

All Sins 111

Chapter 111

Ana had no intention of covering for Tyler. She was there to reveal everything and disrupt whatever existed between Naomi and her son.

“What were you guys talking about?” Naomi asked, peeking through the partly open door.

Olivia turned first, her face turning pale. Tyler followed, and he frowned.

Ana glanced up and smirked. “Well, why don’t you take a guess?”

Olivia sensed trouble brewing. She reached for Ana’s hand. “Please, don’t do this to her. Don’t hurt her... please!”

Her plea was barely audible, but Ana heard it clearly. She smirked triumphantly. Her only goal was to teach Olivia a lesson she wouldn’t forget, and it seemed to be working just as she intended.

Ana’s expression softened slightly as she replied, “Fine then. Seeing you so distraught, I’ll do you a favor just this once. Go inside and keep your sister company. I’ll stay out here.”

Releasing Ana’s hand, Olivia stumbled back.

Ana turned to Tyler, locking eyes with him in a tense exchange. “I suppose there’s no need for me to talk to Naomi today,” she said with a confident smile before leaving.

Feeling as though she’d been caught in a scandal, Olivia looked at Naomi, still flustered, What could she possibly say now?

Naomi was still waiting for an explanation.

Approaching Naomi calmly, Tyler spoke up, "We had a disagreement. Did Ana upset you?"

Naomi's expression gradually relaxed. "I... No. She was just sitting there without a word. I mean, what can she possibly do to me while I'm in this state?"

Olivia's greatest fear was Naomi overhearing Ana's words, but judging by her sister's reaction, it seemed she had only been mildly startled.

Taking Tyler's hand, Naomi confessed, "I... I feel a bit uneasy."

He squeezed her hand. "Don't be. I'm here with you."

Naomi sighed, looking fragile as if a gust of wind could knock her over.

Tyler enveloped her in a comforting hug. "It's alright now."

Watching them, Olivia felt a pang of unease. She couldn't understand why Ana would say such things, nor why Tyler hadn't objected.

After a moment in Tyler's embrace, Naomi beckoned Olivia closer. "Come here, Olivia. Don't just

stand there."

Olivia approached her a little apprehensively. Naomi, about to say something more, noticed the bracelet on her sister's wrist.

Tyler followed Naomi's gaze, observing quietly for any reaction.

Olivia had not noticed Naomi's attention until it was too late. She covered the bracelet with her other hand and stammered, "Er, this? It's...uh...".

Naomi appeared surprised. "Did Maisy give you that? Have you been to the Harrises'?"

Before Olivia could respond, Tyler intervened, "Yes, my grandmother gave it to her during a visit.

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Naomi felt a sting, not because she suspected anything between Tyler and Olivia, but because...

She forced a smile. "Ah, so they at least like Olivia quite a bit."

Olivia felt even more trapped. Guilt consumed her. How did it come to this? She had meant to do this for her sister, but now she found herself wearing the family's bracelet, calling Maisy her grandmother, and being approached by Ana as her future daughter-in-law.

It was as if she was robbing her sister blind.

She couldn't bear to look at Naomi. Her sister's eyelashes fluttered, as if holding back tears.

Tyler noticed Naomi's expression and smiled. "I didn't ask Olivia to return the bracelet because it's

hers now."

"Yeah, I understand," Naomi replied.

"The air out here isn't good for you. Let's go back inside," he suggested.

Seeming too exhausted to protest, Naomi followed him back inside, pausing briefly. "Aren't you coming, Olivia?"

“She still has classes later,” Tyler explained.

“Ah, right! She should prepare for her classes instead of hanging around here.” Naomi chuckled. Let’s have the driver take her to school. Make sure he drives safely, okay?”

Tyler hummed in agreement, escorting Naomi back to her room, leaving Olivia alone in the corridor.

Naomi settled onto her bed. “Hey, Tyler? Maybe you should drive instead. I don’t want Olivia to get the wrong idea.”

There was a brief silence before he responded, “Okay. You rest up.”

She nodded.

As he stepped outside, Olivia remained rooted to the spot, clearly surprised to see Tyler so soon. She took a step back.

Sunlight streamed through the window, illuminating Olivia. Tyler’s gaze trailed the sunlight to her neck, down to where he had left his marks from the previous night.

“Let’s go. Don’t dwell on this too much for now,” he said softly. “We’ll talk about everything once

we’re home.”

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His hand gently touched her neck. Startled, Olivia looked up at him.

Just then, Mrs. Jones called out, “Olivia?”

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Olivia and Tyler turned their heads at the same time.

Mrs. Jones was a bit taken aback. She had caught Tyler's hand on Olivia's neck and wondered, 'What was that?'

Tyler discreetly withdrew his hand as Olivia stepped back. "Uh, hello, Mrs. Jones."

The whole thing lasted for only a few seconds. Mrs. Jones almost doubted herself, but her intuition told her otherwise. She scrutinized Olivia with a frown.

"Here for Naomi too, Mrs. Jones?" Tyler asked, watching her closely.

She held up the thermos. "I brought some broth for her."

"She's resting inside," he informed her.

"I see. She must be hungry. I'm a bit late today."

"Let's go in together," Tyler suggested, successfully diverting her attention.

Smiling. Mrs. Jones walked beside him. "Good idea. It's been a while since I saw you."

As they headed to the room, Mrs. Jones stole a quick glance at Olivia just before entering.

Tyler didn't catch it, but he could guess the look Mrs. Jones had given Olivia. His expression darkened.

Lost in her thoughts, Olivia barely noticed Tyler's driver approaching-

“Miss Olivia? Let’s go.”

“Right!” Snapping out of her daze, she replied, “Right...”

She hadn’t anticipated the sudden turn of events. Tyler’s hand on her neck, just before Mrs. Jones appeared, had left her bewildered. It was all so confusing and abrupt. Shy felt like her soul had been jolted out of her body.

Following the driver, she moved mechanically.

Naomi broke into a grin. “Mom! So good to see you! And Tyler, I didn’t expect you here!”

Tyler placed the thermos on the bedside table. “Mrs. Jones came while I was talking to Olivia outside, so I decided to come in with her.”

“I see! I thought maybe you two planned this.”

Mrs. Jones seemed unusually quiet today, her mind preoccupied with what she witnessed in the corridor. Olivia and Tyler were supposed to be together for Naomi’s sake, but that small gesture she

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witnessed hinted at something more.

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It was as if Tyler felt sympathy for Olivia, and from that arose undeniable intimacy. Mrs. Jones felt a surge of anxiety building within her.

“Mom? Mom!”

She snapped out of her reverie.

“Are you okay? You seem distracted,” Naomi said.

Mrs. Jones felt a sense of dread. Precautions needed to be taken—she was certain of it. There were things she needed to be ready for.

Casting another glance at Tyler, this time noticed by Naomi, Mrs. Jones realized she couldn’t delay any longer.

“Mom? What’s going on?”

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“You should drink your broth before it gets cold,” Tyler suggested.

“Right, you should do that now. I was just a bit distracted,” Mrs. Jones chimed in hurriedly.

Naomi studied her mother’s face. There was something off about her today; she could sense it.

Tyler and Mrs. Jones left together.

Once in the car, Mrs. Jones finally spoke up. “Olivia hasn’t become pregnant yet, has she? Maybe we should consider IVF instead. What do you think?”

He regarded her carefully. “Did Naomi mention this?”

“No, it’s just something I thought about. Olivia... is still young. I was concerned that your relationship might develop into something more than it already is.”

Tyler stared at her coldly.

"I mean...I was only suggesting it for Naomi's sake. I wouldn't want things to get awkward between you two in the future," Mrs. Jones hurriedly added, realizing she had been too forward.

"I'll think about this," Tyler said curtly, his expression inscrutable and stern.

Why did he even care about Mrs. Jones's opinion? Well, it was out of basic respect. If it weren't for the fact that she was Naomi's mother, he wouldn't have given it a second thought.

As the car stopped at Mrs. Jones's house, she got out. Tyler watched her disappearing silhouette icily.

Olivia returned to Sandalwood Palace feeling a bit under the weather and went straight to her room. She waited anxiously for Tyler to come back, uncertain how long he would be with her sister.

Then, around 3 o'clock, she heard a car pull up.

Stepping out onto the stairs, she spotted Tyler entering the hall. He noticed her almost immediately.

He gestured for her to follow him silently. "Not here," he mouthed.

Olivia followed him into his study.

"I think I want to move out, Tyler," she began.

Tyler took a moment to absorb her words before asking, "Is this really what you

want?"

“Yes.”

“Can you tell me why?” he asked, his tone calm.

“I just don’t think I can stay here any longer because of what happened today,” Olivia answered.

A lot had happened that day. Ana’s words, Naomi’s reaction to the bracelet, Mrs. Jones’s presence...

“We’re... There’s nothing between us. I don’t want people to think otherwise,” she finally explained. Tyler wondered what “nothing” really meant.

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“I’ll need to discuss this with your sister first,” Tyler replied flatly.

Olivia expected his response. Leaving Sandalwood Palace wasn’t going to be simple, especially with Ana’s influence. “I... I understand.”

Suddenly, Tyler stood up and approached her.

Olivia’s gaze dropped, fixating on the cuff of his gray business suit. As he drew nearer, her anxiety heightened. She instinctively took a step back and lowered her head.

Their proximity was uncomfortably close, with only half an arm’s length between them. Their shadows, however, seemed to melt into each other.

“You should get some rest,” he eventually advised.

“Okay.”

That night, they slept in separate rooms.

The next morning, Mrs. Jones wasted no time in presenting her proposal to Naomi. "We should suggest that Olivia move out of Sandalwood Palace."

"Why? I thought you were the one who wanted her there," Naomi countered.

Mrs. Jones had been contemplating how to broach the subject with Naomi, but she still hadn't found the right approach. "I just thought... Maybe we should explore other options, like IVF. Despite living together for a while, she hasn't become pregnant, right?"

"Did something happen yesterday, Mom?"

Mrs. Jones decided to be frank. "Look, I know Tyler has been with you for a few years, but he's a man. with typical needs. The fact that you can't spend the night with him creates a situation we'd rather

avoid."

Naomi gripped the edge of her blanket tightly.

"Give it some thought, alright?" Mrs. Jones continued.

"I will. I'll talk to Tyler about it," Naomi responded after a moment.

Having eaten only a fraction of her breakfast, Olivia stood up abruptly. "I should head to school now, Tyler. Bye."

The table had barely been set. One of the maids, still holding fresh breakfast, was puzzled. "It's not 8 o'clock yet, Miss Olivia. Are you sure?"

Grabbing her bag, Olivia insisted, "Er, my class starts early today!"

She rushed out of the house, leaving the maid baffled by her sudden departure. “Goodness, what’s gotten into her? Leaving so early today.”

Tyler wasn’t surprised at all. “Just let her be.”

Unlike Olivia, Tyler left for the hospital later in the day. When he arrived, Naomi wasted no time echoing her mother’s suggestion. “I was thinking... should we consider IVF? If we do, Olivia could move out of Sandalwood Palace.”

Naomi’s complexion had grown increasingly pale. She appeared more fragile with each passing day.

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Tyler’s response was calm as he handed over the prescribed medication. After a brief up, “We’ll need a marriage certificate for IVF.”

pause,

he spoke

Naomi was stunned.

Meeting her gaze, Tyler continued, “IVF might not work on the first try. I could talk to Olivia about this, but she’s only in her twenties. We can’t predict the risks she might face. You wouldn’t want her to experience those, right?”

Naomi hadn’t fully considered these aspects. “I didn’t know all of that,” she admitted awkwardly.

Tyler left the ward with a somber expression. His assistant murmured something to him, but he walked away without acknowledging it.

Olivia was oblivious to Naomi’s situation. She had spent the entire day at school and then in the lab until late at night. Upon returning to Sandalwood Palace, she headed straight to her room, avoiding

any common areas.

Tyler returned home late that night. The maid informed him, "Miss Olivia has already gone to bed."

Without a word, Tyler went to his room.

This had become their routine for the past two days. Their interactions were limited to brief encounters in the morning. At night, they never crossed paths; Olivia either returned home too early or Tyler arrived

too late.

It was Olivia's deliberate choice. She preferred not to see Tyler if she could avoid it.

This routine continued for about a week. Then, one afternoon, Olivia received an unexpected call.

"Hello, is this Olivia Jones?"

Startled, she hesitated before responding. She hadn't expected to hear Claude at all. "Who... who is this?"

A gentle voice replied, "It's Sophie's brother, Claude."

Olivia's heart raced. "How can I help you?" She stood at the edge of the library's entrance,

surrounded by silence.

"I found a necklace, and I think it might be yours," Claude explained.

Olivia's grip tightened on her phone. "Does it have a heart-shaped pendant?"

"Yes, it's made from platinum."

"It's mine, Claude! Please, where are you?"

They agreed to meet at a cafe. Olivia entered and immediately spotted Claude. "Claude?"

He stood up as she approached. "Olivia!"

A smile spread across her face. "I hope I didn't make you wait."

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Claude grinned. "Nah, I just got here myself."

Olivia glanced at his drink, noticing the melted ice and damp exterior. "Sorry about that. Traffic was a nightmare," she apologized.

"It's all good. I've got plenty of time," he reassured her, presenting the trinket he found. "Is this yours?"

Taking the necklace, Olivia held it close. Claude added, "Must be very important to you, isn't it?"

"My mother left this for me," she whispered.

Claude nodded knowingly. "I'm glad I called you about it, then."

Grateful for the return of her cherished possession, Olivia thanked him sincerely. "Thank you, Claude."

The young man studied her sweet, beautiful face and advised, "Be more careful with your stuff next time, alright?"

"Yeah, I'll keep that in mind," she replied.

While they had a mutual acquaintance, Claude and Olivia were hardly familiar with each other. The atmosphere became awkward.

"Well... I guess I should tell you to drink a little less next time?" he said in mild concern.

Olivia found his concern endearing. "Thanks for the advice, Claude. I'll remember that."

He smiled warmly. "How did your mom pass away?"

Feeling a pang, Olivia tightened her grip on the necklace.

Realizing his misstep, Claude quickly apologized, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to be insensitive."

After a moment of contemplation, Olivia decided it wasn't a big deal. "She passed away from an illness a long time ago. This necklace is all I have left of her."

Claude had known she was a child of an affair, so he decided to change the subject. "Hey, the ice cream here is amazing. Want to grab some?"

As they chatted, Olivia noticed other women casting glances at Claude. Despite the attention, he seemed unfazed, as if used to it.

Impressed by his easygoing nature, Olivia agreed to join him for ice cream. "Sure, I'd love to."

"Great. I was dying to have one with a friend anyway."

Olivia had expected their meeting to be awkward, given Claude's knowledge of her secrets, but their conversation flowed naturally as they enjoyed their treats.

Grateful for his gesture, Olivia considered paying for both of them, but Claude insisted otherwise. "I'll cover it. Can't let a lady pay, right? Or are you worried I can't afford it?" he teased.

Surprised, Olivia scratched her head, as she knew Claude's family owned a bank. She responded sheepishly, "No, I just wanted to thank you."

"Then you can treat me next time. Right now, I need to keep up appearances," he said cheerfully, gesturing to their surroundings.

Realizing the attention he was attracting, Olivia nodded in understanding, deciding to play along.

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Claude went to the cashier, his movement casual and cordial—a far cry from the way Tyler carried himself. The latter would always carry himself with the grace of an aristocrat.

Claude's smile seemed unbreakable, as if nothing could dampen his spirits. Returning to Olivia's side, he suggested, "Come on, we can hang out together a little while longer, right?"

Olivia was stunned. She didn't expect that.

"I heard the scenery around your campus is beautiful. I'm supposed to wait for Soof to finish her class, anyway."

Olivia was more than happy to keep his company. She gladly agreed, eager to delay her return to

Sandalwood Palace.

Leading him around the campus, she introduced him to various sights and foods.

Claude had been away from city life for long enough that he found all of them interesting. He chuckled, clearly in good spirits. Olivia was just as happy.

As they strolled along the outer wall, a bike whizzed past Olivia, prompting Claude to instinctively pull her close, her body colliding with his chest.

A familiar floral scent enveloped Olivia, reminiscent of gardenias from her childhood.

Claude, caught off guard by his own protective gesture, quickly released her and asked, "Are you okay? You're not hurt, are you?"

Still processing the moment, Olivia checked herself for injuries, feeling more grateful than embarrassed. She shook her head. "I'm fine."

"Let's switch places. You can walk closer to the wall," Claude suggested gently.

Meanwhile, on his usual route, Tyler spotted Olivia walking with someone else. Recognizing the figure as Claude Pearce, he instructed the driver to stop.

Observing them for a while, Tyler narrowed his eyes, his thoughts unreadable,

Half an hour later, it was almost time for Sophie's class to end. "I gotta return to the lab," Olivia said.

Claude understood her commitments and bid her farewell. "Goodbye for now then. See ya!"

"Same to you!" Olivia replied, chuckling as she headed back into the academy.

Tyler's eyes followed her.

“Shall we move on, Mr. Tyler?” the driver asked.

“Let’s go.

It was time for Olivia to return to Sandalwood Palace, but she decided to stay a little longer in the lab

until 10 pm.

Tyler, meanwhile, had begun to wait in the hall back in Sandalwood Palace.

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Olivia returned home expecting everyone to be in their rooms, but she found a man sitting on the couch, which surprised her.

Tyler put the magazine down. “Welcome back,” he said calmly, as if he had been waiting for her.

The hall was so quiet that Olivia could hear her own voice echoing. “You’re not asleep yet?”

“I even thought about calling you,” he said instead.

“I... I’ve been busy at the lab lately, that’s why I’m coming home late. Sorry, I should’ve called you,” Olivia explained.

“It’s fine. Just make sure you come home safe. But try not to stay out late, it’s not safe,” Tyler advised.

Olivia nodded. “I know.”

After a brief silence, he got up. “I’m going to my room.’

“Okay. See you.”

Once Tyler went upstairs, Olivia hurried to her room, closed the door, and locked it. She felt like there needed to be some distance between them.

They couldn’t be any closer than this now. There had to be distance.

There had to be.

She closed her eyes, her face a little pale.

The next morning followed the same routine. Olivia took a few bites of her breakfast before deciding to leave.

Tyler spoke first, “Another morning class?”

“Yes.”

“Then let’s go together. I have some personal business to take care of at your university anyway.”

Olivia wanted to refuse, but she couldn’t think of a good reason to decline. “Oh... okay.”

Sitting next to him, Olivia noticed Tyler making several calls. She couldn’t hear what he was saying, but she saw him frown and fall silent often, making it hard to guess the purpose of the calls.

When they arrived, Tyler dropped her off but didn’t go inside himself. “I won’t be seeing you inside,”

he said.

“That’s fine.”

Olivia arrived early for her class since she had come with Tyler, but she still hurried inside.

Tyler watched her before his car entered an alternative entrance meant only for the university’s board of directors.

Olivia had decided to pass the time in the library.

Suddenly, a figure jumped out from behind and hugged her. “Aren’t you early today!” Sophie chirped.

“Um, I’ve got nothing to do lately, so I thought I should just come here early,” Olivia replied hesitantly.

Sophie could tell Olivia’s excuse was weak. She knew her friend had been acting strangely lately.

A thought struck Sophie, and she leaned close to Olivia’s ear, whispering, “Did you hear? The Harris Group made another big donation to the school. They’re going to build a new block soon.”

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Now, Harris Group had always been one of the university’s most generous donors their name was even up on the main hall. So, hearing news like that wasn’t much of a surprise,

“You know,” Sophie continued, “they said Harris Group’s doing, this for your sake. Something about trying to increase your sister’s positive vibes? It’s pretty weird, I know. Pat hey, those rich folks really believe in all this spirituality stuff way more than us regular folks, huh?”

Olivia had no idea. Why would they do this? Was it because she couldn't get pregnant like they had hoped?

But Sophie didn't notice Olivia's change in mood. She kept on talking, "Your sister graduated from here too, right? So, of course, Harris Group keeps donating, Man, our school sure benefits from being connected to Naomi, huh?"

"I guess so," Olivia murmured.

Sophie studied Olivia's confused expression. "You didn't know about this at all?*

"No. No one told me."

Their conversation ended quickly. Olivia made up an excuse about needing to do some research in the library and headed inside, while Sophie went off to do her own thing

Unfortunately, even in the quietest corner of the library, Olivia couldn't escape the gossip. It felt like she was the only one out of the loop.

That evening, after Olivia left the lab, she received a call from Tyler. "Hello? What is it?"

"Let's have dinner."

She paused on the stairs, trying to think of an excuse to say no, but then he added, "I'm already at the entrance. There's a restaurant near your school."

Unable to think of a good excuse, she reluctantly agreed, "Okay."

"I'll be waiting for you."

Olivia told Sophie about her change in plans and canceled their dinner. As she headed to the entrance, she noticed Tyler checking his watch every few minutes.

“Sorry for making you wait,” she apologized when she reached the car. The lab was quite a distance from the entrance.

Tyler set his documents aside. “I didn’t wait that long. Get in.”

“Just the two of us?” she asked. They rarely ate together alone.

“No, it’s... it’s an event I can’t skip, so I thought of bringing you along,” he answered quietly.

Olivia recalled the story about his donation again,