

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 301[979 words]

Chapter 301 The Garden Confrontation

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From Lily's expression, Scarlett could tell she had something to say, but Scarlett wasn't in the mood to hear it. Before Lily could begin, she cut in, "Lily, why don't you go ahead with what you need to do? Claire and I are going to take a walk around."

With that, she took Claire's hand and stood up, stepping out of the pavilion.

Lily opened her mouth a few times, trying to speak, but each time Scarlett gently brushed her off. Seeing there was no opening, Lily had no choice but to turn away and call Vincent.

The hospital gardens were quite expansive. Even in early winter, the faint, sweet scent of late- blooming jasmine hung in the cool air.

After strolling for a while, Claire nudged Scarlett subtly and glanced behind them. Scarlett turned to see Vincent making his way slowly toward them through the grounds.

Shrouded in the hazy morning mist, he wore a black overcoat left open over his clothes. His thick hair was slightly damp from the moisture in the air. As he emerged from the fog, the edges of his coat fluttered lightly in the breeze.

The moment she recognized Vincent, Scarlett instinctively turned to leave.

But he was quicker. "Ms. Wright," he said, addressing Claire, "would you mind giving my wife and me a moment alone?"

Claire didn't respond to Vincent. Instead, she looked at Scarlett, waiting for her cue. If Scarlett wanted to leave, she'd walk away with her right then.

After a brief pause, Scarlett patted Claire's hand. "It's okay," she said softly. "Go on ahead, I'll catch up in a bit."

Claire still seemed concerned, but Scarlett offered a small, reassuring smile and a nod. Only then did Claire reluctantly head off toward the path.

Noticing Scarlett was only dressed in thin fleece pajamas, Vincent frowned deeply. “It’s cold out here. Why didn’t you put on something warmer?”

Scarlett turned slowly to face him. As she looked up, Vincent was already shrugging off his long overcoat. He moved behind her and draped it over her shoulders, his hands resting on the fabric for a moment to secure it.

Just as the weight of the coat settled, Scarlett shifted aside. “Vincent, don’t,” she said, her voice even. “I don’t need it.”

Vincent, taller and standing close, easily kept her within his reach. She had little room to step

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away.

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He gently but firmly settled the coat back onto her shoulders. Afraid she might remove it again, he kept his hands lightly on her shoulders through the thick wool and looked down at her. “Keep it on. There’s something I need to say.”

The coat was overwhelmingly long on her, nearly swallowing her whole. She looked almost comical wrapped in it, like a child lost in an adult’s

garment.

Ignoring his previous statement, she said instead, “The air is fresh out here. Since Vanessa’s fever broke, she’s been cooped up in that room. You should bring her out more often. The change would do her good.”

Seeing she wasn’t rejecting the coat anymore, Vincent slowly let his hands drop from her shoulders.

“Alright,” he replied.

Scarlett met his gaze. “What did you want to talk about?”

Vincent studied her face. “Are you feeling better now?”

Scarlett didn’t want to dwell on it. “Get to the point, Vincent.”

He hesitated, then said, “I was too harsh the other day. I’m sorry. I hope you won’t hold it against me.”

Scarlett wasn’t even sure which day he was referring to, and she didn’t care to ask. To her, it didn’t matter anymore. None of it did.

She

gave a slight, indifferent shrug. “It’s fine. Really. I’m used to it.”

Her detached tone made his chest tighten. He pressed on, wanting to explain. “I didn’t know you were running a fever that day. If I had-”

She cut him off. “Yeah, I got it.”

Her nonchalance was a dull ache. He heard himself say, “Move into Vanessa’s room. It’ll be easier for me to look after both of you.”

The suggestion took her by surprise, but only for a second. Her refusal was firm and immediate. “Thank you, but no.”

Vincent started to speak again, but Scarlett didn’t give him the chance. She held his continued, “Vincent, in less than twenty days, we should finalize things at the courthouse.”

gaze

and

Her words were both a reminder and a quiet boundary.

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Seeing the cool distance in her eyes, he simply said, “I know.”

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A faint, polite smile touched her lips. At the same time, she slipped off his coat and held it out to him. “If that’s all, I should be going.”

Vincent didn’t take it. “It’s winter. Keep it on. I don’t want you catching another chill.”

“No, thank you,” she said, the smile still there but not reaching her eyes.

She insisted, holding the coat out until he finally reached for it.

Once the coat was back in his hands, Scarlett turned without another word and walked away.

Watching her retreating figure, Vincent was suddenly struck by a memory of her—the Scarlett from before. The one who used to meet him at the door, taking his briefcase and hanging up his coat. The one who’d straighten his tie before he left for work, bring him a fresh cup of coffee when he was working late, or run a bath for him when he was tired.

Even though they hadn’t shared a home for long, in those moments they did, she had attended to every detail of his comfort.

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Chapter 302 Brotherly Advice

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She had once longed so deeply for his kindness.

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He even remembered the time she burned her finger and came running to him, holding it out with tears in her eyes, saying, “Vincent, can you kiss it better?”

Back then, Vincent had just glanced up at her and replied flatly, “I’m not a doctor. Have Freya get you some ice for it.”

He might have caught the flash of disappointment in Scarlett’s eyes back then, but he hadn’t cared enough to let it bother him.

Just like now, he was the one feeling uneasy, but Scarlett couldn’t have cared less.

Watching her walk further away, Vincent couldn’t stop himself from calling out, “Scarlett, wait.”

Hearing him, she paused and half-turned to look back. “Yes?”

“Lily is bringing lunch around noon,” Vincent said. “Would you like to join us?”

“No, thank you.” Scarlett refused politely. “My lunch is already taken care of.”

With that, she turned and walked away again.

Vincent stared after her, rooted to the spot for a long moment.

A strange feeling settled in his chest—one he couldn’t quite name.

At the same time, he couldn’t help wondering—when she said her lunch was “taken care of, did she mean by Damian... or by Nolan?

That evening, Claire had an event to attend, so she left once other members of the Theron family arrived.

Violet didn’t come that night. It was Nathan who showed up, bringing dinner with him.

Since Scarlett had been admitted to the hospital, Nathan hadn’t visited once—until that night.

Having grown up together, Scarlett knew Nathan well. He was a man of few words and even fewer smiles, methodical in everything he did, with a temper that could shift unpredictably. Even though they were siblings, being alone with him still made Scarlett feel a little on edge.

She was propped up against the headboard of the hospital bed, slowly eating the dinner Nathan had brought. Nathan sat in the chair beside her, carefully peeling an orange.

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When he finished, he placed the segments neatly into a small container. After wiping his hands clean, he looked over at Scarlett. “Where’s Damian?” he asked.

The day Damian had carried Scarlett out of the house, the whole family had rushed to the hospital. Once they learned Scarlett was hospitalized with a high fever, Nathan had urged their parents to go home and rest.

He had intended to ask Damian right then what he was doing at Theron Manor in the first place, but Violet had stopped him. Not only did she shut down his questions, but she also told him to leave.

Nathan understood what Violet was thinking.

So, for the past couple of days, even though he was worried about his sister, he hadn’t come to visit. It wasn’t that he didn’t want to—he was afraid that if he saw Damian, he wouldn’t be able to hold back his resentment and might end up throwing a punch.

And, of course, Violet hadn’t wanted him coming to the hospital, either.

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At her brother’s question about Damian, Scarlett’s hand stilled for a second. “He went back,” she answered quietly.

Nathan let out a low, derisive sound. “Couldn’t even last two days taking care of you?”

Scarlett set her lunch container aside and picked up a piece of orange, eating it slowly. “After all, he’s a Langley,” she said, her voice soft. “He was never really one of us to begin with.”

Though Nathan’s tone was sharp, beneath it was genuine concern for Scarlett.

Hearing her reply, he looked at her with worry. “I’m not against you seeing someone, Scarlett. But finding someone stable and grounded is worth more than all the glitter and promises from those old-money families. Violet keeps telling me how wonderful Damian is, but I honestly don’t see it. He couldn’t handle looking after you for two days before taking off. How is he supposed to be there for a lifetime?”

A faint smile touched Scarlett's lips. "Don't worry, Nathan," she said. "I'm not going to fall in love again so easily."

Nathan watched Scarlett, his heart aching for her. She'd been married to Vincent for years—she must have endured more than her share of hurt.

Otherwise, someone as kind-hearted as her would never have sought a divorce.

The thought filled him with a frustrated sense of helplessness. If only he were more influential, more capable...

He managed a smile for her, though his eyes were still shadowed with pity. "For what it's worth,

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I think that Nolan is a decent guy. You're both in medicine, your backgrounds are compatible... and if he ever gives you trouble, I could be at his door in ten minutes flat."

Scarlett couldn't help but laugh at that. "Nathan, Clara says she'll support me if I stay single. What if I just don't get married again?"

Nathan lowered the hand he'd raised demonstratively and smiled a little more genuinely. "You absolutely can."

Truthfully, he'd prefer if his sister never remarried at all. But if she did, he'd rather it be someone like Nolan.

Mention of Clara reminded Scarlett of something. "Is Clara at home by herself?"

"She's home packing for the weekend trip," Nathan said. "Actually, she asked me to check if you're still feeling up to going with her this weekend."

It was called a fall outing, though early winter had already set in.

Remembering the promise she'd made to Clara, Scarlett nodded. "Yes, I'll go. I promised her, so I'm not backing out now."

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Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Chapter 303 Midnight Visit

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Nathan wanted to stay with Scarlett, but in the end, she managed to persuade him to go home.

The worst of the flu had passed after the first couple of days, and Scarlett was mostly recovered. However, in the middle of the night, she found herself burning up with fever again.

Half-asleep, she heard the soft sound of the hospital room door being pushed open from the outside.

The lights inside were off. When the door opened, the light from the corridor spilled in, outlining a tall, silhouetted figure in the doorway.

Scarlett's vision was blurry. Thinking it must be Damian, she called out tentatively, her voice hoarse, "Damian?"

As her voice faded, she clearly saw the approaching figure freeze mid-step.

Gradually, her eyes adjusted, and she could make out the face of the visitor. It wasn't Damian— it was Vincent.

Vincent walked over and sat down in the chair beside her bed. He reached out and felt her forehead with the back of his hand. Finding her skin hot, he pressed the nurse call button on the bedside panel.

A nurse came in promptly with fever medication and a cup of water. Vincent helped Scarlett sit up slightly and handed her the pills and the water. Once she had taken them, he watched her for a moment, his gaze lingering on her sweat-dampened cheeks.

“Does he come to stay with you often?” Vincent asked abruptly.

It took Scarlett a moment to realize the “he” he referred to was Damian.

Even feeling unwell, her tone was sharp. “Vincent, what’s that to you?”

Vincent continued to look down at her. After a weighted silence, he said, “We’re still married.”

A faint, tired smile touched Scarlett’s lips. “It’s just a piece of paper. That certificate is the only thing tying us together. In every way that matters, we’re already strangers.”

Another pause hung between them before Vincent spoke again, his voice low. “If that paper didn’t exist... what would you do?”

Scarlett let out a soft, humorless laugh. “What do you think I would do?” she countered. Truthfully, she didn’t know the answer herself.

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Chapter 303 Midnight Visit

Vincent didn’t reply to her question, but his steady gaze never wavered.

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Scarlett closed her eyes, resting for a while until the medicine began to work and she felt a bit better. When she opened her eyes again, Vincent was still there.

“Aren’t you going back?” she asked, curiosity tingeing her voice.

“Vanessa asked me to come stay with you,” Vincent replied.

Scarlett was skeptical. But Vincent had always held himself apart from her; it was hard to believe he'd choose to be here on his own.

So, among the possibilities, Vanessa's request seemed the most plausible.

She didn't press further. Just then, Vincent's phone buzzed on the bedside table.

She glanced over and saw the screen light up with Sabrina's name.

This time, however, Vincent didn't answer. He simply muted the call.

His uncharacteristic reaction puzzled Scarlett.

As she was processing this, Vincent stood up. "You're all sweaty," he said. "Let me get some warm water and a washcloth. You'll sleep better after cleaning up."

Before Scarlett could muster a refusal, his phone buzzed again—this time with a text message.

Vincent picked it up, his brow furrowing as he read it. After a moment of hesitation, he looked down at Scarlett. "I need to handle something. I'll come back later."

With that, he turned and left without a backward glance.

Watching him walk away so decisively, Scarlett couldn't help but smile faintly to herself. She hadn't actually expected him to stay. Even though she felt sticky and uncomfortable, it was late, and all she wanted was to rest.

Across town, the atmosphere was thick and pulsating inside The Inferno, a popular upscale bar.

In a dimly lit VIP booth on the second floor, three men were seated. Felix had been the last to arrive, and by the time he got there, two bottles of red wine were already open on the low table.

Damian was slumped in the corner of the plush leather sofa, having finished more than a bottle by himself. Zachary sat beside him, having talked himself hoarse trying to reason with him, but Damian kept pouring glass after glass.

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Sensing the tension, Felix settled next to Zachary. "What's going on with him?" he asked quietly.

Zachary sighed, running a hand through his hair. "What does it look like? He's heartbroken over

someone."

Matters of the heart were a territory Felix felt unequipped to navigate. He stayed silent.

"He's been like this all day," Zachary added, nodding toward Damian. "See if you can talk some sense into him."

Felix spread his hands helplessly. "I'm afraid I'm out of my depth here."

The two exchanged a look of mutual resignation, unsure how to pull their friend out of his misery.

Downstairs, the music was deafening, a deep bass thrumming through the floor. The lights flashed in a dazzling, colorful syncopation, and the dance floor was a sea of energetic, moving bodies. The bar was alive with noise and laughter, but Damian felt a hollow, aching void in his chest.

All he could think about was what Scarlett had said to him that morning. The memory was a fresh wound.

They had an understanding—he was supposed to be the one she turned to. But after just one night, she had shut him out.

Women, their hearts might as well be made of stone.

The more he dwelt on it, the angrier and more hurt he felt. His grip tightened around his wine glass before he suddenly slammed it down onto the table. "Liar!" he muttered, voice thick with emotion. "Scarlett, you're a damn liar."

The glass shattered upon impact. Shards embedded in his palm, but he didn't flinch from the physical pain. His eyes, however, glistened with unshed tears, filled with a raw struggle and profound hurt.

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Zachary saw the blood and the broken glass, his heart aching for his friend. “Damian, why are you doing this to yourself?” he said, his voice heavy with concern. “If you care about her that much, then fight for her. Go and win her back.”

As soon as the words were out, Felix, ever the pragmatist, cut in from beside him. “Coercion isn’t the answer. We need to handle this situation rationally.”

Zachary shot Felix a look of pure exasperation. “Forget the lawyer talk for a minute, will you? Our friend is hurting.”

Felix pressed his lips together and fell silent.

Damian hadn’t processed a word of their exchange. He stared down blankly at his bleeding palm, then pushed himself unsteadily to his feet.

“Damian, where are you going?” Zachary asked, concerned, rising from his seat as well.

Damian was already heading for the exit. “To see her,” he muttered, not looking back. “Don’t follow me.”

It was a little after one in the morning. Scarlett awoke, her throat dry, and got up to use the bathroom attached to her hospital room.

As she came out, she saw, by the dim wash of city light from the window, a figure sitting in the chair beside her bed.

Remembering Vincent’s parting words, she assumed it was him who had returned.

Her voice was cool and tired. “Vincent, I already told you, I don’t need—”

Before she could finish, the figure in the chair stood up abruptly.

As he turned, Scarlett finally saw clearly in the gloom—it wasn't Vincent. It was Damian.

She froze in surprise. But in the next instant, Damian closed the distance between them. His hands grasped her shoulders, and he guided her backward firmly until she was lying flat on the

mattress.

Before she could react, he leaned over her, planting a knee on either side of her hips, caging her in effortlessly and leaving her no room to slip away.

The strong, sharp scent of whiskey filled the space between them, overwhelming her senses

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and making her chest feel tight.

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She could see a white bandage wrapped around his right hand, but a patch of crimson was already seeping through the palm area, stark and alarming against the white.

His eyes were bloodshot in the deep night. He stared down into hers, a bitter, pained sneer twisting his lips. "Take a good look," he demanded, his voice rough. "Who am I? Tell me."

Scarlett tried to shift, but pinned beneath him, there was nowhere to go. She noticed, however, that despite his aggressive posture, he was careful to keep his full weight braced on his knees, not crushing her.

Seeing his desperate, nearly unhinged expression, she answered softly, "You're Damian."

Some of the terrible tension seemed to drain from his body. He let his forehead drop gently until it rested against hers.

They were so close now that their breath mingled, warm and intimate in the quiet room.

Damian didn't speak for a long moment. He just stared into her eyes, his gaze searching, as if trying to see straight through to her soul.

intense and

Unsettled by his scrutiny, Scarlett asked, her voice barely a whisper, "How... how did you get here?"

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At her question, Damian buried his face in the curve of her neck. His voice, when it came, was muffled and thick with emotion. "Because I'm a fool. I just had to see you."

There was a telltale crack in his words, and a fine tremor ran through his body.

Hearing him like this sent a sharp pang of sorrow through Scarlett's heart. She didn't know how *to* respond, so she stayed silent.

A long time seemed to pass before Damian lifted his head again. His eyes were impossibly red. He grabbed her wrist firmly and brought her hand up to his own cheek, slapping it against his skin with a startling force.

He seemed like he wanted to do it again, but Scarlett wrestled her hand back, alarmed. "Damian, stop! What are you doing?"

When he couldn't move her hand again, he just locked his tormented gaze with hers. "Scarlett," he said, each word weighted with hurt, "you were the one who started this. You were the one who made a promise. You broke it. You lied to me."

Scarlett looked back at him, utterly confused. "I don't understand what you're talking about."

Damian stared at her for what felt like an eternity. Finally, a bitter, resigned smile touched his

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lips. “It doesn’t matter if you don’t understand,” he said, his voice dropping to a raw whisper. “Maybe it’s better if you never do.”

If she couldn’t remember the promise between them... if her heart was still so tied to Vincent... then maybe it was for the best. Remembering would only cause her more pain.

And he would rather bear it all himself than see her hurt.

Having said that, Damian pushed himself upright, breaking the charged space between them.

He stood beside the bed, a tall silhouette in the darkened room. Under the cover of night, he quickly lifted a hand and swiped at his face, brushing away the traitorous wetness that had escaped his

eyes.

Scarlett couldn’t make out his expression clearly and couldn’t begin to guess the storm inside him. But she could feel it—a profound, radiating sadness that seemed to fill the room.

Before she could find any words, Damian turned and walked toward the door.

“Damian, wait...” The call left her lips almost of its own accord.

He paused at the doorway, his back to her, and cut her off before she could finish. His voice was low, strained, and final. “Scarlett, for your own sake... I hope you never remember that promise. Not ever.”

Then he was gone, disappearing into the hallway, running as if staying one second longer would shatter what little composure he had left.

Watching the empty space where he had stood, Scarlett slowly let out a breath, the words she might have said dying on her tongue, swallowed back into the heavy silence of the night.

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After Damian left, Scarlett found sleep impossible. She remained sitting up in the hospital bed, lost in a heavy, confused daze for what felt like hours.

She didn't understand what he meant by saying she had "started this" or "provoked him first". Yet, a vague, unsettling feeling tugged at her—a sense that there might have been some previous connection between them, a thread from the past she couldn't grasp. For reasons unknown, her memory held no trace of Damian.

And what was this "promise" he kept mentioning?

Her mind churned all night after his abrupt departure. As for Vincent's parting words about returning, they proved to be nothing more than an empty promise, a forgotten notion by the time dawn broke.

When the morning nurse came in for routine checks, Scarlett felt even more drained, any desire for rest completely gone. Seeking distraction, she picked up her phone and mindlessly scrolled through short video clips. Strangely, Sabrina's account popped up again in her feed.

She was sure she had marked "Not Interested" before, but the algorithm pushed it to her nonetheless.

Since it was there, Scarlett watched the video to the end. It was a compilation of several clips set to a soft, melancholic piano track.

The first clip was a close-up of Sabrina's face, her expression sad and tearful. In the blurred background, a man's figure was visible behind her. There was no doubt it was Vincent; his hands appeared to be resting on her shoulders in what looked like a comforting massage.

The second clip showed Vincent, dressed in a plush bathrobe, walking away from the camera toward what seemed like a bathroom.

The third clip was the most suggestive—Vincent with his back to the camera, starting to shrug off the bathrobe. The video cut to black just as it revealed part of his bare shoulder.

These three clips were seamlessly edited together. The caption read, "Had a really tough day. Got *my* research thesis direction completely wrong and my advisor tore into me. Called you but you didn't pick up. Yet when I texted saying I was feeling low, you replied instantly and said you'd come right over. Seeing you standing there made me want to cry even more. But when you said, 'Don't cry, I somehow calmed down. You said you'd take

my mind off things. Didn't expect it to be this... but I really love how you show you care instead of just talking about it."

As Scarlett watched, she unconsciously analyzed each frame. The conclusion she drew was stark - Vincent had spent the night comforting the "unhappy" Sabrina in the most intimate way possible.

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Chapter 305 Betrayal on Video

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A cold, hollow feeling settled in her chest. She switched off her phone screen and set it aside.

Thinking of Vincent's words from the night before, "I'll come back later," she almost laughed out loud. It was pathetic, really.

The moment Sabrina signaled her distress, he had rushed to her side without a second thought.

As for his wife lying sick in a hospital bed? That was likely the last thing on his mind.

Scarlett

Vanessa.

got out of bed and washed up mechanically. Once dressed, she decided to go check on

Making her way to the pediatric VIP wing, she hadn't yet located Vanessa's room when she heard her excited voice echo down the hall. "Maria! I missed you so much!"

Scarlett's steps faltered. She didn't catch Maria's reply, but she continued walking toward the sound.

Standing outside the door, she hesitated, her hand pausing before it could knock. She thought she might just peek in. Seeing that Vanessa was okay would be enough to ease her mind.

Through the small window in the door, she saw Maria sitting by Vanessa's bedside, feeding her breakfast.

At first, it looked normal. Then Scarlett's blood ran cold. She watched in disbelief as Maria took a spoonful of food, put it into her own mouth, chewed it thoroughly, and then—with the same spoon—held it back out to Vanessa's lips.

Maria was cooing gently, "Here you go, sweetheart. Eat what I made for you. It'll make you all better."

Scarlett's stomach turned. She assumed Vanessa would instinctively refuse such a thing.

To her horror, Vanessa obediently opened her mouth.

As the pre-chewed spoonful of food was about to enter her daughter's mouth, Scarlett's composure shattered. She shoved the door open, the handle hitting the wall with a bang.

"Vanessa, don't!" she cried out, her voice sharp with panic.

Vanessa jumped, startled, and stared wide-eyed at her mother storming into the room.

Without a word, Scarlett marched up to Maria and swatted the bowl of oatmeal from her hands. It clattered to the floor, splattering its contents all over Maria's clothes and the tiles.

Before a stunned Maria could react, Scarlett confronted her, fury vibrating in her voice. "Are

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you out of your mind? That is disgusting and completely unsanitary! Is that how you feed a child?"

Maria finally snapped out of her shock. She grabbed a handful of napkins, dabbing frantically at her soiled sweater. "Disgusting?" she retorted, her own temper rising. "What's so disgusting about it? I raised both Caleb and Sabrina this way! It's perfectly normal!"

Scarlett, who was rarely this openly angry, didn't hold back. "Then it's no wonder Caleb and Sabrina turned out as inconsiderate and entitled as they are!"

That ignited Maria's temper fully. She shot to her feet, pointing a finger at Scarlett. "How dare you speak about my children that way! I got up at six this morning to make this homemade breakfast. Not only do you waste it, but you insult my son and daughter? Scarlett, what have I ever done to deserve this from you?"

Just as her last words hung in the charged air, the ward door was pushed open from the hallway.

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Chapter 306 Cast Out

Daniel walked into the room.

He had been meaning to visit ever since hearing Vanessa was ill, but his schedule hadn't allowed it until today. He certainly hadn't expected to walk into such a tense scene.

As he entered the ward, he saw Scarlett and Maria standing face-to-face, the air between them crackling with hostility.

Moving closer, he instinctively positioned himself slightly towards Maria's side. "What's going on here?" he asked, his tone demanding.

Seizing the opportunity, Maria launched into her tirade. "Scarlett just barged in for no reason and knocked the breakfast I lovingly made for Vanessa right out of my hands! After all that effort, she shows no gratitude whatsoever. On top of that, she had the nerve to call Sabrina and Caleb disgusting!"

Scarlett stood off to the side, her arms crossed. She didn't offer a word in her own defense. Explaining herself to Daniel felt utterly pointless.

After listening to Maria, Daniel turned to Vanessa. “Vanessa, is that what happened?” he asked, his voice softer. He believed, as many did, that a child wouldn’t lie.

Vanessa had been sitting quietly against her propped-up pillows since Scarlett’s entrance. When Daniel addressed her, she looked up at him with wide eyes. “Yes, Daniel,” she answered clearly. “What Maria said is true. Mommy did knock over the food. And she said those things about Sabrina and Caleb.”

Hearing this, Daniel reached out and gently ruffled Vanessa’s hair. Then he straightened up, his gaze hardening as it landed on Scarlett. “Didn’t Vincent make it clear you’re not to come around Vanessa unless absolutely necessary?”

Faced with the accusation, Scarlett merely shrugged, a gesture of cold indifference. “Funny, he never mentioned that rule to me.”

Vanessa’s words were a fresh wound to her heart, but such betrayals had happened so many times before that a dull numbness had started to settle over the pain.

Daniel looked at her with clear disapproval. “Surely you must realize that your presence and behavior are a bad influence on her.”

Scarlett couldn’t help a short, humorless laugh. “And people like you, Mr. Lennox—willfully blind and utterly heartless—are a much better influence, I suppose? More likely to make her naive and foolish, wouldn’t you say?”

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Chapter 306 Cast Out

A 65

Finished

Daniel was taken aback by her sharp retort; he rarely saw this defiant side of her. Recovering, he lowered his voice, the threat implicit. “Get out. Don’t make me call security to have you removed.”

“Don’t bother,” Scarlett said flatly. “I have no desire to stay here a moment longer.”

She turned to leave, but a final surge of anger made her pause at the doorway. She looked back at Daniel. “You may despise me, but I’ll offer you my sincere wishes anyway. I hope any children you have in the future are fortunate enough to meet someone as... wonderful,” she bit out the word, “as Maria.”

With that, she left the ward, and no one tried to stop her.

Daniel hated her. Maria resented and envied her. And Vanessa... Vanessa didn't seem to need her.

When she thought about it, she had always been the outsider, the extra piece that never quite fit.

By the time she returned to her own hospital room, the morning rounds had begun. The doctor examined her and confirmed her condition had stabilized, adding she was well enough to be discharged if she wished.

Scarlett had already planned to leave that day anyway.

In the afternoon, Violet arrived. She efficiently handled all the discharge paperwork and logistics. It was past five in the evening by the time everything was finalized.

Once everything was settled, Violet drove Scarlett back to Theron Manor.

The moment Scarlett stepped into the grand foyer, she saw Nolan sitting stiffly on one of the living room sofas. He looked deeply uncomfortable, nervously sipping from a coffee cup.

Seeing Scarlett and Violet return, he quickly rose to his feet. "Mrs. Theron, Scarlett, you're back," he said, his formality betraying his unease.

Violet was momentarily surprised to see him but recovered with a polite smile. "Dr. Huntley, hello."

The tips of Nolan's ears turned a faint pink. Scarlett noticed his discomfort and walked over. "Nolan, please, have a seat," she said gently.

Sensing the two might want to talk, Violet took the hint. "I'll just go upstairs and put these things away," she said, excusing herself.

Once they were alone, Nolan's concern became more evident. His heart ached seeing how pale and thin Scarlett looked. "I went by the hospital today to see you," he explained. "They said you

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were on medical leave, so I thought I'd come by the house instead."

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Scarlett offered him a small bowl of mixed nuts from the coffee table. “I came down with a pretty bad fever,” she said. “I’ve been in the hospital the last few days.”

Hearing this, Nolan’s professional instinct kicked in. He instinctively reached out and pressed the back of his hand gently against her forehead, then against his own. Satisfied she was no longer running a temperature, he asked, “Are you feeling better now?”

Scarlett nodded, offering a small, tired smile. “Yes, much better. Thank you.”

Nolan fell quiet for a moment, absorbing her words. A quiet sadness seeped in.

She doesn’t need me. Otherwise, why wouldn’t she have told me something as important as being hospitalized?

Just then, the sound of quick, light footsteps pattered down the staircase.

“Auntie! You’re home!”

It was Clara, who came rushing into the room and threw her arms around Scarlett, her little face a mixture of happy tears and a beaming smile.

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 307[934 words]

Chapter 307 Family Approval

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Scarlett held Clara tightly, a sudden rush of emotion making the bridge of her nose tingle. In that moment, she couldn't help but think of Vanessa.

After the hug, Clara settled comfortably onto Scarlett's lap, facing her. Playing idly with a strand of Scarlett's hair, Clara began listing off items with great enthusiasm. "Auntie Auntie! Nolan brought so so many things! He got Grandpa a yummy bottle of whiskey and some vitamin pills! He got Grandma a super soft shawl and some face cream! He brought Dad a slippery silk tie and Mom a pretty pretty watch! Oh wait! There's also a huuuuge gift basket just for you!..."

Here, Clara leaned in conspiratorially, whispering into Scarlett's ear, "I peeked, Auntie. It's full of gourmet snacks, fancy sparkling water, a handheld game console... and there's some jewelry in there too!"

Then she leaned back, giggling. "And Nolan brought presents for me, too! Loads of Swiss chocolates and a whole set of collector edition dolls."

Seeing how adorable and earnest Clara was, Scarlett couldn't help but reach out and boop her nose gently. "You little sneak."

Clara gave a gleeful chuckle. "Okay, Auntie, I'm gonna go upstairs and play with my new dolls

now."

Scarlett nodded. "Alright, go ahead."

Once Clara had scampered off, Scarlett turned to Nolan with a soft, grateful smile. "Thank you, Nolan. That was incredibly thoughtful."

Nolan brushed off the thanks, quickly changing the subject. "Dr. Newman is hosting a small gathering this weekend at his home. He specifically asked me to invite you."

Scarlett was slightly surprised but nodded. "That sounds nice. I'd like to go."

It was still relatively early. While not all the Therons had returned home yet, the staff were already bustling in the kitchen, preparing dinner.

Nolan had accomplished his goal of delivering the gifts and seeing Scarlett, yet he showed no sign of being in a hurry to leave.

By seven o'clock, the family had assembled. Nolan was warmly invited to stay for the meal, and he accepted without hesitation.

Dinner was a congenial affair. Henry kept up a steady conversation with Nolan. It began with general topics—work, current events—but gradually grew more personal.

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“Are you an only child, Nolan?” Henry inquired.

“Yes, I am,” Nolan replied politely.

“And your parents? Are they both well?”

“They are, thank you. Both are retired now.”

“I see. And how old might they be?”

“My father is just turning sixty, and my mother is fifty-six.”

Henry nodded slowly, a sound of approval. “I see.”

Although it was Henry doing the asking, Nathan and Diana were listening intently to every

answer.

By the time Henry finished his gentle interrogation, his expression suggested he was quite satisfied with Nolan’s stable, respectable background.

Nolan wasn’t oblivious; he could sense the family’s approval. Midway through the meal, he stood up, glass in hand, to propose a toast. He went around the table, offering gracious words to each family member.

Finally, he stood before Scarlett, his gaze softening. “Scarlett,” he said, raising his glass slightly. “To your health and happiness. May your future be bright, and... may you have everything you wish for.”

He had almost said, “May you find love,” but the words caught in his throat. It didn’t feel like the right time.

After dinner, Nolan stayed for coffee and conversation in the living room. As the clock ticked past nine, he knew it was time to go.

He rose, thanking everyone for their hospitality. As he was saying his final goodbyes, Nathan spoke up, “Scarlett, why don’t you walk Nolan to his car?”

Understanding the unspoken suggestion in her brother’s words, Scarlett simply agreed. “Of course.”

They walked in companionable silence down the long driveway of Theron Manor, the evening air cool around them. Only when they reached the imposing front gates did Nolan turn to her.

“Are you really okay?” he asked, his voice low with concern.

A flicker of weary resignation passed through Scarlett’s eyes, but she nodded. “I am. Really.”

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Nolan’s own eyes held a deep, conflicted emotion. Several times, he seemed on the verge of saying something more, only to hold back. He reasoned that with her divorce not yet finalized, it wasn’t his place to complicate her life further. He would wait.

Having drunk wine, Nolan had called a taxi. Just then, a yellow cab pulled up to the curb. Reluctant to leave, he turned back to Scarlett one last time. “Well... I should get going.”

Scarlett offered a small smile.

Nolan opened the rear passenger door. But as he was about to duck inside, he straightened up suddenly and looked back at her, the words he’d been suppressing finally breaking free. “Scarlett, actually, I’ve been wanting to tell you-”

Fate, it seemed, had other plans. His confession was abruptly drowned out by a louder, more imperious voice.

“Scarlett! Grandpa is at Ravensshade Villa. He sent me to pick you up for dinner.”

Behind the idling taxi, Vincent's unmistakable Rolls-Royce had pulled up silently. The driver's side window slid down, revealing Vincent's sharp, defined profile.

The interplay of shadow and streetlight etched his features with a severe handsomeness. Even seated, he commanded the space around him with an aura of undeniable authority that seemed to swallow the quiet intimacy of the moment.

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 308[914 words]

Chapter 8308 A Test of Power

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Heartcatching Xavier was at Ravensshade Villa, Scarlett felt her heart clench involuntarily. After brief hesitation, she replied with a touch of resignation, "I understand."

She then looked up at Nolan, who was still standing by the taxi. "Nolan, you should head back. I'll treat you to dinner next time to make up for tonight."

Nolan's lips curved into a faint smile, though it didn't quite reach his eyes. He nodded. "Alright, I'll hold you to that."

Returning his smile gently, Scarlett turned and got into Vincent's car.

By the time they arrived back at Ravensshade Villa, it was already past eight in the evening.

Xavier was seated on the plush living room sofa, leaning on a handsomely carved cane. In casual attire, he exuded an undeniable air of authority.

Seeing Scarlett enter with Vincent, a slight smile finally touched Xavier's stern features. But the two approached, his despondent expression grew serious once more.

"Where have you been at such a late hour?" he asked, his tone conveying clear disapproval.

"I went to visit my parents, Grandfather," Scarlett replied calmly.

Xavier's gaze held a note of expectation. "Vanessa still looks quite peaky. You should make an effort to spend more time with her these days."

"Of course," Scarlett answered simply.

Vanessa had been discharged from the hospital that same afternoon. Scarlett felt no need to explain the day's earlier conflict, nor did she particularly care how Xavier perceived her actions.

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In less than twenty days, she would have no further ties to the Stewart family. For now, it was easier to simply acquiesce to his requests.

Seeing her compliant demeanor, Xavier finally allowed a look of satisfaction to settle on his face.

Across the room, near the coffee table, Maria was sitting comfortably, snacking on fruit while watching a drama on the large television. She had been happily in her room when Xavier finally arrived and had only come downstairs a short while ago.

Unfamiliar with Xavier and engrossed in her show, she hadn't paid much attention to the conversation nearby. Her relaxed posture, however, had not escaped Xavier's notice.

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Chapter 308 A Test of Power

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Taking in her simple house dress, Xavier assumed she was one of the villa's staff.

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His voice, laced with undisguised disdain, cut through the room. “What is this? Do the help at Ravensshade Villa now presume to sit as equals with the family?”

The direct address made Maria jump. She turned and saw the elegantly dressed old man whose very presence commanded respect. A wave of instinctive apprehension washed over her.

Noticing how Scarlett and Vincent stood attentively nearby, she quickly deduced this must be a senior member of the Stewart family—Vincent’s grandfather, most likely.

Once she guessed his identity, a thread of genuine fear wound through her irritation.

But before she could muster an apology, Scarlett spoke up, her voice cool and clear, “Maria, have you forgotten the household rules?”

Hearing Scarlett use her name so pointedly sent a fresh spike of anger through Maria. Yet, with Xavier’s critical eyes upon her, she couldn’t afford to lose her temper.

Swallowing her pride, Maria stood up from the sofa. She walked over to Scarlett’s side, adopting a deferential tone. “My apologies, Mrs. Stewart. Is there something you’d like? You only had to ask.”

A faint, almost imperceptible smile touched Scarlett’s lips as she regarded Maria. After a deliberate pause, she said, “Now that you mention it, Maria, I have a bit of a craving. I’d like some agneau aux haricots verts farcis.”

As she named the dish—an exceedingly labor-intensive one requiring the meticulous stuffing of a fine lamb mousse into individual hollowed-out green beans—her eyes held a deceptively gentle, harmless look.

Maria knew full well Scarlett was creating a difficulty for her. But she simply nodded. “Of course, Mrs. Stewart. I’ll prepare it for you right away.”

With that, she turned and hurried toward the kitchen. Scarlett was seizing the opportunity presented by Xavier’s presence to subtly assert her position, if only for the moment.

Once Maria had left the room, Xavier turned to Scarlett, his brow slightly furrowed. “Scarlett, isn’t it rather excessive to demand such an elaborate dish from the staff at this hour?”

“Is it?” Scarlett replied evenly. “Maria often takes great pride in preparing gourmet meals, no matter the time. She seems to genuinely enjoy the craft.”

Xavier didn't pursue the matter further. But Scarlett, as if struck by a sudden thought, turned to Vincent. "You know, I just remembered Grandfather is particularly fond of Consommé Royale, isn't he? Since Maria is already in the kitchen, perhaps she could prepare a portion for him as well?"

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Chapter 308 A Test of Power

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She directed the remark pointedly at Vincent, watching as his expression subtly darkened.

Xavier himself waved a hand in refusal. "It's far too late for such a rich soup. Not good for the digestion at my age."

Vincent seized on this, offering Scarlett a thin smile. "Grandfather is right. Perhaps you should take his advice. Late-night meals should be light."

Scarlett knew he was intervening on Maria's behalf, but she held her ground, her tone light yet insistent. "But I'm still feeling a bit peckish. And besides, didn't you always tell me not to skip meals?"

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 309[962 words]

Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Chapter 309 An Unwelcome Announcement

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Vincent knew Scarlett was deliberately testing his patience. He frowned, his voice low. “Then choose something else. Not that particular dish.”

But Scarlett remained stubborn. “It’s the only thing I want,” she stated flatly.

Just as the tension between them threatened to escalate, Xavier finally interjected. “Enough,” he said, his tone brooking no argument. “If Scarlett has a craving, let her have it. It’s hardly a matter of state.”

With Xavier having spoken, Vincent fell silent.

At that moment, a soft, familiar voice called from the foyer entrance. “Vincent?”

Sabrina had returned.

Stepping into the grand hall, her eyes immediately found Xavier. Though they had never met, she instantly recognized who he must be.

Xavier gave her a measured look before turning his questioning gaze to Vincent. “And who might this be?”

As Vincent was put on the spot, Scarlett glanced at him, genuinely curious about how he would define Sabrina’s presence.

For a moment, all attention in the room was fixed on him.

Vincent remained composed. He met Xavier’s gaze evenly and replied, “This is Vanessa’s tutor, Sabrina.”

Xavier’s brow furrowed slightly. “Vanessa is so young. What could she possibly need a tutor for at this age?”

“She’s taken a liking to digital tablets and games,” Vincent explained smoothly. “I thought it prudent to have someone guide her towards more constructive activities.”

Before Xavier could comment further, Sabrina stepped forward and offered a deep, respectful bow. “It’s an honor to meet you, Mr. Stewart.”

“Hmm,” Xavier acknowledged with a brief nod.

Encouraged by his not-unfriendly response, Sabrina’s nerves seemed to settle. “Mr. Stewart, would it be alright if I went upstairs to check on Vanessa now?”

Xavier gave a dismissive wave. "Yes, yes, go ahead."

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Chapter 309 An Unwelcome Announcement

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Sabrina beamed at him. "Thank you. Have a restful evening." With that, she turned and made her way to the staircase. Throughout the entire exchange, she hadn't so much as glanced in Scarlett's direction.

Once Sabrina was gone, Xavier turned his appraisal to Scarlett and Vincent. "Seems like a pleasant young woman. Cheerful, respectful. She appears quite suitable for the role."

Scarlett said nothing, her expression unreadable.

Vincent, however, allowed a small smile. "Yes, she's always had a good temperament," he agreed, his eyes unconsciously flicking toward the stairs where Sabrina had disappeared, a trace of something akin to pride in his gaze.

Xavier, whose attention was elsewhere, didn't notice. He instead focused on the silent woman beside Vincent. "Scarlett, what's your opinion?"

Scarlett, who would have preferred to remain detached, found she couldn't ignore a direct question from him. After a brief pause, she offered a non-committal, "She seems... adequate."

Her lukewarm endorsement seemed to satisfy Xavier, whose lips curved slightly. "Good." He then cleared his throat, his demeanor shifting to one of gravity. "Now, the reason I came tonight... There's something I need to discuss with you both."

His serious tone sent a ripple of unease through both Scarlett and Vincent.

Xavier continued, "My health hasn't been reliable. I don't know how much time I have left." He paused, letting the weight of his words sink in. "I've decided I want to stay here, at Ravensshade Villa, for a while. If my time comes, I wish to be surrounded by family."

Since his last hospital discharge, a profound loneliness and fear had settled over him. With his wife long gone, the silence of Stewart Manor felt oppressive. He dreaded the thought of another fall, another crisis, with no one nearby.

Scarlett remained silent, stunned. She turned to look at Vincent, finding him already looking back at her. In that brief, shared glance, a mutual understanding of complicated worries passed between them.

Scarlett's concern was immediate and practical. If Xavier moved in, her carefully maintained distance from Ravensshade Villa would collapse. She would be expected here daily.

As for Vincent's worry, which flickered in his eyes, she could guess its source—the delicate, untenable situation with Sabrina and Maria living under the same roof.

A long, heavy silence stretched out after Xavier's announcement. Seeing their lack of response, a flash of irritation crossed his face.

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“What?” he demanded, his voice rising. “Am I such a burden that you can’t tolerate my presence for a few days?”

Scarlett was the first to recover, forcing a placating smile. “Of course not, Grandfather. We’re only concerned we might not be able to provide the care you deserve.”

Xavier walked back and settled heavily into his armchair. He looked from Scarlett to Vincent. “Just spend time with me when you can. The rest of the time, consider me furniture. You won’t know I’m here unless I’m on my deathbed.”

Scarlett didn’t dare say more. She glanced pointedly at Vincent, signaling it was his turn to respond.

Vincent met his grandfather’s expectant gaze. “If this is what you wish, Grandfather, then you are welcome to stay as long as you like.”

Hearing his grandson’s assent, Xavier’s posture relaxed, a hint of triumph in his expression. “Naturally,” he said.

Just then, the sound of Sabrina’s gentle laughter mingled with Vanessa’s higher-pitched giggles floated down from the upper floor.

Xavier glanced at his vintage wristwatch. “It’s getting late,” he murmured, more to himself. Then, looking at Scarlett, he added, “Shouldn’t Vanessa be in bed by now?”

Scarlett, however, was only half-listening. Her mind was reeling, tangled on Vincent’s words, “as long as you like“, and the daunting new reality they now faced.

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Chapter 310 Masks Removed

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He could make that promise so casually, but she was the one who would have to return here every single day.

Just the thought of it made Scarlett feel as if a heavy stone were lodged in her chest, making it hard to breathe.

Vincent understood her turmoil perfectly, but to avoid arousing Xavier’s suspicion, he quickly called out in a commanding voice, “Maria!”

At that moment, Maria was still in the kitchen, painstakingly mincing lamb for the mousse, the green beans still waiting to be prepped. Hearing the summons, she instinctively replied, “Coming!”

She hurried into the living room, wiping her hands on her apron. Vincent instructed her without preamble, “Go upstairs and inform the tutor she may leave for the evening.”

Tutor? Maria hadn’t been aware of any tutor. Confused, she let out a puzzled, “Hmm?”

Seeing her bewilderment, Vincent clarified, “Tell Ms. Monroe she is dismissed for the night.”

Finally understanding, Maria nodded. But a fresh wave of resentment washed over her. She was treated as a mere maid, and her daughter was relegated to the role of a “tutor“...

Yet, in this moment, she had no right to object. She simply nodded again. “Right away, Mr.

Stewart.”

As Maria headed upstairs, Xavier couldn’t help but comment, “That maid seems a bit dim. If she’s not competent, you should simply replace her.”

Before Scarlett could even form a response, Vincent interjected smoothly, “Maria prepares an excellent breakfast. I’ve grown accustomed to her cooking. It’s best to keep her on.”

Xavier didn’t press the issue. He stifled a yawn, patting his mouth. “Very well. I’m off to rest. You two should retire as well.”

“Goodnight, Grandfather,” Vincent said.

Scarlett merely stood in silence, offering no farewell.

Xavier noted her continued quietness but, after a moment’s thought, chose not to remark on it.

After being summoned downstairs, Sabrina and Maria left Ravensshade Villa together.

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Standing on the curb in the chilly night air, Sabrina looked utterly drained. Her days were spent on grueling research at the university, and her nights were devoted *to* caring for Vanessa at the villa.

The thought of her relentless routine brought her close to tears. Here she was, a young, unmarried woman, living the life of a domestic caretaker.

Maria, for her part, had been muttering complaints under her breath the entire way out. Even now, she couldn't stop. "That woman is insane! Who demands a pâté-stuffed haricot vert at this hour? It's pure malice!"

They both knew it was a calculated power play, but with Xavier present, they'd had no choice but to comply. Now, safely outside, their frustration boiled over.

Seeing Maria's genuine anger, Sabrina tried to soothe her. "Mom, don't let it get to you. Petty stunts are all she's capable of."

Maria finally took a steadying breath, though her words were gritted out between her teeth. "Mark my words, one day I'll see that woman crying as she's thrown out of Ravensshade Villa for good."

Sabrina was taken aback by the venom. She stepped closer and patted Maria's back. "Mom, honestly, whether Scarlett leaves or not... my situation isn't so bad. If Vincent finalizes the divorce, I'll marry him properly. If he doesn't... well, I'll remain his..."

She left the sentence hanging, but the implication was clear to them both.

Maria looked at her daughter's weary face, her heart aching with pity. "Look at how exhausted you are. When you get home, turn your phone off immediately. That ungrateful little girl won't be able to bother you. She's as vexing as a stubborn mule."

Sabrina managed a tired smile. "Okay, Mom. I will."

Back inside Ravensshade Villa, after Sabrina's departure, Vincent made his way upstairs.

He found Vanessa in her room, lying on her bed and carefully applying glitter stickers to a sketchbook.

Hearing footsteps, she called out hopefully, "Sabrina?"

But when she saw it was Vincent, her bright smile faded. "Daddy, where's Sabrina? Didn't she come up with you?"

Vincent sat on the edge of her bed, gently smoothing her hair. “Great-Grandfather is going to

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be staying with us for a while. Because of that, Sabrina won’t be able to stay overnight anymore.”

Vanessa looked at him with confused, wide eyes. “Why not?”

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Vincent didn’t offer a lengthy explanation. “Great-Grandfather will be living here. For now, it’s best if Sabrina doesn’t stay over.”

At this, Vanessa’s eyes instantly welled with tears. “But Daddy... how long is Great-Grandfather staying?”

Vincent considered for a moment. “It’s not certain. Perhaps a week, maybe a month... possibly longer.” Judging by Xavier’s determination, it might indeed be until the end.

Vanessa didn’t blame Xavier. Instead, her worry was more immediate. “But what if I miss Sabrina?”

Vincent was momentarily at a loss, but he rallied. “I will think of something,” he promised.

Even though he hadn’t formulated a plan, the simple fact that he had made a promise filled Vanessa with a sense of relief, and a small, trusting smile returned to her face.

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 311[864 words]

Chapter 311 A Stranger's Room

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After Xavier retired for the night and Vincent went back upstairs to stay with Vanessa, Scarlett found herself alone in the first-floor living room, feeling strangely adrift.

Eventually, she too made her way up to the second floor.

With a familiar motion, she pushed open the door to the master bedroom—the room she had once shared with Vincent.

Flipping on the light, a palette of soft, light colors greeted her. The bed was made with lavender-colored sheets and pillowcases. The wardrobe and the dressing table were both in a pristine white...

Everything within sight was in a light, airy hue.

Standing in the middle of the room, Scarlett was overcome with a profound sense of estrangement. The room's layout was unchanged, yet every object within it felt foreign.

In the past, eager to please Vincent, she had decorated strictly in the muted tones he preferred -blacks, whites, and

grays.

Now, Sabrina's influence was undeniable. Traces of her were everywhere: a hairbrush and an array of skincare products on the dressing table, a medical textbook left open on the desk, an unused silk sleep mask beside a pillow, a pair of fluffy pink slippers tucked by the bedside...

Mixed in among these were Vincent's belongings. Their things were intermingled, a silent testament to shared intimacy that conjured unwelcome images in Scarlett's mind.

She had known intimacy with Vincent in this very room. Now, it clearly belonged to him and Sabrina. Countless moments of intimacy had unfolded here since.

Her painful reverie was broken by the sound of footsteps behind her.

She turned to see Vincent approaching. His tone was matter-of-fact. "It seems you'll need to stay at Ravenshade Villa for the foreseeable future."

Scarlett listened in silence, offering no reply. Vincent didn't press her.

After a pause, he walked to the wardrobe and pulled open the door. Inside, a riot of colorful dresses, blouses, and loungewear was crammed together. Only a small, orderly section at one end was reserved for Vincent's tailored shirts and suits.

The sight of the closet was a punch to the gut, vividly recalling the past. She had once tried to hang her clothes alongside his, only to find them mysteriously moved or removed the very next day.

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Chapter 311 A Stranger's Room.

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Vincent reached into the colorful mass of fabric, rummaged briefly, and pulled out a set of soft, seafoam-green silk pajamas.

He turned, holding them out to her. "These pajamas belong to Sabrina, but I don't recall her ever wearing them. They should be clean. You can use them tonight. We'll have all your personal necessities brought over tomorrow."

Scarlett eyed the pajamas. They were lovely, but she made no move to take them. Instead, she lifted her gaze to meet his, her voice steady. "Vincent, when exactly do you plan to tell your grandfather that we are getting divorced?"

A note of entreaty entered his voice. “Given Grandfather’s current health condition, now is certainly not the time.”

Scarlett let out a slow breath. “If you can’t bring yourself to tell him, then I will.”

At this, Vincent instinctively caught her wrist. “I will tell him myself when the timing is right. Please don’t mention it to him now. It would only upset him.”

Scarlett had no desire to cause Xavier pain either. She slowly pulled her hand free from his grasp. Once released, she said coolly, “I’ll sleep in one of the guest rooms.”

Vincent’s hand shot out again, this time grasping her arm. “Sleep here.”

She allowed him to hold her, meeting his eyes with detached indifference. “Vincent, we are on the verge of a divorce. Maintaining separate sleeping arrangements is the appropriate boundary.”

For a long moment, he held her gaze, then slowly released his grip.

The moment she was free, Scarlett turned away, refusing to look at him again. As for the pajamas he still held, she would not deign to wear them.

To reach the guest wing, she had to pass Vanessa’s room. The door was slightly ajar. As Scarlett paused nearby, she heard her daughter’s voice, clearly on the phone.

She leaned closer, catching the words. “I’m not happy at all that Mom is home tonight.”

The words were a knife to the heart. Scarlett straightened up, the ache sharp and physical. Vanessa had once been so affectionate and clingy... What had she done to make her own daughter despise her so?

She continued down the hall to the guest room in a `daze.

Lying in a bed that was in a familiar house yet felt utterly alien, sleep refused to come. Resigned, she picked up her phone for distraction.

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Chapter 311 A Stranger’s Room

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The moment she opened her social media app, the first video that autoplayed was, once again, Sabrina's.

This time, the background was a dimly lit bar. The framing was the same—showing only from her chin down to her waist.

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Silent Dreams Never Die — 312

Chapter 312 Fevered Dreams

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Though she couldn't see the face of the person opposite Sabrina, when Scarlett paused the video, she was taken aback. The man's hands in the frame didn't look like Vincent's at all. Instead, they bore a striking resemblance to Damian's.

From what she could recall, Damian had a faint, distinctive scar on the back of his left hand.

In the video, as the man seated across from Sabrina raised his glass in a toast, the scar on his knuckle was briefly but clearly visible.

The caption read, "So nice to have company on a lonely night. Especially when it's a 6'3" drink of water."

Scarlett zoomed in, studying the paused image until she was certain. The man was indeed Damian.

Just to be absolutely sure, she slipped out of the guest room and quietly checked the master bedroom. Vincent was already asleep, his form still under the covers.

This confirmation settled it—at that very moment, Damian was the one sharing a drink with

Sabrina.

After watching that one clip, Scarlett lost all interest in scrolling further. She put her phone down and eventually drifted into a fitful sleep.

She dreamed that Damian climbed in through her window again. In the dream, he walked over to her bed, lay down beside it, and wrapped his arms around her.

Half-asleep, she murmured into the pillow, “Damian...?”

But the next moment, a low, familiar male voice—nothing like Damian’s—hissed in her ear, “Is he the one in your dreams? What’s going on? Did you dream you were with him? Is that why you’re squeezing your thighs together like that?”

Scarlett’s fever hadn’t fully broken. Her body burned, feeling as if it were roasting from the inside out.

When Vincent’s deep, magnetic voice vibrated against her ear, a jolt, startling and electric, shot through Scarlett’s system.

Struggling against the heavy fog of sleep and illness, she forced her eyes open, disoriented. She had seen Damian in her dream, so why was she hearing Vincent’s voice?

As her vision cleared and she recognized the man leaning over her, her body convulsed with a violent tremor. She tried to jerk away instinctively, only to find Vincent’s arms caging her in, his

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Chapter 312 Fevered Dreams

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hands planted firmly on the mattress on either side of her head. There was no escape.

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In the faint silvery glow from the window, she could barely make out his expression. He was frowning down at her, his eyes dark pools of intense scrutiny.

“Vincent, get off. What are you doing?” Her voice, when it came, was ragged and hoarse, barely recognizable.

At the same time, she brought her hands up to push against his chest.

Vincent’s solid frame resisted her weak shove. Through the thin cotton of his sleep shirt, she could feel the heat of his skin, and he, in turn, felt the scorching touch of her fingers.

He leaned in closer, his body blocking what little light there was, casting his face into shadow. Scarlett could no longer see his features clearly.

“Vincent, get out. Now.” Impatience and fever made her voice sharp.

that

Instead of moving, his hand shot out, his fingers closing around her jaw with a pressure bordered on painful. His voice dropped to a chilling, controlled calm. “Answer me. Have you slept with him?”

The pain made her gasp, but she managed a hoarse, derisive laugh. “What on earth are you talking about?”

Vincent moved closer still, his face now dominating her entire field of vision. He studied her through narrowed eyes. “Is that it? You think he’s better than me? Is that why you’re so eager for the divorce?”

Scarlett wasn’t entirely sure which “better” he was implying. But it was so rare to hear Vincent draw a comparison with another man, especially one laced with what sounded like insecurity masked as aggression.

She seized the chance to strike back mercilessly. “Vincent, are you finally admitting to your own... inadequacies?”

A shadow passed over his face, a flash of raw irritation. Then, unexpectedly, a cold, humorless smile touched his lips. “Or is it possible,” he countered, his voice a low taunt, “that the problem has always been you? That you just... don’t do it for me?”

His words left her stunned, breath catching in her raw throat.

Perhaps it was because they struck at the oldest, most vulnerable bruise in her heart that the hurt was so acute. Over the years, their intimate life had never been what she’d hoped for. It was always rushed, perfunctory on his part, a duty rather than a connection. She had never known real pleasure with him.

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Chapter 312 Fevered Dreams

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Finished

Vincent's accusation was cruel, and the lack of fulfillment hadn't been her fault alone. In the past, a comment like that would have haunted her for weeks, a source of secret shame.

But not anymore. None of it mattered now.

A faint, tired smile touched her lips. "Well, that works out perfectly then," she said, her voice dripping with indifference. "We don't need each other."

This detached, unflinching Scarlett felt alien to him. Vincent's frown deepened.

After a heavy silence, he spoke again, a new, challenging edge in his tone. "If it's... stamina you're interested in now, or a different kind of experience... are you sure you don't want to give me another chance to prove myself?"

Seeing the arrogant confidence in his shadowed expression, Scarlett couldn't hold back a scornful laugh. It was raw and painful in her throat. "Another chance? For what? In all our years of marriage, Vincent, when have you ever lasted more than a few minutes?"

The moment the words left her mouth, she felt the punishing grip on her jaw slacken.

In the dim light, she thought she saw the cold smirk on his lips twist into something darker.

Simultaneously, her mind flashed to Sabrina's social feed, with its daily intimate glimpses. Sabrina had Damian with her last night, she remembered.

The thought fueled her final, parting shot. "Vincent, sometimes you should check that arrogance. You might not be the prize you think you are."

With that, she mustered all her strength and twisted out from under him, rolling to the edge of the bed and sitting up, putting what little distance she could between them in the confining

room.

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Silent Dreams Never Die — 313

Chapter 313 Witness to Betrayal

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The sky outside was just beginning to lighten, the deep blue of night yielding to the first hints. of dawn.

Scarlett had no desire to return to sleep. She went into the ensuite bathroom to wash her face and get ready for the day. What Vincent might be doing or thinking outside the door held no interest for her.

By the time she finished and stepped back into the bedroom, Vincent was gone.

Once she was dressed, the early morning light had fully crept into the room. It was still very early, but Scarlett had no intention of lingering at Ravensshade Villa any longer than necessary.

As she left the guest room, she heard the sound of crying coming from Vanessa's room down

the hall.

“Wahhh... Daddy, Sabrina isn't answering my texts. She doesn't want me anymore!”

The door was slightly ajar. Through the gap, Scarlett saw Vincent standing by the bed while Vanessa stood on the mattress, her small arms wrapped tightly around his waist as she sobbed.

Hearing his daughter's distress, Vincent quickly tried to soothe her. “It's still very early, sweetheart. Sabrina is probably still asleep.”

Vanessa looked up at him, her face streaked with tears. “But Daddy, Sabrina always wakes me up at this time. She didn't today.”

Vincent gently stroked her hair. “How about I call her for you?”

Vanessa nodded vigorously, a spark of hope in her eyes. “Okay!”

Holding Vanessa, Vincent pulled out his phone and dialed Sabrina’s number.

The call connected, but was immediately met with a cold, automated voicemail greeting informing him the subscriber was unavailable.

Scarlett, still paused in the hallway, heard the faint robotic message through the door. Thinking of Sabrina’s late-night video and her habits, a cynical thought crossed Scarlett’s mind—perhaps Sabrina had simply had a very enjoyable night and was now sleeping it off.

At the thought, Scarlett gave a small, humorless shake of her head and continued downstairs.

From her perch on the bed, Vanessa’s eyes, still glistening with tears, had been fixed on the sliver of hallway visible through the doorway. She had seen the shadow of someone passing by -it was Scarlett.

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Chapter 313 Witness to Betrayal

64

Finished

So, Mommy heard me cry?

But why doesn’t she come in to check on her? Before, she always would.

But this wasn’t the first time, or even the second.

A sad, final certainty settled in Vanessa’s young heart—Mommy didn’t love her anymore.

Well, fine. If Mommy didn’t want her, she still had Sabrina.

Since Sabrina’s phone was off, Vanessa’s crying subsided into hiccups. She looked up at Vincent. “Daddy, Sabrina must just be really tired. She’s sleeping in.”

Vincent gently pinched her cheek. “Mhm.” Even as he agreed, he knew this was out of character for Sabrina. As a doctoral student, she kept her phone on at all times, needing to be reachable for her research advisor or university matters.

That afternoon, Scarlett was in her office at the hospital, finishing up some patient charts, when her phone screen lit up on the desk.

It was a message from Claire. Opening the app, Scarlett saw Claire had sent a short video clip. In it, Sabrina was walking arm-in-arm with Vincent, looking at display models in what appeared to be a luxury real estate office.

A follow-up text from Claire came through. "Your husband is house hunting."

Scarlett didn't understand the implication and replied with a simple question mark.

Claire's response was immediate. "Seriously. Looks like he's picking one out for Sabrina."

Scarlett stared at the message for a long moment. Then, her fingers moved calmly over the screen. "Can you get a few more photos? If there's any money to be claimed back later, we'll split it 50/50."

Claire, who was far from needing money, wasn't interested in that. Her concern was for her friend. "You're not upset?" she texted back.

Scarlett's reply was succinct and weary. "What's the point?"

Meanwhile, after a day of viewings with Sabrina, Vincent had finally settled on a property—a sleek, modern villa located in the same exclusive neighborhood as Ravenshade Villa, just a short walk away. Its proximity was the first advantage; the property's quality and privacy were

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Chapter 313 Witness to Betrayal-

the second.

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After Vincent completed the preliminary paperwork, Sabrina looked at him, bewildered. "Vincent, why are you buying a place for me all of a sudden?"

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Vincent straightened up from the table and looked at her, his gaze soft. “You and your mother should have a proper home of your own.”

Sabrina frowned slightly. “But... we have Ravensshade Villa.”

Vincent’s eyes held a trace of remorse. “What happened last night was unfair to both of you. I don’t want you to be put in that position again. From now on, you can live here. Whenever Vanessa misses you, she can come over anytime. It’s close.”

Hearing this, Sabrina’s eyes welled up. She threw her arms around Vincent’s neck, her voice thick with emotion. “Vincent, you’re too good to me.”

He returned her embrace gently. “It’s the least I can do. I handled things poorly yesterday. It won’t happen again.”

That evening, just after seven, Scarlett was unexpectedly pulled from her routine. She was informed she needed to accompany an Emergency Room physician on an urgent home visit— a call-out just as her shift was about to end.

The demand for overtime instantly put her in a sour mood. The only small consolation was that the address was for a residential area less than two miles from the hospital.

The patient was a young child, which required the specialized assessment of a pediatrician like Scarlett. Fortunately, the case was straightforward—a bad case of the seasonal flu with a high fever.

After accompanying the child and their anxious parents back to the hospital for further observation, Scarlett finally returned to her own department to wrap up.

As she saved the last of her notes and leaned back in her chair to stretch, her phone screen lit up once more on the cluttered desk.

She glanced over. This time, it was a text message from Xavier.

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Silent Dreams Never Die — 314

Chapter 314 A Bitter Errand

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The message from Xavier read, “Scarlett, Vincent had a bit too much to drink at a business dinner tonight. My driver took me home first. Could you go and keep him company? Make sure he gets home safely.”

Reading the text, Scarlett knew exactly what Xavier was doing—trying to engineer another situation for them. Even though she saw through it, she also knew she couldn’t refuse.

With a sigh, she typed a reluctant reply, “Okay.”

After packing up her things at the hospital, Scarlett headed to the parking garage. Sitting in her car, she hesitated for a long moment, her fingers tapping restlessly on the steering wheel. Ultimately, she started the engine and entered the address Xavier had sent into her GPS.

If she didn’t go tonight, Xavier would undoubtedly have questions later. More importantly, given his fragile health, she was afraid of being the one to upset him.

Arriving at the upscale restaurant, she spotted Vincent’s car immediately—a sleek, dark luxury sedan parked prominently near the entrance. The car was eye-catching enough, but its personalized license plate made it unmistakable.

Inside, Scarlett was greeted by a host who directed her to the private dining room. When she reached the door, she found it slightly ajar.

Through the narrow gap, her gaze immediately found Vincent and Sabrina. Vincent was slumped on a chair, his complexion pale, his usually sharp eyes dull and unfocused as he stared up at Sabrina, who was standing over him.

As she watched, he suddenly let out a soft, breathy laugh, then leaned forward slowly, wrapping his arms around Sabrina’s waist and burying his face against her.

Sabrina raised her hands and began gently massaging his temples. “I told you to take it easy,” she chided softly, her voice a mix of concern and mild reproach. “But you never listen. Serves you right for the headache.”

Vincent, his face still hidden against her, didn’t respond in words. He just held on tighter.

Then Daniel's voice carried from inside the room. "Sabrina, I'll leave him in your capable hands." There was the sound of a chair scraping back as Daniel stood up.

Outside the door, seeing movement, Scarlett quickly turned to face the wall, pretending to check her phone.

After a round of murmured goodbyes from the remaining guests, they began to file out. Harris was also quite intoxicated, and Daniel helped support him as they left.

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Chapter 314 A Bitter Errand

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Passing by Scarlett, who was still facing the wall, neither of them noticed her.

Once the hallway was quiet again, Scarlett glanced back into the room. Only Vincent and Sabrina remained.

Vincent seemed utterly inebriated, his body heavy and limp as he leaned into Sabrina.

"Vincent, we should get you home," Sabrina said, her voice gentle.

Vincent lifted his head to look at her, his tone taking on a rare, childlike petulance. "Just a little longer."

Sabrina couldn't help a small, affectionate smile. Looking down at him, her eyes were soft. "You're a grown man. Why are you acting like a little boy?"

"Sabrina, come closer," Vincent murmured, his words slightly slurred. "I have to tell you something."

Obliging, Sabrina leaned down.

But instead of whispering, Vincent suddenly lifted his head and pressed a kiss to her lips.

Sabrina brought a hand to her mouth, her cheeks flushing a delicate pink. "Vincent! You..." she started, a mixture of surprise and shy delight in her voice.

Vincent just grinned, a genuinely happy, unfiltered expression that Scarlett rarely saw.

A cold, hollow feeling settled in Scarlett's chest. Almost mechanically, she pulled out her phone and, through the crack in the door, quickly snapped two photos of the intimate moment.

Her thumb moved to her message thread with Xavier. She selected the photos, her finger hovering over the "send" button. A powerful, bitter impulse urged her to do it—to expose this scene to the one person who kept pushing them together..

But a calmer, more rational voice held her back. *If you send these and he has another episode because of the shock... the responsibility will be on you.*

Reason won out. Scarlett deleted the photos from the message draft and shoved her phone back into her pocket.

Seeing that her presence here was not only unnecessary but painfully intrusive, she turned and walked away from the door, then out of the restaurant.

Back in her car, she sat for a long time in the driver's seat, the engine off, the silence pressing in on her. She didn't want to return to the stifling atmosphere of Ravensshade Villa, nor did she want to go back to her parents' house in this state and worry them.

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Chapter 314 A Bitter Errand

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Finally, she started the car and drove to Claire's apartment.

She had just stepped inside Claire's welcoming, minimalist living room when her phone rang. It was Xavier. She answered without hesitation.

"Grandfather."

"Scarlett, did you find Vincent?" Xavier's voice was full of concern.

Not wanting to create complications, she told a half-truth. "Yes, I'm with him now."

"Ah, good. And when will you two be coming home?"

Scarlett thought quickly. "Grandfather... Vincent and I probably won't be back to Ravensshade Villa tonight."

Hearing this, Xavier chuckled warmly, the sound crackling slightly over the line. “Excellent! That’s the spirit. You young people should take some time for yourselves. It would set an old man’s heart at ease to hear you’re thinking about expanding the family...”

Scarlett had no intention of venturing down that conversational path. “Grandfather, Vincent is calling for me,” she interjected gently. “I have to go. Goodnight.”

Before he could respond, she ended the call.

On the other end of the line, listening to the dial tone, Xavier’s face broke into a wide, satisfied smile. He shook his head fondly. “That boy. Even more impatient than I was in my day.”

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 315[892 words]

Chapter 315 Midnight Disturbance

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After hanging up with Xavier, Scarlett took off her shoes at the entrance of Claire’s apartment and slipped on a pair of guest slippers.

The two friends settled onto the large, comfortable sofa in the living room. After listening to Scarlett recount the events of the day, Claire couldn’t hold back a frustrated sigh. “That cheating bastard and that homewrecker really deserve each other,” she muttered.

Scarlett simply offered a faint, tired smile. In her heart, Vincent no longer held any power to hurt her. The fact that she could discuss the situation so calmly with a friend was proof enough that she had moved on.

However, Claire still felt uneasy. “You just told Xavier you two weren’t coming home tonight. But what if Vincent does go back? Your cover will be blown.”

Scarlett let out a soft, knowing laugh. “He won’t go back tonight.”

Claire looked puzzled. “You sound so sure.”

Scarlett met her friend’s gaze with a slightly wry smile. “Don’t you understand how men think by now?”

Claire was quiet for a moment, then nodded slowly. “Right. A night of passion is too good to pass up, especially when fueled by alcohol.”

They talked about many things—the past, the future, their present circumstances. When the conversation turned to Elias, Claire’s eyes grew red, and a few silent tears escaped. She said if she could turn back time, she would have chosen to love herself first.

As for Scarlett, she simply wished all the confusing, tender memories involving Damian were just fabrications.

They talked until well past one in the morning before finally deciding to try and get some sleep.

But just as they had settled into bed in the guest room, a disruptive noise erupted from the street below. A man’s voice, amplified and distorted through a bullhorn, shouted up at the building.

After the second shout, Scarlett began to vaguely recognize the voice. Claire identified it even sooner. From the first crackle of the bullhorn, she knew it was Elias.

The neighborhood was typically silent at night, but Elias’ commotion prompted lights to flick on in apartments across several buildings. Soon, angry shouts came from open windows.

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Chapter 315 Midnight Disturbance

“Are you insane? It’s the middle of the night!” one neighbor yelled down.

Another voice joined in. "Take your drama somewhere else, man!"

Elias ignored them all. He had finally tracked down Claire's address through mutual acquaintances and wasn't about to waste this chance to win her back.

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He kept shouting into the bullhorn, heedless of the disturbance. "Claire! I was wrong! What I did... I know I messed up. Please, just forgive me!"

Hearing his "heartfelt" apology, Claire felt no tenderness—only a profound wave of nausea.

Elias continued, his voice echoing off the buildings. "Baby, please... I'll never do anything to hurt you again. If you can hear me, just come down and see me. One meeting. That's all I'm asking for."

Claire knew Elias all too well. This performative humility was just a trick to lure her downstairs. Once he got her alone somewhere else, the act would drop.

All she felt was a deep, sickening ache.

With Elias disrupting the entire block's peace, Claire didn't have to lift a finger. More windows slammed open, and the shouting grew angrier. Someone even threw what looked like a half- empty takeout container in his general direction.

Undeterred, Elias pressed on. "Claire, I know you still love me! Stop punishing us both! Just come down and *talk* to me!"

At that, Claire suddenly threw back the duvet and got out of bed.

Seeing her move, Scarlett sat up quickly. "Claire, what are you doing?"

Seeing the worry on Scarlett's face, Claire managed a small, grim smile. "What? You think I'm going down there?"

Scarlett looked at her, unsure.

Claire walked to the coffee table, picked up her phone, and said, "Don't worry. I'm not going to see him." She unlocked her screen. "I'm calling the police."

She dialed 911, explained the situation clearly—a man causing a public disturbance and harassing a resident—and was told a patrol car would be dispatched.

In less than ten minutes, the flashing red and blue lights of a police cruiser lit up the quiet street below. After a brief conversation, the officers escorted a protesting Elias into the back of the car, the charge being public disturbance.

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Chapter 315 Midnight Disturbance

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After the night’s drama, both women were wide awake. Since sleep was impossible, they resumed their conversation on the sofa.

They talked until, the clock ticked past two in the morning.

In the deep quiet, the sudden ringing of Scarlett’s phone made them both jump.

Finished

Seeing Vincent’s name on the caller ID, Scarlett felt a flicker of hesitation. But it was so late for him to be calling... Curiosity got the better of her, and she answered.

She remained silent. After a brief pause on the other end, Vincent’s voice came through, sounding oddly flat. “Are you at Ravensshade Villa?”

Hearing the question, Scarlett’s intuition flared. He must not be there himself.

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Silent Dreams Never Die — 316

apter 316 A Deal With the Devil

64

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Scarlett didn't see a reason to lie. "No, I'm not there," she answered truthfully.

Vincent didn't react to her location. Instead, he made a request. "Vanessa woke up crying just now, having a nightmare. Can you go back and comfort her?"

Scarlett almost laughed at the absurdity. "So you called me in the middle of the night just to tell me that?"

"You are her mother," Vincent stated, as if it were the most obvious reason. "Who else should I tell?"

Scarlett ignored his rhetorical question and fired back one of her own. "And you're her father. Why aren't you going back to comfort her?"

Vincent offered no real explanation. "Scarlett, I'm tied up with something. Do you think I'd call you if I had a choice?"

A bitter laugh escaped her. "What about Sabrina? Doesn't Vanessa adore her precious 'Sabrina' the most?"

There was a brief pause on the line before Vincent replied, "She's... occupied as well."

"Occupied?" Scarlett's temper, worn thin by the late hour and the accumulated hurts, finally snapped. "Occupied with what? Are you both too busy sweating between the sheets?"

She shouted the accusation into the phone, her voice trembling with anger, and then slammed her thumb on the "end call" button before he could respond.

After hanging up, her whole body was shaking—a combination of rage and a deep, humiliating pain. Claire, who had witnessed the entire exchange, felt a surge of sympathy. She moved closer and wrapped a comforting arm around Scarlett's shoulders.

"Don't let him get to you like that," Claire said softly. "He's not worth this kind of upset."

Scarlett took a shaky breath and nodded. "I know."

They finally tried to settle down to sleep around three in the morning. Claire, exhausted from the night's events, drifted off quickly. But sleep eluded Scarlett. Her mind was racing.

Picking up her phone for distraction, she mindlessly opened her messaging app. As she scrolled through her contacts, her thumb accidentally tapped on her conversation history with Damian.

Just as she was about to exit, something caught her eye. The label with Damian's name briefly changed, displaying a typing indicator as if he were writing a message.

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Chapter 316 A Deal With the Devil

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Scarlett blinked, thinking her tired eyes were playing tricks on her. She rubbed them and looked again. The indicator was gone; it was just his name once more.

It's the middle of the night, and I'm exhausted. I'm definitely hallucinating. I need to sleep.

Finished

At that same moment, Vincent and Sabrina were not in a bedroom, but seated around a large conference table in a sleek, modern office space. With them were five or six serious-looking individuals wearing glasses, all radiating an air of academic intensity.

They had been deep in discussion for nearly three hours, dissecting the complexities of Sabrina's doctoral research proposal. Despite the brainpower in the room, they had hit a significant roadblock and made little concrete progress.

Sabrina's shoulders slumped with defeat. "Vincent, maybe we should just forget it," she said, her voice small. "Perhaps a PhD just isn't for someone like me."

Vincent remained silent for a moment, but his mind was working. He knew of one more person they could consult, someone whose expertise was precisely in this field—Nolan.

After a moment of consideration, Vincent stood up. "It's very late," he announced to the room. "Let's adjourn for the night and reconvene with fresh perspectives."

A palpable wave of relief washed over the weary consultants. They gathered their notes and laptops, departing quickly without a word of protest.

Once they were alone, Sabrina turned to Vincent. "I'll go to the university tomorrow and start the withdrawal paperwork."

Vincent looked at her, offering a gentle, reassuring smile. "That won't be necessary. There's still one more person we can ask for help."

Sabrina immediately knew who he meant. "Nolan? But... I think he has a rather poor opinion of me," she said, her worry evident. She had approached Nolan before, only to be met with polite, but firm refusal.

Previously, Vincent hadn't given much weight to Nolan's capabilities or opinions. But now, at this critical juncture, Nolan's specialized knowledge was the key they needed.

Vincent dismissed her concern with a calm authority. "Just focus on refining your research questions. Leave the rest to me."

Three hours earlier, in the newly acquired villa next to Ravensshade Villa...

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Chapter 316 A Deal With the Devil

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The villa was ablaze with lights, its opulent interiors gleaming. Maria, exhausted from a long day of unpacking and settling in, had been looking forward to an early night.

Her plans were interrupted by a knock at the door. When she opened it, she found Lily standing there with a pajama-clad Vanessa.

Before Maria could speak, Vanessa happily bounded forward and wrapped her arms around Maria's leg. "Maria! I want to sleep at your house tonight!"

Vincent had called earlier to say he and Sabrina would be at an important academic consultation and would be home very late. He had instructed Vanessa to *go to* bed on her own.

But Vanessa, feeling lonely and unable to sleep, had begged Lily to secretly bring her to the neighboring villa to see Maria.

Maria, whose body ached with fatigue, felt a flash of intense irritation at the sight of the demanding child. However, with Lily watching, she plastered a wide, doting smile on her face.

She bent down and scooped Vanessa up with exaggerated affection. “Oh, my sweet girl! I was just feeling lonely and thinking of you! What a wonderful surprise! You can keep me company all night.”

Vanessa, nestled in Maria’s arms, giggled with delight. Satisfied, Lily nodded and took her leave.

Once the door was closed and she had carried Vanessa to a guest bed, Maria’s smile vanished. She went into the ensuite bathroom to wash up. As the water ran, she muttered a stream of vicious curses under her breath, her resentment towards the child and her situation bubbling to the surface.

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 317[913 words]

Awakened Housewife; Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

Chapter 317 A Mother’s Cruelty

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Especially that Scarlett—how could she have given birth to such a spoiled, ungrateful little thing?

Finally, after washing up and collapsing into bed, Maria had just sunk into a deep sleep when Vanessa started wailing again.

Jolted awake, Maria couldn't stifle her frustration. "You little monster," she muttered under her breath. "Why didn't your mother smother you at birth?"

Even as she cursed, she forced herself to sit up and gather Vanessa into her arms, attempting to shush her.

But no matter how she rocked or whispered, Vanessa's cries only grew louder and more piercing.

In desperation, Maria called Vincent. He was likely preoccupied with Sabrina's research crisis, as it took him a long time to answer.

When he finally did, Maria quickly explained the situation.

Hearing this, Vincent asked her to put Vanessa on the phone. He tried to soothe his daughter with a soft voice, but her crying persisted. Sabrina also spoke a few comforting words into the receiver, *to no avail*.

It was then that Vincent wondered if Vanessa simply missed her mother. So, he called Scarlett.

Maria hadn't expected Scarlett to outright refuse to come back. But upon reflection, what mother would willingly step in to comfort a child who was clinging to her husband's mistress? If it were Maria herself, she wouldn't have returned either.

With Vincent and Sabrina "busy", the burden of the distraught child fell squarely back on Maria's shoulders.

At first, she managed to muster some patience. But the more she tried to calm Vanessa, the louder the child sobbed. Maria's tolerance wore thin and finally snapped.

"Cry, cry, cry! Is that all you know?" she snapped, her voice sharp in the dark room. "Wailing as if someone died! Do you want to cry your father to an early grave? Or your mother?"

Maria didn't hold back. Her tone was vicious, the words deliberately cruel.

Vanessa's tear-streaked face froze. The sudden verbal assault made her small body tremble with shock. Her crying ceased abruptly.

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Chapter 317 A Mother's Cruelty

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She stared blankly at Maria, too stunned to speak.

Maria glared back, her eyes hard. "If you want to sleep, then sleep. If not, you can go and make yourself useful as coyote bait."

outside

Vanessa's lower lip trembled. She pressed her lips tightly together, not daring to make another sound, though soft, helpless whimpers still escaped her. This fierce woman was nothing like the gentle, doting Maria she knew.

Having vented her rage, Maria lay back down. She was exhausted from the day's move, her body aching. How could she be expected to handle a hysterical child on top of it all? Reaching her breaking point, she decided she was done pretending.

But as she lay there in the silence, a sliver of doubt crept in. Perhaps she had gone too far. After all, her daughter's future was tied to Vincent. Being openly cruel to his child wasn't wise, even if the brat deserved it. She didn't want to create complications for Sabrina.

The thought left her restless, sleep now even further away.

Vanessa, still sitting up, watched Maria lie down. Fearful, she slowly lay down too. She inched closer and whispered timidly, "Maria... are you mad at me?"

Maria was already thinking of a way to smooth things over. Vanessa's question provided the perfect opening.

She turned and pulled the child into an embrace, her voice softening into its familiar, sugary tone. "I was just so scared you'd make yourself sick from crying, sweetheart. That's why I sounded so cross. You must be a good girl and not tell anyone about this, okay? It'll be our little

secret.”

Vanessa snuggled into the hug, sniffing quietly before nodding. “Okay.”

Secretly, Maria had been prepared to threaten that Sabrina would abandon her if she told. She was surprised Vanessa agreed so easily.

The next morning, as soon as Vanessa was up, Sabrina returned to the villa.

Seeing her, Vanessa scrambled out of bed, barefoot, and ran to throw her arms around Sabrina’s legs, bursting into fresh tears. “Sabrina! You’re back!”

Sabrina knelt down, cupping Vanessa’s face. “What’s wrong, darling? Did you have a bad night?”

Vanessa said nothing about the previous night’s incident. She just looked up with pleading eyes. “I don’t want to go to school today. Can you stay home with me?”

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Chapter 317 A Mother’s Cruelty

64

Finished

Sabrina’s expression turned apologetic. “Oh, sweetie, I can’t today. I have a scheduled meeting with my dissertation advisor.”

Vanessa’s face fell, her little mouth turning down in a pout. “Oh... okay.”

Noting her disappointment, Sabrina tried to offer an alternative. “How about Maria stays with you?”

The memory of Maria’s fury last night made Vanessa recoil instinctively. “No!” she said, more forcefully than intended.

Sabrina frowned, sensing something was off. “What’s the matter? Did something happen?”

Vanessa didn’t elaborate. She just shrugged and said, “I’d rather go back to keep Great-Grandfather company.” –

Sabrina didn't press further. "Alright then. I'll walk you over."

After dropping Vanessa off at Ravenshade Villa, Sabrina returned to the neighboring villa and went straight to the kitchen, where Maria was preparing breakfast.

"Mom," Sabrina said as she entered.

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 318[959 words]

Chapter 318 Academic Coercion

Maria turned, smiling at Sabrina. "You're back already?"

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Finished

As Sabrina walked closer, a slight frown appeared on her face. "What was going on with Vanessa last night? She seemed off this morning."

Maria set down the whisk she was holding, wiped her hands on a dish towel, and leaned in slightly, lowering her voice. "Oh, that child cried half the night. Drove me up the wall, honestly. I just lost my patience and gave her a proper scolding. Raised my voice quite a bit, I'm afraid."

Hearing this, Sabrina's frown smoothed away, replaced by a conspiratorial look. She lowered her own voice. "Next time she acts up like that, don't bother with just yelling. Go ahead and give her a good smack. I've been sick of the sight of her for ages, just haven't found the right moment to put her in her place. Do it for me, Mom. Let out some of that frustration for your daughter."

Maria had expected a reprimand for being too harsh. Her daughter's response made her smile widen. She leaned in even closer, her voice dropping to a whisper. "To tell you the truth... I did give her a few good pinches when she wouldn't quiet down."

Sabrina let out a soft, approving laugh and gave Maria a playful nudge. "You're clever, Mom."

Maria patted Sabrina's hand affectionately. "It's you I feel for. Having to grin and bear it when you clearly can't stand the little brat."

Sabrina's smile was bright and calculating. "A few fake smiles are a small price to pay for the position and security I get. It's a fair trade."

Maria nodded in agreement. "You're right about that."

For a moment, mother and daughter dropped their masks, speaking freely. But their candid moment was shattered by a new voice from the kitchen doorway.

Sabrina was about to suggest Maria pinch Vanessa more often when Vincent's voice cut through the air. "What are you two conspiring about in here? You look terribly secretive."

Vincent was leaning casually against the doorframe, arms crossed, a look of lazy amusement in his eyes.

At the sound of his voice, Sabrina's cheeks flushed with momentary guilt. She recovered swiftly, forcing a calm expression. "Vincent, perfect timing. Mom and I were just discussing Vanessa. She has a school field trip this weekend. We were trying to decide who should chaperone."

The kindergarten had scheduled a fall outing, though early winter had already set in. Since it was school-organized, Vincent didn't question it.

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Chapter 318 Academic Coercion

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Finished

After a moment's thought, he said, "If you're free this weekend, you can go, Sabrina. If not, I'll have her mother take her."

Sabrina paused only briefly before answering. "I'll go."

"Only if you're not too tired," Vincent said.

Sabrina walked over to him, stopping right in front of him. "It's no trouble. Vanessa will be happier if I'm there."

Vincent relented. "I suppose that's true."

Sabrina smiled. "Let me just run upstairs and change."

"Alright. I'll wait for you here. Then we'll go see Mr. Newman."

Sabrina nodded and headed upstairs, returning shortly, dressed smartly. Vincent drove, and they headed to the university campus together.

Later that morning, Vincent intercepted Thomas just as he was leaving his lecture hall. "Mr. Newman," Vincent said, his tone polite but firm. "Do you have a moment for a conversation?"

Seeing Sabrina beside Vincent, Thomas immediately understood the purpose of the visit.

Sabrina's doctoral research had hit a major snag; her methodology was flawed, and her initial conclusions were wrong. The news had spread through the department, and Thomas, a respected figure in the field, was well aware of it. He had long since concluded that Sabrina lacked the aptitude for a Ph.D.

Sensing this wouldn't be a pleasant discussion, Thomas' demeanor turned cool. "What is this about, Mr. Stewart?"

The hallway was busy with passing students and faculty. Not wanting to cause a scene, Vincent suggested, "Perhaps somewhere more private would be better."

Thomas, wary of Vincent's intentions but curious, agreed.

They went to a quiet restaurant nearby, and Vincent secured a private dining room. After they had ordered, Thomas didn't waste time. "Mr. Stewart, let's not play games. State your business."

Vincent subconsciously reached for his silver cigarette case. He hesitated, glancing at Sabrina, then slid it back into his pocket. Leaning back in his chair, he looked directly at Thomas, his expression turning steely.

"Let's be blunt, Mr. Newman," Vincent began, his voice calm but carrying undeniable weight. "I need

you to ensure Sabrina graduates with her Ph.D., and does so smoothly. If that doesn't

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happen, the annual seven-figure funding from Stewart Group to the university's medical research foundation will be... reevaluated. It may very well be withdrawn."

The threat was laid out plainly, without pretense.

Finished

Thomas stared at him for a beat, then let out a short, incredulous laugh. "Vincent, you must be joking. Are you seriously trying to strong-arm me—to strong-arm this university—with a funding threat? Do you think you're above the rules? Above the state boards that oversee this institution?"

It was true that Vincent's contributions had been significant in keeping several high-profile research projects afloat. But the university's survival didn't hinge on him alone; it had government backing and other donors.

The sheer audacity of Vincent using financial leverage to force a doctoral degree for an unqualified candidate struck Thomas as not just unethical, but dangerously arrogant. He had never imagined Vincent would go this far.

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Silent Dreams Never Die — 319

Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Chapter 319 Power Play

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Finished

Given this, when Vincent made his threat, Thomas still couldn't believe he would actually follow through.

Perhaps sensing Thomas' skepticism, Vincent simply stood up. He looked down at the seated professor, his tone final. "Mr. Newman, I assure you, this is no joke. If you choose not to believe me, time will tell. The future of several key research initiatives at the foundation rests entirely on your decision."

With that, he guided Sabrina out of the private room, leaving Thomas sitting alone in stunned silence.

Not long after, Thomas' phone rang. He answered to hear the strained voice of a project coordinator. "Mr. Newman, I'm afraid the shipment of the new spectrometers and lab equipment... It's been halted."

Confused and alarmed, Thomas demanded, "What do you mean, halted? On whose authority?"

"Orders from the top, sir," the coordinator replied, sounding helpless. "The funding source has flagged the procurement. There's nothing we can do." The call ended abruptly.

Sitting in the now-chilly, empty dining room, a cold realization settled over Thomas. He picked up his phone again and dialed Vincent's number.

Vincent answered promptly, a note of smug satisfaction in his voice. "Mr. Newman. Have you reconsidered?"

Thomas was seething. "Vincent, this is an academic institution, not your personal fiefdom. You can't strong-arm scholarship."

"My terms are simple," Vincent replied coolly. "You will instruct Nolan to develop a viable, publishable research framework for Sabrina. The execution of the experiments and the writing of the dissertation, she will handle herself."

Thomas let out a short, bitter laugh. "To elevate a woman, you resort to tactics this underhanded, Vincent? You are more pathetic than I imagined."

Vincent fell silent, offering no defense to the personal jab.

When he didn't speak, Thomas pressed on, his voice heavy with disdain. "Sabrina lacks the intellectual foundation to operate at that level. Even if you use your influence to hoist her up, the only certainty is that her fall will be from a much greater height."

Then, Thomas hung up. He knew Vincent had him checkmated, for now. But that wasn't the true tragedy. The real loss was that this shortcut for Sabrina would lead to a far shakier

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Chapter 319 Power Play

foundation than any path built on genuine merit ever could.

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That same afternoon, just as Scarlett was finishing her shift, Nolan came to find her at the hospital.

"Dinner?" he asked.

After a brief moment of thought, Scarlett nodded. "Alright."

She had promised to treat him to a meal after Vincent had abruptly summoned her away from her parents' house. Since she was free tonight, it seemed like a good time.

At an upscale, modern fusion restaurant, Nolan handed the menu to Scarlett. She gently pushed it back toward him. "Nolan, this is my treat. Please, you order."

Hearing this, Nolan simply smiled and took the menu back without argument.

After he had placed their order, Scarlett glanced up to signal a server and saw the heavy curtain at the entrance being swept aside. A couple walked in.

The man was Damian. Handsome, with the build of an athlete, his expression was one of open, lazy charm.

Beside him was a woman in a cream-colored slip dress under a tailored camel coat. Her makeup was impeccable. Damian's arm was draped casually over her shoulders.

As they entered, they turned several heads. Scarlett recognized the woman from television and magazine covers. She was a rapidly rising starlet, the current “it girl” of the moment.

Of course. Damian changed companions as often as he changed his Italian loafers. Beautiful women were never in short supply around him.

And what was she, Scarlett, in that lineup? Nothing. A fleeting, forgettable blip.

As Damian and the actress passed their table, Scarlett was looking down at her phone. Nolan, seated beside her, was carefully pouring warm water from a carafe into her glass.

Once the glass was full, he nudged it toward her. “The air in the city is so dry this time of year. This might help.”

Only then did Scarlett look up at him, forcing a small, polite smile. “Thank you, Nolan.”

Damian, his hand now resting possessively on the small of the actress’ back, seemed to be in no hurry. Whether he was deliberately moving slowly or was too absorbed in their whispered exchange, he didn’t proceed to a table immediately.

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Chapter 319 Power Play

64

Finished

Instead, he engaged in some very public, very intimate flirtation right there in the aisle.

The restaurant was busy, but Damian displayed no concern for an audience. He pulled the actress closer, his hand firm on her waist as she melted against his chest with a practiced sigh.

“Mr. Langley, you’re being awfully bold... holding me so tight right here,” the actress purred, her voice a low, provocative tease. “Aren’t you worried I might... make a scene?”

Her own hand drifted, tracing a suggestive line along his abdomen through his fine sweater.

Damian’s smile widened into a wolfish grin. He looked down at her, his voice dropping to a murmur that was, unfortunately, still perfectly audible. “Pressed against me like this, darling, who else would be making a scene but you?”

He followed this with a rich, unrestrained laugh that drew a few more glances.

They were standing mere feet from Scarlett's table. Every word, every intimate nuance, carried clearly to her ears.

Noticing the tight line of Scarlett's mouth, Nolan reached over, his brow furrowed with concern. "Are you alright? You've gone a bit pale."

Scarlett shook her head slightly, summoning another faint smile. "I'm fine. Really."

Nolan could tell her mood had shifted, though he didn't connect the change to Damian's dramatic entrance.

And in truth, Scarlett wasn't overwhelmed by heartbreak. Remembering the moments when she had actually been moved by Damian's gestures, she now felt nothing but foolish derision for her own naivete.

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 320[948 words]

Chapter 320 A Playboy's Display

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From the very beginning, she had been certain Damian had an ulterior motive. Yet, in the end, a part of her had still been swayed by him.

Thinking of this, what she felt most acutely was a profound sorrow at her own foolishness.

After their prolonged, public display of affection, Damian and the actress finally settled at a table slightly to the left and in front of Scarlett's.

From her seat, a simple glance upward provided a full view of their continuing interaction. Even when she tried to focus elsewhere, their presence lingered in her peripheral vision.

Once seated, the actress remained glued to Damian's side. While ordering, Damian went through the menu item by item, turning to her each time. "How about this one, sweetheart?"

The actress would shake her head coyly for dishes she disliked or nod with a smile for her favorites. What should have been a five-minute process stretched into a leisurely half-hour before their order was finally complete.

The server, though visibly strained, maintained a professional smile, not daring to rush them.

By the time Damian's table was finally settled, Scarlett and Nolan were already halfway through their meal.

Nolan ladled a portion of roasted tomato bisque into a bowl for Scarlett, pushing it toward her with a gentle expression. "You've lost some weight lately. Have a bit more."

Scarlett offered a small smile. "Thank you."

Nolan continued serving her until her plate held a generous portion. Only then did she speak

like up, her tone lightly teasing, "Nolan, are you trying to fatten me up a prize heifer?"

Her words were playful, but Nolan took them with sincere earnestness. He looked directly at her, his voice soft but serious. "You're nothing of the sort. You are lovely. Truly beautiful."

Hearing this, a wave of heat rushed to Scarlett's ears. Nolan was a straightforward man; he didn't offer such compliments lightly. She felt a flicker of embarrassment at her own flippant remark.

Meanwhile, the server began delivering dishes to Damian's table. As the plates were set down, the actress melted against Damian once more. "Damian, darling," she cooed, her voice dripping with honeyed sweetness, "will you feed me? Please?",

Damian looked down at her, his face alight with amusement. "Call me 'honey' first, and maybe I'll consider it."

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Chapter 320 A Playboy's Display.

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The actress flushed, playfully swatting his arm. "You're terrible. Didn't I call you that plenty last night?"

Damian leaned in, his lips brushing her temple in a semblance of a kiss. "I want to hear it again. Go on."

The actress shifted, pressing her lips close to his ear. "Honey," she whispered, the word carrying just enough to be overheard.

A satisfied grin spread across Damian's face, and his hand tightened on her waist. "That's my girl." He then picked up his fork, carefully cutting a piece of steak and holding it to her lips with exaggerated care.

Even in the relatively public setting of the restaurant, Damian seemed utterly unconcerned with onlookers.

As for Scarlett, she absorbed the entire performative display between Damian and the actress. A faint, detached smile touched her lips. There was no sharp pain, just a distant, hollow acknowledgment.

When they were nearly finished, Scarlett stood. "Nolan, shall we go?"

Nolan rose as well, gathering her coat and bag. "Of course."

As they walked toward the exit, Scarlett didn't cast a single glance toward Damian's table. He was the quintessential playboy, his life a rotating carousel of glamorous companions. They had never inhabited the same world.

She had never entertained extravagant hopes regarding Damian. From the start, she had only ever considered him a... complicated acquaintance.

It was merely a moment of weakness, born from misplaced gratitude, that had briefly clouded her judgment.

This was fine. Everyone had their own path. A clean, mutual indifference from now on was the best possible outcome.

At the host stand, Scarlett reached for her wallet, but Nolan gently stayed her hand. "Scarlett, please, let me."

"But I promised to treat you," she insisted, reaching for his hand which held his credit card.

As Nolan pulled his hand back slightly, Scarlett leaned in, her fingers brushing his in an attempt to intercept the card. The sudden movement caught her off-balance. She stumbled forward, one hand landing flat against his chest for support.

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Chapter 320 A Playboy's Display

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Finished

Worried she might fall, Nolan instinctively wrapped his arm around her, his hand coming to rest firmly on the curve of her waist.

For a moment, she was pressed close against him.

Nolan looked down, his voice low with concern. "Scarlett, are you alright?"

She shook her head, a little flustered. "I'm fine, just clumsy."

She tried to step back, but Nolan's hand on her shoulder held her gently in place. "Let me take care of the check, okay?"

At this point, the bill was the last thing on her mind; she simply wanted to escape the intimate proximity. She nodded quickly. “Alright. Thank you.”

A satisfied smile touched Nolan’s lips before he finally released her, turning to hand his card to the cashier.

Once the transaction was complete, he turned back to her. “Ready? I’ll drive you home.”

Scarlett, still slightly disoriented, didn’t immediately respond.

Seeing her hesitation, Nolan offered a faint, understanding smile and lightly took her elbow, guiding her out of the restaurant and into the cool evening air.

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Silent Dreams Never Die — 32`1

Chapter 321 Withdrawn Messages

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Back at the restaurant, after Scarlett and the others had left, Damian removed his arm from around the actress’ waist and set down the fork he had been using to feed her.

He stared coldly at the table full of dishes without saying another word.

Seeing his expression, the actress didn’t dare speak either.

It wasn’t until Nolan’s voice came from the entrance-“Are you alright?”-that Damian suddenly turned. He saw Scarlett leaning into Nolan, supported by his arm.

In that split second, a flash of bitter, scorching jealousy blazed in Damian’s eyes. The silver fork he’d been twisting between his fingers snapped clean in two with a sharp “crack“.

As the metal splintered, a jagged edge sliced into his palm.

The cracking sound made the actress flinch. She shrank back into the booth, watching Damian with wide, nervous eyes.

Putting on an act like this in exchange for a solid decade of safety and career security in Hollywood... who wouldn't take that deal?

Once outside with Nolan, Scarlett stood by the curb waiting for a cab.

Remembering that Xavier was still at Ravenshade Villa, she realized she'd likely be spending the night there again.

There was no need to hurry back just yet.

"Nolan, let's walk for a while," she said. "I'm feeling a bit too full from dinner."

Naturally, Nolan wanted to spend more time with her. He agreed right away. "Sure."

So they walked side by side along the seemingly endless street.

With Nolan, conversation drifted mostly toward hospital matters and work.

Before they knew it, nearly an hour had passed.

Seeing how late it was getting, Scarlett decided it was time to head back.

Nolan offered to drive her, but she politely declined.

Inside the taxi, her phone buzzed with notifications—not just once, but over a dozen times in quick succession.

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Chapter 321 Withdrawn Messages

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64

Finished

That kind of frequency usually meant either work emails or a message thread from Claire.

Unlocking her phone, she opened her messaging app and saw Damian's name with 18 unread

messages.

But when she tapped into the thread, all she found was a screen filled with "This message has been deleted" placeholders.

Puzzled, Scarlett typed back a simple question mark.

Damian replied almost instantly, "Wrong thread."

Scarlett paused, then sent, "Okay."

That was the end of it.

Meanwhile, back at the restaurant, Damian kept refreshing his messages, but no further reply came from Scarlett.

A heavy, frustrated sigh escaped him.

The actress beside him stayed perfectly still, not daring to make a sound.

After a few more sighs, Damian's eyes widened as if he'd just remembered something. He picked up his phone again and opened his chat with Sabrina.

His thumbs hovered over the screen, typing and deleting several times before he finally settled on a message, "Wanna hang out tonight?"

At that moment, Sabrina—who was in the study with Vincent—got the text and nearly dropped her phone.

Vincent was reviewing documents; Sabrina had been looking up research topic references online.

Even though Vincent had pressured Thomas to secure a research topic for her through Nolan, until it was officially finalized, Sabrina didn't dare relax.

She had worked too hard to get into this Ph.D. program to let it fall apart now.

A doctorate would open doors to a different circle—different people, different opportunities.

Seeing Damian's name pop up sent a cold sweat down her back.

Vincent noticed her reaction and set down his papers. "What's wrong?"

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Chapter 321 Withdrawn Messages

Sabrina's face warmed. She turned her phone screen-down on the desk. "N-nothing."

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Hearing her stammer, Vincent guessed she was hiding something and reached for her phone.

Sabrina quickly pressed her hand over his. "Vincent, it's just a silly video a friend sent."

Vincent raised a brow. "And I can't see it?"

Seeing his insistence, Sabrina softened her voice. "Promise you won't get upset if *you* do."

Curious now, Vincent agreed. "Fine."

Only then did Sabrina pick up her phone. She opened the video link from a friend in her social app—a generic relationship advice clip—and handed it to Vincent.

As soon as it played, a woman's upbeat voice began, "If you want to win a man's heart, here's what you need to do..."

Vincent watched a few seconds, then lost interest. He handed the phone back. "Just be yourself. You don't need to study things like that."

Hearing that, Sabrina finally released a breath she hadn't realized she was holding.

Thank goodness Vincent hadn't pressed further—otherwise, he would've seen Damian's text.

Since Vincent had said that, Sabrina tilted her head and asked lightly, "But if I don't learn this stuff, how am I supposed to win your heart?"

Vincent paused. Instead of answering directly, he gently tapped her forehead with his finger and said in a more serious tone, "Right now, your only focus should be your research topic. Everything else can wait."

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 322[843 words]

64

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Seeing how serious Vincent looked, Sabrina didn't dare keep teasing him. "Okay, I understand," she murmured.

Vincent returned to his paperwork, while Sabrina sat beside him, flipping through research articles without really taking in a single word.

Damian's message had left her on edge.

In a city like Rivergate, aside from Vincent, Damian was the most influential man around.

She already had Vincent wrapped around her finger, and now, unexpectedly, she seemed to have Damian right where she wanted him too.

At that moment, the sense of triumph she felt was just as strong as when she'd earned her doctorate.

After a moment's thought, Sabrina switched off her tablet. "Vincent," she said softly, "I don't feel like studying anymore tonight. I think I'll head back to my place to rest."

Hearing this, Vincent stood up right away. "Alright, I'll drive you."

Sabrina didn't refuse. "Okay."

Vincent put on his jacket and walked Sabrina downstairs.

Xavier had already gone to bed—otherwise, Vincent wouldn’t have felt comfortable letting Sabrina come up so casually.

After dropping Sabrina off at the new townhouse he’d bought for her, Vincent didn’t stay long before returning to Ravenshade Villa.

Once inside, Sabrina sank into the sofa and finally replied to Damian’s text, “Mr. Langley, are you really that impatient?”

Damian’s reply came almost instantly. “Can you do it or not? Yes or no.”

From the tone, Sabrina could almost picture Damian’s frustrated, hungry look.

But just then, a news alert flashed across her screen. “Damian Langley Spotted Getting Cozy with Rising Star at Upscale Restaurant.”

Sabrina tapped the notification.

The photos and short video were clear—Damian and the actress were being openly

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Chapter 322 A Delicate Balancing Act

affectionate.

Looking at the images, Sabrina clicked her tongue in annoyance.

At the same time, another message from Damian popped up. “?”

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Sabrina typed back carefully, “The man I want has to be fully committed *to* me—no other women in the picture. Otherwise, I just wouldn’t feel secure.”

Even though Damian was clearly already into her, Sabrina wanted to test how far he’d go.

There was a certain satisfaction in making a known playboy settle down.

When Damian read the message, he couldn’t help rolling his eyes.

He locked his phone screen without replying.

He'd thought he had things under control, but he hadn't expected Sabrina to be so difficult.

Still, he eventually sent a reply, "Buzzkill."

Just two words, but when Sabrina saw them, she pressed her lips together and let out a faint, disdainful laugh.

Ever since she turned 18, she'd learned one thing—if you give yourself to a man too easily, he won't value you.

A man only stays when he's had to work for it.

Damian had countless beautiful women around him, yet none ever stayed. Wasn't it because they were *too* easy to get?

Sabrina intended to be the exception.

So she didn't write back.

Ignoring him for a while would probably only make him want her more.

After returning to Ravensshade Villa, Vincent went back to his study to finish up some work.

He'd only been at it for a short while when the door quietly opened.

From the light footsteps, Vincent knew it was Vanessa.

He stopped what he was doing and turned. Vanessa stood there in her pajamas, clutching a stuffed animal. She walked over and asked softly, "Daddy, how much longer until you come to bed?"

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Chapter 322 A Delicate Balancing Act

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Vincent bent down, lifted her onto his lap, and gently touched his forehead to hers. “Daddy has to work a little late tonight. It might be a while.”

Vanessa pouted, clearly unhappy.

Vincent gently tugged her earlobe. “Why don’t you go to sleep first, sweetheart?”

Vanessa pressed her lips together and stayed quiet.

Noticing her mood, Vincent asked patiently, “What’s the matter?”

Vanessa wasn’t entirely sure herself. She just... kind of missed Scarlett.

When her mom was around, she never yelled—she always spoke softly and kindly.

But last night, Maria had been so harsh with her. Of course she felt hurt.

Still, Maria had explained she was only strict because she didn’t want Vanessa to keep crying.

Remembering that, Vanessa held back. After all, she’d promised Maria not to tell.

When she didn’t answer, Vincent tried, “How about going to sleep in Maria’s room tonight?”

At the mention of Maria’s name, Vanessa instinctively shook her head. “No, I don’t want to.”

Thinking she just wanted his company, Vincent reassured her, “Then I will come tuck you in as soon as I’m done, okay?”

Vanessa didn’t reply. She slipped off his lap and, without another word, padded back to her own

room.

Lying in her soft bed, she felt a hollow ache inside.

She waited a few minutes, but Vincent didn’t follow.

In that quiet loneliness, Vanessa suddenly missed Scarlett terribly.

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 323[880 words]

If it were Scarlett, she would've dropped everything to be with her. Even if she was in the bathroom, she'd come out right away. But Vincent wouldn't—he was always busy with work.

Thinking of Scarlett, Vanessa's eyes grew hot with unshed tears.

Just then, footsteps sounded outside her door. Vanessa looked toward the slightly ajar door and caught a glimpse of Scarlett's figure passing by in the hallway.

Scarlett didn't even come in to check on her.

Vanessa rolled over to face the window, and the tears she'd been holding back began to fall quietly.

She cried for a long time, but sleep still wouldn't come. Finally, she sat up, thinking maybe she could

go see Sabrina.

Vincent had bought Sabrina a house right next door. She could walk there herself.

Clutching her stuffed animal, Vanessa slipped quietly out of Ravenshade Villa.

When she rang the doorbell next door, she was filled with hope—maybe Sabrina would come greet her with a warm hug.

But it wasn't Sabrina who opened the door. It was Maria.

Vanessa went pale at the sight of her.

Maria opened the door warmly and took Vanessa's small hand. "It's chilly out—you're not dressed warmly enough. Come inside, sweetie. I'll warm up some milk for you."

Vanessa didn't want to go in. She tried to pull her hand back, but Maria's grip tightened.

Sensing her resistance, Maria's tone shifted slightly. "Get inside now."

Unable to break free, Vanessa was led into the house.

Once in the living room, Maria sat on the sofa and patted the spot beside her. "Come here," she ordered.

Vanessa hugged her stuffed toy and sat down uneasily.

The moment she was seated, Maria's friendly mask dropped. She reached over and pinched Vanessa's arm hard—twice. "You little pest," she muttered through gritted teeth, her voice low and vicious. "I could just wring your neck."

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Chapter 323 Hidden Bruises

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Maria glared as if she wanted to devour the child whole.

The pain made Vanessa burst into loud, startled tears.

"Quiet!" Maria hissed sharply.

Vanessa had never seen Maria like this. Trembling, she whimpered, "Maria, it hurts..."

Her crying only seemed to irritate Maria more. She pinched her again, then leaned close to threaten in a harsh whisper. "If you tell anyone about this, I'll make sure Sabrina never wants you again."

Vanessa fell silent, but tears continued to stream down her cheeks.

Just the thought of Sabrina not wanting her filled Vanessa with fear and dread.

Crying softly, she promised, "I won't tell... I won't tell anyone."

Meanwhile, Sabrina stood inside the first-floor guest room, her ear pressed to the doorframe, listening to Vanessa's sobs outside.

The louder Vanessa cried, the more satisfaction Sabrina felt.

Hearing those pitiful sounds, she even felt the urge to stride out and slap the child herself.

But for the sake of her long-term plans, she couldn't let Vanessa see her true face—not yet.

Back at Ravensshade Villa, Scarlett had already washed up and lain down for a while. She was just drifting into a doze when she felt a small body slip under the covers beside her.

She turned and reached out instinctively, touching the warm little form. Instantly, she was fully awake.

Scarlett jerked back in alarm. "Who is it?" she asked warily.

Out of the darkness came Vanessa's raspy, tear-strained voice. "Mom... it's me."

Hearing her, Scarlett's tense shoulders relaxed. But remembering how Vanessa had treated her recently, she kept her voice cool. "Your room is next door."

Vanessa wriggled closer, nestling against Scarlett's arm. "But, Mom... I want to sleep with you."

She had gone to find Sabrina, but only met Maria.

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Maria promised she'd stay until Vanessa fell asleep, but it was all talk—Maria was snoring before Vanessa had even closed her eyes.

Chapter 323 Hidden Bruises

And then there were the pinches... they still hurt.

Vanessa had always been treated like a princess. When had she ever been treated so cruelly?

She felt miserable, but lying next to Scarlett now, she wasn't sure if she should say anything about what Maria had done.

Scarlett didn't really want Vanessa in her bed, but the child refused to leave and sounded so heartbroken.

Against her better judgment, Scarlett's resolve softened. She didn't hug Vanessa or show much affection, simply saying, "Fine."

Lying beside Scarlett, Vanessa felt a sense of safety she hadn't known all evening. Here, she didn't have to worry about anyone pinching her or speaking to her harshly.

Several times through the night, Vanessa tried to roll over and curl into Scarlett's arms.

But each time, Scarlett quietly shifted away, keeping a careful distance.

The next morning, Scarlett woke first. Seeing Vanessa asleep beside her, her eyes stung again with unwanted emotion.

But remembering the coldness Vanessa had shown her, she hardened her heart, got up quietly, and left the bedroom.

After washing up and heading downstairs, she heard Xavier say near the front door, "I'm just going out for a short walk. I'll be back for breakfast."

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20:09 Wed, Jan 14

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 324[816 words]

In response came Luke's voice. "Sure, Grandpa. Take

Hearing that familiar tone, Scarlett froze mid-step.

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After only a brief pause, she continued down the stairs.

time.”

Luke was slouched on the sofa, scrolling through videos on his phone.

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Hearing footsteps, he looked up. When he saw it was Scarlett, he rolled his eyes and let out a mocking laugh. “It’s this late in the morning and you still haven’t even started breakfast. Really acting like you’re the lady of the house now, huh?”

Scarlett ignored him and moved toward the door.

But Luke wasn’t finished. “Some people just don’t know how to act when they get a taste of the good life.”

Scarlett stopped walking. She couldn’t let it slide. Turning to face him, her voice was icy. “When you talk like that, it only shows your own lack of class.”

Luke had never liked Scarlett. Seeing her talk back now, his temper flared. “Say that again!”

Scarlett smirked. “I’ll say it as many times as you need to hear it. You’re the one who doesn’t belong here.”

That was it for Luke. He tossed his phone aside and strode toward her. “You’re asking for it.”

As he closed in, he raised his hand as if to strike her.

Before his hand could descend, a deep voice rang out from the stairs. “Luke, enough!”

It was Vincent.

Hearing Vincent’s voice, Luke flinched and immediately lowered his arm.

Vincent was dressed in light gray sleepwear. He descended the stairs step by deliberate step.

Each footfall seemed to land heavily on Luke's nerves.

When Vincent reached them, Luke mumbled, "Vincent."

He hung his head, his voice rough and defensive, like a scolded child.

But Vincent wasn't letting him off easy. Without warning, he delivered a sharp kick to the back

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Chapter 324 A Brother's Defense

of Luke's knee.

The force was enough to make Luke stumble, barely catching his balance.

Once he steadied himself, Vincent asked coldly, "Is that any way to speak to my wife?"

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Luke kept his head down, grumbling discontentedly, "It's just... she's changed. She doesn't cook or help around the house anymore. Someone had to say something."

Vincent's voice dropped lower. "And that someone is you?"

Luke hung his head, saying not a word.

Vincent pressed on, his voice sharp with accusation. "Is she a maid to the Stewart family?"

Luke shook his head. "No."

"Then since when," Vincent pressed, "is she required to cook or clean for you?"

Luke finally looked up at him. "But she used to do all that! She even made my favorite meals."

Vincent's anger flashed. He raised his voice above Luke's. "Well, she doesn't have to anymore. From now on, she doesn't have to do a single thing she doesn't want to."

“You’re spoiling her, Vincent,” Luke muttered resentfully.

Vincent didn’t engage. Instead, he changed the subject. “Why are you at Ravensshade Villa this early?”

“I haven’t seen Vanessa in a while,” Luke replied. “Came by to visit her.”

“She’s upstairs,” Vincent said flatly. “If you’re here to see her, then go see her. Don’t stand down here making a scene.”

With a reluctant “Yeah, fine,” Luke headed upstairs.

From the moment Vincent had come downstairs, Scarlett had been watching him.

She saw him defend her—kicking Luke, speaking up for her.

Yet none of it stirred any warmth in her heart.

If anything, so he can stand up for me.

But what about all the times before?

He never did.

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Chapter 324 A Brother’s Defense.

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After Luke was gone, Vincent turned to Scarlett. “If he bothers you again, tell me. I won’t let him-”

Scarlett cut him off. “I need to get to work. I’m leaving now.”

Without another word, she turned and walked out.

Vincent watched her go, an uneasy feeling settling in his chest.

Upstairs, Luke went to Vanessa's room first and found it empty.

After glancing into a couple of rooms, he found her in the guest bedroom.

Vanessa was already awake, lying on the large bed with a troubled expression.

Luke approached and playfully tickled her side.

Vanessa didn't laugh. She just turned her head and said softly, "Uncle Luke."

Luke pulled her into a sitting position and gently pinched her cheek. "What's going on? You look kinda down."

Vanessa wrapped her arms around his waist and buried her face against him. "Nothing... I just don't feel good."

Luke sensed something was wrong, but he didn't want to push her.

Still, he was sure Vanessa's mood had something to do with Scarlett.

Internally, he cursed Scarlett again. *That witch. If she's upsetting Vanessa, she's really going to regret*

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 325[753 words]

Chapter 325 A Dangerous Allure in the Hallway

After spending a little more time with Vanessa, Luke stood up to head downstairs.

Vanessa nodded obediently. “Bye, Uncle Luke.”

Luke smiled, ruffling her hair. “You’re such a sweetheart, Vanessa.”

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Such a lovely niece—but seeing her so downcast, it was clear something was bothering her.

If Scarlett had upset Vanessa, then Luke decided he’d make sure Scarlett didn’t get off easy either.

With that thought occupying his mind, he didn’t notice Sabrina coming up the stairs until he was already on his way down.

“Luke,” came Sabrina’s soft voice.

Hearing his name spoken so gently, Luke felt a slight shiver. When he looked at Sabrina, his eyes instantly lit up. “Sabrina,” he replied, his ears turning pink.

Seeing his flushed cheeks, Sabrina recognized the signs of a shy crush.

Given her experience with men, she guessed Luke probably had feelings for her.

So she reached out and playfully tapped his forehead. “Look at you, all grown up now—quite the young man.”

Her teasing made Luke’s heart race.

He’d always admired Sabrina—she was beautiful, intensely focused whenever she played the piano, and her music genuinely moved him.

But until today, he’d kept his liking quiet, never imagining anything could happen between them.

Now, Sabrina had even touched him.

For a moment, Luke felt light-headed, as if walking on clouds.

He looked down, his face warm. “Sabrina, you’re always joking.”

Luke was younger than Sabrina. Seeing him blush because of her gave Sabrina a little thrill of satisfaction.

She smiled. “I mean it. You’ve really grown into a fine young man.”

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Chapter 325 A Dangerous Allure in the Hallway

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As nice as the compliments felt, Luke couldn't ignore one important fact—Sabrina was Vincent's girlfriend.

So after that brief flutter of happiness, his expression turned serious again. "No matter how I look, I could never compare to Vincent in your eyes."

Sabrina kept smiling. "You're both very important to me, Luke."

Luke paused, opening his mouth as if to ask something, but the words never came.

Noticing his hesitation, Sabrina didn't press. Instead, she reached up and gently stroked his hair once more. "You're a good guy, Luke. I really do like you."

Her words carried a subtle weight, and her eyes held a warm, knowing gleam.

Before Luke could fully process what she meant, Sabrina had already continued upstairs.

Just watching her walk away was enough to leave him longing.

From the corner of her eye at the landing, Sabrina glanced back at Luke still standing below.

Seeing his dazed, captivated look, a quiet surge of satisfaction washed through her.

So many men were drawn to her—it felt undeniably sweet.

Once upstairs, she went straight to Vincent's bedroom.

He was just changing out of his sleepwear when she entered.

Sabrina didn't hesitate. She walked right over.

Hearing footsteps, Vincent turned. Seeing it was her, he continued buttoning his dress shirt. "Couldn't sleep a bit longer?"

Sabrina stepped close, rising on her toes to smooth his collar.

She deliberately stood near—so near that if Vincent lowered his head just slightly, he’d brush her cheek.

“I thought you were heading to the office,” she said softly, “so I came to see you off. If I weren’t here, you’d probably struggle with your tie again.”

Sabrina usually helped Vincent with his tie.

A faint, fond smile touched her lips as she spoke.

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Chapter 325 A Dangerous Allure in the Hallway

Vincent looked down at her glowing face and couldn’t help but smile back.

Just then, a small voice came from the doorway. “Daddy? Sabrina?”

Both of them turned.

Vanessa stood there, her hair still loose, clutching that same stuffed animal.

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Seeing the girl, Sabrina couldn’t help but think of what Maria had done to her the night before.

Truth be told, hearing Vanessa cry in pain had stirred a strange, dark excitement in Sabrina.

Seeing it was Vanessa, Vincent held out a hand. “Come here, let Sabrina fix your hair for you.”

Vanessa walked into the room, still holding her doll.

After Sabrina had gathered her hair into a neat ponytail, she said lightly, “All done.”

As Vanessa turned, the sleeve of the arm holding the doll rode up slightly, revealing a small cluster of faint bruises on her skin.

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 326[776 words]

Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Chapter 326 Bruises Concealed

Vincent was adjusting his collar in the mirror and didn't glance toward Vanessa.

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Sabrina, however, grew instantly nervous—panicked that Vincent might notice the faint bruises on the girl's arm. She quickly stepped between them, blocking his line of sight.

Seeing her move so abruptly, Vincent frowned. "Is something wrong?"

Sabrina's eyes shifted, and an excuse came to her at once. She spoke with rehearsed concern, "Vincent, you're a grown man, and Vanessa is a young girl. It's not really appropriate for you to be half-dressed around her."

At that moment, Vincent's shirt was still hanging open.

Hearing this, he finished buttoning it and glanced at Sabrina. "You're right. I wasn't thinking."

Sabrina offered a relieved smile. "I'll take Vanessa back to her room for now. Come over once you're properly dressed."

Vincent nodded. "Alright."

The whole time, Vanessa just stood there quietly, feeling strangely invisible—utterly overlooked.

Watching Vincent and Sabrina interact so easily, her eyes began to sting.

It wasn't until Sabrina turned and took her hand that a few hurt tears finally escaped.

Sabrina saw her crying but didn't offer any comfort. She simply led her back to the bedroom.

Once inside, Sabrina picked out Vanessa's clothes for the day.

Ignoring the child's teary eyes, she pulled the top over Vanessa's head.

After she was dressed, Vanessa suddenly grabbed Sabrina's hand and asked in a small, choked voice, "Sabrina... will you always love me?"

Hearing that, Sabrina reached out and brushed the tears from Vanessa's cheeks. "Of course I will."

But Vanessa still seemed uncertain. She threw her arms around Sabrina and held on tightly. "Please don't leave me. I don't have a mom... You're my mom now."

Sabrina stroked Vanessa's hair, her voice gentle. "Alright, sweetie. I'll be your mom."

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Chapter 326 Bruises Concealed

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At the doorway, Vincent—now fully dressed—had been about to push the door open. But hearing Vanessa's words, he stopped.

Seeing how deeply Vanessa clung to Sabrina, Vincent couldn't help but feel that divorcing Scarlett might have been the right choice after all.

It was Saturday, the day of the kindergarten's annual fall field trip.

The night before, Violet had called Scarlett to say she had a conflict and asked if Scarlett could take Clara on her own.

Scarlett agreed and woke up early to get ready.

By the time she reached the kindergarten, most of the parents and children had already gathered.

The teacher took attendance and noticed only Vanessa and her guardian were missing.

Scarlett stood in the crowd holding Clara's hand, her gaze fixed on the school entrance, hoping to see Vanessa arrive.

Ever since she was little, Scarlett had taught Vanessa not to be late.

But now, nearly ten minutes had passed, and they were still waiting.

As Vanessa and her parent failed to appear, a few parents began to voice their impatience.

"Can we just get started? Do we really have to wait for one family?"

"It's the weekend—some of us have plans. I made time for this trip, but I didn't sign up to stand around."

"Seriously, teachers—time is money. Let's move it along."

In moments, the assembly area buzzed with murmurs of complaint.

Scarlett didn't join in. She just kept watching the gate.

Then Clara suddenly tugged her hand. "Auntie."

Scarlett bent down. "What is it, honey?"

Clara whispered, "Damian has been looking at you."

Scarlett followed Clara's gaze.

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Chapter 326 Bruises Concealed.

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Damian stood amid the crowd, Eric beside him.

But the moment Scarlett looked over, Damian turned his eyes away.

Scarlett gently cupped Clara's cheek. "Damian and I are friends, sweetie. It's okay if he glances this way."

Clara, too young to understand fully, simply squeezed her hand. "Okay... as long as you're happy."

Warmth touched Scarlett's heart. She leaned down and softly pressed her forehead to Clara's. "I am."

Nearly twenty minutes later, Sabrina finally arrived with Vanessa.

At the entrance, Sabrina took in the dissatisfied faces and understood at once. "So sorry to keep everyone waiting," she said warmly, an apologetic smile on her lips. "Traffic was terrible on the way over. To make it up, coffee is on me for the parents, and ice cream for all the kids after the trip."

With just a friendly apology and a promised treat, the grumbling faded away—replaced by appreciative smiles and even a few cheerful murmurs in Sabrina's direction.

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 327[809 words]

"Not only is Vanessa's mom gorgeous, but she's so thoughtful—what an incredible woman," one parent remarked.

"Honestly, if my partner were half as considerate," another sighed, "I'd be thrilled."

"Vanessa's father is one lucky man to have someone like that."

In an instant, the earlier complaints melted into a chorus of flattery and praise.

Sabrina, standing at the center of it all, wore a bright, pleased smile.

Vanessa stood quietly beside her, all but invisible in Sabrina's glow.

The lead teachers exchanged subtle eye rolls, but there was no polite way to call Sabrina out in front of everyone.

Bianca clapped her hands for attention. "Everyone, quiet please! Let me go over the plan for today's field trip. We'll be working in groups—two parents paired with two children each. First, we'll take the bus to West Hill Park. Once there, each group will gather firewood, start a campfire, and prepare a meal. After cooking, we'll share what we've made. In the afternoon, we'll have parent-child games, followed by drawing and singing activities in the pavilion. Once everything is finished, please check out with me before leaving in an orderly fashion."

As Bianca spoke, the parents gradually settled down.

When she finished, several parents immediately approached Sabrina. "Sabrina, any chance we could be in your group?"

It wasn't just fathers—mothers too wanted to partner with her.

What had been an orderly lineup had been disrupted twice now because of Sabrina.

Throughout it all, only Scarlett and Damian—each with their child—stayed where they were, unmoved by the commotion.

Frowning at the disorganization, the teachers conferred briefly.

Finally, Bianca announced a solution: she would assign groups based on the attendance sheet, calling names in order.

When Scarlett's name was called, she was paired with another mother.

After Damian's name came Sabrina's.

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Chapter 327 A Cruel Taunt

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A few murmured in disappointment at the groupings, but thankfully no one made a scene.

Soon, everyone boarded the buses headed to West Hill Park.

After disembarking, Sabrina took the initiative to speak to Damian. “Mr. Langley, why don’t we go gather firewood first? Vanessa and Eric can stay here and help prepare the vegetables.”

The suggestion made sense—it was easier to move quickly without the children, and it gave a chance to be alone with Damian.

Damian found the arrangement reasonable and nodded. “Alright.”

her

Before leaving, Sabrina unpacked the supplies she’d brought and instructed Vanessa and Eric to work together prepping the ingredients.

Once everything was set, she turned to Damian. “Shall we, Mr. Langley?”

For some reason, Sabrina couldn’t help but notice that Damian seemed less bold in person than he was over text.

Just the other night, he’d openly propositioned her on WhatsApp. Now, he barely looked her

way.

She wondered if it was just her imagination, or if he was still annoyed she’d turned him down. Either way, she knew the play—sometimes you pushed a man away just to pull him closer.

Not far off, Scarlett and her assigned partner had taken their two children to collect firewood nearby.

But Sabrina and Damian hadn’t gone more than a few steps when Eric’s sharp cry made them turn around.

Damian spun instinctively and saw Vanessa standing over Eric. She kicked him hard in the shin and shouted, “You mommy-less brat! Who do you think you are, telling me what to do? I want fries, not stupid shredded potatoes! Keep your mouth shut!”

“Yeah—you’re just a mommy-less brat!”

Vanessa didn’t just yell—she’d zeroed in on Eric’s deepest sore spot.

Damian knew Eric’s story—his mother had died in childbirth, and Felix had never remarried, dedicating himself wholly to raising his son.

Even with all of Felix’s love, Eric still carried that quiet, unspoken ache of never having known

his mom.

And here was Vanessa, throwing it in his face.

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Chapter 327 A Cruel Taunt

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Hearing those words, Damian felt his temper flare.

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Even if Eric had been a stranger’s child, he wouldn’t have tolerated that kind of cruelty.

In three swift strides, Damian was back. He grabbed Vanessa by the arm.

Almost without thinking, his free hand rose as if to strike her across the face.

But reason caught him just in time.

She was just a child—Scarlett’s child.

His raised hand trembled slightly before he forced it back down.

Sabrina hurried over, a step behind.

The moment Damian released Vanessa, Sabrina pulled the girl into a tight hug.

“Sabrina,” Damian said, his voice low and seething. “Keep her in line. If she ever talks like that again, I won’t care whose child she is—I’ll make sure she regrets it. I mean it.”

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die – 328[749 words]

Damian's expression remained dark. He turned just enough to fix Sabrina with a glare—the coldness in his eyes was sharp, almost venomous.

Sabrina had never seen him look like that and felt a flicker of genuine fear.

Vanessa, shaken by Damian's threat, buried her face in Sabrina's shoulder, crying quietly.

Nearby, Eric's tears stopped the moment Damian returned.

After confronting Vanessa, Damian bent and scooped Eric up.

He carried the boy to a quieter spot before setting him down.

Crouching to Eric's eye level, Damian gently brushed the child's hair. "I'm sorry, buddy," he said, his voice soft now. "I shouldn't have left you alone back there."

Even though Damian often teased Eric, in truth, he cared for him like his own.

Seeing him hurt like this was unbearable.

Eric shook his head. His eyes were still red, but he managed a small, brave smile. "It's okay, Damian. You don't need to say sorry."

Hearing that only made Damian's heart ache more. He pulled Eric into a quick hug. "Come on," he said, standing. "Let's find another group. We don't have to stay with... her."

With that, he took Eric's hand and went to find Bianca.

When the teacher saw Eric's tear-streaked face, she asked what had happened.

After listening, her expression softened with sympathy. "Eric," she said gently, "you're a strong boy. We don't let words like that keep us down, okay?"

Eric nodded. "Okay."

Bianca understood why Damian had brought him over. "Is there another friend you'd like to join instead?" she asked Eric.

Without hesitation, Eric replied, "I want to be in Clara's group."

Clara could be tough, but he liked playing with her she never picked on his deepest hurts.

Bianca gave his shoulder a reassuring pat. "Alright, let's make that happen."

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Chapter 328 A Frustrated Kiss

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After a quick rearrangement, Damian swapped places with the mother originally paired with Scarlett.

Once in the new group, Damian suggested Clara and Eric stay under the trees to wash and prep the vegetables, while he and Scarlett went to gather firewood.

Scarlett didn't ask why the groups had been changed.

Firewood wasn't easy to find inside the park itself, so they had to walk a bit farther out.

West Hill Park wasn't fully developed—some areas were still rough and uneven.

Damian walked briskly ahead, and Scarlett quickened her pace to keep up.

By the time she reached him, he'd already collected several dry branches.

He snapped one across his knee, then another—but without gloves, a sharp splinter soon dug into his finger.

Scarlett noticed the blood immediately. She reached for his hand without thinking. “Let me

see.”

Damian started to pull away, but the concern in her eyes made him still.

He watched her closely, his gaze intense, as if trying to see past her calm exterior.

Scarlett felt his stare but didn’t look up. She focused on cleaning the small wound.

Finally, Damian couldn’t hold back. Even keeping his voice low, she could hear the tension in it. “Why are you so distant with me now?”

Scarlett was dabbing the cut with a clean tissue. At his question, she flinched almost imperceptibly.

After a pause, she replied quietly, “We live in different worlds.”

She kept her head down, her lashes casting faint shadows. There was no smile in her tone- only a quiet, stubborn seriousness.

The words stung. Damian’s voice grew heavier. “Scarlett, I’ve been trying—really trying—to close that distance. I’ve taken so many steps toward you. Why won’t you take even one toward me? Why?”

Scarlett finally looked up, her fingers still pressed lightly against his.

When their eyes met, she saw the frustration burning in his.

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Chapter 328 A Frustrated Kiss

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For a second, her mind flashed back to that night—the image of Damian kissing Sabrina.

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Her expression cooled. “You have your life,” she said, her tone turning brittle. “I have mine.”

Damian was tired of hearing that. It wasn't like this at the hospital.

She'd let him hold her while she slept. He refused to believe she felt nothing.

Angry now, he caught her wrist and pulled her closer. "You're lying to me," he said, his voice low and tight.

Scarlett winced at his grip. "Damian," she said, frowning, "let go."

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 329[823 words]

Damian couldn't understand why Scarlett had changed so abruptly. Keeping his voice low, he pressed her again. "Just tell me what did I do wrong? If I messed up, I'll fix it. Okay?"

Scarlett met his gaze directly. "You didn't do anything wrong. Nothing at all."

Hearing that, Damian's grip on her arm eased slightly. He asked, almost disbelieving, "So you still have feelings for Vincent, is that it?"

Scarlett tried to pull her hand back a few times, but couldn't break free.

Finally, she gave up and said quietly, "I don't have feelings for anyone. I only care about myself now—that's all I'm capable of."

Her cold words felt like a blade to Damian's chest. To him, it was clear she was still hung up on Vincent and was just making excuses.

He released her hand roughly. "If you don't care about me, then don't pretend to. Even if something happens to me, it's none of your business."

With that, he turned sharply and started walking away.

Seeing him leave so decisively, Scarlett instinctively called out, "Damian."

He stopped. A flicker of hope rose in him.

Maybe she'd just spoken in anger and now wanted to make things right.

When he turned back, full of expectation, he heard her say in a calm, even tone, "Clara and Eric are just kids. Let's not drag our issues into their day. When we go back, let's not argue in front of them."

Damian let out a bitter laugh. "Is that really all

you

wanted to say?"

Scarlett nodded. "Yes."

Before she could react, Damian closed the distance between them. He cupped the back of her head and pulled her against him, then lowered his mouth to hers without waiting for permission.

The kiss was fierce, almost punishing—he swallowed her protests, leaving her breathless.

Scarlett felt like she was suffocating. She pushed against his chest, but couldn't break free.

Only when her strength gave out and she slumped against him did Damian finally release her.

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Chapter 329 Bitter Words

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Finished

His hand still cradled her head. He rested his forehead against hers, breathing heavily. "Scarlett," he said, his voice rough, "this is what you owe me. Just a little interest."

Then he slowly let her

1. go.

A moment later, Scarlett gathered all her strength and slapped him hard across the face.

His head turned to the side. He looked stunned, working his jaw as if testing the sting.

When Scarlett lowered her hand, her fingers were trembling.

Once she could feel them again, she raised her hand and scrubbed fiercely at her lips, rubbing them raw until the skin nearly broke.

Seeing her look of disgust felt like a thousand needles piercing Damian's heart.

Tears welled in Scarlett's eyes as she stared at him. "How could you..." she choked out. "How could you be so selfish? So... tainted. Why would you kiss me like that?"

Of all her words, the one that stuck in Damian's mind was tainted.

He stared at her, then let out another humorless laugh. "I'm tainted? Scarlett, I've been with plenty of women, but I've never let things go too far. All this time, I've been trying to stay true to you—and you call me tainted?"

The angrier he got, the more his handsome features tightened with fury.

His eyes were bloodshot, glaring at her with an intensity that was almost frightening.

After spitting out the words, he kicked the pile of firewood violently and stormed off.

Scarlett stood frozen, trying to process what he'd said.

He stayed true to me?

But the tabloids were full of his escapades. And she'd seen him with that actress at the restaurant with her own eyes.

And now? He had the nerve to stand there and claim he'd been staying true to her?

And what about him and Sabrina?

She couldn't make herself believe it was all nothing.

No-Damian's words weren't worth trusting.

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Chapter 329 Bitter Words

When Damian returned to the group area, Sabrina noticed him immediately.

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Finished

Seeing his dark mood, she approached on her own. "Mr. Langley," she said gently, "are upset about what Vanessa said earlier?"

you

still

Damian was simmering with anger. He glanced at Sabrina. "Not worth it."

Vanessa was just a child-getting worked up over her wasn't worth it, though his heart still ached for Eric.

Sabrina thought his coldness was still about Vanessa, and that he was taking it out on her too.

She pressed on softly, "Mr. Langley, let me apologize on Vanessa's behalf. What she said to Eric was wrong. She shouldn't have spoken to him like that."

Damian turned fully to face her. "And can you apologize for her for the rest of her life?"

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 330[781 words]

Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Chapter 330 A Fierce Defense in the Park

The question left Sabrina at a loss; for a long moment, she couldn't form a reply.

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Finished

Having never been a mother herself, Sabrina couldn't truly grasp the deep hurt Eric must have felt when called such a name.

Her apology wasn't rooted in a real understanding of the pain she was addressing—it was just a convenient attempt to keep the peace.

Seeing Sabrina speechless, Damian felt a cynical urge to laugh.

But before he could, Sabrina suddenly leaned closer.

At the same time, she deliberately let her body brush against his arm.

Feeling her calculated touch, Damian's expression turned stony.

He immediately took a step back, putting clear space between them.

Meanwhile, Scarlett had just returned from gathering wood and caught sight of Damian and Sabrina. They were standing unusually close, almost in an embrace.

After only a brief glance in their direction, she turned her attention to finding Clara.

Just then, she heard Vanessa's shrill voice taunting. "You're a nobody! A fatherless nobody! Eric, you have no mom—you're nothing!"

Looking over, Scarlett saw Vanessa standing on a large rock, pointing down at Eric and shouting those ugly words.

Scarlett immediately strode toward them, her hands tightening into fists along the way.

A quiet, cold fury rose within her.

But when she was still a few yards away, Clara suddenly burst from behind a tree.

Without a word, Clara lunged forward, tackling Vanessa off the rock and onto the grass.

Before Vanessa could even react, Clara was on top of her, delivering hard slaps and punches to her face and arms.

Vanessa, always the pampered little princess, had no idea how to fight back. Against Clara's fierce assault, she was quickly overpowered.

The noise of the scuffle was loud enough that Sabrina—who had been focused on Damian—

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Chapter 330 A Fierce Defense in the Park

finally noticed and frowned.

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Sabrina hurried toward the tangle of children, raising her voice as she approached.

"Clara! Stop that this instant! Do you have any idea what you're doing? What do you think Vincent will say when he hears about this?"

Her words were clearly meant for Scarlett—an attempt to use Vincent's authority to pressure her into stepping in.

But Scarlett didn't move. She simply watched, her expression cold, as Clara kept hitting Vanessa.

Vanessa wailed and screamed between blows, but even then her threats spilled out. “Clara, if you don’t stop, I’ll tell my daddy! He’ll make you pay! He’ll ruin your whole family!”

Clara ignored her, throwing punch after punch without slowing.

Slowly, Vanessa’s defiant cries faded into weak, pitiful sobs.

Sabrina grew nervous. What if Clara went too far? If Vanessa was seriously hurt, how would she ever explain it to Vincent?

She moved to step in and pull Clara off.

But just then, Scarlett reached out and caught Sabrina’s arm, holding her back.

Startled, Sabrina turned to Scarlett. “Scarlett! That’s your daughter! How can you just stand there and watch her be beaten—maybe even beaten to death? Is this how a mother acts?”

Scarlett fixed Sabrina with an icy glare. When she spoke, her voice was colder still. “She was hurling hateful insults. She brought this on herself.”

Sabrina stared, stunned. “Scarlett, you...”

Seeing not a trace of concern on Scarlett’s face, she paused, then said bitterly, “Vincent was right about you. You really aren’t fit to be anyone’s mother.”

With that, Sabrina began trying to pull her arm free.

Just as she was about to break away, a broader figure stepped in front of her, blocking her path.

Looking up, she saw it was Damian.

Sabrina hesitated, but before she could speak, Damian said flatly, “Isn’t Ms. Theron right?”

He and Scarlett now stood side by side, forming a solid wall between Sabrina and the fighting children.

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Chapter 330 / Fiemme Deletion in the tran

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A chill ran through Sabrina. “You...

Damian met her gaze, his expression stern. “What? Am I wrongsh

Realizing she couldn’t intervene now, Sabrina gave up. Fler only hope was that Clara would know when to stop.

After all, Vanessa wasn’t really her child—she felt no real ache seeing her hurt.

In fact, watching Vanessa get what she deserved gave Sabrina a certain dark satisfaction.

Meanwhile, Eric—who had wandered off to cry alone after the cruel taunts—had made his way

back.

Seeing Clara pinning Vanessa down, he understood—she was standing up for him.

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 331[745 words]

Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

Chapter 331 Comfort After the Storm

From the looks of it, Vanessa had already taken quite a beating.

So Eric stepped forward and called out loudly, “Clara, stop! She’s had enough.”

Hearing that, Clara finally stilled her hands.

64

Finished

She was breathing heavily, sweat dampening her hair. Pushing herself up from Vanessa, she walked over to Eric.

Vanessa lay on the ground, past caring about pride or appearances, and simply cried out loud and raw.

Each sob felt like a twist in Scarlett’s heart.

Sabrina slipped past Scarlett and Damian and hurried toward Vanessa.

Meanwhile, Clara reached Eric. She lifted a hand—smudged and a little bloody—and placed it on his shoulder.

“If she ever talks to you like that again, tell me. I’ll shut her up myself.”

Eric felt a warm swell in his chest, but seeing Clara’s wild hair and flushed face, he couldn’t help adding, “You look like a total tomboy right now.”

Clara swatted him lightly on the head. “Looking for another beating?”

Eric instinctively raised his arms in defense. “Okay, okay, sorry.”

Satisfied, Clara lowered her hand. “That’s better.”

Eric dropped his guard and said earnestly, “Thanks, Clara.”

Clara found the sentiment too mushy. She rolled her eyes. “Whatever. Just shut up.”

Eric smiled slightly and didn’t press further.

Over by the trees, Sabrina had reached Vanessa. She bent to gather the sobbing girl, but before her hands could make contact, Vanessa scrambled up and bolted toward the woods, crying as she ran.

With a sigh, Sabrina set off after her.

Once Clara was done with Eric, she noticed Scarlett's quiet, tense expression.

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Chapter 331 Comfort After the Storm

After all, the child she'd just beaten up was Scarlett's own daughter.

What mother wouldn't be upset?

(64)

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Around Eric, Clara was all fierce confidence. But under Scarlett's gaze now, she felt suddenly

nervous.

She walked over, hooked a finger gently around Scarlett's hand, and when Scarlett looked down, Clara shut her eyes and blurted, "Auntie, I'm sorry. I know I was wrong. You can punish me if you want, but please don't stay mad at me."

Hearing that, Scarlett's heart ached even more.

Why were children so different? Clara was so perceptive and brave, while Vanessa...

Then again, Vanessa was being raised by Sabrina now.

Scarlett knelt down and softly brushed Clara's cheek. "You don't need to apologize to me, sweetheart. Sometimes people who do wrong need to face consequences."

Clara wrapped her arms around Scarlett's leg. "Auntie, maybe you should go Damian can stay with me."

check on Vanessa.

Scarlett shook her head gently. "Someone else is already with her. She doesn't need me right

now."

Thinking Scarlett was still upset, Clara held out her palm. "Then hit my hand, so you can feel better."

Scarlett simply took Clara's hand in hers, holding it without a word.

"Auntie," Clara said quietly, "I don't regret standing up for Eric."

Scarlett looked into Clara's determined eyes and managed a faint smile. "You did the right thing, Clara. Protecting your friends is important."

The pain was still there, but Clara wasn't wrong.

Damian stood nearby holding Eric's hand, though his attention never truly left Scarlett.

On the surface she was composed, but he knew—she was hurting more than anyone.

He wanted to comfort her, but the memory of her calling him "tainted" still stung.

He hated how much it bothered him, but he couldn't just turn it off.

Sensing Scarlett's low spirits, Damian gave Eric a subtle nod toward her.

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Chapter 331 Comfort After the Storm

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Eric understood. He walked over and hugged Scarlett gently. "Scarlett, let's go make lunch together."

Scarlett looked down at him, her eyes full of regret. "Eric... let me apologize for what Vanessa said to you. It was cruel and wrong."

Eric shook his head. "It's okay. I'm used to it. She's not the first kid to say things like that. I've never had a mom."

Hearing him say that so quietly broke Scarlett's heart. She pulled him into a warm hug, stroking his hair. "You are a wonderful boy, Eric. Don't let anyone make you feel less. Your dad loves you so much—even if you don't have a mom, you are deeply loved."

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 332[806 words]

Eric gently patted Scarlett's cheek with his small hand. "Yeah, Dad loves me so much. And Damian, Zachary—they all do. And someday, I'll have a wife who loves me too."

Scarlett managed a smile. "That's right. More and more people will love you as time goes on."

Eric took her hand. "Let's go make lunch now. I'm really hungry."

Pulling herself together, Scarlett pushed thoughts of Vanessa aside for the moment. She chopped the vegetables while Damian handled the cooking over the portable stove. Clara and Eric helped by adding ingredients to the pan.

Working together, they quickly prepared two simple dishes. Scarlett was quietly impressed by Damian's capable hands in the kitchen, but her low spirits kept her from commenting.

Once the food was ready, she said to Damian, "Mr. Langley, why don't you stay here and have lunch with Clara and Eric?"

Damian frowned. "What about you? Where are you going?"

Scarlett offered a faint smile. "Just to the restroom."

Damian watched her with concern. He knew she was upset about Vanessa, but he didn't press

her.

After washing her hands, Scarlett told the children she'd be back soon and turned to leave.

Damian's eyes followed her. He noticed she wasn't heading toward the restrooms at all.

He untied his apron and said to Eric, "Take the food over to Bianca with Clara. I'll go check on Scarlett."

"Okay, Damian," Eric replied.

Damian quickly rinsed his hands and set off after Scarlett.

She wasn't walking fast, and he caught up easily.

He found her sitting on a wooden bench along the path, head bowed, tears streaming silently down her face. Even in her grief, she bit her lip hard, holding back any sound.

She hadn't noticed him. After an inner struggle, a choked sob finally escaped her.

The daughter she'd nurtured so carefully had become someone cruel and hurtful—the thought was a physical ache, a suffocating weight.

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Chapter 332 A Shoulder to Cry On

(64)

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Damian had intended to give her space, to let her release what she'd bottled up. But when Scarlett began hitting her own legs in frustration, he could no longer stand aside.

He strode over and caught her wrist.

Startled, she looked up. Her face was wet with tears, filled with helplessness and confusion. She stared at him, dazed, as the tears kept falling.

His heart clenched. He sat beside her, pulled a clean handkerchief from his pocket, and offered it to her. "Here."

Scarlett took it, her voice hoarse. "Thank you."

Damian looked away, gazing ahead as he asked calmly, "It hurts, doesn't it?"

Scarlett wiped her cheeks. “No.”

He still didn’t look at her. He knew how vulnerable she must feel and that she wouldn’t want to

show it.

Hearing her denial, he let out a soft, humorless laugh. “Now you know how it feels.”

Scarlett stayed silent. She didn’t fully understand what he meant, so she didn’t engage.

Then Damian turned to her. He didn’t ask anything more, only said gently, “If you need to, you can lean on my shoulder for a while. It’s here for you.”

Scarlett wanted to refuse, but the words wouldn’t come. The tears welled up again, spilling over.

She couldn’t hold back any longer. Turning, she buried her face against his shoulder and wept -deep, wrenching sobs that shook her whole body.

“Vanessa wasn’t like this before,” she cried into his shirt: “She really wasn’t. But now she won’t listen to me. I can’t reach her anymore. I just... can’t.”

Damian could feel her trembling. He raised a hand and rested it lightly on her back. “I know,” he said softly. “I understand.”

Scarlett cried for a long time, recounting memories of how sweet and well-behaved Vanessa used to be. Damian listened quietly, offering little more than his presence.

After nearly twenty minutes, Scarlett finally lifted her head from his shoulder.

She felt drained but lighter. Her eyes were dry now.

She met his gaze, “Thank you.”

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Chapter 332 A Shoulder to Cry On

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Damian looked back at her seriously. “If you really want things to change for Vanessa, you should tell Vincent what happened today.”

Scarlett nodded. “I know.”

He continued to hold her eyes. “If I were her father, I would never let you carry this alone.”

A faint, tired smile touched Scarlett’s lips. “We should go back.”

“Yeah.”

They walked side by side along the path. Just as they were nearing the clearing where Clara and Eric waited, Vanessa’s voice drifted from the trees to their right.

“Sabrina... since I don’t have a mom anymore... will you be my mom?”

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 333[803 words]

Chapter 333 A Stolen Title

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When Vanessa was being hit by Clara, Scarlett hadn’t stepped in to stop it.

So in Vanessa’s mind, Scarlett was no longer her mother.

Sabrina had heard this kind of plea before. In the past, she would have agreed eagerly.

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But this time, she pretended to hesitate. “But... Ms. Theron is still your mom, Vanessa.”

Vanessa was nearly in tears, pleading desperately, “Sabrina, please... please say yes. Just for me.”

Seeing Vanessa so humble and eager, Sabrina finally replied with satisfaction, “Alright then. But only in private, okay? Don’t call me that around other people.”

The moment Sabrina agreed, Vanessa threw her arms around her. “Mom! I knew you would! You’re the best!”

Scarlett heard every word of their exchange. Her hand, hanging at her side, tightened silently.

Damian, standing beside her, felt the weight of her pain.

For a moment, he thought she might break down right there.

With Sabrina’s permission, Vanessa began calling her “Mom” over and over, clinging to her.

Sabrina answered each time, though her mind seemed already elsewhere.

Scarlett remained quiet, but Damian had heard enough. He started toward the voices.

Scarlett quickly caught his arm. “What are you doing?”

He looked back at her coldly. “Are you really going to let her ruin your daughter like this?”

Scarlett was momentarily stunned by his question.

Was he so upset because he cared about Vanessa... or because he cared about Sabrina?

She stared at him, silent and confused.

When she didn’t respond, Damian tried to pull away.

Seeing his movement, Scarlett released his arm. Calmly, she said, “What good would it do if I went over there? Scold Vanessa? What’s the point now? Let them be.”

With that, she turned and walked back toward Clara and Eric.

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Chapter 333 A Stolen Title

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She thought she'd made herself clear. If Damian still wanted to go, she wouldn't stop him again.

Whether he was worried about Vanessa or about Sabrina, that was his choice *to* make.

By the time she rejoined Clara and Eric, they had already finished lunch and were playing a quiet game.

Scarlett had just sat down when Damian returned.

She was a little surprised to see him.

He hadn't gone to Sabrina after all.

Bianca noticed they were back and quickly set out plates for their belated lunch.

As she ate, Scarlett felt a dull cramp low in her abdomen. Checking the dates in her mind, she realized her period was due soon and tried to brush off the discomfort.

Throughout the afternoon, she felt increasingly listless and drained.

Damian noticed but assumed it was because of what had happened with Vanessa.

By five o'clock, the kindergarten field trip came to an end.

Scarlett drove Clara back to Theron Manor, then headed to Ravensshade Villa.

It was half past six when she arrived—just in time for dinner.

Vincent was home, and so was Xavier. Vanessa hadn't returned yet.

Lily had set the table. Noticing Vanessa's absence, Xavier looked toward Scarlett as she walked in. "Where's Vanessa? Isn't she back yet?"

Scarlett paused, then instinctively glanced at Vincent.

Vanessa had already shut her out—how would she know where she was?

Vincent met Scarlett's look, then answered Xavier smoothly. "She went to a friend's house after the trip, Grandpa. She'll be back after dinner."

A friend?

Scarlett almost laughed bitterly. Vanessa was hardly popular at kindergarten—what friend?

But she didn't call Vincent out on the lie.

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Chapter 333 A Stolen Title

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Seeing Vanessa wouldn't be joining them, Xavier gestured to Scarlett. "Come sit down, then. Dinner's ready."

Scarlett nodded and took her seat.

As she settled, another sharp cramp seized her lower abdomen.

The pain had been lingering all day, leaving her pale and visibly weary.

Even with a table full of food, she had no appetite.

Xavier asked Vincent to serve Scarlett some soup, and Vincent complied, ladling a rich, broth-based soup into her bowl.

Scarlett stared at it, feeling queasy.

Just as the meal was about to begin, Scarlett spoke up, her voice quiet but firm, "Vincent, there are two things I need to say to you. And I'd like to say them in front of Grandpa."

Her sudden formality sent a chill through Vincent.

His first thought was that she might be about to announce their divorce right here at the table.

Not wanting to risk it, he leaned closer and said under his breath, “Grandpa’s eating. We can talk upstairs later.”

But Scarlett held his gaze. “No,” she said firmly. “We’ll talk about it here.”

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 334[748 words]

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Vincent tightened his grip on his fork. Before he could speak, Xavier interjected, “That’s right, Scarlett—speak freely in front of me. If Vincent has treated you unfairly, I’ll make sure he answers for it.”

Whether Xavier fully meant it or not, his words brought a faint warmth to Scarlett’s heart.

She offered a small, tired smile. “Thank you, Grandpa.”

Then she turned her gaze back to Vincent.

His handsome features were taut with tension.

Scarlett could guess what he was afraid she’d say, but she continued calmly, “At the kindergarten outing today, Vanessa used a very cruel word toward another child. What do you think should be done about it?”

Hearing this, some of the tightness left Vincent’s expression.

After a pause, he asked, “What did she say?”

Scarlett met his eyes. “She called him a bastard.”

Vincent went still, as if he couldn’t quite believe it, and said nothing.

But Scarlett wasn't letting it go. "Well, Vincent? What should the consequence be?"

He turned the question back on her. "What do you think it should be?"

Scarlett clenched her jaw. "A public apology. And no dinner tonight."

Vincent frowned. "Is that really necessary?"

"Yes," she replied without hesitation. "It is."

For a child who had lost his mother, being called that was a deep, reopening wound.

But Vincent simply waved a hand dismissively. "What if I don't make her apologize?"

Scarlett had expected that. "It's your choice. She's your daughter as much as mine."

Vincent's face darkened. "She's just a little girl. Do you want to punish her into the ground?"

"Yes," Scarlett said coldly. "She deserves to face consequences."

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Chapter 334 A Fiery Clash

Vincent's voice rose. "Scarlett, you're her mother. Do you hear what you're saying?"

Since their argument began, Xavier hadn't been able to get a word in.

Watching them go back and forth, he wasn't sure whom to chide first.

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Scarlett looked at Vincent's anger-twisted face and started *to* stand, but a sudden warm rush between her legs made her sink back into her chair.

The cramping in her lower abdomen was growing sharper. Cold sweat beaded on her skin.

Even so, she kept her voice steady. "If this were before, no matter how much it hurt you to see it, I would've made her apologize. But now... it's up to you."

With that, she pressed a hand to her stomach and pushed up from the table.

But after only two steps, she froze.

Looking down, she saw several vivid streaks of blood on her calf.

Heat rushed to her face—how humiliating, to have this happen here, now.

Before she could react further, her vision dimmed, and everything went black.

Scarlett crumpled to the floor, the blood on her leg smearing the polished wood.

The moment she fell, Vincent was on his feet. He crossed the room in quick strides and knelt beside her.

Gently, he tapped her cheek. Her skin was alarmingly pale, almost without color.

A sudden panic gripped him.

Without a word, he scooped her into his arms and carried her out of Ravensshade Villa.

Xavier followed slowly with his cane, unable to keep up. “Vincent!” he called. “Call me when you get to the hospital!”

“I will, Grandpa!” Vincent’s reply trailed behind him.

When Scarlett’s eyes fluttered open, the first thing she saw was Vincent standing by the window, smoking.

She couldn’t tell how many cigarettes he’d gone through—the whole room was thick with the smell.

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Chapter 334 A Fiery Clash

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The stale smoke made her nauseous. She wrinkled her nose. “Vincent... could you outside?”

Her own voice startled her—hoarse and ragged, barely recognizable.

Vincent stubbed out the half-finished cigarette in the ashtray.

Once the ember died, he walked to the bedside and sat in the chair.

smoke

His expression was cold and serious. “Scarlett,” he said, his voice low. “Tell me the truth. What really made you faint?”

Scarlett studied his face—the searching, suspicious look in his eyes.

She wasn’t entirely sure what he meant, but the persistent ache in her abdomen told her this wasn’t just her monthly cycle.

Still, she held her ground. “It was cramps. That’s all.”

Vincent’s pupils narrowed. He leaned closer, dropping his voice. “Think carefully. Is there anything you’re not telling me?”

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No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 335[872 words]

apter 335 The Anguish of a Hidden Truth

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Scarlett caught the implication in Vincent’s words. Her voice was weak but sharp. “Vincent, if you want to have a meltdown, take it outside. I don’t have the energy for this.”

As soon as the words left her mouth, exhaustion washed over her. A cold sweat broke out across her skin, and a sharp, pulling pain seized her lower abdomen.

Instinctively, she pressed a hand below her navel. The pain there—different from any period cramp she'd known—told her this wasn't normal. The soreness between her legs confirmed a deeper procedure had taken place.

Even as the realization settled in her mind, she refused to voice it.

Vincent lifted his icy gaze. The chill in his eyes seemed to seep into her. "I'll give you time to think, Scarlett," he said, his voice low and controlled. "Answer me when you're ready."

Scarlett couldn't take the circling anymore. Using the last of her strength, she demanded, "Just

what you mean!"

say

Vincent's eyes narrowed. "Oh? So you remember now?"

Scarlett leaned heavily against the raised bed, her body listing to one side. Her face was sheet-white, her eyes rimmed with furious red.

She had no strength left; every slight movement brought a fresh wave of clammy sweat.

Vincent's imposing presence filled the room, yet he still wouldn't spell it out.

After several rounds of this, Scarlett had pieced together what he was hinting at—and what must have happened to her.

Seeing his continued refusal to speak plainly, she finally snapped. "Vincent, with all your questions—aren't you just trying to say I terminated the pregnancy? That I had an abortion?"

The moment the admission left her lips, Vincent's eyes darkened completely. He pulled a stack of papers from behind him and flung them onto the bed beside her.

"How could you, Scarlett? That was my child. How could you just... get rid of it?"

Scarlett's gaze fixed on the documents. They were her medical records—details of the procedure.

Facing his accusation, she offered a bleak, brittle smile. "Why couldn't I? It was my choice, Vincent. My body. Whether to continue or end a pregnancy is my decision."

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Chapter 335 The Anguish of a Hidden Truth

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64

Finished

Vincent stared at her, a humorless laugh escaping him. “And what about me? Didn’t I even have the right to know?”

A tightness gripped Scarlett’s chest. “What’s the point of all this now? Can you change anything?”

Even propped against the bedrail, she felt unmoored, as if she might slip away at any moment.

She was drenched in a cold sweat, her body trembling as if trapped in ice.

Seeing her defiant, guiltless expression, Vincent’s anger surged. “You ended our child’s life, and you can be this cold about it?”

Scarlett found it almost laughable. “Yes, I did. What are you going to do about it?”

Vincent could take no more. He lunged forward, his hand closing around her throat, and dragged her toward him.

He pressed his forehead hard against hers, teeth clenched. “You’re pushing me, Scarlett.”

Being choked, Scarlett could barely breathe, but her bloodshot eyes locked on his. “You pour all your care into Sabrina. My life meant nothing to you. Why should I have risked it for this child?”

Vincent’s grip tightened. His own eyes reddened. “You were pregnant and you just... erased it. Do you know what that is?”

Somewhere, Scarlett found a burst of strength. She struck his arm twice. “I’ve never regretted it. Not for a second.”

From the moment she made the decision, she had felt no regret.

If anything, she was relieved—relieved the pregnancy was early, relieved she had realized the truth in time.

As soon as she finished speaking, Vincent shoved her back violently.

She crumpled against the bedrail, her forehead striking the metal bar with a dull thud.

Vincent looked down at her coldly. “You’re out of your mind.”

With that, he stood up. He didn’t glance at her postoperative condition, didn’t acknowledge the thin trail of blood now seeping from her hairline.

He said nothing more, turning silently and walking out.

Scarlett lay twisted against the bed, her forehead pressed to the cool rail. She lacked the

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Chapter 335 The Anguish of a Hidden Truth

strength to right herself. Turning her head slightly, she watched Vincent’s blurred figure disappear through the doorway.

She didn’t know how long she stayed like that.

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Finished

Long enough for her limbs to grow numb. Then the door opened, and a doctor walked in.

Seeing her position, the doctor hurried over, carefully helping her lie back properly and pulling the blanket up to her chin.

“Are you alright?” the doctor asked, concern in his voice.

Scarlett gave a faint, dazed shake of her head, saying nothing.

Still uneasy, the doctor spoke gently. “You had an incomplete procedure which led to significant hemorrhaging. It’s a good thing you were brought in when you were. We performed a D&C to stop the bleeding. You’re stable now.”

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Scarlett was a doctor herself—she understood exactly what had happened. Still, after the physician finished speaking, she simply replied, “I understand.”

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The doctor hesitated, not wanting to add to her distress, but felt obligated *to* state the facts. “The procedure has thinned your uterine lining. It may be significantly harder for you to conceive in the future.”

Although Scarlett specialized in pediatrics, her medical training meant she was fully aware of the implications.

She didn’t react dramatically, only responding quietly, “I see.”

Her calmness left the doctor somewhat at a loss. After a final check of her vitals, he quietly left the room.

Alone again, Scarlett pulled the blanket closer and turned onto her side. Tears slipped silently down her cheeks, but she stifled any sound.

Before long, a young nurse entered.

Hearing the faint catch in Scarlett’s breathing, the nurse said gently, “You’ve just had a dilation and curettage—your body needs rest, like a postpartum recovery. Try not to cry; it isn’t good for you now.”

Scarlett murmured a soft acknowledgment.

Once the nurse was gone, the weight of everything pressed down even harder.

The cut on her forehead had already dried, the sting faded into numbness.

Sleep wouldn't come that night.

Scarlett turned restlessly in the narrow hospital bed, Vincent's furious words echoing in her mind. What did he really want from her?

It was well past two in the morning when exhaustion finally pulled her under.

But barely had she drifted off when the blanket was yanked away.

Cold air rushed over her, and her

eyes flew

open.

Gradually, the figure beside her bed came into focus—Amanda.

Scarlett lay curled on the mattress, while Amanda stood over her like a vengeful shadow.

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Chapter 336 Cruel Visitors in the Night

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⌕ (64)

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“How dare you lay a hand on a child from the Stewart family?” Amanda hissed, each word dripping with venom. “Do you have a death wish?”

Weak and drained, Scarlett looked up but said nothing.

Her silence only fueled Amanda's rage. She stepped closer and slapped Scarlett hard across the face.

“You ignore me? Who do you think you are?”

Amanda shouted without restraint, showing no regard for the fact that Scarlett was still Vincent's wife—or that she was lying in a hospital bed.

Scarlett's head snapped to the side, five vivid finger marks rising on her cheek.

She glared back, eyes red-rimmed. "Is this all you're capable of now? Petty bullying?"

That set Amanda off completely. She climbed onto the bed, straddling Scarlett, and began hitting and pinching her wherever she could reach.

Too weak to fight back, Scarlett could only endure the assault.

Only when Amanda was out of breath did she stop, panting heavily. Beneath her, Scarlett lay pale and still, a terrifying stillness about her.

Her arms and shoulders were covered with angry red marks.

Surveying her handiwork, Amanda gave a satisfied nod.

But she wasn't done. Like a wild animal baring its teeth, she dug her nails into Scarlett's arm and snarled, "You never should have married into this family. You've brought nothing but bad luck.

"Why are you staring at me like that? Why don't you just disappear?"

"How dare

you touch a Stewart child? You're not worth the air you breathe.

"Your whole family is trash. Worthless, the lot of you."

Scarlett lay motionless, able only to turn her face away from the blows.

She hadn't the strength to sit up, much less fight back.

And she couldn't muster the energy to rebut the insults.

Amanda might have stayed longer, but her phone suddenly rang.

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Chapter 336 Cruel Visitors in the Night

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Scarlett couldn't hear what was said on the other end, but she saw Amanda's expression shift instantly.

"Alright, I understand. I'll be right there," Amanda said, her voice tense.

Whatever it was, it was urgent enough to make her abandon her torment of Scarlett.

She didn't even glance back as she hurried from the room.

Once alone, Scarlett finally caught her breath. But she was *too* weak to move, left only to watch as the red marks on her skin slowly darkened into bruises.

She didn't remember falling asleep again—only a haze of exhaustion and the sticky discomfort of sweat and dried tears.

Somewhere between sleep and waking, she heard the door open.

Her nerves were frayed; even the slightest sound brought her eyes open.

A man stood in the doorway—Luke.

Seeing him, Scarlett knew it meant more trouble. She didn't try to avoid his gaze, only asked wearily, "What now? What do you want?"

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Luke was unusually calm. He settled into the chair beside the hospital bed and looked at Scarlett, who was covered in fresh bruises. “My sister had a high-risk exposure,” he stated flatly.

That evening, Lucy had been assisting her attending physician in surgery when she accidentally nicked through her glove—and into her own skin.

The patient on the table happened to be HIV-positive.

The operating room had erupted into chaos.

When Scarlett heard this, a flicker of concern still passed through her eyes. “Did she start post-exposure prophylaxis?” she asked.

C

Luke didn’t answer. Instead, he leaned closer. “You must be feeling pretty satisfied, aren’t you?”

Scarlett was taken aback. “What?”

Seeing her shocked expression, Luke sneered. “Why so surprised? Wasn’t it you who encouraged her to pursue medicine?”

Scarlett stayed silent.

It was true—she had urged Lucy to follow her own dreams.

Her silence only fueled Luke’s anger. “My sister could’ve married well and lived an easy life. But because of you, she insisted on this path. And look where it got her.”

He paused, letting the words hang.

After a few seconds, he added coldly, “Scarlett, if anything happens to my sister, do think my family will let you walk away from this?”

you really

Scarlett met his gaze with a bitter smile. “Even without this, your family was never going to let me off the hook, was it?”

Luke stared at her, saying nothing.

The prolonged silence began to unnerve her. Warily, she asked, “What do you plan to do?”

As soon as the words left her mouth, Luke stood up. His face was stony. “I don’t hit women,” he said.

Before Scarlett could process what he meant, he called toward the door, “Come in.”

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Chapter 337 A Brutal Beating

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The ward door opened, and a young woman walked in.

It took Scarlett a moment to recognize her—Naomi.

A 63

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Naomi approached the bed, a cold smile on her lips. “Ms. Theron, long time no see. I hope you haven’t forgotten me?”

How could Scarlett forget? At that charity event, Damian had utterly humiliated Naomi.

Before Scarlett could respond, Luke ordered, “Do it.”

On cue, Naomi cracked her knuckles and—much like Amanda had earlier—began hitting Scarlett without restraint.

Weak and drained, Scarlett was now utterly vulnerable, like a fish on a cutting board.

Ever since Damian had humiliated her that day, Naomi had held a grudge. She’d sworn to get

even.

Now, she held nothing back.

Watching Scarlett weakened and unable to fight back, Naomi felt a surge of vindication.

“You looked so proud when Damian shielded you that day,” Naomi spat, yanking Scarlett’s hair to force her head up. “Call him now. Let’s see if he comes to rescue you.”

She sneered. “What kind of man do you think Damian is? Do you really believe he cares about you? Once he’s bored, he won’t even remember your name.”

With that, she slapped Scarlett hard across the face.

When her hand grew tired, she pinched Scarlett’s cheeks roughly. “Such a hard face—it’s hurting my hand.”

After shaking out her fingers, she resumed slapping. “Even if I killed you right here in this hospital room today, I doubt Damian would bother showing up.”

Throughout it all, Luke stood by, watching coldly without a hint of mercy.

Seeing how late it had gotten, Luke finally spoke up, “Enough. We’re leaving.”

Naomi stopped but pouted in protest. “Luke, I’m not done yet.”

She sidled up to him, clinging to his arm.

Luke glanced at her, his voice icy. “What? Do you actually want to kill her?”

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Chapter 337 A Brutal Beating

Naomi shook his arm, her tone sickly sweet. “Could I?”

Seeing she was half-serious, Luke scoffed. “And if you did, would you take the blame?”

Naomi pouted and fell silent.

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Luke turned his attention back to Scarlett. She lay flat on the bed, her face a mess of bruises and cuts, blood trickling from her nose. Beneath the torn hospital gown, fresh blood stained the inside of her thigh.

Naomi had shown no mercy; the gown was ripped nearly to shreds, barely covering her..

Now Scarlett lay helpless and broken, every shallow breath sending sharp pain through her body.

Seeing her in such a battered, half-conscious state, some of the pent-up anger in Luke's heart finally began to subside.

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Chapter 338 An Assault Interrupted

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Luke was thoroughly satisfied with Scarlett's current state—even felt a twisted sense of pleasure from it.

After watching her for another moment, he suddenly leaned in. His broad frame blocked the overhead light as he gripped her chin, his voice dripping with contempt. "Look at you now. Still think you can mess with me?"

Scarlett forced her eyes open. Her eyelids were swollen and heavy, but she saw the disdain in his gaze clearly. She said nothing.

Her silence seemed to irritate him further. He shoved her chin aside roughly. “Remember this well, Scarlett. Today was just a warning. You’d better pray nothing happens to my sister. If it does... what happened here will only be the beginning.”

Scarlett’s head was flung to the side. Tears escaped, soaking into the pillowcase.

With that, Luke left, Naomi trailing behind him.

Suddenly, the room was quiet again—so quiet Scarlett could hear her own ragged pulse.

She reached weakly for the phone on the bedside table, intending to call for help.

But as her fingers brushed it, the device tumbled to the floor.

Rolling slowly onto her side, she saw the screen had shattered into a spiderweb of cracks, colored lights flickering beneath the glass.

She no longer had the strength to retrieve it. All she could do was lie there, each breath a struggle.

Tears continued to fall, dampening the pillow.

No matter how hard she tried to hold back, quiet sobs eventually broke through.

She didn’t know how much time passed before her crying faded into exhausted stillness.

Then, darkness took over.

Somewhere in the haze, she felt hands moving over her body.

Scarlett thought it was a dream—until she forced her eyes open and saw a figure standing beside the bed.

She tried to focus, but his face remained blurred.

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Chapter 338 An Assault Interrupted

A

Finished

She attempted to speak, to tell him to stop, but her voice was a raw, broken whisper.

The man's hand slid slowly up from her abdomen, coming to rest on her chest.

A low, mocking laugh followed. "What a shame," he said, false sympathy in his tone. "Such a pretty thing... all beaten

up

like this."

A cold dread washed through her.

She recognized the voice now—Caleb.

She felt him working at the buttons of her hospital gown. With immense effort, she managed,

"Get... out."

—

Her vision cleared just enough to make out his face—the wicked smile, the triumphant glint in his eyes.

She knew what was coming..

In the next moment, Caleb undid the last button.

Her gown fell open.

Seeing the bruises that covered her body didn't unsettle him—if anything, it seemed to excite him.

The bright stain of blood against the sheets acted like a catalyst, spurring him on.

He couldn't hold back any longer. Kneeling on the bed, he pushed her legs apart, wedging one knee between them to keep her from closing them again.

His hands moved busily, tugging at her clothes.

Scarlett struggled, kicking weakly. "Caleb—stop! Get off me!"

Her resistance only seemed to fuel him.

Just as he reached to unfasten his own pants, the door swung open.

A young nurse stood in the doorway. She stared at Caleb, her voice stern. “The patient has just had surgery and needs rest. You’ll have to leave.”

Interrupted, Caleb calmly refastened his trousers.

As he climbed off the bed, he shot the nurse a sinister look. “You’d better watch your step. Wouldn’t want to lose your job over nothing.”

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Chapter 338 An Assault Interrupted

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With two low, arrogant laughs, he walked out.

The nurse looked shaken by his threat, but she held her ground.

After a moment, Scarlett whispered, “Help me... make a call.”

The nurse looked at her battered form, understanding dawning. “Who should I call?” she asked, pulling out her phone.

Several faces flashed through Scarlett’s mind.

Damian? Nolan? Nathan? Violet?

But she couldn’t bring herself to reach out to any of them.

After a long pause, she said quietly, “Call the police.”

The nurse hesitated, then began to dial.

But before she could finish, the door opened again.

Naomi stood at the threshold, eyes fixed on the nurse. “Think carefully,” she said coolly. “Are you really willing to go against the entire Stewart family... for someone like her?”

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Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

Chapter 339 Seeking Justice in Vain

The Stewart family?

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At those words, the young nurse’s expression shifted immediately. Under Scarlett’s hopeful gaze, the nurse finally abandoned the idea of calling the police.

Seeing her back down, Naomi smiled faintly. “Smart choice.”

With a loud, contemptuous laugh, Naomi swaggered out.

The nurse couldn’t bring herself to meet Scarlett’s eyes. But before leaving, she quietly placed her own phone on the bedside table, then hurried from the room.

Scarlett understood the nurse’s difficult position—she hadn’t expected her to leave the phone behind.

The moment she had it in her hand, Scarlett decisively dialed 911.

About ten minutes later, two officers arrived.

The first thing Scarlett said was, “Officers, I want to file a report and request a medical examination for documentation.”

The officers agreed. “We’ll arrange that.”

After the exam was completed, Scarlett added, “I was assaulted and nearly... attacked. I want those responsible held accountable.”

The officer taking her statement nodded. “We’ll investigate this thoroughly.”

After offering a few words of reassurance, the officers left the ward.

They returned before long.

Sitting down beside the bed, one officer spoke, his expression apologetic. “We checked the surveillance system. The camera in this hallway... it was malfunctioning during the relevant time.”

Scarlett’s heart sank.

Feeling a surge of frustration, she asked tearfully, “What about other cameras? The lobby? The elevators?”

Seeing her distress, the officer softened his tone. “Please try not to worry. We’ve documented everything. We’ll follow all available leads.”

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Chapter 339 Seeking Justice in Vain

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Scarlett felt a wave of helplessness. She wanted Amanda, Luke, Naomi, and Caleb arrested immediately.

But with the police taking this stance, pressing them further seemed futile.

After they left, it dawned on her—the Stewart family had likely covered their tracks.

Even calling the police might have been pointless from the start.

That night, Scarlett lay awake, restless and uneasy.

During morning rounds, the medical team filed in.

Though Scarlett was visibly bruised and battered, they offered only perfunctory glances before asking with routine concern, “Ms. Theron, are there any family members we should contact?”

Scarlett didn’t answer, just stared back with red-rimmed eyes.

The attending physician spoke gently, “Your body is still very weak. Even if you’re not observing a formal recovery period, you really shouldn’t be alone right now.”

Still, Scarlett remained silent.

Seeing her resistance, the team moved on without further comment.

After they left, a hollow ache in her stomach reminded her she hadn’t eaten since the previous day—not a meal, not even a sip of water.

She could barely sit up, let alone go downstairs to the cafeteria.

The doctor was right about one thing—she needed help.

But who could she turn to?

Contacting her own family was out of the question. If Nathan found out, his temper would surely lead him straight into a confrontation with the Stewarts.

Damian had crossed her mind, but she’d decided against involving him.

Nolan was just a colleague—dragging him into this would only complicate his career.

That left only one person, however cold he might be—Vincent.

When she used the nurse’s phone to call him, he answered—perhaps because it was an unfamiliar number.

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Chapter 339 Seeking Justice in Vain

“Hello.” His voice was rough with sleep or something else.

Scarlett bit her lip. “Vincent, it’s me. I need-”

Before she could finish, the line went dead. He had hung up.

She knew he was angry about the pregnancy—about her choice. But now, weakened and isolated, she had nowhere else to turn.

She hadn’t expected him to be this cold.

He hadn’t even let her finish her sentence.

Listening to the dial tone, Scarlett let out a bitter, hollow laugh.

Then the tears came again.

Now, there was only one option left.

When she called Claire, the line connected almost instantly. “Hello? Who is this?”

Scarlett’s voice broke. “Claire... can you come to the hospital? I... I need someone here.”

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Finished

Claire didn’t hesitate. “I’m on my way.” Scarlett could hear the rustle of a coat being grabbed. “What happened?”

Scarlett kept it brief. “I’ll explain when you get here. And... could you bring me a new phone?”

Hearing the strain in her friend’s voice, Claire didn’t press. “I’ll be there soon.”

After hanging up, Scarlett waited. Within half an hour, Claire rushed into the room.

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Chapter 340 A Friend's Arrival

⌘ (63)

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Despite the winter chill, Claire's face was glistening with sweat by the time she reached the hospital room.

When she saw Scarlett's bruised and swollen face, she froze in the doorway. "My God... what happened to you?"

Scarlett managed a faint, strained smile. "I'm alright."

Claire could see right through the brave front. Her own eyes welled up, and heavy tears began to fall.

"Scarlett, tell me who did this to you," she demanded, voice trembling. "I'll go find them myself."

Seeing Claire so upset, Scarlett quickly reassured her, "Really, Claire, I'm okay."

But Claire's tears kept coming. In all their years of friendship, she had never seen Scarlett like this—and she knew Scarlett was holding back to protect her.

After a moment, Claire forced her raging emotions down. She walked back to the bedside, gently smoothing the blanket. "You must be starving," she said softly.

Scarlett nodded, her own eyes growing damp. "I am."

"I'll go get you something to eat right now. Wait for me," Claire said, already turning toward the door.

Once outside the room, she let the tears flow freely again.

She was still crying quietly when the elevator arrived, and she stepped inside without looking up, not wanting anyone to see her face.

Because her head was down, she didn't notice Zachary standing in the corner.

He saw her, though. "Claire?" he said gently. "What a coincidence."

Lost in her thoughts, Claire didn't hear him.

Seeing her tear-streaked cheeks, Zachary felt a pang of sympathy. He pulled a clean handkerchief from his pocket and held it out to her.

Still not looking up, Claire assumed he was a fan asking for an autograph—something that happened occasionally as a food blogger with a modest following.

She took the handkerchief and, out of habit, signed her name neatly in one corner.

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Just as she finished, the elevator doors opened.

Claire quickly pulled her mask up and hurried out, leaving Zachary standing there, holding the signed handkerchief, utterly bewildered.

Then, slowly, he began to smile.

He couldn't help thinking how unexpectedly... cute she had been in that moment.

When Claire returned with food, she helped Scarlett sit up and fed her carefully.

After Scarlett had eaten, Claire tidied up the room.

Just then, Scarlett's new phone rang.

It was her department head.

“Scarlett, you didn’t show up for your shift today. Care to explain?”

Scarlett replied hoarsely, “I’m not well, Dr. Jenkins. I need to take a few days off.”

Hearing another leave request, he snapped, “You do realize you’re supposed to request leave in advance?”

Before Scarlett could respond, Claire snatched the phone. “Do people schedule when they get sick?” she fired back. “Tell me, how do you plan ahead for that?”

Silence on the other end.

But Claire was only getting started. “If you’re going to be a decent supervisor, then act like one. Otherwise, step aside. Either approve the leave and dock her pay, or fire her. But stop with the pointless lectures.”

With that, she ended the call and tossed the phone onto the bed.

Turning back to Scarlett, her expression softened into one of pained protectiveness. “What a terrible boss. You don’t need that job anyway.”

As a doctor, Scarlett was used to being reprimanded by superiors. But seeing Claire so fiercely defensive of her made her want to cry all over again.

A moment later, the phone rang once more.

Thinking it was the hospital again, Claire grabbed it, ready to unleash another round—but

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Chapter 340 A Friend’s Arrival

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stopped when she saw the caller ID. The anger in her

eyes

faded.

“It’s Violet,” she said, handing the phone to Scarlett.

At those words, Scarlett's expression changed.

A wave of unease washed over her.

Did Violet already know something? Why was she calling now?

With a nervous heart, she answered, "Hello, Violet."

But Violet's tone wasn't what Scarlett had feared. It was calm, even warm. "Are you coming back for dinner tonight? I'm not on set today, so I thought I'd cook at home. I remember you like shrimp cakes... I was planning to make some for you."

Hearing Violet's gentle words, Scarlett's nose stung. Heavy tears rolled silently down her cheeks.

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