

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce c 5

When Scarlett opened her eyes again, she was lying in a hospital room, the sterile smell of antiseptic hanging in the air.

Melinda popped her head in a few minutes later, checking her vitals and reminding her to stay in the hospital for two more days of observation. Even after discharge, she'd need to take it easy for a full month-no strenuous work, no stress.

Scarlett nodded along to every word. She'd already made up her mind-she was going to take that month seriously. Her body was hers, after all-not a tool for the Stewarts, not something to neglect. For the first time in years, she was putting herself first.

Once Melinda left, Scarlett picked up her phone, half-expecting to see a missed call or text from Vincent. Nothing. Not a single notification.

She shouldn't have been surprised-last night's fight, her leaving, the surgery-none of it mattered to him. To the Stewarts, she was just a blip on their radar, easily ignored.

But for Scarlett? It was a turning point.

Finally seeing them for who they really were-selfish, cold, ungrateful-was a relief, not a heartbreak. No more late nights overthinking, no more clinging to false hope. Just clarity.

Old habits tugged at her, though. She found herself opening the video app almost on autopilot. The first recommendation? A new post from Sabrina, tagged with “Someone you may know”. The video showed Sabrina holding a small hand; even from the back, Scarlett recognized Vanessa’s curly hair instantly. The caption read, “There’s no feeling like being needed.” And the background? The living room of Ravensshade Villa-Vincent’s “secret” villa for Sabrina.

Scarlett let out a soft, tired smile. She’d once cried over posts like this, stayed up all night replaying them in her head. Now? She long-pressed the screen and tapped “Not Interested”. The days of secretly stalking her husband’s mistress were over.

After leaving the hospital, Scarlett hired a part-time caregiver to help with meals and chores, then spent the entire month resting.

A month later, she paid the caregiver, slipped into a crisp white dress, applied a light layer of makeup, and drove back to Rivergate. It was the fifteenth-her and Vincent’s “scheduled” night for trying to conceive.

Truth be told, Scarlett had never enjoyed those nights. Vincent had always treated it like a chore, rushing through it so he could leave for Sabrina as soon as possible. But tonight, she wasn’t there for a baby. She was there to hand him the divorce papers.

She arrived at Oakland Villa at seven. Freya greeted her warmly and offered to make dinner.

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Scarlett ate a quiet meal alone, then headed upstairs to the study. The divorce agreement was still on the desk, exactly where she'd left it a month earlier-untouched, unread. Vincent hadn't been home once in that time.

She waited until nine, her patience wearing thin, when she heard footsteps in the hallway. Her heart skipped a beat-maybe he'd finally show up. But when the door opened, it was only

Freya.

"Mrs. Stewart," Freya said, looking uncomfortable, "Mr. Stewart just called. He said he's tied up tonight and won't be coming home. He asked if you could come back next month instead."

Scarlett let out a bitter laugh. Next month? She'd shown up this month, but who knew if she'd even be in Rivergate by then. She was tired of waiting-tired of being trapped in this gilded cage of a marriage.

After a moment's pause, she stood up.

"When he does come back," she told Freya, "tell him I left something for him on the desk. It's important."

Freya nodded. "I will, Mrs. Stewart."

Scarlett grabbed her bag and walked out of Oakland Villa, the night air cool against her face. She got in her car and drove, no destination in mind-just needing to get away. Eventually, she found herself parked outside a building with bright lights-Rivergate Grand Hall. A crowd of well-dressed people was spilling out, laughing and chatting.

Then she saw them.

Vincent and Sabrina, flanking Vanessa, each holding one of her hands. The three of them were smiling, their heads tilted together like they were sharing a private joke. Vanessa was bouncing on her toes, talking a mile a minute.

"Sabrina, you were so pretty up there! Like a fairy!" she gushed, swinging Sabrina's arm. "Your piano playing was amazing-can you teach me when I'm older? Please?"

Sabrina was wearing a floor-length white gown, her hair pulled back in a sleek bun, looking like she'd just stepped off a red carpet. She bent down and leaned forward, booping Vanessa's nose playfully. "I'd love to-anytime you want."

Vanessa cheered, then turned to Vincent. "Daddy, isn't Sabrina the best?"

Vincent's eyes softened-the kind of softness Scarlett had never seen directed at her. He nodded, a small smile tugging at his lips. "Yeah, she is."

Just one word, but it was enough to tell Scarlett everything.

Vanessa beamed. "When I grow up, I wanna be just like her!"

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Scarlett watched through the windshield, her chest tight. Vanessa had never looked at her that way-never admired her, never begged to be like her.

She thought back to the years she'd spent as a full-time mom-covered in spit-up, up at 3 a.m. with a fussy baby, giving up her career as a pediatric surgeon to stay home. She'd stopped wearing makeup, stopped playing the piano, stopped being Scarlett-all to be "Mom" and "Mrs. Stewart".

To Vanessa, she was just the woman who cooked her meals and folded her clothes. Sabrina was the exciting one-the one who played piano, wore pretty dresses, and made her dad smile.

At the entrance of the hall, Vanessa held out her arms, whining. "Sabrina, carry me! Please?"

Vincent stepped in quickly. “Vanessa, Sabrina’s wearing a gown-it’s not easy. Wait till we get to the car, okay?”

Vanessa’s lower lip stuck out, her eyes watering. Sabrina saw her pout and immediately knelt down, lifting her into her arms. “It’s okay, sweetie-I don’t mind.” She smiled at Vincent, like they were a team.

Vincent’s face softened even more. He walked behind them, carefully lifting the hem of Sabrina’s gown so she wouldn’t trip on the steps. This was the man who ruled Rivergate’s business world with an iron fist-who never apologized, never bent, never showed weakness. And here he was, fussing over a woman’s dress like a doting husband.

They climbed into Vincent’s Rolls-Royce and drove away, laughing. So this was his “busy night”-a concert with Sabrina and Vanessa, playing happy family.

Scarlett laughed too, a cold, hollow sound. She sat in her car for a long time, watching the empty parking spot where they’d been, until her phone rang. It was Spencer Jenkins, her supervisor at the hospital.

“Scarlett?” his voice came through the line.

She composed herself. “Hi, Spencer.”

Scarlett majored in pediatric surgery. After being a full-time mom for four years, she returned to the workforce and was working as a junior doctor at the hospital.

“Good news-your training can end early. You can come back to work next week, if you want.”

Scarlett hesitated. The last thing she wanted was to stay in Rivergate, where every street corner reminded her of the Stewarts. “Spencer, what about that volunteer program? The one doing health checks for kids in the countryside?”

There was a pause. “You mean the rural clinic gig? It’s tough-long hours, basic facilities, and it won’t do much for your resume. We have spots, but no one’s pushing you to take it.”

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“I want to take it,” Scarlett said firmly. “Think of it as a break. I need some time away from the city.”

Spencer could hear the resolve in her voice. “Alright. You can go for two months. I’ll send you the details tomorrow.”

A month passed in a blur. Vanessa had started kindergarten, and without Scarlett around to “try” for a second baby, Vincent was getting pressure from Amanda and the Stewart elders. On the fifteenth, he showed up at Oakland Villa earlier than usual-before six.

Freya was shocked to see him. “Mr. Stewart, you’re home early!”

Vincent didn’t explain. He just headed upstairs, pausing to tell her, “If Mrs. Stewart comes back, send her to the bedroom.”

Freya nodded, watching him go. He walked right past the study-didn’t even glance at the desk where the divorce papers sat—and went straight to the master bedroom. He was only here for one thing-to make sure Scarlett got pregnant. Nothing more.

After a shower, he put on a pair of sweatpants and waited on the bed, scrolling through work emails. Seven o’clock came and went. Eight. Nine.

Three hours later, he was starting to get annoyed. Just as he was about to call Scarlett, he heard footsteps in the hallway.

Finally.

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