

Departure with a Belly Chapter 556

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Chapter 556 Not That Carefully

After leaving the office, Henry felt as if he had just achieved a great accomplishment unbeknownst to everyone else as he had done something that immensely satisfied Alaric. On his way back, the events that had just occurred in the office continuously replayed in his mind.

For some reason, he couldn't shake off the feeling that the questions Victoria had asked him were somewhat strange. At first, he assumed that she was only attempting to change the topic, but he began to sense that something was amiss after leaving the office. Even if she was trying to divert his attention, she had a plethora of other topics to choose from, so why did she ask him that?

The more he thought about it, the stranger it felt, and his concern increased along with his doubts. Hence, after giving it some thought, he returned to his office to retrieve a document that required Victoria's signature and made his way back with the intention of getting to the bottom of things.

Due to his worry, Henry's stride became exceptionally swift, and he arrived at the office in no time. Then, he knocked on the door. Though the office remained silent, he did not panic and continued to stand quietly in place as he waited.

After waiting for a few seconds with no response, he knocked on the door again and called out, "Excuse me, Miss Selwyn."

A short pause later, there was the sound of a chair crashing onto the ground. The noise was deafening even through the door, causing Henry to worry that the two had gotten in

to a disagreement. After all, the previous events were just too strange to explain otherwise.

At that thought, Henry couldn't help but grow anxious. He knocked on the door heavily and asked in an urgent voice, "Miss Selwyn, are you all right? What happened?"

However, he was only met with silence.

"Miss Selwyn?"

After a moment of hesitation, Henry's anxiety got the better of him, and he decided to reach out and twist the

door handle.

Click... Unexpectedly, the handle only moved an inch before he was unable to turn it any further.

Henry instantly froze in place, his dazed eyes fixed on the door handle before him. *Is the door locked?*

Just then, a low voice sounded from behind the door. "What is it?"

Henry quickly recognized this voice to be Alaric's, and the cogs in his mind began to turn. However, as if his brain had short-circuited, he found himself unable to return to his senses.

In fact, his mouth moved before his brain, and he reflexively replied upon hearing Alaric's question, "I-I have a document that requires Miss Selwyn's signature."

There was another pause.

"Wait there."

After spitting these words out, the other end fell back into silence.

As he stood before the door, Henry still found the situation strange. *What exactly is going on?*

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Then, as if struck by lightning, a thought occurred to him that caused his eyes to widen in shock. After he left, the office door was immediately locked from the inside, clearly meant to prevent anyone from entering. Moreover, there was the sound of the chair toppling, and even

Alaric's voice sounded hoarse as he spoke. It was then that Henry finally realized he had just interrupted them in the middle of something extremely

important.

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It's over... Where did my tact when I was an executive go? Why did my mind stop working all of a sudden?

At this moment, Henry wanted nothing more but to pry his skull open and take a look at what exactly he was thinking about. And yet, with how things had turned out, he did not have the nerve to leave and could only

remain frozen in place like a statue.

Sometime later, when Henry was beginning to think that he was turning into stone, the sound of footsteps finally sounded from within, and the door opened immediately after.

When the door opened, Henry reflexively piled on his signature smile. And yet, his efforts were useless—the person behind the door was not Victoria, but a peeved Alaric.

“Where's the document?”

Henry noticed that Alaric's expression was gloomy. Not only was his collar in disarray, but both of his sleeves' buttons had been unfastened. As for his necktie, it had been discarded into an unknown corner long ago. Seeing that, Henry was immediately certain that he had interrupted them.

“Here...” Henry could only numbly pass him the document in his hand. “I just need a signature.”

As a matter of fact, this particular document did not require Victoria's signature, and he had only pulled it out from a pile of papers as an excuse.

After taking the document, Alaric growled at him to wait before immediately shutting the office door.

Bang!

Locked outside, Henry could almost feel the door brush against his nose. And yet, there was nothing he could do. As a man, he knew all too well how it felt to be interrupted in the middle of a time like that. If he were in Alaric's shoes, he might even feel murderous. Hence, even though Alaric behaved viciously toward him, he could only caress his *nose* meekly and wait in place.

Meanwhile, in the office, Alaric handed the document that Henry had given him to Victoria.

"This needs your signature."

Victoria, who was hurriedly fixing her attire, had completely turned red. Every part of her skin that was not covered by her clothes was thoroughly flushed, from her face to her neck and her ears. She hastily buttoned up her collar before taking the document from Alaric and picking up a pen.

"Where do I sign?"

Upon seeing her frantic and disheveled appearance, Alaric recalled how she had heard the knock on the door when they were in the moment and immediately shoved him away. Instantly, he felt a ball of fury boiling in his chest.

That damned Henry. Why couldn't he come earlier instead of interrupting me now?

Due to his injuries, Victoria had been refusing any form of intimacy with him for fear of worsening his wounds. Hence, it had taken much effort for him to find the opportunity to

seduce her and make her forget that he was injured, only for Henry's appearance to ruin everything.

Standing next to Victoria, he lowered his gaze and watched as she opened the document when his eyes froze. and fixed on the back of her neck. There, a small, red mark was left behind from his kisses, striking and eye-catching on her fair skin.

Alaric's irate mood only took a turn for the better after he saw the red mark, a satisfied look filling his the sight. This was a mark he left on her body, and a proof of their earlier intimacy.

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Victoria hastily skimmed through the document and left a hurried signature before handing it back to Alaric. "All right, you can bring it out now."

However, after accepting the document, Alaric did not rush to send it out. Instead, he began to flip through it seriously as soon as he held the document in his hands.

Seeing that, Victoria couldn't help but ask, "What are you doing?"

"Don't you read through the document properly before signing it?" Although Alaric's voice was still a little hoarse, he was clearly much calmer than before.

Just like that, he continued to stand before her as he read through the document with a furrowed brow. At the sight of his sudden change in behavior, Victoria defended herself in a quiet voice. "I did read it, just not that carefully."

Chapter 557 Don't Come with Me Anymore

As soon as Victoria finished speaking, Alaric turned to another page. Her eyes widened at the sight and she was about to say something, but she ultimately swallowed her words when she saw his furrowed brow.

Forget it. Even though he reads very quickly, it's better for two people to go through it than just one.

Hence, she did not interrupt him and waited for him to read through the document on a chair. In just a few minutes, Alaric had finished looking through the contract. When he caught sight of her neat signature at the

bottom, he couldn't help revealing a small smile at the corner of his lips.

After he closed the document, he heard Victoria mumble, "You finished it so quickly. It's not like you read it any

more carefully than me."

At her words, Alaric sent her a look. "Third page, fifth line. Do you remember what was written on it?"

"What?" Taken aback by his sudden question, Victoria gave him a dumbfounded look.

Then, he began to languidly drawl the contents of the page he just mentioned. A brief pause later, Victoria leaned toward him and yanked at the document, only to find that the contents of the fifth line on the third page were true as he had spoken, and she glanced at him.

Alaric's eyes held a smile as he asked, "Isn't your husband amazing?"

Hearing that, Victoria was immediately rendered speechless.

Then, he caressed her head. "I'll bring this to him. Wait for me here."

Upon saying that, Alaric left to drop the document off. As soon as he turned away from Victoria, the faint smile immediately dissipated from his face, and the air that surrounded him was as cold as frost as he opened the door to hand the document to an awkward Henry, who had no choice but to accept it from him.

"Don't come anymore," Alaric ordered coldly.

Things were fine before he spoke, but as soon as his words fell, Henry's embarrassment immediately intensified, and he bobbed his head after taking the document.

"All right. Things are mostly settled on my end as well, so I won't disturb you and Miss Selwyn anymore."

At that, Henry hastily took his departure.

After turning a corner, he came to a stop and heaved a huge breath of relief. Even after his experience as an influential executive in a large company, he rarely met any men who had a presence that was as powerful as Alaric's. *As expected of the president of Cadogan Group. Even the way he carries himself is different from everyone else,*

Once he handed the document out, Alaric closed the office door. When his slender fingers came into contact with the door handle, he hesitated for a moment, wondering if he should lock the door again. After all, there might be a second Henry in the office who would be tactless enough to knock on the door and even attempt to let themselves in when they did not receive a response.

Most importantly, even if they did not enter, the woman in his embrace would be distracted by the sudden interruption, and he would feel immensely displeased by her absent-mindedness as well. What he wanted was for her to completely devote herself to him after following his lead, and the connection of both their bodies.

and their hearts.

After racking his mind, Alaric eventually decided that this was not a good location for romantic endeavors and ultimately left the door unlocked.

And yet, when he headed back to Victoria's side, she had already finished clearing her desk and even rose to her feet nervously upon noticing his return. "I've already tidied everything up. Should we go back now?"

However, Alaric did not budge and looked at her with a smile at the corner of his lips. "Are you in such a hurry to go back?"

Victoria fell silent.

As she met his ferocious gaze, the only thought that occurred to her was to avoid them. "That's right. There's nothing for me to do here, anyway, so let's just go back."

At this moment, Alaric had already gotten ahold of himself and lost the motivation to continue. However, when he saw how much she was keeping her distance from him, he couldn't help but tease her, "Who said there isn't anything to do?"

Once again, he was met with no response. "Come here."

Victoria hesitated, remaining in place. "Why don't we forget about it?"

"If you won't come over, should I go to you?"

She struggled with herself for a moment, but as she recalled the earlier events, she eventually lifted a foot and

went to him.

As he watched her obediently walk toward him, Alaric couldn't help but let out another laugh and reached out to pinch her cheek. "Why are you so obedient all of a sudden?"

"Is there any use in being disobedient?"

After all, she had not forgotten the events that occurred earlier after he successfully captured her.

"That's true."

Watching her huffy appearance, Alaric couldn't hold himself back from pinching her cheek again. "That's why you have to remember, don't avoid me anymore. Otherwise, even if you hide at the corners of the earth, I will still come to take you back immediately."

After saying that, he lowered his head and dropped a kiss on her smooth forehead.

When he leaned over, his warm breath fanned across her face, causing Victoria to reflexively close her eyes. Then, she felt a soft touch grazing her forehead. When the warmth left her skin, Victoria expected a storm to follow. And yet, Alaric suddenly pulled her into his embrace.

Victoria froze before she immediately peeled her eyes open. At the realization that Alaric was only holding her without any intention of taking the next step, she grew somewhat dubious.

"You..."

As soon as the word left her lips, she found herself unable to find the words to finish her sentence. Was she supposed to ask him why he didn't continue? That question would only sound like encouragement in disguise.

"What's wrong?" As if he didn't understand her thoughts, Alaric asked, "Disappointed that I didn't follow through? Do you not want to leave anymore?"

"No." Victoria rebuked reflexively, "Let's just go."

At that, she immediately shoved him away and dragged him outside by the arm, deeply afraid that he would unleash his wild side again if they stayed another second longer.

Just like that, Alaric watched as she pulled him out of the office with her delicate hand holding his large palm, a dotting smile playing at the corners of his lips, not forgetting to close the door behind him before they left.

As their grand arrival had caused quite a stir in the company, most of the employees had yet to recover from their excitement. Hence, it was impossible for them to leave quietly

even if they wanted to, and her company. was just not large enough to provide any other alternative exits.

Once again, Victoria became the center of attention as they left, and by the time they walked out of the company, she no longer knew where to put herself.

After getting into the car, she couldn't help but order him disdainfully, "Next time I come to the company, don't come with me anymore."

Hearing that, Alaric raised an eyebrow. "Why?"

When she did not reply, he pressed, "Is it because of those people in your company? Because you're worried about what they think, so you aren't willing to let me stay with you anymore?"

"That's not it. I come to the office to work. You don't work at my office, so why should you come with me?"

At this moment, the two had already settled in the car. Alaric scooted closer to her seat and swept her into his embrace with his large palm.

"It's true that it's your company, but I'm your husband. What's wrong with a husband accompanying his wife to work while he's recuperating from his wounds?"

At the mention of his recuperation, Victoria began to hesitate again. If she prohibited him from following her to the company, it seemed that there was nothing else for him to do at home. Naturally, she was certain that he would be unwilling to recover at home all by himself, and even if he agreed, he would most likely work behind her back, just like the way he had used the study in the hotel while she was asleep.

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Chapter 558 Yearning

As Alaric had a company and business of his own, it was unrealistic to completely deter him from using his computer or doing any work at all. Hence, Victoria did not mind if he had to settle some urgent matters once in a while. However, although his injuries were mostly healed, he still needed to rest.

If she didn't keep him by her side and left him at home all by himself, he most certainly would not obediently take care of himself as he did when he was with her. After all, this was a man who disregarded his heavy wounds and risked his life to rescue her. He had barely batted an eyelash at the blood gushing out from his injuries back then, while she, a mere bystander, felt her heart race from the sight.

The strong grip that clasped around her wrist jolted her back to reality, and she saw that Alaric was looking at her intently.

“Why aren’t you saying anything? Do you still disagree?”

After returning to her senses, Victoria gazed at his striking features before she eventually let out an exasperated sigh.

“Fine, just come with me if you want to. However, we have to make this clear now. You can’t do something like

that to me in the office again.”

“Oh?” At the mention of this matter, Alaric began to pretend as if he couldn’t understand her words. “What do you mean, something like that?”

Victoria turned speechless as she stared at him. “You already know what I mean.”

This caused the smile on Alaric’s lips to deepen, and he lowered his voice. “Since when? You’re the one who said that, so how would I know what you’re talking about if you don’t tell me?”

Victoria had truly realized how thick-skinned he could be. She never thought that the mighty president of Cadogan Group would be so bold and shameless, and he even seemed to take pleasure in this fact.

At this point, Victoria finally realized that he would always attempt to tease her whenever they were together, so she quipped in return. “Since you don’t know what I’m talking about, you should think about it carefully. When you figure it out, you can come with me to the office.”

The smile on Alaric’s lips did not disappear. “Are you threatening me? Do you think that I’ll be scared, or do you think that I won’t come with you to the office anymore if I can’t figure it out?”

Subsequently, his arms tightened around her, and his voice turned deep. “Forget about it. Wherever you go, I’ll follow. I won’t let you go even if I can’t figure it out.”

Ever since the past five years and the recent events, whenever Alaric found himself unable to fall asleep, he would always wonder if he would’ve noticed that something was off earlier if he had cared about her more back then instead of only focusing on work, or if he would’ve noticed any clues from their daily life.

Perhaps if he had paid more attention to her, he would’ve noticed much earlier that he had already fallen for her, and all of these years wouldn’t have gone to waste, nor would they have so many misunderstandings between them that caused her to experience so much harm now. He even thought that he might not be able to

atone for his sins for the rest of his life.

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And yet, the past was already gone. As he did not want to lose her, even if he knew that he might not be able to make things up for her, he would still continue to try, and he would still do his best to make her happy. Hence, to Alaric, Victoria and their two children were now miles more important than his company.

To put it simply, he could leave a project that was worth billions to someone else, but he had to personally spend time with his wife and children—this was what he decided on now. He did not want to lose her again for

the rest of his life.

Naturally, Victoria could sense that his clinging onto her was not as simple as him merely wanting to be by her side, but because he was afraid of her disappearing from his side and did not want to lose her. Recently, they were practically glued at the hip for every passing minute of the day.

Even so, Victoria did not feel repulsed by it and did not mind as long as he did not get bored of her. When his wounds finally recovered, he would most likely get irritated from the lack of personal space, and she would be

able to catch her breath—this was what she had in mind.

However, she never expected that in the days that followed, Alaric did not feel annoyed by her presence and instead became increasingly attached to her as time passed, like he was a piece of gum stuck to her shoe. Victoria's employees soon became used to Alaric as well, and they were no longer as excited and overwhelmed

as they were in the beginning.

Besides, after seeing how Alaric treated Victoria, all of them were more than grateful that they had begun working at the company while it was still starting up. After all, it would not be a simple feat to secure a job here once the company took off in the future.

Although Alaric visited the company with Victoria every day, the two did not stay for long. At times, they would stay throughout the morning, other times they would come in during the afternoon, and sometimes they would only be present for a few hours. However, the employees did not think much of their working hours as they were their superiors, the ones in charge of handing out their wages.

Just like that, the days continued to go by, and as the weather gradually turned cooler, it was soon the end of the year. There was not much of a festive atmosphere in the city,

and with most of the younger generation who worked in the city returning to their hometowns as the end of the year approached, the city that was usually bustling with life slowly turned quiet.

The staff in Victoria's small company had mostly left as well, leaving the office empty. At first, she was planning to put up some decorations for the season, but she quelled that thought upon seeing how few people were

left.

She took some of the things she was interested in back home and asked for Alaric's help in putting them up. Whenever he was in the company, Alaric was accustomed to letting others do everything for him, but he was now climbing all kinds of ladders under Victoria's instructions to decorate the house for her.

As for his wounds, they had completely healed long ago, and even the doctors praised his recovery during his checkups. Victoria, who was thrilled upon hearing that, boasted to Alaric when they returned home.

"I was right to make you rest, right? If not, your injuries would've never healed this quickly."

"Yeah." Alaric held onto her waist with a large hand. "Aren't you happy now that I've recovered so well?"

"Yeah!"

"Yeah!"

Naturally, Victoria was elated. As he had sustained those wounds in order to save her, she was overjoyed that he had finally gotten better. Hence, she bobbed her head enthusiastically at his question.

"Since you're happy... shouldn't you give me a reward?"

Alaric's hand pressed against the back of her neck, slowly bringing her into his arms. As soon as her sweet scent filled his senses, his breathing turned heavy before he could realize it.

For a long time now, every time he attempted to approach her, Victoria would always push him away once they arrived just before the point of no return, using his injuries as a reason. As he did not want to hurt her, Alaric did not refute her refusal either.

However, as time passed, he was having a hard time keeping his body in check, and his yearning for her intensified. Just like now, he found himself losing his control just from being near her.

Alaric's eyes darkened, and just as he was about to swoop in for a kiss, the phone in Victoria's arms began to ring.

Without thinking much about it, she pushed him away and said, "I'm going to take a call."

PREVIOUS

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Chapter 559 Landed

Victoria quickly left with her phone after speaking. She completely ignored Alaric's unexpected push and stumbled a few steps awkwardly.

On the other hand, he was speechless as he stood still to balance himself and regain the composure he lost earlier. He, on the other hand, stood still to steady himself and restore his nearly shattered composure. The intense desire that had enveloped him gradually subsided. Reluctantly, he glanced at the spot where she had vanished while heaving a deep sigh..

She really doesn't care, does she? A gentle push will have sufficed.

He felt resentful but couldn't bring himself to blame her, so he redirected his anger toward the person on the other end of the phone.

Who is so thoughtless as to call her at a time like this?

Victoria entered the bedroom and answered the call from the person whom Alaric deemed lacking in common sense. As the year drew to a close, her excitement was palpable after she received this call.

"Summer Jones," Victoria said.

Even though Victoria's memories had yet to be restored, she had frequently conversed with Summer over the phone lately, thus rekindling their bond. Due to their once close relationship, Victoria subconsciously relied on Summer even after losing her memory.

During this period, Victoria also discovered another person—Fiona Garza,

Fiona was also within her social circle, but according to Summer, Fiona was someone whom Victoria had met abroad whereas Victoria and Summer were acquainted when they were studying locally.

Victoria could have been better; she still subconsciously relied more on Summer.

Occasionally, a jealous Summer would make comments. "I'm your best friend. The one who has been with you. the longest. Don't forget about me just because you've found so meone else."

"I won't," Victoria repeated. She would comfort Summer whenever this happened by saying. "Even though I lost my memory, I haven't forgotten about you."

Summer remarked with a scoff, "You've clearly forgotten about me. You wouldn't even remember who I am if I

hadn't called. Ah, let it go. It doesn't matter, anyway. Discussing this won't change anything since you've lost

your memories too."

They swiftly moved on to other matters to avoid dwelling on these issues.

However, Victoria enjoyed chatting with Summer and sharing daily anecdotes from their lives.

They discussed everything from company issues to what they ate and did that day, which meant that they were getting along well.

Victoria felt the utmost joy when she received this call. After she greeted Summer, she asked, "Summer, it's nearly the end of the year. Are you planning to come back?"

Summer clicked her tongue on the other end and remarked, "I had intended to surprise you, but it seems impossible to keep a secret at year-end. Everyone seems to call to ask if and when I am returning. Sigh..."

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Amidst Summer's resentful tone, Victoria surmised that Summer had likely been bombarded with similar inquiries in recent calls. This prompted Victoria to let out a soft chuckle.

"Isn't that normal? After all, everyone goes home for the New Year," Victoria said.

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"Who said so? There were times when I didn't go home. Back then, I was working tirelessly to earn more money..." Summer's voice trailed off and when she spoke again, it was in a lower tone. "Forget it, let's not dwell

on that."

Just as Victoria was about to say something, she heard what seemed to be an airport announcement in the background, which caught her off guard. "Are you at the airport?" she asked.

"Yeah." Summer confirmed, scanning her surroundings and meeting Audrey's gaze by chance.

Audrey caught her eye and immediately flashed a sweet smile at her.

Summer smirked and continued, "I'll be boarding. See you soon!"

"Okay," Victoria promised.

Recalling something, Summer added, "Maybe not today, though. I'll probably arrive in the evening."

Victoria was not expecting to meet Summer on the day of her arrival due to the long hours associated with international flights. It would be well past midnight by the time Summer arrived, so Victoria decided to stay the night at a nearby hotel near the airport. At least she could freshen up the next day before meeting Summer

and her family.

"At night?" After Victoria asked for Summer's flight number for checking, she replied, "Then I'll come to pick you

up in the evening."

"Don't worry

about it." Summer immediately declined the offer. "By the time I arrive, it'll be late at night. You should rest, and we can meet tomorrow."

Victoria noticed Summer's anxious expression, so she smiled and refrained from saying anything further.

"I need to get ready for boarding now. I'll give you a call tomorrow."

"Okay, have a safe trip." Victoria answered.

After hanging up, Audrey approached her as Summer was about to keep her phone and asked, "Summer, is that your friend?"

Summer thought and replied, "She's been my close friend for many years."

"Did you meet during your school days?" Audrey felt curious about this.

"Yes."

Audrey expressed a hint of envy. "That's great. Most people I knew from school rarely keep in touch anymore."

Summer let out a soft laugh. "Who doesn't? Many people drift apart, but she's the only one who remains."

Once people entered the workforce, they commonly forgot about friends from their student days. To reconnect after their marriage would be challenging because their circle of friends would shrink too. Everyone would be so caught up in their hectic lives that it would be a stroke of luck if they occasionally remembered each other or exchanged wishes during holidays and special occasions.

They chatted about various topics for a while before parting ways after boarding. Since they had different seats and destinations upon arrival, Summer planned to stay in a hotel near the airport for a good night's rest.

In contrast, Audrey had her family come to pick her up.

Therefore, Summer made up her mind not to trouble Audrey. Once they disembarked, she would head directly to a nearby hotel to freshen up and relax.

The flight had been highly uncomfortable for Summer since it was a lengthy journey due to the long layover in between. On top of that, when she arrived in Corynthea, she looked like she had seen better days as the airline food was also not appetizing.

Audrey deliberately waited for her in the aisle as she stepped off the plane.

"You don't look well. Did you feel

airsick?"

Summer waved her hand. "No, I'm just tired."

"Ah." Audrey sighed. "I'm feeling exhausted too. My family's car is already here. Why don't you come with us? We can drop you off."

Summer was not one to trouble those whom she was not close with. She did not know Audrey for long and there was a chance they would not have any further contact once they left the airport.

"Never mind. The hotel that I booked is nearby, so I'll hail a cab to take me there. It'd be too much trouble for you guys."

However, Audrey remained enthusiastic. "No, it's not a problem. I'm mainly concerned about your well-being. I'm worried that something might happen to you."

Summer was about to say something else when her phone began to ring. "Sorry, I have to take this call. You can head back now; I assure you that I'll be fine."

Yet, Audrey shook her head and just stood still.

Feeling slightly helpless, Summer retrieved her phone and was surprised that Victoria was calling. "Hello?"

"Miss Summer, I've checked that your flight has landed. I'll be waiting for you at the exit."

Chapter 560 Come to My House, Please

Victoria's unexpected phone call in the middle of the night left Summer in disbelief as she never expected that Victoria would call and casually mention being at the airport.

After being stunned for a while, Summer finally found her voice. "Why aren't you asleep at this hour? Didn't we agree to rest well and meet tomorrow?"

On the other end of the line was Victoria, who replied with amusement, "How could I not come to pick up my

best friend when she returns home?"

Summer felt an overwhelming surge of gratitude instantly, her eyes growing moist. "Alright, I'm on my way."

"I'll be waiting," Victoria replied.

After ending the call, Audrey was the first to inquire. "Is it your friend who's coming to pick you up?"

Summer nodded in response. "Yes, my friend's here. I explicitly told her not to come, yet she disregarded my words and hurried over in the dead of night."

Audrey couldn't help but feel a tinge of envy. "That's so wonderful. You won't have to take our family's car then, and I won't need to worry about you."

At the sight of Audrey's genuine concern, Summer replied, "Thank you for caring. You should head back now so your family doesn't have to wait too long."

Audrey agreed and said, "Let's catch up later."

"Okay."

After bidding farewell to Audrey, Summer took a deep breath and made her way to collect her luggage. She had resigned from her job and returned home, so she brought a substantial amount of luggage that required a

detour to retrieve.

As she waited for her belongings, she sent a message to Victoria, explaining the situation.

Victoria's thoughtful reply reassured her by telling her not to worry and that she would be waiting.

A thought crossed Summer's mind, and she asked, 'Are you alone?'

Victoria answered, 'No, I'm not.'

Summer was finally relieved and felt at ease.

It was good to have someone accompany Victoria in the late-night hours. Since Victoria had an eye-catching appearance, Summer was genuinely concerned for her friend's safety. As she waited for her luggage, she received an unexpected text message.

'Have you landed?'

She read and reread the message several times, finding it hard to believe it was from Erik. Summer exited the conversation and checked his profile multiple times to confirm the authenticity of the message since she found it slightly skeptical.

After double-checking, Summer finally accepted that Erik had sent her the message. She realized the situation after feeling a mix of curiosity and quick comprehension.

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It seemed perfectly normal for him to politely inquire about her after her flight home as she suffered years of exploitation under his management without being granted any annual leave.

Summer replied to his message with a smiley emoji. 'Yes, I have! Thank you, Mr. Ludson, for your concern.'

After sending the formal reply, she put her phone aside and focused on retrieving her luggage that had just

arrived.

Once she had her belongings, Summer hurried toward the exit and spotted her best friend with a tall, handsome figure in waiting. Victoria was buried under her coat which shielded her from the winter chill.

From a distance, Victoria and the man looked like a perfect match.

To Summer's surprise, she was immediately hit with a sweet moment when she approached them. She couldn't help but tease them. "Wow, you two are amazing. Don't you know that airline food isn't tasty? You're here to feed me some sugar, yes? Thanks a lot."

In the past, Summer wouldn't dare to speak to Alaric like this. However, she no longer felt the same level of fear toward him after Victoria's memory loss and what they went through.

Victoria playfully pushed Alaric aside and embraced Summer tightly while Summer reciprocated the hug with equal warmth.

It had been a long time since they last saw each other, and there were so many things they wanted to express. They held each other for a while to cherish the moment.

Their eye-catching appearance caught the attention of passersby, who couldn't help but steal glances at them.

Alaric was still jealous after observing Summer and Victoria embracing, but he couldn't resist teasing, "Do you both have enough hugs? It's getting late."

Summer glanced at Alaric speechlessly, after which she released Victoria from the embrace. Victoria immediately grabbed her arm with a playful smile.

"Let's ignore him. He's just a jealous guy," Victoria said.

Summer nodded and replied, "Okay."

Victoria then suggested, "Didn't you enjoy the airplane food? Are you hungry? Let's grab something to eat

together."

"No, really." Summer instinctively waved her hand. "It's quite late, and I'm grateful you came to pick me up. Just drop me off at the hotel. I can grab some instant noodles in the shop nearby my hotel."

Victoria frowned upon hearing the mention of instant noodles. "Instant noodles?"

Summer nodded, saying, "Yeah."

"But they're not nutritious. Why would you eat that?" Victoria questioned.

Summer protested, "It's just this once; what harm can it do?"

After a moment of contemplation, Victoria realized her hypocrisy. She noticed that it was acceptable for her to eat instant noodles, but when it came to her best friend, she suddenly considered the item to be lacking in nutrition.

Victoria

disagreed with Summer for eating instant noodles. "No, you should hurry and get in the car. We'll accompany you to grab something to eat."

Despite Summer's continued insistence, Victoria eventually pulled her into the car. After a brief discussion, they visited a late-night food stall and had hot chocolate.

Since it was late at night, there were lesser choices of food for them to choose from.

Although Alaric didn't fancy hot chocolate, he couldn't resist Victoria's enthusiasm and ordered a cup of hot

chocolate too.

The aroma of hot chocolate filled the air.

After

taking a big sip and eating a couple of sandwiches, Summer finally felt her empty stomach becoming full.

Noticing that Summer didn't look well, Victoria took care of her attentively.

Alaric observed the two of them and witnessed how Victoria cared for Summer. Although he knew they were

just besties and Summer was a woman, he couldn't help but feel a hint of envy.

Summer suggested returning to the hotel after eating because it was already late, and she didn't want to delay

the couple's time together. Additionally, she also sensed the slight tension from Alaric.

To her surprise, Victoria asked where she was staying and insisted on sleeping at the hotel together.

Summer felt speechless as

she sensed that she might inadvertently end up on Alaric's list of rivals if she agreed to Victoria's request.

She just chuckled awkwardly and asked, "Why? You can't bear to part with me to the point? We can just meet

again tomorrow, so you don't have to spend the night with me in the hotel. The hotel bed won't be as comfortable as your own, though.'

”

Victoria seemed to resonate with her words. “You're right. The hotel bed isn't as cozy as the one at home, and

the cleanliness might not meet our expectations.”

“Yeah, exactly.” Summer agreed to it.

However,

Victoria gave another suggestion a moment later. “Don't stay at the hotel. Just come over to my

place.”

Summer blinked in surprise. “Huh?”

Victoria explained, “We have a guest room at home, and the staff always keeps it clean. You can simply grab a blanket and sleep.”

There was a slight hesitation on Summer's part as she didn't immediately accept Victoria's offer. Instead, she subconsciously glanced in Alaric's direction.

PREVIOUS