

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 21[660 words]

Chapter 21 Home Talk

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Vanessa turned to Sabrina, her eyes shining. “Sabrina, you’re so amazing! The best ever!”

Sabrina brushed a strand of hair from Vanessa’s face, her voice warm and doting. “You’ll be just as awesome when you’re older-you’ve got such a great dad, after all.”

Vanessa glanced at Vincent, pride swelling in her chest. Her dad was a successful businessman. and Sabrina was a famous pianist-they were like superheroes to her.

Across the table, Harris sat quietly, swirling his water. He wasn’t one for gossip, but the woman by the door looked familiar. He racked his brain for a minute before it clicked-he’d seen her at Vanessa’s birthday party. She was Vincent’s wife.

He muttered under his breath, “Small world-I know that woman.”

His words made Vincent, Vanessa, and Sabrina all turn to look. Scarlett had her back to them. but her silhouette was unmistakable.

Vanessa groaned. “Ugh, why do I keep seeing Mom everywhere? It’s so annoying.”

Vincent picked up a rib and set it on Vanessa’s plate. “Just eat. Don’t worry about it.”

Vanessa pouted, suddenly losing her appetite. She’d seen Scarlett at the concert, and now here —was her mom following them? A tiny part of her hoped Scarlett was there to apologize, but she pushed the thought away. She was still mad.

When she snuck another glance a few minutes later, Scarlett was gone. Vanessa frowned, confused-where had her mom gone?

Vincent hadn't noticed Scarlett leave, and he didn't care to ask. His attention was on Sabrina, who was telling a story about her last concert tour.

Later that night, Nolan dropped Scarlett off at Theron Manor. Violet was waiting outside, wrapped in a thick coat.

"Violet? What are you doing out here?" Scarlett asked, confused.

Violet's eyes flicked to Nolan-tall, handsome, dressed in a tailored suit-and then back to Scarlett. "Just waiting for you. Your dad's inside-he says he needs to talk to you about something important."

Nolan stepped out of the car, offering a polite smile. "I'm Nolan, Scarlett's college senior. We used to study together."

Violet smiled back. "Nice to meet you. Thanks for dropping her off."

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After Nolan left-Scarlett had promised to treat him to dinner soon-Violet raised an eyebrow. "Just friends?"

Scarlett nodded firmly. "Just good friends. Nothing more."

Violet could tell Scarlett wasn't ready for romance, so she dropped the subject. "C'mon-your parents are worried. The mood inside is pretty tense."

Scarlett's heart sank. She followed Violet into the house, where Henry and Diana were sitting on the couch. The air felt heavy-there was a coffee set on the table, but no one had poured a cup.

Henry stood up when he saw her, his voice gruff but soft. "Scarlett. Come sit. It's been a while since you made coffee for me."

Before she married Vincent, Scarlett had always made coffee for Henry. He loved her brews, and they'd chat while she worked-about school, about her dreams of becoming a doctor. But after she married, she'd stopped coming home as often, too busy trying to please the Stewarts.

Now, she felt a twinge of guilt. She'd bent over backward for Vincent and his family, but she'd neglected her own.

She sat on a small stool by the table, warming the coffee pot and measuring out coffee beans- her movements smooth, practiced. Her parents watched quietly, their eyes full of worry.

When the coffee was ready, she handed a cup to Henry. "Dad. It's still your favorite-Americanos."

Diana didn't drink coffee at night-she hated the way it kept her up. Before Scarlett got married, the Theron family's life was actually quite warm. Nathan was sharp-tongued but soft- hearted. Back then, he always said that Scarlett should marry someone who would cherish, love, and hold her in the palm of his hand.

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Awakened Housewife Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 22[662 words]

Chapter 22 Grandparents' Wish

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But life never went the way she'd hoped-not even close. In the end, she'd married Vincent, a man who'd never once loved her.

Everything shifted, though, after Violet married Nathan. For the first time in a long while, Scarlett gained someone in her family who truly cared about her-someone who saw her. As her sister-in-law, Violet didn't just go through the motions of kindness; she treated Scarlett like she was her own little sister, the kind who'd have her back no matter what.

Scarlett knew exactly why Diana was scared to drink coffee at night. And if she was being honest with herself, she knew she was part of the reason too. Ever since she'd rushed into marrying Vincent-no second thoughts, no hesitation-Diana had spent every night crying herself to sleep. Back then, the woman could barely get a single peaceful hour of rest; her nights were just a cycle of worry and tears, all because of Scarlett's hasty choice.

Henry held the cup but didn't drink. He stared at Scarlett for a long time before speaking. "We know you want a divorce. That's fine-we support you. But what about Vanessa? She's your daughter. You almost died giving birth to her. You have to fight for custody."

Scarlett's chest ached. Of course she wanted Vanessa-who wouldn't want their own child? But

Vanessa didn't want her.

"Dad, it's not that I don't want her," she said, her voice tight. "It's that she doesn't want me. She's mad at me. She'd rather stay with Vincent and Sabrina."

Henry's jaw tightened. "Vanessa's a little girl. She needs her mom. The Stewarts only care about having a son-do you really think they'll treat her right? Your mom and I will help you raise her. We'll give her the love she deserves."

Scarlett looked down at her hands. She knew Henry was right, but she also knew Vincent loved Vanessa. He might not have loved her, but he was a good father.

"I trust Vincent to take care of her," she said quietly.

Henry slammed his cup down-gently, but hard enough to make the coffee slosh. "You trust him more than us? Don't you see? We're the ones who love you. We're the ones who want what's best for you and Vanessa."

Tears pricked Scarlett's eyes. "I know, Dad. I just... I don't want to hurt Vanessa more. She's already mad at me. If I fight for custody, she'll hate me forever."

Henry's voice softened. "At least let us meet her. I've never even held her since she was a baby. I've been saving things for her-toys, books, a little dress I found at a market. I just want to see her. Once."

Chapter 22 Grandparents' Wish

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Diana wiped a tear from her cheek. "Your dad hasn't slept well in weeks, worrying about her. We just want to be part of her life. Even if it's just a visit."

Scarlett took a deep breath. She couldn't say no to her parents. "Okay. I'll try. I'll talk to Vincent. I'll ask if you can meet her."

That night, after her shower, Scarlett stood in front of her vanity, wrapped in a towel. She stared at her reflection for a long time before picking up her phone. She needed to call Vincent.

He answered on the first ring-unusual, since he usually ignored her calls. "What is it?" His voice was cold, no hint of warmth.

Scarlett's heart didn't flutter like it used to. She felt nothing but calm. "Is Vanessa there? I need to talk to her."

"She's here," Vincent said. There was a pause, then Scarlett heard him call out. "Vanessa. Your mom wants to talk to you."

Vanessa's voice came through, sulky and loud. "No! I don't want to talk to her. She hasn't apologized to Sabrina yet."

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Awakened Housewife Ignore Betrayer's Beggings

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 23

Chapter 23 A Cold Call

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The teacher always said, “If you mess up, own up to it. That way, you might still walk away with a gold star.”

Scarlett had no idea what was going through Vanessa’s head-and honestly, she didn’t care to play guesswork. If Vanessa didn’t want to answer the phone, Scarlett wasn’t about to badger her into it. Just as she reached to end the call, Vincent suddenly dropped his voice, sharp and cold. “Vanessa Stewart.”

He used her full name. That was a dead giveaway-he was furious.

Vanessa had always been a little scared of Vincent. She flinched at the sound of her name, but still mumbled defiantly, “Dad, Mom’s the one who messed up! She didn’t even say sorry to Sabrina. I’m not taking her call.”

Scarlett heard every word, and confusion washed over her. “What are you talking about?” she blurted out, her voice tight with frustration.

Vincent tore his glare away from Vanessa and snapped back into the phone, “What do you think?”

Before Scarlett could wrap her head around his words, a soft, warm voice-Sabrina’s-filtered through from Vincent’s side. “Vanessa, time for your bath. You’ve got school bright and early tomorrow.”

That was the last straw. Scarlett didn’t even bother hanging up gently-she just ended the call, her fingers trembling.

She stood at her vanity, her legs suddenly wobbly, like the floor beneath her had shifted. She had to grip the edge of the counter to keep from stumbling, her reflection in the mirror looking pale and unsteady. Vanessa’s words had cut her deep-sharp, like a knife to the chest. What had she done, exactly, to make her own daughter think she was the one in the wrong?

And Vincent? Sabrina? The thought of them made her sick to her stomach. She’d barely stepped away from being Vincent’s wife, and they were already acting like they belonged together-shacked up, like she’d never even existed. Vincent probably “worked overtime” in Sabrina’s bed, she thought bitterly. With her? He’d only ever given her those rushed, cold three minutes, like she was an afterthought.

The next morning, Vincent rolled out of bed and headed downstairs, only to find Vanessa already picking at her breakfast. He slid into a chair at the table, but didn't so much as glance at her-his jaw tight, his mood still sour from the night before.

Vanessa kept her head down, poking at her toast, well aware Vincent was angry. She'd ignored Scarlett's call on purpose last night, and even though Vincent hadn't yelled or punished her, his

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Chapter 23 A Cold Call

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silence was louder than any scolding. After he'd hung up, he hadn't said goodnight, hadn't checked on her-nothing. She knew that look, that cold shoulder. He was mad. Really, truly mad.

"Dad..." she finally whispered, turning her head toward him slowly, her voice soft, like she was tiptoeing around a minefield.

Just then, Vincent's phone rang. He didn't even acknowledge Vanessa-he just grabbed the phone and swiped to answer. It was a call from Stewart Manor, his grandfather, Xavier's number flashing on the screen.

Xavier's voice boomed through the speaker, gruff and full of irritation. "You and Scarlett haven't brought Vanessa to see me in six months! My birthday's coming up, and I've got plans with the guys-but what, if I didn't call, you'd just let this old man rot alone? You're even gonna take away my chance to see my great-granddaughter and granddaughter-in-law now?"

Xavier had always been short-tempered, but he held all the power in the family. He'd built the Stewart Group from the ground up-without him, they'd never be the most influential family in town. Vincent had grown up living with Xavier, and their bond was tight-closer than with anyone else. If it hadn't been for Xavier's insistence, Vincent would've never agreed to marry Scarlett, not even if she'd held a knife to his throat. But when Xavier spoke, Vincent had no choice but to listen.

Hearing Xavier's hurt, sharp words, Vincent let out a half-hearted chuckle, his tone softening a little. "We'll swing by when we get a free minute, Grandpa."

Xavier wasn't having it. "A free minute? When's that gonna be, Vincent? Don't feed me that garbage. I want a real date. If you don't bring your wife and my great-granddaughter over here, don't bother showing your face again."

Vincent was used to Xavier's dramatic threats, but he still frowned, knowing he couldn't brush this off. "How about in the next couple of days?"

Xavier didn't care about his excuses. "Tonight," he barked, firm and final.

Vincent hesitated, his mind racing-tonight was supposed to be...

He started to say something, "Tonight might be a little-"

But Xavier cut him off, his voice sharper than ever, "If you wanna let me die alone in this big house, then fine. Go right ahead."

Then he hung up, the line going dead with a click, loud enough to echo through Vincent's phone.

Vincent stared at the screen for a second, silent, his jaw set. When he finally set the phone down, Vanessa had scooted her chair closer, her eyes wide. "Dad, was that Great-Grandpa?"

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Chapter 23 A Cold Call

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They were father and daughter, after all-grudges between them never lasted long. Vincent finally looked at her, his expression softening a touch. "Yeah. He says he wants to see you."

Vanessa's face lit up, her legs swinging back and forth under the table. "Yay! I haven't seen him forever-I miss him so much!"

Xavier had always spoiled Vanessa rotten. Whatever she wanted-her favorite snacks, the latest toys, even silly little trinkets-he'd get it for her without a second thought. Vincent had always thought Xavier coddled her too much, which was why he didn't take her to Stewart Manor very often.

Watching Vanessa's excitement, Vincent decided to be upfront. "Mom's gonna come too."

Vanessa's smile faded instantly. She pouted, crossing her arms. "Then I don't wanna go."

Vincent didn't push her-instead, he pulled out the one card he knew would work. "If you don't go, Great-Grandpa's gonna be really sad. You don't wanna make him upset, do you?"

Vanessa's resolve crumbled right away. She sighed, nodding slowly. "Okay... I'll go with you, Dad."

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Awakened Housewife Ignore Betrayer's Begg

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 24

Chapter 24 Reluctant Visit

Vincent offered a faint, tight smile and said nothing more.

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By the time breakfast was halfway done, he pulled out his phone and dialed Scarlett. He rarely reached out to her first-even more, he hadn't saved her number with a name. He'd just memorized the last few digits, scrolling through his call log until he found the right one.

The phone rang, and Scarlett picked up within seconds.

"What do you want?" Her voice was sharp, edged with impatience-like she didn't have time for whatever he was calling about.

Vincent paused for a split second, as if weighing his words, before finally speaking. "Grandpa wants us to come to Stewart Manor tonight. He said he misses Vanessa... and you."

Scarlett was behind the wheel at that moment, driving to work. When she heard his words, she froze for a heartbeat, her hands tightening on the steering wheel. Then she replied, her voice quiet and a little hoarse, "Got it."

She wasn't agreeing for Vincent, or even for Vanessa. She was doing it for Xavier-for the kindness he'd always shown her. She owed him that much. Xavier was the only one in the entire Stewart family who'd ever treated her like a real person, not just a trophy wife or Vanessa's mother. That was a debt she'd never forget.

Vincent wasn't surprised she'd said yes. He just added, "I'll come pick you up this afternoon."

Scarlett didn't hesitate. "No need. I'll drive myself."

That caught Vincent off guard. Normally, if he'd offered to pick her up, she would've been over the moon-so happy she might've even teared up. But now? She sounded calm, almost detached, like his offer didn't matter one way or the other.

He didn't push it. Instead, he said, "Then swing by and get Vanessa on your way."

Scarlett's answer was quick. "It's not on my way. You get her."

She knew Vincent probably couldn't even name the hospital where she worked, let alone find it. Her workplace and Vanessa's preschool were on complete opposite sides of town-if she detoured to pick up Vanessa before heading to Stewart Manor, she'd be stuck in traffic for hours. But that "not on my way" line was just an excuse. The real truth? Scarlett didn't want to get too close to Vanessa anymore.

She'd risked her life to give birth to that little girl. She'd stayed up with her through fevers, read her bedtime stories every night, and tried to be the best mom she could. But now? All Vanessa cared about was herself-siding with Sabrina, ignoring her calls, even calling her the one who

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Chapter 24 Reluctant Visit

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“messed up”. If her own daughter didn’t care about her, why should she keep bending over backward for nothing? Besides, she thought bitterly, Vanessa probably didn’t even want her to pick her up anyway.

Vincent went quiet on the other end, but Scarlett had already ended the call.

Outside, the driver waited by the car, but Vanessa hadn’t left yet. She’d hung back, hovering near the door, waiting for Vincent to finish his call. She was still mad at Scarlett-mad about the fight with Sabrina, mad that her mom wouldn’t apologize-but a tiny part of her had hoped Scarlett might try to make things right. Then she’d heard Scarlett tell Vincent she wouldn’t come pick her up, and that anger flared up again. It didn’t matter if she’d wanted Scarlett to pick her up or not-her mom had said no before she even asked. That stung.

Vincent slipped his phone into his pocket and noticed Vanessa still standing there. He frowned, confused. “Why aren’t you in the car yet?”

Vanessa pouted, her lower lip sticking out. “Mom’s so spoiled, and it’s your fault, Dad.”

Spoiled? Vincent blinked. He’d never spoiled Scarlett-not once. He’d barely even shown her kindness. But he didn’t bother arguing with a kid. He just sighed and said, “Go to school. I’ll pick you up this afternoon.” With that, he straightened his tie and headed upstairs, leaving Vanessa alone.

Vanessa sat at the kitchen table for a minute longer, kicking her legs. When she finally hopped down, she muttered under her breath, so quiet only she could hear, “Hmph. I don’t even want a mom like that.”

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By six o’clock that evening, Scarlett was just about to clock out of work when a child with a broken leg was wheeled into the ER, screaming in pain. The injury looked serious-compound fracture, the nurse said-so Scarlett stayed late to help the on-call doctor stabilize the leg and prep the kid for surgery. By the time she was done, it was past seven.

She changed out of her white coat, grabbed her bag, and hurried downstairs, then drove straight to Stewart Manor. Even with her foot on the gas, it was already past eight when she pulled into the driveway.

The housekeepers spotted her the second she walked through the door and swarmed over, greeting her warmly-“Mrs. Stewart, you’re here! Shall I get you a cup of coffee?”

Scarlett smiled and shook her head, thanking them as she made her way toward the main hall.

Just as she reached the doorway, Xavier's loud, angry voice boomed out. "Scarlett's still not here, and you didn't even think to call her? What woman wants a man who can't be bothered to check in? You're as cold as a block of wood, Vincent! Who would ever like you?"

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Chapter 24 Reluctant Visit

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Inside, Vincent sat on the leather couch, head down, scrolling through his phone-business news, by the look of it. It was anyone's guess if he was even listening to Xavier. Either didn't react-no eye roll, no sigh, nothing.

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Vanessa sat at a small table in the corner, playing a game of solitaire with a deck of cards. When she heard Xavier yelling at Vincent, she looked up and said, her voice serious for a kid her age, "Great-Grandpa, it's not Dad's fault! Mom's just late 'cause she forgot the time. Dad cares-he just doesn't show it."

Scarlett heard Vanessa's words from the doorway, but she didn't flinch. This was how her daughter was now—always taking Vincent's side, always making excuses for him, even when he was wrong. She'd gotten used to it, but that didn't make it hurt any less. So much for her "little angel. More like a little traitor.

She didn't want to listen to Vanessa defend Vincent anymore, so she stepped into the hall, her shoes clicking against the marble floor.

Xavier saw her instantly and jumped up from his chair, hurrying over. "Scarlett! There What took you so long tonight?"

you are!

Scarlett forced a soft smile, explaining gently, "We had an emergency patient at the hospital— little kid with a broken leg. I couldn't leave until we got him sorted."

Vanessa heard Scarlett's voice and stiffened, her hands freezing mid-card. But she didn't turn around. She sat there, back straight, waiting-waiting for Scarlett to come over, to greet her first, to apologize. This was Xavier's house. Scarlett wouldn't dare ignore her here. Even if she had to fake it, she'd at least pretend to care.

But Scarlett didn't even glance in her direction. It was like Vanessa wasn't there at all.

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Awakened Housewife ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 25

Chapter 25 Xavier's Protection

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When Xavier stood up, Vincent's gaze flicked to Scarlett as she walked in-but she didn't so much as glance his way. Her eyes were fixed solely on the elder, warm and attentive.

Xavier took Scarlett's hand and led her toward the couch. As they walked, he shot Vincent a sharp look, his voice leaving no room for argument. "Your wife hasn't eaten yet. Head to the kitchen and bring out the food we saved for her."

It was an order, plain and simple. Vincent had no interest in picking a fight with Xavier-especially over something as trivial as fetching food. He nodded, set his phone down on the armrest, and stood up.

As he passed the table, he reached over and tugged gently on Vanessa's hat. "Come with me."

Vanessa spun around, her face scrunched up in annoyance at Vincent—but with Xavier watching, she didn't dare throw a fit. Reluctantly, she pushed herself out of her chair, mumbled a half-hearted "Fine," and trailed after him toward the kitchen.

Scarlett watched the two of them-Vincent's broad shoulders, Vanessa's tiny, slumping figure- heading to get her food, and it was obvious neither was happy about it. She didn't want to stir up more awkwardness, so she spoke up, "I can go get it myself, really."

She started to stand, but Xavier tightened his grip on her hand and guided her back down into a chair at the dining table. He lifted his cane slightly, waving it for emphasis as he lectured, "Sit right there. We brought you into this family to be taken care of, not to wait on everyone else. Vincent and Vanessa have two hands and two feet, don't they? What's the harm in them waiting on you for once? You've done more than enough for this family-you gave birth to Vanessa, for heaven's sake! That makes you a hero around here. Men need to be told what to do, Scarlett. If you don't stand up to him today, he'll walk all over you tomorrow."

Scarlett's heart warmed at his words, a soft ache spreading through her chest. All these years, Xavier had always been kind to her-genuinely kind, not the fake politeness the rest of the Stewart family offered. When she'd had Vanessa, Xavier'd handed her a jewelry box full of pieces worth a fortune and a bank card with no limit, just saying, "For my great-granddaughter... and her mom." He was the only one in this family who treated her like a person, not a placeholder. If it weren't for his kindness, she would've never agreed to come back tonight-not to deal with Vincent's coldness or Vanessa's resentment.

Her eyes stung, but she managed a smile. "I know, Grandpa. Thank you."

Just then, Vincent and Vanessa emerged from the kitchen, carrying plates of food. The spread was rich-braised pork, garlic shrimp, sticky ribs-all of Scarlett's favorite dishes. Vanessa set a bowl of rice down in front of Scarlett, then turned on her heel and darted back to the couch to play with her cards, like being near Scarlett was a chore,

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Chapter 25 Xavier's Protection

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Vincent handed Scarlett a fork, said nothing, and turned to leave-but Xavier's voice stopped him. "Vincent. Where do you think you're going?"

Vincent looked up, confused, his brow furrowed. "Grandpa? What's wrong?"

Xavier raised his cane, a mock-threatening gesture-he never actually hit anyone-and snapped, "Don't you know you're supposed to sit and eat with your wife?"

Vincent glanced at Scarlett, his expression uncertain. But she didn't meet his eyes, her voice cool and distant. "Grandpa, it's okay. I can eat alone. He doesn't need to stay."

Her coldness caught Vincent off guard. For a split second, he found himself thinking of how she used to be-how, no matter where they were, home or out, she'd stick close to him, asking if he wanted seconds, if he needed a drink, if he felt like stopping for fruit on the way back. Now? She was the complete opposite. It was like he was looking at a stranger. A twinge of unease settled in his chest, but he brushed it off. It was just awkwardness, he told himself-nothing

more.

Since Scarlett didn't want him there, he wasn't going to force it. He stood there for a moment, then shrugged. "Alright. Let me know if you need anything."

Xavier watched their exchange, a heavy sigh escaping him. Five years. They'd been married five years, and their relationship hadn't gotten any better-if anything, it was falling apart at the seams. He'd tried playing matchmaker a hundred times, nudging them to talk, forcing them to spend time together, but nothing worked. At this point, he wasn't sure there was anything more he could do.

After dinner, Scarlett tried to clear the dishes and wash them herself, but Xavier wouldn't let her. He called the maid over and told her to take care of it, then ushered everyone into the living room. The atmosphere there was thick with awkward silence.

Vanessa sat on the floor, playing with her cards, chattering occasionally to Xavier or Vincent-but she acted like Scarlett wasn't even in the room. Scarlett, in turn, only spoke to Xavier, her attention never straying to Vincent or Vanessa. Vincent didn't say much at all; he just sat on the couch, his phone in his hand, typing away.

Scarlett knew exactly who he was texting-Sabrina. She could picture it-him apologizing for not spending the night with her, making plans for tomorrow, maybe even sending a silly meme to make her laugh. The thought didn't hurt as much as it used to; it just felt... empty.

Xavier had wanted to try mediating again, to nudge them into talking, but it was getting late and he was tired. He pushed himself up from his chair, his joints creaking, and said, "I'm off to bed. You all should stay the night-there's plenty of rooms."

Vincent stood up first, stepping forward. "Grandpa, let me walk you to your room."

Xavier softened at the gesture-Vincent might be bad at marriage, but he was always respectful

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Chapter 25 Xavier's Protection

to his elders. He nodded. "Alright. Come on, then."

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Just as Vincent was helping Xavier steady himself, Scarlett spoke up, "Grandpa?"

Xavier turned around, his eyes gentle. "What is it, dear?"

Scarlett took a breath, her voice calm. "I have to work at the hospital tomorrow, so I should head home tonight. I'm worried about-"

She didn't get to finish. Xavier cut her off, his tone playful but laced with fake disappointment. "Oh, fine. Go on, then. I'm just an old man, after all—every day could be my last. All I want is to have my family around me, but now everyone's got a million excuses to leave. Guess I'm just useless now, huh?"

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Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 26

Chapter 26 Guest Room Tensions

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Xavier let out one heavy sigh after another as he spoke, his voice thick with feigned weariness.

Seeing him like that, Scarlett's heart twisted-sharp and uncomfortable. She instantly regretted her earlier words, wishing she could take them back. "Grandpa, I'm not leaving," she said, giving in. Scarlett had always been soft-hearted, and she'd never been able to resist Xavier's gentle guilt. "I'll stay. We can have breakfast together tomorrow."

With Vincent supporting his elbow, Xavier turned toward his bedroom. He didn't glance back at Scarlett, but Vincent caught the faint, sly smile tugging at Xavier lips. Vincent knew him too well-Xavier was a master at playing the sympathy card, and none of them had ever been able to outlast him at it. It was a trick he'd used for years, and it still worked every time.

Now, only Scarlett and Vanessa remained in the living room. The silence hung thick in the air, so quiet that one could've heard a pin drop. Scarlett could hear Vanessa shuffling her cards behind her-soft, repetitive sounds. Once upon a time, she would've crossed the room in a heartbeat, hugged her daughter tight, and asked all about her day at kindergarten-what games she'd played, which friends she'd sat with, if she'd eaten all her lunch. But now? She felt nothing but a dull indifference. She didn't have the energy to reach out, not anymore.

After standing there for a minute, she turned and headed straight upstairs. Staying overnight at Stewart Manor wasn't new-she knew where everything was, knew she could just grab her things and get ready for bed. There was no need to linger.

Vanessa kept playing her cards, but her eyes kept darting to Scarlett. When she saw Scarlett pause by the dining table, she smiled to herself, assuming Scarlett was working up the nerve to come over and apologize. When Scarlett finally lifted her foot, Vanessa's heart raced-she'd already planned to hug her, to melt into her mom's arms like she used to. It had been so long since they'd hugged, so long since Scarlett had held her. She'd even daydreamed about asking to sleep in her mom's bed that night, just like when she was little and scared of thunderstorms.

But Scarlett didn't walk toward her. She just turned and went up the stairs, her back straight, like Vanessa

wasn't even there.

Vanessa's smile faded instantly. Anger bubbled up inside her, hot and fast. She grabbed her deck of cards and threw them across the floor-cards scattered everywhere, landing on the rug, under the couch, across the table. "Hmph! Stupid mom! Bad mom!" she yelled, her voice wobbly with fury. "I'm never talking to you again!"

While Vanessa threw her little tantrum in the living room, Vincent stepped out of Xavier's bedroom. He spotted the cards strewn across the floor first, then glanced around-no sign of Scarlett. Confused, he knelt down to pick up a few cards and asked Vanessa, "Where's your mom?"

Vanessa jabbed a finger toward the stairs, her face still red with anger. "She went up. She didn't even say goodbye!"

Vincent paused, a flicker of surprise crossing his face. That woman-she'd once treated Vanessa like she was her whole world, like nothing else mattered. Now? She couldn't even be bothered to say goodnight to their daughter. He didn't understand what had changed.

After a second, he stood up and took Vanessa's hand. "Come on. Let's get you washed up for bed."

Vanessa pulled her hand away. "Dad, I don't want to sleep with Mom!"

Vincent looked at her, his expression blank-no warmth no sympathy. "Great-Grandpa only set up one

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Chapter 26 Guest Room Tensions

guest room. If you don't want to sleep with her, go talk to him yourself."

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Vanessa pouted, her lower lip sticking out. Annoyance and defiance flashed in her eyes, but she knew arguing was useless. Vincent wasn't taking her side this time-throwing a fit wouldn't change anything. Reluctantly, she nodded. If mom's gonna ignore me, I'll ignore her right back.

When they reached the guest room, Scarlett wasn't there. bustling around like she usually did-laying out pajamas, grabbing toothbrushes and towels, making sure everything was ready for Vanessa. Instead, the bathroom light was on, and Scarlett's soft movements could be heard inside-she was getting cleaned up, taking her time, like she didn't have a care in the world.

Vincent stared at the closed bathroom door, confused. He had no idea what had gotten into Scarlett lately. He took off his watch and jacket, draping the jacket over the arm of the couch, then sat down, his phone in his hand.

Vanessa looked around the room, her lip trembling. She was used to her mom fawning over her-fixing her hair, tucking her in, singing her a lullaby. Now, there was nothing. The silence made her angrier, but she bit her lip and held back her tears. She wasn't gonna cry in front of Dad.

Soon, Scarlett came out of the bathroom, wrapped in a fluffy white bathrobe, her hair still damp. She saw Vincent and Vanessa sitting on the couch, their eyes fixed on her-like they were waiting for her to jump up and take care of them, like she always had. A bitter laugh almost escaped her, but she bit it back. She said nothing, didn't even meet their eyes, just grabbed her hair dryer and went to the vanity to dry her hair.

Once her hair was dry, she walked over to the couch. Vincent was holding his phone, a video call going— Sabrina's face was visible on the screen. Vanessa was snuggled up against his side, grinning at Sabrina like she was the most important person in the room.

"Sabrina, are you gonna go to bed soon?" Vanessa asked, her voice sweet.

On the other end, Sabrina's voice was warm and cheerful. "I was just about to, but if you want to chat a little longer, I'll stay up for you, Vanessa. I miss talking to my favorite girl!"

Vanessa saw Scarlett out of the corner of her eye, but she didn't move. She just leaned closer to Vincent, as if to say, "See? I don't need you."

Once upon a time, seeing them this close to Sabrina would've hurt-sharp, like a knife. Scarlett would've felt a twist of jealousy, would've hurried over to ask if they were ready for bed, if they needed anything, just to remind them she was there. But now? She didn't care. The video call, Vanessa's smile, Vincent's quiet laughter-none of it touched her. "I'll sleep on the couch tonight," she said, her voice flat. "You two can take the bed. Keep chatting, if you want."

Both Vincent and Vanessa looked up at her, stunned-their mouths slightly open, eyes wide. They couldn't believe what they'd heard.

But Scarlett didn't flinch under their stares. She repeated, calm and firm, "I'm sleeping on the couch. You guys take the bed."

Vanessa glared at her, fury sparking in her eyes. She opened her mouth to yell, but Vincent spoke first, his voice sharp, "Vanessa, aren't you going to take a bath?"

Scarlett ran a hand through her dry hair, her tone casual like she was talking about the weather. "Let the maid do it."

She used to do everything for Vanessa-bathe her, dress her, read to her. She'd thought her effort would matter, would make Vanessa love her back. But it never had. Now, she didn't want to bother anymore.

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Chapter 26 Guest Room Tensions

Vincent’s jaw tightened. “You always did it before.”

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Scarlett didn’t back down. “When I wasn’t here, she was fine, wasn’t she?” she said, her eyes finally meeting his. “Wasn’t it always Lily who bathed her when I was at work? She’ll be fine.”

Send Gifts

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09:23 Wed, Jan 7 u uw

Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 27

Chapter 27 Tearful Morning

Finished

Scarlett knew, deep down, that Sabrina had probably been the one helping Vanessa bathe lately-but she didn’t bother calling that out. There was no point in picking a fight over it, not anymore.

Vanessa, though, only grew angrier at Scarlett’s cold indifference. She shot to her feet and shoved Scarlett hard in the arm. “I don’t want you to wash me! I’ve got my own hands, okay? For the rest of my life, you can forget about ever helping me again-you already blew your chance!” With that, she spun on her heel and stormed toward the bathroom, her little feet slamming gainst the floor.

On the other end of the video call, Sabrina had heard every word. She hurried to soothe Vanessa, her voice soft and gentle. “Vanessa, come on, be good. You don’t have to take a bath tonight. Tomorrow, when we get home, I will help you-nice and slow, just how you like.”

Vanessa heard her, but only snorted, her tone short. “Yeah, whatever.” Sabrina was nice, sure-but deep down, she knew Mom had always washed her more carefully, had always made sure the water was just the right temperature, had always hummed little songs while lathering her hair. But that Mom was gone now. Mom didn’t love her anymore.

Vincent was a man, and he knew it wasn’t right for him help Vanessa bathe. Vanessa, for her part, refused to ask the housekeeper either. So she just climbed into bed, yanked the covers up over her head, and squeezed her eyes shut-pretending she didn’t feel the grime on her skin, pretending she didn’t miss Mom’s hands.

After hanging up the video call, Vincent stood up too. He glanced over at Scarlett, his expression unreadable, but didn’t ask a single question-didn’t ask why Vanessa was so upset, didn’t ask why Scarlett wasn’t trying to fix it. He just turned and headed to the bathroom to wash up.

When he came out, the main lights in the room were off-only a soft wall lamp glowed in the corner. Scarlett was already on the couch, her eyes closed. Vincent slipped into bed next to Vanessa, but sleep wouldn’t come. From across the room, he could hear Scarlett’s steady, even breathing-calm, like she didn’t have a care in the world. What on earth had happened to make her change so much? Once, she’d been so desperate for his attention, so eager to keep the family together. Now, she acted like they were strangers. But after a minute, he shrugged the thought off. Maybe it didn’t matter anymore.

The next morning, Scarlett woke up early-long before the sun was fully up. When she got out of bed, Vincent and Vanessa were still fast asleep, their faces relaxed. She didn’t wake them; she just grabbed her bag and tiptoed downstairs to wash up.

She wanted to do something nice for Xavier, a small act of filial piety. So she rolled up her sleeves and made oatmeal on the stove-creamy, with a hint of sweet potato, just how he liked it-and toasted some sandwiches with avocado and egg.

Xavier was up early too, sitting in the living room reading the newspaper. When he saw Scarlett bustling around the stove, a proud smile tugged at his lips-but there was a flicker of sadness in his eyes, too. He hated seeing her work so hard, hated that the rest of the family didn’t appreciate her.

Once breakfast was ready, Scarlett sat down and ate a quick bowl of oatmeal with him. Then she stood up, slinging her bag over her shoulder. “Grandpa, I have to go to the hospital-work starts early. Next time I come back, I’ll bring you those new marinated peanuts you liked from the shop downtown, okay?”

Xavier listened, then nodded toward the stairs. “Aren’t you gonna wait for Vincent and Vanessa? You’ve never left this house alone before.”

Scarlett's heart tightened, but she shook her head. "No, keys, afraid Xavier would try to convince her to stay, an

really in a rush. I can't be late." She grabbed her practically hurried out of the hall-her shoes

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Chapter 27 Tearful Morning

clicking against the floor as she went.

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Watching her disappear through the front door, Xavier shook his head and let out a heavy sigh. When it came to his grandson, he was powerless now. Once, he'd been able to force Vincent to marry Scarlett, to keep the family together. But now? All he wanted was for them to be happy-and there was nothing he could do to make that happen.

Vincent woke up early too, well before Vanessa needed to get ready for school. He didn't wake her; he just quietly got dressed. As he walked past the couch, he noticed the blanket was folded neatly, the pillow fluffed -like no one had slept there at all. He figured Scarlett must have gone downstairs to keep Xavier company, to make him breakfast or chat.

When he went down, though, the kitchen was empty-Xavier was gone too. That only confirmed his guess -Scarlett was probably out with Xavier, doing something nice.

A housekeeper spotted him and hurried over, wiping her hands on her apron. "Mr. Stewart, would you like some breakfast? Mrs. Stewart made oatmeal this morning-it's still warm."

Vincent was in a rush to get to the office. He shook his head. "No, thanks. I'll grab something on the way."

At the front door, he suddenly paused, remembering Vanessa. He turned back to the housekeeper. "Oh, and when Mrs. Stewart gets back, tell her to take Vanessa to kindergarten. I won't have time."

The housekeeper had no idea Scarlett had already left-she just nodded, smiling. "Of course. I'll let her

know."

After Vincent left, the housekeeper went back to the kitchen to wash the breakfast dishes. She was scrubbing a bowl when a loud, wailing cry echoed from upstairs.

The housekeeper froze, the bowl still in her hand. She didn't even bother taking off her apron-she just dried her hands on her clothes and raced up the stairs. The closer she got to the guest room, the louder Vanessa's sobs became. "Daddy... Daddy!"

When she pushed open the bedroom door, Vanessa was sitting on the bed, her hair a wild mess, her face streaked with tears. She was pounding her fists against the blanket, her shoulders shaking, and her eyes were red and swollen-like a little orphan who'd been left all alone.

The housekeeper rushed to her side, kneeling down. "M. Stewart, what's wrong? Why are you crying?"

Seeing it was just the housekeeper, Vanessa cried even harder, her little body heaving. "I want Daddy! I want Daddy to come back!" She hit the bed even harder, kicking her legs and thrashing around like a toddler.

The housekeeper reached out to pick her up, trying to soothe her. "Miss, your dad already left for work. He told your mom to take you to kindergarten. How about help you wash up first? We can braid your hair all pretty-just like you like it."

Vanessa looked down at the housekeeper's hands-still little greasy from washing dishes-and shoved her away, her nose wrinkling in disgust. "Don't touch me! Get your dirty hands off!"

The housekeeper pulled her hands back, her heart aching for the little girl. She tried again, her voice soft and patient. "Okay, okay-I won't touch you. But don't y, sweetie. When your mom comes back, she'll help you get ready, I promise."

Vanessa turned her face away, her voice full of resentment. "I don't want her to help me. I hate her."

The housekeeper sighed, helpless but determined. "Mis Mrs. Stewart went out with Mr. Xavier Stewart-

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Chapter 27 Tearful Morning

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they'll be back soon. Let me help you wash up, okay? I'll be super careful, and we can put a bow in your hair. If we don't hurry, you'll be late for school." She kept her voice gentle, talking to Vanessa like she was a friend, coaxing her with little bribes and kind words.

Send Gifts

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09.23 Wed,

Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 28

Chapter 28 Xavier Rescues Vanessa

Finished

But Vanessa wouldn't listen-not a single word. She screamed, "Get lost! I don't need you telling me what to do! You're not my mom!"

The maid was out of ideas. With no other choice, she pulled out her phone and called Vincent, her hands shaking a little.

He answered right away, his voice sharp with the edge of a busy workday. "What's the problem?"

The maid's forehead was damp with sweat. "Mr. Stewart Vanessa woke up crying, and she won't let me help her wash up or do her hair. I was thinking... maybe you could call Mrs. Stewart and ask her to come home a little early? She's still not back yet."

Vincent's tone shifted, a hint of anxiety creeping in. "She hasn't come back? At all?"

The maid nodded, even though he couldn't see her. "No. Not yet."

Vincent paused for a few seconds, clearly thinking. Then he said, "Put Vanessa on the phone. I'll talk to her."

“Of course,” the maid replied, then held the phone out to Vanessa. “Miss, it’s your dad. He wants to talk to you.”

Vanessa was still fuming, but she snatched the phone from the maid’s hand, her face scrunched up in a scowl.

“Dad...” Her voice was hoarse from crying, thick with hurt.

“Why are you crying?” Vincent’s voice wasn’t gentle-not even a little. It was sharp, like he was annoyed at the interruption.

Vanessa could tell he was angry, so she mumbled, picking at the edge of her pajama top. “You left without saying goodbye. I woke up and you were gone... That’s why I cried.”

Vincent didn’t bother explaining-didn’t say he’d had an early meeting, didn’t say he’d thought she’d still be asleep. He just gave an order, firm and final. “Listen to me. Let the maid help you wash up and fix your hair. When your mom gets home, she’ll take you to school. That’s non-negotiable.”

Vanessa’s lower lip trembled. She tried to argue, “But I don’t-”

Vincent cut her off, his tone leaving no room for protest “That’s final, Vanessa.”

Whatever Vanessa had been about to say died in her throat. His sharpness shut her up instantly. She hung her head, her voice small. “Fine.”

Vincent softened just a little-enough to add, “I’ll call your mom right now and tell her to come home to take you. If you don’t want to talk to her, you don’t have to. But she’s still your mom, and she’s responsible for you. Taking you to school is her job.”

Vanessa sniffled, wiping her nose with the back of her hand. “Got it, Dad.”

Vincent hung up, then immediately dialed Scarlett’s number. But it went to voicemail-no answer.

At that moment, Scarlett was at the hospital, buried in patients. Her phone was on silent in her bag, and there was already a line of people waiting in her office. She hadn’t heard it ring at all.

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Chapter 28 Xavier Rescues Vanessa

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Vincent frowned, assuming she'd left her phone at Stewart Manor when she'd gone out with Xavier. He didn't call again. Instead, he sent her a text, "Take Vanessa to school. I'm already at work and can't make it

The maid managed to get Vanessa ready-she washed her face, brushed her teeth, and braided her hair into two neat little pigtails, tying each with a pink bow. She even got Vanessa to eat a few bites of toast and drink a glass of milk.

But they waited. Eight o'clock came and went, then eight twenty. It was almost time to leave for school, and Scarlett still hadn't shown up.

The maid started to panic. She hurried outside, craning her neck to look down the driveway, as if Scarlett would magically appear.

Just then, Xavier shuffled into the front hall, leaning on his cane. He saw the maid rushing around, her face flustered, and frowned. "What's all this hurry? Why are you so worked up?"

The maid glanced over Xavier's shoulder, hoping to see Scarlett behind him-but there was no one. Confusion and worry mixed in her voice. "Sir, where's Mrs. Stewart? Vanessa's been waiting for her to take her to school, and we're already gonna be late. I just... I don't get why she's not back yet-doesn't she care about being on time?"

Xavier didn't have time to scold the maid for speaking ill of Scarlett. His own frown deepened. "Scarlett left almost an hour ago. She had to get to the hospital for work. Isn't Vincent still upstairs? Why isn't he taking Vanessa to school?"

The maid's eyes went wide. She looked even more anxious now. "Mr. Stewart left too, early this morning. He told me to tell Mrs. Stewart she had to take Vanessa to school. He said he couldn't do it."

Xavier slammed his cane against the floor, the sound echoing in the hall. His voice rose, sharp with anger. "Scarlett's been gone for an hour! What the hell is Vincent thinking? Can't he even take care of his own kid? That's his daughter too!"

Vanessa heard the maid and Xavier talking from the living room. Her lower lip trembled, and then she burst into tears-loud, wailing sobs.

"Bad mom! Bad mom!" She screamed it over and over, her little fists balled up at her sides.

Xavier's heart ached when he heard her cry. He didn't even stop to correct her-to tell her Scarlett had left for work, that it wasn't her fault. He just hurried into the living room, scooped Vanessa up into his arms, and held her close.

“It’s okay, Vanessa. Shhh, it’s all right,” he cooed, patting her back gently. “I will take you to school. Don’t cry.. sweetie. I’ll even stop for your favorite strawberry milk on the way, okay? It’s all going to be fine.”

Vanessa kept sobbing, her face pressed into Xavier’s shoulder. He rocked her back and forth, whispering soft comforts, until finally-after several minutes-her cries lied down to quiet hiccups.

In the end, Xavier had his driver take them to preschool By the time they pulled up to the gate, it was already nine o’clock. Through the fence, they could see the other kids dancing in the yard, laughing and singing to a nursery rhyme.

Vanessa stood at the gate, her backpack slung over one shoulder, her eyes still puffy from crying. The teacher who usually greeted her, who always gave her a bug-was busy leading the dance, and none of the other kids looked over to say “good morning”.

The security guard noticed her, stood up from his chair and walked over to open the gate. He smiled

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Chapter 28 Xavier Rescues Vanessa

kindly. “Vanessa! You’re a little late today, huh? Did you sleep in?”

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As soon as she heard the word “late”, tears welled up in Vanessa’s eyes again. She buried her face in Xavier’s hand and started crying harder. Usually, Sabrina would drop her off bright and early-never late. Back then, the teachers would always praise her for being on time, and would stick a little sticker on her forehead. Now? She was the late one, and no one even cared.

Send Gifts

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Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 29

Chapter 29 Bring Her Home

But today, there was no little sticker for her.

86%

Finished

Because she'd been late, Vanessa couldn't shake the feeling that the teacher was giving her the cold shoulder. Even when she shot her hand up high, waving it to answer questions, the teacher just glanced right past her. By the end of the day, Vanessa was in a foul mood-grumpy, quiet, and seething inside.

She'd cursed Scarlett a thousand times in her head, her hatred growing stronger with each passing minute. Not only had Scarlett refused to apologize for hitting Sabrina, but she'd also purposely skipped dropping her off at school-making her look like an irresponsible troublemaker in front of the teacher. Hmph, I'm never talking to her again. Not ever.

Scarlett's clinic hours ended right on time. Before six o'clock, she'd packed up her things and left the hospital. Once she was in her car, she finally pulled out her phone to check it-only to find two unread messages-one from Vincent that morning, asking her to drop Vanessa off at preschool, and another from Henry.

"Scarlett, your mom and I spent all day prepping-made your favorite braised pork, Vanessa's favorite sweet and sour ribs. Bring her home tonight, just for a little while. We haven't seen our granddaughter in ages."

Henry had always been persistent, and Scarlett knew she couldn't say no. With a sigh, she gripped the steering wheel and headed straight for Vincent's company. If she wanted Vanessa to agree to go see her grandparents, she'd need Vincent to help talk her into it "Just this once," she told herself. "I'll ask him, and that's it."

Scarlett parked her car outside the Stewart Group building and waited. Minutes ticked by, turning into half an hour. She watched as employees streamed out of the building, laughing and chatting about their day- but there was no sign of Vincent. Impatience bubbled up, so she reached for her phone to call him. As she unlocked it, she saw Vincent's

morning message again-the one about dropping Vanessa off at school. She'd been swamped with emergency patients earlier and had completely missed it.

A twinge of worry hit her. Vanessa was such a competitive little thing, always wanting to be first, always craving the teacher's praise. If she'd shown up late... Scarlett could picture Vanessa crying in the corner, feeling like she'd let everyone down. The thought made her chest ache. She hadn't been there to drop Vanessa off, and now her daughter would probably hate her even more—would think Sabrina would've never let her be late, that Sabrina would make a better mom.

But then she shook her head, pushing the worry aside. What was the point? She wasn't the one who'd walked away. Vincent and Vanessa had been the ones to leave her, to choose Sabrina over her. She didn't need to feel guilty.

Just then, the glass doors of the Stewart Group slid open and Vincent stepped out-flanked by Abbott. He looked sharp in his tailored suit, tall and lean, standing out like a sore thumb in the crowd. All he had to do was stand there, and people couldn't help but glance over.

A black Rolls-Royce was parked at the curb. Vincent walked over, but he didn't get in. Instead, he opened the driver's side door, lifted one hand to shield the roof, and held out another toward the seat inside.

Scarlett didn't pay much attention to the car at first, didn't care who was inside. But then the passenger leaned forward, and she saw it clearly-it was Sabrina.

When Sabrina stepped out, Vincent kept his hand up, shielding her carefully. She looked like a fairy—untouched by the chaos of the city—in a simple white dress, her hair flowing softly over her shoulders. Her

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Chapter 29 Bring Her Home

86%

Finished

style was understated, but next to Vincent, she didn't look plain at all. They fit together, like two pieces of a puzzle.

Scarlett rolled down her car window, watching her husband and the woman he'd chosen, from across the street. Even the sunset seemed to favor them-painting the sky in warm oranges and pinks, their shadows stretching on the ground, tangled together like they belonged.

Sabrina slipped her arm through Vincent's, natural as breathing. He looked down at her, his eyes soft with a warmth Scarlett had never seen from him-not in their five years of marriage. Abbott, sensing he was third wheel, stepped back quietly, giving them space.

Vincent said something to Sabrina, his voice low, but Scarlett was too far to hear. She sat in her car, frozen, her hands tightening around the steering wheel until her knuckles turned white. But then she remembered her parents, waiting at home with a table full of food, and forced herself to get out.

As she walked over, she caught snippets of their conversation. "If you're tired, don't push yourself with the concert," Vincent was saying. "Focus on your studies first Didn't you always want to be a doctor?"

Sabrina tilted her head, a soft smile on her face. "I do love being a doctor... but I love piano too. I don't want to give up either."

Vincent smiled back, his gaze tender. "Then don't. As long as you're happy, that's all that matters."

"I will," Sabrina said. "If it gets too much, I'll tell you. Promise. Don't worry about me."

Vincent nodded, then leaned in to close the car door-only to freeze when he spotted Scarlett standing a few feet away.

She was dressed simply-blue jeans, white sneakers, a plain long-sleeved shirt, and a small crossbody bag slung over her shoulder. Her hair fell loose down her back, catching the last of the sunset. She wasn't smiling, but she didn't look sad either-just calm, like she was there for a business meeting, not to talk to her husband.

Vincent's surprise faded quickly, replaced by annoyance He frowned. "What are you doing here?"

Sabrina turned to look at Scarlett too, her expression neutral.

Scarlett didn't beat around the bush-she got straight to the point. "I need to talk to you. It's about Vanessa."

Vincent's jaw tightened. "Spit it out."

“My parents want to see her,” Scarlett said, her voice stealy. “I’ll take her to their place tonight-she can stay. over, and I’ll drop her at school tomorrow. You can pick her up in the afternoon, if you want.”

In their five years of marriage, Vincent had never once et Scarlett’s parents or her brother. He’d never asked about them, never shown any interest in her family. It was like her life before him didn’t exist.

Send Gifts

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Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 30

Chapter 30 Vanessa’s Cold Shoulder

Finished

But after a moment’s thought, Vincent softened a little-he could at least understand how eager grandparents were to see their grandkids. He turned to carlett, his tone still cold but less sharp. “I don’t care either way, but Vanessa...” He trailed off, not needing to finish the sentence.

Scarlett knew exactly what he meant. Vanessa still held a grudge against her-still mad about the fight with Sabrina, still upset she hadn’t apologized. There was no way her daughter would agree to go to Theron Manor with her willingly. She didn’t beat around the bush, her voice straightforward. “That’s why I came to you. She listens to you more than she listens to me.”

Sabrina stood quietly beside Vincent, her hands folded in front of her, just listening to their back-and-forth without saying a word-like she was an observer, not someone who’d inserted herself into their family.

Vincent shrugged, his expression neutral. “Even if I talk to her, it might not work.” He wasn’t being difficult; he was just being honest. Vanessa had a mind of her own these days. She didn’t always do what he told her- she just feared him a little more than she feared anyone else.

Then he paused, glancing at Sabrina before adding, “How about this? I’ll have Sabrina talk to her. We were on our way to pick her up from kindergarten anyway. You can come with us.” His tone was casual, like it was no big deal-but Scarlett caught the underlying message. “You need Sabrina’s help, not mine.”

She turned to look at Sabrina. The woman stood tall, graceful, with a quiet confidence that seemed to radiate from her-like she had a magnetic pull that made Scarlett feel small, like she didn’t belong. A sharp wave of hurt washed over her, her nose stinging, tears picking at the corners of her eyes. But she blinked hard, forcing them back. She wasn’t going to cry in front of them.

“No need,” she said, turning away, her voice tight as she lunged to the last bit of dignity she had. The thought hit her then, almost laughable-she’d carried Vanessa for nine months, given birth to her, stayed up with her through every fever and nightmare-and now she needed another woman to convince her own daughter to visit her grandparents. A kid who held that much resentment... maybe Scarlett didn’t even want her anymore.

But then she remembered her parents’ voices, soft and hopeful over the phone, begging to see their granddaughter. She stopped, her hands curling into fists so tight her nails dug into her palms, leaving half-moon marks.

After a few seconds, she turned back to Vincent, her voice steadier. “I mean... I drove here myself. I’ll just follow your car.”

Vincent noticed her eyes were a little red, like she’d been holding back tears, but he didn’t comment on it. He just nodded. “Okay.”

Sabrina finally spoke, her voice gentle, like she was trying to be reassuring. “Don’t worry, Ms. Theron. When we get to the kindergarten, I’ll do my best to talk to Vanessa. She’s a really sweet kid-she just needs a little nudge.”

Scarlett knew Sabrina was hinting at something-hinting that Scarlett wasn’t doing enough, that she didn’t understand her own daughter. But she couldn’t snap at Sabrina, not right now. She just swallowed the lump in her throat and nodded.

Scarlett climbed into her car and watched as Vincent walked around to Sabrina’s side, opening the door for her and leaning in to buckle her seatbelt. He’d always seemed so untouchable-cold, distant, like nothing could soften him. But now he was bending over backward for someone else. The only person he’d ever done that for, she realized, was probably Sabrina.

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Chapter 30 Vanessa’s Cold Shoulder

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Finished

She sat there for a minute, not starting the engine. She leaned back against the seat, staring out the window at the street-everything outside looked blurry, like her eyes were fogged over. Her heart hurt so bad it felt like it was being torn to shreds. It hurt to see how kind Vincent was to Sabrina, and it hurt even more to know her daughter would listen to Sabrina before she'd listen to her. She'd never done anything to hurt them, never been anything but a good mom and wife. So why were they treating her like this?

She sat there, numb, until her phone rang, jolting her out of her trance. She glanced down-Vincent's name flashed on the screen. She answered, her voice hoarse. "What's up?"

Vincent's voice came through, casual. "Aren't you following us yet? We're about to pull out." For once, he sounded like he cared-like he'd noticed she was lagging behind. But then she realized it wasn't concern for her. It was just impatience, like she was holding them up

"I'm coming now," she said, and hung up.

When she pulled into the kindergarten parking lot, the teachers were already standing at the gate, herding the kids into a line. Vanessa was at the front of her class, her little backpack slung over one shoulder. When she saw Sabrina, her face lit up-eyes wide, a big smile spreading across her face. But then the smile faded, and her shoulders drooped, her face turning sad again.

Scarlett could tell right away something was wrong. Her mom's instincts kicked in-she worried Vanessa had been bullied, or forgotten her lunch, or gotten in trouble with the teacher. Without thinking, she called out, "Vanessa!"

Vanessa turned at the sound of her voice. For a split second, her face lit up like she was about to wave- happy to see her mom. But then she remembered Scarlett hadn't taken her to school that morning. She'd been late, missed the morning circle time, and didn't get the little sticker she'd worked so hard for. The happiness vanished, replaced by anger. She turned away ignoring Scarlett completely.

The smile froze on Scarlett's face, then faded. She'd never really tried to fix things with Vanessa-not in the past few weeks. She'd let Vanessa pull away, let her get closer to Sabrina, because she didn't want to fight. She figured Vanessa would come around eventually. But now, even when she reached out, she was ignored. How could she not feel heartbroken?

Ever since Vanessa was born, Scarlett had dreamed of being there for every moment-her first step, her first word, her first day of school. But now Vanessa was in kindergarten, and this was the first time Scarlett had ever come to pick her up. She'd missed so much.

One of the teachers spotted Sabrina and walked over, smiling warmly. “Vanessa’s mom! Good to see you.”

Sabrina didn’t correct her. She just smiled back, her voice friendly. “Hi there. How was her day?” Then she turned to Vanessa and waved. “Vanessa, come here!”

Vanessa grabbed her backpack and ran straight into Sabrina’s arms, burying her face in Sabrina’s shirt. And then, right there in the middle of the parking lot, she started crying-quiet, sniffling sobs,

“Sabrina,” she mumbled, her voice muffled by Sabrina’s dress. “Can you take me to school tomorrow? I don’t ever want to go to Great-Grandpa’s house again. It’s all Mom’s fault-I was late, and I didn’t get my sticker.”

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Awakened Housewife. Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

Dylan