

## Chapter 528 Leonel, Think About Start Anew

In the deep night, Leonel's gaze, lit by the crimson ember of his cigarette, lingered.

He was fixated on Alexis, unable to tear his eyes away.

He watched her, a silhouette in the spring night, her dress flowing, hair dancing in the wind, her face a soft glow in the dark.

There had been so many moments when he had held that face close, their kisses fervent.

Now, he was relegated to observing from afar.

"Alexis," he murmured, an undertone of longing in his voice.

Alexis noticed him as well.

Yet, she remained silent, observing briefly before turning away from the balcony.

Leonel's eyes dimmed.

He continued to stare at the empty space she left behind, feeling her absence...

Alexis retreated to the living room.

Distraught, she picked up a magazine but found the words blurring before her eyes.

A knock at the door broke her reverie.

Looking up, she saw Edwin, a gentle smile on his face. "May I come in?"

Alexis nodded toward the adjacent seat.

Edwin sat, revealing a 20 billion check.

He extended it to her.

Alexis, slightly surprised, responded, "It's okay. I've returned the money to him. You keep this."

Her smile was warm. "Consider it a wedding gift for you and Laura."

Edwin and Laura were planning their wedding in Duefron, a choice made to keep peace with the Evans elders in Czanch.

This was Alexis' gift to them.

Edwin exhaled softly. "Lexi, this is far too generous."

Alexis gently tapped his hand. "For a once-in-a-lifetime event, it's just right."

Edwin then accepted it.

He gestured toward the window. "Is he still out there?"

Alexis said nothing.

Edwin continued, "Uncle Waylen is holding up. He doesn't speak of it, but it weighs on him."

Alexis knew but chose to distance herself from anything related to Leonel.

Respecting her silence, Edwin didn't push.

He recalled the joy on Alexis' face when she first presented the check. Their bond seemed unbreakable then. What had changed?

As Edwin left, Rena approached Alexis with a bowl of red bean soup.

Alexis took it, her thoughts elsewhere.

Rena sat beside her, combing her hair with a gentle touch. "Your father mentioned a young man the other day, the son of a family friend. He wondered if you'd like to meet him."

Expecting a refusal, Rena knew Alexis' heart had always seemed reserved for Leonel.

To her surprise, Alexis consented.

Looking into the bowl, she murmured, "Let's meet. Maybe it's time."

Rena was taken aback.

Alexis finished her soup and later, as she lay in bed, reflected on her decision. Why had she agreed? Perhaps it was an admission of a lost hope.

During a planned afternoon, Alexis met the man, an arrangement set by their families.

Their interaction was unremarkable, neither unpleasant nor engaging.

Alexis, feeling no spark, decided against pursuing any further meetings.

Upon leaving the restaurant, the man paused, hoping to extend his company.

Alexis, placing her briefcase in her car and offering a subtle smile, clarified, "I've got my car. I'm on my way to see a client next."

The man, recognizing her lack of interest, politely opened her car door, suggesting hopefully, "Perhaps we can have coffee sometime."

Alexis acknowledged with a polite smile and drove away gracefully.

Meanwhile, in the restaurant, the man's parents were earnestly speaking with Waylen, attempting to persuade him to endorse their son to Alexis. They implored, "Waylen, you've seen Ablett grow up. Please, speak well of him to her. Love can grow over time, we assure you. Once Alexis joins our family, she'll be cherished. Ablett will treat her like a treasure!"

Waylen, thoughtfully sipping his tea, responded with a gentle smile, "Your intentions are kind, but matters of the heart are for the young to decide. I wouldn't want them to harbor any resentment if things don't go well."

He then skillfully diverted the conversation, leaving the parents to reluctantly accept his stance.

Subsequently, Waylen stumbled upon Leonel.

The young man looked noticeably leaner and unwell, stirring a sense of concern in Waylen.

As he acknowledged his presence with a nod and attempted to move past, Leonel halted him with a plea, "Mr. Fowler, I implore you, don't marry Alexis to someone else."

Waylen, touched yet troubled, paused.

He spoke with a soft earnestness. "Leonel, you must know, even in those 8 years of your absence, Alexis remained single and never agreed to meet someone we introduced. We assumed she'd remain so."

With that, he excused himself, his steps quickening as he sought to avoid further emotional turmoil.

Leonel remained still, a picture of despair, until Rena approached.

Her eyes were filled with a mix of worry and affection.

Despite everything, she loved all her children equally. She reached out to him, her voice quivering slightly. "Leonel."

He responded with a grave, "Mrs. Fowler."

Rena, gently touching his arm, inquired with heartfelt concern, "Are you still in pain?"

He shook his head.

Observing his inadequate attire, she fretted, "Whynot dress more warmly?"

He simply replied, "I'm not cold."

Rena, perceiving the profound changes in him, grasped his arm more firmly, pleading, "Please, come back home. Waylen might be a little bit harsh the other day, but he cares deeply for you. An apology could mend things."

Yet, Leonel's resolve was unshaken.

He aspired to be Alexis's partner, not merely a son in the Fowler household.

Sensing his steadfast determination, Rena felt her heart ached with a mixture of respect and sorrow.

She softly implored, "Leonel, think about starting anew. Alexis may not return to you."

At her words, a shadow crossed Leonel's face.

He offered a final, solemn response. "Mrs. Fowler, I still wish to try." With that, he departed.

As Rena settled into the car, her emotions churned.

Waylen, sensing her distress, gently inquired, "Did you speak with Leonel?"

With a nod, she confirmed.

As Waylen drove in contemplative silence, Rena voiced her concerns. "He's changed so much and seems deeply troubled. I'm afraid he might act rashly and get himself into trouble."

"What could possibly happen? Our daughter is the one we should worry about," Waylen responded, trying to shift the focus.

Rena, with a reproachful glance, countered, "If Leonel can't let go of this, it's our daughter who will suffer the consequences first."

What if his desperation leads him to do something drastic?"

Waylen, attempting to comfort her, patted her hand gently. "Let's limit our involvement in their matters. We've done enough and now they're on their own."

"But we can't just abandon him," Rena murmured, her concern evident.

"You're too lenient!" Waylen exclaimed, a hint of frustration in his voice.

"And you're not?" Rena challenged. "You drove him away, yet I hear you sighing every night."

A sad smile crossed Waylen's face.

No parent could stay indifferent about a child they raised.

He knew, however, that some decisions Leonel must make on his own.

Meanwhile, at the court, Alexis encountered Serenity and Darwin, finalizing their divorce.

It was all going smoothly.

Darwin, surprised to see her, called out, "Alexis!"

She glanced at him and then at Serenity, understanding the undercurrents.

Serenity must be the one who filed the divorce so she could be with Leonel. But that wasn't Alexis' concern anymore. With a brief nod, she moved on to find her client, leaving Darwin to Serenity's biting sarcasm.

"Now you can chase after your goddess, thrilled that she's no longer with Leonel," Serenity remarked sharply.

Darwin, annoyed, replied, "What are you implying? You wanted this divorce."

"Yes, but were your feelings for her not why you marry me in the first place? Was it not because I played the piano just like her?"

Serenity's bitterness was palpable. "Both you and Leonel treated me as nothing but a replacement."

Darwin had grown weary of Serenity's constant snide remarks after four years of marriage.

Finally, he found himself free.

He had given her a considerable sum of money, ensuring her comfort henceforth. With no children and an unconsummated marriage, he felt no further obligations toward her.

Initially, Darwin had planned to offer Serenity a ride, but her biting remarks made his presence unbearable.

Deciding against it, he left on his own, opening his car door and driving off into a future that didn't include her.

As he drove away, Darwin caught a glimpse of Serenity's frazzled state in the rearview mirror.

She stayed there, angrily cursing him, calling him a jerk.

It was a stark contrast to the charm she possessed when they had married. He hadn't expected such a drastic change in her.

Deep in thought, Darwin called the driver, instructing him to pick her up.

His mind was a whirlwind of emotions, agitated by Serenity's words.

He wondered if things would have been different if he had never married her. Could he have pursued Alexis instead? He reminisced about seeing Alexis play the piano during his visit when she was just a child, her smile revealing small dimples, making her seem like a really cute princess.

Now, he found himself longing to claim that princess for himself.

His heart was all over the place.

On Monday, Alexis was at the airport, and to her surprise, Leonel was there already, helping with her luggage.

"I can manage," she insisted, noticing his solitude.

Leonel's sparse words and her curiosity about his lone presence hung in the air as they proceeded to the security check-in.

Leonel had reserved their adjacent seats in the sparsely filled business class, ensuring they were alone.

The air between them grew subtly tense.

Alexis settled down, ready to drift off to sleep when Leonel's voice whispered near her ear. "How did the blind date go?"

She opened her eyes to find his face uncomfortably close to hers.

Shifting away discreetly, she replied, "It was alright. But discussing this,

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Mr. Douglas, seems inappropriate. We can remain silent if you don't want to talk business. Also, you don't need to be so close."

Leonel's voice was a hushed murmur. "You better hope your blind dates don't work out, because I won't let you be with anyone else."

Alexis shot back, "Aren't you the shameless one?"

She gave him a chilly look and closed her eyes, but her expression softened once they were shut, losing the sharp, cutting edge.

She appeared more gentle, obediently by his side.

Leonel curled up, gazing quietly and greedily at her sleeping face.

He missed her too much and couldn't resist gently touching her fingertips.

As Alexis slept, he cautiously held her hand, careful not to grasp too tightly.

Only in vulnerable times like this could he catch a glimpse of her embrace.

Two hours later, the plane landed in Czarch.

Leonel had arranged a hotel room for Alexis, but she opted to go to the Evans family's residence instead. "I'll stay at Evans Gardon," she announced.

Leonel reached for her hand. "Then I'm staying there too."

She looked down, smiling faintly. "That's funny! Why should they let you in? It's my great-uncle's house. Go back to your hotel."

Her words wounded Leonel deeply.

Everything he had since childhood came from the Fowler family.

Now, stripped of those privileges, he was merely the old Leonel Douglas.

Evans Gardon, once a familiar place, was now out of his reach.

The Evans family driver, oblivious to the rift, greeted Leonel. "Mr. Douglas, aren't you coming?"

He replied with a melancholic shake of his head, "No, I'll be at a hotel."

As Alexis boarded the car, Mark, seated in the back, eyed her. "Did you really have a fallout with that guy? He looks madly upset."

In front of her parents, Alexis could maintain a facade, but before her great-uncle, her defenses crumbled. "Great-uncle Mark!" she exclaimed.

As a child, she always turned to him first with her problems.

Mark embraced his beloved little girl, ready to set things straight.

Through the rearview mirror, he glimpsed the heart of the problem.

With a soothing voice, Mark said, "If he's not the right one for you, we'll find someone better. There's no reason to be upset, right?"

Alexis, battling a storm of emotions, answered, "He's irreplaceable to me! It seems I'm destined to be single!"

Mark couldn't help but laugh at her melodramatic statement. "That's a ridiculous thought!"

Joining in the light-hearted moment, the driver added with a chuckle, "Miss Fowler, with your beauty, you have countless admirers. In Czarny alone, suitors would indeed line up at your door!"

As they drew closer to Evans Garden, a taxi stopped at the entrance.

Leonel emerged from the vehicle.

With feigned ignorance, Mark commented, "Look at this boy, showing up uninvited as if he owns the place. I certainly didn't summon him!"

At that moment, Cecilia made her appearance, tasked with welcoming their particular guest.

She noticed Leonel's tall, slender form and greeted him with a gentle smile. "I'm the one who invited him. He's traveled quite a distance. Let's offer him a meal."

Cecilia then took Leonel's luggage, her expression revealing a mixture of emotions as she noted his worn look. Leonel greeted her respectfully,

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"Mrs. Evans!"

Cecilia, with a blend of sternness and warmth, replied, "Still got some manners, I see. Then I must scold you. How could you let things escalate with Alexis? Waylen did the right thing if you ask me."

At her words, Leonel's eyes instinctively searched for Alexis, revealing a complex mix of feelings.



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