

## Departure with a Belly Chapter 141

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#### Chapter 141

If it weren't for meeting Victoria at the hospital back then, Samantha wouldn't have been so cautious in her actions afterward. After all, she didn't want anyone to know about the things her daughter had done. Her family was wealthy and powerful, so she felt that her daughter had to be matched with the best man in the world. At first, she was close to Mary because she saw Alaric, the only heir to the Cadogan Family, as a potential match for her daughter. If the Keith Family and the Cadogan Family could become in-laws, their combined developments would be unbeatable. In any case, they wanted to get on board the Cadogan Family's ship. However, they didn't expect the Johnson Family to intervene. In fact, she had openly and secretly disliked the Johnson Family's daughter for a long time. Yet, she didn't expect that the woman who would end up marrying Alaric would be Victoria. As such, she redirected her jealousy and resentment toward Victoria.

The last time she saw Victoria going to the hospital, she guessed that Victoria was probably going to have an abortion, but she didn't know why. With a family background like the Cadogan Family's, if the child was

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Alaric's, Victoria would have revealed it directly to the Cadogan Family, and it would be even better for her to rely on the son. Yet, she had secretly gone to a small hospital to have an abortion.

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Samantha never thought that Victoria, who seemed unattainable on the surface, would cheat on her husband. If it weren't for her daughter also doing things that she found unspeakable, she wanted to expose what Victoria had done. At the same time, she was afraid that Victoria would retaliate by exposing her daughter.

Thinking of this, Samantha tugged at her lips and said, "I haven't been feeling well lately, so I came for a check-up."

After she said that, Sandy walked toward them while holding a registration form. "Mom."

At her daughter's voice, her face changed.

"Is your daughter here too?"

Before Mary could finish her sentence, Samantha said, "I have something

else to do. Let's catch up another day." With that, she turned around and walked away with Sandy.

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Mary wanted to ask more, but they had already gone out of sight.

After a while, Mary said to Victoria, "Victoria, don't you think there's something strange about Samantha? She seemed very nervous." Yet, even after she threw the question out, she didn't get a response. She looked at Victoria and saw that the latter was lost in thought, standing still. "Victoria? Victoria?" Mary called her several times again, pulling her back to reality. When she saw Victoria coming back to her senses and looking at her apologetically, she sighed helplessly. "Why have you been absent-minded all day, Victoria? Did something happen? Why don't you tell me?"

"It's nothing. I was just thinking about something. Don't worry." Victoria chuckled lightly after coming back to her senses.

When she saw Samantha and Sandy, she thought of what had happened in the restaurant that day. Perhaps she sympathized with Sandy, who was in a similar situation, and she felt sorry for the girl.

I consider myself emotionally mature, but it seems like that young girl

still living under the control of her mother. Does she know that the man

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has other women in his heart? I want to tell her so badly. Suddenly, she had this thought in her mind.

Before this incident, she had seen Sandy a few times. Despite Sandy's introverted personality, she would always smile shyly at her whenever they met. Victoria couldn't even imagine someone as malicious as Samantha could have such a cute and shy daughter.

"Victoria? Victoria!" Mary's voice rang in her ears once again.

When Victoria came to her senses, she realized that she had zoned out in front of Mary for the third time today. It made her feel embarrassed and guilty. "I'm sorry, Mom. I'm really not in the mood today. Can't we skip the check-up for now?" This time, she was very straightforward.

Mary was taken aback for a moment but finally nodded in agreement. "If you don't want to do it, we can do it another day."

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"Thank you, Mom." Victoria smiled. "I have other things to take care of, so I'll deal with them first. I'll visit Grandma in the ward later."

Since Mary was an extremely understanding person, she agreed. “Well, go

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ahead and deal with it. I can see that your mind is not here today. I think you won't have the mood to do the check-up if you're not done dealing with that.” Then, she waved her hand at Victoria. “Go ahead. If you need my help, just let me know.” After a pause, she continued, “If you can treat Grandma as your own grandma, you can also treat me as your own mom.”

Victoria was originally planning to leave, but she didn't expect Mary to say these words. Her actions came to a halt, and emotions seemed to be surging within her.

Treat her as... my own mom? What a touching statement. If I had heard it earlier, I would have been happy for a long time. It doesn't seem too late for me to hear this now. At least from now on, I will always remember this statement.

Thinking of this, she suddenly took a big step forward and hugged Mary tightly.

Mary thought she was about to leave, but she didn't expect Victoria to suddenly hug her. At the same time, she could feel the emotions in this

hug. For some reason, she felt a little strange. This little girl must be hiding

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something from me.

Victoria held her tightly for a long time before letting go, and when she did, her face was still a little red, probably from her shyness. "Thank you, Mom. I'll be going now."

"Okay, go ahead." With a smile, Mary watched Victoria leave, and after she was gone, she pulled out her phone to call Alaric.

The phone rang for a while before someone who should've been in an important meeting right then picked up the phone. His voice sounded lazy.

"What?"

Mary was already full of doubts and wanted to ask her son for an answer, but she was taken aback to find that his attitude was so indifferent after he picked up the phone. The last incident had already made her extremely dissatisfied, so her face immediately darkened. "What? Can't I call you if there's nothing wrong?"

"No, it's not that." After denying it, Alaric had no choice but to soften his tone. "What's up?"

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Hearing that his tone had returned to normal, she felt a little more at ease, so she talked about the situation. "Did something happen between you and Victoria lately?"

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Alaric, who had no expression before, narrowed his eyes when he heard this question. Then, he quickly remembered what she had said to him in the car last night. I thought I could let this slide by finding an excuse not to see her this morning. I didn't expect...

At this thought, he frowned slightly and asked in a deep voice, "Nothing happened. What's wrong? Did she tell you something?"

Mary instantly realized something amiss when she heard his last sentence. "Don't try to hide it from me!"

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Alaric frowned at Mary's reprimand.

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He almost spilled the news that they would be divorcing, but when he was about to say it, he remembered trying to hide something when he was young, and his mother had tried to get the information from him.

His mother had tricked him into saying it using her words.

In reality, his mother didn't know the truth at all.

This time might be no different.

While thinking of this, Alaric's dark eyes gleamed.

His mother might be the same woman she had always been, but Alaric was no longer the little child from back then.

"I didn't mean to hide it from you. You've always known there's been conflict between us, right?"

Alaric decided to take a step back.

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If Mary knew about the divorce, she would let it slip after he said that.

Just as expected, when Mary heard him say that, she replied a little suspiciously, "Was it just a minor conflict, though? Things are so tense between you two right now, so how can that be a minor conflict? Or do you not care about Victoria at all, and that's why you think it's minor?"

Alaric fell silent.

"Don't blame me for nagging, but if *you* keep treating the conflict between you and Victoria so nonchalantly, minor conflicts will eventually turn into huge ones, and it'll be too late by then."

When Alaric heard Mary saying that, he didn't retort. Instead, he just stayed silent.

"Forget it, I don't understand youngsters these days. Just don't regret it later."

With that, Mary hung up right away.

Since Victoria didn't have to undergo the check-up, there was no point in Mary staying here. In the end, Mary decisively turned around and went to



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the ward to accompany Griselda.

After Victoria left, she discreetly followed Samantha and Sandy.

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No matter what the others thought, she only wanted to do one thing at the moment; she wanted to tell Sandy the truth.

As for Sandy's decision after knowing the truth, Victoria wouldn't interfere with that.

However, she wasn't sure why they had come to the hospital.

Weren't they always afraid that the others would find out?

As she pondered, Victoria noticed Samantha whispering something to Sandy. Then, Samantha went to the consultation room with her number. Sandy waited for her outside.

Sometime later, before Samantha came back out, Victoria walked over to Sandy.

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When Sandy heard the footsteps, she raised her head. She was stunned when she saw Victoria.

However, she wasn't surprised. They had bumped into each other when they were in the hospital before.

After a few seconds, Sandy put on a timid smile, the same one she had every time they met each other.

"Victoria."

Victoria smiled at her as well.

Sometime later, she sat down next to Sandy.

Perhaps not expecting Victoria to sit, Sandy looked confused for a moment.

“Are you accompanying your mom to the hospital?”

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After taking her seat, Victoria lightly started their conversation with a topic.

Sandy thought Victoria was waiting as well, so she nodded.

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“Yeah, my mom hasn't been feeling well these days.”

When Victoria heard that, she could more or less understand why Samantha would bring Sandy here. Perhaps because she was the one feeling unwell, and she was the one taking the number, she wasn't worried that people would start rumors.

By the looks of it, Samantha wouldn't be coming out anytime soon, so Victoria could chat longer with Sandy.

However, Victoria gazed at the people walking around them.

A moment later, she said quietly, “This isn't a good place to talk. Shall we go somewhere else?”

When she said that, Sandy's originally shy expression shifted, and the red tint on her lips instantly disappeared.

“W-What are we going to talk about?” Sandy asked, stuttering.

Victoria smiled.

“Life, of course.”

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Sandy was speechless.

“What’s the matter? Don’t you want to?”

Noticing that Sandy was getting so nervous that she was gripping her skirt, Victoria couldn’t help but chuckle. “Am I too scary?”

“O—Of course not. I just—”

“Come on.”

Victoria was already standing up.

Sandy bit her lower lip, remaining seated with a complicated expression.

When Victoria saw Sandy like that, she guessed that Sandy already knew what she was going to talk about.

She wasn’t in a rush either, so she found a middle ground.

“There’s a street outside the hospital, and you can find a restaurant serving specialty breakfasts. *Do you know which one I’m talking about?*”

When Sandy heard that, she was a little stunned. She nodded after a

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while. “Yes.”

Victoria lifted her hand and glanced at the time on her watch, then said,

“I’ll be waiting there for you for 30 minutes. If you don’t appear by then, I’ll just leave. You can consider coming over in the meantime.”

Sandy fell silent.

When Victoria finished speaking, she didn't stand there and disturb

Sandy's thoughts. Instead, she left the hospital quickly.

Sandy stared at Victoria's figure thoughtfully, her nails digging into her palms.

Should she go or not? Victoria seemed to respect her, so if she didn't go, Victoria wouldn't come back to look for her.

"Sandy."

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Just then, Samantha came out of the consultation room and called out to her.

Sandy returned to her senses and hastily went up to ask, "How was it,

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Mom? What did the doctor say?"

Samantha was obviously in a much better mood than before.

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"The doctor said that I'm fine, and he asked if I was overthinking things. He told me to be more optimistic, and there's nothing wrong with me."

When Sandy heard that, she couldn't help but lower her gaze.

"Is it because of me?"

"You should know that, Because of you, I was so worried that I couldn't even eat properly, and I lost so much weight. If you care about me, you should listen to me. You shouldn't-"

When Samantha said that, she suddenly paused. “Never mind. The walls have ears. It wouldn’t do to have people eavesdropping. Anyway, you should decide quickly. You can’t delay it any longer.”

Sandy lowered her gaze and stayed timidly silent.

Just like that, Samantha nagged her daughter all the way to the entrance of the hospital. When they were about to get into the car, Sandy suddenly

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said, “Mom, you should go back first. I have something to attend to.”

Samantha, who was already in a troubled mood, immediately said sharply, “Where are you going, Sandy? You’re going to see that man again, aren’t you?”

Samantha even grabbed Sandy’s hand as she nagged.

“I’ve told you so many times that you’re not allowed to see him anymore, so why are you still so shameless? What’s so good about that man? He’s just a poor man, and look at how poor he looks! He just wants to be with you for your money.”

When Sandy heard her mother slandering the love of her life like that, the look in her eyes changed. She wanted to explode, but since the woman in front of her was her mother, she controlled her temper in the end.

“Mom, I’m not going to see him. Why would you think that I’m going to see him every time I want to go out? Do you think he’s the only one left in my

world? Don't I have other friends?"

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However, Samantha didn't trust her at all.

"Last time, you also told me that you weren't going to see him, but what happened next? You went to see him again, and you even got sad when you came back. Isn't that right?"

When Samantha said that, Sandy couldn't even retort.

After a long while, she patiently said, "Mom, I know I was in the wrong last time, and I even lied to you. However, I'm telling the truth this time. If your don't believe me, I'll definitely come back within 30 minutes."

"Within 30 minutes?"

Samantha narrowed her eyes suspiciously at the time frame. If Sandy wanted to see that man, she wouldn't be back within 30 minutes.

Could it be that she had misunderstood Sandy this time?

"Mom, I really have something to attend to." Sandy looked at the time, appearing a little anxious. She feared that if she went too late, Victoria

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wouldn't be waiting there anymore.

Seeing that Samantha was still not open to negotiation, Sandy said

urgently, “If you keep acting like this, I’ll leave the Rogers Family and never come back.”

When she saw that her daughter was getting mad, Samantha finally realized that it would only damage their relationship if she kept acting like this, so she said, “If you’re not lying to me, then I’ll certainly believe you, Sandy. Go ahead. However, you have to keep your promise and come back within 30 minutes.”

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Samantha paused for a moment before adding, “Since it’s just 30 minutes, I’ll wait for you here.”

Sandy silently lowered her gaze.

Just as expected, no matter what she said, her mother wouldn’t believe her.

“Alright, wait for me here. I’ll be right back.”

With that, Sandy left without any hesitation.

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Meanwhile, Victoria had been sitting alone in the restaurant for almost 30 minutes. She ordered the restaurant’s specialty pasta even though she didn’t have much of an appetite, for it wouldn’t be appropriate to sit in a restaurant without ordering anything for half an hour.

Then, she ordered some soup.

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There were quite a lot of customers in the restaurant at first, but the

numbers dwindled after that, and Victoria was the only one left in the end.

Victoria lifted her hand to glance at the time on her watch.

There were only three minutes left before the time she and Sandy agreed on ran out.

Sandy hadn't shown up after almost half an hour.

Just a few minutes were remaining, so Victoria assumed that Sandy wouldn't be coming.

It wasn't a surprise, though. Back in the hospital, Sandy didn't look like she wanted to come. Samantha was a forceful woman too, so it was only reasonable that Sandy wouldn't come.

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Victoria put down her fork and took a sip of the soup.

Perhaps 30 minutes isn't sufficient. Why don't I wait for another ten minutes?

As she was pondering, a slender girl entered the restaurant. The familiar figure caught Victoria's eye, and the two quickly met each other's gaze.

"Victoria."

Sandy held her skirt up as she swiftly walked up to Victoria.

"You're here."

Victoria was reassured to see her.

"I was worried that 30 minutes might be too short, and you couldn't find time to come here."

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When Sandy heard that, she panted as she said, "Thirty minutes is plenty,



but I took the wrong turn on my way here, and I had to take the long route to find this place.”

So that’s what happened. This meant that Sandy had already decided to

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come here early on, but she only came late because she went to the wrong place.

“Are you hungry? Do you want to eat something?”

Sandy wanted to decline, but when she saw the food laid out in front of Victoria, she said, “I’ll have some soup, please.”

“Alright.”

After that, they both sat down. Sandy grabbed a spoonful of soup.

“Didn’t you find it strange when I wanted to talk to you? I can’t believe you’d be willing to come.”

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When Sandy heard that, she raised her gaze and glanced at Victoria, then put down her spoon.

“I did find it a little strange, but... I know you won’t harm me, Victoria.”

Victoria smiled at her. “If you put it like that, I’ll get straight to the point, alright? Your mom will be upset if you go back too late, won’t she?”

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At the mention of her mother, Sandy could only smile bitterly.

“Yes, she’s still waiting for me at the hospital. I’ve already told her it wouldn’t take more than 30 minutes.”

Victoria wasn’t surprised to hear that at all.

“I’ll make it short, then.”

“Okay.”

“Perhaps this might be too sudden to you, but believe me, I have no intention of offending you. That day, I spotted you and your boyfriend in the washroom of a restaurant.”

Sandy thought that Victoria had asked her out to talk about her pregnancy.

However, she didn’t expect Victoria to mention the incident at the restaurant.

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“I accidentally overheard your conversation when I passed by that day. I’m sorry.”

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Sandy smiled. “It’s okay. We were talking too loudly that day, and it’s only normal that someone overheard us.”

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Seeing her forced smile, Victoria continued, “After you left, I bumped into your boyfriend at the entrance of the restaurant again. There was another woman beside him, and when I heard them talking, they sounded like a couple.”

At that, Sandy suddenly stood up in a rush of emotions. She moved so quickly that she even toppled the chair behind her.

Victoria was startled at her movements.

Even the owner of the restaurant looked over at them.

When Sandy realized that her actions were being a nuisance to others, her pale face and neck turned red, and she hastily apologized.

“Sorry! I’m so sorry.”

As she apologized, she picked up the chair and sat back down.

She didn’t say anything as she stared at the table. The

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embarrassment–induced redness on her face had disappeared.

“How... is that possible?”

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Victoria looked at her, fearing that the news might have been too much of a shock to her. Hence, she said carefully, “I know you may not be able to accept this right now, but I’m telling the truth.”

With that, Victoria held Sandy’s hand and said lightly, “Didn’t you notice anything after being with him for so long?”

Even though Sandy didn’t reply, she subconsciously bit her lower lip, and her gaze was a little avoidant.

Seeing her like that, Victoria understood.

“You already knew about it, didn’t you?”

After all, when two people were dating, they would expend effort on each other.

A person’s effort and energy had their limits. If there was another person involved, the effort expended would be halved, so the other party would

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definitely sense that.

She looked at Sandy in front of her, making guesses in her heart.

Perhaps Sandy already knew about this, but she just refused to believe it.

Just as expected, before Victoria asked again, Sandy admitted it herself.

“I suspected it before, but I never verified it.”

When Victoria heard that, her eyelashes quivered. “Was it because you didn’t want to, or you didn’t dare to?”

There was no reply.

Victoria could only continue, “Since you’re aware of it, why did you continue the relationship? You and him-”

Halfway through her words, Sandy suddenly looked up.

“What about you, Victoria?”

“What?”

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“Why would you abort the child? Only people who want an abortion would visit that hospital, right?”

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For a moment, Victoria didn’t know how to reply to Sandy’s question, and she just sat there, stunned.

Sandy sniffled lightly. Perhaps because she was ashamed that someone

had learned about her boyfriend, her eyes were reddened as well.

“Victoria, even though I didn’t know you before, and I don’t like to gossip, I still hear rumors about you these days. You’re not the only woman in your man’s life too. Can’t you deal with your own troubles?”

When Victoria heard that, she finally understood what Sandy was getting

1. at. “You feel that I’m already in a mess myself, so I have no right to tell you this, correct?”

Sandy originally had more or less the same intention.

Sandy felt that Victoria couldn’t manage her own relationships well either, for Alaric had other women by his side. Victoria couldn’t do much about it, and of course, she knew that one couldn’t do whatever they liked when they were in a marriage involving prestigious families.

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Since Victoria herself couldn’t do anything, why should she boss Sandy around?

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However, when Victoria put it that way, Sandy felt like she had gone overboard.

After all, Victoria was just worried that Sandy didn’t know any better, so she told Sandy about it out of kindness.

At that thought, Sandy could only shake her head. “I didn’t mean that, Victoria, I’m sorry... I just feel-”

What did she feel? Even Sandy herself couldn't explain it.

Seeing her at a loss for words, Victoria more or less understood what Sandy meant. "It's okay, there's no need to say more. I'm not blaming you."

Sandy bit her lip. "I'm sorry, Victoria. Did I hurt you just now?"

As Victoria looked at the girl in front of her, she wondered if she should tell Sandy about her upcoming divorce. Suddenly, her phone rang.

Victoria took a glance. It was a call from Bane. Why is he calling right now...

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"Is it an important call? Why don't you answer it?"

Seeing Sandy's pitiful look, Victoria knew that she had to answer the call even if she didn't want to. As such, she could only nod.

"Alright, then. I'll answer the phone."

With that, Victoria went out to answer the call, leaving Sandy alone to ponder.

"Hello?"

Outside, Victoria had already picked up Bane's call.

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"Snowball." Bane's voice sounded gentle even over the phone. Akin to clear running water, his voice was a pleasure to listen to, be it in person or over the phone.

She had always known this fact, but even so, when she heard him calling her 'Snowball', she felt odd, and she couldn't quite accept it.

After all, throughout her entire life, only two people called her that—her

father and Alaric.

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Alaric had always known her pet name, but he rarely called her that. He would only call her 'Snowball' at very specific moments.

"How are you these days?" Bane's voice was lined with a slight smile. "You didn't get found out after going back, did you?"

He was asking about her pregnancy.

Hence, Victoria's thoughts were quickly interrupted as she focused on this matter. "No."

"Good. If there's anything you need help with, just tell me."

"There's nothing much to help with..."

After all, how could a man help with something like this?

"Hmm." Bane didn't expand on the topic as he quickly changed the focus.

"I've said before that I would help you, right? Why don't we meet up and talk?"

Meeting up at this time? Victoria thought for a bit, then shook her head. "I

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can't make it today."

"It's okay, *you* can decide the time. I'm okay with tomorrow or the day after tomorrow."

Victoria thought about it, then said, "Maybe in a few days."

She was now stuck between a rock and a hard place.

“Alright,” answered Bane in response.

After hanging up, Victoria went back to the restaurant.

The girl seemed to have thought things through. When she saw Victoria coming in, she didn't avoid it as she looked Victoria in the eye, saying, “Victoria, about that thing *you* mentioned, I think I'll have to give it more thought.”

When Victoria heard that, she paused slightly, then asked after a while, “Are you reluctant to give up on him?”

Sandy smiled bitterly. “In that case, are you reluctant to give up on Mr. Cadogan, Victoria? I think you're the one who can understand my feelings  
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the best. We're in similar situations, after all.”

She was referring to the fact that they were both pregnant, yet both their men were seeing other women.

When Victoria heard that, she smiled and said lightly, “Do you think we're in the same situation?”

“Are we not?”

“Yes, they look almost the same on the surface, but have you considered the fact that we're of different ages?”

When Sandy heard that, she was stunned. Then, she bit her lower lip in frustration. “Victoria.”

Seeing Sandy like that, Victoria sighed lightly. “You have a future ahead of you, so don't hesitate about certain things. That's all I have to say today.



It's getting late, so you should head back first. Your mom might get worried."

Sandy could only nod, then got up to leave.

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When the girl was approaching the entrance of the restaurant, she seemed to have thought of something as she turned to look at Victoria.

After a moment of silence, she dashed up to Victoria and asked in a small voice, "Victoria, I have a few questions for you."

Victoria said, "Go ahead."

"Will you give birth to the child?"

Seeing the girl's sincere expression, Victoria pursed her red lips slightly.

Sometime later, she nodded gently.

"Yes."

When the girl heard that, she seemed to be surprised that Victoria would answer her. After taking a deep breath, she asked the question she wanted to ask the most.

"Then... are you going to divorce Mr. Cadogan? Or..."

Even though it hadn't happened, and she shouldn't talk about it, when Victoria looked at the girl in front of her, she decided to trust the girl for

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once.

After all, she had gone to Sandy herself.

At that thought, Victoria nodded. "Yes."

Her second reply was firmer than her first.

"I will give birth to the child, and I'll raise the child on my own." Victoria's voice was light as her gaze fell upon the girl's face. Sandy seemed shocked at her determination. "This is just my personal decision. We're different, so you don't have to do it my way."

Sandy originally thought that Victoria hadn't left Alaric because she had no plans for divorce. Through those questions, Sandy could see from Victoria's determination that Victoria must have planned this for a long time. This wasn't something she thought up a few days ago.

Victoria had already made the decision early on, but Sandy foolishly thought that she couldn't let go of the relationship like herself.

At that thought, Sandy finally realized how pathetic she was. She lowered her gaze and said in a small voice, "Thank you, Victoria. I know what to do

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now."

Victoria nodded. "You're welcome."

This time, Sandy turned around and left quickly without any hesitation.

Victoria thought that perhaps her own decision had affected Sandy.

However, no matter what, she wished that Sandy wouldn't be blinded by love. Victoria also wished Sandy could let go and move on.

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After she bid Sandy adieu, Victoria visited Griselda at the hospital

Then, Mary asked whether the matter was settled. Victoria wanted to say that it was all settled, but when she thought about the check-up, she changed her mind and mentioned that there were still some final bits to deal with,

At that, Mary was understanding and did not urge Victoria to undergo the check-up.

Victoria spent quite a long time at the hospital with Griselda, so she was happy when she saw the elderly woman recovering to the point where she had a rosy complexion.

It was just that when Victoria returned home from the hospital, she heard that Alaric would be working overtime at the company. As such, he would not be home for the night.

When Hector relayed the news to Victoria and Mary, Mary immediately frowned. "Is he really that busy in the office that he has to pull an all-nighter after spending the entire day working?"

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At Mary's line of questioning, Hector felt awkward and could only nod in agreement. "Please don't be angry. The company's been busy lately. Otherwise, things won't be like that."

Mary felt discomfort at that while Victoria, who heard the news, didn't

reckon that there was a problem.

When she looked for Alaric earlier in the morning, he mentioned that he needed to attend a meeting and eventually refused to speak to her over the phone. She had already guessed that Alaric was avoiding her.

She just never expected that he would not even return home.

At this thought, Victoria chuckled. You can avoid coming back, but surely, you'll have *to* go to the hospital, right? Grandma is still recovering in the hospital. Alaric can avoid visiting her for one or two days, but can he maintain this routine?

Victoria no longer panicked because a certain someone was surely more anxious than her.

2/0

Someone too susedonere she boog rose onto the tie Ro which caused the tem to shotter into a million pieces in all directions.

However, the person who threw the vse don't seem to think that it was enough to relieve their anger

Apart from the vase, there were some expensive decorations, all of which were smashed onto the ground.

The servants were trembling as they stood outside the door, lacking the courage to intervene.

It was only when Mrs. Johnson came over and the servant reported the incident to her that Claudia stopped throwing a tantrum. However, Claudia was still in a bad mood, so she ended up lying flat on her bed.

**I'm** not in a good mood, Mom. I don't want to talk either, so please leave."

When Claudia's mother saw the mess in the house, she hurried to Claudia's side and cajoled, "You better ask someone to clear the mess. Come and rest in my room. I'll accompany you tonight, alright?"

#### Chapter 145 He Has His Weakest Moments

Claudia originally wanted to refuse the offer but quickly agreed after thinking of something. She burst into tears the moment she lay next to her mother on the bed.

4/0

"We clearly agreed that when Old Mrs. Cadogan undergoes her operation, Alaric will divorce that b\*tch Victoria. But what happened in the end? It's been ages since Old Mrs. Cadogan's surgery, but the two of them have not signed the divorce papers."

It was one thing to not sign the divorce papers, but what made it worse was when she tried to call Alaric, he claimed that he was busy and cut her call.

Claudia felt that in all her years of knowing Alaric, these few months were when she suffered lots of grievances.

"Things were not like that when I left the country, Mom. Back then, Alaric would not have treated me this way, but now I suddenly feel scared. Is it because he doesn't want me anymore?"

When Mrs. Johnson heard this, she was a tad bit worried because the Johnson Family's success came from the Cadogan Family's reputation. If

#### Chapter 145 He Has His Weakest Moments

Mary really doesn't want Claudia to be her daughter-in-law, what will

happen?

At this thought, Mrs. Johnson softly said, "Maybe he doesn't want to meet you because the company's really busy. Have you gone to have a look at the office?"

"Nope." Claudia felt so down that she didn't have the heart or time to visit the Cadogan Group.

"See, before you can even search for the evidence, you already claim that he doesn't want you. Old Mrs. Cadogan has just undergone surgery, so she'll need some time to recuperate. Alaric had been so focused on his grandmother's health that he couldn't sort out the company matters. Now that he has the time, he has to pick up from where he left off. Isn't this normal?"

"But... back then, even when he's sorting out the company matters, he's never behaved like this."

"That was before. After all, he... He has been with Victoria for many years."

At that, Mrs. Johnson also realized the urgency of this matter. "When you

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E

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wanted to head abroad, I disagreed because you wouldn't be able to keep such an excellent man by your side when you're away. Someone might come along and tempt him."

"Impossible." An upset Claudia explained, "I saved his life back then."

"Silly child. It doesn't matter. Men are meant to be kept close to us. And for

someone like Alaric Cadogan? Once you lose him, chances of you meeting another him will be close to nil.”

“What you mean to say is, being his benefactor doesn’t make a difference? But-”

“Being his benefactor means that he’ll be forever grateful to you, but how long can this go on? If you want him to not forget you, then you’ll need to think of something to sway his heart.”

“Sway his heart?”

“That’s right.” Mrs. Johnson then gave her daughter some ideas. “At what stage are you two at now?”

Claudia remained silent.

6/9

Chapter 145 He Has His Weakest Moments

When Mrs. Johnson saw Claudia’s expression, she thought that her daughter was too embarrassed to say it aloud What’s there to be embarrassed about? Have you gone to that stage with him yet?”

B

At that, Claudia’s expression turned sour.

”

It was one thing to avoid the topic, but now that it was brought up, she felt like someone had stabbed her in the chest.

“Don’t talk about it, Mom. We’re only at the stage of hugging.”

Mrs. Johnson was taken aback when she heard that. “At the stage of hugging?! Have you guys even kissed yet?”

Claudia didn't want to answer the question, but as she closed her eyes, her disappointment was obvious.

"I mean, Claudia... You guys have known each other for so long. You've also sought him out often, so how can you guys not have kissed before? I-Is Alaric swinging the other way?"

Such words were enough to make Claudia lose her temper. Of course, Alaric does not swing the other way. If not, how does that explain Victoria's  
7/0

Chapter 145 He Has His Weakest Moments

pregnancy?

3

56%

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Apart from being a normal man, Alaric was also restrained in his ways and would never be as dissolute as other men who would take advantage of their power and status. This was one of the main reasons why women would flock to Alaric.

However, because of his restraining himself, the same women were also frustrated because they would not even have any chance to approach him, save for Victoria, his childhood friend, and Claudia, the woman who saved him.

He had always respected himself and would never overstep the boundaries.

Claudia was dignified and gentle in front of him, so if Alaric did not take



the initiative, she wouldn't throw herself at him either. Otherwise, she would have no idea what he thought of her.

She never felt that there was anything wrong with the way they socialized with each other and was even secretly elated that he respected her.

That was until she heard about Victoria's pregnancy.

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E

At that point, Claudia felt like someone had whacked her *head* with a hammer.

As it turned out, Alaric had his moments of weakness and was not as restrained as he projected himself to be every time.

He could also do other things than cuddling with other women.

Chapter 146

"Claudia, this is impossible."

Mrs. Johnson thought that Claudia and Alaric's relationship was stable and that he would marry Claudia once he divorced Victoria.

Who would have thought that the divorce never occurred?

If Alaric really fancied Claudia, then why didn't he sleep with her after all these years?

"I know it's impossible, Mom. I won't dare to take the initiative because I'm worried about what Alaric thinks."

At this, Mrs. Johnson immediately advised, "Who asked you to take the initiative? You can seduce him and let him make the first move. Claudia, I don't mean to say this, but why didn't you let me know earlier? Don't tell me he doesn't have any impulses!"

Impulses?

Claudia reflected on how they mingled with each other. I've never felt any

1/9  
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Chapter 146 You're Not Avoiding Me?!

impulses from him.

What she felt was Alaric's respect and gratitude toward her.

The more she thought about it, the more she felt that she was in a precarious situation.

"Claudia, you can't go on like this. You need to take action!" Mrs. Johnson, who was beside her, suggested.

Claudia remained silent, but she agreed with her mother's words.

She also knew that they couldn't go on like this. Back then, she always behaved demurely and in a gentle manner, but look at what happened.

Victoria took advantage of the situation and got pregnant with Alaric's child. I can't just sit around anymore. I... I must find a way to have his child!

"Mom, don't worry. Alaric is mine, so I won't let anyone snatch him from me."

It was after dark when Alaric finally returned home.

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To be exact, it was around 1.00AM when everyone was asleep.

He gingerly headed to the bedroom and his gaze dimmed when he saw the sleeping figure. I've been avoiding her for the entire day, but I don't know if she'll come to the office tomorrow to look for me. If she really wants a divorce, then she'll probably be at the office in the morning.

Alaric stood by the bed and watched the sleeping Victoria for a long time.

He finally bent over and gently planted a kiss on her forehead.

The man himself did not expect the kiss.

It was a sudden reaction after observing her.

Then, he couldn't control himself and kissed her upfront.

It was only a peck on the forehead, but as soon as he approached her, Alaric smelled that faint fragrance that she always had.

He suddenly did not want the divorce.

He subconsciously rested his hands on either of Victoria's sides, after which he bent over and merely watched her. His gaze first slid across her

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Chapter 146 You're Not Avoiding Me?!

long, curly eyelashes and her small, delicate nose before her face came into his view. She is asleep with her pink lips slightly parted.

Victoria had beautiful lips with a prominent Cupid's bow. This was his favorite part about her when they kissed.

He had loved it so much that he would gnaw at it repeatedly.

Alaric's eyes darkened before he slowly lowered his hands. Then, his trembling lips landed on hers.

The moment their lips touched, his negative emotions from these few days seemed to dissipate before other kinds of emotions overpowered him.

He knew that he returned home in the wee hours of the morning because he wanted to avoid her. That was because he was worried that once she saw him, she would express her wish to divorce again.

I should not be kissing her anymore. Otherwise, I'll only wake her up... But now that our lips have touched, I can't stop.

He then opened his lips to cover hers.

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## Chapter 146 You're Not Avoiding Me?!

It was at this moment when Alaric's vibrating cell phone brought him back to his senses as he stood up and backed off.

Even though she was asleep, Victoria's eyebrows furrowed slightly, as if she was about to wake up at any moment.

Alaric rushed out of the bedroom before she woke up. He glanced at his phone, only to realize that it was a spam message, and immediately threw the device aside.

Victoria's taste still lingered on his lips as he slumped against the couch and closed his eyes. Not long after that, he reached out and touched his lips. It was as if a spell had been cast on him.

What he really wanted was...

Maybe Norwood struck the bull's eye when he said those words.

As Alaric thought about this, his gaze slowly darkened.

The next day, when Victoria woke up, she heard that Alaric returned home  
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## Chapter 146 You're Not Avoiding Me?!

in the wee hours of the morning. However, when she questioned for more information, she was informed that he had already left for the office.

She laughed in her heart when she heard that. Do you have to take such steps to avoid me? Is it worth it? You're back late but out at the cr\*\*\*ck of dawn? Does he want a divorce or not?

After breakfast, Victoria said to Mary, "Mom, I'm heading to the office, so you'll have to go to the hospital on your own."

Mary nodded in agreement upon hearing Victoria's words. "Go ahead. If you don't go, Alaric is as good as dead. He's at the office the whole day and refuses to come to the hospital. He's such a capable kid, huh?"

After that, Victoria headed straight for the Cadogan Group in the family car.

Peter reached out to her the moment she arrived at the office as if her presence was expected. "Miss Selwyn, are you looking for Mr. Cadogan?"

"Yeap. Where is he?"

"What a coincidence. He just left."

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## Chapter 146 You're Not Avoiding Me?!

Victoria frowned at that.

She had roughly expected Alaric to use such a method to avoid her, but she never expected him to be this useless.

When Peter saw Victoria's frown, he asked in curiosity, "Miss Selwyn, is there anything I can help you with?"

She only regained her senses at his words. Then, she smiled at Peter before she commented, "It's okay. I'll call him instead."

She originally thought of heading to her workplace, but she asked after some thought, "Since he's not around, can I wait for him in his room?"

Peter frantically nodded. "Of course. You are Mrs. Cadogan. If you can't

wait in his room, then no one else can.”

When Victoria saw how he tried to butter her up, she couldn't help but laugh. “Okay, then. I'll head off first, Mr. Levane.”

After that, she went to Alaric's office. There was no one there, so she sat on the couch and gave the man a call, but it was to no avail.

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She refused to give up after the first call was rejected, and she continued to make succeeding calls.

Still, there was no answer. It was only on her third attempt that Alaric finally answered.

He sounded like he was somewhere noisy, but the voice that came through was colder than ice. “What's up?”

What's up?! Victoria laughed at his greeting.

She cut to the chase and asked, “What do you mean by ‘what's up’? Alaric, are you avoiding me?”

Standing in front of the floor-to-ceiling windows, Alaric could see the hustle and bustle of the city, but he was disinterested in the city's traffic.

He was instead overwhelmed by his own dark cloud of thoughts.

His lips were pulled into a straight line as he retorted, “Who's avoiding you?”

Victoria was so angry that she burst into laughter. “You're not avoiding me? Then, meet me now!”

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“I'm busy.”

“With what?”

“A collaboration.”

“Fine! When will you be free?”

“Not sure.”

“And here you are telling me you're not avoiding me, Alaric Cadogan?!”

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Alaric pursed his lips in silence. So what if I'm hiding from her?!

“What the hell do you want? Didn't we have an agreement? After Grandma undergoes her surgery, we'll divorce. Then, you said that we should wait until she recovers. She's close to a full recovery now, so are you still going to proceed with the divorce?”

Victoria couldn't understand what he thought.

If it had been before, Alaric thought that Noel, Bane, and she were involved, which resulted in his self-esteem taking a beating.

But what's going on now?

Her line of questions fell onto Alaric's ears like a sharp knife stabbing him. and causing his skin to bleed.

Hostility flashed in his gaze, and the tone of his voice dipped so much that he became a little unscrupulous in his choice of words.

"It's only been a short while since Grandma's surgery, and yet you are so eager. Didn't you mention before that she's like your own grandmother? Is  
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this how you treat her? You're not even worried about informing her about the divorce. What if her illness recurs if we tell her now? Victoria Selwyn, where's your conscience?"

If it had been the past, she might have been fooled by his words, but it was no longer possible.

She gave a sarcastic laugh. "Yeah, I have no conscience. You don't want to divorce, but you're using Grandma as an excuse. Is that what you call having a conscience?"

Victoria saw through his intentions perfectly, causing Alaric to suddenly freeze before he subconsciously refuted, "Who said I don't want a divorce?"

"If you want to divorce me, then you should come over. I have the marriage certificates, so we can file for the proceedings now!"

"Ms. Snowball, do you think I won't dare to do anything to you?"

"I'm at your office now. Why don't you come over? We'll see what you can do to me." At that, Victoria sneered. "If you don't come over today, I'll tell your parents the truth!"

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3/9

The distinction that she used to describe Alaric's parents caused the man to narrow his eyes in displeasure. Although he was annoyed, he still went out of his way to remind her. "Watch what you say. They are still considered your in-laws too."

At that, she was taken aback and almost immediately agreed with him.

What he said made sense. They were still not divorced, which meant that Mary and Adrian were still her in-laws.

"Fine. If you don't come over, then I'll tell them everything tonight."

Alaric fell silent as if he was considering his current situation.

After what seemed like an eternity of thinking, Victoria heard his cold laughter.

"I suddenly feel that what you said earlier is correct."

"And what was it?" She only felt her heart racing.

"It's true that I don't want a divorce."

Alaric tugged on his tie and stared at the traffic with indifference. Now that

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he had admitted it, his heart finally calmed down.

It was like the moon had successfully broken through the clouds to reveal itself.

The corners of his lips curled upward as he added, "Just tell them anyway. I

won't agree to a divorce either way."

Victoria was speechless as she figured that Alaric was close to losing his marbles.

Otherwise, it means I'm the one going bananas. In what world will I hear that he doesn't want a divorce?

It took her a while before she could respond to him. "What did you say? You don't want a divorce? You were the one who brought this up, you know."

"So what? I retract my words."

It was only after a few moments that Victoria spoke. "Why are you going back on your word?"

It's obvious that he does not like me.

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"There's no reason. I still have something to do, so I'm going to end the call. We'll continue this when I'm back later."

Victoria held the cell phone and sat blankly on the couch while pondering their telephone conversation.

Moments later, she pinched her cheeks. Ouch!

What happened moments ago was reality and not a dream.

Alaric really did not want to divorce her.

Does he know what nonsense he has said? If he doesn't file for divorce, how is he supposed to marry Claudia?

Alaric had always mentioned that Claudia was the one meant for him.

Victoria remained in her position and held the phone in a daze until she heard footsteps and blocking sounds at the door.

"Miss Johnson, I've already said that Mr. Cadogan is not in the office.

There's no use going in there since it's empty now."

"Mr. Levane, I know you don't like me, but I'm friends with Al. Isn't it bad

5/9

Chapter 147 Don't Want a Divorce

that you are lying that he's out?"

"Why should I lie to you? There are no benefits in doing so. He really is out of the office."

"Can't you let me decide for myself? If I don't see him, I'll leave immediately."

As they were arguing, they did not realize that they had arrived in front of the office. Peter never intended for Claudia to enter, but since she insisted on entering, he couldn't do much either.

After all, he knew very well that Claudia held a special position in Alaric's heart.

As a result, he tried to stop her, but he never expected that she would push her way through.

As soon as Claudia arrived outside the office, her eyes widened in shock.

"Isn't the door open? You lied, Mr. Levane!"

At that, she pushed the door open and rushed in. "Al!"

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However, upon entering, the person whom she saw was not Alaric but Victoria instead, who was wearing a white coat and seated on the couch.

"Why are you here?"

Claudia was rather surprised to see Victoria.

When she got her wits back, she covered the wound on her forehead but realized that it was bandaged, so there was nothing to hide.

This was the first time that the two women met after Claudia's injury.

"Miss Selwyn, Miss Johnson said that she wanted to look for Mr. Cadogan. She refused to believe me when I said he's not around..."

Victoria grunted in acknowledgment as she turned to Peter. "I understand." Then, she faced Claudia. "Look at the entire room. Alaric is obviously not here today."

When Claudia saw how Victoria acted like the woman of the house, she felt suffocated. If the former did not decide to leave for abroad back then, there was a chance that they would be in opposing positions.

7/9

#### Chapter 147 I Don't Want a Divorce

At this, her lips curled upward slightly.

"He's not around, but it makes no difference since you're here. I have something to tell you anyway."

Ever since Claudia tripped and fell on her own accord but blamed Victoria for it, Victoria felt that there was nothing left to say.

However, Claudia quickly turned to Peter and said, "I'd like to have a word with Victoria."

Peter had no choice but to look at Victoria. He only nodded after he noticed that she did not have much reaction to hearing that.

Claudia waited for Peter to leave before she closed the office door.

Victoria silently watched Claudia's movements and calmly pursed her lips.

"It's been a while, Victoria." Claudia smiled kindly. "I haven't seen you since the injury. You didn't even visit me, which left me a bit sad."

When Victoria heard that, she stoically asked, "It's just the two of us here. Are you sure you want to continue with your act?"

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#### Chapter 147 I Don't Want a Divorce

The smile on Claudia's lips gradually disappeared before it was replaced by indifference and coldness. She looked at Victoria, who sat in front of her, and questioned in a sharp tone, "When the hell are you getting a divorce?"

#### Chapter 148

"If I remember correctly, didn't you mention before that you'll divorce Alaric when Old Mrs. Cadogan undergoes surgery?" Claudia gazed contemptuously at Victoria and asked in a sarcastic tone.

"It has been so long since Old Mrs. Cadogan's surgery. So, why aren't you divorced yet? Victoria Selwyn, are you coveting the position of Mrs.

Cadogan? Is that why you breach our agreement and choose to not divorce?"

She is trying to give me hell just because she can't locate Alaric, huh? Victoria thought.

She would have already gone off at Claudia if it wasn't for the fact that Claudia helped her before. Instead, she m\*\*\*ly rolled her eyes while asking nonchalantly, "Speaking of this, I'd also like to ask you, Miss Johnson, when will you have Alaric divorce me?"

Claudia's expression changed at that. "What did you say? Me having Alaric divorce you?"

"Duh." Victoria raised an eyebrow. "I'm looking for him because of this, but 12:03 Sat, 24 Jun G

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he's avoiding me. Since you are close with Alaric, maybe you can help me persuade him, Miss Johnson."

Claudia understood then that she had been fooled by Victoria when she heard that.

Her expression became an angry one. She had no faith in herself, to begin with, and Victoria's words now only further provoked her.

"What do you mean? Don't tell me that Alaric doesn't want to divorce you. That's impossible."

The corners of Victoria's lips were raised. "You can ask him if you really want to know."

Such words coincidentally stabbed Claudia's already bl\*\*dy heart. She wanted nothing more than to call Alaric and ask him right away. However, he had been saying that he had matters to attend to since yesterday and that she should call him again later. And yet, he refused to answer her calls by the time she called him again.

Never once in all these years had she been as flustered as she was today. She had a feeling that she was about to lose whatever she had!

2/8

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At the thought of this, Claudia balled her fists as she gritted her teeth and glared at Victoria. "Are you showing off to your savior?"

When Victoria heard that, her expression turned into a calmer one. She then looked at Claudia and repeated, "Savior?"

"Am I not? Don't forget that I helped you out before!" Claudia emphasized.

"Do you think you would still have your house after that incident that happened to your family if I didn't help you? Victoria, you are not an ungrateful person, are you?"

"Miss Johnson, if I am ungrateful, I wouldn't be here, wasting my time having this conversation with you. I wouldn't have agreed to your nonsensical requests either. You haven't forgotten how many favors you have asked of me, right? And I agreed to every one of them."

"So what? Do you think that is enough to make up for it?"

3/8

"We did mention this when we made our agreement. However, you



admitted that you want me to repay you for what happened, right? Since you have asked me to return the favor, we no longer owe each other anything. Of course, I'm not an ungrateful person. So, please tell me if you need any help in the future. I'll do my best to help you...as long as you aren't

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asking me to hurt anyone.”

Claudia couldn't help sneering after hearing that last sentence. “You seem sure that I will ask you to hurt someone.”

Victoria remained calm despite the mockery. “It's hard to say, considering that you have done it before.”

Claudia immediately blew her top upon hearing Victoria's words. Through her gritting teeth, she warned, “Stop bringing that up. You know it is not the same thing.”

“What's the difference? It's still a person's life.”

“A person's life? It was just a fetus!”

“Oh? Have you never been a fetus before, Miss Johnson?” Victoria threw a curveball at Claudia with that question.

It felt impossible to continue the conversation at this point.

As if she sensed something, she found herself narrowing her eyes and glaring at Victoria. “Why are you being hostile to me? What the hell? I don't remember us being enemies before this.”

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“You have misunderstood, Miss Johnson. I have never treated you like an enemy.” Victoria paused for a second before she continued, “But we were never friends either, were we?”

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Claudia had to agree to this. She had never regarded Victoria as her friend, not even for a second.

Even though she knew that Victoria was Alaric's friend, she wouldn't truthfully treat Victoria as a friend. Claudia had always thought that this childhood friend of Alaric's was troublesome. Victoria was also someone whose existence bothered Claudia a great deal.

Noticing that Claudia was silent, Victoria grinned and added, “Looks like we share the same thought.”

Claudia didn't deny it. She simply sat across from Victoria while holding her purse. “Spill. What is up between you two? Why aren't you guys divorced yet?”

“How am I to divorce someone I can't find?”

Victoria's answer put a frown on Claudia's face. She can't find him? She is not trying to say that Alaric is the one refusing to get a divorce, is she? Then

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again, there is no other way to explain Alaric not being there when Victoria

is already waiting for him in the office.

However, Claudia wouldn't do something as shameful as agreeing with Victoria that Alaric was the one who refused to sign the divorce papers. She could only force a smile as she uttered, "Looks like Al has been busy with work then. Wait for a little longer. I'll contact him in a bit."

Sitting across from Claudia, Victoria could guess what was happening from Claudia's current behavior and the way she rushed into the office earlier. It was evident that Claudia couldn't get in contact with Alaric either. She wouldn't have barged into his office and insisted on meeting Alaric otherwise.

Victoria looked down and pursed her lips. Have I really misunderstood Alaric? Could he really be swamped with work lately? But why did he admit that he didn't want a divorce? Forget it, she eventually told herself. It is not like I'll have an answer no matter how hard I think about it.

She then rose to her full height. "Alright then. Please contact him. I'll make a move now."

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At that, she left the office.

As Claudia watched Victoria leave, she angrily threw her purse on the couch. "Piece of sh\*t!"

Her resentment was written all over her face as she cursed softly.

She listened to her mother's advice and came over to look for Alaric. Since he mentioned that he was busy with work, she came over to see whether he was telling the truth or not. If he turned out to be lying, she would take the opportunity to cry and complain while throwing herself into his embrace. Claudia had suppressed herself in the past because she was afraid that Alaric would think her an immodest and dissolute woman if she took the initiative to approach him.

However, she would really lose him if she didn't start doing something.

She would never allow herself to lose just like that.

She didn't care if he thought she was a debauched woman or anything along the line in the end. She only wanted him.

Alaric can only be mine!

7/8

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Unbeknownst to both Claudia, who was fuming, and Victoria, who already left the office, the surveillance cameras in the office had recorded their every word and action.

Chapter 149

After leaving Cadogan Group, Victoria had only arrived on the ground floor when she received Bane's call.

"Why did you come to the office today?"

His question stunned Victoria, who then replied, "How did you know...."

1/10

She had only spoken halfway when she thought of something and looked at the vehicle parked ahead.

As expected, she saw a familiar-looking car there.

"Why are you here?"

"What a coincidence." Bane, who was on the line with her, chuckled. "I'm here to settle the final bits of a contract negotiation from last time."

Victoria did not suspect anything when he mentioned the contract negotiation.

Even if Bane hadn't mentioned about last time, she wouldn't have suspected anything either. After all, she hadn't come to Cadogan Group

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lately. There was no way that he would be here to keep an eye on her.

He can't be here spying on me every day, can he?

And since they ran into each other, she started to make her way toward him.

2/10

She hadn't even taken a step when Bane instructed, "Stay where you are. I'll tell the driver to drive to you."

"It's okay. It's just a short distance. I can walk over."

To her surprise, he suddenly asked, "You want to get a divorce, no?"

Victoria stopped in her tracks at that. "Does that have anything to do with me walking to you?"

"Of course."

Victoria was speechless.

She couldn't figure out what Bane was up to. What does my walking over and his car coming to me have to do with my divorce?

Chapter 149 Alaid That Youll Owe Me?

As she was still dwelling over it, the vehicle was already moving in her direction.

Victoria had no choice but to wait at the curb instead.

When she waited for his car, she saw the familiar employees of Cadogan Group walking in and out of the building. Many of them even approached her when they saw her and greeted her as "Miss Selwyn".

It was also because of this that Victoria finally understood why Bane said that his car coming over to her had everything to do with her divorce.

She stood still while she waited for his car to stop in front of her.

As expected, the car window did not wind down. Instead, Bane opened the car door and invited her to hop in.

"Get in." He smilingly added, "Now that we ran into each other, can we at least have lunch together?"

It seemed that both Bane and Victoria had unknowingly grown closer ever since Bane discovered Victoria's secret.

Sure enough, many gossipy people stopped to have a look at them.

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Victoria could feel their enthusiastic gazes. She could also imagine what would happen in the company chat groups once she entered Bane's car.

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Her head was telling her that she should be mindful of her status and not enter the vehicle. However, she no longer hesitated when she recalled how Alaric flaunted Claudia at the company. Not only that, the public kept talking about Victoria's relationship with Alaric and Claudia, and Victoria ended up being the butt of the joke.

She nodded before entering the car. "Thank you."

Like a gentleman, Bane closed the door and entered from the other side. After he got into the car, his lips curled as he commented, "I thought you wouldn't get in."

Victoria calmly replied, "Why won't I when there is a free meal and free ride?"

"Sounds like you don't intend to pick up the tab for lunch?"

"Bingo." She glanced at him. "Why would I offer to pay when you'll pay for anyway?"

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"Fine. What do you want to eat?"

If it had been like before, Victoria would have said that she was okay with any cuisine. But now that Bane was aware of her secret, she would be pretentious if she didn't satisfy her food cravings.

At the thought of this, she immediately rattled out a few food items she liked.

Bane couldn't help chuckling when he heard her description. "Whoa, you are really going all out."

"Yup, I have a voracious appetite now. There's still time for you to regret."

He thought about it before responding, "I can afford the bill."

What he wanted to say was that he could afford to take care of her, but considering the situation, it seemed like it was an inappropriate thing to say. She might even run for the hills!

I have to approach her bit by bit.

They were on the way to the restaurant when Bane asked her about her relationship with Alaric.

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Bane was slightly taken aback when he learned that Alaric avoided Victoria because he refused to divorce her. The shock in Ben's eyes was hidden by his glasses, and his gaze quickly returned to normal as the corners of his lips curled upward.

He wasn't expecting Alaric to make this decision.

He then glanced at Victoria, who was seated next to him, and casually asked, "So, what are you thinking?"

“Huh?”

“Would you continue to be Mrs. Cadogan if he refuses to divorce?”

Continue to be Mrs. Cadogan? Obviously not, she quietly answered the question.

It didn't matter what caused Alaric to suddenly decide against divorcing her. As long as Claudia remained his savior, he would not completely cut contact with her.

And Victoria wasn't all that eager to be a homewrecker. She knew that there was no place for a third person in a relationship.

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Furthermore, he had decided to divorce Victoria a long time ago. This meant that she was not his first choice.

She never told Bane all these, though. She merely smiled at him without saying anything.

Bane was someone who knew his boundaries.

He cared, but he didn't care that much. He wouldn't insist on hearing an answer if she was reluctant to answer his question after he asked once. However, Bane suddenly thought of something interesting as he turned to Victoria and asked, “Say, how long do you think it will take Alaric to know that I picked you up from the company?”

Victoria paused. Alaric is avoiding me. It doesn't matter if he knows.

“How about we make a bet?”

“What kind of bet?”

“We'll bet on whether Alaric will look for you as soon as he finds out that I have picked you up in my car.”

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Victoria was stunned into silence. After a while, she finally answered, “I'm surprised even you have your childish moments, Bane.”

Bane laughed. “Don't tell me you're not interested to know? I could tell that he minded it when you stayed with me last time.”

Upon hearing this, Victoria thought to herself, It's just his stupid dignity as a man that is acting up.

Still, she asked, “What is the bet?”

“Tsk. I can't hide anything from you. Let's bet on whether or not he will come over and look for you.”

“What happens if he does?”

“If Alaric really comes, you will let me help you.”

“Huh?”

“Help you with your divorce.”

Victoria fell silent at those words.

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When Bane asked whether she needed his help, she never responded

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because she felt that it was a personal matter and she shouldn't owe anyone a favor.

She already owed too many favors to return them.

When he noticed her silence, he put on a faint smile and asked, "Why are you silent? Are you afraid that you'll owe me a favor?"

Victoria came back to her senses upon hearing his question and gave a small nod.

The man proceeded to flick her forehead before he added helplessly, "It's just a bet. Even if you lose, you just have to agree to the terms of the bet. Why would it be you owing me a favor? I didn't even say anything about that, did I?"

"I..."

His action made Victoria frown. She wanted to say something, but she ended up not doing that when she thought about how he had grown up with her and Alaric.

"Are you in or not? My bet is he will show up at the restaurant not long after we get there."

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"That's not happening."

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Victoria thought it was possible if Alaric wanted to come after knowing that she was having lunch with Bane.

However, the chances of him rushing over in a hurry were close to zero.

"Looks like we have different views on this. Our bet is confirmed, then. If he really comes, I'll help you."

Victoria couldn't say anything else since Bane had already expressed his wishes. She could only ask, "How are you going to help me?"

Bane smiled without saying anything.

Why is he acting all mysterious? Victoria wondered.

The restaurant where they had placed their reservation was still a distance away. It took them a good thirty minutes to arrive. When they reached and got out of the car, Bane came out and held the door for her again.

"It's okay," Victoria told him. "I can get the door myself."

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"If we want to put on a show, we might as well go all out."

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Having nothing to say to that, she went out of the car and followed him into the restaurant.

Before they came, Bane had already instructed his assistant to reserve a table in a small corner by the window on the second floor of the restaurant in advance.

It took about eight minutes for them to head upstairs, sit down, and place their orders.

Victoria, who still remembered Bane's words, remained absent-minded. She kept wanting to look back to see whether Alaric would show up as Bane had predicted, but she restrained herself every time she was about to give in to her curiosity.

You can't look back! she reminded herself. Alaric will think that I'm waiting for him if he sees me turning around.

She intended to divorce him as she decided a long time ago. To make, she must break. There is nothing for me to have second thoughts about.

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"Nervous?" Bane suddenly asked.

Victoria returned to her senses when she heard his question. When she realized what Bane asked, she subconsciously denied it. "Nah."

"But you don't even know what I'm asking you."

She was at a loss for words then.

Right then, Bane, who sat across from her, looked at a distance not far behind her. The corners of his lips proceeded to curve upward. "You are about to lose the bet."

Victoria's heart s\*\*\*ed a beat the second she heard those words.

"I'm going to fulfill my promise."

Right after that, she saw Bane getting up and approaching her.

Before she could even react, he had suddenly wrapped his arms around her, enveloping her in the clear smell of tobacco.

After she realized what Bane did, she froze and subconsciously tried to break free from the embrace.

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"Don't move," he whispered into her ears. "Alaric is right outside."

Victoria only turned stiffer at those words.

Bane's words continued to ring in her ears. "Haven't you always wanted to get rid of him? This is your best chance."

He hugged her tighter as he spoke, closing the distance between them.

Even though Victoria instinctively placed her palms on his chest, her body clearly showing her resistance to the intimacy, Bane remained in the same posture.

Perhaps, just like he said, he was only fulfilling his promise of helping her out. He didn't harbor any other thoughts.

"Al is a highly egotistical man. If you tell him that you want to be with me, he won't force you to stay with him."

Victoria fell silent when she heard that. As she had known Alaric for many years now, she knew that Bane was right.

Bane's suggestion was the fastest method there was at present.

There was no reason to stop her anyway if she insisted on the divorce.

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Claudia, Alaric, and I will be stuck in this entanglement if we don't get a divorce.

Victoria felt nauseous at the thought of Claudia being the third party to their marriage if she and Alaric didn't get divorced.

Claudia was Alaric's savior. Alaric was always going to look at her through rose-tinted glasses and shower her with privileges.

And what do I get out of this?

Forget it. So be it. Bane's method isn't that bad after all.

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Thinking about this, Victoria no longer resisted Bane and complied as if she accepted her fate.

Bane also felt her compliance.

No, rather than saying that she was compliant, it was better to describe her as a piece of wood that had been adrift in the ocean for a long time. Worn out by the wind and rain, she no longer wanted to fight back. All she wanted to do now was follow the waves wherever they brought her.

Seeing Victoria like this left him in a state of distress and helplessness.

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Although she was a piece of drifting wood, she still needed to be carefully loved and cared for.

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Without even being aware of it, Bane grabbed her hand and cautiously held it tight.

At that moment, he raised his gaze, locking eyes with Alaric, whose face was contorted with anger as he strode angrily in their direction from outside through the maze of tables and chairs.

There was a victorious glint in Bane's smile.

This was the first time in their years of knowing each other that Bane had shown Alaric such an expression.

Bam!

Alaric rushed forward and punched Bane's jaw before he pulled Victoria behind him.

However, one punch didn't douse the fire in his chest.

After getting Victoria behind him, Alaric grabbed Bane by the collar of his shirt and punched him again, the veins on his forehead twitching. His eyes

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were red as he glared at Bane.

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Blood trickled from the corner of Bane's lips, and even his glasses had been punched off his face, revealing a pair of narrowed, chilling eyes. Those piercing eyes were now staring into Alaric's enraged and indifferent black orbs.

Ha! It's so easy to piss him off, Bane thought.

He managed to restrain himself at the hospital last time, so why can't he control his temper now?



“Why?”

Alaric sounded like he was gritting his teeth as rage danced in his eyes. However, he saw a trace of humor in Bane’s eyes. It even looked like Bane was teasing him.

“Don’t you already know that I have feelings for her?”

“But I never knew that you were this shameless.”

Bane’s smile was stained with blood when he laughed. “So what if I’m

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shameless? I don’t care as long as I can have her.”

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The moment Alaric heard those words, he was so enraged that he raised his fist at Bane again.

“Stop!”

Victoria finally snapped back to reality and grabbed Alaric’s hand to stop his swinging arm.

Although she had used all of her strength, there was still a huge difference between a man’s and a woman’s strength. She couldn’t push him away at all.

Her anxiousness flashed in her eyes when she saw Bane bleeding from his mouth.

“Get the hell up, Alaric.”

Bane helped her because she desperately wanted a divorce. He even masked his help under the pretext of a bet because he didn’t want her to feel guilty.

It resulted in Bane getting socked by Alaric because of her.

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She only felt she owed him a bigger favor after this episode.

Alaric’s eyes were emotionless and cold when he turned to Victoria. “Let go.”

Victoria subconsciously tensed up upon hearing that. “I’m not letting go.”

She shook her head. “Not if you get up first.”

After saying that, she tightened her grip on Alaric’s hand. She feared that he would continue to rain blows on Bane if she let go.

Bane had already been punched twice for her sake. If he continued to get hit...

I can’t imagine how sorry I would feel for him.

Alaric glared at Victoria with a gaze that could freeze an ocean. “I’m saying it again. Let go.”

Victoria shook her head. “No!”

He must have been instigated by her actions, as he kept staring at her before he suddenly got up. He then grabbed her by the hand and dragged her out of the restaurant with him.

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Because of his powerful grip, Victoria st\*\*\*red as she struggled to follow

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him. And right when he walked out with Victoria behind him, Bane's gentle voice rang out. "Alaric, let Snowball go."

Alaric stopped in his tracks and cast a fierce glance at Bane.

Bane swiftly stood up and wiped the blood at the corner of his lip before he softly uttered, "She doesn't want to be with you anymore."