

Departure with a Belly Chapter 17

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After Noel snapped out of his daze, he took a glance at the girl in front of him. She was dressed very simply, with long hair casually pinned behind her ears. She did not even put on makeup today, so she had a morbid kind of beauty that made people unable to resist their pity for her.

He was a person who was aware of his limitations and always knew he could not compare to Alaric; he was in no position to do so either.

When the Selwyn Family went bankrupt, he ran around to many places for help, but unfortunately, he was too insignificant to help in any way. A CEO of one of the companies even told him frankly, "You're very capable, Noel, and I have high hopes for you too, but the Selwyn Family has fallen now. The smart ones should know how to make choices. You can come to my company."

At that time, many not only did not want to help but even wanted to poach him. "The Selwyn Family won't rise again. Even if someone is willing to help now, they won't have their former glory back. So, I advise you to

carefully consider your future. After all, you're not a member of the Selwyn Family, nor are you their son-in-law. There's no need for you to run around like this for them."

Hearing all these made Noel's heart sink, but he seriously considered what he heard on his way back. After that, he called Victoria and asked where she was so he could pick her up, but when he arrived, the second son of the Burke Corporation and his cronies were verbally humiliating her.

"The great Miss Selwyn, you ignored my pursuit in the past when your family was prosperous. Now that the Selwyn Family has fallen, I wonder if you still have such pride. Well, I can help the Selwyn Corporation, but don't you think you should pay the price? Maybe like sleeping with me for a night?" As soon as he finished speaking, his cronies burst into laughter.

Seeing this scene unfold from the side, Noel almost rushed forward to fight with them. All the plans he had considered for himself when he was

on his way disappeared in that second. At that moment, he only had one thought—he could not leave the Selwyn Family at this critical moment to pursue his future. Also, he could not go up to fight the second son of the Burke Corporation because he did not have the right to do so. All he could do was pull Victoria away from the scene.

Not long after that, he heard that the Burke Corporation's second son had been beaten up by someone and that the entire Burke Corporation was implicated because of him. Due to this, the Burke Corporation's CEO and his son visited Victoria's home overnight to apologize to her.

The person who helped her was Alaric.

Looking back, it was indeed Alaric who pulled her out of adversity before, but because of what had happened in the past few days, he had put her in another difficult situation.

As Noel pressed his lips together, he said softly, "I don't mean to lecture you, but there are some things you need to consider carefully so that you can make plans in advance."

Just as Victoria was about to answer, her phone vibrated. She took it out and saw that it was a message from Alaric. 'Your assistant said you went out?'

The message was sent via WhatsApp with the same casual tone as usual, as though he was casually asking after realizing she went out.

Not knowing what she was thinking, she only replied with a 'Yes' after reading the message.

He was probably looking at his phone at the time because his reply came quickly. 'When are you coming back?'

Their conversation looked normal, just like their usual chat. He did not mention the text last night, nor did he mention his overnight absence.

Meanwhile, she was being 'understanding' by not asking him anything. It seemed as if nothing had happened yesterday, and life was continuing as

usual with them having an unspoken agreement to keep this peace.

She replied, 'I'll go back when it's time for work.'

After that, he did not reply again.

As such, she put away her phone and told Noel, "I get it, Noel."

As his gaze lingered on her phone for a moment, he asked, "He texted you?"

After hesitating for a moment, she answered with a nod.

There was nothing more he could say, so they silently finished the rest of

their meal and paid the bill. Then, he sent her back to the office.

When Victoria got into the elevator, she found that he had also followed.

her in. Surprised, she asked, "Where are you going?"

Their offices were not in the same location.

With a hand in his pocket, he answered with a calm expression, "I'm going to see Mr. Cadogan. I have something to report to him."

After getting off the elevator, he looked at his watch and told her, "It's ten minutes before work starts. I don't think it's appropriate to meet Mr. Cadogan now."

Hearing that, she could only reply, "Come spend some time in my office, then."

"Sure."

When they arrived at Victoria's office, which did *not* require passing by Alaric's office, Yasmin had already started working early and immediately got up to make coffee for them.

"Thank you." Noel took the coffee and looked at her, asking, "Did Mr. Cadogan come by here just now?"

Hearing his question, she seemed a bit surprised but still nodded. "He did."

A mysterious expression took over his face as he asked, "Did he come by himself or..."

Yasmin did not say anything and merely pressed her lips together.

Meanwhile, Victoria took a sip of her coffee and did not talk either, creating

a strange atmosphere.

Ten minutes later, Noel put down his cup. "Time for work. I'll meet Mr. Cadogan now." He got up to leave, but just as he arrived at the door, he suddenly turned back to look at Victoria and invited her. "There's some

work for the project from yesterday that requires your help to report. Let's go together."

Taken aback, she instinctively furrowed her brows.

Sensing her silence, he asked again, "Victoria?"

Only when she heard him again that she finally came back to her senses.

With a nod, she answered, "Okay. I'll go with you."

Initially, she wanted to avoid Alaric and Claudia. Ever since she spoke out that piece of news but did not hear back from him, who then had Claudia call to tell her he would not be coming home that night, she did not want to appear in front of those two anymore. To say that she was running away or being afraid was all true. She admitted all that.

However, it was obvious that Noel would not allow her to run away. Frankly, she knew what he wanted to do. All he wanted was to force her to face reality.

As the two of them walked to the office, he knocked on the door.

“Come in.” Alaric’s cold voice came from inside.

With a smile tugging at his lips, Noel pushed open the door and walked in.

As soon as the office door was pushed open, Alaric looked over in their direction. When he saw the two of them walking in together, a trace of displeasure flashed in his dark eyes, but it was so fast that it was not easy for one to notice.

“Mr. Cadogan.” Noel walked to the front. “I’m here to report yesterday’s work to you.”

“Okay.” Alaric nodded slightly with a poker face.

At the same time, Victoria stood behind Noel, watching the two men discuss work.

Alaric at work was completely different from his private self. During work, he was cold, rational, and unsentimental. Just like now, he held his hands together and placed them on his knees, expressionless, listening to Noel’s work report indifferently. However, his gaze occasionally passed over Noel and landed on her face.

She was not sure if it was her imagination, but the way Alaric looked at her was rather chilly.