

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 101[904 words]

Chapter 101 The Bar Confrontation

52

Finished

When Scarlett finally emerged, Vincent straightened his posture and addressed her coldly, “Come with me.”

His tone was icy, devoid of any warmth.

Hearing his command, Scarlett wondered if he intended to confront her about earlier—after all, in the dining room, she hadn’t exactly complied with his unspoken expectation to refuse staying over.

But Vincent gave Scarlett no opportunity to question him. He simply turned and strode out of the hall, leaving her little choice but to follow.

Once they had stepped outside the Stewart Manor, Scarlett’s expression turned frosty. She spoke with unmistakable suspicion, “Vincent, whatever you need to say, you can say it right here.”

Vincent stopped abruptly and turned just as Scarlett was closing the distance between them.

In her haste, she accidentally collided with his solid chest the moment he pivoted.

She could feel the hard, defined lines of his torso through his clothing, and her cheeks instantly flushed

with heat.

Vincent looked down at her, his expression unreadable. “Luke is missing. I’ve tried calling him repeatedly, but he isn’t answering.”

This was highly unusual. Whenever Vincent called, Luke always picked up—even if reluctantly, he would answer due to the implicit pressure Vincent exerted.

Hearing this, Scarlett finally understood-Vincent was genuinely concerned about Luke's whereabouts.

But Scarlett maintained her composure and replied coolly, "He's a grown adult. He can take care of himself. If he can't handle a few harsh words, then perhaps he lacks the resilience he claims to have."

Seeing Scarlett's apparent indifference, Vincent's tone sharpened. "If something happens to him tonight, will you be able to live with the consequences?"

Scarlett fell silent. Reflecting on the evening's events, if she had made any error, it was allowing herself to be drawn into a conflict with someone who behaved like a spoiled child.

But in truth, she didn't believe she had done anything wrong.

Nevertheless, now wasn't the time to debate fault or responsibility.

Finding Luke was the immediate priority.

Though Scarlett had little desire to involve herself further, this concerned someone's safety. What if something serious had actually occurred?

So she asked Vincent, "Can Abbott track Luke's location?"

Vincent shook his head grimly. "I already had Abbott attempt to trace him. Nothing has turned up yet."

Scarlett sighed in helpless frustration. "Then where does he usually go when he's upset?"

18:14 Thu, Jan 8 G

Chapter 101 The Bar Confrontation

Vincent considered for a moment before deciding. "Get in the car."

Finished

The vehicle was parked curbside. Vincent opened the passenger door and gestured for Scarlett to enter.

With no time to deliberate, Scarlett simply complied.

They drove directly to the most vibrant entertainment district in Rivergate, stopping before an upscale bar's

entrance.

Vincent exited the vehicle hurriedly, clearly anxious that something might have befallen Luke.

Apparently concerned that Scarlett was moving too slowly, he turned back, grabbed her arm firmly, and commanded, “Stay close to me!”

Scarlett felt her own concern rising. If something truly had gone wrong, Amanda would undoubtedly blame her entirely.

The mere thought made her want to roll her eyes in exasperation.

Regardless, finding Luke took precedence.

Inside the bar, the music throbbed at deafening volumes. Men and women moved against each other on the dance floor, their hips swaying like serpents to the rhythm.

Vincent led the way, his imposing presence parting the crowd as Scarlett focused on watching her step behind him.

When they reached the VIP section, long corridors branched off in both directions, each lined with private

rooms.

Which room contained Luke? Vincent had no specific information.

After an extended, awkward silence, Scarlett finally proposed, “Let’s split up. You take one side, I’ll take the other.”

Vincent nodded curtly. “Agreed. If you encounter any trouble, shout immediately. I’ll come at once.”

Scarlett looked at him but offered no response. After several seconds, she turned and proceeded down the right-hand corridor.

Upon entering, she immediately heard obscene shouts emanating from various rooms. Doing her best to ignore them, she began knocking on doors systematically.

Some patrons, taking note of Scarlett’s striking appearance, stroked their chins suggestively and propositioned, “Who sent you? Got time to come watch my cat do backflips?”

Others simply cursed at her, “Who the hell are you? We don’t want any salespeople here! Are you insane?”

Having nearly completed her search of every door, she began to suspect Luke wasn't present in this section.

But then, from the final room at the corridor's end, she suddenly heard the distinct sound of shattering glass, followed by an angry shout. "Who the hell do you think you are? How dare you speak to me like that!"

2/3

18:14 Thu, Jan 8

Chapter 101 The Bar Confrontation

There was no mistaking it-that was Luke's voice.

Finished

Another voice retorted aggressively, "Why should I care who you are? Touch my girl again and I'll end you, understand?"

From the escalating tension, a physical confrontation seemed imminent.

Worried the situation would spiral out of control, Scarlett rushed toward the source of the commotion.

She kicked the door open forcefully. Everyone inside turned to stare at her, their fists already clenched and ready for combat.

Scarlett's eyes immediately found Luke, who was already rolling up his sleeves, while the man beside him appeared to be reaching for something concealed in his pocket.

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18:14 Thu, Jan 8

Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 102[887 words]

Chapter 102 A Slap of Reality

52

*Finished

No one could discern what he intended to retrieve, but the intention was unmistakably malicious.

The private room wasn't crowded. Luke stood isolated on one side, while three men and one woman occupied the other.

If violence erupted, Luke would be severely outnumbered.

Scarlett fought to maintain her composure. She shot Luke a sharp glance and commanded through gritted teeth, "Luke, come over here now."

Her presence only exacerbated Luke's foul temper. "You think I'll obey just because you say so? Who do you imagine you are?"

Scarlett's gaze turned arctic. "Your brother is here as well."

She was strategically invoking Vincent's authority to control the situation.

With numerous witnesses present, any physical altercation would inevitably disadvantage their side.

The men confronting Luke regarded Scarlett with confusion. When Luke defiantly ignored her, their expressions shifted to open contempt and provocation.

Scarlett disregarded their hostile demeanor, instead noticing the young woman weeping quietly in the

corner.

From the fragmented conversation she'd overheard, Scarlett deduced Luke had likely instigated the conflict. Hoping to prevent further escalation, she stepped forward, seized an unopened beer bottle, and announced, "Gentlemen, I'm Scarlett, Luke's sister. He's

young and impulsive, and I apologize if he's offended this young lady. Please accept this drink as my gesture of apology."

She raised the bottle, preparing to consume its contents, but Luke snorted derisively, "Who granted you permission to call yourself my sister? Sabrina is the only one I acknowledge as family."

Scarlett's hand hesitated momentarily. A bitter smile touched her lips before she tilted her head back and drained the entire bottle without pause.

Luke watched with unmoved disdain. "Who are you performing for? Nobody's impressed."

Scarlett refused to internalize his cruel words. Turning to the others, she declared, "I'll settle tonight's entire bill. I'm taking my difficult brother home now."

The group had witnessed her drinking the entire beer as an apology, and her straightforward manner earned their grudging respect.

Her diplomatic words effectively defused the mounting tension.

Just as pleasantries were about to be exchanged, Luke erupted in fresh anger. "Scarlett, who authorized your interference? Don't flatter yourself thinking you matter!"

Scarlett met his glare calmly. "Your brother is waiting outside for you."

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18:14 Thu, Jan 8 G

Chapter 102 A Slap of Reality

Luke snapped. "I'm not going anywhere with you."

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Finished

Scarlett sighed and addressed the others. "Please continue your evening. My apologies for the disruption."

They exchanged brief civilities before departing.

Now alone in the room with Luke, Scarlett watched as he furiously swept all bottles and cans from the table with a deafening crash that made her flinch.

Simultaneously, he screamed at her, “Scarlett, know your place! What gives you the right to order me around? You’re just a pawn the Stewart family keeps around-less valuable than a housemaid. If anyone should be disciplining me, it’s Sabrina. Now get out!”

Scarlett listened, then actually laughed-a cold, mirthless sound. She strode directly up to Luke and, without warning, delivered a sharp slap across his face.

“Luke, listen carefully. All these years I’ve dedicated to the Stewart family-I might as well have thrown my devotion to a stray dog. Gratitude isn’t required, but I won’t tolerate your venom. If I weren’t concerned you might get yourself killed tonight, I wouldn’t waste a single glance on you.”

With that, Scarlett turned to leave. But Luke, unable to accept being struck, leaped up and seized her wrist. “You dare hit me? You’re asking for retaliation!”

He raised his hand to strike back. Scarlett squeezed her eyes shut, bracing for impact.

But the expected blow never landed. Instead, she felt only a rush of air brush her cheek.

When she opened her eyes, she saw Vincent firmly gripping Luke’s raised arm.

The moment Luke saw Vincent, he burst out, “Vincent, you need to teach this woman a lesson! She actually hit me! Even Mom and Dad never raised a hand to me! Vincent, you have to punish her!”

Blood truly runs thicker than water. Vincent would undoubtedly side with Luke and likely strike her too.

But she had no intention of remaining passive. As she began backing away, she heard Vincent tell Luke, “She is my wife. She possesses every right to discipline you when necessary. Regardless of her reasons for striking you, you will accept it without complaint.”

Luke stood dumbfounded. “Vincent, I’m your actual blood relative! How can you take her side?”

Not only Luke-Scarlett herself was equally astonished.

Then realization dawned-Vincent wasn’t defending her personally, but rather the situation demanded it since they were staying at the Stewart Manor tonight.

If Scarlett appeared with visible injuries and Xavier noticed, significant trouble would ensue for everyone.

Considering this, his intervention made perfect pragmatic sense,

Vincent ignored Luke's outrage and commanded in a low voice, "We're returning home now."

Luke didn't dare argue further with Vincent and could only swallow his resentment.

The three departed the bar together. Scarlett occupied the front passenger seat, Luke sat sullenly in the

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18:14 Thu, Jan 8 G

Chapter 102 A Slap of Reality

back, and Vincent took the wheel.

No one spoke. The silence in the vehicle grew thick and heavy with unspoken tensions.

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Awakened Housewife Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

**No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce -
Silent Dreams Never Die — 103[985 words
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Chapter 103 The Unspoken Distance

Finished

Luke was absolutely seething. He glared daggers at the back of Scarlett's head as if trying to burn holes through her skull with the intensity of his stare.

Even though she had already rationalized Vincent's earlier intervention, Scarlett found herself unable to stop turning his words over in her mind.

How much genuine acceptance had there really been in his defense of her?

But then again, what remained between them now was barely worth quantifying.

The car window was partially lowered, allowing a cool night breeze to circulate. Combined with the lingering effects of the beer she had consumed, Scarlett's head began to feel increasingly heavy and clouded.

No matter how much she obsessed over Vincent's motivations, it ultimately felt pointless.

Resigning herself, she decided to cease the mental gymnastics. She leaned back against the headrest, closed her eyes, and feigned sleep.

The alcohol was beginning to affect her more strongly, causing her to frown slightly and even cough a little.

Vincent heard her cough. He glanced sideways, noted her pallor, and silently pressed the button to raise her window.

Hearing the window hum shut, Scarlett opened her eyes slightly. Her gaze fell upon the darkened glass, where she could just make out Vincent's reflection.

He was focused intently on the road ahead, his profile sharp and handsome-still possessing the same captivating features that had once made her fall for him.

Even now, the sight of him could make her heart flutter faintly. But the sensation was fundamentally different now.

When the car came to a stop at a red light, Vincent turned to study Scarlett again. She was leaning against the window, and the arm exposed to the night air showed goosebumps-likely from the chill.

Vincent unfastened his seatbelt and leaned across, draping his jacket carefully over her legs.

Scarlett looked down at the garment, then pushed it away with polite detachment. "Thank you, but I'm not

cold."

As she spoke, she slid the jacket completely off her legs.

The traffic light turned green. Vincent offered no verbal response, didn't argue, nor did he retrieve his discarded jacket.

Seeing he made no move to reclaim it, Scarlett simply folded the jacket neatly and placed it on the console

between them.

She didn't touch it again for the remainder of the journey.

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Chapter 103 The Unspoken Distance

Vincent noted Scarlett's altered behavior but kept his observations to himself.

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Finished

There was a time when merely being allowed to hold his jacket would have filled her with joy for weeks.

Now, she seemed entirely indifferent to anything associated with him.

Soon, the car pulled up before the Stewart Manor.

Lucy, who knew Vincent had gone searching for Luke, had been waiting anxiously by the entrance.

Her face finally relaxed into a smile when she saw the car arrive.

She opened the rear passenger door, and upon confirming Luke was safe and unharmed, she released an audible sigh of relief.

She reached out and ruffled his hair affectionately. "You little rascal, getting bold enough to ignore your brother's and my calls now, are you?"

Luke swatted her hand away irritably. "Stop messing up my hair."

Lucy rolled her eyes and was about to retort when she noticed several faint red marks on Luke's cheek.

“Luke, what happened to your face?”

She reached out to examine the marks, but Luke slapped her hand away. “Got bitten by a dog.”

His tone was dripping with resentment. Without another word, he stormed into the house.

Lucy stood bewildered, casting a helpless glance toward Vincent.

Given Vincent’s temperament, it was entirely plausible he had disciplined Luke.

If Vincent had indeed struck him, Lucy privately thought Luke might have deserved it.

Vincent offered no explanation. He simply instructed Lucy, “Go inside and keep an eye on him. Ensure he doesn’t attempt to leave again tonight.”

Lucy didn’t dare press for details. “Understood, Vincent.”

Only after they had entered did Scarlett finally exit the vehicle..

She had consumed the beer rapidly, but its effects were already diminishing just as quickly.

Now, Scarlett felt significantly more clear-headed.

She stepped out and walked directly toward the house, completely failing to notice that Vincent had extended a hand as if to assist her.

Vincent’s hand remained suspended in the air for a moment, his fingers curling slightly before he let it fall back to his side. A soft, cold laugh escaped him.

Scarlett proceeded directly to her assigned room. Vincent first went to check briefly on Luke.

When Vincent finally entered their shared bedroom, his eyes immediately fell upon a blood-stained tissue

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18:14 Thu, Jan 8

Chapter 103 The Unspoken Distance

lying on the bedside table.

Finished

He was momentarily taken aback. Scanning the room, he noticed the bathroom light was illuminated.

He walked over, forgetting to knock, and pushed the door open.

The room was filled with steam. Scarlett stood at the bathroom vanity, wrapped only in a towel that left her shoulders and legs exposed.

She possessed a naturally excellent figure-slender yet toned, the kind that would draw admiring glances even from other women.

She was bent forward, applying lotion to her skin. The towel provided minimal coverage across her chest, and Vincent froze momentarily at the sight.

Scarlett caught his reflection in the mirror and straightened up abruptly. “What do you need?”

Her voice was icy, devoid of the warmth and softness it once held for him. She was all sharp edges now, like a defensive hedgehog raising its quills.

Vincent couldn’t see any visible injuries on her, but he inquired nonetheless, “I noticed a bloodied tissue on the table. Are you hurt?”

Scarlett replied dismissively, “It’s nothing significant. I’ve already addressed it.”

The minor injury had occurred when her finger had snagged on Luke’s earring during their earlier altercation.

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18:14. Thu, Jan 8

Awakened Housewife Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

Dylan

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 104[816 words]

Chapter 104 The Midnight Revelation

The wound wasn't particularly deep, yet blood continued to seep slowly.

Vincent found himself asking. "Does this require medical attention at a hospital?"

Scarlett frowned, turning to face Vincent directly. "You really don't need to pretend to care."

His excessive attentiveness felt artificial and performative to her.

Finished

Had they not been at the Stewart Manor, Scarlett might have read deeper meanings into his behavior.

But given their surroundings, she concluded that every word and action was likely part of an elaborate charade.

Vincent met her gaze but remained silent.

Scarlett didn't concern herself with his thoughts. After completing her facial routine, she stated, "There's something I need to discuss with you."

He had been prolonging the divorce proceedings for what felt like an eternity.

She wanted to understand his perspective and determine how they might conclude matters amicably.

But before Vincent could acknowledge her request, his phone abruptly vibrated.

He glanced at the screen-the caller ID displayed "Sabrina".

Scarlett observed his hesitation, the visible conflict between answering and ignoring the call. She offered a thin smile. "Feel free to take it."

With the ringing nearing its end, Vincent finally accepted the call.

As he began speaking, he walked out of the bathroom.

Standing behind him, Scarlett could discern a young girl's voice through the receiver-Vanessa. "Daddy, look! Sabrina and I drew a little villa together!"

Vincent stared intently at the screen, watching the video transmission. Noting three figures in the drawing, he inquired curiously, "Vanessa, who have you drawn here?"

Vanessa's voice bubbled with excitement. "I drew you, Daddy, and Sabrina, and me! We're all sunbathing together!"

Vincent's smile became unmistakable. "That's truly wonderful artwork."

Vanessa asked, "Daddy, was Great-Grandpa happy today?"

Vincent confirmed, "Yes, he was very happy."

"Daddy, I'll visit him next time. Sabrina wants to go on vacation, so I want to go with her."

Vincent's tone remained even. "That's fine."

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18:14 Thu, Jan 8

Chapter 104 The Midnight Revelation

He had settled in the living room area, engaged in his phone conversation. Scarlett remained in the bathroom, meticulously completing her skincare regimen.

Finished

She delayed her exit specifically to hear what Vanessa might say to Vincent-perhaps Vanessa would inquire about Scarlett.

Instead, Scarlett inadvertently discovered the real reason Vanessa hadn't returned to the Stewart Manor for the celebration.

It was Xavier's significant birthday, a major family occasion, yet Vanessa had chosen to go on vacation with Sabrina instead.

Were Xavier to learn the truth, he would likely be deeply hurt.

Vanessa's voice carried through again. "Daddy, you didn't tell Great-Grandpa, right? If he finds out I went traveling instead of attending his birthday, he'll be terribly upset."

Vincent replied reassuringly, "I provided a plausible excuse for you. Told him you'd gone to visit your grandmother."

Vanessa sighed with relief. "Thank you, Daddy. You're the best."

"Preparing for bed now?" Vincent's expression was filled with paternal affection.

He might have been a deficient husband, but as a father, he demonstrated genuine dedication.

Overhearing Vincent using her own mother as cover so Vanessa could travel with Sabrina ignited fresh resentment within Scarlett.

She couldn't suppress a wave of bitterness toward him.

Vanessa continued through the phone, "Not yet. I'm going to the beach with Sabrina to stargaze."

Vincent, now seated in the living room, lit a cigarette and responded, "Very well, but don't stay out excessively late. Ensure you rest afterward."

Vanessa agreed, then suddenly asked with hopeful anticipation, "Daddy, are you coming? It feels incomplete without you. Sabrina seems disappointed too."

Vincent glanced toward Scarlett, still visible in the bathroom. Remembering Xavier's insistence they stay overnight, he declined Vanessa's invitation. "Not tonight. I'll take you and Sabrina stargazing together another time."

Vanessa's voice drooped with disappointment. "Alright then."

Vincent said, "Go enjoy your time with Sabrina. I'm ending the call now."

Mere mention of Sabrina visibly elated Vanessa. "Okay! I'm going now. If you change your mind, please come early!"

"Understood."

After Vanessa disconnected, Vincent set his phone aside.

213

Chapter 104 The Midnight Revelation

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Having overheard their entire exchange, Scarlett felt profound disappointment and a strange sense of absurd amusement.

Throughout the conversation, Vanessa hadn't mentioned her even once.

A sharp pang struck her heart, yet no tears formed.

Unwilling to reveal her vulnerability, Scarlett closed the bathroom door and pretended to use the facilities.

Vincent noted this but offered no comment.

Scarlett remained standing in the bathroom for several minutes, allowing her emotions to stabilize before finally emerging.

When she did, she found Vincent had already showered-evidently using the guest bathroom-and was now lying on the bed.

He lay on his side, watching videos on his phone.

The bed was generously sized, yet he occupied only one side, leaving the other half conspicuously empty- as if deliberately reserving that space for Scarlett.

18:15 Thu, Jan 8

Awakened Housewife ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 105[885 words]

Chapter 105 Morning Aftermath

52

Finished

Scarlett observed the unoccupied space, though she remained uncertain whether it was intentionally left for

her.

Regardless, she had no intention of sharing a bed with him again.

She walked directly to the sofa, lay down, drew a blanket over herself, and switched off the main lights, leaving only a single dim lamp illuminated.

Vincent watched Scarlett choose the sofa, his brow furrowing slightly. Yet his pride prevented him from swallowing his ego and inviting her to the bed.

Thus, he remained silent in the growing darkness.

Before long, the steady rhythm of Scarlett's breathing filled the quiet room.

Vincent initially thought he might be mistaken. He listened more attentively and confirmed she had indeed fallen asleep.

The following morning, when Scarlett opened her eyes, Vincent was conspicuously absent from the large bed.

She surmised he had likely gone for his customary morning run.

Without dwelling on it further, Scarlett prepared herself and descended the stairs.

She noticed the housekeeper working diligently in the kitchen and inquired casually, “Have you seen Vincent this morning?”

The housekeeper paused thoughtfully before shaking her head. “No, Mrs. Stewart, I haven’t seen Mr. Stewart.”

Scarlett merely responded with a neutral “I see,” dismissing the matter from her thoughts.

It was still relatively early. She decided to breakfast with Xavier before departing for the hospital.

Accordingly, she settled onto the living room sofa and began scrolling through her phone.

Unlike previous behavior, she no longer felt compelled to actively ingratiate herself with the Stewart family.

The household staff observed this change with some surprise.

While browsing, Scarlett’s attention was caught by a viral topic that had exploded overnight.

“Vincent Stewart Spotted Stargazing at Midnight with His Wife and Daughter-Picture-Perfect Family of Three.”

She tapped into the post and found numerous media outlets sharing the story.

Accompanying the articles were multiple photographs depicting Vincent, Vanessa, and Sabrina sitting closely together, their postures radiating comfort, happiness, and familial sweetness.

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Chapter 105 Morning Aftermath

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Though only their backs were visible, Scarlett could almost palpably sense the joy emanating from both Vincent and Vanessa.

So this explained his absence-he had gone to join Sabrina and Vanessa.

The revelation didn't surprise Scarlett in the slightest.

When Vanessa called last night, Vincent had probably wanted to depart immediately. Only consideration for Xavier's feelings, having specifically requested they stay, had given him pause.

Yet ultimately, Sabrina's pull had proven stronger.

Beneath the trending post, comments were proliferating rapidly.

[They already have a child together and still maintain this secrecy? Do wealthy men simply avoid responsibility? Not even a formal wedding?]

[Does a wedding ceremony truly hold that much significance?]

[Who needs a wedding? I'd gladly wash dishes and cook for a man like that forever. Some men just captivate us completely.]

[Why is this trending? Does anyone genuinely care about ordinary people's struggles?]

[Zero interest!]

Opinions varied wildly-some expressed envy, others cynicism; some criticized Vincent's perceived irresponsibility, while others dismissed the situation as unimportant...

Truthfully, Scarlett found she couldn't summon any concern.

Everyone knew Vincent loved another woman, but who would have guessed his legal wife wasn't the woman everyone assumed?

Just as Scarlett set her phone aside, she observed Xavier entering from the backyard.

Spotting Scarlett, Xavier's eyes brightened noticeably. "Not occupied with work today, Scarlett?"

Typically, Xavier breakfasted alone at the Stewart Manor.

He secretly longed for companionship, but the younger generations remained perpetually busy and rarely visited.

Scarlett rose and greeted him respectfully, “Good morning, Grandpa. It’s still early, so I’ll join you for breakfast before heading to the hospital.”

She understood Xavier’s loneliness and wanted to provide what small comfort she could.

Xavier was visibly delighted, praising Scarlett’s thoughtfulness. However, when he turned and noted Vincent’s absence, his expression clouded. “Where is Vincent?”

Scarlett hesitated momentarily before replying, “He left for the office. Mentioned an important morning meeting.”

213

18:15 Thu, Jan 8 G

Chapter 105 Morning Aftermath

Finished

Xavier didn’t engage with social media and remained unaware of the trending story. Consequently, Scarlett chose to withhold the information.

Since she intended to divorce Vincent regardless, creating conflict over minor matters seemed pointless.

After breakfast, Xavier proved reluctant to let Scarlett depart, holding her hand and repeating his admonition, “Visit whenever you have time. I don’t know how many days I’ve left to see you.”

Scarlett felt a sharp pang in her heart and could only nod repeatedly.

Only after several rounds of reminders did Xavier finally permit her to leave.

The moment she stepped beyond the Stewart Manor’s threshold, she encountered an unexpected visitor.

It was Amanda.

She wore a vibrant blue dress, a luminous emerald bracelet encircling her wrist, adorned with jewelry and embodying the image of a wealthy matriarch.

One glance told Scarlett that trouble awaited.

It was evident Amanda had been lying in wait for her at the entrance.

“Well, look who finally decided to grace us with her presence,” Amanda sneered the instant she opened her mouth.

Scarlett had no patience for her vitriol and stated bluntly, “If you have something to say, say it directly.”

After five years of marriage to Vincent, Scarlett had endured more than enough of Amanda’s sarcasm. Previously, she had prioritized family harmony and never contested Amanda’s remarks.

Awakened Housewife Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

Dylan

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 106[801 words]

Chapter 106 Amanda’s Ultimatum

But circumstances had fundamentally changed.

Finished

Amanda circled Scarlett slowly, then spoke through gritted teeth, “Don’t imagine you can trample over me just because Xavier favors you.”

Scarlett responded with icy composure, “Rest assured, I wouldn’t degrade myself by stepping on you. Maintaining balance on a pile of filth seems rather precarious.”

Having grown accustomed to Scarlett’s previous meekness, Amanda was momentarily taken aback by this sharp retort.

Nevertheless, Amanda refused to be intimidated. She shrugged dismissively and declared, “If you cannot produce another baby soon, I will ensure Vincent divorces you.”

Her threat dripped with arrogant confidence, as though victory were already assured.

Yet Scarlett merely offered Amanda a light, almost amused smile. “If you truly possess that level of influence, I shall treat you to an elaborate dinner.”

After all, she had desired liberation from this marriage for quite some time.

Recognizing Scarlett wasn't bluffing, a flicker of panic crossed Amanda's features.

But then she recalled how desperately Scarlett had fought to marry Vincent, sacrificing everything for the union. Surely she wouldn't willingly seek divorce now?

Thus, Amanda puffed herself up and retorted, "Don't presume I won't follow through."

Scarlett appeared almost eager. "Then please proceed quickly. I await the opportunity to buy you that meal."

With that final remark, she entered her vehicle.

Before Amanda could formulate a response, Scarlett drove away.

The formerly compliant Scarlett had transformed into someone entirely thorny and defensive.

Amanda couldn't pinpoint exactly when it began, but she distinctly felt Scarlett slipping beyond her control.

Moreover, Scarlett's wording strongly suggested she was genuinely contemplating divorce.

However, should divorce occur, Vincent must be the one to initiate it. Scarlett didn't yet hold that privilege.

Amanda pondered this uneasily before ultimately deciding to call Vincent.

He answered promptly, and she could hear the distinct sound of keyboard typing in the background.

"What is it?" Vincent's voice carried a distinct roughness, suggesting poor rest.

This assessment proved accurate. The previous night, he had stargazed with Sabrina and Vanessa before accompanying them for late-night barbecue.

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18:15

Chapter 106 Amanda's Ultimatum

With pressing matters awaiting at the office today, he had arrived exceptionally early.

19 Finished

Amanda dispensed with pleasantries and went straight to her concern. “Vincent, has Scarlett been behaving unusually lately?”

Vincent’s fingers stilled over the keyboard. He hesitated before responding, “What exactly are you implying?”

Detecting something in his tone, Amanda pressed urgently, “She hasn’t mentioned divorce, has she?”

Vincent replied simply, “No.”

Amanda finally relaxed slightly, then added, “Naturally not. She invested too much effort into marrying you to seek divorce so readily.”

Vincent merely said, “Correct.”

Still unsatisfied, Amanda continued nagging, “If you ever wish to end this, ensure you raise the matter first. Don’t allow her to preempt you.”

Vincent’s typing ceased again, his voice turning serious. “Mother, I have never contemplated divorcing Scarlett. We share a daughter together. Separation would adversely affect Vanessa.”

Amanda remained adamant. “I don’t care about that. You are a Stewart. Should divorce occur, you must execute it with dignity intact.”

Vincent had no desire to argue further. “Mother, I have appointments arriving shortly. I must conclude this call to greet them.”

That afternoon, while Scarlett was documenting medical records, she received a call from Claire.

“Scarlett, let’s dine together tonight.”

Though occupied, Scarlett asked no questions and agreed readily. Certainly.”

Their close friendship made shared meals commonplace, hence her easy acquiescence.

However, upon entering the private dining room, she discovered Claire wasn’t alone-Elias was present as

well.

The cold appetizers already adorned the table, though one plate clearly showed a missing portion.

Obviously, Elias had already begun eating without them.

Scarlett seated herself without acknowledging Elias, and offered Claire only minimal attention.

Claire poured water for Scarlett and offered her a warm towel for her hands.

Scarlett remained silent yet didn't entirely ignore Claire's gestures.

Elias sat quietly beside Claire, head bowed as he focused on his phone.

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18:15 Thu, Jan 8 G.

Chapter 106 Amanda's Ultimatum

When the main dishes arrived, Claire poured wine for Scarlett, Elias, and herself.

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Finished

Claire raised her glass, looked directly at Scarlett, and proclaimed, "Scarlett, I didn't fully explain my purpose this afternoon. Tonight's gathering is intended as an apology. Regarding the incident that landed you and Elias at the police station-I feel profoundly responsible. But I cannot bear seeing your friendship fracture over this. You are my dearest friend, and he is the person I love most."

Scarlett offered no response. She glanced toward Elias, who held his wineglass but seemed mentally absent, clearly not listening to Claire's words.

Seeing Scarlett's continued silence, Claire threw her head back and drained her entire glass of wine in one determined swallow.

18:15 Thu, Jan 8 Ng

Awakened Housewife Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 107[833 words]

Chapter 107 The Unwelcome Dinner

finished

In conclusion, she turned to Scarlett with a strained smile and asked, “I’ll drink first as my apology. Will you forgive me now?”

Scarlett looked at her, feeling both heartache and helplessness. “Yes.”

Claire’s smile widened briefly before she nudged Elias with her elbow, signaling him to offer a toast to Scarlett as well.

Elias, visibly reluctant, raised his glass. “Here, this one’s for you.”

Scarlett lifted her glass slightly but made no move to clink it with his. She merely took a small, symbolic sip of her wine.

Elias mirrored her action, barely moistening his lips.

Claire was clearly attempting mediation, and Scarlett remained present solely out of respect for their friendship. As for Elias, however, she had no intention of ever being cordial with him again.

The dinner atmosphere remained strained throughout. Claire persistently tried to facilitate conversation between them. When Elias posed ‘a question, Scarlett would respond with a noncommittal “Hmm”.

Their mutual animosity was palpable, yet Claire continued exerting maximum effort to reconcile them.

But some relationships, once fractured, simply cannot be restored.

This was precisely how Scarlett felt about Elias-and, increasingly, about her marriage to Vincent as well.

They eventually endured the meal to its conclusion. Elias rose to settle the bill.

Claire grasped Scarlett’s arm and inquired softly, “Are you angry with me?”

“No, as long as you’re content.”

Now Scarlett finally understood how her own family had felt when they’d attempted to dissuade her from marrying Vincent.

Claire lowered her gaze. “I know you’re displeased, but...”

Scarlett had no desire to hear further justification. She stood abruptly. “I’m visiting the restroom.”

Scarlett believed Claire needed to navigate her own emotional realizations. Currently, Claire resembled exactly who Scarlett had been years earlier.

When Scarlett emerged from the restroom, she immediately spotted Elias. He must have completed payment but was heading in the wrong direction.

Approaching closer, Scarlett observed a young woman with loosely styled hair seated at a nearby table.

Elias placed his hand on the back of the woman’s chair, leaning forward to effortlessly encircle her within

his arms.

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18:15 Thu, Jan B

Chapter 107 The Unwelcome Dinner

Finished

They were whispering intimately, their faces close, exchanging unknown words. Shortly thereafter, Elias retrieved his phone and added the woman’s number.

Having accomplished this, Elias straightened up, waved his phone at the woman, and said, ‘Don’t forget to

contact me.”

The woman beamed radiantly, nodding repeatedly with an intoxicating blend of shyness and sweetness.

Scarlett witnessed the entire interaction. She could only conclude one thing about Elias—a leopard cannot change its spots.

As Elias turned to return to their private room, he immediately noticed Scarlett's presence.

Across the spacious dining area, their eyes locked from a distance. Scarlett's gaze brimmed with undisguised contempt, while Elias appeared utterly indifferent.

After an extended silent confrontation, Elias finally approached Scarlett. He halted directly before her, then unexpectedly leaned forward and taunted, "What's this? Found me so irresistible you can't stop following me? Or are you attempting some secret rendezvous behind your best friend's back? If that's your intention, I'd be delighted to accommodate you."

Scarlett took a deliberate step backward and muttered under her breath, "You disgusting animal."

The insult seemed not to bother Elias in the slightest. If anything, it appeared to amuse him further. He grinned provocatively. "Care to discover exactly how animalistic I can be?"

Scarlett raised her hand to strike him, but Elias swiftly captured her wrist. With a sharp tug, he pulled Scarlett directly against his chest, holding her firmly.

"What's this? Couldn't resist throwing yourself at me after all?"

At that precise moment, the door to an adjacent private room opened, and two figures emerged.

It was Vincent and Daniel.

Scarlett faced Elias, while Vincent and Daniel exited from the room behind her.

Consequently, she remained unaware of their presence.

Elias similarly failed to notice Vincent and Daniel. He was too preoccupied with brazenly pulling Scarlett into his embrace, his gaze roaming over her with predatory appreciation.

However much he disliked Scarlett personally, Elias couldn't deny she possessed an exceptionally attractive figure.

Particularly tonight, her form-fitting dress accentuated every curve. He felt an undeniable stirring of desire.

Scarlett's hand remained trapped in Elias' grip. She struggled to free herself, but he only tightened his hold.

Nevertheless, Scarlett yanked her arm back with desperate strength, disregarding potential injury.

Elias maintained his grasp but wasn't employing full force. Thus, when Scarlett exerted genuine effort, she actually succeeded in breaking free,

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18:15 Thu, Jan 8

Chapter 107 The Unwelcome Dinner

Finished

However, the momentum of her pull sent her stumbling backward. Before she could even register the impending fall, someone caught her with steady, firm support.

A pair of strong arms encircled her, preventing further collapse.

As she regained her balance, Scarlett offered a slight nod. "Thank you."

But when she lifted her head, she found herself staring directly into Vincent's impassive face.

Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 108[879 words]

Chapter 108 Truth in the Shadows

finished

His features were sharply defined, with striking bone structure and profound, enigmatic eyes that seemed to conceal untold depths. He looked down at her, his brow slightly furrowed-likely questioning her presence here.

She suspected he might even think she was following him, given her past behavior.

Daniel, standing nearby, radiated visible anger. He clearly had more to say, but at that moment, Claire approached.

“Elias, Scarlett, so this is where you’ve been.”

Claire naturally positioned herself beside Elias, linking her arm through his. Simultaneously, she detected the tension radiating from him. When she turned to observe Scarlett, she also noticed Vincent’s presence.

Though unaware of the specific details, Claire immediately understood that Scarlett and Elias must have clashed again.

However, with Vincent involved, the situation became more complicated, so she refrained from questioning. Instead, she quietly suggested to Elias, “Let’s go.”

Elias, feeling guilty and worried Scarlett might reveal something to Claire, readily agreed. “Okay.”

After they departed together, Scarlett considered leaving the dining area as well. But the moment she took a step, Daniel sneered contemptuously, “Scarlett, you’re even more promiscuous than Damian ever was, aren’t you?”

Scarlett halted and turned back, her expression amused. “What exactly are you implying?”

Daniel didn’t mince words. “You’re nothing but trash.”

His insult didn’t faze Scarlett. More curious about Vincent’s reaction, she glanced toward him. But Vincent behaved as though he hadn’t heard Daniel at all, his attention completely absorbed by his phone as his fingers flew across the screen.

She didn’t need to speculate-she knew he was messaging Sabrina.

Daniel’s insults clearly held no significance for him. In his worldview, any of his friends possessed the right to disrespect her.

The treatment differed entirely for Sabrina, whom all his friends addressed respectfully.

Contemplating this double standard, Scarlett felt bitter amusement rising. Yet facing their collective disdain and insults, she understood she alone could mount her defense.

She lifted her chin and met Daniel’s gaze, mirroring his mocking tone. “You call me trash, but does that description not fit you equally well?”

Daniel deliberately drawled his response. “The situations are entirely different. I don’t entertain multiple romantic interests simultaneously.”

Scarlett shrugged, a cool smile playing on her lips. “That sounds remarkably like the pot calling the kettle,

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Chapter 108 Truth in the Shadows

black.”

Finished

Having delivered this retort, she cast Daniel one final disdainful look before glancing at Vincent—still engrossed in his texting. A sharp pang struck her heart. A bitter laugh escaped her before she turned and walked away.

As she exited the dining area, she heard someone calling her name. “Scarlett!”

Turning, she found Claire standing beneath a nearby tree.

“Aren’t you heading home yet?”

Claire replied, “I was waiting for you.”

Scarlett approached, her expression neutral. “If you have something to say, please say it directly.”

Claire sensed Scarlett’s emotional distance but pressed on regardless. “I just spoke with Elias. He mentioned you saw him exchanging numbers with another woman. But Scarlett, it was merely adding a contact—it doesn’t imply he’ll actually pursue anything. You attempted to strike him in public. He’s a man with considerable pride, you must understand...”

Scarlett immediately grasped Claire’s implication and countered sharply, “So you’re suggesting I was at fault?”

Claire quickly clarified, “Scarlett, that’s not what I meant. I understand you’re protecting me, but he’s my future husband and you’re my closest friend. I cannot bear this continued misunderstanding between you.”

Misunderstanding?

Hearing that word ignited fresh irritation within Scarlett. She didn’t temper her response. “If he genuinely intended to marry you, he wouldn’t keep you waiting indefinitely. You understand better than anyone exactly how many years you’ve invested in this relationship.”

Claire lowered her head, her voice dropping to a fragile whisper. "Scarlett, he will marry me eventually."

Scarlett felt weary of the circular conversation. "How are you planning to get home?"

"I'll just hail a taxi."

"Where's Elias? Shouldn't he be accompanying you?"

Claire hesitated before responding, "I told him to go on ahead without me."

The unspoken reason hung between them-Claire had orchestrated this separation to prevent another confrontation between Scarlett and Elias.

Scarlett didn't press for further explanation. "Let me drive you home," she offered simply.

During the car ride, Claire kept weaving through their shared memories, her voice soft with nostalgia. Scarlett felt her eyes growing moist, the familiar ache returning to her chest. While she understood the depth of Claire's feelings, her own judgment of Elias remained unchanged-no amount of sentimental recollection could alter what she knew to be true about his character.

When they reached Claire's apartment complex, Scarlett waited until her friend had safely disappeared

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Chapter 108 Truth in the Shadows

through the glass doors before preparing to drive away.

Just as she was about to shift gears, a sudden tapping sound on her window made her jump.

Turning, she was genuinely surprised to find Nolan standing beside her car.

Finished

She quickly lowered the window, confusion evident in her voice. "Nolan? What are you doing in this neighborhood?"

Nolan stood casually dressed, leaning down to peer into the vehicle. The evening shadows partially obscured his features, yet somehow this half-light accentuated his handsome profile, making him appear even more striking than usual.

Dylan

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 109[854 words]

Chapter 109 Nolan's Defense

Finished

He offered Scarlett a warm smile. "I was just about to ask you the same question-what brings you to this part of town?"

Scarlett explained casually, "I was just giving a friend a ride home."

Nolan nodded understandingly before suggesting, "Since we've both found ourselves here unexpectedly, would you care to join me for some late-night snacks?"

Scarlett agreed without hesitation, "That sounds perfect."

Since she had her car, Scarlett gestured for Nolan to take the passenger seat.

They drove to a famously popular street food alley known for its vibrant atmosphere. Before sitting down, Nolan meticulously cleaned both chairs and their table with disinfectant wipes, attending to every possible surface she might touch.

Scarlett smiled at his thoroughness. "Nolan, you really don't need to go through all this trouble. I'm not nearly that delicate."

Nolan simply returned her smile and continued his careful cleaning of everything within Scarlett's reach.

But the moment Nolan settled into his seat, he noticed an unexpected group entering the establishment, their arrival marked by the rustling of the entrance curtain being pushed aside.

Vincent, Daniel, Harris, Sabrina...

They filed in and selected a table not far away.

Daniel was the first to spot Scarlett. He nudged Vincent discreetly, directing his attention toward their table.

When Vincent looked over, Scarlett met his gaze directly. Their eyes held for a brief, charged moment before both simultaneously looked away.

What incredibly unfortunate timing-running into each other in such an unlikely place.

All she had wanted was a peaceful meal with Nolan.

While they waited for their food, Daniel suddenly rose and approached their table.

Before Scarlett could process his intention, Daniel pulled up a chair and seated himself directly beside Nolan.

“Bet you didn’t know this,” Daniel began, his tone deliberately provocative, “but just about an hour ago, Scarlett was having dinner with another man.”

He was clearly attempting to paint Scarlett as promiscuous in Nolan’s eyes.

Most men might have begun questioning Scarlett’s character upon hearing such a remark, but Nolan merely smiled calmly at Daniel. “Scarlett is free to do as she pleases. Who she chooses to dine with is none of my concern. Her happiness is what matters-not just to me, but no one has the right to control her

choices.”

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18:17 Thu, Jan 8 B

Chapter 109 Nolan’s Defense

In Nolan’s perspective, he hadn’t earned the privilege to dictate Scarlett’s personal life.

Moreover, he trusted that Scarlett conducted herself with integrity.

Daniel’s expression hardened at Nolan’s response. “With all the women available in this city, you deliberately choose to pursue this particular one?”

Nolan remained unruffled. “That remains none of your business.”

Daniel pressed further, “Tell me what type of woman you prefer. I can make introductions. My social connections are extensive-I know women of every variety you could possibly imagine.”

Finished

Nolan replied politely but firmly, “I appreciate the offer, but it’s unnecessary. You should conserve your social resources for yourself.”

Seeing Nolan's unwavering defense of Scarlett, Daniel's irritation mounted. He lowered his voice to a venomous whisper. "You were once highly respected in medical circles, yet now you can't even secure employment. All those years of education rendered worthless by a single word from me. How does that feel, Dr. Huntley?"

Nolan offered Daniel a deliberately bright, artificial smile, though his eyes remained cold. "It feels remarkably liberating. Early retirement provides abundant free time."

Daniel grew even more incensed. "Only stray dogs content themselves with others' leftovers. Don't degrade yourself to that level, Dr. Huntley."

Nolan's smile widened. "How amusing-that description seems to fit you rather perfectly as well."

Realizing Nolan had just called him an animal, Daniel snapped, "Nolan, you-"

Scarlett had heard enough. She fixed Daniel with an icy glare. "Why do you persist in harassing us, Mr. Lennox? My private affairs aren't even my husband's concern-what gives you the right to interfere?"

Her words struck with precision, momentarily rendering Daniel speechless. Still, he attempted a dismissive tone. "No particular reason. I simply find your behavior intolerable."

Scarlett retorted sharply, "Then you should learn to tolerate your displeasure silently. No law requires you to voice every distasteful thought that enters your mind."

She allowed Daniel no opportunity for rebuttal. Rising gracefully, she addressed Nolan, "Let's find another establishment."

Nolan stood immediately. "Certainly."

As they passed Vincent's table, Scarlett deliberately paused.

Vincent looked up at her but remained silent.

Scarlett glared down at him, her voice cutting through the noisy atmosphere. "You might lack self-control, but you should at least keep your attack dogs leashed. If you've abandoned basic decency, you scarcely qualify as human."

She cared nothing for Vincent's reaction. Having spoken her piece, Scarlett departed with Nolan.

Chapter 109 Nolan's Defense

Vincent offered no response, yet his mood visibly darkened.

Having overheard Scarlett's remarks to Vincent, Daniel appeared ready to pursue them, but Sabrina restrained him with a hand on his arm. "Daniel, let it go. Please return to your seat."

Since Sabrina intervened, Daniel could only sigh in resignation. "Very well."

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Finished

Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 110[826 words]

Chapter 110 Damian's Return'

After resuming his seat, Sabrina passed the menu to Daniel. "You handle the ordering, Daniel

Daniel nodded and accepted the laminated menu from her hands.

Finished

Sabrina then turned her attention to Vincent. Observing him sitting with his head slightly bowed in silence, she could sense his continued preoccupation with Scarlett's pointed remarks.

"Are you alright?" Sabrina leaned closer, her voice softening into a gentle murmur.

Vincent glanced at her briefly and responded coolly, "I'm fine."

Sabrina attempted to offer consolation. "Please don't dwell on what Ms. Theron said. Her comments were completely inappropriate and uncalled for."

Vincent paused thoughtfully before stating, "Perhaps there was some truth in her words."

They weren't speaking loudly, and Daniel remained engrossed in the menu, oblivious to their exchange.

Sabrina expressed her surprise. "What do you mean?"

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But Vincent showed no inclination to elaborate further. He simply redirected the conversation. "What would you like to eat?"

Sabrina shook her head dismissively. "Anything is acceptable."

Vincent nodded and instructed Daniel to order the oysters-knowing they were Sabrina's favorite.

However, Sabrina's focus had shifted entirely from food. She slid her chair closer to Vincent, leaning against his shoulder intimately. "Are you truly upset?"

Vincent looked down at her, offering a charming yet somewhat distant smile. "Not particularly."

While Scarlett's words had undoubtedly irritated him, they hadn't provoked genuine anger-merely struck a nerve with their blunt accuracy.

Hearing this, Sabrina rested her head contentedly against Vincent's arm. "I'm glad."

Just then, Daniel completed the ordering process. He returned the menu to the waiting staff, then immediately observed the intimate posture between Vincent and Sabrina. A distinct pang of envy shot through him.

"Vincent," Daniel began, unable to contain his curiosity, "are you still not considering divorcing Scarlett?"

Sabrina lifted her head to study Vincent's reaction as well.

Vincent hesitated momentarily before responding evenly, "We shall see how circumstances develop."

Daniel couldn't restrain his opinions. "She's been openly involved with numerous men. It's evident she holds no regard for you."

Vincent instinctively turned his gaze fully upon Daniel. “You’ve noticed this pattern as well?”

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18:18 Thu, Jan 8

Chapter 110 Damian’s Return

Daniel appeared momentarily confused. “Noticed what?”

#Finished

Perhaps recognizing his own heightened reaction, Vincent simply dismissed the topic. “It’s unimportant

Leaning against Vincent, Sabrina detected the subtle shift in his mood. Yet observing his composed expression, she allowed herself to relax once more.

Daniel, unwilling to prolong discussion about Scarlett, changed the subject. “Let’s speak no more of this. We should eat-we mustn’t allow Sabrina to grow hungry.”

Both Vincent and Daniel had already dined before arriving, but Sabrina had not.

Within their social circle, everyone acknowledged Scarlett as Vincent’s legal wife, yet collective disapproval followed her-general preference consistently favored Sabrina,

In earlier years, Scarlett had pursued Vincent with relentless determination, seizing every possible opportunity to be near him.

Sabrina presented a stark contrast-gentle, accomplished, intuitively understanding when to advance and when to retreat. She made her affections clear yet never explicitly demanded formal recognition.

When compared directly, collective preference became unmistakably evident.

After concluding their barbecue at an alternative establishment, Nolan drove Scarlett to the Theron Manor.

Following their farewells, Scarlett waited until Nolan’s vehicle had disappeared from view before turning toward the manor.

She had just stepped through the main gate when a powerful arm abruptly encircled her waist, lifting her completely off the ground.

Her captor used only one arm to restrain her. Before she could even initiate struggle, she found herself unceremoniously deposited into a waiting luxury vehicle.

The entire abduction spanned mere seconds-Scarlett literally was carried into the car with her feet dangling helplessly.

Once inside, the distinct scent of fine tobacco filled her nostrils.

Even now, Scarlett hadn't visually identified her abductor.

Only when he backed her into the vehicle's corner did his face emerge from the shadows.

It was Damian.

He wore a characteristic grin, his eyes crinkling with a mixture of arrogance and wild energy that sent anxious tremors through Scarlett's heart.

With no avenue for escape, Damian leaned inward until his lips nearly brushed her cheek.

He inquired, "Darling, why have you remained so silent? I've been awaiting your message."

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Chapter 110 Damian's Return

Funster

Damian positioned himself alarmingly close. When he spoke, his warm breath ghosted across her skin. Instinctively, Scarlett ducked her head in a futile attempt to create distance.

Simultaneously, she questioned nervously, "Is such communication truly necessary between us?"

Before her marriage to Vincent, Damian had frequently joked about her marrying him instead. Yet after her actual wedding, he had never revisited the subject.

Until now.

Observing Scarlett's evasive movement, Damian smirked roguishly. He captured her hand and pressed it firmly against his chest, feigning emotional injury. "When you remain silent, it feels like a cat's claws are tearing at my heart. Can't you feel the scars still lingering here?"

18:18 Thu, Jan 8

Awakened Housewife: ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 111[799 words]

Chapter 111 Damian's Dangerous Game

Finished

He captured Scarlett's hand and pressed it firmly against his chest, deliberately guiding her fingers to trace the defined contours of his pectoral muscles.

This wasn't about demonstrating emotional pain-he was unmistakably making her appreciate his physical conditioning.

The moment her fingertips encountered those hardened ridges, Scarlett instinctively attempted to withdraw her hand. But Damian tightened his grip like an unyielding vise.

Realizing escape was impossible, Scarlett simply lifted her chin and met his gaze directly. Her voice carried sharp-edged clarity. "Really? To how many women have you delivered these exact lines?"

Damian's brow furrowed momentarily before he responded, "Darling, I'll be honest with you. I've probably said similar things to about twenty women."

Scarlett made another attempt to reclaim her hand, but his hold only intensified, effectively immobilizing her.

At that moment, Scarlett spotted Nathan emerging from Theron Manor's main entrance. He stood surveying the surroundings, clearly awaiting her return.

Anxiety surged through Scarlett, her tone turning pleading. "Damian, my brother is waiting for me at the door. If he doesn't see me soon, he'll become frantic."

Damian merely repositioned her hand against his chest, his gaze unwavering. "What about me? If I don't see you, I'll perish."

Scarlett internally rolled her eyes. Was he being serious? A man of Damian's success probably aspired to live another century, not expire over her absence.

Seeing her skepticism, Damian suddenly proposed, “Scarlett, perhaps I should go greet your brother first?”

Scarlett’s anxiety escalated into sharp irritation. “What exactly do you want from me?”

Damian lifted a finger to twirl a strand of her hair, his grin widening. “Have I ever mentioned that I want to marry you?”

Scarlett closed her eyes briefly before questioning, “And how many women have you said that

to?”

Damian considered this seriously. “If I had to estimate, perhaps fifty?”

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14:33 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 111 Damian’s Dangerous Game

Scarlett stared at him intently. “So? What value do you believe your words carry?”

87

Finished

Damian met her gaze with complete seriousness. “But among all those women, you’re the only one I genuinely mean it with.”

Scarlett pushed against him. “Even if you sound utterly sincere, I’m not buying your nonsense.”

Their proximity made every word exchange an intimate sharing of breath, intensifying Scarlett’s discomfort.

Damian showed no offense. He simply maintained her hand’s position against his chest with minimal pressure. Regardless of how she struggled, the distance between them remained unchanged.

When she finally exhausted her efforts, Damian captured her slender wrist, his thumb gently caressing her skin.

Abruptly, Damian stilled. His gaze dropped to Scarlett’s bare arm.

He frowned and inquired, "Where is your bracelet?"

Scarlett blinked, suddenly remembering. "You're right. Wait here in the car-I'll go remove it and return it to you."

Damian's frown deepened. "Return it? Why? Don't you like it?"

Scarlett shook her head. "No, it's just—"

Before she could complete her explanation, Damian interrupted, "I suppose it wasn't expensive enough. There's an auction tomorrow. I'll acquire something even more valuable for you."

Scarlett panicked. "Damian, don't—"

She hadn't even finished saying "don't do this" before Damian's expression turned icy. "If you refuse to wear the bracelet, I'll simply continue sending you increasingly expensive jewelry daily until you finally wear something."

Seeing his stubborn determination, Scarlett deliberately attempted to provoke him. "It's not my money being wasted, so I don't care. Regardless how much you spend, I said I won't wear any of it, and I won't."

Damian merely laughed. "As long as you're unconcerned. I earn money specifically to spend it on you. If you don't spend it, what purpose does it serve? I'd gladly give you every cent I possess."

He concluded by stroking Scarlett's cheek tenderly.

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14:33 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 111 Damian's Dangerous Game

Startled, Scarlett slapped his hand away in panic.

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Finished

Damian winced and withdrew his hand. Rather than blowing on it to soothe the sting, he ran his tongue across the back of his hand.

While doing so, he looked up at Scarlett, his eyes twinkling mischievously. “Darling, be gentler next time. I may be resilient and don’t mind you teaching me lessons, but I’d prefer you strike me when we’re, well, in bed. That would be considerably more exciting.”

He laughed openly, making no attempt to conceal the mischief in his expression.

Scarlett glared at him, furious. “You pervert.”

She couldn’t conjure any more severe insults, and truthfully, nothing she might say would likely affect Damian regardless.

But even being called a pervert didn’t bother him in the slightest.

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14:33 Sat, Jan 10

Awakened Housewife Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

Editorial board

Editorial Board: Our editorial team works behind the scenes to refine each chapter, maintain consistency, and deliver the best reading experience.

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 112[884 words]

Chapter 112 The Price of Protection

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Finished

Scarlett stared daggers at Damian. Though her eyes blazed with fury, to him she appeared about as threatening as an irritated kitten. He couldn’t suppress an amused chuckle as he teased, “Darling, you’re utterly adorable when you’re angry.”

No sooner had the words left his mouth than he leaned in, overcome by impulse. Just as his lips were about to claim hers, he abruptly altered course and instead pressed a kiss against the delicate skin of her neck.

Trapped within Damian's embrace, Scarlett had nowhere to retreat.

She attempted to evade his approaching lips, but escape proved impossible. When his mouth made contact with her neck, her entire body stiffened, the spot where his lips touched burning as if branded.

Finally, Damian rested his chin upon Scarlett's shoulder, leaning against her without transferring his full weight.

In this moment, their bodies remained pressed intimately together.

Scarlett leaned into him, inhaling the distinctive notes of his cologne. It was subtle yet distinctive—a comfortable, classic fragrance that wasn't overpowering.

After an extended silence, she finally ventured, "You could have kissed me properly. Why did you stop?"

In that vulnerable position, Scarlett couldn't have escaped. Had Damian wished, he could have easily restrained her completely.

Damian chuckled softly, his smile laden with unspoken meaning. "You were resisting me."

Scarlett was momentarily stunned, uncertain how to respond.

She didn't know Damian particularly well and typically considered him somewhat reckless. Yet hearing him voice this observation left her unexpectedly disarmed.

After a prolonged pause, Damian withdrew, creating deliberate distance between them. "You should return home now. I'll have the new jewelry delivered tomorrow evening."

Scarlett began to protest that it was unnecessary, but Damian interrupted once more, "If you refuse to wear what I give you, I'll simply continue sending additional pieces indefinitely."

They maintained eye contact for an extended moment, yet Scarlett offered no further argument.

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14:33 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 112 The Price of Protection

After exiting the vehicle, she felt distinctly unsettled.

Damian hadn't sounded like he was making empty threats.

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Finished

If he persisted in sending gifts, it would only intensify the pressure she already felt.

When she reached Theron Manor's entrance, Nathan immediately noticed her arrival.

"Why is your hair in such disarray?" Nathan's tone carried distinct sharpness.

Feeling guilty, Scarlett instinctively averted her gaze. "The wind tangled it."

Her feeble excuse didn't deceive Nathan for an instant. "Scarlett, I don't oppose you dating, but you must maintain appropriate boundaries. If you repeat past mistakes, I won't extend forgiveness again. And don't be careless about pregnancy. You're a woman—it's easy to get hurt. Don't open yourself to just anyone."

Having delivered this admonishment, Nathan turned and entered the house.

Scarlett remained motionless for a long moment before finally stepping across the threshold.

"Nathan, it isn't what you're imagining," she attempted to explain, her voice anxious. Yet after a brief hesitation, she added, "Regardless, I'll heed your advice."

Nathan turned to study her, his expression softening when he noticed her slightly reddened eyes. "Very well."

Scarlett finally managed a smile, her voice gentle. "Thank you, Nathan."

Uncomfortable with her gratitude, Nathan changed the subject. "Clara mentioned missing you tonight. You're always occupied, and she rarely sees you. When you have availability next, return home earlier."

Scarlett agreed immediately. "Understood."

The following morning, Scarlett awoke to discover Clara had already departed for school, but a voice message from her niece awaited on her phone. "Auntie, when winter vacation arrives, let's go skiing overseas together!"

Clara's sweet voice melted the lingering tension in Scarlett's heart.

She sat on the edge of her bed, replaying the message repeatedly. Yet as she listened, her thoughts inevitably drifted toward Vanessa.

She had raised Vanessa for years, yet never found opportunity to travel with her.

Well, perhaps the opportunity had existed, but she had always dreamed of traveling as a

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14:33 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 112 The Price of Protection

complete family unit.

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But Vincent remained exclusively devoted to Sabrina. There was no possibility he would accompany them anywhere.

Now, both her husband's and daughter's affections belonged to Sabrina.

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Finished

After confirming arrangements with Clara, Scarlett rose, completed her morning routine, and prepared for work.

That afternoon, while documenting patient notes in her office, an intern entered carrying numerous packages.

Distributing the final parcel, the intern approached Scarlett's desk. "Scarlett, this one is addressed to you. I brought it over with the others."

Scarlett appeared perplexed. "Pardon? For me? Are you certain?"

The intern nodded confirmation. "Yes, I verified twice. The contact number matches yours exactly."

Scarlett stared at the box, hesitation evident in her posture.

When she identified the sender's name-Damian—comprehension dawned immediately.

Abruptly, the package seemed to burn against her palms.

She contemplated discarding it, but it likely contained something valuable, potentially exceeding the bracelet's worth. If she didn't dispose of it, she feared the implications of accepting it.

She felt trapped.

Ultimately, she retained it. The item's significant value and her responsibility for its safety decided the matter.

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14:34 Sat, Jan 10

87

Awakened Housewife Ignore Betrayer's Begs

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 113[793 words]

Chapter 113 Nolan's Test

Scarlett was nearly finished documenting the medical records when she inadvertently overheard several colleagues exchanging hushed whispers.

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“Have you

you heard? That brilliant doctor who was dismissed recently has been formally blacklisted from the medical community. They're even discussing revoking his master's and doctoral degrees-this will become a permanent mark on his professional record."

"What did he actually do to warrant such severe consequences?"

"Rumors suggest he accepted bribes during practice, raised illegal funds, and operated questionable side businesses. That's why the authorities are coming down so hard."

"Well, perhaps he deserved it then."

Hearing this disturbing gossip, Scarlett immediately opened Twitter.

Unsurprisingly, Nolan's expulsion from the medical field was trending as the top topic.

Beneath mountains of malicious comments, she discovered one post actually defending Nolan.

[I've met Dr. Huntley previously. He performed my mother's brain tumor surgery, and this year marks her second anniversary post-operation. She's thriving. Dr. Huntley was exceptionally approachable, never requested bribes, and when I attempted to offer a gratitude gift, he refused and advised me to use the funds for my mother's recovery medications.]

Scarlett was preparing to respond to this supportive comment when, upon accessing the reply screen, a notification appeared, "This comment has been deleted."

She attempted to search for the account from memory, but it had vanished entirely.

Undoubtedly, the individual who had spoken in Nolan's defense had been silenced.

The first person Scarlett suspected was Daniel.

Vincent remained preoccupied with his romantic interests and wouldn't concern himself with matters involving Scarlett, leaving Daniel as the only other person possessing both the motive and capability to orchestrate this.

Additionally, he and Nolan shared prior history.

Growing concerned about Nolan's wellbeing, Scarlett sent him a message, "Are you managing alright?"

But after dispatching it, she received no response. Not even by her shift's conclusion.

14:34 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 113 Nolan's Test

487

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Finished

Deciding she couldn't remain passive, Scarlett drove directly to Nolan's apartment complex to verify his condition.

However, upon arrival, she immediately recognized something was terribly wrong. Numerous individuals were directing cameras toward one specific location, capturing photographs incessantly.

Following their focus, she identified Nolan's residence. The windows were completely shattered, glass fractured into intricate spiderweb patterns. A foul odor assaulted her senses- someone had thrown filth at Nolan's home.

As the pungent stench of the filth splashed across Nolan's door hit them, they saw the walls defaced with graffiti sprayed in red.

"Rot in hell, scum."

"Angel of Death."

"Worthless piece of trash."

"Hope you get cancer."

"Your family is next."

The messages were venomous enough to make anyone's skin crawl.

Who knew what additional dangers might be lurking in the shadows?

Scarlett didn't dare enter to search for Nolan. She simply messaged him. "If you're inside, remain there. If you're not, don't return for several days."

Still no reply materialized.

Scarlett didn't linger. She drove directly to Daniel's preferred restaurant.

Fortune favored her-Daniel's distinctive vehicle was parked outside.

Storming into the establishment, Scarlett found Daniel dining with an exquisitely dressed, stunning woman.

Scarlett disregarded everything else. She marched directly to Daniel's table and demanded, "You orchestrated this against Nolan, didn't you?"

Daniel set down his cutlery, dabbed his lips meticulously with a napkin, then leaned back and regarded Scarlett with a raised eyebrow. "Indeed, it was me."

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14:34 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 113 Nolan's Test

He admitted without hesitation, offering no denial.

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Scarlett clenched her fists, glaring at him intensely. "You're utterly despicable."

Daniel merely shrugged. "When you're outmatched, you must accept defeat gracefully."

Scarlett's fury intensified, her voice sharpening. "All you've accomplished is leveraging privilege to crush someone beneath you. What merit exists in that? Daniel, were I in your position, I'd feel profound self-disgust. If you hold grievances against me, confront me directly."

Daniel's eyebrows lifted slightly. "He defended you. Anyone I find objectionable, I'll grind into dust until nothing remains."

Scarlett felt powerless against his influence. "Daniel, you'd better hope you never require assistance from others."

Daniel crossed his legs and smiled condescendingly. "I regret to inform you that circumstance will never arise. Even should it occur, I'd seek aid only from Vincent or Sabrina."

Scarlett emitted several cold laughs, offered no further commentary, and departed.

She knew Daniel was responsible, yet could implement no effective countermeasures.

In Rivergate, aside from Vincent and Damian, Daniel and Harris wielded the greatest influence.

With the exception of Damian, the remaining factions remained intricately interconnected.

Targeting Daniel essentially meant declaring war against Vincent and Harris simultaneously.

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212

14:34 Sat, Jan 10

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 114[845 words]

Chapter 114 Vanessa's Betrayal

Under such circumstances, there truly existed no viable solution.

87

Finished

After returning to Theron Manor, Scarlett spent some time playing games with Clara before announcing her intention to retire upstairs.

Nolan still hadn't responded to her messages, intensifying her anxiety.

She attempted calling again, but his phone remained powered off.

Though Scarlett had never personally experienced online harassment, she understood it was something most individuals couldn't easily withstand.

Words from strangers online could cut deeper than knives and prove more poisonous than venom.

That night, Scarlett obtained barely any restful sleep.

It wasn't until the early morning hours that Nolan finally messaged her. "I'm managing adequately. Please don't concern yourself excessively about my situation."

Seeing his message provided Scarlett some relief, yet after reflection, she replied, "I'm truly sorry about this."

Nolan responded, "The responsibility isn't yours to bear. Please don't internalize guilt."

They exchanged only a few additional words before Nolan ceased responding.

The following morning, despite her sleep deprivation, Scarlett felt unexpectedly alert.

She arrived early at Ravensshade Villa and prepared breakfast-plain oatmeal accompanied by simple side dishes.

While eating with Vanessa, Scarlett repeatedly glanced toward the staircase and main entrance, anticipating Vincent's return.

Certain matters exceeded her capacity to resolve, but Vincent undoubtedly possessed the means to address them.

She didn't need to wait long before Vincent entered from outside.

The weather remained gloomy and fog-laden, his clothing adorned with minute moisture droplets.

Seeing him, Scarlett didn't experience the same urgent compulsion to seek his assistance as she

1/4

Sat, Jan

Chapter 114 Vanessa's Betrayal

might have previously.

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But as he began ascending the staircase, Scarlett instinctively called out, "Vincent?"

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Vincent halted, turned on the steps, and regarded Scarlett. "Yes? Do you require something?"

His tone remained frigid, devoid of warmth.

At that moment, Sabrina appeared at the staircase's summit. She smiled at Vincent and inquired, "You've returned?"

Observing Scarlett's silence, Vincent redirected his attention to Sabrina. "Indeed. Why haven't you obtained additional rest?"

Sabrina remained clad in silk pajamas, her hair loosely cascading, presenting a relaxed appearance with softened eyes.

She deliberately lowered her voice. "The noise disturbance prevented me from returning to sleep."

Returning to sleep?

Was she referring to repose following... morning activities?

gaze remained

Vincent completed his ascent and positioned himself beside Sabrina, though his fixed upon Scarlett below. "You might consider arriving later during subsequent visits."

Scarlett momentarily froze. The words she had intended for Vincent became lodged in her throat.

He and Daniel were cut from the same cloth. Should she request assistance, he would likely side with his companion.

Scarlett offered no response to his suggestion, nor did she look at him again.

Vincent registered surprise at her attitude but didn't pursue the matter.

Just as he prepared to turn toward the bedroom, Vincent suddenly addressed Scarlett, "Incidentally, what did you intend to say

intend to say earlier?"

Scarlett responded, "Nothing of significance."

Thus concluded their exchange.

Vincent and Sabrina retreated to their room while Scarlett ensured Vanessa completed her breakfast.

2/4

14:34 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 114 Vanessa's Betrayal

Following the meal, Scarlett assumed responsibility for transporting Vanessa to school.

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During the drive, Scarlett couldn't resist inquiring, "Vanessa, would you consider assisting me with a certain matter?"

Vanessa, engaged with a mobile game, glanced upward curiously. "What do you require, Mom?"

They halted at a traffic signal. Scarlett turned toward Vanessa and stated, "You're acquainted with Mr. Lennox, correct?"

Vanessa nodded. "Indeed, Mr. Lennox treats me exceptionally well."

Scarlett offered a faint smile, though her eyes reflected no happiness. She continued, "However, Mr. Lennox maintains a misunderstanding regarding one of my friends. Would you object to speaking favorably about my friend to him?"

Vanessa's face scrunched in contemplation before she ultimately shook her head. "If someone has provoked Mr. Lennox's displeasure, they cannot be a commendable individual. Mom, why would you maintain association with such persons?"

Scarlett's brow also furrowed as she observed Vanessa continuing. "Mom, I cannot provide assistance in this matter."

"What if I genuinely requires your help?" Scarlett softened her tone, her eyes brimming with hopeful expectation.

But Vanessa failed to comprehend. Instead, she attempted to instruct Scarlett, "Mom, if Mr. Lennox dislikes someone, you should maintain distance from them."

Scarlett straightened her posture and replied quietly, "Understood."

The traffic signal transitioned to green. She depressed the accelerator and the vehicle proceeded forward.

For the remainder of their journey, neither spoke.

As they approached the kindergarten entrance, Vanessa suddenly declared, “Mom, might I request your assistance with a matter as well?”

Scarlett maintained an indifferent expression, her voice cool. “Proceed. I shall endeavor to accommodate your request.”

Vanessa stated, “During future visits, please refrain from arriving so early to prepare meals. It disrupts Sabrina’s sleep cycle. Without adequate rest, she lacks sufficient energy for academic pursuits or musical practice.”

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14:34 Sat, Jan 10

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 115[837 words]

Chapter 115 The Beach Confrontation

87

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Scarlett’s heart felt as though a thousand needles had simultaneously pierced it. The pain was both sharp and absurd, yet she still didn’t refuse Vanessa’s request.

She asked no clarifying questions, simply agreeing immediately. “Well, I shall comply.”

Over the following days, Scarlett only visited Ravensshade Villa to transport Vanessa to school. She discontinued preparing breakfast entirely.

Sometimes she encountered Vincent, other times she didn't. Occasionally she merely observed Sabrina's presence...

Yet none of this held genuine significance anymore. The media frenzy surrounding Nolan's medical community blacklisting had finally subsided.

Nevertheless, Nolan continued receiving threats and harassment from numerous individuals.

He typically maintained his phone in a powered-off state, attempting to evade the incessant calls from people who had obtained his contact information.

During evening hours, he would send Scarlett brief messages confirming his safety.

Scarlett knew Nolan remained physically secure, but the fundamental issue remained Daniel.

This particular wave of drama had passed, but Daniel would undoubtedly devise fresh torments for subsequent occasions.

Scarlett continuously debated whether she should approach Vincent for intervention to break this vicious cycle.

After days of internal deliberation, she suddenly received news that Vincent was escorting Sabrina, Vanessa, Daniel, Harris on a beach vacation.

She scrolled through newsfeeds displaying photographs of them digging for clams, capturing images, learning swimming techniques, exploring underwater diving...

Scarlett could no longer contain herself. She immediately contacted Vincent.

Regardless of circumstances, Nolan remained an innocent party. Daniel's vendetta hadn't merely destroyed Nolan's career-it had effectively imprisoned him within his own residence.

The telephone barely completed one ring cycle before Vincent answered. She could distinctly hear ocean waves crashing in the background.

1/4

14:34 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 115 The Beach Confrontation

(87)

Finished

“Is something requiring attention?” His voice carried characteristic coldness, blending with the marine acoustics.

Scarlett avoided circumlocution. “Indeed.”

Vincent paused momentarily before responding, “We shall discuss matters upon my return.”

Scarlett could potentially wait, but Nolan’s situation might not permit delay.

Should this persecution continue, the next target might not be merely shattered windows-but Nolan himself.

Thus she hesitated no longer. “Can you compel Daniel to cease targeting Nolan?”

Scarlett theorized that if she informed Vincent, he would devise methods to prevent Daniel from further tormenting Nolan.

Upon concluding her request, anxiety immediately gripped her.

But then, Sabrina’s voice became audible through the connection. “Vincent, look! A shooting star! Quickly, formulate a wish!”

The connection experienced brief silence before Sabrina continued. “Vincent, what did you wish for?”

Vincent responded softly, “That remains confidential.”

Merely three words, yet his voice dripped with unmistakable affection.

Even through telephone transmission, Scarlett could perceive the flirtatious atmosphere between Vincent and Sabrina.

Sabrina laughed lightly before announcing, “Vanessa has discovered a crab! Will you join us capturing it?”

Vincent required no contemplation. “Certainly.”

But then he abruptly remembered Scarlett remained on the line, prompting his inquiry, “Incidentally, what were you articulating previously?”

He hadn't registered a single syllable of Scarlett's prior communication.

Scarlett didn't immediately respond.

After an extended silence, she finally inquired in a hoarse voice, "What is location?"

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14:34 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 115 The Beach Confrontation

87

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Identical to countless previous occasions, she sought knowledge of his whereabouts.

But this instance differed fundamentally-she wasn't reaching out in attempts to salvage their marriage.

Vincent hesitated before questioning, "Are you monitoring my movements?"

Scarlett stated, "There exists something I must communicate to you in person."

Vincent replied coolly, "I am currently occupied. We shall converse during another opportunity."

Scarlett had heard that particular phrase excessively throughout their relationship.

But when would "another opportunity" actually materialize?

His so-called "next time" fundamentally represented perpetual postponement.

She prepared to articulate her reason for contacting him, but he terminated the connection before she could verbalize her explanation.

Listening to the disconnection tone, Scarlett felt her strength completely desert her as she lowered her device.

For two consecutive days, she didn't attempt further contact with Vincent. But abruptly, Nolan ceased responding to her messages.

Simultaneously, Damian's gifts continued arriving with unceasing regularity—never missing a single day regardless of weather conditions.

Scarlett hadn't even bothered unsealing any jewelry containers.

If Damian dispatched them, they undoubtedly carried significant monetary value.

She recognized the wastefulness, yet Damian persistently increased the deliveries.

However, Scarlett currently couldn't concern herself with Damian. Her anxiety regarding potential harm befalling Nolan vastly outweighed other considerations.

She waited throughout an entire day, yet Nolan maintained his silence.

Scarlett could no longer remain passive.

She resolved to personally locate Vincent regardless of his location.

She messaged Vincent, "Which city currently hosts you? I require face-to-face discussion

3/4

14:34 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 115 The Beach Confrontation

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87

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But after transmission, her communication seemed to vanish into emptiness. No response materialized.

regarding an urgent matter."

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14:34 Sat, Jan 10

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 116[951 words]

Chapter 116 Coastal Clash

87

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The next day, Scarlett checked her phone first thing, but there was still nothing from Vincent. Her patience was wearing thin.

Out of options, she opened Twitter and searched for the account “Rina.” Sure enough, the IP location showed Sea City, the major metropolitan area nearby.

Cross-referencing that with some leaked vacation paparazzi shots—along with the distinct seaside scenery and architecture in the background-Scarlett finally pieced it together-they were at a coastal town.

She immediately booked the earliest flight she could find, though the soonest available wasn’t until that afternoon. By the time she landed, it was already 7 PM.

In late autumn, night fell early, and by seven, it was completely dark outside.

Scarlett quickly hailed a taxi. She kept pressing the driver, urging him to hurry as she directed him toward Vincent’s likely location.

Meanwhile, near the most upscale beachfront hotel, a lively bonfire party was in full swing on

the shore.

Staff members were bustling around-some grilling skewers, others cracking open fresh coconuts...

Closer to the water’s edge, Vincent and Sabrina were playing with Vanessa.

Vanessa was absolutely enchanted by the ocean. She'd gone diving during the day, combed the beach for shells at dusk, and now, even after dark, she was still splashing around happily by the waves. She was having so much fun, she secretly wished she could just stay here forever.

Around the bonfire, small tables were set up with all kinds of freshly grilled skewers, along with chilled beer and mulled wine.

Daniel and Harris were seated at one of them, sipping their drinks and occasionally glancing over at the cheerful "family scene" nearby.

After a while, Daniel checked his phone and let out a low chuckle. "Get this," he said, turning the screen toward Harris. "I just listed a few of Nolan's so-called 'misdeeds, and people are already jumping all over him online. And that's not all—after lying low for days, he finally went out in disguise recently, but someone recognized him, gave him a beating, and even messed up his

hands..."

Daniel shook his head, clicking his tongue mockingly. "Just think about it—a surgeon with damaged hands? His career is pretty much over, don't you think?"

1/3

14:34 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 116 Coastal Clash

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He laughed even harder, clearly taking pride in Nolan's downfall.

Harris, however, had been frowning the whole time. He didn't agree with any of this, but he kept his thoughts to himself.

Daniel, completely oblivious to Harris' disapproval, kept scrolling through his phone. "I just planted the seed, but people online are running with it. They're already bringing up bribery and illegal fundraising. All I have to do is give it a little nudge, and others will do the dirty work for me..."

That was when Harris finally cut in, his tone tense, "Daniel, do you honestly believe what you're doing is right?"

Daniel shot him a sharp look, clearly irritated. “Why wouldn’t it be? He had the nerve to go after Vincent’s woman-he brought this on himself. He just picked a fight with the wrong guy.”

Harris let out a heavy sigh. “Vincent doesn’t have feelings for her. She can’t stay ‘Mrs. Stewart’ forever, can she? Even though she’s married, she still has the right to find her own happiness.”

Hearing that, Daniel got even more worked up. “Have you lost your mind? Maybe you should see a doctor yourself.”

Harris didn’t back down. “Daniel, Nolan is a skilled doctor. He operated on one of my friends.”

Daniel just shrugged it off. “Not my problem. I’d never need his services anyway.”

Harris raised his voice slightly. “Maybe you won’t, but other people will.”

Daniel paused, caught off guard for a second, then waved a dismissive hand. “Still not my concern.”

“Do you have any idea how long it takes to train a good doctor? Nolan’s already a top surgeon, and he’s still young. Have you thought about how many patients he could have saved?”

Daniel had heard enough. He snapped, “Harris, drop it. You’re in no position to lecture me.”

Nearby, Vincent was helping Sabrina and Vanessa dig for starfish and catch small crabs. The sound of crashing waves mostly drowned out the argument.

But Daniel and Harris’ quarrel grew louder and more heated. Their faces were flushed, necks tense-it looked like they were on the verge of throwing punches.

Finally, Harris realized it was pointless. He couldn’t get through to Daniel. Frustrated, he turned and stormed away from the hotel.

As he stepped outside, he nearly collided with Scarlett, who had just climbed out of a taxi.

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14:34 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 116 Coastal Clash

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Scarlett looked up, recognized Harris, and knew instantly she'd found the right place. A faint, almost imperceptible smile touched her lips.

Harris saw her expression and frowned in confusion. "Scarlett? What are you doing here?"

In years past, Scarlett had a habit of showing up unannounced wherever they were.

It had been a while since she'd pulled a stunt like that.

Harris had honestly thought she'd finally moved on from chasing after Vincent. Clearly, he was wrong-some things never changed.

Scarlett could guess what he was thinking just from the look on his face, but she didn't bother explaining herself.

Instead, she just asked coolly, "Where are they now?"

Harris couldn't help but notice something different in her demeanor. She seemed... calmer, more composed. Not the desperate, clingy girl he remembered.

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 117[909 words]

Chapter 117 Wine and Wrath

Back when she used to cling to Vincent, Scarlett had always put on an overly sweet act, trying desperately to win over everyone in his circle. Now, even though her expression was frosty, Harris found this version of her far more genuine-and easier to respect.

When Scarlett pressed him for information, Harris visibly hesitated.

Sensing his reluctance wasn't meant to be difficult, Scarlett looked him squarely in the eyes and said with urgency, "I have something extremely important to deal with. The kind that can't wait."

Harris didn't know the specifics, but he could clearly see the deep anxiety etched across her face. Finally, he lifted his hand and pointed toward the hotel grounds. "They're on the private beach behind the hotel."

Scarlett didn't even glance back at Harris, but she still offered a curt, "Thanks," before striding straight into the hotel.

She didn't bother explaining herself at the front desk-instead, she simply booked a room with direct beach access. The moment she got her key, she made her way to the shoreline.

As soon as she stepped onto the sand, her eyes landed on Daniel, sitting alone by the bonfire and nursing a drink. Not far off, the picture-perfect "family" of Vincent, Sabrina, and Vanessa looked so harmonious they could've been real relatives.

Scarlett's arrival didn't go unnoticed. Sabrina spotted her first and quietly alerted the others.

But Scarlett ignored them completely, walking directly up to Daniel. "Daniel," she said, her tone cutting. "Do you want to step aside and talk, or should we have this conversation right here in public?"

It was the first time she had ever addressed one of Vincent's friends with such directness.

Daniel didn't take her seriously. He shrugged, feigning boredom. "Talk? What could we possibly have to talk about?"

Scarlett's voice turned sharper. "You really don't know what you've done?"

Daniel tilted his head back, looking down at her with a smug expression. "No idea. Completely clueless." His eyes glinted with satisfaction, as though he held all the cards.

Scarlett's patience snapped. In one swift motion, she grabbed the half-finished glass of wine Harris had left behind and threw its contents directly into Daniel's face.

Vincent, Sabrina, and Vanessa all watched in shock as the wine dripped down Daniel's face.

1/3

14:35 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 117 Wine and Wrath

87

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Vanessa froze for a second, then rushed over angrily. "Mom, what gives you the right to treat Mr. Lennox like this?" Her voice was thick with disapproval, her expression clearly taking Daniel's side.

Scarlett didn't answer, only looked at her daughter with a trace of bitter amusement.

Vanessa insisted, "Mom, you need to apologize to Mr. Lennox. Now!"

Hearing that, Scarlett couldn't hold back. "Then maybe I'd rather not be your mother anymore

But before she could finish, Vincent cut in sharply, "Scarlett."

His voice was like ice, halting her mid-sentence. He walked over to where Scarlett and Daniel stood, while Sabrina gently took Vanessa's hand and led her away from the escalating scene.

The ocean view was still stunning, the sea breeze soft-but the mood had soured completely.

Vincent locked eyes with Scarlett. "Don't say things like that in front of Vanessa," he warned, his tone cold and clearly angry.

Scarlett didn't care about his feelings. She stared back and asked with a humorless laugh, "So I'm the one saying hurtful things now?"

Vincent didn't flinch. "Yes."

Daniel, still wiping wine from his face, looked like he was about to explode, but Vincent's presence kept him in check as he dabbed angrily at his shirt with napkins.

Nearby hotel staff sensed the tension and discreetly slipped away. Soon, only Scarlett, Vincent, and Daniel remained on the beach.

Scarlett glared at Vincent, her voice trembling with pent-up emotion. "Why did you ignore my messages?"

Vincent frowned. "I didn't see them."

She let out a scornful laugh. "You didn't see them-or you chose to ignore them?"

"I didn't see them," Vincent repeated.

But the truth was, the answer hardly mattered anymore. So Scarlett shifted gears. "You know what's happening to Nolan, don't you?"

Vincent's expression remained icy. "I don't have time to follow trivial gossip."

2/3

14:35 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 117 Wine and Wrath

87

Finished

"Really?" Scarlett's disbelief was palpable. She took a few steps back, her gaze shifting between Vincent and Daniel. Finally, she let out a bitter chuckle. "You're exactly the same. Cut from the same cloth."

Vincent and Daniel were close friends. A part of her had still hoped Vincent would rein Daniel in for her sake.

But she'd forgotten-she was the least important person in this equation. Vincent would never take her side. Even her own daughter didn't support her. So what was the point of asking?

Having realized this, she turned without another word and walked away-only to run straight into Harris again.

“Ms. Theron!” Harris called out urgently.

But Scarlett didn’t acknowledge him. Even if she heard, she didn’t look back.

Once she had completely left the hotel grounds, Harris finally turned on Daniel, his voice shaking with anger. “Daniel, what you did to Nolan is seriously wrong.”

Vincent’s eyes narrowed. He turned to Harris and asked coldly, “What exactly did he do to Nolan?”

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 118[879 words]

Chapter 118 Damian’s Bargain

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Vincent couldn’t shake the uneasy feeling tightening in his chest as he recalled Scarlett’s raw anger from earlier. Was Nolan truly that significant to her? Significant enough to make her speak so harshly to their own daughter?

The next day, Scarlett returned to Rivergate.

There was still no word from Nolan. Growing increasingly concerned, she drove directly to his apartment building.

The paparazzi presence had thinned considerably compared to before, though a few determined stragglers remained. The windows of Nolan's home were more shattered than during her last visit, and the surrounding area was completely trashed-littered with debris that emitted a foul, lingering odor.

She couldn't gain entry, and truthfully, Scarlett wasn't even sure if Nolan was still staying there.

She sat in her car for a moment, lost in thought, when suddenly the passenger door was pulled open. Turning, she saw Damian again, wearing his trademark arrogant smirk. He had that rebellious charm about him that somehow enhanced his looks-the kind of man whose slightest smirk or raised eyebrow could make half the city's women weak in the knees.

Scarlett's eyes lingered on him for a moment before she quickly looked away.

Damian frowned, his tone tinged with jealousy. "Who has you so deep in thought?"

As he spoke, he leaned closer to Scarlett, his sharp eyes fixed on her as if trying to read her mind.

Scarlett's hands rested on the steering wheel. Damian noticed her bare wrist, and the amusement in his eyes froze for a second before he quickly recovered.

He reached out and grabbed her slender wrist, chuckling deeply. "I've given you so many bracelets, yet you never wear any of them?"

Scarlett had no patience for his games. Her mind was elsewhere, weighed down by more pressing concerns. Yet she couldn't help considering Damian's capabilities-he was, after all, the only person who could truly go toe-to-toe with Vincent.

She turned suddenly, nearly brushing her lips against his in the process. Her face flushed instantly, though she tried to maintain her composure. "Can you help me find Nolan?"

Damian's heartbeat quickened. The near-contact with Scarlett's lips left his ears feeling warm. But in front of her, he feigned complete calm, even as his palms began to sweat.

1/3

14:35 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 118 Damian's Bargain

He didn't hesitate. "Okay."

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Scarlett was about to thank him when Damian cut in, "But first, you have to agree to my condition."

The words of thanks died in her throat. "Go ahead. What do you want?"

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Damian leaned down, meeting Scarlett's eyes, and whispered softly, "Spend the night with me."

Scarlett had seen this routine from him before. She immediately countered, "What's the real deal? What do you actually want?"

Inside the car, Scarlett turned to look at Damian, her expression deadly serious. Damian looked back at her, light and shadow playing across his features.

He repeated, "Spend the night with me." But this time, he meant it.

Scarlett could tell he was serious but tried to negotiate. "Damian, you always start with outrageous demands to get what you really want."

"This time is different," Damian said, raising his brow. "Just one night. After that, you call all the shots-even if it means my life."

Scarlett's face turned crimson. She glared at Damian. "You're disgusting. You have no shame."

Damian just grinned, radiating confidence. "Take your time, darling. I've got all the patience in the world."

Scarlett looked at him but said nothing. Nolan was still missing, Vincent wasn't lifting a finger to help-reaching out to someone else felt like her only option.

Damian had helped her before, and she trusted him to keep his word. But his condition... Scarlett wasn't sure she could go through with it.

Then she thought-what was the point of clinging to this so-called purity anyway? What had it brought her but heartache?

Damian didn't want to pressure Scarlett. He pressed the door handle, about to get out, giving her space to truly consider whether she would agree.

But before he completely stepped out, Scarlett spoke from behind him, "Damian, I agree."

Damian turned, his eyes widening in genuine surprise. "Really?"

Scarlett avoided his gaze, simply nodding. "Yes."

Damian didn't wait at all. "I'll drive," he said as he got out.

2/3

14:35 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 118 Damian's Bargain

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Scarlett moved to the passenger seat, her heartbeat racing, her mind in turmoil. Anxiety crept through her—was she making the right decision?

She had thought about divorcing Vincent, though the papers remained unsigned. If something happened with Damian tonight, it would be cheating. But then again, hadn't Vincent cheated first?

As her thoughts tangled, Damian's "We're here" abruptly pulled her back to reality. There was no room for hesitation now. Things had gone this far; backing out would be cowardly.

Damian grabbed her wrist and led her straight toward the hotel as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

Scarlett wasn't surprised. Men like him always had women coming and going—like changing outfits.

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14:35 Sat, Jan 10

Awakened Housewife. Ignore Betrayer's Begs

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 119[896 words]

Chapter 119 The Interrupted Intimacy

87

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Upon entering the suite, Damian loosened his tie and casually tossed his jacket onto the sofa.

“I’ll take the first shower. You still have time to change your mind.”

Scarlett stood frozen near the doorway, her heart hammering wildly against her ribs as his words sank in.

The urge to flee tugged at her, yet her legs felt strangely rooted to the spot.

Damian noticed her internal struggle but didn’t press further, disappearing into the bathroom without another word.

Part of him expected Scarlett would be gone by the time he finished.

But when he stepped out, clean and refreshed, she was still there-rooted in the living area as if held by some invisible thread.

Seeing she hadn’t run, Damian’s brow furrowed slightly. He was about to speak when Scarlett suddenly said, “I’ll take my shower now.”

With that, she slipped into the bathroom, leaving him alone with his thoughts.

Damian lit a cigarette by the floor-to-ceiling window, exhaling slowly as conflicting emotions churned inside him.

A few minutes later, Scarlett emerged. She noticed Damian standing by the window, smoke curling around him, but said nothing.

After towel-drying her hair, she finally looked toward his silhouette and said quietly, "I'm going to bed."

Then, letting her robe fall, she slid naked beneath the covers. The white duvet draped softly over her, its gentle contours hinting at the delicate form beneath.

Suddenly, Damian choked on his smoke and broke into a harsh cough.

Through the window's reflection, he saw Scarlett lying still on the bed—a vision of surrender and tension all at once.

Stubbing out his cigarette, he finally moved toward the bed.

Scarlett heard his footsteps and squeezed her eyes shut even tighter.

Damian stood beside the bed, looking down at her. Her hair fanned across the white pillow—a

1/3

14:35 Sat, Jan 10

22

17

Finished

Chapter 119 The Interrupted Intimacy

stark, beautiful contrast. The covers hid most of her, but the shape of her shoulders and the elegant line of her collarbones were still visible.

His gaze drifted lower, tracing the rhythmic rise and fall of her chest beneath the fabric.

The soft curves were impossible to ignore.

His throat felt dry. He wet his lips before reaching for the light switch.

He turned off the main lights, leaving only the dim glow of a bedside lamp that cast long shadows across the room.

Sitting on the edge of the mattress, he spoke softly, "Are you absolutely sure about this?"

Scarlett kept her eyes closed. “Yes.”

Damian opened his mouth to say more, but just then, the distinct sound of someone working the hotel room’s lock came from the door.

He turned his head-and could just make out the silhouette of Vincent standing in the hallway, his face obscured by shadows, emotions unreadable.

In one swift motion, Damian pulled the covers up, fully concealing Scarlett beneath them.

She stayed perfectly still, not making a sound.

The reality crashed into her-on paper, she was still Vincent’s legal wife. They had a marriage certificate. They had a daughter.

Their relationship was shattered, but the legal ties remained.

What she was doing now wasn’t just rebellion—it was a slap in Vincent’s face.

Even if he didn’t love her, wouldn’t his pride revolt?

Once Scarlett was hidden, Damian rested a hand lightly on the small of her back and looked lazily toward the door. “Mr. Stewart, what a surprise. What brings you here?”

His tone was deceptively calm, almost challenging.

Vincent stood at the threshold, his sharp gaze falling on the chair where Damian’s outerwear, Scarlett’s jeans, cotton shirt, jacket-and even her underwear-lay tangled together.

The careless mix of garments left little to the imagination.

Under the covers, Scarlett’s heart raced. She could only imagine the cold fury building in Vincent.

2/3

14:35 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 119 The Interrupted Intimacy

Would he take it out on the Theron family? Or crush her completely?

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He was Vincent-proud, ruthless. Could he really stand to see his wife in another man's bed?

The silence stretched, thick and heavy. Vincent didn't speak for what felt like an eternity.

Each second amplified the pounding in Scarlett's chest, as if her heart might break free from her ribs.

Finally, Vincent stepped into the room. His fierce eyes locked onto Damian's hand resting possessively on Scarlett's back.

In the dim light, his handsome features were taut-but the expected explosion of rage never

came.

He only growled her name. "Scarlett. You have two minutes to come out."

With that, he turned to leave.

But then Damian spoke again, unexpectedly, "Got something to say, Mr. Stewart? Why not say it here and now?"

Vincent paused. Ignoring Damian entirely, he directed his words toward the bed. "Scarlett, you now have about seventy seconds left."

It wasn't a request-it was an order. One she didn't dare refuse.

Even without visible anger, Scarlett knew the consequences of defiance.

If Vincent truly lost his composure, he could dismantle the Theron family without a second thought.

So Vincent withdrew, leaving the door ajar. Through the opening, they could clearly see him still waiting outside-a silent, formidable sentinel.

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Silent Dreams Never Die — 120

Chapter 120 Come With Me

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87

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Scarlett didn't dare waste a single second. Clutching the blanket tightly around herself, she scrambled off the bed, her hands trembling as she struggled to pull her clothes on with frantic, uncoordinated movements.

Damian watched her panicked state from where he stood, a low, amused chuckle escaping his lips. "Does he really frighten you that much?" he asked, the question hanging in the air like a challenge.

Scarlett didn't respond verbally, but deep down she knew the truth all too well. Vincent tolerated zero imperfections in his carefully controlled world.

He might endure many things, but finding her half-dressed in a hotel room with Damian crossed a line that could never be uncrossed. The consequences would be severe-she was certain of that.

Exactly two minutes later, after what felt like an eternity of frantic preparation, Scarlett pulled open the heavy hotel room door.

Vincent didn't even glance back at her. He stood with his back to the door, his posture rigid with contained tension. Without a word, he began striding purposefully down the hallway, throwing a terse command over his shoulder. "Come with me."

His tone was flat and unreadable, and Scarlett couldn't begin to guess what he was thinking beneath that controlled exterior.

She had no choice but to follow, her footsteps echoing softly against the plush carpet as she trailed behind him.

At the end of the corridor, Vincent pushed open the heavy stairwell door. He entered first, holding the door just long enough for Scarlett to slip through before it swung shut with a definitive click.

Once inside, Vincent positioned himself directly beside the entrance, his broad shoulders almost blocking the doorway as if physically preventing Damian from pursuing them.

Scarlett noticed the protective-or possessive-gesture, her heart racing with a mixture of fear and confusion. This wasn't the Vincent she thought she knew.

They had been married for five years. She had loved Vincent, respected him deeply. Since discussing divorce, she had tried to withdraw emotionally-to stop the loving, to stop the respecting.

But she had never felt this kind of bone-deep fear before, this primal understanding that she was facing a side of him she'd never seen.

1/3

14:35 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 120 Come With Me

87

Finished

Vincent leaned against the cold concrete doorframe and quietly lit a cigarette. As he tilted his head, the flame from the lighter illuminated his face-revealing features that were cold and utterly devoid of warmth. He looked truly terrifying in that moment, like something out of a nightmare.

He remained silent until he exhaled the first puff of smoke, the gray cloud hanging between them like a curtain. Finally, his eyes settled on Scarlett, dark and unreadable. "Come with me," he repeated, his voice low but firm. "There's somewhere you need to go."

Scarlett stared back, taking in his unnerving calm. All her earlier assumptions suddenly seemed laughable. Clearly, when a man doesn't love you, he doesn't even care about infidelity.

If it had been Sabrina who betrayed him, he'd probably be falling apart-screaming, breaking down, losing his mind.

Scarlett's heart sank into icy depths. She wanted to cry, wanted to laugh, but found she could do neither.

Vincent had already started down the stairs. Noticing she wasn't moving, he turned and said, "Scarlett, I've been very patient with you." It was both a warning and a soft threat.

But by now, Scarlett simply didn't care anymore. He had never valued her anyway.

When Vincent first appeared at the door, she had even questioned her own morality.

She wondered if wronging him was justified, given their divorce wasn't yet finalized. But now, such thoughts felt like self-deception.

Vincent went downstairs, and she followed mechanically.

She barely registered when they reached the ground floor. Vincent got into the driver's seat without bothering to open Scarlett's door.

His treatment of her had always been different from how he treated Sabrina. For Sabrina, he would open doors, shield her head, hold her dress, even fasten her seatbelt.

Scarlett still chose the back seat. She didn't know where Vincent was taking her, and neither spoke during the drive.

Vincent never brought up what had happened with Damian. He seemed hurried, driving fast. Through the rearview mirror, Scarlett saw his jaw clenched tight, his lips pressed into a severe

line.

His phone rang repeatedly during the drive, but he never answered, letting the screen light up again and again.

2/3

14:35 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 120 Come With Me

Finished

Scarlett didn't know who was calling, but she guessed it probably wasn't Sabrina-he would never ignore her calls.

Only when the car stopped did Scarlett realize Vincent had brought her to her hospital.

Vincent gave Scarlett no chance to ask questions. He got out and walked straight into the hospital, simply telling her to follow.

They reached an observation room in the emergency department. Through the partly open door, Scarlett saw a man lying on the bed inside. A closer look confirmed it was Nolan.

Scarlett froze, unsure what to do. Instinctively, she reached out to push the door open.

But Vincent caught her wrist. "I need to talk to you about something."

Scarlett's eyes reddened as she glared at him. "What do you want?"

Vincent narrowed his eyes. "I need Nolan to perform surgery."

Suddenly, everything became clear to Scarlett.

She finally understood why Vincent had suddenly returned to the city, why he appeared at the hotel, why he seemed so urgent. All his actions were just to get Nolan to operate.

He didn't need to say who the patient was-Scarlett could guess. No matter who it was, that person was clearly far more important than his legal wife.

Over their five years of marriage, Scarlett had experienced Vincent's emotional coldness countless times.

She remembered when Vanessa was just twelve months old, crawling everywhere. That particular day, Scarlett was running a high fever, her mind foggy, her body weak as noodles.

She tried to keep an eye on Vanessa, but the toddler was full of energy, moving all over the place while searching for toys. Scarlett couldn't keep up, so she messaged Vincent, "Can you come home to help with Vanessa? I have a fever and can't handle it anymore."

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14:35 Sat, Jan 10

Awakened Housewife Ignore Betrayer's Beggings

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 121[961 words]

Chapter 121 The Surgical Ultimatum

87

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Vincent's text came through, "Take something for the fever. I'm not a doctor. Lily's home-have her put Vanessa to bed."

Reading those words, Scarlett felt a profound sense of disorientation. She recognized each word individually, but strung together, they felt icy and detached, as if they'd been sent by a complete stranger.

In the aftermath of that incident, she had genuinely struggled with a low mood for some time. She later discovered that Vincent hadn't been present during her illness because he was out helping his assistant settle a personal vendetta.

He seemed to care for so many people. Yet Scarlett, as his lawful wife, didn't even rank among them.

The thought carved a deep sadness within her.

Shaking off the memory, Scarlett lifted her gaze to Vincent. "Who needs the surgery?" she asked.

Vincent sidestepped the question. "That's not your concern."

Scarlett didn't press. "I can't make decisions for Nolan, especially not while he's hospitalized and his own condition is still uncertain. Whether he's even medically fit to operate is a separate issue entirely."

"This is a critical procedure," Vincent stated bluntly. "I've consulted numerous specialists-he's the only one who can perform it."

Scarlett's mind went momentarily blank, recalling Nolan's earlier reassurance-he had told her to trust that he could handle Daniel's aggression. Now, perhaps, this surgery Vincent mentioned was the very opportunity Nolan needed.

Even so, Scarlett held her ground. "You should speak with him directly. I don't have the right to make choices for someone else."

Vincent was silent for a long moment. "Scarlett, this is a genuine emergency," he finally said, his tone strained. "If I could secure Nolan's agreement on my own, I wouldn't be standing here, wasting my breath."

She could sense Vincent's frustration mounting.

Scarlett looked at him, a bitter smile touching her lips. "An emergency? So your problems are always paramount, while others' simply don't matter?"

1/3

14:35 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 121 The Surgical Ultimatum.

87

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Just yesterday, she had been frantic, unable to reach Nolan, rushing to Sea City in a panic. And how had they treated her then? Why did his needs suddenly become so urgent just because he required assistance now?

Vincent clearly had no interest in rehashing the past. He cut straight to the point, "Daniel's mother had a sudden medical crisis and was hospitalized. She's been diagnosed with a brain tumor compressing nerves. She's his utmost priority, and Nolan is the only surgeon for the job. You're close to him. If you ask, he'll agree. If I approach him... what outcome do you honestly expect?"

Scarlett refused to play along. "How should I know?"

Vincent's patience evaporated. His expression turned cold as he issued a threat. "Fine, don't help. A single phone call from me is all it would take to drag the entire Theron family into this mess."

Anger flared in Scarlett, sharpening her retort. "Vincent, you always assume the world revolves around you. If Daniel had done to you what he did to Nolan, could you simply let it go?"

Vincent remained silent.

Scarlett pressed on, "If you want to target my family, go ahead. But consider this-after pulling a stunt like that, do you truly believe Nolan would still agree to perform the surgery?"

Vincent simply stared at her for an extended moment, then turned on his heel and left without another word.

Scarlett didn't follow. Instead, she stepped into the observation room.

Inside, Nolan lay on the hospital bed, seemingly asleep.

But his sleep was light. The sound of her entrance made his eyes flutter open immediately.

Recognizing Scarlett, a look of profound embarrassment crossed his features, as if he'd been caught in his most vulnerable state.

He tried to sit up, but Scarlett quickly moved to gently press his hand down. "Nolan, don't move."

Ignoring her, Nolan pushed himself up, leaning back against the bed rail. His lips were pale as he offered her a sad, weary smile. "I must look quite pathetic to you right now."

Scarlett's eyes stung, and she looked down, her vision blurring. "Why would you say that? If it weren't for me, you wouldn't even be in this situation..."

Nolan interrupted softly, "Vincent spoke with

you,

didn't he?"

2/3

14:35 Sat,

Chapter 121 The Surgical Ultimatum

Scarlett answered quietly, "Yes."

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His arm was still secured in a cast, and the faint shadows of bruises lingered on his face. He had never wanted Scarlett to see him like this, broken and confined. Yet here she was, witnessing him at his absolute lowest.

Nolan managed a calm, resigned smile and asked gently, "This is about Daniel's mother, isn't it?"

Scarlett looked puzzled. "How did you know? Did Daniel's family contact you?"

Nolan shook his head slightly. "She came to my clinic for a check-up a while back. I advised her to be hospitalized then, but she refused. She said I was too young, that I didn't know what I was talking about—just scaring her. But I knew the situation would eventually escalate to this."

A wave of understanding washed over Scarlett. "So that's what happened."

Nolan studied her face, his gaze perceptive. "Did Vincent threaten you?"

Not wanting to add to his burdens, Scarlett shook her head. "No."

But Nolan was certain. "The fact that you're here asking me about this... It means he applied pressure, didn't he?"

Scarlett didn't confirm, but her silence was answer enough.

Nolan watched her, reading the unspoken truth in her demeanor, and pieced the situation together for himself.

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 122[821 words]

Chapter 122 Vanessa's Cry

Finished

After a long silence, Nolan's voice was quiet. "Scarlett, do you want me to do this surgery?"

Scarlett shook her head slowly. "I don't know."

A doctor's duty was to save lives-but after what Daniel had done to Nolan, how could anyone simply move on?

Nolan smiled with that familiar gentleness of his. "You should know-if you ask me to do it, I won't be able to refuse you."

Scarlett's gaze drifted to Nolan's injured hand. "Even if you wanted to operate, you might not be physically able to right now. Let's just focus on you getting better first."

Nolan gave a soft hum of acknowledgment and didn't press further.

Scarlett didn't ask how he'd been injured. She could already guess it was tied to the rumors Daniel had spread.

Jealousy could be vicious, and gossip could ruin a person-she understood that all too well.

She stayed with Nolan a while longer before finally rising to leave.

Before she walked out, she turned and told him, "Nolan, whether you take this case or not-it's your decision alone. No one should force you into it."

Herself included.

Nolan smiled at her, his voice tender. "I know."

When Scarlett returned to Theron Manor from the hospital, Henry, Diana, and Clara had already gone to bed.

Nathan, as was his habit, waited until she was safely home before retiring himself.

Scarlett spoke briefly with Violet. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary with her family- Vincent was clearly holding back for now, waiting on Nolan's decision about the surgery.

The next day, the Therons returned to its usual rhythm.

The adults went to work, the children to school...

Scarlett guessed Vincent probably wouldn't make a move against her family just yet.

Around 10 a.m., her phone rang. Vincent's name flashed on the screen.

1/3

14:35 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 122 Vanessa's Cry

Since their marriage, he had rarely ever called her.

If this had happened before, Scarlett would have been over the moon.

But now... things were different. She felt nothing.

She answered coolly, "What is it?"

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Vincent got straight to the point. "Let's have lunch."

Scarlett was about to refuse when he added, "Nolan will be there too."

No doubt this was about Daniel's mother and her urgent need for surgery.

When they didn't need Nolan, they were fine with crushing him-tarnishing his reputation, sabotaging the career he'd worked so hard to build.

Now that they needed him, they couldn't even ask properly. Instead, they wanted Scarlett to act as the go-between.

It was almost laughable, really.

Was their pride as wealthy people really that fragile?

Was admitting they were wrong so difficult?

The thought drew a dry, humorless laugh from her. "Vincent, I'm not your puppet. You can't just pull my strings whenever it suits you. I don't need you to buy me lunch-I can feed myself."

With that, she hung up, not caring how he might react.

But just before the call cut off, she thought she heard Sabrina's voice in the background.

That afternoon, her phone rang again.

This time, it was a call from Ravenshade Villa.

Scarlett guessed it was probably Vanessa. She hesitated, unsure whether to answer.

Vanessa had hurt her more than once.

But then again, she was still her daughter. Holding a grudge against a child felt wrong.

She picked up but didn't speak, waiting for Vanessa to break the silence.

Vanessa waited too-both of them holding their breath.

2/3

14:35 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 122 Vanessa's Cry

87

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Finally, Vanessa gave in first. “Mom?”

Her voice was small, barely a whisper, tinged with something like pleading.

Scarlett replied evenly, “Yes.”

Vanessa asked cautiously, “Mom... can you come home? Dad and Sabrina haven’t been back for days.”

Scarlett figured Vincent and Sabrina were likely tied up with Daniel’s mother’s medical crisis— that would explain their absence.

Still, she wasn’t ready to give in. “Isn’t Lily at Ravensshade Villa?”

Vanessa sounded down, her voice muffled. “But Lily is just the housekeeper. I have a mom and a dad. I just... want my parents with me.”

Just her parents?

What about Sabrina?

Scarlett understood what Vanessa really meant. She was only asking for her mom because Sabrina wasn’t available-she was settling for second best.

“Mom has to work late tonight, so I can’t come home-”

Before Scarlett could finish her refusal, Vanessa began to cry. “Mom, I haven’t eaten. Lily’s food doesn’t taste good. I want your dish.”

Hearing that, Scarlett’s chest tightened. Against her better judgment, she felt herself softening. Her voice gentle, she coaxed, “Don’t cry, sweetheart. I’ll come home after work.”

Vanessa’s tears stopped almost instantly. “Thank you, Mom! You’re the best parent.”

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14:36 Sat, Jan 10

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 123[891 words]

Chapter 123 A Daughter's Betrayal

87

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For a long moment, Scarlett felt herself pulled back in time-twelve months ago, when things were different.

Back then, she must have truly mattered to Vanessa.

But after she returned to hospital work and was sent to Oakridge for training, Vanessa had slowly begun transferring her affection to Sabrina.

Once that shift happened, there was no going back.

Scarlett's mind went blank for a while. It was only when Vanessa's voice came through the phone again-"Mom?"-that she snapped back to the present and replied, "Yes?"

Vanessa said, "Then I'll be really good while I wait for you to come home, Mom."

Scarlett answered, "Okay."

After hanging up, Scarlett sat motionless for some time, lost in her thoughts.

She felt deeply helpless, and a bitter amusement crept into her heart.

Vanessa hadn't mentioned anything about what happened in Sea City-it was as if she had wiped the memory

clean.

But that night, she had been the one to push Scarlett into apologizing to Daniel.

After work, Scarlett stopped by the grocery store. She picked up ingredients for cooking and some of Vanessa's favorite fruits.

When she arrived at Ravensshade Villa, Vanessa was in the living room playing with her toys, with Lily keeping an eye on her.

Hearing the sound at the door, Vanessa turned. Scarlett stepped inside, her hands full of grocery bags.

Vanessa quickly stood up, rushed over, and wrapped her arms around Scarlett's leg. "Mom, you're home!"

Scarlett looked down at Vanessa's eager embrace. Her heart softened a little, but her hands were too full to hug back. She just said gently, "Alright, let me go so I can start dinner."

Even though Vanessa had hurt her many times, that biological bond between mother and child was something she couldn't simply break.

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14:36 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 123 A Daughter's Betrayal

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87

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Once Vanessa let go, she eagerly reached for Scarlett's bags. "Mom, let me help you carry them."

The bags were heavy, and Scarlett didn't want the child straining herself. "Go on and play, sweetheart. I can manage."

But Vanessa insisted, tugging lightly at the fruit bag. "Mom, my teacher says we should help out at home. I want you to be less tired."

Scarlett felt a slight frown form.

If Vanessa had said something like this before, she would have been overjoyed-probably stroking her cheek and praising her for growing up so thoughtful.

But now, it all felt unreal, almost like a scene from a dream.

After a brief hesitation, Vanessa ended up holding one lighter bag, while Lily took the rest.

While Scarlett was in the kitchen preparing the dough, Vanessa lingered nearby.

When Scarlett started mixing the filling, Vanessa helped by peeling onions beside her.

Scarlett guessed the teacher must have taught the children to be kind and helpful to their parents, and Vanessa had taken it to heart. That thought brought her a little comfort.

Maybe as Vanessa grew older, she would come to see that Sabrina wasn't as wonderful as she believed.

The possibility lifted Scarlett's spirits as she continued preparing the food.

Vanessa noticed Scarlett's lips curve upward and sensed her mood had lightened.

After hesitating for a long while, she finally spoke up, "Mom, can I ask you for a favor?"

Scarlett's hands, busy with chopping vegetables, stilled. She turned to Vanessa, the smile completely gone from her face.

"What is it?" she asked.

Vanessa registered Scarlett's shift in mood but pressed on. "Mr. Lennox's mom is really sick. I heard Dad say only Mr. Huntley can do the surgery. Mr. Lennox has been at the hospital for days without sleeping. You and Mr. Huntley are good friends. If you ask him, he won't say no."

Scarlett froze. She lifted her gaze toward the ceiling. Suddenly, she let out a laugh, even as tears traced paths down her cheeks.

In that moment, she understood everything.

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14:36 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 123 A Daughter's Betrayal

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So Vanessa's insistence on her coming home, all that helping around the house-it was all leading up to this, a plea on Daniel's behalf.

She'd even called him "Mr. Huntley" just to win Scarlett over.

During Scarlett's prolonged silence, Vanessa reached out and touched Scarlett's fingers. "Mom?"

After what felt like an eternity, Scarlett finally looked at Vanessa and said, "Vanessa, you once said you had your own opinion-that people Mr. Lennox dislikes can't be good people. You don't need to force yourself to call him 'Mr. Huntley.'"

It took Vanessa a moment to recall what Scarlett was referring to.

So the person Daniel disliked happened to be the very doctor who could save his mother.

For a moment, Vanessa didn't know what to say.

Still, she continued to plead, "Mom, will you do it for me?"

Scarlett shook her head. "I can't help."

Vanessa drew out the word, "Mom?"-clearly trying to sound cute and persuasive.

But Scarlett's voice remained firm. "I said I can't help."

Vanessa finally lowered her eyes. "Okay, then."

She left the kitchen, her whole posture dejected, and went to sit alone in the living room.

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**No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce -
Silent Dreams Never Die — 124[784 words
]**

Chapter 124 The Accidental Injury

87

Finished

Sabrina hadn't visited in some time, and Vanessa was genuinely feeling her absence. In her young mind, she'd convinced herself that if she could help solve Vincent's and Sabrina's problems, they might finally make more time for her.

She never anticipated Scarlett would refuse to help.

Vanessa couldn't shake the growing conviction that Scarlett had become a completely different person.

She sat curled on the sofa, looking small and forlorn, her spirits sinking with each passing moment.

From the kitchen, Scarlett watched Vanessa's melancholy expression with a bitter sense of irony.

She had declined to help, and Vanessa hadn't even pretended to accept it-she'd simply withdrawn.

Scarlett released a quiet, humorless breath. After preparing the meal, she moved to wash her hands.

If Vanessa didn't truly want her there, what was the point in staying?

When Scarlett emerged from the kitchen, she instructed Lily, "The fish are ready to be steamed. Please make sure Vanessa eats when they're done. I need to leave-I have things to attend to."

Lily frowned, watching Scarlett prepare to depart. "Mrs. Stewart, won't you be staying the night?"

Scarlett was already removing her apron as she responded, "No."

Vanessa heard Scarlett's decision but made no attempt to persuade her to stay.

Scarlett collected her belongings and moved toward the entrance,

Just as she reached the doorway, she nearly collided with Vincent and Sabrina entering together.

Scarlett barely acknowledged them, attempting to step around, but Vincent suddenly seized her arm. "I need to speak with you."

Scarlett turned to face Vincent, her voice frosty. "If this is about Nolan, save your breath. I'm not Nolan-I can't make his decisions, and I have no right to."

1/3

14:36 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 124 The Accidental Injury

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87

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With that, she pried his fingers from her arm.

But then Sabrina positioned herself in front of her. "Ms. Theron, Vincent values your opinion highly. He'll listen to you. Daniel is in the hospital, so distressed it's affecting his health. For Vincent's sake, couldn't you help?"

Unlike Vincent's direct approach, Sabrina adopted a humble, pleading manner.

Scarlett refused to even look at Sabrina. She said simply, "Move."

But Sabrina held her ground. "Ms. Theron, I'm begging you. Don't you care about Daniel at all?"

Scarlett's eyes fixed on Sabrina, her voice sharpening. "I said move."

Sabrina spread her arms, blocking the path. "I'm not moving."

Scarlett didn't hesitate-she pushed Sabrina's shoulder firmly, forcing her aside.

The way was clear now, but as Sabrina stumbled backward, she must have lost her footing or caught her shoe on something.

She fell to the ground, her hand scraping against sharp gravel, blood immediately blooming on her palm.

Scarlett froze momentarily, taken by surprise.

But Vincent reacted instantly. He crouched down, took Sabrina's hand, and upon seeing the blood, urgently began dabbing at it with his white shirt sleeve.

Scarlett had been married to Vincent for five years-she knew his fastidious nature when it came to cleanliness.

Yet now, he seemed completely unconcerned about the blood staining his expensive clothing.

When true love exists, all rules are forgotten.

Scarlett watched the scene unfold, her eyes suddenly burning with unshed tears.

Vincent's devotion was so palpable, so undeniable.

This was just a minor incident, but didn't genuine love reveal itself in these small moments?

Vincent carefully cleaned the blood and dirt from Sabrina's hand with his sleeve, then gently blew on the wound.

Sabrina winced, tears gathering in her eyes, her fragile appearance enough to soften any heart.

213

14:36 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 124 The Accidental Injury

He looked at her, his voice tender with concern. "Does it still hurt?"

Sabrina pressed her lips together and shook her head. "Vincent, I'm alright. The pain is manageable."

Vincent helped her to her feet. "Let's go inside and properly clean that wound."

Sabrina's tears finally overflowed. "Vincent, I'm useless. I couldn't help Daniel."

87

Finished

Vincent gently wiped the tears from her cheeks. “It’s not your fault. You did everything you could.”

Sabrina continued blaming herself. “I’m a doctor. I graduated from the same prestigious school as you. But I can’t perform this surgery. If I could, we wouldn’t need to ask anyone. Vincent, I’m just not competent enough.”

Vincent reached out and softly stroked her hair, his voice comforting. “You’re exceptional. Stop blaming yourself. If Daniel knew how you’re feeling, he’d be heartbroken.”

Sabrina lowered her eyes, her cheeks flushing, guilt evident across her features. “Alright.”

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3/3

14:36 Sat, Jan 10

Awakened Housewife Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 125[816 words]

Chapter 125 Family Interventions

Vincent was assisting Sabrina toward the main house. Scarlett stood to the side, neither departing nor speaking—simply observing them move together.

Finished

But before they reached the entrance, Vincent turned and fixed his gaze directly on Scarlett. His eyes blazed with restrained anger.

Yes, he was furious.

Scarlett remained completely unintimidated. She met his stare unflinchingly, her expression inscrutable.

They regarded each other in silence, neither speaking, yet in that wordless exchange Scarlett understood Vincent's message perfectly.

He was telling her she had crossed a line.

But was it truly her fault?

Sabrina had blocked her path and refused to move-contact had been inevitable. Why was Vincent blaming her instead of Sabrina?

Scarlett offered a bitter, weary smile and finally broke their gaze.

Just as she turned to leave, Vincent suddenly asked Sabrina, "Can you walk unassisted?"

Sabrina appeared confused, but before she could respond, Vincent bent and swept her into his arms.

His hand brushed against Sabrina's injured arm, and she leaned into his chest, murmuring softly, "Vincent, that stings."

"I'll be more careful."

Vincent lowered his head as he spoke. From Scarlett's perspective, it appeared his lips grazed Sabrina's forehead.

"Hah..." Scarlett couldn't suppress a cold, quiet laugh before turning and walking away.

As Vincent carried Sabrina inside, Vanessa came rushing over. "Dad, what's wrong with Sabrina?"

Scarlett didn't hear Vincent's response-she was already too distant.

After leaving Ravensshade Villa, she noticed a white Porsche parked out front. The door opened,

1/3

14:36 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 125 Family Interventions

and a woman in a long white dress emerged.

Scarlett looked up and recognized Lucy.

In the passenger seat, Luke sat momentarily before reluctantly exiting as well.

87

Finished

Since Scarlett and Vincent had married, Lucy and Luke rarely visited Ravensshade Villa. When they did come, it was typically only to see Vanessa.

Still, regardless of how infrequent their visits, they usually appeared several times a year.

In the past, whenever they visited, Scarlett would welcome them with a warm smile and prepare various dishes-stews, stir-fries, an entire spread.

If Lucy or Luke expressed preference for a particular dish, she would prepare it regardless of complexity or time required.

But now, seeing them here at night, her face showed no hint of a smile, none of the warmth she'd once readily offered.

Knowing they weren't here for her, Scarlett attempted to pass by without engagement, but Lucy suddenly caught her arm. "Scarlett, I need to speak with you."

Scarlett paused, her eyes red-rimmed as she regarded Lucy. "So you're here to ask me for something too?"

Not every member of the Stewart family was unkind—at least Xavier and Lucy had always treated her decently.

Xavier had consistently been gentle with Scarlett, never causing her difficulties. Lucy wasn't particularly close, but she'd never intentionally made things hard for her.

Seeing the hurt in Scarlett's eyes, Lucy felt a twinge of guilt. After hesitating briefly, she sighed. "Scarlett, Daniel's mother is still young, with so much life ahead. I consulted Dr. Huntley as well, but he stated he'd only agree to the surgery if you requested it. So..."

Scarlett didn't let her finish. She withdrew her arm from Lucy's grasp. "Speaking with me won't help. Go talk to Daniel."

With that, she turned and walked away without looking back. Luke didn't attempt to stop her, but he muttered sharply to Lucy, "I told you-even if you ask, she won't help. She's just a parasite. Why bother pleading with her?"

Scarlett heard Luke's insult clearly, but she didn't react. She simply entered her car and drove

away.

Watching her departure, Lucy glared at Luke. "I told you to mind your language. She's Vincent's

2/3

14:36 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 125 Family Interventions

wife. Can't you show some respect?"

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Luke emitted a derisive sound. "Vincent's wife? The only one I acknowledge is Sabrina."

87

Finished

Lucy struck his arm. "She's Vanessa's mother. As for Sabrina, she's merely Vincent's girlfriend. Cease such remarks. If I hear them again, I'll address it myself."

Luke rolled his eyes. "You continue defending her, but does she even value your concern?"

Lucy sighed deeply. "But Daniel isn't entirely blameless in this situation either. Nolan is a principled professional. He wouldn't commit basic errors."

Luke retorted, "You're not Nolan. How can you possibly know what truly occurred?"

Lucy had no response and fell silent.

The following day, after work, Scarlett brought food to visit Nolan.

But when she opened the hospital room door, she found Xavier already present.

“Grandpa?”

She was surprised, but still greeted him courteously.

She knew precisely why Xavier had come, but she felt neither anger nor emotional distress— just an empty resignation.

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3/3

14:36 Sat, Jan 10

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 126[930 words]

Chapter 126 Xavier’s Plea

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87

Finished

Xavier’s face lit up when he heard Scarlett’s voice. Using his cane for support, he rose from the chair beside the hospital bed, his movements deliberate but warm. “Scarlett, my dear! Perfect timing-I was hoping to steal a moment of your time. Would you indulge me?”

Though her expression remained guarded, Scarlett responded with practiced politeness. "Of course, Grandpa."

He was family, after all-and if she were honest, he had always shown her more genuine kindness than anyone else in that household.

Even as she recognized the purpose behind his visit, she fought to keep the rising bitterness at bay.

Setting the food containers on the bedside table, she noted Nolan's improved color and said gently, "I brought you something light to eat. I wasn't sure what you'd feel like having, but you should keep your strength up. Once you're discharged, I'll take you out for a proper meal."

Scarlett made no attempt to conceal her concern for Nolan, even with Xavier as a witness.

She believed in being direct-it was better than allowing room for misinterpretation.

Nolan offered her a soft, grateful smile. "You really shouldn't have gone to all this trouble. I'm perfectly capable of feeding myself."

Scarlett's tone remained even but carried an edge. "If the world were a safer place, you wouldn't be lying in a hospital bed in the first place."

Her words held layered meaning-a subtle rebuke aimed at Xavier, while simultaneously revealing the depth of her care for Nolan.

Once satisfied that Nolan was comfortable, Scarlett excused herself and accompanied Xavier into the corridor.

At the far end of the hallway, Xavier hesitated for a long moment before speaking, "Scarlett, I understand your anger, but Daniel's mother is a good soul. Life hasn't been kind to her. Think of this as extending compassion to someone who genuinely needs it."

Scarlett lowered her head, emotions churning within her. She felt trapped and profoundly misunderstood.

Tears pricked at her eyes, but she stubbornly willed them away.

Pressing her lips into a firm line, she refused to let her composure break.

1/3

14:36 Sat, Jan 10

Finished

Both she and Nolan were healers by profession-saving lives was in their blood.

She knew Nolan's character better than anyone. He would have operated on Daniel's mother regardless of whether anyone intervened.

Yet now, with everyone pressuring her, she felt even less willing to facilitate it.

Why should she comply with their demands so easily?

How could they destroy a person's reputation and face no consequences?

Nolan was the true victim here. Why hadn't Daniel offered a single apology? Why send intermediaries to pressure her instead?

Even facing her beloved grandfather, she stood her ground. "Grandpa, I hear what you're saying. But Nolan is the one who suffered because of them. Whether he chooses to forgive them or perform this surgery is his decision alone. I won't speak for him, and I won't pressure him."

Xavier sighed wearily. "Shall I try to mediate? Perhaps we can find a way for both sides to move forward."

Scarlett studied him for a prolonged moment before responding, "I'm not the one whose career was nearly destroyed. I have no right to negotiate on his behalf."

Xavier released a long breath. "Very well, I won't press further. Just bring Vanessa to visit when you can. At my age, I don't know how many opportunities I'll have left to see you both. If you have

any affection for me, do visit more often."

Scarlett gave a quiet nod of agreement.

Xavier asked a few more routine questions-about her work, Vanessa's school progress, the state of things between her and Vincent...

Scarlett offered only brief, noncommittal responses.

After some light conversation, Xavier announced he should be heading home.

Scarlett didn't attempt to delay him. She accompanied him to the hospital entrance, watched as he settled into the car, and only then turned back inside.

Returning to the room, she noticed Nolan hadn't touched the food.

"Is something wrong with the food?"

Nolan leaned against the raised bed, smiling at her. "I thought you probably hadn't eaten either. I was waiting for you."

2/3

14:36 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 126 Xavier's Plea

Finished

Truthfully, he didn't need to speculate-the two portions in the container made her intentions clear.

Scarlett sat and began eating with him.

Throughout the meal, she carefully avoided mentioning the surgery, sticking to neutral topics instead.

She asked about complex medical cases and discussed her preparations for the exams.

Nolan answered patiently while closely observing her mood.

Noticing her subdued demeanor, he asked gently, "Is something troubling you?"

Scarlett shook her head. "No, everything's fine."

Nolan lifted his injured hand slightly, a gentle smile playing on his lips. "Looks like I'll be ready to hold a scalpel again soon."

He was testing the waters, but Scarlett pretended not to notice, simply smiling back. "That's wonderful. In a few days when you're discharged, you can—"

She didn't finish her sentence before Nolan looked at her seriously. "I'll perform the surgery for Daniel's mother."

Scarlett was stunned. "What did you say?"

Nolan met her gaze steadily. “I don’t want you caught in the crossfire of their conflicts. You need to focus on your studies. This kind of drama is the last thing you should be dealing with.”

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3/3

14:36 Sat, Jan 10

460

87

Awakened Housewife Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 127[744 words]

Chapter 127 Nolan’s Sacrifice

Finished

Scarlett’s eyes immediately welled with tears. “So all the harm you suffered-it just gets brushed aside?”

Nolan looked down with a faint, resigned smile. “Some things aren’t worth holding onto.”

A wave of guilt washed over Scarlett. “I’m so sorry,

Nolan.”

“Scarlett, I’m a doctor,” he replied gently. “I was just doing my job. Don’t blame yourself, and don’t feel ashamed for me. Honestly, I’m fine.”

That’s what he said aloud, but only Nolan knew the truth he carried inside.

He came from a different world than Vincent and Daniel-an ordinary background where he was the first to achieve such professional success.

He had poured everything into building his career, yet it could be so easily threatened by those with power and influence.

How could he truly be fine?

Scarlett wanted to say more-to suggest he use this situation to secure his future. But Nolan spoke first, “How about oatmeal tomorrow? If I have any more fish soup, I might start growing gills.”

He even made a playful swimming gesture with his hands.

Despite herself, Scarlett let out a soft laugh.

Seeing her smile, Nolan said, “That’s better. No matter what happens, you have to keep finding reasons to laugh. If you can still laugh, you can survive anything.”

Scarlett nodded. She stayed a while longer before finally taking her leave.

But the moment she stepped into the corridor, she found Vincent leaning against the wall.

Scarlett started, her hand flying to her chest as her heart raced.

She moved to walk past when Vincent said calmly, “I heard your conversation.”

Scarlett paused. “Good. I wanted to speak with you anyway.”

“Very well,” Vincent responded.

A minute later, they stood together in the stairwell.

14:36 Sat, Jan 10

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Chapter 127 Nolan’s Sacrifice

Finished

Scarlett didn't bother with pleasantries. "Nolan has agreed to do the surgery. He's a doctor-he would never abandon a patient. But you owe him for his reputation. That needs to be addressed."

Vincent's response was measured. "Once the situation is resolved, I'll ensure appropriate restitution."

"Appropriate?" Scarlett's voice sharpened. "I want Daniel to apologize to Nolan personally."

Vincent watched her anger with detached calm. "Like you, I can't make decisions for others."

Frustration surged through her. "So you allowed everyone to pressure and harass him? You, Lucy, even Grandpa-all of you ganged up on him!"

Vincent remained unmoved. "Daniel is a proud man. I doubt he'll easily concede."

Scarlett found this ridiculous. "Who cares about his pride?"

"I don't understand your meaning."

"Would Daniel really value his pride over his mother's life if Nolan refused the surgery?" Her voice rose with each word.

Vincent offered no response, his silence speaking volumes.

His indifference only fueled her anger.

Realizing the futility of the conversation, she took a calming breath. "Forget it."

She reached for the door to leave.

But as her hand touched the handle, Vincent said, "I'll speak with Daniel."

Scarlett didn't acknowledge him. She simply pushed the door open and walked away.

Two days later, Daniel posted a public apology across social media platforms. That same afternoon, Nolan performed the complex brain surgery on Daniel's mother at Rivergate Central Hospital.

The procedure spanned seven hours and concluded with remarkable success.

The following day, Nolan resumed his duties at the hospital.

With the surgery complete, the pressure on Scarlett finally eased. Her life gradually returned to its normal rhythm.

2/3

14:36 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 127 Nolan's Sacrifice

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87

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Three days later, Scarlett left work early and decided to visit Theron Manor to cook for her family.

She had spent about thirty minutes preparing ingredients when Clara returned home.

"Auntie! I brought your package inside!" Clara called from the living room.

Scarlett emerged from the kitchen to find an elegantly wrapped box on the dining table.

The sophisticated packaging unmistakably signaled Damian's involvement.

Amid all the recent turmoil with Nolan, Scarlett had nearly forgotten about Damian's existence.

She kept reminding herself that men like Damian were capricious-their interests were temporary, their grand gestures ultimately meaningless.

Yet nearly ten days had passed, and he continued sending extravagant gifts to her home.

Scarlett couldn't help but wonder when a millionaire decided to pursue someone, did the price tag really mean so little?

1.1K

2/2

14:37 Sat, Jan 10

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 128[708 words]

Chapter 128 Damian's Extravagance

Was this all just some elaborate game to him?

87

Finished

Scarlett knew Damian only in the most superficial sense-the public persona everyone saw.

She never permitted herself to believe his feelings could be genuine.

Even when he flirted and joked about their future together, she always brushed it off as meaningless charm.

A man like Damian, who moved through the highest echelons of society-why would he ever seriously court a divorced mother?

Lost in these thoughts, she was startled when Clara tugged at her sleeve. "Auntie, what's in the box?"

Scarlett blinked, returning to the present. She approached Clara with a soft smile. "Shall we find out together?"

Clara settled beside the dining table, chin propped in her hands, eyes wide with anticipation.

When Scarlett lifted the lid, another exquisite bracelet gleamed up at them. This piece wasn't emerald but carved from premium diamond-the quality so fine it seemed almost unreal.

Under the chandelier's glow, the bracelet emitted a subtle, sophisticated radiance. Clara gasped, "It's so pretty! Who gave it to you, Auntie?"

Scarlett stared, momentarily speechless. Though no expert in fine jewelry, even she could recognize exceptional craftsmanship. The stone's texture was impeccably smooth.

While not particularly drawn to luxury accessories, she immediately understood this piece's staggering value-likely matching or exceeding the previous emerald bracelet.

Recognizing its worth, she instinctively moved to secure it. Just then, Nathan's cheerful voice carried from the entrance. "I could hear the excitement from outside! Found something special? Maybe your aunt can take you jewelry shopping someday."

"Daddy!" Clara scrambled down and dashed to the door.

Nathan scooped her up, tapping her nose affectionately. "So what has my girl so fascinated today?"

Clara clung to his collar. "Someone sent Auntie the most beautiful bracelet! It looks like something from a fairy tale!"

1/3

14:37 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 128 Damian's Extravagance

Carrying Clara into the living room, Nathan approached the table. "Let's see this magical treasure then."

His smile vanished the moment his eyes fell upon the bracelet.

Finished

Setting Clara down gently, he spoke in a carefully measured tone, "Clara, why don't you go draw upstairs for a bit? I need to talk with Auntie privately."

”

Clara, sensitive to his changed demeanor, simply nodded and scampered upstairs.

Scarlett felt unease coiling in her stomach as she watched Nathan's expression harden.

Once they were alone, he turned to her. "Who sent this?"

Scarlett met his gaze squarely. "Damian, most likely."

Nathan's face darkened. "Do you have any concept of what this is worth?"

She shook her head silently.

"Yesterday at the charity gala auction-Damian won this with a single bid of two hundred million. No one even challenged him." Nathan's voice was tight.

Scarlett's mind reeled. Two hundred million dollars? For a bracelet?

Collecting herself, she reached for the box. "I'll return it immediately."

"Wait." Nathan stepped closer, his expression softening with brotherly concern.

"Scarlett, both Vincent and Damian are dangerous territory. We've seen how the Vincent situation ended. I don't oppose you dating, but please choose wisely. With men like Damian, you can never discern their true intentions. His entire circle knows him as volatile and unpredictable."

He paused, choosing his words carefully. "Perhaps I'm being selfish, but I want you to have a normal, stable relationship where I can actually protect you. If you get involved with Vincent or Damian..."

Tears glistened in Scarlett's eyes as she interrupted softly. "I understand, Nathan."

She offered him a grateful smile, the unspoken words passing between them.

Some truths didn't need articulation.

After careful consideration, Scarlett decided against confronting Damian directly. Instead, she gathered every gift he'd ever sent and drove to his estate.

2/3

14:37 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 128 Damian's Extravagance

87

Finished

The housekeeper who answered the door immediately assessed the situation through narrowed eyes.

Damian constantly had women appearing at his doorstep-some crying, others demanding attention.

Assuming Scarlett was just another admirer, the housekeeper made to shut the door.

“Please give these to your employer,” Scarlett said quickly, recognizing the misunderstanding.

1.1K

18

3/3

Sat, Jan

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 129[751 words]

Chapter 129 The Final Return

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5

Finished

The housekeeper stared in astonishment. Most women who came here were either emotional, dramatic, or desperate for attention. But this visitor remained perfectly composed-and wanted to return gifts?

Recovering her professional demeanor, the housekeeper replied, “Mr. Langley never accepts returned gifts. If you truly wish to-”

Before she could complete the sentence, Scarlett raised her phone and began recording. Speaking clearly for the camera, she stated, “I have returned all items requiring return. I’ve notified the housekeeper and requested signed confirmation. Any loss or damage

occurring from this moment forward is not my responsibility.” She systematically displayed each bracelet in the recording.

Without another word, Scarlett turned and walked away.

The housekeeper gaped at the collection of luxury boxes scattered across the marble steps. By the time she gathered her wits to call after the retreating figure, Scarlett had already disappeared.

With a resigned sigh, the housekeeper carefully gathered the precious packages. These weren’t ordinary trinkets—they represented fortunes that could bankrupt her if anything went missing.

From her concealed position around the corner, Scarlett watched until every box was safely inside. Only then did she release the breath she’d been holding, a weary sigh escaping her lips.

A week later, an evening call came from Xavier.

“Scarlett, come to Stewart Manor. I need your assistance.”

Agreeing readily, Scarlett drove directly there after work.

She found Xavier waiting alone.

After sharing a meal, he came straight to the point. “I’ve prepared some gifts. I want you to visit the patient at the Lennox Manor as my representative.”

Anticipating refusal, he added persuasively, “Consider it humoring me.”

Scarlett saw through his scheme immediately. He knew perfectly well about the tension between her and Vincent and constantly sought reconciliation.

With Vincent holding a grudge over Daniel’s mother’s situation, this visit was clearly designed to ease hostilities. Though this was Xavier’s idea, she knew he’d present it to Vincent as her own initiative.

1/3

14:37 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 129 The Final Return

487

87

Finished

She understood his good intentions, but the effort felt futile. Eventually, she'd need to step aside for Sabrina.

Vincent's delayed divorce signature likely stemmed from timing considerations rather than reluctance.

After brief consideration, she declined. "Grandpa, Vincent should go. My presence at the Lennox Manor wouldn't be welcome. If I inadvertently upset the patient, the consequences would be unforgivable."

Xavier remained adamant. "You're going."

Recognizing his determination, Scarlett reluctantly acquiesced, though her displeasure showed clearly.

Xavier directed the housekeeper to load the gifts into Scarlett's car. After repeated safety reminders, he saw her off.

Fastening her seatbelt with a resigned nod, Scarlett drove away.

Arriving at the Lennox Manor, she wasn't entirely surprised to see Vincent's car parked outside - given his close friendship with Daniel, his presence was expected.

Laden with gift bags, she entered to find Daniel's mother, Madeline Lennox, seated in an armchair, a hat covering her post-surgery head and a blanket across her lap. Vincent and Sabrina flanked her like devoted attendants.

Engrossed in conversation, the trio didn't notice Scarlett's arrival.

Madeline clasped Sabrina's hand, her eyes crinkling with affection. "Sabrina, Daniel told me how much you sacrificed for my surgery. Lowering yourself to beg others for help... I'm deeply moved. Remember, no matter what happens, I'll always support you. If Vincent ever mistreats you, come straight to me. Daniel and I will always have your back."

Sabrina's cheeks pinkened as she ducked her head. "Madeline, Vincent and I aren't officially together yet."

Madeline patted her hand reassuringly. "Vincent's a good man. Stay by his side-I promise he'll make it official."

Sabrina's blush deepened, her gaze dropping further.

Vincent, sitting slightly apart, seemed absorbed in his phone, barely acknowledging the conversation.

But when he glanced up, his eyes connected with Scarlett's. She stood slightly flushed from

2/3

14:37 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 129 The Final Return

carrying the heavy gifts, having just arranged the final package on the coffee table.

As she straightened, their gazes

locked.

87

Finished

Vincent's brow furrowed in silent inquiry, but Scarlett pointedly ignored him. Instead, she turned to Madeline, her voice calm and even. "Mrs. Lennox."

She maintained perfect composure, showing no reaction to finding Vincent and Sabrina together with the patient. Her expression remained unreadable as she stood waiting.

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3/3

14:37 Sat, Jan 10

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**No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce -
Silent Dreams Never Die — 130[963 words
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Chapter 130 Unwelcome Visit

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Madeline clearly heard Scarlett's greeting but completely ignored her, continuing to hold Sabrina's hand as she chatted warmly. "Daniel mentioned you play the piano beautifully. You should come visit more often and play for me."

Sabrina first glanced subtly at Scarlett, then her gaze briefly touched Vincent's before she responded to Madeline with a gentle smile, "As long as you enjoy it, Madeline, just say the word and I'll be here."

Madeline's smile widened, her eyes crinkling at the corners. "What a thoughtful child you are. Not like some people-wearing that white coat but lacking basic manners. They put on airs as if they're something special, not realizing how fragile their position really is. One word from the right person could shatter their entire world."

Scarlett stood quietly in the center of the living room, her expression calm. She recognized the deliberate provocation in Madeline's words and understood this treatment stemmed from Vincent's attitude toward her.

If Vincent didn't value her, why would his family and friends show her any respect? Even with Vincent present, Madeline felt free to humiliate her so openly.

Vincent remained silent, which didn't surprise Scarlett. A faint, almost imperceptible smile touched her lips as she addressed Madeline, "Mrs. Lennox, Grandpa was concerned about your health and asked me to check on you. Since you appear to be in excellent spirits, I'll take my leave. There's no need to trouble yourself about dinner-someone is waiting for me at home."

After delivering this polite yet distant response, Scarlett turned to exit. But after two steps, she paused, a sweet yet sharp smile gracing her features as she added, "Mrs. Lennox, at your age, it's particularly important to take good care of your health. I sincerely hope you remain in perfect health and never require hospital services."

Her words carried layered meaning-a subtle reminder that Madeline owed her current vitality to medical professionals like herself.

Without waiting for a response, Scarlett turned and walked away decisively.

Madeline's face paled instantly, her breathing becoming slightly labored from suppressed anger.

Seeing this, Vincent quickly poured a glass of water and handed it to her, gently patting her back in a soothing motion.

Sabrina moved closer to support Madeline, speaking in soft, comforting tones, "Madeline, please don't upset yourself over such unimportant matters. Your wellbeing is what truly matters."

1/3

14:37 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 130 Unwelcome Visit

86

Finished

Outside, Daniel happened to return just as Scarlett was leaving, their paths nearly crossing in the doorway.

"What are you doing here?" Daniel asked, his tone laced with suspicion and disapproval.

Scarlett didn't even glance his way, brushing past him as if he were invisible as she continued out the door.

Daniel stood frozen for a moment, his frown deepening. Lately, Scarlett had become completely unrecognizable to him. The woman who once went out of her way to please the Lennoxes now treated them with utter indifference.

No wonder Vincent showed her no affection—with such a disagreeable temperament, how could she possibly compare to someone as refined as Sabrina? The thought made him snort derisively before he entered the living room.

Upon entering, he witnessed Sabrina carefully helping Madeline adjust her hat, the scene striking him as particularly touching.

He hurried over and took over the task from Sabrina. "Sabrina, you've already done so much these past few days. Let me handle this," he said, his voice filled with genuine appreciation.

Daniel had heard all about Sabrina's recent efforts-how she'd contacted classmates, reached out to professors, and exhausted all her connections trying to find someone who could reason with Nolan.

Though ultimately unsuccessful, she'd even personally approached Scarlett to plead their case. That Madeline was now recovering so well was largely thanks to Sabrina's dedication.

Sabrina offered a modest smile. "Daniel, we're friends. This is simply what friends do for each other."

In that moment, Daniel became even more convinced that Sabrina was the ideal match for Vincent. The Stewart family's wealth meant Vincent didn't need a marriage for financial advantage-what he needed was an intelligent, poised woman who understood social nuances. Someone exactly like Sabrina.

Though Daniel didn't voice these thoughts aloud, his resolution solidified-he would do everything in his power to see Sabrina become Vincent's wife.

Madeline clearly shared this sentiment. She kept holding Vincent's hand and urging, "Sabrina is truly a wonderful girl, perfectly suited to stand by your side. If you have feelings for her, you should cherish her properly."

Vincent glanced at Madeline, a faint, unreadable smile playing on his lips, but offered no verbal

response.

2/3

14:37 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 130 Unwelcome Visit

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Since Madeline had recently undergone surgery, it wasn't advisable for her to remain in the living room for extended periods. Daniel soon helped her back to her bedroom to rest.

When he returned, he suggested to Vincent and Sabrina, "Why don't you both stay for dinner?"

Vincent declined politely, "Not tonight. We'll take a rain check."

Daniel checked the time-it was indeed getting late-so he didn't press further. "Alright, I'll host you both properly next time."

As Vincent passed by the table, his eyes fell upon the gifts arranged there. He paused abruptly and turned to Daniel. “These are from my wife. They’re from Grandpa, and from both her and me.”

When Vincent used the formal address “my wife”, Daniel instinctively glanced toward Sabrina. Their eyes met briefly in silent understanding, though neither chose to comment.

Vincent’s unexpected mention of Scarlett left Daniel genuinely puzzled about what Vincent could possibly be thinking.

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14:37 Sat, Jan 10

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Silent Dreams Never Die — 131

Chapter 131 The Caretaker’s Return

86

Finished

It was crystal clear that he didn’t have an ounce of love for his wife, yet the way he’d suddenly brought her up and bluntly admitted that fact left Sabrina completely befuddled.

She hung her head low, her lips pressed into a tight, thin line, her mind racing to make sense of his unexpected comment.

Daniel stole a quick glance at her, and in that split second, he could read her confusion like an open book—he knew exactly what was swirling around in her head.

But Daniel had already solidified his stance—he was firmly in Sabrina’s corner, and he was determined to back her every step of the way until she became Vincent’s wife someday.

As for Vincent, he didn't bring up anything else besides the gifts they'd discussed earlier.

Once the conversation wrapped up, Daniel walked them to the door and saw them off, only turning back toward the house once their car had pulled away and disappeared from sight.

The driver sat up front, focused on the road, while Vincent and Sabrina settled into the backseat. From the moment they climbed in, an awkward silence hung in the air-neither of them said a word.

Vincent kept his gaze fixed downward, his fingers tapping lightly on his phone screen as he scrolled through something, though Sabrina had no clue what had captured his attention. Sabrina couldn't help but feel a twinge of unease. Finally, she mustered up the courage to break the silence. "Vincent?"

He looked up at her, his voice cool and calm, as if he hadn't noticed the tension between them. "What is it?"

Sabrina hesitated, not daring to bring up the uncomfortable things Madeline had said earlier- she didn't want to ruin the moment or make him angry. Instead, she opted for a safer topic. "I'm not going back to Ravensshade Villa tonight. I need to head home for a few days."

She deliberately left out the reason for her trip, figuring it didn't matter much and she didn't want to overexplain.

To her relief, Vincent didn't press her for details. He just nodded slightly, his expression unchanged. "Alright."

But Sabrina still sensed something was off. She wondered if it was because of Madeline's comments, and a wave of worry washed over her. Tentatively, she asked, "Vincent, when I come back... will you come pick me up?" She held her breath, waiting for his answer, hoping it would ease her anxiety.

1/4

14:37 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 131 The Caretaker's Return

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Finished

He looked at her, and a small, soft smile tugged at the corner of his lips-the kind of smile that always made her heart flutter. "Of course I will."

Vincent had never been one for long, elaborate speeches; he was a man of few words, and his demeanor was always calm and collected. But Sabrina knew him well enough to read between the lines. If he'd agreed to pick her up, it meant he wasn't mad about what Madeline had said.

In fact, he might not have even taken those harsh words to heart at all. And if he didn't care about them... maybe that meant he'd quietly accepted the idea of her being part of his life, just like Madeline had implied. The thought made her feel warm inside.

As she was lost in her own thoughts, Vincent suddenly spoke up, pulling her back to the present. "So, when are you leaving?"

Sabrina paused for a moment, then replied, "Tomorrow morning."

He thought about it for a second, then said, "I'll come over and see you off tomorrow."

Sabrina's face lit up instantly, a bright, genuine smile spreading across her features. "Thank you, Vincent."

He smiled back at her, his eyes soft and warm, filled with a gentle affection that made her knees feel weak. Sabrina felt her cheeks flush, and she shyly lowered her head, all her little worries and doubts melting away in that moment.

She'd been so scared that Vincent would be upset because of Madeline, but now she realized she'd been overthinking everything-she should have trusted him more.

The driver took a slight detour to drop Sabrina off at her place first, then continued on to take Vincent back to Ravensshade Villa. By the time he arrived home, it was already past nine o'clock at night.

As he walked into the courtyard, he noticed that the lights in the living room were still on, and through the window, he could just make out Vanessa playing with her toys on the floor. The sight of his daughter instantly brought a smile to his face,

When he stepped into the hall, Lily, who was sitting nearby watching over Vanessa, was the first to notice him. She stood up slightly, a polite smile on her face. "You're back, Mr. Stewart?"

Vincent stopped at the door, slipping off his shoes and placing them neatly by the rack. He hung his coat up too, then loosened his tie as he walked over toward Vanessa.

At the same time, he turned to Lily and asked, his voice casual but with a hint of curiosity, "Has Scarlett been by at all?"

Lily's smile faded, and she frowned slightly at the question. She shook her head. "No. Mrs. Stewart hasn't been back here in quite a while now."

2/4

14:37 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 131 The Caretaker's Return

86

Finished

Ever since Madeline had gone in for surgery, Scarlett had stopped coming around altogether- she'd barely even checked in.

Vincent's own frown deepened, and he hesitated for a moment, clearly not satisfied with that answer. "What about this morning? Did she stop by then?"

Lily looked at him, her expression sympathetic, and shook her head again. "No, she didn't, Mr. Stewart. I haven't seen her all day."

Vanessa, who had been busy with her toys, looked up when she heard Vincent's voice. Her face lit up, and she called out, "Daddy!"

Vincent replied with a soft "Mm," his eyes warm as he sat down on the floor in front of her. He reached out and took her small, tiny hand in his, his touch gentle. "Vanessa, did Mom call you today?"

Vanessa tilted her head to the side, her little brow furrowed as she thought hard about it. After a few seconds, she shook her head, her voice quiet. "No."

Vincent's frown deepened even more, a look of concern crossing his face. "Did you try calling Mom yourself?"

Vanessa shook her head again, then lowered it, her shoulders slumping slightly-she could tell her dad wasn't happy, and she didn't want to disappoint him.

But Vincent didn't scold her, and he made sure not to say anything negative about Scarlett in front of their daughter. Instead, he softened his voice, his tone gentle and caring. "Do you miss Mom, sweetheart?"

Vanessa nodded, but then quickly added, "I do... but it's okay." Her little voice was brave, but Vincent could hear the hint of sadness in it.

He reached out and stroked her cheek softly, his thumb brushing against her smooth skin. "How about this-let Mom take you to school tomorrow? Would you like that?"

Vanessa frowned, confused by the sudden suggestion. "Daddy, why?"

Before Vincent could answer her question, Vanessa's eyes lit up with another thought, and she quickly asked, "Wait, where's Sabrina? Why didn't she come home with you tonight?"

Vincent's expression softened, and he replied calmly, "Sabrina went to visit her family. She won't be here for the next few days."

Vanessa's face fell, and she looked surprised and a little disappointed. "Oh... really?"

Then, her eyes brightened again, and she asked, "Can we go visit Sabrina with her family?"

3/4

14:37 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 131 The Caretaker's Return

Please?"

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86

Finished

Vincent chuckled softly at her eagerness. "We'll have to wait until the weekend, sweetie. School comes first-you have to finish your classes before we can go out and play."

Vanessa let out a quiet, dramatic sigh, but she knew he was right. "Okay, fine," she mumbled.

Vincent glanced at the clock on the wall-it was getting late, and Vanessa needed to get ready for bed. He gently patted her shoulder. "Go let Lily help you wash up and get into your pajamas, okay? It's time for bed. I'll call Mom and ask her to come take care of you for the next few days."

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14:37 Sat, Jan 10

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Silent Dreams Never Die — 132

Chapter 132 Reluctant Guardian

86

Finished

Vanessa's disappointment was etched clearly across her face. Though visibly unhappy with the arrangement, she knew she had no other options. She muttered under her breath, "Alright,

fine."

Deep down, she understood the reality of the situation. With Sabrina gone, Scarlett was the only one left to take care of her.

After Lily led Vanessa upstairs to begin their bedtime routine, Vincent immediately pulled out his phone and dialed Scarlett's number.

The phone rang four times before Scarlett finally answered. Her voice came through the receiver like a sheet of ice. "What do you want?"

There was no warmth in her tone, no hint of familiarity-she sounded like she was speaking to a complete stranger rather than the father of her child.

Vincent didn't bother with pleasantries or small talk. He went straight to the point. "Come over tomorrow morning. You need to take Vanessa to school."

Scarlett's initial instinct was to refuse-to reject the request without a second thought. But then she remembered the promise she'd made to Vincent, the commitment to be more present as a mother for Vanessa's sake. With a reluctant sigh that conveyed her displeasure, she finally agreed, "Okay."

The next morning, Scarlett arrived precisely on time-she might not have wanted to be there, but punctuality was a matter of principle for her.

She had briefly considered preparing breakfast earlier, but then Vanessa's previous words echoed in her mind. "Don't get up early to cook, it'll wake Sabrina."

If my own daughter doesn't appreciate the effort, why should I bother trying? So she'd decided against making anything at all.

When she entered the house, she found that Lily had already prepared an impressive spread,

Scarlett quietly took a seat at the dining table, pulled out her phone, and began scrolling through the morning news to pass the time.

Vincent and Vanessa still hadn't come downstairs. Scarlett assumed they were probably still asleep, and since it was still early-just past seven-she decided to wait patiently rather than rushing them.

She had barely finished reading the first headline when she heard footsteps descending the stairs. Looking up, she saw Vincent-still wearing his bathrobe, his hair slightly disheveled from

14:37 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 132 Reluctant Guardian

86

Finished

sleep-walking directly toward her, his eyes locked on her as if she were the only person in the

room.

Before Scarlett could fully process what was happening, he was standing right in front of her. His robe was slightly unbuttoned at the collar, revealing a glimpse of his honey-toned chest and the faint outline of well-defined muscles.

A sudden, unwelcome memory flashed through her mind-the feeling of his arms around her, how solid and warm he had felt. The thought made her throat go dry, and she quickly averted her gaze, feeling her cheeks grow warm. She didn't want Vincent to notice how flustered he still made her feel.

After a long, tense silence-so prolonged that Scarlett began to wonder if he intended to stand there indefinitely-Vincent finally spoke, his voice calm yet firm, "Iron my shirt for me."

Scarlett frowned, her eyes scanning the empty dining room. They were completely alone-no Lily, no Vanessa in sight. So he was definitely speaking to her.

She looked up at him, her tone sharp with defiance. "Lily's in the kitchen. Ask her to do it."

She knew perfectly well that Sabrina was his favorite-he would never dream of asking Sabrina to perform such a mundane chore.

She remembered how, in the past, she would have jumped at the chance to iron his shirt. She would have interpreted it as a sign of his trust, perhaps even felt grateful that he had turned to her.

But that was then. Now? She had absolutely no interest in playing the dutiful wife.

Vincent's eyes darkened at her refusal-she could clearly see the flicker of irritation in his gaze. After a moment's pause, he retorted, his voice edged with challenge, "Wouldn't it make more sense for you to do it?"

He didn't say it explicitly, but the implication hung heavily in the air between them.

Scarlett let out a dry, humorless laugh, refusing to back down. "I'm about to eat breakfast. Either do it yourself or ask Lily. Vincent, I'm not ironing for you."

She deliberately didn't mention Sabrina-she didn't need to. They both knew he would never put Sabrina in that position.

Vincent stared at her for what felt like an eternity, his jaw clenched tight. Scarlett waited for him to argue, to insist, but he didn't. Finally, without another word, he turned and walked back upstairs, leaving her alone at the table.

Scarlett managed to eat a small bowl of Lily's oatmeal and a fried egg, but her appetite had vanished. Glancing at the clock, she saw it was almost 7:40-Vanessa would be late for school if

2/4

14:38 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 132 Reluctant Guardian

she didn't leave soon.

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86

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Unable to wait any longer, she pushed back her chair and headed upstairs to wake Vanessa.

Just as she'd expected, Vanessa was still fast asleep, curled up snugly beneath her blankets. Scarlett shook her gently, informing her that she was running late, then stepped back and allowed her to get ready on her own.

Vanessa was a responsible child-the moment she heard the word "late", she snapped awake, her eyes wide with alarm, and scrambled out of bed to rush to the bathroom.

Scarlett didn't hover or fuss over her like she might have in the past. She simply said, "I'll be waiting downstairs," and turned to leave, whether Vanessa had heard her or not.

As she walked back down the hallway, she passed Vincent's bedroom. The door was slightly ajar, and she couldn't help but peek inside. What she saw made her pause-Vincent was holding an iron in one hand, staring at his dress shirt as if it were some mysterious foreign object-as if he had absolutely no idea how to use the device.

He made several attempts, lifting the iron and hovering it uncertainly over the fabric, but never actually pressing it down.

Scarlett stood in the doorway, a complex mix of emotions swirling within her—a touch of sadness, because he didn't even know how to perform this basic task for himself, and a hint of amusement, because he looked so utterly lost. Before she could consciously decide to intervene, she found herself pushing the door open and stepping inside.

Vincent heard her entrance and glanced over his shoulder. When he saw it was Scarlett, his expression became completely blank-no surprise, no warmth, just a cold, impassive mask. He didn't utter a word.

Scarlett walked over to him and extended her hand, her voice flat and emotionless. "Give it to me."

Vincent hesitated, his grip tightening momentarily on the iron. For a second, she thought he might refuse, but then he let out a quiet sigh and handed it over to her.

Scarlett took the iron and began working, her movements smooth and practiced.

When she flipped it over to work on the other side, a faint but distinct scent reached her nose—sweet, floral, unmistakably feminine perfume. She didn't need to guess whose it was. It was Sabrina's.

The realization made her pause, her mind beginning to wander. Distracted by her thoughts, before she knew what was happening, her hand accidentally brushed against the section of fabric she had just ironed. It was scorching hot-so hot that she yelped in pain, instinctively pulling her hand back.

14:38 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 132 Reluctant Guardian

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Vincent heard her sharp intake of breath and frowned, his voice flat and noticeably lacking in concern. “Are you okay?”

He stood merely a few feet away, close enough to have reached out, but he made no move to check on her. He didn’t even glance at her hand to see if it was burned.

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14:38 Sat, Jan 10

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Silent Dreams Never Die — 133

Chapter 133 The Empty Home

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86

Finished

Scarlett knew all too well that even if she collapsed right in front of him, he probably wouldn’t bat an eye. In fact, he might even think she was putting on some kind of performance.

She had initially refused to iron his shirt, yet she had ended up offering to help anyway. Not only had she failed to be useful, but she had also managed to burn herself in the process. He probably thought she was just seeking his attention.

Scarlett never expected him to care about her-not even a little.

When Vincent asked if she was okay, Scarlett replied in an even tone, "I'm fine."

And she truly was fine. It was just a minor burn from the hot iron. She gritted her teeth and endured the sting, which soon faded away.

After Scarlett said she was fine, Vincent didn't press further.

With a few efficient movements, Scarlett finished ironing the shirt and turned off the iron.

She laid the shirt down neatly and said to Vincent, "It's done."

Without waiting for a reply, she turned and walked straight out of the bedroom, wanting nothing more than to put distance between them.

Vincent removed his bathrobe and put on the freshly ironed shirt. Just as Scarlett reached the door, he called out, "You should stay here at Ravensshade Villa for the next few days."

Scarlett stopped in her tracks. Without a second thought, she refused flatly, "That won't be necessary. I have my own place."

Unaware that Sabrina wasn't currently staying at Ravensshade Villa, her words carried an unintended sharpness, born from years of feeling like an outsider in what was supposed to be her home.

Vincent noticed the edge in her tone but chose not to argue. Instead, he took a different approach.

He looked at her retreating figure and said, "Ravensshade Villa is your home too."

Scarlett let out a short, bitter laugh. "Is it, really?"

Was Ravensshade Villa truly her home? The question echoed painfully in her mind.

Perhaps it had been once, but not anymore.

Chapter 133 The Empty Home

86

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Ever since Sabrina had moved in, Scarlett no longer felt like the lady of the house. Every corner of the villa seemed to remind her of her displaced status.

Vincent didn't respond to her bitter retort. Instead, he simply stated, "Vanessa needs you."

Scarlett instinctively refused again. "Vincent, I have my own work commitments. I can't spend every waking moment looking after Vanessa."

Vincent looked directly at her and said, "I have work too. If you don't take care of Vanessa, who will?"

Scarlett felt her temper flare. She spun around and glared at Vincent. "Then let Sabrina—"

She had been about to say, "Let Sabrina do it," but Vincent cut her off before she could finish. "Sabrina has gone to visit her family. She won't be back for some time."

Hearing this, Scarlett fell silent. The pieces suddenly clicked into place.

Now everything made sense—why Vincent had called her to take Vanessa to school that morning, why he had asked her to iron his shirt, why he wanted her to stay at Ravensshade Villa.

It was all clear now.

With Sabrina away, they needed her. That was the only reason he wanted her back.

Scarlett found it both laughable and heartbreaking. She didn't have the energy to argue with Vincent anymore, nor did she want to say another word. She simply turned and went downstairs alone, the weight of his words settling heavily on her shoulders.

That afternoon, around five o'clock, Scarlett was at work but couldn't focus at all.

Vincent's words from that morning kept echoing in her mind. "If you don't take care of Vanessa, who will?"

School would be out soon. If no one picked Vanessa up, she would be heartbroken, wouldn't she? The image of Vanessa waiting alone filled her with dread.

The thought gnawed at her. Eventually, Scarlett asked Spencer for permission to leave early and drove straight to the kindergarten.

When she arrived, most of the children had already been picked up. Only a few remained, waiting for their parents. Vanessa was among them, looking small and forlorn.

When Vanessa saw Scarlett, her eyes welled up with tears.

“Mommy, I thought you forgot about me. I thought no one was coming.”

2/3

14:38 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 133 The Empty Home

Vanessa clung to Scarlett’s leg, sobbing uncontrollably, her small shoulders shaking with emotion.

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86

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There she was, a little girl with her backpack still on, crying as if her world had ended.

Scarlett had carried Vanessa for nine months and had nearly died giving birth to her. How could she not love her? The sight of Vanessa in tears tore at her heart.

At that moment, Scarlett’s heart ached with a sharp, twisting pain that took her breath away.

She bent down, scooped Vanessa into her arms, comforted her gently, and carried her to the car, whispering reassurances all the way home.

Back at Ravensshade Villa, Scarlett cooked dinner for Vanessa herself, wanting to provide some comfort through a home-cooked meal.

By the time the meal was ready, it was already eight o’clock. Just as they were about to eat, Vincent returned home.

Lily, who was setting the table, looked up in surprise when she saw Vincent. A warm smile spread across her face. “You’re back, Mr. Stewart. I’ll serve your dinner right away.”

It had been so long since Vincent and Scarlett had shared a meal together.

Tonight felt different, and Lily couldn't hide her delight at the semblance of normalcy.

Vanessa spotted Vincent and greeted him sweetly, "Daddy!"

Vincent acknowledged her with a nod, then let his gaze drift over the table laden with food before finally settling on Scarlett.

Both Lily and Vanessa had greeted him, but Scarlett hadn't uttered a word. Her demeanor was as cold as ice, a stark contrast to the warmth of the meal she had prepared.

He remembered vividly how, two years earlier, he had returned unexpectedly to Ravensshade Villa. Back then, Scarlett and Vanessa had been eating dinner together.

The moment she saw him, Scarlett had rushed around-adding extra dishes to the table, eagerly sharing little stories about Vanessa... The memory stood in sharp contrast to the silent woman who now refused to even meet his eyes.

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14:38 Sat,

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Silent Dreams Never Die — 134

Chapter 134 She's Changed

But now... she was a completely different person.

86

Finished

Vincent pulled out a chair and took his seat at the dining table. Vanessa tilted her head, her eyes sparkling with curiosity as she asked, “Dad, I thought you were working late tonight?”

“No,” he replied, his answer brief and offering no further explanation.

Vanessa shoveled a spoonful of rice into her mouth, leaving a few stray grains at the corner of her lips and a tiny smudge of oil on her cheek. She beamed, her entire face lighting up with pure joy. “That’s great! It feels like it’s been ages since we’ve all had dinner together as a family.”

Vincent picked up a napkin, leaned over, and gently wiped the mess from her mouth, a faint, affectionate smile playing on his lips. “Slow down, sweetheart. No one’s going to steal your food.”

Vanessa nodded obediently, then her eyes drifted across the table to where Scarlett sat.

Scarlett was quiet, picking at her food without uttering a single word. Her expression was placid -too placid, almost detached-and Vanessa couldn’t decipher any emotion on her face.

This was a stark contrast to Vanessa’s memories. In the past, the moment Scarlett heard Vincent’s key in the door, her whole demeanor would transform.

But now? Vincent had come home, and Scarlett hadn’t even bothered to get up

and

greet him.

Vanessa remembered how it used to be-Scarlett would hurry to the door to take Vincent’s coat and briefcase, lay out a pair of warm slippers for him, and call out cheerfully, “Go wash up, dinner’s ready!”

A small frown creased Vanessa’s brow. She couldn’t quite understand why things were so different now. But she was too young to articulate the change, so she simply shrugged off the thought and returned her attention to her meal.

Lily emerged from the kitchen carrying a bowl of steamed rice. She set it down in front of Vincent and placed a fork beside it. “Mrs. Stewart prepared all the dishes herself this evening.”

Vincent’s gaze swept over the assortment of food on the table. The rich, savory aroma hit him first-it was that distinct, comforting smell he’d always associated with Scarlett’s cooking. He’d never lived with her for extended periods, but every time he had come

home to a meal she prepared, he'd always eaten his fill, and it had invariably led to a better night's sleep.

Scarlett was an excellent cook. She had an almost uncanny ability to remember his preferences -what he loved and, more importantly, what he detested.

1/4

14:38 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 134 She's Changed

215

Finished

Truth be told, he had always loved her cooking. It wasn't just about the flavors; it was the care and attention behind it. She remembered everyone's favorites.

But tonight, something felt... amiss.

It wasn't that the food was bad-far from it. Yet, not a single one was his particular favorite. None of the dishes were the ones he would normally reach for first.

He did notice, however, that every single item on the table was something Vanessa adored. The shrimp, the pork ribs-they were all her top picks.

As he picked up his fork, Vincent hesitated momentarily. For the first time, he felt a sense of indecision, unsure which dish to try first.

Reflecting on how Scarlett used to be, Vincent realized the extent of her transformation. Before, he never even had to lift a finger to get his favorite food-she would have already piled it into his bowl before he could reach for it herself.

Now? She seemed entirely focused on her own plate.

Vincent looked over at her. His eyes caught the line of her lashes, long and dark, casting delicate shadows on her cheeks as she kept her gaze lowered. Her silence was profound-unnervingly so-creating a strange, hollow atmosphere in the room where their usual easy conversation should have been.

Even though none of the dishes particularly appealed to his personal tastes, Vincent wasn't one to complain. He took a bite of the shrimp, followed by a spoonful of soup, and continued eating quietly until he was full.

As he set his fork down, Scarlett was quietly sipping from her soup bowl, her attention still firmly fixed on her own meal. He averted his gaze from her and turned to Vanessa, attempting to fill the lingering silence. “Vanessa, what did you learn at school today?”

Vanessa finished the last of her soup, dabbed her mouth neatly with a napkin, and immediately brightened, eager to share. “Today, the teacher taught us new words-like ‘squirrel’ and ‘autumn’! We also did some addition and subtraction, and we even went outside to draw! She said we were drawing autumn leaves-mine were red and yellow!”

“Oh, and guess what?” she leaned forward, her voice dropping to an excited, conspiratorial whisper. “The teacher said there’s a hiking trip next week, and parents are supposed to come with us!”

Vanessa was practically vibrating with excitement in her seat. When she mentioned the hike, her eyes

darted expectantly between Vincent and Scarlett, her expression brimming with the unspoken hope that both of them would agree to come.

Scarlett heard Vanessa perfectly and understood that hopeful look all too well. Vanessa wanted

14:38 Sat, Jan 10

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86

Chapter 134 She’s Changed

both her mom and dad there-just like it used to be.

But Vincent spoke up first, interrupting her train of thought. “Vanessa, let Mom-”

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He was actually about to suggest that Scarlett should go. It was a small gesture, but it felt like an olive branch, an attempt to reintegrate her into their daughter’s activities.

Before he could finish his sentence, however, Scarlett looked directly at Vanessa, her voice calm yet firm, cutting him off. “Vanessa, let Dad take you. I’m on call at the hospital next week, and there’s a charity clinic I have to assist with-it’s something I can’t miss.”

Vanessa's face fell for just a second as she processed this. Then she turned her wide, hopeful eyes back to Vincent, the plea clear in her expression, silently begging him to say yes.

Meeting Vanessa's gaze-those big, bright eyes that were a mirror of his own-Vincent found it impossible to refuse. "If my schedule allows, I'll go with you," he said, a soft smile finally gracing his features.

Vanessa was so thrilled she threw her arms up in celebration, nearly knocking over her water glass in the process. "Yay! If you come, you can carry me when my legs get tired from walking!"

Vincent reached out and gently pinched her cheek, his smile warming further. "Yes, I'll carry you. Don't you worry about that."

Vanessa continued chattering animatedly, but Scarlett had largely tuned out.

Vincent, however, kept stealing glances in Scarlett's direction. He couldn't help it. He was trying to read her, to figure out what was really going on in her head.

Is she genuinely that busy, or is she just making excuses?

Hadn't she always been the one who cared the most about Vanessa's school events?

This wasn't the first time she'd declined an opportunity to spend time with Vanessa, but Vincent still couldn't make sense of it. He didn't understand her reasons for pulling away.

After dinner, Scarlett took Vanessa by the hand and led her upstairs to begin their bedtime routine.

Once they had finished washing up, Vanessa changed into her favorite pink pajamas, the ones with little unicorns on the sleeves, hugged her teddy bear tightly to her chest, and looked up at Scarlett. "Mom, can I go say goodnight to Dad before I go to sleep?"

Scarlett nodded, her voice soft. "Alright. But don't stay up too late, understand?"

Vanessa's face lit up instantly. She squeezed her teddy bear even tighter, bounced off the bed, and skipped out of the bedroom, her little footsteps pattering down the hallway toward

3/4

14:38 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 134 She's Changed

Vincent's room.

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Watching Vanessa's retreating back-so full of uncomplicated joy and innocence-Scarlett let out a quiet, bitter laugh.

After Vanessa left, Scarlett took a shower. Stepping out wrapped in a towel, she realized she'd forgotten to bring her skincare products into the bathroom.

She remembered, though, that Vincent kept several extra bottles of her preferred lotion in his room. She decided she'd just pop in quickly and grab one.

Approaching his bedroom door, Scarlett reached out to push it open. But her hand froze mid-air when she heard Vanessa's excited, high-pitched voice carrying clearly from inside-loud, bubbly, and full of energy.

"Sabrina, look! I'm all clean and fresh now!" Vanessa giggled delightedly. "What about you? What are you doing right now?"

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 135[996 words]

Chapter 135 The Favorite

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86

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Sabrina's gentle voice came through the phone. "My mother was hospitalized recently. I just got back from visiting her."

Vanessa's tone immediately softened with concern. "Oh no! Your mom really needs to take good care of herself, otherwise you will worry so much."

Sabrina responded with a warm laugh, "Thank you for your concern, Vanessa."

Scarlett stood frozen outside the door, feeling her heart sink deeper with each passing moment. A chilling cold seemed to seep into her bones. Though it was only autumn, she felt as if she had fallen into an icy abyss.

After a moment's hesitation, she clenched her teeth and pushed the door open.

As the door swung inward, Vanessa immediately turned to look. When she saw Scarlett, her eyes widened nervously and she quickly explained, "Mom, I'm just helping Dad with his video meeting."

Scarlett glanced at Vanessa, her gaze as cold as ice.

She had always taught Vanessa the importance of honesty, and Vanessa had repeatedly promised never to lie.

Yet now, the lies flowed so effortlessly from her lips.

The precious rose she had nurtured with such care seemed to have withered after all.

Her heart ached intensely, but she found she no longer had the energy to intervene.

If Vincent didn't care, why should she bother?

Scarlett simply responded with a noncommittal, "Mm."

Vincent sat at his desk with Vanessa perched on his lap, holding his phone while video chatting with Sabrina. When Scarlett entered, Vanessa quickly placed the phone face-down on the desk.

As for Vincent, he remained completely absorbed in his computer, seemingly engrossed in his work.

After her brief acknowledgment, Scarlett moved toward the vanity to retrieve her skincare products.

But when she opened the drawer, she discovered all her belongings were gone. In their place sat a brand-new set of products from a luxury brand she had never used before.

1/4

14:40 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 135 The Favorite

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86

Finished

Scarlett's fingers lingered on the drawer handle for a moment before she let out a bitter, silent laugh. Closing the drawer quietly, she turned and left the room without another word.

She had forgotten-Ravenshade Villa was no longer her domain. Why would Vincent's room still contain any of her possessions?

Seeing Scarlett preparing to leave without further comment, Vanessa called out anxiously, "Mom, I'll come back to our room as soon as Dad finishes his meeting."

Scarlett heard her but only offered another quiet, "Mm."

She nearly added, "Don't bother coming back at all," but swallowed the words before they could

escape.

As she exited, she gently closed the door behind her. Almost immediately, Vanessa's cheerful voice carried through the door. "Sabrina, have you been crying?"

"Don't worry, Vanessa. I haven't been crying." Sabrina's gentle reply followed.

Vanessa's voice softened. "You need to make sure you get plenty of rest. And please tell your mom that she needs to take good care of herself. When she's feeling better, Dad and I will visit her. I'd love for her to cook something delicious for me."

Sabrina's voice sounded slightly choked. "Vanessa, whatever you'd like to eat, she would be happy to make it for you."

Vanessa laughed brightly. "I'm not picky at all! I'll eat anything she prepares."

Scarlett stood motionless outside the door, every word between the two etching itself painfully into her consciousness. Vanessa's affectionate remarks felt like knives twisting in her heart.

Back at Theron Manor, Vanessa had always been such a picky eater. Yet with Sabrina, she presented herself as the most accommodating child.

Scarlett felt the urge to cry, but found herself unable to produce any tears.

The daughter she had nearly died bringing into this world seemed determined to drain what little life she had left.

Scarlett couldn't quite recall how she made it back to her room, or how she ended up lying on

the sofa.

She lay on her side in the darkness, staring blankly into nothingness, completely lost in her thoughts.

She had no concept of how much time had passed before Vanessa finally returned.

2/4

14:40 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 135 The Favorite

:

86

Finished

"Mom?" Vanessa called out softly as she entered the dimly lit room.

Scarlett emerged from her trance and responded coolly, "Mm."

Following the sound of Scarlett's voice, Vanessa settled onto the sofa beside Scarlett.

"Mom, how has Grandma been lately?"

Though Vanessa had suddenly brought up her grandmother, Scarlett felt no joy at the question. She knew Vanessa had likely only thought of her own grandmother because of Sabrina's mention of her mother.

Scarlett's reply was flat and emotionless, her voice cold. "She's fine."

Hearing this, Vanessa snuggled closer, resting her head against Scarlett's shoulder. "Mom, I want to go visit Grandma."

Scarlett didn't know what genuine feelings might underlie Vanessa's request, but she couldn't bring herself to agree.

Without much consideration, she refused, "There's no need. You have kindergarten to attend. Your studies come first."

Vanessa thought for a moment before proposing a compromise, "Then during winter break, I'll go

with you to Theron Manor to visit Grandma. We could even spend New Year's there."

New Year's?

The idea would likely thrill Diana beyond measure.

But Vanessa had never shown particular fondness for anyone in the Theron family. Her presence would likely only create tension and disruption at Theron Manor.

Scarlett avoided giving a definite answer, merely stating, "We'll see when the time comes."

Children were notoriously changeable. What she wanted now might be completely different later.

Besides, in Vanessa's heart, didn't Sabrina already hold the most important position?

Growing tired of lying in one position, Vanessa curled up in Scarlett's arms and began playing with Scarlett's fingers. "Mom," she asked curiously, "does Grandma make good food?"

3/1

14:40 Sat, Jan 10

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Silent Dreams Never Die — 136

Chapter 136 Rainy Departures

A

86

Finished

Scarlett froze for a moment, her mind flashing back to the last time Vanessa had visited Theron

Manor.

She remembered that evening vividly. Diana had gone to the trouble of preparing dinner herself, but before Vanessa had even taken a single bite, she had started picking the food apart, her criticisms sharp and unwarranted.

Even now, after all this time, the memory sent a fresh, sharp pang of hurt through Scarlett's heart. She had no desire to revisit that topic or answer Vanessa's question. "Go to bed early, sweetheart," she deflected, her voice soft but firm. "I'm tired."

Vanessa, perhaps sensing Scarlett's reluctance, didn't push. She sat up, extricating herself from Scarlett's embrace. "Goodnight, Mom," she said simply.

"Goodnight."

Once Vanessa was back in bed, she drifted off to sleep relatively quickly.

Scarlett, however, spent the night tossing and turning on the couch, sleep evading her. Each time she closed her eyes, the memories of that night replayed in her mind, and she couldn't stop a few silent, bitter tears from escaping, tracing a cold path down her temples and into her hair.

She barely slept a wink. The restless night was further disturbed when a heavy, relentless rain began to pour down around midnight, the drumming sound on the roof and windows only amplifying her inner turmoil.

By seven in the morning, Scarlett gave up on any pretense of sleep and got up.

She threw on a coat and headed downstairs, surprised to find Vincent already there, seated in the living room.

The sight of him gave her a momentary start, but she quickly schooled her features into a mask of composure.

Vincent had been completely absorbed in a financial magazine, but the sound of her footsteps on the staircase drew his gaze upward. Recognizing her, he offered a rare, curt greeting. "Morning."

"Morning," Scarlett replied, her tone even and devoid of warmth.

She then moved towards the kitchen, intending to start breakfast, but Vincent's voice stopped her. "No need to cook today. We'll eat out."

1/4

14:40 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 136 Rainy Departures

86

Finished

Scarlett was somewhat taken aback by the suggestion. After a brief moment's consideration, she nodded. "Alright."

Once she had agreed, Vincent immediately returned his attention to the magazine, effectively ending the conversation.

Unbeknownst to Scarlett, the suggestion to eat out had actually come from Vanessa the previous night, just before she'd retreated to her room.

The girl had grown tired of constant home-cooked meals and was craving something from a

restaurant.

With no breakfast to prepare, Scarlett found herself at a loose end. The rain outside continued to fall in heavy, relentless sheets, showing no sign of letting up. The autumn rain, whipped by a gusty wind, carried a distinct, penetrating chill.

Yet, there was a silver lining. After such a thorough downpour, the air always felt cleaner, fresher, as if washed anew.

Scarlett tightened her coat around herself and carried a chair over to sit by the front door, watching the rain cascade down. The sky outside was a uniform, gloomy gray, and the

steady drumming of raindrops against the windowpanes created a strangely rhythmic and soothing soundtrack.

As she watched the endless sheets of water, she felt the heavy weight on her mood gradually begin to lighten ever so slightly.

Just then, her phone's ringtone sliced through the tranquil sound of the rain, jarring in the quiet room.

She pulled the device from her pocket and saw Violet's name flashing on the screen.

But when she answered, it was Clara's sweet, young voice that came through the speaker. "Auntie, are you coming back to Theron Manor tonight?"

Scarlett thought for a moment before responding, "Yes, but it will be quite late."

"Yay!" Clara cheered, her excitement palpable even over the phone. Then she added, "Auntie, I learned how to make pancakes online! I got up super early today and made some for Grandpa, Grandma, Mom, and Dad. They all said they were delicious! I saved one for you, too! Auntie, can you please pick me up after school tonight? Then we can go back to Theron Manor together, okay?"

Hearing Clara's earnest, soft voice pleading with her, Scarlett's heart melted instantly. Clara was being so thoughtful and enthusiastic-how could she possibly refuse?

So she agreed warmly, her voice softening. "Okay."

2/4

14:40 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 136 Rainy Departures

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A

86

Finished

Clara grew even more excited. "Yay! Auntie's picking me up after school! Yay!"

Scarlett couldn't help but smile fondly. She said gently, "Alright, sweetheart. I need to hang up now, okay?"

“Auntie, I love you the most!” Clara declared before the call ended.

“I love you the most, too,” Scarlett replied, her voice barely above a whisper.

After ending the call, Scarlett stared at her phone for a long while, lost in thought. She couldn’t help but reflect that if Vanessa were still her sweet, affectionate self, she would probably be the one declaring her love so freely, just like Clara.

But now, her own daughter clearly didn’t hold the same depth of affection for her as her young niece did.

The rain outside continued its relentless downpour. Scarlett pulled her coat tighter and turned around, only to meet Vincent’s intense gaze from across the room.

She had no idea how long he had been watching her, but the displeasure in his eyes was unmistakable.

Even so, Scarlett didn’t back down or look away. She met his gaze directly and said, “Can you pick up Vanessa from school tonight? I need to go back to Theron Manor for something.”

She didn’t bother explaining the specifics; she saw no need to justify herself to him.

But an explanation was unnecessary-Vincent had overheard her entire conversation with Clara.

His eyes narrowed as he looked at Scarlett, something unreadable and dangerous flashing within them. When he spoke, his voice was deceptively flat, yet it carried a distinct undercurrent of disdain. “You’re going back just for your niece?”

Scarlett didn’t deny it. She admitted openly, her chin lifting a fraction. “Yes. She made something for me to eat.”

The look in Vincent’s eyes instantly darkened, the storm in them mirroring the one outside. He said in a low, firm voice that brooked no argument, “I have an important meeting tonight. I can’t pick up Vanessa.”

He rejected her request without a moment’s hesitation, leaving absolutely no room for negotiation.

Scarlett, however, didn’t seem particularly bothered by his refusal. She simply offered an alternative, her tone pragmatic. “Then let Lily pick her up.”

3/4

14:40 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 136 Rainy Departures

86

Finished

Vincent snapped his magazine shut with a sharp crack and stood up abruptly, his tall frame towering over her as he stared down, his presence intimidating. He held her gaze for a long, tense moment, making his profound displeasure crystal clear.

Scarlett didn't back down an inch. She stared right back at him, her gaze steady, unyielding, and utterly resolute.

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14:40 Sat, Jan 10

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Silent Dreams Never Die — 137

Chapter 137 The Umbrella's Shadow

86

Finished

After a long, tense silence that seemed to stretch between them, Vincent finally broke eye contact. "Whatever," he said dismissively, his tone making it clear the discussion was over.

With that, he turned and headed upstairs without another glance.

Scarlett watched his retreating figure, her own voice cold and flat in response. "Fine."

She waited a few moments, gathering her composure, before going upstairs to wake Vanessa.

Once Vanessa was dressed and ready, mother and daughter came back downstairs together. Vincent was already there, fully dressed and waiting by the door, his posture rigid.

“Good morning, Dad!” Vanessa chirped cheerfully, seemingly oblivious to the tension between her parents.

Vincent gave a brief, almost imperceptible nod. Then his eyes shifted to Scarlett. “It’s pouring outside,” he stated. “I’ll drive you both.”

Scarlett didn’t look at him, focusing instead on helping Vanessa into her little yellow raincoat. “No need,” she refused coolly. “I’ll drive us myself.”

Vincent didn’t press the matter further, though the line of his jaw tightened slightly.

After securing Vanessa’s raincoat, Scarlett took Vanessa’s small hand and turned toward the door.

But Vanessa tugged at her fingers pleadingly. “Mom, the rain’s too heavy,” she whined. “Can you carry me?”

Scarlett looked down at Vanessa’s expectant, upturned face and felt her resistance melt away. “Alright,” she relented.

She lifted Vanessa into her arms, then awkwardly tucked the umbrella under her chin while trying to maintain her grip. Just as she was about to step out into the downpour, Vincent suddenly reached over and took the umbrella handle from her. “Let me hold it,” he said simply.

In that moment, Scarlett’s eyes stung with unshed tears, though she quickly blinked them away.

Memories came flooding back-countless times she’d had to manage everything completely alone.

Children get

sick so easily. When Vanessa was younger and fell ill, and she couldn’t reach Vincent, she’d carry their daughter to the hospital by herself, no matter the hour or weather.

14:40 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 137 The Umbrella’s Shadow

A 886

Finished

She'd lost count of how many times she'd made that anxious trip, sometimes in weather just like this, arriving at the emergency room completely drenched and exhausted.

Back then, she'd desperately wished Vincent would stand by her side, to hear him say, "Don't worry, I'm here."

But he was always too busy, always unreachable, always somewhere else when she needed him

most.

So, gradually, she learned to handle everything herself, building walls around her heart with each lonely journey.

But just now, Vincent had taken the umbrella from her and said he'd hold it.

All those long-held wishes had suddenly come true in this moment, yet all Scarlett felt was a fresh wave of pain-nothing else. The gesture felt too little, too late.

If only he had done this sooner, shown this small consideration years ago, perhaps she wouldn't have given up on him completely.

As they stepped into the relentless rain, Vincent kept the umbrella carefully tilted toward Scarlett and the child in her arms.

But she knew with painful certainty he wasn't doing it for her—he was doing it for Vanessa, ensuring his daughter stayed dry.

That was fine, she told herself. At least he was good to their daughter. At least he cared about

Vanessa.

At the gate, Scarlett settled Vanessa into the back seat of her car. As she leaned in to buckle the seatbelt, Vincent kept the umbrella positioned over her, shielding her from the worst of the downpour.

Once the door was safely closed, Scarlett moved around to the driver's side.

She reached to close her door but noticed Vincent still standing there with the umbrella. She looked up at him, rainwater clinging to her lashes, and said quietly, "Thank you."

Vincent's brow furrowed slightly at her words, as if her gratitude puzzled or annoyed him. He didn't respond verbally, but noticing Scarlett's shoulder was still damp, he shrugged off his own jacket and placed it on her lap. "Don't catch a cold," he said, his voice low.

Scarlett was momentarily stunned by the gesture. She picked up the jacket, its fabric still warm from his body, about to return it, but Vincent was already walking away toward his own car, umbrella in hand, not giving her the chance to refuse.

Scarlett didn't insist. The rain was still falling heavily, after all. She simply tossed the jacket onto

2/4

14:40 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 137 The Umbrella's Shadow

the passenger seat.

Finished

As they pulled away from the curb, Scarlett asked Vanessa in the back, "What would you like to eat later?"

Vanessa replied eagerly, "I want those pancakes from the shop near kindergarten! And a yogurt!"

Scarlett nodded, checking the rearview mirror. "Alright."

Vincent sat in his own car, watching Scarlett's vehicle disappear into the gray, rainy distance before finally looking away and starting his own engine.

That afternoon, Scarlett finished work at five thirty. By the time she navigated through the wet streets to the kindergarten, it was already six o'clock.

The rain hadn't stopped all day, a steady, dreary downpour. When she arrived at the school gate, she saw Vanessa waiting outside with her teacher under the shelter of the entrance awning.

Vanessa spotted Scarlett immediately, jumped up excitedly with her little backpack bouncing, and called out, "Mom!"

Scarlett offered her a small, tight smile but didn't step forward to pick her up or open her arms for an embrace.

Noticing Scarlett's hesitation, Vanessa began to walk out herself into the light rain, but Scarlett stopped her gently. "Vanessa, I'm here to pick up Clara today. Could you wait a little longer? Lily will be here soon to take you back to Ravensshade Villa."

Vanessa's face fell instantly, her bright expression collapsing. Her eyes welled with tears, shimmering with hurt and confusion. "What about Dad?" she asked, her voice small.

Seeing Vanessa's eyes redden and her lower lip tremble, Scarlett felt a sharp, guilty pang in her chest. She quickly averted her gaze, unable to bear the sight, and explained softly, "Dad's working late tonight."

Tears began rolling down Vanessa's cheeks, mingling with the raindrops. "Can't I go to Grandma's house with Clara?" she asked, her voice trembling with the effort not to sob.

Scarlett still couldn't bring herself to look directly at her, forcing out the difficult words. "Not today, sweetheart. You don't want to go; I don't want to force you."

Vanessa clutched the straps of her backpack anxiously, her small knuckles white. "But Mom, I..." she began, her voice choked.

3/4

14:40 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 137 The Umbrella's Shadow

Just then, Clara's bright, clear voice rang out from behind Vanessa. "Auntie!"

86

Finished

Clara ran up to the gate, her little rain boots splashing in puddles. Her face lit up with a radiant smile when she saw Scarlett. She turned to the teacher holding the umbrella and announced proudly, "Ms. Monroe, this is my aunt! She's picking me up today!"

Then Clara turned to the other children standing under their umbrellas, declaring happily to anyone who would listen, "This is my aunt! She's a pediatric surgeon! She's amazing! I really, really like her!"

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W

14:40 Sat, Jan 10

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86

Finished

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Silent Dreams Never Die — 138

Chapter 138 Choosing Clara

Whenever Clara spoke about Scarlett to her teachers and friends, she would instinctively straighten her posture and lift her chin with visible pride, her eyes shining with unmistakable admiration and devotion.

straps of

Scarlett couldn't help but smile affectionately at the sight, but then her gaze drifted to Vanessa. Her own daughter stood slightly behind Clara, partially hidden. Vanessa clutched the her backpack so tightly her small knuckles turned white, her head bowed low, her slender shoulders trembling almost imperceptibly.

She had clearly been crying.

A sharp, twisting pain shot through Scarlett's heart. She wanted to call out to Vanessa, to offer some comfort, but the words seemed to lodge in her throat, thick and unspoken, and she forced them back down.

Clara happily walked out of the school gate and eagerly grabbed Scarlett's hand.

Snapping out of her thoughts, Scarlett magically produced a pink doll from behind her back- the exact one Clara had been begging for-and handed it to Clara. "Look what I found-the toy you've been wanting."

Clara took the doll and jumped up and down with pure delight. "Thank you, Auntie! You're the absolute best!" she exclaimed, her voice ringing with joy.

After showering Scarlett with thanks, Clara insisted she crouch down. She wrapped her small arms tightly around Scarlett's neck, covering her cheeks with quick, affectionate kisses and gentle pats.

Vanessa watched from inside the school grounds, her grip on her backpack straps tightening unconsciously. She glared at Clara, her young eyes burning with a mixture of resentment, jealousy, and raw anger.

That was her mom. Why did Clara get all the hugs and kisses? Why was her own mother here to pick up Clara and not her?

Vanessa felt deeply wronged and furious, a hot, bitter feeling rising in her chest, but Scarlett seemed to be ignoring her completely, and no one appeared to notice just how upset she was.

Scarlett gently ruffled Clara's hair, smoothing it back into place with a tender touch, and said softly, "Clara, don't forget to say goodbye to your teacher."

Clara turned and waved cheerfully at her teacher. "Goodbye, Ms. Monroe! See you tomorrow!"

Then Scarlett took Clara's hand firmly in hers, and the two of them walked off into the curtain

1/4

14:40 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 138 Choosing Clara

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86

Finished

of rain, each holding an umbrella—one large, one small—their figures gradually blurring into the gray afternoon.

Vanessa stood frozen at the school gate, watching Scarlett and Clara turn the corner and disappear. She reached out, her small hands gripping the cold, wet iron bars of the gate, and cried out with all her might, "Mom!"

But the rain was falling too heavily, its steady drumming drowning out her voice, and Clara was chattering so excitedly that Scarlett didn't hear Vanessa's desperate call at all.

Lily arrived a few minutes late and nearly bumped into Scarlett just as she was leaving.

"Mrs. Stewart," Lily greeted Scarlett respectfully, adjusting her own umbrella.

Clara immediately stopped her animated chattering and looked up curiously at Scarlett, waiting to see what would happen.

"Lily, thank you for coming. Vanessa is still waiting inside. Please take her straight home, help her wash up early, and make sure she doesn't spend too much time on her phone before bed," Scarlett instructed.

She clearly wasn't fully at ease, giving Lily detailed instructions as if trying to maintain some control from a distance.

Lily looked as if she wanted to say something several times, her mouth opening slightly, but Scarlett didn't give her the opportunity, turning her attention back to Clara.

"Clara, let's go home now," Scarlett said to Clara, her voice softening again.

Clara nodded obediently. "Okay, Auntie."

With that, Scarlett took Clara's hand and led her to the car without a backward glance, not seeing the small figure still pressed against the gate.

The car quickly drove away, its taillights disappearing into the rainy evening.

When Lily went to collect Vanessa, she found the little girl in tears, her small body shaking with sobs, completely falling apart emotionally.

Even after getting into the car, Vanessa continued to cry, refusing to let go of her backpack as if it were a lifeline.

Lily held her close, trying everything to comfort her. "Sweetie, your dad is busy with work, and Mrs. Stewart has her own matters to attend to. Please don't cry, alright? I will make you some french fries when we get home, how does that sound?" she offered, stroking the child's hair.

Vanessa clung to Lily, not listening to a word, just repeating over and over between ragged sobs.

2/4

14:40 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 138 Choosing Clara

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“Mom doesn’t want me anymore... She doesn’t want me...”

86

Finished

Lily was growing increasingly flustered, at a complete loss for what to say or do to ease such a deep hurt.

It wasn’t until Vanessa had cried herself to exhaustion, her small body going limp, that she finally looked up at Lily with red, swollen eyes and mumbled weakly, “Lily, I miss Sabrina.”

If Sabrina were here, she thought miserably, she wouldn’t have been left waiting alone with no one to pick her up.

Lily couldn’t help but gently remind her, “Sweetie, Mrs. Stewart is your real mother. She’s the one who loves you the most.”

“No, she’s not my mom,” Vanessa insisted, her voice trembling but firm. “I don’t want a mom like her. Sabrina is my real mom.”

After Scarlett brought Clara home, the little girl rushed straight to the kitchen to reheat the pancake she had made that morning with such pride.

She carefully brought it out on a small plate and watched expectantly as Scarlett took her first bite, her eyes wide with hope.

To be honest, it was a bit cold in the middle and slightly burnt at the edges, but Scarlett finished the entire piece anyway, praising Clara warmly for her effort while gently suggesting small improvements for next time, like cooking it a little slower.

Clara listened attentively, taking every word to heart, and promised earnestly, “I’ll make an even better one for you next time, Auntie!”

After dinner, the family sat together in the cozy living room, chatting comfortably as the rain continued outside.

When Scarlett went upstairs later to wash up, she picked up her phone from the bedside table and was startled to see over a dozen missed calls—all from Vincent.

She was still processing this, a sense of foreboding settling in her stomach, when her phone lit up again-another call from Vincent.

A gut feeling told Scarlett that something urgent must have happened, so she answered immediately, her heart beginning to race.

The moment the call connected, Vincent’s voice came through-harsh, impatient, and filled with barely restrained anger. “Scarlett, what the hell are you doing? Why haven’t you been answering your phone?”

3/4

14:41 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 138 Choosing Clara

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486

86

Finished

His aggressive tone instantly put Scarlett on the defensive, erasing any concern and replacing it with sharp irritation. She retorted sharply, “Vincent, what I’m doing is none of your business, is it?”

“Vanessa is sick,” he snapped, clearly having no interest in arguing and going straight to the point, his voice tense with urgency. “You need to come see her. Right now.”

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14:41 Sat, Jan 10

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Silent Dreams Never Die — 139

Chapter 139 Midnight Emergency

Finished

The moment Scarlett heard Vanessa was sick, her heart plummeted to her stomach. She immediately threw off the covers and jumped out of bed, not even bothering that she was still in her pajamas, and hurried out of her bedroom in a frantic rush.

While rushing downstairs, her slippers barely touching the steps, she asked urgently into the phone, “What happened? Wasn’t she perfectly fine this afternoon?”

Vincent, on the other end, had somewhat calmed down from his initial panic, his voice now much softer but still laced with concern. “Lily said Vanessa went upstairs after dinner complaining of stomach pain. Not long after, she vomited everything she’d eaten.”

Scarlett grew even more anxious upon hearing this and quickened her pace downstairs, her heart hammering against her ribs.

It was already quite late, the household settled into nighttime quiet, so she didn’t want to disturb anyone. She simply snatched her car keys from the entryway console and drove straight to Ravensshade Villa, her knuckles white on the steering wheel.

When she arrived, she found Lily pacing anxiously in the living room, holding a pale-looking Vanessa with a frantic, helpless expression.

The moment Lily heard the door open, the profound worry in her eyes eased slightly, replaced by a wave of relief. “Mrs. Stewart, you’re finally back,” she breathed out.

Lily looked as if she were on the verge of tears at the sight of Scarlett, her composure frayed after hours of worry.

Though it was still raining outside, it wasn’t as heavy as it had been that morning, now just a steady, dreary drizzle.

In her panic, Scarlett hadn’t bothered with an umbrella, and her thin pajamas were now half-soaked, clinging uncomfortably to her skin.

She dropped her car keys onto the side table with a clatter, didn’t even change her shoes, and went straight to Lily, taking Vanessa into her arms with a practiced, maternal movement,

Vanessa had been dozing fitfully, restless and uncomfortable. When she felt the familiar safety of Scarlett’s embrace, she opened her eyes weakly and murmured, “Mom,” her voice thin and reedy.

Scarlett leaned down and gently brushed Vanessa's forehead with the back of her hand. It didn't feel hot-probably not a fever, she noted with a sliver of relief.

"Vanessa, tell me, does anything else hurt?" Scarlett asked softly, her professional instincts

14:41 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 139 Midnight Emergency

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kicking in automatically, her voice calm and reassuring.

Finished

As a pediatric surgeon, she knew exactly what signs to look for, her mind already running through a checklist of possibilities.

Vanessa lay limply in her arms, too exhausted and miserable to argue with Scarlett anymore, all earlier resentment forgotten in her vulnerability.

And when you're feeling weak and unwell, you naturally crave the comfort of someone you love, the primal need for a parent's care overriding everything else.

Seeing Scarlett now felt like spotting an oasis in the desert after a long, desperate trek.

Vanessa nestled deeper into Scarlett's arms, seeking warmth and security, her voice hoarse and faint. "Mom, my stomach hurts. A lot. And I feel dizzy, like the room is spinning."

Scarlett gently pressed Vanessa's abdomen with skilled fingers, asking specific questions as she performed a preliminary examination, her touch light and probing.

After her assessment, Scarlett suspected it was likely a digestive issue, perhaps something she ate or a stomach bug.

Even though she was a doctor herself, some conditions required proper testing—she knew better than to jump to conclusions without concrete evidence, her medical training overriding her maternal worry.

Without a moment's hesitation, she adjusted her grip and lifted Vanessa securely into her arms. "Vanessa, I'm taking you to the hospital. We need to get an abdominal ultrasound to be sure what's going on," she explained calmly.

Vanessa's eyes welled with fresh tears at the mention of the hospital, fear flashing in their glassy depths. "Mom, I'm scared," she whimpered, clutching at Scarlett's damp pajama top.

Scarlett stroked her cheek soothingly, her touch gentle and reassuring. "Don't be scared, sweetheart. I'm right here with you. I won't leave you," she promised, her voice firm.

No matter what disagreements they had, what tensions lay between them, Vanessa's health would always, always come first-that was non-negotiable,

Scarlett carried Vanessa out of Ravensshade Villa and into the damp night, with Lily following closely behind, holding an umbrella over them as best she could.

They headed straight to the hospital. After Scarlett arranged for Vanessa's ultrasound, she reviewed the results and confirmed it was indigestion accompanied by some abdominal lymph node inflammation, nothing critically serious but certainly uncomfortable for the child.

Vanessa looked pale and weak, her energy completely sapped, so Scarlett decided to keep her in

2/4

14:41 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 139 Midnight Emergency

86

Finished

the emergency observation room for a few hours until she stabilized and showed signs of improvement.

She prescribed digestive medication and probiotics. Lily brought a cup of water, and Scarlett carefully fed Vanessa the medicine, holding the cup to her lips with infinite patience.

After taking the medication, Vanessa was too restless to fall asleep. She leaned against the bed, looking at Scarlett with tired, weary eyes. "Mom, I'm hungry," she whispered plaintively.

Having emptied her stomach earlier, it was no surprise she felt hungry now, her body craving nourishment.

Scarlett's heart ached at the sight of Vanessa so diminished. She gently stroked Vanessa's damp forehead, pushing back her hair. "What would you like to eat? I'll go get it for you right now," she offered softly.

"I want some oatmeal," Vanessa whispered, her voice small.

Scarlett managed a soft, reassuring smile. "Okay. Plain one it is. I'll be back soon."

She instructed Lily to stay with Vanessa, not to leave her side for a moment, then grabbed the umbrella and left the hospital room.

She had been rushing around all evening, propelled by adrenaline, and only now, stepping outside into the cool night air, did she realize she was still in her pajamas-her hair disheveled, her clothes damp and wrinkled, looking completely frazzled and out of place.

She walked a few hundred feet from the hospital, the streetlights casting long, watery reflections on the wet pavement, when suddenly the rain intensified, coming down in thick, heavy sheets. Even with the umbrella held firmly, her shoes and pajamas were quickly soaked through, the fabric clinging coldly to her skin.

But thinking of Vanessa's hunger, the plaintive look in her eyes, she braved the rain and headed resolutely toward a 24-hour restaurant she knew was nearby.

She left her dripping umbrella at the entrance and pushed the door open, the bell jingling overhead, only to bump directly into a familiar figure-Abbott.

Abbott frowned in surprise upon seeing Scarlett in her sodden pajamas, her hair a mess. "Mrs. Stewart?" he asked, his tone a mixture of confusion and concern.

Scarlett replied with a quiet, distracted "Yeah," and suddenly, sharply, remembered Vincent.

She had been so utterly consumed with worry for Vanessa, so single-minded in her focus, that she had completely forgotten about Vincent until this very moment.

Vanessa was sick—no matter how busy he was, he should have returned to Ravensshade Villa.

3/4

14:41 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 139 Midnight Emergency

B

86

Finished

That was his responsibility as a father.

In such an emergency, if he couldn't reach her, shouldn't he, as the father, have already taken their daughter to the hospital himself? The thought ignited a spark of anger amidst her worry.

She hadn't had time to process these thoughts earlier, the chaos of the evening pushing them aside, but seeing Abbott now, all these questions surged to the forefront of her mind, demanding answers.

Almost instinctively, her voice tight, she asked, "Is Vincent still working?"

Abbott looked momentarily confused, taken aback by the abrupt question. "Huh?" he responded, blinking.

Scarlett's brow furrowed deeply, her patience wearing thin. "Vanessa is sick. He told me he had to work late and had an important meeting tonight. Is he still in that meeting?" she pressed, her words sharp.

It was already past ten o'clock. Sure, he often worked overtime, that was his pattern, but rarely this late, especially on a night like this.

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4/4

14:41 Sat, Jan 10

86

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Silent Dreams Never Die — 140

Chapter 140 The Truth in Rain

Finished

Abbott didn't hesitate before answering Scarlett's question with straightforward honesty. "Mr. Stewart didn't have any meetings scheduled for this evening. He actually left the office around three this afternoon."

Scarlett paused mid-step, her expression shifting almost imperceptibly. "What?" she said, the single word laden with sudden understanding.

Abbott immediately began to panic, realizing he had spoken out of turn. "I-" he stammered, his eyes darting away nervously as he avoided her penetrating gaze.

Scarlett was slowly connecting the dots in her mind, the pieces falling into place with unsettling clarity. She didn't make a scene or press Abbott for further details, maintaining her composure despite the turmoil inside. Instead, she replied with remarkable calmness, "I understand. You may go about your business."

Abbott was taken aback by her reaction. She understood? Understood what exactly?

But Scarlett didn't linger to elaborate. She walked directly to the counter, ordered a plain oatmeal to-go in a steady voice, and waited quietly for her order.

Once she received the warm container of food, she left the shop without another glance in Abbott's direction, moving with purpose through the automatic doors.

Abbott stood there stunned, watching her retreating back. This wasn't the reaction he had expected from Scarlett at all. Shouldn't she have pressed him for more details about Vincent's whereabouts?

Unable to believe she had let it go so easily, Abbott hurried after her, his own concerns mounting. But by the time he reached the entrance, Scarlett was already walking away under her umbrella, her figure receding into the rainy darkness, becoming smaller with each step.

Watching her solitary silhouette disappear into the rainy night, Abbott felt an unexpected pang of sympathy in his chest.

He had witnessed the entire story of Vincent and Scarlett's marriage from the very beginning, watching it unfold like a slow-moving tragedy.

Their marriage had always been little more than a carefully maintained facade, a performance for the outside world. Over the years, they had hardly shared a single genuinely warm moment together.

And as for Vincent and Sabrina...

Abbott had no idea whether Scarlett was aware of the full picture, of how deeply entangled the

1/4

14:41 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 140 The Truth in Rain

two had become.

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86

Finished

He didn't dare dwell on it further, shaking his head as if to clear his thoughts. Grabbing his own umbrella, he quickly left the scene.

When Scarlett returned to the hospital with the oatmeal, she found Vanessa sitting up in bed, watching videos on Lily's phone with apparent interest.

Whatever she was watching seemed to amuse her, bringing a faint, genuine smile to her pale face-the first Scarlett had seen all evening.

Lily noticed Scarlett's return first and immediately alerted Vanessa in a hushed tone. "Miss, Mrs. Stewart is back."

Hearing this, Vanessa quickly locked the phone screen and sat up straighter, composing her features into a more neutral expression. "Mom," she said, her voice still weak.

Scarlett's pajamas were completely drenched by now, not a single dry spot remaining, the fabric clinging heavily to her skin. Yet she had carefully protected the oatmeal container throughout her walk, holding it close to her body to ensure it stayed warm and unspilled.

Handing the container to Lily, she said in an even tone, "Lily, could you please help feed Vanessa?"

Seeing Scarlett soaked to the bone, her hair plastered to her forehead, Lily felt a wave of sympathy wash over her. Her voice was slightly choked with emotion as she said, “Mrs. Stewart, you should go change into dry clothes before you catch a cold yourself.”

Scarlett merely responded with a quiet “Mm,” offering no further explanation about her drenched state.

Vanessa noticed Scarlett’s wet clothes too. She wanted to ask about it, to express concern, but then she remembered how Scarlett had failed to pick her up from school that afternoon, the hurt still fresh in her mind. So she bit back her words and remained silent, looking down at her hands instead.

Knowing she kept spare clothes in her car for emergencies, Scarlett headed back outside into the damp night air.

But once she settled into the driver’s seat, the door closed against the world, a wave of exhaustion washed over her. She leaned back against the headrest, closed her eyes, and replayed Abbott’s words in her mind.

Combined with the fact that Vincent hadn’t brought Vanessa to the hospital himself, hadn’t even been there when their daughter needed him most, the truth wasn’t difficult to deduce- Vincent likely wasn’t even in Rivergate at all.

2/4

14:41 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 140 The Truth in Rain

If he wasn’t here, then where was he?

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The answer was almost too obvious, falling into place with painful certainty. Wherever Sabrina was, that was where he would be. It was the only explanation that made sense.

But that was only speculation, however logical. Scarlett wanted concrete proof, something undeniable to confirm what her heart already knew.

She picked up her phone with slightly trembling fingers and searched for “Rina’s” video account, the one she knew belonged to Sabrina.

Sure enough, a new post had been uploaded just hours earlier.

She clicked on it with a sense of dread. The video showed Vincent carrying an elegant bouquet of flowers, walking into what appeared to be a hospital room. His face wasn't clearly visible, deliberately angled away from the camera, but Scarlett recognized him instantly by his distinctive attire and familiar

posture.

The caption below the video read, "Whenever I need you, no matter where you are or what

in you you're doing, you always come. I'm so grateful to have

life."

my

Scarlett set down her phone carefully and covered her face with her hands, the weight of the confirmation pressing down on her.

What hurt wasn't merely that Vincent had gone to see Sabrina-that was almost expected by now. What truly wounded her was the timing-while Vanessa was sick, needing both her parents, Vincent had chosen to be with Sabrina instead of his own daughter.

The thought tightened her chest, making it difficult to breathe, as if someone had wrapped a band around her lungs.

But she knew dwelling on it wouldn't change anything, wouldn't alter the painful reality of her situation. She straightened up, took a deep breath, and began methodically changing into the dry clothes she kept in the car.

Just as she finished buttoning her fresh blouse, her phone rang-not a messaging app call, but a regular video call. Vincent's name flashed on the screen.

After a moment's hesitation, her finger hovering over the answer button, Scarlett finally accepted the call.

Vincent's face appeared on the screen, looking composed. He asked without preamble, "How is Vanessa? Is she feeling better?"

Scarlett replied coolly, her voice carefully neutral, "The doctor examined her and prescribed medication. She's much better now, resting comfortably."

3/4

14:41 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 140 The Truth in Rain

Finished

Vincent's tense expression relaxed visibly at the news. He seemed genuinely relieved. "That's good to hear," he said, the concern in his voice sounding authentic.

Scarlett responded flatly, "Mm," offering no additional information.

Vincent added after a brief pause, "Thank you for taking care of her."

Scarlett had no patience for his polite formalities, not after what she had just discovered. "I'm hanging up now," she said abruptly, her fingers moving toward the disconnect button.

Vincent didn't ask anything further, simply saying, "Okay."

Just as Scarlett was about to end the call, Vincent began to say something else, "I'll be back soon -" but Scarlett disconnected before he could finish his sentence, not interested in whatever explanation or promise he might offer.

She sat in the car for a few more minutes. Then, squaring her shoulders, she headed back inside the hospital, preparing to resume her role as the concerned mother.

When she returned to the hospital room, Vanessa had already finished her oatmeal, the container sitting on the bedside table.

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Scarlett walked in quietly. Vanessa glanced at her but said nothing, her expression guarded.

Though Vanessa was physically feeling much better, the emotional residue from earlier still lingered between them, leaving her somewhat withdrawn and distant.

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4/4

14:41 Sat, Jan 10

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Silent Dreams Never Die — 141

Chapter 141 The Unwanted Embrace

So, she really didn't want to talk to Scarlett.

Finished

Scarlett knew Vanessa all too well. She could sense Vanessa was still holding a grudge against her, the resentment simmering beneath the surface of her quiet compliance.

Fine, if she wanted to stay angry, then let her stay angry. There was little Scarlett could do about it anyway.

After monitoring Vanessa at the hospital for about an hour and confirming no further symptoms had appeared, Scarlett finally took her back to Ravensshade Villa, the drive home passing in heavy silence.

Once home, she helped Vanessa wash up and change into fresh pajamas with mechanical movements.

Only after Vanessa had finally fallen asleep, her breathing evening out into the rhythm of slumber, did Scarlett allow herself to take a shower and complete her skincare routine, the familiar motions offering little comfort.

Still concerned about Vanessa's condition potentially worsening during the night, she decided to sleep on the couch in Vanessa's room.

Perhaps because she had been caught in the rain earlier, Scarlett experienced restless dreams throughout the night-feverish visions of everything she had done for Vincent, of her painful falling out with her family, of her own daughter calling her a bad mother...

In her half-awake, half-asleep state, she thought she saw Vincent leaning over her, his lips moving as if saying something, but she couldn't make out any words through the haze of her fever.

Though she couldn't hear him, she then felt Vincent bend down, one hand sliding beneath her back, the other under her legs, lifting her with surprising gentleness.

He lifted her up, cradling her against his chest.

Where was he taking her? Scarlett had no idea.

It felt like a dream, yet carried a strange sense of reality that confused her fever-addled mind.

That night, Scarlett slept deeply once the dreams subsided. When she woke the next morning, her entire body felt sore and numb, as if drained of all strength, every muscle protesting when she tried to move.

As consciousness slowly returned, she realized with growing confusion that she was no longer

1/4

14:41 Sat, Jan

25

86

Chapter 141 The Unwanted Embrace

Finished

in Vanessa's room, but in the master bedroom she shared with Vincent-a space that had felt increasingly foreign to her in recent months.

What truly shocked her was discovering Vincent lying quietly beside her-with her own arms and legs wrapped around him like an octopus, clinging tightly in her sleep as if he were her only anchor in a storm.

Scarlett was completely bewildered. Recalling last night's hazy memory, had Vincent actually carried her here? Had that not been a dream after all?

Regardless of how she got here, the current reality of her entangled position with Vincent was undeniable and deeply embarrassing.

She attempted to carefully retract her limbs, moving as stealthily as possible to avoid waking him, but Vincent opened his eyes anyway, his gaze immediately clear and focused.

The moment their eyes met, Scarlett froze-her entire body and movements halting abruptly like a deer caught in headlights.

Vincent turned his head and studied her for a long moment, his expression unreadable, before finally asking in a morning-rough voice, “You’re awake?”

Scarlett quickly withdrew her arms and legs, scooting as far from Vincent as the bed would allow. Only then did she respond with a stiff, “Yes.”

Vincent clearly noticed her retreat, his eyes tracking her movement, but simply stated matter-of-factly, “You had a fever last night.”

Scarlett remembered being drenched in the rain and suddenly understood why she felt so wretched. “Oh,” she acknowledged, the single word heavy with reluctant acceptance.

Feeling too weak to attempt getting up, she focused only on maintaining what distance she could from Vincent, pressing herself against her side of the bed.

Seeing her still disoriented and pale, Vincent instinctively reached out as if to check her temperature, but Scarlett flinched away from his touch as if burned.

Her immediate avoidance sparked an odd discomfort within him, a feeling he couldn’t quite

name.

He recalled how in the past-on the rare occasions he had ever stayed with her like this-she would have immediately snuggled closer, seeking his warmth and presence.

But now, not only was she not drawing near, she was actively trying to put as much space between them as possible, treating him like a stranger.

Vincent didn’t withdraw his hand. Instead, he grasped Scarlett’s arm firmly and pulled her

2/4

14:41 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 141 The Unwanted Embrace

against his chest, ignoring her weak struggle.

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She was too weakened by fever to resist effectively-he drew her in effortlessly, her body yielding to his stronger pull.

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Then he leaned down and pressed his forehead against hers in the classic method of checking temperature.

After a few seconds of contact, he released her and said, "Your fever hasn't broken completely. Don't go to the hospital today."

Scarlett immediately shifted away from him again, putting distance back between them. She particularly disliked Vincent's scent this morning-it carried traces of cigarette smoke and a faint, floral perfume that definitely wasn't his.

"I can take care of myself," she insisted. "Besides, I work at a hospital. If anything happens, there are colleagues who can help me." Unwilling to follow Vincent's orders, Scarlett rejected his suggestion with stubborn defiance.

Vincent frowned at this resistance, his brows drawing together. He turned to look at her directly, remaining silent for an extended moment as if weighing his response.

Scarlett could feel the irritation in his gaze burning into her, but she refused to meet his eyes, keeping her own fixed on the ceiling. She simply said, "When Vanessa wakes up for school, you take her."

Vincent was quiet for a while, the silence stretching between them, before finally answering with a curt, "Okay."

Unable to summon the strength to get up just yet, Scarlett added, "Then go wake her now."

Vincent said, "Okay."

After Vincent got out of bed, he sat on the edge for a moment, not immediately leaving but simply watching Scarlett as she lay there, his gaze intense and contemplative.

Feeling increasingly uncomfortable under his prolonged stare, Scarlett finally asked, "Wh-what is it? Why are you staring?"

Instead of answering, Vincent reached out and unexpectedly slipped his hand beneath her shirt.

The moment she felt his touch, Scarlett instantly wrapped her arms around herself defensively, glaring at him with wide eyes. "Vincent, what are you doing?" she demanded, her voice sharp

with alarm.

Already feverish and lightheaded, it took her a moment to process his movement. By the time

3/4

14:41 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 141 The Unwanted Embrace

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she tried to defend herself, his hand was already under her clothing, his palm flat against her

skin.

So now, she was hugging not just her shirt, but Vincent's hand as well, trapping it against her in her panic.

Flustered, she tried to push him away, but this only caused his hand to slide further upward, landing directly on a particularly sensitive area just below her breast.

Vincent's hand was burning hot, searing against Scarlett's comparatively cool skin, the contrast startling.

She was utterly stunned. When she finally comprehended the situation and attempted to release his hand, Vincent spoke first, his voice low and deliberately provocative, "Scarlett, have you no shame?"

Scarlett looked up at him, her cheeks flushed pink with both fever and embarrassment, her eyes still hazy and not fully alert, completely bewildered by his accusation and their compromising position.

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4/4

14:41 Sat, Jan 10

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Silent Dreams Never Die — 142

Chapter 142 The Unspoken Truth

86

Finished

Vincent lowered his head, his gaze locked with hers, seemingly drawn into the swirling darkness of her eyes.

In that moment, a flood of inappropriate memories rushed through his mind at the worst possible time—unwanted, untimely, and completely unbidden.

He remembered Scarlett beneath him in the darkness of their bedroom, desperately matching his rhythm, her arms wrapped tightly around his waist as if he were her only anchor, breathlessly calling his name.

Except during those rare, intimate moments, Scarlett had never addressed him so familiarly in their daily lives, always maintaining a careful distance even in their closest proximity.

Lost in these unexpected thoughts, Vincent actually forgot to withdraw his hand.

Scarlett's face was so flushed it seemed about to bleed, heat spreading across her cheeks and down her neck. Hearing his accusatory words and seeing his hand still hadn't moved from its compromising position, she snapped angrily, "Are you going to remove your hand or not? Have you no decency at all?"

She shoved his hand away roughly as she spoke, then immediately wrapped herself tightly in the blanket.

Vincent finally snapped back to reality, hastily retracting his hand as if burned. "I'll go Vanessa," he said abruptly, the words tumbling out too quickly.

wake

With that, he didn't spare Scarlett another glance, practically fleeing the bedroom like a man escaping a fire, his usual composure completely shattered.

But as he left, the tips of his ears were burning bright red, as if dipped in blood.

He had only intended to check if Scarlett was still sweating from her fever, but somehow her defensive movement had pressed his hand against a completely inappropriate place, creating this awkward situation.

Though they'd shared a bed many times over the years, their encounters were always straightforward and purposeful, driven by physical need rather than tender exploration. This was the first time he'd accidentally touched her in such an unexpectedly intimate manner.

Even though he was technically familiar with her body from their marital relations, the moment he felt her soft curves beneath his palm through the thin fabric, his mind had momentarily short-circuited, all rational thought fleeing.

After Vincent left, Scarlett lay there stunned for several long moments, the spot he'd touched

1/4

14:41 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 142 The Unspoken Truth

still burning with residual heat as if branded.

A 86

Finished

She wasn't sure what Vincent had been trying to accomplish with his unexpected gesture, but one thing was certain-he wasn't seeking physical intimacy with her out of genuine desire or affection.

Whatever was going through his mind in that confusing moment, the fundamental truth remained unchanged-he didn't love her.

Remembering she still needed to go to work despite her lingering fever, she forced herself to get out of bed, her body protesting every movement.

She dragged herself through her morning routine with weary determination, got dressed in comfortable but professional attire, and made her way downstairs.

Downstairs, Vincent stood by the large window, talking on the phone with his back to her. The rain outside continued its relentless fall, though not as heavily as the previous day.

Scarlett glanced at his rigid back. She wanted to ask if Vanessa was ready for school, but seeing him occupied with his call, she remained silent, not wanting to interrupt.

He didn't seem to notice her presence at all. Into the phone, his voice was unusually gentle, almost tender. "Don't worry about anything, I'll handle all the wellness arrangements personally."

Just from his patient, caring tone, Scarlett knew immediately he was speaking with Sabrina.

Her head still felt somewhat dizzy from the fever, but since Vincent was clearly occupied with his conversation, she decided to go upstairs and check on Vanessa herself rather than wait for him.

She had just turned toward the staircase when Vincent ended his call and spotted her moving away. "Scarlett, wait a moment," he called out, his voice shifting back to its usual businesslike

tone.

Scarlett gripped the banister tighter for support and looked back at him over her shoulder. "What is it?" she asked, her own voice carefully neutral.

Vincent walked over, his tall frame blocking the dim light from the window and casting a shadow over her. He looked down at her from his greater height and said, "I wanted to ask about Vanessa's condition in more detail."

He had rushed home late last night intending to check on their daughter first thing, but when he arrived, he found Vanessa sleeping peacefully and perfectly fine. Instead, he'd discovered Scarlett burning up with fever on the couch in Vanessa's room, her forehead damp with sweat.

So he had carried her back to their bedroom, an action that felt both strange and strangely

2/4

14:41 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 142 The Unspoken Truth

natural.

86

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Hearing Vincent inquire about their daughter with apparent concern, Scarlett wanted to ask where he had been last night when Vanessa first fell ill, but what would be the point of rehashing that now?

The fact that he'd rushed home in the middle of the night at least showed he still cared about their child's wellbeing, even if his priorities seemed misaligned.

So she swallowed her questions and the bitterness that accompanied them.

"Vanessa has some abdominal lymph node inflammation, but it's not severe medically speaking," she reported in her professional clinical voice. "The nodes are few and relatively small. At her age, functional abdominal pain is quite common. We've ruled out more serious conditions through the ultrasound, but we do need to monitor her diet carefully going forward to prevent recurrence."

Vincent frowned, his brow creasing in thought. "What's actually causing this inflammation?" he asked.

Scarlett replied with clinical precision, "Multiple factors can contribute-spicy food, excessive snacking between meals, cold beverages, overeating at single sittings, and irregular sleep patterns that disrupt her natural rhythms. All these can trigger or exacerbate the condition."

Vincent looked down thoughtfully, processing the information. "Understood."

Seeing his contemplative expression, Scarlett suddenly remembered something important she needed to address with him.

"Vincent, I actually wanted to discuss this particular issue with you," she began, her voice taking on a more serious tone.

Vincent glanced at her, offering only a noncommittal "Mm" as acknowledgment, waiting for her to continue.

Scarlett's expression turned fully serious, her professional concern as a doctor blending with her maternal worry. "I don't care who's looking after Vanessa when I'm not there-she's only five years old. She shouldn't be eating inappropriate foods that upset her delicate system, and she absolutely shouldn't be staying up late consistently. She needs early bedtimes, regular wake-up times to establish healthy patterns, and much more outdoor physical activity for her development."

Just thinking about Sabrina's concert outings with Vanessa made Scarlett's blood boil with a mixture of anger and helplessness.

Her concerts always ran late into the night, far past a child's reasonable bedtime, and Vanessa would stay up just to watch her performances, sacrificing much-needed rest for entertainment.

3/4

14:41 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 142 The Unspoken Truth

86

Finished

A five-year-old simply couldn't handle that kind of irregular schedule without consequences to her health, as they were now witnessing.

Vincent waited until Scarlett finished speaking, letting her concerns hang in the air between them, then responded coolly, "If you feel so strongly about how she's being cared for, why don't you quit your job and stay home to take care of Vanessa yourself?"

Scarlett's eyes widened in disbelief at his suggestion. She stared at Vincent, utterly stunned by what he was proposing. "What did you just say?"

Vincent repeated calmly, "If you think I'm not managing Vanessa's care properly, then you take over her care completely. That should resolve your concerns."

Scarlett couldn't help but let out a bitter laugh at the absurdity of his suggestion. She looked directly at him, her gaze sharp and penetrating, and asked pointedly, "So you're really choosing to take her side over addressing legitimate concerns about our daughter's health?"

The "her" obviously referred to Sabrina, though she didn't speak the name aloud.

Scarlett knew all about Vanessa's late nights and junk food indulgences during her time with Sabrina-the very patterns that had likely contributed to their daughter's current health issues.

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14:42 Sat, Jan 10

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Silent Dreams Never Die — 143

Chapter 143 A Mother's Rejection

85

Finished

There had even been several instances where she and Nolan had crossed paths unexpectedly at those late-night events.

Vanessa's swollen lymph nodes-even if not entirely Sabrina's fault-certainly weren't unrelated to her influence and the lifestyle she encouraged.

Yet Vincent never once acknowledged Sabrina's role in the situation, always deflecting or changing the subject when her name came up.

If that wasn't taking sides, then what was? The favoritism was becoming increasingly difficult to ignore.

Vincent still deliberately avoided mentioning Sabrina directly. Instead, he countered sharply, "If you're truly concerned about Vanessa's wellbeing, shouldn't her biological mother be the one staying home to care for her? That seems like the most logical solution."

Scarlett was furious at his implication. She met Vincent's gaze directly and stated with unwavering firmness, "Vincent, no matter what you say or how you try to manipulate me, I'm not quitting my job."

Her career was the last thing she had to hold onto, and now Vincent wanted to strip even that away from her, leaving her with nothing.

Vincent retorted with equal intensity, "Scarlett, Vanessa isn't just my daughter-she's yours too. Don't you think you should take some responsibility for her care instead of always pointing fingers?"

"I've been her primary caregiver for four solid years, Vincent. I'm done. I simply can't do it anymore, not like this," she shot back, the exhaustion of those years evident in her voice.

“So you believe you still deserve to be called her mother when you’re refusing to care for her?” he challenged, his words deliberately cutting.

“You said it yourself—I’m not as good as Sabrina in Vanessa’s eyes. So why don’t you just let Vanessa call her ‘Mom’ instead?” The bitter words escaped before she could stop them.

“Scarlett, don’t push this conversation where it doesn’t need to go,” Vincent warned, his voice dropping dangerously.

“Vincent, you’ve said everything you wanted to say over the years. Are you determined to leave me with nothing? We’ve been married five years, and not once has this house ever felt like a real home to me. I-”

Their heated argument was abruptly interrupted when Lily appeared at the top of the stairs,

1/4

14:42 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 143 A Mother’s Rejection

85

Finished

her voice urgent and filled with alarm. “Mr. and Mrs. Stewart, something’s wrong! Ms. Stewart is complaining of stomach pain again! She’s crying quite badly!”

The moment Lily finished speaking, both Scarlett and Vincent immediately abandoned their argument and bolted upstairs simultaneously.

They rushed into the bedroom, their faces etched with identical concern as they hurried to the bedside where their daughter lay suffering.

Vanessa was curled into a tight ball on the bed, her small frame trembling with visible pain, looking utterly pitiful and vulnerable.

Scarlett’s heart clenched painfully at the sight. She reached out instinctively and gathered Vanessa into her arms. “Don’t be scared, sweetheart. I’m here,” she murmured soothingly.

She gently stroked Vanessa’s hair as she spoke, trying to provide some comfort through the touch.

But the pain was too intense for Vanessa to bear. She continued sobbing uncontrollably.

Scarlett extended her hand tenderly toward Vanessa's abdomen. "Vanessa, let me rub your tummy, okay? It will help you feel better, I promise," she offered softly.

Just as her hand made contact with Vanessa's abdomen, Vanessa suddenly shoved her away with surprising force. "No! I want Sabrina! Daddy, I want Sabrina!" she cried out, rejecting Scarlett's comfort completely.

Scarlett froze in place, completely stunned by the rejection. Her mind went blank, all thoughts momentarily wiped away by the shock of Vanessa's words.

Already weakened by fever and dizziness from her own illness, Vanessa's forceful push sent her stumbling sideways, forcing her to grab the bedside table for support.

Vanessa kept crying desperately, her pleas now directed solely at her father. "Daddy... Daddy..."

Vincent immediately stepped forward and scooped her into his arms, holding her close against his chest and comforting her softly. "I'm, sweetheart. Be a good girl now, I've got you."

Vanessa clung tightly to Vincent's shirt, her tear-streaked face pressed against his chest as she sought comfort in his embrace. She sobbed brokenly, "Daddy, where's Sabrina? I want Sabrina."

Vincent pressed his face against Vanessa's, his heart aching. He said softly, "I will take you to see her this weekend, okay?"

Vanessa cried, "I want to hear her play the piano for me. I want her to tell me those special stories she knows. Daddy, I need Sabrina here with me right now."

2/4

14:42 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 143 A Mother's Rejection

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Vincent's heart ached at Vanessa's desperate pleas. Whatever she asked for in this state of suffering, he could only agree to provide comfort. "Alright, darling, Daddy will call Sabrina and have her come stay with you, okay? I'll make sure she comes right away."

Vanessa's crying ceased almost instantly at his promise. "Okay," she whispered, finally calming

down.

Scarlett sat at the edge of the bed, listening to the heartbreaking exchange between Vanessa and Vincent. Silent tears streamed down her face unchecked, each word feeling like a physical blow.

She bit her lip hard, drawing blood, refusing to let any sound escape and betray the depth of her pain.

Lily stood beside her, quietly patting her shoulder in a gesture of comfort, her own expression filled with sympathy.

Scarlett didn't register anything else said between Vincent and Vanessa after that moment. She felt like a complete fool just sitting there, an unwanted spectator in her own family's drama.

Forcing herself to stand on trembling legs, she slowly walked out of the bedroom without another word.

Downstairs, she noticed through the window that the rain outside was falling even more heavily than before.

Staring at the pouring rain, Scarlett felt the weight in her heart grow heavier.

After some time had passed, Vincent came downstairs, his footsteps measured on the staircase.

Seeing Scarlett still standing by the door like a statue, Vincent approached her cautiously. "I've called the school and informed them Vanessa won't be attending today due to her illness."

With her back still turned to him, Scarlett replied flatly, "Okay."

Then she added in the same emotionless tone, "I'm going to work now."

But simultaneously, Vincent said, "You should stay home today and take care of Vanessa since she's not feeling well."

Scarlett refused immediately, her voice gaining strength. "I can't take time off on such short notice. If you're unwilling to care for her yourself, then find someone else to do it," she stated bluntly.

Her meaning was unmistakable-she wanted Sabrina to be the one to care for Vanessa since that was who their daughter clearly preferred.

Vincent grew angry at her outright refusal. “Scarlett, when did you become like this? So cold

3/4

14:42 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 143 A Mother’s Rejection

and detached?” he demanded, genuine confusion in his voice.

In the past, she would always personally care for Vanessa whenever she fell ill.

So why couldn’t she do it now? What had changed so fundamentally?

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Scarlett listened to Vincent’s accusations without showing any visible emotion, her face a carefully constructed mask. “Vincent, I haven’t changed, not really. I’ve simply finally seen things clearly for what they are rather than what I wished they were.”

With those final words, she opened her umbrella with a sharp snap and stepped out into the pouring rain.

Vincent watched her determined departure with growing frustration, when suddenly his phone rang, breaking the tense silence.

He glanced down at the screen with irritation-it was a call from Abbott.

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14:42 Sat, Jan 10

Awakened Housewife. Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

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Silent Dreams Never Die — 144

Chapter 144 Fevered Obligations

85

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Abbott's voice came through the phone. "Mr. Stewart, there's a meeting scheduled to begin shortly."

Vincent thought of Vanessa's fragile condition upstairs and finally sighed in resignation. "Reschedule the meeting for another time. I won't be coming to the office today. Handle any matters that arise yourself. Unless it's absolutely critical, don't contact me."

Abbott didn't dare inquire further about the sudden change, simply responding with his usual deference, "Understood."

Scarlett spent the entire day at the hospital in a daze, her mind clouded by fever and emotional exhaustion, barely accomplishing any substantial work. Fortunately, her colleagues noticed her poor condition and kindly took on some of her responsibilities without being asked.

Feeling genuinely grateful for their understanding, she promised to treat everyone to a meal once she recovered.

That afternoon, her phone buzzed with an incoming text message from Vincent. "Vanessa wants some of your homemade oatmeal."

Scarlett stared at the message, her fingers hovering over the screen, uncertain how to respond to this simple yet loaded request.

Should she agree, setting aside her own illness and hurt feelings? Or refuse, maintaining what little dignity she had left?

In the end, after several minutes of internal debate, she chose not to reply at all.

But when her shift finally ended, the exhaustion weighing heavily on her shoulders, she found herself hesitating in the hospital parking lot.

After much internal debate, her maternal instincts ultimately overriding her pride, she eventually drove to Ravensshade Villa.

She knew it was futile to hope for appreciation or kindness, but Vanessa was her daughter, her own flesh and blood. She simply couldn't bring herself to abandon her completely.

When she arrived at Ravensshade Villa, Lily was cleaning the living room. Seeing Scarlett enter, Lily looked genuinely surprised, her cleaning cloth stilling in mid-air. "Mrs, Stewart?" she exclaimed, her voice filled with undisguised shock.

After everything Vincent and Vanessa had put her through that morning, Lily honestly believed

1/4

14:42 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 144 Fevered Obligations

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Scarlett would never return to this house, at least not so soon.

Yet here she was, looking even more frail than when she'd left...

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Scarlett noticed the shock in Lily's eyes but deliberately ignored it, asking instead in a carefully controlled voice, "Where are Vincent and Vanessa now?"

Lily replied, recovering her composure, "Mr. Stewart is upstairs in Vanessa's room, keeping her company."

Scarlett said simply, without elaborating further, "I'm going to prepare some food."

Once the oatmeal was simmering on the stove, Scarlett remained standing by the stove, monitoring its progress with tired eyes.

She had felt unwell all day-her body weak and clammy with sweat, clear signs of her ongoing fever that she had stubbornly ignored throughout her shift.

At dinnertime, Vincent and Vanessa came downstairs.

Scarlett served Vanessa a bowl of the freshly cooked oatmeal without uttering a word, placing it gently on the table before retreating slightly.

Vincent remained largely silent too, carefully feeding Vanessa spoonful by spoonful with a patience Scarlett rarely saw in him.

Scarlett sipped some broth from her own bowl but had little appetite, the food tasting like ash in her mouth.

After dinner, Vanessa expressed wanting to watch cartoons upstairs, so Vincent carried her back to her room without a backward glance at Scarlett.

While Lily cleared the table, the clatter of dishes the only sound in the quiet room, Scarlett collapsed onto the living room sofa, her energy completely spent.

Exhausted from the long, emotionally draining day, the moment she touched the soft cushions, all she wanted was to lie down and never get up again.

As soon as she did, stretching out on the comfortable sofa, overwhelming drowsiness washed over her.

She had no idea how long she'd been asleep when, in her groggy, half-aware state, she sensed someone moving nearby. Struggling to open her heavy eyelids, she saw Vincent draping a soft blanket over her, his movements surprisingly gentle.

She parted her dry lips to speak, to protest this unexpected kindness, but no sound emerged, her throat too parched and raw.

2/4

14:42 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 144 Fevered Obligations

85

Finished

She didn't even possess the strength to remove the blanket Vincent had placed over her, her limbs feeling like lead weights.

Noticing she was awake, her eyes barely open, Vincent reached out to feel her forehead with the back of his hand, then compared it to his own temperature. "Your fever has returned."

Scarlett swallowed with difficulty, wincing at the pain in her throat, her voice hoarse as she managed, "I'll be fine after taking some medication."

Her forehead glistened with sweat, her eyes were bloodshot and glassy with fever-she appeared completely drained, a shadow of her usual composed self.

Vincent looked unconvinced by her weak assurance. He bent down closer to her and said, his voice firm, "I'll carry you upstairs to rest properly."

Just as he reached for her, his arms positioning to lift her, Scarlett pushed his hands away weakly. "No need. I can walk by myself."

Despite her entire body feeling weak and heavy, every movement an effort, she insisted on climbing the stairs independently, determined to maintain some semblance of dignity.

She forced herself to sit up from the sofa, a wave of dizziness washing over her, sweat already dampening the back of her blouse.

After catching her breath momentarily, she stood shakily and moved toward the staircase, each step deliberate and unsteady.

But she had taken only a few steps when her legs buckled beneath her, the strength draining from them suddenly, and she began to collapse forward, unable to catch herself.

Vincent had been watching her closely, his expression unreadable. The instant he saw her falter, he rushed forward and caught her just before she hit the floor. "Why must you always be so stubborn?" he demanded.

Leaning against his support, too weak to stand on her own, Scarlett retorted weakly, "I'm not being stubborn. I simply prefer to manage on my own."

Vincent's temper flared at her continued resistance. "What's the point of this pointless pride? I'm already exhausted from caring for Vanessa all day, and now I have to look after you too because you refuse to accept help."

Scarlett shot him a cold glare. "I never asked you to take care of me. I don't need or want your assistance," she declared.

She attempted to push him away again, but he held her firmly, his grip unyielding.

3/4

14:42 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 144 Fevered Obligations

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Already physically disadvantaged by her illness and weakened by fever, she stood no chance against his superior strength, her struggles futile against his solid frame.

After struggling briefly against his hold, she was perspiring even more heavily, her breath coming in ragged gasps from the exertion.

Scizing the opportunity while she was momentarily incapacitated, Vincent bent down and scooped her into his arms in one smooth motion, cradling her against his chest.

Too weak to resist effectively, her energy completely spent, Scarlett simply leaned against his chest, feeling the steady beat of his heart through his shirt. She looked up at his sharp, tense jawline-so handsome yet as cold and unyielding as ice, a perfect reflection of his character.

Beautiful things are often the most poisonous—and hurt the deepest when they turn against you.

After carrying Scarlett upstairs, Vincent laid her gently on their large bed, the mattress dipping with her weight, and tucked the covers around her with surprising care.

He brought her medication and a glass of water, then sat beside the bed watching intently until she swallowed the pills, ensuring she actually took them.

When she finished, he took the empty cup from her trembling hand and suddenly said, his tone shifting to businesslike, “We need to talk.”

Scarlett’s head was still throbbing, a dull ache that pulsed with every heartbeat. Leaning against the headboard for support, she looked at Vincent and asked wearily, “What do you want to discuss?”

Vincent stated matter-of-factly, as if discussing a routine schedule, “I have an unavoidable business trip this weekend.”

His implication was obvious, hanging unspoken in the air between them-he expected Scarlett to take care of Vanessa during his absence.

Though Scarlett understood his meaning perfectly, she pretended not to grasp his meaning.

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4/4

14:42 Sat, Jan 10

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Silent Dreams Never Die — 145

Chapter 145 The Weekend Arrangement

85

Finished

“Vincent, you don’t need to inform me about your schedule or whereabouts,” Scarlett said, her voice flat and emotionless. “I’ve never attempted to control your movements, and I have no interest in starting now.”

There was a time, early in their marriage, she had desperately hoped for more transparency from him.

But as the years passed with no change, she had gradually abandoned such futile expectations.

Vincent rarely returned home these days. So why would he suddenly bother reporting his every move to her now?

“Stay home this weekend and look after Vanessa properly. I’ll return on Sunday evening.” Vincent finally dropped the indirect approach and stated his expectations clearly, leaving no room for misunderstanding.

Seeing his directness after their usual dance of implications, Scarlett didn’t overanalyze his words or search for hidden meanings. She simply assumed he was traveling for legitimate business reasons, as he often did.

After all, he was the CEO of the massive Stewart Group with international reach. Countless responsibilities and decisions demanded his attention daily.

Occasional business trips were completely understandable given the scope of his position.

As for her own weekend, Scarlett already had both days off without being on call—a rare occurrence she had been quietly looking forward to.

After a brief moment of consideration, weighing her maternal duty against her need for rest, she nodded reluctantly. “Alright.”

With Vincent away and Sabrina apparently absent as well, Scarlett remained the only one available to accompany Vanessa.

She figured she simply needed to fulfill her basic maternal responsibilities.

Seeing Scarlett's agreement, Vincent finally relaxed slightly, the tension leaving his shoulders. "Good, get some proper rest now to recover fully. I'm going to check on Vanessa before I leave."

Scarlett didn't respond, simply settling herself deeper under the covers and turning away from him.

Vincent watched her lie down, his gaze lingering for a moment before he carefully tucked the blanket around her shoulders and gently smoothed her disheveled hair away from her damp

1/4

14:42 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 145 The Weekend Arrangement

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Scarlett instinctively closed her eyes at his touch, her body stiffening slightly. Vincent's unexpectedly gentle gestures felt almost surreal, like something from a dream rather than their reality.

Yet the lingering warmth where he'd touched served as undeniable proof that this was actually happening, however confusing it might be.

When Vincent entered Vanessa's room a few minutes later, he found her lying on the bed engaged in a video call with Sabrina, the device propped against her pillows.

They were connected but not actively conversing-each preoccupied with their own activities, the call serving more as comforting background presence than actual conversation.

On the other end, Sabrina was visibly tending to her ill mother, while Vanessa watched cartoons on a separate tablet, only occasionally glancing toward the screen.

The moment Vincent opened the door, Vanessa spotted him immediately, her face lighting up. “Daddy!”

Vanessa raised her arms toward him, signaling for Vincent to pick her up and hold her close.

Vincent’s expression softened at the sight of Vanessa, the hard edges of his face relaxing. He walked over and lifted Vanessa onto his lap, settling them both comfortably on the edge of the bed.

On the video feed, Sabrina was explaining something about medication schedules to her mother, her voice a soft murmur. Vincent paid little attention to their conversation, instead leaning down to tell Vanessa in a confidential tone. “Sweetheart, I’m going to Oakridge this weekend to visit Sabrina’s mother and check on her condition.”

Vanessa immediately looked up, her eyes widening with interest and excitement. “Daddy, I want to come too! Please take me with you!”

Vincent gently pinched her soft cheek in an affectionate gesture. “You’re still recovering, my dear, so it’s best you stay home and rest properly for now.”

Vanessa’s face fell instantly, her expression filling with clear disappointment and sadness, her lower lip trembling slightly.

Vincent lowered his voice soothingly, trying to soften the blow. “Mom will stay with you this weekend, keeping you company. Once you’re completely better and your stomach doesn’t hurt anymore, Daddy will take you somewhere special and fun, I promise.”

Vanessa remained visibly upset, hanging her head in silence and refusing to look at him.

2/4

14:42 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 145 The Weekend Arrangement

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585

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Vincent added after a moment, trying another approach, “If you behave well and listen to your mother while I’m away, Daddy will promise you one extra special wish when I return. Anything

you want.”

Vanessa finally looked up at him, her eyes curious and hopeful. “Anything I want? Really, Daddy?”

Vincent nodded, a small smile touching his lips. “Anything within reason, yes.”

Vanessa instantly brightened, the disappointment forgotten as she hugged Vincent’s arm tightly. “Can I make my wish now? Please, Daddy?”

Vincent adopted a mock-stern expression, though his eyes remained warm. “That depends entirely on your behavior while I’m gone. If you’re good and do everything your mother says, then you can make your wish when I return.”

Vanessa felt slightly disappointed at having to wait but already knew exactly what she wanted to ask for, the idea forming clearly in her mind.

“Daddy, I’ll be very good, I promise. So please come back quickly with Sabrina, okay?” she said, her voice sweet and pleading.

Vincent nodded, smoothing her hair. “Alright, I’ll do my best.”

Vincent departed from Ravenshade Villa as planned on Friday evening.

That night, though still feeling weak and drained, Scarlett slept on the couch in Vanessa’s room for Vanessa’s sake, wanting to be nearby if she needed anything during the night.

By the next morning, her fever had broken completely and she felt somewhat improved, though a lingering fatigue still clung to her bones.

After sharing a quiet breakfast with Vanessa at the dining table, she considered taking Vanessa out for some fresh air, hoping the change of scenery might improve both their moods.

So much had happened recently between them, and Vanessa’s attitude toward her kept fluctuating unpredictably, leaving Scarlett constantly off-balance.

When Scarlett tentatively suggested an outing to the nearby park, Vanessa didn’t object or complain, but displayed little enthusiasm-her responses muted and her manner suggesting she was merely going through the motions to satisfy Scarlett.

Whatever Vanessa’s true motivations or feelings, Scarlett chose not to dwell on them too deeply. She simply focused on fulfilling her duties as a mother, one task at a time.

Chapter 145 The Weekend Arrangement

Finished

They wandered through the neighborhood park for over an hour, before Scarlett took Vanessa grocery shopping at the nearby market, holding her hand carefully as they navigated the aisles.

By the time they returned to Ravensshade Villa, the morning had advanced and it was nearly ten o'clock, the sun climbing higher in the sky.

Wanting to prepare a special, nutritious meal for Vanessa to aid her recovery, Scarlett went to the kitchen early to begin preparations, gathering ingredients for Vanessa's favorite dishes.

Around eleven, as she was chopping vegetables, her phone rang from where it sat on the counter.

She glanced at the screen while wiping her hands-it was Melinda.

Melinda was the one who had assisted with the procedure during her second pregnancy.

Seeing Melinda's name flash on her screen, Scarlett couldn't help remembering the child who never entered the world, the tiny life she had chosen to end.

Back then, in her desperation, she had actually believed that having a second child might make Vincent stay, might somehow fix their broken marriage.

Looking back now with clearer eyes, she realized how utterly ridiculous and naive that notion had been.

She answered the call, pushing the painful memories aside. Melinda announced without preamble, "Scarlett, I'm arriving in Rivergate this afternoon for a conference. Would you like to have a meal together? It's been too long."

Scarlett didn't hesitate, grateful for the distraction. "Of course, I'd love to see you."

Normally, that would have concluded their conversation, with plans confirmed and goodbyes exchanged.

But Melinda kept pausing, leaving awkward silences in the conversation. Sensing Melinda's unusual hesitation, Scarlett finally asked, concern coloring her voice, "Melinda, is everything alright? You sound troubled."

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4/4

14:42 Sat, Jan 10

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Silent Dreams Never Die — 146

Chapter 146 The Frozen Account

After a heavy, meaningful sigh, Melinda finally confessed, "Scarlett, when I passed by the gynecology ward earlier today, I think I saw Vincent there."

85

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Scarlett paused only briefly in her movements, but responded with remarkable calmness, "I see. Thank for telling me."

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Melinda couldn't contain herself any longer, the words tumbling out in an angry rush. "But he wasn't alone! He was with a woman, and they looked extremely close, walking arm in arm. They were laughing and chatting intimately, completely absorbed in each other like a proper couple in love."

Scarlett immediately knew exactly who the woman must be, yet maintained her composed facade, not allowing even a flicker of emotion to show on her face. "Thank you. I understand the situation completely."

Noting Scarlett's detached reaction, Melinda couldn't help pressing further, her voice filled with concern. "Scarlett, are you truly alright with this?"

Scarlett replied evenly, as if discussing the weather, "Her name is Sabrina Winters. She's the woman Vincent has loved most for years, long before I entered the picture. Melinda, the real loser in any relationship is always the one who isn't loved."

Melinda grew increasingly frustrated on Scarlett's behalf. "But regardless of history, you're his legal wife! That woman, behaving so familiarly with a married man-how is she any different from a homewrecker? She should know her place!"

Scarlett let out a bitter laugh that held no humor. "To be perfectly honest, in Vincent's eyes, I'm probably the actual third wheel here."

Melinda suddenly felt a wave of helplessness wash over her. She didn't know what else to say that wouldn't cause Scarlett more pain.

After a prolonged silence filled with unspoken sympathy, she finally changed the subject to something safer. "How's your health been since... everything? Have you fully recovered now, both physically and emotionally?"

Scarlett managed a faint, unconvincing smile that didn't reach her eyes. "Yes, I'm doing quite well now. Don't worry about me."

Melinda finally relaxed slightly. "Good. If you ever hurt yourself again over a man who doesn't appreciate you, it simply wouldn't be worth it."

Scarlett merely offered another faint, strained smile and said nothing more, the silence speaking louder than words.

1/4

14:42 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 146 The Frozen Account

Finisfied

After lunch, Scarlett ensured Vanessa took her prescribed afternoon nap, tucking her in with careful hands. Once Vanessa woke up refreshed, she took her to the neighborhood playground for some much-needed outdoor time and sunshine.

Around five o'clock, Melinda called to announce she was nearly at their prearranged meeting point.

Scarlett promptly dropped Vanessa back home with Lily, changed into fresh clothes quickly, and headed out the door without delay.

She picked up Melinda from the bustling train station and took her to an upscale restaurant for an early dinner.

Throughout the meal, Melinda continued venting about Vincent's behavior. Scarlett simply listened with a quiet, fixed smile, clearly disengaged from the topic and merely humoring her friend.

After dinner, they went shopping together at an elegant department store.

Scarlett helped Melinda select two professional outfits for her conference, offering thoughtful advice, but somehow found herself drifting almost unconsciously toward the children's section, drawn by some deep maternal pull.

All those tiny dresses and little tops on miniature hangers were so adorable she couldn't resist browsing through them, her fingers gently touching the delicate fabrics.

Even though Vanessa currently seemed to despise her, Scarlett's maternal instincts still drew her irresistibly toward the beautiful children's clothing, imagining how sweet Vanessa would look in them.

Once properly inside the section, surrounded by miniature fashion, she selected numerous outfits for Vanessa, holding each piece up critically before adding it to her growing pile.

Watching Scarlett's focused selection process, Melinda couldn't help commenting with a sigh, "You're so completely devoted to your daughter. Maybe you should redirect some of that energy toward yourself occasionally."

Scarlett smiled softly, a genuine expression of maternal love. "This might be a one-time opportunity to do this for her. Who knows when I'll get to shop for her like this again if things continue as they are?"

Unable to argue with that sad reality, Melinda simply accompanied her patiently through the aisles, occasionally holding up an outfit for approval.

After filling several luxurious shopping bags with their selections, Scarlett finally announced she was ready to check out, looking satisfied with her purchases.

2/4

14:42 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 146 The Frozen Account

85

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The sales clerk tallied the items meticulously and announced with a professional smile, "That will be eighty-eight thousand dollars altogether, Ma'am."

Scarlett froze momentarily at the amount but didn't question it aloud, having grown accustomed to the prices in this exclusive boutique.

She knew this particular children's section carried exclusively luxury brands-excellent quality but notoriously expensive, catering to the city's wealthiest families.

Back when she and Vanessa had been closer, she'd shopped here frequently for special occasions. Sometimes spending a few thousand on a single outfit, sometimes over ten thousand per visit when she got carried away.

Price had never been an issue before, not with Vincent's generous allowances.

Moreover, Vincent had provided her with a dedicated bank card specifically for Vanessa's expenses and transferred substantial funds into it monthly without fail.

Initially, careful with money, she'd checked the balance regularly, but Vincent's transfers were always more than generous-sometimes reaching a million dollars, far exceeding what she could possibly spend on children's clothing and toys.

Eventually, grown accustomed to the abundance, she'd stopped monitoring the balance altogether, trusting the funds would always be there.

Melinda was startled by the total but then reasoned silently. Well, she is Vincent's wife after all, and this is their only child. Of course they'd use only premium products.

Scarlett retrieved her black card from her purse and handed it to the clerk with practiced ease. "The PIN is 990824," she provided automatically.

The clerk swiped the card through the payment terminal with a smooth motion, but the machine emitted an abrupt, jarring beep that echoed in the quiet boutique. "Transaction declined. Please try alternative payment method."

Hearing the unexpected alert, Scarlett stood completely stunned, her hand still extended where she'd offered the card.

The clerk recognized Scarlett as a regular VIP customer familiar with her substantial spending patterns, yet the card had genuinely failed. She appeared equally surprised and slightly embarrassed.

Melinda looked completely bewildered, glancing between her friend and the declined card. "What's happening? Is there some mistake?"

The clerk inspected the card again carefully and explained to Scarlett in a hushed, apologetic

14:42 Sat, Jan 10

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85

Chapter 146 The Frozen Account

tone, “Ms. Theron, your card appears to have been frozen or suspended.”

Scarlett frowned in genuine confusion. “How is that possible?”

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The clerk double-checked the terminal display and confirmed with growing discomfort, “Ms. Theron, the card has definitely been frozen by the issuing bank.”

Scarlett remained motionless, shocked into silence for a long moment before finally instructing the clerk in a strained voice, “Could you please hold these items for me for a short while? I need to make an urgent phone call to sort this out.”

With that, she grabbed Melinda’s arm firmly and hurried out of the children’s section.

Once they reached the relative privacy of the emergency stairwell, Scarlett didn’t hesitate—she immediately dialed Vincent’s number with trembling fingers.

She had anticipated difficulty reaching him, but to her complete surprise, he answered instantly on the second ring.

“What’s wrong? Has Vanessa fallen ill again?” Vincent’s voice carried immediate, genuine concern the moment the call connected.

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14:42 Sat, Jan 10

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die – 147[935 words]

Chapter 147 Damian's Intervention

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85

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Scarlett didn't address his question about Vanessa. She cut directly to the matter at hand. "The bank card you gave me has been frozen."

Vincent paused momentarily, then recalled the instructions he'd given Abbott previously. Yes, he had indeed ordered the card to be frozen.

He didn't bother offering an explanation. After a brief silence, he asked Scarlett, "What were you trying to purchase?"

Scarlett opened her mouth, wanting to demand why the card was frozen, but seeing Vincent's dismissive attitude made it clear he was fully aware of the situation. The words died in her throat.

Then Vincent stated abruptly, "I'll transfer some money to you instead."

Scarlett felt anger rising, but she was too emotionally drained to argue. She told him flatly, "Never mind."

With that, she ended the call without hesitation.

Melinda, standing nearby, had overheard the entire conversation. Even without full context, she could easily piece together what had happened.

She immediately erupted at Scarlett, "That absolute jerk! How can he treat you like this and you're still not filing for divorce?"

Scarlett's voice was hoarse with suppressed emotion. "It will happen soon."

The more Melinda thought about it, the angrier she became. "That despicable man! He spends millions on fireworks displays for his mistress' birthday, not to mention all the luxury gifts and extravagant surprises. He casually blows through tens of millions, but when you want to buy your own daughter a dress costing a few thousand, you have to beg him for money? I swear, how does he not get run over every time he crosses the street?"

Scarlett felt disappointed and hurt, but by now she had grown accustomed to such treatment. It barely registered anymore.

"Melinda, I simply won't make the purchase. There's no need to waste energy getting angry over someone like him."

Melinda was practically shaking with rage. "I genuinely want to strangle that scumbag with my bare hands."

Scarlett squeezed her friend's hand reassuringly. "Let it go. He's not worth your outrage."

1/3

14:43 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 147 Damian's Intervention

85

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Incidents like this had occurred too many times to count. If she allowed herself to react to every single one, she'd have drowned in bitterness long ago.

Melinda's heart ached for Scarlett. "You threw away your academic career for that worthless man, and look where it's gotten you. You graduated at the top of our class, yet ended up with the most disappointing life. After all these years, you're still just a junior doctor."

Even Melinda, who had been an average student, had advanced to become a lead obstetrician. But Scarlett, who once shone so brilliantly...

Scarlett didn't wish to dwell on the topic. She told Melinda, "I'll focus on catching up studies and professional development."

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Melinda believed she was capable of remarkable achievements, but who could possibly compensate for those five wasted years?

Eventually, Scarlett led Melinda back to the children's section. The items she had selected earlier remained piled at the checkout counter.

The clerk noticed her return and approached promptly.

Scarlett looked at her, somewhat embarrassed. "I apologize, regarding those items earlier..."

She hadn't finished saying "I won't be taking them" when a deep, authoritative voice sounded behind her. "Package everything up."

Scarlett turned to look. It was Damian, dressed in his signature black trench coat. Black suited him perfectly-he carried that dangerous, rebellious aura, yet his sharp, handsome features made him resemble a movie star more than an actual troublemaker.

He was grinning at Scarlett, his expression both arrogant and wild.

Scarlett frowned at him. "That won't be necessary. I don't want any of it."

Damian strode over, retrieved a sleek black credit card from his coat, and handed it to the clerk. He raised an eyebrow defiantly and declared, "When a woman says she doesn't want something, she usually means the opposite. Pack everything. Charge it to my card."

Remembering Nathan's warning, Scarlett didn't dare get too close to Damian. Seeing him prepared to pay, she panicked and urgently whispered to the clerk, "I said I don't want these. Even if he pays, I won't accept them."

With that, Scarlett grabbed Melinda's hand and strode decisively out of the children's section.

She reasoned that if Damian witnessed her firm refusal, he would abandon his intention to purchase the items.

2/3

14:43 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 147 Damian's Intervention

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Her heart was still racing as they exited the shopping mall.

Melinda remarked, “Scarlett, that incredibly attractive man seemed genuinely interested in you.”

Scarlett simply shook her head. “You’re reading too much into it. He’s an infamous playboy. He shows interest in countless women. I’m a divorced mother-why would he possibly be serious about me?”

Melinda remained convinced. “I have good intuition about these things. If he wasn’t interested, why would he offer to pay for your purchases?”

Scarlett didn’t know how to respond, so she stated simply, “It could be anyone. But it definitely won’t be him.”

The Langley family ranked among the most powerful in Rivergate, and Damian essentially lived under a spotlight. Even if he didn’t marry some wealthy socialite, he would inevitably end up with someone from an equally prominent family.

Melinda remained undeterred. She continued encouraging Scarlett. “Just give it a chance! He’s incredibly handsome, and you’re just going to let him pass by without even trying?”

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14:43 Sat, Jan 10

Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

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**No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce -
Silent Dreams Never Die — 148[839 words
]**

Chapter 148 Birthday Remembrance

Melinda's teasing caused Scarlett's ears to flush crimson.

85

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"Melinda, stop joking around." Scarlett nudged Melinda's elbow gently, attempting to maintain a composed expression.

Melinda understood Scarlett wasn't particularly adventurous in romance, but she couldn't resist pressing further. "Just consider it, will you? You can't remain hung up on one person forever. You've tried Vincent-why not give someone new a chance? Life becomes monotonous without variety. Besides, he's the one who betrayed your trust first."

Scarlett pressed her lips together, forcing a faint smile. "Let's change the subject. I'd rather not discuss this anymore."

Recognizing Scarlett's discomfort, Melinda dropped the matter.

They continued strolling through the evening streets, sampling various local Rivergate delicacies from food stalls.

Around ten o'clock, Melinda finally declared herself tired and ready to return to her hotel.

Scarlett drove her to the hotel entrance, but just before Melinda exited the car, she suddenly remembered something. Digging through her bag, she retrieved a small, elegantly wrapped box and handed it to Scarlett. "This is for you. I remembered your birthday is approaching."

Scarlett's eyes moistened as she accepted the gift. "Thank you, Melinda."

Since marrying Vincent, she had severed ties with the Theron family. Each year, Violet would secretly send birthday wishes and transfer a substantial sum of money.

But beyond Violet, no one else remembered her birthday anymore.

It had been years since Scarlett had properly celebrated the occasion.

Had Melinda not mentioned it, Scarlett would have completely forgotten her twenty-seventh birthday was merely days away.

Melinda understood the sorrow in Scarlett's heart. She embraced her tightly and advised, "Be kinder to yourself from now on. If someone doesn't deserve space in your heart, don't permit them to remain there."

Scarlett leaned against her shoulder and murmured, "I will."

Then, somewhat abruptly, she asked, "By the way, Nolan is also in Rivergate. Don't you want to see him?"

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14:43 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 148 Birthday Remembrance

Melinda's smile faded instantly. She shook her head firmly. "No. I still remember how thoroughly he rejected my confession."

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During her final-year internship, Melinda had mustered the courage to confess her feelings to Nolan.

Very few people knew about this incident-Scarlett being among the privileged few.

Nolan had declined her advances, stating he wasn't interested in dating at that time.

After that rejection, Melinda had never contacted Nolan again.

Scarlett respected Melinda's decision. "Alright, I won't pressure you to meet him."

Melinda stepped out of the car, stood by the door, and told Scarlett, "Drive safely now. Message me when you arrive home."

Scarlett didn't return to Ravensshade Villa until eleven that night.

Assuming Vanessa would already be asleep, she moved quietly upstairs, minimizing any noise.

But when she opened Vanessa's bedroom door, she found the bed empty.

A wave of panic washed over Scarlett. She checked Vincent's room-still no sign of Vanessa.

Hearing the commotion upstairs, Lily hurried up to investigate.

Seeing Scarlett's distressed expression, Lily quickly explained, "Mrs. Stewart, Mr. Clarke took Vanessa out this evening. It was under Mr. Stewart's instructions."

Scarlett breathed a sigh of relief but pressed further, "Where did Abbott take Vanessa?"

Lily thought momentarily before responding, "Since it was Mr. Stewart's arrangement, I didn't inquire specifically. But from what Mr. Clarke mentioned, I believe they went to meet with Mr. Stewart."

Scarlett understood immediately. They weren't merely visiting Vincent-they were obviously going to see Sabrina.

Still concerned about Vanessa's wellbeing, she stated, "I'll call Vincent directly."

Returning to her bedroom, Scarlett dialed Vincent's number.

He answered relatively quickly.

"Has Vanessa arrived safely?" Scarlett asked directly.

2/3

14:43 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 148 Birthday Remembrance

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Vincent confirmed, "Yes, she just got here."

Simultaneously, Scarlett could clearly hear Vanessa and Sabrina chatting happily in the background.

Though she couldn't distinguish their exact words, Vanessa's delighted laughter was unmistakable.

Unable to bear listening further, Scarlett said curtly, "Alright, I'm ending the call."

But Vincent interjected suddenly, “Scarlett, there’s something I need to discuss with you.”

He rarely speaks to her so gently.

Scarlett paused briefly before responding coldly, “Whatever you intend to do, just proceed. You don’t require my approval.”

Before Vincent could elaborate, Scarlett terminated the call.

She sat on the sofa, clutching her phone, lost in thought for a considerable time.

Then her phone screen illuminated-an incoming call.

Assuming it was Vincent calling back, she was surprised to see Nolan’s name displayed.

“Nolan,” she answered, striving to sound composed.

Nolan detected her subdued tone but refrained from probing. He simply stated, “It’s the weekend tomorrow. Would you like to study at the library together?”

Scarlett didn’t decline. “What time?”

“Ten o’clock,” Nolan specified.

Scarlett agreed promptly.

She was preparing for graduate school examinations, and time was growing short. However, with Vanessa’s recent illness, she had neglected her studies considerably.

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14:43 Sat, Jan 10

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 149[814 words]

Chapter 149 Library Encounter

420

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With Vanessa away, Scarlett seized the opportunity to immerse herself completely in her studies.

The next morning, she rose exceptionally early. After completing her morning routine, she drove away from Ravenshade Villa.

When she arrived at the library, Nolan was already waiting for her.

Though they had planned to study together, Nolan primarily allowed Scarlett to focus independently, intervening only to answer her questions and explain complex concepts.

Around noon, they took a break to grab light refreshments outside.

Throughout the afternoon, Nolan remained nearby, providing quiet companionship while Scarlett studied.

Approaching five o'clock, Nolan received an urgent call from the hospital-an emergency surgery required his immediate attention.

After Nolan's departure, Scarlett continued studying alone for an extended period. She only looked

up

when dizziness and blurred vision finally forced her to pause.

That was when she realized darkness had fallen outside.

Gathering her materials, she proceeded to the parking lot and located her car. Just as she settled into the driver's seat and reached for the ignition, a low, familiar voice emanated from the passenger seat. "Why did you return my gift?"

Startled, Scarlett whipped her head around to find Damian seated beside her, his expression filled with clear frustration and resentment.

“How... how did you get into my car?” Scarlett demanded, her voice trembling with alarm.

Damian ignored her question. Instead, he leaned across the console, seized her wrist, and with a single powerful motion, pulled her uncomfortably close.

Their proximity became intimate, their scents intertwining in the confined space, creating a palpable tension.

Scarlett’s eyelashes fluttered nervously. Damian stared into her deep eyes, those long lashes repeatedly brushing against his consciousness, unsettling his composure.

When he spoke again, his voice was husky and rough. “Answer me. Why did you return what I gave you?”

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Chapter 149 Library Encounter

Though Damian appeared angry, something in Scarlett’s gaze softened his fury. He unconsciously loosened his grip on her wrist.

Seeing her wince, he worried he had hurt her.

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Scarlett attempted to pull away several times, but despite Damian’s seemingly relaxed hold, she remained trapped.

She looked at him helplessly. “Damian, I cannot accept such gifts from you. We don’t share that kind of relationship. It’s inappropriate.”

Everyone knew Damian’s reputation as a flirt who lavished extravagant gifts.

He had famously spent fortunes on women on multiple occasions.

Even if mostly rumor, Scarlett had personally witnessed him dropping astronomical sums on jewelry at auctions.

Scarlett’s words appeared to infuriate Damian further. He tightened his grip on her hand and leaned even closer.

Soon, their noses were nearly touching.

Their proximity became overwhelming, their breaths mingling, the air thick with unspoken tension.

Scarlett tried to turn away, but Damian cupped the back of her head, holding her firmly in place.

She found herself completely immobilized.

His body pressed closer, radiating intense heat like a furnace.

Their lips hovered mere centimeters apart.

Panicked, Scarlett murmured, “Damian, don’t do this. I’m Vincent’s wife.”

Damian had been restraining himself, but Scarlett’s reminder only intensified the fire within.

He abandoned all restraint. Lowering his head, he captured her lips in a forceful, demanding

kiss.

His mouth carried the distinct flavors of tobacco and mint, merging into a potent combination that invaded Scarlett’s senses.

His kiss was ferocious, like a hurricane crashing against her defenses. She couldn’t evade,

212

14:43 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 149 Library Encounter

couldn’t escape, couldn’t even protest.

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Scarlett’s head tilted back, forced to accept his assault.

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She dug her nails into his waist, pressing hard enough to nearly break skin, yet he remained unmoved.

When the pain registered, Damian released a low, guttural groan.

The sound sent shivers through Scarlett's scalp. Releasing his waist, she began pounding her fists against his chest instead.

Damian reacted swiftly-he captured both her wrists with one hand, pressing them against his chest, forcing her to feel the defined muscles beneath.

Oxygen became scarce. Scarlett felt herself suffocating.

Damian finally released her, his eyes gleaming with mischief as he observed her flushed face. "So, sweetheart, how was that?"

Scarlett's complexion deepened further. "Damian, you're utterly shameless."

Damian maintained his grip on her hand, preventing retreat. He gazed down at her reddened, swollen lips and couldn't suppress a low chuckle. "Did you enjoy my kiss?"

Scarlett glared at him, fury evident. "Release me first."

Noticing tears welling in her eyes, Damian realized he had crossed a line and relinquished his hold.

But the moment he released her, Scarlett delivered a sharp slap across his face. "Damian, I'm not some commodity you can purchase with gifts and manipulate as you please. I have a husband and a daughter."

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14:43 Sat, Jan 10

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Silent Dreams Never Die — 150

Chapter 150 The Emerald Bracelet

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After being slapped, Damian's head snapped sharply to the side from the force of the impact. He showed no visible anger, merely pressing his tongue against the stinging spot inside his cheek where her palm had connected with his face.

He turned back slowly to face Scarlett, his expression unreadable. "You know, Ms. Theron, I've never encountered a woman as utterly oblivious to her own worth as you appear to be."

Scarlett let out a bitter, humorless laugh that held years of accumulated pain. "So what? Are you disappointed that I don't fit whatever fantasy you've constructed in your mind?"

Her eyes glistened with unshed tears brought on by frustration and humiliation, but when she looked directly at Damian, she stubbornly refused to let them fall, determined not to give him that satisfaction.

Damian plucked a tissue from the car's console, pinched it elegantly between his fingers, and gently dabbed at the moisture gathering at the corners of Scarlett's eyes. "I'm disappointed for you, Ms. Theron, not in you. There's a significant difference."

Scarlett turned her face away from his touch, finding his sudden tenderness more unsettling than his usual arrogance. "Damian, I appreciate you helping me on two separate occasions, but let's be clear-you owe me nothing, and I owe you nothing in return. We're even."

Damian suddenly pulled Scarlett firmly into his arms, ignoring her resistance, and rested his chin atop her head. He held her so tightly against his chest that she couldn't possibly break free, his arms like steel bands around her.

His voice softened considerably, almost whispering into her hair as if sharing a secret. "No, you're mistaken. You do owe me, whether you're willing to acknowledge it or not."

Scarlett had no idea what he meant by this cryptic statement, and truthfully, she didn't want to speculate about his intentions. She pushed against his solid, unyielding chest. "Damian, I've told you repeatedly-I'm a married woman. Whatever game you're playing, I'm not interested."

Even if divorce was imminent, hanging over her head like a storm cloud, the legal fact remained that she and Vincent were still bound together in the eyes of the law and society.

Damian still refused to release her from his embrace. He murmured against her hair, his voice dropping to a conspiratorial tone, "With Vincent's infamous three-minute performances in the bedroom, do you genuinely believe he can satisfy a woman of your passion and intelligence?"

Scarlett froze completely, flustered and mortified by his bluntness. "You-how dare you!" she sputtered, unable to form a coherent response.

Damian grinned wolfishly, radiating pure arrogance and confidence. "What? Did I strike a nerve

1/4

14:43 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 150 The Emerald Bracelet

with that observation?"

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He had merely been fishing for information, testing the waters with his provocative comment, but Scarlett's flustered reaction had confirmed his suspicion about the state of her marital intimacy.

Scarlett refused to discuss the intimate matter further, maintaining a stubborn silence and staring fixedly ahead.

But her silence and the blush creeping up her neck spoke volumes more than any words could have.

Damian lowered his head, hooked a finger under Scarlett's chin, and forced her to lock eyes with him, a teasing, knowing smile playing on his lips. "If he's that incompetent in bed, why not give me a chance to show you what real pleasure feels like?"

Scarlett didn't want to answer his provocative question. She broke free from his grasp sudden jerk and reached for the car door handle, desperate for escape.

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The moment she opened it, a man with a professional camera stood directly outside.

Damian reacted instantly with reflexes born of dealing with paparazzi, yanking Scarlett back into the car and pulling her tightly against his chest once more.

The center console was the only barrier separating them from the front seats, creating an awkward divide.

Scarlett ended up sprawled awkwardly across the hard console, pinned firmly against Damian's torso with no room to maneuver.

Worried the paparazzo might capture her face clearly, Damian enveloped her completely with his trench coat.

Scarlett's face was buried in Damian's chest, her nose pressed against the fine fabric of his shirt. She could distinctly smell the faint, intriguing blend of tobacco and mint on his clothes, a scent that was uniquely his.

The combination was surprisingly not unpleasant, much to her annoyance.

Damian's hand pressed firmly against Scarlett's lower back beneath the covering coat. She knew he was doing it intentionally, taking advantage of the situation, but she didn't dare protest or even move in her current vulnerable position.

If the camera outside captured her identity clearly, the consequences would be catastrophic for her already precarious situation.

She knew all too well how merciless online comments could be.

2/4

14:43 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 150 The Emerald Bracelet

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It was frighteningly easy to destroy someone's life completely with a few well-placed photos and sensational headlines.

The reporter outside clearly had no intention of leaving despite Damian's obvious displeasure.

Damian turned his head toward the camera while keeping Scarlett shielded, appearing completely unbothered by the intrusion. Instead, he smiled coolly and remarked with

deceptive calm, “You certainly know how to chase a headline. I’ll give you credit for persistence.”

The reporter chuckled nervously, “Mr. Langley, would you mind if I got a shot of the lovely lady beside you?”

Damian maintained his chilling smile. “Do you mind resigning from your job?”

The reporter froze, initially misunderstanding the threat. Then Damian’s expression abruptly turned icy, all pretense of amusement vanishing. “Since you don’t seem prepared to quit voluntarily, I don’t mind assisting you with that process.”

The reporter finally grasped the serious threat, snatched his expensive camera protectively, and fled immediately without looking back.

Chasing scoops was one thing, but provoking powerful figures like Damian wasn’t worth losing his career over. This job was already stressful enough without making personal enemies.

Once certain the reporter had gone for good, Damian gave Scarlett’s waist a deliberate, possessive squeeze. “What? Not finished lying there yet?”

Scarlett threw off the suffocating trench coat and gulped several deep breaths of fresh air.

But before she could fully recover her composure, Damian ordered in a commanding tone, “Drive. Now. This location isn’t secure, and others might come looking.”

Scarlett understood all too well the terror of online exposure and becoming tabloid fodder. She had no desire to become the next viral target for gossip and speculation, so she promptly started the car and drove away from the scene as quickly as possible.

Only when they reached a quieter, safer location several blocks away did Scarlett finally pull the car over to the curb and stop the engine.

Damian remained seated beside her, making no move to exit the vehicle. Scarlett turned to him with visible frustration. “You-”

Before she could finish her sentence, Damian interrupted smoothly, “Give me your hand.”

Scarlett eyed him warily, her instincts screaming caution. “What are you scheming now?”

3/4

14:43 Sat, Jan 10

Chapter 150 The Emerald Bracelet

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89

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Seeing her reluctance to comply, Damian simply seized her wrist himself with firm determination. He retrieved something from beneath his coat and, before Scarlett could react or pull away, slipped it onto her wrist with practiced ease.

Looking down at her hand, she recognized it immediately-the exquisite emerald bracelet he had purchased for her.

She froze in place, then instinctively attempted to remove it, her fingers scrambling at the smooth stone.

Damian watched her struggling efforts, his voice deceptively calm yet carrying a clear, unmistakable warning. "You'd be wise not to take that off, Scarlett."

Once the bracelet was fastened securely around her slender wrist, it proved surprisingly difficult to remove. Scarlett struggled for some time, but couldn't work it free past her knuckle.

Frustrated and feeling trapped, she glared at Damian with burning eyes. "What exactly do you want from me? Why are you doing this?"

Damian didn't even glance at her, seemingly unaffected by her anger. He simply leaned back comfortably in his seat and laced his fingers behind his head as if he hadn't a care in the world.

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14:43 Sat, Jan 10

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