

TSBMMOUS 13

Chapter 13: Her Dignity

As they were eating, Ayla looked up from the plate and turned around.

Suddenly she froze when her eyes met Brian's sharp gaze directly on her.

Anna followed Brian's gaze and located Ayla.

A smirk appeared on her face as she waited for the drama.

"Lala, what's wrong?"

Toby held Ayla's hand and shook it gently.

"Are you cold? Why is your hand so cold?"

"Oh, it's nothing. I'm fine."

Ayla forced a smile as she averted her gaze from Brian and looked down.

She withdrew her hand gently from Toby's hold, conscious of Brian's burning gaze that bore into her.

She knew he was misunderstanding the whole situation.

She'd have to face its consequences.

"Come on, finish the food. Do you want more? I can order more for you."

Toby looked at her with adoration in his eyes.

She was still that little girl whom he left years ago.

He reached out and rubbed her hair softly.

He wanted to come back before her eighteenth birthday and celebrate it with her.

But he couldn't make it.

Now that he was here, he could make it up for her.

"Thank you, Toby."

Ayla nodded then drank the orange juice quickly.

Toby noticed how suddenly she turned restless.

Meanwhile, Anna gave Brian a side glance.

"Mr. Clark, why did you marry such an unworthy woman?"

In fact, Anna never really understood why Brian married Clayton's daughter if he wanted to take revenge on him.

Such a skittish woman was not suitable for him.

For a person like Brian, any woman would want to marry him.

But he chose Arlene out of all.

It was beyond understandable to Anna.

Brian and Anna took seats at the table opposite to the one where Ayla was seated.

Brian quietly stirred the coffee in front of him before saying, "Well, I expected this."

He had expected that Clayton's daughter wouldn't be a loyal woman.

Brian used marriage to bind Arlene for a lifetime.

Because the hatred he had in his heart, wouldn't have subsided otherwise.

"Mr. Clark, I really don't understand why would you do that? Although she is beautiful and slender, as far as I can tell, you don't care about appearance." Anna looked at him.

Brian was handsome and a renowned businessman.

But his appearance was of a cold and strict person.

No one could really understand what went on in his incomprehensible mind.

He was like a closed book.

She couldn't read him, and perhaps no one else could.

"You are right."

Indeed, Brian wasn't a man who only paid attention to appearance.

When he decided to marry Arlene, he didn't even know how she looked like.

Brian had no idea that he actually married Clayton's adopted daughter, Ayla, and not his biological daughter, Arlene.

"I hope I am the only woman who knows you well." Anna smiled.

No matter how many women Brian would meet and take, she was the only one who would always stay by his side.

Brian didn't answer.

He just picked up the coffee cup and drank it slowly. His icy glare shifted to Ayla.

Seeing her with another man, he felt bothered.

He said to Anna, "I've had enough coffee. Let's go now!"

Anna looked over at Ayla.

She might look nervous on the outside, but that woman was bold.

She didn't even try to leave and continued to talk with that other man.

Brian was careful of his image outside.

Otherwise, he'd have done something reckless.

Ayla shuddered at the thought.

Ayla's heart sank when she saw the deathly glare in Brian's eyes when he left.

She felt guilty and helpless, glancing at Toby.

"Lala, are you living in the school dormitory now? I can help you find a better place to live.Okay?"

Toby didn't want her to be bullied in the school.

The Woodsen family never treated her well, but she deserved better.

She might be the adopted daughter of the Woodsen family, but she was nothing more than a servant.

Ayla shook her head.

"No, that won't be necessary."

She didn't even have the basic freedom now.

It was impossible for her to move out.

"Why? What's wrong? Do you still live with the Woodsen family? Have Uncle Clayton forbidden you to move out?"

Toby knew that Ayla was obedient to Clayton.

She'd never refuse Clayton's words no matter what.

"Uh, I'm living in my student's home.I am her home tutor."

Ayla lied to him.She couldn't tell him that she was sold to a devil named Brian.

"Do you still work part-time?"

Toby was aware of her working part-time.

She worked to earn money and save it for her higher studies.

"Yes, I do."Ayla nodded guiltily.

She wanted to hide her marriage from him as long as possible.

She wanted to protect her dignity in front of Toby for now.

She knew she shouldn't lie to him, but she couldn't bear to be looked down upon by him.

If Toby had returned earlier, she wouldn't have been in this situation.

“Lala, you don’t have to do part-time jobs anymore. Now I can afford a good life for you,” Toby said.

He wanted to provide her a good life.

She needed not to rely on others anymore.

“Toby, I’m fine. Don’t worry for me.”

Ayla didn’t want Toby to stress for her.

He must have a lot of pressure already.

Ayla didn’t want to come between him and his achievements.

Toby closely observed her, then held her hand.

“Lala, don’t lie to me. Tell me what’s wrong with you? You are so thin. Aren’t you taking care of yourself? I’ll find a house tomorrow. You can quit your part-time job and move out. You just need to focus on your study. You don’t need to worry about anything else. I will be with you and everything will be fine. Okay?”

He didn’t want her to suffer anymore.

Since childhood, he had seen this girl suffering a lot, and he felt sorry for her.

Toby had loved her since those younger days and wanted to marry only her.

Chapter 14: Humiliation

Ayla couldn’t say no to him when Toby insisted. She wasn’t sure how long she could hide the truth from him.

But if she rejected him too many times, he would be suspicious.

After leaving the cafe, Toby drove her back to her school.

“Lala, can you have dinner with me tonight?”

Toby eagerly waited for her response.

He even was very reluctant to leave Ayla.

Ayla felt guilty again to lie to him.

But she had no other choice.

She gave him a half-smile and said, “Toby, I have work tonight. Let’s do it sometime later.”

Toby thought for a moment and then said, “Okay! This is my card. It has my new phone number. Call me if you have time.”

“Okay.” Ayla nodded with a smile and took the card from him.

The card had his title printed on it.

“Executive Director and Deputy CEO of Smith Group”.

After exchanging goodbyes to each other, Toby left and Ayla went back to attend her classes.

When she returned to the villa after school, Brian hadn't come back.

She was temporarily relieved for his absence.

So, Ayla helped Maria prepare the dinner and waited for Brian to come back.

She knew today she'd have to give him an explanation for her seemingly rendezvous with Toby.

"Mrs.Clark, you can have your dinner.Mr.Clark hasn't called yet.He might not return tonight."

Maria was worried about Ayla's health.

It was almost midnight now, and still she didn't eat or drink anything.

She had been waiting for Mr.Clark since she returned from school.

Ayla smiled at Maria and said, "Don't worry.I'm fine.He'll be back soon."

However, she was well aware of the possibility that once he returned, things might go haywire.

Perhaps, she'd have to face his wrath.

She still couldn't believe that she bumped into him while being with Toby.

But she wanted to get it over with.

So she waited anxiously.

Brian came back around one o'clock in the morning.

Ayla was already trembling with fear with the thought of facing him.

As soon as Brian came in, a rush of cold, bitter wind entered the villa along with him.

"Mr.Clark."

Ayla mumbled his name and walked up to him.

She bowed politely wondering whether she had any chance to negotiate with him.

Brian glared at her.

This woman had the audacity to come and stand before him after he caught her red handed.

"Well, have you had your dinner? I've cooked as per your instruction."

Ayla accumulated a lot of courage to say that to him.

Brian said nothing and walked directly into the dining room.

The table had already been prepared.

He noticed the dishes and the soup on the table.

They looked delicate and delicious indeed.

Despite being cold, they still looked appetizing.

But he did not show any appreciation.

She had cheated on him for God's sake.

How could he forgive her? Did she think making a few delicious dishes would make him forget everything? But how wrong she was! Arlene shouldn't have underestimated him and thought that he wouldn't find out.

He had been being generous with her.

He provided her a good life.

He even gave her the permission to go to school.

Yet, she cheated on him.

"Arlene, how dare you! How can you think cooking food for me would make up for your deed? Did you think I would forgive you easily? You are my legal wife. Do you still remember that?"

Brian shouted aloud and with a wave of his hand, threw away all the dishes to the floor.

The porcelain dishes and bowls broke into pieces and scattered around.

Ayla flinched in fright.

She was about to bend down and clean up, but she was pulled back and pressed on the table by him the next second.

The suddenness took her by surprise.

"What...What are you doing?"

She trembled being held by him tightly.

"What am I doing? What exactly do you think I am doing?"

Brian gritted his teeth.

This woman was indeed a temptress, and she thought she could tempt him as well.

Many men might want to spend time with her, but he didn't.

All he wanted was to humiliate her in every way possible.

"Arlene, since you love talking and laughing with other men, you wouldn't refuse your own husband, right?"

Brian spat the words out bitterly.

They were filled with hatred.

“No, no! You’re misunderstanding things, Mr.Clark.He and I are just...”

Ayla couldn’t finish her sentence because she was tightly gripped by him.

Two streams of tears rolled down from the corner of her eyes.

But it didn’t make Brian feel sorry even the slightest.

This time Brian was even more brutal.

Almost animalistic.

Ayla held the edge of the table tightly and endured the pain.

She was afraid.

He’d always humiliate her like this, and she couldn’t do anything about it.

Ayla didn’t know how long he continued his torture on her, because at one point, she fainted because of the terrible pain.

When she regained her senses, she was the only one present in the dining room, lying on the table, naked.

Enduring the pain, Ayla sat up and collected her dress from the ground to cover her body.

She went back to her room and walked into the bathroom.

She looked at herself in the mirror.

Her body was covered with bruises all over.

It hurt.

She hurt everywhere.

She couldn’t even stand any longer.

She collapsed on the ground as the shower kept pouring on her head.

Ayla grabbed a scrubber and washed her body with hot water.

She rubbed her body hard to wash away all the evidences of torture left by him.

What Brian had given her was the worst pain anyone could have, and this moment would never fade away from her life.

“Toby, what should I do?”

She whispered then broke down completely.

Tears streamed down her face, mingling with the running water.

Chapter 15: He Has A Fiancee

Brian stood in front of the window, overlooking the garden below.

An inner turmoil was going on inside him.

The room was dark and the only light came from the lit cigarette held between his fingers.

His jaws were clenched together making his aura look more domineering.

His mind darted to the thought of that woman he had made his wife.

He couldn't understand how she could affect his heart so much.

When he saw her at the coffee shop, getting cozy with that man, something unusual shifted inside him.

It surprised him more when she allowed that man to hold her hand and touch her hair.

The way she smiled at him, it made Brian unreasonably angry.

His phone rang suddenly.

He glanced at the screen before answering the call.

"Jaime, how is it going? Have you got any information?"

"Mr.Clark, his name is Toby Brown, the Deputy CEO of Smith Group," Jaime answered.

Brian had asked him to investigate this particular person without telling him the reason.

Jaime was slightly confused.

They had no business relationship with the Smith Group.Why was Brian interested in the Smith Group's Deputy CEO?

"Toby Brown? The Deputy CEO of Smith Group." Brian repeated Jaime's words.

His eyes narrowed at the mention of Toby's name and position.

Toby.

Wasn't this the same man she was mentioning that night? Apparently she missed him so much.

"Yes, he joined the Smith Group three years ago.After his engagement with Molly Smith a year ago, he had been promoted to the Deputy CEO post a month ago.Toby is close to the Woodsen family as well." Jaime informed Brian.

It wasn't difficult for him to investigate and find everything about Toby.

He thought, perhaps, it was because of the Woodsen family, and Toby's relationship with them that Brian asked him to find out details about Toby.

Brian fell silent.

So these two were childhood friends turning lovers.

Although Toby was engaged to Miss Smith, he still met with Arlene.

Perhaps, he didn't love his fiancée.

"Mr.Clark?"

When Brian didn't respond after a long time, Jaime called out his name.

"Send his details to me by tomorrow morning."

Brian wanted to know everything about him.

Ayla still wasn't over last night's incident.

Standing in front of the mirror the next morning, she observed the marks Brian left on her skin.

She chose a high-necked dress and a coat to cover up those marks.

When Ayla left her room, Maria was the first one to see her.

She looked at Ayla and noticed how haggard she looked.

In the morning, when Maria was cleaning the villa she saw the mess in the dining room and guessed what might have happened last night.The servants' house was at a certain distance from the main villa.

Unless Brian called them urgently via the intercom, they were not allowed to come over past midnight.

"Mrs.Clark, are you okay?" Maria asked with concern.

Ayla nodded.

"I'm fine."

She couldn't hide in her room forever.She'd have to face it sooner or later.

Maria felt sorry for her.

"Mrs.Clark, you look tired.I am making breakfast.Please wait a little."

A few minutes later, Brian came downstairs.

He stood at the lowest step of the stairs and called, "Arlene!"

Ayla was sitting at the dining table, face down.

She was, in fact, slightly distracted.

"Arlene!"

When she didn't respond, he raised his voice.

It was evident that he was displeased with her.

Ayla jumped up in fright and turned around at once.

She froze seeing him scowling at her.

She was still scared by what happened last night, but she couldn't avoid him.

She walked towards him in trembling steps.

"Mr.Clark."

Her voice wavered.

Glancing at his indignant face, she realized it'd be useless to try to explain things to him.

Because he wouldn't believe it anyway.

Also, he was a dangerous man and she should never offend him.

"Are you planning to meet your lover again today? Aren't you satisfied already after yesterday?" Brian noticed the clothes she wore today.

She wore a high- necked dress and a coat to cover the marks he deliberately and intentionally left.

"I won't go out."

Ayla knew that he wouldn't let her go out today.So, she gave in voluntarily.

Brian nodded.

"Good."

Then he sneered, "Make me a cup of coffee."

"Yes, sir."

Ayla immediately went to the kitchen and prepared coffee for him.

She didn't know how he liked his coffee to be.

So, she asked Maria and made the coffee as per her instruction.

Few minutes later she served a cup of coffee in front of him and stood aside like a servant.

She dreaded his reaction.What if he would be dissatisfied with the taste?

"Arlene, has Clayton called you recently?" Brian asked her.

Clayton loved his daughter the most.

He must have contacted her.He must have discussed his escape plan with his daughter.

Ayla tensed up at the sudden mention of Clayton.She shook her head.

"No, he didn't call me."

Clayton would never call her.She'd never be equal to his biological daughter.

“No?”

Raising his eyebrows, Brian asked, “So, he won’t try to stop me and let me do whatever I want to you? If he hasn’t yet called you, it means, he doesn’t even care for you and your well-being.No matter how you are living, he doesn’t care.So, you want me to believe that Clayton doesn’t love his only daughter? Alright, I might even believe that lie.But you can’t forget that you have been sold to me.Without my permission, no one can touch you.”

Ayla clenched her fists, but said nothing.

Brian continued, “If you dare to go out and try to meet another man again, I’d give you two choices only.Either Clayton dies or Toby.”

Ayla’s face turned pale when she heard the last sentence of Brian.

How did he find out Toby’s name? Her blood ran cold.

Would he make Toby lose everything he had now? At that exact time Jaime came in with the documents of Toby.

He saw Ayla standing aside with a pale face and gave her a smirk.

As he handed the documents to Brian, he said, “Mr.Clark, here are the documents of Toby that you wanted.”

Brian picked up a photo of Toby and looked at it intently.

“This man has a fiancée, do you know that?”

Although he said the words in a flat tone, they dropped on her like a bomb.She couldn’t even stand steadily anymore.

Chapter 16: Her Freedom Toby had a fiancée?

The unexpected news shocked Ayla.

How could it be possible? Why didn’t Toby tell her anything? It meant the woman she saw with Toby that day was his fiancée.

If he was engaged already, why did he promise to be with her? He promised to give her a good life in the future.Was it nothing but a lie?

“Don’t tell me you don’t know that,” Brian taunted, noticing her surprised expression.

Ayla’s eyes darted towards the documents in Brian’s hand.

She realized they were all related to Toby.

Of course! He was Brian Clark! A man whose one word was enough to decide if a person would continue to live or just die.

It was ridiculous for her to expect anything good from him.

“Why are you silent now? Arlene, I didn’t really expect that you’d date such a man. Why are you now pretending to be surprised?”

Brian dropped the photo of Toby on the table and looked up at Ayla.

Ayla considered whether she should tell him the truth.

She bit on her lips before opening her mouth.

“Mr. Clark, actually, I want to tell you something.”

“Tell me something? Are you even qualified to talk to me? What would you tell me by the way? Apparently I know things more than you,”

Brian sneered, intimidating her.

“Mr. Clark, I can do anything you want me to do. I will help keep your villa clean, c**k for you, and wash your clothes. I will do everything to pay back the money my father owes you. But, will you please give me freedom after that?” Her voice broke at the end.

Ayla wanted nothing but to be free.

No matter what kind of life she would lead in the future, she didn’t want to stay prisoned like this forever.

She had no freedom here, and she didn’t want to lose herself.

Brian and Jaime exchanged a look before turning towards Ayla at the same time.

“I have many servants. I don’t need your help in anything.” Brian scoffed.

“If I give you freedom and let you roam freely, how much would you make by selling yourself? Even if you trade yourself, it won’t be enough to pay me back. Your father took sixty million dollars from me, and gave you to me to pay my debt back. Do you think you can make that much money easily?”

His words struck her like a cannon ball.

She was really scared now.

Clayton owed him more than what she had expected.

She couldn’t make that much money even if she worked all her life.

Did that mean she’d lose her freedom forever? Brian deliberately thought about her request before speaking, “Give me some time to think about it. If you can make me happy, you can stay here peacefully.”

What Brian actually meant was he wouldn’t let her go.

He was possessive over his belongings. He didn’t like sharing his owned things with anyone.

Then he turned to Jaime and instructed him, "Jaime, investigate the Smith Group and see if it is worth buying."

He would like to see how important Toby was to Arlene.

If he bought Smith Group, Toby would work under him.

How would she react then?

Jaime nodded and stood up to leave.

Seeing him stand up, Ayla immediately grabbed Brian's hand and pleaded, "Mr. Clark, please, don't do that to my Toby."

"Whoa! Your Toby? That sounds intimate." Brian shook her hands away.

"Why did you even think that I'll listen to your useless begging? The more you beg to me, the more miserable his life will be, and I promise you that,"

Brian said bitterly then arose from his seat and stepped towards the exit.

"No! Please, no! I won't see him anymore. I promise I won't!"

Ayla shouted behind Brian helplessly.

Jaime looked at Ayla disapprovingly.

"Mrs. Clark, please behave yourself. Don't embarrass Mr. Clark."

"Jaime, please. You have to help me. Please persuade him to not hurt Toby. Please! I promise, I'll listen to him always."

Ayla said that without thinking twice.

Practically, she had lost everything.

She couldn't afford to lose Toby as well.

She didn't want him to get into such predicament where the chance of winning was nil.

Jaime didn't say anything, because he couldn't make a decision whether to accept Ayla's request or not.

It made Ayla more worried.

Jaime left after giving her an indifferent look.

She brought out her phone, but couldn't make herself dial Toby's number.

After that encounter in the morning, Ayla made herself busy in gardening to distract her mind.

Maria found her squatting in the garden, trimming flowers and plants.

Ayla didn't even go to her room until it was dark.

As she finished freshening up and changing her clothes, Brian came back.

She went up to him and took the coat from his hand.

Brian sat down on the sofa as his eyes fell on Ayla's phone on the tea table.

It was a very old model.

Why was she using this old phone being Clayton's daughter?

"Make me a cup of coffee," he ordered her then picked the remote control and switched on the TV.

Leaning against the sofa, he concentrated on the news on it.

A few moments later, Ayla's phone started ringing.

Brian glanced at it, annoyed by the ringtone.

Ayla came running from the kitchen when she heard the phone ringing.

She read the number displayed on the screen and froze immediately.

She didn't dare to answer it in front of Brian.

"Answer it! Who is it?"

Brian didn't look at her, but he knew she was hesitating.

Ayla wanted to answer the phone in her room.

But if she tried to avoid him now, she'd look more suspicious.

She had no other way but to answer it.

"Hello."

"Lala, where are you? Why didn't you come to school today? Are you sick?"

Toby bombarded her with questions soon after she answered it.

He went to the school today to look for her.

When he learned she didn't show up in the school, he got worried.

He couldn't help but call her.

"I'm fine. I'm not sick. I had something else to deal with today."

Ayla tried her best to keep her voice as low as possible, but it didn't escape Brian's ears.

Chapter 17: She Gave In Again Before

Ayla could hang up the phone, Brian stood up quickly, grabbed her phone and threw it on the floor.

The phone broke in half instantly.

“My phone!” Ayla screamed.

She looked at the broken phone on the ground in horror.

She bought the phone by saving money for several months.

Although she had used the phone for many years, she couldn't afford another phone at this moment.

“Oh? Are you bothered by that broken phone? You're from the Woodsen family. This inexpensive phone must not be too much for you. If you want to talk to that Toby, I can give you my phone.”

Brian was furious after learning Arlene didn't take him seriously when he asked her not to contact Toby anymore.

He walked towards her broken phone and stared at it with a scowl.

“This old model of your phone is making me suspect whether you are really from the Woodsen family.” Ayla flinched at his words.

He had suspected her.

What if he found out the truth? If he learned it somehow that she was not Arlene, the whole Woodsen family would suffer the consequences.

Ayla tried to sound firm when she replied, “Of course I'm from the Woodsen family. Let's make a deal. From now on, I'll listen to your every instruction, and in turn, you won't hurt my father or Toby. You agree?”

Brian turned around and glared at her.

“You aren't qualified to make a deal with me. I don't even trust you. Just keep your mouth shut and stay at home.”

Ayla had no power to disobey him.

There was no other way but to accept his every command.

Meanwhile, Toby was confused when the call got cut shortly.

He dialed her number again, but the line didn't connect.

He anxiously asked for her address from her classmates.

But no one knew where she lived.

He lingered at the school gate almost the entire day.

But Ayla didn't show up.

When the classes were over, it was almost dusk.

Veronica and Lisa walked out of the school together and spotted Toby in front of the school gate.

“Isn’t he Ayla’s friend? What is he doing here?” Lisa said to Veronica.

“He must be looking for Ayla. She hasn’t come today. She might have fallen sick,” Veronica said worriedly.

“How could Ayla be sick? Isn’t she with some rich man now? Won’t he take care of her like a princess? She doesn’t even need to come to school!”

Lisa said that aloud intentionally to make Toby hear what she said.

And it worked.

Toby heard Ayla’s name and turned towards them.

His brows knitted in a frown as he approached them.

“What did you just say?”

He abruptly caught a hold of Lisa’s arm.

“Ouch! It’s hurting. Let go of me!”

Lisa didn’t expect he’d pull her arm so roughly.

He looked like a handsome gentleman but didn’t know how to behave.

A frown appeared on Toby’s face as he let her arm go.

“You are Lala’s classmate. You must know what happened to her, right?” Lisa rolled her eyes.

“Ayla used to live in the same dormitory with us. But she moved out recently and resigned from her part-time jobs. These days she came to school by a luxury car. Although we don’t know for sure, everyone has been gossiping that she is hooking up with a rich man.”

Toby’s face darkened as Lisa said that.

“That’s all I know.”

Lisa shrugged and stepped away from him.

This man also seemed to belong to the elite class.

Was he too an admirer of Ayla? Veronica walked up to Toby and said, “Sir, it is just a random guess from our classmates. Please don’t mind about it. How about you leave your phone number? If she comes to the school, I’ll let you know.”

Toby agreed.

He took out a business card and handed it to Veronica.

“Thank you so much. I’ll come again tomorrow.”

They exchanged formal goodbyes before he got into his BMW and drove away.

Meanwhile, Molly showed up in Toby’s office without informing him beforehand.

Today she wore a light pink chiffon dress that looked pretty on her just to impress Toby.

She sat on the sofa while a bodyguard stood beside her.

Toby's assistant offered a glass of fresh juice to her.

"Miss Smith, here is your juice."

"Where is Toby? Where has he gone?"

She glared at Toby's assistant.

Molly was an extremely domineering woman.

She never allowed any other woman around Toby.

Even she chose his personal assistant by herself.

All of the staff that Toby dealt with personally, were males.

"Miss Smith, the Deputy CEO only said he had something personal to do today."

Fred Fowler, Toby's personal assistant, just repeated what Toby said before leaving.

He knew that vague answer would make Miss Smith unhappy, but he couldn't help but obey Toby's instruction.

"Something personal? What is it? He never mentioned it to me."

Molly's voice was laced with fury.

Toby had been behaving strange since he came back from abroad.

He was often absent-minded, as if he had something going on in his mind all the time.

She even asked him if something was bothering him, but he never answered her clearly.

This definitely made her more suspicious.

"He didn't tell me, either."

Fred found it really more difficult to cope with Molly's interrogation than to deal with these unruly and insatiable clients.

"Aren't you his personal assistant? You should know everything about his schedule. Shouldn't you follow him when he goes out for business?"

Molly took a sip from the glass and ordered, "Call him and ask him to come back soon."

But it wasn't needed anymore as Toby entered the room pushing the door open.

"Molly! What are you doing here?"

When Molly saw Toby, she beamed.

She put down the juice glass on the table and walked over to him.

Flinging herself onto him, Molly asked, "Toby, where have you been? I want to have dinner with you."

Toby looked at the woman in his arms and agreed.

"Okay, I'll have dinner with you."

"Did I interrupt your work? You must have been very busy today," Molly asked tentatively.

Toby always worked diligently.

He often went to work early and came back late.

This had been more frequent lately.

She didn't even know what he was doing these days.

"It's okay. What do you want to eat? Let's go to a five- star restaurant."

Toby wrapped his arm around her waist and the two left the office.

"Toby, are you too busy with your work lately? You aren't spending enough time with me these days. Let's enjoy tonight with each other. Please?"

It was Molly who persuaded the company directors to make Toby the Deputy CEO.

So, Toby couldn't deny her request.

However, as he had a prescheduled work, he said to Molly, "Molly, tonight it won't be possible. I have some work pending. But I promise, tomorrow night I'm all yours."

"Okay. No problem. Tonight I'll accompany you while you work. I won't be a disturbance, I promise."

Molly was determined to not leave Toby's side tonight.

So, she didn't give him a chance to refuse her proposal.

In the end, Toby had to compromise.

He didn't want to offend her.

In the meantime, Anna went to meet Brian in his office.

"Mr. Clark."

"Anna, have a seat."

Brian didn't look up at her and continued to read the documents in his hands.

"Mr. Clark, I heard from Jaime that you were investigating the Smith Group. Is it because of your wife?"

Anna didn't think it was necessary.

The Smith Group was also a big company.

If Brian was intending to buy it, he'd have to spend a huge amount. A corner of Brian's mouth tilted up.

"Anna, why are you interested in it?" Anna smiled.

"Mr. Clark, I only think about your interests."

After a momentary pause she asked again, "So, is it anyhow related to her?"

Brian got up and pulled her closer.

"Go back to the club and wait for me. I'll come tonight."

Anna nodded before placing a soft kiss on his lips.

"Okay, I'll have them prepare some delicious food especially for you."

These days, Brian rarely went to the club. Maybe it was because of that woman, Arlene.

Chapter 18: He Wanted To Know Her

In the club, sitting in the private room on the second floor, Brian overlooked the crowd on the first floor through the glass window.

"Anna, you have managed this place so well."

Anna handed a glass of wine to Brian.

"Mr. Clark, how can I not since it's your order? How can I be careless in taking care of this place?"

Brian had many entertainment clubs, hotels and other subsidiaries running under his name.

He ran them all by himself, and Anna really could understand the pressure he put up with all the time.

"Anna, are you tired?"

As Anna sat beside him, Brian pulled her close by her waist.

"If you feel tired, you can ask Jaime to help you."

Anna smiled.

"Don't worry, Mr. Clark. I'm fine. You saved my life. I'm willing and very glad to do everything for you."

Brian nodded and gulped down the wine in the glass.

"You follow me everywhere. If you keep doing that, you can't relax for yourself."

Anna was the only woman who followed him everywhere.

"I don't care about that, Mr. Clark. I don't care about anything as long as you are with me. Please don't drive me away from yourself."

Anna was not afraid of anything because she had faced many difficulties in the past.

Her condition had been so bad that she used to live on the streets.

Her life depended on beggary.

She still remembered that one time when she was so hungry that she went to a small shop to steal a piece of bread.

The shopkeeper caught her red-handed and beat her to death.

It was Brian who found her on the streets almost dead.

He brought her to his home and treated her back to health.

Since then, she always stayed by his side.

He was the most important person in her life.

“How can I drive you away?”

The reason why Brian saved her back then was because there was a glint of tenacity in her eyes, which was similar to his.

The first floor suddenly became livelier.

A woman with heavy makeup, long curly brown hair, and a tight black skirt, had entered the club.

Her appearance naturally attracted all men’s attention towards her, making them covet her.

She swayed her hips coquettishly while making her way to the dance floor.

All the men gathered around her watching her dance enchantingly.

The men whistled, cheering for her and it became louder and louder with every passing moment.

Even the men who weren’t on the dance floor, walked onto the stage and danced with her.

Some of them put their big hands on her waist, while dancing.

The environment got hotter.

“Who is this woman?”

The woman had caught Brian’s attention as well.

“I don’t know. She has been coming here for a few days now. She is indeed very attractive. My goal is to make money. As long as she can bring or attract more customers, I don’t need to know who she is.”

Anna had a strong business outlook.

She had noticed the presence of this woman had been beneficial for the club.

The sales, especially of the alcoholic beverages, had increased a lot in the past few days.

Brian gave Anna a proud smile.

“Anna, you’re getting more and more business-minded. I guess, I don’t have to worry about this place anymore. Even if I can’t come here personally in the future, you’ll be able to take care of it efficiently.”

Anna teased, “So you used to come here to inspect how I was running this place? Were you worried that I couldn’t run it well?”

She took the empty glass from Brian’s hand.

“Mr. Clark, do you like that woman? If you want, I can invite her over to accompany you.” Brian waved his hand dismissively.

“No, I don’t want her. But you can ask someone to find out who she is.”

His eyes darted towards her.

Why did he have a bad feeling about her? Anna looked at him, slightly confused, but she didn’t ask more.

She would do whatever he had asked.

However, after walking around the first floor, Anna found out that everyone called her Lene.

Anna wanted to know more about her.

But she couldn’t see her anywhere.

So she asked a few people about where she went, and found out that Lene had been taken upstairs by the Stone Group’s CEO’s son.

Anna was very efficient in her job.

She knew, at this time it wouldn’t be wise to go and stop the Stone Group’s heir.

Because it’d offend him, and that wouldn’t leave a good impact on the business.

So, Anna returned to Brian and informed him, “Mr. Clark, I’m sorry. I couldn’t find out her exact identity. But everyone called her Lene.”

“Lene?”

Brian’s eyebrows knitted in a frown.

A moment later, he stood up and said, “It doesn’t matter. I’ll leave soon anyway.”

When Brian was about to leave, Anna hugged him from behind.

She didn’t want him to leave so soon.

“Are you going back to her?”

“Why do you think so? You already know how much I hate her.”

Brian turned around and gently kissed on her pink lips.

“Mr.Clark, why do you have a grudge against her?”

The amount of money Clayton borrowed from Brian was huge.

Under the current circumstances, it was impossible to pay back all the money to Brian immediately.

That was why Brian hated Clayton so much.

But why did he hate Arlene? What had she done? Brian only smiled when she asked that.

He didn't hate her exactly, but he hated Clayton, and he hated Arlene for being Clayton's daughter.

All he wanted was Arlene to bear his hatred for the rest of her life to repay what Clayton owed him.

After that conversation, Brian sat down on the sofa again and drank wine with Anna, glasses after glasses.

However, he still wasn't drunk even after drinking quite a few bottles.

When Brian finally returned to the villa, it was already one o'clock in the morning.

As Ayla was the only one who lived in the main villa, she heard the noise when Brian entered the villa.

She quickly put on an overcoat and went to receive him.

“You are back.” Ayla realized Brian was drunk.

Although she was scared to be near him, she walked up to him and helped him walk.

“Have you been waiting for me?” Brian stared at her closely.

When she nodded hesitantly, he abruptly pulled her into his arms and kissed her aggressively.

“Mr.Clark, you are drunk.”

Ayla struggled in his arms.

She knew that he was drunk and didn't know what he was doing.

After what happened in the dining room last time, she had been afraid of him.

Now that he was drunk, she was more afraid to be near him.

But Brian didn't let her go.

“Mr.Clark, please! Let go of me!” Ayla cried out in pain.

“It's hurting me.Please! Let me go!”

But her pleading didn't work on him.

He pushed her down on the sofa, and climbed on top of her.

He had tried everything to test this woman.

But still he couldn't understand her fully.

Brian's eyes darkened.

"This is the real you, isn't it? Arlene, this is what you want, right? Stop pretending!"

He knew she was about to reveal her true colors.

But he couldn't let her go, could he? If Arlene lived a peaceful, unhindered life, it'd be no fun.

It would be meaningless to keep her with him, if he just let her go.

After he finished, Brian stood up and looked down at her spitefully.

"Don't forget to take your medicine!"

He sneered then left without looking back.

He had no feelings for her except hatred.

He only wanted her to suffer.

He didn't need a child from her, and he made it very clear to her.

He didn't like to be bound by such things.

Chapter 19: Tried His Best To See Her

Ayla dragged her aching body to her room. She was sore all over.

Leaning against the bed, she sat on the ground.

Her eyes shifted to the bottle of contraceptive pills on the bedside table. How long would she have to do this?

Sitting in his room, Brian took a drag of his cigarette and puffed out the smoke.

His mind kept replaying what just happened.

He wondered why he became so impulsive after being drunk.

It never happened before.

He still couldn't understand what kind of woman Arlene was? Brian wanted to investigate about her when he realized her behavior differed from what he had heard about her.

But when Toby showed up, he overlooked his suspicion.

Her secret rendezvous with Toby was enough proof.

Ayla grabbed her new phone, which was given by Brian.

There was no other phone number except his.

He really wanted her to cut off all contacts.

She stared at it forlornly before putting it aside.

A week passed by after that incident.

Ayla feared that Toby would be worried for her.

She needed to meet him and explain things.

She didn't want Toby to lose his bright future and his beautiful fiancée because of her.

Although she had just seen his fiancée from a distance, she could tell that his fiancée was a beautiful and very graceful lady.

Unlike her, who had just been a burden to Toby, his fiancée was mature and really suitable for Toby.

Toby always had Ayla's back since childhood.

He skipped classes for her, fought for her, worked for her to buy her delicious food.

So, the Brown family hated Ayla very much for being Toby's priority.

Although she was adopted by Clayton, she never understood what his purpose was behind adopting her.

Because he never cared about her and never wanted to keep her in his close proximity.

Ayla never called him father.

When she turned eighteen, she thought she could finally get rid of the Woodsen family, which never really was her home.

But instead, Clayton pushed her towards a darker future from where she couldn't see a way out.

She couldn't refuse Clayton when he approached her with a request to marry Brian.

For the sake of his so-called kindness of raising her, she had to sell her whole life to the devil, Brian Clark.

It had been three days since Brian didn't come home.

As there was nothing to do, Ayla walked out of her room and went to the garden.

The only freedom Brian approved of was, she could roam freely inside the villa.

So, he didn't assign any bodyguards to restrict her freedom.

As there weren't many visitors, the only people she saw were the servants.

But today she had to sneak out of the villa anyhow.

She secretly told Maria that she was going to take care of some private affairs and would come back soon.

She didn't even ask Lyle to drive her.

Instead, she went to the nearby bus station and took a bus.

As soon as she arrived at school, she met Veronica and Lisa.

“Ayla, finally you came. Was that rich man keeping you locked? You aren’t even coming to school these days. But if you continue to be absent from school, you will get into trouble. Our dean has been looking for you. But we couldn’t get in touch with you,” Lisa said everything in one go.

Veronica pulled Lisa’s sleeve in order to make her shut and said, “Ayla, you can talk to the dean and I’m sure things will be fine after that. But during your absence, a man named Toby came looking for you.”

“Toby came to the school? Did he say anything?” Ayla asked anxiously.

Since Toby had come to school, he might as well go to the Woodsen family.

If he went there he’d know what had happened recently.

“That man is really very handsome! He looked like a business elite and wore a designer suit. Are you in a relationship with him too?” Lisa blurted out.

She didn’t like Ayla, especially because Ayla was better in studies than her.

Ayla was always appreciated by the teachers.

However, she wasn’t good at socializing, as she spent a lot of time in the library every day.

She also worked part-time.

Even without her family’s support, Ayla was able to gain a lot of people’s love and care.

Lisa wasn’t really a bad person.

But she was jealous of Ayla, because Ayla was more popular than her.

Lisa looked at Veronica.

“Veronica, didn’t he give you a business card? Why don’t you give it to Ayla?” Veronica nodded.

She took out a card and gave it to Ayla.

Ayla felt fortunate to have Toby’s card.

As Brian destroyed her phone, she lost Toby’s number along with it.

“Thank you. I have to go now. Can you please ask the dean to grant me a few days’ leave?”

Ayla couldn’t stay in the school for a long time without Brian’s consent.

Veronica nodded understandingly.

She knew something had been going on with Ayla.

But until Ayla felt comfortable to talk, she wouldn't ask.

Ayla wasn't a talkative person, so it explained why she hadn't yet told anything.

Sitting in a cafe, Ayla gripped the business card in her hand tightly.

After thinking for a long time, she dialed the number.

"Hello!"

Toby answered the call.

His voice sounded composed and professional, not how she had imagined it'd be.

She had thought he'd sound more anxious because of her missing.

"Toby, it's me," Ayla said in a low voice.

Toby paused for a while.

His eyes shifted to Molly who was sitting right in front of him on the sofa.

Toby asked almost in a flat tone, "What's the matter?"

"Are you busy now?"

Ayla didn't want to interrupt his work. But if she didn't make it clear today, she might never get the chance to do so.

"Go ahead."

Although Toby looked calm and collected on the outside, his heart was palpitating inside.

"I want to meet you. Can we meet? If you are busy now, I can wait until you come."

Ayla knew that if he was busy working now, it'd be inconvenient for him to talk.

She told Toby where she was and she'd wait until he came.

There was a firm belief in her heart that he'd come.

After their telephonic conversation, Toby hung up the phone with an indecipherable face.

But all he wanted was to meet Ayla right now.

He just wanted to know what was happening with her.

He was worried for her.

This girl always had a special place in his heart.

Only when he'd see her with his own eyes, would he feel relieved.

Molly noticed how quickly Toby's mood changed after the phone call.

"What's wrong, Toby? Who was that?"

She stood up and walked around the table to his side.

Toby caught a hold of her hand and said, "Nothing is wrong, Molly. Don't worry. If you're feeling bored sitting here, you can go shopping."

Molly got the idea immediately.

He was actually driving her away.

Was he planning to meet someone behind her back? But she wasn't going to let him do as he wished.

This man belonged to her and only her.

"I don't want to go shopping alone. Only if you'll come with me will I want to go."

Molly pouted, then sat on his lap.

Toby wrapped his arms around her slender waist.

There was nothing wrong with Molly, but he had always loved Lala.

"But I'm working now," Toby said with a smile.

Molly turned her head and kissed him on the lips.

Her slender arms encircled his neck and pulled him closer.

No man had ever resisted her beautiful lips.

Toby wasn't an exception.

"Toby, can you spend tonight with me?"

Although the two of them had been officially engaged, Toby wanted to live separately before marriage.

Toby said nothing at first.

He smoothed her hair and said after a while, "Let's go shopping!"

In fact, he was not in the mood to work now.

He couldn't concentrate and kept thinking of Lala.

Chapter 20: Pretended Nothing Had Happened

Ayla waited for Toby in the cafe, but he didn't come, and it was already dark outside.

Would he come today? She was confident that her Toby would come.

But after the night fell, when he didn't show up, she decided to leave.

If she didn't leave now, she wouldn't be able to catch the last bus.

When she was about to leave, a familiar figure walked into the cafe.

"I'm sorry, Lala. I'm late."

She beamed at him.

Finally, her Toby had come.

But, her smile only lasted for a short moment.

How would she explain things to him? She didn't even know how to start the conversation.

Although, she had prepared for this meeting and thought of many ways she could explain, but now they seemed not good enough.

"Lala, what's wrong? You look unhappy. Why? Are you sad because I'm late?"

Toby reached out and held her hand.

His eyes were full of concern.

"I'm really sorry, Lala. I was busy with some important work." Ayla shook her head.

"It's alright. I'm not upset because of that." Toby smiled.

"I thought, you are angry with me. Are you hungry? Let's eat something first, then I'll take you home."

Ayla was about to say something, but Toby didn't notice it. He called the waiter over to order the food.

In fact, Toby didn't have much time.

When he and Molly were at the mall, he lied to her that there was some emergency in the company and he needed to be present there.

So, he must return to Molly as soon as possible.

Ayla refrained herself from speaking.

He had been busy all day long, he must be hungry.

Also, it'd be the same if they talked after eating.

She also wanted to spend more time with him.

However, things didn't go as she had thought.

The steak was just served in front of them when Toby said, "Lala. Let's eat!"

Toby considerately cut the steak into small pieces before putting them on the plate in front of her.

"Thank you Toby."

Ayla was touched by Toby's kind gesture.

He was still so considerate to her.

He had never changed.

Toby smiled and said, "You don't have to thank me. Silly girl, just eat the delicious steak."

The two looked at each other and smiled.

The moment seemed like they had returned to their childhood, as if it was just yesterday and they were still the same.

"Toby!"

A shrill and angry voice caught their attention.

Molly suspected him when he left her at the mall.

So, she followed him and caught him red-handed.

Toby was stunned to see Molly here. Did she follow him?

"Molly!"

"Toby, won't you introduce her to me?"

Molly came and wrapped her hands around Toby's arm intimately.

This man was hers.

She could give him everything, unlike this woman and she'd prove it to her.

Toby saw the calm look on Ayla's face.

She wasn't even surprised when she saw Molly, as if she already knew about his fiancée.

"Lala."

Toby felt a little uneasy as he didn't know how to introduce them to each other.

Things didn't go as he expected.

He wanted to take Lala to his apartment today, but Molly appeared suddenly.

Ayla smiled at Molly politely.

"Nice to meet you. But Toby, I have to go now."

Ayla didn't have the courage to face his fiancée.

She wanted to hug Toby and tell him everything, but she didn't expect Molly would come along. She couldn't do that in front of her.

Now she just wanted to run away as fast as she could.

When Ayla got up, about to leave, Toby grabbed her hand and said, "You haven't eaten anything, Lala."

Molly felt jealous when she saw how intimately Toby held the girl's hand.

But Molly knew better to not show her displeasure in front of Toby.

Instead she acted generous and asked Ayla to stay for the dinner.

A while later, she turned towards Toby.

“Toby, I’m feeling cold.Can you please get my coat from the car? The white one which you just bought me from the mall, ” Molly said in an enticing voice.

Toby hesitated to leave Ayla with Molly, but then nodded.

“Okay, if you want something else, you can order it.I’ll get the coat for you.”

As soon as Toby left the cafe, Molly turned her unfriendly look at Ayla, making her a_ little uncomfortable.

“I don’t know who you are, but please stay away from Toby.He is my fiance.I don’t want him to have contact with any other woman besides me.”

Molly came straight to the point.

“He might have other women in the past, you will be the last one.Toby is a soft- hearted person.He can’t refuse anyone if they pretend to be helpless in front of him.So, don’t try to fool him.”

Her hurtful words made Ayla disheartened.

Unintentionally, she had put Toby in a difficult situation.

“Don’t worry.I understand.I won’t contact him in the future.I wish the two of you a very happy and wonderful life ahead.But now, I have to go.I have something important to do.”

Ayla hurriedly got up and almost ran away from there.At the exit, she bumped into Toby who had Molly’s coat in his hand.

“Lala, where are you going?” he asked with concern.

“I’m sorry, Toby.I have something else to do.I have to go now,” she said in the calmest tone she could muster, but her heart had been broken into million pieces.

She was hurting inside and the pain was too much to endure.

Toby tried to stop her, but Ayla didn’t stop and left quickly.

Toby watched her leave helplessly before he turned and came back to Molly.

“Toby, she left after answering a phone call.I think, there must be something urgent.Why don’t you go and check on her?” Molly pretended to be worried.

Toby gave her the coat and said in a low voice, “It doesn’t matter.Let’s eat.”

Ayla went straight to the bus station and waited for the bus.

But to her misfortune, no bus was available even after an hour.

She asked around and came to know, the last bus had already left.

She rummaged through her bag and found out she didn't have much money left to hail a cab.

A sad smile escaped her lips.

She shouldn't have come here and let Toby get involved in her miserable life.

Having no other options, she started walking along the street with heavy steps.

Where would she go now? Because she certainly couldn't go back to Clark villa.

It was almost midnight when she couldn't walk anymore.

Ayla took out her phone, but it was useless.

Because she had no other number except for Brian, and she wasn't willing to call him.

She had no one to ask for help.

A sense of grievance spread through her chest.

How miserable her life had become! She collapsed on the ground and broke down completely.

All her sadness streamed down her face as tears.

There was no one but herself to comfort her.

She felt so alone.

In the meantime, Jaime was driving Brian back to the villa.

As the speed of car was at a moderate rate, he saw a lonely person on the road.

At first, he didn't care about it, because it was night time.

Nothing could be trusted at night.

However when the car passed by her, he saw her face.

It was Mrs.Clark.

"Mr.Clark!"

Brian had also noticed her.

She had tear stained cheeks.

Her shoulders hunched forward as if in defeat.

It meant, she left the villa without his permission. But why was she crying alone on the roadside at this time?

"Stop the car!"

As the car halted right beside her, Brian got off and shouted at her, "Arlene, what exactly are you doing here? Don't even try to make an excuse like you've been waiting for me here."

Ayla looked up at him with teary eyes.

Due to her blurred vision, she couldn't see the man clearly, but his voice was familiar.

"Mr.Clark."

"Get in the car!"

Brian yelled aloud before going back to the car.

Ayla didn't have much of a choice.

She might be scared of Brian, but she was more scared of spending the night alone on the streets.

Back in the villa, Maria was very worried.

Mrs.Clark told her that she'd return home soon but it was past midnight and she still hadn't come back.

If Brian came back before her, he'd be so furious.

Only thinking of that made Maria very scared.

When she heard the sound of Brian's car sliding into the garage, Maria hurriedly went to receive Mr.Clark and saw Mrs.Clark getting off the car along with him.

"Mrs.Clark, you're back. Are you okay?" Ayla nodded.

"I'm sorry to make you worried, Maria.I missed the last bus."

"Mrs.Clark, It's not safe to come back this late.Next time, if you need money, you can ask me.But please take a cab, and come back home on time," said Maria in a low voice.

Although they talked in a hushed voice, Brian and Jaime still heard them.