

TSBMMOUS 171

Chapter 171: The Truth About The Past Two Years

Ayla stared at Brian in shock.

“You, you...”

“What? Did I ever let you come into my study as you please?”

Glancing back at her, he picked up the medical test report from the floor.

Ayla stared at the empty coffee cup.

‘How could I expect him to fall into my trap?’ She had put two sleeping pills into the coffee, but her plan had failed.

“What the hell are you doing here?” Brian asked.

All he wanted from her was an honest response.

“Why do you have this?” Ayla asked back as she showed him the drug.

Brian just looked at her indifferently.

“Are you not aware of my business dealings yet? Why bother asking such an idiotic question?”

Of course, she knew.

But he had never taken drugs himself, had he? This specific drug could make people addicted to it even with a milliliter of dosage.

“You should never try this.”

Ayla kept the syringe away from him, and added, “Throw this wretched thing away!”

He then stood up to take the syringe from her hand “Lala, tell me, how do you know about this drug? Have you taken it before?”

She repeatedly shook her head.

“No! I’ve never taken it in my life!”

She was panicking.

There was no way she would tell him about her connection to this drug. This was the one thing that she hoped he would never find out.

“Tell me the truth!”

Brian clasped her tightly in his arms.

If Tatum had injected her with this drug back then, was that the reason she was willing to jump into the sea without a second thought? All he wanted was to know the truth.

What kind of hellish life had this woman lived in the past two years? Tears started to well up in Ayla's eyes.

"Don't force me talk about it! I don't want to."

Indeed, she didn't want to recall the most harrowing and miserable experience in her life.

it would be best if she never had to mention it again in her life.

And to do that, she must pretend as if she had never had that sort of experience in the first place.

"Tatum forcibly injected you with this drug, didn't he?" Brian wanted to force the truth out of her. He had given no importance about what happened to her in the past two years.

All that mattered to him was that she came back alive.

However, if this drug had made her life a living hell, then it would be a different story.

Tears rolled down her cheeks.

"How did you figure that out?" She thought that he would never find out if she didn't utter a word remotely related to that traumatic past.

"You had a fever last time, remember?"

He didn't want to hide anything from her anymore.

If it weren't for that inexplicable fever she had, he never would have known, and she might've quietly disappeared from his life again.

"My fever has nothing to do with this. Don't bring this xs anymore. Just drop it, okay?" Ayla said that as if she was pleading.

"No way!"

Brian shook his head in refusal.

"From now on, you'll always be with me. You're not allowed to go anywhere without my permission. Do you understand? Also, I forbid you from seeing Lucas again. If you do, you'll regret it."

This was the second time he had said those words to her.

Whether she would listen to him or not, he just wanted to warn her of what might happen.

Ayla rested weakly in his arms.

Right now, she didn't have the energy to figure out whether Brian did this on purpose or not. She was weak and fragile at this moment, so she needed him by her side.

Brian held her in his arms, and the two of them went back to the bedroom. He wiped the tears streaming down her face.

“Did it hurt?”

Even though he hadn't experienced it himself, he had seen the drug's effect on people. He was so glad that she managed to stay safe and sound.

Ayla nodded slightly.

“Yes. It was the most painful thing I've ever felt.”

Using his lips, he wiped away the tears on her face.

This time, he was so gentle.

When Ayla felt his gentle kiss, she knew that it was pointless to struggle.

There really was nothing she could do in front of him.

This night was a restless one for the couple.

Ayla was nestling in Brian's arms.

There was a subtle change in their relationship, due to the fact that he had seen through her.

Or maybe it was because she was willing to open her heart to him now.

She felt so conflicted about everything that had been happening lately.

Although his eyes were closed, he could tell what was going on in her mind all the time.

He pressed her closer against his body, thinking that he must make up for everything she had lost in the past.

Over the next few days, Ayla didn't mention anything about the earring anymore.

Moreover, she personally made the clothes for the second fashion show. She had been working overtime for several days and she almost fainted from overworking in the office.

Linda walked in, twisting her slender waist.

“Ayla, I really don't get you. Why do you push yourself so hard? You could've just taken advantage of your relationship with Mr. Clark, and do nothing.”

“It's none of your business.” Ayla glanced back at her.

During the past few days, they barely saw each other, due to their own busy schedules.

However, Linda was always badmouthing her in the office. She knew about Ayla's relationship with Brian, so she was so jealous of her to the point of hatred.

Yareli had called to ask about the accident during the fashion show last time.

And so, Ayla worked really hard this time to ensure that nothing of the sort would happen again.

Later, Brian came to pick her up. He had told her that she must stay by his side all the time.

Seeing that he had arrived, Ayla stopped working because she knew easily he became impatient.

She'd rather not get on his bad side after all.

Then, they walked out of the office together and Linda saw them.

Their closeness made her even angrier.

The couple went downstairs and got into the car together, and Lucas, who came there to meet Ayla, saw everything clearly.

He had thought that she was just lying to him when she said that she chose to be with Brian. He figured it might be a trick to make him give up and choose Haley instead.

But now, when he saw Ayla walking by Brian's side, his heart sank.

It felt so painful that he felt a chill run throughout his body.

Had his one true love finally decided to go back to Brian's arms? When Ayla turned her head, she noticed a familiar car and a familiar face staring at her.

At once, she turned away and pretended like she didn't see anything.

Brian glanced at her.

"Are you planning to talk to him?" He was sure that Ayla would soon forget Lucas, or even hate him.

Lately, Lucas had been trying to sabotage the Clark Group's activities, but Brian hardly cared.

However, it was necessary for him to know what made Lucas resent him so much, to the point that Lucas was willing to do a lot of evil things for Tatum, including harming Ayla.

If he was being completely honest, Brian knew that he had a myriad of enemies, but no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't figure out what might've made Lucas regard him as an enemy.

Chapter 172: Deep Hatred

Ayla nodded.

"Would you mind letting me talk to him for a bit?"

In all honesty, sometimes, she had no idea how to face her problems.

"Be my guest," Brian replied as he opened the door for her.

Upon seeing Ayla approach him, Lucas threw away his cigarette.

"Lala," he greeted.

"Lucas, what are you doing here?"

She tried to force a smile, which ended up looking unnatural.

"I was worried about you, so I dropped by."

Lucas had been worrying about Ayla for so many days. He wondered what Brian might've done to harm her.

'Would he actually do anything to make her cry and feel wronged?' Lucas thought.

But based on what he saw, he figured that he was mistaken with his assumption. The woman he was so worried about was now intimate with another man.

Perhaps Lucas never had a place in Ayla's heart to begin with. He was just a burden to her.

Everything that he gave her, she reluctantly accepted.

Maybe she had only thought of him as a friend and not a lover all these years.

No matter how long it had been, she still hadn't forgotten about Brian.

Despite how despicable he was, he easily won over Ayla's heart.

"I'm fine."

It was true that she was fine. She didn't even need to think too much lately.

Over the past few days, Brian had only forced her once.

It was only once, but he had taken everything he could from her.

In his presence, Ayla had a hard time being calm.

Every fiber of her being, other than her strong facade, he could easily tear down.

And because of that, her heart softened. She realized that her love for him had never changed.

No longer did she stubbornly resist and obstinately hold on.

If she kept on being hard headed, it would only exhaust her.

"Everything's going to be fine as long as you're happy."

The sound of Lucas' voice was so hoarse and showed hints of exhaustion.

Lately, Haley had been grinding him to the point of insanity. She coerced him to give in using their baby, and forced him to marry her.

Perhaps all she really wanted was a marriage.

But did she actually love him? Maybe Haley wasn't a person capable of love.

"Lucas, how is Miss Green?"

Ayla didn't want to bring it up, but she knew she had to face it.

With a bitter smile, Lucas nodded.

In reality, he didn't care whether Haley was fine or not.

The only person he actually gave a d**n about was Ayla.

But unfortunately, she was now in Brian's arms, so she didn't need Lucas anymore.

It took two years to build a foundation for their relationship, but in the end, it was ruined overnight.

Maybe this was for the best? At the very least, once Ayla found out the truth about his identity, she wouldn't be hurt that much.

On top of that, he must have his revenge.

If losing the woman he loved the most was inevitable, then he must destroy Brian, the man capable of controlling everything.

"I see. I'll be on my way then."

With that, Ayla turned around and walked away.

It seemed that the distance between her and Lucas was now too great for her to see his heart.

In the past, she did her best to love him back, to give him everything, and to accept what fate had in store for them.

Sadly, she just went back to square one.

The man who stood beside her now, was the same heartless man, Brian.

Despite that fact, she was still so willing to be with him.

Whenever she was around him, she couldn't resist him.

All she could do was give into his wiles, and feel everything that he was giving her.

This wrong love of hers was now bound to last a lifetime, and the final outcome was a burden that she must bear alone.

Her only sin was that she loved and got hurt.

And after everything that happened, she found that nothing had changed.

Ayla hadn't gotten that far yet when Lucas chased her to hold her in his arms.

"Lala, I miss you so much! Please come back to me!" he pleaded humbly.

His heart was so fragile that it couldn't be strong enough to withstand adversity. But it didn't matter to him if he got hurt over and over, as long as she came back to him.

Ayla shook her head.

"You'll be much happier without me," she said.

Two years was enough for her to prove that her only choice was to go back to the starting point, and act as if nothing had changed.

“You’re wrong! I can’t be happy—not without you! As long as you’re not by my side, I’ll never be happy!”

Didn’t Ayla have a shred of understanding what could make Lucas happy? Over the past few years, she never seemed to understand him.

It was as if she never learned to love him at all.

Lucas felt so pathetic right now.

Brian only agreed to let Ayla speak to Lucas for a few minutes, but he never allowed any intimate contact between them, let alone a hug.

And so, he got out of the car and pulled Ayla into his arms.

“Mr.Collins, I’m warning you.Stay away from my woman, or I’m going to teach you a lesson you’ll never forget.”

“You’re going to teach me a lesson? Brian, when have you ever been civil? You’ve killed so many people, and your hands are stained in so much blood! Never have you been kind to anyone.There’s no way you can make Lala happy! You’ve hurt her so much, so you have to pay the price.”

Lucas wanted to remind Brian that a bloodthirsty demon like him would someday receive divine punishment.He didn’t want Ayla to get hurt because of this demon.

“Mr.Collins, thanks for the kind reminder.I know what I have to do, what I’ve done, and what I haven’t.I know it all too well,” Brian sneered.

Lucas glared at him.

‘How could Brian be this cold- blooded? Does he really think that none of it was his fault? Does he want to pretend like nothing happened?’ Lucas hated Brian so much.

This wretched man was the reason he lost his family, and even took away the love of his life.

No matter how anyone looked at it, they were destined to be at daggers drawn.

Shifting his gaze towards Ayla, Lucas said, “Lala, you should find out what kind of person Brian really is.It’s best that you stay away from him.He can never make you happy!”

If someday, Brian would die by his hands, then she would be all alone.

So, if Ayla fell in love with him again, she would still be unfortunate and miserable.

Soon, she watched Lucas drive away.

There was nothing she could do to stop him.She then turned to Brian, and asked, “Do you have a grudge against Lucas or something?”

“No,” he said flatly.

To his knowledge, there had never been an enmity between them.

And it had nothing to do with Ayla.

Two years ago, what Lucas did to her was all done to spite Brian.

That man knew him well, so he manipulated her into getting kicked out of the house.

But in the end, Ayla ended up getting caught by Tatum.

Taking a deep breath, she said, "But it seems that Lucas loathes you.

Whether you believe it or not, there's probably something that caused that hatred."

Chapter 173: Her Inescapable Heart

Brian smirked.

"Are you worried about me?"

"Why should I worry about you? There are already far too many people concerned about your well-being. I'm not the only one, you know? To be honest, I'm more worried about Lucas."

In Ayla's mind, Lucas could never win against Brian.

"The more you worry about him, the more miserable he'll be!" he warned.

He didn't know whether she was bluffing or just doing this on purpose. Ayla cast a sidelong glance at Brian.

She didn't give a d**n about his threat because she had nothing to fear.

But in reality, the person she worried about the most was Brian, not Lucas. Brian just cast her an indifferent glance, and drove back to the apartment.

Meanwhile, Anna was sitting alone in a bar. She had emptied the entire bottle of liquor she ordered, and yet she was still very sober.

For some reason, no matter how much she drank, it could never erase the pain she was feeling.

After everything that happened, and despite the fact that Brian kept turning a blind eye to her affection, she still loved him so much.

Her heart was still reluctant to let go.

Brian and Ayla had been getting along well, more and more each day, but Anna was all alone.

Ayla had completely taken her place.

It was understandable that Anna hated how things turned out, wasn't it?

"Anna, have you been drinking all by yourself here?"

Linda showed up, wearing an enchanting black dress.

Anna caught her eye as soon as she got here.

Judging by that look on Anna's face, Linda was sure that the woman's foul mood was caused by Ayla.

"What are you doing here?" Anna glanced back at Linda.

She had never been sympathetic towards this woman because she knew that Linda had ulterior motives for Brian. She just never said a word about it.

Linda sat across Anna.

"I'm here to drink of course! Just like you," she said with a smile.

Anna had been with Brian for so many years.

Perhaps she was the only person willing to lose everything for him in exchange for nothing. But Ayla managed to take everything away from her.

"Don't tell me you're here because of me."

Anna poured herself another glass of wine, and drank it all down.

Linda leaned against the leather sofa, not saying anything. She poured herself three glasses in a row before she decided to break her silence.

"I wasn't looking for you on purpose. Earlier, I saw you looking so depressed, so I decided to accompany you. You and I are both women who can't get the man we love."

"Love? Do you even deserve to say that word?" Anna sneered.

"All you want is prestige and status. I don't think you want love." Brian possessed all those things.

"I never imagined you to read me so well." Linda smirk.

"Honestly, I'm not that greedy. Back when I was in Italy, I was a design director. But when I arrived here in Antawood, I became the same as Ayla, just another designer. To top it off, she got more than I did. How could I be reconciled with that?"

She was a proud and arrogant woman.

No matter what happened, she had never gotten hurt.

Perhaps her only mistake was to underestimate Ayla.

Back when she was still in Italy, Ayla was just a school girl who went to school and took up a part-time job. But upon her arrival at Antawood, Brian gave her everything.

"You can fight with all you have and use up all of your time, effort, and resources, but it's useless to come to me for aid."

Anna was implying that Linda got the wrong person.

No matter how capable she was, she wouldn't be able to help her.

Moreover, Anna knew Brian's capabilities all too well, so she wouldn't want to go against him.

“Don’t say that! You’re Anna, the woman who has been by Brian’s side through thick and thin for the longest time. You’re far more capable than Ayla ever will be,” Linda said with a smile.

More than anyone else, Anna was the only person who could claim to love Brian deeply.

A bitter smile appeared on Anna’s lips.

“You’re exaggerating.”

Indeed, she had been by Brian’s side for so many years, but it was because she had never crossed the line.

Anna was well aware of what she could get, and what she couldn’t.

Nobody could ever understand her pain, especially not Linda.

“Whatever the hell you’re planning to do, don’t ever do something that will harm the Clark Group. If something had happened once, it won’t be allowed to happen again.”

Anna didn’t have to say it directly. She just wanted to remind Linda of what she had done.

If Anna was capable of figuring out that Linda was Ayla’s assailant, then Brian had probably known it by now.

He was an incredibly perceptive man.

Just because he wasn’t saying anything about it, that didn’t mean he didn’t care.

But if something of the same nature were to happen again, perhaps it would prove to be fatal for Linda this time. Once Anna was done speaking, Linda left her seat.

‘Was she implying that she knew that I assaulted Ayla? Well, lucky for me, I’m sure Anna doesn’t have any evidence to prove it!’ she thought.

Linda sat on a different booth alone, continuing to drink. Meanwhile, Ayla was sitting alone in the living room and looking at the design drafts in her hand.

There was no way she would let any accident happen on the fashion show again.

But unfortunately, there were some things that she couldn’t control.

Yareli came to Antawood again.

When she arrived, she called Ayla.

“Ms. Evans, what brings you to Antawood?” Ayla answered the call, surprised.

“I actually just arrived. The second fashion show will be held the day after tomorrow. I heard you suffered a minor injury last time. I was so worried about you that I had to come here,” said Yareli.

The reason she came back this time was to monitor the fashion season.

Upon hearing her response, Ayla could tell how worried she was.

After all, rumors and gossips were fatal in the design industry, not to mention Ayla’s lack of experience.

As soon as Brian walked out of the study, he heard a phone call with Yareli. He didn't say anything and just sat beside her.

It was only until she was finished with the call did he finally speak.

"Has Ms. Evans returned?"

"Indeed, she said that she'll drop by the company tomorrow." Ayla said, turning towards him.

'Isn't this an official business?' she thought.

Whenever they were in the apartment, they didn't talk that much about the company's affairs.

Normally, they were busy doing their own things.

The only thing they did together was s*x.

Besides, once Brian had asked for it, Ayla had no right to refuse it.

The only thing that could stop him was her period. Brian placed his arms around her waist.

"Are you happy that Ms. Evans is here?"

When did Ayla ever smile like this around him? Perhaps in her mind, he was trying to please her and making up for his mistakes because he had an ulterior motive.

"I just don't want to disappoint Ms. Evans."

If it weren't for Yareli's words, Ayla would've kept her distance from Brian.

But now, she was under his control with no chance to escape.

Although, did she really want to leave him again? She had no choice but to leave him two years ago.

Now did she still have to make that choice? Maybe, Ayla had never lost what had been engraved in her heart. And perhaps, from the very beginning, what she couldn't escape was actually her own heart.

Chapter 174: Subtle Changes

The second fashion show went smoother than the first one.

Ayla honestly didn't need to worry about anything else. She just stayed with Brian the whole time, and let her assistants and stylists handle what needed to be done.

As she sat beneath the stage, Yareli glanced at Ayla, and said, "You've made astounding progress lately! Keep up the good work, Lala!"

If the company's fashion season events continued to succeed, Ayla would make leaps and bounds in her career as a designer.

Yareli lived on her own and she didn't have any children.

It took her the majority of her life to build her company from the ground up, so she didn't want Starlight to be passed down to someone unworthy.

Out of all the people she had met, the only person worthy of inheriting her legacy was Ayla.

That was why she asked her to go back to A City and work with the Clark Group.

Meanwhile, Brian hadn't said a word since the beginning of the show.

His stern silence was stressing Ayla out.

This man's mind was too strange to understand.

Moreover, the more she tried to read him, the less she understood what he might be thinking.

Linda walked out of the backstage.

Upon seeing Yareli with Brian and Ayla, she immediately figured out what was happening. Yareli neither had children nor kin she could trust enough to pass down her company.

A company as big as hers needed someone capable at the helm once she retired.

And as of this moment, the most suitable person in her mind to lead the company was Ayla.

Linda wondered what trick that woman had played to fool everyone into liking her, especially Yareli and Brian.

"Miss Linda, what are you looking at? Do you wish speak to Ms. Evans?" her assistant asked.

"What are you talking about? Get back to work! If anything goes wrong, you're fired!"

Linda was seething with anger.

The assistant had chosen a terrible time to talk to her.

Immediately, the assistant turned around and went back to work.

Linda noticed that Ayla was wearing an exquisite and expensive dress, surrounded by many reporters and guests. She was as glamorous as a twinkling star.

Brian treasured her like a gem. He helped Ayla get everything that Linda had ever wanted.

But what could that woman even give him in return? Perhaps all men were like this? They kept wanting whatever they couldn't get, and turned a blind eye to those who were willing to give themselves out of their own volition.

Maybe that was why Brian was so uninterested in Linda? Because she kept throwing herself into his arms? On the other hand, Ayla was always playing hard to get, and he fell head over heels for her.

As he looked at the woman beside him, Brian felt relieved.

When the fashion show concluded, a party was held at the banquet hall on the Hyatt Hotel's third floor.

Ayla had never been one for such occasions.

Usually, she would just hide somewhere as far as she could.

But alas, this was one event she couldn't avoid. She was the star of this party.

Last time, due to her accident, they had to cancel both the party and the press conference.

And so, this time, they wanted to make up for that blunder by holding a grand banquet.

Ayla's tolerance to alcohol wasn't that high.

If she had one too many toasts from all these guests, she would probably get hammered.

"I can see that you're tipsy already. That's enough alcohol for you today." Brian took the glass from her hand.

'Is she not even aware of how much she drank?'

She couldn't hold her liquor well, and what made it worse was her habit of non-refusal to anyone who wanted to toast with her.

Besides, she might get so drunk that she could cause a scene. He just didn't want her to humiliate herself in front of all these people.

It was fine if she did something outrageous in front of him alone, but there were numerous reporters and guests at this party, so he decided to stop her before it could happen.

"Mr. Clark, just step aside and give me back my glass." Ayla glanced at him.

She actually didn't want to drink that much, either! However, people kept asking her to drink with them.

How could she refuse them? It would be rude not to!

"What? You don't want me to step in when I know something terrible might happen? Give me one good reason not to stop you from doing that." Brian stared at her intently, wondering why this woman was so ungrateful.

As she looked back at his stern face, Ayla figured out what she must do.

Just for today, she would listen to him.

"Fine, you're right. I do think that I've had one too many drinks. I'm done drinking."

Since he wanted to swoop in and save her from drinking too much, she was happy to oblige.

"Good. You should've listened to me from the beginning." Brian replaced her wine with a glass of juice.

"If you're tired, get some rest at the lounge."

Upon hearing his suggestion, Ayla's eyes lit up.

"Wait, what? Did you just say I can get some rest?" He nodded slightly in response.

He had noticed how stiff her face had become because she had to keep smiling for the guests. Other than letting her get some rest, what else could he do?

“Sounds great. Get rid of this juice, I don’t want it.”

Ayla transferred the glass into his hand, and made her way to the lounge.

With a glass of wine on one hand and orange juice on the other, Brian shook his head helplessly.

Naturally, Yareli saw this scene unfold. She noticed that this time, they were much more in sync than the last time she saw them.

“Mr. Clark, it seems that the two of you have been getting along quite well,” Yareli said to him as she walked over.

“You’re joking, right, Ms. Evans?” Brian replied with a chuckle.

‘She and I are getting along? Yeah, right! Maybe that’ll happen a hundred years from now! He honestly wanted to get back together with her, but due to Ayla’s stubborn character, the odds of that happening were slim to none.

“I’m not kidding. Anyway, I’m going to talk to her for a bit.”

With that, Yareli followed Ayla into the lounge.

Meanwhile, Ayla had taken off her high heels and sat on the sofa.

The soothing sound of a silent room was her ideal way to relax.

After knocking twice, Yareli entered the room.

“Ms. Evans!” Ayla greeted.

As soon as she saw Yareli, she got up from the sofa.

“Please sit down!” Yareli replied to her greeting.

She had to say that because Ayla was standing barefoot on the Carpet.

“Are you tired?” asked Yareli.

“Not that much.” Ayla shook her head.

“Ms. Evans, what’s going on? Why are you here?”

“I came here to see you. You’ve been really busy lately, haven’t you? I heard about what happened to you during the last fashion show. Thankfully, this event today was a huge success,” Yareli remarked.

Moments later, a waiter brought them two glasses of honey water.

“Hello, ladies. Mr. Clark told me to bring these over.”

“Mr. Clark has been very considerate to you. Haven’t you changed your mind yet?”

Yareli was aware of the fact that they used to be in a relationship, but now, their relation was something ineffable. Although Brian was said to be a ruthless man, his feelings for Ayla were sincere.

He treated her so much better than everyone else.

Perhaps it was true that those who were too closely involved in something couldn't see as clearly as those who were not.

It was clear to Yareli that Ayla was also stubborn.

"Why would you ask something like that, Ms. Evans?"

Ayla looked at the other woman in confusion.

It seemed as though Yareli was pertaining to her relationship with Brian.

Perhaps there had been some changes in their relationship, but she just didn't want to admit it.

Maybe she was too scared to face that fact. Yareli handed her a glass of water.

"I'm sure you know why I'm asking you this question."

She could see how happy Ayla was whenever she was with Brian. Even if she didn't explicitly say it nor display the fact, Yareli could see it in her eyes.

Chapter 175: The Man In The Past

Ayla took a sip of the honey water and smiled.

"Ms. Evans, I'm afraid that I can't go back to how things were in the past."

Even if she wanted to go back, she didn't have the courage to do so, because she would just end up being miserable again.

"But you need to remember that some things out there are worth fighting for, Lala." Yareli was right.

Many years ago, she lost something, and she couldn't get it back anymore.

"Ms. Evans, you have no idea how much getting your heart broken can drive you towards despair."

Ayla knew that she was no longer strong enough to allow herself to experience heartbreak.

"Oh, this is too depressing to talk about. Never mind. Just let nature take its course. Don't force yourself to do anything that you don't want to. I'm only telling you this for your own good. Do you understand? Sometimes, when you let go of someone you love, they might never come back," Yareli remarked.

Ayla nodded.

"I know that all too well, Ms. Evans."

She already knew that, but she just didn't want to do it.

Perhaps because she was too afraid of the outcome.

They kept chatting until the party almost reached its conclusion.

The only reason they stopped was because Brian came in and asked them to conclude the party together.

As soon as the party ended, he asked the chauffeur to drive Yareli and Ayla home.

“Ms.Evans, are you going to stay in A City for a bit longer this time?”

Actually, Ayla was being mentored by Yareli in many different aspects.

Even though they didn’t talk over the phone every day, they still sent e-mails to each other every two or three days.

“Yes.I was actually planning to stay for fifteen days.There’s something I have to do.”

This time around, Yareli was here to deal with both official business and personal matters.She was hoping to find her daughter.

And although the chances were slim to none, she didn’t want to give up.

“Sounds like a good plan.I was afraid all this traveling by plane will take a toll on your body.”

Ayla noticed that she wasn’t looking very well.

“I agree! I’m getting old, and my body isn’t as strong as it used to be.”

Indeed, Yareli had been feeling a little feeble lately.She really was getting old.

As a matter of fact, it might’ve been a good idea that she returned to Antawood.

Ayla looked at the other woman intently, and said, “How could you say that, Ms.Evans? You’re still young!”

If Yareli didn’t mention that she was fifty years old already, everyone would think that she was much younger than she actually was.

“You’re a smooth talker!” Ayla’s words made Yareli feel flattered.

“Anyway, Lala, I don’t have anything to do later.Would you like to have tea with me?”

“I would love to! I know a good teahouse around here. They serve your favorite tea.”

Every time she was with Yareli, she felt so happy that the void in her heart felt like it didn’t exist.

Even though they didn’t have that much time to chat all the time, they were still so close to each other.

Their relationship was a bit complex; it was similar to a familial affection.Once Ayla told the chauffeur the teahouse’s address, he brought them there quickly.

Meanwhile, Hayden was seated at a table on the first floor of Chatime Teahouse.An old man of similar age was sitting across him.

It seemed that they were old friends.

“Hayden, you’ve been dealing with the company’s affairs all these years.We hardly see each other,”said his friend.

“Yes. Now, I’ve gotten old, and my health isn’t how it used to be. It’s boring to stay at home all day. Since you’re retired already, how about we go fishing together when we’re both free?”

It was true that Hayden had grown tired of staying at home all day long.

He had been quarreling with his wife for so many years, and the same thing had been happening to his daughter, and son-in-law.

That kind of scene was something he didn’t want to see anymore.

As the saying went, “Out of sight, out of mind.”

This way, he could live a few years longer.

“No problem.”

While they were happily chatting, Ayla and Yareli walked into the teahouse.

“This way, please,” said the waiter.

He then led them to a private room, and they passed by Hayden.

Upon seeing the familiar figure, Hayden thought that he must be seeing things again.

But then he saw that Ayla was there.

And so, he gestured to his friend that he wanted to follow the woman.

“Lala?”

Hayden went to see her at the room next to the one he was in.

“Uncle Hayden? Are you here to have tea as well?”

Ayla hadn’t spoken to him for a long time. She figured that since Molly was pregnant, all the members of the Smith family needed to be there for her.

“I am. I’m actually here with an old friend of mine. I’m sorry I didn’t come to your fashion show today.”

After saying that, Hayden looked at the woman sitting across Ayla. Initially, Yareli thought that her ears were imagining the familiar voice.

But when she stared back at him, the teacup in her hand fell to the floor. Upon seeing how shocked the two of them were, Ayla asked, “Uncle Hayden, Ms.

Evans, do you two know each other?” Hayden nodded slowly.

“Yes. In fact, we’ve known each other for many years.”

“I see! Why don’t you take a seat with us, Uncle Hayden?” Ayla moved to another seat to make way for him, but he refused to sit there.

“It’s fine. I have to get back to my friend. He’s still in the other room.” He didn’t say that because he didn’t want to see Yareli. It was actually because he needed some time to process what was happening. It had

been a long, long time since he separated with Yareli. It was only natural that Hayden was surprised to see her.

Glancing at Yareli, Ayla asked, "Ms. Evans, are you close to Uncle Hayden?"

"I guess you could say that. We haven't seen each other in a long time."

Yareli had never imagined that she would bump into Hayden this time. It was so unexpected.

For many years, she had forgotten all about him.

It was as if she pretended like they never even met. Hayden was the man she loved and hated. Ayla didn't mention it again.

As they drank tea, Yareli seemed like her mind was wandering, which made Ayla realize something.

After receiving a call from Brian, she decided to head back.

He said that there was something important that must be dealt with, but she knew that he would never come to her for anything important.

Meanwhile, Yareli walked out of the teahouse, and stood at the entrance, waiting for the driver to pick her up.

"Yareli," Hayden greeted.

It turned out that he hadn't left. It seemed that he had been waiting for her.

"It really is you! Let's go find somewhere we could talk!" he said.

Then, Hayden led her to a black limo and opened the door for her.

Yareli didn't refuse his invitation, and decided to go in and sit next to him.

Not long after, they arrived at a restaurant in the suburb.

"Yareli, how have you been all these years?" asked Hayden.

"Seriously? You're only asking that now? Don't you think it's a bit too late for that?"

For twenty long years, she went through hell and back just to build everything that she had achieved today. Nobody in this world could ever understand how Yareli felt, especially not Hayden.

He was the owner of the Smith Group, and his wife was the heiress of the Jones family.

Their marriage served to strengthen his company further.

No matter how hard he tried, Hayden could never understand Yareli's pain. She had suffered a lot when she was all alone during her pregnancy.

Back then, to prevent her daughter from suffering the same fate, Yareli didn't keep her daughter by her side.

But unfortunately, she couldn't find her daughter anymore.

Chapter 176: She Refused To Face Him

Hayden heaved a sigh.

“Yareli, I know you’re mad at me for what happened, but I had no choice! I had to leave you back then.”

“Yes, that’s right. You had no choice. It’s been twenty years, Hayden! And now, you dare ask me how I’ve been doing? Is it really necessary? Just pretend we didn’t see each other today, okay?” Yareli stared at his face.

They had grown old, far away from each other, so there was no more need to associate herself with him. She was already living a good life now, unlike her hellish past.

Back then, she had absolutely nothing! No decent education, diploma, nor job, and on top of that, she was a single mother.

She was forced to go abroad and started working as a waitress.

There was no way that he could ever understand her struggles, and he could never make up for it either.

“It’s been so long since we last saw each other. Now that you’re here, I can’t just pretend that I didn’t see you. Look, all I want is to know where our child is.”

Hayden didn’t like beating around the bush when it came to her.

He was aware of the fact that she was pregnant when he left her, and that she definitely gave birth to their child.

If it weren’t for the pressure he received from his family, he never would’ve married Miley and sent Yareli to another place while she was pregnant.

He knew his mistakes.

But he didn’t know that when he chose to send her away, he had lost the chance to be with her ever again because she disappeared.

She had left the small house he arranged for her, leaving him no clue of where she might’ve gone.

He didn’t know what happened to his child either.

The moment he met Ayla, he did a background check on her, but he didn’t find anything suspicious.

But now, he wanted to ask Yareli about the child. Did she even give birth to it?

“The baby is dead,” Yareli said coldly.

“Did you really expect me to give birth to that baby? Did you think you could get married and live a happy life after you sent me away? Did you really think I’d wait around for you until you decide to offer me some scraps of your affection?”

She had loved him just as much as she loved her own life, so much so that she gave him everything she had.

But in the end, he hurt her so much that she could no longer face her own emotions. She never imagined that the man she once loved would choose another woman and abandon her.

“Did you have an abortion?” The tiny spark of hope that resided in Hayden’s heart was extinguished.

All this time, he believed that somewhere out there, he still had another child.

Perhaps it was a son, but now, Yareli told him that their child was dead.

More than twenty years ago, that child died.

“Yes, that baby’s dead. So, from now on, you and I will never see each other again. Just forget everything that ever happened between us!” Yareli endured so much heartbreak.

Her child had gone missing.

If he hadn’t abandoned her in the past, they might’ve been a happy family right now.

Sadly, he destroyed her chance of happiness with his own hands.

Unable to bear it any longer, she decided to leave. She didn’t even say a word to him. She thought that it was better that they just pretended like they didn’t see each other today, and that nothing notable happened.

They both had their own lives now, so they would never cross paths again in the future. He had his family, and she had her career.

Meanwhile, as Ayla sat in Brian’s car, she asked, “Where are you taking me?”

This road didn’t lead back to his apartment.

“We’re going to have dinner,” he replied.

“Is this the important thing you mentioned over the phone?”

If she had known this was his intention, she would’ve just stayed with Yareli.

“What’s the matter? Don’t you think eating is important?” Brian did this on purpose.

He just wanted to celebrate the successful launch of her fashion show today, but this woman didn’t seem to give a d**n about it.

“You’re right. It is important.”

Whenever she saw his stern, handsome face, all she could do was nod.

Obviously, no matter how much she objected, everything would go according to his plan.

Upon seeing her agree, Brian felt satisfied, and continued to drive towards the luxurious restaurant halfway up the mountain in the suburbs.

In that restaurant, people could enjoy a picturesque night view.

A smile appeared on Ayla's face when she saw the place, and then she followed him into the restaurant. However, she noticed that there didn't seem to be any other guests.

This restaurant was probably prestigious enough.

One might even need to place a reservation before they could get a table at this place.

How could there be no other patrons besides them? There was only one possibility why this was happening.

He must've booked the entire restaurant.

"Are you sure that the food in this restaurant is good? Nobody seems to be around besides us," Ayla asked with a knowing look.

"You'll know when you try the dishes yourself. The food doesn't have anything to do with how many customers dine here, does it?"

Right now, he really wanted to slap her.

The reason he did this was to create a tranquil atmosphere for her. How ungrateful could she be?

"You're right."

As Ayla flipped through the menu, she noticed that the prices were unaffordable for ordinary people.

One meal cost more than ten thousand dollars.

Noticing her hesitant look as she flipped through the menu, Brian decided to order in her stead. He didn't even need to glance at the menu.

It turned out that he knew the specialty of this restaurant.

Through the floor-to-ceiling window, Ayla saw the cityscape at the foot of the mountain.

Under the moonlight, the city looked so bright and colorful.

From atop, it was a glamorous sight.

Being here made her feel so far away from the hustle and bustle of the city; away from the disturbance of her urban life.

"So, what do you think? Do you like it here?"

Although it was halfway up the mountain, the scenery was nothing short of magical.

That was the reason this restaurant was so popular. And of course, the restaurant's specialty also made it incomparable to an ordinary restaurant.

"Honestly, it's incredible. If it's possible, this place might even be a good place to live," Ayla admitted.

She had had to face so many people and so many things every single day of her life downtown. She was always busy with her work in the company.

Sometimes, even if she was so exhausted, she still had to push through.

Placing his arms around her waist, Brian replied, "Lala, I know that there are some things in your life that you don't like, but you still have to face them. But out of all the things you don't want to face, why do you refuse to face me?"

All he wanted was for her to confront him honestly.

Even if she wanted to say that she hated him, or something even worse, he would accept it.

But unfortunately, she kept all her feelings buried at the back of her mind. She kept refusing to face him, to understand him, and to feel his emotions. She just kept pushing him away.

What on earth could she get out of doing so? Brian had never been considerate of anyone, but for Ayla's sake, he made drastic changes in himself. He dropped his pride in order to get her back, but she just kept refusing him over and over.

"Mr. Clark, are you kidding again? Aren't we facing each other right now?" Ayla deliberately took the literal meaning of his words.

It was true that she could face anything, but she didn't dare to face Brian because she didn't trust her own heart. She knew that it wasn't strong enough to suffer the pain of heartbreak one more time.

And because of that, she kept running away from him.

Chapter 177: She Didn't Want Him To Understand Her Feelings

She was right.

It was true that they were standing next to each other right now, but her heart and soul were distant. It was as if they were thousands of miles apart.

Brian didn't like how it felt.

Normally, he could control anything, but for some reason, he could never control her. She was the only person who refused to be controlled. "Ayla, I really want to see what's in your heart,"

Brian said as he looked into her eyes.

Ayla just smirked at him.

"You wouldn't want to know what lies beneath the darkness of this heart, Mr. Clark."

If he had understood how she felt two years ago, things wouldn't have ended up this way. There was no way he could understand her heart.

And knowing that her heart was once again giving into him, she didn't want him to understand.

"You are not me. How the heck would you know whether I want to or not?"

"This woman is so self-righteous. When did she learn to be this way?" "Because I know you well," she said.

Ayla raised her head to look at his face.

Indeed, she knew him well.

If he ever found out that he had finally succeeded in winning over her heart again, would he once again drive her away like what he did two years ago? She would rather stay with him, arguing every single day with each other, than be worlds away from him. Brian heard those words come out of her mouth.

It might be true that she knew him all too well, but she didn't dare to fall in love with him.

And even if she had fallen in love with him again, she would rather keep those feelings suppressed

"Should I be satisfied with what we have now?" he thought.

Being subjected to his deep gaze made Ayla feel a bit uncomfortable, so she stared at the floor and his shiny black shoes instead.

"Why did you suddenly stop talking? Weren't you showing me how eloquent you've become?"

He had thought that she had learned to be witty, but it turned out that she was still the same as she used to be.

Then, he eyed her from head to toe. She looked so gorgeous in her deep V-neck dress, but he didn't want her wearing something like this.

Because he wanted to enjoy her beauty alone.

He wanted to have every fiber of her being to himself.

Today, her beauty was ethereal.

When he saw a group of men staring at her, he got upset.

Taking a step back, Ayla said, "I want to go."

"But we haven't had dinner yet. Where do you want to go? Why? You can't wait to go back and have a good time with me, can you?" Brian remarked.

"Isn't there anything else that goes on in that head of yours? You shouldn't assume that everyone is like that, alright?"

As Ayla looked at him, she felt helpless.

"Like what?"

He was pretending to be ignorant. He was a man, and she was a woman.

On top of that, they were living under the same roof.

If nothing were to happen between them, he would doubt his own masculinity.

Ayla sat on the leather sofa.

"I have no idea!" "Is that so?"

A smile appeared at the corners of his lips as he sat next to her, pulling her into his arms.

Passionately, he pressed his lips against hers.

All of a sudden, they heard a knock coming from the door of the private room before it was pushed open.

Before she could push him away, the waiter came in with their order.

“Mr.Clark.” The waiter placed the dishes on the table one by one.

“Thank you.You can leave now” Brian said those words, still holding onto Ayla.

‘Couldn’t they pick a better time to come in?’“Yes, sir.”

At once, the waiter left the room.Nobody would dare to get on Brian’s bad side.

If someone were to do so, they would definitely lose their job.

Ayla pushed him away.

“Mr.Clark, I’m hungry.”

“Then let’s eat!”

He then stood up and sat at the opposite side of the table.In reality, she wasn’t that hungry yet.She just wanted him to get off her.

To be honest, she didn’t have any appetite anymore, especially because of the fact that he was staring at her so intently.

When the two of them finished dinner, they weren’t in a hurry to leave.

Ayla stood in front of the window, and Brian stood beside her.

The overlooking of the entire city was truly a sight to behold.It was only during times like this could she feel a bit of peace.

“Aren’t you planning to go home yet?” Brian looked at her.

“Do you plan to spend the night here? That’s fine. They have guest rooms upstairs.”

Hearing that, Ayla turned to him, and replied, “Let’s head back!”

She was worried that if she stayed the night here, she wouldn’t be able to sleep well.

Going back to the apartment was the better choice.Meanwhile, Yareli was standing in front of the window of her hotel room, thinking of her encounter with Hayden today.

Before, she didn’t want to go to Antawood because she was afraid of running into him.

Unfortunately, she still ended up meeting him.

Back then, she loved this man so much that she sacrificed a great deal of things for him.

Sadly, he abandoned her without a second thought.

She admitted that part of the reason she abandoned her daughter was due to her hatred of Hayden. However, when she finally calmed down, she went back to look for her daughter, but the child was nowhere to be found.

For so many years, she didn't hear any news about her daughter. She had spent years trying to look for the child, but it was all in vain. And now, Hayden had asked her about their child.

But did it even matter anymore? The child had been missing for decades.

Didn't he already have a daughter? He also had a wife! Wasn't he satisfied with what he had? 'But what about me?' thought Yareli. She was all alone.

All she wanted to do was to find her daughter before she could leave this world.

Whether it was good or bad news, she wanted to know about it. Yareli gulped down the wine in her glass.

Maybe it was due to her sore eyes, or perhaps the alcohol was too strong that it made her eyes well up with tears.

Silently, tears rolled down her cheeks.

For more than twenty years, ever since she got pregnant and separated from Hayden, she had never once shed a tear.

That was because she vowed that she would never again shed a single tear for any man.

But right now, she was feeling so heartbroken.

In the business world, she was one of the strongest women.

But that didn't matter in the end, because she had nothing. It was only now that she realized what really mattered in her life.

As long as she could be with her daughter, her career and accolades could disappear.

Even if she was still just a waitress, she would be the happiest woman in the world. Sadly, it was too late. She wouldn't be able to change anything now.

All of a sudden, her phone rang.

Glancing at the caller ID, she answered it right away.

"Hello."

"Ms. Evans, I'm from the detective agency. You told me to investigate the whereabouts of your daughter before, remember? We found someone who matches the description. Would you like to see her?" The man's voice was familiar to her.

Although the detective had never brought her to the right person, she still held on to a tiny spark of hope.

“How about tomorrow?” Yareli decided that she wanted to see the girl.

Besides, she had planned to stay here for a few more days. It would be good to see her, even if the chances of the girl being her daughter were slim.

“Great! I’ll arrange the time and place. Shall we meet around three in the afternoon at the Dandelion Cafe? Would that be fine?” the detective asked.

“Alright, I’ll see you tomorrow,” Yareli agreed.

Meanwhile, Ayla had just gotten back to the apartment.

As soon as she entered the room, she slumped onto the sofa.

Brian threw away his coat, and asked, “What? Are you tired already? You haven’t pleased me yet.”

“Can’t I just sit here and get a little bit of rest?” Ayla closed her eyes.

There was no rule in this house that she had to serve him like he was her master the second she had gotten home.

Chapter 178: He Was Mesmerized

Brian sat beside her.

“You can do whatever you want, as long as I don’t object to it.”

After saying that, he carried her into the bedroom. Then, he gently put her down beside the bed.

Ayla was standing barefoot. She stepped on the hemline of her dress and tipped over.

Slowly, she fell onto the bed behind her. Her arms were still dangling around his neck, so when she fell, she dragged him down with her.

“You can’t wait to sleep with me any longer, can you? I never expected to see this side of you.”

Since she had pulled him closer towards her, Brian wasn’t planning to go easy on her anymore.

“I can’t wait? What are you talking about? It’s the dress. It’s too long, so I accidentally stepped on it.”

With that, Ayla felt no need to explain her side.

Right now, they were entangled in an awkward position, so it wasn’t the perfect time to talk about something as trivial as a dress. A few minutes ago, she was wearing high heels and a full-length gown. It was understandable that she would step on the hemline of her dress and trip over it now that she was barefoot.

“That’s a terrible excuse! It’s unacceptable.”

Brian had long known that this woman wouldn’t take the initiative when it came to s*x

“I’ve already given you an explanation. Whether you accept it or not, it’s up to you. Now, get away from me! You’re too heavy.”

Ayla’s delicate body felt sore after bearing the full weight of his body. Brian did as he was told, and the two of them got even closer to each other, rendering her unable to move an inch.

“What on earth do you want?” Ayla felt his warmth as their skins came into contact.

“What do you think I want?” He stared at her body with lust evident in his eyes.

Following his gaze, Ayla quickly covered her chest with her hands.

“You pervert!”

“Come on! This wouldn’t be the first time that I’d see your body!”

Upon seeing her reaction, Brian chuckled. He was mesmerized by how shy she looked just now.

Afterwards, he kissed her passionately. He was a good kisser. His wild kisses made it seem like he couldn’t get enough of it. Once they were done doing it, Ayla fell asleep.

Brian gently ran his fingers along her cheeks, realizing that he couldn’t keep his urges at bay whenever he was around her. He leaned against the headboard, still wide awake.

‘What am I supposed to do with her?’ he thought.

If it weren’t for the fact that he was worried she would get exhausted, he wouldn’t have gone easy on her. The following day, as soon as Ayla entered the office, she saw the newspapers on her desk.

It was all about her! On the headline, she saw “the fashion show of the Clark Group’s new designer, Ayla Woodsen, was a huge success”.

“Ayla, take a look at all these reports! They’re all about you. All of a sudden, you’re now the most sought-after designer of every fashion magazine,” Ellie said to her as she came over with a smile. Ayla flipped through the newspaper casually.

Upon reading the highlights, she felt that they were all being exaggerated. She hardly cared about it.

No matter how much they were praising her, she didn’t feel anything at all.

Without saying a word, she put the newspaper away.

“Ayla, aren’t you happy about it? You’re the headline of the newspaper! You’re a celebrity.” Ellie was surprised to see her so calm.

“I’m pretty sure this news will be forgotten in a day or two. Don’t feel envious about it. Perhaps one day, you, too, will be on the front page.”

To be perfectly honest, that was not what Ayla wanted. As long as her efforts paid off, she would be happy.

Ellie felt shy.

“How is that going to happen? I’m not capable of achieving something like this yet!” She was just an ordinary assistant, and she wasn’t even a professional in this industry.

As soon as Ellie reached the end of her sentence, Linda came over, and said, “Ellie, you’ve been shadowing Ayla for a long time now. Aren’t you aware of her tricks yet?”

“What do you mean?” Ellie was perplexed.

“She’s beautiful and charming. The type of woman that men could only dream of having. As long as she satisfies Mr. Clark in bed, she’ll get everything she wants. Don’t you get it? That’s what you should learn from her!”

Linda’s words were laden with malice, implying that the only reason Ayla gained everything that she had was because she sold her body.

But Ayla chose to ignore that remark.

Besides, Linda had never liked her since the very beginning. She had no intention of changing Linda’s opinion.

If it were any other woman that Linda was bashing like this, they would’ve started a war.

Everyone in the office already knew how special Ayla was to Brian.

However, Linda still openly slandered her in front of so many people in the office.

Surprisingly, Ayla didn’t seem bothered by it. Meanwhile, Brian was casually reading the newspaper in his office. He was satisfied with how the reports turned out.

Normally, such reports should’ve appeared after the first fashion show was held.

Unfortunately, something terrible happened that day, so the event wasn’t that successful.

“Are you satisfied?” Anna came in and saw Brian reading the news.

Such reports were to be expected.

After all, they invested a lot of time, money, and effort into it.

Both the grand fashion show and grand banquet yesterday cost them a fortune.

“Why are you here?” Brian put down the newspaper and shifted his gaze towards Anna.

“I was planning to show you the newspaper, but it doesn’t seem necessary now, does it?” Anna never knew when she started to become so tolerant.

Brian and Ayla brought out the best in each other now.

Naturally, she wasn’t happy about it, and yet she still helped him get everything that he desired.

“You’re not happy about it?”

Glancing at her, he added, “You worked really hard yesterday. Let me take you out to lunch.”

“Aren’t you going to accompany her?”

A bitter smile appeared on Anna's lips.

What was she to him? Should she pretend to be happy that she had a chance to be a third wheel between them? Brian leaned back against the chair.

"She probably doesn't want to see me right now."

Last night, everything was fine between them.

But earlier this morning, she sneaked out before he could wake up. It was obvious that she was avoiding him.

He thought that she wouldn't be able to get up today, but when he got up, the servant told him that she had already left ten minutes before he could wake up.

"Brian, are you still letting her have her own way? Haven't you ever thought of how she has lived her life in the past two years, and how you've lived yours?" Anna felt sorry for him.

Was Ayla really worth all the kindness, consideration, and love that he offered? To Anna, he was the only man that she could ever love.

But what about him? He just kept turning a blind eye to her, and even asked her to do everything in her power to help Ayla. No matter how unhappy she became, she would do anything just to make Brian happy.

There was nothing else in this world that she wanted. But she couldn't bear to watch as Ayla acted so cold towards Brian.

It didn't seem like she cared about him at all.

From Anna's point of view, Ayla was just using him to get what she wanted. If it weren't for Brian, she wouldn't even be standing in the Clark Group's Design Department in the first place.

Chapter 179: No Matter What Her Purpose Was, He Didn't Care

Brian just kept his mouth shut.

Even if he allowed Ayla to do as she pleased, he had one condition: that she had to stay by his side, and she couldn't leave without permission.

"Brian, you know that she's just using you right? Don't you get it?"

Anna kindly reminded him. He wasn't an idiot.

All Ayla wanted was a stable job and career growth.

When she became part of the Clark Group's Design Department and took charge of the whole fashion season's designs, she was no longer an ordinary employee.

"Anna, there are some things that I don't need to know, and you don't have to tell me."

He had always been decisive.

Whether it involved Lucas or Toby, he wouldn't give either of them an opportunity no matter what.

He wanted to make sure that Ayla would be by his side.

Sternly, Anna stood before him, and said, "Brian, we've been working so hard all these years to get where we are today. You can't let all of our efforts go in vain just for Ayla!"

Ayla was neither a woman worthy of his love, nor a person who could contribute to the Clark Group's growth.

The reason why Anna and Brian had gone to Italy and entered into a partnership with Yareli was to help their company slowly transform. She just didn't want him to continue proceeding down a dangerous path.

It was clear to her that he wanted to transform the Clark Group into a fully legal business for Ayla's sake, but she honestly didn't care about that fact.

Anna just wanted Brian to stay safe and sound. She loved him so much that she always prayed that nothing bad would happen to him.

"Anna, you already know my plan."

Brian had always been a man of his word.

Once he had made a decision, nobody could change his mind.

Just to keep Ayla around, he didn't hesitate to damage the Clark Group's reputation." Brian, why do you even have to do this? There are too many men in Ayla's life! How are you so sure that she'll get back together with you again? Don't forget what happened two years ago. Back then, you made her life miserable. You forced her to get an abortion, drove her out of the villa, and she got kidnapped by Tatum. To make matters worse, she got shot and dove straight into the sea. Have you forgotten all of that? Perhaps she's back to have her revenge, or maybe she's trying to use you to get everything she wants. But whatever her reason may be, I'm certain that she will destroy you!"

Anna warned him.

Back when she witnessed what happened between Ayla and Brian, she wasn't directly involved in it, so she saw things that neither of them could see.

Anna was aware of the fact that her relationship with him would end badly, and that no matter what she did for him, he would never love her back.

But that didn't stop her from loving him.

"Two years ago, I owed her my life. So, I don't care what purpose she has. All I care about is that she's back!"

The moment Brian met Ayla, he knew that he was doomed to be defeated by her.

"This decision will ruin your life."

Anna had long known that he was a stubborn man, so there was nothing she could do that would change his mind.

But there was no way that she would let Ayla hurt Brian! Moments later, he lit a cigarette.

As a matter of fact, he hardly cared if it could ruin him or not. He had even imagined the worst that could happen. Meanwhile, Yareli showed up at the cafe on time.

The detective had already been waiting for her there.

As soon as he saw her arrive, he immediately waved at her.

“Ms. Evans, here’s the report that you asked for. He already brought the girl here. She’s in the private room upstairs. If you want to see her, allow me to show you the way.”

She had always been generous every time she asked the detective to look for her daughter.

Even if the detective found the wrong person, she would still give him the reward she promised.

This was also the reason why he contacted Yareli every time he received news about her daughter. As she sat on the sofa, Yareli said, “I want to see what you’ve found first.”

Then, she took the document from him, looking over each page carefully.

“Have you told her about me?” “I have. I’ve told her everything about you,” said the detective.

While she looked at the photos, Yareli didn’t feel familiar to the girl.

Although the person did grow up in the same orphanage, and had the same birth date, something felt off about her.

It wasn’t a secret that Yareli was looking for her daughter, and this news might’ve reached every orphanage within the city.

Rumor had it that her daughter would inherit the Starlight in Milan.

Although the company wasn’t that well-known, its assets and annual revenue were a considerable amount of money.

“Then show me the way.”

Despite having a hunch that the girl in the file wasn’t her daughter, she decided to meet her anyway. She was already here, so there was no reason to leave right away.

Meanwhile, in the room on the second floor, a girl wearing a white dress instantly stood up the second she saw Yareli.

The two of them just stared at each other in silence.

Then, Yareli took a seat and studied the girl carefully.

“I’ve read your profile. So, you majored in design. How many years have you been studying?”

The fact that the girl also majored in design made Yareli even more suspicious.

"I studied for three years," the girl replied in a soft voice.

"Three years, huh? Where do you work? And what have you designed so far?" Yareli asked frankly.

She had planned to pass down her company to her daughter, but if her daughter turned out to be conniving and incapable, she would rather stay in charge.

The girl was stupefied by the barrage of questions she received.

Uncertain of how to respond to all those questions, she chose to keep her mouth shut.

"Okay, how about this? This is my business card. It has my email address. Perhaps you can send me the designs you've drafted. Oh, by the way, even though your profile matches my daughter's, I'm still going to need a strand of your hair."

What she was implying was obvious. She wanted to do a DNA test.

Although the girl felt reluctant to do so, she decided to pull a strand of her hair and hand it to Yareli anyway.

"Well, now that that's out of the way, you can enjoy your coffee! This is my treat."

Yareli took out a Ziploc bag and stored the strand of hair inside it. She didn't stay there any longer.

After putting the Ziploc bag into her bag, she went downstairs, and ran into Ayla.

It turned out that she was also there to have afternoon tea.

Chapter 180: Looking For Her Daughter

"Hi, Ms. Evans. Are you also here to have coffee?"

Ayla approached Yareli.

"I'm just here to deal with some private affairs. But now that I have time, shall we have a cup of coffee together?"

She had already planned to go to the Clark Group's office to find Ayla. It was good that they ran into each other here at the coffee shop.

Ayla nodded.

"Sounds lovely."

Afterwards, they ordered a cup of coffee and sat at a table by the window.

"So, Ms. Evans, have you dealt with the private affairs you mentioned earlier?"

Ayla glanced at the portfolio that Yareli had put aside.

"No, not really."

Yareli was certain that the girl she met earlier was not her daughter.

Puzzled, Ayla looked at her, and said, "So, does that mean you're not done with it yet?"

“Actually, I’ve been looking for my daughter who has been missing for twenty years already.”

There was no need for Yareli to hide that fact from her.

As a matter of fact, she already thought of Ayla as her own daughter.

“Your daughter? I thought you never got married?” they wasn’t expecting that someone perpetually single like Yareli actually had a daughter.

It seemed that she still had difficulties of her own.

A bitter smile appeared on Yareli’s lips.

“That’s right. I believed that I would live alone for the rest of my life. And so, after I gave birth to my child, I left her at the door of an orphanage. I’ve been wanting to get her back, but I never saw her again.”

During the past two decades, she had suffered every night she remembered her daughter.

The thought of losing her daughter pushed her to work harder.

And if sometime in the future, she could find her daughter, she would tell her how sorry she was.

She owed her daughter a lifetime of apology.

If she could ever find her again, she would give her a good life, and never would she live a life of suffering again.

When Ayla saw tears rolling down Yareli’s cheeks, she grabbed a tissue and wiped them away.

“I’m sure that if your daughter is still alive somewhere, she definitely wants to see you, too.”

She felt the same way. If someday, her biological parents showed up, she would definitely be the happiest person on earth.

But for some reason, she felt that that day might be too far away. She even doubted if it would ever come.

“You think so? But I abandoned her. No matter how hard my situation was, I shouldn’t have left her.” Yareli resented herself for what she did.

It didn’t matter how wealthy she had become, because it could never fill the void of losing her daughter.

“She’ll understand why you did it. Every parent has their own reason for giving up their children,” said Ayla.

That was the same thing she told herself. Her parents probably must’ve been left with no other choice but to abandon her. Her words of comfort made Yareli feel at ease.

“You’re a good girl.”

Oh, how she hoped that Ayla could be her daughter! She had taken a liking to her ever since the first day she saw her.

If by some ungodly reason, she couldn't find her real daughter, she would adopt Ayla instead. They kept chatting for about two hours before Yareli drove back to the company.

"Lala, I heard you're in charge of half the designs for the third show. And the third show is a bigger project. Both you and Linda must be well-prepared!"

Although Yareli had been in Italy, she had known everything that had been happening to Ayla while she was working for the Clark Group in Antawood.

"That's right. I'll work hard to make it a success. I've already finished my designs for the third fashion show. Actually, I was hoping if you could take a look at them and give me some pointers for improvement," said Ayla.

"No problem," Yareli agreed, and then the two of them went into the office together.

As soon as Linda saw Yareli, she got up and approached her.

"Ms. Evans, you're here! Would you like something to drink? I'll get it for you. Which do you prefer? Coffee or tea?"

"No, thanks. I've already had coffee with Lala earlier. I just came here to see how things are going."

As she sat on the sofa, Yareli nodded at Ayla and asked her to show the designs.

At once, Ayla brought her a portfolio of all her drafts for the third fashion show.

Carefully, Yareli examined them one by one. After a while, she got up and said, "Lala, come with me."

Once the two of them were in the meeting room, she said to Ayla, "Tell me more about the style you used, and the features of each dress."

Ayla's answers impressed Yareli very much.

"I'm surprised at the progress you've made, Lala! It's only been a few months, and you're already this good."

She closed the folder, and said, "There's still time before the next fashion show. If you have some spare time on your hands, you should design a few shoes to match these dresses, Lala."

A designer must bear in mind that she should keep her designs comprehensive.

Despite the fact the designers had different strengths, it was better to be good in all aspects.

Moreover, Yareli had been wanting to launch a series of shoes.

If Ayla could design shoes as well, she would be the most capable designer in her company! Perplexed, Ayla looked back at Yareli.

"Ms. Evans, I'm afraid that I wouldn't be able to do it well."

"You'll know once you try. I'm certain that you've already learned how to do it."

Yareli gave her a pat on the shoulder to encourage her.

"I have some references that could help you with designing shoes. I'll send them to you later, so you can study it. If you have any questions or concerns, you can come to my hotel room later."

"Okay." Ayla nodded in agreement.

There was no way she would give up that easily.

Knowing that Yareli was rooting for her only served to embolden her.

Even if she encountered all sorts of difficulties during the drafting process, as long as she didn't give up, she would push through no matter how difficult it could get.

When Brian found out that Yareli and Ayla were in the meeting room, he walked in, and said, "Ms. Evans, why didn't you come to my office?"

"I'm having a chat with Lala. Mr. Clark, come, take a look. What do you think about these designs? I told Lala to try designing the shoes, too," said Yareli.

Brian took the drawings, carefully looking through them one by one.

Indeed, Ayla's designs were becoming more and more incredible.

He believed that Yareli made the right call.

"I agree. These are perfect. Ms. Evans, I believe we're going to have a successful cooperation this time."

For some reason, he felt something strange. Yareli seemed to think too highly of Ayla, and it made him feel uneasy.