

A Second Chance With My Billionaire Love

Chapter 506:510

The night hung heavy.

In the expansive yet somewhat empty apartment, two people who had once shared an innocent childhood stood face to face.

In their youth, they had huddled together under a single blanket.

Alexis had once assured Leonel, "Don't be scared."

But here and now, between them, there existed nothing but emptiness.

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Perhaps all the serenity of their past was merely a prelude to this moment of eruption.

Eight years had elapsed, and Alexis hadn't forgotten.

Nor had Leonel. If he could have, he wouldn't be grappling with that torment.

They had each pursued their own life's endeavors, but their hearts should never have been the pawns. Anyone else could have been embroiled, anyone but Leonel and Alexis.

"You should go!"

Alexis regained her composure and strolled over to the floor-to-ceiling window, leaning against it casually.

In a soft tone, she uttered, "This is pointless."

Leonel remained seated, his gaze fixed on Alexis.

After a prolonged silence, he ventured in a subdued voice, "Do you still have feelings for me?"

He didn't even dare to inquire about the nature of those feelings, dreading an immediate dismissal, an outright rejection from Alexis.

Alexis rested her head against the transparent glass.

She offered a gentle smile.

“Leonel, what response are you hoping for?”

Leonel found himself taken aback.

Alexis was more enigmatic than any woman he had ever encountered.

Unpredictable, proud, impervious to all his allure, his looks, wealth, and gestures of servitude. In her eyes, they held no value whatsoever.

He had to concede that version of Alexis was irresistibly attractive.

He could fathom why Calvin was utterly captivated by Alexis.

She possessed that charm.

Leonel was a man of pride, and he recognized that Alexis was even prouder.

Her gaze, perpetually a blend of chilly disdain and derisive mockery, kindled in him an insatiable desire to press her against that glass and surrender to his desires.

After a brief interlude, Alexis reiterated, “Just go! Don’t ever come back!”

Leonel felt exceedingly embarrassed.

Instead of departing immediately, he tidied up the living room and prepared a fresh cup of hangover tea for her.

With his coat in hand, he declared, “I’m leaving.”

Alexis held her position, her head resting against the glass. From that vantage point, her delicate form and dainty countenance exuded an air of vulnerability.

Leonel’s throat constricted.

In the end, he succumbed to the yearning in his heart and approached her, enfolding her in an embrace from behind.

It was a tenderness he had never exhibited before.

Beyond the realm of physical desires, it was an emotion entwined with familial and romantic sentiments. His heated face pressed against hers. Leonel’s voice emerged husky and barely intelligible, “Alexis, I’m sorry.”

Alexis maintained her silence.

And he, gently encircling her with his arms, cradled her in his embrace.

The night fell into a deeper dusk.

He simply held her, experiencing the tumultuous surges of his emotions.

Leonel's anguish stemmed from his decision to depart from Alexis at the age of twenty, only to realize after years of wandering that she remained his foremost desire.

He had no idea how to win her back.

He didn't possess any certainty of a second chance. all he grasped at that moment was his yearning to hold her. As if they had never been separated, as though Alexis was still the one who shared everything with him.

She used to share her bed.

Even her parents and the guardianship of Marcus and Elva she shared with him. She delighted in introducing Marcus to him and relished observing Elva's interactions with him.

It had been so perfect.

Undoubtedly, Alexis constituted his entire youth. Life within the Fowler villa had mended all his childhood wounds, nurturing the self-assured Leonel of today.

But he had relinquished it all so readily.

Leonel wept, his scorching tears searing both their hearts.

Alexis gently pushed him away.

Clutching her bathrobe, she said softly, "Whether you return or not, my parents, Marcus and Elva, they can always find a way to forgive and accept you. Because in their eyes, you're a son, a brother. But I'm different, Leonel. How many eight years do I have to waste?"

"Let's just be family."

Alexis thought that after all those years, there was nothing to forgive anymore.

Discussing it suddenly felt overly sentimental.

She remained composed, but Leonel was burdened with an almost unbearable pain.

He departed, shutting the door behind him, and leaned against her door with his head tilted back and eyes closed.

After a prolonged interval, he descended the stairs and settled into his car.

The driver had left, and Leonel remained seated without turning the AC on.

Resting his elbow on the window, he puffed a cigarette, exhaling the smoke in repetitive motions.

Smoking was the only thing occupying his mind.

Around two hours later, a sports car pulled up, and the sight of the person who emerged caused Leonel's eyes to sting.

It was Calvin.

The young man who had some involvement with Alexis.

What was he doing there in the middle of the night?

Leonel regarded the young man, wearing a baseball cap, and a surge of anger welled up within him. The mere thought of Calvin being close to Alexis infuriated him. It was a possibility he couldn't bear.

Leonel stepped out of his car.

Calvin also noticed him, slightly tilting his chin, and the two men locked eyes in silence.

Leonel's tone was icy.

"What brings you here?"

Calvin had been putting on a front of vulnerability in front of Alexis, but he showed no signs of weakness when facing Leonel. He sneered, "Whatever brings you here, Mr. Douglas, I come for the same reason."

Leonel extinguished his cigarette and replied, "She's asleep."

"Is that so?"

Calvin scoffed, "That sounds perfect. She's afraid of cold, and I'm here to warm her bed."

With that, Calvin got ready to head upstairs.

He adeptly punched in the passcode at the elevator lobby.

Leonel's eyes blazed with anger.

Just as Calvin was about to enter the elevator, Leonel rushed forward and landed a punch on him.

Calvin staggered back a few steps, bracing himself against the wall.

Wiping the blood from the corner of his mouth, Calvin snapped, "Wasn't it you who didn't want her? You gave her up, remember? And now you're upset seeing another man by her side? What were you doing all this time?"

Breathing heavily, Leonel retorted, "Even so, she's not yours!"

"Is that so?"

Calvin's handsome face bore a mocking expression, but he remained silent, opting instead to land a punch on Leonel when he least expected it.

Provoked by his words, Leonel momentarily dropped his guard.

That was why he took a solid hit to the face.

The two men then engaged in a wild struggle akin to alpha males locked in fierce combat.

Each punch they exchanged seemed fueled by a burning desire to obliterate the other.

Half an hour later, a police car pulled up, and both of them were taken away.

Calvin hastily put on his hat, obscuring his face completely. Leonel taunted him, "Why the sudden shyness?"

Calvin scoffed in response.

"You really should worry about yourself.

You're always hovering around Alexis, but does she even care about you?"

Leonel's expression soured.

Calvin continued to needle him.

"I bring her medicine. She always gets headaches after drinking. She lets me stay the night, but how about you? You don't even have the privilege to be in her house, yet you act like you own the place."

With a trace of bitterness in his voice, Calvin added, "She'll never marry. Give it up!"

Surprisingly, Leonel remained uncharacteristically silent, not offering a retort.

Leonel sat battered and disheveled in the car.

He was trying to wrap his head around Calvin's words when he said, "Alexis won't marry!"

Leonel covered his face with his hands, lost in thought. Then Calvin continued, "You think it's just a fling between her and me? Leonel, I've known her for four years! When I was twenty, my dad committed suicide due to gambling debts, taking my mom with him. It was Alexis who paid off all the debts for me, using her connections to get me into the entertainment industry."

He was twenty years old, and there was suicide in the mix of his story.

As Calvin recounted his past, Leonel listened in a daze.

He was struck by the eerie similarity of Calvin's story to his own.

So, Alexis had taken Calvin under her wing after Leonel left her.

Was it because Calvin reminded her of him? Did Calvin replace him in her heart already after all these years? Leonel had no idea.

He looked up, his eyes misty. Calvin's words hit home.

Calvin vowed softly, "For her, I'd give up everything!"

Unexpectedly, Leonel nodded in agreement, saying, "I know."

Leonel gazed at Calvin's pale, youthful face. He noticed how it looked so much like his own when he was his age. Then, the realization hit him that Calvin had become a replacement for him in Alexis' life over the years.

A heavy feeling settled in Leonel's heart as if it were sinking in water.

At the police station, the officer asked them why they had caused trouble.

Leonel, who typically cared about his image, remained silent.

Calvin bluntly replied, "We fought for a girl!"

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Calvin's statement stunned everyone in the police station.

The police officer removed Calvin's hat, revealing his famous face, and chuckled. Wasn't he the hottest young star of today?

Quite a passionate affair it must have been, then.

Observing the other, it was evident that he was a seasoned business professional with several more years of experience.

The police didn't want to delve further into their personal matters and proceeded to fill out a form.

"Once it's daylight, have someone come over, pay the bail, and you can leave."

He made further comments, saying, "Fighting because of jealousy, huh?"

Calvin and Leonel spent the night in the station, reflecting on their actions.

At dawn, Calvin made a call, and Leonel also contacted his assistant in Duefron.

Leonel's assistant arrived first and quickly processed his release.

Leonel was in the process of putting on his coat when he received a warm send-off from the precinct chief, who said, "Mr. Douglas, do come again!"

Leonel pursed his Lips and said nothing.

He headed for the door. Just as he was about to take his exit, a white sports car pulled up. The first thing that caught his eye as the car door swung open was a pair of long legs. It was none other than Alexis.

Alexis also spotted Leonel.

Their eyes briefly locked in the air before she decisively closed the car door and walked toward him. Instinctively, Leonel reached for her hand.

He caught it, and she looked up at him.

Leonel's voice was subdued as he asked, "You never told me why you're with him.

Is it because of me, Alexis?"

Alexis glanced at him for a few seconds before gently shaking off his hand, returning to her usual half-smiling, nonchalant demeanor.

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She said, "You're overthinking it. Mr. Douglas, don't add unnecessary drama to yourself."

Leonel continued to stare at her with intensity.

Growing impatient, Alexis flicked her hair lightly and walked into the building.

Calvin promptly stood up.

As a top star, he clung to Alexis like glue, resting his head on her shoulder. There was at least a ten-centimeter difference in their height. One would expect their interaction to be awkward, but it wasn't.

Calvin leaned on Alexis with a sense of dependency that was palpable.

Leonel felt a sting in his eyes as he observed Calvin and Alexis together as if witnessing a reflection of the past.

He and Alexis had once shared such closeness.

Unable to bear it any longer, Leonel hastened his steps.

He didn't quite understand what he was trying to escape from, but he knew he couldn't endure another moment there.

His assistant encouraged him to head to the hospital.

However, he declined and made his way straight back to the villa. To his surprise, he found Waylen sitting on the sofa, sipping tea as though he had been waiting for him.

“Mr. Fowler.”

Leonel spoke softly, hoping to slip past him and head upstairs.

But Waylen halted him.

“Where have you been last night? Alexis was out, and you were gone too. This house is starting to feel less Like a home with each passing day. Is it haunted that neither of you want to be here?”

With no other option, Leonel took a seat on the sofa.

With a meaningful look at one of the servants, Waylen signaled for a medical kit to be brought in to tend to Leonel’s injuries.

The concerned servant, who had watched Leonel grow up, couldn’t help but inquire, “Who could have beaten you up this badly?”

Leonel felt embarrassed to discuss it in front of Waylen.

Leonel mumbled, attempting to downplay the situation.

But how could Waylen be easily fooled? His gaze was sharp, and after a moment of contemplation, he let out a chuckle.

“Our Mr. Douglas commands respect out there. Who would dare lay a hand on him? If there’s a fight, it must be about girls!”

Leonel gingerly touched his bruised nose.

In high spirits, Waylen lit a cigarette and leaned in, his curiosity piqued.

“So, how much younger is this Calvin compared to you?”

Leonel was slightly caught off guard by his directness.

Waylen laughed again.

“You see, I may not have much, but I’ve got some experience to share with you!”

He paused, a mischievous glint in his eye.

“When Rena was young, oh, she was quite the heartthrob, a real handful! What should I do? We can’t have a husband and wife constantly at odds. So, we need to find a way to turn a rival into an ally! Like that young man with the last name Moore, didn’t I just adopt him as my sworn son? Learn from that, young man!”

Leonel's expression remained inscrutable, a mix of surprise and bewilderment.

Leonel paused in tending his wound and stood up. He announced, "Mr. Fowler, I think it's time for me to get some rest."

Waylen called out to him.

"Hey, I'm not done talking!"

Leonel was already making his way upstairs, his posture exuding pride and dignity. His voice echoed back to Waylen.

"I'm not quite ready to adopt a son that old." If I decide to have a child, I'll do it on my own terms!"

Waylen scoffed, "Do you think having a child is as simple as a hen laying an egg? If you can do it, then have one for me! Rena and I have been yearning for a grandchild. Let me tell you, none of you measure up to Edwin. He always handled family conflicts with such finesse!"

He grumbled in frustration.

"I've raised a bunch of good-for-nothing kids!"

Leonel halted in his tracks.

Determination weighed in his voice.

"I've actually been thinking.

Would you be willing to let Alexis and me have a child?"

Waylen responded with a dry laugh.

"Can't handle her on your own, so you're calling us in for help, huh?"

Leonel offered no further response and made his way upstairs to his room.

Observing his departure, Waylen couldn't help but think that only his daughter could handle a man like Leonel. However, as he pondered his precious daughter who was also a handful, a headache began to set in.

His daughter was also a troublemaker.

Not only were male stars pursuing her, but female ones were also vying for her attention.

To make it worse, it seemed that Alexis was thoroughly enjoying it.

Waylen couldn't help but wonder whom she took after.

Back in his bedroom, Leonel collapsed onto the soft, spacious bed.

He hadn't slept all night.

Despite that, sleep eluded him. Each time he closed his eyes, he was haunted by Calvin's words, unable to shake the memory of Alexis' when were expression they together.

They had nearly gone all the way.

He had caressed every inch of her body, whether it was appropriate or not.

The thought of it made Leonel's heart race.

During lunch, Waylen summoned Alexis.

Dressed in a business suit, Alexis displayed no remnants of the previous night's revelry or weariness. She tossed her briefcase onto the sofa and reclined, remarking, "Dad, I've been buried in work!

When you beckon me like that, it undermines my professional image.

How can I assert myself with clients?"

Noticing her demeanor, Waylen grew irritated.

Pointing at her, he said, "You're making headlines again! That toy boy you're with, are you sure he isn't up to something?"

Alexis had been frequently captured on camera with Calvin.

Waylen wasn't a stranger to the ways of the world; he understood that Calvin craved recognition.

Alexis reached for the newspaper and let out a chuckle.

"Isn't it typical for a celebrity to aspire to marry into a wealthy family?"

Calvin and I have simply swapped the traditional gender roles. Hey, he's quite the sweet one. How about I tie the knot with him and bring him home to provide company for you and Mom? He's got a fantastic singing voice. He'd certainly liven up the household!"

Waylen sneered.

“Can he bear children?”

Alexis grinned mischievously.

“Well, I can’t marry a woman either, can I? I’m not really a lesbian.”

“You’ll surely be the death of me, you little devil!”

Waylen’s anger was simmering beneath the surface.

At that very moment, Leonel descended from upstairs, clad in casual home attire.

He was radiating sharpness and energy.

Oblivious to everyone else, Alexis narrowed her eyes appreciatively for a moment; then, she spotted him standing halfway down the staircase, earnestly posing a question.

“Are you interested in having a child? I could stay home and take care of it.”

Alexis understood his meaning.

With a smug grin, she retorted, “I wouldn’t dream of having Mr. Douglas as a babysitter.”

Leonel’s gaze bore into her.

“Looking after my own child, how does that equate to babysitting?”

Alexis found the conversation somewhat annoying.

She replied lazily, “If you desire a child, find one of your flings to bear it for you. My time is valuable.

“Not having children and just marrying for the sake of sex is also an option!”

Leonel declared boldly but with a determined expression.

Waylen stood there, taken aback.

Leonel had, without a doubt, exceeded his mentor’s boldness. Back in his youth, Waylen had never uttered such words in the presence of Rena’s parents. He pondered if he had been too permissive in raising those two.

Before he could impart any wisdom, his daughter exhibited no hint of embarrassment either.

“Look for someone else when you’re in the mood. Don’t even think about bothering me!” Alexis declared.

Waylen rose to his feet, clearing his throat.

“Let’s have our meal!”

It was only then that Leonel reined in his audacity.

Rena descended the stairs at the moment, and he offered his assistance, earning a gentle smile from her.

“Leonel, have you found someone?” Rena asked softly.

Leonel glanced at Alexis.

She just sat gracefully at the dining table, eating her meal with such tranquility that it begged the question of how much effort it took to horn such composure.

Just the mere thought of it riled him.

In truth, Leonel was envious, but he didn’t dare to inquire. He didn’t dare to probe into her relationships over the past eight years, how many men she had been involved with, or even contemplate what place he still occupied in her Life.

Their relationship had never truly begun.

Meanwhile, Alexis had indeed experienced romantic relationships with others, as with Calvin.

He wondered if she genuinely didn’t care anymore.

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After a lengthy pause, Leonel finally responded, "Not right now."

Rena nodded, her gaze shifting to Waylen with concern.

"You have many acquaintances. Surely, one of your business partners could be a suitable match for Leonel, right?"

She had a straightforward notion that Leonel had come to live with them since he was little, so he was family and naturally she cared for him.

But he was also still a Douglas. She was determined not to let his family lineage end with him.

Waylen observed the two young ones, and then served some food to his wife's plate, gently remarking, "Our children will forge their own destinies. It's sufficient that we lead comfortable lives ourselves.

Delving too deeply into it and our kindness may not be well-received.

If he becomes unhappy and ventures abroad once more, or if he happens upon some random woman and has a child with her, where will you turn to for solace then?"

Rena continued to cast anxious glances at Leonel.

At that moment, Alexis chimed in, "Dad, aren't you a bit old-fashioned? What's wrong with having a mixed-race child? Good looks are always the valuable currency these days."

Waylen shifted his gaze to Leonel as well.

Leonel didn't laugh; instead, he spoke with deliberate slowness.

"I have a preference for pure-breed."

He was insinuating something, but Alexis simply brushed it aside.

She had long ceased to care about Leonel's taste in women.

Following the meal, Alexis retreated to the cozy Lounge to indulge in some piano practice. Ever since she had taken up her job, there had been scant time for such pursuits, nor had she been in the right frame of mind for them. However, that afternoon offered a rare respite, and the sunshine streaming through was also inviting.

She wore a delicate Issey Miyake dress.

It featured a black knitted top and a billowy white chiffon skirt below.

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Her lengthy brown tresses cascaded down her back.

She played Fiir Elise as always, purely for her own amusement, with no intention to impress anyone.

Leonel lingered in the doorway, silently savoring the melody.

It had been a considerable span of time since he had last heard Alexis play the piano.

She possessed remarkable talent and played with finesse, but her aspirations resided elsewhere.

Leonel strolled in and leaned against the piano, lighting a cigarette as he gazed downward.

The piano's melodious notes flowed without interruption. Alexis inquired casually, "Is there something on your mind?"

Leonel regarded her through the haze of smoke, and then, in a seemingly indifferent manner, uttered, "I'm contemplating a return to China for my career."

"Your admirers abroad will undoubtedly be heartbroken!"

Leonel clenched his fist, feeling a twinge of irritation. After a pause, he murmured, "The company I'm establishing requires a legal team with an expected annual revenue of around five hundred million.

Are you interested?"

Alexis ceased playing.

She regarded him with a faint smile.

"Certainly, I have just the team you need within my firm."

"What if I were to request your personal involvement in this case?"

Leonel inquired quietly.

Alexis maintained her smile and remarked, "How intriguing! You insist on my involvement, and I should just oblige? Leonel, I'm rather occupied at the moment. I don't have the time for these little romantic charades. Let's be frank. This won't work."

Outside, a servant likely caught wind of their conversation and started eavesdropping.

Leonel crossed the room to shut the door.

Upon his return, Alexis leaned against the piano, sipping her coffee.

The piano was the precious Louis XII that Waylen had gifted Rena, and now Rena seldom touched it; it was almost always Alexis who played it.

Her slender form exuded an effortless grace as she rested there.

As Leonel drew nearer, he spoke in hushed tones.

“Let’s set aside business for now. Instead, let’s talk about our personal connection.”

Alexis arched an eyebrow.

“Oh, do we still have a personal connection?”

Leonel advanced a step closer. One of his lengthy legs subtly positioned itself between hers. Alexis couldn’t be sure, but it felt as though he had drawn nearer.

Alexis glanced up.

“Leonel, if you’re in search of female companionship, I can introduce you to some.”

She decided to splash her coffee directly onto his pants.

There was a spark of hope in her to jolt him back to reality.

The rich, dark brew marred his light trousers even further. But since it wasn’t scalding hot, Leonel remained unresponsive. His gaze merely deepened, growing more mysterious and inscrutable.

Alexis set the cup aside, cautioning, “Step back. Don’t get any ideas about me.”

In the next instant, he clutched her shoulders firmly.

Leonel regarded her and inquired in a light tone, “Why did you help Calvin? Is it because he resembles me, or because his experiences mirror mine? Alexis, do you still have feelings for me?”

Alexis responded with a soft laugh.

“Leonel, has all this years spent abroad scrambled your brain? What on earth are you thinking? I helped Calvin because...”

Alexis inched closer to him and enunciated deliberately, "Naturally, it's because he's youthful and handsome, in great shape, and, well-endowed. Do you desire a more detailed account? I'm not opposed to sharing. We are, after all, good friends."

Leonel was perilously close to being driven to death by her mouth.

Deep down, he didn't truly buy into her words.

His jealousy toward Calvin was undeniable, but he still possessed some semblance of sound judgment. He knew that, within her heart, Alexis still held some affection for him.

Even if she refused to acknowledge it.

But Alexis had no desire to prolong this conversation with him. She briskly pushed him aside and ascended the staircase at a leisurely pace. Leonel made no attempt to stop her.

He had no intention of sparking a fight with her at home.

He retreated to his room to change his trousers. Just as he was on the brink of descending the stairs, the sound of a car engine starting reached his ears.

He ventured out onto the balcony and observed Alexis driving away.

Leonel stood there in silence, watching until her taillights vanished into the distance. After a considerable duration, he took out a cigarette and lit it.

Alexis didn't return home for the subsequent week.

When Waylen called her, she simply chuckled it off, offering various excuses about being swamped.

Following the call, Waylen remarked to his wife and Leonel, "Looks like we have a phantom haunting our home; that's why she refuses to return."

Leonel wordlessly served them their meals.

Waylen contemplated saying more but ultimately opted against it.

Their next encounter came yet another week later.

Duefron's weather had grown milder, and the nights were no longer bitterly cold.

Alexis had indulged in some wine.

As she alighted from the car, her briefcase in hand, she exhibited a slight wobble, prompting her assistant to offer support.

“Take it slow, Miss Fowler.”

Alexis dismissed the gesture with a wave.

“You can head back. I’m not intoxicated.”

She had indeed imbibed some alcohol but was far from being inebriated.

Observing that she could still maintain her balance, her assistant nodded and departed first.

Leaning against the elevator wall, Alexis awaited its arrival. With a “ding,” the doors parted, and she glanced up.

Leonel stood by her door, clad in a black leisure jacket, clutching an insulated food container, his demeanor implying he had waited there for an extended period.

Alexis remained inside the elevator.

She regarded him, her eyes veiled.

The elevator door continued its ceaseless cycle of opening and closing.

Eventually, Alexis stepped out, moving with a languid grace. She employed her access card to unlock the apartment door.

Leonel trailed behind her, and she made no attempt to stop him. She nonchalantly tossed her briefcase onto the sofa, shedding her coat and collapsing onto the couch in one fluid motion.

She adorned a red blouse paired with black trousers.

Her distinctly feminine and seductive aura was undeniable.

Leonel placed his items on the dining table and stated, “I’ve prepared some hangover tea for you to sober up and two types of snacks you used to adore when you were young.”

Throughout the entire exchange, Alexis maintained an unwavering gaze at him without blinking.

After a while, she let out a soft laugh, her voice unexpectedly taking on a rare, gentle, and flirty tone.

“Leonel, do you know what I currently fancy to eat?”

Leonel’s body tensed.

He pivoted to face Alexis, who met his gaze without hesitation. She even casually kicked off her high heels. Subsequently, neither could recall how it began.

The moment awareness hit them, they were already engrossed in a fervent kiss.

Leonel clasped her waist tightly, consuming her with an almost voracious hunger. Unrestrained gasps and moans reverberated through the apartment, their mere audibility enough to redden cheeks and ignite desire.

Alexis’ fingers became entwined in his ebony hair.

They continued to indulge in a whirlwind of kisses.

Swaying together, drunken of each other, a deft touch of her hand caused his belt buckle to release with a crisp click. The elegant silver accessory tumbled aside, freeing Leonel’s white shirttails.

With her arms around his neck, Alexis whispered against his Lips, “Impressive kissing skills, Mr. Douglas.”

Leonel’s complexion bore a faint flush.

His Adam’s apple moved involuntarily a few times before he ardently kissed her once more. He carried her into the master bedroom, saturated with the lingering fragrance of a woman.

Leonel held her close, one hand braced against the bed, their intense kisses growing more passionate.

In the throes of passion, they merged their bodies.

Alexis tenderly traced her fingers along his handsome countenance, lifting beads of sweat as substantial as peas from his skin. She chuckled softly.

Leonel clenched his jaw and ardently dominated her.

By the time they finished, it was already two in the morning.

Leonel remained insatiable, while Alexis couldn’t keep up with his ceaseless demands. She playfully slapped his cheek, saying, “Don’t be so voracious.”

She then enveloped herself in the sheets and headed for the shower.

Leonel sat upright, lighting a post-sex cigarette. He intended to wait for Alexis to finish so they could converse.

Alexis emerged from her shower after a mere five minutes. Catching sight of him, deep in thought, leaning against the headboard, she let out a soft laugh as she lifted the comforter and settled in, and then closed her eyes.

“Don’t forget to turn off the lights outside when you leave. I prefer a dimmer ambiance.”

Leonel furrowed his brow.

“Are you kicking me out?”

What kind of man would depart his sweetheart’s abode in the cold after sating her every desire, inside and out?

Alexis kept her eyes shut.

“What else? Do you plan on squatting at my place?”

Leonel swiftly turned her over and pinned her down.

“After what just transpired between us, shouldn’t we address our relationship properly?”

Alexis opened her eyes.

“Hah! Don’t kid with me! Did you arrive here wearing a chastity belt? Didn’t you feel pleasure just moments ago, reveling in it completely?”

Leonel ground his teeth.

“I’m genuinely committed to being with you!”

Alexis playfully patted his face once more.

“If you’re inclined to be with me, that’s perfectly fine. Just bear in mind that you must be compliant, like not harboring jealousy or possessiveness. Oh, I almost forgot to mention Calvin will be delivering breakfast tomorrow morning. Make sure to greet him warmly.”

Leonel’s countenance darkened.

Alexis nudged him aside and luxuriously stretched. She then said casually, “I was being rather generous with you since you persisted in pestering me. I have to admit, your skills are commendable!”

Leonel was a proud man.

It appeared that Alexis regarded him as nothing more than a plaything; hence, she initiated their encounter as soon as they entered.

Evidently, she didn't take him seriously in the slightest. To her, that physical relationship held no significance either.

He rose and began dressing up.

Before long, the door resounded with two slams.

Alexis rolled over, gazing up at the crystal chandelier suspended from the ceiling. She murmured, "Not exactly elegant, but multitasking two things at once doesn't seem that bad."

Her body felt invigorated, and her worries had evaporated.

Alexis didn't concern herself with Leonel's sentiments. He was accustomed to playing the role of the conniving antagonist, so what harm was there in her capitalizing on him once?

She nestled comfortably into the beddings.

Unavoidably, her thoughts wandered back to his physique, prowess, and endurance, which were all exceptional. A satisfied smile graced Alexis' lips.

Early the next morning, the apartment door creaked open.

Calvin entered, bearing breakfast.

He had an impending out-of-town shoot that morning, so he had arrived early to spend time with Alexis.

The moment he stepped inside, he froze in sheer disbelief.

Stockings, a woman's blouse, and intimate little undergarments were haphazardly strewn across the sofa. A single glance would suffice to conjure up images of the prior night's escapade.

Calvin stormed into the bedroom.

Alexis still slumbered peacefully.

Calvin yanked her quilt aside, his tone laced with a chill.

"Who was it? Who spent the night with you?"

Disgruntled at being roused from her slumber, Alexis didn't mince words.

Spotting Calvin, she promptly delivered a forceful kick that sent him tumbling across the room. Grimacing through the pain, Calvin scrambled up from the carpet.

"Even if you're angry with me, you can't casually invite a man over to spend the night! Did he lay a hand on you?"

Alexis sat up in bed.

She was clad in pajamas, yet the neckline offered a glimpse of her smooth skin adorned with a faint, telltale mark, a clear imprint left behind by a man.

Calvin's eyes welled with fury.

Alexis reclaimed the quilt, propping herself against the headboard.

Calvin glowered at her.

Alexis responded with a derisive chuckle, "Who I share my bed with is no concern of yours. Kiddo, don't involve yourself in grown-up matters!"

"It was Leonel, wasn't it?"

Calvin retorted, his tone icy, "You hate him! But to deter me, you chose to sleep with him! Alexis, you're utterly twisted!"

Alexis showed no inclination to coddle him either.

Her connection with Calvin was destined for failure. While she permitted him to remain by her side, she refused to acknowledge their relationship publicly, particularly to her parents.

The prospect of being accountable to anyone was something she actively shunned.

Accountability, huh? It proved an excessively weighty burden.

In the present day, one didn't always get back what they gave.

Alexis stated bluntly, "Hurry up and find a woman to marry! Quit indulging in fantasies about what you can never attain. I'm not attempting to piss you off or anything. I am a woman with needs who merely sought someone to share the night with, and Leonel happened to be a suitable choice."

Calvin was so consumed by anger that he hurled her quilt onto the floor once more.

Alexis bristled, "Calvin, don't go too far!"

Yet suddenly, Calvin enveloped her in a tight embrace.

He buried his face against her neck. In no time, he dampened that spot with his tears. He was crying.

Alexis' heart softened.

She gently patted his back.

"Stop crying! It's not such a big deal, Calvin. In a few years, you'll come to realize that I was merely a fleeting presence in your life. Nobody can be indelible in another person's life."

Calvin choked on his words.

"Don't be with him. Don't Let him touch you. Don't fall in love with him! I can't bear it. I truly can't bear it!"

From the age of twenty onward, his entire existence revolved solely around Alexis.

Alexis was well aware of that.

Little did anyone anticipate that by the age of twenty, Alexis had already irrevocably lost Leonel.

It happened during that fateful evening.

The skies were painted in the hues of a sunset's glow.

The mailman delivered a letter from Acoiclya. Alexis eagerly tore it open.

Yet within, there were no cordial greetings or tender sentiments, only a few frigid lines. He wrote that the world beyond was vast, and he'd decided not to return. He said he intended to remain in Acoiclya. He also said he'd met some more people and started thinking that they ought to reconsider their situation. He said maybe they were never the most suitable match to begin with.

Alexis set that letter on fire.

From that moment on, a void remained in her heart.

Even though she had shared her bed with Leonel the previous night, the hole in her heart didn't go away. Some wounds just couldn't be healed merely through apologies or physical intimacy.

Leonel hadn't ruined her life.

There was one thing he did. He had only shattered her heart.

She empathized with Calvin's agony. She didn't want him to become another version of herself, forever mired in hopeless waiting. She'd rather he harbored resentment toward her than remain perpetually confused.

It was only then that Alexis finally conceded.

Even though she no longer loved Leonel, he was still the only one in her life.

He was a presence no one else could replace.

How could she convey all of that to Calvin? She tenderly stroked his silken hair and whispered, "Calvin, two wounded souls just can't be together. They can never mend each other. One will recover and leave once they're healed. Then, what about the one left behind?"

Calvin clung to her fervently.

"I'll never leave you! Not ever."

Alexis felt tears welling up.

Just then, footsteps echoed at the door, and soon, Leonel stood there.

In silence, he watched Alexis and Calvin locked in a tight embrace.

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Chapter 509:



The air hung heavy and still.

Leonel's face was void of any emotion as he gazed at Alexis, who was in the arms of someone else. Time seemed to crawl as he finally spoke in a hoarse whisper.

“Let’s talk.”

Head bowed, Alexis gently nudged Calvin.

“Get up.” But he remained motionless.

His body trembled, and his teeth gritted as pain displayed on his pale face.

Caught off guard, Alexis quickly found a small medicine bottle from his pocket. She deftly poured out a pill and attempted to feed it to him.

But Calvin’s clenched teeth barred the way.

Turning to Leonel, who was close by, she called out, “Come help!”

Momentarily taken aback, Leonel hurried over. He carefully laid Calvin down and pried open his clenched jaw, allowing Alexis to administer the pill.

Calvin’s chest rose and fell with great effort.

Turning his head, his eyes met Alexis’ with a fragile and pleading Look.

It was a look Leonel knew all too well, one he had once directed at Alexis, seeing her as his entire world.

On those sleepless nights, she would cradle him, whispering, “Don’t be afraid, Leonel!”

But now, her comforting embrace was reserved for another.

Despite the intimacy they had shared just the night before and the breathless moments of passion, Leonel knew his place in her heart had shifted.

She cradled Calvin now, her calls filled with concern solely for him.

It was reminiscent of how she had once cared for him.

“His parents took their own lives right in front of him when he was just 20,” Alexis said softly, her fingers gently tracing Calvin’s face.

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“That same year, he was diagnosed with heart disease.”

Her voice lowered, filled with emotion.

“Leonel, you’ve emerged from your dark times. But for Calvin, I’m all he’s got. Even if the entire world turns its back on him, I won’t.”

Leonel felt a pang in his heart, a sensation he hadn’t felt in a long time.

Despite his robust health, Alexis’ words somehow managed to cause him pain.

As she gazed down at Calvin, Leonel noticed a flicker of tenderness in her eyes, a tenderness that was once reserved solely for him. All her patience and affection had once been his and his alone.

In a soft tone, he asked, “Do you love him?”

Alexis’ response was straightforward.

“Calvin means a great deal to me.”

Leonel slowly rose from the bed, his voice barely above a whisper.

“Have you slept with him?”

Alexis remained silent.

The truth was, they hadn’t. To her, Calvin was more than just someone she cared for. She needed him in a way that was different from his need for her.

Their relationship was unusual, not defined by typical norms.

She harbored hopes of Calvin leading a normal life, wishing he would marry and have children. She thought at least one of them deserved happiness.

Her voice was gentle yet firm as she suggested, “You should leave.”

Leonel’s gaze shifted between her and Calvin, who was now sleeping peacefully on her bed. After a long, strained silence, he managed to utter, “You’re just going to let him sleep in your bed?”

Calvin, nestled against Alexis’s arm, was oblivious to the world.

Alexis carefully covered him with a quilt, ensuring he was comfortable.

She then changed into her loungewear and freshened up. In the kitchen, she started making something simple and light, a task she wasn’t particularly skilled at but could manage. As the pot simmered, she made a discreet phone call to Calvin’s agent.

“He’s asleep at my place. Cancel all his appointments for today. Yes, I’ll look after him.”

Tossing her phone onto the sofa, she felt a sense of finality.

Leonel, still lingering in the room, knew it was time for him to leave. He realized he couldn't compete with someone who needed Alexis' care, someone who held a more significant place in her heart than he ever did.

Calvin was special to her, while he had become nothing more than a means to satisfy fleeting desires.

As he stepped out and closed the door behind him, a bitter chuckle escaped his Lips.

The love he had once easily forsaken now seemed as unattainable as the stars in the sky.

Alexis hadn't been playing hard-to-get or toyed with his emotions.

She had genuinely moved on. The tender bond they once shared had dissipated, leaving nothing but clarity in its wake.

Returning to his villa, Leonel was drawn by an impulse to a particular bedroom.

It was Alexis' childhood room, adorned in pink like a fairytale princess' chamber.

The white bed was familiar, with two pillows—one that had been hers, and one his.

Sitting down slowly, he ran his fingers over the bedsheet, Lost in memories of days long gone.

Having just returned from overseas, Marcus appeared at the door.

He took in the scene—Leonel in Alexis' old room. Edwin had shared some details about Leonel and Alexis with him, but Marcus knew even more than Edwin.

With a calm demeanor, he loosened his tie and stepped inside, closing the door behind him for privacy.

"What's wrong? Having second thoughts?"

Leonel's gaze lifted to meet his.

Marcus bore a striking resemblance to Rena in his youth, but as he matured, his features echoed those of Waylen.

With his long legs crossed, Marcus didn't mince words.

"Do you know the real reason why my sister didn't take you back?" he asked bluntly.

Leonel obviously didn't.

Untying his tie with a certain casualness, he continued, "You found it so easy to walk away, to utter 'let's break up' without a second thought. But, Leonel, you're not the only one who had childhood traumas. My sister's life has been anything but easy. She was born with a blood clotting disorder and spent her first two years in a lab, fighting for her life. And she had autism. Each aspect of her life is as struggling as yours, if not more. When you decided to walk away, my parents were disappointed, but they said nothing. They saw you as a son, but you let Alexis down."

Marcus took a deep breath and pressed on, "Yes, we know feelings can't be forced. But do you know Alexis isolated herself for two years after you left? She didn't seek you out or demand explanations. She healed in silence and gradually erased you from her life; because you chose to leave. She never returned to this room after that letter from you. Her belongings remained untouched. You see, among us three siblings, it might seem Elva is everyone's favorite, but the truth is Alexis has always been the most cherished in my father's eyes. She is the embodiment of my parents' love, while Elva and I are merely the products of their marriage. Do you get it? Do you understand anything at all? No! You fucking don't!"

Marcus' thoughts were heavy with indignation. Why should their family's treasured princess have to endure such treatment?

Why did Leonel think he could just return after his escapades and be accepted?

Why should Alexis open her heart to him again, when there were countless better men longing for her attention?

After Marcus finished speaking, Leonel's complexion turned ashen.

He was left in the dark about Alexis' health issues. He had no idea she was sick, a fact that had never been disclosed to him.

Marcus scoffed at his ignorance.

"You were too wrapped up in your own world, dreaming of a life beyond the Fowler family," he said with a hint of scorn, before exiting the room.

Left alone, Leonel remained seated, lost in thought for a long time.

When he finally ventured out of the room, the house was mostly silent except for some activity downstairs. Elva, having just returned from abroad, was distributing gifts to the house staff—face masks and skincare products.

When a servant attempted to compensate her, Elva cheerfully declined, "No need! They're gifts for you!"

Leonel observed her from afar.

Elva noticed him and offered a gentle smile.

“Hi, Leonel.”

He managed a slight nod, feeling a sting of guilt. Despite her warm greeting, he couldn’t shake the feeling that he was undeserving of her affection.

Suddenly, Leonel felt compelled to act. He swiftly descended the stairs, snatched the car keys from the foyer, and headed out.

Elva called after him, curious, “Leonel, where are you going?”

His voice caught in his throat, but he mustered enough composure to gently stroke her hair.

“I’m going to find Alexis.”

Elva responded with a simple smile, unaware of the turmoil within him.

Leonel sat in his car, took several deep breaths to steady himself, and then started the engine.

Upon his arrival, Alexis opened the door, clearly surprised by his return.

“Why did you come back?” she asked.

In the background, Leonel noticed the voices of a doctor and someone who appeared to be an assistant.

Alexis whispered softly, “Let’s just talk in another time.”

But Leonel couldn’t wait. He looked at her with a gentle earnestness and asked, “Those two years— were they hard for you?”

She suspected Marcus had told him about his newfound knowledge.

Maintaining a casual demeanor, Alexis replied, “It’s all in the past.

There’s no need to revisit old wounds. I’m fine now.”

Before she could react, Leonel stepped forward and embraced her, his lips brushing against her neck.

His voice was raw with emotion.

“Alexis, I won’t ask if you still love me. I wouldn’t dare. But I need to know- do you hate me?”

His greatest fear was her indifference.

Caught in his embrace, Alexis could have pushed him away and retorted with cold, biting words as she had done before.

But this time, she didn’t.

Her voice low, she said, “Leonel, hating someone takes too much energy. Why dwell on the past? I never expected you to return, let alone express regret. The past is just that, the past. In eight years, even the deepest feelings can fade.”

She motioned for him to release her, but Leonel held on, his face burning against hers.

He knew he was compromising his pride, but at this moment, he was desperate to cling to any remnants of their past connection, even if it was just a fleeting glance from her.

At that moment, the doctor approached with Calvin’s assistant in tow.

They appeared somewhat uneasy at the scene unfolding before them.

Alexis quickly distanced herself from Leonel and turned her attention to the doctor, inquiring, “How is he?”

The doctor responded in a low voice, “He’s stable for now, but he needs a consistent living environment. Miss Fowler, please reconsider the advice I gave earlier.”

Alexis acknowledged his suggestion with a nod.

As Calvin’s assistant escorted the doctor out, exchanging a few words at the door.

Leonel’s gaze returned to Alexis. He questioned her, “Are you planning to marry him just for the sake of his emotional and physical well-being?”

Alexis, drained from the exchange, replied quietly, “That’s none of your concern.”

Leonel’s expression darkened at her words.

Alexis let out a soft sigh.

“Please, just go. Leonel, you’re in no position to demand anything from me.”

Her thoughts lingered on the possibility that had she made different choices, she might already have had children.

She would have long walked out of his life.

Leonel studied her for a moment, noting the subtle dark circles under her eyes, before finally departing.

The assistant returned, seemingly with a question, but Alexis, sitting on the sofa and casually flipping through a magazine, dismissed it with a wave of her hand.

“Just make sure he’s well taken care of. Keep him out of trouble.”

As the assistant nodded and left, Alexis’ thoughts drifted.

She then murmured to herself, “Actually, Leonel made the right choice.”

With that, she offered a subtle and faint smile.

That evening, Calvin left her apartment.

Alone, Alexis uncorked a bottle of red wine and sipped it slowly.

She lit a long, slender cigarette and placed it on the ashtray, watching as it smoldered quietly into ash.

Her mind occasionally wandered to Leonel. He had called her twice that evening, but she didn’t pick up. She had no desire to rehash the past or engage in conversations that led nowhere.

It was better to let sleeping dogs lie.

To her, Leonel was like someone who, after sampling various delicacies, suddenly realized the comfort of home-cooked meals.

But why should she be the one to satisfy his newfound appreciation?

In the days that followed, Alexis put Leonel out of her mind, focusing on her own life.

Their paths crossed again at a banquet.

It was only when she was leaving that she noticed Leonel. Dressed in a dark floral formal suit, he stood out with his height and style, surrounded by a bevy of admiring women.

Alexis didn’t engage in the lively scene. She observed quietly for a moment before deciding to leave early.

Ross, her driver, was waiting downstairs. As she approached, he promptly opened the car door for her.

She slid into the car, ready to leave.

Just as Ross was about to close the door, a firm hand stopped him.

Alexis looked up to find Leonel standing there.

Ross, caught in an awkward situation, asked, "Mr. Douglas, didn't you drive here?"

Leonel, his voice low and steady, responded, "I could use a lift."

Ross glanced at Alexis, waiting for her cue.

Understanding that Leonel was persistently seeking her attention, Alexis leaned back in the seat and said softly, "Let him in."

She scooted over and instructed Ross, "Head home."

With a sigh, he obliged. Once Leonel entered and the car door was closed, a subtly charged atmosphere enveloped the space.

Alexis' choice of perfume seemed to accentuate the romantic undertones, given the close proximity of a man and woman in the back seat.

Resting her hand against the car window, she asked in a light tone, "What do you want?"

Leonel questioned her directly, "Why didn't you answer my calls?"

Alexis couldn't help but laugh at the absurdity.

"What's this, Leonel?"

Am I obligated to answer every call you make?

Leonel's reply was deliberate, each word emphasized.

"Considering what happened between us that night, considering we fucked three times——"

At the front, Ross' composure faltered. His face flushed with embarrassment.

The conversation was becoming too— too indiscreet for him.

Alexis, usually unfazed, found Leonel's remarks excessive.

She laughed coldly.

"So, because you exerted some effort, you think I owe you something? You don't strike me as the type to hold such conservative views, Mr. Douglas!"

Leonel's response was low and serious.

"What if I do want you to take responsibility?"

Alexis retorted sharply, "Then you'll have to get in line! And then just wait patiently!"

Her biting words seemed to stir something in him. In a swift, unexpected move, he gently grasped her chin and kissed her.

Alexis had consumed some wine, but she was far from intoxicated.

As he kissed her, she bit his lip in retaliation. Leonel looked at her, his gaze enigmatic.

"You weren't this distant that night."

Unamused, Alexis lightly patted his face.

"I'm not in the mood right now!"

She then called out to Ross, half-jokingly, "Drive to the police station!"

Ross, caught in the middle of their antics, felt overwhelmed. These were the children he had watched grow up, now engaging in inappropriate behavior in the back seat of the car he was driving.

It was too much for him to handle.

Understanding her sarcasm, he drove them back to the villa without further comment.

Upon arriving, Alexis stepped out of the car promptly.

The villa was silent, the clock striking 10 pm. As she reached the second floor, Leonel suddenly scooped her up and carried her into his bedroom.

Caught off guard by his boldness, especially in their own home, Alexis stood her ground as the door shut behind them.

She prepared to offer a quick solution, "Leonel, if you're really this horny, I can help you with my—"

But he wouldn't let her finish.

Leonel pressed her against the door, his head lowered close to hers.

He sought her lips but kept the kiss gentle, not deepening it. His voice was rough yet sincere as he spoke against her lips.

"Alexis, let's have a proper talk."

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Chapter 510:



Alexis firmly pushed Leonel away. She walked across the room, filled with a distinctly masculine scent, to the floor-to-ceiling window.

Opening it, she looked out over the courtyard she had known since childhood. Everything was so familiar, yet so distant now.

In a low voice, she addressed Leonel, "You can't just come and go as you please. The world doesn't work like that! Yes, you might have come back and you might still have feelings for me. But what does that matter? Your pursuit feels like a burden to me now. Frankly, it's disrupting my life."

Leonel approached her slowly, listening as she continued, "Before you came back, I was doing just fine on my own. A woman doesn't need to be married to live a fulfilling life."

He was well aware of this.

Alexis, with her status, had the liberty to lead whatever life she chose, surrounded by anyone she desired.

Yet, despite how selfish or shameless it might seem, Leonel couldn't bear the thought of letting her go.

He wrapped his arm around her, resting his face against her slender shoulder.

Alexis let out a light sigh.

"I need to rest now. Leonel, please, let's not create a scene."

Before she could finish her thought, Leonel suddenly scooped her up in a perfect princess carry. Caught off guard, Alexis began pounding on his shoulder.

"Put me down! What are you doing?" she demanded.

Undeterred, Leonel opened the door with one hand, still holding her.

As they moved through the hallway, a cool draft swept through, prompting Alexis to instinctively draw closer to Leonel for warmth.

He looked down at her, their faces nearly touching, and felt the addictive sensation of their skin lightly brushing against each other.

Alexis shot him a glare, but in a spontaneous moment, Leonel leaned in and kissed her on the lips. Both of them froze momentarily.

Despite their past intimacy and romantic encounters, this simple kiss stirred a flood of memories.

Alexis recalled her 18th birthday, a day they spent together.

It was a summer evening in an outdoor tent, and after she blew out the candles on her small cake, Leonel had leaned down and kissed her.

Back then, they were not in a relationship but just childhood friends.

Yet, the feelings from that time were incomparable.

Alexis had once thought she would marry Leonel after university, never expecting him to leave her.

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This fleeting kiss brought back those youthful memories, leaving Alexis with misty eyes.

They remained that way until he carried her into her childhood bedroom. Her body tensed as she asked in a strained voice, "Leonel, what are you doing?"

She didn't want to be in this room.

Leonel pressed her against the door, their bodies struggling in a silent confrontation. Alexis felt sweat dampen her back as she leaned weakly against the door.

Panting, Leonel rested his forehead on her shoulder.

After a long pause, he murmured, "Change into your PJ and go to bed, okay?"

Alexis' glare was filled with anger and contempt.

Despite her resistance, Leonel carried her to the bed. As she attempted to escape, he gently restrained her and helped her out of her evening gown, replacing it with a simple white nightgown.

He only removed his jacket.

Lying side by side on the 1.5-meter-wide princess bed actually felt cramped for two adults.

Yet, Leonel seemed indifferent to the lack of room.

He intended to rekindle the old spark, to stir memories within Alexis.

He wrapped his arms around her, gently unraveling her long hair, caressing it softly.

The physical difference between them was evident. Alexis couldn't easily break free, and she certainly didn't want the whole family to know they were holding each other on her childhood bed. To provoke him, she said mockingly, "What's with this innocent act?"

Leonel's hand cradled the back of her head.

Gazing down at her, he replied softly, yet with a hint of challenge, "Do you want more? If you do, I can oblige."

Alexis retorted, "Damn you!"

Leonel didn't say anything.

Alexis turned her head away, unwilling to offer more responses either.

Soon however, she kicked his leg again, exasperated.

"Leonel, this is absurd. We mean nothing to each other, yet here we are sharing a bed.

Imagine the scandal if someone found out!"

Leonel's suggestion was blunt.

"We could get married."

Her response was another sharp expletive.

“Fuck you!”

Frustrated and tired, Alexis decided not to engage further.

She closed her eyes, resigning herself to let him stay if he was so determined to keep her company.

As she drifted off, her head rested on his sturdy arm.

The soft, pink lamp light cast a gentle glow on her face, bringing out traces of her youthful self.

“Alexis,” Leonel murmured, leaning in to kiss her tenderly.

Alexis’ eyes fluttered open, but before she could utter a word, Leonel had already taken her hand, their fingers intertwining.

The kiss was tender yet unrestrained, bridging the distance between them.

As she gazed up at Leonel, the reality of their closeness in this childhood space hit her.

They were together in the very room where they had once innocently shared a bed as kids.

Her usually assertive lips were slightly parted, a contrast to her typical demeanor. Leonel, unable to resist, kissed her repeatedly, each kiss more fervent than the last.

The small bed creaked under his movements.

He wasn’t planning to take things too far in such a setting. His kisses and touches were merely meant to bring her comfort.

As the night deepened, Alexis gently pushed him away, turning her back to him in silence.

Leonel didn’t say anything. He carefully adjusted her nightgown, and then wrapped his arms around her from behind. His body radiated warmth, which she could feel against her back.

Later, as Alexis drifted into a half-sleep, Leonel whispered into her neck, “Alexis, I really regret it. I’m sorry.”

But he knew his apologies for the hurt and disappointment he had caused her were futile. As she had said, eight years was long enough to diminish even the deepest feelings.

Beyond her disdain for him, there might also be a trace of regret.

Leonel's voice was filled with earnest longing.

"I want to start over with you. Alexis, please, give me one more chance."

Leonel waited with bated breath for her response.

After a tense two minutes, Alexis finally broke the silence.

"But I don't want to! Leonel, I did have feelings for you once, but not anymore. I'm not going to change my mind just because of a past physical connection—" She paused, and then continued, "I don't want to force things."

Leonel's face drained of color at her words.

To him, her sentiment felt like a rejection of their entire history.

Unable to stay in the room any longer, Alexis rose to leave. As Leonel reached out to her, she forcefully shook off his grasp. Her voice low and strained, she implored, "Leonel, have some self-respect."

"Let's preserve some dignity here."

With that, she exited the room, though she couldn't help but slam the door in frustration.

In the lamplight, Leonel looked even more pallid, a stark contrast to the warmth of the room.

Alexis, stepping into the cold hallway barefoot, felt an even deeper chill.

She realized with surprise that she was crying.

Lifting her head, she questioned her own tears. Why cry over someone like Leonel? It wasn't worth it.

Upstairs, the light in the study was on.

Waylen stood in the doorway, watching her in silence.

Alexis approached and embraced him softly.

“Dad.”

He responded with a gentle pat on her back.

“Why are you barefoot?”

Come to the study; it’s warm inside.”

In his embrace, Alexis felt a sense of comfort, albeit mixed with the embarrassment of her rare emotional outburst.

Waylen showed nothing but understanding and warmth. To him, Alexis was his first little girl, unique in her own way compared to Marcus and Elva. He had raised her with his own hands for years, fostering a special bond between them.

Despite her achievements in the legal world, she was still his little Alexis in his eyes.

He prepared a cup of warm milk for her and wrapped her in a wool blanket. Alexis, leaning on his shoulder, sipped the milk just like she did as a child.

Waylen’s concern was evident as he asked, “Did Leonel give you trouble? I can handle him if he did.”

Alexis, tears still Lingerin in her eyes, managed a laugh.

“I can take care of it myself!”

Waylen affectionately stroked her hair, and half-jokingly said, “I bet that kid wouldn’t dare fight back either.”

Holding her milk, Alexis seemed lost in thought.

Waylen sighed softly, a hint of insight in his voice.

“You still have feelings for him, don’t you?”

Alexis didn’t respond, simply finding solace in her father’s presence.

After a while, Waylen, trying to lighten the mood, pinched her cheek playfully.

“How about I find him a wife and move them out of the villa? That way, you won’t be bothered by him anymore.”

Even though she knew he was joking, Alexis couldn’t help but smile and agree.

Then, leaning against her father a bit more, she found comfort in his embrace.

Waylen patted her gently.

“Finish your milk and go sleep with your mom. She was worried when she heard the noise earlier.”

Alexis nodded in agreement.

After a moment, Waylen cleared his throat slightly, adding a piece of fatherly advice.

“And remember, no matter what happens, don’t bring a child into this if you’re not planning to stay together. What would we do with the child?”

Alexis, ever the resilient one, quickly regained her composure.

“Didn’t you always think I was impractical? Having a baby would be just the thing to make you a grandfather,” she teased Waylen.

Waylen looked like he wanted to playfully swat at her for the comment.

After finishing her milk, Alexis casually put down the cup, borrowed her dad’s slippers, and went to sleep in his bed with his wife.

As for Waylen, he could handle going barefoot and finding himself a place for the night.

The next morning, Alexis rose early, partly to avoid encountering Leonel.

To her surprise, she found him already in the dining room, dressed impeccably as if to impress someone.

Undaunted, she sat across from him and silently signaled the servant to prepare breakfast. While waiting, Leonel remarked, “You didn’t used to like Western-style breakfasts.”

With a hint of defiance, Alexis retorted, “Well, not only do I enjoy Western-style now, I’ve also developed a taste for fast food.”

She was not one to be outdone in a verbal exchange.

Leonel, opting not to escalate the banter, just observed her quietly.

Alexis, sipping her coffee, caught his gaze and challenged, “What’re you looking at?”

Leonel, unfazed and with a slight smile, replied gently, “When will you stop being so headstrong? Sometimes you can actually be quite agreeable.”

Alexis, not in the mood for early morning flirtation, chose to ignore his comment.

As if brushing aside the tension of the previous night, Leonel casually brought up their previous conversation, "What about the legal team we discussed? What's your decision?"

"The Legal team?"

Alexis pondered for a moment before responding, "Send your people over to my firm, and I'll see to the arrangements."

Leonel responded with a slight nod.

The breakfast table was relatively quiet after that. Marcus soon joined them, adding an air of elegance to the setting. Waylen, observing his three grown children dining together, felt a mix of emotions.

In a half-joking, half-serious tone, Waylen queried, "Which one of you is going to give me a grandchild first? Rena is getting impatient!"

Marcus quipped back with a touch of humor, "I don't have a wife.

Should I magically produce a child all by myself?"

Waylen shot back, "This is not a joke!"

His gaze then shifted to the other two.

"Nearly 30 and still no urgency. Do you plan to remain single forever?"

Alexis, not in the mood for such discussions, especially with Leonel present, was visibly annoyed.

She stood up, playfully placing her hand on Waylen's forehead.

"You were the same at my age, Dad. I'm just following in your footsteps," she reminded him.

Waylen, in a mock gruff tone, called them all "Damn brats!"

Alexis responded with a forceful kiss on his cheek before grabbing her coat and departing.

Waylen watched her leave, and then turned his attention back to Leonel.

"And you? Still fixated on one possibility? It's time to find someone and start a family. Life has to move on."

Leonel, lost for words, remained silent.

After a while, Waylen excused himself to go upstairs.

Marcus, left alone with Leonel, folded his newspaper and smiled slyly.

“Leonel, you know, my dad’s never really been fond of you.”

Leonel, maintaining his composure, replied, “Perhaps everyone will have to endure a little longer.”

He then excused himself from the table.

Marcus, left with his coffee, took a leisurely sip, a knowing smile on his face.

Exiting the courthouse at eleven in the morning, Alexis felt a sense of accomplishment.

She had just won a lawsuit, and the grateful plaintiff had called, albeit with the audacious request of reducing the legal fees.

Alexis tossed her briefcase into her car and got in, phone in hand, wearing a slight smile.

She generously told Colin Duffy, her client, “For your case, I won’t charge a cent.”

Colin, mistakenly assuming Alexis was offering a charitable gesture due to their supposed close relationship, was overjoyed.

Alexis, knowing better, ended the call with a curt, “Keep dreaming!”

She then sent Colin a message, attaching photos of him cheating with a minor Internet celebrity.

The woman was no match for his partner in looks or demeanor, but Alexis mused on how some men always seem drawn to the wrong choices.

After sending the message, she tossed her phone aside and drove back to her law firm.

Upon arrival, her assistant approached her quietly, “Mr. Douglas is here to see you.”

Leonel?

Alexis directed with a glance.

“Show him to the reception room.”

Her assistant hesitated, mentioning she had let Leonel wait in Alexis's office, considering he was family.

Alexis firmly reminded her, "Don't let it happen again."

Carrying her briefcase, she entered her office to find Leonel making himself at home. In his hand, he held a photo frame.

It was a group photo of the Fowler family, featuring all four children.

Alexis, about ten years old in the picture, stood next to Leonel, their heads touching in a moment of youthful innocence and joy.

Alexis set her briefcase down with a thud, hands on her hips as she regarded Leonel.

He looked up at the sound of her footsteps, and after a moment, he commented lightly, "You still have it."

Moving to her desk, Alexis settled into her leather chair, giving it a light spin.

"Leonel, I don't appreciate others meddling too much in my life Whether it's Calvin, you, or anyone else- it's all the same to me.

Leonel's response carried a tinge of self-mockery.

"I understand I have no special standing here."

Alexis confirmed sharply, "Good that you realize it."

She eyed him suspiciously.

"What's the matter? You had to come yourself regarding the legal team? Don't trust me to handle it?"

Leonel posed a direct question, "Why are you hesitant to take this case yourself? Is it because of me?"

Alexis laughed dismissively.

"I keep business and personal matters separate.

It's not about you. I'm simply swamped with work."

Leonel leaned forward, placing his hands on either side of her desk, his voice lowering.

"How about just add your name to the team? It's not like you have to do anything."

Alexis retorted, “That would come at a different price.

You’ll need to increase the budget.”

Leonel was ready to agree, but before he could respond, the intercom on Alexis’ desk interrupted their conversation.

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