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As soon as the question was asked, both of them fell silent.

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Victoria's silence was due to the recall of the incident back at the L'Indigo Country Club when Claudia's friends took her phone and sent prank messages to herself; similarly, Alaric's expression also indicated that he had thought of the same thing as Victoria.

Both of them were thinking along the same lines at the moment.

After a long pause, Alaric looked at Victoria and said, "Perhaps the phone really isn't with me?"

Victoria pursed her lips and remained silent.

Alaric seized this glimmer of hope as he immediately pressed the issue, "Victoria, if the phone really wasn't with me when you told me about the incident, resulting in the following events, would you still blame me?"

Victoria had no idea what to think.

"If the phone isn't with you, then who would it be with?" Victoria looked at him intently.

"Your phone is always with you, isn't it? If it truly isn't, then it has to be with someone important to you. What does it matter even if you didn't see it?"

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Besides, she didn't even know if what he said was true. Is he intentionally trying to confuse me with this approach? In any case, I won't easily believe him until everything is thoroughly investigated.

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Her words, too, plunged Alaric into silence. He pursed his thin lips together, intending to explain further when Victoria yawned in front of him.

"I'm a bit tired. Can I rest? Instead of asking me so many questions, why don't you think to find out what really happened back then if you truly didn't receive that text

of a way

message?”

After a long while, Alaric nodded. “Alright, rest. I will investigate this matter thoroughly and present the evidence to you when the time comes. I’ll make sure you’ll believe me by then.”

“Mhm, whatever.” Victoria paid him no heed and responded absentmindedly while turning her face to the other side.

Her demeanor once again stung Alaric, whose hand clenched into a tight fist by his side, but eventually relaxed as he covered her with the blanket. Simultaneously, Victoria shut her eyes as Alaric got closer, fearing he might try to initiate another conversation.

Alaric didn’t want to disturb her further, so he stopped meddling after tucking her in and

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walked to the window to ponder over things.

Text message?

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As long as the phone is with me, I’d rarely miss any messages sent by Victoria. If I really

did, it’s either that I didn’t see it, or I mistakenly treated it as a junk message. But how could I mistake her saved contact as a junk message?

Considering this, Alaric quickly took out his phone to check.

His expression instantly revealed a hint of frustration as he scrolled through the messages.

It had been five years...

He had changed his phone long ago, and the messages from back then were all gone.

So, what could he find now?

While he hastily swiped through the phone screen with his delicate fingers, his mind raced with fleeting thoughts that were too fast for him to grasp. In the end, all he could do was slump against the wall defeated with furrowed brows.

It was only after a few minutes that Alaric left the hospital room and called Terrance.

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Terrance had actually been outside for a long time. Just as he was getting under the

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covers after returning home and taking a hot bath, he sulked to himself, “The weather is

freezing cold. Being Mr. Cadogan's assistant is so difficult. Fortunately, I came back early. Time to sleep!"

So, he turned off the lights and lay down immediately. Alas, just as he was falling into a drowsy state, his phone vibrated again.

Due to his position as an on-call assistant, Terrance's phone remained on round the clock.

When the phone rang, he already knew who was calling. However, he was currently enveloped in the warm sanctuary of his bed during this frigid cold weather, making him reluctant to get up.

The phone continued to ring persistently, so he had no choice but to force himself to answer the call.

"Mr. Cadogan?"

Alaric disclosed a date, followed by a request. "Find a way to help me investigate all the text messages received on the phone during that period."

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Terrance fell silent.

Once the realization of the date imparted by Alaric sank in, Terrance was utterly bewildered.

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"But, Mr. Cadogan... It has been so long since that date. How can I possibly investigate it?"

"You're my assistant, figure it out. Investigate everything thoroughly, including junk messages."

Before Terrance could say anything else, Alaric ended the call, leaving Terrance with a cacophony of bustling curses in his mind as the dial tone persistently reminded him. that his boss had once again decided that he was a robot instead of a man. Thus, he could only clutch onto his phone as he curled into himself in resignation that his plans had gone down the drain again.

After a few hours of sleep, Victoria faintly heard the murmur of a child, mingling with the unfamiliar voice of a masculine whisper; there was even a gentle touch that grazed her forehead in the end as if her wound was being examined.

Her consciousness wavered within the mists, and she succumbed once more to her

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slumber.

It was a pair of hands gently shaking her that caused her to rise from her slumber.

Victoria opened her eyes and noticed Alaric's worried expression.

"Are you okay? You've been sleeping for a long time."

The sight of him confused Victoria slightly.

"What time is it?"

"It's already morning."

"Morning? I think I heard the doctor come in?"

"Mhm." Alaric nodded. "The doctor told me to seek him when you've awakened. Do you feel any discomfort?"

Victoria shook her head solemnly. "No, I'm just tired."

She was indeed just tired. Lately, her unease stemmed from the fear of him snatching their child away, leaving her in a perpetual state of heightened tension. Though she appeared unchanged during the day, in truth, she had been plagued by insomnia for 6/8

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countless nights.

She could only grasp a few fleeting hours of slumber each night previously. Yet now, whether due to her injury or the reassurance of the recorded proof that he wouldn't snatch their child away, she finally found solace in sleep.

"Just tired?" Regardless, Alaric's brow furrowed, concern etching his features. "Being tired at a time like this makes me worried. Stay awake, I'll fetch the doctor."

Alaric released her and turned to leave almost immediately.

As soon as he departed, two little bundles closed in on her.

"Mommy."

"Mommy, you're awake."

It was then Victoria noticed Nicole and Nathan, who had been hiding behind Alaric earlier.

"Nathan, Nicole, you're here too."

"Mommy, what's wrong? Does it still hurt?"

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Nicole leaned in, extending her hand to touch her forehead, only to have Nathan grab her arm from behind.

"Nicole, don't touch! Mommy's wound hasn't healed."

Nicole hastily withdrew her hand upon hearing his warning, then timidly mumbled, "Nicole won't touch Mommy. But does Mommy feel any pain? How about I soothe your wound?"

Nicole immediately propped herself up with her little legs and climbed onto the bed with her brother's assistance.

The actions of the two little ones evoked a bittersweet smile from Victoria as she lay in bed. Before she could react, Nicole had nestled close to her face, gently blowing against Victoria's forehead.

"Mommy, huff."

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The little one blew air against her forehead.

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Though the gauze-wrapped wound on Victoria's forehead seemed unaffected, the considerate gesture warmed her heart. She felt her mood lighten, and a faint smile appeared on her pale lips.

"Mommy, are you feeling better?"

Victoria replied in a gentle voice, "Mm. Much better. Thank you, Nicole."

Nicole immediately smiled innocently and said, "No need to thank me. It's good as long as Mommy doesn't feel any pain."

At that moment, the doctor arrived. Alaric followed behind him and walked in. When he caught sight of Nicole by the bedside, he wasted no time in reaching out to scoop her up into his arms, while also leading Nathan away.

Subsequently, the doctor and nurse examined Victoria and inquired about her condition.

Later, the doctor confirmed that her speech was coherent, proving that there weren't

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any lasting effects. So, he nodded at Alaric, confirming that everything was fine.

"Based on her condition, there shouldn't be any major issues. We'll order a CT scan to be conducted later. If it shows no problems, she can be discharged."

Alaric, who was still holding onto Nicole, nodded. "Thank you."

Afterward, Alaric borrowed a wheelchair and prepared to take Victoria for the CT scan.

Victoria blinked and looked at Alaric in speechless disbelief, reminding him, "I injured my forehead, not my legs."

"I know," Alaric responded and then walked over to carry her up, placing her in the wheelchair.

"It's precisely because the injury is on your forehead that we need the wheelchair." Victoria once again had no idea what to say to this man.

Before they left, Alaric instructed the two children to stay in the hospital room and not wander around. However, after he thought it over, he was still worried about them, so he asked them to tag along.

Since they had to wait for the results when Victoria was done with the CT scan, Alaric
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escorted her back to the hospital room.

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As soon as they reached the corridor in front of the room, they saw two familiar figures standing by the door and peering in.

The instant Victoria saw those two individuals, her expression instantly turned cold. She was about to say something when she heard Alaric. "I will handle it."

Thus, the words that were about to leave Victoria's lips got swallowed back.

They were in the hospital now; besides, the children were also there. If anything happened...

Finally, she lowered her gaze and coldly stated, "This is your own matter, to begin with."

Meanwhile, Claudia and West had already spotted them. When Claudia saw them walking together, her expression initially stiffened, but she quickly composed herself.

Claudia approached Victoria and called out affectionately, "Victoria, how are you? Are you alright?"

When she was forced to face Claudia's hypocritical concern, her lips tugged into a plastic smile as she replied, "Thanks for your concern, I'm fine."

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A slight stiffness appeared in Claudia's smile. Before she could say anything else, Alaric had already pushed Victoria into the hospital room along with the two children.

"Go in."

As he escorted the three of them into the room, his tall figure blocked the entrance, preventing anyone from entering.

Only when he ensured that they were all in that Alaric took a step back and closed the door to the room.

Claudia and West watched him in silence.

This gesture instantly made Claudia, who was already in despair, look even more dejected. "Al, what do you mean by this? We just wanted to visit her."

Alaric's voice was icy as he replied, "Well, you've already seen her. You can leave."

Claudia bit her lower lip upon hearing his dismissal, her eyes slowly reddening.

On the other hand, West, who had already convinced himself to come and apologize, became furious at Alaric's attitude. "Alaric, what do you mean by this? We've been friends for so many years. It's one thing if you're rude to me, but do you have to treat Claudia this way too? Let me tell you, even if what happened last night was my fault

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and I shouldn't have acted first, you also have to take responsibility. Victoria should apologize to Claudia!"

Alaric's gaze suddenly turned cold and fierce, like a sharp sword aimed at his face.

"What did you say? Say it again?"

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His sharp gaze made West feel a bit scared, but when he looked at Claudia with her red eyes, he gathered his courage. "Did I say something wrong? You and Victoria have been divorced for so long. It's always been Claudia by your side all these years. Now that Victoria is back, how can she easily replace Claudia?"

"West, please stop..." Claudia held onto West's hand while speaking pitifully, "It's not a problem for me. Victoria has suffered such a serious injury, and it's only right for Al to take care of her."

"Claudia, what nonsense are you talking about? What does Victoria's injury have to do with Alaric? What do you mean by saying it's only right for him to take care of her?"

Victoria was the shameless one from the beginning..."

Bang! Before West could finish his words, his chin was met with a punch.

Not giving him time to react, another punch quickly followed, causing Claudia to let out a startled cry. And as soon as West regained his senses, he immediately tried to

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engage in a fight with Alaric.

Unfortunately, he was no match at all. After a few exchanges, his hand was pinned behind his back and he was pressed against the cold, hard ground.

"Al, stop fighting, don't be mad. If you're not happy with us being here, we'll leave."

Claudia ran over, grabbing Alaric's arm and crying as she tried to pull him away.

"West Finn, I'm warning you, my matters are not for anyone to meddle in. If you like Claudia, go after her openly instead of using this excuse to interfere in other people's lives, even resorting to violence against women. Today, I spared you for Victoria's sake, otherwise..."

The grip on West tightened, causing him to wince in pain, his forehead covered in cold sweat.

Nonetheless, Alaric didn't immediately retract his hand; instead, he coldly stared at him and continued, "If this happens again, I won't let you off the hook this easily."

With that, he finally released his grip and rose to his feet.

Although Alaric had thrown a few good punches, he remained as unruffled and tidy as before, while West lay in a disheveled state on the ground, making Alaric appear

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exceptionally sharp and handsome. The sight of this caused Claudia's heart to flutter even more. No matter how she thought about it, she couldn't bear to let go of such an outstanding man.

After Alaric finished giving out his warning, he didn't even spare her a glance before walking away, leaving her with no choice but to grit her teeth and chase after him.

"Al, I'm sorry about what happened yesterday, but today I'm genuinely worried about Victoria. I just wanted to know how she's doing, I... I didn't mean anything else."

Unfortunately, his gaze remained icy. "Didn't you just see it earlier?"

"What?"

In response to her question, Alaric remained silent for a while, then slightly parted his

thin lips, saying, "Claudia."

His voice was calm, his expression indifferent, giving Claudia an ominous premonition.

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She wanted to escape from hearing what she was reluctant to hear, but Alaric's voice resounded clearly throughout the hallway, "I made it clear to you years ago, but it seems you've never really taken my words to heart."

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"I... I was just..."

"Claudia, the most shameless thing for adults is to pester someone else."

Claudia bit her lower lip upon hearing such a brutal remark, her eyes reddening. "And what about you? You said the most shameless thing to adults is to pester someone else, so what are you doing now? Haven't you been pestering Victoria?"

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Alaric's expression turned cold upon hearing that, and his tone became sharp. "This is between her and me."

Claudia was unsatisfied with his answer. "But this matter also concerns us. You don't want me to pester you, but you're entangled with Victoria yourself. You can't let her go either. So, what right do you have to ask me to let go? Al, I like you."

He tightly pursed his lips, and his eyes were dead serious. He responded indifferently,

"Fine, then. I won't ask you to let go, but don't ask West to fight your battles for you."

Her expression changed. "Al, what are you talking about? Why would I ask him to do things for me? It was clearly him-"

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"Yeah, right. He allowed himself to be used because he is an idiot, but can you honestly

say that you had no ulterior motives? If yesterday's incident was an accident, what

about today? Why did you even bring him to the hospital?"

Claudia was instantly rendered speechless by his words, but she managed to keep her composure. "Indeed, I brought him here. But my intention was for him to apologize for what happened last night."

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"Did he apologize, then?"

"—"

"You should be sincere when you apologize. But tell me, what kind of attitude did both of you display just now?"

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She bit her lip. Admittedly, she wasn't there to apologize, even though she claimed that was her purpose. She only wanted to assess the situation, and bringing West along seemed like the best choice, just as Alaric had pointed out. But how did he see through her? At that point, she had no choice but to show her vulnerability.

"I'm sorry. We genuinely came here to apologize. We even had a discussion beforehand,

but you know how impulsive West can be; I can't control his behavior, can I? It makes me sad that you would think I'm using him."

Alas, Alaric's gaze remained stony no matter how much she tried to explain. "You know what you did."

"..."

Tears welled up in her eyes the moment their eyes met. “Al, do you really see me as that

kind of person? Yes, I envy that you’re with Victoria. If I could, I would rather be the one

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lying there, so you could personally take care of me. But I understand that things don’t always go as I wish. That’s why I worry about her getting hurt. Besides, if we hadn’t come to find you last night, Victoria wouldn’t have been injured. Right now, I just want to make amends.”

She even reached into her bag as she spoke. “Here, take a look. I bought some supplements and gifts for the two children. I genuinely came *to* apologize without any ulterior motives.” Meanwhile, West remained on the ground, still in great pain and unable to get up.

Alaric glanced inside her bag and saw that it did contain supplements and similar items. Regardless, these items did not change his thoughts in any way.

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“I don’t want her to see anyone until she’s recovered. You should all go back.”

“Al.” Claudia reached out and grabbed his collar when she saw him about to leave. “Do you want to reconcile with her?” she asked.

His brows furrowed upon hearing that. Reconcile? The mention of this word stirred complex emotions within him. Did he want to reconcile with Victoria? The answer, needless to say, was yes. But Victoria’s current attitude toward him was so hostile.

Would she really want to reconcile with him? Moreover, the misunderstandings between them had not been resolved yet. For example, the text message she had sent

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him.

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He still had no idea what happened with the text message. And he hadn't received any response from Terrance regarding the task he assigned to Terrance since last night. But it was understandable; five years had already passed, and it would probably take a long time if they were to investigate it now. Also, there was no guarantee of finding any answers. He just couldn't wrap his head around it. After all, the phone had been in his possession all along. How could it have...

"Al..." Claudia couldn't help but call out to him after noticing his prolonged silence. At that moment, her voice triggered something in Alaric's mind. Initially, he was still trying to wrap his head around the text message, but as soon as he heard Claudia's voice, he had a sudden realization. He narrowed his eyes, and his entire demeanor underwent a significant change. He swiftly turned, reaching out and gripping Claudia's shoulder. She was taken aback by his sudden action as she gazed at his handsome face in astonishment.

"What... what's wrong?" Did her words provoke him? Why did his emotions suddenly become so intense? Or... did he finally come to the realization that they should be together?

A smile appeared on Claudia's face. She was about to respond when she saw Alaric squinting his eyes and heard his cold tone as he said, "You took my phone five years

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ago."

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"What?" The sudden statement caught her off guard and left her puzzled and confused.

What did he mean? Why did the topic suddenly shift to five years ago? And what was the big deal about her taking his phone?

On the other hand, he had a sudden realization after uttering those words—he was finally able to recall the scene in his office from five years ago. Although it had been a long time, the slight displeasure he felt about what she had done made the memory surprisingly clear at that moment.

At that time, in his office, she had asked to borrow his phone. He didn't refuse and handed her the phone because he trusted her. He then quickly immersed himself in his tasks due to being excessively busy with work. Amidst his hectic schedule, he heard the sound of a text message notification, but he didn't pay attention to it since receiving text messages was a normal occurrence.

It was only when he finished his work that he thought about checking it. Yet, Claudia told him it was a junk message and had deleted it on his behalf. At that time, he didn't think anything of it. After all, who would suspect someone who had saved his life and

whom he trusted? It was just an insignificant incident **for** him back then. However, after last night, it was no longer a trivial matter. It became something of great importance.

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But Claudia obviously didn't quite understand the meaning behind Alaric's words.

"Al, what happened? Can you tell me?" She looked directly into his eyes and asked.

Tears were still streaming down her cheeks.

He looked at her tear-streaked face and made up his mind to ask directly. "Five years ago, you borrowed my phone in my office. Do you remember?"

Somehow, she was in a daze and nodded.

"Yeah, but what about it-" Her voice trailed off because in that instant, she suddenly remembered the text message she received on his phone back then, and her breath hitched.

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Under normal circumstances, Alaric probably wouldn't have caught on to her changes.

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However, he was earnestly probing into the matter now, and on top of that, they were currently engaged in a confrontation. Driven by a strong desire to uncover the truth, Alaric kept his gaze fixed on her face after posing the question, afraid that he might miss even the slightest change in her expression.

He feared that if he let his guard down even for a moment, he would miss an

opportunity to seek the truth.

Therefore, he caught all the subtle expressions on Claudia's face, and his narrowed eyes were now tinged with a trace of danger.

"You do remember, don't you?" he asked. "Good. I have a question for you."

Snap out of it. Claudia finally realized she had been a little unguarded just now. After forcing herself to regain composure, she smiled at him helplessly. "But isn't this matter from a long time ago? Why are you bringing up old stories? Did I accidentally break you r

phone back then?"

"No," he replied.

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"Then, what is it?"

Alaric looked at her with a complex gaze.

"Why did you do that?"

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Claudia's breath hitched. Why would he ask that? D—Did he actually find out?

"W—What's wrong? I just deleted one junk message for you. Is there a problem?" she stammered.

At her response, his gaze instantly darkened. "Did I say it was a message?"

Claudia remained silent.

"You seem really nervous, don't you?"

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"The message you deleted back then wasn't just some random junk message, was it?"

His eyes were as sharp as a knife, and the pressure on her shoulder intensified as if he was about to crush her bones.

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As pain surged through her, her eyebrows twisted in discomfort. "Al, you're hurting me."

However, it appeared that he didn't hear her at all. Unyielding, he tightened his grip while his eyes grew increasingly threatening.

"Tell me,

what was that message you deleted back then? Was it a message from Victoria? Did she mention her being pregnant?"

"No, I didn't-"

At first, Claudia cried out in pain, hoping that he would hear her plea and release his grip on her shoulder.

However, Alaric seemed completely deaf to any sound as he was focused solely on finding his answers.

Therefore, he relentlessly interrogated her, pushing her for answers, and she could only consider herself lucky that he hadn't shattered her bones.

In the midst of her excruciating pain, she struggled to free herself from his grasp. "Let go of me! I don't understand what you're talking about!"

Never before had she witnessed him in such a state. He seemed like a demonic entity,

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with eyes that thirsted to devour her, and hands that appeared ready to break her in

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half. He's merely speculating now, but he's gone completely off the deep end. If he were

to find out that I deleted that message, what will he do to me?

With that thought in mind, Claudia could only seek help from West, who was nearby.

“West, West, save me...”

Lying on the ground, West was already in so much pain that he could barely get up. He was also disappointed that Claudia didn't even bother to help him up earlier. However, at this very moment, he caught the beckoning call of his goddess.

After regaining his senses, he saw her being held by Alaric by the shoulder while being interrogated like a criminal. Instantly, a thought crossed his mind. I will not allow it!

With that, he charged forward like an enraged lion as he tried to intervene. “Alaric, you've lost it! Let go of Claudia!”

Without any hesitation, West rushed forward. However, to his dismay, he failed to make it close as he stumbled under his feet and fell flat on his face in front of them. The pain was so intense that he couldn't get up for quite some time.

Alaric gave him a cold glance before shifting his gaze back to Claudia. “Explain yourself,” he demanded.

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“I-I don't know what you want me to explain. If it's about the message, I've already told you that I deleted a useless junk message, nothing more. I have no idea about any pregnancy message you mentioned.”

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Her words were met with a faint sarcastic laugh.

“You don't know, huh? My phone is always with me, and I didn't receive any text messages except when you had my phone. Coincidentally, a junk message came in

while it was in your hands. Is there such a convenient coincidence in this world?"

At this moment, her face was streaming with tears.

"How would I know about this? I have no idea how to explain it to you, but I swear the message I deleted that day was just junk. I'm completely clueless about the things you mentioned. Al, don't you know me well? If I wanted to harm you, why did I jump into the river to save you back then? I risked my own life for you..."

At the mention of saving his life, there was finally a slight change in Alaric's expression, and his grip on her shoulder also loosened slightly.

Seeing this, she cried even harder, her eyes welling up with tears. "I don't know what Victoria told you, but please trust me, I stand on your side. No matter what happens, I would never bring harm upon you, and I would never do anything despicable."

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Although her words didn't entirely sway his doubts, the mention of her selfless act of saving his life stirred a flicker of compassion in his heart.

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The mere thought that she had risked her own life by jumping into the river *to* save him. years ago evoked a profound sense of empathy within him. If it had not been for her, he would have been long gone in that river long ago.

Therefore, even if she messed up and stubbornly refused to acknowledge her mistakes,

he couldn't do anything about it.

After all, the fact remained that she had saved his life, and he had to own up to it.

With this realization, Alaric gradually released his grip.

After regaining her freedom, Claudia instinctively cradled her shoulder as she leaned weakly against the wall. "I didn't lie to you. Everything I said just now was true. If

doubt me, feel free to verify it for yourself.”

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Well, it’s been a solid five years, and he’s already changed his phone. There’s no way that the service provider can dig up any incriminating evidence now, but the real deal is that he still trusts me. As for what lies ahead, even if he somehow stumbles upon something, as long as I’m carrying the weight of saving his life, he won’t harm me in any way, and I’ll always have a shot at redemption.

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After retracting his hand, Alaric looked at her coldly. “Never show up in front of her again.”

With those words, he stormed into the hospital room and slammed the door shut.

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After making sure that he had entered and wouldn’t come out again, Claudia, who was leaning against the wall, gradually lost the gentle expression on her face. The softness on her face was now replaced by a trace of malicious cunning.

Victoria! Why did you come back? It’s been five years! Five freaking years have passed, and your children have grown so much. Why are you still lurking around like a haunting spirit?

“Claudia...” West weakly called out to her.

When Claudia regained her senses, she became even more annoyed after seeing West

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lying *on* the ground.

What a useless wimp! I had counted on his help today. However, not only did I fail to accomplish anything, but I also found myself under Alaric's suspicion now. If I had the choice, I'd rather not have anything to do with him.

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However, considering that she might still need him in the future, she walked over to him. "West, are you okay?"

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After Victoria entered the hospital room with her two kids, she didn't pay much attention to what was happening outside.

Although her two kids were filled with curiosity upon hearing the sounds of a fight outside, Victoria remained incredibly calm.

"Nathan, Nicole, don't worry about what's happening outside."

Nicole whispered, "But Mr. Night seems to be fighting with someone. Mommy, shouldn't we do something? What if he gets hurt?"

Hearing that, she couldn't help but glance at her daughter.

"Are you worried about Mr. Night?"

Without a hint of cunning, Nicole's innocent eyes sparkled with pure innocence. "Mr. Night said Nathan and I should punish him by taking us out for food. If he gets hurt, does that mean he won't be able to treat us anymore?"

Victoria found herself momentarily speechless.

What on earth did Alaric tell them while I was asleep?

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"Don't worry, Nicky. If he gets beaten up, I will take you both out instead, okay?"

Afterward, she proceeded to offer some gentle lessons to the two little ones.

Little did she know that in no time at all, the door behind her was pushed open, accompanied by Alaric's voice.

"What are you all talking about?"

Surprised by how quickly he had come back, Victoria was completely caught off guard. She had anticipated that Claudia and West would keep him occupied for a while.

With this in mind, Victoria turned her head to look behind Alaric. However, there was no familiar figure in sight.

As if he could read her thoughts, Alaric uttered, "There's nothing to see. I've already sent her back."

It was only then that she averted her gaze.

Watching Claudia's figure as she moved away, Alaric couldn't help but think about the text message incident.

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Although she didn't admit anything, her strange reactions had already confirmed some suspicions in his mind.

There's no doubt that she won't do any harm to me.

But what if it's not me but Victoria?

I'm sure that she won't treat Victoria the same way she treats me.

Thinking about what had happened next, he gave Nicole and Nathan a glance before making his way toward them. "I wish to have a private chat with your mommy. Can I get your opinion on that?"

Hearing that, Victoria was somewhat puzzled, and her gaze toward him became filled with mixed emotions.

Shouldn't he be seeking my opinion if he wants to talk to me? Yet, he went off and seek the input of the two little kids instead.

What surprised her, even more, was that Nicole actually took it seriously and pondered for a moment before nodding. "Okay, Mr. Night. Since you sincerely requested it, Nate and I will give you a chance to chat with Mommy."

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Alaric curved his lips into a charming smile. "Thank you,

"Nate, let's go over there first."

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Nicole."

Nicole pointed toward a distant spot, gesturing for Nathan to come with her. Feeling resigned, Nathan reluctantly followed her cue and went along.

Alaric watched as the two little ones walked until they reached the farthest distance from them. After speculating that their conversation would be out of earshot by now, he suddenly heard Victoria's voice questioning, "What do you want to say by keeping them away? If it's about you and Claudia, I think I have the right to refuse to get involved in your drama, right?"

Hearing that, he abruptly snapped back to reality and shook his head in response.

"It's not about me and her, but it's about you."

Victoria was puzzled.

"Let me get this straight. You claimed that you sent the pregnancy text to me back then, didn't you?"

As he tried to bring up the old matter again, she grew displeased and furrowed her

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brows.

"What's the deal? Are you trying to deny it now? Or maybe you want to turn the tables and claim that I never sent that text message at all?"

He looked somewhat helpless.

"Why would you think that? I just wanted to ask you-Do you remember if anyone came to see you after you sent that message?"

Victoria hesitated for a moment as she thought back to Claudia's visit and her words shortly after the message was sent.

Judging by her expression, Alaric could tell that someone had actually sought her out.

"So, someone did come to see you. Who was it?"

However, she didn't respond to him right away. Instead, she simply gazed at him intently.

"What's the point of you saying all this now? Will you trust me if I tell you?"

Much to her astonishment, he also looked at her with a serious expression.

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"If I don't even trust you, who else can I trust now?"

His gaze held such sincerity that it seemed he would believe every word she uttered. This level of trust transported her back to their childhood days when their connection was unbreakable.

It wasn't a romantic love, but rather an unspoken understanding and profound bond that made them each other's most reliable confidants-the ones with whom they could freely share their deepest emotions and secrets.

Back then, there was no one else between the two of them.

It was not until later that both of them grew up, and a multitude of circumstances eventually drove them apart.

"Victoria?"

Noticing her extended silence, Alaric called out to her, and she immediately snapped back to reality. After glancing at him for a while, she finally uttered a few words.

"Someone did come to see me, and you'll be surprised to hear that it was Claudia."

She had expected him to be astonished upon hearing Claudia's name. However, to her surprise, his expression seemed as though he had anticipated it all along.

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Perplexed, she proceeded to inquire further with another question.

"Didn't you ask her to come and find me?"

At that, he was confused.

"Why would I?"

Fixing her gaze on him, she closely scrutinized his face while keenly observing every subtle expression. However, his reaction didn't seem fake to her. As she pursed her lips in reluctant disbelief, she had no choice but to continue probing.

"I sent the message to your phone. If you didn't ask her to find me, how did she know about my situation?"

Speaking of this, she bit her lip and continued, "Don't tell me that she took your phone that day and deleted the message?"

Alaric pressed his lips together and remained silent.

"Why aren't you speaking?" Victoria's eyes flickered with sarcasm.

Is it because I hit the nail on the head that he's left speechless now? If that's the case, why did he mention not trusting anyone else if he doesn't trust me?

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To her surprise, he unexpectedly responded, "You've just said everything I wanted to say."

Instantly, she found herself at a loss for words.

"Did I mishear you? Are you actually suspecting Claudia?"

At that, he corrected her words, saying, "It's not a suspicion. It's a fact right in front of us."

Any lingering doubt in his mind vanished the moment he discovered that Claudia had sought her out right after she sent the message.

The text message was sent while Claudia had coincidentally been using the phone.

Then, Claudia saw it, deleted the message, and lied to him, claiming it was just junk.

He never had any doubts about her simply because he had complete trust in her from the start.

As a thought crossed his mind, Alaric abruptly narrowed his eyes. “The extra 7 million from the money you left behind...”

Victoria lowered her gaze. “She gave it to me.”

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In that instant, all doubts vanished completely. Alaric’s pupils contracted in disbelief as he never expected Claudia to do something like this behind his back.

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