

## Departure with a Belly Chapter 171

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In the meantime, Alaric was perched precariously on the edge, looking like he could fall at any moment.

However, the blonde woman's playful interaction with Terrance abruptly stopped when she noticed Alaric's distressed appearance and realized something was wrong. Ultimately, she abandoned her attempts to captivate Terrance and followed him while awkwardly communicating with him in Corynthean. "Is he alright? Should I call for an ambulance?"

When he found out their collaborator had sent this woman to them, he initially wanted her to leave. However, after seeing Alaric in such a state... Instead, he uttered, "Please, refrain from touching me."

Nonetheless, when she attempted to assist Terrance in propping Alaric up, she was

met with an icy reprimand from Alaric. In response, Terrance swatted her hand away and deftly translated what Alaric had said. "There's no need for your help here. You should go and attend to your own matters."

On the other hand, the blonde woman gazed reluctantly at the feeble yet undeniably handsome man before her. Such an exceptional man is truly a rare gem; it's just that... As she observed Alaric's frailty, she realized he would be unable to return her

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interest tonight even if she managed to arouse him After realizing this, she relinquished her persistence and departed

After the woman left, Terrance, who was clearly struggling under the burden of Alaric's weight, led him into the bedroom As Alaric settled on the couch, the arrival of the young intern disrupted the silence, bursting through the door when she saw that it wasn't opened with a gastric medicine in her hand Mr Levane, I've brought the g-gastric medicine

When Terrance heard this, he quickly grabbed the medication, unscrewed the bottle, and prepared to pour the medicine onto his palm. Midway through, he was abruptly reminded of something as he quickly turned her, urgently demanding, "Water! Past me water!"

"Ah, water! I'll go get it immediately" Then, she promptly turned her head and hurried into the kitchen to grab a glass of water for Alaric

Due to Alaric's stomach condition, the scene became a whirlwind of chaos and commotion, though only Terrance and the young intern were the busy ones attending to the matter.

By the time Alaric had consumed the medicine and been tenderly guided to the respite of the guest room, half an hour had quietly slipped away. As for their choice Chanta 75 Thekro

of the guest room, it was because the blonde woman had slept on the bed, so not only were the bed and sheets soiled, but the entire right room was also scented with perfume

After emerging from the room, Terrance immediately ordered, 'Once Mr. Cadogan is feeling slightly better, we shall relocate him to a fresh suite on the lower floor

The young intern readily nodded and said, "Okay, no problem. What was that woman doing? How did a woman end up in Mr. Cadogan's room

When he heard that, he responded helplessly, "She was sent by the collaborator thinking Mr. Cadogan would be interested"

She was speechless upon hearing that and eventually grumbled, is the person in charge of the collaboration dumb? Have they not heard that Mr. Cadogan is uninterested in such things? It would be common knowledge if they had asked around

Ultimately, Terrance chose not to elaborate further, his countenance darkening "By the way why did Mr. Cadogan's stomach act up again?"

"He barely ate a few bites for lunch and didn't have time for dinner. Of course, with Chapter 171 Thinking Mr Cadogan Would Be Interest

his pre-existing stomach condition, if he doesn't eat properly, his stomach will act up again." When the matter was brought up, he couldn't help but scratch his head in frustration. Then, he continued, "Mr. Cadogan has been suffering from this illness for a long time. If this persists, who knows if it may take a turn for the worse?"

Despite our earnest efforts to counsel him, he remains unyielding. Not only does he disregard proper meals, but he's also consumed by his work."

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The young intern couldn't help but shudder upon hearing that, recalling Alaric's dreadful complexion from earlier. Then, she inquired, "Won't he listen even after his family intervened?"

Terrance's expression turned somber in response. "It's useless. If it had worked, Mr. Cadogan would not be suffering as much as he is now."

"Right." As the conversation progressed, a palpable air of hopelessness pervaded the room. Suddenly, a glimmer sparked in her eyes as she recalled something.

"What about Miss Johnson? Haven't we been told for years that she is Mr. Cadogan's sole presence? Can't she persuade him?"

"You mean Claudia?" he sighed and added, "Let's not dwell on that. Initially, I believed it would make a difference. I even beseeched her for assistance, but it was useless."

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After hearing that, the young intern said, "If even Miss Johnson couldn't do anything... Then, it seems there's no solution. We'll just let things develop as they are. Mr. Cadogan won't pass away prematurely, right?"

"Tsk, tsk, tsk. Don't talk nonsense! You're just an intern, so don't utter ill wishes!"

Terrance scolded, causing her to pout.

"Mr. Levane, let's be honest. Am I really cursing anyone? I am genuinely concerned about Mr. Cadogan. If things persist like this, even a healthy individual couldn't endure such turmoil, right?"

Terrance sighed, acknowledging the young intern's point. "Yes, but if even his family members are powerless, what can we do?"

She said nothing after that, and they fell into a shared silence.

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Meanwhile, Alaric awoke two hours later and changed rooms. The new chamber welcomed fresh air, free of unpleasant odors, and he quickly fell into a deep slumber on the bed.

Afterward, Terrance opened the window to allow ventilation and told the young intern, "Alright, if there's nothing else, you may return now."

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“What about you?”

“Mr. Cadogan is not feeling well; someone needs to stay here with him at night.”

She pursed her lips, pondering for a while before suddenly suggesting, “Should Mr. Cadogan take his stomach medicine without eating anything? It can’t be good for his stomach, right? How about... I go downstairs and see if I can find some plain congee?”

“This is a foreign country; finding plain congee won’t be easy.”

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“When I returned, I noticed a Corynthean restaurant nearby. Perhaps, they have it? I’ll go and check.” With those words, she hurriedly dashed out.

Initially, Terrance intended to tell the young intern not to bother, considering that even if she managed to buy it, there was no guarantee that Alaric would eat it.

However, she was so enthusiastic that he didn’t stop her and could only sigh before taking a seat.

About an hour later, she returned, clutching a container wrapped in multiple plastic bags. “Mr. Levane, I’m back.”

He promptly stood up upon hearing that. “You got it?”

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She nodded and smiled. “Yes, I got it. The owner of the restaurant downstairs is a Corynthean. As soon as he heard about Mr. Cadogan’s stomach condition, he immediately cooked a pot of congee.”

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After hearing this, Terrance hurriedly approached and verified that it was congee. Moreover, he couldn’t fathom how the owner prepared it, but it exuded a fragrant aroma that aroused one’s appetite.

“I’ll call Mr. Cadogan, and you go to the kitchen and fetch a bowl. Fill it up to slightly less than halfway.”

“Alright.”

On the other hand, Alaric had only slept for approximately two hours. Not only did his appetite suffer, but his sleep was also restless; it was only due to his stomach

condition today that he could indulge in a deep slumber lasting a mere two hours. After waking up, whether in his thoughts or before his eyes, all he could see was the sweet smile of a particular woman from his past. Aside from his stomach, there was another source of excruciating pain for him-A heartless woman. Who in this world could be more inhuman than her? A moment later, he was gasping for air as the searing pain in his chest forced him to lean against something and reach for his phone. Suddenly, he felt the urge to check the accounts of those children.

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It had been a day since Alaric hadn't replied to Victoria's message. Now, it was already approaching midnight.

The two children's social media accounts were well-maintained with no random things cluttering their profiles. Their bios were simple and even their posts were infrequent. Occasionally, they would share edited videos with music and captions. It was evident that the person managing the accounts didn't have much free time. Alaric clicked on one of the videos and the smiling faces of the two children immediately appeared on his phone screen.

At the sight of their smiles, he suddenly felt the restlessness and irritability in his chest dissipate. He sat back against the edge of the bed, scrolling the account with his finger, and quietly watched for a long time. Gradually, his mood became increasingly calm.

When Terrance pushed open the door to the room to find him, his restlessness had completely subsided and his stomach felt better as well after taking the medicine. "Why are you awake, Mr. Cadogan?" Terrance quickly walked up to him. "I thought you were resting."

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Although Alaric's complexion hadn't fully recovered, his gaze was noticeably sharper. He glanced at the person before him and pressed his thin lips together before asking, "Do you need me for anything?"

Only then did Terrance recall his purpose and quickly say, "Well, Joe bought some chicken soup from the restaurant downstairs. The owner specially made it after hearing about your condition. The smell is quite enticing. Would you like to have some?" As he finished speaking, he rubbed his hands together. "Since you've taken the medicine, it's better for you to eat something to fill your-

However, before he could finish his sentence, he heard Alaric coldly reject his suggestion. "I'm fine. You can take it back."

Terrance hadn't expected to be rejected so quickly, but he didn't want to give up either. He hesitated in place, reluctant to leave.

"Is there something else?" Alaric glanced at him.

"It's not that, Mr. Cadogan. Your stomach is not good and you can't go on like this. You must eat something."

"What does that have to do with you?"

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Hearing that, Terrance pouted. I wish it had nothing to do with me. After all, I'm not the one feeling the pain, but when you are in pain, I end up being busy. In the end, I'm the one worried about you instead of yourself. Also, if you were to die from the illness, I would lose my position. Where would I find another high-paying job?

Although there are many things to do when working with Mr. Cadogan, he is extremely cold. He is different from other people. As long as I complete my work during office hours, he doesn't inquire about other matters. The end-of-year salary and bonuses are also very generous. In short, if he could work at the Cadogan Group for a lifetime, he wouldn't consider going anywhere else.

At this thought, he planned to use a bunch of polite words to respond to Alaric. "You shouldn't say that, Mr. Cadogan. You are my superior. So, as your subordinate, I should be concerned about your health. If you're sick, Joe and I will worry."

However, no matter how he expressed his concern, Alaric seemed as if he hadn't heard his words.

Seeing that Alaric's expression seemed impenetrable, Terrance was extremely worried. He couldn't help but say, "Mr. Cadogan, you already have a stomach problem. Even though you took your medicine, no matter how good the medicine is, not eating or drinking like this will..."

"Get out."

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"Mr. Cadogan."

"Get out!" Alaric's expression turned cold.

Terrance stood still for a while, but in the end, he had no choice. With a sigh, he turned around to leave.

As Alaric closed his eyes, he felt a headache coming on, but at this moment, a soft, adorable voice echoed in his mind. 'Mummy said that we have to eat well and on time to have a healthy body. So, everyone must have their meals on time. This is... Nicole's voice. Why did I think of that child's voice at a time like this? Is this a sign? Although he had taken his stomach medicine, his stomach still ached faintly. He pressed his lips together, and just as Terrance was about to leave the bedroom, he called out to him, "Wait."

Terrance stopped in his tracks and turned around to look at Alaric with a dejected expression. "Yes, Mr. Cadogan?"

"You mentioned... chicken soup?"

At his question, Terrance, whose eyes had lost their spark, immediately brightened up and nodded eagerly. "Yes, Mr. Cadogan. It's chicken soup specially made by the

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restaurant downstairs."

Alaric pondered for a moment. "Bring it in."

"Alright. I'll go get it immediately."

When Terrance left the room, the young intern, Joe, was anxiously waiting outside.

"How did it go, Mr. Levane? Is Mr. Cadogan willing to eat something?"

"Yes. Hurry up and bring me the chicken soup."

“Here.” Joe handed a small bowl of chicken soup to Terrance.”

Once he received it, he hurriedly made his way back to the bedroom, fearing that Alaric would change his mind if he was a few minutes late. In any case, when he felt like eating, it was better to let him have a bite than not eat anything at all.

Instantly, the aroma of the chicken soup filled the room. Furthermore, it was still warm when it was handed over.

Terrance handed a spoon to Alaric and said considerately, “Be careful, Mr. Cadogan. It’s hot.”

After Alaric took it, he looked at the bowl of chicken soup and scooped up a  
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spoonful, but instead of eating it, he lifted his head and looked at Terrance. “How long do you plan to stay here?”

Terrance, who originally intended to watch him eat, retracted his gaze. “Alright then. I’ll be outside.”

After the bedroom door was closed, the room fell silent.

Alaric stared at the bowl of chicken soup. In fact, he had no appetite at all. He had never been enthusiastic about food in the first place. Food, to him, was merely sustenance to keep himself alive.

He always ate very little. It was the woman who used to be by his side who had a great interest in food. It was even more pronounced when they were younger. Every time, after school or on weekends, she would always drag him to try out delicious food and ask him to take her there. When he was with her, his appetite grew a little, but after she left...

At this thought, his eyes grew slightly heavy. He pushed aside the unnecessary thoughts in his mind, picked up the bowl, and without even using a spoon, he reluctantly drank the chicken soup straight from the bowl.

The food in his mouth held no flavor whatsoever. It was as tasteless as chewing  
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wax.

After finishing the congee, he glanced at his phone again and thought about the message Victoria had sent during the day. Against his better judgment, he succumbed to the temptation and opened it. Then he stared at the message for a while before crafting a reply.

On the other hand, Victoria was busy with work tonight. By the time she finished, it was already late at night. She felt a little hungry, but she was too lazy to cook, so she settled for a few pieces of biscuits to fill her stomach. After washing up and checking on her two little ones to make sure they were asleep, she planned to go to bed too. Unexpectedly, her phone vibrated at that moment.

She was worried that it might be something important from work, so she wiped her hair while picking up her phone to check.

When she saw the message, she realized it was a reply from a man named ‘Silent Night’. After a whole day had passed, he chose to reply at such a late hour. ‘What do you want to talk about?’

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To be honest, this answer sounded rather strange no matter how one looked at it. If it weren't for the fact that this person had silently supported Nicole and Nathan with donations for such a long time without any intent, Victoria would probably have ignored him directly. But no matter what, she was the one who contacted him first. Time was precious for Victoria even at night, so she didn't want to waste it. With that, she directly asked for his contact information. 'Can I please have your contact number?'

At this sight, Alaric stared at this sentence for a while and then entered his own contact information. Victoria looked at the contact information he sent her and then opened her WhatsApp to add it. The profile that came up was very simple, with the simple letter 'Y' as the nickname and a profile picture of a beach at night. The nickname was similar to his Tik Tok handle. She then quickly added the person's number.

After Alaric sent the message, he waited for a while but didn't receive a reply from her. He pursed his lips as he glanced at the time and thought, Could it be that the person is not responding because it's too late and had fallen asleep? While contemplating, he opened WhatsApp and saw a new message. He subconsciously looked at the person's profile picture.

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Originally, he thought that people who had children usually used their own children's pictures as their profile pictures, but unexpectedly, the person's profile picture was a ray of sunshine at twilight. Looking at this picture, Alaric somehow felt that the person was someone with a vibrant spirit, unlike himself... While in thought, he saw a message appearing above the chat box, 'The other person is typing...'

Soon, the other person's message came through. 'Hello sir, how should I address you?' Sir? Alaric pursed his lips upon seeing this.

He typed a word in response. 'Al.'

Al? When Victoria saw this word, she was momentarily taken aback, but soon she felt relieved. The world was vast, and over the years, she often heard the same surnames, words, and even similar first and last names. At first, Victoria's heart would pound when she heard the same name. But now... she was just momentarily taken aback and soon regained her composure. 'Hello, Mr. Al.' It was indeed similar to his handle on TikTok.

Mr. Al? This address made Alaric slightly tug at the corner of his lips, but he didn't reply. Shortly after, she sent another message. 'Thank you very much for liking my two children. You have given both my children a lot of gifts throughout this year. Nicole and Nathan both really like you. However, we mentioned during the livestream that we won't accept gifts. So, after excluding the portion deducted by

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the platform, I roughly calculated the remaining amount, and it's this sum.'

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Alaric paused upon reading the message. He knew that she added him just to talk



about money-related matters. He never expected that she had already calculated everything. The figure she sent was also larger than he had anticipated. It wasn't that he cared about the large sum of money he had given out but rather, he hadn't realized that he had been tipping the two children that much money.

'Mr. Al, this is a substantial amount. May I ask for your account number? I'll return this money to you.' After receiving Victoria's message, Alaric silently stared at the phone screen. She's serious about returning the money? Although he could tell from the live stream that the two children came from a well-off family, who in this world, apart from a certain foolish woman, would complain about having too much money?

Victoria waited for a long time until she finally received a response from him. She thought he had gone to look for his bank account number, but after a few minutes, he only replied with a brief text. 'There's no need for that.'

She was speechless upon seeing that.

From the beginning of the conversation until now, she realized that he was a man of few words. It was unclear whether it was how he normally was or he simply didn't

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want to engage in further conversations. However, based on her observation, it seemed more likely the latter reason. After all, when Victoria sent him a message, it was marked as read, but he didn't reply until later in the evening. Perhaps, the reason he replied to her message at night was that he thought it would be impolite not to reply.

After making sense of the situation, Victoria dismissed the idea of chatting further with him. She fell silent for a moment and then left a message that read, 'It's getting late, Mr. Al. Rest early. If you have time tomorrow, please send me your account number. Goodnight and sweet dreams.'

When Alaric saw this message, he couldn't help but chuckle. It was evident that she was trying to end their conversation. However, he was caught by surprise when she requested his bank account details. She's still thinking of returning the money? If I were to send my account number, would she actually transfer the money to me? Considering how well-behaved and polite the two adorable kids were, he couldn't rule out the possibility that if he dared to provide his account number, they would genuinely transfer the money. Unfortunately, he wouldn't take back what he had given away.

The next day, the half-asleep Victoria seemed to hear some noise in the living room.

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They were rustling sounds. She stayed silent for a second, then quickly woke up and pulled back the covers before getting out of bed barefoot. The morning light peeked through the gaps in the tree leaves, illuminating the living room with flickering fragments of light.

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The window in the living room was opened, and the sounds of birds chirping could be heard which added liveliness to the atmosphere. The next moment, a tall and

slender figure was seen being busy by the dining table in the living room. The sleeves on his off-white shirt were rolled up, revealing the muscular arms. He paired the white shirt with simple black trousers, which exuded an extraordinary temperament.

“You’re awake?” The man’s warm voice echoed while his gaze fell on Victoria. The next moment, he noticed her bare feet, making him furrow his brows lightly. “You’re up, but why aren’t you wearing shoes?” Hearing that, Victoria looked down and glanced at her bare feet. Before she could respond, she heard Bane’s gentle voice again. “Quickly put on your shoes.”

“Okay.” Victoria went back to her room and put on her shoes before coming out.

“Why are you here?” Victoria walked over and sat opposite him.

Bane placed the plate of breakfast on the table and put the bag away before saying, “If I didn’t come, were you planning to have sandwiches again today?” Victoria

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paused for a moment and then retorted, “I don’t eat sandwiches every day. I only do that occasionally when I’m busy.”

“You should still eat properly even if you’re busy.” Victoria didn’t say anything and looked at Bane helplessly.

Since Bane knew she was busy, he would often have his chef at home prepare meals and send them over. At first, he would call Victoria before sending the food over, but after some time, Victoria couldn’t bear it anymore and directly told him, “Why don’t you stop coming over in the morning? I want to sleep a bit longer.”

At that, Bane raised an eyebrow and said, “If you want to sleep more, you can. Just give me the entrance code.”

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Thus, that was how Bane obtained the entrance code to her house. Afterward, he would often personally bring breakfast over. As the frequency increased, Victoria also felt embarrassed and said to him, “Actually, you can have your subordinates deliver it.”

Bane then ruffled her hair and said, “Didn’t you want to sleep a bit longer? If they deliver it, they’ll have to give you a phone call which will wake you up.”

“Don’t you have the entrance code?”

Upon hearing that, Bane sighed, “Do you think I would trust others with the entrance code to your house?”

“Not even your subordinates?”

“Not even them.” Unless he was truly busy, he would take care of her no matter what.

“Have you washed up?” Victoria was lost in thought when she suddenly heard Bane ask her a question.

She snapped out of her thoughts and shook her head. “Not yet. I got up to check

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because I heard a sound in the living room.”

“You’re still not used to it?” Bane placed a cup of warm water in front of her and continued, “What difference does it make if you’re awake as soon as I arrive?”

“There’s still a difference. From the time you wake me up with a phone call to the time you spend arranging things in the living room, I can at least sleep a few more minutes.” Victoria smiled.

Hearing that, Bane was amused by her and playfully tapped her delicate nose with his finger. “You’re so cheeky.”

With that, Victoria paused and blinked her eyes gently before laughing. “I’ll go wash up.”

“Okay, I’ll wait for you.”

When Victoria finished washing up and came out, Bane was already sitting in the seat next to hers with a newspaper in hand. Upon hearing her movement, he folded the newspaper and put it in his bag.

“You’re here.” Victoria glanced at her seat and thought for a moment before deciding to sit opposite him.

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Bane noticed her actions and his gaze darkened slightly. However, he didn’t show it on his face. He then pushed the plate of breakfast toward her. “Have some.”

“Thank you.” Maybe it was due to the fact that she had just chosen to sit across from him, the atmosphere between them became a bit strange, and they both had breakfast quietly.

As Victoria looked at Bane’s handsome face, she felt a twinge of guilt in her heart. He was treating her so well, yet she was still concerned about something as trivial as the seating arrangement... The thought of it gave her a sense of guilt. After swallowing the food in her mouth, she was about to speak to break the awkward silence when she heard Bane say, “How are things going with the business?”

Upon hearing that, Victoria paused. “What business?”

“Are you still half-asleep?” Bane gently reminded her. “I’m talking about the company you’re starting.”

It was only then did Victoria understand what he meant. “Oh, you mean that.” She lowered her gaze and said softly, “I’ve already thought it through, but I might make a slight change in the location.”

“Location?”

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“Yes, I plan to open the company domestically.” When Bane heard the mention of the domestic market, his hand paused for a moment, but it was so subtle that it was almost undetectable. Not to mention, Victoria wasn’t even looking at him at that moment.

“The domestic market?”

“Yes, I’ve done market research, and the domestic market is the most suitable in recent years.”

“You’ve really grown. You’ve even learned how to do market research.”

Victoria was speechless upon hearing that. She was already a mother of two children, and it had been five years. Why did Bane still treat her as a young girl? After praising her, Bane fell silent for a moment, then spoke gently, "But wouldn't it be better to set up your company overseas? Set it up near my company so I can help."

"You've helped me so much in these five years and I shouldn't rely on you for everything." Victoria felt a bit embarrassed.

"Rely on me for everything?" Bane chuckled lightly at the description. "Victoria, if you

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were truly willing to rely on me for everything in these five years, I wouldn't have had to go through so much trouble."

Although she now agreed to let him bring her breakfast, it was the result of Bane's efforts. Even if he didn't do these things, Victoria could still live a good life.

"Don't say that. You've already helped me a lot. If you do more, I won't be able to repay you."

"Who said you have to repay me?" Bane looked at her with a deep gaze, and he spoke in a deep voice. "Anyway, I'm doing it willingly so I can't do anything to you even if you don't repay me."

Victoria remained silent upon hearing that. It was true that he couldn't do anything to her as he had always respected her. But the more she owed him, the more guilty she felt. If she couldn't repay him, she wouldn't be at ease for the rest of her life.

"Alright, relax. It's not an issue if you want to go back to the country. I can even go back with you." Upon hearing that, Victoria, who had been looking down, suddenly raised her head.

"You'll go back with me?"

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"Why not? Since you're going back to start a company in your home country, shouldn't I go there to help?"

Victoria was speechless after hearing that. The truth was, her decision to return to her home country to set up a company wasn't just based on market research. There were other reasons as well. She simply felt that Bane had done too much for her, and she wanted to go somewhere far away from him. But she never expected him to make such a significant decision for her or for him to decide that immediately.

"What's wrong? Are you startled by my words?"

"Before this..."

"Don't worry. Did you really think I wanted to go back to the country with you?"

Victoria, I'm a businessman. I won't do anything if I don't gain from it. Even if you don't want to go back to the country this time, I will still go back. I plan to expand my business domestically as well. As for the market research report, my assistant handed it to me last month. Do you think I did it for you?"

Upon hearing about the market research report, Victoria heaved a sigh of relief, but at the same time, she became suspicious. "Last month? Are you telling the truth?"

“Don’t believe me?” Bane took a sip of coffee and smirked. “If you don’t believe me,  
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go to the company later and have Ethan show you the report.”

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“Don’t think that I’ll believe you just because you say so. I will really go and see it.”

“Sure, go take a look. There’s nothing in my company that you haven’t seen before.”

His frankness made Victoria feel that she had been too presumptuous.

Come to think of it, if he hadn’t made any preparations in advance and just gone  
back to the country with her, his business abroad would definitely suffer a huge  
loss. How could a businessman allow himself to lose so much money?

“By the way…” Bane remembered something and took out an invitation letter from  
his pocket. “There’s an auction in the country next month, in Riverdale. Will you  
accompany me?”

Victoria took the invitation letter and opened it while asking, “Is there something  
specific you’re looking at?”

“Well, it’s Old Mr. Morison’s birthday, and there’s a particular antique he’s interested  
in that is said to be available in this auction. I plan to bid for it and give it to him as a  
birthday gift.”

Victoria nodded upon hearing the reason. “Okay, I’ll accompany you then. I need to  
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see what gift I should prepare for Old Mr. Morison as well.”

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Victoria handed the invitation letter back to Bane upon finishing her words.

However, Bane didn’t put it away immediately. Instead, he tightened his grip on the  
invitation letter while gazing at Victoria. “The best present one can give Grandpa is  
probably a granddaughter-in-law.”

Victoria froze for a moment; she had a feeling that Bane was hinting at something.  
She was about to respond to him when he continued speaking, “It’s a shame I  
couldn’t fulfill his wishes. The best I can do for now is to get him one of the antiques  
that he might like” After saying that, he finally kept the invitation letter away. He let  
out a chuckle when he saw how stiff Victoria seemed. “What is it?” he asked.

“It’s nothing.” She snapped out of her daze before letting out an awkward laugh.

“Is that so? Could it be that you thought I was trying to give you a hint earlier?” the  
man asked.

She eyed him speechlessly before responding, “Well, not really… Why would I think  
so?”

“It’s fine if that’s what you thought. Grandpa is quite fond of your two kids, and I’m  
sure you know how I feel about you,” Bane commented.

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Victoria pressed her lips together without saying much after that. Two years ago, he

had seized the perfect opportunity to confess his feelings toward her, but she had rejected his advances then. She tried her best to avoid him after that incident, and it took a while for Bane to finally get in contact with her again.

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“If you’re avoiding me because of my feelings for you, I want to let you know that you don’t have to do that, Victoria. I’m responsible for my own feelings. I’m sure you can tell I haven’t forced you to do anything for me in the past three years. I might not even have brought this topic up today if we hadn’t had this conversation. So, are you sure you want to continue avoiding me because of this? Would you rather lose me as a friend?” His tone was sincere and warm.

If I continue to avoid him, I’d feel bad about it, Victoria thought. Bane had been nice to her throughout the two years after his initial confession, and he hadn’t dated any other women since then. He would reject anyone that came close to him.

Thus, Victoria was the only woman in his life, along with her two children. Even though he never brought up the topic of his feelings and never once forced Victoria to date him, she still found herself in a tough spot. She couldn’t reject him since he didn’t voice his feelings, and sometimes, she couldn’t help but wonder if she was the cause that hindered him from finding someone better.

“Alright. You shouldn’t worry about these things. You’re about to start a company, so

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you should focus on that.” Bane’s voice brought her back to reality, and she nodded lightly upon hearing his words. “You’re right. I’m probably going to be very busy if I start my own business,” she muttered.

After breakfast, Victoria packed some leftovers into a lunch box and left a sticky note on it. Then, she headed off to the office with Bane. It was rare for both of them to show up in the office together, and their gorgeous looks made the people around turn their eyes on them as they walked into the office.

“I can’t believe Mr. Morison is coming in with Miss Selwyn. How rare!” someone commented.

“What’s so rare about this? Mr. Morison is in love with Miss Selwyn. Everyone in the company knows about this.”

“But the whole company also knows Miss Selwyn isn’t interested in Mr. Morison. Otherwise, they would’ve gotten together by now,” someone else stated.

“Why do you guys think Miss Selwyn keeps rejecting Mr. Morison? He’s a handsome and capable man. He’s gentle and sweet, too! Just the sight of him makes me excited. Furthermore, he’s so nice to Miss Selwyn. Can any woman resist our boss’ alluring charms?”

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“Well, I heard that Miss Selwyn only rejected Mr. Morison because of her history. Apparently, she reckons that she isn’t up to Mr. Morison’s standards because of what she encountered in the past, and that’s why she refuses to date him.”

“What? What happened?” Everyone was intrigued by this topic of conversation. Gossip was to be found in any corner of the world as long as it was a space occupied by people.

“Miss Selwyn had a divorce, and she’s a single mother with two kids now.” The

people who hadn't heard about this were shocked at first. They had expected Victoria to have some dramatic ex-lover, but they hadn't expected her to be a divorcee, much less a mother of two children.

"I heard that the Morison Family is pretty strict about these things. I'm sure Old Mr. Morison wouldn't allow a woman like Miss Selwyn into the family since she's a mother of two kids," someone uttered.

"It may be possible for a divorcee with two kids to marry a regular man, but I would agree that she's no match for someone like Mr. Morison. There's no way that Old Mr. Morison would agree to such a marriage! That explains why they aren't dating- she's simply not a good fit for him!" Another person sneered.

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"Where did you hear about that? Didn't Mr. Morison's father also have a second wife? HOW COULD YOU say that the Morison Family is strict about these things another staff member rebuked

THE TITLE. WT. Monson has a brother who's only about seven years old. Isn't that the chic of his father's second wife? I heard that Mr. Morison's stepmother is pretty mean too." The workers had been gossiping about Victoria and Bane at first, but they eventually steered in the direction of Bane's private life since they were more interested in him. The workers only stopped when they heard the team leader bearing his throat. They scurried back to their respective seats after that.

"If you guys could apply the same amount of effort you put in gossiping to your work, I'm sure you guys wouldn't have been stuck with your current positions for so long. You guys are just so lazy sometimes!" The team leader shook his head before walking off.

Victoria had no idea that the other staff members were gossiping about her. Even if she knew about it, she wouldn't be too bothered as she didn't care what others said about her. That was because she knew everyone was free to have their own opinions and that the only person whom she had control over was herself. After parting ways with Bane, she headed to her own office. While on her way there, she recalled something and took a detour to Ethan's office.

E

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Knock! Knock! Ethan had been preparing the schedule for the day. He looked up when he heard the knock, and his eyes lit up when he saw Victoria standing by the doorway. "What brings you here, Miss Selwyn?" He got to his feet with a smile on his face. "Is anything the matter?"

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Victoria shot him a side-eye. "Am I not allowed to drop by for no reason?"

"Of course not! You're free to do that," Ethan replied. He was the assistant who had been present at the airport all those years ago. He had witnessed the special treatment that Bane gave to Victoria, and he had been continuously learning about their relationship in the past five years. Ethan was surprised that Bane had not managed to win Victoria over even after five years, and he even looked down on Bane's flirting skills sometimes.

However, that didn't stop Ethan from treating Victoria like his boss' wife.

"I wanted to ask if Bane has any plans of developing the business within the country," Victoria uttered.

At her question, he froze for a moment before returning to his senses. Is that why Mr. Morison told me to prepare all the market research reports? “Yes, he does. Mr. Morison told me to do some research on that. What is it, Miss Selwyn? Are interested in this?” he asked.

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“Do you have the market research report with you? Can I take a look at it?” she asked. I don't care how I might look here. I need to find out if that market research report does exist or if Bane had just come up with something to trick me. I simply can't accept all of his support for me.

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*Ethan handed the report to Victoria in the end. Victoria flipped through the pages to realize that it was the same copy that Bane had been talking about—it was also dated from a month ago. The market research report wasn't just a general report, as it also included a lot of specifics. After Victoria went through the whole thing, she let out a huge sigh of relief. She was glad to learn that Bane genuinely had the intention of developing the business locally and that he wasn't doing all of this just for her.*

*“Thank you. You can have it back,” Victoria uttered as she handed the files back to Ethan.*

*“Do*

*you*

*need more time to study it, Miss Selwyn?” Ethan asked.*

*“It's fine. I went through it already,” she replied.*

*“Alright. Feel free to text me if you ever need it again and I'll send it to you,” Ethan offered.*

*After he walked Victoria out with a polite smile on his face, he returned to his own*



seat and wiped off the layer of sweat that had formed on his forehead. Then, he lowered his head to glance at the research report on the table as he recalled what

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#### *Chapter 176 Neglected Your Kids*

*Bane had told him in the past.*

*“It has to be done meticulously,” Bane had said when he first told Ethan to prepare the report.*

*“Meticulously?” Ethan wasn’t sure what Bane meant by that. “How meticulous do you need me to be, Mr. Morison?”*

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*“As meticulous as possible,” he replied. Ethan had left the research report around for a long while after it was done, and no one seemed to need the report for anything. It was only when Victoria dropped by that day that Ethan realized why Bane required the report to be meticulous. I bet all of this is done just for Miss Selwyn, Ethan thought. Mr. Morison’s even hiding the truth from her just to protect her.*

*Ethan couldn’t help but sigh when he thought about the situation. Is he still the same madman that I once knew? He seems so different now. Well, he’s still a madman in his own ways—I guess he won’t change that part of him for anyone. Ethan shuddered at the thought of all the wild and insane things that Bane had done in the past. Sometimes I wonder... Is Miss Selwyn really lucky, or really unlucky, to have captivated the heart of a man like Bane?*

#### *Chapter 176 Neglected Your Kids*

*Ever since Victoria decided to start her own company, she completely immersed herself in work. In the past, she would still have the time to take an afternoon.*

*nap,*

*but she barely had any time to rest in recent days. She even had to sacrifice her sleep. There were simply too many things that she had to prepare—she only managed to complete her initial draft of her business plan after staying up for a few consecutive nights.*

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*She finally managed to get some rest in the afternoon after she completed her first draft. Coincidentally, Summer paid her a visit on that day, and they decided to have a meal together. When Summer saw the look on Victoria's face, she shook her head with a sigh. "You shouldn't overwork yourself even if your goal is to start a company! Have you taken a look at yourself in the mirror in the past few days?" Summer cried. "Why would I look in the mirror?" Victoria sipped on her coffee without seeming too concerned. "Do you think I have the free time to do that?" she sighed.*

*"Well, you might be hard at work, but don't you think you should also pay some attention to your health and your image?" Summer scanned her friend from head to toe. "Do you know what you look like right now?" she asked. Victoria stared blankly at Summer, and Summer was also quiet for a moment as she couldn't find the right words to describe her friend.*

*In the end, Summer simply pulled a pocket mirror out of her bag before handing it to*

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*Victoria. "I'm not going to say it. You can take a look at yourself—perhaps you'd understand," Summer muttered. Victoria was exhausted from her days of hard work, and all she wanted was a peaceful lunch. She hadn't expected Summer to comment*

*on her looks and to even hand her a mirror. "Stop messing around, Summer-"*  
*Victoria stopped abruptly when she actually saw her reflection in the mirror.*

*An*

*"I know, right?" Summer let out a laugh when she saw the stunned look on Victoria's face. "Do you know what you look like right now?"*

*Victoria instinctively placed a hand on her cheek after a few seconds of just staring at herself. "My image is ruined," she muttered. Her reflection in the mirror was of a woman with huge, swollen eye bags. She had been too busy to put on any makeup and she looked especially pale as she hadn't been getting enough sleep. On top of all that, she had also lost a few pounds, which made her look like a drug addict. If my reflection is a shock to myself, I can only imagine how shocking it must be for others, she thought.*

*"Please don't tell me this is how you've been showing up in the office for the past few days," Summer muttered.*

*"Uh-huh." Victoria nodded solemnly.*

*"Pfft." Summer nearly choked on her food. "Did you really go to work like that?"*

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*Summer couldn't help but click her tongue when she saw the helpless look on Victoria's face. "Well, I guess that's one of the perks of being naturally good-looking.*

*You're still pretty even when you don't care about your looks," Summer uttered.*

*Summer didn't actually think that Victoria looked bad—she simply looked less presentable than her usual self. Furthermore, with Victoria's naturally gorgeous looks and sharp features, the added layers of eyebags and the lack of color in her*

*cheeks only made her look like a pretty vampire. Summer couldn't help but sigh at this thought. She's still a beauty even when she's at her worst. Meanwhile, if someone like me were to be in that state... I'd probably be a mess, Summer thought. "Anyway, you shouldn't overwork yourself. You don't expect yourself to start a whole business within the span of a few days, do you? You should allow yourself more time. There's no harm in delaying the opening a little, right?" Summer commented.*

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*"I know," Victoria replied with a nod. "Don't worry. I'll take care of myself." Victoria's attention was quickly drawn back to her company after Summer first mentioned it. She quickly asked Summer for some pointers, completely forgetting that she looked like a mess. Summer knew that there was no point in lecturing Victoria when Victoria was in a workaholic mode, so Summer no longer bothered to make any comments after that.*

*They spent lunchtime talking about work, and Summer only realized that she didn't*

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*have much to eat when it was time for them to leave. Forget it. I guess this helps me to lose some weight, Summer thought. "Have you been neglecting your kids with all that's going on at work recently?" Summer wondered.*

*Victoria felt especially guilty at the mention of her kids. "Yeah, but Nathan and Nicole have been really sweet about it. I promised that I would bring them to the playground once I'm done with all my work," she uttered.*

*“The playground, huh? Do you want me to take them out instead?” Summer offered.*

*Victoria shot the woman a puzzled glance. “You? Are you free to do that?”*

*“Of course,” Summer replied while wiggling her eyebrows.*

*“Did you apply for a day off today?”*

*Summer chuckled. “Yeah. It’s a rare occasion, but I’ve taken three days off work. I’m going to move in with you for a bit.”*

*Victoria wasn’t too surprised to hear this. After all, Summer would come over to stay with her every time Summer had a holiday. She would help with caring for the kids and preparing meals every now and then. Their friendship had been steady throughout all these years. “Alright. You can head over first, then. I have other*

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*matters to handle. Can you do it all on your own?” Victoria asked.*

*“Of course.” Summer waved at Victoria. “I’ll ask someone else to help if I need anything. You should hurry off and get back to work. I don’t want to stop you from making big bucks,” she uttered.*

*“I’m sorry, Summer. When I’m done with this, I’ll-”*

*“Don’t worry about it. I’m just waiting for you to get rich so that you can cover all my expenses,” Summer teased as she gave Victoria a playful push. “Hurry up and get to work. I’ll take care of the kids.”*

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*After keying in the passcode to the room, Summer could hear the babbling of the two kids. When she took a good look at them, she realized that the kids were doing a live stream. Summer had been about to say something at first, but she held herself back at the very last moment. Since Nicole and Nathan hadn’t noticed her yet, she figured that she would head over to clean the kitchen first.*

*Summer assumed that Victoria would’ve been too busy to do her dishes in the past two days, but to Summer’s surprise, the kitchen was s\*\*ck and span when she entered the area. The bowls were all washed, and the tabletop had been wiped down. There was a chart placed on a rack by the side, and there was a tick next to*

that day's date. "Did the maids come over?" Summer muttered to herself. Then, she walked out to the balcony from the kitchen, and she only returned to the hall after the kids were done with their live stream.

"Miss Jones!" When Nicole saw Summer, she ran over excitedly. Before Summer had the chance to bend down and pick the girl up, Nicole had already wrapped her arms around Summer's legs. "I haven't seen you in so long, Miss Jones. I missed you!"

"Is that so?" Summer narrowed her eyes and knelt down in front of the girl. Before Nicole could say anything, Summer reached her hand out and squished the young

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girl's cheeks before rubbing and pinching them gently. Nicole's cheeks had turned pink and flushed by the time Summer stopped. Summer then leaned forward to plant a kiss on Nicole's forehead. "I've missed you too!"

Nicole's eyes widened as she blinked a few times. "You're a little odd, Miss Jones..."

"I'm the only one who's allowed to treat you like this, okay? You're not allowed to let anyone else touch your face!" Summer was grinning like an idiot at this point. "Oh, okay." Nicole was just a young child-she didn't know better than to agree with Summer even though her cheeks were all pink from Summer's affection.

Summer couldn't help but give Nicole another kiss after hearing Nicole's words.

"Also, I don't want anyone else to kiss your cheeks! Aside from me, only Mommy and Grandpa can do it," she added. Nathan happened to walk over right then. "Miss. Jones," the boy uttered politely. Summer's eyes lit up once more when she saw Nathan, and she loosened her grip on Nicole and made her way toward the boy. However, Nathan was quick to take a step back.

"Nathan! Hurry up and give me a kiss!" Summer protested as she narrowed her eyes to form a mean look. Nathan took a few more steps back as he felt his cheeks turn red. Summer rushed over to catch him before picking him up and sitting him down beside Nicole. "It's no wonder Victoria does so much for you guys. I would do the same if I had kids as cute as you two!" Summer said. What a shame! It has been five  
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years-I can't believe I'm still single! Her best friend had gotten married, pregnant, and then divorced, and she had also given birth to two kids. However, Summer was still single.

Back then, when Summer first left her country, she had hoped that Victoria would be able to introduce her to some quality men. It was Summer's dream to marry a foreigner and to have a child who was of mixed descent. However, having a child. seemed like too far away of a dream then-she couldn't even find a partner! This was all because of that mean superior of hers! Summer's superior happened to be a biracial man-his mother was of Corynthean blood. When Summer first met him, she had envisioned a future with him. However, the more time she spent with him, the more she realized that he was just a workaholic who would find all sorts of ways. to suck up the free time she had over the weekend.

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Sometimes, Summer would be out on a date when her superior would give her a call and tell her to get back to work. He would threaten to deduct her year-end bonus if she refused to return. Summer would have no choice but to ditch her dates and head back to work. As time went on, Summer began to blame her superior for the reason she couldn't find a partner. Summer felt frustration boiling in her as she thought about this matter. "You guys need to pray for me to get married as soon as possible. I want to give birth to kids as cute as you two so that I won't have to come over all the time to squish your cheeks."

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Nicole, being the thoughtful one, was quick to wrap her arms around Summer's neck. "I hope you get married soon, Miss Jones!"

"Oh, my sweetie! You're so adorable. I love you to death!" Summer exclaimed.

Bane came over to visit Victoria when it was nearly time to get off work. "Are you still working?" he asked. Victoria was too busy to even look up from her work and simply muttered a short response. "Yeah. I'm going to take a while more." Moments later, she realized who she was talking to, and she lifted her head immediately.

"What are you doing here?" she asked.

Bane had his keys in one hand and his blazer hanging on the other arm. There was a warm smile on his face as he walked over to her. "I wanted to drive you home, but it looks like you're not done with work." Bane walked over to the couch as he continued speaking. "Should I wait for you here? How much longer will you need?" he asked.

Victoria had intended to reject his offer at first, but she gave in eventually. "I'll need about an hour," she replied.

"Sure. Go ahead and do your thing." Bane was an understanding man, and he no

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longer spoke to her after that. Victoria was quick to get back into her flow of work. Since he had to wait for an hour, Bane picked up a book and began to flip through it on the couch. He had been interested in the book at first, but after a while, he found himself more drawn to Victoria.

Victoria looked earnest when she was at work. All of her focus was placed on her laptop screen as she ran her fair and slender fingers across the keyboard. She didn't even notice the strands of hair that were covering her face—all of her attention was on the screen. Every now and then, Victoria would slow down when she was faced with an issue that she had to think about. Then, she would rest her chin on her palm as she knitted her brows and pursed her lips. If she managed to think things through and find a solution, the muscles around her brows would relax, and she would go back to typing. Victoria had no idea that Bane had been observing her the whole time even though he looked like he was reading a book.

Bane didn't mind waiting for Victoria at all, but he thought one hour was too short because he wanted to watch her forever. It felt like he had only just sat down when Victoria finished her work. "Okay. I'm done. Let's go," she uttered.

"Are you done already?" he asked as he lifted his wristwatch. It had only been 45 minutes. That explains why it feels like it hasn't been an hour, he thought. "Hmm,

yeah? I mean, my superior is keeping an eye on me as I work. My productivity increases in stressful situations, so I get things done a little faster than usual," she

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uttered.

Bane smiled upon hearing her words. "It seems like my presence is pressuring you." "It's pressure, but it's also motivation. Come on-let's go." Victoria stuffed her notebook into her bag. She had been about to walk over to grab her coat when she realized that Bane had already taken it for her. He opened the coat and waited for her to slip her arms in. "It's getting cold outside, so you should dress a little warmer. Don't you know how frail you are?" Bane muttered.

Victoria froze for a second as she felt the man getting closer to her. Before she could do anything, she heard his deep and mesmerizing voice sounding from above her head. "Hold your arms out," he ordered. Victoria felt rather embarrassed at first. "Why don't I-"

"Am I not even allowed to help you put on a coat?"

Moments later, Victoria helplessly held her arms out as she allowed Bane to put the coat on for her. She only resisted his efforts when he began to help her button her coat. "Alright. I'll button the rest on my own."

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Bane's hand seemed to tremble for a moment, but he continued holding onto the button on her coat. "Victoria," he uttered with a slight chuckle. "Are you that repulsed by me?" he muttered.

"No, I'm just..." Victoria was trying to find the words to explain herself when Bane pulled his hand away with a soft sigh. "You can do it on your own, then." Once he pulled his hand away, Victoria hastily turned her back against him before she buttoned up her coat. After she was done, she turned back around to find that Bane had already picked up her laptop bag and walked ahead of her.

Victoria jogged after him. Most of the people in the office had gotten off work by then, but there were a few workers who stayed to work overtime. They greeted Bane and Victoria when they saw them. "Mr. Morison, Miss Selwyn," they uttered. Both Victoria and Bane nodded in unison.

Upon entering the elevator, Victoria began to tell Bane about how Summer had ended up in her house. "She's on holiday, huh? How rare. I can't believe her boss gave her a holiday," Bane commented. Victoria couldn't help but chuckle at the mention of Summer's boss. "Yeah. It's really rare for her to be on holiday-I was surprised to hear that her boss gave her three days off." The two of them continued to chat about their daily life as they headed to the car and drove out of the parking

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lot.

When Victoria and Bane got home, they were greeted by a mouth-watering smell. The hall was dimly lit, and both Nathan and Nicole were watching a cartoon on the couch. "Mommy! Mr. Morison!" The kids hadn't seen Bane in a few days, so they



were both excited to see him now. They reached for a hug, and the man stretched both his arms out to pick one kid up with each arm.

Nathan was slightly timid-he hung his arms loosely around the man's neck. Nicole, on the other hand, exaggerated all her actions-she looped her arms tightly around Bane's neck while crying out in a childish voice, "Thank you for sending Mommy home, Mr. Morison. You're the best!"

"Am I not the best when I don't send your mother home?" Bane teased.

"No. You're always the best," Nicole replied sweetly. Bane glanced in the direction of the woman who had slipped into her indoor slippers and headed toward the kitchen.

"If you think I'm that great, what do you say I become your father?" he asked in a whisper.

"Hmm." Nicole tilted her little head sideways as she fell deep into thought. Moments later, she flashed a wide grin to reveal her baby canine teeth. "Would you be nice to me if I allowed you to be my daddy?"

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"Of course." Bane chuckled. "I'll buy anything you want for you, I'll make sure to fulfill all of your requests."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes," Bane replied as he lifted his arm to hold her closer to his face. "Well... I'll have to think about it," Nicole replied.

"Aren't I the best? Do you still need more time to consider this offer?" he asked again.

"Mhmm. I really like you, but I have to ask for Mommy's permission," Nicole explained.

Tsk. Bane bit his bottom lip gently. He was about to say something when he heard Summer's voice coming from the kitchen. "Are you trying to fool the kids again, Bane? Aren't you a little too shameless?" Summer had just walked out of the kitchen with plates in her hands, and she happened to overhear Nicole's conversation with Bane. She couldn't help but tease Bane a little.

"You always fail at these little tricks of yours. Why won't you just give up?" Summer continued. Bane brought the two kids over to the dining table, and he watched Summer serving the dishes as he lowered the kids into their seats. "I believe that I'll

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get what I want if I'm stubborn enough," he replied.

Summer froze for a moment before she let out a smile. "You're right. I wish you all the best. You know I'm on your side-I'm sure you'll win her over someday," she stated.

"I'll make sure not to let you down," Bane replied. Summer hadn't been as friendly with Bane when they first met. Even though Bane seemed like a warm and gentle man, he was from an extremely influential family, so Summer had been reluctant to treat him like just any other person. However, after spending time with him, Summer realized how nice he was, although she sometimes wondered if this was merely because she was Victoria's best friend. Bane was generous when it came to the things that he had to offer to her.

Soon enough, Summer jumped ships to side with Bane instead. She even put in a good word or two for him with Victoria every now and then. On top of everything, Summer felt certain that Bane was a decent man. After all, he had stayed by Victoria's side for the past five years, and he didn't have any other women with him throughout the years. I don't think I can find another man who's as loyal and committed as Bane, right? Summer thought. He doesn't even seem to mind the fact that Victoria is divorced and has kids. He treats her kids like his own. If this isn't love, then...

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"What is there to win over?" Victoria happened to walk out of the kitchen as they were talking. She didn't hear the front part of their conversation-she only heard the back. Summer quickly cleared her throat before lying with a straight face. "What else can we win over? We're planning to win over one of the client's projects, that's all."

"Let me do it," Bane offered as he took the plates from Victoria. Victoria handed it to him as she continued talking. "It's dinnertime. Why are you guys still talking about work?"

"Tsk. What's wrong with that? This just shows that we're motivated people. Work is our source of life," Summer commented. Victoria then turned around to shoot her a glare. "Is that so? Why don't I call your superior now, then? Should I tell him what just said?"

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Summer immediately frowned. "Why would you bring up that man at a time like this? Stop talking about him!"

After they all sat down, Victoria continued to giggle as she thought about the look on Summer's face. "Why do I feel like the two of you are in some kind of a love-hate relationship?" Victoria teased.

"Pfft. Who's in a love-hate relationship, huh? I'm warning you, Victoria-don't you

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dare put that guy and I in the same sentence when you talk about us. He's the reason I've been single for the past five years. He's the person I despise the most!" Summer hissed. Both Victoria and Bane simply exchanged glances and smiled without saying much.

"I specially made these chicken wings for you two, Nicole and Nathan. Dig in!"

Summer placed some food into the two children's bowls. The whole atmosphere in the hall felt really warm and loving.

"By the way, how are things going with your company? When are you heading back to the country?" Summer asked.

Victoria thought about her question for a moment. "I'll probably finish up the projects that I have on hand before I head back," she replied.

"Are you still working on projects? It'll take a while for you to complete them. Wouldn't you-"

"You should arrange a flight to head back in the next few days," Bane interrupted

their conversation. Both women turned to stare at him, and he flashed them a bashful smile. "Why are you guys looking at me like that? You should speed things up if you want to start a business. If you continue dragging things out, how would you be sure that the market is suited for your business in the near future?"

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"You have a point, but..." Victoria muttered.

"The company wouldn't go bankrupt even if I was the one who left, Victoria. So, you shouldn't worry about me and should just focus on what you want to do," Bane uttered. Victoria froze when she heard his words. At that moment, Summer felt like she was a third wheel sitting at the dining table with them.

Summer took a glance at Victoria before looking at Bane. Then, she rolled her eyes in exasperation. "That's enough, guys. We're having a meal here. Must you guys act all lovey-dovey right now? Do you guys want me to flip the table?"

Victoria's expression faltered for a second. There seemed to be love in the air after she heard what Bane said, and now that Summer was pointing out how sweet they seemed, Victoria felt as if there was actually something going on between the two of them.

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After dinner, Bane rolled up his sleeves and said, "I'll wash them."

"There's no need. You just need to rinse them and put them in the dishwasher."

Unfortunately, Bane was too quick in his actions and Victoria didn't even have time to react before he took the dishes away.

Summer, who was standing by, couldn't help but make fun of them again. "Alright, Victoria. Let him do what he wants to do. If you don't agree, how can he show off?"

"Yeah," he added. "Just let me show off."

Since he had insisted, Victoria gave in and handed the remaining tasks to him.

When it was time to rest in the evening, Summer had her own room to sleep in, but she insisted on bringing her pillow and squeezing in with Victoria.

It was drizzling outside, and the temperature in the room had dropped significantly. However, the warmth in the blanket increased when the two of them squeezed together.

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#### Chapter 179 Rewarding Too Much?

"I remember when we were in school, I used to sneak into your house and sleep together, but your bed was so big back then. I kept wondering if all rich families had such big beds."

Talking about the past, Victoria couldn't help but smile.

"Probably because my dad was afraid I would fall off the bed, so I always slept in custom-sized ones ever since I was little."

"Yeah, now that you mention it. I remember rolling around on your bed back then, but no matter how far I rolled, I wouldn't fall off."

Time flew, and when talking about the past, one couldn't help but feel nostalgic.

It turned out that they were so happy back then, and so many years had already

passed.

Summer happily chirped like a little bird when talking about the past. "Oh, do you remember when we used to sneakily eat while still in bed, and then we were caught by your nanny?"

There was no response to this statement.

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Thinking that Victoria had fallen asleep, Summer looked at her only to see her looking down, seemingly absent-minded.

"Victoria. Victoria?"

Summer called her several times in a row before Victoria snapped out of her thoughts.

"What's wrong with you?"

Victoria could only force a smile and replied, "Nothing, I just got lost in thought for a moment."

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Unexpectedly, Summer grabbed the back of her head and said sternly, "After being friends with you for so many years, I'm dead sure you have something on your mind. Come on, spit it out."

At that, Victoria finally glanced at her and pondered for a moment before saying,

"Can you please not say those things anymore?"

"What things?" The sudden request left Summer puzzled.

Knowing that she was confused, Victoria reminded her. "At dinner tonight."

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When Summer heard this, she immediately understood. "You mean the jokes I made about you and Bane?"

4/8

Victoria remained silent.

"So, is your mind elsewhere because of this?" Summer asked as she puzzled.

Victoria muttered, "I feel it's not right."

"Do you feel awkward because of the things I said, or is it because you don't want to be with Bane, so you think it's not appropriate?"

"\_"

"Victoria, I don't understand." Summer tapped her chin. "It's been five years, and Bane has been extremely caring toward you. He is so accommodating as well. You still don't have any feelings for him?"

Victoria pursed her lips and remained silent.

"But if he were unattractive, or poor, or treated you badly, I could understand if you didn't like him, but he isn't any of those things. He's incredibly good-looking, not to mention his wealth. You know how he treats you."

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After hearing this, Victoria couldn't help but furrow her brows in protest.

"But feelings aren't about these things."

"Then, what are they about? Tell me, what are you looking for?" Summer smiled.

"Instead, why don't you just tell me, have you liked anyone in these five years?"

There's more than just Bane being interested in you."

"Summer, I have children. I don't want to think about these things."

“But those people don’t mind that you have children. Bane practically treats Nicole and Nathan as his own children, right?”

“Yes, I know. I owe him a lot.”

Victoria owed him so much that she might never be able to repay him in this lifetime.

“Ah, if Bane heard you say that, he would definitely be heartbroken.” Summer couldn’t help but feel sorry for him. “I really think he’s great and good-looking, and his family background is good too. The most important thing is that he’s virtuous and has no other women around him. There’s only one woman in his life, and that’s you. If you could date him, you’ll definitely live a happy life in the future.”

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Chapter 179 Rewarding Too Much?

“Summer...”

“Alright, alright. Regardless of how good he is to you or what impression you have of him, you have to trust me that I’ll always be on your side. I’m only suggesting it because I think he’s a good person. But if you really don’t like him, let’s just forget it. It’s not a big deal. I won’t mention it again.”

Victoria was somewhat surprised as she had expected Summer to strongly persuade her.

“You’re not going to persuade me anymore?”

“Why should I persuade you? Are you silly? You’re my best friend. How could I force you to do something you don’t like? Besides, even if I did force you, it might not work.”

Victoria gave her a heartfelt smile. She rarely smiled like this ever since becoming a mother.

If Summer had known that saying such things would be so effective, she would have said it from the start. After all, as her best friend, protecting her smile was her duty.

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Sat,

Chapter 179 Rewarding Too Much?

After setting the date to return to Uspein, Victoria told the two children about it.

The two little ones were obedient and they would always listen to her.

Nicole even snuggled into her arms directly. “Wherever Mommy goes, I go too.”

Nathan also shyly said, “Hmm, Nicole is right.”

Victoria patted their little heads and said softly, “Then later, you can go live and tell everyone about our recent situation where we’ll temporarily stop broadcasting for now. After we settle down in our new home after returning to Uspein, we can start broadcasting again, okay?”

“Okay, Mommy. We’ll live and talk about it later.”

While Victoria was packing her things, the two children went straight to their room to start the live stream.

7/8

When the viewers of the live stream noticed that the background for today’s stream was different from usual as they were not in the living room but in a cozy little room, they started asking in the chat. Nicole took the chance to share the news.

"Friends, we won't be doing live streams anymore."

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Huh? The viewers of the live stream were momentarily perplexed. No more live streams? Why?

Among those who felt 'perplexed' was Alaric, who was sitting in his office at the moment. He had put down his work and was watching the live stream of the two adorable children.

After hearing the announcement that there would be no more live streams, his face fell and he gripped his phone tighter. No more live streams? Why?

The first thought that came to his mind was-Could it be that she thinks I've been rewarding her too much?

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*At this thought, Alaric remembered the previous incident when he had added Nicole and Nathan's mother's contact information. As he didn't reply, they lost touch with each other.*

*They wanted to avoid accepting the money he sent as a reward. Are they afraid I will continue to send them money if they continue to live stream? So, they just stop live streaming altogether? But what if... I gave them my card number?*

*Alaric indeed liked those two little kids. Although they didn't live stream frequently, they always managed to dispel the darkness in his life.*

*The two kids were adorable. Over the past year, watching them had become a habit for Alaric.*

*He hadn't found anything else that could replace them in relieving his mood. If they stop live streaming because of this...*

*In an instant, various thoughts on how to resolve the situation crossed his mind.*

*However, before he could indulge in his wild thoughts for long, Nathan in the live stream corrected Nicole.*

1/8

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## *Chapter 150 Respecting Your Choice*

*“It’s not that we won’t live stream anymore in the future. It’s just that we’re moving, so we won’t live stream until we’re settled in our new place.”*

*“Yeah.” Nicole nodded along. “We’re moving.”*

*After hearing that they were just moving and not discontinuing their live streams, Alaric finally breathed a sigh of relief.*

*Fortunately, they were just moving.*

*He clicked on their homepage to check their IP addresses and found out they were abroad.*

*He was taken aback when he saw that the location matched his current whereabouts.*

*He never specifically checked where these two kids lived before. This time, while on a business trip abroad, he naturally didn’t realize that they were in the same area as him.*

*However, they might not be in the same city considering the vast size of the country.*

*As a result, numerous people in the live stream were asking where they were moving to. However, the two kids were clever and didn’t disclose their exact*

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*address. They only mentioned that they might return to Corynthea.*

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*A thought flickered in his mind upon hearing they were returning to Corynthea. Their native language was Corynthean, so there was no need to say much about where they could be.*

*Strangely, Alaric had the fleeting thought that if they returned to Corynthea, he could pick them up, but he quickly suppressed the thought as soon as it emerged. To them, he was just an audience who sent them rewards online. If he randomly offered to pick them up, they would probably consider him a weirdo or think that he had mental issues.*

*The live stream had already ended when Terrance came to look for him. Alaric had just put away his phone when he heard Terrance say, "Mr. Cadogan, it's time for your to take your medication."*

*Alaric pursed his lips and ignored him.*

*After a moment of silence, Alaric still remained indifferent, so Terrance reminded him again, "Mr. Cadogan, please take your medication."*

*Finally, Alaric glanced at him reluctantly. "Do you have nothing better to do?"*

*3/8*

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*"I'm busy." Terrance walked up to him directly, opened the drawer, and took out the gastric medicine from inside. He then poured a cup of warm water for Alaric. "But right now, my top priority is to remind you to take your medication. Please take it."*

*Alaric was dumbfounded.*

*He looked at Terrance, who was even more exasperating than Peter. He couldn't figure out why he had agreed to let Peter's cousin become his assistant in the first place.*

*"Mr. Cadogan? Mr. Cadogan, the water is warm. With this weather, if you leave it for a while, you'll have to drink cold water. Please take your medicine now. Your health*



*requires it.” Terrance’s mannerisms were such that he was about to force-feed the medicine to Alaric.*

*He wouldn’t have dared to behave this way toward Alaric a few days ago.*

*However, Alaric’s mother got furious during the phone call when she heard that his stomach ailment flared up when he was attending a conference.*

*“Terrance, starting today, I’ll double your salary. Your other job is to make sure Mr. Cadogan takes his medication. Don’t worry. If he dares to have any objections toward you, tell him it was my decision for you to do this. If he’s unhappy with you*

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*asking him to take his medication, then he is unhappy with me too. Feel free to call and complain to me.”*

*With Mary backing him up, what did Terrance have to fear? It was like borrowing the tiger’s might to scare others. He had to make sure Mr. Cadogan took his medicine. The best thing was he only had to remind him to take it and could receive double the salary. Wasn’t this great?*

*“Mr. Cadogan, if you don’t take the medicine, it will be hard for me to explain when Mrs. Cadogan calls.”*

*As soon as Terrance finished speaking, he felt a cold gaze and immediately felt a chill down his spine.*

*5/8*

*It was at this moment that he realized that even with Mary’s support, Alaric was still her son. If he became too arrogant and complacent, Terrance would undoubtedly be*

*the one to suffer in the end.*

*However, Terrance was pleasantly surprised by Alaric's subsequent behavior. It was because he took the medicine and even drank the cup of warm water that Terrance had poured for him. He then placed the cup heavily on the table, making a loud sound.*

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*"Satisfied?"*

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*Terrance quickly nodded and bowed. He then expressed his satisfaction and quickly left.*

*After Terrance left, Alaric seemed to have thought of something and took out his phone. He looked at the screen that showed the finished live stream and pursed his thin lips.*

*He wondered when the next live stream would be and hoped it would be sooner rather than later.*

*"Is the live stream over?" Victoria just finished packing some things into a bag when she saw the two kids walking in with their phones.*

*"Yes, Mommy." Nathan obediently handed the phone to her.*

*"Did you tell everyone that you won't be live streaming for a while?"*

*"Yes, Mommy. We've told everyone."*

*"That's good. We'll take a few days to pack up. There's no rush. Once we're done*

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*packing, we can go back.”*

*Suddenly, Nathan asked, “Mommy, did you tell Grandpa?”*

*At that, Victoria paused and suddenly realized she didn’t.*

*“Oh, right. I’ve been so busy lately that I forgot about that. We’ll visit Grandpa’s house in the evening.”*

*“Okay.”*

*7/8*

*Five years ago, when Victoria first arrived abroad, Tony’s company was struggling and even had debts.*

*Victoria used her meager savings to fill the shortfall, but when Tony found out, he scolded her harshly.*

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*However, upon learning about Victoria’s divorce from Alaric and her pregnancy, Tony, who initially wouldn’t accept help from others, started to change his mindset.*

*He no longer insisted on starting from scratch but began tapping into his network.*

*During the prosperous times of the Selwyn Family, many people received care and assistance from them, so he visited them one by one to ask them to repay their*

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*kindness to him.*

*Eventually, the company that would have taken several years to establish thrived within a year.*

*Later, Tony bought their current house.*

*As for why Victoria didn’t live with him, it was because, in the third year after the*

*—*

*house purchase, her father suddenly had a close female friend.*

*She was a widow who came abroad to make a living on her own, and she had a son who was much younger than Victoria and was studying abroad.*

*At first, Victoria felt a bit uncomfortable with the sudden presence of this woman around her father. In her impression, her father had always been around her, so she was not used to someone sharing his attention.*

*However, when she saw her father's different expression when he was with that woman, Victoria decided to respect her father's choice.*