“That's right. You have the prettiest face I've ever seen.”

Victoria returned their compliments with a grateful smile. “Thank you. All of you are good-looking too.”

“Coming from the most beautiful woman herself. You're making me blush. Just so you know, your face is one in a million. Remember to make the most of it.”

Even though the women were nosy, Victoria couldn't bring herself to hate them. Before Alaric came back, the women kept making light conversation with Victoria even if she seldom responded to them.

However, they saw themselves as Victoria's new besties and they even started to share their love stories on their own.

Finally, a lean figure that showed up at the entrance announced the end of the conversation. The group that formed around Victoria dispersed within a second as they returned to their seats.

Alaric approached Victoria. When a mix of different perfumes reached him, he scowled in annoyance.

“What do they want?” he asked as he handed the packet of food to her. After a moment of hesitation, she reached out a hand to take it and explained, “It’s nothing important. They are merely curious about our purpose of being here.”

Chapter 56

After taking the bag from him, Victoria found that what Alaric had purchased was all fast food, which she had no appetite for. Hence, she merely took a look and put the bag away.

Alaric, who was standing nearby, noticed her actions. “Does none of them appeal to you?”

She shook her head when she heard that. “No. I just don’t feel like eating right now.”

He did not say anything in response and sat down next to her a few seconds later.

Possibly because he did not have many layers on or because he had just returned from the outside, Victoria found her surrounding temperature

dropping the moment Alaric sat down.

And the next second, she noticed that he still wore nothing but that thin dress shirt.

She moved her lips as if to say something, but nothing came out.

The two of them then sat silently.

Despite being physically close, they somehow felt disconnected from one another.

Victoria noticed the other women who had been gossiping with her earlier going in with their respective boyfriends, then coming out with marriage certificates one by one. When each couple left, the man's arm was wrapped around the woman's waist, or the woman was holding the man's arm, and both had blissful smiles on their faces.

Looking at them, she remembered the day Alaric and she came to the state government.

That was a lovely memory to her, in stark contrast to how things were now.

While Victoria was in a daze, she heard someone calling Alaric and her names.

Hearing that, she regained her senses, but she didn't move an inch and simply said, "It's our turn."

Alaric remained silent as well. Nobody knew what was going through his head.

He did not stand up as well.

It wasn't until the staff inside called out their names again that Victoria took a deep breath and finally stood up. "Let's go," she said to Alaric.

Then, she started walking.

"Wait!" Alaric said subconsciously, motioning her to stop.

Victoria came to a halt when she heard that, and she bit her lower lip to restrain herself from turning her head back.

Her entire mouth was filled with the taste of blood and the pain she was feeling made her more clear-headed than she had ever been.

The next second, she heard herself asking, "What's wrong?"

She didn't even turn her head to face him. Seeing such an attitude from her, Alaric furrowed his brows. Just as he moved his lips and was about to say something, his phone rang.

As if the call was the savor she had been waiting for, he quickly said,

"Answer your phone call first. I'll wait for you there."

She continued to walk forward immediately after her words.

However, she only managed to take one step before Alaric grabbed her wrist.

"Wait a moment for me." Alaric held on to her wrist with one hand and took his phone out with the other.

When he saw the screen showing who the caller was, he frowned. "It's

from the nursing home.”

At that, she turned around and stopped wiggling her wrist away from his grip.

“Has something happened to Grandma? Quickly pick up the call!” Victoria urged, her hands clutching Alaric’s tightly.

Alaric did not think much about the fact that their hands were clasped and quickly picked up the call.

When he answered the call, Victoria was extremely anxious.

She had no idea why but when Alaric said the call was from the nursing home, she had a bad feeling in her heart.

She noticed Alaric’s expression darkening as he spoke, and she couldn’t help but furrow her brows as well.

When he hung up the phone, Victoria’s heart was filled with fear. She clutched his hand even tighter and asked, “What happened?”

Alaric quickly stood up in response, his actions revealing his anxiety.

“Something happened to Grandma.”

Victoria was immediately at a loss for words.

One minute later, both of them were no longer in the state government building. The employee in charge, who had been calling their names earlier, couldn’t help but lament their absence before calling those further down the line.

When they were on their way to the nursing home, Victoria was so anxious that she couldn't stop herself from biting her lower lip. Her fingers were tangled together, her heart was pounding, and her mind was jumbled.

I was wrong. I shouldn't have gone to the state government first. I should have gone to the nursing home the first thing after I woke up. No... I shouldn't have even come back last night. I ought to have stayed in the nursing home to accompany Grandma.

I know she will be having her surgery today, so why am I such a fool to leave her alone just because she turned me down once?

Victoria closed her eyes and leaned back, reprimanding herself incessantly.

Her mind was swirling and chaotic; images, both clear and vague, kept flashing through her mind.

Alaric was driving fast, but he made sure to adhere to all the traffic laws. He obediently stopped the car when they arrived at a traffic light, but his brows remained tightly furrowed.

While waiting at the traffic light, he felt something was wrong with Victoria, so he turned his head to look at her.

The next moment, he saw blood stains on her lips.

“What happened to you?” he asked, his frown still on his face.

However, he did not get any response.

With a pale face, Victoria had her brows furrowed. Her eyelashes were trembling, and her lips were pursed tightly. She looked as if she didn't hear his voice at all.

Alaric was taken aback by this and quickly held her chin, wanting to separate her lips, but all of his efforts were futile.

Victoria was biting her lip hard and a faint trickle of blood began to flow from her mouth as she resisted Alaric's force.

“What are you doing, Victoria? Open your mouth!” Alaric wanted to exert more force, but he was afraid of hurting her. Hence, he could only yell at her, hoping she came to her senses.

However, she appeared to be so engulfed in a nightmare that no amount of yelling could bring her back to reality.

Suddenly, he recalled something at this precise moment.

Victoria had been raised without her mother since she was a child. Her father adored and even spoiled her and to outsiders, she appeared perfect, as if nothing could irritate her. However, **if** someone made a joke about or mentioned her mother, she would explode.

This showed that she still cared about her mother, who was never by her side.

Subsequently, she went to the Cadogan Family. Griselda doted on Victoria as if she were her granddaughter. With this, Victoria not only received love

and care other than from her father but also realized and felt the difference in parental love between a man and a woman.

She told Griselda a lot of her secrets as well.

This was something Alaric discovered by accident when he was young.

Victoria frequently visited the Cadogan Family when she was younger. At first, she came to look for Alaric but as time passed, the person she looked for was Griselda. There was once when Alaric returned home and was told that Victoria was with Griselda in the garden, and he went over as well.

He overheard a young Victoria telling Griselda about her menstruation.

Victoria complained that she had a heavy flow and that her stomach hurt, and she wished for a warm hug from Griselda.

Then, he also overheard her complaining about how her menstruation had stained her favorite white dress and how she felt sorry for not being able to wash it clean.

She told Griselda everything, including those she would never tell anyone else.

Alaric had originally intended to look for Victoria at that time. When he heard what she was complaining about, he became embarrassed and stood there motionless.

Naturally, he did not approach them in the end.

Returning his thoughts to the present, he could see that Victoria had a

different and deeper feeling toward Griselda based on how she was now. She appeared to have devoted all of her feelings for her mother to Griselda.

After calming himself down, Alaric calmly tapped Victoria's fair cheeks. "Wake up, Victoria. Grandma is fine."

Chapter 57

However, no matter how many times he called her name, she made no response. It was as if she had completely shut herself off from the rest of the world.

Alaric was getting increasingly anxious as he looked at her..

The traffic light had turned green. His car did not move, and all the cars behind him began to honk impatiently.

Alaric heard the endless honking as well, but he ignored it and abruptly bent over. Lifting Victoria's chin, he kissed her lips.

Just as he had expected, her teeth were tightly gritted together. He couldn't break through them no matter how hard he tried.

With his brows furrowed, he then moved his hand to Victoria's waist and lightly pinched her.

Victoria was a ticklish person.

Hence, though she didn't yell and dodge like she usually did, her stiff body

still reacted to the pinch.

Alaric quickly took advantage of her short response time to pry open her rows of white teeth.

Because of the proximity, he immediately detected the strong scent of blood. However, before he could even blame Victoria for doing this to herself, he felt a painful sensation that caused him to furrow his brows and groan loudly.

“Ouch!”

He was in so much pain that he had the urge to push the person in his embrace away.

However, he managed to stop himself from doing so. He then pinched Victoria again, this time with more force than before.

After retracting his tongue and leaving her lips, he quickly held her chin, preventing her from biting herself again. “If you don’t wake up now, Victoria, I’ll do something more to you right now,” he said harshly.

Possibly as a result of his harsh tone, Victoria trembled slightly and she slowly relaxed her jaw.

After regaining her consciousness, the first thing she heard was the endless, impatient honking sound, together with the yelling and cursing of the other drivers outside the windows.

What made her even more startled was the breathless man right in front

of her face.

His masculine aura surrounded her and his fingers were still holding onto her chin.

“You’re finally awake.”

Victoria blinked several times and her blood–stained lips moved as well.

Just as she was about to say something, Alaric let go of her chin and started driving.

After a while of the car steadily proceeding on the road, Victoria finally remembered what had happened earlier.

She then secretly looked at Alaric and noticed that his lips were stained with blood as well, most likely caused by her.

Perhaps aware that she was secretly looking at him, Alaric suddenly opened his mouth and said aloofly, “If you’re awake, clean yourself up.

You’d be scaring people at the nursing home otherwise.”

Given that she was in the wrong, she didn’t talk back and merely took her mirror from her bag. The moment she saw herself in the mirror, she was taken aback.

A large pool of blood had formed at one corner of her lips, leading to her chin.

If she truly reached the nursing home looking like this, everyone would surely be terrified.

With this, she quickly pulled some wet tissues from her bag to clean herself. When she pressed the wet tissue against her lips, the pain caused her to take a deep breath.

“Ouch! It hurts,” she exclaimed reflexively. Then, as if she thought of something, she fell silent.

But Alaric had heard that. With a sneer, he said, “Why did you bite yourself so hard? If I didn’t stop you, you would have bitten yourself to death.”

Victoria knew she was at fault and could only apologize.

“I’m sorry. I’m not sure what happened earlier, but I just couldn’t stop myself. Your... Is everything okay with you?”

She deliberately asked him in a general manner.

When she spoke, her lips moved as well and that hurt. She could only try to tolerate the pain.

Alaric, on the other hand, narrowed his eyes and asked grumpily, “My what? Why didn’t you continue?”

Victoria was rendered speechless.

She could only purse her lips tightly and remain silent. Their relationship was so awkward now that she had no idea what to say.

“Don’t you dare to continue?” Alaric persisted.

Victoria simply lowered her gaze, feeling uncomfortable.

Alaric found her demeanor amusing. “Luckily I’m not dead. It was only my

tongue that you nearly bit off,” he said, his voice cold.

Hearing that, Victoria raised her head, appearing to be shocked.

“Was it that serious?”

“Isn’t it obvious from the injury on your lips?”

Victoria was at a loss for words again.

He’s right. I saw myself in the mirror earlier. I bit myself so hard, let alone him.

She could not think of anything to say in response. As such, she lowered her gaze and apologized once again.

“I’m sorry. If I do the same thing again the next time, just leave me alone.”

However, Alaric frowned when he heard that.

“The next time, you say? Do you enjoy hurting yourself, Ms. Snowball? Don’t you ever allow the same thing to happen again, you hear me?”

If he wasn’t by her side today, it would be fatal.

“I have no control over it, so how will I know if it will happen again or not?”

Victoria muttered.

Alaric swept her a glance, his face solemn.

She’s right. No matter how many times I shouted for or spoke to her earlier, she appeared to be completely oblivious. Her mind was trapped and only her body reacted slightly to external stimuli.

I’ll have to take her to the doctor when this matter is over.

After making up his mind, Alaric murmured in a low voice, “Grandma has only fainted. Although her condition is unclear now, she has been in good health recently. Even if there’s anything wrong, the worst that could happen is that she won’t be able to have her surgery in these few days. Don’t scare yourself.”

Given what had happened earlier, Victoria had also calmed down.

I was indeed too panicked.

I was so terrified that I lost my rationality the moment I heard something happen to Grandma. Thinking back on it, Alaric is right. I should have kept my cool.

“Okay. I got it.”

They then arrived at the nursing home. After the car came to a stop, Alaric opened the door and stepped out, with Victoria following behind.

“Wait.”

Alaric turned his head and looked at her with a frown.

“Why?”

Victoria then handed him a piece of wet tissue. “Wipe away the blood stains on your lips.”

Alaric was stunned for a moment when he heard that. Then, he took the wet tissue and wiped his mouth casually.

However, the blood stains had dried up during their journey here and

couldn't be removed cleanly with simple rubbing. Victoria had no choice but to point to the corner of his mouth and mutter, "There's some over here."

Alaric tried to wipe at it again.

"No. You're wiping the wrong spot," she said.

Alaric pursed his lips and wiped patiently again.

"Why do you keep wiping the wrong place?" Victoria asked.

That made Alaric lose all his patience. With his brows furrowed, he handed her the piece of wet tissue and growled coldly, "Wipe it for me, then."

Victoria was rendered speechless.

She would have thrown the wet tissue in his face because of his cold attitude if it hadn't been for the fact that he was injured as a result of her.

She then took the wet tissue from Alaric and began wiping his mouth.

As he was tall, Victoria had to go on her toes to wipe his mouth, which caused her some effort. Noticing this, Alaric silently bent forward a little, his gaze dark.

But that did not escape Victoria's eyes. Her eyelashes fluttered as she realized what he had done. She continued to wipe the blood stains at the corner of his lips with care while also checking his lips for other injuries.

Her gaze was lowered. Hence, Alaric was unaware of what she was doing.

While she was checking his lips, he was examining her as well.

After a while, Victoria heard Alaric ask, “Didn’t you say you slept well last night?”

Chapter 58

Victoria instinctively looked up and glanced at him after hearing what he said. She felt rather self-conscious when she gazed directly into his deep, dark eyes—she felt as if he could read her mind then. She hastily looked away before responding in a nonchalant tone. “Yeah.”

“Is that so?” Alaric narrowed his eyes before looking at the area under her eyes, which she tried to cover up with her glasses. “Why do you have dark circles, then?” Alaric seemed to realize something the moment he finished his sentence. “That explains why you’re wearing your glasses today.”

Victoria didn’t know what to say. She pulled her hand away before shooting him a disdainful look. “I’m done cleaning up for you, but you have a cut on your lip. You should get some medication for it later. Come on, let’s go look for Grandma.” Victoria turned to walk after finishing her sentence, while Alaric hesitated for a while more before going after her.

“You have bloodshot eyes, which shows that your eyes are tired. Did you not sleep last night?” he asked. Victoria finally turned around to snap at him. “That’s enough, Alaric.” Then, she hastened her footsteps, her high heels clicking on the ground.

After speaking to the doctor, they found out that Griselda fainted because

she had been too anxious. Her vital signs were all fine, and she didn't show any other significant problems after arriving at the hospital. The three of them heaved sighs of relief after hearing the news. Thankfully, she only fainted because she was nervous! I'm glad there's no other issue, Victoria thought.

"I wouldn't recommend for her to get surgery with the current mental state that she's in," the doctor uttered with a frown. "Mental illnesses can lead to more severe problems as well. She's physically prepared for the surgery, but her weak mental state might lead to other issues," the doctor advised.

"What should we do now, then? Do you have any ways to fix this, Doctor?" her down for now, but we may also need her family to be around for some counseling sessions with a psychologist," the doctor said. Victoria understood the situation then—Griselda's issue was still more of a psychological one than a physical one. Victoria pressed her red lips together to form a glum look on her face.

Alaric walked over to give her a hug. "We understand. We'll do our best to support her treatment. We'll excuse ourselves for now," he said in a calm voice. "Sure. You guys should pay Old Mrs. Cadogan a visit now," the doctor replied. Alaric led Victoria—who felt like she was floating around in a daydream—out of the office and toward Griselda's ward.

There were two nurses keeping watch in Griselda's ward, and they got to

their feet to greet Victoria and Alaric when they walked in. “Old Mrs. Cadogan is still asleep for now, but she’s doing fine. You guys don’t have to worry,” one of the nurses said.

Victoria nodded with a heavy feeling in her chest. “Thanks. We can keep an eye on her now, so you guys can go on with your other jobs,” Victoria offered. Then, she took a seat by the side of Griselda’s bed. Her movements were gentle and careful, and she seemed as light as a feather even when she sat down on the chair. She didn’t make any noise at all.

Griselda, who was still fast asleep, had a peaceful look on her face. She still had the same elegant aura despite all the time she spent in the nursing home. One could tell that she was a special lady even just by looking at the way she lay silently on the bed. Both Victoria and Alaric were silent as they stayed in the room.

Nearly half an hour had passed when the sound of a phone ringing filled the air. Victoria instinctively glanced in Alaric’s direction, and he hastily pulled his phone out to put it on silent. Since both Alaric and Victoria were sitting by the old lady’s bed, Victoria was close enough to see the caller ID on Alaric’s phone—it was a call from Claudia. Victoria met Alaric’s gaze for a moment before she looked away. “You should go out to pick up the call,” she whispered.

Alaric was silent for a while before he walked out to pick up the call. After he went out, a rather disheartened look flashed in Victoria's gaze. Why is Claudia calling him at this time? Did he tell her that we're getting a divorce today? Is Claudia calling to ask if we've successfully gotten a divorce?

Meanwhile, Alaric made sure to walk a distance away from the room before he picked up Claudia's call. "Al?" Claudia's voice came from the other end of the line. Even though Alaric wasn't in a good mood, he still tried his best to sound pleasant. "Yeah. Why are you up so early?"

Claudia sounded worried. "I've been awake for a while, actually. I didn't get much sleep last night as I was worried about Old Mrs. Cadogan. How is she now? Al, I know this might not be a good time to make such a request, but I'm really worried about Old Mrs. Cadogan, so... Can I drop by to visit her? Don't worry—I'll make sure that she doesn't see me. I'll just stay outside, and I'll leave when she wakes up. I won't go in at all," Claudia uttered.

Alaric raised his eyebrow when he heard how meek she sounded. She was his savior, and she didn't deserve such treatment. Alaric was tempted to agree to the suggestion, but he eventually decided against it when he considered Griselda's condition. "Grandma hasn't gone for the surgery, Claudia."

Claudia paused for a while after hearing his words. "Is that so? Was the

surgery delayed, or...?”

“Yeah. The surgery was delayed because Grandma got too nervous and fainted.” Alaric glanced in the direction of his grandmother’s room as he spoke. “The surgery will be delayed for quite a while.”

“What? It’s... It’s going to be delayed?” Claudia froze as she glanced at the red wine and steak that she had prepared. She had even placed some scented candles on the table. She hadn’t expected such a situation to

Chapter 58 That’s Enough, Alaric

arise at this point.

“Yeah. We’re not sure how much longer it’ll take until Grandma gets the surgery. She’s still asleep for now, so I’ll contact you later on.” Alaric ended the call and walked back to the room after that.

Beep, beep. Claudia froze when she realized that Alaric had ended her call. One of her friends walked out from the room next door, and the friend walked over to tease her when she saw that Claudia had placed her phone down on the table. “How is it going, Claudia? Did you make the call?”

Claudia nodded. However, her friend didn’t seem to realize how low her spirits were. “Woah. Congratulations, then! Is Alaric coming over later? Can we stay back to celebrate with you guys?” the friend asked excitedly.

“Yeah, Claudia. Your precious Al is finally free of that woman. You’ll officially

become Mrs. Cadogan after this, won't you?"

"Oh, Mrs. Cadogan, please don't forget us after you become all wealthy and powerful!"

"You'll have to share some of your wealth with us once that happens. I'm expecting to get a VIP seat at your wedding, you know?"

"Me too, me too! I want to be at the front of the hall! By the way, can you throw the bouquet of flowers in my direction during your wedding, Claudia? I'm hoping to marry my boyfriend by the end of this year!" one friend added.

"Really? Are you planning to get married too? Congratulations," another friend replied. The few friends chatted happily among themselves, and they didn't realize the gloomy look on Claudia's face. The friends seemed to get more and more excited as they spoke.

After a while, Claudia couldn't take it any longer. She looked up and snapped at them. "Can you all stop talking?"

Her friends were stunned as they didn't understand why she was throwing a tantrum. "Claudia..."

"You didn't even try to understand the full situation and are making your own assumptions. None of you even care about how I feel. Don't you think you guys are a bit too much?"

Chapter 59

It was rare for Claudia to throw a tantrum. She was typically gentle and easygoing with others, and people often saw her as the ‘it girl‘ because of how pretty and kind she was. Her friends were, therefore, stunned to see her lose her temper, and they all stared at her puzzledly. The air around them felt especially still, and Claudia only returned to her senses after she realized how silent her surroundings were. She realized what she had just done after she noticed how everyone was staring at her.

Claudia parted her red lips and hesitated for a while before she managed to explain herself. “I’m sorry. I lost my temper as I was in a bad mood earlier. My apologies.” Claudia had no choice but to keep apologizing to maintain their good impression of her. Tears started to form in her eyes before they trickled down her cheeks. Tears started to form in her eyes before they trickled down her cheeks. Her friends had been shocked by her sudden outburst of anger earlier, but they immediately felt sorry for her when she started apologizing and crying.

“What happened, Claudia? Don’t cry.”

“Tell us what happened. We’re all here to help.”

“Yeah, Claudia. Weren’t you on the phone with Alaric earlier?” All her friends started comforting her and handing her tissues. It took them a while before they finally managed to calm her down. Claudia was a gorgeous young lady, and she looked especially delicate and vulnerable when she

cried. She ran her fair fingers across her eyes to dry her tears. “Yeah, we spoke on the phone earlier. They’re not getting a divorce for now,” she muttered dejectedly.

Griselda’s surgery was delayed after she fainted, which meant that Alaric and Victoria’s divorce would have to be delayed as well. Even though Claudia felt rather embarrassed, she knew that she couldn’t hide the truth from others. “What? Are they not getting a divorce yet? Why not?” one of Claudia’s friends asked.

“Yeah. Didn’t they say that they would get the divorce after Old Mrs. Cadogan’s surgery was done? Why are they changing their plans?”

“I know! That b*tch, Victoria, must have shamelessly clung onto Alaric. She didn’t want to get the divorce, did she?” Claudia parted her lips to explain herself after hearing her friends’ words. Right then, another one of her friends spoke up. “I always knew that Victoria was up to something. Do you guys remember how she looked when we last went to look for her? Does she really think that she gets to hold on to the title of being Mrs. Cadogan just because she has been with Alaric for two years?”

“Don’t worry, Claudia. If she tries to snatch Alaric away from you, we’ll make sure to teach her a lesson.”

“We have to give her a taste of her own medicine.”

Initially, Claudia figured that she would have no choice but to wait until

Griselda was done with her surgery. However, after hearing how her friends wanted to teach Victoria a lesson, Claudia was reminded of the child in Victoria's belly. If... If I can use my friends to get rid of the baby in Victoria's belly... How would that turn out? Alaric might find out about this if things ever get exposed, but even in that case, Victoria will no longer be a threat since she no longer has the kid. Furthermore, I won't have to bear any responsibility as long as I'm not the one who hurt Victoria. I'll still be Alaric's savior.

Despite having these thoughts, Claudia still put on a good act. "You guys shouldn't talk about such things. I'm sure Victoria has her reasons," she uttered in a gentle tone.

"What reason could she have? How could one have a reason for clinging onto someone else's boyfriend for such a long time? I bet she just wants to be the third wheel in your relationship. Perhaps she just doesn't want to return Alaric to you. She's such a shameless b*tch," one of Claudia's friends hissed.

"Yeah. Why would she give up on her role as Mrs. Cadogan when she receives so many benefits from it? You're just too kind, Claudia. Why didn't you speak up when Al wanted to have a fake marriage with her?" another friend asked.

Why didn't I speak up? I wanted to speak up, but... Claudia lowered her

gaze without saying much. “Stop questioning Claudia. Don’t you guys know how kind Claudia is? Claudia probably felt sorry for Victoria when she saw how poor Victoria’s family was. Victoria is simply trying to seem pitiful by exaggerating the state of poverty that her family is in. I’ve never seen someone as shameless as her,” one friend uttered.

“Don’t worry, Claudia. We’ll make sure to do you justice this time.”

“Stop it, guys.,” Claudia glanced at her friends with her teary eyes. “I know you mean well, but Victoria has been taking care of Al’s grandmother in the hospital. She’s a thoughtful girl,” Claudia said.

“Is that so? Well, then, we can teach her a lesson after she’s done caring for his grandmother. We have to stand up for you,” one of the friends said after everyone heard Claudia’s explanation.

“I don’t want you guys to do anything silly. I’ll talk to her after this,” Claudia said with a helpless look on her face. Then, she dried her tears before giving her friends a forced smile. “Alright. Let’s finish up this dinner that I prepared. I’m glad I bought more food. I’ll get someone to send more food over if this isn’t enough,” she added.

“Claudia...”

“Let’s stop talking about that matter. We should all get drunk tonight so that we can forget about all our sorrows.” Claudia opened a bottle of wine before she walked over to the cupboard to get more glasses. A few of her

friends looked at Claudia before exchanging glances among themselves.

They came to a decision there and then.

Both Victoria and Alaric took care of Griselda for the whole day. Victoria didn't have much of an appetite that day, so she leaned against the edge of the bed with a sickly look on her face. She looked like she was the patient in the room. Later on, Alaric helped her up to have some food. "You need to eat something," he said.

Victoria frowned. "I don't have an appetite."

"Do you think you're some higher power who doesn't need food to survive?" Alaric muttered after a moment of silence. She didn't have an appetite throughout the day, so she hadn't eaten anything at all. Alaric noticed how Victoria had lost a lot of weight, but he wasn't sure if it was just his imagination. Victoria didn't protest after that, so Alaric handed her a bowl of porridge. "You should eat some, even if you just have a few mouthfuls of it."

Victoria knitted her brows together at the sight of the porridge. She wanted to reject his offer at first, but she hesitated for a moment before taking the bowl from him. She picked the spoon up and forced a few mouthfuls of food into her mouth. She genuinely didn't feel hungry, nor did she have any appetite. However, she couldn't do as she pleased because she now had a baby in her belly. This baby was about to be part of her

family in the future. She knew that it was her duty as a mother to take care of her baby.

Upon realizing that, Victoria found her appetite. She no longer struggled to finish her food, and she took a second bowl of porridge after finishing the first bowl. Alaric raised his eyebrow when he saw her having more food- he was surprised by her sudden change in demeanor. However, he didn't comment much about it since the change was good for her. Both of them finished their meals quietly. Alaric didn't have much of an appetite himself -he typically ate double the amount of what Victoria did, but he only consumed the same amount of food as her that day.

Alaric cleaned up after they were done, while Victoria simply sat on the couch and watched him. She was used to this—they had known each other since they were children, and Victoria would often urge Alaric to clean things up even when they weren't dating. Alaric was usually compliant with her requests, and after that, he would do it before Victoria even told him to. Their interactions followed a regular pattern of Alaric taking care of her and giving in to her needs.

All along, Victoria had been enjoying receiving his care and didn't think too much of it. She even developed a stronger emotional attachment toward him after seeing the way he treated her throughout their fake marriage. However, at this point in time, Victoria observed their interactions without

thinking about their marriage, and she realized that their interactions were pretty much the same with or without them being married.

Chapter 60

It was likely that Alaric was especially attentive and caring toward Victoria because they had been friends since they were kids or because their families were close to one another. Perhaps Alaric treated Victoria like a sister, and perhaps that was why he was nice to her with or without their marriage.

However, what struck Victoria as funny was how she ended up developing feelings along the way. She closed her eyes so that she could stop looking at Alaric. Griselda woke up at around 8.00 PM, and the old lady opened her eyes to find Victoria's face hovering over hers. Victoria's eyes were staring into Griselda's, and the tip of her nose was practically touching Griselda's. She looked extremely worried. "You're awake, Grandma. How are you feeling? Are you feeling any discomfort? Are you hungry?"

Griselda curled her lips into a smile as she looked at the fair-skinned and wide-eyed girl before her. Victoria was obviously concerned, so Griselda

quickly shook her head. This young girl is so sweet, Griselda thought to herself. It was likely that Alaric was especially attentive and caring toward Victoria because they had been friends since they were kids or because their families were close to one another. Perhaps Alaric treated Victoria like a sister, and perhaps that was why he was nice to her with or without their marriage.

However, what struck Victoria as funny was how she ended up developing feelings along the way. She closed her eyes so that she could stop looking at Alaric. Griselda woke up at around 8.00 PM, and the old lady opened her eyes to find Victoria's face hovering over hers. Victoria's eyes were staring into Griselda's, and the tip of her nose was practically touching Griselda's. She looked extremely worried. "You're awake, Grandma. How are you feeling? Are you feeling any discomfort? Are you hungry?"

Griselda curled her lips into a smile as she looked at the fair-skinned and wide-eyed girl before her. Victoria was obviously concerned, so Griselda quickly shook her head. This young girl is so sweet, Griselda thought to herself. Victoria licked her lips nervously when she saw Griselda shaking her head and keeping quiet. Eventually, Victoria ended up holding her

hand up in front of Griselda.

“Look at me, Grandma. What number is this?” Victoria asked.

Griselda could clearly tell that Victoria was sticking two fingers out, and she had intended to part her lips and give the right answer when she came up with an idea. “One,” Griselda said, just to fool around with Victoria.

A look of shock appeared on Victoria’s face after she heard Griselda’s answer. “Grandma...“.

Victoria was just about to call the doctor when she felt Alaric holding her wrist. “Let go of me. I need to get a doctor,” she uttered with a stunned look on her face. Alaric stared at her for a moment without letting her go. “Are you sure about this?” he asked in an exasperated tone. The old lady let out a light chuckle then. “I was just fooling around, you silly girl. I’m fine.”

Victoria noticed the smile on Griselda’s face the next time she looked at her. So... She said the wrong answer on purpose earlier? She isn’t just feeling fine—she even feels good enough to play a trick on me, huh?

Victoria finally heaved a sigh of relief. “You really shocked me there, Grandma,” Victoria uttered as she reached over to give Griselda a hug.

After that, Victoria fed Griselda some porridge. Griselda slowly consumed

the food with big gaps of time between each mouthful.

Griselda no longer wanted more porridge after finishing half a bowl of it.

She had just woken up, and her digestive system wasn't as efficient as a young person's, so Victoria decided that she wouldn't convince Griselda to eat more. "I'll feed you again when you're hungry later," Victoria offered.

Griselda didn't say much after that—she simply sat around in silence.

Meanwhile, Victoria was a lot more occupied. She was a thoughtful girl, so she hurried off to the washroom with a towel after Griselda finished her meal. Victoria then soaked the towel in warm water and gave it to Griselda to clean her hands.

"You guys should head home," Griselda announced after some time.

Victoria **froze**, and Alaric raised an eyebrow after they heard what Griselda said. "What are you talking about, Grandma?" Alaric asked.

However, Griselda continued on with a calm and peaceful tone—she didn't seem bothered by his harsh tone at all. "I'm old, and you guys shouldn't waste your time on me. Sleep is really important for youngsters who are your age. You guys should head home to rest. I have the nurses with me," she uttered.

Even Alaric could tell that something was wrong with the claims that Griselda was making. “What do you mean when you say we’re wasting time, Grandma? We’re spending time with you in the hospital. How is that a waste of time?” he asked. Victoria took one glance at Alaric, and she could tell that the vibe was off. So, Victoria lowered the things in her hands before walking over to Griselda. “We’re not just spending time with you out of a sense of duty, Grandma. We genuinely want to be here with you. How is that a waste of time?” she asked gently.

Griselda patted the back of Victoria’s hand to show that she had no intention of losing her temper with Victoria. Then, Griselda turned to look at Alaric. “You should bring Victoria home to get some rest. I’ll be fine as the nurses will take care of me.” Victoria didn’t understand why Griselda would reject their company when she had just woken up. After Alaric heard Griselda’s words, he didn’t move—he simply stayed in his seat with his lips pursed. A glum look formed on his handsome face.

“Are you going to disobey me, Alaric?” Griselda said again.

Alaric knitted his brows together, and Victoria hastily stepped in front of him. “Do you have any concerns, Grandma? Do you want to talk about it?”

Victoria was worried to see the way Griselda was acting especially since Griselda had just fainted earlier.

“I don’t have any concerns. I just think that my mindset changed after I aged. I don’t want you guys to work so hard just to care **for** me. I don’t want to bother you guys.” Griselda heaved a sigh as she continued

Chapter 60 Caught Feelings

speaking to Victoria in a gentle tone. “I don’t really care if I do the surgery anymore, Victoria. It’s not important to me.”

Victoria’s expression darkened upon hearing Griselda’s words. “What do you mean, you don’t care? What do you mean it’s not important, Grandma? You’re still healthy enough to recover from it, and the doctor says that the surgery will be a success. Are you afraid? In that case, I’ll stay with you all the way until you get the surgery done, okay?” Victoria panicked when she heard that Griselda didn’t want to do the surgery.

Victoria hastily held onto Griselda’s hand before crouching down on the floor with a look of panic on her face. It was almost as if Victoria was the one who had to get surgery.

Griselda felt bad when she saw the look on Victoria's face. They had known each other for years, so Griselda knew that Victoria had never received any motherly love in the past. Griselda understood that Victoria became dependent on herself as she was a female elderly figure. If Griselda had been any younger, she could see Victoria treating herself as her mother.

"Okay, Grandma?" Victoria gazed at Griselda with a hopeful smile on her face. "I'll stay at the nursing home with you, or... If you don't like the nursing home, we can go somewhere else. The doctor said that you can do the surgery whenever you don't feel nervous about it," Victoria uttered. Her comment on the nursing home was exactly what Griselda needed to hear. Griselda pressed her lips together without agreeing or disagreeing with Victoria. When Victoria saw the look on the old lady's face, she had a feeling that she might have hit the bullseye. So, after giving her words. more thought and after considering the whole situation earlier, Victoria tried to offer another suggestion. "Why don't Alaric and I bring you home?" Alaric, who had been listening to their conversation, glanced at Griselda as well.

Griselda still kept quiet for a while, but she later gazed at Victoria before she shook her head. “Grandma?” Victoria was puzzled. Did I get it wrong? I thought Grandma would prefer to go home with us. I thought Grandma no longer likes it here because she has stayed here for too long.

“I don’t want to go home. I don’t want my presence to bother you guys. At least there’ll be people to care for me in the nursing home,” the old lady uttered flatly while waving her hand. “It’s getting late. You guys should head home now. You can just get a nurse to stay with me. I’m getting tired, and I need more rest,” Griselda added.

Victoria wanted to say something else, but Alaric held her arm and helped her stand up. “All right. You should get some rest, Grandma. We’ll come back tomorrow.” Upon hearing Alaric’s words, Victoria shot him a look of disbelief. She was about to push him away when Alaric shot her a glare. His grip on her was firm, and he quickly led her out of the ward.