

Professor Dearest Chapter 13

~CLARA~

Scarlett looks at me; she knows Alaric's words would have affected me badly. I can see the worry in her eyes.

I fold my arms across my chest to hug myself. I suddenly felt sick to my stomach.

I couldn't believe it; he was the one that invited her over.

Why would he do that if he wanted to divorce her? Does this mean that he wasn't serious about the divorce?

There were so many questions racing in my head. I knew that I shouldn't let it bother me; there was nothing at all between us. However, I still felt like I'd been betrayed.

It made no sense. I knew that I was acting ridiculous. Alaric never once even looked at me like he desired me. He never touched me inappropriately and never said anything to make me think that he liked me.

I had no right to feel like this.

"Hello, everyone" Nicole says as she approaches us.

The tension in the air had just risen with her presence. Just like it always did whenever she was around.

She knew that no one here liked her or could even tolerate her except Alaric. I didn't know how he could have possibly stayed married to her for so long. I couldn't understand why he would invite her to this party either.

Everything would have been better without her here.

"Nicole." Searlett forces a smile.

"How have you been?"

I knew that I should say something to her as well, but I couldn't bring myself to open my mouth.

"I should be asking you that, Scarlett." She says. "I heard that you've been sick lately."

We all are shocked that she's suddenly acting concerned about my sister. I knew that it was all pretend. The person who spoke to me outside was the real Nicole, not this fake woman. I couldn't stand her.

But how did she know that Scarlett was sick? Did Alaric tell her?

"I'm better. Clara comes over every day to help take care of me. It's because of her that I've improved." She answers her.

Nicole didn't even try to acknowledge me, even though she had plenty to say when it was just the two of us.

Instead, she turns her attention back to Alaric. I felt my heart twist when she placed her hands on his chest and leaned in to give him a kiss on his cheek.

I couldn't look at this anymore. I turned my face in the opposite direction.

Jenna was at the entrance, it was my cue to leave.

"Jenna is here," I tell Scarlett.

She nods, "Bring her over."

I leave everyone's side to walk over to my new best friend.

She smiles the second she sees me and pulls me in for a hug.

"I think you might make Scarlett a little jealous." I tease her.

"You were her best friend first."

She laughs, "There's enough of me to share between the two of you."

I smile, but I think she sees straight through my act.

"Something's wrong." She says. "Tell me what it is."

I didn't have to say anything; I just moved out of her way so she could see for herself.

"Oh no," she says the second that she spots Nicole. "Please tell me that isn't who I think it is."

I sigh, "I wish I could, but that would be a lie."

"What is she even doing here?" She asks. "Aren't Alaric and her getting a divorce?"

That's what we all thought. Apparently, we were all fooled.

"I thought so, but maybe we were all wrong," I say dryly. "It was Alaric that invited her. I heard it from his very own mouth."

I can't hide the disappointment from my voice.

I had hoped it wasn't true, but I heard him admit it myself.

I look down at my dress; I'd wasted my time today. I had hoped that I would grasp his attention, but this entire time, he was only thinking about Nicole.

I was foolish for thinking that he would divorce the woman he was in love with.

My silly heart was hoping for things that could never happen.

"We can leave if you want," Jenna suggests.

I sigh as I follow her gaze back to the man who could never

— be mine, "it would be unfair to Scarlett. Even though seeing Alaric and Nicole together is a bit painful for me. My sister is more important than that."

I'd been a lot more open with Jenna about my feelings. It felt good to speak to someone about it.

She holds my hand to give me more support. I was grateful to her.

"Scarlett is looking at us." She tells me. "Maybe we should join them."

I nod and force my feet forward. I watch as Alaric removes Nicole's hand from his chest and guides her away from everyone else.

My heart hurts as I watch him take her towards the stairs.

"Is he carrying her to his room?" Jenna gasps. "I guess they really are trying to make their marriage work again. We all had it wrong."

I bit down hard on my lip.

Why was I suddenly feeling this way?

What had changed?

While I was with Carter, it never bothered me what Alaric did or didn't do. He always fascinated me, but I never wanted him this badly.

Something must be terribly wrong with me.