

Departure with a Belly Chapter 521

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Chapter 521 It Will Get Better Tomorrow

Alaric kept holding Victoria's hand on their way back.

The situation gave her butterflies.

After all, she could feel the chemistry between them earlier. Besides, his words gave her ideas.

Therefore, she was expecting something more intimate to happen between them. To her surprise, he only kissed her on the forehead and took her hand to leave.

It's totally different from what I'm expecting! Even though she didn't get her hopes up too high, the turn of events still left an empty feeling within her.

Victoria put a hand on her chest. It's strange. I'm strange.

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"What's wrong?" She heard Alaric's voice coming from the side. "Is it heartburn?"

His question snapped her out of her thoughts. She shyly avoided looking at the concerned look on his face and whispered, "It's nothing."

She's probably hiding something. However, he decided to let it slip as Victoria clearly didn't want to talk about it.

Since she seemed fine and wasn't bothered by the matter, he didn't it.

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It was around 8.00PM when they returned.

Aquilo walked over upon catching sight of them. "You're back from the walk. How does it feel? How

your first day in the countryside? How are you settling in?"

is

"Don't worry about us. The air is fresh, and we are doing just great."

He chuckled. "That's good to hear. Remember to keep the window shut when you're sleeping, or else the mosquitoes will get into the room."

"All right."

"By the way, your grandmother said it's very late already, so we'll continue the work tomorrow. Otherwise, eating too much for dinner will cause a digestion problem and further cause a sleeping problem."

Victoria was surprised to hear that.

"It's

getting late. You should wash up and get some rest. The farmers' markets are opening tomorrow. You should go with us."

Both she and Alaric nodded.

After the two returned to the room, Victoria began, "It's good to know I made the right choice to come back early."

Alaric agreed with a soft hum. Her smile was contagious, and he couldn't help but pinch her ivory cheeks. However, the sensation triggered a pang of sadness within him. He used to do the same to her, and back then, he could feel the softness of her cheeks between his fingers, but now, he was almost touching the bone.

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He decided to look after her until she recovered to her healthy self.

Meanwhile, Victoria had zero ideas about his thoughts. All she knew was Alaric pinched her face, so she swatted his hand away before asking, "Where are Nicole and Nathan? Aren't they supposed to sleep with us tonight?"

She didn't see the children around when she came back. I wonder where they are.

"I asked after them a while ago. They're sharing a room with Mom tonight."

With Mom, huh? Victoria cast her eyes to the ground and was lost in her thoughts.

With just a glance, Alaric was able to tell what she was thinking. Therefore, he prompted , "What is it? Do you want to sleep with them? You can join them if you want."

At that, she immediately raised her chin to meet his eyes. "Can I really join them?"

"Nope, you can't."

Feeling speechless, she stared at him in annoyance. "Are you messing with me, Alaric?"

Alaric couldn't help the smile on his face. "I'm not. But I saw the room. The bed is large enough for three people but not for more. There's no more space for you if you want to join them."

Victoria tilted her head and glanced at the bed behind him.

The bed wasn't large enough either. It barely fit both of them. If she was the only person taking the bed, there was no problem having the children share a bed with her.

The problem was Alaric. The tall man took up a lot of space when he lay on the bed. There wasn't any extra space for the kids.

Therefore, bringing the children over to share a room with her was an impossible goal.

"Whatever. Forget about it." Victoria shook the thought out of her mind before turning to Alaric. "Let me tend to your wounds. Where did you put your medicine?"

At that, she reached for his suitcase.

“Allow me.” Alaric set the suitcase on the ground and searched for his medicine and bandage.

She noticed his attempt, so she took the medicine and bandage and went to the side of the bed. “Let’s do it here.”

Alaric glanced at the couch on the side. Then, he walked over to the bed and took a seat without saying a word.

He had removed his coat, revealing the gray sweater and a white dress shirt he wore.

“You should take off your sweater. Are you able to do it?”

“Yeah.”

Alaric removed his sweater with one swift movement, acting much unlike an injured person. If it wasn’t for the blood stain on his dress shirt, Victoria would have thought that he was in his best state after watching him remove his sweater.

It wasn’t until she saw the blood-stained shirt that she realized even though he seemed fine during the stroll, he was only acting tough the whole time.

After catching sight of the blood stain, she began to see things she didn’t notice earlier. When she looked at Alaric again, she felt like he looked paler than usual. I’m so careless! Why didn’t I think of it earlier? I should’ve let him rest.

Once the thought was formed in her mind, she couldn’t hide the urgency in her movements. She bent down to unbutton his shirt.

She did it with a thoughtful expression on her face, never giving a thought to anything else. Therefore, she did not notice Alaric’s expression when she was unbuttoning his shirt.

A moment later, she undid all the buttons on his dress shirt and pulled it off him.

After helping him to remove his shirt, she involuntarily frowned at the sight of the bandages wrapped around his body.

Her gentle hands ignited a desire within Alaric when they brushed along his body earlier. However, they vanished when he noticed the concerned furrow between her brows.

“Hey, what’s with that look? Even though the wound hasn’t healed, it’s looking better than yesterday. All I need is a night’s rest. It’ll get better tomorrow.”

Victoria raised her head and studied his expression. She reached out again to remove his bandages.

He held her slender wrist when he didn’t get any reply from her. “I’m speaking the truth. It isn’t a lie. The medicine is working out pretty well. See, I’m much better now.”

Victoria nodded as she hummed a response.

“Don’t worry about me, hmm? I’m fine.”

She withdrew her hand and continued to remove the bandages.

Alaric got help yesterday, but he was sharing a room with her tonight. He had no choice but to depend on her.

Therefore, Victoria could see his bare torso in proximity. She saw multiple wounds.

It took her one look to tell the difference. She found both fresh wounds and old injuries on him.

The new wounds looked more terrible than the scars.

The sight overwhelmed her. It was as if somebody had their hands around her throat. She struggled to get the words out. “Your injury...”

“Don’t look at them. Just help me apply the ointment, and it’ll heal in time, alright?” Alaric

comforted her even at this point.

Chapter 522 I Really Need Some Space

A pang of sadness hit Victoria. "Can you stop talking, please?"

She

spoke through her sobs, and it took Alaric aback. When he raised his head, he was greeted by the sight of her teary eyes.

The sight worried him. Having a hard time containing his concerns, he jumped to his feet. "What's the matter? Did I say something wrong? Are you all right, Victoria? Is it because of something I said? Don't be mad at me. I'm sorry. Will you tell me what it is?"

However, his words had the opposite effect. Tears began to roll down her cheeks like raindrops falling from the sky.

Panicked at her tears, he stood still and watched her weep.

"Victoria..." At last, Alaric could only pull her into a hug even though he didn't know what to do.

However, Victoria struggled out of his embrace and took a few steps back. She studied him through her blurry vision.

"You have two injured areas. One is older, and the other is new. The fresh wounds are serious, but you said nothing at all! You even-

You even comforted me as if I was the one who was injured!

At that, she made clear to him the reason for her sudden tears. At first, Alaric was worried that his unintentional words hurt her. It seems like she's crying because she feels bad for me.

Victoria was hit by a pang of embarrassment after she finished those words. I'm not supposed to cry. After all, I'm not the one who's injured.

Seeing her cry would only unnerve him. Then, he had to comfort her. Time was wasted, but his wounds weren't treated.

At that, she felt a new resolution bubble up within her. She quickly wiped away her tears with the back of her hand before pressing down on his shoulders, forcing him to sit on the bed. Then, she turned around to reach for the first-aid kit.

Alaric was only wondering how he should comfort her a moment ago. To his surprise, Victoria was shedding tears one minute, and the next, she forced him to sit on the bed and went to get the kits.

With her back to him, Victoria was wiping her tears with her hand. However, she did it quickly. After getting the necessities, she returned to his side.

She wasn't crying anymore when she stood before him. Besides, her expression seemed calm to him, leaving little trace of her earlier outburst.

She looked so calm. The redness at the corner of her eyes and the tip of her nose was the only evidence to prove that what he witnessed wasn't his imagination.

Alaric pulled himself together and looked at her again. She remained calm like before. He opened his mouth, but the words barely left him because she spoke up. "Raise your arm."

The injury on his left crossed his lower arm. When he put his hand down, it would block her view of the injury. As such, Victoria asked him to lift his arm so she could clean his wound.

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After a few seconds of shock, Alaric followed her words by lifting his arm.

She bent down to clean his wounds, her expression blank. As she leaned closer to him, he could smell the unique fragrance of her body.

Alaric watched her serene expression up close with mixed feelings inside him.

At first, he worried that his injuries would scare her when she found them on him.

However, she was tending to his wounds in a surprisingly calm manner.

He watched her with a piercing gaze.

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What is it now? One minute she's crying, but the next moment she changes into a different person. Did she regain her memory? No, it can't be that fast. Besides, there was no occasion to trigger her memories. Moreover, she shouldn't be reacting like this if she remembers things.

At that, Alaric couldn't help but ask, "What happened to you?"

It seemed like Victoria wasn't ready to answer him. She only shook her head before continuing to tend to his wounds.

She cleaned the wounds fast. Soon, she applied ointment on the two injured spots. After that, she picked up the bandage to dress his wounds.

Alaric tried to initiate a conversation the whole time but to no avail. All he could do was follow her orders. He lifted his arm and held the bandage as she asked. At that moment, Alaric Cadogan, the man who dominated the business world, sat on the bed like a tamed lion. He bowed his head, watching her work with a gentle gaze.

Once Victoria finished dressing the wounds, she informed him about it. Then, she turned around to put away the things.

Pursing his thin lips, he watched her bend down to clean up the kits. He walked over to her.

“Just leave it like this. You should go shower.”

She paid no mind to his words.

He had to crouch down and hold her wrist. “Victoria.”

He called her name in a stern voice and held her in a firm grip. She couldn't get out of his grasp, so she exhaled deeply

“Fine. Let me go. I'm going to shower.”

“Everything was fine until a moment ago. What's wrong?”

She seemed concerned about him when she was tending to his wounds earlier, but her attitude changed right after she finished it.

“It's nothing.” She shook her head and whispered, “Go rest. I'm taking a bath.”

Then, she surged to her feet and picked up some clean clothes before heading to the bathroom.

Just when she was closing the door, she found Alaric following her into the bathroom.

It took her aback. Her hand was closing the door to shut him out there. However, he quickly raised his hand, stopping her from shutting the door.

“You-” The sight put a frown on her face. “I'm going to take a bath. What do you want?”

“Don't bottle up your feelings. Let's talk it through.”

“I'm not bottling up any feelings!” Victoria denied it right away. “You're imagining things.”

“I saw you crying, but you were too calm when you dressed my wound. It was as if nothing had happened. I don't buy it. You're just hiding them.”

It was either keeping the feelings inside her or sharing them with him.

Alaric didn't know the consequences if she kept them all to herself, but he knew better than to let her bottle her feelings up.

However, Victoria didn't want to answer him. In the end, she muttered, "I want to shower."

After that, she tried to close the door again.

Alaric pushed it back hard. At the same time, he frowned deeply. "Tell me, or I'll stay here. I don't mind talking to you like this. After all, you're the one who will help me with the bandages."

His words struck her.

She raised her gaze and found him using his arm to stop the door from closing. It was dangerously near his wound. Therefore, if he pushed back hard against the door, his wound would surely

reopen.

She remembered seeing how deep the wounds were when she helped him to clean his wounds.

She cast her eyes to the ground, finally giving in. "It's not that I don't want to talk to you, but I really need some space."

She was surprisingly calm when she explained to him. Her response took him aback.

"Aside from being unhappy with you pushing yourself too hard, I blame myself too. I hate myself for making a scene when it's unnecessary. I was just wasting our time. I should've tended to your wounds instead of throwing a tantrum. That's all. You should get some rest."

Alaric didn't need more words to understand what she was trying to tell him.

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Was Testing to See If You Truly Didn't Need Me

He had contemplated various possibilities, such as the idea that her anger stemmed from his failure to inform her or that he had said something hurtful. However, the notion that she would blame herself had never crossed his mind.

As he witnessed her eyes welling up and her struggle to hold back her tears, Alaric couldn't help but feel a profound sense of heartache.

At that moment, his mind couldn't entertain any other thoughts. Acting swiftly, he reached out and enveloped her in his arms. "Silly, why are you blaming yourself?"

Victoria

leaned against his chest and blinked. "Now that I've told you everything, can you grant me some time alone?"

go, but her yearning Alaric was caught off guard by her request. He genuinely didn't want to let her for solitude was apparent. If he remained there, it would likely only make her feel more uneasy.

Reluctantly, he decided to grant her space to take a bath and compose herself before they could resume their conversation later.

Once he had come to this resolution, Alaric released her from his embrace. "Alright, then. Go ahead and shower. I'll wait for you in bed."

Victoria was left momentarily speechless.

Amid the gravity of the situation, she even felt a sense of heaviness in her heart. Little did she anticipate his unplanned remark about waiting for her in bed.

Although she recognized it as an innocent slip of the tongue, her thoughts couldn't help but drift. She pushed Alaric gently and gestured for him to leave quickly.

Meanwhile, Alaric remained oblivious to her misunderstanding and failed to recognize any error in his words. Obediently, he turned and left.

Once he had exited, Victoria shut the bathroom door and leaned against it. Then, she gradually closed her eyes.

Finally, she found the solitude that she longed for.

Ever since losing her memory and being rescued by Alaric, Victoria had felt that everything around her was unfamiliar. However, she was willing to embrace it. While she cherished being by his side, it was evident that they needed to find a way to navigate their relationship.

Perhaps it wasn't necessary at all. It was the recent series of events that stirred up turmoil in her heart.

Nearly half an hour had passed by the time Victoria finished her shower.

Meanwhile, Alaric patiently waited by the bed.

Initially, he managed to sit quietly, but after ten minutes, he couldn't resist glancing at his phone to

check the time.

Girls always take their time to shower, he thought to himself.

Therefore, he set his phone aside and refrained from rushing her.

As twenty minutes elapsed, the bathroom remained eerily quiet. Alaric pressed his lips together, fighting the urge to get up and knock on the door.

His concern wasn't driven by impatience but rather the fear that she might faint due to her weakened condition if she stayed inside for too long.

past, Alaric Reminded of instances where he might have inadvertently disturbed her in the
he restrained

himself and turned to his phone for guidance. He searched for information on how long women typically took to shower, only to be overwhelmed by the myriad of answers that left his head spinning.

Nevertheless, he gleaned that women often took extra time due to washing their hair, applying conditioner, using body

wash, and occasionally indulging in exfoliating rituals. Alaric didn't delve further into the details after confirming that twenty minutes was within a reasonable timeframe. Thus, he patiently waited outside.

As thirty minutes elapsed and Victoria remained inside the bathroom, he decided to rise from the bed and check on her.

Just as he got off the bed, he heard the sound of the bathroom door opening.

As the bathroom door swung open, Victoria emerged from the steam-filled room and walked out.

Noticing that she was wearing a thin set of autumn pajamas, Alaric swiftly grabbed one of his long coats and approached her. "You shouldn't be wearing so little, even when showering," he said as he draped the coat over her.

Instantly, Victoria found herself shielded from the chilly air outside. Her eyes glistened, and her fair cheeks blushed, making her look particularly enticing. "I could only find autumn pajamas in the closet. I thought they would be comfortable enough for sleeping," she explained.

As she was still wrapped in the coat, Alaric guided her to the side of the bed. "If you're going to accompany Grandma to the fair tomorrow, make sure to get yourself a few sets of thicker pajamas."

Buy some pajamas?

In truth, they hadn't brought much luggage with them when they arrived, Alaric intended to purchase whatever they needed once they reached their destination.

However, upon hearing his words, Victoria couldn't help but ask, "Are we planning to stay here for a long time?"

At her question, Alaric fell silent for a moment before answering, "It depends on you. Do you like it here? If not, we can always go back."

She pondered for a moment, realizing that she didn't particularly dislike being there. However, as she earnestly considered her options, she couldn't think of any specific place she longed to be.

If she had to choose, it would likely be by her children's side.

Even her decision to come here was driven by the desire to see her children and be with them.

With this in mind, she responded, "It's not just about whether I like it or not. Ultimately, it depends on our two children."

At her words, Alaric finally grasped the depth of her intentions.

Indeed, she had come here solely because her children were present. Without them, she might not have had the desire to come at all.

Initially, there hadn't been much more to contemplate. However, for some inexplicable reason, Alaric's thoughts began to drift to another level.

It seemed as if Victoria only had concern for the children.

As long as they were by her side, perhaps she wouldn't even care about anything else, including him.

Alaric knew he shouldn't entertain such thoughts, but at that moment, he couldn't help but subconsciously allow them to creep in. "However, Grandma truly seems to adore them. I did mention to my mother before that we could have the kids stay here during winter and summer vacations. We don't necessarily have to stay for the same duration as them."

Just as Alaric felt a sense of frustration in his heart, her words sparked a glimmer of hope within him again.

Nevertheless, he responded, "Well, the decision is yours. If you want to stay here with them, then we will stay. Your happiness is what matters most to me."

“What about you?” Victoria raised her gaze and looked at him.

“Me?” Alaric’s thin lips curled into a faint smile. “I’m responsible for earning money to support our family. If you need me, I’ll come over. If you don’t, I’ll stay in the city and work. How does that sound?”

He presented himself as someone who would follow Victoria’s lead. Victoria met his gaze unwaveringly before giving a nod of agreement. “Alright, then. You can return tomorrow.”

The smile on Alaric’s lips momentarily froze.

“We’re going to the fair tomorrow morning. You shouldn’t join us, right?” she teased.

As Alaric caught on to her deliberate teasing, he narrowed his eyes and tightened his grip around her slender waist, pulling her closer. “Are you teasing me?”

The sudden closeness made Victoria’s heart skip a beat, and she instinctively cleared her throat. “No. Didn’t

you mention that you’re responsible for earning money?”

“I was testing to see if you truly didn’t need me,” he responded.

Chapter 524 Sharing a Bed

Observing her silence, Alaric couldn’t help but inquire, “It seems you don’t need me. Should I start packing now and go back tomorrow?”

As he spoke, Victoria pursed her red lips and remained still.

Sensing her silence, Alaric released his hand from around her waist as if preparing to turn away and pack his belongings.

Deep down, Victoria knew that his previous remark had been nothing more than a playful comment, and now he was deliberately putting on a show for her.

His intention behind this act was simply to provoke a reaction from her.

Fully aware of the ruse, she initially thought that she could quietly observe his performance.

However, her instincts got the better of her. As he turned away, she impulsively reached out to grasp the hem of his clothing.

Her action was subtle, almost negligible, and Alaric could have easily brushed it off and carried on.

If he had chosen not to stop, he could have ignored this gentle resistance without much consequence.

However, as he sensed that slight resistance, his steps abruptly halted, leaving him standing in place.

“Um...” Victoria hesitated, her gaze fixed on him. With some difficulty, she asked, “Even if you’re planning to pack up, isn’t this the wrong timing?”

Her words caught Alaric’s attention, and he cast a sidelong glance at her. “Then when would suggest? Can you provide a specific timeframe and assurance?”

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Confronted by his direct and penetrating gaze, Victoria cleared her throat and steered the conversation in a different direction. “Let’s set that aside and focus on you for the time being. Your injuries haven’t fully healed, so you shouldn’t push yourself. Even if you have the intention to leave, it would be wise to wait until you’ve recovered.”

Alaric raised an eyebrow in response. “Do you mean that I can stay here until my injuries have healed?”

Victoria instinctively nodded.

After nodding, she suddenly realized the ambiguity of Alaric’s statement and couldn’t help but look at him. “What do you mean by that? Are you suggesting that you plan to stay intentionally...”

The man curved his lips into a playful smile. “Do you see me as someone who would do that?”

Victoria was left momentarily speechless.

He didn’t outright admit it, nor did he deny it. He simply posed the question, leaving her to interpret his intentions.

She contemplated silently, entertaining the possibility that he might indeed follow through with

such a plan.

The mere thought of that possibility caused Victoria's eyebrows to furrow unconsciously.

"If you dare to do that, I will never speak to you again," she declared with determination.

After saying that, Victoria paid no further attention to him. She turned around before walking over to the side of the bed and sitting down.

Initially, Alaric had intended to tease her, wanting to gauge her reaction and ease the jealousy in his heart. However, he hadn't anticipated that his words would once again irritate her. Realizing his mistake, he felt compelled to go after her and apologize. "I'm sorry. I promise I won't make light of my injuries anymore. Please don't be mad at me, okay?"

Victoria pursed her lips and continued to ignore him.

"Victoria?" Alaric called out to her repeatedly until she finally turned her head.

"Don't make jokes about your wounds," she sternly admonished.

This time, Alaric humbly acknowledged his mistake and nodded. "Okay. I promise you that I will never joke about my injuries again."

Holding her wrist, Alaric looked at her earnestly as he asked, "When my injuries have fully recovered, will you come with me?"

The warmth of his palm radiated through her, akin to a comforting fire.

"I..." Victoria couldn't resist asking, "What about Nicole and Nathan? Will they come back with us, too?"

At that, Alaric took a deep breath and reminded himself that those two children were his precious

treasures.

They were the embodiment of his and Victoria's love, and he had no reason to be jealous when it came to his children.

After mentally reassuring himself, he responded, "Of course. When we leave, they will come back with us. It's not summer vacation yet, and my mother has only arranged for them to have a little

over a week off."

Alaric's decision primarily stemmed from his concerns about leaving the two children with their aging grandparents.

Considering the advanced age of the grandparents, he couldn't ignore the potential safety risks. If there were any dubious intentions from Bane, it wouldn't be good for the two elderly people to experience fright or suffer any unpleasant events when he came here.

Having taken all these factors into account, Alaric had reached this conclusion.

He didn't intend to extend his stay for an extended period. It would probably only last for two or three days before he had to go back.

Victoria nodded, realizing that it wasn't summer vacation yet. "Alright, then. We'll go back together when the time comes."

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the two of them.

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Victoria appeared exhausted, leaning wearily against the bedside with droopy eyelids.

Noticing her fatigue, Alaric gently suggested, "It's getting late now. Let's get some rest, shall we?"

With that, he lifted the covers and allowed Victoria to lie down before tucking her in with the blanket.

The bedding during this year of the time was quite cold.

As Victoria prepared to sleep, she removed the coat that Alaric had placed on her. Consequently, when she got into bed, she couldn't help but shiver and involuntarily uttered, "It's so cold."

Observing her reaction, Alaric decided to join her, lying down beside her. "I'm warm. Shall I hold

while we sleep?" you

With those words, he was about to turn to her side and embrace her. However, Victoria, who had been lying still, quickly interjected, "Don't move."

Her words brought his movements to an abrupt halt. "What's wrong?" he asked.

He dared not proceed and inquired of Victoria.

"You have injuries on your body, so you should only lie flat." Victoria looked at his profile as he lay flat. Then, she earnestly explained, "If you turn on your side, it will put pressure on the wound."

Upon hearing her words, Alaric finally recalled his condition and acknowledged, "Alright."

He nodded and refrained from attempting any further adjustments to his position. Instead, he reached out his hand toward her and said, "Come closer by yourself, then."

Perplexed, Victoria asked, "Why do I need to move closer?"

"Aren't you feeling cold?" Alaric chuckled softly. "I'm warm."

Initially reluctant to comply, Victoria pondered for a moment upon hearing his words. Slowly, she snuggled up to his side, turning onto her side and reaching out to embrace him.

Just as he had claimed, his body emitted a comforting warmth reminiscent of a cozy furnace.

As soon as she leaned against him, the comforting warmth radiating from his body enveloped her. The sensation felt oddly familiar as if she had experienced something similar before.

Flashes of hazy images danced through her mind.

They were snapshots of the two of them lying in bed, holding each other. However, these images weren't singular; they varied in clothing and posture.

There were moments when she clung to his waist, instances when she drifted off to sleep while he enveloped her in his embrace, and even some moments of intimate vulnerability, with both of them unclothed...

As the enchanting images played in her mind, a subtle blush graced Victoria's cheeks.

Feeling slightly embarrassed, she averted her gaze and nestled her face against Alaric's arm.

Alaric raised his hand and reached for a nearby switch.

With a click, the brightly illuminated room instantly dimmed.

As the surroundings plunged into darkness, an intriguing shift occurred. Without visual distractions, all senses sharpened their focus on the realm of sound.

In the absence of light, Victoria became acutely aware of the stark contrast between the countryside and the city.

In the city, even with the lights out, she could still hear various sounds. However, in the countryside, all she could hear after the lights were extinguished were the gentle calls of small animals outside the house.

Chapter 525 Not a Dream

While the place was so quiet that they could hear each other's heartbeat, Victoria slept in a lower position, resting her head on Alaric's chest. Thus, she could clearly hear his rhythmic heartbeat. Nonetheless, she was soon overwhelmed by her sleepiness a few moments later, dozing off with her head still on Alaric's chest.

Noting Victoria's steady breathing, Alaric knew that she had just fallen asleep. Then, he gently let out a sigh and wrapped his arm around her, pulling her closer to him so that he could fill the void that was inside of him. Although he had managed to save her from the incident earlier and always made sure she was by his side, he still couldn't help but feel anxious and worried about her safety. Whenever Victoria was asleep, he would stay awake so that he could protect her.

Deep down, Alaric was afraid that having Victoria back was just a dream that would end when he awakened. Therefore, he had been suffering from insomnia lately. Even with her in his arms, he could clearly feel her warm breath wafting toward his chest and even hear her heartbeat. While everything felt real, Alaric was still scared that it would turn out to be just a dream because he still couldn't believe it was so easy for him to have her back by his side. At the thought of that, Alaric couldn't help but feel lost, not knowing what he should do to make himself feel at ease.

After silently looking at Victoria for a few moments, Alaric suddenly felt movements in his arms. He then heard a soft murmur and looked down, thinking there could be something going on in his embrace. However, it soon turned out that Victoria was just turning and tossing around in his arms before she hugged his waist even tighter. After that, she buried herself deeper in his arms and continued her sleep.

Then, Alaric realized Victoria was probably just sleep-talking as she hadn't woken up. Nevertheless, the fact that she hugged him even tighter during her sleep made him smile. After all, Victoria often gave their two children more attention during the daytime, making Alaric jealous of them. Because of that, he was satisfied and happy for Victoria to wrap her arms around him tightly.

No matter what happens, Victoria and the kids will always be the most important people. As the thought of that filled his mind with euphoria and joy, Alaric closed his eyes in satisfaction, happily falling asleep for the first time after having suffered many sleepless nights. Not knowing how long it had been, Alaric woke up and saw the light brightening the surroundings of the room, realizing he had fallen asleep. When he turned his attention to the window, the first thing that came into his view was the sunlight that shone through the clouds at the crack of dawn.

Victoria... As that name flashed across his mind, Alaric looked down and saw Victoria still in his arms, only feeling relieved at the sight of that. Phew! She is still right by my side

. She is still with me. With his eyes fixed upon Victoria's restful look, Alaric felt as if the voidness in his heart filled. Hugging the woman he loved in his arms, he leaned closer to her and planted a kiss on her forehead.

Meanwhile, Victoria vaguely felt someone's lips on her forehead during her sleep, as if there was a feather gently grazing her skin. Although she was still sleepy at that time, she somehow opened her eyes when she felt that. After that, the first thing that came into view was Alaric's chiseled chin and his thin lips. At that moment, Alaric happened to back away as their gaze met. It was then that she realized he planted a kiss on her forehead.

"You..."

"Are you up?" Alaric asked with a hoarse voice, gulping in his throat. "Did I wake you up? Sorry

about that. I should have been a little gentler, baby. Now, if you're tired, go back to sleep, would you?"

Victoria gently blinked, thinking she was not sleepy at all. "No, I'm not tired. I slept pretty early last night." She shook her head. After all, she went to bed with Alaric around 10.00PM the night before. As the crack of dawn suggested that it was approximately 6.00AM, she believed the two of them had about 8 hours of sleep. Furthermore, she was excited and curious to find out how it would be to visit the bazaar with Mary later.

At the thought of that, Victoria sat up straight on the bed and looked at Alaric, asking, "Shouldn't we have to wake up early to get to the bazaar? Do you think it's a little too late for us to wake up at this hour?"

Just when

Alaric was about to answer that question, they were suddenly interrupted by a knock on the door. "Alaric, Victoria, are you two up yet?" Mary asked.

"Yes, we are, Mom," Victoria responded subconsciously.

"Great then. In that case, would you want to come with us to the bazaar? If you're interested in tagging along, you're going to have to wake up early."

"Sure." Victoria gave an affirmative reply without hesitating at all.

"Alright, I'll tell the rest about it while you get ready."

After it went silent out there, Victoria removed the blanket and got off the bed. Upon seeing that, Alaric followed right behind her and was able to tell that she was especially interested in visiting the bazaar when she quickly put on her clothes. Helpless, he put on his own clothes and entered the bathroom as well. Soon, when

Alaric got into the bathroom, Victoria was already done with her morning ablutions, whereupon she stepped aside and left some space for him to stand.

As soon as Alaric stood aside, something came to Victoria's mind. She then turned around and looked at him. "You're hurt. You can't come with us."

"What? Why? Nothing went wrong when I hung out with you yesterday."

"Well, nothing went wrong on the outside for sure." Victoria spoke more comfortably than ever before after spending the night sleeping by Alaric's side. "Have you forgotten what I tended to your wound last night? Did you think I don't remember seeing the bloodied bandage? The reason your wound isn't obvious now is because it's winter; if it's summer, your wound is going to start bleeding again." Victoria felt the need to convince him not to tag along. "I may not have been to the bazaar, but I'm sure that place is going to be crowded with people, and weaving through them could cause your wound to rupture."

Alaric stepped up his persuasion when it seemed to him that Victoria wouldn't allow him to tag along. "I don't care. All I know is that I can't let you go to someplace where there are a lot of people."

"No, I'm not going alone. I'll be going with Grandma and the rest."