

A Farewell 121

Chapter 121

"Ian, did you agree to the divorce?" Owen asked.

Ian sat on the couch with a poker face. "I don't make a habit of forcing others. I'm not going to stop her since she's so eager to be rid of me."

"No! You're not allowed to get a divorce!" Susan was so furious that she tore up the divorce agreement.

"Hold on! That's mine!" Sage lunged for the paper, but Susan simply shredded the divorce agreement that she had worked so hard to get in the blink of an eye.

Susan tossed the scraps into the trash and dragged Sage out of the office. "Let's go find your grandfather. I'd like to see if he'll allow you to do as you please this time!"

"I'm not going!" Sage struggled with all her might. "Stay out of this! I'll tell Grandpa myself."

Owen rose to his feet. "You're coming with us, whether you like it or not! I've turned a blind eye to your antics in the past, but I can't believe you're seriously considering a divorce! How could you treat your marriage so lightly? I can't let you get away with this!"

"Please don't take her seriously, Ian. Sage has always been impulsive. We'll set her straight when we get home," Owen pleaded worriedly.

Ian glanced at the irritated Sage and said coolly, "It's alright, Uncle Owen. I wouldn't have wasted my time dealing with Sage's antics if I hadn't been afraid that Grandma would worry."

"Of course, of course," Owen continued. "Mrs. Holcomb Senior has always been fond of Sage. For her sake, please don't let this get in the way of your relationship with Sage."

Then, he and his wife pushed Sage out of the office. Ian glanced at the paper scraps that were in the trash can. Ignoring them, he straightened his perfectly pressed suit and made his way to the conference room.

The tension in the car was thick. The couple's faces were grim. Sage sat in the back seat, feeling miserable.

After all her hard work, she had finally gotten her hands on the divorce agreement! However, things had taken an unexpected turn and caught her off guard. From the looks of it, Owen and Susan weren't going to let her off the hook so easily.

Sage had grown up with her grandfather and her mother. Owen, on the other hand, lived in the bustling city. He would only come back occasionally to share a meal with them, and he showed little interest in his niece."

Thus, she and Owen weren't particularly close. However, Owen was still her grandfather's son and the overseer of their family business, so she couldn't treat him like a stranger.

Now that the divorce was coming to her grandfather's attention, she needed to brace herself and navigate the situation carefully.

As for the divorce agreement, she would just have to swallow her pride and ask Ian to sign.

another one later. Sage leaned against the car window, closing her eyes.

The car pulled up to the courtyard of Joyner residence after an hour's drive. Sage wanted to hop out of the car and get to her grandfather first, but Susan stopped her. "Let's go in together!"

Sage was rendered speechless. The driver opened the car door for them. Sage was escorted into the living room by Owen and Susan.

Donald, who was playing chess with the butler, Dexter Moore, looked up in surprise when he spotted the three of them. "What brings the three of you here?"

Dexter greeted them with a smile and left. Owen took a seat across from him, visibly irritated. "You might want to ask your precious granddaughter what she's been up to!"

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Susan ordered the housekeeper to serve them coffee before settling into a chair.

"What's wrong, Sage?" Donald asked gently.

Sage felt a lump form in her throat when she noticed her grandfather looking at her with the same indulgent and

helpless expression he had whenever she got into trouble as a child.

"Grandpa..." she choked out. Tears began rolling down her cheeks

"Why are you crying, Sage? What happened?" Donald inquired anxiously. Then, he glared at his son.

"Owen, did you do

something to upset Sage?"

"That's unfair, Dad, How could you jump to such conclusions?"

Susan couldn't help but interject. "This has nothing to do with us. It's your precious granddaughter! She wants a

divorce!"

"Divorce?" Donald was genuinely caught off guard. He almost dropped the glass that was in his hand.

"Watch out, Grandpa!" Sage dashed forward to grab her grandfather's glass. Then, she placed it on the coffee table and held his hand to help him catch his breath.

"Stop pretending! If you don't want to upset your grandfather, stop doing these foolish things!" Susan mocked.

"Shut it," Owen snapped at his wife. "Dad, you can't possibly go along with Sage's antics this time. If we hadn't gone to see Ian today and Susan hadn't found that divorce agreement in time, they might've already filed it!"

"Sage, is everything your uncle and aunt said true?" Donald asked solemnly.

"Grandpa, I've been meaning to tell you about this, but I was afraid it would worry you, so...!"

"Why do you want a divorce?" he asked.

He had heard Sage joke about it a while ago, but he assumed it was just something she said in the heat of an argument with Ian. He had no idea that Sage and Ian were serious about it.

There were a lot of people who kept asking her why she wanted a divorce, and Sage was tired of answering. But she had to give her beloved grandfather a reasonable explanation.

"Grandpa, Ian and I were never a good match. He doesn't love me, and this marriage is just making the both of us miserable. So I'd like to end it."

"No one is a match made in heaven. In the past, people didn't even get to know each other before marriage, yet all of them still made it work!" Susan argued. "Besides, you were the one who begged for this marriage! Now you want to end it just because you're unhappy? That's a bit childish, don't you think?"

"Yeah, I was the one who wanted this marriage. But that doesn't mean I can't get a divorce! Shouldn't people be allowed to correct their mistakes?" Sage countered. Susan was rendered speechless.

“Watch it, Sage. Is that any way to talk to your elders?” Owen fumed. “You’ve only been married for a short while, and

the Holcomb family has given you everything you need. So how on earth are you miserable? The way I see it, you’re just

being overly dramatic and selfish. You just want to make

everyone unhappy!”

“Just because I have everything I need doesn’t mean I’m happy,” Sage retorted. “If Layla was stuck in an unhappy

marriage, would you also force her to stay in it too?”

“1—” “1” Owen was tongue-tied.

“Alright, that’s enough,” Donald said. “Owen, Susan, go home. I’ll talk to Sage about this.”

“Dad, no matter how protective you are of her, we will never agree to Sage and Ian getting a divorce!”

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“Exactly. If word of their divorce gets out, who knows how many people will trample all over our family? It’ll be even harder for Layla to find a good match then.”

“Go home. I know what I’m doing,” Donald repeated when he noticed that his son and daughter-in-law weren’t backing down.

Noticing that his expression showed no room for negotiation, the couple left reluctantly.

Sage looked at her grandfather apologetically. "I'm so sorry for worrying you, Grandpa. I know I insisted on marrying Ian, but I'm dead serious about getting a divorce. I'm not joking, and I'm not taking this lightly."

Donald didn't say a word. Instead, he motioned for her to sit beside him and took her hand in his. "Sage, I know you must have your reasons for filing for divorce. But be honest with me, do you seriously not feel even an ounce of Ian's love for you?"

He paused before continuing, "Let me rephrase that, have you noticed that Ian's behavior toward you has changed drastically since you guys got married?"

Sage paused for a moment when she heard that. After all, she couldn't say that she hadn't noticed any changes in Ian's behavior.

Ian had shielded her from a car window shattering. He had also taken the initiative to teach her how to drive. He had appeared in the nick of time when Shane tried to kidnap her. He put up with her tantrums.

He had even proposed to sleep in the same bedroom for a while to try and get along like other married couples. These were things Ian would never have done in the past.

"I can tell that Ian cares about you, Sage," Donald continued. "That morning, he said he had a meeting. But it was clear to everyone that he went out of his way to see you because you hadn't returned home the night before. He gave me that antique inkwell and ink because he wanted to make you happy, and he wanted you to know that he cares about your family."

Sage would've been overjoyed if he had done these things in the past. But now, she only felt a little sad. He didn't cherish her when she loved him with all her heart. However, he was reluctant to let her go when she gave up and wanted a divorce..

"Grandpa, that level of care isn't enough to hold our marriage together," Sage insisted.

Donald let out a soft sigh. "Sage, I'm not here to persuade you to stay with Ian. I know that once you've made up your mind, you never change it. Do you remember when you were young? You had a grey rabbit plush toy that you cuddled every day until it wore out. I bought you lots of new, beautiful plushies, but you refused to give it up.

"You insisted on having it patched up and only reluctantly threw it away when it was beyond repair. However, you've never held on to another plush toy since then. So... although I knew deep down that you and Ian weren't a good match, I agreed to let you marry him because I knew there's no going back once you've set your heart on him.

"I just want you to be honest with yourself, Sage. You need to think about whether you want to give yourself another chance."

Her grandfather's words echoed in her mind as she settled into the car. It was true that she tended to be stubborn and opinionated. Otherwise, she wouldn't have clung to Ian previously. But she realized nothing else mattered as much as her life after experiencing death once. However, she couldn't tell her grandfather these things. She only promised him that she would think about it.

Linda's birthday was just around the corner. Ian had promised that he would agree to the divorce if her feelings remained unchanged. Linda, too, agreed not to stop them after that. After giving it some thought, she decided to wait until after Linda's birthday.

Tiana called to ask about the progress of her divorce just as she was leaning against the window, lost in thought.

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Tiana burst out into laughter when she learned that Sage hadn't gone through with the divorce. "See? I told you so! Ian wouldn't let you go that easily."

Sage roiled her eyes. "Believe it or not, it has nothing to do with Ian. He kept his word and signed the divorce papers. But then, things took a surprising turn."

Sage then filled Tiana in on how her aunt stumbled upon the divorce papers.

“Isn’t that too much of a coincidence? Why were your uncle and aunt there when you went to pick up the divorce agreement?” Tiana asked.

“My uncle needed Ian’s help to seal a deal.”

Even though her story sounded plausible, Tiana couldn’t shake the feeling that Ian was somehow involved. “Regardless, the fact that you didn’t get divorced only proves my point!”

“Wow. With such a wild imagination, perhaps you should quit being a nurse and become a writer instead.”

“Hmm... that’s a great idea! I could write a novel titled ‘My Clueless Best Friend Who Can’t Seem to Get a Divorce’. Isn’t that a great idea?”

Sage was rendered speechless. “. On second thought, nursing suits you.”

The car arrived in the city while she and Tiana were still chatting. As the sun set, Sage remembered that she had promised Michael to go to the gym that day. Hence, she asked the driver to take her there.

The gym manager spotted her and immediately apologized to her. Behind him was the coach. from last time.

Sage, however, had long forgotten about the incident. “It’s alright. As long as you guys don’t give Michael a hard time in the future, we’re good.”

“Michael might not be able to work part-time at our gym anymore,” said the manager. “Mrs. Holcomb, would you like to switch to a different coach or get a refund?”

“What? Why not?” Sage asked, puzzled. After all, he hadn’t said anything about it when they had dinner together yesterday. Surely Ian wouldn’t hold a grudge against Michael for something so trivial?

The manager explained, “He told me he was going to participate in an audition.”

Sage was aware that Michael was going to try out for an upcoming talent show, so it made sense to her.

“Ms. Joyner!” Michael called out from ahead when he spotted her.

Sage walked up to him. “I just heard from the manager that you’re going to participate in a talent show. Good luck! Y’all are going to knock it out of the park!”

“Haha. No one knows what the future will hold.” He scratched his head sheepishly. “A friend of Kai’s introduced us. He contacted us this morning, so we decided to sign up at the last minute. I feel bad, especially since you’ve booked so many sessions with me...”

“It’s alright. I can always switch to a different coach,” Sage assured him. “As punishment, you’ll have to teach me today.”

“Deal!” Michael grinned, flashing his pearly whites. He then earnestly taught Sage self- defense for several hours.

Sage was dead tired after the session. She reached for her phone as she sipped some water. “Why’d you send me a video?”

“I’m afraid you’ll forget, so you have to practice using my video every day.”

Looking into Michael’s bright, sparkling eyes, Sage suddenly remembered Tiana’s words from yesterday, as well as the way he gazed at her in the picture.

“Michael, do you have a crush on me?” Her phone rang as soon as the words left her mouth. Surprisingly, it was Ian calling.

Sage immediately declined his call when she thought of what had happened in his office. during the day.

Meanwhile, Michael's ears turned red when he heard her question. "I didn't mean anything by that, Ms. Joyner. I just think it's beneficial for girls to learn some self-defense, just in case they run into trouble."

Sage chuckled when she noticed his reaction. "Relax! I was just joking with you."

His ears were still red as he asked, "Did I cause you a lot of trouble, Ms. Joyner?"

"Nope," she responded honestly. "I was mostly concerned that you would see me through rose -tinted glasses and fall for me after I helped you last time."

"Don't worry, Ms. Joyner. I know where I stand. I wouldn't dare have such thoughts," he said somberly.

"Nonsense. That's not what I meant," she said solemnly. "Listen here, your current situation is just temporary. You're going to make it big someday and gain the support and love of a lot of people. Besides, why would you ever have those thoughts about me? I'm older than you, and I'm married, so I'm not your type. You deserve better, Michael."

Her pep talk made him feel less nervous and embarrassed. He looked at Sage and chuckled. "Thanks, Ms. Joyner. I got this!"

"Yup. Just keep doing what you're good at," she encouraged. "You've got this!"

Sage stepped out of the gym and was about to order a taxi when she noticed a text message from Henry. "Sage, are you free? I have a few questions about Layla that I would like to pick. your brain on."

Sage checked her wristwatch and realized it had been sent half an hour ago when she was in the shower. Mulling it over, she responded. "I was working out and had left my phone in the locker. What's up?"

Henry called just moments after she replied.

"Hey!" Sage said when she answered the phone.

"Sage, what should I give Layla as an apology gift? I upset her yesterday, so she won't even pick up my calls today." He sounded distressed.

"What'd you do to upset her?" she asked.

Henry explained that he went to the botanical garden yesterday with Layla and a few of her classmates. He had invited two of his friends to join him, but Layla wanted to leave after she received a call.

In the heat of the moment, he said she was being disrespectful, to which Layla said she didn't care before she left in a huff.

"I didn't mean to upset her, Sage. I just wanted to hang out with her because we hardly get to. But she was ready to bail as soon as she answered that call, and I just... freaked out," he

continued.

Sage snickered inwardly. Layla was spoiled rotten by Susan and had a haughty personality. She needed people to stroke her ego constantly.

Plus, she was already in a bad mood after getting an earful from her mother yesterday. Henry must've hit a nerve when he called her out in public.

"I'm sorry, Henry. I'm sure you saw how she was with me the other day. We're not exactly close, so I honestly have no idea what she's into. I can't help you here," she said apologetically. "No worries, I'll ask her classmates then. Thanks for getting back to me." He then casually asked, "I didn't know you were into sports, Sage. Where do you usually train? I've been slacking off ever since I arrived in Haldon. Do you have any gyms you'd recommend?"

She couldn't believe his cheek! On the surface, he was asking about Layla, but he was now attempting to probe her about her whereabouts.

Sage responded apathetically, "Hmm... I don't know. The gym I go to focuses on kickboxing, which is probably not what you're looking for."

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Henry was an expert at leading people on. Instead of jumping at the opportunity right away, he responded coolly, "Why don't you send me the location, Sage? I'll check it out."

Sage smiled. "Sure."

After hanging up the phone, she sent over the name of the gym. After all, she had to get to know him better to keep track of his and Layla's progress. It would be even better if she could get him to work for her.

Henry replied almost instantly. "Thanks, Sage."

"You're welcome. By the way, I would appreciate it if you refrain from calling me by my name since you and Layla haven't made things official yet. You should address me as Ms. Joyner instead."

"I understand, Ms. Joyner. Have a nice evening!"

Meanwhile, Ivy sat on the hospital bed with a hardened expression. Her forehead and arms were wrapped in bandages.

"Whoa, this ward is pretty nice. The young man of the Holcomb family seems to be treating you well," Sandra remarked as she looked around.

Ignoring her comments, Ivy asked coldly, "What brings you here? It's late. Didn't I tell you to stay away from me?"

“Well, I heard you were injured, so I thought I’d pay you a visit to see how you were doing,” Sandra explained. “How could you be so careless, Ivy? Fortunately, the lamp missed you by a hair’s breadth. Otherwise, it could’ve caused serious damage.”

Ivy’s brows remained knitted. “What is it? Why did you come all the way here? Why couldn’t you just tell me whatever it is over the phone?”

Sandra had no choice but to get to the point. “I’m here because of that little troublemaker of mine. He’s been splurging a lot to impress that girl, showering her with gifts and taking her out on dates. He’s practically burned through all his cash.”

Ivy glanced at the gold bracelet on Sandra’s hand. “I’m sure you haven’t been holding back either.”

Sandra hastily tucked the gold bracelet underneath her sleeve. “I haven’t touched your money, Ivy. This was the compensation I received from the mall after someone splashed lime water on me in the restroom.”

Ivy was well aware of what had happened at the mall.

Even though Sandra was greedy and had a tendency to speak in a way that rubbed people the wrong way, she couldn’t help but wonder who would go to such lengths as to trap her in the restroom and splash lime water on her.

Even the surveillance cameras in the mall had conveniently malfunctioned at that time.

That was a mystery that Ivy couldn’t figure out. However, it was also possible that the salesperson at the mall had conspired with the security personnel to teach Sandra a lesson after she had caused a scene.

Mulling it over, Ivy’s expression hardened as she said, “Aunt Sandra, I hope you remember it was me who bailed Henry out the last time he got into trouble.

“I also hope you also remember how you went from being a simple country bumpkin to someone who is now decked out in gold and silver. If you want a promising future for you and your son, stay out of

trouble!”

“Of course, of course,” Sandra hastily agreed. “You’re our savior, Ivy. We will never forget what you’ve done for us. We’ll follow your lead.”

Her attitude made Ivy’s expression soften a little. “So, how’s Henry doing?”

“He said it’s going well.” Sandra’s heart swelled with pride when her son was mentioned.” After all, he’s got the looks and the charms. He’s also a smooth talker, so winning over a few girls is a piece of cake.”

Ivy wasn’t the least bit interested in Henry. However, it must have been a breeze for him to charm a girl with his appearance, height, and connections. Ivy pointed to her bag, and Sandra hurriedly brought it over.

Ivy took out a debit card and handed it to Sandra. “Here’s 50 thousand dollars. Give it to Henry, and make sure he doesn’t slip up. Also, tell him to step up his game. Do something else if his usual tricks don’t work. I don’t want my money to go down the drain without any results.

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Sandra’s eyes sparkled as she held the debit card. “Don’t worry, Henry will definitely up his game. He actually planned to rescue the damsel in distress yesterday. Unfortunately, that girl had to bail. He’s already planning his next move, though. He’ll win that woman over!” Ivy didn’t press for further details. Instead, she just said, “Don’t drop by unannounced. I’ll come to you IF I need anything in the future.” She made sure to emphasize the second part. Sage and Ian had spotted Sandra at her place last time. Even though she and Sandra were family, Henry was currently attempting to get close to Layla. If Sage and Ian found out, she would undoubtedly be dragged into the fray. Hence, it was better to proceed with caution. Sandra tucked the card away. “Oh, Ivy, I genuinely came to see how you were doing. It must be tough for you to be all alone in the hospital.”

Ivy propped her chin up. “Tell the nurse I passed out. She’ll know what to do.”

Realization dawned on Sandra. "That's true. Mr. Holcomb's company will definitely be better than mine! I'll go find the nurse right away!"

Meanwhile, Sage returned to Solaris Estate. When she noticed that there wasn't a single soul in the living room, she went upstairs. However, she noticed something amiss when she opened the door to her bedroom.

There were now more of Ian's belongings, and her chaise lounge had been replaced by two simple chairs and an elegant, round, coffee table.

Sage was dumbstruck when she heard footsteps coming from the dressing room. After a moment, she saw Ian walking out in a fresh set of loungewear.

"What's going on? Who did this to my room? And where's my chaise lounge?" she asked with

a frown.

Ian seemed cold and impatient. "Whose idea do you think this is? Uncle Owen and Aunt Susan went to Holcomb Manor in the afternoon to find Grandma.

"They spilled the beans about our divorce, and she called me right away to give me a piece of her mind. She also warned that she'd disown me if I dared to sign another divorce agreement and not sleep in the same bedroom as you!"

"Why didn't you tell me sooner?" Guilt washed over Sage. She figured that her uncle and aunt would settle down after her grandfather asked them to leave.

But to her shock and surprise, they went straight to Linda. This meant that her grandmother-in-law must've found out she had broken her promise and asked Ian for a divorce again.

Why was she so unlucky? Not only did she fail to get a divorce, but she also made her grandfather and grandmother-in-law restless. 1

"I could've told you earlier, but someone decided not to answer her phone," he continued.

Sage fell silent as she remembered the call she had rejected earlier.

+15 BONUS

"Sage Joyner, what the hell are you playing at?" Tan scoffed. "I can't believe you'd let your aunt and uncle find out about the divorce agreement. Don't you dare deny it too!"

Sage felt frustrated by his accusations and tried to explain herself. "I accidentally bumped into an employee, and then..."

She stopped mid-sentence when she noticed the contemptuous look on Ian's face. He seemed convinced that she was just attempting to weasel her way out of this and that she had never really wanted a divorce.

Hence, Sage didn't want to waste her breath. "You know what? Let's just hold off on getting the divorce certificate until after Grandma's birthday. Until then, I won't bug you about it. I'll also ask Uncle Owen and Aunt Susan not to bother you."

She told herself that it would be over in the blink of an eye. After all, it was just ten days. She had to stop causing trouble for herself.

Ian sneered when he heard her promise. He didn't say a word and simply strode toward the bathroom.

Just then, his phone, which was on the coffee table, rang. Unintentionally, she glanced at it and noticed the number. Ian hastily picked up his phone and answered it.

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"Mr. Holcomb! Ms. Shekdotter has just fainted! Please come over as soon as possible!" the person on the other end of the line said urgently.

Ian's forehead creased when he heard that. "Alright." He then put his phone away and glanced

at Sage.

Without a word, he changed quickly and walked straight out the door.

Sage was close by and heard everything that had been said. Of course, she knew exactly where he was going.

Her grandfather had asked her to give their marriage another chance because he could tell Ian cared about her. But why the hell would she want to give another chance to a man who dropped everything for another woman just because of a damn phone call?

Meanwhile, in the hospital, Ivy clutched her bruised elbow and said apologetically, "I'm so sorry to bother you at this hour. I just wanted to stretch my legs a little, but I got dizzy and fell. I only passed out for a few minutes, but the nurse made a big deal out of it."

Ian's brows knitted. "There are nurses everywhere here. Why'd you get out of bed by yourself?"

"I want to speed up my recovery and get out of the hospital as soon as possible. I need to see if I can salvage the Mimosa project," she explained.

"Don't worry about it. It's just one project. Bolton Investment will be fine without it," he responded.

"I wouldn't care if someone else invested in it, but it's clear that Shane's just attempting to one-up you," she insisted.

"I heard you called your subordinates in for a meeting this afternoon?" Ian asked. "Shane's been attempting to undermine me for a while now. Even if he snags this project, it doesn't mean he'll be able to beat me."

Hand over the company's affairs to your subordinates for now and focus on recovering. Uncle. Ron's out of town, but he has called me several times to ask me to take care of you. He'd rush right back if he found out you were acting so recklessly."

Ivy smiled gently when he mentioned her father. "My dad just worries too much. Thank you, Ian. I won't worry you and my dad anymore."

Ian glanced at his wristwatch. "Unless you need anything else, I need to get going."

"Hold on, Ian," Ivy called out.

She took out a boxout from the bedside drawer and said, "I picked this pair of earrings out for Sage. She must be feeling down these days because of me. Please give them to her."

He looked at the deep red brocade box, which held a pair of diamond earrings shaped like delicate orchids. They were simple yet elegant and shimmered brightly under the light. "Girls love receiving gifts. I know you're busy and wouldn't notice these little things, so I

+16 BONUS

picked them out and had the store deliver them," Ivy added.

He hadn't given Sage anything before besides a card. Sage had gotten upset with him about this several times in the past.

"How much is it? I'll Venmo you," he said.

"Don't worry about it, Ian. After all, you helped my dad secure such a huge project last time. and even gave him a birthday gift. I haven't had a chance to thank you yet, so consider this my way of doing so."

Ian put the earrings away. "Those are two different things. I compensated you with the project. and gave your father a gift because it was common courtesy."

“Do you really have to be so square with me?” Ivy fumed. “I gave you those earrings to pass on to Sage as a token of goodwill. Why are you turning it into a transaction? I wouldn’t have asked you to do this if Sage hadn’t misunderstood me!”

Ian thought of the wry smile on Sage’s lips when he left and decided to accept the earrings.

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“Uncle Ron really liked the wine I gifted him last time. I’ll have someone deliver a few more bottles to him.”

“Ian

“Rest well. I’ll be going now.” He then got to his feet and left the ward.

Sage woke up the next day feeling refreshed. She was so tired from practicing self-defense with Michael the day before. After a refreshing and soothing bath, she climbed into bed and drifted off into a deep slumber.

Sage stretched her arms and yawned. She was about to reach for her phone to catch up when she found a deep red brocade box on the nightstand. Intrigued, she opened it and found a pair of delicate diamond earrings nestled inside.

The earrings were simple yet elegant, with just the right amount of sparkle. It was perfect for everyday wear without being too ostentatious.

She had never bought such earrings before. Plus, it was placed on her nightstand, so it was clear that it was meant for her. Did Ian leave them here? Had he returned last night?

She had slept so soundly that she hadn’t noticed a thing. Did he leave the earrings there as a way of apologizing for seeing Ivy yesterday?

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He had never been one for gifts. Even when she had dropped hints on numerous occasions- birthdays, holidays, or anniversaries he always brushed them off with excuses like he was busy, wasn't

interested, or she should just pick something out herself. It seemed like he was becoming more thoughtful.

Sage set the earrings aside, washed up, and did her skincare routine. After she had freshened up, she picked up the earrings and held them up for a closer look.

Upon closer inspection, she had a feeling that she had seen these earrings before. Sage frowned and pondered for a moment before it hit her—she had indeed seen them before... on Ivy!

Ivy was wearing them in a series of photos she posted on Instagram. The caption to her post. read, "I mentioned that I loved orchids when I was a child, and someone remembered it! I'm so grateful to have received these custom-made earrings, so I took a few photos to

commemorate them!"

At the time, Sage had been green with jealousy, and she couldn't help but look at the pictures over and over again. Eventually, she couldn't take it anymore and sought solace from her grandmother-in-law. Under her coercion, Ian reluctantly bought her a pair of earrings as well.

Sage couldn't believe these earrings had somehow ended up in her hands! Just then, someone opened the door. Sage turned around and noticed it was Ian.

His expression remained unchanged when he spotted the earrings in her hand. "I came to get something," he said apathetically.

+15 BONUS

"Did you buy these earrings?" she asked.

He glanced at her. "I figured I'd save you from your usual spiel about me never getting you anything. Otherwise, you'd use this as an excuse to go and bother Grandma."

"When did you get them?" she demanded.

Ian could tell she wasn't in a good mood. He suspected that she was about to interrogate him. She could at least smile even if she couldn't muster up a simple thank you.

"What's your problem?" Ian frowned.

"The stores were all closed when you left yesterday. Plus, you were in such a rush to get to the hospital. There is no way you had the time to get them," Sage stated. "So you must've bought them beforehand. But you didn't give them to me right away when you got home. Instead, you waited until after you returned from the hospital..."

"So?"

"So, it's nothing but trash!" Sage flung them into the trash can. "And that's where it belongs."

Ian's forehead creased when he looked at the diamond earrings in the trash can. "Sage Joyner, what's gotten into you so damn early in the morning?"

Chapter 130

"Ian Holcomb, you're the one who's picking a fight with me!" Sage snarled. "If you don't want to give me anything, don't force yourself to! I'm not a recycling bin. I don't need things that have belonged to someone else!"

“Could you stop being so damn difficult, Sage?” Ian was afraid that she might snap if he mentioned that Ivy was the one who had picked out the earrings. So, he gritted his teeth and said, “The earrings are brand new. It still has the tag on it. Where did you get the idea that these belonged to someone else?”

“Oh, so just because it has a tag means it’s brand new?” Sage sneered. “Ian, if you wanted to make things right, perhaps you should’ve found out what I liked first! Otherwise, just do what you always do and ignore me altogether!”

Jan ran out of patience in the face of her accusations and sarcasm. “Fine! Forget I ever gave you anything then! Who gives a damn about what you want anyway?” He then stormed out of the room.

Sage was so furious that she threw the box into the trash can as well. She cursed Ian inwardly. She couldn’t believe he would give her something he had also bought for Ivy.

Did he seriously think she was that cheap? Did he think that she would treasure anything he gave her, even if it was crap?

Her anger grew with each passing moment. Eventually, she couldn’t take it anymore and kicked over the trash can. Out rolled the earrings, their diamonds gleaming in the light.

Initially, she wanted to stomp on the earrings and flush them down the toilet. But she couldn’t bring herself to do that when she looked at the exquisite workmanship and shimmering diamonds. Hence, she picked it up again.

They were expensive, after all. It would be a waste to flush them away.

“I can’t argue with cold, hard cash,” she mused. Mulling it over, she decided to sell it at half price on eBay.

Calvin felt a little uneasy as he looked at Ian, who was sitting in silence across from him in a café.

“Ian, please say something. I’m scared. I know I invited you out for lunch because I wanted. you to help me out, and I worked hard on revising this proposal. I stayed up two nights in a row just to ”

“I thought women liked to receive gifts. Why did she get so upset when she received one?” Ian asked gloomily.

Calvin sighed with relief. He thought Ian was upset by his terrible proposal He discreetly patted his chest. “What did you get Mrs. Holcomb?”

“Earrings,” Ian answered coldly.

“What kind of earrings? Was she upset because she didn’t like them?”

+15 BONUS

“Do you seriously think I’d be asking you if I knew why she was upset?” Ian could feel his anger bubbling up as he thought about it. He had tried to do something nice and got her a gift, but she ended up blowing up at him.

Calvin reassured him, “Okay. Calm down. Tell me what happened. I’m sure I can help you figure out why she’s upset.”

Sighing, he told Calvin what had happened that morning. “She said she didn’t want anything that belonged to someone else. But those earrings were obviously brand new, so how could they belong to anyone else?”

“Isn’t it obvious, Ian?” Calvin was impressed by how stupid Ian was. “Mrs. Holcomb had asked you when you got them. She probably thinks those earrings weren’t meant for her at all. She thought you decided to give them to her because you felt guilty about going to the hospital and wanted to make up for it.

mon man. If you wanted to give her something, why didn’t y

pick it out yourself? Passing on someone else's gift and not being able to admit it is what caused this mess." Ian shot daggers at Calvin.