

CEO's Regret After I Divorced – Chapter 264

Serena's POV

My body had steadily recovered since giving birth—I'd finally completed my postpartum confinement period and was eager to return to Dreamland Studio after such a long absence. Work would be a welcome distraction from everything that had happened.

"Show them in," I told the housekeeper, smoothing my blouse and straightening my posture.

To my surprise, Lucy burst through the doorway, her face flushed with excitement. "Serena! Oh my god, you look amazing!" She rushed forward, then stopped herself abruptly. "Wait, can I hug you now? Or are you still healing?"

I laughed, opening my arms. "I'm not made of glass, Lucy."

She embraced me enthusiastically, then stepped back to examine me. "Motherhood suits you. There's like, this glow about you."

"That's probably just sleep deprivation," I joked, though her compliment warmed me. "What brings you here so early? I was actually heading to the studio today."

Lucy's eyes widened. "Really? That's perfect timing! I came to update you on everything—we've gotten three major commission requests this week alone, and Martin called about that exclusive design showcase in Paris next month."

I gestured toward the sitting area. "Tell me everything."

As Lucy launched into studio updates, I felt a familiar excitement building. Creating something beautiful had always been my escape, my sanctuary when life became overwhelming. Now, with Olivia's betrayal behind me and Kane neutralized, I could finally return to that creative space.

"So what do you think?" Lucy finished, looking at me expectantly.

"I think it's time I came back," I said firmly. "I've been away too long."

"Perfect! Maya's going to be thrilled. She's been running everything, but she keeps saying no one can match your vision for—" Lucy paused as Ryan entered the room, carrying Vivian.

"Sorry to interrupt," he said, his voice softening as it always did around our daughter. "Someone wanted to say goodbye to mommy before work."

My heart melted at the sight of them together—my strong, powerful husband cradling our tiny daughter with such gentle care. The contrast between his commanding presence and the tenderness in his eyes when he looked at Vivian never failed to move me.

“Come here, sweetheart,” I murmured, reaching for my daughter. As Ryan carefully transferred her to my arms, our fingers brushed, sending that familiar spark through me.

“She started fussing the moment you left the nursery,” Ryan explained, his hand lingering on the small of my back. “I think she knows her mother is going somewhere.”

I pressed my lips to Vivian’s forehead, breathing in her baby scent. “Mommy’s just going to work, little one. I’ll be back before you know it.”

Lucy watched our family moment with a soft smile. “She’s absolutely beautiful, Serena.”

“She is,” Ryan agreed, his eyes never leaving our daughter’s face. “Just like her mother.”

I felt a blush creep up my neck at his words. These moments of open affection still caught me off guard—the new Ryan who didn’t hide his feelings behind a wall of ice.

“I should get going,” I said reluctantly, kissing Vivian once more before handing her back to Ryan. “First day back shouldn’t start with being late.”

Ryan nodded, shifting our daughter expertly in his arms. “I’ve arranged for Simon to drive you. And I’ve increased security at the studio.”

I opened my mouth to protest but stopped myself. After Olivia and Tiffany’s appearances, I understood his concern wasn’t just overprotectiveness.

“Thank you,” I said instead, reaching up to straighten his tie—a small, domestic gesture that felt surprisingly natural. “Try not to worry too much.”

His free hand captured mine against his chest. “Call me if you need anything. Anything at all.”

“I will.” I stood on tiptoe to kiss his cheek, but he turned his head at the last second, catching my lips with his. The kiss was brief but filled with a warmth that lingered.

Lucy cleared her throat awkwardly. “I’ll, uh, wait in the car.”

As she hurried out, Ryan’s mouth curved into a smile. “I think we embarrassed her.”

“Good,” I teased. “It’s about time people saw this side of the terrifying Ryan Blackwood.”

He laughed—that rare, genuine laugh that transformed his entire face. “Only you get to see this side. Everyone else can keep thinking I’m terrifying.”

"I'll be home early," I promised, reluctantly stepping away. "Try not to intimidate the nanny too much while I'm gone."

"No promises," he called after me, making silly faces at Vivian that caused her to gurggle happily.

The image of them together—Ryan's stern features softened with paternal love—stayed with me as Simon drove Lucy and me to the studio.

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Dreamland Studio felt both familiar and strange after my absence. The open workspace buzzed with creative energy, designers bent over sketches or peering at computer screens. Maya spotted me first, abandoning her conversation mid-sentence to rush over.

"About damn time!" she exclaimed, pulling me into a fierce hug. "The queen returns to her kingdom."

I laughed, hugging her back just as tightly. "I missed you too."

"Everyone, look who finally decided to grace us with her presence!" Maya announced to the room, keeping an arm around my shoulders.

A round of applause erupted, designers and staff members gathering around to welcome me back. Their genuine enthusiasm touched me deeply—this was the family I'd built from nothing, people who valued me for my talent rather than my name or connections.

"Alright, enough fawning," I said with mock sternness. "I expect full updates on all projects within the hour."

Maya grinned. "She's back five minutes and already bossing everyone around. That's our Serena."

As the team dispersed, Maya guided me toward my office. "Seriously though, how are you feeling? Ready for this, or just putting on a brave face?"

"Both," I admitted. "I needed to come back. Being idle was driving me crazy, especially after everything with Olivia."

Maya's expression darkened at the mention of my former friend. "I still can't believe that bitch tried to kill you. Twice."

"Let's not talk about her," I said firmly. "She's where she belongs now."

My office remained exactly as I'd left it—sketches pinned to boards, fabric samples neatly organized, even my favorite pen positioned precisely beside my sketchbook. Someone had added a framed photo of Vivian on my desk, and fresh flowers brightened the windowsill.

“Julian’s idea,” Maya explained, noticing my gaze on the flowers. “He thought you’d appreciate a warm welcome.”

I touched a delicate petal. “That was thoughtful of him.”

“He’s been asking about you,” Maya said casually—too casually. “Worried, you know.”

I gave her a pointed look. “Maya.”

“What?” She raised her hands innocently. “I’m just saying, the man cares about you. As a colleague and friend, obviously.”

“Obviously,” I echoed, not wanting to examine the complicated situation with Julian. His feelings for me had always been clear, but my heart belonged elsewhere—had always belonged elsewhere, even when I’d been too stubborn to admit it.

“So,” I said, changing the subject, “tell me about this Paris showcase Lucy mentioned.”

Maya’s eyes lit up. “It’s huge, Serena. Invitation-only, the most exclusive design event of the year. Martin personally requested your attendance—seems he’s had a change of heart since that whole mess with Ivy.”

I sat down at my desk, feeling the familiar comfort of my creative space. “Send me the details. If the timing works with Vivian’s schedule, I’ll consider it.”

“That’s my girl,” Maya grinned. “Now, wait until you see what Celeste has been working on. I swear that woman channels you when you’re not here—her latest collection is completely in line with your aesthetic.”