

## Chapter 529 Alexis, Do You Still Care About Me

Alexis didn't say a word.

She entered Evans Gardon with Mark coming along behind her. He softly touched Leonel's shoulder and offered him words of comfort, "Young man, heartbreak is a normal part of life."

Leonel looked down and remained silent.

Mark noticed something different in Leonel's demeanor.

His silence felt unusually deep.

Cecilia brought Leonel to a spare guest room. He expressed his gratitude softly, "Thank you, Mrs. Evans."

"Why are you thanking me?"

Cecilia asked calmly, "What's going on? Rena is quite concerned about you and asked me to look after you. Haven't you and Alexis been in good terms lately?"

Leonel's voice was a bit rough. "It's my fault!"

He recounted the whole event honestly, which left Cecilia astonished.

She let out a sigh after a brief pause and said, "Of course, Alexis won't easily forgive you. She's always been strong-willed. After being hit by you, how could she just accept it?! Moreover, she has been patient for eight years, waiting for you to come back."

Leonel was overwhelmed with unease.

Cecilia consoled him once more, "Take your time."

She was like Rena and Waylen who could never be overly harsh on

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Leonel. She still saw him as a part of this family. She criticized him when he made mistakes, but never wanted to see him suffer.

She allowed him some time to rest before inviting him to lunch.

This would be the first time in many weeks that Leonel and Alexis sat down to eat together again.

Alexis ate in silence and barely spoke, while Mark took extra care of her.

"Great-uncle Mark, I really can't eat anymore."

"Nonsense, you always had a bit appetite when you were younger. Has your stomach shrunk now?"

Mark had loaded her plate with a mound of food.

Alexis didn't really have an appetite but she ate slowly. Leonel unexpectedly reached over and took the majority of her food to his plate and said to her, "Don't force yourself to eat if you don't have an appetite."

Alexis was on the verge of arguing with him. But she restrained herself because of Mark and Cecilia's presence. She decided to say nothing.

Leonel responded with a slight smile.

Alexis found this uninteresting and decided to wait for Leonel in the backyard after the meal. The wisteria flowers spread a subtle fragrance in the spring air.

She stood against the tree, her tall, slender figure prominent.

The sound of Leonel's approaching footsteps snapped her out of her reverie.

Alex opened her eyes and saw him. She then said in a cool voice, "Leonel, remember we're just staying at the family home. It doesn't mean anything more. Don't let what happened at lunch repeats itself."

"You were forcing yourself to eat, so I assisted. Was that wrong?"

Alexis was frustrated so she snapped back, "What kind of bond do we share that justifies such closeness?!"

Leonel looked down and said, "I love you."

Alexis looked at him. After a brief silence, she smiled and said, "Do you genuinely think so?"

She felt exhausted from the dialogue and started walking toward her room.

Leonel continued, "This afternoon at two, we have to go to the other company for the first round of negotiations."

Alexis nodded.

As Alexis walked away, Leonel's words followed her in a gentle whisper, "Alexis, if it's possible, I'd sacrifice everything to undo that slap!"

Alexis continued on her path and she only responded with a slight smile.

Life, alas, had no ifs.

She went back to her room for a nap, and then got ready quickly before joining Leonel in his car for their visit to the client's company. When Alexis got into the car, she noticed that he was pale and expressed her concern by saying, "Are you sure you don't want us to postpone the meeting? You look quite pale which could impact the negotiation."

"Are you worried about me?" Leonel turned to her and asked.

Alexis replied with an uninterested tone, "My concern is for the success of our project."

Leonel gently stepped on the gas and said in a casual tone, "I see. Your disdain for me has grown to the point where you wouldn't be bothered even if I were seriously sick."

His voice was laced with sadness, a feeling Alexis could obviously sense.

She remained silent though.

After an hour, they reached the location where the negotiation was set to take place.

The negotiations were rigorous and demanding and they lasted for six

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Contrary to what Alexis had anticipated, despite how pale he looked, Leonel maintained his sharpness and unwavering commitment to issues related to profit and was very confident.

Alexis wanted to talk about the case with him during the break.

However, Leonel appeared quite pale. He excused himself. "I have to use the restroom."

Alexis remained in the lounge, going over documents and didn't even touch her tea and snacks.

Leonel came back about 15 minutes later.

He settled next to Alexis and they conversed about the negotiations in a low voice. Alexis closed the file. "You need to rest. Is putting your health on the line really worth the financial gain?"

"Do you care about me now?" Leonel asked.

"Why would I? It's your life, not mine."

A bit annoyed, Alexis walked out to the terrace.

It was already late and dinner time was long gone. She was no stranger to this level of work intensity.

But this didn't mean she was comfortable working alongside someone unwell.

Leonel was ill!

Alexis thought about ways to convince him to take better care of himself; she didn't know how to talk to him. Maybe it would be better to have another lawyer work with him.

Alexis felt frustrated.

However, the negotiation went on until 10 p.m. As they left the building, Leonel collapsed in the car. His forehead was burning hot.

"Leonel!"

Alexis opened the door on the driver's side and encouraged him to move to the backseat so that she could drive.

Leonel leaned on the steering wheel.

After a moment, he turned to her and asked, "Alexis, you still care about me, right?"

Alexis responded with a scoff, "Caring for men has never brought anything good!"

She pulled him out and said, "We're going to the hospital!"

Leonel grabbed her hand.

Even with his fever, his grip was firm. "Alexis! Alexis!"

Before she knew it, she was pulled into his embrace.

His arms radiated intense heat, like a blazing fire.

The car door shut.

He clung to Alexis tightly, like a child clinging to a doll. "Don't leave, Alexis! Can you find it in your heart to forgive me?"

Their cheeks touched and the warmth mixed with his masculine scent.

Alexis felt dizzy.

She asked with a hoarse voice, "Leonel, do you even know what you're doing right now?"

He wasn't sure.

The only clear thought in his mind right now was the desire to keep her close...

Left with no choice, Alexis softly said, "I'll stay and drive you home."

Leonel muttered, "To Evans Gardon?"

"Yes."

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Leonel gradually loosened his hold. Just when Alexis began to feel a sense of ease, he leaned in and kissed her.

His hand tenderly supported her head while his warm lips met hers.

They held each other tightly, as if nothing could part them.

His fever made the kiss more intense. His attractive features tinged with a feverish, ardent color... He kissed Alexis relentlessly as if he was under a spell.

Suddenly, he stopped.

He looked at her. Alexis softly shut her eyes and mumbled, "Why even start all this in the first place!"

After returning to Evans Gardon, Leonel was in a state of feverish delirium.

He was under Mark's care who promptly summoned an expert physician. After examining him, the doctor said, "The fever doesn't just happen. Did you by any chance injured yourself lately? Could be inflammation. Please remove your clothes for a more thorough examination."

Mark remembered hearing about Waylen beating Leonel.

He quickly helped undo the shirt's buttons and turned Leonel to his side. He was startled when he saw his wounded back.

"Were these wounds ever properly treated?"

The open wounds didn't heal and had worsened. It was now indeed showing signs of inflammation.

Mark frowned and said, "This is ridiculous!"

Cecilia observed with a hint of sadness. "Poor Leonel!"

Alexis, struck by a sharp twinge of emotion, found the scene unbearable and exited the room.

She leaned against the door after it shut behind her.

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She acknowledged that both she and Leonel were unable to surmount their conflict, which had now grown into an unbridgeable chasm between them.

Meanwhile, inside the bedroom, Mark and Cecilia looked at each other.

Cecilia said gently, "It's heartbreaking to see Alexis like this. Maybe you should go and see how she's doing? They grew up together and all. Even if romance is off the table, they still share a connection. They're just too proud to admit it."

Mark nodded in agreement.

He glanced at Leonel, who lay there unconscious, and murmured under his breath, "He is such a fool!"

Cecilia nodded.

As the doctor administered treatment to Leonel, she gently wiped his forehead. She was concerned about him.

Mark left the room.

Alexis quickly composed herself and wiped her eyes. "How's his condition?"

Mark closed the door and patted her head. "Still concerned about him, huh? Well, here's an idea. Since he laid a hand on you, hit him back a hundred times. I bet he wouldn't dare retaliate or he'll have to answer to your father and I."

Alexis softly shook her head. "That's not really the issue."

She went on, "This never should've happened at all! Things might still be fine if I hadn't given in. It wasn't supposed to go this way! This isn't about whether I can forgive him or not; it's about our completely opposing values."

Leonel had spent a long time abroad.

Thus, he considered his past with Serenity to be unimportant.

But for Alexis, their history carried considerable significance.

Undoubtedly, she couldn't just overlook that slap.

She wasn't willing to belittle herself, nor did she want to bear seeing Serenity constantly around her husband, making her feel sick all the time.

Mark showed understanding and respect for her decision.

In this time, numerous young women decided to remain single. Alexis had her family to look out for her even if she decided not to marry for life.

He took Alexis to the kitchen to make something special, showing her how much he was fond of her.

He prepared small wontons and added chopped cilantro which was her favorite.

"When my mother was still alive, she used to prepare these for Cecilia, who was very dear to her," Mark said with a tender and loving voice.

Alexis rested comfortably on her great-uncle and paid close attention as he shared.

Mark served two bowls, one for Alexis and the other for Leonel.

Aware of Leonel's dislike for cilantro, she deliberately added a lot to his portion.

Mark teased her with a grin, "You're quite mischievous!"

When Leonel got up later that night, he found the food waiting.

Even though everyone in the family knew he didn't enjoy cilantro, he saw it in his bowl and immediately knew who had added it.

He quietly ate every bit of it.

As Cecilia arrived to gather the tray, she noted, "Mark said you don't like cilantro, but you seemed to enjoy it today."

Leonel quietly expressed his gratitude. "Mrs. Evans, I'm sorry for any trouble."

Cecilia tenderly patted his head. "Alexis brought you back. Reconcile with

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her tomorrow and you'll settle this small disagreement, okay?"

Leonel nodded in agreement, his eyes slightly teary.

Cecilia sighed and left the room...

Leonel felt much better early the following morning and walked into the courtyard.

Alexis was awake already.

When she saw him, she asked, "Has your fever subsided?"

Leonel confirmed with a nod as he came closer, "Thank you!"

Alexis responded with a calm voice, "No need for politeness! I would have helped anyone in need. Besides, considering your health, we should postpone our negotiations."

Leonel didn't object.

He then asked, "Will you stay to look after me?"

"I have to catch a flight at 11." After giving it some thought, Alexis said, "We need to have a conversation."

She seemed to have a gentler attitude towards him now.

Leonel sat at a small table with a pot of flowers that belonged to Zoey.

They were bright and lovely.

Alexis served him some warm milk and also poured some for herself.

They sat opposite each other. Alexis took a moment and then began in a soft tone, "Leonel, we grew up together and I really can't think of you as a stranger just because things didn't work out between us. You are part of this family, even though you slapped me because of someone else! Let's forget what happened. I won't mention it again and neither should you. Make sure you visit Dad and Mom when you have time. They're concerned about you. Dad might not show it, but I can tell that he has missed you."

"What about us?"

"There is no us anymore. It's over."

A heavy silence followed.

Alexis gave a sorrowful smile. "Just let it go. Don't dwell on it."

"Are you going to get married? Will you be with someone else?"

"Perhaps, if I find the right one, I'll marry. Leonel, you too should look for a partner who's right for you."

Alexis finished, experiencing a wave of sadness.

She raised her gaze, speaking gently. "Years ago, when I took you home, I had my reasons, as did my father. However, the affection they've shown you since then is genuine. Let's not trouble them with this insignificant matter. It's not worth it."

"Not worth it..."

These words echoed in Leonel's mind.

The morning sunlight cast on his face, showing how pale he was.

Alexis released all her bitterness and no longer desired to quarrel. In her heart, the distinction between right and wrong lost its meaning the moment she decided to let go of this relationship.

What was truly important to her was his well-being. She couldn't bear to see him in pain.

She still wished for his happiness.

With a voice laden with emotion, she said, "Let's leave it at that. I'm off to the airport."

She stood up and took her leave, only to come back shortly with her bags. Meanwhile, Leonel just sat there.

He didn't say a word.

He merely remained there, drinking the milk Alexis had poured for him.

The last sip had turned cold.

Cecilia came over and draped a jacket around his shoulders.

Leonel whispered in a soft voice, "I can't keep her by my side. If I had become stronger and proven indispensable, would she have stayed?"

Cecilia was shocked.

She got really worried about Leonel at this moment.

He looked up and smiled faintly. "I'm alright Mrs. Evans. I've just realized a few things."

"Leonel!"

Cecilia's voice quivered, "Do you think we should consult a therapist?"

"I am fine, honestly."

Leonel looked towards the sunlight. "I just want to soak in the sun for a bit. After Alexis left, everything feels colder."

A wave of sadness washed over Cecilia.

But Leonel appeared calm.

He chose not to hurry back to Duefron. Instead, he spent two weeks in Czanch at Evans Gardon before returning. During this time, he made no effort to go after Alexis.

Even after learning about her occasional blind dates.

Sometimes, he would unexpectedly run into her on these dates.

But they just nodded at each other.

It almost appeared Leonel had genuinely let go. He worked more intensely than ever before, even more than his days in Acoiclya. His business empire flourished rapidly and grew remarkably.

Marcus was the first to notice the growth!

As the controller of Duefron's most substantial commercial empire, Marcus couldn't overlook a new competitor challenging the Fowler Group.

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And that emerging rival was none other than Leone!!

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