

Surprise 281

Chapter 281 Are You Done?

While listening to Casey, Courtney saw a figure from the corner of her eyes. The once familiar figure looks so foreign now.

Isaac was standing at the corner of the banquet hall. His arm was wrapped around the waist of a petite young woman—she was most probably the female anchor whom Casey was talking about.

Shay saw the two of them as well, but he scowled deeply. “Isn’t that Eva Reed?”

“Do you know her?” Courtney asked.

“She is working in the same company as I am, but she is an online streamer. The company doesn’t seem to value her since they do not intend to provide her with any targeted training. Usually, employees like that will not have their contract renewed.”

“How long is her contract?” She asked out of curiosity.

“Ten years.”

“Wouldn’t she be wasting ten years of her youth?” Courtney was in shock. “Even if they refuse to renew her contract after ten years, she can’t possibly continue in the same industry, can she? They are clearly exploiting her!”

“The bully exploiting her is right here.” Shay pouted at Casey. “Artist contracts within the AW Group start at a minimum of ten years. The money that one has to compensate is exorbitant if they were to break the contract. Those who are underappreciated, like Eva Reed, would have no choice but to do everything they can to look for a patron. Otherwise, with the measly salary from the company and commission through online streaming, it is impossible for her to afford two purses.”

Courtney glanced at Casey when she heard that. Then, she turned to ask Shay, “Well, in that case, do you have to look for a patron if you are being underappreciated?”

Casey’s gaze immediately darkened.

She acted as though she had not noticed it. In fact, she shoved Alexander forward. “I’ll lend him to you when the time comes. He can be your patron—what do you think?”

“You are so considerate toward me.” Shay blinked his eyes a few times. “Courtney, you are too selfless.”

Before he could finish speaking, Casey dragged him away. “Come with me.”

“Ouch! What are you doing? I am chatting with Courtney!”

Courtney burst into a fit of giggles as she saw the two of them walking away. “Oh, my! I have a feeling that Casey is even worse than you are when he’s jealous.”

Alexander stared at her. “I, on the other hand, feel that Shay is worse than you are in regards to being a scatterbrain.”

Courtney did not have a comeback for that.

“Isaac, there are too many people here. I don’t feel so good. Can you please accompany me to the washroom?” Eva held onto Isaac’s arm and she appeared weak.

He tightened his arm around her waist. “Are you afraid of bumping into Vanessa later?”

“Why would I be afraid of her? I just don’t want to embarrass you. That mad woman of yours doesn’t care about your dignity when she loses her mind. It is bad for your reputation.”

“Well, you are always the mature one. Do you truly need to use the washroom?”

“Yeah, I need to go.”

Isaac seemed to be in a trance as he stared at the woman in front of him acting coyly. “Sure! Let’s go.”

I was planning to live a peaceful life after experiencing so much with Vanessa, especially after being married to her for half a year. However, she has been filled with suspicions ever since she had a miscarriage. She keeps tabs on my work—day and night; it is almost giving me a nervous breakdown. I met Eva in a bar when I was having a business meeting with a friend. I wasn’t in awe of her when I met her for the first time. In fact, she is nowhere as pretty as Vanessa. However, her eyes have entranced me.

When Eva locked the bathroom door from inside with a click, he snapped back to reality when he heard the door shut. He observed his surroundings while frowning deeply. “What are you doing? This is a female’s bathroom. I will wait for you outside.”

Nevertheless, Eva wrapped her arms around his neck while dragging him into one of the cubicles. She whispered seductively, “Isaac, don’t you find it exciting to be here?”

Isaac was astounded when he heard that, but his first reaction was to shove her away. “Stop fooling around. This is a cocktail party by the AW Group. How would it look to the public if somebody were to walk in on us?”

“Come on, don’t worry. Nobody will see us because I’ve locked the door.” With that, Eva pushed him to sit on the toilet seat before impatiently unzipping her evening gown. She was not wearing anything underneath. After tossing her gown aside, she sat on top of him. “Isaac...”

Isaac was burning with desire at that point. He seemed to have lost himself once he looked up into her eyes.

The toilet cubicle was filled with the heavy panting sounds of the couple as the passionate sound of their skin slapping against each other reverberated throughout the washroom.

None of them realized the figure standing outside the cubicle. Her pink evening gown was dragging on the floor and the originally beautiful woman wore a frosty expression. She asked in a faint voice, “Are you done?”

“Aaah!” Eva screamed as she shrunk against Isaac’s arms almost instantly.

The color drained from Isaac’s face as well. However, his expression darkened when he caught sight of the woman standing in front of them. He wore his pants before blocking Eva by standing in front of her. “Vanessa, what are you doing?” he asked unhappily.

"I think I should be the one asking the both of you that question, don't you agree?" Vanessa ferociously glared at them. She looked extremely upset and her tone was especially somber. "Do you know where this is? I can't believe you two are doing this right here. Are you two animals? Don't you feel ashamed?"

"Vanessa, that's enough!" Isaac glanced at the entrance of the bathroom. "You are screaming at the top of your voice because you want to be heard, is it?"

"Are you finally ashamed of yourself?" Vanessa asked coldly. "Why weren't you shameful when she was on top of you earlier?"

Isaac looked upset, but he did not have a comeback.

Eva was hiding behind him and revealed her beautiful face while staring at Vanessa with fear. Then, she spoke in a soft and girlish voice, "Vanessa, please stop this. We shouldn't air our dirty laundry to the public. Aren't you humiliating Isaac by having an outburst?"

"You are a shameless b\*tch! You do not have a right to speak here!" With that, Vanessa took a step forward to grab her hair.

Eva shrieked in fear while hiding behind Isaac.

"That's enough!" Isaac pushed Vanessa away. "Are you done with your nonsense? No matter what happens, you shouldn't air our dirty laundry to the public. You act as if you are taking the moral high ground as the daughter-in-law of the Graham Family, but you didn't seem to have any principles when you seduced me to sleep with you in the past. What gives you the right to control me?"

Vanessa lost her balance after he shoved against her. His harsh comments were like knives being stabbed into her heart. She could not believe what she heard, but she had no choice; she had to swallow the bitterness in silence.

"Isaac, you told me that you wanted to live happily ever after with me and I believed you, but why? I can look away when you are gallivanting with other women outside. However, did you ever consider my feelings when you brought her here in front of the public's eye?" She sat on the floor. "I can no longer be a mother because of you and I don't have anyone else to rely on apart from you."

Her confession was moving and shocking, but Isaac had heard that countless times. He was already sick of it and his expression immediately soured.

The eyes of the woman, who was standing behind Isaac, twinkled with a smile and she interrupted Vanessa. "Well, Vanessa, you are truly something to be able to talk about not having children so casually. I am willing to give birth to Isaac's children, no matter how many he wants, without demanding for a legal status. How about you? You do not even have a child. So, why are you stopping Isaac from keeping his bloodline alive?"

"Shut the f\*ck up!" Vanessa lost her cool.

"You should be the one shutting up." Eva chuckled softly. She pulled the strap, which was sliding down, back up to her shoulder. "I am now two months pregnant."

## Chapter 282 Defective Substitute

That comment felt like a lightning strike on Vanessa's body as she could not believe Eva. "How is that possible..." I have been with Isaac for six years, so I know his personality very well. No matter how much he fools around outside, he would never do such a thing! For one, the Grahams are extremely strict with their rules. Hence, the Graham Family would never acknowledge a child whom he shares with an artist at the bottom tier. On the other hand, I know that he doesn't love the women he fools around with.

"That's impossible." She scrambled from the floor, as though she was ready to tussle with Eva.

"Nothing is impossible." Isaac stood in front of Eva. "Eva is right—she is pregnant with my child. I am taking her home to the Graham Residence."

Vanessa had heard a lot of hurtful comments from him in the past, but she was unprepared for something like that. She was stunned into silence because she could not believe her ears. "Are you insane? Mom and Dad would never agree for you to marry a woman like her."

"Nothing is impossible as long as I insist." Isaac's determined and composed expression shook Vanessa. He wasn't even so certain when I previously wanted to be married to him. In fact, I had to figure out ways to make Isaac's parents like me. Does he know how much effort I put in to join the Grahams? How can this woman obtain everything by relying only on her charms and seductive methods? I don't believe it.

She looked up at the woman who was standing behind Isaac. She has a petite figure—she isn't shapely or voluptuous. She is just much younger compared to me. I can't help but compare her with me. Nevertheless, she realized the truth with a start when she saw Eva's eyes before bursting in laughter. "Haha! Haha!"

He was confused and he scowled. "What are you laughing at?"

Vanessa pointed at the woman behind him and she cackled maniacally. She questioned him insistently, "Are you actually in love with her? Or, you can't forget the person whom you can't have? Is that why you'll be happy even if she's just a defective substitute?"

"Who are you referring to as a defective substitute?" Eva was bewildered, so she frowned at Vanessa while waiting for an explanation.

Nevertheless, Isaac immediately understood what Vanessa meant and his gaze turned icy-cold.

"Vanessa, I am warning you. Nobody thinks you are dumb if you don't say anything."

"The mouth is mine. I will say whatever I want. Why are you afraid of what I have to say if you have the audacity to cheat?" She supported herself against the marble top of the basin as her face twisted into an ugly expression. "Do you think highly of yourself? Previously, you were the one who betrayed Courtney, but now, you've found a woman who resembles her. Are you trying to pretend to be devoted to her?"

"That's enough!" He looked livid.

"Who is Courtney?" Eva appeared lost.

"Courtney?" Vanessa guffawed. "She is a—"

Smack! There was a loud smack across her face and the crisp sound rang loudly in the bathroom. She lost her balance due to the impact and she fell onto the ground.

Isaac spat coldly, "You are unworthy of mentioning her name. You better shut up if you want to retain your position as Mrs. Graham."

After saying those words, he strode away.

Despite her curiosity, Eva did not want to be alone with Vanessa. In the end, Eva went after him hastily. "Isaac, wait up!"

Vanessa was left alone in the bathroom—she was a mess as she sat on the washroom floor. She held a trembling hand over her reddened cheek. I have worked hard for so long. It has been so many years now. Am I not on par with Courtney? I don't believe that.

In the banquet hall, Courtney was chatting with the guests at the cocktail party. She turned to look when she heard the word 'Isaac'. From afar, she saw him walking down the stairs while wearing a gloomy expression and the young artist was holding onto her gown as she chased after him from behind.

Courtney frowned, but just as she was about to look away, he looked up and their gazes met.

Isaac stopped dead in his tracks from walking down the stairs. I haven't seen Courtney for half a year, but I have heard a lot about her in the past six months. In fact, her life has been more interesting and vibrant ever since she left me. Out of all the independent and confident women in my life, Courtney takes the lead and she will always be the one who got away.

They locked eyes for a few seconds and she gently nodded as a greeting. Then, she turned naturally to continue chatting with the person beside her.

Isaac was in a daze, but Eva was already clinging onto his arm. "Isaac, please don't be mad. It is entirely my fault. Why don't you come to my place tonight and I will make it up to you?"

He suddenly felt uneasy, so he retrieved his arm. "I want to be alone for a bit. Stop following me." With that, he walked down the stairs alone.

After greeting her close friends, Courtney felt slightly tipsy, so she wanted to look for a place to rest. She scanned her surroundings, but she could not find Alexander. He must have left to use the washroom. Hence, she put her wine glass down before making her way to a conspicuous spot to wait for him.

Just as she looked down, she saw the hem of a pink flowy gown swishing in front of her. She heard Vanessa's voice before she could look up. "Courtney, it has been ages since we last met."

Courtney saw Vanessa the moment she looked up. The right side of her face is red and swollen, for some reason. Then, she immediately recalled the rumors about her and Isaac.

She frowned and looked at Vanessa with pity in her eyes. "It has been such a long time. How have you been?"

"I am great." Vanessa's gaze significantly darkened. "What do you mean by that?"

“You are overthinking it. I don’t mean anything at all.” Courtney no longer felt sorry for Vanessa. Well, with me attending the cocktail party with my status, she must have misinterpreted my pity as gloating at her.

Vanessa looked rather upset, but she gave Courtney a thorough once-over.

Her blatant stare obviously made Courtney uneasy, so she scowled deeply. “What are you looking at?”

“I am guessing you weren’t aware that the small-time online streamer somehow resembles you. Isaac is now dating a female online streamer and she looks a lot like you.”

Vanessa seemed to be waiting for a reaction from Courtney. However, Courtney looked distant and avoided her gaze while advising, “Vanessa, why are you telling me this? In all honesty, this has nothing to do with me at all if you truly want to live a happy life with Isaac.”

“Are you saying that the problems in my marriage with Isaac are caused by me?”

“I never said that.” She felt that Vanessa lacked basic comprehensive ability.

“That is exactly what you said.” Vanessa stubbornly barked. After that, she burst into laughter all of a sudden while giving Courtney an evil stare. “Are you pleased with yourself? You have many men hanging around you. In fact, it has been that way since you were in school. They treat you like the unattainable Ice Queen. However, do they know that your own older sister once sold you off? Do they know that four to five men took your virginity away?”

Courtney felt as though lightning had struck her; everything exploded suddenly and she was left with pieces of ruins everywhere.

The surrounding guests started to gather around them.

She noticed that Vanessa’s lips were moving in slow motion. “That is why Anna deserves to die—she harmed her own younger sister. I can’t believe she sent you off to those people to rape you. Don’t you think she deserves to die?”

## Chapter 283 Nothing Happened That Night

Vanessa’s announcement had attracted the majority of the guests to gather around them in the banquet hall.

Courtney was standing in the middle of the crowd and she had to endure stares of pity or contempt at her from all directions. Her ears buzzed as Vanessa’s voice resembled a drum that constantly thumped and amplified her past without any consent.

“Anna more than deserves to die. My guess is that she didn’t even bother to apologize to you when she was dying. Besides, you are affectionate and loyal enough to have attended her funeral. I admire you, Courtney.”

Courtney tightened her fists in an attempt to force herself to calm down. “Vanessa, I do not know what you are talking about.”

Vanessa folded her arms while regarding Courtney, as though she expected the latter's denial. She cackled sinisterly when she said, "How could you possibly not remember what happened six years ago? It was on your eighteenth birthday. Mr. Hunter gave you a house as a gift, but a jealous Anna arranged for those men to come. Later, you left the country and I suppose that's because the Hunters didn't want to expose themselves to such a scandal."

She was giving a detailed account of what happened whereas Courtney turned as pale as a white sheet.

"Vanessa, what are you doing?" Isaac marched through the crowd to block Courtney from view. "Are you insane? Do you know what you're saying?"

"I'm merely clarifying the truth. Previously, outsiders have always felt that Courtney hasn't been loyal and responsible to the Hunter Group. Well, I should at least let them know how horrible the Hunter Family has treated Courtney. The public shouldn't simply judge others by assuming the moral high ground," Vanessa asserted eloquently. On the other side, his expression soured significantly as he hissed angrily at her. "Mad woman!"

Then, he turned to face Courtney. "I am sorry. Courtney, please leave first and I will handle the situation here."

"Isaac, please do not forget that Courtney is no longer associated with you since I am your wife." Vanessa lost her cool when she saw how considerate he was toward Courtney, rendering her blinded by jealousy and rage at that point.

Isaac had been unhappy with Vanessa for a long time. Now that she humiliated him in front of the crowd, he was livid and shouted at her angrily, "You no longer are my wife!"

"What do you mean? If you are doing this over such a small matter—"

"That's enough!" Courtney interrupted Vanessa's tearful howl. She coldly stared at the husband and wife who had fallen out with each other. She had to calm down as well and after careful analysis of the situation, she inhaled deeply while observing her surroundings. "Vanessa, I know that you hold a grudge against me, but you have gone overboard by slandering me. Besides, Anna has passed away for some time now; you shouldn't casually joke about the deceased. Six years ago, when you came between Isaac and me, you spread rumors among our classmates by claiming that I cheated on him. How dare you use the same trick now! At that time, we were still young and naïve. Shouldn't you at least look around to see who is present? Do you truly believe that they will believe the nonsense you're spouting?"

Not only did Courtney deny Vanessa's claims, but she simultaneously managed to bolster everybody's self-esteem. Vanessa's claims had sounded absurd to begin with, so the crowd present merely took it as an exciting distraction. After considering Courtney's explanation, they disregarded the truth of Vanessa's claims.

True enough, the guests started to discuss animatedly among themselves after Courtney's statement.

Vanessa fumed. "What do you mean by me spouting nonsense? You are clearly the one spouting nonsense here. Six years ago, I clearly heard what Anna said. She drugged your liquor to allow somebody to send you to the hotel. There were four to five men waiting for you in the room at that time, and..."

When the crowd heard Vanessa's words, they erupted and Isaac's expression also changed drastically. I don't know much about what happened that night six years ago. I only know that Courtney had an accident, but I didn't expect Vanessa to know everything about that incident.

The guests were not fools and they started to discuss in hushed tones.

Courtney chuckled in amusement. "Vanessa, you seem to know every detail about that incident. You claim that you know about everything that happened beforehand; well, in that case, as my best friend at that time, why didn't you warn me that somebody was about to harm me? It has been more than six years now, so why are you talking about it now?"

The color drained from Vanessa's face. "Well... T-That is because Anna threatened me to keep quiet about it..."

"The deceased can't speak for themselves. You can obviously blame everything on Anna." Courtney wore an intimidating expression. "Do you truly believe that you were the only one who learned about the incident beforehand? Did you assume that I was being manipulated and fooled by others without knowing better?"

"What are you referring to?" Vanessa's facial features twisted into an unsightly expression.

"Nothing happened that night. I caught you doing something disgusting with Isaac and yes, I also consumed large amounts of alcohol. However, Anna's men did not take me away after that."

"That's impossible..."

"Nothing is impossible." Shay's voice attracted everybody's attention when he spoke from the crowd.

Courtney turned and she saw the crowd making way for Shay and Casey. They approached her one by one.

Shay stood beside her and he was much taller than she was. His usual warm and friendly demeanor was replaced with an eerily cold and distant expression as he commented frostily, "I was the one who personally took Courtney away that night. Vanessa, I'll accept that you are ignorant for what you said earlier since it's the first time, but if I were to hear it again, I would not be as polite as today."

"You took Courtney away?" Vanessa obviously did not believe him. However, Casey interrupted her thoughts before she could refute Shay. "Mr. Isaac, the AW Group is the organizer for the Business and Trade Cocktail Party today. Most of us within the industry have not met for a long time, so we are here to reconnect and make new friends. Therefore, I think it is inappropriate for you to air your family's dirty laundry here."

Casey's comments had carried a lot of weight since he was the president of AW Group.

Isaac immediately understood as he answered hastily, "My apologies for being a wet blanket. We had a fight before leaving our home, which is why she is making a scene now because she's unhappy with me. I am sorry that you all have to witness this. I will handle this at home."

Vanessa was about to say something, but he fiercely glared at her. "I will meet you at the Civil Affairs Bureau if you dare to utter another word."

In the end, she had no choice, but to shut up.

Away from the crowd, a figure in a light yellow evening gown observed everything. After scanning the surroundings and confirming that the person she was looking for was nowhere to be seen, she lifted her skirt while making her way to the second floor. The figure seemed to have made up their mind that the commotion had come to an end.

Casey looked around and he saw people bustling around. He found it especially agitating, so he announced loudly, "Adjourned! There's nothing more to see here. Those were merely trivial family matters."

The crowd dispersed slowly as Shay held onto Courtney's hand. He sounded worried when he felt that her hand was icy cold and asked, "Courtney, are you alright?"

"I'm fine." She let out a slow sigh of relief.

Casey focused on their hands and he reminded, "Let's look for a place to rest."

Shay agreed straight away. "That's right. Courtney, there's a place to rest upstairs. Let me take you there."

"No need." Courtney pulled her hand away. "I can go up alone. Please inform Alexander if you two bump into him later."

Shay scowled at Alexander's name being mentioned. "Alexander has become a scared cat at such a critical moment. He is nowhere to be seen," he unhappily commented.

Casey looked up the stairs thoughtfully. "I suppose he's left to use the washroom. He most probably has no idea what's going on here."

"Does he need to use the washroom for such a long time?" Shay rolled his eyes disapprovingly. "My guess is that there's something wrong with his prostate!"

#### Chapter 284 Don't You Have Anything to Say?

Alexander had just exited the washroom when a cold breeze blew from the balcony. He sneezed twice consecutively while feeling a chill at the back of his neck. I answered a phone call from my family's butler, Mr. Harry. He was nagging me over the phone for quite some time and urged me to return to the Duncans' ancestral home to make peace with Grandpa. Mr. Harry has been giving me the same speech every other day. In fact, he has been rather loquacious lately. I respect him as an elderly in the Duncan Residence, which is why I listen when he nags. However, I have yet to return home even once.

"President Duncan."

Alexander barely took a couple steps forward when a figure blocked his way. She was wearing a bright yellow, knee-length dress; her hair was tied in a bun and there was a silver, crown-shaped hairpin inserted into her brown hair. As far as my tastes are concerned, I find her rather childish. I wouldn't usually notice such details, but Courtney has a similar hairpin, which is why I've noticed it. Besides, the

clothes that Courtney pairs with the hairpin look so much more elegant than whatever the girl standing in front of me is wearing. "Can I help you?" he asked.

"President Duncan, you couldn't possibly have forgotten me, can you?" The girl, who was wearing the bright yellow evening gown, stared at him unblinkingly. She looked like she was controlling her temper when he did not seem to recognize her.

"Should I remember you?"

"I am Kelly, Anna's cousin sister."

Alexander wore an indifferent expression while giving her a once-over. I have a vague impression of her. It is not much of an impression and it's not even a good one. I believe I ran into her the day I arrived at the Hunter Group to assume my position. It happened that she was embarrassing Courtney. He frowned slightly and repeated his initial question. "How may I help you?"

Kelly's cheeks flushed red, but she could not lose her temper. "Well, of course I have something to discuss with you—it is about Courtney. I think you'll be very interested in this, President Duncan."

He arrogantly glanced at her. "I do not feel like I need to listen to somebody else about Courtney."

"Well, what if it's something about her sleeping with another man?" Kelly called out for Alexander. "Do you think that she would tell you such a thing? President Duncan, you can't possibly be such a naïve person, can you?"

He stopped dead in his tracks; he turned to stare at her with an eerie gaze. "What was that?"

"The night that Courtney celebrated her 18th birthday, she went to bed with a group of men. I personally heard Vanessa saying that. I can't believe you treasure such a disgusting and promiscuous woman. Aren't you afraid that others might comment that you are dating a loose woman behind your back?"

Alexander's expression fell. He grabbed her arm before she could respond and he dragged her into the adjacent lounge.

"What are you doing??" Kelly struggled in fear, but she tripped over the ribbon on her skirt. In the end, she lost her balance and fell onto the couch.

He leaned down to put his hands on the sides of the single sofa. At that moment, he had a face like thunder.

The scent of his cologne was refreshing and intoxicating, causing her to blush. Her heart was racing when she started to stutter, "Y-You b-better not do anything rash."

Alexander laughed mirthlessly, but his eyes glazed over with a layer of frost. "Do you believe that you'll become the so-called promiscuous woman if I were to ever hear you say those things again?"

Kelly felt as if her heart had instantly stopped beating. Those wonderful thoughts that she had completely vanished before it was replaced by a suffocating chill that spread all over her bones. It was her first time experiencing his cruelty and ruthlessness, which others had described in the rumors. Nevertheless, she had been spoiled as a young lady from a wealthy family. Hence, despite being afraid

of his threat, she held onto her last shred of dignity to defend herself. "I am speaking the truth. If you don't believe me, why don't you ask—"

"Do you truly want to experience the sensation of not being able to open your mouth to speak?" Alexander's eyes were pitch-black at that point and he shot her an icy look. "I find women who carry tales sickening."

She was rendered speechless when she heard that.

Following what Casey had said, Courtney was looking for a place to rest. She saw the plate, which indicated the direction of the VIP lounge, from afar. She then lifted her gown to make her way forward. Suddenly, she heard the door open with a thud just as she took a few steps forward. After that, she saw Kelly running out while holding a hand to her chest. Her hair was disheveled and she seemed to be scared witless.

Despite the animosity between the two of them, they were working in the same company. Furthermore, Courtney was older than Kelly by two years, so she felt responsible if the latter was bullied there. In the end, she kindly asked, "What happened to you?"

However, before she could ask further, Kelly severely glared at her. Then, she ran away with the hem of her gown in her hands.

When Courtney looked up again, she saw Alexander walking out of the lounge.

There were obvious creases across his straight and dark suit. Her heart sank when she recalled how Kelly ran out from the lounge in a hurry. "Why are you here?" she blurted out.

"I came out of the washroom and I dropped by to have a rest here."

"What about Kelly?" Courtney pointed in the direction that Kelly left with a suspicious look. "Did you take her back to the lounge to rest with you?"

Alexander maintained a blank expression. "The lounge is a public lounge. It is accessible to everyone. Please do not misunderstand the situation."

She inhaled deeply when she heard that. "Fine. I will not misunderstand the situation. However, as far as I know, you will never be alone in the lounge with her. There must be a reason since it happened. What were you two talking about? I believe I have the right to know, don't you agree?" Alexander has had very little gossip over the years and it is mainly thanks to the fact that he never hangs around a woman alone. It's his habit to avoid a scandal. I do not believe that Kelly has the ability to change his habit which has lasted for more than ten years. Initially, this is just a simple matter; maybe he walked into the lounge a second before she left the room. That might explain why Kelly was heading out from the lounge earlier.

With that in mind, Courtney requested Alexander to explain the situation to her.

"There's nothing for me to say because nothing happened. You are thinking too much," he calmly replied.

"Are you telling me that nothing happened even though Kelly ran out from the lounge looking like that?" She felt a looming disappointment deep in her heart. "Have you considered the possibility that I wasn't

the only one who saw her running out in that state? You wouldn't even explain to me. What about others? What would others say about this?"

"I don't care what others think."

"Alexander!" Courtney stopped him. She was on the verge of breaking down as she was still shaken after Vanessa's public humiliation earlier, but she now had to face another challenge. "Please imagine yourself in my shoes—you can't even handle it when I stare at another man for a moment longer. A pretty girl, who wasn't properly dressed, has just run out of the room whereas you are right behind her. Do you truly feel that you do not have to explain yourself?"

Alexander remained silent. It is not that I can't explain myself. I just do not want to talk about the horrible things Kelly mentioned about Courtney earlier under those circumstances. I do not want to speak with her about it in this manner. Similarly, I do not want to lie, why I choose to keep quiet.

"Fine. You have nothing to say, have you?" She tightened her grip around the hem of her skirt and she hissed coldly. "In that case, I have nothing to say either."

## Chapter 285 I Do Not Hate You

Courtney turned to leave after speaking her mind.

Where are you going?"

"That's none of your business," she sounded livid. With that, she held onto her skirt to walk down the stairs—she was preparing to leave the cocktail party and the hotel straight away.

Just as she was about to enter the elevator, Alexander caught up with her. However, she was quick to close the elevator doors and he was left standing outside. He had no choice, but to stare helplessly as the elevator descended swiftly. Soon, it stopped on the first floor.

By the time he descended to the hotel entrance via another elevator to chase after her, she had already entered the car. Through the car window, he could vaguely make out a man's side profile before he clenched his fists tightly in anger and he took out his phone to call her.

The car drove away from the downtown area, which was crowded with people, when Courtney's phone would not stop ringing in the car.

"Aren't you going to answer that?" the man sitting beside her asked.

She immediately declined the call while turning sideways to look at Isaac. "No worries. Just drop me at the intersection in front. I'll grab a cab to head home."

"I'll send you home." He looked uneasy. "It's late and it is not safe out here."

"No need." Courtney flatly refused. "You know why I entered your car earlier. We do not have to be polite with each other."

"I am not being polite."

She shot him a look and he could see the invisible barrier between them.

Isaac was trying to explain himself, but the words disappeared from the tip of his tongue when he saw her gaze. "Courtney, I need to tell you something."

She frowned at him. "If it's about the past, I don't want to talk about it anymore. It is already in the past, so there's nothing to talk about."

"I know." Isaac looked up and he stared at Courtney. "I know that I deserve it. Previously, I was blinded when I hooked up with Vanessa. However, in the years that you have left me, I realized that you are the one whom I truly love all long. I can't be faithful to any woman apart from you."

"What are you trying to say?"

"I know that this sounds out of the blue, but if it's possible, I just hope that you won't hate me."

He has been beating around the bush for so long and I was wondering what he was planning to say. In the end, he's humbly asking me not to hate him. Courtney regarded Isaac and she realized that time and life had caused the once warm and confident boy from school to fade away. In fact, she could not sense the high spirits that he used to have. I suddenly can't even recall why I fell for him all those years ago.

"I do not hate you." She broke the silence after a long pause. "I have never resented anyone when it comes to love and relationships. Getting together and splitting up only involves two people. It is impossible to blame only one person. In the later few years when I was abroad, I was busy with work and life for ages. Therefore, to be honest, I wouldn't have had time for a relationship. As for your claim of not being able to be faithful to any woman, you should take it back."

Isaac looked as though he was in a daze.

"Life is a long process. Who knows what you might encounter in the future? Even if the person suited for you is not Vanessa, there might be someone else out there." After Courtney's speech, the car fell into complete silence. No matter what happened throughout the years, we once gave each other the best parts of our youths.

Isaac still insisted on sending Courtney home. She did not tell him where she lived, but his chauffeur seemed to be well informed about her address. He drove in a familiar manner to the entrance of her residential area.

"We are here."

Courtney nodded and she opened the door. "Thank you," she said softly.

"I should be the one thanking you." He smiled faintly to hide the bitterness in his expression. His gaze was focused at a distance away from the windshield. "Do you need me to help you explain?"

She followed the direction of Isaac's gaze—it was Alexander's figure standing as straight as a pole at the entrance of the residential area. "There's no need," she rejected before closing the car door.

Isaac did not linger around. The car engine roared to life before it disappeared in the continuous traffic moving through the entrance of the residential area, resembling the relationship she and him shared throughout the years. In the end, their love melted into the crowd; it was never to be seen again.

Alexander walked toward Courtney without asking anything. He merely removed his coat to wrap it around her shoulders. "It is cold outside. Let's head home first."

Well, I thought that he would fly into a rage of jealousy as usual. In any case, his calm demeanor is unexpected. Therefore, she decided not to temporarily throw tantrums. "Let's go."

It was getting dark and most of the buildings within the residential area had their lights switched on. The street lights reflected on the greenery along the road as the two of them walked along the passageway. If it weren't for the cumbersome evening gown, I can almost feel a sense of serenity right now.

"It is nice to have an evening stroll." Courtney was trying to take the initiative to make amends to ease the tension from the earlier incident.

Alexander kept quiet for a moment, but he suddenly blurted out, "What did you say to Isaac? Even if you are lashing out at me, you must not get into somebody else's car in the future..."

The smile wavered and stiffened on her face as she made a sudden movement to throw his coat back to him. She hissed in anger, "Then, you better explain about the situation with Kelly before commenting about me!" With that, she aggressively lifted her gown as she made her way to enter the building. How can he be such a hypocrite? He refuses to explain himself, but he expects me to explain myself! This is frustrating!

The door slammed with such force that Oliver thought that it was an earthquake.

"Court—" He could not even manage to greet her when he saw her storming into her bedroom. There was another loud slam as she closed her room door.

He shivered involuntarily as he spilled half a cup of his tea.

Alexander marched into the house soon enough. He saw Oliver taking a sharp breath while stomping his own foot in the kitchen.

"Hey, what's up with Courtney?" Oliver asked.

"Nothing."

"What do you mean by nothing?" Oliver gave him a sideways glance. He was tugging against his pants where the tea had spilled. "The words 'I am pissed' are branded across her face. Please do not tell me that you have no idea what's going on."

Alexander stared at Oliver pointedly, as if asking, Will you die if you were to stop talking?

"Got it." Oliver immediately understood what he meant. "It is definitely related to you then."

"What if I say that it's not?"

Oliver seemed unfazed. "I will surrender if you are able to make Courtney open her door right now."

Alexander scowled deeply while staring at the master bedroom door. He then walked to the couch to have a seat. Courtney usually does not lose her temper. In fact, she seems to be throwing her tantrum for nothing today. He lowered his head while counting the days that she snapped, but he shook his head in the end.

Oliver brought the tea cups and sat across from Alexander. He pushed one of them toward Alexander while masking an offhand comment. "Sigh, I heard from Shay that Vanessa humiliated Courtney at the cocktail party tonight. The husband and wife are rather shameless, if you ask me. They are cheap, as always. I can't believe she has the audacity to bring up the past."

"What are you talking about?" Alexander abruptly looked up.

"Vanessa and Isaac are a b\*tchy couple..." Oliver was astounded as he gazed at Alexander in confusion. "Didn't they mention Courtney's past at the cocktail party? They humiliated her openly in public. D- Didn't you know about it?"