

## Chapter 573 I'll Be Gentler Next Time

Alexis dismissed the servant and then closed the bedroom door.

It was still quiet, since Evelyn hadn't woken up yet. Lying on the pink cushion beside the bed was Ollie, staring up at Alexis with big doe-like eyes. Its expression was a little complicated, even for a dog.

All of sudden, it occurred to Alexis that this dog probably witnessed everything that happened between her and Leonel that morning.

Just then, Ollie withdrew its gaze.

Then it ran across the room and started pawing at the door, as though it wanted to go to the bathroom.

Alexis obliged and opened the door for the dog.

Ollie wagged its tail at her in thanks and then trotted out, heading downstairs happily.

Alexis didn't shut the door completely. She turned around and looked at Evelyn's adorable sleeping face.

She placed the champagne roses in a vase and set it down on the bedside table. Then she lay back down in bed. Now that Ollie was done with its business, the dog came running back inside the bedroom.

But Ollie didn't want to linger on the cushion anymore.

Instead, it jumped onto the bed and lay beside Alexis' pillow. The dog was probably afraid that Alexis would drive it away, so it looked at her with pitiful eyes.

Alexis didn't mind so much. In fact, she didn't really care about the dog.

But Evelyn was quite fond of it.

Thinking of this, Alexis turned her head and observed the puppy carefully. Ollie's whole body was covered in black spots, making him resemble a little cow.

Huh. Ollie was actually cute.

Alexis subconsciously reached out her hand to pet Ollie, and the dog immediately rolled over to show her its belly.

Glancing down, she could tell that the dog was a boy.

This puppy's just like Leonel. Alexis mused to herself.

She withdrew her hand, but Ollie rubbed up against her and whimpered, begging her to pet him some more. In the end, he climbed on top of her and settled down, ready to fall asleep in her arms.

After hesitating for a while, Alexis acquiesced.

She too went back to sleep. When she woke up, it was already noon, and both Evelyn and Ollie were nowhere to be seen.

But Alexis could hear Evelyn's voice coming from the living room.

It sounded like Evelyn was trying to train the dog, but her childish voice was by no means authoritative. A moment later, Alexis heard the sound of small feet trotting towards the room.

Then Evelyn burst inside the bedroom and rushed over to Alexis' bedside.

Alexis blushed.

Evelyn announced, "I've already had lunch, Mommy. Daddy called and said that you slept late and that I shouldn't try to wake you up."

Evelyn didn't understand what her father meant, so she just looked at Alexis with concern.

"Mommy, are you sick?"

Feeling embarrassed, Alexis coughed and mumbled, "I think I've caught a cold."

Without hesitation, Evelyn ran to her toy basket to fetch her toy stethoscope.

Pressing one end of the toy stethoscope against Alexis' heart, the little girl pursed her lips grimly. Alexis was quite amused, but at the same time, she felt touched by her daughter's concern.

Soon, Evelyn came up with a "diagnosis".

She tilted her head and thought hard about how her mother took care of her whenever she was sick. Then, she ran downstairs to give orders to the servants. Soon, she returned followed by a servant holding a tray of food.

Evelyn was walking in front of the servant, looking like a well-seasoned hostess.

The servant set down the tray of food on the bedside and said with a smile, "Mrs. Douglas, Evelyn is really good at taking care of people. She said that you weren't feeling well and asked me to send lunch to your room. I'm sure she must've learned this from her father."

The servant was experienced and could guess the reason why Alexis had gotten up so late.

But of course, the servant wouldn't dare to talk about it in front of the child.

Alexis felt so ashamed that her cheeks turned bright red.

Seeing this, the sensible servant excused herself after setting down the tray. When the two girls were alone in the bedroom, Alexis looked at Evelyn.

Evelyn and Ollie were lying prone on the edge of the bed. Evelyn was resting her face on her hands, looking at Alexis expectantly, as though she was waiting to be praised.

Alexis couldn't help but giggle.

She touched Evelyn's soft hair and said, "You're such a good little girl. Mommy's feeling a lot better. Thank you, sweetie."

Evelyn suddenly felt a little shy.

Blushing, she retreated to the parlor outside and busied herself with the building blocks; Ollie obediently followed her there.

Looking at this warm scene, Alexis felt soft. Combined with the scent of roses, she had no reason to be in a bad mood. In order not to disappoint the child, Alexis sat up in bed and ate.

Only when she took her first bite did she realize how hungry she was.

Thinking of Leonel's insistence on making out so early in the morning, Alexis was a little annoyed.



Just then, her phonerang, interruptingher thoughts.

Speak of the devil! It was Leonel calling.

After a moment's hesitation, Alexis answered the phone. Leonel should've just gotten off the plane. He asked in a hoarse voice, "Up already?"

Alexis didn't ask him how he knew. After all, the servants here were kind of like his spies.

"Yeah," she replied, making it a point to say it in a lighthearted tone.

But Leonel knew his woman well. Seeing right through her, he smiled gently and said, "Rest well. I'll be back in a few days."

After exchanging a few more words, Alexis hung up the phone.

All of a sudden, she noticed a warm sensation trickling down her legs, so she quickly stood up.

The sheets were stained red.

At the same time, a sudden, sharp pain stabbed at Alexis' belly. Clutching her stomach, Alexis swore under her breath, wanting to kill Leonel.

Maybe it was because Leonel did Alexis so hard for days on end that she was so sore over the next few days. However, she wanted to get pregnant, so she didn't dare to casually take medicine for the pain.

When Alexis couldn't stand the pain, she took Evelyn to stay with her parents.

Rena looked after Alexis, while Waylen took care of Evelyn.

Evelyn wasn't in good health, so she couldn't go to regular amusement parks.

But in order to please his granddaughter, Waylen booked a whole themed park for a week for Evelyn to play in freely.

Seeing Evelyn getting along so well with Waylen, Alexis felt relieved.

On the fourth day, Alexis felt much better. Rena had prepared afternoon tea and invited Alexis to enjoy it in the garden.

It was early summer, so all the flowers were in full bloom.

It was Waylen who had planted this garden for Rena. Over the years, Rena was the one who maintained it.

In the small pavilion, a teapot of freshly steeped black tea and two antique cups were set on the marble table.

Smiling gently, Rena elegantly poured herself a cup of tea and said, "Leonel called me to say that he just got off the plane. He should be here soon."

Alexis' eyebrows shot up in surprise.

Wasn't he supposed to come back tomorrow?

Rena continued, "Your father told him that you and little Evelyn were here with us. Leonel seemed surprised and then got to know that you weren't feeling well. He said he'll come back once he's done with work."

Alexis nodded calmly.

Truth be told, she was actually panicking a bit on the inside.

She was kind of afraid of Leonel now. What if the horny man insisted on having sex with her every day?

She pursed her lips, making up her mind to talk to him about it once she got pregnant.

Seeing Alexis' troubled expression, she guessed that Alexis was thinking about Leonel, so she asked softly, "How're you two doing?"

Alexis knew what her mother was really asking.

Rena was basically asking if Leonel and Alexis were really together for the sake of Evelyn or for love.

Alexis mulled over the question for a while before finally answering, "We love each other, and we love Evelyn. Also, handling all this alone is becoming so tiring."

It wasn't easy, taking care of Evelyn alone in Braseovell. Alexis wasn't the same woman she used to be, thanks to all the suffering she endured from loving Leonel.

But now, she came to realize that not everything was about love.

"There's nothing wrong with being with someone who loves Evelyn," Alexis concluded the conversation flatly.

Rena knew that.

She sighed with emotion, but she couldn't say much about it. After all, Alexis was a grown woman who could make her own decisions.

While sipping from her tea, Alexis looked up and saw a figure standing nearby.

It was Leonel.

Wearing a very exquisite windbreaker and carrying his suitcase, he seemed worn out, which meant that he might've come straight from the airport.

Alexis was slightly stunned.

How long had he been standing there? Did he overhear their conversation just now?

However, Leonel seemed normal enough.

He put down his suitcase and hugged Rena gently in greeting.

Rena patted him on the back and said meaningfully, "I'll give you two some time to talk."

Leonel nodded and watched Rena leave. He didn't withdraw his gaze until the latter was out of sight. Then he asked Alexis in a low voice, "Are you feeling better?"

Taking a sip of the tea with a masked expression, Alexis replied perfunctorily, "Yes."

Leonel sat down.

The servant brought him another cup. He poured himself a cup of tea, took a sip, and said, "If you like it here, we can move back. That way, Evelyn will always have company."

But Alexis shook her head.

She would have more free time when she finished up with work. She didn't want to bother her parents. After all, they were retired, and they deserved the rest.

Leonel didn't insist. "Okay. I'll make time for you."

The blooming flowers bobbed in the wind.



The fresh breeze brought their sweet fragrances over, and Leonel breathed it in greedily, feeling refreshed.

The two hadn't seen each other in a few days, and naturally, Leonel couldn't help but want to get closer to Alexis. He walked to the back of her chair and gently hugged her, whispering in her ear, "I'll be gentler next time."

He figured he'd been a little too rough that morning.

Of course, he couldn't help but regret his actions.

But under the circumstances at that time, no man could've resisted such temptation.

Alexis' expression darkened. She couldn't stand hearing him talk about that, so she tried to push Leonel away, but the man had already held her chin and kissed her gently.

She immediately stopped fighting, trembling slightly in his arms.

Just when things were about to get heated, Waylen came back home with Evelyn. The little girl hadn't seen her father in a few days, so she came running in as soon as she saw the car parked out front. "Daddy? Where are you?"

Leonel felt caught between a rock and a hard place.

He looked down at his bulging crotch and then at Alexis, who wasn't looking any better.

Her cheeks were red, her eyes glazed over. Even her pink lips were parted slightly as she panted.

It took a while for Leonel to calm himself down. "I'll go and say hi. You stay here and rest."

After saying that, he pecked her on the lips and then trotted back inside the house.

A moment later, the sound of Evelyn's happy giggles reached Alexis' ears.

Leaning back in her chair, Alexis cupped her cheek with her hand. She felt hot.

Meanwhile, inside the house, Evelyn started to feel sleepy after playing outside all morning and the excitement over her father's return started to die down.

She sat on Leonel's lap and rested her head on his shoulder, her eyelids drooping slightly.

Still, she tried to fight the urge to fall asleep.

In the end, Leonel had to rub her back and lull her to sleep. Soon, she started to snore softly.

Leonel adjusted the thermostat to a comfortable temperature.

He walked back and forth with Evelyn in his arms for over ten minutes before finally tucking her into bed. Her cheeks were ruddy, which made her look much healthier than before.

Leonel kissed her on the forehead.

He took a closer look at the child. She looked like a combination of him and Alexis.

Evelyn truly was their daughter.

That was why Alexis was willing to sacrifice everything for Evelyn, even if it meant living with Leonel.

With a faint smile, Leonel stroked Evelyn's cheek before finally leaving her room.

He came to the balcony.

It had a great view of the whole of the Fowler villa. Leonel recalled an evening when he and Alexis had exchanged glances here. It was a time when he had just returned from abroad, and she had not forgiven him yet.

Perhaps even until now, she hadn't forgiven him completely.

She was just making do with him.

But this was all his fault. Alexis had everything prior to him; all she wanted was pure and loyal love.

However, he couldn't even give her that.

He thought that maybe no matter what he did, she would never believe that he only loved her.

He stood on the balcony and lit a cigarette, taking long, slow drags from it.





After dinner that evening Leonel took Alexis and Evelyn back to their own villa.

When they got out of the car, he carried their suitcases out of the trunk and joked with a smile, "How long were you two planning on staying there? I don't even bring this much stuff when I go abroad on business trips!"

The family of three headed inside. Leonel, however, didn't let Alexis unpack and insisted on doing it himself.

He opened one suitcase and found it was full of Evelyn's stuff.

There were children's books and all kinds of toys.

Leonel stared at them for a long time. Then he looked at Evelyn, thinking that Evelyn's character was more like Elva's and Olivia's than her own parents'.

Maybe Evelyn took after her aunt Cecilia.

But it was just as well.

Leonel believed his daughter should be pampered as a princess.

Leonel wanted to have a boy so that he could take over the family business. That way, it didn't matter if Evelyn didn't work or get married; her younger brother could support her no matter what.

A servant knocked on the door and said, "Mr. Douglas, Mrs. Douglas asked me to tell you that dinner's ready."

Leonel nodded. "I'll go down as soon as I'm done here."

There was no sound outside. The servant must've acquiesced silently.

After Leonel organized the stuff, he washed his hands and headed downstairs.

Alexis and Evelyn were already sitting at the table, waiting for him. As soon as he arrived, Evelyn pleaded, "Daddy, can we not go to the hospital tomorrow? Every time I go there, I get injections. My butt hurts!"

Leonel looked up at Alexis, one eyebrow raised.

Alexis was also helpless. Truth be told, it was usually Calvin who handled such situations, so now, even she didn't know how to coax Evelyn.

Speaking of Calvin, Alexis suddenly remembered that she hadn't seen him in a while.

Calvin had gone to Braseovell for treatment.

Alexis wondered whether she should visit him there before she got pregnant.

Naturally, she was aware that Leonel had reservations about it. Leonel believed that Alexis and Calvin had a previous romantic connection. Initially, Alexis had chosen not to clarify this with Leonel, as she deemed it unnecessary. Back then, she actually hoped he would eventually move on, so believing she was involved with another man would actually make things easier for him. However, now that they were embarking on a significant period of living together, she felt it was crucial to provide an explanation.

Alexis thought she should bring it up with Leonel.

She figured he'd be happy if he understood everything and would even be willing to go to Braseovell with her to visit Calvin.

Thinking of this, Alexis made up her mind.

Seeing that Alexis wasn't saying anything, Leonel took the initiative to comfort Evelyn and coaxed her into agreeing to go to the hospital.

As soon as he looked up, he saw the smile tugging at the corners of Alexis' mouth. He was stunned. It seemed that Alexis hadn't smiled in such a relaxed manner in so long. It wasn't that she wore a straight face all the time, but that her smiles seemed a bit strained these days.

"Why are you so happy?" he asked.

Observing him, Alexis recalled the disappointment etched on his face earlier this afternoon at her parents' place. It dawned on her that he must have overheard her conversation with her mother.

His birthday was coming up. If Alexis told him now that she and Calvin were never really a couple, it'd cheer him up, right?

They were kind of estranged from each other due to the separation, but their love for each other was real.

Alexis smiled.

She didn't say anything and just lowered her head to eat.



Perhaps because she was in a good mood, she ate more than usual tonight.

When she finally got up from the table, she gently touched her belly, thinking that if Leonel saw her do this, it'd eliminate his evil desires for her.

Sure enough Leonel stared at her the whole time.

But he saw right through Alexis. Judging from her movements, he could guess what was on her mind, and he couldn't help but chuckle.

For a moment, he even had the illusion that the old Alexis had come back...