

Departure with a Belly Chapter 331

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Chapter 331

In the end, Nathan placed his small hands in the large, warm hand and was led out of the room.

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Since Terrance didn't know what the children liked to eat, he bought all sorts of things, basically some of every kind. That was why the table was overfilled with food and snacks. Even Nicole was shocked at the number of things to eat when she was carried to the table.

"Mr. Night, are all these for Nathan and me?"

"That's right."

Then, Alaric took out two white napkins and placed them before Nicole and Nathan. Having taken care of these two for quite some time, although he still hadn't gotten to know their preferences, Terrance knew their eating habits and utensils very well. Hence, he also bought the other necessary things on the way.

In the meantime, Nicole and Nathan sat there, watching Alaric prepare everything for them.

Nicole's attitude also changed from ignoring him to being stubborn and had gradually Chapter 331 Looking At You Makes Me Sick

let down her guard. She even began ordering him, "Mr. Night, I want to eat that!"

"Sure." Alaric placed the thing she wanted onto her plate.

"And that too!"

"Sure."

"And the braised ribs on the far end."

"No problem."

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On the other end, Alaric ate nothing and fully cooperated with Nicole while serving Nathan. However, Nathan was a shy child, and though he seemed unwilling to let Alaric serve him, he still politely thanked Alaric.

While looking at the two well-mannered children, Alaric could not help but compliment.

how well Victoria had raised them these past five years. Just how much effort had she put into raising them?

At that thought, Alaric glanced sideways at Victoria on the bed. She was still unconscious and hadn't woken up since she was brought here.

Frowning, Alaric wondered how long she was going to be unconscious.

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"Mr. Night!" The little girl's sharp and loud voice pulled him out of his thoughts, and he turned around to see her looking at him with a displeased look.

"Mr. Night, what's the matter?"

It was then that Alaric realized he had fallen into a daze. "I'm sorry, Nicole. I was thinking about something and got lost in my thoughts. What would you like to eat? I'll grab it for you."

While pouting, Nicole instructed, "I'm thirsty. I want soup."

"Okay. I'll serve you some soup." Then, he got up and served her some soup.

When Victoria came too, her fingers on the bed shook slightly but couldn't move, and her mind was still fuzzy.

All she could hear was a muffled voice constantly ringing in her ears.

"I want this one!"

"I want that too!"

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"I'm thirsty. I want soup!"

"Ouch! It's too hot. You're so silly, Mr. Night. You have to cool it down first!"

In her hazy state, she thought that voice sounded so much like her daughter, but Nicole never behaved in such a way. When had she ever fussed over hot soup and asked someone to cool it down for her?

While thinking of that, Victoria felt resigned but also affectionate toward her daughter.

But before she could think of something else, she was engulfed by darkness again.

When she woke up again, she was more clear-minded than before, and the continuous voices she thought were hallucinations had also disappeared. The surroundings were so quiet that she could only hear the machines beeping.

After accustoming herself to the environment, she opened her eyes and saw all white.

It was already nighttime, and the room was only illuminated by a gentle, dim light,

which was why she didn't feel any discomfort after opening her eyes.

Looking around the room, Victoria soon noticed an unwelcome guest sitting beside the bed-Alaric.

Her dazed mind instantly remembered what had happened after she saw Alaric. She had lost consciousness after her head was bashed into something, and she had no recollection of what happened next.

It seemed like she had probably gotten injured then, so Alaric brought her to the hospital. The hospital... but what about Nicole and Nathan?

Victoria was lying quietly, but she immediately wanted to sit up from the bed when she thought of her children. Instead, her movement woke Alaric, who was resting beside the bed, up.

When Alaric opened his black eyes, she immediately met his gaze, and a moment later, Alaric got up to support her.

"You're awake. Are you feeling uncomfortable anywhere?" His voice sounded deep and raspy, seemingly because he was tired from staying up all night.

But Victoria's first question was, "Where's Nathan and Nicole?"

When Alaric heard that, he was slightly taken aback. She asked about the children when she woke up, which meant she was very worried about them. "Don't worry."

Then, he used his chin to gesture behind her, and Victoria looked in that direction.

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Two children were cuddled together under the warm night light on the small bed, covered by a thick blanket and Alaric's coat. Since the light shining on them was too beautiful, it created a scenic view for Victoria.

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But when she saw her two children here, Victoria felt relaxed because she was worried about them and didn't expect them to be here either. More importantly, she didn't expect Alaric would agree for them to be here at the hospital.

"Rather than being worried about them, you should be more concerned about yourself."

Alaric's voice drew her back from her thoughts.

After ensuring her children's safety, Victoria instantly became displeased and gave Alaric a cold stare. "Where are the others?"

Alaric was surprised she would ask that. "I brought you here myself."

"Yourself?"

“Nathan and Nicole helped.” He immediately discarded his credit and let the two little fellows take the credit as well.

As he expected, Victoria glanced at the two children after hearing that, and her gaze also seemed gentler when she looked at the two sleeping children.

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In the meantime, Alaric sat on the side, watching her expression and gaze. He tightened his fists to try and suppress the jealousy boiling inside him. “They’re great kids,” he said.

Those words finally brought Victoria’s attention back, and she sneered before snapping at him, “I’ve painstakingly raised them for five years. Of course, they’re the best.”

Alaric could hear the meaning in her voice, but thinking she was hurt and had just woken up, he didn’t want to continue this topic because it might cause her to get too riled up. So, he changed the topic. “How are you feeling? Do you feel sick?”

After what happened tonight, Victoria didn’t feel like maintaining the mutual respect between them anymore, so she retorted, “Looking at you makes me sick.”

Like what she envisioned, Alaric’s expression fell, and she smiled. “So, what now? Are you going to leave?”

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Alaric’s expression froze, and his temples began to twitch, but his expression then returned to normal, seeming to have recovered from his negative emotions just now.

“Are you thirsty? Why don’t I pour you some warm water?”

Victoria looked at him emotionlessly, and Alaric stared into her eyes for a moment before taking the initiative to pour her a glass of warm water.

“I’ve tried it. It should be just the right temperature.”

However, Victoria only took a glance at the cup and rejected it, “I refuse.”

“You haven’t eaten anything all night and have been unconscious for so long. You should drink some water to hydrate your throat.”

While he spoke, he even placed the cup to her lips.

Victoria frowned and turned away. “I told you. I don’t want it.”

But Alaric kept the cup in place but then took it away. “How about eating something? What would you like?”

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At that moment, Victoria wasn't sure what she was thinking because she gently scoffed and rebuked, "I don't want anything to drink or eat, and I don't want to see you. If you feel guilty for what happened tonight and want to make it up to me, help me call Bane over."

Right after she mentioned Bane's name, the calm Alaric instantly turned angry and rejected her without thinking. "Impossible."

"Okay. Then don't stop bothering me."

Once she said that, she tried to lie down, but her violent movement accidentally tugged on the wound on her forehead, causing her to take in a sharp breath.

Meanwhile, Alaric noticed that, and his cold expression instantly turned nervous when he looked at her. "Is it your wound? Does it hurt?"

His voice sounded anxious, and he even touched her shoulder. It was like the angry Alaric from just now had disappeared.

"I don't need your concern, and don't touch me." Victoria pushed his hand away but felt so much pain that she was heaving.

"Why are you pretending to be nice to me now? I wouldn't have gone looking for you if

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you hadn't taken away my children without my permission. Then, I wouldn't have bumped into them if I hadn't gone looking for you, and everything else wouldn't have happened."

Alaric fell silent because what she said was right. Today's incident happened because of his failure to deal with his relationships. He failed to protect her.

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"I'm sorry." Alaric gently apologized. "This happened because I failed to deal with my relationship with Claudia. But you're unwell, so let's not talk about this. You should take a rest."

While speaking, Alaric's tone was very gentle and even somewhat careful, as though he feared Victoria might get mad.

In fact, Victoria was mad just now but had calmed down after feeling the pain. When she heard Alaric speaking to her so humbly, her rage dissipated even more, but she still didn't want to speak with him because she didn't want to argue with him.

After lying down to lessen the pain, Victoria finally spoke. "I want to have some quiet time alone."

A long while later, Alaric replied, "Okay."

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Seeing that he had agreed to her request, Victoria felt relieved, but when Alaric hadn't left after a while, she frowned. "Why aren't you heading outside?" Didn't you agree to let me have some time alone?

When Alaric heard that, there was a slight surprise on his pale face as he looked at her. "I'm staying here to take care of you."

"I don't need you to stay with me."

Alaric pursed his lips while looking at her and then left the room. Meanwhile, Victoria felt at a loss for words. She wasn't sure if she had misjudged, but

she thought Alaric's gaze seemed aggrieved when he looked at her. But when she realized that, she felt slightly angry as well. Why should he feel aggrieved? I'm the one injured, not him, so why should he feel aggrieved?

Bang!

The door was closed after Alaric left the room.

Victoria gently turned her body despite the pain because she wanted to turn to the side where she could look at her children while lying on her side.

When she saw the two children sleeping so soundly, she could not help but wonder if it

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was because of her presence or because they knew Alaric was there.

The injury to her head made her feel uncomfortable, so she didn't have the effort to think about anything else and soon became feeble-minded.

Therefore, she fell asleep with her eyes half-lidded but didn't fall fully asleep and occasionally fell in and out of consciousness.

Sometimes, her attention would be on the person outside the ward, but her reasoning would stop her from thinking about him.

After who knew how long of being in such a state, Victoria heard the door being opened. It was so soft that she couldn't hear it if the hospital wasn't so quiet and she was asleep. Didn't he already leave? Why is he coming back inside?

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Since she had her back to the door, she couldn't be sure whether the person coming in was Alaric.

A set of soft footsteps stopped behind her a while later, and she felt a gaze stuck on her back.

The gaze made Victoria feel uncomfortable, and she frowned before turning around.

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Once she did, she met Alaric's dark eyes.

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In the meantime, Alaric seemed surprised to see her turn around, probably because he didn't expect she was still awake.

The expression on his face explained everything. He probably thought he had been outside for long enough and could sneak back inside while she was asleep. That way, she wouldn't notice him coming in..

Indeed, the first thing that Alaric asked was, "Why aren't you asleep?"

"It's none of your business. Didn't I say I wanted some time alone? Why did you come in again?"

Alaric's gaze stopped on her face for a while before looking down and parting his slightly pale lips. "It's cold outside."

His voice was soft and slightly raspy from not having any sleep and being out in the cold for so long.

Moreover, what he just said rendered Victoria unable to retort because he was only wearing a gray garment because his coat was being used to cover the two children.

That meant that he wouldn't be cold if he didn't give the children his coat, but the truth

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was that he did give them his coat, and then he got chased out of the room.

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New Year's Day was around the corner, so it was cold outside and slightly warmer inside. However, Victoria didn't feel much warmth despite having her covers, let alone Alaric, who had been outside in that attire.

"Just let me stay for a while. I won't make any sound or disturb you, okay?"

Victoria was speechless. She wouldn't have cared if he hadn't given the children his coat, but now that he did, wouldn't it be too cruel for her to reject him again?

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Victoria didn't agree nor did she refuse him.

So, Alaric's pounding heart gradually slowed down as he smirked slightly at her figure. He wasn't really telling a s***b story so that she would take pity on him, but the temperature outside was below 50, and it was far too cold for him to stay outside just wearing a shirt. Besides, he had not recovered from the gastric bleeding before, so his body was still weak.

Of course, he could ask Terrance to bring him a jacket as he suggested. It was just that it would take some time.

However, he just wanted to try his luck by asking her if he could stay, and as expected, he succeeded.

Even though it was still chilly inside, his heart felt warm as he watched Victoria and the children peacefully sleep on the bed.

After he sat for a while, he got up and poured himself a glass of hot water. Although he wasn't being particularly loud, it was still quite a racket as it was a quiet night.

On the other hand, Victoria hadn't eaten or drunk a sip of water since last night. So, she

B

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was a little parched. But since she didn't want to speak to Alaric, she stubbornly kept her eyes shut and endured the thirst.

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After some time, she couldn't take it anymore as her eyes flew open in irritation. After she pondered her options on the bed for some time, she finally decided to get up for some water.

As she hadn't heard any sound coming from behind her, she thought that Alaric was asleep or trying to catch some sleep on the couch. So, she decided to be discrete by ensuring that her actions were quiet when Alaric's voice rang, "What's wrong?"

She froze in mid-action and turned her head to see Alaric walking toward her. "What do you want to do? Tell me. I'll help you."

"Nothing," Victoria rejected him without a second thought as she wanted to get up herself. Alas, she fell forward suddenly. Fortunately, Alaric reached his hands out to catch her, preventing her from rolling off the bed.

A sigh sounded from above her head, "Did you want to use the bathroom? I can carry you over?"

Even though he made it seem like a question, he didn't wait for a reply as he carried her up the next second before she could even splutter out her indignation.

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Victoria was utterly caught off guard. "What are you doing?! Put me down right this

instant," she whispered harshly as she didn't want to wake the children.

Alaric glanced at her. "Don't you want to use the bathroom?"

"Who said that I wanted to use the bathroom?"

"

"Is that so? But you probably want to since you were on IV drips earlier."

In the end, Victoria could only tell him what she wanted in order to stop him from dwelling on the topic. "I don't. I just wanted some water."

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"Water?" He paused in his tracks. It wasn't something he expected as he regarded her with skepticism. "Do you really want to drink water?"

"Why wouldn't I? I've not had a sip of water since last night. My throat's burning," she answered with an eye

roll.

He finally understood and laughed helplessly before murmuring, "But you ignored me when I asked if you wanted water earlier."

Then, he gently lay her on the bed and turned around to pour her a glass of water.

Spon, he returned with a glass of warm water and Victoria accepted it without any

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qualms as she was genuinely parched.

She merely gave him a nod and downed the glass of water.

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While she was drinking, Alaric stood beside her with his gaze locked on her face. "Slow down. No one's snatching it from you."

Victoria retorted, "I'm just drinking water and I'm not a child. I don't need you nagging me."

Then, she finished the rest of the water before handing the glass back to him.

He took the glass from her with a smile, but suddenly asked, "Do you want to use the bathroom?"

Victoria was rendered speechless. Why is he asking this again?

She wanted to refuse him, but somehow, she suddenly felt the need to. So, her face darkened at her body's betrayal.

Then, as if he knew what she was thinking, he said, "I'll carry you."

He carried her and walked to the door of the bathroom.

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Luckily, the drip was all done, so her arm was free. Besides, she injured her forehead not her limbs, so it didn't create any inconvenience for her if she wanted to use the bathroom.

After they entered the bathroom, Alaric helped lift the toilet cover and took some toilet tissue for her before saying, "I'll be waiting for you outside. Call me when you're done."

Then, he exited and closed the door behind him.

Victoria stayed rooted to the spot and whispered after waiting for some time, "You're outside?"

Alaric immediately replied to her, "Yes. I'm here."

She was a little speechless and couldn't bear it anymore. "Can't you stand further away?"

She was whispering, yet he heard her. How could she still use the bathroom with him

standing so close?

After a moment of silence, Alaric's voice sounded and it seemed lower and distant. "Is this far enough?"

Victoria decided to open the bathroom door and ordered emotionlessly, "Further."

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Alaric was very compliant and took a few more steps. Then, Victoria finally shut the door as he was far enough for her.

After she finished her business, she washed her hands and walked out to see Alaric still standing in the same spot. He strode up to her when she exited the bathroom.

"I don't need you to carry me." Victoria stopped him before he could touch her again.

So, Alaric could only stop his outreached hands. "Are you sure? You don't feel pain anywhere else?"

"No." She gave him a side-eye. "I hurt my forehead, not my leg."

The ward wasn't big. So, she was already by the bed while she was retorting him. In the meantime, Alaric was trailing after her like a lost duckling. Still, he attentively fluffed the pillow and pulled the covers for her as she lay down.

He looked so considerate and caring, but Victoria was still furious when she recalled what he did before.

"I won't seek compensation for what happened tonight."

Alaric's hands that were tucking in the covers paused and he looked at her in surprise

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when he heard her.

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"I don't give a rat's *ss about it any longer, but you can't come over anymore either. Let's make this a clean break."

The surprise in Alaric's eyes disappeared and dark, stormy clouds filled them. "What do you mean?"

"I believe I said that clearly."

"You mean you don't want to see me anymore?"

"Yes. That's about it."

Alaric went silent for a moment before asking, "What if I don't agree to this?"

Victoria donned a nonchalant look on her face. "Whatever floats your boat. I'm not asking for your opinion."

Alaric fell silent again at her words, but he didn't leave. Instead, he stared at her face with determination. "Do you have to make me leave? Why can't you let me take care of you and the children?"

Victoria chuckled but there wasn't a hint of mirth in her eyes. Rather, it was filled with

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disdain and mockery as she refuted, "Why, Alaric? Tell me why should I? You didn't want the kids in the first place. But now you decided to want them out of the blue. Things don't always go your way in this world. You don't control this world and the world does not revolve around you."

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When Victoria mentioned that Alaric didn't want the kids, he frowned and snapped, "When did I ever say that I don't want the kids?"

His reaction seemed amusing to Victoria. "Cut the pretense. Don't think that you didn't do it just because you didn't say it yourself."

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Alaric's frown deepened at her statement because it sounded ridiculous. So, he tried to defend himself. "Since I didn't say it, how can you say that I did it?"

A look of disbelief washed over Victoria's face. "Alaric, don't you even have the guts to admit it?"

Annoyed by her confusing words, he argued, "Why should I admit to something I never said?"

A mocking smile spread across her face. "I didn't think that you've turned into a wimp who doesn't even dare to own up to your own actions. And now, you keep playing word games with me."

"When was I playing word games with you?"

"If you aren't, why won't you admit it?"

"How do you expect me to admit something I've never done?"

Victoria felt that there was no need to waste any time talking to him. Besides, words alone were not proof. It was true that he didn't say it himself at that time, but if he wanted to fight for custody of the children, then he would have denied it back then. Still, she just didn't expect him to turn into such a person now.

Not only was she quiet, but the way she was looking at him had changed tremendously and she was wearing a completely different expression. When he noticed this, he couldn't help but grab her shoulders and said through a tightened jaw, "Fine, if you

insist, then I'll admit it. Just take it that I've done something like that. Then, as the person involved, may I ask you to review what happened at that time?"

Victoria flinched a little, thinking, Just admit it. Why is he being so pushy about what happened back then? Could it be...

"Even if you're going to convict me, you should let me know what crime I committed, right?" Alaric growled; it was an understatement to say that he was utterly frustrated by this entire ordeal.

He had absolutely no idea what happened back then, but now, Victoria was so sure that he had done something like this before and even called him a wimp for not owning up to his actions. This was enough to show that a deep misunderstanding existed between them. When she went silent, he softened his stance, coaxing, "Will you please tell me?"

After she stared at him for a couple of minutes, she took a deep breath, looked the other way, and blurted, "Text message."

"Text message?" Confused by her words that came out of the blue, he narrowed his eyes. "What text message? Are you saying that I sent you a text all those years ago?" His question merely made her even more puzzled. Things are already set in stone, but why is he acting like he doesn't know anything about it? "It's the text message I sent you. Do you know now, or do you still need me to tell you anything else as a reminder?"

Alaric's brows knitted together tightly. The text she sent me? He tried to recall everything that happened but couldn't remember ever neglecting any of her texts nor did he have any recollection that she had sent him any texts about her pregnancy. At the thought of this, he gazed at her and asked a crucial question, "Did I reply to your back then?"

“No.”

As I expected, he thought. That explains why I don't remember it at all. If she had sent me a text for something so important, I'd definitely remember it. So, he said seriously, “Victoria, will you believe me if I tell you that I've not received that text?”

Victoria's lips curled into a cold smirk as she was expecting him to say that. “I knew that you'd deny it. Anyway, you didn't reply to my text, so you can simply take it that you've never seen it.”

“I swear I didn't see it. Otherwise, do you think I won't reply to something so important? We grew up together. Am I that kind of person to you?”

“Yes, we did grow up together and I thought that I knew you, but who knows if you'll change or not? After all, Claudia is your savior and it's not entirely impossible for you to change because of her.”

“Do you think that I'll hurt you because of her?”

Well, this question is... She shot him a scornful look at that outrageous statement.

“Haven't you hurt me because of her?”

“When did I do that?”

When? How dare he!

While Victoria was fuming in anger, he continued, “If you mean the divorce, then I can explain.” Again, she didn't say anything. “Didn't we already agree that the marriage was

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a pretense before we got married?” When she heard that, she finally glanced at him

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without saying a word, and he used the opportunity to add, “Do you remember what you

said to me back then? You said that we'll get a divorce when Grandma's surgery is over .

"I didn't say that," she snapped. "You did."

"Did you forget?" The smile on his face seemed a little sad. "On the fifth day after we slept together, you told me that we'll divorce after Grandma's surgery."

Victoria was a little startled by his words because she had forgotten about this part, but now that he had brought it up again, she thought about it seriously and realized that such a thing did happen.

That was the first time they slept together, but it happened because alcohol played a big part in it, and both of them were very awkward after waking up unclothed right next to each other. She could recall that after that discussion, Alaric was in low spirits for a very long time.

Victoria couldn't take it anymore, so on the fifth day of their awkwardness, she woke up early and said to him without even looking at him, "Stop pulling a long face every day. Didn't I already say that what happened that night was an accident? If it bothers you that much, we can divorce once Grandma's surgery is over."

Chapter 334 | Can Explain

Alaric stopped in his tracks at her words, but she dashed right into the bathroom before she even had the chance to check out the look on his face. At that time, it felt horrible to her that he was giving her the cold shoulder. She wanted to be in a passionate relationship like other couples, or maybe whine to him like a young girl in marriage. However, when she thought about her situation—that their marriage wasn't genuine, to begin with, and the relationship they shared was childhood friends hidden under the pretext of a happy marriage—she felt that she was in no position to whine like his girlfriend, asking him not to give her the cold shoulder anymore.

In addition, she wasn't coveting anything in her heart, thinking that he was only pulling a long face because their friendship was ruined. So, she reckoned that clearing up their relationship would set him at ease. After all, he had helped her out and she should do something in return.

Nonetheless, she snapped out of her flashback and looked at him coldly. "So what if I said that? Would I have said that if you hadn't shunned me after that incident?"

Alaric narrowed his eyes. "I shunned you? Victoria, aren't you the one who said that it was a physical need after waking up and asked me for 14.5 million? You're the one who turned our relationship into a deal."

At this point, she finally understood something and turned to him with an amused look.

"What? Isn't that the entire basis of our relationship?"

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"I am grateful for your help when my family faced difficulties back then, but have you forgotten the reason we got married? It was because of my Grandma's poor health..."

The mention of Griselda brought forth the painful realization that she hadn't been able to see her before she passed away. A slight pang of pain welled up in her chest, and she took a deep breath to ease the sensation before continuing, "In any case, we both had our own motives when we decided to get married. It wasn't any different from a transactional relationship."

"Is that so?" Alaric's gaze turned piercing as he held her firmly, "If it was merely a transactional relationship, then why didn't you take a single penny when you left? And why did you choose to give birth to our children?"

“We were already divorced, so why would I take your money? You helped me resolve my

family’s affairs, and I helped take care of your grandmother. Why would I need your money? And your question about why I decided to give birth to the kids is even more absurd. I didn’t force you to sleep with me; it was your own choice. So, of course, I have the right to decide whether to give birth or not since they are in my womb.”

“But they are my children as well.”

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Chapter 3351 Won’t Take Them From You

“So what? Is your bloodline so noble? I’m the one giving birth to the child, so they belong to me. If you’re jealous of me having a child, find someone else to bear your children.”

Alaric was rendered completely speechless.

The conversation was veering off track, and that was when Alaric finally realized the core issue.

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He wanted to unravel what had truly happened back then and why Victoria had such a massive misunderstanding about him. However, whenever Victoria brought up the topic of their children, she would become guarded, as if she feared he would take them away from her.

It was understandable, though. As long as they never resolved their misunderstanding, she wouldn’t be able to find inner peace, nor would she believe that he hadn’t considered taking them away but genuinely wanted to co-parent with her.

The immediate plan was to reassure her as quickly as possible and gain her trust so

that he would have the opportunity to clarify the past misunderstandings.

With these thoughts in mind, Alaric suddenly took out his phone from his pocket and handed it to her.

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Victoria took over the phone as soon as she saw that it was hers, but she had no idea that Alaric would then add, "Turn on the voice recording function."

Victoria tilted her head slightly and looked at Alaric in confusion. "What do you mean?"

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"I want you to record everything I say from now on."

When he noticed that she wasn't cooperating, he took the phone back from her hand and began navigating to the voice recording function and opening it.

Victoria, on the other hand, quietly watched as he operated the phone, momentarily unsure of his intentions. Since there were only the two of them in the hospital room at this late hour, she couldn't stop him from doing as he wanted, so she simply watched and wondered about his intentions.

After a while, Victoria heard Alaric's soft voice directed at her. "You've always been afraid that I would take the child away, haven't you? Well, now it's recorded. I, Alaric Cadogan, assure you that I will never snatch your child from you."

Victoria paused, not expecting him to address this topic so straightforwardly.

Is he trying to provide proof for me in case he goes back on his words?

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“Now, are you still afraid?”

Victoria remained silent, contemplating his words.

“Now that you have this recording, you can save this audio file securely, and make at backup. I don’t care how many backups you make. If I ever decide to take your child, you can take this and use it against me.”

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Victoria let out a derisive chuckle when she heard his words. “And what difference does the recording make? You’re merely saying that you won’t take my children, but you haven’t explained what you would do if you actually did so.”

“Then, what do you want me to do? Tell me, and I’ll do it.”

“You’ll comply with anything I say?”

Alaric nodded.

A smile curled upon Victoria’s lips. “Very well then, you asked for it.”

“Mhm,”

“Say that *you* will never take my children, Nathan Selwyn, and Nicole Selwyn, for the rest of your life nor will you fight for custody. As long as I remain committed to caring

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for them, these two children belong to me alone, and they have no connection to anyone else.”

Alaric nodded and calmly repeated her words into the recording phone.

Victoria lay there, listening attentively as he slowly said those words into the phone.

Then she added, “If you ever entertain the idea of snatching my children from me, whether through legal means or other means that I won’t bother speculating about, I

will sue you. And then, all your assets will be rightfully transferred under my name, Victoria Selwyn.”

She didn't believe that he would really repeat what she said word for word; after all, spoken words held consequences. If he truly had any intention of taking her children. after this, he might have to face significant consequences. Subsequently, Victoria put down her guard and relaxed after finishing speaking for she didn't expect Alaric to bother.

Yet, *to* her surprise, Alaric repeated her words without a hint of emotion on his face the next moment. He didn't even try to sneak in any loopholes in order to give himself a fighting chance.

Victoria was startled.

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Tue,

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She looked at Alaric with a mix of emotions, realizing that he had indeed echoed her words.

What does this mean? Could it be that he genuinely has *no* intention of taking my children? Have I been overthinking things?

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As she pondered, it occurred to her that she was indeed being excessively suspicious during this period. He had emphasized his desire to co-parent the children with her since the beginning, rather than...

“Can you feel at ease now?” Alaric asked, noticing that her expression was no longer as

guarded as before. He finally let out a sigh of relief. Could these words finally resolve the troubles between us?

Victoria didn't bother replying as she silently saved a backup of their recorded conversation.

Should the need arise in the future, these records could serve as evidence.

A smile gradually formed on Alaric's lips while he took note of her actions. "Make sure to keep the recording safe. Don't lose it or let anyone take it. I won't take the blame if that happens."

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"I have no need for your reminder," Victoria responded, her expression devoid of emotion as she nestled the phone beneath her pillow.

"So, now that you're convinced that I won't take your children, is your mind finally at ease?" Alaric could tell from her expression that she was waiting for him to say something.

"Why do you have so many questions? Just say whatever that's on your mind. It's already late at night, and I don't have time for idle chatter."

7/8

Alaric glanced at his watch and quickly acknowledged the lateness of the hour and her need for rest, especially considering her injury. But the longer the misunderstanding persisted, the more complicated things would become. They had already gone through enough misunderstandings previously...

With this in mind, Alaric spoke his mind, "Regarding the text message, I genuinely had no knowledge of it. If I failed to reply to you, it's highly likely that I either overlooked the

message or didn't receive it."

"The phone number belongs to you, and the network indicated successful transmission. Don't you think it's a bit too suspicious to claim you didn't receive it?"

Victoria's demeanor remained composed, as though discussing a matter unrelated to herself.

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Her indifferent attitude annoyed Alaric, but he had no choice, so he continued, "What do you mean that it's 'suspicious'? Perhaps the network was good *on* your end, but it wasn't on mine. Or perhaps, the phone wasn't with me at that moment."

8/8

Victoria instinctively retorted upon hearing his words, "If it's your own phone and it's not with you, then whose hands could it possibly be in?"