

My CEO Ex: Let Me Go.

Chapter 3: Chapter 3

A wave of bitterness spread through my chest, my nose tingling as my vision blurred with tears. A deep sense of frustration and sorrow washed over me.

I had never seen Alexander like this—so gentle. Three years of marriage, and he had always been indifferent to me. I often told myself that this was just how he was. After repeating that to myself for so long, I had even started to believe it.

But now, I saw it. He was capable of tenderness, but it was for another woman.

They passed right in front of my car, and he didn't even notice. Of course, he didn't notice me either.

“M-Mrs. Hawthorne, you’re back. What would you like for dinner...?” Maggie Hayes glanced at me, her eyes catching the tears on my face. But before she could say anything more, I walked straight into the bedroom, and she wisely stayed silent.

I leaned against the door, exhausted, my throat tight with grief. I’d held it in all day, but now, I couldn’t anymore. My vision blurred as the tears began to fall, each one more painful than the last.

The ache in my chest was unbearable. It hurt so much.

Having grown up in a broken home, I’d suffered enough from the pain of divorce. I didn’t want my baby to grow up the same way. I wanted my child to be happy. But who could tell me how to make that happen?

After a long while, Maggie gently knocked on the bedroom door. “Mrs. Hawthorne, dinner is ready.”

I barely responded with a soft “Mm” before heading to the bathroom to wash my face.

When I came out, I suddenly remembered the message from Alexander.

He had said he brought me a gift from his business trip.

What could it be?

I walked over to the closet and found his suitcase. I opened it.

Inside was a signed album from my favorite international singer, Avery Rose. It wasn’t gold or jewelry, but it meant something.

I hugged it to my chest. A tender green sprout grew in the barren desert of my heart. At least he still remembered what I liked. He still thought of me. Maybe I wasn't a total failure after all.

I woke up the next morning in a daze, the bed beside me empty. I sat there for a long time, lost in thought.

He must have stayed with Isabella last night. I should have been prepared for that. But why did it feel like a piece of my heart had been ripped out, leaving an open, bleeding wound?

The bedroom door clicked open, and Alexander stepped in, his gaze falling on me with concern when he saw my pale, dazed expression. He walked over and sat beside me. "Vivienne, are you feeling alright?"

I froze when I saw him, and to my surprise, a faint sense of relief washed over me. I stood up and moved away from the bed. "I'm fine."

"Then what's wrong? Tell me."

Tell him?

Tell him that I don't want a divorce? That I don't want this at all?

He brought me a gift. He didn't stay with Isabella last night. Could that mean there's still something left between us?

If I asked him to stay, would he?

I opened my mouth, but before I could say anything, he added, "Even if we're not married anymore, I'm still your brother. You can talk to me if something's bothering you."

My throat tightened, like I had swallowed sand. The words stuck, and I couldn't speak at all.

After a long silence, I forced a faint smile and turned to him. "I'm really fine. You should go ahead. I'll be downstairs after I wash up."

Alexander looked at me, loosening his collar and pressing his lips together. "Vivienne, we haven't divorced yet. Are you really going to be this distant with me now?"

I parted my lips, trying to swallow the bitterness, but all I could manage was a weak smile and a shake of my head. "I'm not."

He studied me for a moment, a hint of displeasure in his eyes. "Since you don't want to talk, I won't push. I'll head to the office now."

With that, he turned and left without another word, no hesitation at all.

As the door clicked shut behind him, the smile on my face faltered, and I couldn't hold it anymore.

What was he angry about?

Was it because Isabella was back? Was he getting impatient with me?

I tried to force a smile, but the weight of it dragged my lips down, more painful than tears.

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Vanguard Global Enterprises.

My assistant hurried in. "Director Vivienne, Lena Ashford's talent agent is on the phone!"

Vanguard Global Enterprises' upcoming season of *Valmonté & Roussier International* was set to debut with a brand ambassador who was quickly becoming the hottest rising star—Lena Ashford. Known for her youthful and vibrant image, she was the perfect fit for the season's theme.

"What's going on?"

"She didn't say, but insisted that you take the call."

I grabbed the receiver. "Hello, Sophia?"

When I heard the angry voice of Lena Ashford's talent agent, Sophia Archer, my heart clenched. She snapped, "Director Vivienne, if you think Lena's caliber doesn't match Vanguard Global Enterprises, just say it. Lena doesn't need you! We've already turned down other brand endorsements, and now you're changing your mind about Lena? Are you messing with us? You owe Lena an explanation for this!"

I took a deep breath to steady myself, keeping my voice calm but firm. "Sophia, please calm down. Lena is our brand ambassador. There's no way we'd replace her."

She scoffed. "Oh, really? Didn't the director of Corporate Communications and Public Relations (CCPR) personally call to say they're replacing her?"

A chill ran through me. For a moment, I was stunned, but then it hit me. My tone sharpened. "Sophia, I'll look into this immediately. I'll make sure Lena gets an explanation."

After hanging up, I felt a surge of anger bubbling up. My face darkened as I stood, heading straight for the CCPR department. The sharp click of my heels echoed through the hall, each step feeling like a weight pressing against my chest.

The past three years at Vanguard Global Enterprises hadn't been easy. Olivia Reynolds had been quietly undermining me, and I knew she was behind this.

Without hesitation, I threw open the CCPR door and stormed in. My voice was icy. "Olivia Reynolds, explain what's going on with the Lena Ashford brand ambassador issue."

Olivia looked up, her expression one of cool readiness. She smirked. "Director Vivienne, why so angry? Why don't you sit down and we can talk?"

"Don't try to play me. CEO Hawthorne approved this plan, so why are you interfering with V&R's decisions?" I glared at her, anger simmering in my chest.

A flash of contempt crossed Olivia's face, but she didn't back down. "And what if I am interfering? What gives you the right to shout at me? If it weren't for your so-called 'foolish father,' you'd never have wormed your way into Vanguard Global Enterprises in the first place. So maybe look in the mirror before you talk down to me."

Her words cut deep, like a knife through my heart. But I didn't retaliate right away. I took a slow breath and said quietly, "You have no right to comment on how I got here."

I would never let anyone insult my father, whether he was alive or dead.

The room fell into a tense silence. A few employees looked on, holding their breath. Olivia seemed to think she had the upper hand and continued her taunting, satisfaction clear in her voice. "What? Am I not telling the truth? Wasn't it you who played the martyr to get into Vanguard Global Enterprises? And didn't you seduce CEO Hawthorne?"

Her laugh was sharp, full of venom and jealousy. It reminded me of the rumors she'd spread about me when I worked alongside Alexander. She hadn't just envied my position—she'd resented my relationship with him too.

"Too bad Miss Blackwood is back in her home country. Now when you come crawling back, CEO Hawthorne won't even look at you! If your 'foolish father' knew—" Before she could finish, I raised my hand and slapped her across the face.

"Slap!"

The sound of the slap echoed in the quiet office. The air seemed to freeze, and for a moment, no one moved.

Olivia covered her cheek, her eyes wide with disbelief. She glared at me, her voice seething with rage. "Vivienne Sinclair! How dare you slap me! I'll say it—your father deserved to die young. He should have—"

I interrupted her, my voice cold as ice. "Since you don't understand respect, let me teach you."

I raised my hand again, ready to strike, but just then, a strong hand grabbed my wrist.

I struggled, but couldn't break free. Frowning, I turned, only to be stunned. "CEO Hawthorne?"