

## Departure with a Belly Chapter 441

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Just like that, Victoria was sent back to her seat at the desk while they kept watch at her windows and door. If someone else had walked into this room, they would have assumed that she was the mistress of some underground boss.

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Fortunately, she was in no mood to work or entertain any guests. Instead, she kept her phone by her side at all times, worried that she would miss any updates about Alaric's welfare. Although she wasn't in the mood to work, she still forced herself to buck up and managed to get some things done. In the meantime, Terrance also informed her that he had boarded the flight.

It would be difficult to contact him again after he was on the plane, so she could only wait for him to disembark. The whole afternoon passed by peacefully, and while she was packing up for the day, her phone started ringing. She instinctively reached for her phone when she heard the ringing, and she immediately saw that an unknown number from abroad was calling her.

Who's this? she wondered and picked it up without thinking more. "Hello?"

She desperately wished that it was Alaric calling her to tell her that he was fine and could only contact her through this number for now. Still, she didn't dare to call out his

name right away.

“So, you changed back to this number.”

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However, the voice that echoed into her ears was another gentle voice that carried a tinge of iciness. This voice... A shiver ran down her spine, and before she could say anything, he added, “Don't you like the new number I gave you, Victoria?”

2/6

He sounded aloof, and even through the phone, she could feel the glacial tone piercing through and sending chills down her spine.

“Or maybe, you don't like that number and think that the last digits of the number aren't to your liking? Should I get you a new number?”

Victoria finally found it in herself to react when Bane asked another question. She bit her lip as she demanded, “What exactly are you trying to say? What's the point of saying all these?”

Her bodyguards immediately gathered around her upon seeing the look on her face.

“Hah...” Bane chuckled lightly from the other end of the phone. “Okay, since you think that it's pointless for me to say this, let's speak about something interesting, shall we?”

Her chest tightened at his words and her eyes fluttered in panic. “What do you mean?”

“You find this topic boring, don't you? So, I'm changing to a different topic just for you.”

Victoria held her breath as she pursed her lips and remained silent. When the leader of

the bodyguards saw her face, he gestured at her, asking if she needed help. She shook

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her head in reply, and he waited silently like a sentinel standing guard. "What are you trying to say?"

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"Oh, you'll probably find my topics interesting. Such as... coming back to me." Still, she said nothing, and he continued, "If my guess is right, you're probably very anxious now, huh? You can't get in contact with him, can you?"

She finally heard something she wanted to hear after his endless prattling and narrowed her eyes dangerously. "Where is he? What did you do to him?" What's going on? Isn't Bane injured as well? Why did Alaric fall into his trap? But he stopped talking after she questioned him. Unable to withstand the painful, prolonged silence, she urged, "Say something!"

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Suddenly, a light chuckle came from the other end after her urging. "If you could just come to care for me as much as you do for him, I'll be more than willing to die for you."

Victoria worried her bottom lip as she mumbled wearily, "Don't do this."

"Do what? If I had done this earlier, would you still return to the country? Maybe it was a mistake to let you return. At least, you weren't seeing anyone else when you were abroad even when you refused to accept my affections."

His words made her close her eyes, and she took a deep breath before asking, "Is he with you? What did you do to him?"

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"Don't you even have the patience to listen to me anymore?"

"1"

"If you really want to know what happened to him, why don't you come and see it for yourself?" Victoria's breath was stuck in her chest as he said, "I won't tell you anything about him until you appear in front of me."

She clenched her jaw and said, "Everything was fine. Do you really have to do this?"

4/6

"Hah..." He simply chuckled softly. "Yes, everything was fine. Then, why did you return to the country?"

She didn't know what to say and felt frustrated that she couldn't get through to him when he had turned out this way.

"Come over. I'll be waiting for you at the same old spot."

When he wanted to hang up, panic struck her. "Hold on! You haven't told me what you did to him and where he is now!"

"Victoria, I won't say anything before I see you. Of course, you should forget about looking for him, too."

This time, he hung up after speaking instead of dragging out the conversation, leaving

her with a blank look on her face as she listened to the dial tone ringing in her ears. It

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took her a few minutes to gather herself together. By the time she did, she immediately tried to call Bane once more.

Alas, her efforts were all for naught as she couldn't get through no matter what, and the results were the same regardless of how many times she tried.

The leader next to her noticed her anxiety and said, "Miss Selwyn, don't be nervous.

Please tell us if something has happened. Let us solve it."

So, she hastily spilled the beans and told him about the call, giving him the number Bane had used, and he immediately asked someone to call a technician to look up that number. Victoria tried calling Alaric's number again while she was waiting, but it was futile.

About half an hour later, news came. "Miss Selwyn, our technicians found out that this number belonged to an old phone booth abroad."

Phone booth? Are there still phone booths in that country?

She couldn't help but find it off as she lowered her eyes and replayed the words Bane said earlier.

"I won't tell you anything until you appear before me."

He had especially found a phone she couldn't trace just to tell her this?

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When she considered this, she quickly browsed through her phone and called the cell phone number he had given her previously.

Beep, beep, beep...

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As she expected, the number couldn't get through. In other words, their communication was one-sided. She could only stew in her anxiety until he decided to deign her with a phone call. Other than that, the only way for her to find him was to meet him abroad.

The bodyguards didn't know what was on her mind and their job was to protect her from harm. Hence, the leader said, "Miss Selwyn, your safety is the highest priority to Mr. Cadogan. Please don't do something silly."

Victoria was still hesitating about how she should bring this up, but after hearing him, she realized that he had given her the perfect opportunity to start. Hence, she turned to him and asked, "What if the Mr. Cadogan that you just mentioned is in trouble?" Once she saw that he had no answers for her, she pressed, "What if he couldn't pay you for your services?"

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"Don't worry about that. Mr. Cadogan has paid us one year's fees in advance when we signed a contract."

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"

One year? He paid in advance for one year?! Victoria was shocked when she heard this little tidbit.

“So, we’ll protect your safety for this whole year, Miss Selwyn.”

She couldn’t help but look up at him. “You will do whatever as long as you’re paid?”

The lead man nodded.

“Great. If I offer a higher price than he did for you to accompany me to leave the country

and look *for* him, will you accept?”

The leader fell silent.

“Don’t worry. Alaric isn’t the only rich guy around. I have the money. If you don’t believe me, I can pay in advance as well.”

“This...”

“Or are your protection services only available within the country?”

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“Well, no. We offer our services abroad as well. It’s just that... we’ve promised Mr. Cadogan to protect you. So, we-

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“Yes.” Victoria pursed her lips. “You’re just here to protect me. You’re not here to limit my movement, right? Did he say that I wasn’t allowed to go anywhere when he paid you guys?”

The few men didn’t know how to respond in the face of her sharp questions.

As expected, they couldn’t limit where she decided to go. They would have to follow her wherever she wanted. After she made this crucial connection, she felt like she knew what she needed to do.

“Um. Miss Selwyn, I’ve no objection to you wanting to go abroad, but I have to remind you one thing. How would you know if he was telling the truth? What if Mr. Cadogan is fine, and he was just trying to trick you?”

The leader’s words held merit. That thought had passed through Victoria’s mind after her phone call with Bane.

What if he’s trying to trick me? Victoria had known Bane for many years and he had always been by her side for the last five years. So, she felt that she knew him pretty well. Since he called her and said those words, it means that things were as she feared even though she frankly couldn’t figure out just how Alaric lost to him.

Of course, this could just be Bane’s scheme as he also knew her very well. So, there was also a high chance that he intentionally said those things just to provoke her to go to him.

Victoria lowered her eyes as she fell into deep thought.

The leader caught sight of her hesitance and urged, “Miss Selwyn, I hope that you’ll reconsider your course of action.”

She came back to her senses at his voice and looked at him, saying, “I can do that, but can you contact Alaric?”

“This...”

“You can’t get through to his phone or find him. You have no news of him, right?”

Some things could be easily sussed out based on a few questions, but there were also some tricky situations where the water was murky, and one had no choice but to have a little faith. Victoria’s question rendered the men speechless. Since no one could contact Alaric, there was a high possibility he was in danger.

Of course, Victoria was also worried that she would fall into a trap. So, she decided to



play it safe by setting aside some time to wait for Terrance.

Terrance had already gone abroad. So, she could only place her hopes on him. If he still

couldn't find Alaric even when he was there. Then...

Victoria's heart sank at that thought. Even though it was almost time for her to clock off, she went to look for Henry and chatted with him for a long time before finally leaving.

When she returned home, she acted like nothing had happened and continued her life with the rest of the Cadogans as per usual.

Although she had tried her best to hide her unease, Mary still noticed something was off. After dinner, Nicole and Nathan followed Adrian to the study to play while Mary quietly asked her, "How is it? Did you manage to get ahold of Alaric?"

Victoria stiffened for a second at that question and didn't know how to answer her.

"What's wrong? Is there something you're worried about? Victoria, even though I'm not your biological mom, you can treat me as yours if you're willing. You can tell me anything. I didn't manage to see you when you first left and didn't even know what happened between the two of you. If I knew, I would have told you that no matter what happens between you and Alaric... You can always consider me your mother even if things don't work out between you and Alaric."

That sudden speech made Victoria's eyes brim with tears as a warm feeling coursed through her heart, "Thank you, Mom. I'll remember that."

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Victoria had always envied others for having mothers when she was young and

wondered why she didn't have one. She desperately wanted a gentle and loving mother who would buy her beautiful dresses and would help her into those dresses. She wished for someone who would hold her to sleep and tell her stories at night. Then, when she woke up, a gentle morning kiss would grace her. Even though she couldn't have all those, she still wished for those things.

However, later on, she projected these feelings onto Griselda, who was an older female figure that became irreplaceable to her.

"Your grandma's gone now, but she was still thinking about you when she passed. She felt that she didn't do enough for you and if she had talked to you and Alaric more, maybe you both wouldn't have divorced."

Tears filled Victoria's eyes at the mention of Griselda. The mention of Griselda was a trigger for Victoria as she regretted that she couldn't see her one last time due to her stubbornness at that time. "I'm sorry. If I..."

"It's okay." Mary held her wrist gently. "It's in the past. Don't apologize for that. I don't want you to feel guilty by telling you this. If your grandma's still alive, she wouldn't want to see you blaming yourself. I just wanted to tell you the truth."

Victoria tried her best to blink away the tears in her eyes as words felt stuck in her throat.

"So, no matter what happens between you and Alaric, let's not repeat our mistakes."

"Okay."

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Victoria took quite a while to calm down before she wiped the tears away from her cheeks and said, "Mom, I've got a favor to ask."

“What is it?”

“Tonight... or maybe latest by tomorrow... I may need to go abroad.”/

Mary was a little surprised at the news but didn't press for answers and simply waited for Victoria to tell her about her plans.

“Nicky and Nate have never left my side ever since they were born. So, I'm not too sure how they would react when I leave. I'll let them know that I have some business to settle abroad and tell them to behave. Still, when I'm gone, can I trouble you-”

“Nonsense. It's no trouble at all. I'm their grandmother. It's my job to care for them too. Go do what you need to do and leave the rest to me. Besides, you've taught them well. Nicky and Nate are good kids.”

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Victoria went to look for Nicole and Nathan after her chat with Mary.

When she found them, they immediately dashed to her and snuggled up against her, asking, “Mommy, can we sleep together tonight?”

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The children had always slept on their own. It was weird that they would ask that out of the blue. Is this telepathy?

So, Victoria asked, “Why do you both want to sleep with me?”

Nicole let out an adorable smile at that. “Because we miss you, Mommy.”

Nathan nodded in agreement.

Victoria wasn't going anywhere yet, but the sudden request from Nicole and Nathan made her wonder if they overheard her conversation with Mary.

However, their next words dispelled her confusion. “Mommy, what were you talking to

Grandma about? You guys were talking for so long.”

Victoria reached out to gently flick her nose and replied tenderly, “Children don’t need to know what adults are talking about.”

“Hmm. Fine.”

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“Then, can we sleep together tonight, Mommy?”

“Okay. I’ll be with you two the whole night.”

Terrance’s flight hadn’t landed. So, she could only wait for him to arrive before finding out what had happened. She might as well accompany the children while she waited.

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Then, Victoria spent time with the children while Mary prepared some fruits and snacks for them.

Around 10.00PM, Victoria finally received a call from Terrance, saying that he had landed and would inform her if there were any updates.

She thought about it and wanted to tell him about Bane’s phone call, but he was in a hurry and hung up too soon, leaving her sighing at the dial tone.

She only hoped to hear good news later.

“Mommy,” Nicole and Nathan were calling for her, so she was promptly dragged out of her worries and went to accompany them.

The children took up her time with their chatter and didn’t allow her time to think about anything else. It wasn’t until they were tired out from playing and went to sleep that Victoria had time to herself.

She lay in the middle of the bed with them sleeping on both sides of her hugging each.

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of her arms.

Victoria whispered, "I may need to leave for a trip."

"Where are you going, Mommy?"

"It's a secret. I'll tell you both when I'm done handling the issue, okay?"

The children were usually very obedient, so they didn't push for an answer since she avoided the question. "Then, you have to come back quickly, Mommy."

"Okay. I'll come back as soon as I can. But... you both have to promise me that you'll listen to Grandpa and Grandma when I'm not around, alright?"

"Okay. We will, Mommy."

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Victoria gently called their names after she waited until they were deep asleep and their breathing was steady. Then, she carefully got up from the bed, ensuring that she wouldn't jostle them in their slumber.

Victoria finally had time to look at her phone after playing with them until they were all tuckered out.

She had just unlocked her phone when Terrance sent her a message, 'Miss Selwyn, I'm

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afraid we won't get any updates tonight. Please go ahead and rest.

However, she immediately called him when she saw that he had time to message her.

"Mr. Levane."

Terrance didn't expect her to be waiting for news this late.

"Miss Selwyn, I sent you that text because I didn't want you to worry. Why haven't you gone to sleep?"

"I can't."

Those two words stunned him before he heard her continue, “You should understand just what I’m feeling. I can’t get ahold of him, and I haven’t gotten any news about him for days. How can I fall asleep in this state?”

Terrance didn’t answer her and remained silent.

“Mr. Levane, do you have any updates?”

Finally, Terrance let out a helpless sigh.

Victoria felt her heart pound against her ribs as her brows furrowed. “What is it?”

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“Miss Selwyn, I was afraid that you’d be disappointed and worried. Yet, it seems like you

will not rest if I don’t tell you anything. So, here it is. After I arrived, I haven’t gotten any

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news about Mr. Cadogan and there were only two men stationed at the villa. I’ve lost contact with everyone else.”

“Everyone that went out... Did they just disappear out of thin air?”

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Victoria found it hard to believe as Alaric should have many men with him at that time.

If Terrance couldn’t even get in contact with any of them, then...

She finally knew why her heart was beating furiously when she woke up in the morning and just why her eyelids kept twitching that day.

“Miss Selwyn...”

“Just tell me: Yes or no.”

“Yes...” It was as if Terrance used up all his energy as his voice fell flat, “I couldn’t get in

contact with Mr. Cadogan after I arrived. I’ve tried a few different ways of contacting

the others, but none of them worked.”

The probability of everyone being in danger was extremely low, but it was frightening when *none* of them could be contacted.

Victoria bit on her lower lip and pondered before saying, “I’ll buy a flight ticket there right now.”

Terrance was shocked. “You’re coming over, Miss Selwyn?”

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“Why not? Everyone is missing. Do I have any other choice besides going there myself?”

“But... ” Terrance didn’t have the nerve to tell her directly that she wouldn’t be of help even if she was there. Even they couldn’t find Alaric, let alone her. So, he could only politely say, “Our men have not searched the place yet. *You don’t* really have to be here .”

However, Victoria bluntly questioned him the next second, “You don’t think I can be of help even if I’m there?”

He became flustered as he tried to salvage the situation, babbling, “N–Not that. What I mean is-”

Unfortunately, Victoria didn’t want to waste more time dragging this out. So, she quickly told him about Bane’s phone call.

“So, now that all our chips are on the table. Do you still think I won’t be of any help if I’m there?”

Terrance didn’t expect her to reveal that and was at a loss.

“B–But Mr. Cadogan wants you to be safe. If you’re here, putting yourself in danger, it goes against Mr. Cadogan’s wishes even if he’s saved.”

“Then, between me and him, who do you think is in more danger now?”

Terrance stopped talking because Victoria indeed wasn't in danger when they found her. That man only tied her up and wouldn't injure her.

If Alaric was taken... It was hard to say since Alaric was still on the mend from his latest injuries.

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“You're not saying anything. Does that mean you share the same thoughts as me? You're worried about him too, right?” Victoria probed, seeking confirmation from Terrance.

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“Miss Selwyn.” Terrance finally snapped out of his thoughts and gritted his teeth. “Yes, I am deeply concerned about Mr. Cadogan. However, before he departed, he made it clear to me that nothing is more important than ensuring your safety and that of the children. Even if he encounters trouble, he will find a way to escape. Therefore, I will never allow you to take any risks on his behalf.”

“Escape? If it were within the country, I might overlook it. But do you have any ideal about the situation abroad? Are you familiar with the conditions there?” Victoria bombarded him with a barrage of questions, leaving Terrance stunned.

She continued, “Let me make things clear—if he hasn't escaped and something untoward occurs on his person, will you regret your insistence today?”

Terrance fell silent in response.

“Alright, I'm buying the ticket now,” she declared before promptly ending the call and opening the app to purchase her plane ticket. Her actions were swift and resolute. Last



time, it had been inconvenient for her with the children in tow, but this time she was traveling alone. With Nicole and Nathan under the care of Adrian and Mary, and numerous bodyguards surrounding her, it would be more than convenient for her to handle things independently

Victoria swiftly completed the ticket purchase and turned her attention to packing when Terrance called again. When she saw the caller ID on her phone she anticipated that he would merely attempt to persuade her to prioritize her safety and advise her against going. She had no intention of entertaining those words. Thus, she simply stared at the screen and rejected the call.

A few seconds later, he called again. Initially she had considered turning off her phone since nothing he said could deter her determination to go abroad. However, she feared that there might be new developments overseas, and this caused her to reconsider. After a brief hesitation she answered the call.

“If you’re only trying to persuade me, spare your breath, if you call me again, I’ll block you because you’ll be wasting my phone’s battery otherwise,” she spoke with a cold and resolute tone as soon as the call connected.

Terrance, who was on the other end of the line, clearly anticipated Victoria’s response. After a moment of silence he said, “Miss Selwyn, I know I can’t persuade you, so I didn’t call for that reason. I just wanted to inform you that I’ve contacted the bodyguards, and if you provide me with the flight number, I’ll have them book the same flight as you.” Her initial surprise subsided upon hearing his words. She had expected him to try dissuading her but she never anticipated that he would. Instantly she sent him the flight number.

“Got it. We’ll also investigate Mr. Cadogan’s whereabouts. Keep your phone on and connected before and after the flight. I’ll notify you immediately if there’s any news.”

“Okay.”

“Take care, Miss Selwyn.”

“You too.”

After she ended the call, she breathed a sigh of relief. While Terrance didn’t agree with her decision, his support still provided her with some comfort. Now that she had his assistance, things should proceed more smoothly. She packed the final piece of clothing into her suitcase, then turned to gaze at the two sleeping children. She walked over and kissed each of their cheeks before leaving quietly.

The individuals arranged by Terrance had all booked the same flight as Victoria.

Despite the late hour, the weight of their mission propelled them into swift preparation.

As Victoria walked down the stairs with her suitcase, she witnessed the group of people standing ready and waiting for her.

“Miss Selwyn!” they exclaimed in unison, prompting her to instinctively place a finger to her lips, signaling them to be quiet. It was late at night, and everyone was supposed to

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be resting, yet their voices were excessively loud. The leader’s expression instantly assumed an air of innocence. In truth, their voices weren’t particularly loud, but the collective sound amplified the volume slightly.

Concerned that they might speak again, she swiftly made her way down with her suitcase. “Let’s go.”

“Let me get your suitcase.”

In reality, her suitcase contained very little. She had only packed daily clothes and

hadn't even brought any skincare products. Honestly, it was as light as a carry-on suitcase. She shook her head and replied, "I can manage it myself; it's essentially an empty suitcase."

The leader persisted, and eventually, she reluctantly handed over her suitcase to him.

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Then, she entered the car surrounded by a group of people. Although the night was dark, she could still observe a line of vehicles driving on the road through the rearview mirror under the moonlight. The headlights illuminated the dim environment, creating an aura akin to daylight. She embarked on her journey with this high-level protection. The midnight flight was less crowded than during the day, which proved advantageous. Victoria had a conversation with Terrance prior to boarding said flight, but there were no new developments on his end.

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"Have a safe journey," he said.

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During the flight, the leader took good care of her. He even went into the restroom first to inspect for any potential danger before standing guard outside. Unfortunately, she was too worried to fall asleep. Yet, when her mind strayed to the numerous tasks awaiting her after landing, she forced herself to get some rest. In the end, she managed

to intermittently sleep for two or three hours before arriving at her destination. Frankly,

her eyes felt rather sore, and she wouldn't be surprised if they were bloodshot when she

disembarked the plane.

As soon as she stepped off the plane, she immediately turned on her phone, and

Terrance's call came in instantly.

"Miss Selwyn, I noticed your flight has landed."

"Yes, I have just arrived. I'll be coming out shortly."

"Our car is waiting outside to pick you up."

She was about to inquire about any updates regarding Alaric, but she realized that Terrance hadn't proactively shared anything, indicating that there was likely no news. Since she knew that asking would be futile, she decided it was best to withhold her words until there was something for her to worry about. Consequently, she simply replied with a sharp 'Okay' and followed everyone off the plane.

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Terrance spotted them, guided them into the car, and drove toward the previous base.

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"Our team has been searching, but currently, there are no leads. Miss Selwyn, what did Bane say when he contacted you? Did you manage to obtain any evidence confirming Mr. Cadogan is in his custody?"

Victoria shook her head. "Not really, but I've known him for many years, and I understand him well. He wouldn't make such claims if he wasn't confident."

Terrance's expression instantly grew more serious upon hearing that. "Then, what should we do next?"

She glanced at her phone in response. "It hasn't been 24 hours since his last call. Even if he wants to meet me, he'll have to take my flight into consideration. I assume he'll call me again soon."

As if to verify her words, just as she finished speaking, the phone that had been silent since she entered the car started ringing.

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It was an unknown number.

It wasn't just Victoria. Everyone in the car subconsciously sat straighter when they heard the sudden ringing, which pierced through the silence, Jarring them from their worries.

Terrance stared at the phone nervously before turning to look at Victoria, requesting, "Miss Selwyn, can you put the call on speaker when you answer it later?"

Victoria hummed in agreement. Her face was devoid of any expression when she answered the call and turned on the speaker. When everyone in the car saw this, they reflexively tempered their breathing, worried that the other party would hear that there were interlopers in this supposedly private conversation.

When she picked up the call, she parted her lips before finally saying, "Hello?"

Cheerful and low-pitched laughter sounded from the other end of the phone, followed by Bane's voice, "You came, indeed, and faster than I imagined."

Victoria replied nothing. As expected, Bane knows my every movement. Well, I'm the least bit surprised. Given his capability and connections, he can certainly track my movements with relative ease. He doesn't have to specifically trace my whereabouts either since he was the one who gave me the incentive to go abroad. Besides, he

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simply has to ask any of my acquaintances, and they will gladly tell him anything he wants to know.

"It seems that he truly holds a significant spot in your heart, eh..."

Victoria sensed a tinge of dissatisfaction in Bane's voice when he dragged out the last letter of his sentence.

"Otherwise, you wouldn't be so anxious."

She couldn't help furrowing her brows when she heard Bane saying that. After a while, her face became placid as she said flatly, "The anxious one is you, no? After all, you are the one who has a clear grasp on all my movements."

In fact, Victoria even suspected that Bane knew what her current facial expression was.

"Heh... You're right, though. In that case, let's just think of me as the anxious one."

"Now that I'm here, do you mind telling me how Alaric's current condition is?"

"There's no rush. Since you are already here, there's no reason for me to harm him."

Victoria frowned. What a presumptuous statement! I've never thought that Bane would end up this way. She took in a deep breath, trying to calm herself down, before continuing, "What do you want for his release? Also, what's your proof to show that he is with you? Where's the evidence?"

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"Victoria." Bane started calling her name again, "Based on how close we are, do I

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honestly still need to provide any evidence? You should know well if I'm telling the truth,

no?"

Meanwhile, Terrance, who sat next to Victoria, frowned upon hearing Bane's words. He would have criticized Bane if he wasn't worried about angering the clearly unstable man.

However, before Terrance could express his displeasure, Bane's voice sounded once

more, "Otherwise, you wouldn't have left the country so soon, would you?"

Victoria pursed her lips and asked, "What do you want?"

Bane fell silent for a moment. Then, he replied, "You know what I want."

She bit her lower lip in response.

"I will wait for you at the same place. Come alone," he instructed.

Terrance tried to voice his protest upon hearing those words. However, Victoria stopped him before he could jeopardize things. Nevertheless, Victoria attempted to achieve a semblance of a compromise with Bane after pondering things over. "I can't possibly do that. I have zero idea what you will do to me after going there alone."

"You're the one I want. I promise you I won't harm Alaric as long as you make your way to me."

Victoria felt her frown deepen. Even though I really don't want to go there alone, I'm also

aware that he won't harm me. After all, Bane didn't injure Alaric when he took me away back then. Well, perhaps Bane let his guard down that time because he didn't expect that Mr. Hudson would betray him and abscond with me. Otherwise, I would most likely still be held captive in that place right now.

"I will wait for you, Victoria."

She immediately had a bad feeling after she heard that. "Don't..." Unfortunately, she was

too slow and was too late to stop him, for Bane immediately ended the call just as she anxiously tried to say something.

Beep... *Beep*... Beep... The dial tone pierced through the air, making the atmosphere in the car tense.

After a while, Terrance took the phone. "Miss Selwyn, uh..."

“Stop looking at the phone. You probably can’t get through even if you call that number. Bane has disposed of it.” Bane has made himself clear. He wants me to go over and meet him. In addition, I will have to make this trip alone. Otherwise, he won’t comply. Moreover, the reason he is so confident is that he knows he has leverage over us. He has a clear sight of my movements, yet he hasn’t ordered his men to approach me at all. Instead, he wants me to go on my own free will. Victoria closed her eyes. It seems

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that Alaric is indeed in his hands. What the hell happened? How did Alaric lose to Bane? Did Bane pull one over Alaric?

“Miss Selwyn, you can’t go!” Terrance uttered angrily. “He’s just baiting you.”

“Yes, I can tell. What of it? Do you have any idea on how to locate Alaric’s whereabouts?”

He stared at her, unable to find the words to retort. After a while, he said, “The men we deployed are already trying their hardest to track Mr. Cadogan.” When he saw that Victoria was ignoring him, he added, “I’m sorry, Miss Selwyn. I’ve been incompetent. I should have stayed behind and helped Mr. Cadogan in the first place.”

There was really no point in placing the blame when things had gone this far. None of this would help matters at all. Besides, Victoria couldn’t be bothered to think of what-ifs. Still, she comforted Terrance, “Don’t think that way. This has nothing to do with you. Instead, *you* guys were dragged into this mess all because of me.”

“Don’t say that, Miss Selwyn. You and Mr. Cadogan have been a couple long before Bane was in the picture. Moreover, the children who were taken away were Mr. Cadogan’s children too. Of course, he would save you. As for me, I work for Mr. Cadogan, so naturally, I have to protect you from harm too.”



Now that they had heard each other out, there was really no point in continuing this discussion, for they knew it was pointless.

#### Chapter 4451 Will Wait For You at the Same Place

After approximately more than ten seconds of silence, Terrance took the initiative to speak, "Why don't we devise some strategies?"

Victoria looked at him and asked, "Do you have any plan in mind?"

"We can't possibly let you meet him alone, yet he requested for you to go over by yourself."

She nodded. "Yeah, so?"

"So, Miss Selwyn... Where is this place he mentioned? How are you going to find him later?"

Terrance's questions made her consider Bane's words seriously. According to what Bane said on the phone earlier, he would wait for me at the same place. Same place? Is

he referring to the villa we previously stayed in? Somehow, I feel that things aren't as simple as they seem. Victoria turned around and inquired about the situation regarding the villa from her recollection. Soon, she received an answer. The villa from the past was empty. Those who were dispatched had already searched the villa. Alas, they found nothing, and that villa was as empty as a ghost town.

She furrowed her brows upon hearing the news. Where would Bane be then if there was no one in that villa? And where is this place he keeps bringing up? After all, he clearly knows that I have arrived in this country. That villa is obviously the only place we had been to while we were in this country last time.

#### Chapter 44

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“So, Miss Selwyn, please tell us if you know the location of the place he mentioned just now. That way, we can deploy someone over in advance, and our men can respond promptly once Mr. Cadogan is found.”

“I’m afraid that won’t work.” Victoria shook her head and dismissed Terrance’s plan.

“Why?” As soon as Terrance heard her say that, he instantly became anxious. “Miss Selwyn, could it be that you really intend to follow his instruction and go there alone? You can’t! You shouldn’t do that! It’s too dangerous!”

“That’s not what I mean.” Victoria felt her eyes flutter shut as she explained in

resignation, “You said that the villa was empty. But that is the only place I’ve ever stayed

in this country. So, my only clue is a dead end, and I don’t even know where to start looking.”