

TSBMMOUS 101

Chapter 101: She Decided To Go Back

Ayla went to Starlight's building. She had an appointment with Yareli because she wanted to know her boss's thoughts. But when Linda saw her, it was obvious that she wasn't happy about seeing her.

"Director," Ayla greeted.

However, Linda just cast her a cold glance.

"Ms. Evans isn't here yet. You can wait in the meeting room!"

Naturally, Linda knew why Ayla was here.

She had always wanted to work with the Clark Group, and if that cooperation became successful, she would gain everything that she could ever want, whether it be prestige or future prospects.

Ayla was chosen to go, and yet she refused over and over.

Linda never thought highly of her because she was just a student who hadn't even graduated yet! Linda had always been hostile to Ayla.

When they both participated in the school's fashion design competition, Yareli adored Ayla's work but not hers.

Although Ayla's design hadn't matured back then, Linda was aware that she had great potential and her skills would eventually improve after a period of training.

"Wenny, you shouldn't be complacent, and don't think that you're above me just because Ms. Evans appreciates your talent.

I've been working for this company for so many years, and you should know that no matter what happens, I'm still a director in this company, and you are just a new designer."

"Director, you need not worry about your status. I have no desire to compete with you. Whether it's the designs for the fashion show or any other designs I've made, those were all chosen by Ms. Evans. To tell you the truth, I personally think that your designs are exquisite. You shouldn't worry that I would steal your position from you. You are the company's director, and you have a rich experience. All I want is to do what I have to do."

In all honesty, Ayla didn't want to tell her this, but she wanted to make it clear to Linda that she wasn't that ambitious.

All she wanted was a stable job.

She just needed a job to support herself with her own capabilities.

That was her simple goal.

She had never even dreamed of being a famous designer, nor had she wanted to be wealthy and famous.

“You’d better keep your word! I hate it when someone goes against their own words. You’re only here because Ms. Evans helped you become a part of this company. Do you think we’re not aware that you often eat, drink tea, and chat with Ms. Evans?”

Linda had been trying so hard not to lower herself to Ayla’s level because she believed it would be a stain on her reputation.

However, Yareli had given the cooperation project of the Clark Group to Ayla, and she couldn’t stand it anymore.

Ayla just smiled at her.

“Director, you’re thinking too much. I’m not the kind of person you think I am. I’m aware that my words mean nothing to you, but I’m telling you the truth.”

When Linda heard her, she almost lost her temper. She picked up a folder on her desk, wanting to throw it at her face.

However, at this time, Yareli opened the door and came in.

As soon as she entered, she noticed that something was off about the atmosphere.

On top of that, there was a smile on Ayla’s face.

“Ms. Evans,”

Ayla greeted.

“Oh, you came. Let’s talk in my office, shall we?” Yareli said to Ayla.

Afterwards, she led her to her office.

They sat on the sofa in the office, each of them had a cup of coffee in front of them.

“So, Wenny, have you made up your mind? Or are you still unwilling to go back to A City? But if you really don’t want to go there, I won’t force you anymore.”

Everyone had a past that they didn’t want to face. If Ayla wasn’t willing to go back, it only meant that she had a good reason for it.

As a matter of fact, Ayla already knew that her boss wasn’t going to force her.

However, she wasn’t willing to let her down after all her help.

“Ms. Evans, I accept the project.”

It took Ayla a while before she finally said yes. She had been thinking about it for two days.

Even if Anna hadn’t talked to her in the past two days, she knew that she had to go back this time.

Yareli was surprised to know that she was accepting the project.

“Wenny, if you’re sure about this, I’ll arrange everything for you. But if you ever have second thoughts about doing this project, I won’t force you.”

She didn’t want her to have any regrets.

Ayla shook her head.

“I’ve already made up my mind. I won’t regret anything,” she said firmly.

Besides, Brian Clark must’ve forgotten about her already.

As long as the two of them didn’t see each other, nothing would change.

“Great! Now that you’ve decided, I’ll arrange for your return to A City as soon as possible.”

Her words put Yareli’s mind at ease. She believed that Ayla had a bright future ahead of her.

Over the years, Yareli had gone through a lot in this industry, and allowed herself to go through each difficulty one at a time.

She endured the pain in her heart.

And that was the reason she hadn’t returned to her home country after so many years.

The first time she saw Wenny’s design and her character, she felt something familiar, which made her grow fond of her.

Moments later, Ayla left the Starlight Fashion Hub and walked alone along the road.

After a long walk, she sat on a park bench.

She then took out a business card from her bag and dialed Anna’s number.

“Miss Woodsen, have you made up your mind?” Anna asked directly.

“Well, you’ve been waiting for my answer all this time, so I’m sure you’re aware of my decision, right, Miss Anna?”

Although Ayla still needed a bit of time to think about it, she knew that she must go back this time, and that she would never be able to escape her fate.

Perhaps, she had been avoiding it all this time.

Even if she had personally witnessed how happy Anna and Brian Clark were, she didn’t have the right to feel heartbroken about it, and she should just let it go.

His affection never belonged to her in the first place.

“You’ve decided to go back, haven’t you? But you should know that I still won’t let you meet Brian.”

Anna wasn’t willing to compromise regarding this.

Ayla looked ahead.

She wasn't sure what her future held and what she was about to face, but she knew that she must move on.

"I know that. Don't worry, I don't want to see him either. You're Brian's fiancée, and you're the person in charge of this cooperation project. I am just a passerby, and I'll be out of your lives sooner or later, so you don't have to worry about anything. As long as you can keep him away from my office, we won't have any problems,"

Ayla responded.

This was her only request. She hadn't been back for more than two years, so it was probably time for her to return.

After all, Italy wasn't her home, and she must go back to her hometown.

That place also held many of her fondest memories, and she was willing to bear anything despite how painful it could be.

Hearing her response, Anna smiled with relief.

"Very well, I'll take care of that. I booked us flight tickets two days from now, so pack up your things, too! Let's go back together!"

The only reason Anna stayed in Italy was because she wanted to bring Ayla with her but she also wanted to ascertain that Ayla had given up on Brian Clark.

But it shouldn't matter if Ayla could forget about him or not.

She was already gone, and now, Anna was Brian Clark's legitimate fiancée.

Ayla replied, "I see. I'll get ready then."

In truth, she didn't need to prepare anything.

Yareli had arranged an apartment for her in A City, and all she had to do was to go to work in the office building.

As long as she handed over designs that would satisfy the Clark Group's standards, the companies under the group would be able to produce and sell those designs.

That was all she had to do. She didn't even have to show up at all.

### Chapter 103: The Right To Love

When Ayla woke up, she was having a hangover, and she had a splitting headache.

"It hurts," she groaned and turned sideways.

All of a sudden, she noticed that there was a handsome face in front of her.

Beside her, a man was sleeping soundly.

At this time, she realized that his arm was wrapped around her waist.

“Ah!”

Ayla screamed, startled by how close they were.

Her loud screaming woke Lucas up.

“What’s going on? Lala?”

He looked at her panicked face and then he realized that they were in bed together.

“I’m sorry. Last night, I drank too much.”

Ayla was petrified for a few seconds before she got ahold of herself.

“Me too. I drank too much last night.”

She frowned at how insane she was.

How could she let herself drink so much last night? Lucas grabbed a nightgown and handed it to her.

“I’ll take responsibility for you, Lala,” he said.

No matter what might’ve happened between them, he was determined to take responsibility.

Putting the nightgown on, Ayla pursed her lips, and said, “Lucas, last night was an accident, okay? Let’s just forget that it ever happened.”

It took Lucas by surprise that she was still able to maintain her composure after something like that happened.

“No, I’m not an irresponsible man. Lala, no matter what I did to you, I’ll take responsibility for it. I promise I’ll do anything you ask of me.”

He looked at her clear eyes with a trace of confusion.

Was he mistaken? He believed that a faithful woman like Ayla would also give her heart to him the moment she gave her body.

Looking back at him, she said, “Something had already happened between us, and it was out of my willingness even if I was drunk. So, I’m not gonna let you ruin yourself because of me.”

In all honesty, Ayla couldn’t remember what had happened last night.

Although she was hammered, she only felt a splitting headache, but no soreness in her body.

She was puzzled but she believed that Lucas wouldn’t lie to her and joke about something this serious.

He gazed into her eyes and asked, “What do you think of me?”

Based on the look on his face, it was clear that he was a bit angry.

He was mad because she didn’t seem to care about it at all. He was a man and he was more than willing to take responsibility for the woman he loved.

Sadly, he was wrong. He was gravely mistaken.

Ayla wasn't as weak and softhearted as he had led himself to believe.

Ayla watched as Lucas stormed out of her room wearing nothing but a night robe.

Did she do something wrong? She just didn't want what happened last night to hinder him from anything.

When Ayla went to Lucas' room, she noticed that he was standing by the window, smoking unhappily.

"Lucas," she called out softly.

However, Lucas didn't even cast her a glance.

"Do you really want to be responsible for me?" Ayla asked in a low voice.

If she was being honest, she was now feeling uncomfortable.

She clasped her hands together, subconsciously shaking them.

Lucas just looked back at her, not saying anything, and proceeding with his cigarette.

Taking a few steps forward, she said, "If you want to be responsible for me, then don't be mad at me, okay? It's all my fault. I shouldn't have put you on the friend zone. I shouldn't have failed to see how you felt for me."

Ayla's words finally reached Lucas' heart.

He looked at her and listened, waiting for her to continue.

"Lucas, I'm not a complete woman, so if someday, you meet a woman that deserves your love, you can tell me about her and I won't have any objections," she said.

In all honesty, she wasn't sure if she could love him, let alone accompany him for the rest of his life.

Lucas flicked the cigarette b\*\*t away, looking at the uncertainty in her eyes.

"Believe me, you're the only woman I will ever love."

If Ayla was willing to accept him, it would only make him love her more.

Although his way of doing things was a bit despicable, he really didn't want to give up on her.

Ayla opened her arms, placing them around his waist, and buried her face in his chest.

She was worried that he might regret it, and that she might regret it herself.

But now, Lucas was the only one she could rely on! In that case, she must accept him as her support system for the rest of her life! Lucas kissed her forehead.

"Lala, you should trust me and yourself. Besides, you have the right to love if you want to."

As she sat on the balcony, Ayla felt overwhelmed by the sudden change with her relationship to Lucas. Wearing a light casual suit, he came in and said, "Let's go, Lala! I'm taking you somewhere."

He then took her hand and led her out.

Not long after, Ayla sat in his car and Lucas drove her to an unfamiliar street. Before she had the chance to react, he had already taken her into a jewelry store.

"Lucas?"

She looked up at him.

They had only agreed to become a couple this morning, but he was already buying her a ring?

"What do you think? Which one do you like the most?"

Ignoring how surprised Ayla was, Lucas dragged her to the diamond ring counter.

"Are we really buying one of those?" She looked at the rows of rings; all of them looked expensive.

In all honesty, she wasn't prepared for any of this! "Of course, I brought enough money with me, so you can rest assured that we can afford even the most expensive one. I want to give you only the best. This is just one of the things I can give you, and I hope you're willing to accept it."

Lucas wanted to give Ayla the best and most expensive diamond ring in the store. She looked around, but she didn't pick any of them.

So instead, he asked the sales clerk to take out their most exquisite ring available.

"Lala, what about this one? Do you like it?"

Then, he put the ring on her finger. It was so beautiful on her hand that he didn't want to remove it.

"This is too expensive! And I don't like wearing such a big diamond ring. I'm scared of being mugged."

If she was being honest, Ayla never liked luxurious things.

Besides, she never liked wearing anything expensive because she didn't think they were suitable for her.

After that, Lucas allowed her to choose again.

"Well, you can go ahead and choose whichever you like."

Ayla was the one who would be wearing the ring, so it was up to her.

As long as she liked it, he wasn't going to object.

After a long time, she finally chose a plain silver ring.

"Are you saving money for me Lala?" Lucas thought that she shouldn't have chosen such a cheap ring.

He wanted her to wear only the best. He also hoped that she could be the happiest bride in the world, and that she could be his beloved wife.

Raising her slender hand, Ayla said, "It's just the right size. Will you refuse the one I picked?"

She noticed how surprised Lucas was, but she was satisfied with the ring.

As long as they loved each other, they didn't need such expensive material objects.

Now that she had chosen a ring, he paid for it without any objection. After that, they walked out of the shop, hand-in-hand.

Chapter 104: Lucky To Be Loved

Lucas held Ayla's hand as they strolled through the street together.

Looking at him, she wondered, 'Is this how we're going to be from now on?'

After more than two years, she knew how much he had done for her.

Meanwhile, Anna was standing not far away, watching them. It turned out that Ayla was now with another man.

No wonder she managed to stay in Milan for two years without feeling hurt.

"Miss Woodsen, you are so charming! This man is so smitten with you he even followed you to Italy. Outstanding!"

Anna glanced at their hands.

For some reason, she felt a bit jealous.

Wherever Ayla went, she was happy.

Meanwhile, Anna had been with Brian for two years, but he had never been intimate with her again other than the time he was drunk last time.

He had kept her at arm's length all this time.

Looking at Anna, Lucas replied, "Lala is my fiancée. Please mind your manners."

Naturally, he knew that the reason she said that was because of Ayla's past relationship with Brian.

"Fiancée?" Anna sneered.

"So, are you aware that your fiancée is coming back to A City?"

"Of course, I do. If Lala wants to go back, I'll go back with her. You don't need to worry about such things."

Lucas hadn't mentioned to Ayla that he was coming back with her.

Anna looked at her and said, "I guess you really do have a new man now. Is this why you were so blunt with me? You just didn't want your fiancée to have any problems with Mr. Clark?"

"Indeed! I'm very happy now, so you don't have to worry that I'll do something to get Brian back."



Ayla held onto Lucas' arm.

"That's great! You better keep your word. Well, now that you have someone to accompany you on your way back, you can choose whether you want to come back with me or not."

Anna said that because she didn't want to see her acting sweet during the flight home.

Looking at her, Ayla replied, "I'll go to Antawood on time. And when the matter is over, I'll return to Italy."

After all, every beginning had an end.

She was on her own at the beginning, and she would be on her own until the end.

Once Anna had left, Ayla let go of Lucas' arm and asked, "You're going back, too? But what about your work?"

"Don't worry! I can deal with my work too when I am in A City."

Lucas would be very worried if he wasn't with her.

As Brian sat in his office, he received a call from Anna.

She mentioned that the new designer of Starlight was arriving one or two days after she came back.

Fortunately, he didn't ask to see Miss Wenny, so Anna was relieved.

The truth was, Ayla would be coming back on the same plane with her.

"Brian, will you pick me up at the airport tomorrow?"

What she really wanted was for Ayla to see how intimate she was with Brian.

"Okay. Send your flight schedule to my phone. I'll be there on time tomorrow," Brian answered.

In the past few days, the familiar woman that he saw on the streets of Milan that night repeatedly crossed his mind.

Maybe Anna was right that Ayla might really be dead.

There had been no news regarding her for over two years.

However, there was still a glimmer of hope residing in his heart, and he couldn't bring himself to give up, nor forget about her.

"Brian."

For a moment, Anna hesitated to speak her mind.

The man she loved deeply had another woman in his heart. How could she tell him that Ayla was still alive?

"What's the matter?"

Upon noticing her hesitation, Brian wondered if something noteworthy had happened to her in Italy.

“Anna, did something happen?”

Taking a deep breath, she replied, “Nothing. Go to bed early! I’m hanging up.”

Anna pursed her lips, bearing an indescribable pain in her heart.

Loving someone also meant that you had to get hurt.

And being loved was a fortune.

However, she was the one who loved.

The flight lasted for more than ten hours, but Ayla never closed her eyes once. She felt both uneasy and hopeful.

Lucas held her hand, feeling the cold ring on his palm.

“Are you worried about meeting him?”

She then turned to look at him and shook her head.

“There’s nothing to worry about. Even if we do meet, it only means that it’s destiny.”

Ayla wasn’t the same person she used to be two years ago.

Her debt to Brian had been paid off two years ago. She didn’t need to make any concessions for the sake of the Woodsen family.

“I’m glad that’s how you see it,” Lucas said, combing back her hair.

“It will take several hours before we get there. Don’t you want to get some rest first?”

Shaking her head, Ayla said, “I’m afraid of getting airsick.””

Two years ago, when he took her to Italy, she suffered a relapse of her illness while she was on the plane, and it scared him.

Ayla almost lost consciousness during the flight. And when she finally got off the plane, she vomited a lot.

Neither of them said anything more. He just held her in his arms.

As long as she was willing to accept him, he was willing to do anything to make her happy.

By the time the plane landed in Antawood’s international airport, it was already eleven in the evening.

Looking at Ayla’s pale face, Lucas asked, “Are you feeling unwell?”

“No, this is nothing.”

Ayla waved her hand in dismissal, weakly leaning into his arms.

Lucas embraced her before they got off the plane.

Ayla raised her head and looked not far away.

Anna was running towards a man standing at the side.

This certain man in black always stood out from the crowd, just like he did two years ago.

Ayla stopped and watched as Brian took the small suitcase from Anna's hand, and then the two of them walked out of the airport hall side by side.

"Let's go!" Ayla said to Lucas after being lost in a trance for a while.

Perhaps she only gathered enough courage to leave the airport after they had gone far away.

Meanwhile, Anna got into Brian's car and said, "Brian, let's get something to eat first, shall we?"

She didn't want to eat the food on the plane.

"Would you like to go to your favorite restaurant?"

After saying that, he focused on driving.

"Sure." Anna nodded.

As long as she was with him, it didn't matter what she would eat.

On the other hand, Ayla and Lucas hailed a taxi and went downtown together.

Yareli got her an apartment near the office building so that it would be convenient for her.

Lucas wouldn't allow her to live alone, so he got an apartment right across hers.

"So, now that you're back, do you feel anything special?" he asked Ayla, who had been looking out the window.

Ayla shook her head.

"No matter where I go, I will always be alone. I don't have any relatives. I guess I've gotten used to the life in Italy."

Because she didn't like spacious houses, Yareli didn't get her a big one, but she had everything she needed.

"Ms. Evans thinks highly of you, and that's why you're willing to go back to Italy, right?"

When he saw that the apartment had everything she might need, Lucas felt relieved.

"Ms. Evans has been very kind to me. Nobody would even consider assigning such an important cooperation project to a non-professional newcomer like me."

Naturally, Ayla was under a lot of pressure, but she wasn't afraid. She tried her best to bear that burden alone.

“You should have more confidence in yourself. You’ve spent all your time on learning how to design clothes in the past two years.”

Lucas was capable of supporting Ayla and providing her with a comfortable life, but she chose to be independent and she did whatever she wanted to.

In the past two years, she had designed numerous clothes and shoes.

Originally, it was just a hobby, but it eventually became her career.

After Lucas helped her unpack her luggage, Ayla leaned against the sofa to rest.

He didn’t go back to his own apartment until she was asleep.

As he stood in front of the French window, looking at the scenic night view, he felt a bit uneasy.

There was a cigarette between his fingers. Tatum had probably found out that he had returned. What kind of predicament would he get himself into next?

Chapter 105: Would You Still Love Her If She Came Back To You

Lucas heard his phone ringing. It was late and there was only one person who would call him at this time. He answered the phone warily.

“Father.”

“Have you returned to Antawood?” Tatum asked without preamble.

He had asked Lucas to go to Thailand but the latter had refused.

This time, he wanted to get done with solving the Brian issue now that Lucas had returned.

“Yes, I just arrived today.”

Lucas knew that he couldn’t hide this fact. He had tried his best to hide Ayla from Tatum for two years.

But maybe he couldn’t do it anymore.

Lucas wondered what Tatum would do to Ayla once he knew the truth.

Tatum had used her once. He might do it again.

“How long will you be in Antawood this time? I shouldn’t have to remind you of the issue each time. Do you want to insult the memory of your deceased parents by losing the Collins Group that rightfully belongs to you?”

Tatum had been feeding Lucas such ideas since Lucas’ childhood.

That was also why Lucas hated Brian.

All Lucas had wanted was to get close to Brian by using Ayla and kill him.

But before that could happen, he had developed a huge crush on Ayla. He hadn't taken revenge for his family yet.

And if Ayla were to know why he had approached her, she might hate him.

But he didn't regret it.

When he began trying to put a ring on her finger, he had considered everything that might happen in the future and had plotted his plan out.

"I know that, Father. I will never forget it," Lucas said, nodding.

"Good. Brian's men are watching me. So I hope you will handle this as soon as possible,"

Tatum reminded him.

Tatum's TH Gang had suffered a heavy blow because of Brian.

If it hadn't been for the fact that Brian had quitted the drug transactions over the past two years, Tatum wouldn't have had the chance to get back into this business again.

But Tatum was too eager for money.

He had forgotten the simple fact that the higher he climbed, the heavier the fall would be.

And Brian would not let him get away with this.

Tatum had shot Ayla, and Brian considered this unforgivable.

"I see."

Lucas hadn't taken any action yet because of Ayla.

He knew that if he took Brian down, Ayla would definitely leave him. And he couldn't imagine his life without her.

Over the past two years, Lucas had tried his best to do what Tatum had asked of him.

He would get whatever Tatum wanted, no questions asked. He knew that these illegal transactions would put him in a soup, but he did not care.

"I'm not forcing you, Lucas. You shouldn't forget what you've been working towards all these years," Tatum said.

But that was exactly what Tatum had done. He had forced Lucas into a corner, step by step.

Lucas had been smoking the whole night.

He looked out of the window, realizing with a wrench of his gut that Antawood, which was once his hometown, was now something he despised.

But he couldn't leave this place.

If his father hadn't told him everything before he had passed away, he might not have suffered so much.

Lucas had still been a helpless child at the time, being made to watch as several men raped his mother while his father, a heart patient, was admitted to the hospital.

Before his father had died, he had asked Lucas to take revenge.

The opportunity presented itself to him when Tatum had approached Lucas with a proposition for revenge.

Lucas had been too young to understand what hatred meant to him. He had merely nodded his head in confusion.

Tatum had then taken him to Thailand and put him through a rigorous, harsh training routine.

He had made Lucas stronger and taught him everything he needed to exact his revenge.

Brian drove Anna back to the villa.

"Where are you going?" Anna asked as she watched Brian turn around the moment they entered the living room.

"I'm going out for a walk. You should go to bed early," Brian said.

He just wanted to go to the backyard.

As he stood by the wooden tombstone that Ayla had built, Brian's heart ached.

He recalled that Ayla had gone crazy living here and had tried to commit suicide, and that Brian had forcefully kept her alive. But she had disappeared in the end.

He was the reason behind it all.

Would he ever get the chance to make it up to her? Anna followed him out and saw him standing there, still as a statue.

The only light in the dim corner of the backyard was the cigarette flickering between his fingers.

"Are you still thinking about her?" she asked, walking up to him.

Brian didn't say anything. Instead, he took a drag from his cigarette.

To him, it didn't matter if he thought about Ayla or not.

"If she is still alive, will you still love her?"

Anna had to know, although she didn't really want to hear him say yes.

She was the only one who knew that Ayla had returned on the same flight tonight.

"I won't answer your hypothetical questions," Brian said, throwing her a withering look as he put out the cigarette.

Brian and Ayla's marriage had only been signed on, but hadn't been registered.

But in his heart, Ayla had become his legitimate wife.

"I know. It has been two years. Even if Ayla is alive, she might be with another man, or she might have forgotten everything that happened here," Anna said.

She thought that the intimacy between Ayla and Lucas was real.

But if Brian knew that Ayla was still alive, and he still loved her, he would put all his efforts in getting her back.

He turned around and said, "We need to stop talking about her. Let's go."

He shook off all his thoughts as he strode furiously back to the house.

Anna hurried after him, wrapping her arms around his waist from behind as she caught up to him.

"Brian, please don't think about her."

If Brian made a conscious effort to not think about Ayla, he would eventually forget about her.

He turned his head to look at Anna and asked, "Why do you have to act like this, Anna?"

He pulled away from her and went up to the room.

Anna followed him in.

"You go to the backyard frequently, don't you?"

She could tell that Brian had an inexplicable pull towards the backyard.

He couldn't forget Ayla and the child they once had. So wouldn't it be good for Anna to make up for the loss?

"Go back to your room," Brian said shortly.

He didn't want to answer her question.

All he wanted was to stop thinking about it.

But in the past two years, he had always dreamed of a b\*\*\*\*y, disheveled Ayla appearing before him for just an instant before disappearing yet again.

"Do you remember this ring, Brian?" Anna asked, walking up to him.

She didn't take off the ring from her hand, but Brian did.

Because Anna \_ took their relationship seriously.

"You know that, Anna. I let you go at the time," he said, looking pained.

He knew that Anna wouldn't be happy if she chose to be with him. She would never be happy.

"But I didn't agree. My happiness is all about you. A kiss from you is more important than everything that another man can offer," Anna said.

Brian looked at her.

“Anna, I...”

He couldn't do this. He couldn't give her anything, not even a kiss.

“Just give me one chance. You feel guilty for losing your child with Ayla, don't you?” she pressed again, carefully sitting down beside him.

Child? Yes! He had abandoned his own child! And now, Anna had brought up a subject that seemed to close Brian up.

“I don't need a child!” Brian said coldly.

“No! You do! Or you wouldn't keep going to the backyard,” she said simply.

Anna knew Brian best, having worked for him all these years.

“Anna! You don't understand. You will never understand.”

Brian shook his head and looked at her “I understand everything. I won't force you to marry me. I just want to be with you and have a child. Is that too much to ask?”

Anna was being truthful in this moment.

She could give up everything just to be with .She had always known that Brian would not give her the love she desired.

But she had still gone and fallen in love with him.

Chapter 106: Let's Have A Baby

“Anna, stop kidding around. This is no fun,” Brian chastised her.

He looked intently at the woman beside him, wondering how it all came to be.

But there were certain things in life that one couldn't back out from once it happened.

He couldn't change the fact that he had a sexual relationship with Anna in the past, nor could he change the fact that he fell in love with Ayla.

Brian's silent thoughts were interrupted by Anna's outright admission, “I'm not kidding. I want us to have a child. I'm begging you.”

No sign of shame could be seen from her demeanor.

Setting her dignity and pride aside, her love for this incredible man made her braver and more vocal than she ever was.

Brian looked at her incredulously and exclaimed, “You will regret it!”

Before he could say anything more, she pulled him in for a deep slow kiss.

“I wouldn't regret carrying the child of the man I love the most, ” her heart spoke over her mind.



Brian just let her kiss his lips with much intensity.

Straddling his waist, her slender arms circled around his neck to deepen the kiss.

She had to admit that her past job as a bartender made her knowledgeable when it came to pleasing a man. She had always been the one who took the initiative in her relationship with Brian.

He stopped in the middle of the kiss to caress her cheeks.

“What a silly woman you are, Anna,” he whispered.

“I may be silly but I love you,” she replied with a radiant smile on her face.

At that moment, nothing could stop her from surrendering herself to the man who captured her heart.

After their passionate lovemaking, Anna leaned against his broad chest as she evened out her breathing.

“Brian, no matter what happens in the future, I will always love you,” she said to him with utmost sincerity.

If Brian knew that she had already seen Ayla and she chose not to tell him, he would certainly hate her.

Having a child with him was the key.

With a child binding the two of them together as one family, she was hopeful that he would still be with her in the future.

This plan might sound like she was taking advantage of the baby to make him stay, but she didn't want to take any chances at losing Brian.

He remained quiet despite Anna's heartfelt words.

Instead, he held her tightly in his arms.

This woman had done so much for him and he already owed her countless things for that reason.

It was already dawn when Ayla woke up.

Slowly, she walked towards the window and watched as the first light of day illuminated the sky.

Down the road, there was already a steady stream of cars coming and going.

After two long years, she finally came back.

As she took in her surroundings, it occurred to her that everything changed as much as she did.

‘My love, my heart, my unborn child’

She couldn't help but think of how these things from her past almost drove her to the brink of hell.

It took her a while to realize that everything was real.

She would have to live here for a period of time until she finished the project.

Ayla's work wouldn't start until tomorrow so she had the rest of the day for herself.

Across her apartment was an impressive skyscraper that housed her would-be office. Her musings were interrupted when the doorbell rang, signaling the presence of a visitor.

As she peered into the peephole, she saw Lucas standing outside the door carrying a bag in his hands.

"Lucas, what brought you here so early?" she asked curiously, as she opened the door to let him in.

"I want to make sure you wouldn't starve yourself. That's why I brought you something to eat," he informed her pointedly.

"You'd have stomachache if you won't eat breakfast. If you'd start your new life here in poor health, what would become of you in the future?" Lucas continued on his tirade.

As he set the food onto the table in front of her, Ayla stared at him and she could see the concern etched on his face.

He'd always looked after her and she would be thankful for that forever.

"I know and thanks for reminding me. I will take good care of myself," Ayla replied gently, an easy smile apparent on her face.

She would c\*\*k for herself more if she wanted to stay healthy.

"Lala, will you help me prepare the food? I really enjoy your cooking," Lucas grinned.

He was excited to share breakfast with her.

"Of course!" Ayla agreed happily.

She was touched that Lucas liked her food well enough to ask for it, although it was just simple home cooking. She remembered how Brian picked on everything she cooked, as if she couldn't do anything right.

'Or maybe he just hated my presence so much he couldn't stand it' she thought negatively.

Shaking her head, she reminded herself not to dwell on such ugly thoughts.

"Lala, I have some errands that I need to deal with today. Would you be fine with staying here alone?" Lucas asked her.

She wouldn't want to get in his way so she replied, "Sure, no problem."

Ayla stuffed her mouth with the delicious fried dumplings that Lucas brought. She nodded vigorously with her eyes closed as she relished every tasty bite.

Once done, she gulped the refreshing soybean milk and exclaimed, "I haven't eaten such a delicious breakfast in a long time!"

"I'll buy it for you every day," he assured her.

It was a joy watching her eat heartily.

“You know I’m not a picky eater. I’ll eat whatever you buy,” Ayla said as she wiped her mouth.

She didn’t have much appetite that morning that was why she only ate a few dumplings. Despite that, she felt as if her stomach would burst already.

“I will go to the supermarket to buy groceries today. I like the idea that we’d always have meals at home,” Ayla informed him as she took more sips of her soybean milk.

Lucas stilled upon hearing the word “home” from her.

That touched him immensely and he took it as a sign that she was beginning to accept his love.

Not wanting to spoil the moment, he cleared his throat and offered, “I’ll drive you there.”

“No, that’s okay. The supermarket isn’t far from here. Don’t you have things to deal with?”

Ayla’s apartment was situated at the best location in the city. She’d have to thank Yareli for that. Ms. Evans had always treated her well and made sure she would be at ease.

Ayla tidied up the breakfast table after Lucas left for his errands.

Once everything was spotless in the room, she grabbed her bag and headed downstairs.

Much to her surprise, she came across Anna at the lobby.

She was utterly speechless for a few seconds as she never imagined this would happen.

“Miss Anna, what brings you here?”

Ayla managed to ask despite the shock she felt.

Her keen eyes didn’t fail to notice how the woman looked at that moment.

Knowing Ayla would be sorely affected, Anna continued to pretend that she was pulling on her clothes and trying to put them back in place.

“Brian always acts like this. It’s embarrassing,” she even stated for added effect.

Hearing those words and understanding what they implied hurt her to the core.

“Is that why you are here?” Ayla asked to divert the topic.

She decided to turn a blind eye to what she was seeing, although she was still heartbroken over Brian’s devotion to Anna.

“I’m here because I wanted to check if you’re free today. I can take you to your office and give you a little tour,” Anna informed her.

Ayla considered it for a moment.

Since her office was far away from the Clark Group’s building, there would be no chance for her to run into Brian unexpectedly.

“Sure, I’m free today. We can go now,” she agreed.

“Alright, then. Let’s go!”

Anna eagerly walked ahead while Ayla trailed closely behind.

“I’ll call you Wenny from now on. You’re no longer Ayla, right?” Anna asked.

She cocked her head and raised her left brow, as if daring Ayla to disagree.

Frankly, Ayla didn’t care whether she was Wenny or Ayla. She had been Wenny to others for two years, but Lucas still called her Lala.

However, it would be wise to remain as Wenny from now on if she didn’t want Brian to discover her identity.

“Yes, I’m just Wenny now,”

Ayla simply said, not wanting to prolong the conversation.

When they reached the building, the two women entered the elevator at the same time.

The office was located at the eighth floor.

Upon entering the room, Ayla instantly liked her office.

Despite being small, it had all of the equipment and materials she needed.

‘I couldn’t ask for more ’ she sighed contentedly.

“What do you think? Does it suit your liking? If there’s more I can help you with, don’t hesitate to call me,” Anna assured her, while handing her a business card.

It wasn’t necessary but she wanted to show off to Ayla that she was the executive assistant to the CEO of the Clark Group, the one who was closest to Brian.

Not wanting to come off as rude, Ayla accepted the card and tucked it away.

“I think this space is good enough for me,” she said lightly.

Anna nodded.

“That’s good. You will work here starting tomorrow. Here’s the key card. I won’t come here often so just send your design draft to my e-mail.”

As much as possible, she wanted to cut off all the chances for Ayla and Brian to meet.

“Don’t worry about me. You’re already his fiancée. What we had was in the past and I have no plans of getting in between you two,”

Ayla finally addressed the elephant in the room.

Still, Anna couldn’t shake off the uneasy feeling because she could already guess what would happen if they crossed paths.

Sensing the rising tension between them, Anna decided to get up and leave the room.

Meanwhile, Ayla stayed behind, still relishing the good feeling she had in this office. She didn't leave until later that day. She took in the surroundings while walking down the pavement of this bustling metropolis.

It was incredible to think of how the city developed rapidly.

There were towering buildings left and right and the roads were packed with countless cars.

As Ayla headed towards the direction of the supermarket, a speeding car appeared out of nowhere and almost hit her by a hair.

Shocked and terrified, her knees gave out and she fell to the ground.

The shiny black limousine stopped almost immediately.

The driver rushed over to her, his face full of worry.

"Miss, are you okay? Did you get hurt?" he asked frantically, while looking over to her for any possible injury.

"What's going on here?" a deep baritone voice reverberated in the background.

At that moment, the city noise became muted and Ayla could only focus on that familiar voice.

She angled her head towards its direction and raised her eyes to see the man from the back seat.

When their eyes met, an immediate shock registered on both of their faces.

Chapter 107: All He Wanted Was A Home

Ayla stood up, her gaze not leaving the middle-aged man before her. She was stunned into speechlessness.

"You're Ayla, aren't you?"

Hayden was excited, surprised, and disbelieving at the same time.

"Yes, I am."

Ayla hadn't expected to meet Hayden on the next day after she returned.

"Hello, Mr. Smith," she said politely.

Hayden hadn't expected to see her again.

It had been more than two years, and he had thought that something bad had happened to Ayla.

"So you are still alive," he said, his voice joyful.

Ayla nodded. She had only met Hayden a few times and they weren't that familiar with each other. But the way Hayden looked at her confused her to no end.

"Are you free now? Can I buy you a cup of tea?" he asked, looking at her with hopeful eyes.

Ayla looked at her watch before nodding and saying, "Okay."

She couldn't refuse his polite invitation. To her, so far at least, Hayden was a good man.

They got into the car and Hayden mentioned the address of a nearby tea bar to his driver. It wasn't long before they were seated at a table.

"What kind of tea do you want to drink?" he asked.

"Green tea, please," she said mildly.

Hayden turned to the waiter and said, "Two cups of green tea."

Once the waiter had left, he turned to Ayla, the question shooting out of him.

"Where have you been these past two years? I was very worried when I heard that you had an accident."

"I was in Italy, Mr. Smith. I had a good and peaceful life there," she said honestly.

"That's good."

What could be better than her being alive? Hayden had never thought he would meet Ayla again.

"You look much older,"

Ayla observed as she looked at him.

In just two years, more than half of Hayden's hair had turned white, which made him look older than his actual age.

He nodded, "Yes. I'm getting old and I'm not in good health. So my hair turns white very quickly."

Saying thus, he sighed.

"Mr. Smith, you have a heart problem. You need to rest more," Ayla said, mildly berating the man.

Ayla and her adoptive father, Clayton, didn't get along well and almost never spoke to each other.

However, Ayla could carry a conversation with Hayden, even though they weren't very familiar with each other either.

"I'll call you Lala from now on, okay? Don't call me Mr. Smith. If you don't mind, just call me Uncle Hayden," Hayden said to her earnestly.

"Uncle Hayden," said Ayla, awkwardly testing out the new title.

Hayden nodded, smiling, "Okay, okay. That's good enough for now."

He was so excited, it was all he could do to control himself from bursting into tears.

Hayden's driver hurried over to them when they didn't emerge for a long time.

“Mr.Smith, the doctor called again and asked when you will be there.”

“Let them wait.”

Hayden had been making his way out to go to the hospital for a physical examination when he had met Ayla. But now, everything else seemed trivial and unimportant.

Looking at his pale face, Ayla said, “Mr.Smith.”

“What?”

Hayden said, pulling a long face at the reverted name.

“Okay, Uncle Hayden. You’d better go to the hospital. We can talk another day,” she said with a slightly amused smile.

Hayden nodded.

“Okay. Will you be staying in Antawood?”

This was a question he was very concerned about the answer for.

“I came back for work, but I may be here for a long time,” Ayla said.

“That’s good. Where are you going now? Let me drive you there,” he said, getting to his feet.

Ayla shook her head.

“No, thanks. I just need to visit the supermarket across the street.”

They exited the tea bar together and Ayla didn’t make her way across to the supermarket until Hayden’s car turned the corner.

When Lucas came home from work at noon, he saw Ayla cooking busily in the kitchen in a pink apron.

“Why did you c\*\*k so many dishes, Lala?” he asked, sniffing at the air full of the aroma of delicious food.

“I haven’t cooked in a long time. I don’t have anything to do today, so I’m thinking I’ll prepare more. Especially since I’ll be busy from tomorrow,” she said.

She pulled out a pot of soup as she spoke.

Lucas slid a hand around her waist as he said, “I’m so lucky to have you.”

He kissed her on the cheek and released her to pick up his chopsticks.

“I smell of oil and smoke. You go sit at the table. I’ll freshen up and be out soon,” she said, turning her head away from her as he made to kiss her again.

Later, when they were seated across from each other at the table, Lucas said to her, “Lala, you should eat more. You didn’t eat anything the whole of yesterday.”

Thus berating her, he piled up some food for her on a plate.

Ayla remained silent for a minute before asking, "Are you busy this afternoon, Lucas?"

She looked at him intently.

"I'm free. Where do you want to go?" he said.

She shook her head.

"I just want to go out and look around the city."

There was a hint of sorrow in her voice.

"Okay, I'll drive you there. Wherever you want to go, I'll be with you."

Lucas knew that Ayla's feelings towards Antawood were complicated.

It didn't matter if these feelings were good or bad.

She would always harbor them.

He finished eating all the food, thinking appreciatively of Ayla's cooking skills. His memory of home had been distant.

Only Ayla had been able to make him feel what home was like. He wanted this feeling for the rest of his life.

After lunch, Ayla did the dishes in the kitchen as Lucas prepared a fruit bowl.

They worked around the kitchen in harmony, like a couple that had lived together for a long time.

As they settled down onto the sofa, he handed her the bowl.

She picked at the fruits before saying, "I want to go see the Woodsen family's house this afternoon."

"Okay. I'll drive you there. But will you be okay if you go there?"

When Clayton had sent Ayla to Brian, the Woodsen family had lost everything, and Clayton had been forced to live on the streets for several years.

The Woodsen family now had nothing but desolation.

Ayla shook her head.

"I just want to go there to look. You won't understand the feeling of growing up in that place alone."

"Of course I do. How can I not understand? You know that I have been alone since I was a child."

It was the first time Lucas had told her something like that.

She had always thought that Lucas was from a rich family, because he always gave her the best.

"Lucas," she whispered and then fell silent as she watched him.

Long minutes later, she finally asked the question she had been wanting to ask for a long time.



“What’s your relationship with Mr.Smith’s family?”

“Uncle Hayden is a friend of my father, so we are on good terms.”

Lucas knew the relationship that Ayla and Toby shared, as well as the relationship between the Smith family and her.

“I see,” she said, nodding.

“Have you always lived with the Smith family? Ever since you were a child?”

“I grew up in Thailand,” he said quietly.

Those painful memories were now in the past.

Ayla took his hand but said nothing.

It looked like they were more similar than she had expected.

That was why Lucas was so kind to her.

“I think we should go.Didn’t you say you wanted to have a look at the Woodsen family’s house? I’ll go with you,” he said, standing up abruptly.

Once Ayla had changed into something better, they left the house together.

Chapter 109: Dissatisfaction With Wenny

Lucas stirred his coffee as he looked at Molly.

“If you want to live in peace, you need to overwhelm Toby with love. Do you understand?”

Loving someone constituted more than just being nice to each other.

It involved sacrifices and commitments that would last a lifetime.

“Lucas, do you still think about Ayla? Are you still in love with her?”

She knew that Lucas had fallen in love with Ayla two years ago.

When Ayla had disappeared, he had also mysteriously disappeared.

He only reappeared recently.

Lucas nodded, “Yes! Very much so!”

His tone betrayed helplessness.

He would never stop loving her.

“Lucas, have you been searching for her over the past two years?”

She couldn’t comprehend how he could possibly love someone who always gave him a cold shoulder.

“Let’s change the topic. When you are free, let’s invite Toby to join us for dinner,” Lucas said, sipping his coffee.

“Okay, I’ll get back to you on that,” Molly said with a smile.

“I’m attending a dinner party with him this evening.”

After leaving the cafe, Lucas headed for the office building where Ayla was working.

Brian had neglected the drug business in the past two years and this gave Tatum a chance to revive his business.

It was obvious that Brian’s only objective now was to defeat Tatum.

Lucas had warned Tatum many a time not to be reckless, but he was ruled by his greed and risked everything.

Seated in her office, Ayla was concentrating so deeply on her painting that she lost track of time.

Ellie, who was a responsible assistant, just waited in silence for instruction from her.

Lucas entered with some coffee and tiramisu he had bought from the bakery.

He noticed Ellie sitting at her own desk with a helpless, aggrieved expression on her face.

Meanwhile, Ayla, who was so engrossed in her work of art, was oblivious of the presence of both Ellie and Lucas.

Ellie livened up at the sight of her savior.

“Good evening, sir. What can I do for you?”

It was only when Ellie addressed Lucas that Ayla raised her head and greeted him.

“Lucas.” She looked at her watch.

It was already seven o’ clock in the evening.

“Ellie, you may leave now! You can leave at the end of your shift. You don’t need my permission.”

Ayla felt a little embarrassed.

Ellie nodded, took her bag and bid them goodbye as she left.

Clasping her hand in his, Lucas sat on the sofa and remarked, “You’re so busy with your masterpiece that you forgot how late it is, didn’t you?”

He should have thought of this.

Ayla nodded with embarrassment.

“You know I have a deadline to meet.”

It was only when she saw the tiramisu in front of her that she realized how hungry she was.

“Snack on a slice of cake first then I’ll take you out for a sumptuous dinner.”

Seeing Ayla take a big bite of the tiramisu, Lucas smiled.

“Eat it slowly.No one is going to grab it from you!”

Lucas wiped her mouth with a tissue and asked, “Did you skip lunch?”

Ayla hesitated then said, “I have eaten.”

She had only nibbled.

“Why do I find it so hard to believe you?”

He handed her a cup as he sipped on his coffee.

“Don’t stay up too late tonight!”

“I won’t.”

When something was bothering her, she would not be able to sleep.

At other times, she dozed off so easily.

Ayla packed away all the design drafts into the drawer.Then she left the office with Lucas.He draped his coat over her.

“It’s a little chilly outdoors.What do you fancy for dinner?”

“Let’s go home,” she said.

For her, Antawood was too small and she didn’t want to risk running into Brian.

“Okay, let’s go home then.”

Hand in hand they walked towards the apartment building across the street.It was a real advantage to live close to one’s work place.

Besides, Ayla liked to reach home in good time to c\*\*k.

After leaving the company, Brian drove back to the villa.Anna had gone home ahead of him to prepare dinner.

Ever since she had made her desire to have a baby with him known to him, she had always gone home early and helped with dinner preparations.

She wanted to prove to him that she could be the perfect Mrs.Clark.

“Brian, you’re home! Dinner is ready.Let’s tuck in.”

She took his briefcase and helped him with his coat.

They enjoyed a quiet dinner.

“Brian, have you been working overtime?”

“Hmmm.” Brian nodded.

He was extremely busy these days, strategizing on how to destroy Tatum. He swore he would make Tatum rot in hell for what he had done to Ayla.

“Anna, is everything ready for the new designer, Wenny?” Brian asked after a long pause.

Anna was taken aback.

“Brian, why are you so concerned about Wenny?”

She felt ill at ease.

“What’s wrong? You seem to be dissatisfied with her.” Brian looked her in the eye.

She was always generous and supported women in business.

“No, not at all! Wenny is a very capable person.”

Anna smiled faintly and uneasily. She was hostile to Wenny, because she was afraid of Ayla taking Brian away.

Ayla was her biggest threat.

“Really? Then why don’t you invite her out for dinner sometime?” Brian said casually.

But his words jarred her and she dropped her chopsticks.

Anna hurriedly picked them up and apologized, “I’m sorry. My hand just slipped.”

“What’s wrong? Is something bothering you?”

Brian’s eyes tore into Anna.

Anna shook her head.

“No, it’s just that Wenny is so busy these days. I’ll ask her at a more convenient time.”

Why did he broach the topic of wanting to see Wenny? Was he getting suspicious? “Then forget it. If she is busy, we will contact her at a later date. I would imagine that she must be pretty busy with the next season’s fashion show.”

Brian continued to relish his meal.

She was filled with a great sense of relief.

Anna made coffee and took it to his study.

“Brian, a delicious cup of coffee for you.”

“Just put it there,” he motioned, without raising his head.

He was busy analyzing the information sent by Jaime.

If he wanted to completely destroy Tatum then he needed to usurp all Tatum's power globally. He must come up with a foolproof plan.

"Brian, why don't you go to bed? It's late now."

Although they lived together, they rarely met or spoke. She wondered if it was the same case when Ayla was there.

Brian replied, "You can go ahead to bed. I still have some urgent work to complete."

The truth was, over the past two years, he hadn't totally given up on the drug business.

He just observed Tatum's complacency. At the earliest opportunity, he would make him pay for the prices.

Chapter 110: You Should Have Died Two Years Ago

Anna had no choice but to leave the study. She stood for a moment outside, leaning against the wall, taking deep breaths to center herself.

Brian's increasingly indifferent attitude towards her was making her more uneasy with each passing day.

Brian never asked about the work that she was responsible for, but tonight he had offered to meet Wenny.

If this happened, he would find out that Wenny was Ayla, who he had waited and looked for two years.

And if Brian as much as saw Ayla, there would be no place for Anna in his life.

Only if Anna became pregnant with Brian's child would she have the chance to be with him.

Brian leaned back against the leather seat.

Anna had acted strange tonight, which caused him to wonder if something had happened. She had always allowed him to dominate her, and had never raised an objection, no matter what he did.

But ever since she had returned from Italy, her behavior had changed.

He trusted her, which was why he didn't restrain her too much. But he didn't like women who would cross the line.

Ayla prepared soup and four dishes and called for Lucas.

"It's time for dinner. You must be hungry. Aren't you?"

"I'll eat any number of dishes you c\*\*k," Lucas said, sitting down at the table.

"I can have only one meal every day if I eat the food you c\*\*k every night!"

"Okay, then you should eat all of this. We can't waste food," Ayla said, putting down a bowl of rice before him.

"I don't want to waste them," Lucas said, and practically inhaled the food.

As she watched him eat with gusto, Ayla remembered cooking for Brian, only for him to pick at the food.

He hadn't liked her cooking at all.

And when things had come to a head, she couldn't c\*\*k dinner for him anymore.

Maybe that was a good thing.

"Lala, why aren't you eating? The food won't taste as good when it gets cold," Lucas said, looking up as he realized that she wasn't eating with him.

She nodded.

Ayla ate slowly, but she didn't find the food delicious, because she recalled what Anna had said to her in the studio today.

Ayla knew that she shouldn't care, and that she should not pay so much heed to Anna's words.

Because even if she harbored all these feelings and thoughts and nursed a broken heart, she couldn't speak about these things to anyone.

The next day, Lucas received a call from Tatum, asking him to go to Thailand.

He couldn't refuse because he knew that if he didn't go, Tatum would come to him. He would then come face to face with Ayla, something that Lucas couldn't imagine the consequences of.

"I need to go out of town for a week. Are you okay with being alone?" Lucas said to Ayla, worry etched on his face.

"Don't worry. I'm not a kid anymore. Besides, I'll be busy with my work. Nothing will happen to me," she said reassuringly.

But Lucas didn't believe her. He knew that once she began working, she would forget everything else, including eating.

Ayla dropped him off at the airport and went back to her office only after Lucas' plane had taken off.

She found Anna waiting at her office when she got there.

"You don't have to come to check on me every day, Miss Anna," she said shortly.

"Really? If I hadn't come, I wouldn't have found out that you were planning to skip work today,"

Anna retorted. She had found the flimsiest excuse and started to rip into Ayla.

Ayla walked to her desk and sat down before looking Anna dead in the eye and saying, "You don't have to remind me. I will finish my work on time."

"That's good," the other woman said and made her way out.

But before she left, she turned around and asked, "You won't meet Brian without telling me, will you?"

"Why do you ask me this?" Ayla asked, cocking her head to the side.

She wanted to tell Anna that she didn't have to remind her to stay away from Brian every single day. She was as far away from Brian as she could be. Wasn't Anna satisfied to have Ayla hiding here?

"Because Brian suddenly proposed to invite you to dinner last night."

Brian had given up on the idea eventually, but Anna wasn't sure if he wouldn't bring it up again.

Ayla was surprised too.

Although Brian liked to take control of everything, he would never offer to see a woman voluntarily, no matter what the situation was.

Moreover, she had found an excuse to avoid meeting Brian in Milan.

So even if he really wanted to see her this time, she could choose not to.

"Don't worry. I won't go," Ayla said.

She pulled out a design draft, looked at it for a long second, before continuing, "You don't have to come here every day if you don't have anything important to tell me. You can speak with Ellie. I'm afraid your frequent visits will affect my work."

She was sure she had made herself clear that she needed to be alone and in a quiet environment.

She didn't want to see anyone, so Anna didn't need to worry.

Moreover, Anna's appearances would only ruin her mood.

Anna looked at Ayla with obvious distaste as she said, "I don't want to see you either. If you weren't the designer that Ms. Evans had personally arranged for, I'd rather not have seen you for the rest of my life. I'd rather you were dead! You should have died two years ago!"

"I'm not dead. And it looks like I let you down. But you know what? I also wish I had never met you. I had hoped to live my life in Milan. But you were the one to force me. You don't want Brian to see me, so you are making me hide here. I have to sacrifice my freedom for one of the Clark Group's cooperation cases. And I've promised you over and over that I won't see Brian. But you don't believe me. So why don't you go to Ms. Evans and ask her to replace me with Linda instead? Wouldn't it be so much better? Then you wouldn't have to worry all the time."

Ayla was sad. She couldn't love the man she wanted to love. Her only choice had been to escape, but Anna kept forcing her to do things she didn't want to do.

Ayla had chosen to quit, which made Anna's worry unnecessary.

But that didn't seem to register in Anna's mind.

"You don't have to be so arrogant just because you are a good designer. All you have done is rely on men to become what you are today!" Anna said acidly before turning around and storming off, giving Ayla no chance to retort.

Ayla stood before the French windows.

The scenery took her back two years, engulfing her with a sense of déjà vu.

But her feelings were different. She was different.

After that day, Anna didn't come to the studio again.

Every time she had any questions, she went to Ellie.

And since Ayla's off-duty time wasn't fixed, she'd ask Ellie to take off when the day ended, staying there herself long after the office time ended.

Lucas had gone to Thailand but he still called her every day to ask whether she was doing well, whether she had meals on time, and whether she often stayed up late, unmindful of the time.

And Ayla laughed at him every time, telling him that he was like a housekeeper.

But she knew that some men gave all their love to just one woman.

Lucas was one such man, and Ayla knew she had to accept him.

She felt a sharp pain in her neck, as a result of not moving from her chair for the whole day. Her neck throbbed as she lifted her head to look at the clock, shocked to find that it was already ten o'clock in the evening. She thought of Lucas' words and put away the design drafts, preparing to go back home.