

Departure with a Belly Chapter 561

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Chapter 561 Won't He Be Angry?

If Victoria wasn't married, Summer would have readily agreed if the woman asked her to sleep over.

However, since Victoria no longer lived alone, it would be impolite to agree at once.

Therefore, Summer immediately looked at Alaric subconsciously.

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"Why are you looking at him?" Victoria asked when she noticed Summer's gaze. Then, she turned to look at the man as well. "Are you refusing to let me go?"

Alaric was caught off guard while being looked at and he answered helplessly. "Why would I? Let's go. I'll get the driver to inform the servants to prepare ahead of our arrival."

Summer was surprised that he agreed to it.

On the other hand, Victoria hugged Summer, feeling elated. "Tonight, let's sleep together."

Summer nodded awkwardly and responded, "Sure."

Alaric initially sat with Victoria in the backseat, but after getting into the vehicle, he because of Summer.

He sat alone in the passenger seat, his gaze gloomy.

was forced to ride shotgun

However, he had to suppress his bitter emotions inside. After all, he knew that Summer was Victoria's only close friend.

That night, Summer offered to let Victoria stay at her place. The guest room was clean, and the linens were new thanks to the housekeeping staff.

After taking a hot bath to wash away the exhaustion, Summer's skin still had a rosy hue when she came out of

the bathroom.

When she came out, she saw someone lying on her bed. "Victoria?" she called out.

'Are you done with your shower?' Victoria asked, already in her pajamas. She sat on the bed and patted the spot next to her.

Summer was a bit surprised, not expecting Victoria to keep her company for the night. She thought it was just a passing remark; even if it weren't, Alaric wouldn't have allowed her to come over.

'What's wrong?' Victoria asked curiously when she saw Summer standing still and staring at her.

'It's nothing,' Summer replied, realizing her foolishness. She walked over to the bed as if it had been long since she last slept with her best friend. It's great that we get to have sleepovers like this.

However, Summer was still slightly worried and asked, "Won't Alaric be angry that you are here with me?"

Victoria was a bit puzzled by the question. "Why would he be angry?" she asked.

I'm keeping my best friend company, not another man. If this is enough to make him mad, I don't think I'd be able to tolerate it.

"After all, I took his wife away. If not for me, he would be with his beautiful wife now," Summer replied.

Victoria chuckled "Come on it's just one

thin!

“Really? Summer questioned.

“Yes,” Victoria replied.

Summer asked again, “Do you have the heart to do so?”

“What is there to be reluctant about?” Victoria asked in return.

Summer stood still and thought for a while. Suddenly, she got under the quilt to hug Victoria, after which they both laughed happily.

Just like when they first met while they were younger, they tickled each other and rolled around the bed together.

After calming down, they talked about anything and everything, sharing all of their thoughts.

In the end, both of them chatted until they fell asleep.

Even though they were adults now, their habits did not change a bit.

As soon as they lay down, they both hugged each other. Then, Summer started complaining about all the weird things she encountered at work and about Erik.

Victoria listened quietly and responded every now and then.

As they chatted, Summer’s phone rang. She glanced at it and saw that it was Erik calling.

She thought, What time is it? Why is he calling me? Doesn’t he need to sleep? Wait, it’s daytime over there.

After taking a deep breath, Summer turned to Victoria and said, “Let me take this call.”

“Sure,” Victoria answered.

“Hello, Mr. Ludson?” Since Summer answered almost at once, Erik was caught off guard, not expecting her to

pick up the call so soon.

Summer couldn't hear his voice, so she moved the phone away from her ear and whispered to herself, "Did he dial the wrong number?"

Erik heard another woman's voice in the background just as he was about to speak. "Who is that?"

He immediately recognized the voice thanks to his incredible memory. The voice belongs to the woman Summer and I went looking for back then. It's Victoria. Seems like Summer didn't respond to my message earlier because she was too busy with her best friend.

Erik quickly found an excuse for the woman.

"Shh!" Summer put her index finger to her lips, signaling for Victoria not to speak.

Victoria covered her mouth while Summer said, "Mr. Ludson?"

He hummed in response just then.

"Was the signal bad just now? I didn't hear your voice on the other end," Summer asked.

"Yeah, the signal might not have been great." Erik's voice was calm. "Are you at the hotel already?"

"No, I'm staying at a friend's place tonight. Mr. Ludson, is there something urgent you need to speak to me about at this hour? Is there something wrong at work?"

Erik was silent for a while on the other end. Summer seemed to hear him sigh before he finally said, "There's a bit of an issue, but considering the time difference between where you are and here, let's just forget about it."

Summer was speechless.

"Okay, I'll hang up now." Erik quickly hung up the phone.

Summer was annoyed as she listened to the busy tone on her phone. She threw her phone aside and started complaining to Victoria, saying, "I told you this person is not just a workaholic, but also a slave driver to his subordinates. I've already quit my job, but he still wants me to handle work!"

At this, Victoria blinked her eyes. She had no memory of their past, so she had no idea what had happened

between them.

However, based on Summer's description and the fact that he called in the middle of the night to ask about

work, it seemed that he was indeed a workaholic.

"Haven't you handed all your work over?" asked Victoria.

"How is that possible? I handed over my work a long time ago. Audrey is quite capable," Summer replied.

"Why would he call you about work, then? Shouldn't he call the person you handed over your work to?" Victoria

questioned again.

Summer nodded in agreement. "Exactly. I don't understand why he would call me."

The more she thought about it, the angrier she became. "The next time he calls me about work, I will tell him off! I no longer work for him, so I don't care about offending him!"

Nonetheless, Victoria spoke up just then. "Maybe he wasn't calling about work. Perhaps he just wanted to check if you landed safely."

Summer shook her head. "Impossible. He was already asking me about work. While picking up my luggage earlier, I saw his message and replied to him right away. Take a look for yourself."

PREVIOUS

NEXT

Chapter 562 Playing Tricks

Summer opened her WhatsApp, wanting to show Victoria their conversation as she never had anything to hide. from her best friend.

When Victoria leaned over to take a look, she let out a gasp. "You didn't reply to his latest message," she

remarked.

Summer hadn't noticed this earlier, so she pulled her phone closer to check her messages.

After she thanked

Erik for showing concern, he sent her another message. 'Stay safe, and let me know when you've arrived at the hotel.'

She didn't respond

since she had collected her luggage by then and went looking for Victoria and Alaric. Following that, she had supper with them and even took a shower after going back. She only saw his message

now...

"It seems like asking about work was just an excuse, right? More importantly, he just wanted to make sure that

you were safe," Victoria said, and Summer looked up at the woman.

"Why does he need to make sure that I'm safe, though?" Summer found it strange.

Victoria thought momentarily. "Well, you've been working under him for many years, and you guys usually work together. People aren't cold-blooded animals, you know. It's normal for him to express concern when an old team member resigns and leaves at midnight. It would mean he's too cold-blooded if he didn't show any

concern."

After hearing Victoria's explanation, Summer felt it made sense, so the nervousness in her heart disappeared. She rubbed her face with her hands. "You're right. He probably won't bother me again in the future."

They only dwelled on the topic for a short time and quickly moved on. They chatted for a long time, but just as Victoria wanted to ask Summer about what happened between herself and Alaric, the woman fell asleep,

succumbing to her exhaustion.

“Summer?” Victoria called out, but all she heard was Summer’s soft and steady breathing in response.

It seems like she’s tired after a long day of traveling. Victoria did not intend to disturb Summer, so she simply reached over and pulled the blanket up a bit higher to prevent Summer from catching a cold in the middle of

the night.

Then, Victoria turned off the bedside lamp and quickly fell asleep.

That night, everyone slept late after a long day.

However, Victoria’s body alarm woke her up bright and early, even though she wanted to sleep in.

When she woke up, she found Summer sleeping beside her and almost falling off the bed.

Victoria’s eyes were so tired that she could barely open them. She struggled in bed for several seconds before deciding to go back to sleep for a while longer.

In the end, she didn’t wake up until noon.

She felt something fluffy brushing against her face in her sleep, but she didn’t pay much attention to it at first.

Gradually, she began to sense a slight itch on her cheek.

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While in deep slumber, she instinctively reached out and brushed it away.

“Mommy, wake up.”

A soft, endearing voice chirped as Victoria’s hand swatted away the mysterious presence. She wondered if she had misheard things after hearing the voice.

“Mommy? Mommy, wake up.”

After a moment, Victoria discerned that it was her daughter’s voice.

When Victoria opened her eyes, she saw Nicole's adorable face lying beside her while looking at her with big, bright eyes.

Seeing her awake, those lively eyes curved into crescent moons.

Nicole said, "Mommy, you're finally awake."

"Nicky?" Victoria called out sleepily and instinctively pulled Nicole into her embrace. "How did you come in here? What time is it now?"

After speaking, she let out a yawn.

"Mommy, it's already noon," Nicole replied.

"What?" Victoria's eyes widened abruptly upon hearing the time, and she sat up despite feeling drowsy at

first.

"Mommy?"

"It's already noon!" Victoria instinctively glanced over to where Summer had been sleeping, only to find it empty. "Summer?"

"Mommy, are you looking for Miss Jones?" Nicole questioned.

"Yes, do you know where she went?" As Victoria asked, she lifted the covers and got out of bed.

"Miss Jones got up early in the morning and went downstairs. It seems like she's chatting with Grandma."

"Did she get up early?" Victoria's eyebrows unconsciously furrowed after hearing this news. I didn't even notice Summer getting up.

Victoria felt displeased with herself and pursed her lips. After getting dressed, she said, "I'll go downstairs and

take a look."

At the sight of her mother about to leave, Nicole quickly snuggled up to her feet. "Carry me, Mommy."

Victoria bent down to scoop Nicole into her arms. She planned on going downstairs to look for Summer, but to her surprise, she ran into Alaric.

Alaric reached his arms out after seeing Nicole hanging onto Victoria's slender frame.

“Daddy will carry you, Nicky,” Alaric said.

Nicole was torn between her parents’ embrace, but she couldn’t bear to refuse Daddy’s inviting gesture, so she

entered his arms.

Victoria felt relieved after seeing Nicole being held by Alaric and said, “Hold her for a moment. I’ll go downstairs and check.”

As she passed by Alaric, he grabbed her hand. “Are you looking for your friend?”

“Yes. Nicole said Summer got up early,” Victoria replied.

“She’s already left,” Alaric informed Victoria.

After hearing this, Victoria stopped in her tracks. “Has she left already?”

Her eyebrows furrowed in response. “Why did she leave without even telling me? I feel hurt.”

Alaric

sighed helplessly after seeing her pained expression. “Well, she did want to tell you, but you were fast

asleep.”

His words left her speechless for a moment. She instinctively retorted, “It’s not that I sleep too much; you guys wake up too early.”

After all, everyone went to bed late last night. If they had followed their biological clocks, they would have only slept for two or three hours.

I woke up at some point, but my body felt so miserable. I couldn’t move at all, and I only wanted to go back to sleep. It’s a completely different situation from before. My body and eyes feel comfortable after being well-rested.

Alaric chuckled softly. “Yes, we do wake up too early. What about you, though? Are you a lazy little piggy?”

Victoria was speechless.

Before she could refute it, she heard Nicole speaking up while nestled in Alaric’s arms. “Yeah, Mommy is a lazy little piggy.”

Victoria initially intended to scold Alaric, but she had to swallow her thoughts and instead reached out to pinch Nicole's cheeks. "You little rascal! Your Daddy is being naughty, so how can you join him?"

Even after being pinched, Nicole continued to playfully whine, "You're a lazy little piggy, Mommy!"

She looked at Alaric, feeling speechless. "Let's not use that term anymore. It's not good for the children to pick it up."

Alaric chuckled. "What's wrong with it? Don't you find it cute when she says it?"

"What's cute about it? Should I call you that too? Do you think it's cute?" Victoria fought back.

Chapter 563 I Won't Necessarily Agree With It

However, there was this one kid who always seemed to find joy in causing trouble. After hearing her words, Nicole couldn't contain her excitement as she enthusiastically clapped and cheered. "Yay, Lazy Piggy Mommy and Lazy Piggy Daddy!"

Victoria was left utterly speechless by her daughter's reaction.

Meanwhile, Alaric saw no issue with the nickname their daughter had come up with. Instead, he joyfully

bounced Nicole in his arms and showered her with praise. "Nicole, you're amazing! Coming up with such creative names at such a young age!"

Once again, Victoria found herself at a loss for words, struggling to comprehend why Alaric would endorse such a derogatory nickname and exaggerate Nicole's innocent playfulness.

"Do you like it, Daddy?" Nicole's attention shifted toward him, and she began brainstorming various names for

her father.

A speechless Victoria stood there, observing their joyful playtime together. Nicole even leaned on Alaric's shoulder, amusing herself by playing with his hair, and the man seemed to relish every moment.

As she watched, a faint smile formed on her lips. Well, it's just a few unpleasant names, nothing more. As compared to the way they interact with each other, it doesn't seem to matter much.

Victoria quickly brushed it off and remained in place for a moment before Alaric urged her, "Go downstairs and

have your meal. Don't just stand there."

"Has everyone already eaten?" she inquired.

"Yeah," he confirmed.

"Okay, then. I'll head downstairs first."

Before going downstairs, Victoria made sure to take her phone with her.

As soon as she reached downstairs, a servant courteously led her to the dining room and presented the prepared meal.

"Thank you.

As she sat down to eat, Victoria took out her phone and happened to stumble upon a message from Summer.

'Hey there, sleepyhead! Since you were still snoozing just now, it wasn't convenient for me to stay any longer in your house, so I headed out for now. Just reach out to me once you wake up, okay? Lots of love and kisses!'

As Victoria read Summer's message, she could almost picture the mischievous expression on her friend's face as she typed those words. It brought a smile to Victoria's lips as she replied, 'I'm awake now.'

After sending the message, she dialed Summer's phone number.

Summer answered promptly. "You woke up so early? I thought you were going to sleep until the afternoon."

"It's not that early anymore. It's already 12.00PM. Why did you leave without calling me when you woke up?"

Victoria asked.

disturbed you both last night, and I'm already guilty for keeping you up. Now that you've finally had some sleep, it wouldn't be right for me to disturb you again. If not, I'd probably deserve a good scolding."

"Aren't we best friends? Why are you saying all this?"

“You silly girl! It’s precisely because we’re best friends that I didn’t want to disturb your sleep. I wanted you to get more rest. Plus, you’ve lost so much weight. You need to rest and eat more, okay?”

Toward the end, Summer’s tone even carried a hint of sternness and warning.

Although her words sounded strict, Victoria couldn’t help but raise the corners of her lips as she took a sip of chicken broth. “Alright, alright. Where are you now?”

“I’m still in the car and on my way home,” Summer responded.

Summer’s home was in another city which was not too far away. Victoria remembered her mentioning it before. With the New Year approaching, Summer wanted to return to her home.

“How much longer until you arrive?”

“Not quite sure. I thought it would be just a few hours’ drive, but you know how it is at the end of the year- traffic is just awful,” Summer replied, stifling a yawn.

Concerned for her friend, Victoria promptly urged her to get some rest.

“Sure. I’ll take a nap in the car for a bit and let you know when I arrive.”

“Sounds good.”

After ending the call, Victoria shifted her focus to eating her lunch.

As the end of the year approached, the days seemed to grow busier. After quickly finishing her meal, she rushed to the office to attend to the remaining tasks on her list.

By evening, Victoria had completed all her responsibilities at the office. She felt a sense of relief knowing that she wouldn’t have to return to work. From now on, her focus would shift to taking care of things at home.

Amid the busyness of work, Victoria couldn’t shake the feeling that she never had enough time for herself.

However, upon finally returning home after wrapping up all her tasks at the company, she quickly realized that

her presence at home was hardly necessary.

Adrian and Mary took care of most household matters while the remaining tasks were handled by the dedicated helpers. Victoria and Alaric only pitched in with the occasional decorations.

As time went on, some of the helpers started heading home early to celebrate the New Year with their families. Meanwhile, those who lived far away or had no close relatives chose to stay and celebrate the festivity at the Cadogan Residence.

Victoria received a phone call from her father, who wanted to know her plans for the year ahead. He asked if she intended to stay at the Cadogan Residence or travel abroad together.

Having been informed about her amnesia, Tony remained silent for a long time upon hearing that she had ended up with Alaric again.

During that time, Alaric had a private conversation with Tony for a long time, even going overseas to meet him without Victoria's knowledge.

Eventually, Tony's stance softened. "Since she relies on you so much without her memories, I'm placing my trust in you to take care of her. However, if you continue to make my daughter unhappy, I will never entrust her to you again."

Tony had been deeply saddened by the situation of Victoria taking care of her children all by herself in the past.

His precious gem hand had been mistreated. Therefore, he harbored significant resentment toward Alaric, his former son-in-law, for quite some time.

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However, Tony had also been young once and understood that certain relationship issues were beyond the control of elders. The more he intervened, the more pressure it could place on the child, potentially leading to

unfavorable outcomes.

Moreover, Tony knew his daughter very well. In the end, he decided to respect her decision and support

whatever she wanted to do at the moment.

Nevertheless, he still couldn't shake off the deep concern he felt for Victoria.

Even during the New Year, aside from calling to inquire about her plans, he wanted to gauge her emotional state and see if she had been doing well.

When her father inquired about her plans, Victoria was momentarily taken aback before finally replying, "I don't

know..."

Deep down, she longed to celebrate with her family.

However, now that she was married to Alaric, he had become her family as well. Additionally, Adrian and Mary treated her with such love and care, as if she were their own daughter.

This inner conflict left Victoria in a state of dilemma for a moment.

When he heard the uncertainty in her voice, Tony couldn't help but let out a sigh. "Well, I won't make it difficult for you either. You can celebrate the New Year there for now. After the holiday, come over whenever you have

time."

Victoria was unsure how to respond and could only agree by saying, "Alright. I'll see how it goes then."

After ending the call, she immediately sought out Alaric to discuss the matter at hand.

Alaric remained silent, attentively listening to her words. When she finished speaking, he met her calm eyes and asked, "What's your plan?"

gaze

with

Her pink lips parted in response, and she quipped, "If I already knew, would I still be asking you?"

He couldn't help but chuckle softly at her remark. "So are you looking for some suggestions from me?"

Victoria snorted lightly. "Even if you offer one, it doesn't mean I'll necessarily agree with it."

Chapter 564 I Can Be Shameless Every Day

Alaric couldn't resist entertaining mischievous thoughts as he observed her reaction. And so, he reached out and pulled her to sit in front of him. "Well, I do have a suggestion now. Listen and see if you like it. If you don't, we can come up with something else."

Intrigued, Victoria was eager to hear what he had in mind. "Mhm. Go ahead and tell me."

However, the man raised an eyebrow playfully. "Do you want me to tell you? Well, you'll have to give me a kiss

first."

Confusion washed over Victoria's face. "Wait... What?"

She thought she must have misheard him.

Awkwardly, she stared at Alaric, who was in front of her. "What did you just say?"

Alaric's deep gaze lingered on her lips, his voice low and husky. "Are you playing dumb?"

After a moment of bewilderment, Victoria suddenly blushed. "We are discussing something important. What on earth do you think you're doing?"

However, Alaric leaned closer and teasingly brushed his warm breath against her face. "This is important too, and it matters a great deal."

Instinctively, she turned her head away before his breath could reach her.

To her surprise, he reached out and held her chin. "Just kiss me."

Victoria furrowed her brows in protest. "No way."

He looked at her with a puzzled expression. "Why not? Do you feel disgusted with me?"

The word threw her off guard, and she quickly retorted, "Of course not. Why would you think that?"

There was no way she could ever feel disgusted with him.

"Are you sure?" Alaric lowered his gaze, looking like he was deeply aggrieved. "All this time, you've been rejecting my advances. A couple of days ago, you refused to sleep with me because of your friend, and now you won't even kiss me."

A self-deprecating curve formed on his thin lips. "If this isn't disgust, then what is it?"

Hearing his words, Victoria suddenly felt like she had been portrayed as the villain in their interactions. She instinctively rushed to defend herself. "That's not true. When I turned down your advances, it was because we were at the office, and there were people around. I thought it was inappropriate."

Pausing briefly, she gathered her thoughts before continuing.

“You must understand this, right? And as for later, it wasn’t that I didn’t want to sleep with you. It was because Summer came, so I went to sleep with her. It was just a coincidence that one night and it didn’t happen again. And about what just happened... It’s not that I didn’t want to kiss you, but-”

Interrupting her explanation, Alaric quickly interjected, “If you’re not unwilling, then what’s wrong with giving

me a kiss now?”

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irimportant.”

“Kiss me, and we’ll continue the discussion,” he insisted.

She found herself at a loss for words.

It seemed she couldn’t escape from giving him a kiss today.

Feeling a mix of frustration and fear that he genuinely believed she was disgusted with him, Victoria reluctantly leaned in and planted a quick kiss on his cheek.

Her movement was swift and unexpected, catching Alaric off guard. Before he could react, she had already withdrawn. “Now, do you believe that I don’t find you disgusting?”

“That was too quick,” he remarked.

Confused, Victoria asked, “What do you mean?”

“I mean, it was too quick. I barely felt it.”

“You only asked for a kiss, and you didn’t specify the speed. Anyway, you can’t back out now. Hurry up and tell me your idea,” she retorted.

Alaric emitted a soft hum before breaking into a gentle chuckle.

“I’m not satisfied yet. Let me kiss you again.”

Just as Victoria tried to stand up and make her escape, she felt a strong hand grab her wrist and pull her back

into an embrace. Caught off guard, she found herself falling into Alaric’s arms.

In the next moment, her chin was held, and his familiar breath pressed against her.

She intended to push him away, but it was too late. Her lips were captured by Alaric's, and the familiar scent and the friction of his lips gave her a sense of comfort. With a swift surrender, she closed her eyes.

Expecting her resistance, Alaric was momentarily taken aback by her unexpected compliance. However, he quickly regained his composure and deepened the kiss.

An hour later, Alaric held the woman in his arms with a satisfied expression on his face. The subtle upward curve of his eyebrows hinted at his happiness, and the usual depth of his eyes was replaced by a different

emotion.

After letting out a contented sigh, he held her even tighter.

Thinking about their recent encounter, Victoria blushed and buried her petite face in his embrace.

As her cheek pressed against his chest, she could feel the gentle vibrations of Alaric's low chuckle resonating

within him.

She wanted to lift her face and ask him about his amusement, but the weight of their recent intimate encounter made her bravery falter. Hence, she could only grit her teeth and playfully punch him.

Alaric, however, paid no mind to her playful retaliation. After all, in the past hour, he had received what he had longed for in exchange for the cold treatment and lingering bitterness that had plagued him for so long.

Victoria punched him twice and still found no satisfaction, so she continued her playful assault.

However, when she reached the fifth punch, her slender wrist was finally grabbed by Alaric. "Alright, alright. Enough with the hitting," he said helplessly.

"Can't I even hit you?" she retorted.

"You can hit me if you want, but didn't you mention earlier that your hand was sore?" he replied with a hint of amusement. "If it was already sore, won't it hurt even more if you keep on hitting?"

Victoria fell silent upon hearing that.

She couldn't believe he would casually bring up the embarrassing moment from earlier.

Her ears reddened, feeling as if they were about to burst. Then, she swiftly pulled her captured wrist free from his grasp.

“You have no shame!” she muttered angrily.

Alaric cheekily responded, “Yeah, I have no shame. If you’re willing to treat me like you just did, I can be shameless every day.”

“I don’t feel like talking to you.” Victoria pushed him away, intending to get up and leave.

“Wait! Don’t you want to hear my suggestion?” he interjected.

As the subject of the new year came up, Victoria hesitated for a moment. Fearing that he would continue his playful antics, she stood still in place without turning back.

“I’m all ears,” she declared.

Recognizing her genuine concern, Alaric refrained from further teasing. He knew he had to handle things delicately, bit by bit, in order to capture her heart.

Scaring her away now would mean losing the opportunity for future sweet moments.

“I’ll talk to my parents directly about buying plane tickets,” he proposed.

“Buying plane tickets?” Victoria turned her head in surprise. “What do you mean? Why do we need to buy plane

tickets?”

At that, he commented, “You can’t have the best of both worlds, so why not go abroad with them and celebrate together?”

Victoria pursed her lips, contemplating his suggestion.

Truth be told, it was an idea that had crossed her mind as well.

After all, they were Alaric’s parents, and it wouldn’t seem fair to burden them with the expense of traveling

abroad with her.

On the other hand, if she asked her parents to purchase tickets to visit, it wouldn’t be fair to her parents either.

While she was grappling with her conflicting thoughts, Alaric took matters into his own hands.

Contemplating this, Victoria turned to him and asked softly, "Is that okay? Will they... be upset?"

Chapter 565 She's So Polite

"Why would they be annoyed?" Alaric raised his eyebrows. "They're busy with their two little grandkids and don't have the time for anything else. They will do anything you ask of them."

Victoria didn't know what to say. While she didn't really want to believe him, it was still the truth. Adrian and Mary loved Nicole and Nathan so much that they refused to let the children go for even a second. Their days were spent coddling their grandkids or missing them, and eventually, they had taken over Victoria's job of sending the children anywhere.

Victoria had been hesitant at first since she really loved her children, but Adrian and Mary had too much free time after completely handing the company over to Alaric. They had taken charge on occasion, but after seeing Nicole and Nathan, they completely let go of their responsibilities and gave Alaric full control over the company. Instead, the couple spent their days looking after their grandchildren and showing them off on social media.

When she remained silent, Alaric decided to continue convincing her. "For example, if you want to take Nicole and Nathan overseas for the New Year without allowing my parents to see them, my parents will surely buy plane tickets and follow them there."

Victoria pondered momentarily before deciding that it was indeed what Adrian and Mary would do. In the end, she nodded. "Are you going to talk to them?"

"Who else? Are you brave enough?"

She tugged at the hem of her shirt as she mumbled, "It's fine with me, really."

"Never mind." Alaric didn't continue his teasing, and he reached out to stroke her head. "It's better if you don't go. Let me talk to them."

Victoria pursed her lips and was finally willing enough to turn her head to look at him, meeting his gleeful gaze. He was completely different after he had been satisfied. Unlike how stern he usually was, he now looked like a satiated wolf that had hidden its claws.

"But..."

The hand he had on the back of her head went to her nape before he moved forward to kiss her forehead gently. "Just remember to reward me when it has been resolved."

Alaric then went out, leaving a blushing Victoria standing where she was. It was a while before she realized something and quickly rushed to the bathroom to wash her hands.

True enough, Adrian and Mary agreed to the suggestion without a word of protest, just as Alaric had said. Alaric had merely mentioned it offhandedly, yet they had nodded and concurred without even asking why. After making their decision, they started playing with their grandchildren again.

Their thought process was simple—their family owed Victoria because of the fiasco with Claudia. Victoria had been the one who had risked her life to save Alaric, yet someone else had taken the credit. Their family hadn't investigated closely either and kept thanking the wrong person, thus feeding a gluttonous beast.

Of course, it wasn't just feeding the beast. Victoria, the real savior, had to single-handedly care for her two children after the divorce, so her struggles weren't difficult to imagine. Her father would never mistreat her financially, and the children could be cared for well but the emotional trauma as well as the affection and

company missing during those years, could never be compensated with money.

That was why both Adrian and Mary felt indebted to their daughter-in-law. They were already happy enough that she was willing to return, plus she had brought along their grandchildren. What was Victoria to them but someone even more precious than their own daughter? That meant that whatever she said would be done.

On the other hand, Victoria was slightly embarrassed after knowing that the elderly duo had agreed readily. "I'm sorry, Mom. We've already put up decorations and prepared presents, but I—"

Mary moved forward to hug her. "You don't have to apologize, silly girl. We're the ones that should apologize to

you.

Mary's voice was soft and warm.

However, she remembered that Victoria had lost her memory and couldn't recall what had happened before, so Mary quickly rephrased herself, "Just tell us whatever you want to do, and we will agree to it. Don't think too much about it. As far as I'm concerned, you are my real daughter."

Since the Cadogan Family was going overseas for the New Year, they bought airplane tickets the night they made their decision. There wasn't much time left before the New Year, so they rushed to the airport after they had finished their preparations.

After arriving at the airport, Victoria called Summer to inform her about not being able to meet up during the New Year. Summer was shocked after hearing that they were all celebrating it abroad.

"Your entire family is going?"

"Yeah."

"Wow! Alaric's parents treat you quite well. They really are something, huh?" Summer had been slightly angry at the Cadogans, but after the recent events, she couldn't really complain.

"Yeah."

"Spending the New Year abroad isn't a big deal. Just go anywhere you think it's okay. It's just a pity that I've just come back and won't be able to see you then."

Victoria chuckled at the disappointment in her friend's voice. "Didn't you resign? We can meet up again when I come back. We can spend time together then."

Summer, who had been regretful that they couldn't meet during the holidays, became eager again after hearing that. "You're right. Even if we can't spend the new year together, we can always meet up after that."

Summer laughed as she added, "Remember to bring me presents. I want the most expensive one you can find!"

"Sure thing! I will get you something."

Victoria was still smiling warmly after hanging up. "Is it that Summer girl who came to see us?" Mary asked, to which Victoria nodded.

"Yeah. I told her about our trip."

Mary began praising Summer. "She's so polite but is far too courteous and left very early. I was originally planning on inviting her for lunch."

Summer wasn't a stranger to the Cadogans since she had been best friends with Victoria since their schooldays, plus Victoria had always frequented the Cadogan Residence either alone or with Summer back then. The Cadogans saw Summer often and knew she was Victoria's best friend, so they became affectionate with her by association. They had a good impression of Summer and treated her well. However, Summer was extremely

y courteous toward them, probably because of her family, so she didn't dare link herself closely to

them.

"Yes. She's always been that way."

"Hey, Victoria. Is Summer married?"

Victoria shook her head, remembering Summer's busy job, which had made her quit eventually. "Nope. I think

she hasn't even dated someone all this time."

Mary was taken aback. "She hasn't dated anyone all these years?"

"Mhm. She's quite occupied with work."

"That girl really is something."