

Departure with a Belly Chapter 526

Departure with a Belly Chapter 526

Chapter 526 For Your Sake

“No way.” Alaric looked at Victoria with a darkened gaze. “Grandma is old, and you need rest. What if you faint in the bazaar? They can’t look after you.”

“I know I may not be physically fit, but I doubt I’m so weak that I’ll just faint in the bazaar,” Victoria replied speechlessly. After all, she felt a lot better than she was the day before after waking up. Therefore, she believed she should be fine visiting the bazaar, only to be frustrated and disappointed to hear Alaric’s disagreement about her decision.

In fact, the reason behind the disagreement between the two of them was that they were too worried about each other. Due to Alaric’s wounds, Victoria wanted him to have enough rest, or he could suffer from a rupture every day, which could delay his recovery. On the other hand, Alaric was aware of Victoria’s poor health due to her improper diet. While the bazaar was crowded with people, it would make it even more troublesome if she fainted there, not to mention the fact that it would panic his grandparents.

Despite the care they had for each other, neither of them was willing to give in, even though they knew they could put themselves in a situation that could threaten their health. After a few moments, the duo still couldn’t settle their argument until Mary came knocking on the door.

“Victoria, Alaric. Are you both ready?”

When Victoria heard Mary’s voice, she said, “I’m ready, Mom, but Alaric isn’t coming with us.”

“What?” Mary was stunned when she learned that Alaric was not coming with them. Before she could respond, the door was suddenly open, whereupon her son’s glacial look appeared right in front of her.

Alaric spoke with a chilly voice, his hand still on the door like he was trying to block something. "Mom, Victoria isn't going to tag along either."

Mary was stunned upon hearing the duo's response, wondering what was going on between them.

"I want to go, Mom." Victoria's voice came from behind Alaric. Nonetheless, Mary could tell that Victoria was trying to circle around Alaric to talk to her, but because Alaric kept getting in her way, she couldn't come any closer to her. "Move, Alaric. I'm going out. So, step aside."

Alaric answered coldly, "If you don't let me come along, we should both stay home."

"I'm doing that for your sake."

"I could

say

the same for myself."

"How unreasonable!" Victoria began to lose her temper.

"Say whatever you want." Alaric pursed his lips. While he would usually apologize first in almost every argument with Victoria, it seemed that he was pretty adamant about not giving in this time.

"Step aside, Alaric. If you don't step aside, I'm going to miss the bazaar."

"Good. That means you can forget about it."

"Alaric!"

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Mary squinted when she witnessed the quarrel between Alaric and Victoria. "What's wrong with both of you? Why won't either of you let the other go to the bazaar?" As soon as her question was heard, Alaric and Victoria simultaneously went silent. It was

then that Mary sensed something amiss between them. As the aura she radiated grew stronger and more dominating, she folded her arms and stared at her son and daughter-in-law. "What's going on? Is there something you two are hiding from me?"

"You! Tell me." Mary shifted her gaze to Alaric when Victoria only responded with a silent blink.

Alaric pursed his lips and answered with a glacial look on his face. "She just came back from overseas and is still weak, so I don't want her to exhaust herself."

Mary agreed with her son's point. After all, Victoria's skinny physique and sickly look made her look like she was unwell and weak. Thus, she understood why Alaric wouldn't allow her to go to the bazaar. Nevertheless, she quickly became curious about why Victoria didn't want him to leave home. "What about you then?" She then stared at her son with a piercing gaze. "Why does Victoria want you to stay home?"

When Alaric pursed his lips without saying a word, Mary raised her voice and sized her son up, wondering if he was hiding anything about his injury from her. "What's wrong? The cat got your tongue or something?!" At the thought of that possibility, Mary couldn't help but feel speechless about it. Nonetheless, despite the pressure that Mary was imposing on him, Alaric still refused to talk, forcing his mother to turn her attention to Victoria, to whom she showed a gentle smile.

"It looks like he won't talk. Why don't you tell me more about it, Victoria?" Mary sounded like she was trying to coax a child into telling the truth.

"Fine..." Victoria helplessly said upon noticing Mary's expression.

Upon hearing Victoria's compromise, Alaric frowned in a worried manner, nervously wondering how his mother would react if she learned the truth from her. Just as he was hesitating about what to do, he heard Victoria say, "Mom, I don't want him to come along because he doesn't want me to."

As soon as he heard Victoria's response, Alaric's furrowed brows began to relax. He then gave her a loving look, appreciating just how quick she was on her feet. *That's actually a perfect answer.*

As Alaric expected, Mary was stunned for a few seconds upon hearing Victoria's answer, which was a lot different from the one she expected. After all, she was expecting to hear an answer that Alaric had been hiding from her about his injury, thinking there was no other reason for them to seem so worried about each other. *Phew, so that's the truth! What a relief!*

Well, the show must go on. Looking frustrated, Victoria said, "Mom, if I can't go, he can't go either."

"Um..." Mary had no idea what she should say next.

Alaric directly said, "I'll just stay home and look after her and the kids."

After hearing Alaric's words, Mary began to agree with her son's point. After all, she didn't think Victoria's health would make it fit for her to go to a place like a bazaar, although she was initially planning to have a family trip.

I wouldn't want to be responsible for anything that could happen to Victoria. At the same time, she was also worried about leaving Victoria alone at home, which was why she deemed it was the right thing for Alaric to stay home with her. As for the kids, she also thought it would be better for them to stay home with their parents because they could easily go

missing in a crowded place like the bazaar.

At the thought of that, Mary said, "Sure, in that case, you can wait at home for us to come back while I go to the bazaar with them. Tell me what you need, and I'll be sure to get them for you."

Soon, Alaric went on to tell Mary about the thin pajamas that Victoria was wearing, whereupon his mother agreed to buy two pairs of pajamas that were thicker for Victoria. Then, she went on to ask whether there was anything else they needed. "Are you sure there is nothing else you need?" Mary pondered for a second and asked to which Alaric nodded in response. "Alright then, I'll keep an eye out for it when I get there."

Alaric shook his head. "No need for that. We'll be leaving in a few days' time."

"Oh yeah, you're right. It's not like you guys are going to be staying here for a while. Indeed, you don't need that much stuff. In that case, I'll just buy two sets of pajamas then," Mary replied.

"Thanks, Mom."

As soon as Mary left, Victoria immediately glared at Alaric. In the meantime, Alaric was, of course, happy with the news that Victoria was told to stay home. Nevertheless, when she glared at him unhappily, he only responded with a smile and walked off before she could throw a tantrum at him "I'll go get the kids."

Chapter 527 Sad Memories

Although Victoria initially wanted to lecture Alaric, she somehow calmed down when he volunteered to bring the kids over. As soon as Alaric was gone, she returned to the room and tidied up her clothes instead.

Ten minutes later, Alaric came over with the children. When the kids saw Victoria, they immediately ran up to her and gave her an intimate hug, like they had not seen her for a long time. "Mommy!"

In the meantime, Victoria had been missing Nathan and Nicole for the whole night since she met them the day before. Therefore, when she felt them in her arms, she was overwhelmed with joy and euphoria. As the children were enjoying their mother's cuddle, they suddenly thought of something and asked, "Where are Grandma and the rest?"

"They went out." Alaric crouched down in front of Victoria and caressed the children's heads. While Victoria nodded upon hearing Alaric's response, the man went silent for a few seconds and added, "The kids wanted to tag along to the bazaar. They were curious."

Victoria paused and looked at the children. "Do you two really want to go to the bazaar?"

When Nathan and Nicole heard their mother's question, they nodded, only to shake their heads shortly after. They then seized her arm and said, "We're not going anywhere without you, Mommy."

"That's right. We want to stay with you, Mommy."

The children's heart-warming words put a bright smile on Victoria's face, filling her heart with love and strength. "Alright then, keep your promise and stay with me, kids."

Although they didn't tag along with Mary to the bazaar, Alaric suggested that they could go on a family trip, since they had nothing to do at home. While Victoria was going to agree at first, she quickly changed her mind at the thought of Alaric's injury. Due to that, she believed it was best for Alaric to stay in bed and rest for the next few days. After all, when she was taking a rest in the past few days, it was Alaric who stayed awake looking after her day and night at the cost of his own physical welfare. Therefore, Victoria felt obligated to let him rest in return now that she was already awake, which was why she quickly rejected Alaric's suggestion.

"Maybe not. You need to rest more."

Alaric raised his eyebrows upon hearing that. "I had a pretty good rest last night. You tended to my wound, after all. It's getting better." He chose his use of words wisely so that his children wouldn't understand the context.

"So, what? You still need to rest." Victoria pursed her lips.

"It wouldn't hurt for us to hang out for a bit, would it?"

"No way."

The children were trying to fathom the context of the conversation between their parents. Soon, Nicole looked up and asked, "What are you talking about, Mommy, Daddy?"

Victoria then looked down and smiled, saying, "When the grown-ups are talking, children are not supposed to interfere."

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Meanwhile, Alaric's heart was racing rapidly when he heard the children calling Victoria and him Mommy and Daddy. After all, Victoria had previously not allowed them to call him Daddy, insisting that it was not time for that to happen yet. Nevertheless, the two of them grew closer to each other when Victoria suffered from amnesia, much to Alaric's surprise. Despite the joy that he was feeling at the thought of that, he was quickly put down by his wild imagination which made him wonder whether Victoria would regret it when she recovered from amnesia. *Will she tell the children to stop calling me Daddy by then?* Alaric thought to himself, keeping his feelings hidden inside his heart.

Nicole pouted in dissatisfaction when she heard Victoria's words, but on the other hand, Nathan appeared to be rather calm. Then, as Victoria exchanged gazes with him, she couldn't help but notice the similarities in his eyes and Alaric's. Besides, the two of them also rarely expressed their own feelings, which was especially obvious when she

compared Nathan to Nicole. While Nicole was curious and talkative, Nathan only looked back at Victoria calmly.

How do I describe that feeling? It almost looks like Nathan understands the conversation between me and Alaric. Despite the thought of that, Victoria didn't find it surprising, knowing both her children were smart and witty, including Nicole, although she usually couldn't care less about it.

While Victoria didn't agree with the trip, Alaric eventually decided to go along with her, deeming it fair enough since she listened to him and stayed home. *Fine, let's stay* home then. Although they could kill time by watching television or playing with the toys that Mary bought, Victoria preferred to play Lego with the children instead of allowing them to watch TV.

In the meantime, Alaric was told to sit on the couch and rest. As he was idling around on the couch, he set his eyes on Victoria and the children with a smile and a pair of loving eyes on his face. However, that sweet moment was soon interrupted when his phone vibrated. Upon checking out the incoming call, he looked up and fixed his gaze on Victoria. Strangely enough, it seemed as if Victoria could read Alaric's mind as she also looked up and gazed at him.

As the two of them locked eyes with each other in the living room, the space was so quiet that Victoria could hear the vibration of Alaric's phone. After the phone continued to vibrate for a few more moments, he eventually stood up and announced, "I'm going to answer this phone call."

Victoria nodded, thinking she should respect his privacy, not to mention the fact that the children were still too young to hear the conversation. At the thought of that, she kept her head down, wondering how Bane, Ethan, and Jessie were doing recently as she had lost touch with them since she returned to her country. *Bane might have made a mistake, but I still don't want anything bad to happen* to him. Victoria thought to herself while letting out a sigh.

"Don't be sad, Mommy." Nicole hugged Victoria.

"What's wrong, Nicole?" Victoria paused and snapped out of her trance.

Nicole then stuck out her hand and wiped off the tears on Victoria's cheek. It was only then that Victoria realized she had tears rolling down her eyes. After pausing for a second, she came back to her senses and pulled herself together.

"Mommy?" The children stopped playing Lego and turned their attention to their mother after noticing Victoria's emotions.

Victoria paused for a second and wiped off her tears. She then took a deep breath and said, "Don't worry, kids. I was just reminded of something sad in the past. Anyway, you guys should continue

having fun with your Lego adventure, but-don't tell Daddy about how I felt, okay?" Knowing Alaric would get jealous easily, she had to make sure her children wouldn't let the cat out of the bag. *You can't have the best of both worlds every time, can you?*

Upon hearing Victoria's words, Nicole and Nathan only nodded affirmatively before they went on to play with their Lego. Nonetheless, Victoria's tears had taken a toll on their emotions as they were not as excited as they were a few moments ago.

Little did the three of them know that Alaric, who came back halfway through his way out to answer the phone call, had seen what happened. As the phone had already been switched to silent mode, it was no longer vibrating. After that, Alaric continued to stand there with his eyes fixed upon Victoria until his phone screen brightened up once more. It was only then that he walked away to pick up the call.

Chapter 528 The Best of Both Worlds

Five minutes later, Alaric returned after his phone call. In the meantime, Victoria happened to be sitting not far away from him but didn't ask him anything about the call he had received. Upon sitting down on the couch, he peeked at Victoria but failed to meet her gaze as she didn't look at him at all. Thus, he only continued to sit there without saying a single word. Because of that, the atmosphere became somewhat strange and weird.

Not knowing how long had passed, Nicole eventually fell asleep in Victoria's arms while playing with her Lego. Due to the chilly weather, it was easy for the child to catch a cold, although there was a rug on the floor. For that, Victoria was about to carry Nicole elsewhere, but before she could do that, a tall silhouette came over and carried the child instead. "Let me take care of it."

As Victoria was about to insist that she could do it herself due to Alaric's wound, the man had already carried Nicole in his arms with great ease. Why does it look like he is carrying our daughter so easily like a pet? Wait a second, that's not how I should describe my child! Victoria couldn't help but feel amazed with how effortlessly Alaric was able to handle their sleeping daughter despite the injury he was suffering from. What if he wasn't wounded? Wouldn't it be even easier for him to take care of Nicole if he wasn't hurt at all? Victoria was impressed by how tough Alaric could be.

Not long after that, Victoria stood up and looked at Nathan. "I'm going to tuck Nicole in while carry on with your Lego adventure, okay? I'll be back to join you when I'm done."

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Nathan nodded obediently, whereupon Victoria followed right behind Alaric into the room. Then, she saw him carefully putting her down on the bed before he gently tucked her in. When Victoria saw that, she immediately walked closer and interrupted Alaric. "You need to take off her sweater, or it's going to disrupt her sleep."

Without much experience in looking after a child, Alaric couldn't help but feel panicky upon hearing Victoria's words. "Sweater?"

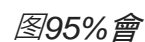
"Yeah." Victoria nodded and removed the blanket that was covering Nicole's body. Thankfully, Nicole was a deep sleeper who was hard to wake. Thus, when Victoria removed Nicole's sweater, the child was able to quickly fall back asleep without a lot of trouble. Upon tucking Nicole in, she gazed at Alaric and asked, "Haven't you looked after a child before?"

Alaric's finger twitched as he puckered his lips. "No."

Victoria was so stunned by Alaric's answer that she looked up and gave him a strange look. How is that possible? The kids have grown up so much. So, I wouldn't be surprised if he told me he hadn't taken care of them in a while, but now that they've grown so much, how is it still possible for him not to know how to take care of them? Does this really make sense?

Faced with Victoria's piercing gaze, Alaric knew he must have given something away by accident. Thus, he only let out a sigh and said, "Because something happened subsequently. When you regain your memory, you'll understand."

Victoria went silent but was not surprised by Alaric's response. After all, she believed there must have been something wrong between them, or she wouldn't have ended up with Bane at that time. Furthermore, it was the only explanation that she thought could justify her subconscious reluctance to hurt Bane. Well, it looks like I have missed out on a lot of things.

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On the other hand, Alaric only responded by giving Victoria a cold and darkened gaze, as if he had something that he had been struggling to get off his chest. A few moments later, he said, "I have something to talk to you about."

Victoria sensed the urge to talk within Alaric, appearing calm as she nodded. "Sure, let's talk outside. We don't want to wake Nicole up."

"Sure."

The two of them left the room while Nathan remained in the living room. With the windows shut, they knew they had nothing to worry about, standing in the corridor. As the corridor was filled with silence, Victoria waited and waited for Alaric to start talking, but the man couldn't seem to speak his mind.

"So, what is it that you want to tell me?" Victoria looked up, only to meet Alaric's darkened gaze that looked like an intimidating bottomless abyss. Suffocated by Alaric's piercin

g gaze, Victoria looked away and asked, "What is it you want to tell me? We've been standing here for ages, and you still haven't spoken a single word. If you think you need more time to organize what you want to ask me, I should go back to Nathan until you're ready..."

"Do you want to see him?" Alaric cut Victoria's words short all of a sudden.

Victoria was stunned as she couldn't believe what Alaric just asked her. Did he just ask whether I wanted to see him? A few moments later, she hesitantly tried to confirm with him. "Do you mean...?"

"Yeah." Alaric nodded and admitted it without mentioning the name.

Nevertheless, Victoria knew whom Alaric was implying, her heart beating rapidly because she didn't expect him to be so frank. In spite of the wild speculations inside of her, she didn't speak her mind because she had a feeling that Alaric would soon talk about the matter that she was seemingly worried about the most.

"Well, if you want to see him, we'll have to go back tonight. I'll take care of the arrangements," Alaric said indifferently.

"No. I'm not going to see him." Victoria pursed her lips and looked down.

Stunned by Victoria's reply, Alaric was seen with a pair of brightened eyes that already darkened on his face not long ago. "What did you just say?" Deep down, he couldn't believe his ears, knowing Victoria had been worried about Bane's safety as she kept checking her phone frequently. Therefore, when Victoria told him that she wouldn't see Bane, he was stunned. In fact, he was expecting a yes from Victoria and a question about when she could meet Bane. Apart from that, he even braced himself mentally for the worst-case scenario, telling himself that it couldn't prove anything, even if Victoria wanted to see Bane in the end. After all, she stayed behind with Bane just so that he could leave safely, and because of that, she even lost the will to live at one point.

Knowing that Bane's feelings for Victoria were true and sincere, Alaric understood why his wife refused to do him any harm. Thus, he kept convincing himself that there was nothing to be jealous of Bane for, but even so, his emotions still got the better of him when he spoke to Victoria. Just as he was waiting for a disappointing answer, he was caught by surprise by Victoria's response. As happy as he was about Victoria's decision, he knew he was not an honorable man who deserved such good news, yet his possessiveness for her was so strong that he didn't think there was anything wrong with it

"Why?" Alaric asked, trying his best to contain the excitement that was about to show on his face.

Instead, she only pursed her lips upon hearing Alaric's question and gently replied, "I've been thinking a lot lately. There are times we can't have the best of both worlds in life, and all we can do is just learn how to accept it."

Despite her desire to meet up with Bane, she knew it wouldn't sit well with Alaric. Since she was in love with Alaric, she had long made up her mind to spend the rest of her life with him, not to mention the fact that he put himself in danger just to rescue her. Because of that, she didn't want to hurt Alaric over an outsider.

Chapter 529 Change of Heart

Although Victoria knew her decision might have been a little unfair to Bane, there was nothing much she could do either. Maybe that's the kind of person I am. A selfish person. I can't please everyone because there is only so much I can do. I've been tired recently, so tired that I even wanted to take my own life and end all the suffering once and for all. Despite her initial suicidal intentions, Victoria subsequently managed to find the strength to live on and the way to make peace

with her bewilderment, thinking she should save her time for the people she loved the most. As for the rest, she would leave it all to her fate, knowing it would only be a waste of time trying to control something beyond her power.

"Don't worry. You're the one whom I've decided to spend the rest of my life with, so you can rest assured knowing I won't see him again." Victoria walked up to Alaric and held his hand. "But please don't be surprised to see me a little down because this is going to last for quite a bit of time. However, I promise I'll be back to normal soon. I just need some time... okay? I'm sorry."

Alaric looked down, staring at his hands within her palms as his heart melted with sympathy. He then pursed his lips like he was trying to suppress something within him, but in the end, his emotions prevailed and prompted him to pull her into his arms. "Please don't be, baby. Please don't."

While Alaric was already grateful enough to have Victoria back with him, the fact that she decided to open up to him only served to add to his joy. In fact, now that Victoria had bared her heart out, Alaric would no longer mind anymore, even if she wanted to meet Bane. At the thought of that, Alaric rested his chin on Victoria's shoulder and closed his eyes happily. "It's okay. You can meet him."

Victoria, who was in Alaric's arms, was stunned when she heard the man's words. "What did you say?"

"I said you're free to meet him. I won't be upset because I'm going to be the one who arranges that." As Victoria blinked in bewilderment, Alaric added, "Well, there is not a word from you. So, I'm going to take your silence as a yes."

Victoria then freed herself from Alaric's embrace and looked up, staring at him. "Are you sure you're not going to be upset if I meet him? What if..." Victoria could still remember the times that Alaric got upset and jealous just hearing her mention Bane's name. Therefore, she was afraid she would provoke Alaric if she met up with Bane.

"Forget about what ifs. You're just going to be standing right before me, so what reason can I be mad at you?"

Victoria went silent, but deep down, she had a strange feeling that something wrong was going on, wondering whether Alaric was just trying to sound her out.

"Alright, I'll tell Grandma about that once Nicole and Nathan wake up."

"Are you sure you want me to meet him? We just told Mom to buy me some new pajamas," Victoria replied.

"Yeah, that's exactly what I was trying to point out, but it's okay. I'll give Mom a call later and see if she has already bought your pajamas. If she hasn't, she won't have to buy them for you anymore; but if she has, it won't matter much either because I believe you'll have a chance to use them on our next visit."

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After hearing Alaric's words, Victoria didn't seem to find anything wrong with that as she nodded her head in agreement. Fine, she already rejected Alaric once earlier, so it's not going to change anything, even if he is trying to sound her out.

"Why don't you go back to the living room and keep Nathan company?"

Victoria nodded. "Alright."

When Victoria returned to the living room, she was fascinated by the fact that she didn't realize how time had passed while talking to Alaric. As she rejoined Nathan, she saw her son already done building the Lego structure he wanted. Surprised and impressed, she complimented her son's resourcefulness. "Wow, I didn't think you'd get it done so soon, Nathan. How smart!" Victoria sat down and caressed Nathan's head, complimenting him in a serious manner.

Nathan blushed in his cheeks upon hearing his mother's compliment. "Thanks, Mommy."

Victoria went on to caress Nathan's head until something crossed her mind. She then told her son about the plan to return home later that night, to which Nathan asked, "What? Are we going back? Aren't we going to stay here anymore?"

"No, we are not, but I promise we will be back here again soon. Do you and Nicole like it here?"

“Yes.” Nathan nodded. “Great–Grandma and Great–Grandpa treat me and Nicole pretty well.”

Victoria couldn’t help but smile and say, “Alright, we’ll be sure to be back again.”

“Okay.” A question crossed his mind. “Can you play with us again when we come next time?” he asked.

“Yes, of course. I’ll be sure to come with you guys, but I may not be able to accompany the two of you during your winter and summer break if you guys are planning to have a long stay here.” Victoria finished her words and reached for her phone, taking a picture of Nathan, who was done building his Lego structure. However, when she was about to post it on her social media news feed, she realized she couldn’t access her account through the cell phone she had. After all, the phone that she had was given to her by Alaric as soon as she was rescued. Yeah, this is a new phone. My old one with my social media account is with Bane. Because of that, she was forced to give up on the idea of uploading the picture onto her social media feed. After that, she saved the picture, thinking she should keep it until Alaric retrieved her phone for her.

Soon, Alaric came closer and said, “The pajamas have been bought, and the rest of the items are on their way back.”

“Alright, I’ll be sure to use them when we come again next time.” Victoria nodded.

“Yeah.”

After Casey learned about the news that they were leaving at night, the first thing she did when she came back was to confirm it. “What? That’s soon. I thought you guys were going to stay here for at least four to five days,” she said in a sad manner upon learning that it was true.

On the other hand, Victoria was sorry that there was nothing much she could do due to sudden changes in her plan. Although Casey couldn’t bear to leave the children, she restrained herself from telling them her sentimental feelings as she only told them to visit her again.

Victoria responded with an affirmative reply to Casey’s request. After that, Casey didn’t say anything else much as she told her husband to pack some food that she had made for Victoria and Alaric to take away. Then, when Casey handed the food over to Victoria, she said, “I made them all by myself. I know they may not taste as good as the food out there and may not last that long, but I can assure you that the food she makes is a hundred percent healthy and natural.”

“Please don’t say that, Great–Grandma. The food that you and Great–Grandpa make is the best. What makes it even better is the fact that they’re natural, unlike any other processed food out there in the market. For that, I’d say your cooking is the best.”

Victoria's heart-warming words melted Casey's heart.

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"That's very sweet of you."

"Nathan and Nicole will still have to go to school when they get back, but I promise I'll bring them along whenever we're free."

"Sure. Sure."

After they went on to exchange pleasantries for a few more moments, Alaric ordered his men to pick up their luggage since they were ready to leave. In the meantime, Mary, who wanted to keep her parents company a little longer, had no choice but to leave early as well because there was no one to take care of Nicole and Nathan. After all, she had been waiting for or years for her two grandchildren to be with her, which was why she was reluctant to separate herself from them again. In the end, she decided to go back with the two of them, but due to the limited capacity of the car, she was forced to find her way back home by taking a cab.

Meanwhile, Victoria, who was embarrassed to let Mary find her own ride, was going to suggest that she take the ride with them, but Mary said, "Come on, I'm not a kid anymore. I can take a cab by myself. Furthermore, this is some quality time for the four of you to spend together, so I must leave you all to it."

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You Look Desperate

"Come on, Mom. What are you talking about? We're a family."

Mary gave Victoria a hug. "You're right. We're a family, but don't you think that's precisely why we shouldn't be too worried about each other? Because that's what we do to our guests. Anyway, I'll be fine by myself. It's just a few hours, after all. Maybe the kids can sleep with me tonight if you really want to make it up to me." Upon hearing Mary's words, Victoria decided to go along with her mother-in-law as she couldn't think of a reason to change her mind. In the end, Mary got into a cab and volunteered to have some of their belongings placed with her since she was the only passenger.

Then, Victoria suddenly thought about the meet-up she was going to have with Bane on their way home, having a lot of questions to ask Alaric in her mind. Nevertheless, as she was about to ask Alaric, she quickly swallowed the words that were forming at the tip of her tongue upon seeing her children. Now *is not the right time to ask*, she thought to herself and decided to put her questions aside.

While the sky still hadn't turned dark, they passed by the same hilly and uneven road that they did last time. Then, Victoria saw several men, who looked like they were preparing for construction, on the road. Upon taking a closer look, she could tell those people were there to repair the road, whereupon she was reminded of what Alaric told her earlier. *Alaric told me the road would be even when we came again, but honestly, I didn't think he would act so fast.* In fact, when Alaric told Victoria that he would get the road fixed, she thought he was just kidding her. After all, she deemed it would take time, even if he was serious about the plan, only to be surprised at the sight of those construction workers. How fast and efficient!

"I believe the road is going to be smooth even when we are back next time," Alaric said.

I don't know how long a road repair is going to take, but I do know that every little bit counts. The more one *contributes*, the *faster* it is going to be done. Victoria thought to herself.

By the time they got home, it was already at night. Then, Victoria stepped out of the vehicle and stood in front of the familiar building, finding it hard to believe that she was back two days after

she left.

On the other hand, Mary, who took her own ride home, was greeted by the two children with a hug as

soon as they stepped out of the vehicle. "Alright, the kids are sleeping with me tonight, right? It's getting late now, so let me take them upstairs and get ready for bed now."

"Mom," Alaric called out to Mary, making her feel nervous.

“What’s wrong? You don’t agree with that?”

Victoria and I had a deal, plus Nicole and Nathan would love to be with their grandmother, wouldn’t they?” Nathan and Nicole nodded together. “See? They would love to accompany me.”

“No, it’s not that.” Alaric then slowly walked up to her and glimpsed the two children. Then, he added, “I’m afraid Victoria and I will have to leave them in your care for the next few days.”

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Upon hearing her son’s words, Mary couldn’t help but feel surprised. Although she knew they were

probably back for some important business, considering their hasty trip, she didn’t think they would be so busy that they couldn’t even look after their children. “Where are you guys going?”

We have to attend to some important business, and we’re not sure when we’ll be back,” Alaric calmly answered.

After hearing Alarie’s response, Mary knew she shouldn’t press on with her questions anymore and decided to nod. “Alright then, go ahead and do what you must. The kids will be safe with me.” She then took the children upstairs, but at that moment, Nicole suddenly shook off Mary’s hand and ran up to Victoria, hugging her leg.

“Mommy, how long are you going to be gone this time?” Nicole seemed sad.

After all, when Victoria told Nicole and Nathan that she would be gone for just a few days, the sibling duo ended up having to wait much longer than just a few days until they reunited with their mother. Furthermore, when they saw Victoria again, she seemed so much skinnier, which worried them a lot. Despite

Nicole’s outgoing and seemingly innocent persona, she was still smart enough to get a rough idea of what was going on with her mother gone. Therefore, when she heard that Victoria was going to be gone again, she became nervous and scared, worried that she would have to wait for god knew how long until she could see Victoria again.

Meanwhile, Victoria might have lost her memories, but her subconsciousness and body language would not lie about her motherly love for her daughter. Therefore, when she heard her daughter's nervous voice, she could roughly tell what made her so worried.

Victoria was overwhelmed by sympathy as she crouched and caressed Nicole's head. "I'll be gone just for a few days, and I'll be back after that."

Nevertheless, Nicole refused to fall for her mother's coax. "Grandma said you would only be away for a few days last time, but in the end, you were gone for a lot longer than that. So, how long are you planning to be away this time? Is it one day or two days?" Nicole stuck out her fingers to illustrate the number of days while asking how long Victoria would be gone.

Victoria was speechless, thinking she must have broken the promise the last time and lost Nicole's trust. Therefore, she reckoned she would probably have to tell Nicole specifically how long she would be away as the little girl didn't seem to trust her anymore. Nonetheless, she couldn't tell an exact date on which she would return because Alaric was the one who arranged everything. Thus, she looked at him as a gesture to ask for help.

In the meantime, Alaric, who was listening to their conversation, met Victoria's gaze and came closer, crouching down with his hand on Nicole's head. "We'll be back in three days; otherwise, we'll see you five days later. Okay?"

"Does that mean the longest Mommy will take is five days?" Nicole asked innocently, fixing her gaze on Alaric.

"Yup."

However, Nicole seemed wary as she went on and asked, "Is that true? Don't lie to me."

Alaric chuckled and gently poked the little girl's nose. "I won't lie to you. If I do, I'm going to let you ride me like a puppy when I get back home."

Victoria, along with Mary, was stunned when she heard Alaric's response. After all, both of them never thought that the same man, who was their husband and son at the same time, would say something like that just to appease Nicole. What? Let *Nicole* ride you like a puppy? Seriously,

something like that just to appease Nicole. What? Let Nicole

Alaric? Victoria wondered to herself as she had never heard Alaric say that ever since they were together. Well, I guess *that's* normal because we *only had a son*, but not a *daughter* back then.

"Alright! Remember your promise, okay? I'll be waiting for you all at home."

Alaric rubbed Nicole's head and said, "Sure, that's a deal. Now, it's getting late now, so get some rest with Grandma, okay?" Nicole was finally relieved after hearing Alaric's reassurance as she

obediently walked away with Mary.

As soon as they were gone, Victoria asked, "Are we not staying here tonight?"

"No. We're heading to the neighboring town." Alaric shook his head.

Victoria was stunned. "Wait, you mean we don't have to travel abroad?" She thought Alaric would arrange for them to fly abroad so that she could meet up with Bane.

"No need for that. He is back." Alaric shook his head after glimpsing Victoria.

"So, does that mean we're ready to set out now?" Victoria asked after hearing Alaric's answer.

"You look desperate." Alaric gazed at Victoria.

"I was just asking when we should set out. How does that make me look desperate?" Victoria was puzzled.

Alaric smiled and replied. "It doesn't matter, even if you're desperate anyway." Alaric trusted Victoria since she opened up to him earlier, knowing her heart was with him.

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