

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 51

Chapter 51 A Mother's Distance

80%

Finished

Scarlett knew with chilling certainty that Vincent would never reconsider his decision, yet she remained rooted to the spot, her stubborn pride refusing to let he retreat.

She stood there until a pins-and-needles sensation crept up her legs, the physical numbness mirroring the emotional void spreading through her chest. Only when she could no longer feel her feet did she finally surrender, turning away with slumped shoulders to walk out of the hall in utter defeat.

The moment she disappeared from view, Vincent lowered himself into his chair and confronted the dinner spread before him. The table groaned under the weight of numerous dishes, yet he merely picked at his food, his appetite gone.

He recognized immediately that none of these dishes bore Scarlett's touch-the flavors, the presentation, everything screamed of Freya's competent but impersonal cooking.

If he was completely honest with himself, Nolan meant nothing to him. What grated on his nerves, what stirred that simmering irritation within him, was the unwavering certainty with which Scarlett always defended the man, that self-righteous conviction in her voice.

Well, if she had already cast him as the villain in this drama, he might as well embrace the role fully and see this through to the final act.

Outside, Scarlett remained sitting in her car for what felt like an eternity, the engine off and silence pressing in on her from all sides.

A wave of frustration washed over her, followed by creeping doubt. Had she been too rash? Had her confrontation only poured gasoline on the fire?

There might have been other ways to handle the situation, avenues left unexplored that could have salvaged something for Nolan. Now, she feared, she had only succeeded in digging his hole deeper.

Yet, a small, rational voice whispered in her mind that even if she had held her tongue, Nolan's circumstances would likely have improved very little. Vincent's mind, once set, was like granite.

Just then, Scarlett's phone started ringing.

She glanced down at the screen-it was Vanessa calling.

She hesitated for a second before picking up. "Vanessa, what's up?"

Her voice had a sharp coolness to it now, a distance that hadn't been there before.

Vanessa caught on right away. "Mom, are you at Theron Manor right now?"

Ever since she'd told Scarlett to leave Theron Manor, a weird unease had been nagging at Vanessa-this constant fear that Scarlett didn't love her anymore,

Scarlett answered flatly, "No, I'm not."

Vanessa's voice drooped with disappointment. "Oh? You're still at work? I was thinking... maybe I could go see Grandma at Theron Manor."

She didn't actually want to visit her grandma-this was just a test, to see if Scarlett still cared about what she

wanted.

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Chapter 51 A Mother's Distance

80%

Finished

She'd tried the same trick a few days earlier with the kindergarten event, and Scarlett had turned her down then, too.

Scarlett had said she was busy. Vanessa had told herself over and over that if Scarlett hadn't been busy, she would've definitely gone with her.

Scarlett shot down the idea. "That's not necessary. Your randma needs her rest."

After Vanessa's last visit, Diana had fallen ill.

Scarlett knew precisely why-Vanessa's words and behavior had upset her.

It wasn't a serious physical ailment, but emotionally, Diana just couldn't seem to move past it.

Feeling her options dwindling, Vanessa lowered her voice and asked tentatively, "Mom... are you still mad at me?"

Scarlett's demeanor remained frosty. "No."

When disappointment accumulated enough, expectations finally ceased.

And when there were no more expectations, there was nothing left to be angry about.

Vanessa tried again, her voice cautious and pleading, "Mom, can you pick me up from school tomorrow?"

Vanessa kind of liked it when Sabrina picked her up-her classmates always commented on how beautiful Sabrina was, and it made her feel proud.

But ever since she'd told Scarlett to leave, a guilty little feeling had been niggling at her. She wanted to make things right with Scarlett.

If they could patch things up, she could finally relax-le Sabrina pick her up every day without that heavy weight on her chest.

Otherwise, that worry would just keep eating away at her.

Scarlett had no clue what Vanessa was thinking, but she really didn't have time tomorrow-so she turned her down again. "Vanessa, I've got to work tomorrow. Ask your dad to pick you up."

Vanessa had no choice but to sigh in defeat. "Okay."

Scarlett didn't even seem like she wanted to talk more. "'m gonna hang up now. Go get some rest."

Before Vanessa could even say anything back, Scarlett ended the call.

She drove back to Theron Manor, getting there a little after 8 PM.

As she parked her car and walked toward the entrance, he ran into Henry-he was on his way out.

“Dad, what’s going on? Where are you headed?”

Henry replied, “Clara’s been out playing for quite a while. I’m going to find her.”

“Dad, let me go. You should stay and rest.”

Henry nodded in agreement. “Alright. I’ll have the staff keep dinner warm for you. You can eat when you get

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Chapter 51 A Mother’s Distance

back.”

“Okay.”

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Scarlett stepped through the gates of Theron Manor one again, the evening air cool against her skin. Parked directly across the street sat a sleek black luxury sedan, its engine idling quietly in the growing darkness.

Inside the vehicle, Vanessa’s eyes widened the moment he spotted her mother emerging from the estate. “Mr. Reed, please open the door!” she urged the driver, Her voice tight with urgency. “I can see Mom!”

Sam Reed, the family driver, had already noticed Scarlet’s approach. With practiced efficiency, he exited the vehicle and moved to open the passenger door for the eager young girl.

At that same moment, Scarlett’s voice cut through the twilight, warm and carrying. “Clara! Dinner time, sweetheart!”

The immediate response came from the direction of the nearby plaza. “Auntie, I’m coming!” Clara’s cheerful voice rang out before she even came into view.

Less than a minute later, the little girl came sprinting across the pavement, her small shoes pattering against the pavement. Without breaking stride, she launched herself directly into Scarlett’s waiting embrace, trusting completely that her aunt would catch her.

“You’re home!” Clara gasped, slightly breathless from her run as she nestled comfortably in Scarlett’s arms. “Was your day very tiring? Grandma told the kitchen staff to prepare all your favorite dishes specially for you!”

A genuine smile finally touched Scarlett’s lips as she adjusted her hold on the child. She lifted Clara effortlessly, bringing them eye to eye before leaning in to gently press her forehead against the little girl’s in a tender gesture. “The moment I see your smiling face, all my weariness just melts away,” she murmured, her voice softening. “How could I possibly feel tired when I have the world’s sweetest niece to welcome me home?”

Clara giggled delightedly and cupped Scarlett’s face with her small hands. “Auntie, you look so pretty today!”

“Thank you for the sweet compliment, Clara. You’re absolutely adorable, too!”

“But everyone says I’m chubby.”

“You are not chubby at all! As you grow up, you’ll change. All girls transform beautifully as they get older.”

Send Gifts

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Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 52

Chapter 52 The Stage of Contrasts

“I believe Auntie!”

“Come on, sweetheart, let’s go home for dinner. I will peel some shrimp for you later.”

“Yay, that’s awesome!”

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Finished

Across the street, Sam held the car door open, but Vanessa remained frozen in place, her mind elsewhere.

“Ms. Stewart?” he prompted gently.

Vanessa snapped back to the present, but her eyes were ready glistening with unshed tears.

She had overheard every word of the warm exchange between Scarlett and Clara.

Scarlett was so patient and gentle with Clara, yet whenever Vanessa called, she would end the conversation after just a few curt sentences.

It truly felt like Scarlett didn’t love her anymore.

She hadn’t always been like this.

“Ms. Stewart, do you still wish to speak with Mrs. Stewart?”

A sharp pang of hurt shot through Vanessa’s chest. “No,” he said, her voice thick with emotion. “I want to go back to Ravenshade Villa. I want to see Sabrina.”

If Scarlett didn’t love her anymore, then she wouldn’t keep chasing after her.

Sabrina was better anyway. Sabrina cared about her, paid attention to her feelings.

But during the drive back to Ravenshade Villa, Vanessa still couldn’t make sense of it. Silent tears traced paths down her cheeks.

Why had Scarlett changed so suddenly?

Scarlett used to adore her. How could those feelings just vanish?

Fine. If Scarlett didn’t want her, she still had Sabrina.

Sabrina was the one who treated her the best.

Dinner had been postponed at Theron Manor, waiting for Scarlett’s return.

Now, the whole family sat around the dining table, the atmosphere lively with laughter and conversation.

Clara was seated contentedly between Scarlett and Violet. Both Scarlett and Violet kept piling food onto her plate and diligently peeling shrimp for her. She was so blissfully happy her eyes crinkled into joyful little

crescent moons.

“Mom, Auntie, tomorrow is the Thanksgiving performance! I’m so excited, but I’m really nervous too!” Clara confessed, licking her fingers as she bounced between anticipation and anxiety.

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Chapter 52 The Stage of Contrasts

Scarlett offered a soft smile, though a heaviness settled her heart.

Finished

Violet spoke to Clara in a gentle, reassuring tone, “Tomorrow, both Mom and Auntie will be there in the audience. There’s no need to be scared, just do your very best. If you earn a sticker as a reward, that’s wonderful. But even if you don’t, you’ll always be the best in our eyes.”

Clara giggled, her little heart swelling with happy anticipation.

Suddenly, she turned to Scarlett, a shadow of concern in her big eyes. “Auntie, are you really sure it will be okay tomorrow?”

It wasn’t the first time Clara had asked Scarlett this.

She and Vanessa attended the same kindergarten, but tomorrow, Scarlett wouldn’t be accompanying Vanessa to the event-she would be there for Clara instead.

While this made Clara incredibly happy, a small part of her worried about how Vanessa might feel.

Scarlett had wrestled with this dilemma herself. Initially she hadn’t even realized both children went to the same kindergarten; she only found out when Clara mentioned it.

Besides, she had given her promise to Clara first.

And if she was completely honest with herself, Vanessa probably didn’t need or want her there anymore.

After a moment’s reflection, Scarlett smiled reassuringly at Clara. “It will be perfectly fine.”

She longed to be there for her own daughter, but her daughter seemingly had no use for her now.

Their relationship would likely never return to what it once was.

If only I hadn't overheard Vanessa saying those hurtful words. If only I didn't know that the person Vanessa values most is Sabrina...

But life, she knew, was not made of "if onlys".

The next morning, Clara woke up bursting with excitement. She roused Violet first, then scampered off to wake Scarlett.

Today was the big event. The teacher had said the children could have their makeup done either at home or at school.

Violet, a former model, naturally intended to do her daughter's makeup herself.

They needed to arrive at the school before 8:30 AM, so Violet was already up and preparing by six.

After Clara's enthusiastic wake-up call, Scarlett got up as well.

Violet carefully applied Clara's makeup, helped her into an adorable dress, and styled her hair into two neat little braids, finishing the look with pretty hairbands. When Clara skipped around, the ribbons fluttered charmingly in the air, making her look even more delightful.

Once Clara was fully ready, Violet headed to Scarlett's room.

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Chapter 52 The Stage of Contrasts

"Scarlett, let me do your makeup for you," Violet offered

Scarlett was already dressed in comfortable clothes and baseball cap.

Finished

She was familiar with how these kindergarten events worked-there would be dancing and parent-child activities.

It wasn't a day for dressing up; comfort was paramount for playing properly with the children.

"Violet, I think I'll skip the makeup today. I'll likely be playing games with Clara later," Scarlett replied.

She had once imagined attending parent-child events with Vanessa countless times, even browsing ideas online for fun activities.

But now that her own daughter was actually in kindergarten, she felt like an outsider, an unnecessary

presence.

At least she could still participate fully with Clara.

Violet understood the complex emotions behind Scarlett's words. She smiled warmly, "Playing games doesn't mean you can't look your best! Besides, putting on makeup is for yourself. When you look pretty, you feel good from the inside out. Come on, let me give you a light, fresh, natural look."

Scarlett found she couldn't refuse such a kind offer.

Ever since Vanessa was born, Scarlett had rarely worn makeup. Fortunately, she had been blessed with good skin, so she didn't look much older than her peers even without it.

But with just a few skillful touches from Violet, her features were subtly enhanced, making her appear noticeably younger, brighter, and more vibrant.

Send Gifts

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09:30 Wed, Jan 7

Awakened Housewife Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 53

Chapter 53 Stolen Spotlight

Finished

Violet held the mirror up to her. “Take a peek-see the difference it makes?” she asked Scarlett.

Scarlett stared at her reflection, caught off guard for a second. She’d always had nice features, but ever since Vanessa was born, she’d gradually stopped fussing over her looks. Most days, Vincent saw her with bedhead, running around nonstop just to keep up with their daughter.

Sabrina, though? She was a totally different ballgame. She always had her makeup done to perfection, and she never wore the same outfit two days in a row.

At least that’s what Scarlett noticed when she’d snuck a look at Sabrina’s social media. Every video Sabrina posted was a new look-sweet, edgy, sexy, polished, cute. She seemed to have an endless number of sides to her.

Scarlett even thought if she were a man, she’d probably be drawn to someone like Sabrina too.

“Scarlett?” Violet’s voice pulled her from her thoughts.

Scarlett smiled. “Yes, it really does look much better.”

Violet gave her shoulder an encouraging pat. “You should dress up more often and enjoy yourself. All those things you feel you’ve lost... in the grand scheme, they don’t really matter.”

Scarlett’s smile softened. “Yeah, I understand.”

“Alright then,” Violet said, “I’ll go finish getting ready. We’ll leave at eight o’clock sharp.”

Promptly at eight o’clock, the three of them headed out of Theron Manor.

When they got to the kindergarten, the place was already buzzing with energy. The area was packed with parents, and every kid was dressed in their nicest clothes.

Clara spotted some of her classmates, then waved proudly at the two women behind her. “This is my mom, and this is my aunt! Don’t you think they’re beautiful?”

She showed them off for a minute, and then the teacher called all the kids to gather. Parents started taking their seats while the teachers wrapped up their last-minute preparations.

The event kicked off with each class doing a different dance routine. ‘

Scarlett sat in the crowd, but her eyes kept wandering over to Vanessa.

Every class took their turn dancing. With the kids being so young, there were tons of stumbles and forgotten steps-but they all pushed through to the end

Vanessa danced too. She had makeup on today, and her hair was just pulled back in a ponytail, no accessories or anything. Even so, she seemed to be in areat mood, grinning the whole time she performed.

Watching Vanessa look that happy, Scarlett felt some of the tightness in her chest loosen up. No matter what Vanessa had said before, she was still her daughter. All Starlett really wanted was for her to be happy.

After the group dances, it was time for the solo acts. Kid who did well got a little sticker and a certificate,

Clara was doing a short skit-acting out a scene from airy tale.

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Chapter 53 Stolen Spotlight

The kids finished their turns one after another. Before long, it was Vanessa's turn.

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Vanessa walked onto the stage alone. She stood there, scanning the audience as if searching for someone.

That was when the murmuring started among the crowd.

"Why is that child up there all by herself?"

"Doesn't she have any parents here with her?"

"Oh, the poor thing... She looks like she's about to cry."

"Really, what kind of parent doesn't show up for their child's kindergarten event?"

Vanessa heard the whispers, and tears began to roll down her cheeks.

Scarlett heard them too-every word felt like a tiny needle pricking her heart. She was just about to stand up and go to Vanessa when Violet suddenly grabbed her arm. Violet gave

her a look that said it all, then nodded subtly toward the right, telling her to look that way.

Scarlett followed her eyes and saw Sabrina. She was wearing a fancy designer dress and expensive high heels, and she showed up with a small group of people carrying a piano.

Vanessa caught sight of Sabrina and immediately started jumping up and down, yelling, “Sabrina! You’re finally here!”

Sabrina walked gracefully through the crowd in her heels, stepped onto the stage, and took Vanessa’s hand.

Once the crew set the piano down and brought over a chair, Sabrina patted Vanessa’s head and sat down at the piano.

Vanessa got into position, ready to dance to the music Sabrina would play.

Sabrina closed her eyes, took a brief, dramatic moment to compose herself, and then let her fingers descend upon the keys. The rich, beautiful sound of the piano quickly filled the entire kindergarten.

Vanessa, wearing her pretty princess dress, began to dance along with the music.

The piano piece was crisp and powerful, but little Vanessa didn’t quite have the skill to match it. She struggled to execute the dance moves properly.

Soon, her steps became messy, and her dancing started to look awkward and out of place.

Sabrina’s playing was technically beautiful, and her lavish gown was certainly eye-catching.

But this was, after all, a kindergarten event where the children were supposed to be the center of attention.

Vanessa’s movements fell more and more out of sync with the music, and her performance began to fall

apart.

The whispers in the audience started up again, this time with a different tone.

“That mother certainly knows how to command attention, doesn’t she? This is supposed to be the children’s day, but she’s practically hijacking the spotlight.”

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Chapter 53 Stolen Spotlight

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Finished

“Honestly. The poor child is clearly struggling up there, and she doesn’t even pause. If you didn’t know any better, you’d think this was some kind of maternal showcase competition.”

“Look, the child has stopped dancing properly, but the mother is still playing on.”

“To be frank, the little girl isn’t much of a dancer. It might have been better if she’d just sung a simple song.”

Send Gifts

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09:30 Wed, Jan 7 u

Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 54

Chapter 54 A Failed Performance

“I guess she just wanted to show off how talented her men is, but it completely backfired.”

77%

Finished

“Seriously. The kid just froze up there like a statue, looking completely lost. Doesn’t seem very quick on her feet, to be honest.”

Vanessa had already stopped moving entirely, but the piano music continued relentlessly.

She could hear every word of the critical chatter floating up from the audience. Her eyes reddened with humiliation, and tears streamed freely down her face.

Meanwhile, Sabrina remained lost in her own musical world, completely absorbed in her performance. She remained oblivious to the crowd's murmuring—and even to Vanessa's quiet sobbing.

Eventually, however, the piano piece drew to a close.

Sabrina had poured her heart into the performance, fully expecting a wave of enthusiastic applause and admiration. But the moment she stood up from the piano, she was met only with a sea of disapproving whispers.

And there, right beside her, stood Vanessa, crying.

“Vanessa, what's wrong?” Sabrina asked, suddenly panicked. She crouched down in front of the girl, her face full of concern.

Without a word, Vanessa pushed Sabrina's hand away and walked off the stage alone.

Down in the audience, Scarlett overheard the other parents gossiping about Vanessa and felt a pang of heartache. When she saw Vanessa leave, her first instinct was to get up and follow her.

But just then, the teacher called Clara's name.

Clara, perceptive as always, could see that Scarlett was worried about Vanessa. “Auntie,” she said softly, “you can go check on Vanessa. Mom and I will be fine for our performance.”

Scarlett looked down at Clara's earnest face, bit her lip, and shook her head. “It's alright. I'll go find her after your performance is over.”

They had rehearsed this skit together so many times at Theron Manor-Scarlett didn't want to let Clara down because of her own personal worries.

Clara wanted to insist, but Scarlett gently patted her cheek and said, “Come on now, let's go.”

With Scarlett's quiet encouragement, the three of them walked onto the stage together.

Their performance-a classic fairy tale brought to life with vibrant energy-completely won over the audience. Everyone clapped and cheered enthusiastically.

Backstage, Sabrina finally caught up with Vanessa, apologizing repeatedly. “Vanessa, I’m so, so sorry, I didn’t think this through properly.”

Vanessa’s eyes were red and swollen, tears, still tracing paths down her cheeks. She looked at Sabrina but remained silent.

After all, she had been the one to suggest the piano piec, and the dance, too. Now that the performance

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Wed, Jan

Chapter 54 A Failed Performance

had been such a disaster, how could she possibly blame Sabrina?

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Finished

Sabrina had looked absolutely stunning in her gown, playing the piano under the bright stage lights-under different circumstances, people would have loved it. So why had it felt so wrong here, at the kindergarten event?

Vanessa just couldn’t understand it.

Just then, the sound of roaring applause caught her attention. She turned and saw Scarlett and Clara still on stage.

Their silly little skit had won everyone’s approval?

But how?

Wasn’t it just the same old boring fairy tale everyone had seen a million times?

Up on stage, Scarlett, who had been quietly worrying about Vanessa the whole time, glanced over and finally spotted her in the wings.

Scarlett saw Vanessa standing there, and she saw the unmistakable mix of envy and confusion in Vanessa’s

eyes.

Vanessa saw Scarlett looking back. Her heart ached, and fresh tears welled up.

If Mom had come with me today, would all that applause have been for me instead?

But the thought quickly turned bitter.

Scarlett clearly had the time. She had chosen to come with Clara rather than be there for her own daughter.

A wave of anger and hurt washed over Vanessa, the sadness feeling almost suffocating. She turned and buried her face in Sabrina's dress, hugging her tightly.

Sabrina, at a loss for words, could only gently rub Vanessa's back.

Soon, all the performances concluded. Clara's skit won first place, earning her three little stickers as a reward.

After the awards ceremony, the teacher announced the next activity-a communal cookie-making session.

Vanessa and Clara were in different classes, so their groups were separate. During the cookie-making, Scarlett and Vanessa weren't seated together.

Each table accommodated five children and their accompanying parents, all working together to make cookies. Once finished, they would be cooked and enjoyed as a group.

Their class areas weren't far apart, so while making cookies, Scarlett kept glancing over toward Vanessa's table.

Sabrina sat beside Vanessa, but her elaborate, fancy gown made her stick out awkwardly amidst the casual, practical clothing of the other parents.

Eager to help Vanessa save face after the earlier disaster Sabrina rolled up her sleeves and attempted to knead the dough. But as soon as she pressed down, one of her long, manicured fingernails bent backward painfully, and blood dripped directly into the dough mixture. Everyone at the table stared, utterly

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Chapter 54 A Failed Performance

speechless.

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Finished

“Ma’am, are you here to spend time with your child or to walk a fashion runway?” one parent finally exclaimed in disbelief. “You just got blood in the dough how are the children supposed to eat this now?”

“You might look all dressed up, but this is just unhygienic,” another muttered with distaste.

“How can someone like you be a mother? Didn’t it occur to you to trim your nails or change into something more appropriate before coming to a kindergarten event?”

“Is this even your child, or did you just pick her up off the street for the day?”

Sabrina had never been subjected to such blunt criticism before. Her face flushed a deep, mortified red. Her finger throbbed painfully, and blood continued to seep from the broken nail.

Send Gifts

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Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

Dylan

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 55[964 words]

Chapter 55 Parting Words

Finished

Upon hearing the adults’ harsh words, Vanessa immediately jumped to her feet, ready to defend herself. “You’re the disgusting ones! You’re the ones who were picked up off the street!” she shouted back.

But the parents weren't about to be intimidated by a small child. One of them retorted sharply, "Look at you, so young and already talking back to adults. You have no manners at all. Your mother probably spends all her time primping and chasing after men-must have forgotten to teach you how to behave properly!"

The commotion at the table grew loud enough for Scarlett, seated nearby, to hear every cruel word. She stood up abruptly, strode over, and with one swift motion, knocked the washbasin clattering from the table. She fixed a cold, fierce glare on the woman who had spoken. "If you have issues with adults, settle them with adults. But how dare you drag a child into this?"

In the midst of the confrontation, Vanessa, feeling utterly humiliated and hurt, turned and ran off.

Seeing Vanessa flee, Sabrina quickly excused herself and hurried after her. "Vanessa!"

Scarlett's imposing presence and sharp retort had silenced the critical woman, who, realizing she was in the wrong, shut her mouth and retreated.

Sabrina chased after Vanessa but soon lost sight of her. Panicked, she pulled out her phone and called

Vincent.

"Vincent, have you arrived yet? Vanessa was just verbally attacked and she ran off. I can't find her anywhere."

Vincent had promised to attend the parent-child event today, though he had planned to arrive a little later.

Hearing that Vanessa had been bullied, Vincent frowned "Understood. I'll be there shortly."

Sabrina, feeling deeply uneasy, apologized, "Vincent, I'm so sorry. I failed to protect Vanessa."

Vincent didn't blame her. "You have a gentle nature. I know this isn't your fault. I'll handle it when I get

there."

After hanging up, Sabrina turned and saw Scarlett approaching, her face etched with worry as she called out Vanessa's name.

At that moment, Sabrina's finger was still bleeding from her broken nail. Though it throbbed with pain, she

couldn't focus on her own discomfort now.

Vanessa was missing. She felt she had no way to face Vincent.

Seeing Scarlett approach, Sabrina called out cautiously, Ms. Theron."

Scarlett looked at her with a cold, piercing gaze. "Where is Vanessa?"

Sabrina pointed vaguely in a direction. "She probably went that way."

Without another word, Scarlett stepped past Sabrina and hurried off.

The school event was still ongoing, Clara, worried about Scarlett, asked Violet to help search for Vanessa.

Scarlett checked every classroom but found no trace of Vanessa.

Finally, she headed toward the restroom.

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Chapter 55 Parting Words

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Finished

Just as she was about to enter, she encountered Vincent merging, carrying a sobbing Vanessa in his arms.

Vanessa had clearly been crying hard. She clung to Vincent's shoulder, her small body still shaking with occasional sobs.

Vincent's large hand gently rubbed her back, both comforting her and ensuring she didn't slip from his hold.

Scarlett's heart ached at the sight of her distressed daughter. She called out softly, "Vanessa."

Vincent's expression was icy, his eyes frosty and accusatory as they settled on Scarlett. The chill in his gaze felt almost suffocating.

"So this is what you call 'having important business to attend to'?" he asked, his voice low and heavy with accusation.

His words were barely moving, yet each one carried the weight of his disappointment and anger.

Earlier, in the restroom, Vanessa had cried her heart out to him. Through her tears, Vincent had managed to piece together what had happened.

He had learned that Scarlett's so-called "important business" was simply assisting Clara with her performance. He now understood why people had been gossiping about Vanessa, and he knew about Sabrina's broken nail, injured while trying to stand up for Vanessa...

Scarlett guessed that Vanessa must have told Vincent everything. Yet, she refused to be intimidated by his imposing presence.

She replied calmly, "Yes, I made a promise to Clara first

Vincent saw not a trace of guilt in her demeanor-only a stubborn insistence on her own righteousness. He sneered coldly, "You truly believe you're justified in this don't you?"

To Vincent, Scarlett's failure to prioritize Vanessa was an unforgivable error.

But he had no idea how emotionally numb and resigned Scarlett had become inside.

Scarlett had no desire to explain herself to Vincent. "Think whatever you wish," she stated flatly.

Vincent felt a profound sense of disappointment. He adjusted his grip on Vanessa and made to leave. As he did, he said to Scarlett, "If you have no intention of properly caring for Vanessa, then stay out of her life from now on."

With that, he began walking away, Vanessa in his arms, rushing past Scarlett.

Scarlett's voice stopped him. "That suits me perfectly."

Vincent halted, turning to glare at her. "You..."

He had spoken harshly out of anger, frustrated that Scarlett seemed to care so little for Vanessa.

But he hadn't expected Scarlett to agree so readily, so coldly.

The woman who had once cherished their daughter above all else seemed to have vanished.

Chapter 55 Parting Words

The person standing before him now felt like a complete stranger.

77%B

Finished

Scarlett took a step forward, meeting Vincent's gaze directly. "Since you've said it, let me make myself clear as well. Starting today, I will no longer involve myself in any matters concerning Vanessa."

This wasn't a statement made in the heat of the moment. It was a resolution she had already firmly settled

in her heart.

Send Gifts

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Awakened Housemfe ignore Betrayer's Bags

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 56

Chapter 56 A Heavy Goodbye

Friskas

Vincent stared at her, his brows knitted rightly together expressen dark and very

Hearing Scarlett's words, Vanessa lifted her tear-streaker face from Vincent's sonder

Perhaps fearing her parents would argue, or maybe terrified Scarlet would try breadom her, Vereina called out in a small, trembling voice, "Mom."

Scarlett's heart ached at the sight of Vanessa. Remembering Clara's earlier advice, she forced herself to take a step cover.

Vincent didn't push Scarlett away as she approached, but he pointedly avoided looking at her.

Scarlett reached out and gently stroked Vanessa's damp cheek "Vanessa, the begen, her voice w but form, I've told you this before-you mustn't bully others, you shouldn't look down on people, and you awokady cannot resort to cursing, If you make a mistake, you have to make it right. Do you understand?

Vanessa's eyes welled up again, fresh tears tracing paths through the old ones. She nodded repeatedly, her voice choked with sobs. I understand, Mom

Scarlett carefully wiped Vanessa's tears away and managed a gentle smile. You were very brave on that stage today, Yes, there was a small hiccup, but having the courage to perform in front of everyone already makes you more remarkable than many. People will always have opinions-both good and bad-but you must learn to believe in yourself. If your dance wasn't perfect this time, well practice harder and do better next time. And honestly, you don't need to pay any mind to what those unkind people said"

The more Scarlett comforted her, the more overwhelmed Vanesa felt aggrieved. Her quiet sobs escalated into heart-wrenching cries.

Scarlett tenderly ruffled her hair. "But you must always remember what I said-if you do something wrong you have to take responsibility and make amends."

Vanessa continued nodding, though the tears seemed to have a will of their own, flowing ceaselessly.

"And from now on, Scarlett continued, her voice growing softer, "listen to your dad more, okay? If anything at school upsets you, you must tell him."

Vincent had heard enough. He adjusted his grip on Vanessa, hoisting her a little higher in his arms, and shot Scarlett an icy glare. "I don't need you to tell me how to care for my daughter. I am perfectly capable"

Scarlett's words carried an unsettling finality, as if she were saying a permanent goodbye-as if she would never see Vanessa again.

For reasons he couldn't quite articulate, a heavy, suffocating pressure settled in Vincent's chest.

He refused to listen to another word from her. Holding Vanessa securely, he turned and strode purposefully out of the school building.

Vanessa clung desperately to his shoulder, crying and screaming, "Mom! I want my mom! Dad, put me down! I want my mom!"

Vincent paid no attention to her pleas, carrying her straight out of the kindergarten gates without a backward glance.

Scarlett stood frozen, watching Vincent and Vanessa disappear from view. Only when they were completely

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09:31 Wed, Jan

Chapter 56 A Heavy Goodbye

gone did she bring a hand to her mouth, stifling the sob that threatened to escape.

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Finished

She had nearly died giving birth to Vanessa. Of course she wanted nothing more than to stay with Vanessa.

But the painful reality was that Vanessa didn't seem to need her anymore.

Scarlett sank down, crouching in a quiet corner, and buried her face in her hands, desperately trying to muffle the sound of her weeping.

Just then, a gentle hand tapped her shoulder.

Scarlett lowered her hands and saw Violet crouching beside her. She could no longer contain her emotions and collapsed into Violet's embrace.

"Violet," she choked out, her voice thick with tears, "do you think I'm being a heartless mother?"

Violet held her tightly, one hand gently stroking her hair. "I'm a mother too. I know you would never make this choice if you weren't truly and deeply disappointed

Scarlett's voice was small, filled with guilt and self-reproach. "Maybe I'm just not fit to be a mother. I don't want Vanessa to grow up feeling motherless, but I just don't know how to face them anymore."

A husband who showed her no care, a daughter who seemed to resent her living in such a family had drained Scarlett completely.

Violet held her even tighter. "You've already made your choice. Don't look back now. Letting go is the only path to your own freedom."

Scarlett nodded weakly against her shoulder. "I know, Violet."

Even though her mind was made up, Vanessa was still the child she had carried for nine months and nurtured. The decision was tearing her apart.

But no matter how profound the pain, she was resolved to release them.

In the back seat of the black Rolls-Royce, a heavy silence had descended.

Vanessa had cried herself out and was now quiet, save for the occasional hiccup and snuffle.

After some time, Sabrina emerged from the school and approached the car.

Vincent, adhering to habit, got out and opened the car door for her.

Sabrina's eyes were red-rimmed. "Thank you, Vincent," he said, her voice filled with gratitude.

Vincent offered a strained, non-committal smile in return, then walked around the vehicle and got back into his seat.

Vanessa sat between them in the spacious back seat.

Sabrina's injured finger remained unbandaged; she had merely wrapped it in a thick wad of tissues to stem the bleeding.

She didn't complain about the pain. Instead, as soon as he settled in, she turned to Vanessa, her expression full of remorse. "Vanessa, I am so sorry. I didn't think things through properly. It's my fault people said those horrible things about you."

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Chapter 56 A Heavy Goodbye

76%

Finished

Vanessa's eyes welled up again. She threw herself into Sabrina's arms. "Sabrina, it wasn't your fault! I was the one who messed up the dance. That's why they were laughing at us. It's my fault!"

Sabrina held the sobbing child close, but her eyes kept flickering nervously toward Vincent. His stony, impassive face left no doubt that he was in a profoundly dark mood.

Send Gifts

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09:31 Wed, Jan 7 W

Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 57[913 words]

Chapter 57 An Unwilling Choice

76%

Finished

Sabrina didn't truly absorb what Vanessa was saying. Instead, she directed her apology toward Vincent. "Vincent, I'm so sorry. I failed to protect Vanessa properly."

When Vincent's gaze shifted to Sabrina, the icy edge in his eyes softened considerably. He offered her a gentle smile. "It's alright. You've never been a mother before, and you're already doing wonderfully. What happened today wasn't your fault."

Vanessa, still nestled in Sabrina's embrace, lifted her head and added her own defense, "Yeah, Sabrina has been amazing! It's those other people who don't know any better. And it's Mom's fault too. If she had come to the event with me, people wouldn't have talked about me like that."

Even though Vanessa feared that Scarlett's love for her was fading, she couldn't shake the bitter jealousy she felt seeing Scarlett win an award with Clara.

Her mom was clearly available, yet she hadn't chosen to accompany her.

That fact alone fueled Vanessa's resentment.

Seeing both Vincent and Vanessa defending her so staunchly, Sabrina finally allowed herself to relax. She held Vanessa a little tighter and murmured softly, "Vanessa, I promise I'll learn how to take better care of you. Next time, I'll do a much better job."

Just then, Vincent interjected, "You've already done more than enough. I'll arrange for someone else to look after Vanessa."

Sabrina, having no children of her own, wasn't particularly keen on being a full-time caretaker. Since Vincent suggested it, she simply acquiesced, "Alright then."

Internally, she felt a wave of relief, though she made sure her expression conveyed only disappointment.

Vanessa, however, was having none of it. She pouted and protested to Vincent, "Dad, I don't want anyone else! I only want Sabrina. I can only sleep well when Sabrina is with me."

Vincent's expression cooled. "Sabrina has her own life and responsibilities. I'll ask your grandma to come and take care of you."

Vanessa's small face scrunched up in displeasure. "I don't want Grandma! She doesn't really like me."

Vanessa had never felt much affection for her grandmother.

Vincent wasn't inclined to negotiate and was about to insist when Sabrina suddenly spoke up, "Vincent, please, let me continue taking care of Vanessa. I can manage it."

Vanessa immediately threw her arms around Sabrina. "Sabrina, you're the best! With you here, I don't even need Mom anymore. Hmph!"

Sabrina stroked Vanessa's hair, her gaze filled with apparent warmth.

Vincent turned to observe them, a flicker of unease crossing his features. "This might be asking too much of you."

Sabrina offered a bright, reassuring smile. "It's really no trouble. Vanessa is such a wonderful child; I can't bear the thought of her being upset or alone."

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09:31 Wed, Jan 7

Chapter 57 An Unwilling Choice

Seeing her determination, Vincent reluctantly conceded “Alright.”

As he glanced down, Vincent finally noticed Sabrina’s injured finger, which was still bleeding.

Finished

He had been so preoccupied with Vanessa earlier that he hadn’t realized Sabrina hadn’t even properly bandaged her hand.

The sight startled him. He leaned forward, gently taking her hand to examine it. “Why haven’t you had this treated yet?” he asked, his voice laced with concern.

Sabrina’s eyes reddened slightly as she shook her head. “I was so busy looking for Vanessa, I didn’t have time.”

This wasn’t entirely true-she had briefly visited the nurse’s office but decided against treatment.

Letting Vincent see the injury now served her purpose better.

Vincent grew visibly alarmed. “I’m taking you to the hospital right now,” he stated firmly.

After Sabrina’s wound was treated at the hospital, Vincent brought them both back to Ravensshade Villa.

Lily, seeing them return, hurried out to greet them. “Mr Stewart, Ms. Monroe, Ms. Stewart.”

Vincent instructed Lily, “Prepare plain oatmeal for dinner tonight. Sabrina has injured her finger, so the food should be light, nothing too spicy or stimulating.”

Lily smiled and nodded. “Of course.”

Once everyone was inside, Lily inquired, “Shall I prepare a separate dinner for you, Mr. Stewart?” She recalled that Vincent wasn’t particularly fond of oatmeal

Vincent thought for a moment. “That won’t be necessary. I’ll have the oatmeal as well.”

Lily understood instantly-he intended to share the meal with Sabrina.

Upstairs, Vincent suggested Sabrina rest in the guest room.

He then took Vanessa to the master bedroom and closed the door behind them.

Vanessa sat on the plush couch, puzzled by Vincent’s serious demeanor.

“Dad, what is it?” she asked.

Vincent sat down facing her, taking her small hands in his. “Vanessa, I want to ask you a question,” he began, his tone earnest.

Vanessa nodded, her expression attentive. “Okay.”

“Between your Mom and Sabrina,” Vincent asked, watching her face closely for any nuance in her reaction, “who do you like more?”

Vanessa thought hard for a moment, her brow furrowed in concentration. Finally, she looked up at Vincent and answered, “I like both Mom and Sabrina.”

Vincent’s brow furrowed slightly. “But if you absolutely had to choose just one?”

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Chapter 57 An Unwilling Choice

Vanessa was stumped. She lowered her head, staring at her lap. “I don’t know,” she whispered.

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Even though she felt angry and resentful toward Scarlett, the idea of truly giving her up was unthinkable.

Yet, Sabrina was wonderful too-beautiful, glamorous, and being around her made Vanessa feel special and proud.

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09:31 Wed, Jan 7

Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

Dylan

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 58[982 words]

Chapter 58 The Bank Card

76%

Finished

The weight of the choice pressed down on her, and she truly had no idea how to answer.

Vincent could see Vanessa's internal struggle. He gently upped her cheek and said softly, "But it seems like Mom might not need us in her life anymore."

Vanessa caught the implication immediately and asked harshly, "Dad, are you and Mom getting a divorce?"

The question took Vincent by surprise. He hesitated for a moment before responding, "No, I would never let you lose your mother."

Hearing this reassurance, Vanessa finally relaxed. She slipped off the couch and wrapped her arms tightly around Vincent's neck. "Dad, I want Mom to love me, and I want Sabrina to love me too. And I want you to always love me."

Vincent's heart softened completely. He leaned forward gently touching his forehead to hers. "Yes, Dad will always love you. And so will Sabrina."

Vanessa pressed further, "What about Mom?"

Vincent offered a faint smile and gently tweaked her earlobe. "Dad will make sure Mom never stops loving you."

Overwhelmed with relief and happiness, Vanessa began spinning around the room, twirling with joyful

abandon.

Watching Vanessa's unbridled happiness, Vincent felt a quiet resolve solidify within him. No matter what challenges lay ahead, his marriage to Scarlett would continue. For Vanessa's sake, they would find a way.

Whatever issues existed between him and Scarlett, Vanessa was their shared priority. He simply wanted her to be happy and secure.

The next day, Scarlett finished her morning shift and headed to a nearby restaurant known for its spicy

cuisine.

She had grown accustomed to solitude, often doing things alone.

As she entered, a server greeted her promptly. “Welcome, Miss. Dining alone today?”

Scarlett nodded. “Could I get a table by the window, please?”

Her eyes scanned the window seats, and just then, she saw the hospital director rising from one of them.

There was another person at the table, and even from behind, Scarlett instantly recognized him—it was Nolan.

She had no idea what they had been discussing, but as the director departed, his expression remained grim, devoid of any trace of a smile.

Scarlett didn’t call out to the director. She stayed discreetly out of sight, waiting until he had left before indicating Nolan’s table to the server. “I’ll sit there, please”

She walked over and settled into the seat opposite Nolan

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09:31 Wed, Jan

Chapter 58 The Bank Card

76%

Finished

He seemed lost in thought, and a sharp pang of guilt shot through Scarlett. She asked softly, “What’s on your mind?”

Nolan snapped out of his reverie and looked up, surprised to see Scarlett seated across from him. A weary smile touched his lips. “What brings you here?”

Seeing him still able to smile at her made Scarlett feel even worse. She lowered her gaze and explained quietly, "I saw you sitting here and thought I'd join you."

Nolan slid the menu toward her. "Order whatever you'd like. It's on me."

Scarlett accepted the menu but made no move to open it. She studied Nolan's face for a long moment before finally asking, "So, what are your plans now?"

Nolan knew Scarlett was still troubled by the recent events. He shrugged, attempting a casual tone. "No concrete plans. I suppose I'll treat it as an unexpected vacation."

Scarlett's gaze fixed on him, her eyes filled with a complex mix of emotions.

Nolan forced another smile. "Scarlett, really, it's fine."

Her heart ached. If it were truly fine, why had he sought another meeting with the director?

She knew Nolan was trying to shield her from worry, bearing the burden alone.

Even now, in the midst of his own troubles, he was still putting her feelings first.

Scarlett's eyes grew moist as she looked at him, her voice thick with remorse. "I'm so sorry."

This entire situation had unfolded because of her. She had let Nolan down.

Nolan looked genuinely puzzled and let out a soft laugh. "Why are you apologizing to me?"

Scarlett lifted her face, her eyes now visibly red-rimmed. "I bring bad luck. You should keep your distance from me."

She was certain that if Nolan hadn't reconnected with her, none of this would have happened.

He had worked tirelessly for years, finally building a stable career, only for Vincent to dismantle it with a few well-placed words.

Scarlett understood the immense effort required to build a medical career, yet against Vincent's influence, she felt utterly powerless.

Nolan's brow furrowed, a flicker of frustration crossing his features at her words. But Scarlett didn't care if he was angry. She placed a bank card on the table between them. "There's no password. I'm sorry. After I walk out that door today, let's not see each other again."

She had no idea how far Vincent might go, but she believed it was safer for Nolan if they severed ties.

Leaving the card on the table, Scarlett stood and hurried out of the restaurant, almost breaking into a run.

Nolan sat frozen for a moment, stunned by her abrupt departure. By the time he gathered his wits to chase after her, Scarlett had already vanished.

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09:32 Wed, Jan 7

Chapter 58 The Bank Card

76%

Finished

Scarlett ducked into another restaurant nearby. She was afraid Nolan would follow her, afraid he would refuse to accept the card.

It was the only thing she could think to do.

Just then, a voice laced with surprise called out, "Scarlet"

Scarlett turned and saw Daniel, impeccably dressed in a suit, observing her with a faint, knowing smile.

But the smile in his eyes was sharp and calculating, cutting like a knife.

Scarlett met his gaze, her breath still slightly uneven from her haste, but she remained silent, her expression hardening.

Send Gifts

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09:32 Wed, Jan

Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 59[944 words]

Chapter 59 An Unexpected Encounter

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Daniel approached with an air of feigned concern. “Have you eaten yet? If not, would you care to join me for a meal?”

Scarlett found his pretense utterly transparent. She let out a derisive snort. “Stop calling me Scarlett. We’re not familiar.”

Daniel raised an eyebrow, his tone dripping with sarcasm. “My, my. Trying to cut ties with us?”

There was a time when Scarlett, desperate to see Vincent, had resorted to flattering Daniel. But now, looking at him only filled her with revulsion.

She fixed him with an icy glare. “Yes.”

She didn’t bother denying it, simply owning the accusation Daniel had thrown at her.

Daniel was momentarily taken aback. Strangely, he felt that Scarlett had changed; she was no longer the persistently annoying presence she once was.

Yet her newfound boldness irritated him and stirred a sense of indignation on Vincent’s behalf.

He sneered, “What’s this? Still pining over that pretty boy, Nolan? Seems you haven’t learned your lesson yet.”

No sooner had the words left his mouth than Daniel pulled out his phone, presumably to make a call. But Scarlett shot him a look so venomous it could kill. “Daniel, that’s enough!” she yelled, her voice sharp. “If you have a problem, take it up with me. Why drag innocent people into this?”

The usually docile kitten was now baring her claws, looking as if she were ready to tear someone apart.

Daniel had never seen this fiery side of Scarlett. He found it somewhat intriguing and couldn't help a smirk. "Defending your friend so fiercely?"

Scarlett snorted in disdain. "Nolan and I are nothing more than classmates. There's nothing to 'defend.'"

Daniel pretended not to hear her explanation, his smile lingering. "You're still Vincent's wife, after all. I wouldn't dare cause you any trouble so directly."

"Daniel, you and your lot are all the same," Scarlett retorted, her eyes blazing with fury. "You present a polished, respectable facade, but underneath, it's all just rot."

She made no attempt to flatter Daniel as she might have in the past.

Daniel stared at her fierce, piercing expression and found himself momentarily stunned. The timid girl who used to always smile nervously in their presence was gone.

He was about to say something more when Sabrina appeared seemingly out of nowhere. "Daniel."

Daniel turned, and his face immediately brightened with a genuine smile. "Sabrina."

His demeanor around Sabrina was entirely different.

It wasn't just Daniel-everyone in Vincent's circle, including Harris and the others, treated Sabrina with marked respect.

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Chapter 59 An Unexpected Encounter

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Scarlett was the sole exception. Though she was Vincent's legal wife, they all acted as if she were invisible. With Sabrina, however, they accorded her a status almost on par with Vincent's own.

The reason wasn't difficult to discern-Vincent himself only had eyes for Sabrina.

There was a time when this would have deeply upset Scarlett, but now she felt an unexpected, almost eerie, calm.

Sabrina noticed Scarlett. She feigned surprise and asked Daniel, "What's going on here?"

Daniel shrugged casually. "Nothing of importance, Sabrina."

Sabrina didn't press further. Instead, she turned to Scarlett with a saccharine smile. "Ms. Theron, would you like to join us for lunch?"

The sight of Sabrina's simpering expression turned Scarlett's stomach. "Drop the act," she said coldly. "I don't need your pity, and I have no interest in spending time with any of you."

Daniel was immediately irked by Scarlett's tone. "Is that any way to speak to Sabrina?"

Sabrina quickly intervened, placing a restraining hand on Daniel's arm. "Daniel, it's quite alright. Vincent will be here shortly. Let's not cause a scene."

Hearing this, Daniel finally backed down.

Scarlett found the whole exchange utterly ridiculous. Without another word, she turned on her heel and walked away.

In her haste to leave the restaurant, she missed a step on the staircase and stumbled.

A pair of steadying hands caught her. "Are you alright?" familiar voice asked.

She had likely twisted her ankle; a sharp pain shot through it, making it impossible to stand properly.

As her helper turned her around, Scarlett looked up in surprise-it was Nolan.

Her eyes instantly welled up, a stinging sensation prickling her nose. She lowered her gaze, and tears spilled over onto her cheeks.

"Why are you still here?" she whispered, her voice thick with emotion,

Nolan crouched down beside her, a gentle grin playing on his lips. "What was that about, handing me your bank card all of a sudden?"

Scarlett kept her head bowed, her voice laden with guilt. "To be honest, it's all my fault that you..."

Nolan didn't let her finish. "I know," he interjected softly

Scarlett looked up at him, her expression a mixture of surprise and confusion. "You...?"

Nolan simply smiled, his voice remarkably calm. "I was ever afraid."

From the moment the director informed him of his termination, Nolan had already pieced together the cause. The only person with the power to blacklist him from the medical field was Vincent. Given the recent chain of events, the motive wasn't difficult to deduce.

2/3

09:32 Wed, Jan 7 1.

Chapter 59 An Unexpected Encounter

Scarlett hung her head again, the weight of her remorse pressing down on her. "I'm so sorry."

75%

Finished

Nolan gently supported her arm, his tone lightening. "What, are you planning to camp out here on the stairs all night?"

Hearing his teasing remark, Scarlett finally managed to regain her footing with Nolan's help.

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09:32 Wed, Jan 7 uu u

Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 60[981 words]

Chapter 60 The Twisted Ankle

75%

Finished

A sharp, throbbing pain shot through Scarlett's ankle. Beads of sweat instantly formed on her forehead and back, and she found herself completely unable to bear any weight on her injured foot. Half of her body. leaned heavily against Nolan for support.

Just then, a waiter's voice called out not far away, "Mr. Stewart."

Scarlett glanced up and saw Vincent walking directly past her, his stride purposeful and uninterrupted.

Vincent had, in fact, noticed Scarlett moments earlier. He had witnessed her stumble down the steps at the restaurant entrance, and he had also seen Nolan discreetly slip a card into her bag.

He had overheard Nolan's questioning remark. "Why are you giving me a bank card out of nowhere?"

Vincent had seen it all. He had heard it all.

The closeness between Scarlett and Nolan was undeniable-so intimate it inevitably bred suspicion.

From Scarlett's perspective, Vincent was nothing but cold and heartless. He had walked right by her without so much as a glance, offering not a single word of concern.

But then, that was Vincent, wasn't it?

Even if she were to collapse and die right before his eyes, he would likely remain utterly unmoved.

The thought brought a bitter, humorless smile to her lips.

Nolan sensed her profound disappointment. He pressed his lips together briefly before saying, "Let me help you over to the curb. I should take a look at your ankle."

Scarlett nodded weakly. "Okay."

Leaning on him, she allowed Nolan to guide her to the low wall of a nearby flowerbed, where she sat down heavily.

Meanwhile, after entering the restaurant, Vincent did not proceed to the private room Daniel had specified. Instead, he paused and turned, his gaze piercing through the glass door, fixed on Scarlett and Nolan by the roadside.

Nolan had crouched down in front of Scarlett, completely disregarding appearances, and was carefully removing her shoe to examine and gently massage her swollen ankle.

To Vincent, this scene was nothing short of humiliating

How could a man debase himself by performing such a servile act for a woman in public?

He felt a surge of contempt.

No wonder Nolan would never amount to anything significant

The more Vincent dwelled on it, the more irritated he came. Almost unconsciously, he pulled out his phone and dialed Abbott,

“Mr. Stewart,” Abbott answered promptly.

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09:32 Wed, Jan 7 2.

Chapter 60 The Twisted Ankle

75%

Finished

Vincent was silent for a beat before issuing the order, “freeze Scarlett’s card,”

The card Scarlett had given to Nolan-Vincent remembered it clearly. It was the one he had provided her, intended for purchasing necessities for Vanessa.

He had been generous, depositing a substantial sum on that card every month.

He didn’t know the exact remaining balance, but regardless of the amount, he refused to let some opportunistic pretty boy get his hands on it.

In his mind, Scarlett giving the card to Nolan was tantamount to her financially supporting him.

Therefore, he would freeze it immediately.

Abbott was momentarily stunned but knew better than question the order. “Understood, Mr. Stewart,” he replied.

Back by the flowerbed, Scarlett watched as Nolan removed her shoe and began massaging her ankle. She felt intensely flustered and embarrassed.

“Nolan, you really don’t have to do this. The hospital is right next door. I can just get some medication; I’ll be fine,” she protested, attempting to gently push his hands away and pull him upright.

Nolan looked up, his eyes meeting hers. Their faces were suddenly very close, the proximity feeling almost intimate enough for a kiss.

Vincent, still watching from inside, saw it all.

He ended the call with Abbott and strode into the private room, his expression thunderous.

Inside, Daniel and Sabrina rose to greet him, but he brushed past them without a word, his dark mood palpable.

Outside, Scarlett, acutely aware of their closeness, quickly shuffled backward to create distance. Nolan, however, maintained his grip on her ankle, his gaze fixed on her foot as he examined it carefully. “It’s quite swollen.” He observed after a long moment.

Scarlett’s face flushed a deep crimson. She felt profoundly embarrassed but found herself unable to stop Nolan, so she reluctantly allowed him to continue tending to her foot.

The atmosphere grew increasingly awkward. In an attempt to break the tension, she whispered, “Nolan, I think I underestimated just how much Vincent cares for Sabrina. If I hadn’t, you wouldn’t be in this situation because of me.”

The guilt still weighed heavily on her.

Nolan looked up at her and offered a reassuring smile, “But standing by you was my own choice. You haven’t done anything wrong, so please stop apologizing.”

Scarlett felt at a loss for words. She opened her mouth, but all that emerged was another soft, “I’m sorry.”

Nolan clearly didn’t want to dwell on the topic. The warm afternoon sunlight illuminated his face, accentuating his sharp, handsome features.

He grinned playfully. “So, shall I carry you on my back, or in my arms?”

2/3

09:32 Wed, Jan 7

Chapter 60 The Twisted Ankle

Scarlett's face burned even hotter with shyness can manage to walk by myself; deinde, though the claim lacked coction

Nolan took her hand gently, "Why be so whom? May to lean on somerne venelanes, to one is gong to judge you for it

Touched by his kindness, Scarlett's eyes reddened. "The on your back sense, the unseher whoty

It was the middle of the day-being carried in his arms would have been far too cojourneren

Her ankle throbbed relendeuly, walking was genuinely opponible. Schon had witally foundys the midje just hop to the curb and hail a taxi.

But with Nolan present, he wasn't about to abandon her on the viderik

Obliging her request, Nolan turned and crouched down front of her, preventing his back

Send Gifts

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Dylan

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 61[925 words]

Chapter 61 Carried Home

Finished

Scarlett hesitated for a few seconds, her internal conflict visible, before finally leaning forward to rest against him.

Nolan straightened up effortlessly, supporting her weight with ease as he moved through the scattered pedestrians, a faint, playful smile gracing his lips.

Overwhelmed by shyness, Scarlett buried her face against the fabric of his back, hiding her flushed cheeks from view.

The sight of a man carrying a woman so protectively naturally drew curious glances, but Nolan paid them no mind. He adjusted his grip slightly and turned the corner with confidence, making his way toward the parking lot.

Vincent, who had stepped outside for a momentary cigarette break, witnessed Nolan carrying Scarlett away.

He stood frozen by the glass door, an unlit cigarette poised between his fingers.

Scarlett hadn't pushed Nolan away-in fact, her telltale blush was unmistakable. To Vincent, this only confirmed his growing suspicions about their relationship.

"Vincent." Sabrina's concerned voice sounded from behind him, pulling him from his thoughts.

Vincent snapped back to the present and finally lit his cigarette, taking a slow drag.

Sabrina moved to stand beside him and glanced outside, but the street was now empty.

"What's wrong?" she asked gently.

Vincent offered no explanation, his voice curt. "It's nothing."

He exhaled a plume of smoke, his gaze distant and contemplative.

Having been by Vincent's side for years, Sabrina could easily sense the shift in his mood. Yet, knowing he wouldn't elaborate, she didn't dare press further.

"Everyone is waiting for you to start the meal," she said instead. "Shall we go back inside?"

Vincent took another deep pull from his cigarette before responding coolly, "Yeah."

His expression appeared composed, but the darkness simmering in his eyes betrayed his clear irritation.

Later that afternoon, after taking her prescribed medication, Scarlett headed to work as usual.

That evening, Nolan drove Scarlett back to Theron Manor.

As the car came to a stop, Scarlett reached for the door handle, but Nolan was quicker. He exited, circled the vehicle, and opened her door, extending his hand. "Let me carry you inside."

"You really don't have to," Scarlett protested, her checks coloring with embarrassment. "I can manage."

Nolan wasn't swayed. "We're right at your doorstep-it's just a few more steps. If your ankle gets worse

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18:04 Thu, Jan 8

Chapter 61 Carried Home

54

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because I didn't help you, your parents would surely hold me responsible. You wouldn't want me to make a poor impression, would you?"

His tone was light, teasing, but Scarlett recognized his genuine concern. Since he'd invoked her parents, she felt she couldn't refuse any longer.

Relenting, she placed her hand in his. "Alright then. Thank you."

Nolan carefully helped her out of the car.

He then turned and crouched, ready to carry her on his back the rest of the way.

The idea of being carried all the way to the door was too much for Scarlett. She quickly grabbed his arm to stop him. "Just helping me walk is more than enough."

Nolan straightened up and looked at her, noticing the tips of her ears turning a telltale pink. He suppressed a smile and nodded. "Alright, as you wish."

Clutching the anti-inflammatory medicine Nolan had bought for her, Scarlett allowed him to support her as they made their way into Theron Manor.

Clara, who had been eagerly waiting near the entrance, came running as soon as she heard someone arrive.

Recognizing Scarlett, her eyes curved into joyful crescent moons. "Auntie, you're back!"

Her little face radiated pure delight, but the smile faltered when she noticed Scarlett's limping gait. "Auntie, what happened? Did you hurt your foot? Does it hurt a lot?"

She hurried over, took the medicine bag from Scarlett, and slipped her small, warm hand comfortingly into her aunt's.

A wave of tender affection, tinged with a bittersweet ache, washed over Scarlett at the child's thoughtful gesture.

Her eyes grew moist as she replied, "It's nothing serious, Clara. I just twisted my ankle a little."

Clara's face remained etched with concern. "But does it hurt very much?"

Scarlett managed a soft smile and ruffled the girl's hair. "Just a little, but I can bear it."

Clara peered up at her aunt, then her curious gaze shifted to Nolan standing nearby. "Auntie, who is this handsome man?"

Scarlett couldn't help but laugh. "This is my classmate, Nolan. Call him Mr. Huntley."

Clara opened her mouth to greet him, but Nolan quickly interjected with a warm smile, "Actually, since I'm your aunt's classmate, just call me Nolan."

Clara was a perceptive child. She looked Nolan up and down carefully.

He was tall, undeniably good-looking, and seemed genuinely kind without any pretension.

In her young opinion, Nolan seemed quite wonderful and a very suitable match for Scarlett.

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Chapter 61 Carried Home

Having reached this conclusion, Clara beamed and called out in a clear, sweet voice, "Hello, Nolan!"

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Her enthusiastic greeting warmed Nolan's heart, though it also sparked a twinge of guilt. "Ah, I came over in such a hurry today," he said apologetically. "I should have brought a gift for our first meeting."

Clara waved off his concern cheerfully. "That's okay! But next time, you can't forget!"

Nolan's grin widened. "I definitely won't forget."

Seeing that Nolan was capably assisting Scarlett, Clara released Scarlett's hand. "I'll go tell everyone you're here!" she announced before darting off toward the living room.

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Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 62[938 words]

Chapter 62 Family Dinner

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Clara came running through the house, shouting at the top of her lungs, "Grandpa! Grandma! Dad! Mom! Auntie brought home a super handsome man!"

Witnessing Clara's enthusiastic announcement, Scarlett turned to Nolan with an apologetic look. "I'm sorry about that. She's always this excitable. Please don't mind her."

Nolan, who had been steadily supporting Scarlett's arm, didn't let go. He smiled warmly at her. "She's absolutely delightful."

"Let's head inside," Scarlett suggested. "Please stay for dinner before you leave."

Nolan had no intention of refusing. With a smile, he readily agreed, "Of course."

Thanks to Clara's loud proclamations, Henry and Diana came to the entrance to greet them. Violet appeared as well.

Seeing Nolan, their faces broke into welcoming smiles.

During dinner, Henry insisted Nolan join him for drinks. Scarlett tried to intervene, but Nolan gently cut her off. "It's quite alright, just a small amount."

Diana added her support, leaving Scarlett with no further room to object.

Nathan didn't intervene in the drinking, but he remained largely quiet, not engaging much in conversation with Nolan.

Throughout the meal, however, Nathan kept stealing discreet glances at their guest.

His first impression? Though Nolan had arrived empty-handed, his demeanor and conversation seemed respectful and sincere.

Nathan couldn't help comparing him to Vincent, thinking this man/seemed far superior to that arrogant jerk.

If Scarlett were to end up with someone like Nolan, her life might actually turn out well.

Scarlett could easily guess what her family was thinking. She kept her head down, focusing on her food, trying not to pay attention to the conversation flowing between Henry and Nolan.

Still, she couldn't help overhearing snippets of Henry recounting stories from her childhood.

Nolan listened intently, occasionally glancing toward Scarlett with a soft expression, and even thoughtfully picked out dishes to place in her bowl.

Seeing that Nolan seemed to be enjoying himself, and knowing she couldn't realistically stop the proceedings, Scarlett resigned herself to letting her family have their way.

The dinner stretched on. Eventually, Clara grew sleepy, but Henry and Nolan were still deeply engaged in their drinks.

Noticing Clara's tiredness, Nathan stood and scooped her up. He didn't want to lecture his father, but felt

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Chapter 62 Family Dinner

compelled to remind him, "Dad, that's enough. You've had plenty for tonight."

Henry waved a dismissive hand. "I know."

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Nathan said nothing more, simply carrying a drowsy Clara upstairs, with Violet following close behind.

With Nolan still present as a guest, Scarlett felt obligated to remain at the table to keep him company.

It was nearly 10:30 PM when Diana finally succeeded in persuading Henry to stop.

The two men had finished two bottles of liquor, roughly a pound between them. Nolan appeared to be holding his alcohol well, but Henry, being older, became unwell. After being sick, he was assisted back to his room by one of the housemaids.

Concerned about Nolan, Scarlett poured him a cup of water. "Here, drink this," she offered.

Nolan accepted the cup with a grateful smile. "Listening to your father... it sounds like you've had your share of hardships."

Scarlett neither confirmed nor denied this, deftly avoiding the topic

After a few drinks, Henry had begun pouring his heart out, lamenting Scarlett's difficult life and unhappy marriage.

Scarlett had repeatedly tried to quiet him, but once Henry was tipsy, he wouldn't be stopped, continuing his emotional outpouring about her struggles.

Sensing Scarlett's reluctance to discuss it, Nolan didn't press further. He took a sip of water and said, "I should probably be heading home now."

Scarlett stood up immediately. "Let me see you out."

Nolan smiled gently. "It's really not necessary. I'll just call a car."

Scarlett still felt responsible. "I'll walk you to the gate and wait with you until your ride arrives."

Nolan glanced down at her injured ankle, about to protest, but she cut him off firmly, "Please."

Seeing her determination, he didn't argue further.

They walked outside and stood by the roadside. A cool night breeze brushed against their faces. Nolan turned to look at Scarlett.

Her makeup was subtle and light, and the wind had tousled her long hair slightly.

After hearing all those stories from Henry, Nolan couldn't help but feel a profound sense of compassion and protectiveness toward her.

"Scarlett, actually, I..." Nolan began.

He had consumed a significant amount of liquor, but he possessed a strong tolerance. He wasn't drunk; his

mind remained clear.

Perhaps the alcohol provided a bit of liquid courage, because he suddenly felt a strong urge to confess

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Chapter 62 Family Dinner

something to Scarlett.

But before he could finish his sentence, Scarlett's phone rang.

The timing was almost too perfect, and Scarlett felt an undeniable sense of relief.

She didn't know exactly what Nolan intended to say, but she could make an educated guess.

Finished

Their relationship was close, certainly. But for a man to consistently take her side so unreservedly... there had to be deeper feelings involved.

Some things, she felt, were better left unspoken.

She glanced at her screen-it was a call from Spencer.

Scarlett didn't answer it, as Nolan's ride had just pulled up.

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"Get in safely," she said. "Please let me know when you arrive home."

Nolan looked intently at Scarlett, the unspoken words still hanging between them. But after a moment's reflection, he decided that tonight was not the right time.

He swallowed his confession, keeping the words locked inside for now

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Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 63

Chapter 63 Foot Soak

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All these years, Nolan had never forgotten the moment he first laid eyes on Scarlett-that instant, fleeting connection that had quietly taken root in his heart.

Nolan settled into the back seat of the car and called out through the open window, "You should head back inside now. Get some rest early."

Scarlett nodded softly. "Alright, you too."

Nolan's smile was gentle, infused with a warmth that seemed to radiate from within. "I will."

Scarlett remained standing there until the car's taillights disappeared into the night before she finally turned and began making her slow way back toward the manor entrance.

Just then, a familiar figure approached and gently took her arm.

"Violet?" Scarlett stared at Violet, her eyes wide with surprise.

"Nathan asked me to come check on you," Violet explained softly.

A wave of emotion tightened Scarlett's throat, making her eyes glisten, "Thank you both for caring."

"Nathan wanted me to ask... what are your true feelings about Nolan?"

Scarlett froze momentarily before responding, "Violet, I haven't even finalized the divorce with Vincent yet. I'm really not in the right frame of mind to consider remarriage."

Besides, as a divorced woman, who would truly want me? Right now, I just want to focus on my career, work toward a promotion, and maybe consider other aspects of life once the paperwork is settled.”

In this complicated world, everyone was simply trying to navigate their own path. Scarlett never claimed she would never remarry, but if she ever did consider it again, it would only be under circumstances where she maintained her independence—where she could walk away if needed.

Only then would she dare to open her heart to that possibility again.

Marriage had failed to give her the security she sought, but her career—that was something she could control.

Violet didn’t attempt to persuade her otherwise, simply offering a soft, understanding smile. “You’ve truly matured so much.”

Scarlett lowered her gaze, her voice barely above a whisper, “It’s all the disappointments over the years that have finally cleared my vision.”

Violet gave her shoulder a comforting pat and said nothing more.

Back in her room, Scarlett called Spencer.

“Scarlett, there’s a new assignment for you.” Spencer’s voice came through the line. “You’ll be heading out to the rural clinic again tomorrow.”

Scarlett was taken aback. “Why? So soon?”

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Chapter 63 Foot Soak

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Finished

Spencer’s tone was apologetic yet firm. “Orders from the management. There’s nothing I can do about it.”

Orders from the management?

Scarlett immediately understood the implication and didn't bother arguing further.

Who else could "management" refer to but Vincent?

She had already completed a rural assignment last month. Under normal circumstances, she wouldn't be dispatched again so quickly.

Yet here she was, being sent away again barely a month later.

Wasn't it perfectly obvious who was pulling the strings?

Knowing resistance was futile, Scarlett simply acquiesced. "Understood."

After ending the call, Scarlett remained seated on the edge of her bed for a long time, lost in thought.

Within the medical field, she was still just a junior doctor at the bottom of the hierarchy.

Even if she pursued a master's degree or a PhD to expand her options, Vincent could still dictate her fate with a single word.

In this ruthlessly competitive world, power ultimately trumped everything.

Meanwhile, in Spencer's office...

After hanging up with Scarlett, Spencer looked across his desk at Daniel and reported, "Mr. Lennox, I've followed your instructions precisely and assigned her to the rural posting."

Daniel finally swung his feet off the desk where they'd been propped. "Good, as long as it's handled."

He stood up, straightened his jacket, and announced, "Alright, I'm heading out."

Spencer nodded and bowed obsequiously, seeing the influential visitor to the door.

Only after the "big shot" had departed did Spencer finally allow himself to release a long, relieved sigh.

Scarlett remained seated on the edge of her bed, so deeply lost in her thoughts that she barely moved. The sudden ringing of her phone finally broke the heavy silence, startling her back to the present.

She glanced at the screen-it was an incoming call from Vanessa.

Genuine surprise washed over Scarlett.

She had always been the one initiating calls to Vanessa, never daring to hope Vanessa would call her first one day.

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Chapter 63 Foot Soak

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Even though she had declared she wouldn't interfere in Vanessa's life anymore, she was still Vanessa's mother. She couldn't ignore the call.

Once she answered, Vanessa's small voice came through. "Mom, what are you doing?"

Scarlett kept her tone deliberately cool. "Nothing much, just about to go to bed."

But just then, her bedroom door creaked open from the outside.

Scarlett looked over and saw Clara entering, carefully carrying a small basin filled with water.

"Auntie, are you on the phone?" Clara asked, her voice hushed. "Am I disturbing you?"

Clara was wobbling slightly under the basin's weight. Worried she might spill it, Scarlett quickly rose to take it from her. "I thought you were already asleep. What brings you to my room so late?"

Clara set down a small stool, settled onto it, and then looked up at Scarlett with earnest eyes. "Auntie, Nolan said your foot is swollen. Whenever my feet used to swell, Mom would always soak them for me. It made them feel much better, and the pain would go away. I thought I could do the same for you, so your foot won't hurt anymore."

Tears welled up instantly in Scarlett's eyes, her heart overflowing with touched emotion. "You're such a thoughtful, sweet child, Clara. You're always so concerned about me."

In her hurry to take the basin, Scarlett had left her phone lying on the bed.

Now, completely absorbed in Clara's heartfelt gesture and overwhelmed by the little girl's kindness, Scarlett entirely forgot she was still on the call with Vanessa.

Clara bent forward, gently guiding Scarlett's injured foot into the warm water. "Auntie, is the temperature okay? Not too hot?"

Scarlett's vision blurred with unshed tears, her voice thick with emotion. "No... it's perfect."

Clara looked up, a bright grin spreading across her face. "Auntie, why are you crying?"

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Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 64

Chapter 64 The Confession

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"It's nothing, sweetheart," Scarlett managed, her voice thick with emotion. "I just feel incredibly fortunate to have you."

"If you like foot soaks, I can bring you water every single time!" Clara declared with earnest devotion.

"You're my precious little princess," Scarlett replied, touched. "How could I ever let you serve me? Just doing this once has already filled my heart with so much joy."

"As long as it makes you happy, I'm willing to do it," Clara said, her small face beaming. "I just love seeing you smile."

At Ravensshade Villa, Vanessa was still clutching her phone, having overheard Scarlett and Clara's entire exchange. She had called out "Mom" twice into the receiver, but Scarlett, distracted, hadn't heard her.

Frustrated and hurt, Vanessa angrily ended the call and threw her phone onto the plush carpet.

Just then, Vincent entered her bedroom. Seeing the stormy expression on Vanessa's face, he frowned. "Vanessa, what's wrong?"

Vanessa ran to him, burying her face in his legs as fresh tears started to fall. "Dad, I think Mom might be hurt! Can we please go check on her?"

Her concern for Scarlett seemed genuine, but it was tangled with a sharp, jealous pang over how tenderly Scarlett was treating Clara.

She was supposed to be Scarlett's daughter. Why was that chubby Clara receiving all the affection and praise?

Vincent listened to Vanessa's plea, his mind flashing back to the scene he had witnessed earlier that day. He knew Scarlett was injured, but his pride and lingering anger kept him from wanting to see her.

He knelt down, gently wiping Vanessa's tear-streaked cheeks. "Mom... doesn't need us to look after her right now," he said, his voice carefully neutral.

Vanessa fell silent, considering his words. Right now, that annoying Clara was probably still fawning over her mom. The last thing she wanted was to see that irritating little girl.

Seeing Vanessa's agitation subside, Vincent pulled her into a hug. "Go wash up and get ready for bed. I'll stay with you until you fall asleep."

Vanessa sniffled, finally acquiescing. "Okay."

Even though she had talked herself out of going, a restless, unsettled feeling still churned inside her.

Ten days later, Scarlett unexpectedly ran into Nolan in the countryside.

The air was fresh and clean. Though the lingering summer heat still clung to the afternoons, the

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Chapter 64 The Confession

temperature always dropped pleasantly as dusk settled in.

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A walk along the creek that meandered through the small town had become the highlight of her day. The water babbled softly, wild ducks drifted peacefully on the surface, and the joyful shouts of children splashing in the shallows filled the air.

Further along, on the wide stone steps leading down to the river, someone had set up a speaker. The lively beat of music accompanied a group of locals dancing in the open square.

All these sounds-the water, the laughter, the music-blended together, creating a vibrant, living tapestry of the small town.

The sky was painted in brilliant shades of red and orange as the sun dipped below the horizon, setting half the sky ablaze. The last golden rays of sunlight filtered through the trees, casting long, dancing shadows.

Amidst the cacophony of children playing in the water, Scarlett's eyes suddenly landed on a familiar figure. Dressed in casual clothes-a crisp white shirt, light blue jeans, and spotless white sneakers-Nolan stood

out.

He was there, amidst the bustling, noisy crowd, yet his gaze was fixed intently on her, as if he had been waiting.

They stared at each other across the short distance. Scarlett was utterly stunned, frozen in place.

It wasn't until Nolan began walking toward her that the spell broke, and she realized his presence wasn't a trick of the light or a daydream.

Nolan waved a hand playfully in front of her dazed face. "What's going on in that head of yours? You look completely lost."

Scarlett's eyes instantly welled up. "Why are you here?" she asked, her voice barely a whisper.

Nolan turned slightly, gesturing toward the magnificent sunset. "Just felt like I needed a change of scenery to clear my head."

Scarlett knew he hadn't traveled all this way just for the view. "Have you eaten yet?" she asked, practicality cutting through her surprise.

Instead of answering, Nolan gently took her hand. "There's a place I want to show you," he said.

Before Scarlett could even form a reply, he was already leading her, weaving their way out of the chattering

crowd.

He brought her to a vast rice field on the outskirts of town. In September, the air was heavy with the sweet, earthy scent of ripening rice. Everything was a lush, vibrant green, and the air felt incredibly pure.

After the sun had fully set, a bright, nearly full moon hung high in the velvety night sky.

They found a spot to sit at the edge of the field, letting the cool evening breeze wash over them. The night was serene and beautiful, with countless stars beginning to pepper the darkness above.

Scarlett broke the comfortable silence. “How long until you go back to Rivergate?”

“I’m not going back,” Nolan stated calmly. “I’m staying here. I’ll find work and be near you.”

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Chapter 64 The Confession

Scarlett looked down, her voice heavy with guilt. “You don’t have to do this for me.”

Nolan simply shrugged, feigning nonchalance. “Think of it as an early, unplanned retirement.”

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Scarlett understood the gravity of what he was sacrificing. After a long pause, she suddenly offered, “I could ask my brother to help you. Maybe he could pull some strings...”

Nolan turned to look her directly in the eyes, his expression completely serious. “I told you before, Scarlett. They will be the ones to come begging me to return.”

Scarlett didn’t understand where his unwavering confidence came from. The worry for him persisted. “But what if they don’t? Vincent’s influence in Rivergate... It’s immense.”

Nolan remained calm, his gaze steady. “They will. You have to trust me on this.”

Scarlett opened her mouth to protest further, but Nolan gently cut her off. “For now, just stay here with me and watch the stars. Once we’re back in the city, we won’t get views like this anymore.”

Hearing the quiet plea in his voice, Scarlett let the matter drop. She tilted her head back, gazing up at the starry expanse, but her mind remained clouded with anxiety.

Nolan’s entire world had been turned upside down because of her. She felt a profound responsibility to somehow make things right for him.

They had both come so far in their careers. The thought that it could all be undone by a single word from Vincent felt profoundly unjust.

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Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 65

Chapter 65 Damian’s Proposal

By the time Scarlett returned to the temporary hospital dormitory, the clock had already struck ten.

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After completing her nightly routine, she lay down on the narrow single bed, idly scrolling through short videos on her phone.

But her mind was restless, a tangled mess of thoughts she couldn't quiet.

No matter how she turned the problem over in her head, only one viable solution emerged to resolve Nolan's predicament-she would have to swallow her pride and ask Vincent for help.

But the very idea rankled. Why should she? She and Nolan hadn't done anything wrong.

Since that single, distasteful option felt unacceptable, she began formulating another plan.

If she couldn't appeal to Vincent, then perhaps she could turn to his greatest rival.

In Rivergate, only one man had the power and audacity to pull this off for her-Damian Langley.

Yet, approaching Damian was like dancing with the devil-it would likely entangle her in even greater troubles down the line.

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Still, after carefully weighing the risks, Scarlett concluded that dealing with Damian was the lesser of two evils.

She pushed herself upright in bed and dialed his number.

To her astonishment, Damian answered almost immediately.

"Well, well, babe. Miss me already?" His lazy, teasing voice drifted down the line, underscored by the thumping bass of loud music in the background.

Damian's reputation preceded him. Everyone knew he was a wild card, a notorious playboy whose roster of women seemed endless-he changed girlfriends as casually as other men changed shirts.

He had a way of speaking to every woman as if she were the only one in the world, as if he were utterly, desperately in love.

His penetrating gaze had a habit of making anyone he looked at feel like the object of his deepest affection.

He had even flirted shamelessly with Scarlett in the past, going so far as to declare that if she weren't married to Vincent, he would marry her himself.

But Scarlett knew better than to take his words at face value. She had never believed a single honeyed line that left his lips.

Accustomed to his brand of nonsense, she cut straight to the chase. "I need to talk to you."

The background music on his end faded slightly, as if he'd moved somewhere quieter. "What's on your mind? Finally realized I'm the only one who knows how to treat a woman right?" he queried.

Scarlett replied evenly, "Damian, I've always considered you a friend."

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Chapter 65 Damian's Proposal

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Regardless of the bitter rivalry between Vincent and Damian, Scarlett had consciously never taken sides.

Damian had helped her out in the past, and she hadn't forgotten his kindness. In fact, he'd come to her aid more than once.

Damian let out an exaggerated, wistful sigh, his smooth baritone resonating through the phone. "You need a favor, don't you?"

Scarlett was momentarily taken aback. "How did you know?"

She hadn't even hinted at her request, yet he had pinpointed the reason for her call with unnerving accuracy.

Damian chuckled softly. "I'll help you, but I don't want anything in return... except you." For once, his tone held a thread of genuine seriousness, devoid of its usual mockery.

Scarlett had heard this particular line from him more times than she could count.

But she simply couldn't comply.

"In that case, let's pretend I never called," she stated flatly.

Scarlett understood perfectly well that Damian was never short of female company. What likely intrigued him was precisely the fact that she was Vincent's wife.

She was about to end the call when Damian's voice stopped her. "You know, if you ask me, I'd move mountains for you."

Scarlett paused, then decided to test the waters. "Even if it means going directly against Vincent?"

Damian didn't miss a beat. "Why not? We're already sworn enemies."

Scarlett responded with a cool, dismissive laugh. "Forget it. I doubt you'd truly commit to opposing him over this."

Damian's laughter grew louder. "Trying to use reverse psychology on me? It won't work, darling."

Scarlett offered a calm, faint laugh in return. "Alright then. I'm hanging up."

Just as her finger hovered over the end call button, Damian interjected, "How about we meet? Face to face."

Scarlett initially declined. "I'm busy tonight. Perhaps another time."

Damian's next words stunned her. "I'm in town."

Scarlett was confused. "What did you say?"

Damian repeated patiently, "I mean I'm here. In the same little backwater town as you."

Scarlett hesitated, weighing her limited options. Finally, she relented. "Okay."

If she truly wanted to help Nolan, this seemed to be her only shot.

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Chapter 65 Damian's Proposal

Scarlett changed into a set of long-sleeved shirt and trousers before quietly leaving the dormitory.

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As soon as she descended the steps, her eyes landed on a sleek black luxury car parked idly by the curb..

Damian was leaning casually against the vehicle, fiddling with the intricate clasp of his expensive wristwatch.

He stood there, shrouded in the darkness, his form blending seamlessly into the quiet, unassuming night of the small town.

Scarlett approached him and called out softly, “Mr. Langley.”

He looked up at the sound of her voice, his eyes giving her a quick, appreciative once-over before he spread his arms wide and strode toward her.

Before Scarlett could react or step back, he enveloped her in a strong, unexpected embrace.

“It’s been too long, Scarlett. Missed me, haven’t you?” Damian’s chin rested lightly on top of her head, his face breaking into a triumphant, self-satisfied smile.

Not far away, concealed within the shadows, a man dressed in black discreetly recorded the entire encounter on his phone.

Once satisfied with the footage, he secretly sent the video directly to Daniel.

Elsewhere, the moment Daniel received the video, he was in a meeting with Vincent and Harris, discussing the details of a new project.

After watching the short clip, Daniel looked up at Vincent, his face a mask of sheer incredulity.

Vincent, noticing his friend’s startled expression, asked coolly, “What is it?”

Daniel rose and squeezed himself onto the sofa between Vincent and Harris, then wordlessly played the incriminating video for Vincent to see.

As Vincent’s eyes took in the scene, Daniel leaned in and asked, utterly baffled, “Bro, tell me the truth. You not satisfying her in bed or something? Does she really need two guys at once now to get her kicks?”

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Awakened Housewife. Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 66

Chapter 66 The Cuckolding Question

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After Vincent finished watching the video, his face remained an impassive mask, betraying none of the tempest raging within him.

Compounding his turmoil was Daniel's crass remark, which involuntarily dragged his thoughts back to the intimate moments-or lack thereof-between him and Scarlett.

To be brutally honest, describing their sex life as "incompatible" would be a generous understatement. He rarely lasted more than three minutes.

It wasn't a matter of physical inability. Rather, he was always so eager to be done with it, to fulfill the obligation and quickly extricate himself to return to Sabrina and Vanessa.

Seeing Vincent remain silent for so long, Daniel's curiosity only intensified. "Seriously, man, tell me the truth. Were you really not able to satisfy her in bed?"

Vincent looked up, his gaze sharp enough to cut glass as he shot Daniel a withering glare. He didn't utter a single word, but the sheer intensity of his silent reproach was potent enough to silence anyone.

Daniel promptly mimed zipping his lips shut.

Yet, his innate nosiness got the better of him. He leaned in conspiratorially and asked again, "But for real, after all this, you're still not considering divorce?"

Vincent rolled his eyes with palpable irritation. "No."

His refusal wasn't rooted in love for Scarlett. It stemmed from what Vanessa had expressed that day-her desperate desire to have both her parents, and Sabrina, loving her.

A divorce would shatter that fragile hope, leaving Vanessa without the complete family unit she craved.

Daniel simply couldn't fathom Vincent's logic. He opened his mouth to probe further, but Harris grabbed his arm firmly. "Man, just let it go. No one's saying you can't talk, but maybe you should know when to stop."

Daniel was even more bewildered. "What's wrong with what I said? Vincent doesn't even have feelings for Scarlett, and now that woman is openly cheating. Why hold on? What are you waiting for?"

Harris tried to reason with him. "This is Vincent's personal matter to resolve. Scarlett is still Vanessa's mother. Just drop it."

Daniel's face flushed with frustration, "Harris, whose side are you on? Do you actually enjoy watching your best friend get cuckolded like this?"

Harris fell silent, at a loss for words.

Vincent had heard more than enough. A low growl rumbled in his chest. "Enough. Both of you, shut up."

With that final command, he stood up abruptly and strode out of the private room,

Daniel made a move to follow him, but Harris held his arm in a vice-like grip. "Could you use your brain for once in your life?"

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Chapter 66 The Cuckolding Question

"Oh, so you're the one with a brain and I'm not? Fine. Whatever."

Harris shot Daniel a look of pure exasperation. "You are utterly hopeless."

Then, he too turned and left the room.

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Finished.

When Vincent arrived at Ravensshade Villa, he found Vanessa still awake, sitting in the living room and snacking on fruit while sipping milk.

The moment she saw him enter, she slipped into her little slippers and came running over. "Daddy!"

Vincent bent down and gently stroked her soft cheek. "Why are you still up so late?"

"I was waiting for you to come home, Daddy," Vanessa replied, her voice sweet.

Vincent picked her up and carried her upstairs.

Vanessa wrapped her small arms tightly around his neck. With a child's intuition, she sensed something was amiss. "Daddy, what's wrong? Are you upset?" she asked quietly.

Vincent was silent for a long moment before finally asking, "Has your mom called you recently?"

At the mention of Scarlett, Vanessa's little head drooped. "Mom hasn't called me in a very long time. When I call her, she either doesn't answer, or if she does, she says she's busy and can't talk."

Hearing the palpable disappointment in his daughter's voice sent a peculiar, sharp ache through Vincent's chest. He could only reply softly, "I see."

After carrying Vanessa back to her room and tucking her into bed, Vincent said, "It's time to sleep now,

Vanessa."

Vanessa blinked her large, round eyes. "Daddy, if I go to sleep nicely like a good girl, will Mom call me tomorrow?"

Vincent didn't have an answer for her. He simply brushed her cheek again and repeated, "Go to sleep.

"Okay," Vanessa acquiesced, her voice small.

Only once he was sure Vanessa was sound asleep did Vincent finally leave her room.

He retreated to his study and stood before the expansive floor-to-ceiling window for what felt like an eternity.

The images from Daniel's phone were seared into his mind, playing on a relentless loop.

He and Damian had been business rivals for years, clashing countless times in both overt corporate battles and covert, underhanded schemes.

Damian was arguably the only person in the business world who could truly match him blow for blow.

Yet, fully aware that Damian was his sworn enemy, Scarlett had still chosen to associate with him.

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18:05 Thu, Jan 8

Chapter 66 The Cuckolding Question

How could Vincent not be incensed?

Regardless of the state of their marriage, she was still legally his wife.

Finished

The more he dwelled on it, the more his anger simmered. Finally, Vincent pulled out his phone and dialed Scarlett's number directly.

The phone rang for an uncomfortably long time before she finally answered.

"What do you want?" Her tone held none of the cautious attentiveness or subdued happiness it once did when speaking to him. Now, her voice was as cold and sharp as shards of ice.

Vincent got straight to the point, his own voice tight. "What are you doing right now?"

Scarlett had no patience for his seemingly pointless inquiries. "If you have something specific to say, then say it. Otherwise, I'm hanging up."

Vincent hesitated briefly, then grasped for the first plausible excuse that came to mind. "Vanessa said she wants the oatmeal you make for breakfast tomorrow."

Surprisingly, Scarlett didn't outright refuse. "I'll call Lily and give her the recipe. Vanessa can have it when she wakes up."

Vincent's eyes narrowed, his angry, distorted reflection glaring back at him from the dark windowpane. His voice dropped several degrees, becoming dangerously cold. "That's not the same thing, and you know it."

Unbeknownst to him, on the other end of the line, Scarlett was seated in the passenger seat of Damian's luxury car, taking his call.

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Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 67

Chapter 67 Trapped in the Car

54

Finished

Damian turned to look at her, making no attempt to conceal the open admiration in his gaze. A slow, knowing smile curved his lips, and he pressed them together as if savoring a secret.

The longer he stared, the more his restraint seemed to waver. He leaned in closer, closing the distance between them, and took a deliberate, deep breath, inhaling the subtle scent of her perfume.

Scarlett noticed his advance and instinctively tried to pull away, but in her haste, the back of her head bumped sharply against the car's roof liner.

"Ouch..." she groaned, a sharp intake of breath following the dull thud."

Simultaneously, Damian closed the remaining gap, his larger frame effectively trapping her in the confined space of the passenger seat.

He didn't speak. Instead, his hand came up, his fingers gently massaging the spot on her head where she had

hit it.

As Scarlett registered that he wasn't attempting anything more invasive, she suddenly remembered she was still in the middle of a phone call with Vincent.

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But before she could utter another word into the receiver, the line emitted a sharp, definitive beep-the sound of a call being terminated.

Vincent had hung up. To his ears, that soft, pained gasp had sounded suspiciously like the kind of muffled moan people make during an intimate moment.

Clearly, from his perspective, his call had interrupted something he was never meant to hear.

Vincent ended the call, and Scarlett didn't bother redialing. She looked at Damian's face, illuminated by the dim ambient light, and said firmly, "Mr. Langley, please conduct yourself appropriately."

Damian didn't retreat. Instead, his fingers gently lifted her chin, forcing her to meet his deep, penetrating gaze. His voice was low, laced with a magnetic, almost hypnotic charm. "What's the matter? Don't you like my attention?"

Scarlett pushed against his chest. "I'm going back."

She fumbled for the door handle, her movements hurried.

She never should have agreed to meet tonight. She knew how dangerous Damian could be, yet she had come anyway.

But Damian's hand shot out, capturing hers and turning her back toward him. "There's a surprisingly decent hotel in this town. Very private. You could scream your lungs out, and no one would hear a thing," he murmured, his voice a suggestive whisper.

Scarlett's face flushed a deep, burning crimson, the heat spreading to the tips of her ears. She glared at him. "You're utterly shameless."

Damian merely chuckled, the sound rich and unapologetic. "Doesn't that make it more thrilling? Come on, be honest. Don't you want to see what it would be like with me?"

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18:05 Thu, Jan 8 DJ

Chapter 67 Trapped in the Car

Finished

Damian was always like this-completely unfiltered, his words laced with bold, unabashed flirtation.

Even though Scarlett was a married woman with a child, he still couldn't resist teasing her, pushing her boundaries.

If truth be told, he'd probably flirt with any female creature that crossed his path.

With a man like him, how much stock could anyone possibly put in his words?

But regardless of Damian's character, he had helped her in the past. Scarlett had never forgotten those acts of kindness, few as they were.

She shrank back into the corner of the seat, feeling Damian's presence loom over her like an immovable mountain.

He possessed a dangerously handsome face, but his heart was pure, unadulterated trouble.

Dealing with a man like this, Scarlett concluded that the only way to deflate his advances was through complete and utter indifference.

So, she shut her eyes tightly, pretending she hadn't heard a single word he'd said.

The streetlights in the small town cast a weak, orange glow. This faint light spilled through the car window, falling directly onto Scarlett's clean, delicate features.

With her eyes closed, her long eyelashes appeared even thicker and more pronounced, fluttering slightly as if betraying a nervous tremor.

Damian observed this, and a strangely gentle, almost tender smile unexpectedly softened his features.

He raised his hand, intending to smooth down a few stray strands of hair near her temple.

But the thought of how visibly apprehensive she was of him made him chuckle softly instead.

Was he really that intimidating?

Damian had always prided himself on being charming and sweet to women.

If a woman wasn't conventionally pretty, he'd compliment her figure. If her figure wasn't remarkable, he'd praise her eyes. If her eyes were plain, he'd admire her smile. If she never smiled, he'd call her an intriguing ice queen...

Women everywhere generally found him handsome, witty, and entertaining.

But Scarlett was the first who seemed genuinely, visibly afraid of him.

The thought amused him. Damian finally straightened up in his seat, relinquishing his intimidating posture and making no further move to touch her.

Just then, a figure materialized outside the car, and the passenger door was wrenched open.

“Scarlett, get out. Now.” It was Nolan.

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Chapter 67 Trapped in the Car

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Finished

Scarlett’s eyes flew open at the sound of his voice. She immediately grabbed his outstretched hand and scrambled out of the car, her movements swift with relief.

She hadn’t intended to get into Damian’s car in the first place. He had simply complained about the mosquitoes outside and suggested they continue their conversation in the comfort of the vehicle.

So, she had reluctantly agreed. But once inside, she realized she had walked straight into one of his carefully laid traps.

Once she was safely outside, Nolan positioned himself protectively in front of her, his expression cold and hard as he addressed Damian. “You might dress in fine clothes, but surely even you know that coercing a woman is a crime?”

Damian rested his hands lazily on the steering wheel, the picture of nonchalance. He raised a mocking eyebrow. “Are you verbally assaulting me right now?”

Nolan’s reply was blunt. “Yes.”

Instead of taking offense, Damian laughed, a bright, handsome smile spreading across his face. “Thinking about physically assaulting me, too?”

Nolan didn’t hesitate. “The thought has crossed my mind.”

Damian removed his hands from the wheel, leaning over toward the open door to continue his exchange with Nolan. “Feel free to entertain the thought, but I wouldn’t recommend acting on it. You see, if you did, my girl here would just have to come begging me for another favor. And I care about her far too much to enjoy watching her plead with another man. It would make me intensely jealous.”

As he spoke, Damian was animated, his eyes sparkling with mischief and provocation.

He sounded utterly serious, as if he genuinely believed every word he was saying.

Nolan had no real desire to engage in a physical altercation. As long as Scarlett was safe, that was his primary concern.

And from Damian's pointed remarks, Nolan quickly pieced together the underlying reason for this

encounter.

Scarlett must have approached Damian to seek his help regarding Nolan's termination from the hospital.

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Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 68

Chapter 68 A Promise of Trust

Finished

Nolan understood that Scarlett's actions stemmed from concern for him, but the thought of her demeaning herself on his behalf was equally unbearable.

He took her hand firmly in his. "I need to speak with you," he said, his tone leaving no room for refusal.

Scarlett offered no resistance and allowed him to lead her away from the car.

Meanwhile, Damian squinted as he watched Scarlett walk away, a slow, predatory smirk spreading across his face. "Remember, sweetheart, if you ever change your mind, my line is always open for you. I'll come running anytime you call," he shouted after them.

He threw his head back and laughed, a loud, unrestrained sound, then leaned further out the window to add, “And darling, you looked absolutely adorable back there, closing your eyes like you were waiting for my

kiss.”

Scarlett quickened her pace to keep up with Nolan, but Damian’s wild, arrogant laughter seemed to chase them, sending a cold shiver down her spine and raising goosebumps on her skin.

It wasn’t until they had rounded a corner and put significant distance between them that his taunting voice finally faded.

Nolan stopped walking and turned to face Scarlett. “Scarlett, is it that you don’t trust me?” he asked, a note of hurt underlying his words.

He had assured her more than once that Daniel and the others would be the ones begging for his return to the hospital.

Yet, Scarlett never seemed to fully accept his assurances at face value.

Seeing the clear disappointment in Nolan’s eyes, Scarlett quickly explained, her voice laced with worry, “No, it’s not that I don’t trust you! It’s just... this entire situation is my fault. I felt responsible, so I thought I should-”

Nolan didn’t let her finish. He gently took hold of her arms, his gaze intense and sincere as he looked directly into her eyes. “Scarlett, please, just trust me this one time. I promise you, I can handle this.”

Faced with his unwavering conviction, Scarlett finally relented. She offered him a small, trusting smile. “Okay. I trust you.”

A genuine smile finally curved Nolan’s lips. “You won’t have to wait long to see it resolved.”

Scarlett nodded, a tangible sense of relief washing over her.

Nolan hadn’t been born into privilege or power. Every achievement was the result of his own relentless hard work and academic dedication.

Scarlett had no concrete idea what method he would employ to rectify the situation, but his absolute self- assurance was contagious, and she found herself wanting to believe him completely.

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Chapter 68 A Promise of Trust

Finished

At Ravensshade Villa's study, Vincent stared at his now-dark phone screen, a peculiar, simmering frustration coiling tightly in his chest.

The memory of Scarlett's soft, involuntary gasp over the phone replayed in his mind, causing his eyes to narrow dangerously.

If Daniel's intelligence was accurate, the man she was with tonight was none other than Damian.

Scarlett could choose to associate with virtually anyone else, but Damian was the one exception-the one man completely off-limits.

Driven by this thought, Vincent snatched up his phone again and dialed Abbott.

"Locate Scarlett. Immediately," he commanded, his voice clipped.

He didn't wait for a reply, abruptly ending the call.

A short while later, Abbott called back.

Vincent answered instantly, only to hear, "Mr. Stewart, I'm unable to track Mrs. Stewart's current location."

Vincent was silent for a beat, then issued a new order. "Then track Damian."

Abbott called back a second time. "Mr. Langley's location is also untraceable."

This news only served to fuel Vincent's anger. He didn't waste further words on Abbott, simply hanging up and immediately dialing Scarlett's number directly.

He let it ring once, then hung up. A moment later, he initiated a video call instead.

Scarlett had just entered her temporary room when her phone screen lit up. Distracted, she didn't check to see if it was a regular call or a video request-her finger simply swiped to answer by accident.

Suddenly, Vincent's face filled her screen, his expression dark and intense, his gaze almost predatory. Scarlett frowned, irritation evident on her features. "What is it now?"

Seeing that Scarlett was fully and properly dressed, the boiling rage within Vincent cooled and subsided almost instantly.

His voice was noticeably calmer when he spoke again. "What are you doing right now?"

Scarlett found his behavior strange and evasive. "Just tell me what you want, Vincent," she replied, unwilling to engage in small talk.

His voice took on a familiar, commanding chill. "Return tomorrow morning. Make breakfast for Vanessa." Annoyance sharpened Scarlett's tone. "I already told you, I'm not coming back tomorrow."

Even though they were face-to-face on the screen, Scarlett pointedly avoided looking directly at Vincent. Vincent, meanwhile, used the video feed to subtly scan her surroundings, his eyes searching for any sign of

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Chapter 68 A Promise of Trust

another presence in the room.

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But it was Scarlett's dismissive, impatient reply that finally ignited his temper. "Scarlett!" he barked, raising his voice in an attempt to intimidate her, a tactic that had often worked in the past.

Scarlett simply sat on the edge of her narrow bed and placed the phone on the nightstand, angling it so she moved completely out of the camera's frame.

With her no longer visible, Vincent's frustration began to simmer anew. He realized, with a pang of something akin to nostalgia, that he still preferred the old Scarlett-the one who had always been so attentive and compliant.

This new, defiant version of her was a constant source of aggravation.

On her end, Scarlett had visibly composed herself. Her voice was much softer, almost gentle, when she next spoke. "Vincent, raising your voice doesn't automatically make you right, you know."

Noticing the change in her tone, Vincent dropped his aggressive posture. His voice lowered, becoming almost quiet. "Just come back tomorrow. There's something I need to discuss with you in person."

Scarlett's reply was firm. "If you have something to say, you can say it over the phone."

She leaned back against the hard headboard, determined not to look at Vincent's face on the screen, nor to grant him the view of hers.

Between the two of them, unless it was absolutely unavoidable, she saw no need for any further face-to-face

encounters.

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Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 69

Chapter 69 The Search Begins

Finished

After all, he held no affection for her, and she had no desire to continue sharing a life with him either.

Vincent suddenly spoke again, his voice cutting through the tension, "It's about Vanessa."

Scarlett remained composed, her tone consistently detached. "Vincent, I've made myself perfectly clear-I am stepping back from Vanessa's life. Unless it's a matter of critical

importance, you don't need to inform me. You have full authority to make decisions for her."

He had invoked Vanessa's name, betting that Scarlett couldn't possibly be so callous toward their daughter. Yet, to his astonishment, she seemed to have genuinely severed that emotional tie.

"Scarlett, you..." He was left speechless, grasping for words that wouldn't come.

Scarlett continued, her voice firm, "And even if it is something significant, it can wait until I return to discuss."

Return?

Vincent latched onto the word. "Where are you right now?" he asked, an unfamiliar urgency in his voice. "I'll come pick you up."

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It was the first time he had ever offered her a ride.

Scarlett was momentarily taken aback, then let out a soft, bitter laugh. "Vincent, you're asking me where I am?"

Vincent replied, "Yes."

Her laugh grew even more laced with irony. "Don't you know better than anyone where I ended up? Why even ask?"

Beneath her calm exterior, a deep-seated anger simmered.

Vincent was genuinely perplexed. "What are you talking about?"

"Vincent, drop the innocent act," Scarlett retorted, her patience snapping. "The state of our relationship is largely your doing. I have no desire to see you. Unless it's truly urgent, don't call me again."

With that, she ended the call decisively, without a moment's hesitation.

Back in the study, Vincent stared at the abruptly terminated call, a wave of inexplicable, frustrated anger washing over him.

The screen went black. He slammed the phone down onto the polished surface of his desk, the sharp crack echoing in the quiet room.

Just then, the study door swung open.

It was Sabrina. She was about to speak, but Vincent, assuming it was a maid, preemptively bit out, "Get out."

His tone was harsh, laced with his lingering irritation.

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Chapter 69 The Search Begins

54

Finished

Realizing his mistake, Sabrina didn't retreat. Instead, she moved further into the room, coming to stand behind his chair. "Vincent, what's troubling you?" she asked, her voice soft and concerned.

Vincent turned to look at her, his expression softening marginally. "It's nothing," he finally replied.

Sensing his unwillingness to discuss it, Sabrina didn't press. She set the bowl she was carrying gently on his desk. "I made you some soup. Please try it."

Vincent offered a noncommittal grunt. "Mm."

"I'll leave you to your work, then," Sabrina said, preparing to withdraw.

Vincent gave a curt nod. "Yeah."

Sabrina turned and walked toward the door. But after only a few steps, Vincent's voice stopped her. "Sabrina."

"Yes?" She turned back, her eyes wide and shimmering with what seemed like unshed tears.

Vincent walked over to her, a gentle smile gracing his lips-a stark contrast to his earlier demeanor. "You've been working very hard lately. Thank you."

Sabrina shook her head modestly. "It's really no trouble at all."

"If there's anywhere you'd like to go, just tell me," Vincent offered. "I'll take you."

A pleased smile touched Sabrina's lips. "Let me think about it. I'll let you know once I've decided."

Vincent nodded. "Alright. You should get some rest now. Don't stay up too late."

"I will. Goodnight," Sabrina replied before finally exiting the study.

Vincent remained standing there for a while longer, but soon a small voice piped up from the doorway. "Dad?"

"Why are you still awake?" Vincent turned to find Vanessa standing there, clad in her little nightdress, her hair loose around her shoulders.

Vanessa shuffled into the room, clutching her favorite dinosaur plushie tightly. "I thought I heard you yelling at Sabrina earlier."

A faint, almost imperceptible laugh escaped Vincent. He reached out and gently pinched her cheek. "You must have misheard. I would never yell at Sabrina."

Vanessa's small brow remained furrowed. "Did Mom make you angry, then?"

A shadow passed over Vincent's features. "Vanessa, don't worry about such things. Your mother doesn't possess the capacity to anger me anymore."

Vanessa lowered her head, her small shoulders slumping with a palpable sadness. "But Dad... I haven't seen Mom in such a long time."

Vincent's heart ached for his daughter. He pulled her into a hug. "Do you miss her?"

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Chapter 69 The Search Begins

Vanessa shook her head against his chest, her voice muffled. "I don't know."

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Finished

Vincent could see the longing in her eyes. He softened his voice, offering comfort. "I'll find some time to speak with your mom, alright?"

Vanessa nodded, though she still looked uncertain. She glanced back at him several times as she finally made her way out of the study and back toward her bedroom.

Sabrina was wonderful, and her dad was the best, but a part of her still yearned for Scarlett's affection, too.

The next day, Vincent obtained Scarlett's work address from Abbott.

After wrapping up his own pressing commitments at the company, he drove directly to the hospital's main entrance. His plan was to wait for Scarlett to finish her shift and speak with her privately in his car.

But he waited for a long time. He watched the staff changeover, the day shift leaving and the evening shift arriving, yet Scarlett never appeared.

Convinced she must have returned to Theron Manor, he drove there next, certain he would intercept her at her family home.

He waited there until eight o'clock in the evening, but there was still no sign of her.

He tried calling her phone repeatedly, but each attempt went straight to voicemail.

His patience thoroughly exhausted, Vincent finally decided to take matters into his own hands. He strode purposefully through the gates of Theron Manor and headed straight for the main house.

The household staff moved to intercept him, but recognizing his status and authority, they hesitated, ultimately not daring to physically restrain him.

He made it all the way to the main hall before a small, defiant figure spotted him.

Clara planted herself squarely in his path, her little hands on her hips. "You! How did you get in here? Get out! We don't want any heartless people in this house!"

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Awakened Housewife Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 70

Chapter 70 The Interrogation

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Clara held no fondness for Vincent whatsoever. The moment she laid eyes on him, she made no attempt to conceal her irritation and immediately began shooting him away.

Nathan, hearing Clara's raised voice from inside the house, hurried out. The instant he saw it was Vincent, the polite smile he typically wore for guests evaporated from his face, replaced by an undisguised scowl. "Get out of here!" he growled, not bothering with formalities.

Vincent's expression turned icy. He ignored the rudeness from both Clara and Nathan and cut straight to the point. "Where is Scarlett? I need to see her."

This only angered Clara further. "You have some nerve asking about Auntie! You're the one who had her sent away to the middle of nowhere, and now you have the audacity to come here looking for her? Get out! Our family wants nothing to do with you."

The commotion from downstairs drew Violet's attention, and she descended from the second floor.

Seeing Vincent standing in the hall, Violet quickly came down the rest of the stairs. She first scolded Clara with a stern expression. "Clara, that is no way to speak to anyone." Then she turned to Nathan. "Nathan, please take Clara upstairs. I will speak with Mr. Stewart."

Nathan had a notoriously short temper. If Vincent remained, the situation could easily escalate into a physical confrontation.

Violet had no intention of letting that happen. She addressed Vincent calmly. "Mr. Stewart, perhaps we should speak outside."

Surprisingly, Vincent acquiesced to Violet's suggestion. "Very well," he replied.

Once they were outside the main hall, Violet said to him, "If you are looking for Scarlett, she is not here. You should leave."

Vincent's brow furrowed deeply. "Then where is she?"

Violet looked genuinely perplexed. "You don't know where Scarlett is?"

Vincent let out a humorless, dry laugh. "Just because she exists somewhere doesn't mean I am privy to her location."

Realizing he wasn't being facetious, Violet's tone held a note of disbelief. "She is your wife. How is it possible you don't know where she has gone?"

Vincent's reply was blunt. "In her mind, I likely ceased being her husband a long time ago."

Violet's retort was sharp. "You are the one who shattered her heart. How can you stand there and say such a thing?"

Vincent's eyes darkened as they fixed on Violet. "Arguing is pointless. I simply want to know her whereabouts."

Violet was utterly confused by Vincent's behavior. When Scarlett left, she had explicitly stated it was Vincent who had orchestrated her transfer out of Rivergate through the hospital administration.

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Chapter 70 The Interrogation

Finished

Yet, Vincent seemed genuinely unaware of Scarlett's location, and his frustration appeared real. Despite this, his overall demeanor was so intense and aggressive that Violet doubted his intentions were benign.

She decided then and there to protect Scarlett's privacy. "If you don't know where she is," Violet stated coolly, "how could we possibly know?"

Vincent's sharp, penetrating gaze remained locked on Violet for an uncomfortably long time, a silent attempt to intimidate her into revealing a crack in her composure.

But Violet remained perfectly calm, her face a mask of serene politeness, betraying not a single hint of panic or unease.

Vincent finally relented, but not without issuing a low, ominous warning. "You had better not be lying to me. The consequences would be... unpleasant for you."

With that final threat hanging in the air, he turned and stormed off, the very air seeming to grow colder in

his wake.

After leaving Theron Manor, Vincent slid into the driver's seat of his Rolls-Royce.

He rested his arm on the open window frame; the night breeze was still warm. He lit a cigarette, the flame flaring briefly in the dimness.

Smoke wreathed his head as he narrowed his eyes, a dangerous glint in their depths.

The memory of the video Daniel had shown him resurfaced vividly. Abruptly, he stubbed the half-finished cigarette out in the car's ashtray with a sharp, frustrated motion.

He pulled out his phone and dialed Scarlett's number again.

The line rang persistently, but no one answered.

Vincent's patience, already worn thin, was rapidly disintegrating.

Suddenly, he remembered that Daniel had been the source of the incriminating video.

He ended the futile call to Scarlett and instead dialed Daniel's number.

"Vincent, what's up?" Daniel answered almost immediately, the thumping bass of loud music nearly drowning out his voice.

Vincent's question was terse. "Where are you right now?"

After Daniel relayed an address, Vincent simply said, "Stay there. I'm on my way."

It took Vincent roughly half an hour to reach the upscale club Daniel had named.

Harris was already there as well.

When the two men entered the private room, neither of their expressions could be described as cheerful.

Daniel stood up from the plush sofa to greet them. "Vincent. Harris."

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Chapter 70 The interrogation

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Finished

Vincent's gaze swept dismissively over the other people in the room. "Everyone else, out," he commanded, his voice leaving no room for argument.

Daniel was slightly bewildered but didn't question the order, assuming Vincent had serious business to discuss.

As the last of the hangers-on reached the door, Vincent added, "And close the door."

His demeanor was deceptively calm—a stillness that felt more threatening than any outburst, putting Daniel distinctly on edge.

Once the door clicked shut, sealing them in, Vincent took a seat on the sofa next to Daniel.

Daniel sat back down, a nervous laugh escaping him. "You're being very mysterious. What's this all about?"

He looked from Vincent's impassive face to Harris' stony one. Both men were unusually grim, a stark departure from their normal demeanors.

Harris remained standing, positioning himself across the low table from Daniel. He got straight to the point, his voice cold. "Vincent has been searching for Scarlett all day and can't find a trace of her. Do you know where she is?"

The moment the question left Harris' lips, a visible wave of panic washed over Daniel. He leaned back, a guilty flush creeping up his neck. "I... I have no idea where she went," he stammered.

Harris' face was like carved stone. "It would be in your best interest if that were true."

Daniel's confusion was now mixed with apprehension. He looked up at Harris, his eyes wide. "What is going on? What is this about?"

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Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 71

Chapter 71 The Confrontation

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Finished

Harris glanced at Vincent, who sat in stoic silence, then turned his attention back to Daniel. “Vanessa misses Scarlett terribly. She’s been craving Scarlett’s cooking. Vincent has spent the entire day searching for Scarlett—he’s nearly at his wits’ end.”

Daniel began to feel a distinct unease settle in the pit of his stomach. He frowned and looked directly at Vincent, who met his gaze with an unreadable expression.

The two men stared at one another. Vincent’s eyes were like chips of ice, and the sheer coldness in them made Daniel’s composure crack. He stammered, “You... you haven’t been able to reach her?”

Vincent didn’t answer the question. Instead, he kept his piercing gaze locked on Daniel. “Where did that video come from?” he asked.

His tone was deceptively level, but the question alone was enough to make Daniel’s panic surge. He bowed his head in a gesture of contrition. “It was me,” he confessed hurriedly. “I was the one who instructed Killian to transfer her to a rural post. But Vincent, I did it for your sake! I just couldn’t stand the sight of her getting so familiar with other men behind your back.”

Vincent’s expression remained impassive, giving nothing away. “Which specific town is she in?”

Daniel replied, “You’ll have to ask Killian for the exact location. He was the one who handled the arrangements.”

Vincent’s voice held a new edge of command. “Call him. Now.”

Daniel fumbled for his phone, his hands trembling noticeably as he dialed Killian’s number.

The moment he obtained the address, Vincent didn’t utter another word. He simply stood up and strode purposefully toward the door of the private room.

Anxious and feeling responsible, Daniel scrambled to his feet and followed. “Vincent, wait! Let me come with you.”

After her shift ended, Scarlett walked down to the nearby river. It was autumn, but the summer's stubborn heat still lingered in the air.

She felt a sudden urge to wade into the cool water, hoping it might soothe her troubled spirits.

The river was remarkably clear, with small fish darting playfully around her ankles. She spent a while casually trying to catch a few with her hands, allowing herself this simple, childish pleasure to momentarily

lift her mood.

Vincent had called her multiple times throughout the day, but she had no desire to speak with him. Her initial response had been to reject the calls immediately. Later, she had simply switched her phone to silent

mode.

The principle of "out of sight, out of mind" seemed to apply perfectly. The distance from her problems made her feel significantly lighter.

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She was halfway through her leisurely wading when Nolan appeared on the riverbank.

Finished

The two of them spent time together by the water's edge, talking and relaxing until well past eight in the evening. Just as they were preparing to leave, Nolan suddenly winced and sucked in a sharp breath. The water around his foot instantly clouded with a vivid crimson.

Scarlett rushed to his side, her voice filled with concern. "What happened?"

Nolan managed a pained grin. "Probably stepped on a piece of broken glass."

Seeing him attempt to laugh it off despite the obvious injury, Scarlett didn't press for details.

“Come with me to the hospital. I’ll clean and dress it properly,” she insisted.

As doctors, they both knew that even a seemingly minor wound could have serious complications if not treated correctly.

A tetanus shot was definitely a prudent precaution.

Nolan didn’t argue and readily agreed to her suggestion.

After his foot was properly treated at the small local hospital, Scarlett suggested Nolan come back to her temporary dorm first. She offered to cook a simple meal for him.

The town was very small, and decent dining options were scarce.

If one wanted a proper, homely meal, cooking for oneself was the only reliable way.

Nolan didn’t refuse her hospitality and accompanied her.

After they had eaten, Nolan mentioned he felt sticky and uncomfortable from the day’s heat and the river water. He asked if he could take a quick shower. Scarlett agreed without a second thought.

But Nolan had barely stepped into the small bathroom and closed the door when a firm knock sounded at

the front door.

Scarlett assumed it was one of her neighbors. During her ten days in the town, the local residents had proven exceptionally kind, often stopping by to share freshly picked vegetables from their gardens.

Without bothering to ask who it was, she went and opened the door.

However, the warm, welcoming smile instantly froze and then vanished from her face the moment she saw the figures standing on her doorstep.

“Vincent?” she blurted out, her voice flat with shock, though she managed to keep her surprise largely contained.

Vincent wasn’t alone. Daniel stood slightly behind him, his expression grim.

Before Vincent could utter a word, the bathroom door opened and Nolan emerged, his hair still damp from his shower, dressed in fresh, casual clothes.

Daniel took one look at him and immediately sneered at Scarlett. “Well, well! So we send you out here for a work assignment, and you just set up a cozy little love nest with your boyfriend? Scarlett, you’ve got some

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nerve. I never would have pegged you for this kind of woman.”

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Finished

Scarlett ignored Daniel’s taunts completely. She kept her eyes fixed on Vincent, her gaze challenging. “What about you? Is that what you believe, too?”

Vincent’s eyes had gone from cold to glacial the moment he saw Nolan. His face was a mask of hardened

ice.

During the drive here, Vincent had actually been contemplating the Theron family’s potential reaction. He had even begun to feel that his own treatment of Scarlett might have been somewhat unjust.

But he had never expected to find her living in such apparent, comfortable coexistence with another man.

Vincent remained silent for a long, tense moment, so Scarlett raised her voice, demanding, “Say something!”

Finally, Vincent spoke, his words clipped and frigid, “The evidence is right here in front of me. What explanation could there possibly be?”

Scarlett let out a short, bitter laugh, though her eyes suspiciously shimmered with unshed tears.

Daniel, emboldened by Vincent’s stance, jumped in again. “You and Nolan were already carrying on in Rivergate! Even if you tried to explain it away now, do you really think anyone would buy your innocent act?”

Scarlett finally turned her gaze to Daniel, her expression one of sheer contempt. “A person with a filthy mind sees filth everywhere. Since you’ve already tried and convicted me in your heads, why should I waste my energy defending myself?”

Daniel was infuriated by her defiant attitude. Preferring not to engage in a direct shouting match with a woman, he instead stormed past her into the main room, striding aggressively up to Nolan.

“You’ve got some serious nerve, fooling around with Vincent’s woman!” he snarled, stepping menacingly closer. “Are you tired of living?”

Nolan merely offered a calm, unruffled smile and was about to respond when Scarlett swiftly moved between them, positioning herself as a protective shield in front of Nolan.

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Awakened Housewife Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

Dylan

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Finished

“Daniel, if you have an issue, you address it with me,” Scarlett stated firmly, her voice cutting through the

tension.

Daniel let out a low, derisive chuckle. “My, my, aren’t we protective of him? Have you forgotten whose woman you’re supposed to be?”

Scarlett found the accusation utterly ridiculous. She lifted her chin, meeting Daniel’s gaze head-on. “Then why don’t you ask Vincent if he remembers whose husband he is supposed to be?”

Daniel was completely thrown. “You... That’s a completely different matter!”

Scarlett’s gaze remained clear and unwavering. “Then enlighten me, Daniel. What, precisely, is the difference?”

Daniel found himself at a loss for a coherent retort and fell silent.

But Scarlett wasn't finished. "When he's smiling at Sabrina, introducing her to everyone as if she's the lady of the hour, did it ever once cross your mind to remind him that he is my husband?"

Daniel grew even more flustered, his face reddening. "You're just twisting my words, changing the subject!"

A bitter, humorless laugh escaped Scarlett. "Oh, really? So it's only 'twisting things' when the mirror is held up to your own behavior?"

It was at that moment that Vincent, who had been standing silently by the doorway observing the entire exchange, finally spoke, "That's enough."

Hearing the command in Vincent's voice, Daniel reluctantly took a few steps back, though his expression remained mutinous.

Scarlett turned her attention to Vincent. His face was an unreadable mask of cold detachment as he slowly began walking toward them.

Instinctively, Scarlett held her ground in front of Nolan, shielding him. "What exactly is it that you want, Vincent?" she demanded.

Vincent didn't answer. He simply continued his advance, his presence alone feeling oppressive and intimidating.

Nolan tightened his grip on Scarlett's hand, ready to pull her behind him for her own protection, when a new, deeply mocking voice drawled from the doorway. "Well, well, what do we have here? Look who it is, again and again... turns out it's Sabrina's devoted boyfriend."

Damian's voice cut through the room, his tone dripping with theatrical sarcasm, more dramatic than a stage performer.

Vincent halted and turned. Daniel, unable to contain his temper any longer, yelled at the newcomer, "Shut your mouth, Damian! No one thinks you're mute."

Damian leaned casually against the doorframe, his arms crossed over his chest, exuding an air of wild indifference. He didn't even bother looking at Daniel, instead letting his gaze wander around the floor as if

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searching for the source of the noise.

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After a deliberately long moment, he brought a hand up behind his ear, feigning deep concentration. “Where is that dog barking? I can hear it clearly, but I just can’t seem to spot it.”

Daniel was livid. He strode aggressively toward Damian. “Damian, what the hell is your problem?”

Damian uncrossed his arms and straightened to his full height, closing the distance between them in one fluid motion. The playful glint in his eyes vanished, replaced by an icy chill. “What’s it to you? Got a problem with me?”

Of course Daniel had a problem, but before he could act on his anger, Vincent’s voice cut in, calm but firm. “Daniel.”

Daniel hesitated, then took a grudging step back, muttering under his breath, “Damian, don’t get too cocky.”

Damian raised a single, mocking eyebrow. “I am cocky. So what are you going to do about it?”

Daniel didn’t deign to reply this time and stalked out of the room, his fury palpable.

Vincent’s gaze returned to Scarlett. “Are you coming or not?” he asked, his voice flat.

Scarlett didn’t understand his meaning. “Vincent, I am not your pet dog that you can summon and dismiss at will,” she stated, her voice firm and resolute.

Any lingering affection she might have held for him had long since withered and died.

Vincent’s voice dropped to a dangerous, icy low. “In that case, don’t expect me to show any leniency toward the Theron family in the future.”

He delivered the threat coldly, then turned and walked away without a backward glance.

As he passed Damian in the doorway, he deliberately met the other man’s gaze. The silent stare that passed between them was heavy with unspoken history and rivalry.

Outside, Daniel saw Vincent emerge and asked, confused, “Vincent, are we just leaving like this? Letting it go?”

Vincent didn’t elaborate, offering only a terse, “Yes.”

Back inside, Scarlett could only feel a wave of bitter amusement wash over her.

Why should Vincent have the power to exile her to the countryside with a single word? And why should she be expected to return just because he now commanded it?

Once Vincent and Daniel had departed, the small room finally settled into calm.

The tension drained from Scarlett’s shoulders, and Nolan, noticing her slight sway, reached out a steadying hand. “Are you alright?”

“I’m fine,” she assured him, though her voice was weary.

Damian remained lounging in the doorway, but his attention wasn’t on Scarlett. Instead, he was scrutinizing Nolan with a critical, almost competitive eye, as if assessing a rival.

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Scarlett looked up at Damian and offered a quiet, “Thank you.”

Finished

Damian finally shifted his gaze to her, a familiar, mischievous spark returning to his eyes. He adopted his characteristic teasing, laid-back drawl. “Just a ‘thank you’? No substantive reward to go with the words?”

Nolan, irritated by Damian’s flippant attitude, interjected, “If you hadn’t arrived, I was perfectly capable of handling the situation myself.”

Damian dragged out his words lazily. “Oh, is that so? So you’re saying I stuck my nose where it didn’t belong?”

Nolan offered a conciliatory smile, trying to defuse the situation. “I wouldn’t dare suggest that.”

Damian lowered his gaze for a moment, then looked pointedly back at Scarlett. “So this is the guy you came asking me to help?”

Scarlett had no desire to listen to the two men bicker. She addressed Damian directly. “It’s getting late. You should head home and get some rest.”

Damian responded with a noncommittal, “Oh.”

Then his eyes flicked back to Nolan, noting that the other man showed no intention of leaving. A smirk touched his lips as he complained, loudly enough for everyone to hear, “Does this guy not get it? My girl is telling you to leave. You hearing this? Got the message?”

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Awakened Housewife Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

Dylan

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Finished

Nolan paid no heed to Damian’s provocations-his attention remained fixed solely on Scarlett.

Scarlett met his gaze and finally spoke softly, “Nolan, you should go home and get some rest now.”

Nolan’s expression was full of concern. “But what if they come back?”

A faint, weary smile touched Scarlett’s lips. “I know Vincent. Once he’s made an exit, he won’t return.”

Seeing her determination, Nolan had no choice but to relent. If Scarlett didn't wish for him to stay, he couldn't very well force his presence.

Moreover, it was indeed improper for an unmarried man and woman to remain alone together so late at night.

In the end, both Damian and Nolan departed together, leaving Scarlett in the suddenly quiet room.

Scarlett sank onto the small couch, sitting in stillness for a long time, unable to dispel the deep sense of unease coiling in her heart.

Vincent's cold threat before he left echoed in her mind. She knew him all too well-he was a man who always followed through on his words.

In the car, Daniel couldn't let the matter rest.

"Vincent, are you really just going to let this slide?" he pressed, his voice tight with frustration.

Vincent sat in the passenger seat, his demeanor as unreadably calm as ever. His reply was flat. "Yes."

Daniel was exasperated. "Come on. Are you really going to let Scarlett make a fool of you-not just once, but twice now?"

Vincent stared out the window at the passing darkness, a cigarette held loosely between his fingers. The burning tip glowed a fierce red in the night.

His face was mostly obscured by shadow, and his voice was barely a murmur. "She is Vanessa's mother. Vanessa needs her."

This only frustrated Daniel further. "Vincent, what's so lacking about Sabrina? If you have Sabrina, why do you still need Scarlett in the picture?"

Vincent was silent for a long moment, the only sound the hum of the engine. Finally, he answered, "She is the one who carried and gave birth to Vanessa."

"So you're just going to swallow your pride? Accept this humiliation?"

Vincent's voice remained even, devoid of emotion. "I only want what is best for Vanessa's well-being."

That was the rationale he voiced aloud. Yet, somewhere deep within, a dissonant note vibrated—a feeling that this explanation wasn't the entire truth, that something else was unsettled within him, though he

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couldn't quite name it.

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Finished

Daniel let out a long, resigned sigh. He knew Vincent well enough to understand that further argument was futile, so he let the subject drop.

The next morning, after the previous night's drama, Killian called Scarlett early.

"Scarlett, you can return to your position at the main hospital now," he informed her.

Scarlett was in the middle of seeing patients at the small rural clinic when she received the call. Surprisingly, she felt little emotion—no relief, no joy.

For a brief moment, she considered asking him outright. "Who is it that gave the order to send me away? And who is it that now grants me permission to return?" But the questions died on her lips before they could be spoken.

There seemed little point in seeking answers anymore.

She couldn't abandon her patients mid-shift, so Scarlett didn't immediately depart for Rivergate that day.

That evening, Clara called her.

They engaged in light, cheerful chatter initially, but when a housemaid entered to tell Clara it was time for her bath, Scarlett finally asked, "Clara, where is your mom?"

Clara's voice took on a slight pout. "Mom got a phone call during dinner. I think the brand she was supposed to endorse gave the deal to someone else at the last minute. She left in such a hurry she didn't even finish her meal."

A wave of foreboding washed over Scarlett. "And your dad?"

Clara replied, "Dad hasn't come home all day."

Remembering Vincent's cold threat, Scarlett's anxiety intensified.

Both Violet and Nathan adored their daughter. Even during their busiest periods, at least one of them would typically be home to spend the evening with her.

But tonight, neither parent was present. Something was definitely wrong.

"Auntie, I have to go take my bath now," Clara said. "I'll call you again tomorrow."

Scarlett murmured a distracted goodbye and ended the call.

Her eyes fell upon

her half-packed suitcase sitting in the corner. She knew then that she could no longer afford to wait.

She immediately called Nolan, and the two of them drove through the night to return to Rivergate.

Upon their arrival, Nolan dropped Scarlett off at the gates of Theron Manor.

Henry and Diana, seeing Nolan, warmly invited him in for a late-night snack, but Scarlett gently declined on his behalf. "Dad, Mom, Nolan needs to get proper rest. It's very late already; we shouldn't keep him."

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Nolan understood that Scarlett's sudden return was likely pressured by Vincent's actions, and he sensed she needed private time to speak with her family.

He took the hint gracefully. "Mr. and Mrs. Theron, I'll certainly come to visit properly another time.

Henry and Diana didn't press further, smiling and waving as Nolan drove away.

The next morning, Scarlett rose early and had breakfast in the dining room. She had intended to gently question her family about the situation, but to her surprise, neither Violet nor Nathan was present for the morning meal.

Left with no alternative, she headed to the hospital to complete her formal reinstatement procedures.

After her shift ended, Scarlett was the first to return to Theron Manor that evening.

By around eight o'clock, the rest of the family had finally trickled home.

Once the household staff had set the dining table, everyone sat down to dinner as was their usual custom.

Clara was ecstatic. She diligently peeled shrimp for Scarlett, poured her water, and chirped happily about how wonderful it was that Scarlett was home and the whole family could be together always.

Violet smiled along, but the warmth didn't quite reach her eyes. Nathan was much the same-making a visible effort to appear calm and normal, but the strain beneath the surface was palpable.

Henry and Diana were unusually quiet throughout the meal. The more they all tried to pretend everything was fine, the more glaringly obvious it became that something was amiss.

They said nothing of their troubles, but Scarlett saw through the charade immediately.

It was clear that Nathan's and Violet's careers had been impacted by Vincent's interference.

They were putting on a brave face, determined not to worry her, but their silent act only confirmed her fears.

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Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begg

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 74

Chapter 74 A Bitter Breakfast

Dinner had been an emotional rollercoaster for Scarlett-one that left her feeling uneasy and lost in thought.

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Finished

She didn't get up from the table and head upstairs until everyone else had finished eating and gone their separate ways.

Scarlett saw right through Vincent's game. This was his way of sending her a warning-clear, no room for misunderstanding.

It had taken so much time and effort for her family to finally come back together, to find this fragile peace. She was determined not to let this hard-won warmth fall apart.

So she made up her mind-she'd call Vincent directly, and demand to know exactly what he wanted from her.

He had commanded her return, yet he had never specified what role or action he expected from her upon her arrival.

She dialed his number, but Vincent didn't answer.

She tried two more times, waiting patiently through the rings each time, but the result was the same- silence.

Finally, she abandoned the attempt and decided she would go to Ravensshade Villa first thing the next morning.

She recalled Vincent mentioning that Vanessa had been asking for her homemade oatmeal.

Perhaps that was the underlying reason he had made such a production of summoning her back from the countryside. Regardless, it provided the perfect pretext for her to confront him.

Long before dawn, Scarlett was already inside Ravensshade Villa.

When Lily woke up and noticed the kitchen light on, she assumed someone had forgotten to switch it off. But upon entering, she was startled to find Scarlett, already wearing an apron, bustling purposefully by the

stove.

"Mrs. Stewart?" Lily's voice was laced with confusion.

Scarlett answered quietly without looking up. “Yes, it’s me.”

Lily was visibly flustered. “You... Why are you here so early?”

Scarlett merely offered a soft, enigmatic smile and didn’t elaborate.

Given that she hadn’t even stayed at the villa overnight, her presence at this hour couldn’t be attributed to simply waking up early.

Soon, Scarlett placed the finished pot of oatmeal on the dining table and prepared two light, complementary side dishes.

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Chapter 74 A Bitter Breakfast

It was already seven o’clock-Vanessa’s usual waking time.

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Scarlett didn’t venture upstairs. She simply took a seat at the table and waited in quiet anticipation.

A few minutes later, the sound of cheerful laughter drifted down from the upper floor.

“Sabrina, you look so pretty today!”

“Vanessa, you’re very pretty too!”

“I wish I could be as pretty as Sabrina.”

“When you grow up, I’m sure you’ll be even prettier than I am.”

“Dad, do you really think I’ll be as pretty as Sabrina when I grow up?”

“You’ll have to wait until you’re older to find out.”

Their happy, carefree voices echoed down the staircase. Scarlett looked toward the source and saw Sabrina and Vincent, each holding one of Vanessa’s hands, coming into view as they descended.

They stepped out of the stairwell's shadow, and for a breathtaking moment, they looked like the perfect, idealized family of three.

Scarlett was seated directly by the table, completely visible. All three of them noticed her simultaneously. Vanessa instinctively released her grip on both Vincent's and Sabrina's hands. She stared at Scarlett, who sat so quietly in the dining room, and uttered a surprised, "Mom?"

Scarlett looked up at Vanessa. "Yes. Come have your breakfast. I made your favorite oatmeal."

Vanessa's face instantly brightened with pure joy. She ran down the remaining steps, practically bouncing over to the table. She waved her little hands to disperse the steam rising from the pot, took an exaggerated, appreciative sniff, and exclaimed, "Wow, Mom made oatmeal! I haven't had this in so long! Thank you, Mom!"

Children's memories are mercifully short. She had already forgotten about the incident involving Scarlett and Sabrina, and the trouble she had caused at Theron Manor that had so upset Scarlett.

Vanessa was her own flesh and blood, and Scarlett found it impossible to hold a lasting grudge. She simply smiled softly and said, "As long as you enjoy it, Vanessa, that's all that matters."

Scarlett sat down and served Vanessa a bowl of the steaming oatmeal. Vanessa took an eager spoonful and began stomping her feet with delight. Then, she turned to Sabrina and asked generously, "Sabrina, do you want to try my mom's oatmeal? It's really, really good!"

Sabrina maintained her pleasant smile. "No, thank you, sweetheart. If you like it so much, you should eat plenty yourself."

Vanessa stuffed another large spoonful into her mouth, her cheeks bulging comically. "Okay!" she mumbled

around the food.

Watching Vanessa think of Sabrina even while savoring the oatmeal she herself had prepared, Scarlett couldn't suppress a sharp, painful twinge of maternal jealousy.

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But Vanessa, completely absorbed in her meal and her happiness, remained entirely oblivious to Scarlett's shifting mood.

Vincent hadn't so much as glanced in Scarlett's direction. He didn't seem the least bit surprised by her presence at Ravensshade Villa.

After a moment, Vincent and Sabrina descended the rest of the stairs together.

Neither of them showed any interest in joining the breakfast. They moved with purpose directly toward the front hall.

Suddenly, Scarlett stood up, her voice cutting clearly through the spacious room. "Vincent, may I have a word with you?"

Vincent turned his body only slightly toward her, while Scarlett stood facing him directly.

He stopped at the sound of her voice but still refused to look at her. Keeping his profile to her, he said, "I have commitments. I'm busy today."

Scarlett pressed further, her voice firm. "When will you have time, then?"

"I don't know," Vincent replied dismissively.

Scarlett's hands clenched subtly at her sides. She could tell he was deliberately evading her.

Seeing his resolve, she didn't push the point any further.

Just then, Sabrina turned and walked back toward Vanessa, her voice dripping with gentle concern. "Vanessa, your dad and I need to go out for a while. How about having Mom take you to school today?"

Vanessa was noisily sipping her oatmeal, a few grains of oat clinging to her lips. She blinked her large, innocent eyes and agreed readily, "Okay!"

Sabrina gave her a patronizing pat on the head, then turned back to Vincent. "Let's go, Vincent."

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Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 75

Chapter 75 Empty Rooms

A rare smile softened Vincent's typically stern features as he looked at Sabrina. "Yes," he agreed.

Finished

Scarlett watched as the two of them walked out of the main hall side by side, their forms receding into the distance. It was only when she finally averted her gaze that she became aware of the telltale wetness brimming in her own eyes.

After Vanessa finished her breakfast, she suddenly glanced at the clock and realized how late it was getting. She dashed upstairs, calling over her shoulder, "Mom, I'm just going to grab my backpack!"

Scarlett watched Vanessa's retreating back, feeling a fresh, sharp sting behind her eyes.

Once she was seated again, Scarlett turned to Lily, who was hovering nearby, and asked in a carefully controlled voice, "Did Sabrina stay here overnight?"

Lily kept her head bowed, too nervous to meet Scarlett's gaze. "I... I couldn't say, Mrs. Stewart."

A bitter, knowing smile touched Scarlett's lips. "I thought as much."

Lily looked profoundly uncomfortable. "Mrs. Stewart, you must understand... I'm just a member of the staff. It's not my place..."

Scarlett's reply was calm, devoid of accusation. "I'm not blaming you, Lily."

Just then, Vanessa came clattering back down the stairs, her small backpack slung over her shoulders. She eagerly grabbed Scarlett's hand. "Mom, can we go now? I don't want to be late!"

Looking down into Vanessa's bright, upturned face-eyes that were a mirror of her own-Scarlett felt a piercing ache deep within her chest.

Perhaps Vanessa still needed a mother, but it was painfully clear that in Vanessa's world, Scarlett would always occupy a distant second place to Sabrina.

That evening, Scarlett went directly to Ravensshade Villa after finishing her hospital shift.

She knew Vincent's dismissive words that morning had been a deliberate power play, a way to make things difficult for her.

As long as Nathan and Violet were facing professional repercussions because of her, she would know no

peace.

She had to resolve this situation, and quickly.

Lily was visibly startled to see Scarlett return, though she dared not question her.

"Mrs. Stewart, what would you like for dinner this evening? I can prepare anything you wish," Lily offered, maintaining her respectful demeanor.

Scarlett shook her head. "That won't be necessary. I'll wait for Vincent to return."

Lily didn't press the matter and left her to her vigil.

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Scarlett waited in the quiet, spacious living room until eight o'clock, but there was no sign of Vincent or the others.

No Vincent, and no Vanessa.

By nine o'clock, a restless irritation had begun to set in.

Lily had been keeping her a silent company, but she suddenly remembered something. "Mrs. Stewart, I've just realized... it's the weekend. Ms. Stewart doesn't have school."

Scarlett was confused. She turned to Lily. "What are you implying?"

Lily couldn't bring herself to meet Scarlett's gaze, her voice dropping to a near-whisper. "It's just... Mr. Stewart and Ms. Stewart... they might not return home tonight."

Understanding dawned on Scarlett, and she frowned. "Is it common for them not to come home on weekends?"

Lily shifted uncomfortably. "Sometimes they do, sometimes they don't."

"And when they don't return," Scarlett pressed, her voice tight, "where do they typically go?"

Lily was clearly nervous but felt compelled to answer. "They... they might go away for a short trip, or sometimes they stay at Ms. Monroe's residence. Their plans... They seem to vary from week to week..." The more she spoke, the quieter her voice became, until it was almost inaudible.

Scarlett understood completely now. "I see," she said softly, the words heavy with resignation.

"Would you like to retire for the evening, Mrs. Stewart?" Lily asked, seeking to be helpful. "I can draw a bath for you."

Scarlett stood up from the sofa, her movements decisive. "No, thank you. I'll be leaving now."

She collected her bag and walked toward the door without a backward glance.

Seeing her determined exit, Lily called out anxiously, “Mrs. Stewart... does this mean you won’t be... staying here anymore?”

Scarlett paused at the threshold, considering the question for a long moment before replying in a quiet, hollow voice, “I don’t know.”

After leaving Ravensshade Villa, Scarlett tried calling Vincent from her car. The call connected and rang, but no one picked up.

Frustrated, she sent him a brief text message. “We need to talk. It’s urgent.”

She stared at her phone screen, willing a response to appear.

But after a long, agonizing wait, the screen remained stubbornly blank, offering no notification.

She was finally forced to accept the obvious truth-Vincent was deliberately ignoring her.

She drove back to Theron Manor. Once upstairs, she waited until Violet had finished putting Clara to bed,

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Chapter 75 Empty Rooms

then quietly called Violet out into the hallway.

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Violet came to her room, and Scarlett asked anxiously, “Violet, please be honest with me. Is everything alright at work?”

Violet offered a reassuring smile that didn’t quite reach her eyes. “Everything is perfectly fine.”

No matter how Scarlett phrased her concern, Violet parried with the same calm, evasive answer.

It was painfully clear she didn’t want to burden Scarlett with her troubles.

Seeing she would get no straight answers, Scarlett finally stopped pressing. After Violet returned to her own room, Scarlett made her way to Nathan’s study.

She was just about to knock when Nathan’s voice, firm and resolute, carried through the door. “I refuse to believe Vincent can control every facet of this city. Let him throw everything he’s got at me-I will not be intimidated into submission.”

Hearing his defiant words, a wave of guilt and sorrow washed over Scarlett, making her feel even worse.

Ever since her marriage, it seemed she had brought nothing but complications to her family. Now, just as she had finally found the resolve to break free, her family was being dragged into another predicament

because of her.

After Nathan finished his call, Scarlett gently knocked on the study door.

“Come in,” Nathan called out.

Scarlett pushed the door open and entered, forcing a cheerful smile onto her face.

Nathan was standing by the window. The ashtray on his desk was overflowing with cigarette butts, a testament to his prolonged agitation.

The entire room was thick with the lingering, acrid scent of smoke.

Scarlett walked over and pushed the window open wider, allowing the cool night air to circulate. “Nathan,” she began, her voice gentle with concern, “it’s very late. Shouldn’t you be getting some rest?”

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Awakened Housewife Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

Dylan

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Hearing the familiar footsteps, Nathan realized it was Scarlett who had entered. He turned toward her and said, "I'm almost finished here. I'll head to bed as soon as I wrap up this last bit of work."

Scarlett's eyes briefly flickered to his dark, inactive computer screen. She didn't challenge his obvious white lie. Instead, she placed the bank card she had been clutching tightly in her hand onto the desk. "Here, Nathan. This is all the money I've managed to save. It might not be much, but perhaps it can help in an emergency."

Nathan's eyes narrowed slightly. "What's this for, Scarlett?"

Scarlett didn't state the reason outright. "Just consider it your little sister wanting to invest in the family," she said evasively.

Though she hadn't spelled it out, Nathan could easily read between the lines. The meaning was clear enough.

Scarlett was far too perceptive for them to successfully conceal their troubles from her.

After setting down the card, Scarlett quietly left the study.

Back in her own bedroom, she sat on the edge of the bed for a very long time, lost in a sea of turbulent thoughts.

Perhaps Vincent hadn't yet deployed his full arsenal against the Theron family, but even the pressure he was currently applying was more than sufficient to be crippling for them.

Determined not to let her family be dragged down because of her choices, Scarlett continued her attempts to contact Vincent.

Finally, after numerous attempts, the call connected-but it was Sabrina's voice that answered.

"Ms. Theron, is there something I can help you with?"

Hearing that voice sent an immediate, icy chill down Scarlett's spine. She was silent for a beat before replying stiffly, "Yes."

Sabrina's tone was utterly nonchalant, almost bored. "Vincent is helping me hand-wash some delicate lingerie right now. If you have a message, you can tell me. I'll be sure to pass it along."

"That won't be necessary," Scarlett refused coldly, without a moment's hesitation, and ended the call just as abruptly.

After all the effort it had taken to get through, she had hung up after just a few seconds.

She had been married to Vincent for five long years. In all that time, he had never performed even the smallest domestic task for her-not even something as simple as holding a door open.

Yet for Sabrina, this man who always carried himself with an air of untouchable superiority was willing to humble himself to such an intimate, servile degree.

He was never inherently cold or incapable of tenderness. He simply reserved all of his warmth and softness

Chapter 76 Public Displays

exclusively for Sabrina.

Finished

The fact that Sabrina had been the one to answer his phone effectively ended Scarlett's attempts to reach Vincent for the remainder of the weekend.

On Sunday, Scarlett returned to Ravensshade Villa once more.

When she arrived, the lights in the grand living room were ablaze. For a hopeful moment, Scarlett thought Vincent might be home, but it turned out only Vanessa was there, accompanied by a maid.

"Mom?" Vanessa exclaimed, jumping off the sofa the instant she saw Scarlett enter, her face instantly brightening with pure delight.

Scarlett walked over and scooped Vanessa up, settling onto the couch with Vanessa in her lap.

She glanced around the empty room before asking, "Where is your dad?"

Vanessa hesitated, a flicker of guilt crossing her small features before she answered, "Dad said he had urgent work at the office, so he went back."

Scarlett had raised Vanessa from infancy. She could detect the slightest evasion in Vanessa's tone instantly.

But she didn't challenge her on it. She knew it would be pointless.

After a moment, Scarlett asked in a conversational tone, "Vanessa, what did you do this weekend? Did you have fun?"

Vanessa had been bursting to share her adventures with someone. Now that Scarlett was asking, the words tumbled out without filter. "We went swimming! It was so much fun!"

We?

Scarlett's heart constricted, but she kept her expression neutral. "Who is 'we', sweetheart?"

Vanessa replied, "Just Dad and me."

Scarlett knew Vanessa wasn't telling the whole story, but she simply nodded. "I see."

Vanessa looked up at her, curious. "Why are you asking, Mom?"

Scarlett forced a soft smile. "No reason at all, darling. You should start thinking about getting ready for bed."

Vanessa tilted her head, her eyes hopeful. "Will you take me to school tomorrow, Mom?"

With Vincent absent, Scarlett felt she had little choice. "Yes, of course I will."

That night, Scarlett slept in Vanessa's room, holding Vanessa close.

Perhaps it was the persistent anxiety gnawing at her, but sleep proved elusive. She woke every few minutes, instinctively checking her phone for any message or call. Each time, she found that only a handful of minutes had passed.

Yet, even as the clock ticked past three in the morning, Scarlett had not heard the familiar sound of Vincent returning home.

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Chapter 76 Public Displays

Perhaps he wasn't coming back at all tonight.

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Or perhaps, at this very moment, he was already asleep, wrapped in another woman's embrace.

During one of these fretful checks of the time, a glaring news headline popped up in the browser feed on her phone.

"Vincent Stewart Spends Millions on Lavish Birthday Celebration for His Lover."

The headline was sensational and impossible to ignore. Against her better judgment, Scarlett clicked on the link.

The article was filled with professionally taken photographs of Vincent and Sabrina from various angles, always walking side by side. In some, Vincent was looking down at Sabrina with a soft, intimate smile. In others, he was shielding her protectively from an imagined crowd. Sabrina appeared demure and glowing in every shot, her eyes shining with unmistakable happiness.

There were even short video clips. They showed Vincent had purchased an extravagant mountain of luxury gifts for Sabrina, and he was personally carrying all the shopping bags himself, refusing to let any staff

assist.

The comments section beneath the news story was flooded with envious remarks.

[Oh my god, this is what true happiness looks like! If a man like that ever spoiled me, I could die completely content.]

[In which direction should I bow to meet a man like Vincent?]

[I'm quite cute myself, you know! Mr. CEO, would you like to consider me?]

[Watching rich people fall in love is just gift-giving on another level. I'm green with envy. If a man treated me like that, I'd dedicate my entire life to him without a second thought.]

Beyond the photos and videos, the article even featured animated GIFs. One showed a spectacular fireworks display lighting up the night sky. As the brilliant colors exploded, words materialized across the screen. "Sabrina, happy birthday. From this day forward, you will always have me by your side."

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Awakened Housewife Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

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Vincent and Sabrina stood beneath the spectacular fireworks display, both tilting their heads back to watch the brilliant colors explode across the night sky. From behind, their silhouettes against the shimmering backdrop looked like a perfectly matched couple.

[Oh my god, look at all those fireworks! They must be going on forever, right?]

[I heard the show lasted a full thirty minutes, and every sequence was completely unique.]

[That must have cost an absolute fortune!]

[Not as much as you'd think, actually. My family's in the pyrotechnics business. For a display of that scale and duration, I'd estimate around ten million dollars.]

[Ten million? That's how the ultra-rich live, I guess. Just the fireworks alone cost more than I could earn in my entire lifetime.]

As she scrolled through the news coverage, Scarlett finally understood why Vincent hadn't returned to Ravensshade Villa that night.

No matter how demanding his schedule, Vincent typically made it a point to be wherever Vanessa was. The fact that Vanessa was home alone while he was absent could only mean he was engaged in something he deemed exceptionally important.

Scarlett had never imagined that his "exceptionally important" engagement was throwing an extravagant birthday celebration for Sabrina.

He had actually left their young daughter at home, unsupervised, for this.

The thought sent a sharp, bitter pang through her. Then another, more visceral thought struck her- perhaps at this very moment, Vincent and Sabrina were entangled in an intimate embrace, lost in passion.

On a romantic night like this, fueled by champagne and fireworks, it would be a wasted opportunity not to consummate the atmosphere.

The more her mind conjured these images, the more a burning sensation prickled behind her eyes. She couldn't suppress the choked sob that escaped her lips, and silent tears began to trace paths down her cheeks.

The sound of her quiet crying stirred Vanessa from her sleep. The little girl rolled over and mumbled drowsily, "Mom, can you please not play on your phone in the middle of the night? The light and the noise are keeping me awake."

Scarlett quickly switched off her phone, plunging the room into darkness. "I'm sorry, sweetheart," she whispered. "I'll go sleep in the guest room."

Vanessa, already halfway back to dreamland, simply rolled over again, completely missing Scarlett's soft apology and promise.

Scarlett sat up in the dimness, staring at Vanessa's sleeping form for a long, long time.

Remembering how Vanessa had claimed Vincent was "working late" the previous night, she found the

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situation tragically laughable.

To Vanessa, it was painfully obvious whose feelings and reputation were deemed more worthy of protection.

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Ultimately, Scarlett slipped out of bed and left Vanessa's room, seeking the solitude of the guest room.

She spent the entire night awake there, relentlessly scrolling through every article, photo, and video detailing Vincent and Sabrina's very public celebration.

As the first hints of dawn painted the sky, Scarlett abandoned any pretense of sleep. She rose and mechanically began preparing breakfast for Vanessa.

She made a simple oatmeal and fried a few sticks of churro, the fried dough Vanessa usually enjoyed.

Once everything was ready and laid out on the dining table, Scarlett went back upstairs to gently wake Vanessa and help her with her morning routine.

After Vanessa had washed up and dressed, mother and daughter descended the stairs together.

Just as they entered the dining room, Lily's voice rang out from the main entrance, "Good morning, Mr. Stewart. Good morning, Ms. Monroe."

Scarlett froze for a fraction of a second. When she looked toward the doorway, she saw a stunningly attractive couple stepping inside, bathed in the soft morning light.

Sabrina, who must have spotted Scarlett immediately, discreetly released her hold on Vincent's arm just before they crossed the threshold.

Scarlett watched their entrance without flinching. Vincent looked utterly relaxed, a faint, contented smile playing on his lips. Sabrina's cheeks were flushed a delicate pink, her entire demeanor radiating a glow that suggested she had been very thoroughly and recently satisfied.

Scarlett's gaze dropped, and she noticed a new, exquisite pale green/emerald bracelet adorning Sabrina's wrist. It caught the light, sparkling with an undeniable, expensive sheen.

Vincent didn't even glance in Scarlett's direction as he entered. Instead, he addressed Lily directly. "Prepare some nutritious dishes for this afternoon. Sabrina had a rather... strenuous night. She needs something restorative."

Lily's face paled slightly at the blatant implication, but she could only bow her head and reply, "Yes, Mr. Stewart."

Scarlett was a woman of the world; she understood perfectly well what Vincent's words-and Sabrina's glowing appearance-signified.

On a night like the one they'd just had, such an outcome was almost inevitable.

When Vanessa saw Sabrina return, she instinctively tried to pull her hand free from Scarlett's grasp, but Scarlett held on just a little tighter.

Vanessa didn't struggle further. Instead, she beamed at Vincent. "Dad, you must be so tired from working so late! You should go get some rest. Mom is taking me to school today."

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Vincent walked over and affectionately ruffled Vanessa's hair. "You're a good girl, Vanessa."

Vanessa nuzzled into his palm like an affectionate kitten. "I'll always be good for you, Dad."

Then she turned her attention back to Scarlett. "Mom, let's eat breakfast now. I'm hungry."

Scarlett looked down at Vanessa's upturned face, a fresh ache piercing her heart.

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Was Vanessa, even at her young age, already learning to cover for her father, constructing an elaborate pretense that he had been working rather than spending the night in another woman's arms?

"Mom?" Vanessa shook Scarlett's arm gently when she seemed to drift away.

Scarlett snapped back to the present, forcing a soft smile onto her lips. "Yes, of course. Let's eat."

Vanessa led Scarlett to the table. While Scarlett was busy serving the oatmeal into bowls, the little girl quickly turned and blew a discreet, affectionate kiss in Sabrina's direction.

Scarlett caught the gesture out of the corner of her eye but said nothing.

She placed a bowl of the plain oatmeal in front of Vanessa. "Here you go, sweetheart. Eat up."

Vanessa glanced down at the simple, unadorned oatmeal and her face fell slightly. "Mom, isn't there anything else to go with this? It's a bit plain."

Scarlett didn't answer Vanessa's question. Instead, her gaze shifted to Vincent, who was just about to escort Sabrina upstairs. Her voice, clear and firm, cut across the room. "Vincent. I need to speak with you. Now."

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Awakened Housewife ignore Betrayer's Begs.

Dylan

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Chapter 78 The Broken Promise

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Vincent paused for a brief moment before replying, his tone dismissive, "I'm occupied today.

Scarlett refused to drop the matter. "What about tomorrow?"

"Busy."

"The day after tomorrow?"

"My schedule is already full."

"What about three days from now?" she pressed, her voice tightening.

Vincent's tone grew noticeably irritated. "I have no idea."

Seizing the opening, Scarlett stated firmly, "Alright then. I will come to see you in three days."

Having declared this, she immediately sat down beside Vanessa, her posture resolute.

Vincent offered no further response. He simply continued upstairs, Sabrina following closely beside him.

Scarlett didn't turn to watch them ascend, but she could vividly imagine them walking hand-in-hand.

Perhaps after she and Vanessa left for the day, they would be intimate again, having the house to themselves.

But none of that seemed to hold any significance for her anymore.

Vincent had never loved her. If he wished to be with Sabrina, then so be it.

She found she simply didn't care anymore.

For the next two days, Scarlett did not return to Ravensshade Villa, nor did she prepare breakfast for Vanessa.

Three days later, true to her word, Scarlett arrived at Ravensshade Villa right after her hospital shift.

She settled into a chair in the living room and waited. She waited until well past eight o'clock in the evening, but there was still no sign of Vincent or Vanessa.

Scarlett could no longer maintain her still composure. She turned to Lily, who was quietly tidying nearby. "Lily, is Vincent planning to return home tonight?"

Lily kept her head respectfully bowed, her voice awkward. "I... I truly don't know, Mrs. Stewart."

Scarlett didn't utter another word. Instead, she stood up abruptly, as if a final decision had solidified within her. Without a backward glance, she walked out of Ravensshade Villa.

If Vincent was determined to treat her with such blatant disregard, what was the point of her endless waiting?

From this moment on, she resolved, she would no longer wait for him. He was free to do as he pleased.

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Chapter 78 The Broken Promise

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Outside, Scarlett had just slid into the driver's seat of her car when the passenger door was abruptly opened from the outside.

Someone climbed into the seat beside her. Startled and lost in her own turbulent thoughts, Scarlett nearly jumped out of her skin.

When her eyes focused and she recognized the intruder, her initial fear subsided, replaced by weary resignation.

Damian settled into the passenger seat. He deliberately leaned in, significantly closing the distance between them.

He studied her face from this intimate angle, and a slow, characteristically charming smirk spread across his lips. "What's this?" he teased, his voice a low purr. "Am I really that terrifying? You won't even grant me a glance? Or are you just too shy to look me in the eye?"

Scarlett was in no mood for his banter. "I have matters to attend to, Mr. Langley. Could you please get out of my car?"

Damian remained unfazed. He leaned back comfortably in the seat, lacing his fingers behind his head, and turned his face fully toward her. "What's this? You return to Rivergate and suddenly you don't know me anymore?" he prodded, his tone lightly mocking.

A flicker of impatience crossed Scarlett's features. "Damian, I'm being serious. I really do have something important to do."

Damian heard the raw, wounded edge in her voice. His playful demeanor evaporated instantly. He sat up straight and, in an unthinking, almost instinctual gesture, reached out his hand. Before he could question the action himself, his fingers were gently brushing through her hair in a comforting pat. "What's wrong?" he asked, his voice now devoid of its usual mockery.

If one listened closely, there was a thread of genuine concern woven through his words.

Scarlett's mind was a chaotic whirlwind of disappointment and heartbreak, all stemming from her husband and daughter.

Hearing that unexpected note of concern from Damian now, the dam finally broke. She could no longer hold back the tears that had been threatening all evening.

She tried valiantly to stifle her sobs, but the more she fought for control, the more her emotions overwhelmed her, making it impossible to contain her distress.

Damian was visibly panicked by her tears. “Scarlett, don’t cry, alright? Please. I... I’m not very good at this comforting thing. Just tell me what’s wrong. I’ll fix it for you. Whatever it is. Just please, stop crying.”

Acting on pure impulse, the words tumbled out from Scarlett between her sobs. “I... I just wanted to ask him two simple questions. But he refuses to see me. He’s deliberately avoiding me.”

Damian gripped her shoulders gently, his gaze intent. “You want to see Vincent? Is that it?”

Scarlett’s eyes were red-rimmed as she nodded miserably. “Yes.”

A wide, relieved grin broke out on Damian’s face. “Man, I thought it was something truly serious! If you want to see him, that’s easy. I’ll take you to him right now.”

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Scarlett’s tears stopped abruptly. “Really?”

Damian bargained, “If you promise to stop crying, I’ll take you.”

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Finished

Scarlett nodded vigorously, wiping her cheeks with the back of her hand. “Okay. I’ve stopped. I won’t cry anymore.”

Damian coaxed her further, a playful glint returning to his eyes. “Then how about a smile for me, huh?”

Scarlett attempted a smile, but the result was a strained, watery expression that looked more pained than joyful.

Damian promptly pulled out his phone and made a call. He received a reply almost instantly.

Once he had confirmed Vincent’s location, Damian got out of the car, circled to Scarlett’s door, opened it, and effortlessly scooped her out of the driver’s seat. He deposited her into the passenger side, efficiently buckled her seatbelt, and declared, “Alright, sweetheart, just so you know, I’m being incredibly magnanimous today personally delivering you to

my rival. When you finally come to your senses and become my girl, you'd better properly reward me for this act of charity."

Scarlett said nothing, her eyes still red but now filled with a stubborn determination.

Damian found her expression oddly endearing.

He chuckled softly to himself, then got back in the car and drove directly to the location he'd been given.

It was an upscale bar, the most exclusive kind in the city, a place frequented only by the wealthy elite.

Damian was evidently a well-known regular. The moment he stepped through the entrance, staff members swarmed around him obsequiously. "Mr. Langley! Which private room would you prefer tonight? Oh, and that sweet girl you inquired about last time, she's available right now. Shall we have her come up to join you?"

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Awakened Housewife: ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

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Chapter 79 A Showdown

"No need. I'll find my own company," Damian retorted without a moment's hesitation.

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"Of course, Mr. Langley. But if you change your mind, just say the word. Those girls you described last time -the 'sexy', 'cute', and 'innocent' ones-are all available tonight."

Damian shot the server a withering look. "When did I ever use those words to describe anyone?"

The server's eyes flickered nervously toward Scarlett before returning to Damian. "You're absolutely right, Mr. Langley. My mistake. You never said anything of the sort."

Damian declared, puffing out his chest slightly, "Exactly. A man of unwavering loyalty like me is a rare find in all of Rivergate."

The server offered a few strained, awkward laughs before hastily retreating.

Worried that Scarlett might have believed the server's implications, Damian hurried to explain himself, "Sweetheart, don't pay any attention to the gossip people spread about me. You should judge me based on your own experiences. Get to know the real me, and you'll see I'm a man capable of profound, devoted love."

Scarlett tilted her face up to look at him, her expression remaining largely impassive, offering no clue to her thoughts.

Seeing her utter indifference, Damian let out a defeated sigh. "Fine, whatever. Sooner or later, you'll come to appreciate my exceptional qualities."

With that declaration, Damian slung a proprietary arm around Scarlett's shoulders and guided her deeper into the pulsating heart of the bar.

They came to a stop before a private room. Without any preamble, Damian delivered a sharp kick that sent the door flying open with a loud bang.

The moment the door crashed against the wall, all conversation inside ceased, and every head turned toward the entrance.

Scarlett's eyes quickly scanned the scene. Vincent was seated centrally on a large, plush sofa, flanked by a few associates. Daniel and Harris were positioned closest to him.

Both Daniel and Harris had scantily clad women nestled against them-beautiful, provocatively dressed companions who seemed to be spilling out of their outfits as they lounged familiarly against the men.

Under the weight of the stunned silence, Damian swaggered into the room, pulling Scarlett along with him. He marched directly up to the low table in the center. With a look of pure defiance in his eyes, he swept his arm across its surface, sending an array of bottles and glasses flying to the floor in a cacophony of shattering glass and splashing liquor.

The violent sound of breaking glass was jarring enough to make everyone's hair stand on end.

Damian then produced a silk scarf from seemingly nowhere and meticulously spread it over the now- cleared table. He shoved the heavy table aside with surprising strength and gently, yet firmly, pushed Scarlett down to sit upon it.

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Finished

Seated now, Scarlett faced Vincent and his companions directly. She could see with perfect clarity that Vincent's face showed not a flicker of emotion. He looked utterly composed, completely unfazed by the dramatic intrusion.

Daniel, in stark contrast, looked absolutely livid, his expression thunderous enough to bite nails. Harris merely frowned deeply, his displeasure evident.

The two women accompanying Daniel and Harris looked thoroughly frightened. They hastily tugged at their revealing necklines and watched Damian with wide, wary eyes.

"Alright, sweetheart," Damian announced, his tone deceptively casual though his expression was menacing. "If you have something to say, ask him right here, right now. I'm standing guard today. If anyone dares to interrupt you, they'll have to answer to me first."

His icy gaze swept over everyone seated on the opposite sofa, his dominating presence making the very air feel thick and heavy.

Vincent remained completely unresponsive. He merely lifted his eyes to look at Damian, and despite the fact that he was the one looking up from a seated position, he somehow managed to project an aura of being utterly untouchable.

Scarlett's gaze also swept over him, and she was mildly surprised to see he was alone, without a female companion. The reason quickly became apparent-he was likely preserving his fidelity for Sabrina.

Daniel shot to his feet, his face flushed with anger. "Damian! Just who the hell do you think you are, bursting in here and causing a scene like this?"

Damian raised a single, mocking eyebrow, his sharp gaze locking onto Daniel. "Yeah, I'm causing a scene. What exactly are you going to do about it?"

Daniel was left speechless, sputtering with rage. He began aggressively rolling up his sleeves, ready for a physical confrontation, but Harris quickly grabbed his arm. "Daniel, don't be an idiot. Think before you act."

Daniel was about to call Harris a coward, but before he could get the words out, Vincent's calm, authoritative voice cut through the tension. "Everyone, leave. Now."

Harris promptly hauled a still-protesting Daniel out of the room, followed quickly by the two frightened women. This left only Scarlett, Vincent, and Damian in the suddenly vast and silent space.

Scarlett turned her head, tilting it slightly toward Damian in a clear, unspoken signal for him to leave as well.

Damian was visibly reluctant. He plopped down right beside her on the silk-covered table. "No way. I'm not comfortable leaving you here alone with him."

Scarlett's eyes held a stubborn, unwavering resolve. Seeing this, Damian finally capitulated. He stood up and said, "Alright, fine. I'll wait right outside the door. If you need anything-anything-just call my name."

"Mmm. Thank you," Scarlett replied quietly.

Damian bent down, his long, elegantly shaped fingers gently brushing a stray lock of hair from her face and tucking it behind her ear. His voice dropped, laced with a mixture of jest and something unexpectedly sincere. "We're practically family now, so drop the formalities. If I had to lay down my life for you, I'd

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Chapter 79 A Showdown

consider it a worthy trade."

Scarlett was long accustomed to Damian's theatrical declarations. She didn't take his words to heart.

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Once Damian had exited, closing the door softly behind him, the room plunged into a profound silence

once more.

Scarlett looked at Vincent. He showed no inclination to initiate conversation, simply sitting there in stoic

silence.

Neither of them spoke. The quiet in the room felt thick, heavy, and intensely strange.

But since securing a moment alone with him was such a rare opportunity, Scarlett decided to break the stifling silence. “Vincent, can we talk?” she began.

She wasn’t attempting to humble herself; she simply wanted to test the waters, to see if he was even willing to engage in a dialogue.

If not, she saw no point in wasting her breath or her time.

Vincent finally glanced at Scarlett, his expression unreadably calm. After a long, deliberate pause, he asked, “What is it you wish to discuss?”

Scarlett decided to waste no time with pleasantries. She got straight to the heart of the matter. “Was it you who orchestrated the professional difficulties Nathan and Violet are currently facing?”

Vincent didn’t bother with denial or evasion. “Yes,” he confirmed flatly. “It was me.”

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Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

Dylan

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Chapter 80 Terms of Surrender

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She had already braced herself for his answer, yet hearing the cold, unadorned truth still managed to send a fresh, sharp pang through Scarlett's heart.

She stubbornly pressed Vincent, her voice tight. "Why? Why are you doing this?"

Vincent offered no explanation. He simply averted his gaze and stated dismissively, "No particular reason."

Unable to decipher his motives and struggling to contain her rising frustration, Scarlett demanded, "What is it that you actually want from me, Vincent?"

Vincent remained silent for a long, heavy moment. Finally, his eyes met hers again. "Vanessa needs you," he stated, as if that single sentence explained everything.

He had used this exact reasoning before, just prior to her being sent to the countryside—that Vanessa missed her cooking.

Suddenly, the pieces clicked into place for Scarlett. A flood of recent memories rushed back, providing a bitter context.

"So," she began, her voice laced with cold understanding, "if I fulfill my role as Vanessa's mother to your satisfaction, you will cease your attacks on my family?"

Vincent's gaze remained steady on her. "Yes."

The bluntness of his confirmation caught Scarlett off guard, stunning her into momentary silence. "Alright," she finally acquiesced, the word tasting like ash.

Vincent's reply was a noncommittal grunt. "Mm."

Even after reaching this unsettling agreement, Scarlett felt no sense of security. She needed specifics. "How long will it take for you to lift the pressure from Nathan and Violet? When will their careers be safe?"

Vincent's answer was deliberately vague, designed to keep her off-balance. "That depends entirely on your performance."

Hearing this, the stark reality of her position settled over her—Vincent would always hold the power in their dynamic. He controlled the terms.

But she was backed into a corner, with no viable alternatives. A profound sense of helplessness washed over her as she silently accepted his conditions.

There seemed to be little left to discuss, yet Scarlett felt compelled to voice the question that had been gnawing at her. "Why have you been deliberately avoiding me ever since I returned? You wouldn't even grant me a few minutes to discuss this."

Vincent's answer was another quiet, infuriating evasion. "No reason."

He certainly couldn't tell her the truth-that every time he looked at her, the image of her with Damian flashed in his mind, stirring a possessiveness and anger he refused to acknowledge.

But in the end, his reasons were irrelevant. He claimed there was none, and Scarlett lacked the energy to

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pry further.

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Finished

She simply looked at him, her expression solemn and resolute. "I am Vanessa's mother. I will fulfill the responsibilities that come with that title. But that is all I will do."

Her tone was flat and devoid of emotion, a stark contrast to the warmth and joy she had once radiated when speaking of their daughter.

Having said her piece, Scarlett stood up and walked purposefully toward the door.

Vincent watched her retreating figure, a nagging feeling that she had changed profoundly tugging at him, though he couldn't quite pinpoint the exact nature of the transformation.

Outside the private room, as Scarlett opened the door, she found Damian leaning casually against the doorframe. An unlit cigarette dangled from his fingers. His cool, assessing gaze was fixed on Daniel and Harris, who stood a short distance away, his posture radiating a confidence that suggested he could handle both of them single-handedly.

It was clear something had transpired in the hallway. Both Daniel and Harris looked thoroughly irritated and on edge.

Undoubtedly, a significant confrontation had occurred outside while Scarlett and Vincent were talking.

Judging by the territorial way Damian held the space, he had clearly emerged the victor in whatever exchange had taken place.

There was a time when Scarlett would have gone out of her way to be deferential to Daniel and Harris. Now, she found she couldn't muster even a shred of regard for them.

Witnessing the visible frustration Damian had provoked in them afforded her a small, private sense of satisfaction.

She didn't grant Daniel or Harris so much as a glance. Instead, she turned directly to Damian. "Mr. Langley, let's go."

Damian immediately stepped forward and wrapped a firm, possessive arm around Scarlett's waist. He leaned in close, inhaling the faint, sweet scent of her shampoo as if savoring a rare perfume, his expression one of pure, unadulterated appreciation.

After a moment of this, he smirked and replied, "Anything you say, sweetheart."

His proximity was overwhelming. Scarlett instinctively brought her hand up to push his arm away, but he only tightened his grip. "Come on, babe," he murmured, his voice a low tease, "we've got an audience. Humor me a little, won't you?"

Scarlett let her hand fall back to her side, resigning herself to his hold.

It's just a body. And it's only an arm around my waist. It means nothing.

But to Daniel and Harris, the sight of Damian holding Scarlett in such an intimate, claiming manner was a blatant and galling provocation.

Daniel, never one to filter his thoughts, was boiling over. He immediately spat out, "Utterly shameless."

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Chapter 80 Terms of Surrender

Finished

Damian heard the insult but, instead of taking offense, he threw his head back and laughed, a loud, theatrical sound that seemed deliberately designed to escalate the tension.

Emboldened, Daniel suddenly shouted at Scarlett's retreating back, "Scarlett! Do you have any idea how many women Damian has been with?"

Scarlett halted her steps but didn't turn around. Her voice was eerily calm when she replied, "I have no idea, nor do I care to know."

Daniel let out a derisive laugh and took a step closer. "You think shacking up with him will lead to a good life? Let me enlighten you-you're just the latest rose in his endless garden. You'll be discarded like all the others."

Scarlett remained silent, refusing to be drawn into his taunts.

Daniel mistook her silence for scare. He was about to launch another verbal assault when Damian smoothly shifted position, placing himself squarely as a shield between Scarlett and Daniel.

He looked at Daniel with a mocking, raised eyebrow. "Well, well, Mr. Lennox. You seem to know an awful lot about my personal life. Tell me, am I one of the roses in your garden, too?"

Daniel shot him a venomous glare. "Who's even talking to you?"

Damian's amusement only seemed to grow. "What's the matter? Did I strike a little too close to home?"

Daniel's face darkened with pure fury. He barked out the name like a curse. "Damian!"

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Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

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Chapter 81 Provocations

Finished

Damian scratched his ear nonchalantly and shrugged, projecting an air of complete indifference. “I can hear you perfectly fine. No need to shout. You might scare my girl,” he said, his tone dripping with mock

concern.

Daniel’s face flushed a deep, furious red. He had always considered himself fairly audacious, but Damian operated on a whole other level of shamelessness.

Seeing Daniel rendered speechless and fuming only widened Damian’s grin. “What’s the matter? Are you getting angry?” he taunted.

Before Daniel could muster a retort, Damian cut him off again, his eyes sparkling with malicious amusement. “You being angry is exactly what I wanted to see. This is highly entertaining for me.”

Throwing his head back with a loud, triumphant laugh, Damian tightened his arm around Scarlett’s waist and swaggered out of the private room with an exaggerated confidence.

A few minutes later, Vincent emerged from the booth.

Daniel spotted him immediately and launched into a heated complaint. “That Damian is utterly insufferable! He makes me want to punch his smug face in.”

Vincent’s gaze was distant, his eyes holding a complex, unreadable emotion, though his voice remained perfectly level. “He has the capital to be arrogant.”

Daniel grumbled, unwilling to let it go, “But Vincent, he’s openly pursuing your wife.”

Vincent showed no visible reaction. His tone was flat, almost detached. “Let him do as he pleases.”

Daniel opened his mouth to protest further, but Vincent had already turned and begun walking away, his posture making it clear the discussion was over.

It was evident Vincent had no intention of entertaining the topic any longer.

Just then, Harris approached and laid a calming hand on Daniel's shoulder. "Vincent knows what he's doing. Don't aggravate yourself over it. He never held any real affection for Scarlett anyway. Perhaps this development is for the best."

Daniel frowned deeply. "But Vanessa is fond of her..."

Harris let out a soft sigh. "She will always be Vanessa's mother, Daniel. That fact remains."

Daniel muttered under his breath, his annoyance palpable, "She's not worthy of the title. In my opinion, Sabrina is the only one truly suited for that role. Sabrina is the only woman who should stand beside Vincent."

Outside the bar, Damian kept his arm firmly around Scarlett's waist all the way to the curb.

Scarlett, lost in her own tumultuous thoughts, barely registered the contact.

She only snapped back to the present when Damian reached to open the car door for her. She took a quick step back, creating distance. "Mr. Langley," she began, her voice quiet but firm, "thank you for your help

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: Chapter 81 Provocations

tonight."

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Damian could sense the turmoil beneath her calm exterior, but he knew better than to press her. He leaned down, bringing his face level with hers, a soft, engaging smile in his eyes. "You keep thanking me. Doesn't that feel a bit too formal between us?"

Scarlett took another subconscious step back, her lower back pressing against the cool metal of the car. She eyed him with renewed wariness. "So, what do you suggest...?"

Before she could finish her sentence, Damian straightened up to his full height, his expression turning uncharacteristically serious. "Spend the night with me. How does that sound?"

He wasn't joking. His gaze was intense and utterly sincere.

Scarlett's heart gave an involuntary lurch. "Anything but that," she said quickly. "I'll agree to anything else."

Damian studied her face for a long moment. "Then have dinner with me. A proper dinner."

Feeling indebted to him for his intervention, Scarlett found herself nodding. "Alright. Dinner."

A triumphant, mischievous glint returned to Damian's eyes. He laughed softly. "I guess Zachary was right. The best way to get a woman to agree to a simple request is to ask for something outrageous first."

Realizing she had been deftly maneuvered, Scarlett's brow furrowed in mild irritation. "Damian, you...!"

Damian quickly locked his eyes with hers, his smile deepening into something more genuine. He stared intently at her and asked, "Are you angry with me?"

Scarlett didn't answer, instead turning her face away to avoid his penetrating gaze.

Damian chuckled, the sound warm. His handsome features softened with a rare sincerity. "You know, you look incredibly cute when you're flustered. It makes me want to kiss you."

As he spoke these words, he leaned in toward her once more, closing the distance between them.

His sudden advance sent Scarlett's heart racing. She instinctively turned her head further away, evading his proximity.

Simultaneously, her voice emerged, laced with a plea she hadn't intended. "Damian, I... I just want to go

home."

The vulnerable note in her voice instantly disarmed him, melting away any intention to tease her further.

Damian immediately straightened up, putting a respectful amount of space between them. His voice was gentle when he spoke again. "Let me drive you home."

Scarlett shook her head, her resolve firming. "No, it's fine. I'll take a taxi."

She promptly stepped to the curb and hailed a passing cab.

Within moments, she was inside, and the vehicle sped off into the night.

Damian stood on the sidewalk, watching the taxi's taillights disappear around a corner. A gentle, unguarded smile touched his lips, and a rare warmth lingered in his eyes.

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Chapter 81 Provocations

Inside the taxi, Scarlett sat by the window, her gaze blankly taking in the blur of city lights and the anonymous crowds flowing along the sidewalks.

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On a massive digital screen attached to a nearby shopping mall, a high-end advertisement was playing. It featured Sabrina, seated elegantly at a grand piano. Her cascading, perfectly styled curly hair fell down her back. Her makeup was flawless, accentuating her delicate features, and she wore a long, figure-hugging gown. The dress was a fiery, passionate red that made her porcelain skin seem to glow from within. Her body was slender and graceful, and the faint, enigmatic smile gracing her lips was utterly captivating.

Pedestrians had stopped to watch, their faces filled with naked admiration and envy.

There was no denying it-Sabrina was breathtakingly beautiful. Her mere presence on the screen commanded the attention of everyone in the vicinity.

She was the complete package-gentle, intelligent, stunningly gorgeous. And with Vincent's powerful patronage and care, she embodied the kind of woman others could only aspire to become, a seemingly unattainable ideal.

Scarlett was acutely aware that she couldn't possibly compete with such perfection. Yet, this rational understanding did nothing to ease the heavy, aching sorrow that settled deep within her chest.

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Awakened Housewife. Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 82

Chapter 82 A New Path

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Finished

Her marriage to Vincent had been so difficult to attain, yet in the end, she found herself utterly incapable of holding onto it. Now, even her only daughter seemed to be slipping further from her grasp with each passing day.

Dwelling on these painful truths sent a sharp, twisting ache through Scarlett's heart.

Before she could even process the wave of emotion, hot, silent tears were already streaming down her face, tracing paths of salt and sorrow.

How could her heart not feel utterly shattered?

After all, she had loved Vincent with every fiber of her being for so many long years.

When she arrived back at Theron Manor, her family was still awake, waiting for her in the living room. Scarlett sat with them for a short while, making quiet small talk, before finally excusing herself and heading upstairs to her room.

She was just about to begin her nightly routine when her phone rang. Glancing at the screen, she saw it was an unfamiliar number.

Despite her weariness, she answered. The voice on the other end was one she recognized immediately.

"Scarlett?"

Hearing Thomas' voice, Scarlett quickly composed herself. "Mr. Newman? Yes, it's me, Scarlett."

Thomas sounded genuinely pleased. "Finally, I got through to you! I was hoping to ask if you've given any further thought to pursuing graduate studies?"

Scarlett hesitated. Her initial instinct was to politely decline, but after a moment of internal struggle, she decided to honor her true desires. "Yes," she affirmed, her voice gaining strength. "I have been considering it."

Thomas pressed further, a note of hope in his tone. "Have you given any thought to applying for my doctoral program specifically?"

Scarlett replied honestly, “Mr. Newman, I would be honored to be your student. But I’m concerned that I might not be a competitive candidate...”

She was no longer a fresh-faced graduate. Compared to the new, bright-eyed students straight out of university, she felt she held no particular advantage.

Thomas chuckled warmly. “It’s the intention that matters most. As long as you have the desire and the drive, there is always a chance. The entrance examination is in less than three months. Do you feel confident in your ability to prepare?”

Memories of her academic excellence during her undergraduate years, where she had graduated at the top of her class, flooded back to her. A spark of her old determination ignited within her. “Mr. Newman,” she said, her voice firming with resolve, “I am confident. I will give it my absolute best effort.”

Thomas sounded delighted. “Excellent! I shall await your good news then. Consider a spot reserved for you.”

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Chapter 82 A New Path

53

Finished

Overwhelmed with gratitude, Scarlett managed, “Thank you so much, Mr. Newman.”

After ending the call, she realized her cheeks were once again wet with tears, but this time, they were tears of hope and renewed purpose.

If it hadn’t been for her decision to marry Vincent all those years ago, she would have pursued graduate studies immediately. She had chosen a different path, one she now deeply regretted.

Having solidified her decision to return to academia, Scarlett called Nolan.

“Nolan,” she began, “I’ve made a decision. I’m going to apply for graduate school.”

Nolan was both surprised and thrilled for her. “Scarlett, that’s wonderful news! I’m genuinely so happy for you.”

Scarlett sniffled, her voice thick with emotion but filled with newfound determination. "I'm going to study hard, Nolan. I'm going to climb as high as I can. I want to be in a position to fight against all the unfairness life throws my way."

Nolan's voice was gentle and reassuring. "Just focus on being the best version of yourself, Scarlett. You are already an incredible person. You don't need to prove anything to anyone by fighting perceived injustices."

Scarlett's nose tingled with emotion. "Thank you, Nolan. Truly."

The next morning, Scarlett arrived at Ravenshade Villa early, long before Vanessa was awake.

She moved quietly through the familiar kitchen, preparing a nutritious breakfast for Vanessa.

Just as she was placing the final dish on the dining table, Lily's voice carried in from the entrance hall. "Good morning, Mr. Stewart! Good morning, Ms. Monroe! You're back!"

Scarlett turned to look. Vincent and Sabrina walked into the main living area, both dressed in matching, high-end athletic wear. Sabrina's hair was pulled back in a sleek, high ponytail that accentuated her slim waist and revealed a hint of toned abdominal muscles. Vincent looked equally impressive, his workout shirt dark with sweat and clinging to a clearly defined, muscular torso.

They entered side-by-side, the very picture of a perfect, power couple-both immensely talented, strikingly attractive, and seemingly made for one another.

Vincent's eyes briefly met Scarlett's, but he offered no greeting. He made a move to head directly upstairs.

But Scarlett called out, stopping him in his tracks. "Vincent, I need to speak with you."

His demeanor softened marginally. He paused and looked at her, his expression neutral. "Go ahead."

Sabrina remained standing close beside Vincent, reaching up with a towel to gently dab the sweat from his temple. Vincent didn't pull away from her touch; instead, a faint, almost imperceptible smile touched his lips as he glanced at her.

The morning sunlight poured through the open doorway, illuminating the two of them, making them appear almost dazzling in their shared radiance.

Scarlett walked directly up to Vincent, pointedly ignoring Sabrina's presence. She addressed him calmly.

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Chapter 82 A New Path

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“From now on, I will come here in the mornings to see to Vanessa’s needs, but I will not be staying in the evenings. I have personal matters that require my attention.”

Her “personal matters” were, of course, her studies-intensive preparation for her graduate school and doctoral program entrance exams. She was determined to excel in the medical field, to reach the very pinnacle of her profession.

Vincent offered no objection to Scarlett’s proposed arrangement. He simply stated, “Do as you see fit. However, when Vanessa requires your presence, you will make yourself available.”

Scarlett hadn’t expected him to agree so readily. “Understood,” she replied.

Vincent then turned his attention to Sabrina, his voice dropping to a more intimate tone. “You should go shower first. I’ll join you shortly.”

Even without a trace of makeup, Sabrina’s beauty was undeniable. A delicate blush colored her cheeks as she replied, “Alright.”

Overhearing their brief, domestic exchange, Scarlett’s mind involuntarily conjured unwelcome images.

Was Vincent planning to join Sabrina in the shower?

They had likely explored every form of intimacy together.

It was a stark contrast to her own rushed and perfunctory experiences with Vincent.

After leaving Ravenshade Villa, Scarlett proceeded directly to the hospital for her shift.

Once her duties were complete, she met Nolan for dinner as planned.

If she was serious about gaining admission to a top-tier graduate and doctoral program, she knew she would need Nolan’s guidance and advice.

Nolan was in exceptionally high spirits. He enthusiastically ordered several of his favorite dishes. Seated across the small table from her, the two friends fell into easy, familiar conversation, their shared history and common goals creating a comfortable and supportive atmosphere

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Awakened Housewife. Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 83

Chapter 83 Catching Up

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Their conversation flowed effortlessly, weaving through shared memories of their university days, the demanding nature of their medical studies, the immense challenges of pursuing graduate degrees and doctorates, and the nerve-wracking experience of performing their first solo surgeries.

Nolan proved to be an animated storyteller, regaling her with a series of humorous and insightful anecdotes from his own professional journey.

Naturally, he didn't neglect to offer Scarlett practical advice for her upcoming academic endeavors, though he was careful not to dwell excessively on the pressures of graduate school, keenly aware of not wanting to overwhelm her.

The atmosphere between them was lively, comfortable, and refreshingly easygoing.

Scarlett realized it had been a very long time since she had felt so genuinely at ease and unguarded.

Listening to Nolan recount the various struggles inherent to advanced medical training, Scarlett felt a complex mix of sympathy for his past challenges and a sharp, poignant twinge of envy.

If I hadn't chosen marriage back then, if I had continued my studies instead, how different might my life be now?

Perhaps she would now be moving in the same professional circles as Nolan, her career equally advanced.

But she knew such thoughts were merely wistful speculation, a path not taken.

She had already missed one crucial opportunity. This time, she was determined to seize the second chance Thomas was extending to her.

As their meal was drawing to a close, Nolan placed a small, carefully wrapped parcel on the table between them. He smiled warmly at Scarlett. "I've put a few essential reference books in here for you. Take your time studying them. I've already gone through and highlighted the most critical sections. With your foundational knowledge and intellect, three months of dedicated preparation will be more than enough for you to rank among the successful candidates."

Scarlett accepted the gift, a wave of profound gratitude washing over her. "Thank you, Nolan. Truly."

Nolan offered her an encouraging smile, expressing his eagerness to soon see her become a significant and respected figure within the medical community.

Meanwhile, at the restaurant's entrance, Vincent and Sabrina made their way inside together.

A waiter, recognizing Vincent immediately, hurried over to greet them. "Mr. Stewart, your usual table?"

Vincent replied with his characteristic cool detachment, "Yes."

"Right this way, Mr. Stewart, Ms. Monroe."

The waiter led them to a table situated two booths behind where Scarlett and Nolan were seated. The distance and the restaurant's ambient noise ensured neither party could clearly hear the other's conversation.

Scarlett was seated with her back to the newcomers. As Vincent settled into his seat, his gaze swept casually

Chapter 83 Catching Up

across the room and, to his mild surprise, landed on the familiar profile of Scarlett.

He registered her presence but deliberately suppressed any reaction.

Finished

After all, Scarlett had already given her word that she would return to Ravensshade Villa whenever Vanessa required her.

Therefore, in his mind, no further connection or obligation existed between them.

Having reached this conclusion, Vincent simply chose to ignore Scarlett's presence entirely.

Sabrina, seated directly across from Vincent and engrossed in the menu, remained completely unaware of

Scarlett.

On the other side of the restaurant, however, Nolan had a clear view of Vincent and Sabrina's arrival.

Since Nolan and Vincent were now facing each other indirectly, both men acknowledged the other's presence with a fleeting glance, yet neither saw fit to mention it to their respective companions.

After they had placed their order, Vincent handed the tablet back to the waiter and added a specific request. "And a glass of water for the lady, please. With just a small amount of sugar."

The waiter beamed. "So attentive to your girlfriend's preferences, Mr. Stewart. It's very sweet."

Sabrina's cheeks flushed with a delicate pink at the waiter's assumption, while Vincent maintained his composed demeanor, offering neither confirmation nor denial of the implied relationship.

When their food arrived, Vincent was in the midst of serving a portion to Sabrina when his eyes inadvertently drifted toward Scarlett once more. She appeared to be laughing at something Nolan had said, her head bowed slightly, one hand covering her mouth. Her laughter was light, clear, and utterly

unselfconscious.

In his memory, Scarlett's laughter had always seemed ingratiating and forced when directed at him, a sound he had found intensely irritating.

But this laughter... it was different. It sounded genuine, carefree.

He couldn't pinpoint the exact reason, but a sudden, sharp wave of irritation washed over him.

Sabrina, perceptive as always, noticed the subtle shift in his mood. "Is everything alright, Vincent?" she asked quietly.

Vincent forced a thin smile. "It's nothing. You mentioned you were hungry. Let's eat."

Sabrina, sensing his desire to drop the subject, simply nodded. "Alright."

A short while later, Scarlett and Nolan concluded their meal and stood to leave together.

Perhaps deliberately aiming to avoid an awkward encounter between Scarlett and Vincent, Nolan subtly guided her toward a different exit, one that wouldn't take them past Vincent's table.

Vincent observed their departure from the corner of his eye but offered no outward reaction, internally dismissing the entire scene.

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Chapter 83 Catching Up

Finished

Let Scarlett do as she pleases. As long as Vanessa's well-being is secured, her actions are of no consequence to me.

The next morning, true to her revised schedule, Scarlett arrived at Ravensshade Villa early once again.

Her presence wasn't solely driven by the agreement with Vincent; a deeper, maternal sense of duty had also taken root. She felt she owed it to Vanessa to be present and reliable.

Even if Vanessa's affection for her had waned, the fact remained that she was her mother, and with that came an inherent responsibility.

Over the past few days, Scarlett’s perspective on “being good to Vanessa” had undergone a subtle but significant shift.

She had come to view it not as a transactional obligation to Vincent, but simply as the right thing to do for her child.

With this change in mindset, the act of preparing breakfast for Vanessa no longer felt strained or performative.

This morning, she had prepared pancake and a pot of slowly simmered oatmeal.

While washing her hands at the sink, Scarlett suddenly felt an unexpected draft of cool air against her back, followed by the distinct, soft sound of a zipper sliding down.

The dress she was wearing featured a back zipper. Evidently, as she had bent over repeatedly while shaping the pancake, the zipper had gradually worked its way loose, now exposing a significant portion of her back.

It was at that precise moment that Vincent returned from his morning run. Seeing the kitchen lights ablaze, and with the memory of Scarlett’s dinner with Nolan the previous night fresh in his mind, he found himself curiously wondering if she would still honor her commitment to prepare Vanessa’s breakfast. He walked toward the kitchen.

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18:09 Thu, Jan 8

G

Awakened Housewife Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 84

Chapter 84 An Unzipped Moment

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Finished

He peered cautiously around the kitchen doorframe, his gaze sneaking into the room. Scarlett stood at the sink with her back to him, meticulously washing her hands. The zipper running down the back of her dress had slipped halfway down, revealing a long, slender expanse of pale, smooth skin.

Vincent lingered in the doorway for a long moment, but Scarlett, absorbed in her task, remained completely unaware of his presence.

The sight of her unexpectedly bare back stirred a strange restlessness within him. Almost against his own will, he found himself stepping fully into the kitchen.

When he came to a stop directly behind her, he reached out, his fingers gently grasping the small metal tab of her zipper, and slowly drew it back up to its proper place.

Scarlett started violently at the sudden contact. She spun around, her eyes wide with initial alarm, but the moment they landed on Vincent, the tension visibly drained from her shoulders, replaced by a shaky, relieved exhale.

Watching the rapid transition from fear to calm on her face, a faint, almost imperceptible smirk touched Vincent's lips. He wasn't entirely sure why he felt the need to explain, but the words came out anyway. "Your zipper was undone. I merely rectified the situation."

Scarlett looked at him, and for an inexplicable reason, she suddenly felt an immense, invisible chasm stretching between them.

It took her a few seconds to find her voice. "Thank you," she finally managed, her tone quiet.

Vincent's eyes drifted to the pot of oatmeal simmering gently on the stove, its contents soft and creamy. Seemingly out of the blue, he stated, "From now on, include my breakfast in your preparations while you're here."

Scarlett turned her attention back to the pot, watching the fragrant plumes of vapor rise. "There is always a sufficient quantity prepared. You are welcome to help yourself if you wish," she replied, her focus seemingly entirely on the food.

Vincent remained standing close behind her. "Okay," he acknowledged softly.

The oatmeal looked plump and inviting, and a steady cloud of steam continued to billow forth.

But just then, the building pressure of the steam began to violently rattle the steamer's lid, causing scalding hot water droplets to sputter and spit in all directions.

Before Scarlett could even process the danger, the force of the steam dislodged the lid completely, sending it tumbling downward toward her.

Her instinct was to flinch away, but suddenly, a pair of strong arms encircled her waist from behind, pulling her securely against a solid frame while simultaneously reaching forward to deftly catch the falling lid.

In an instant, Scarlett found herself completely enveloped in Vincent's embrace. He was so much taller; his chin came to rest naturally on her shoulder, his broad chest pressed firmly against her back, his arms a protective cage around her waist as he held the rescued lid.

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Chapter 84 An Unzipped Moment

Finished

From any observer's perspective, it would have looked like a tender, intimate hug-him holding her close, shielding her.

With the lid safely caught, Scarlett remained trapped within the circle of his arms.

It was the first time in what felt like an eternity that they had been this physically close.

It was only in this unexpected proximity that Vincent became acutely aware of how soft Scarlett's body felt against his, and how pleasant, how uniquely her scent was.

His chin was nestled in the hollow of her shoulder, and with every breath, he drew in that faint, gentle, and strangely comforting fragrance.

Scarlett, acutely conscious of being held captive in Vincent's arms, froze completely, her entire body going as stiff as a board.

The feel of his chest against her back was like a mountain of burning coal, radiating an intense heat that threatened to melt her very resolve.

Neither of them spoke for a long, suspended moment.

Time itself seemed to hold its breath. If not for the water still dripping from the retrieved lid, or the persistent roar of the gas flame beneath the pot...

A treacherous thought crossed Scarlett's mind. If only time could freeze right here, perhaps it wouldn't be such a terrible thing.

But it was merely a fleeting, foolish fantasy.

There was no universe in which her relationship with Vincent could ever be described as "beautiful" or "right".

She didn't know how much time had passed, but the tension finally became unbearable. "Vincent," she called out, her voice barely a whisper.

The sound of her voice seemed to break the spell. Vincent carefully set the lid down on a clear spot on the stove, took a deliberate step back, and released his hold on her waist.

"Next time, place a weight on the lid. It's a safety hazard otherwise. Be more careful." His voice was utterly flat, devoid of any discernible emotion-as if he were merely commenting on the weather.

But Scarlett knew him better than that. He never offered such mundane advice, least of all to her.

For a bewildering second, she wondered if she was trapped in some bizarre dream.

Yet the lingering, burning sensation across her back where his chest had been insisted that this was all starkly real.

After a prolonged pause, she finally summoned a quiet, "Okay."

A moment later, she heard the sound of Vincent's retreating footsteps as he left the kitchen.

Only then did the tense rigidity finally leave Scarlett's body. The areas his arms had encircled and where his chest had pressed against her still tingled strangely, almost numb.

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Chapter 84 An Unzipped Moment

Finishers

The oatmeal wasn't fully cooked yet. Scarlett moved to replace the lid, but as she pulled her hand back, the tip of her finger accidentally brushed against the scalding-hot metal rim of the pot.

A sharp, searing pain lanced through her. She gasped sharply and couldn't suppress a small, pined cry.

Vincent, who had just stepped out of the kitchen, heard her sharp intake of breath. He halted his steps. He hadn't planned on turning back, but before his rational mind could intervene, his feet were carrying him back into the kitchen.

He came to stand behind her once more. "What happened?" he asked his tone brusque

Scarlett had already thrust her injured finger under the stream of cold water from the fauces. The sound of his voice started her, but she quickly schooled her features into neutrality. “It’s nothing” she replied, her voice deliberately even.

Vincent, with his significant height advantage, leaned slightly and could clearly see the angry red burd blossoming on her fingertip. He didn’t press for further explanation Without another word he turned on his heel and left the kitchen for the second time.

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Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 85

Chapter 85 The Gown and the Invitation

53

Finished

But the moment he stepped across the threshold, Vincent nearly collided with Lily, who was approaching the kitchen.

Vincent instructed her tersely, “Scarlett has injured her hand. Go inside and assist her with the wound.”

Inside the kitchen, Scarlett overheard the muffled voices at the door. She frowned, utterly perplexed by Vincent’s sudden, uncharacteristic concern.

There was no logical answer to be found, so Scarlett simply dismissed the thought from her mind.

A moment later, Lily entered and efficiently cleaned and dressed the small burn on her finger.

By the time the ministrations were complete, the oatmeal was perfectly cooked.

As Scarlett turned off the stove, she could hear the distinct, easy cadence of Vincent and Sabrina’s conversation drifting in from the hallway. She couldn’t make out the words, but the tone was unmistakably relaxed and familiar, a comfortable back-and-forth that spoke of deep intimacy.

Yes, the difference between being loved and not being loved is a chasm as wide as the ocean.

Throughout their five years of marriage, Scarlett had never felt she could simply be her authentic self around Vincent. She was in a constant state of high alert, second-guessing her every action, perpetually anxious about whether she was behaving correctly or if she might inadvertently provoke his displeasure.

Consequently, she had lived those years in a state of perpetual tension and profound exhaustion.

But no matter how hard she tried, the fundamental truth remained unchanged-Vincent simply did not love her.

Just then, Vincent abruptly walked back into the kitchen. Seeing Scarlett standing motionless by the stove, seemingly lost in thought, he grasped her arm to get her attention. "An urgent matter has come up at the office. I need to leave immediately. Once Vanessa is awake, can you take her to school?"

Scarlett didn't even turn to look at him. She simply nodded, her voice flat. "Okay."

Vincent's gaze lingered on her profile. Her expression was placid, so utterly calm and devoid of its usual nervous energy that he found it completely unreadable.

Ultimately, he chose not to question her further.

He departed with Sabrina.

The next afternoon, Scarlett had a rare day off from the hospital.

She was just preparing to leave for the library, the book Nolan had given her tucked securely under her arm, when her phone suddenly vibrated.

She glanced at the screen-it was a call from Damian.

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Chapter 85 The Gown and the Invitation

Remembering the significant favor he had done for her recently, she felt obligated to answer.

Standing by the window, hugging the textbook to her chest, she asked quietly, "What is it, Damian?"

Finished

It was unusually quiet on Damian's end. He adopted his characteristic, teasing drawl. "Hey there, beautiful. Been missing me?"

Scarlett's brow furrowed slightly. "Damian, if you have a specific reason for calling, please just state it."

She didn't think Damian was a bad person, but his relentless, flirtatious banter was something she simply didn't know how to handle.

"Aww, sweetheart, if you don't miss me, my poor heart is going to shatter into a million pieces," he sighed with theatrical despair, feigning profound sadness.

Scarlett, at a loss for how to respond to such antics, remained silent.

When it became clear she wouldn't play along, Damian finally dropped the act. "Alright, alright, I'll stop teasing. I need you to accompany me to a banquet tonight."

Recalling the promise she had made him, Scarlett agreed without argument. "Okay."

Damian added, "I'll have an appropriate outfit delivered to you. I'll pick you up promptly at six. Someone will also contact you to handle hair and makeup."

He had clearly arranged every detail, leaving Scarlett with nothing to worry about.

"Alright," Scarlett affirmed, holding the phone.

Damian instantly switched back to his playful persona. "Okay, gorgeous, I'm hanging up now. Don't forget to think of me!"

After the call ended, Scarlett hailed a taxi and returned to Theron Manor.

She hadn't been home long before the promised stylists made contact.

The process of hair and makeup took nearly three hours. Scarlett's limbs grew stiff, and her backside felt numb from sitting for so long.

Finally, the makeup artist stepped back and announced, "Ms. Theron, we are all finished. You can open your eyes."

Scarlett did so and looked into the proffered mirror. Her eyes, enhanced by skillful makeup, appeared brighter and more luminous. Her teeth seemed whiter against the subtle blush that colored her cheeks, her brows were perfectly sculpted, and her lashes were curled to dramatic effect. The overall makeup was delicate and refined, making her skin appear flawlessly fair and giving her eyes a captivating depth and sparkle.

Staring at the reflection of the stunning woman gazing back, Scarlett felt a wave of disorientation.

It had been years-an eternity, it felt like-since she had taken the time to be professionally groomed like this. During her university days, she had been widely considered one of the most beautiful girls on campus, with no shortage of male admirers. But after meeting Vincent, all of that had gradually faded into irrelevance.

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Chapter 85 The Gown and the Invitation

The memory brought a sudden, unexpected sting to her eyes.

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Finished

The makeup artist, noticing the sheen of unshed tears, asked nervously, “Ms. Theron, is there something unsatisfactory about the final look?”

Scarlett forced a light laugh, quickly composing herself. “No, not at all. It’s just... I look so different. It’s a pleasant surprise, that’s all.”

The makeup artist visibly relaxed, discreetly wiping a bead of sweat from her temple. Before arriving, Damian had made it abundantly clear that if Scarlett was not completely satisfied, there would be severe consequences.

Once the makeup was confirmed, the artist helped Scarlett into the evening gown.

Damian had selected a brilliant, fiery red dress-bold, striking, and utterly daring. It was a style Scarlett would never have chosen for herself, convinced she couldn’t carry it off. But the moment the fabric settled on her frame, the makeup artist’s eyes widened with genuine admiration and a touch of envy. “Ms. Theron, this

gown was made for you. It fits you as if it were tailored precisely to your form.”

Scarlett did, indeed, possess an excellent figure-generous curves in all the right places, balanced by a slender waist and graceful limbs. Standing before the full-length mirror, even she was taken aback by the vision she presented.

Ever since Vanessa’s birth, she had not attended any formal social gatherings or events.

But beneath the surface, she was still a woman. The desire to stand confidently in the spotlight, to be seen and appreciated, had never truly died.

At six o'clock precisely, Damian's car pulled up at Theron Manor, right on schedule.

With a final adjustment from the makeup artist, Scarlett took a deep breath and walked out of the manor to meet him.

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Awakened Housewife Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 86

Chapter 86 The Crimson Entrance

It was still relatively early in the evening, so Scarlett's family had not yet returned home. When she departed, only a handful of household staff were present to witness her leave.

Finished

Concerned that her family might worry if they discovered her absence, Scarlett specifically instructed the servants, "If Nathan inquiries about my whereabouts, please inform him that I have gone to the library to study for my examinations."

The servants smiled and nodded obediently, assuring her they would relay the message as directed.

The moment Scarlett stepped through the grand entrance of Theron Manor, her eyes landed on Damian's car—a rare, sleek Lamborghini that exuded power and audacity.

It was autumn. The sun was beginning its descent, casting a warm, orange glow across the landscape. Damian stood with his back to the fading light, leaning casually against the driver's side door with his arms crossed. His trench coat was unfastened, billowing slightly in the gentle breeze.

Hearing the crisp sound of her heels on the pavement, he lifted his head. There, framed by the sunset's radiance, stood Scarlett. The brilliant crimson of her gown made her skin appear almost porcelain in its paleness. Her makeup was immaculate, applied with an artistry that made her look like a movie star gracing a premier red carpet. The overall effect was nothing short of breathtaking.

She possessed a presence that was simply impossible to overlook.

Damian, who typically cultivated an air of detached indifference, made no attempt to conceal his astonishment. His gaze swept over her, filled with open curiosity and frank admiration, thoroughly appreciating the vision she presented.

Yet his look held a purity of appreciation, devoid of any lecherous undertones.

Feeling slightly self-conscious under his intense scrutiny, Scarlett asked quietly, “Is this look... not suitable?”

Damian finally pushed himself away from the car and walked over to her, formally offering his arm. “On the contrary,” he told her, his voice losing its usual flippancy, “it is perfectly suitable. The dress is spectacular, you look... utterly magnificent, and the makeup is exquisite...”

His words tumbled out in an uncharacteristically disjointed manner, a fact he himself seemed to notice.

Scarlett didn’t reply verbally. She simply rested her hand lightly in the crook of his offered arm.

Damian used the opportunity to steal another, longer glance at her profile, then his expression turned unexpectedly earnest. “What I meant to say, honestly, is that the dress pales in comparison to the woman wearing it.”

Scarlett understood the compliment, a faint blush coloring her cheeks. “Thank you,” she murmured.

Dressed in his trench coat, Damian exuded a laid-back sophistication. When he wasn’t actively teasing her, he carried the distinct aura of an intelligent, cultured gentleman. His hands were well-shaped, and his features were undeniably handsome.

Scarlett’s figure was exceptional. The deep V-neckline of her dress, while elegant, offered a glimpse of cleavage. As Damian’s gaze inadvertently dipped, he caught a view he knew he shouldn’t linger on.

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Chapter 86 The Crimson Entrance

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Acting swiftly, he shrugged off his trench coat and draped it carefully over her shoulders. "There's a bit of a chill in the air this evening," he stated, his tone leaving no room for argument. "You should wear this."

Scarlett frowned slightly, mumbling under her breath, "But it's not actually cold."

Despite it being autumn, the nights in Rivergate were still relatively mild.

Damian didn't engage in a debate. He simply opened the passenger door for her. "Please, get in."

Scarlett pulled the borrowed coat a little tighter around herself and moved to enter the car, but paused suddenly. "Damian," she asked, "what exactly is the nature of this event tonight?"

Damian informed her plainly, "It's a charity auction. Many of Rivergate's most influential figures will be in attendance."

Scarlett's frown deepened. "A lot of influential people?"

Damian immediately grasped her concern. "Yes," he confirmed, "Vincent will likely be there as well."

Hearing Vincent's name, Scarlett felt an immediate wave of reluctance. "In that case, I don't think I should go."

Damian looked at her, his expression firm. "You gave me your word, Scarlett. Backing out at the last moment isn't like you."

Scarlett fell silent. He was right; she had promised.

In the end, she slid into the luxurious passenger seat without another word of protest.

Upon their arrival at the auction venue, the forecourt was already lined with an impressive array of luxury vehicles. Small clusters of elegantly dressed guests mingled near the entrance, their chatter filling the air.

As Damian's distinctive Lamborghini purred to a halt, a uniformed valet hurried over to open the driver's door. "Mr. Langley, your designated parking is ready," the young man said respectfully.

"Thank you," Damian replied with a cool nod as he stepped out.

He then circled the car, opened the passenger door himself, and offered his arm once more to Scarlett.

Scarlett accepted his arm, using her other hand to gracefully gather the hem of her long gown.

As she emerged from the low-slung sports car, she immediately drew the attention of a group of young women nearby. Seeing the notoriously unattainable Damian He treating her with such old-world gallantry, their eyes filled with a mixture of shock and unmistakable envy.

A wave of hushed whispers began to circulate.

“Who is she? I’ve never seen her on the social circuit before!”

“Exactly! And Damian never brings the same woman to these functions twice.”

“It’s true, his plus-one is always a new face. But have you ever seen him actually open a car door for any of

them?”

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“Now that you mention it, never. This is a first. Who is she? Is she even on the social register?”

The gossip, while not shouted, was certainly not discreet. Scarlett caught the gist of it.

But she found she didn’t particularly care.

Once Scarlett was fully out of the car, Damian leaned down close to her ear, his voice a low murmur meant only for her. “Pay no mind to the chatter. Where there are crowds, there will be rumors. From the moment you agreed to accompany me tonight, you are the only woman here whose opinion holds any weight for me.”

It was impossible to tell how much sincerity lay behind his words, but Scarlett chose not to read too deeply

into them.

Arm in arm, they made their way into the grand auction hall, the focus of countless watching eyes.

The auction had not yet officially commenced, but the stage was already set, lined with display cases showcasing the evening's lots, most of which appeared to be fine jewelry.

Guests were beginning to find their assigned seats, while reporters and photographers busily set up their equipment at the rear of the hall.

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Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 87

Chapter 87 Front Row Seats

Damian guided Scarlett to their assigned seats in the prestigious front row.

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The auction hall was vast, capable of accommodating over a thousand guests, yet only four prime seats were positioned directly at the front.

Damian and Scarlett now occupied two of these coveted spots.

In contrast to the bustling entrance, the interior of the hall was considerably quieter. No overt gossiping or commotion disturbed the formal atmosphere.

However, this relative calm was soon broken by a fresh wave of excited murmurs and shouts that rolled in from the entrance.

“It’s Vincent! Vincent is here with his muse!”

That was the clearest part of the excited chatter that Scarlett could discern.

A moment later, Vincent and Sabrina made their appearance at the main doorway.

Vincent was impeccably dressed in a custom-tailored black suit that emphasized his tall, lean frame and sharply defined features. Sabrina stood beside him, a vision in a flowing white evening gown, her silver crystal heels clicking softly on the polished floor. Her long, carefully styled curls cascaded down her back, and she exuded an aura of intelligent grace and gentle charm.

Their mere presence was enough to command the attention of every individual in the room.

Even the seasoned reporters scrambled, redirecting their cameras to capture the powerful couple, the rapid-fire clicking of shutters creating a staccato rhythm.

Under the weight of collective scrutiny, Sabrina gracefully linked her arm through Vincent's, and together they proceeded to the two remaining prime seats and settled into them.

As they took their places, both Vincent and Sabrina registered the presence of Scarlett and Damian seated nearby.

Yet, no words were exchanged between the two parties. They maintained a facade of complete unfamiliarity, as if they were perfect strangers.

Vincent and Scarlett's marital status had been deliberately kept private. Beyond their immediate families and closest confidants, virtually no one in their social circles was aware they were legally bound.

To be perfectly honest, theirs was a marriage in name only, lacking the substance of a true partnership.

The hall, which had been relatively subdued, now hummed with a renewed, sotto voce energy following Vincent and Sabrina's high-profile entrance.

"Vincent treats Sabrina so exceptionally. He escorts her to every significant event. What I wouldn't give to be in her position!"

"Isn't that the truth? Sadly, that's not a destiny granted to just anyone. There seems to be only one woman who holds that title for him."

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Chapter 87 Front Row Seats

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“Just the thought of it fills me with envy. Vincent is, after all, the most affluent and influential man in all of Rivergate.”

“But you have to admit, they look perfectly matched. His black tuxedo, her white gown—they complement each other flawlessly.”

Scarlett and Sabrina were now seated in the two center seats, with Vincent and Damian occupying the flanking positions.

When Sabrina had sat down, Scarlett had instinctively shifted her posture, subtly leaning closer toward Damian. She had no desire for any proximity to Sabrina.

She simply could not muster any fondness for the woman she perceived as the architect of her marriage’s ruin.

With both Vincent and Damian—two of the city’s most prominent figures—now present, the event’s host, specially invited by the auction organizers, took the stage and began detailing the auction procedures and presenting the items for bid.

Damian, noticing Scarlett’s subtle lean in his direction, allowed a self-satisfied smirk to touch his lips. He then bent his head toward her, his voice dropping to a conspiratorial whisper. “See anything on the docket that catches your eye?”

Scarlett merely shook her head, her gaze fixed ahead. “No,” she replied.

Her tone was distant, clearly indicating a troubled state of mind.

Damian understood the source of her mood perfectly—the close proximity of Vincent and Sabrina was undoubtedly affecting her. He leaned in even closer, his voice a low, intimate murmur near her ear. “Tell me, sweetheart... do you prefer being on top, or on the bottom?”

Scarlett jolted upright in her seat, her cheeks instantly flooding with a deep, mortified crimson. She swiveled her head to glare at him. “You...!”

Damian straightened up as well, meeting her furious gaze with a cocky, thoroughly amused grin.

He then adopted a serious expression. “You see? Your mind immediately went to the gutter. I was merely inquiring about your seating preference for optimal viewing.”

Scarlett finally released a tense breath she hadn’t realized she was holding. But then, Damian suddenly closed the distance between them again, his lips hovering dangerously close to her cheek. He resumed his previous line of questioning, his tone now dripping with playful, devil-may-care insinuation. “So, now that the misunderstanding is cleared up... my original question stands. Do you prefer being on top, or on the bottom?”

“Damian, you are utterly...” Scarlett sputtered, jabbing an accusatory finger toward him, her anger palpable.

Damian merely laughed, a rich, unapologetic sound. He captured her pointed finger, enfolding her hand and pressing it firmly against his own chest. His eyes locked onto hers with unnerving intensity. “When you’re evaluating a man, Scarlett, don’t rely solely on your eyes. You must use your heart... and your body. You can’t truly discern a man’s quality just by his appearance. The most revealing assessment often happens... in bed. Don’t you agree, darling?”

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Chapter 87 Front Row Seats

He leaned in yet again, his body now almost flush against her side, his gaze devouring every minute reaction on her face.

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Scarlett’s face was on fire, the blush having spread to the very tips of her ears and down her neck. She stubbornly refused to look at him, pretending instead to be completely absorbed in the host’s presentation on stage.

In reality, she didn’t hear a single word the host was saying.

Meanwhile, Vincent reclined languidly in his seat, one leg crossed casually over the other, the picture of relaxed composure as he listened to the host.

Occasionally, he would turn his head toward Sabrina, leaning in to share a quiet remark. Their soft, shared conversation and easy intimacy only served to draw more admiring glances from those around them.

However, during one of these exchanges with Sabrina, Vincent’s gaze inadvertently drifted across the aisle, landing on Scarlett and Damian. They were sitting in disturbingly close proximity. Damian was all but draped over her, Scarlett’s face was flushed a telling shade of red, and her hand was trapped against his chest.

To any observer, they appeared to be a deeply involved, intimate couple.

Vincent clearly interpreted the scene this way as well.

For a reason he couldn’t quite articulate, a sharp, unwelcome pang of discomfort, cold and unsettling, lanced through him.

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Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 88

Chapter 88 Bidding War

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However, the moment was soon interrupted as the host began presenting the next lot—a bracelet crafted from the emerald.

Sabrina's eyes immediately sparkled with desire upon seeing it. "Vincent, look at that bracelet! Isn't it absolutely exquisite?"

Vincent was pulled from his reverie and finally directed his attention to the stage. The emerald bracelet shimmered under the intense spotlights, casting a soft, mesmerizing green glow that, for some inexplicable reason, stirred a strange restlessness within him.

That particular shade of green... Was it trying to trigger a forgotten memory?

"Vincent?" Sabrina gently nudged his elbow when he remained silent for an extended moment.

He forced a thin smile as he returned to the present. "Hmm?"

Sabrina pointed toward the stage and repeated her question with renewed enthusiasm. "What do you think? Isn't it beautiful?"

Vincent's reply was perfunctory. "Yes, it's very beautiful."

The bracelet was, objectively, stunning. The color was a rich, vibrant green, the clarity was flawless, and the stone was impeccably clean without a single visible fissure. Its immense value was apparent even to a casual observer.

On the other side of the aisle, Scarlett had also noticed the bracelet. While the previous items had been presented, her expression had remained utterly impassive, her face a mask of icy indifference, as if all those glittering jewels were merely gaudy trinkets.

But the moment the emerald bracelet appeared, a distinct spark of interest finally ignited in her eyes.

None of these subtle shifts in her demeanor escaped Damian's keen observation.

His intuition had been correct-Scarlett was genuinely drawn to that particular piece.

The moment the host announced the opening bid, Damian immediately raised his paddle and called out in a clear, confident voice, "Ten million!"

The starting price had been five million dollars. Damian had unhesitatingly doubled it.

The instant his bid echoed through the hall, a palpable freeze fell over the guests seated behind him. No one dared to raise their paddle in response.

Seeing this, Scarlett quickly turned to him, her voice a hushed, urgent whisper. "Damian, I have no need for jewelry like that. Please, put the paddle down."

She reached out, attempting to wrest the bidding paddle from his grasp.

But Damian held it aloft, keeping it easily out of her reach.

To the surrounding audience, their quiet struggle appeared to be a playful, intimate tussle between a

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Chapter 88 Bidding War

couple.

Naturally, Vincent and Sabrina also took note of their animated interaction.

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Damian, noticing Vincent and Sabrina's glances in their direction, leaned conspiratorially close to Scarlett's car. "They're watching us," he murmured.

Scarlett knew precisely whom he meant. Her body instantly stiffened, and she ceased her attempts to grab the paddle.

Just as she straightened her posture, the host on stage began the final countdown, preparing to bring down the gavel.

Simultaneously, from the corner of her eye, Scarlett caught sight of Sabrina whispering something to

Vincent.

They weren't seated far away, but the ambient noise in the room prevented her from discerning their words.

At the very moment the auctioneer's arm began its descent, Vincent suddenly raised his own paddle, his voice cutting crisply through the air. "Fifteen million!"

The entire hall erupted in a wave of astonished murmurs.

"My god, raising by five million in one go? Are they trying to launch this bracelet into orbit?"

"Let's be realistic, the piece is worth five, maybe six million at most. At these prices, the winner is just setting money on fire."

"What do you know? He's clearly trying to win his lady's favor. What's a few million to a man like him?"

"Precisely! Neither Vincent nor Damian is exactly short on cash."

"This is like watching titans clash. Let's just hope we mere mortals don't get crushed in the process."

The auctioneer's eyes gleamed with undisguised delight at Vincent's counter-bid, and he promptly restarted the countdown.

As the timer ticked down once more, Damian abruptly raised his paddle again. "Twenty million!"

Vincent did not yield. "Twenty-five million!"

Damian countered immediately. "Thirty million!"

Vincent's response was swift. "Thirty-five million!"

Back and forth they went, a silent war of wealth and wills waged with numbered paddles.

Scarlett listened as the numbers escalated into the absurd, and a cold dread began to coil in the pit of her stomach. She grabbed Damian's arm, turning to face him fully, her eyes pleading. "Damian, please, you have to stop."

He looked down at her, gently patted her hand reassuringly, and offered a confident smile. "If it brings you joy, then any price is justified."

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Chapter 88 Bidding Wat

With that, he raised his paddle yet again.

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A hushed, almost reverent silence had fallen over the entire auction hall as Vincent and Damian relentlessly drove the price higher and higher.

A space designed for a thousand people was now so quiet one could have heard a pin drop.

Scarlett could feel her own heart hammering violently against her ribs. She was terrified that Damian was on the verge of squandering an obscene fortune on a single piece of jewelry.

Whether his motivation was to compete with Vincent or simply a genuine desire to fulfill her apparent wish was irrelevant.

In the end, it was a contest with no real winner.

Ultimately, a bracelet with a realistic value of a few million saw its price skyrocket to one hundred million.

Vincent continued to raise the stakes, but Damian's patience for the game was visibly wearing thin.

Scarlett sensed that Damian was nearing his limit. After all, pouring such an exorbitant sum into an objectively overvalued item was simply poor business acumen.

Damian was, first and foremost, a shrewd businessman. He understood the principle of knowing when to walk away.

As for Vincent, Scarlett understood his motivation all too well. He was bidding so aggressively precisely because Sabrina desired the bracelet. He would spare no expense to secure it for her.

If Sabrina wanted it, Vincent would undoubtedly move heaven and earth to get it.

One hundred million dollars was nothing. For her, he would likely have gone to a billion without a second thought.

When Vincent placed the final bid at 105 million dollars, Damian finally, and definitively, laid his paddle down on his lap.

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Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 89

Chapter 89 Unlimited Markup

A wave of profound relief washed over Scarlett as she witnessed Damian finally lower his paddle.

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But no sooner had she exhaled than Damian, standing beside her, suddenly got to his feet. Without a moment's hesitation, he walked straight toward the auction's proxy desk.

Panic surged in Scarlett's chest as she watched Damian head for the proxy desk.

Acting on pure instinct, she called out, her voice sharp with anxiety, “Damian! What are you doing? Get down from there immediately!”

Both Vincent and Sabrina heard Scarlett’s distressed shout.

Damian clearly heard it too, but he didn’t pause. When he reached the proxy desk, he leaned over to whisper something to his dedicated auction assistant, while handing over his buyer verification card.

In the next second, the auction assistant held up the exclusive bid paddle representing Damian and announced loudly to the auctioneer. “On behalf of Mr. Langley, bid of 110 million dollars.”

Everyone present knew that Damian’s jump bid was no accident. Under the rules, as long as Vincent continued to bid, Damian could have his assistant follow up at any time. The initiative in this bidding war had already fallen firmly into his hands.

Down in the audience, Scarlett’s stomach twisted into knots of dread.

Vincent was a formidable, unyielding force, and this item was something Sabrina clearly desired. Damian’s dramatic gesture was a blatant, public provocation aimed directly at Vincent—a declaration of an all-out financial war.

If this continued, both men would be driven into a fiscal stalemate, a classic lose-lose scenario.

The entire spectacle felt utterly pointless, yet Scarlett knew she was powerless to dissuade Damian. She could only watch the scene unfold with a growing sense of helplessness.

By throwing down this gauntlet, Damian had effectively shifted the burden of the next move onto Vincent, and the crowd buzzed with frenzied speculation.

Some argued that Vincent, with his vast wealth, would undoubtedly counter, refusing to be publicly bested.

Others speculated that doing so would be financial suicide, and that the pragmatic businessman in him would force a retreat.

Sabrina remained seated, her posture composed, but her clasped hands hidden in her lap were slick with cold sweat.

If Vincent failed to raise his bid, it would mean that she had lost this unspoken contest to Scarlett.

The battle between the two men was, in essence, also a proxy war between the two women.

Every eye in the hall was now fixed on Vincent, awaiting his response.

The auctioneer began the final countdown on stage. When the last call echoed through the silent hall,

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Chapter 89 Unlimited Markup

Vincent's paddle remained firmly on his lap. He did not bid again.

It was over. A wave of sighs and murmurs rippled through the crowd.

Finished

While Vincent's withdrawal was the financially prudent decision, there were still hushed whispers that a man of his stature and fortune should not have conceded so readily.

Vincent ignored the surrounding chatter. He sat with an air of unruffled calm, his gaze steady and fixed on Damian, who still stood triumphant on the stage.

Sabrina felt a bitter lump form in her throat at Vincent's surrender.

She was deeply displeased with the outcome, but she maintained her silence.

If one must lose, it was best to do so with grace.

Besides, she couldn't logically fault Vincent's decision.

Scarlett, who had technically emerged victorious in this covert, feminine duel, felt no sense of triumph. Instead, a deeper unease and anxiety settled over her.

Sitting rigidly in her seat, she felt a cold shiver trace a path down her spine.

After the bracelet was officially secured, Damian descended from the stage and resumed his seat beside Sabrina. Noticing Scarlett's distant, preoccupied expression, he leaned toward her with a playful smile. "Why the long face? Not pleased with the outcome?"

Scarlett didn't answer his question directly. She turned her head to look at him instead. "Can we leave soon?" she asked, her voice low.

Damian reached out and gently twirled a loose strand of her hair around his finger, his touch intimate. He leaned in closer, a teasing smirk playing on his lips. “What’s the rush, darling? Eager to get to the hotel with me?”

Scarlett’s cheeks flushed a deep, furious crimson. She shot him a glare filled with reproach, saying nothing, but her eyes spoke volumes of her anger and frustration.

Just then, the host announced that the auction would resume with the next lot.

Damian understood the true source of her irritation, but he made no move to address it.

With the auction still in progress, Scarlett couldn’t simply get up and leave. She had no choice but to remain seated, fuming silently.

Seeing her obvious displeasure, Damian’s own interest in the remaining auction items visibly waned.

The remainder of the event passed in a blur. Once it concluded, the event staff gracefully guided the VIP guests to an adjacent, lavishly appointed reception hall.,

Inside, long tables were laden with fine wines, champagne, fresh fruit, delicate pastries, and an array

of

gourmet snacks...

Damian escorted Scarlett inside. The moment they entered, a group of businessmen immediately

surrounded them.

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Chapter 89 Unlimited Markup

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“Mr. Langley! Aren’t you going to introduce us to this stunning vision beside you? Worried we might try to steal her away?” one portly man joked.

“Come now, it’s not that. He’s just being his usual secretive self,” another chimed in with a laugh.

“Precisely! Mr. Langley always plays his cards so close to his chest.”

The men who approached all had business dealings with Damian, so this level of familiar ribbing was commonplace.

But on this occasion, Damian seemed to take their comments to heart. He gently pulled Scarlett from where she stood slightly behind him and drew her to his side, introducing her to the group with uncharacteristic openness. “This one is different,” he stated, his tone leaving no room for doubt. “She’s the one I genuinely care about.”

The group erupted in knowing laughter, nodding and winking as if they understood perfectly.

Damian’s reputation as a notorious playboy preceded him. Any woman seen on his arm was temporarily labeled as “the one”.

These men had heard this line from him countless times before and attributed no particular significance to it.

Scarlett, knowing Damian’s nature all too well, certainly didn’t take his declaration seriously.

Sensing their skepticism, Damian felt compelled to reiterate, his tone more earnest this time. “I’m being serious. She is the one.”

The men laughed again, humoring him with placating nods. “Of course, of course! She’s the one.”

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Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 90

Chapter 90 A Dance of Defiance

“So, tell us,” one of the men prodded, “what does this special lady of yours do for a living?”

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Damian, accustomed to his reputation as a perpetual joker who treated nothing seriously, had for once spoken a profound truth. Yet everyone had dismissed it as just another one of his quips. The irony stung, though upon reflection, he couldn’t fault them for their perception; he had, after all, carefully cultivated it.

He reached for two glasses of wine from a passing server’s tray, handing one to Scarlett and keeping the other for himself.

After taking a deliberate sip, Damian offered a faint, almost wistful smile. “What does she do?” he repeated. “She saves lives.”

The moment the words left his mouth, the group immediately launched into a fresh round of effusive, yet utterly hollow, praise. “A doctor! How noble! What a commendable profession!”

Their compliments rang false, their insincerity palpable.

Businessmen of their caliber-how many truly held genuine respect for the medical profession? A senior doctor’s monthly salary was a pittance compared to what these men earned in a single day.

Damian didn’t take offense. Instead, he turned his gaze fully toward Scarlett, who had remained silent throughout the exchange. “You all sound utterly disingenuous,” he stated calmly, his eyes locked on her. “But it doesn’t matter. I truly believe she is remarkable.”

He meant every syllable, and the sincerity etched on his face was more pronounced than anyone present had ever witnessed.

Scarlett glanced at him, her brow furrowed in a mixture of concern and profound discomfort.

But the next instant, the men surrounding Damian burst into another round of hearty laughter. Who knew what they were thinking-perhaps they believed he was simply perfecting his role as the devoted suitor, laying it on thicker than ever before.

Even amidst their open snickering, Damian's expression remained solemn. He continued to stare intently at Scarlett, as if trying to telepathically communicate that his words were not a performance.

He held her gaze with a stubborn intensity, refusing to break eye contact, as if waiting for a flicker of belief

from her.

Scarlett began to feel a flutter of panic. She reached out and gave his arm a gentle, almost pleading push. "Can we please leave soon?" she asked, her voice barely above a whisper,

The raw seriousness in his eyes unnerved her. She desperately wanted to believe this was all just another one of his elaborate games.

They stood in a silent standoff. As Scarlett grew increasingly flustered, on the verge of turning to flee the uncomfortable situation, Damian finally pressed his lips together and relented. "It's still early. There's a scheduled photo session later," he informed her, his voice softer now.

Her heart, which had been hammering wildly against her ribs, finally began to slow its frantic pace. The unease remained, but it was now tempered by a slight sense of reprieve. "Alright, then," she conceded, her

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Chapter 90 A Dance of Defiance

voice still tinged with nervousness.

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Since she was already here, she felt compelled to honor her promise and see the evening through with Damian until the very end. She owed him that much.

Just then, the beautiful, haunting strains of a piano sonata began to drift into the lounge from the adjacent auction hall.

Scarlett froze upon hearing it. She recognized the piece immediately; it was Sabrina playing.

The captivating music drew the attention of everyone in the lounge, their conversations faltering as they turned toward the source.

The hallway connecting the two spaces quickly became crowded with guests trying to get a better view. Damian, concerned that Scarlett might be jostled, swiftly wrapped a protective arm around her shoulders and pulled her securely to his side.

Simultaneously, hushed whispers began to circulate among the people packed into the corridor.

“If I’m not mistaken, the one playing the piano is the young lady Mr. Stewart is always seen with, correct?”

“Yes, that’s her. He’s completely devoted to her-escorts her to every significant event.”

“And you have to admit, she possesses that gentle, refined elegance, and she’s genuinely talented. It’s no wonder Mr. Stewart is so taken with her. She must be truly exceptional.

At that moment, Vincent was standing near the stage in the auction hall, his eyes closed, seemingly immersed in the music. He appeared oblivious to the murmuring crowd gathering behind him.

But to every observer, it painted a picture of perfect, shared romance between him and Sabrina.

Scarlett stood at the rear of the gathered crowd. Through the gaps between shoulders, she caught a fleeting glimpse of Vincent’s profile near the stage.

She had no insight into his thoughts, but his mere presence there, sharing this moment with Sabrina, screamed one undeniable truth to the world-Sabrina was the woman who held his heart.

As the piano piece swelled toward its emotional climax, the whispers evolved into open, admiring

commentary.

“Mr. Stewart certainly has an eye for quality. She’s stunning, and she plays with such feeling. If I were a man, I’d be utterly captivated too.”

“It’s not just the piano! Look at her figure! Honestly, what in life has she been denied?”

Listening to the relentless praise, Scarlett felt a bitter, humorless laugh bubble in her chest.

Everyone was extolling Sabrina's virtues, but who among them knew she was the very wedge that had shattered Scarlett's marriage?

Beneath that exquisitely beautiful face, Scarlett was certain, lay no kindness of heart.

Damian also found the public adulation difficult to stomach. Scarlett was Vincent's legal wife, yet all anyone saw or celebrated was Sabrina.

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Chapter 90 A Dance of Defiance

Finished

Scarlett had no desire to remain a moment longer. She turned, intent on leaving, but Damian moved swiftly, stepping directly into her path and blocking her exit.

She looked up at him, her frown deepening. "Do you want to see me humiliated as well?" she asked, her voice tight.

Damian simply smiled, sidestepping her question entirely. He took her slender hand in his and said with a charming grin, "With music this beautiful, it would be a crime not to dance, don't you think?"

Before she could protest, Damian slipped his other arm around her waist, drawing her gently but firmly into a dance hold. "Place your hands on my shoulders," he instructed, his voice a soft command.

For reasons she couldn't quite comprehend, Scarlett found herself complying. She lifted her hands and rested them lightly on his broad shoulders. Then, with Damian leading confidently, they began to move together, their steps slowly synchronizing with the melancholic melody still flowing from the auction hall.

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18:12 Thu, Jan 8

Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 91[863 words]

Chapter 91 The Center of Attention

Finished

The Theron family held considerable social standing. Having accompanied Nathan to numerous events since her teens, Scarlett had been waltzing since adolescence. Yet this marked the first time she had ever danced before such a large audience-and with someone of Damian's prominence.

With Damian taking the lead, several other gentlemen began inviting the ladies beside them to join the dance floor.

Soon, more and more couples swirled across the marble floor.

And, inevitably, the whispers began anew.

"Isn't that Damian? Looks like he's showcasing a new companion tonight."

"Indeed, his reputation as a serial charmer is well-earned. He never brings the same woman twice. If it's not his thousandth date, it must be at least his hundredth."

"True, but this one is particularly striking."

"Has he ever arrived with anyone who wasn't? If she weren't exceptionally beautiful, Damian wouldn't even glance her way."

"One must admit, though, they make a visually captivating pair."

"Look at Damian's hand-I swear he's contemplating how to slip it beneath that dress of hers."

The murmurs drifting from behind eventually reached Vincent's ears.

For some inexplicable reason, whenever he heard Damian's name mentioned, an image of Scarlett surfaced in his mind.

He couldn't suppress the sudden, unwelcome curiosity—was the beautiful woman everyone was gossiping about actually her?

Compelled, he turned to look. In the lounge area not far off, several couples moved to the music. His eyes immediately found Scarlett and Damian.

They moved in perfect synchrony-spinning, dipping, drawing closer in flawless harmony with the piano's melody, as if they had danced together for years. Their performance was mesmerizing, and both effortlessly commanded attention in the crowd.

For the first time that evening, Vincent truly saw Scarlett. She wore a bold crimson dress, its vibrancy tempered by her delicate features, creating a striking yet elegant presence.

It dawned on him that the Scarlett he recalled-often stained with milk, her hair perpetually disheveled— could also transform into this vision of grace.

Unconsciously, he simply stared, a peculiar constriction forming in his chest. He couldn't even decipher the strange emotion tightening within him.

A few minutes later, the piano music concluded.

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Chapter 91 The Center of Attention

Thunderous applause resonated through the grand hall.

Finished

Amid the lingering admiration, Sabrina gracefully lifted her gown and approached Vincent. "Vincent"

Vincent watched as Scarlett and Damian separated, though Damian seemed reluctant to release her, taking her hand to guide her toward the buffet tables.

Sabrina followed Vincent's gaze and spotted the pair as well.

Her smile faltered momentarily, but with so many eyes upon them, she simply feigned ignorance and gently shook Vincent's arm. "Vincent, what has captured your attention so completely?"

Vincent snapped back to the present and returned his gaze to Sabrina. "You've finished your performance?"

Sabrina nodded. "Yes."

"Let's depart, then. It's time to leave," Vincent stated.

He began to turn away, but Sabrina quickly caught his arm. "Wait, Vincent, we haven't taken our commemorative photograph yet."

Vincent paused, remaining silent for a long moment before finally conceding, “Well.”

By this time, the evening’s festivities were drawing to a formal close.

Scarlett and Damian stood near the buffet, sampling delicacies and sipping wine. Occasionally, business associates would approach to offer toasts in their direction.

A similar scene unfolded around Vincent and Sabrina.

As the night deepened and the banquet neared its official end, the hosts announced the final group photograph.

Only the most distinguished guests were invited for the picture, so Vincent and Damian’s inclusion was a given.

When the participants arranged themselves, Damian and Scarlett were positioned at the center—not solely due to status, but largely because Damian had been the evening’s most significant benefactor.

They stood directly beside Vincent and Sabrina.

Though the central spot was intended for Damian, he insisted Scarlett take his place. Consequently, Vincent found himself standing immediately next to her.

It was the first time all night they had been in such proximity—so close their hands nearly brushed.

Vincent caught the faint, clean scent of her soap—a simple, fresh fragrance that left him inexplicably wanting to lean closer.

But the photographic session concluded all too quickly.

Once the cameras stopped flashing, a mass exodus began.

Scarlett prepared to leave, but Damian intercepted her. “Darling, allow me to drive you home.”

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Chapter 91 The Center of Attention

His signature flirtatious grin was back, making it impossible to discern his sincerity.

Finished

Before Scarlett could respond, Vincent unexpectedly approached. “Lily just called. She said Vanessa has developed a fever and is repeatedly asking for you.”

Scarlett’s expression shifted instantly to one of concern. “Understood. I’ll return immediately.”

She turned to Damian. “Mr. Langley, I must attend to my daughter, so I’ll be leaving now.”

With that, Scarlett gathered her gown and hurried toward the exit.

Damian swiftly caught up to her. “Sweetheart, let me drive you. And I still need to give you that bracelet we discussed.”

Scarlett stopped and met his gaze with firm resolution. “That bracelet is far too valuable. I cannot accept it.”

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18:12 Thu, Jan 8

Awakened Housewife. Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

Dylan

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 92[935 words]

Chapter 92 An Unwelcome Ride

Finished

Damian’s expression turned uncharacteristically solemn. “I purchased that bracelet specifically for you,” he insisted, his voice losing its usual playful edge. “If you won’t accept it, then its very existence becomes meaningless.”

Scarlett met his gaze steadily. “Damian, you should give it to someone who truly deserves it. That would be fairer-both to you and to the jewelry itself.”

With those carefully chosen words, Scarlett had gracefully deflected any underlying intentions Damian might have harbored.

She couldn't be certain how much of his attention was genuine, but she believed clarity now would prevent complications later.

Nearby, Vincent stood in silence. Though he wasn't directly watching Scarlett, he was acutely aware of her conversation with Damian.

Beside him, Sabrina monitored Vincent's mood with subtle attention. She noted that his apparent indifference toward Scarlett didn't quite match the tension in his posture.

After declining Damian's persistent offer, Scarlett gathered her gown and departed from the ballroom.

Vanessa was ill, and as her mother, Scarlett couldn't suppress her mounting concern.

No matter how deeply Vanessa's words had wounded her, she still desperately wanted Vanessa to be healthy and safe.

Outside the venue, Scarlett waited by the curb for transportation.

Perhaps due to the recent mass departure of guests, securing a taxi proved nearly impossible.

Several minutes passed without a single available car appearing.

Anxiety began to coil tightly in Scarlett's chest. She repeatedly unlocked her phone, only to realize she had no one to call for help.

Just as panic started to set in, Vincent's voice came from behind her. "Scarlett Theron."

He used her full name, his tone deliberately neutral.

Scarlett turned to find Vincent and Sabrina standing together. Sabrina's hand rested possessively on Vincent's arm, their combined presence radiating the image of a perfect couple,

Sabrina glanced at Scarlett, her eyes filled with unspoken curiosity. Vincent addressed Scarlett directly, "We're returning to Ravenshade Villa. You should come with us."

Scarlett scanned the deserted street once more. Her concern for Vanessa overriding her pride, she finally nodded. "Alright."

Vincent's chauffeur pulled the luxury vehicle to the curb.

With three passengers, the seating arrangement became awkward. It would have been inappropriate for

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Chapter 92 An Unwelcome Ride

Scarlett to occupy the rear seats.

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After a moment's consideration, she walked around the vehicle and opened the front passenger door.

Vincent had already opened the rear door. By the time he straightened up, Scarlett was settling into the front seat. The faint smile on his lips froze momentarily before disappearing.

Recovering quickly, he turned to Sabrina with renewed warmth. "Please, get in."

Sabrina's gown trailed elegantly behind her. As she entered the vehicle, part of the fabric remained outside. Noticing this, Vincent immediately bent down and carefully gathered the remaining material, placing it inside with deliberate care before sliding in beside her.

Scarlett sat rigidly in the front, staring fixedly out the window, determined to ignore the couple behind her.

But fate seemed determined to test her resolve. She heard Sabrina's soft complaint to Vincent, "Vincent, I'm getting a slight headache."

Her voice was sweet and delicate, bordering on plaintive.

Through the rearview mirror, Scarlett watched Vincent lean closer to Sabrina. He raised his hand, first touching Sabrina's forehead, then his own, before concluding, "You don't have a fever. You're probably just fatigued from the evening's events. Let me massage your temples for you."

Sabrina smiled gratefully. "Thank you, Vincent."

Vincent returned her smile and guided her to turn her back toward him. His hands then rose to massage her head with practiced ease.

Scarlett observed the entire exchange in the mirror. She had grown accustomed to Vincent's devoted attention toward Sabrina. The sight no longer provoked the sharp pain it once did.

Vincent had never performed such tender gestures for her, yet he offered them so freely to Sabrina.

To him, Sabrina's comfort likely mattered more than his own.

The thought still brought a dull ache to Scarlett's heart. Her eyes stung with unshed tears, but unwilling to reveal her vulnerability, she pretended to focus intently on her phone.

At that moment, a new notification appeared. It was from Damjan.

"Darling, I've already dispatched the bracelet to you by courier. If you truly don't want it, feel free to discard it."

Reading those words, Scarlett felt a heavy weight settle in her chest.

Damian was gambling that she wouldn't casually dispose of something valued at 100 million dollars.

If she didn't throw it away, she would be effectively accepting it.

And once accepted, she couldn't possibly return it to him.

Knowing Damian's nature, once he gave something, he would never take it back.

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Chapter 92 An Unwelcome Ride

Whether his intentions were sincere or merely playful, Scarlett had no desire to be indebted to him.

The more she owed, the more entangled their relationship would become.

Before she could fully process these thoughts, the vehicle came to a smooth stop at the entrance of Ravenshade Villa.

Scarlett quickly exited and hurried inside.

When Vincent emerged, he circled the car to open Sabrina's door, offering his arm for support.

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Sabrina, still constrained by her elegant gown, moved with difficulty, so Vincent allowed her to lean heavily on him.

He was so focused on assisting Sabrina that he completely forgot Scarlett was also wearing a full-length dress.

When Scarlett entered the living room, she found Vanessa crouched by the table, completely absorbed in her toys.

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18:12 Thu, Jan 8 DJ

Awakened Housewife Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 93[975 words]

Chapter 93 A Glimmer of Hope

52

Finished

The sharp click of high heels on the marble floor made Vanessa quickly turn her head. “Sabrina, you’re back -” she began, but the words died in her throat as she froze mid-sentence.

Standing in the doorway was a woman draped in a blazing crimson gown, so breathtakingly stunning that Vanessa was momentarily robbed of speech.

“Who... who are you?” Vanessa stammered, though something about the woman’s features felt deeply familiar. Yet she couldn’t quite trust what her eyes were telling her.

In her memory, Scarlett had never possessed this kind of radiant beauty.

How could this vision of elegance at the doorway possibly be the same person?

They simply stared at one another, the passage of time seeming to suspend around them.

It wasn’t until Vanessa’s toy slipped from her grasp and clattered against the table that Scarlett finally broke, her voice rough with suppressed emotion as she called out, “Vanessa.”

Only then did Vanessa dare to believe it. The beautiful woman before her was truly her mother. She scrambled to her feet, disbelief painted across her delicate features. “Mom?”

Scarlett’s response was a soft, choked whisper. “Yes.”

Seeing Scarlett transformed into this vision of grace, Vanessa couldn’t contain herself. She rushed forward and wrapped her arms tightly around Scarlett’s legs, gazing up with wide, awestruck eyes. “Mom, did you go to a fancy party with Dad tonight?”

Scarlett instinctively began to reach down to embrace Vanessa, but caught herself halfway. She looked down at Vanessa, a complex mixture of bitterness and sorrow swirling within her. “No,” she answered quietly.

Vanessa’s face clouded with confusion. “Then why are you dressed so beautifully?”

Scarlett opened her mouth to offer an explanation, but the words felt hollow and pointless.

So she simply deflected with a quiet, “No particular reason.”

Though still puzzled, Vanessa didn’t press further. She clung to her mother, an unexpected swell of pride rising in her chest.

It turned out Scarlett could be just as beautiful as Sabrina-perhaps even more so.

Scarlett took a moment to compose herself before crouching down to Vanessa's level and taking Vanessa's small, cold hands in her own. "Are you feeling any better now?"

Vanessa looked genuinely surprised. "Huh?"

Scarlett gently smoothed the hair from Vanessa's forehead. "If you're not feeling well, you should be resting in bed. What are you doing sitting out here in the living room?"

Vanessa didn't really want to argue with Scarlett. She certainly couldn't admit she'd been waiting for Sabrina

to return.

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Chapter 93 A Glimmer of Hope

When Vanessa remained silent, Scarlett pressed gently, "Shall I take you upstairs and tuck you in?"

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Vanessa was just forming a response when Vincent's voice cut through from the doorway. "Vanessa, do as your mother says."

The authority in his tone instantly deflated Vanessa's resistance. Her shoulders slumped in resignation. "Okay, fine."

Scarlett could easily guess that Vanessa had likely been waiting for Sabrina in the living room.

But at this point, it hardly seemed to matter who she'd been waiting for.

Taking Vanessa's hand, Scarlett led her toward the staircase. As they ascended, she asked, "Have you brushed your teeth yet?"

Vanessa shook her head, her voice dropping to a mutter. "Not yet."

Her tone made her displeasure abundantly clear.

”

Not wanting to indulge her sulking, Scarlett offered, "Would you like me to help you get ready for bed?"

Vanessa gave a small nod. “Yes, please.”

Once they reached Vanessa’s room, Scarlett moved to the closet to retrieve her pajamas.

But the moment she opened the closet door, she fell completely still.

Noticing Scarlett’s sudden silence, Vanessa turned to look. Her eyes fell upon several sets of Sabrina’s pajamas hanging neatly beside her own.

“Mom,” Vanessa explained quickly, “when you’re not here, Sabrina worries I’ll have bad dreams. So sometimes she sleeps in here with me.”

Scarlett stared at the multiple sets of pajamas that clearly belonged to Sabrina. Was it really just “sometimes”?

She didn’t need to think deeply to recognize Vanessa’s deception.

The realization that her own child would lie to protect another woman felt like a thousand needles piercing Scarlett’s heart simultaneously, yet she could only clench her jaw and endure the pain.

Her grip tightened on the closet door handle as she fought to steady her breathing.

Meanwhile, Vanessa approached and stood beside Scarlett, looking up at her with pleading eyes. “Mom, are you staying here tonight?”

Scarlett looked down at Vanessa. Though Vanessa’s expression held complex emotions, Scarlett chose to ignore them, answering simply, “Yes. Since you’re not feeling well, I’ll stay with you tonight.”

Vanessa’s brow furrowed. “Mom, did Dad tell you I was sick?”

Scarlett pulled out Vanessa’s pajamas and replied evenly, “Yes.”

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Chapter 93 A Glimmer of Hope

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#4 Finished

Hearing that Vincent had been the source of the information, Vanessa didn't dare say anything more.

After a moment's thought, she suddenly remembered something. "Then, Mom, please wait for me. I'm just going downstairs to get a glass of milk. I'll be right back."

It was true that Vanessa had a habit of drinking milk before bed, but traditionally it was Scarlett who brought it to her room.

During Scarlett's absence from Ravensshade Villa, Lily had been the one to deliver it. There was truly no need for Vanessa to go downstairs herself.

Scarlett could easily guess the real reason Vanessa wanted to go downstairs.

After Vanessa hurried out, Scarlett remained seated on the small sofa, holding Vanessa's pajamas, lost in a daze for several long minutes.

Still constrained by her elegant evening gown, which made movement difficult, she finally rose and returned to the closet to search for her own pajamas.

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18:13 Thu, Jan 8

Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 94

Chapter 94 The Scent of Betrayal

52

Finished

After what felt like an eternity of searching, she finally discovered an old pajamas tucked away in the back- the same one she used to wear nightly while caring for Vanessa. It had

originally been a soft pale yellow, but after countless washes over the years, it had faded to a dull, lifeless off-white.

If this were Sabrina's closet, there would certainly be no place for such worn-out sleepwear.

But she was Scarlett. When it came to her, nobody paid attention to these minor details.

She changed out of her elegant evening gown and slipped into the pajamas she hadn't worn in ages. With careful, almost reverent movements, she folded the expensive dress and placed it securely in her bag.

That gown had been a gift from Damian. She resolved to find an appropriate opportunity to return it to him.

Vanessa still hadn't returned, so Scarlett decided to proceed with her own nighttime routine. She stepped into the shower, completing her ablutions quickly and efficiently in under ten minutes.

When she emerged from the steamy bathroom, Vanessa remained conspicuously absent.

A growing sense of unease prompted Scarlett to leave the bedroom.

Just as she prepared to descend the stairs, her eyes fell upon Vanessa and Sabrina sitting together in the living room below.

At that moment, Vanessa was perched comfortably on Sabrina's lap, clinging to her arm while whining in a pleading tone, "Sabrina, please don't be angry with me! I really didn't know Mom would come home tonight. Next time, I promise I'll sleep in your room again, okay?"

Sabrina pretended to be offended, turning her face away in a show of silent treatment.

Seeing that Sabrina was ignoring her, Vanessa straightened up and pressed her cheek urgently against Sabrina's, her voice trembling with desperation. "Sabrina, please don't ignore me like this?"

"Come on, Sabrina, please smile for me! Look at me, please!" Vanessa began making exaggerated silly faces, pulling out all the stops to coax a smile from Sabrina.

Vanessa employed every tactic in her arsenal, determined to see Sabrina's expression soften.

Watching this entire scene unfold from her vantage point on the staircase, Scarlett felt a bitter, aching emptiness spread through her chest.

She remembered when Vanessa was just learning to form words-how she would stay awake day and night talking with Vanessa, responding to every babble, terrified of making her child feel even momentarily ignored or uncomfortable.

Yet all that devotion and effort now felt like a cruel, meaningless joke.

If making Sabrina happy required Vanessa to get down on her knees and beg, Vanessa would probably do so without a moment's hesitation.

The thought brought fresh tears to Scarlett's eyes that she struggled to hold back.

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Chapter 94 The Scent of Betrayal

Unable to bear watching any longer, she turned and walked toward Vincent's room, suddenly feeling parched and in need of water.

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Finished

After drinking her fill and returning to Vanessa's room, she found Vanessa just emerging from the staircase.

Spotting Scarlett, Vanessa called out with a hint of guilt in her voice, "Mom?"

Scarlett looked at Vanessa, who was growing into a young woman before her eyes, and thought of how she'd just witnessed her groveling before Sabrina. The pain in her heart intensified into a sharp, twisting

sensation.

Yet there was nothing she could do. Both Vanessa and Vincent clearly preferred Sabrina's company.

"Mom, where did you go just now?" Vanessa approached, slipping her small hand trustingly into Scarlett's palm.

Scarlett immediately understood what Vanessa was really asking.

Vanessa was testing her, trying to determine whether she had overheard the conversation with Sabrina downstairs.

But things were different now. Scarlett had learned to accept the painful realities of her situation. If Vanessa didn't want her to know something, she would simply pretend ignorance.

"I just went to the bedroom to get my pajamas and take a shower," she answered calmly.

As she spoke, Scarlett watched Vanessa's expression closely. When she saw the visible relief wash over Vanessa's features, the ache in her heart deepened.

Hand in hand, they walked back to the bedroom together.

Vanessa announced, "Mom, I finished my milk. Let's get ready for bed now."

Scarlett gently withdrew her hand from Vanessa's grasp, replying softly, "Alright."

Noticing that Scarlett had pulled away, Vanessa looked down at her now-empty palm, experiencing a strange, unnamable bitterness she couldn't quite comprehend.

Scarlett entered the bathroom and turned on the shower.

Even as the hot water began to flow, she didn't call for Vanessa to join her.

She was simply too tired. She didn't want to call out anymore.

Surprisingly, Vanessa obediently gathered her pajamas and entered the bathroom without being summoned.

Soon enough, Scarlett had finished bathing Vanessa.

After carrying Vanessa back to bed, Scarlett said simply, "Go to sleep now."

Her tone suggested she was preparing to leave.

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Chapter 94 The Scent of Betrayal

But Vanessa quickly called out, "Mom, aren't you going to sleep here with me tonight?"

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Finished

Though Vanessa had grown accustomed to Sabrina's company, she would have been equally happy to have Scarlett stay the night.

Scarlett refused without hesitation. "No, I'll sleep on the couch tonight."

The blankets carried the distinct scent of Sabrina's perfume, and Scarlett detested that fragrance.

It wasn't just Vanessa-Vincent carried the same scent these days.

Her husband and daughter, who had once belonged solely to her, were hers no longer.

Since they all clearly preferred Sabrina, there seemed little point in caring anymore.

Vanessa, who had finally managed to cheer Sabrina up and was in a rare good mood, had even been willing to let Scarlett share the bed with her.

But she never expected Scarlett to reject the offer.

Stunned, Vanessa watched as Scarlett settled onto the small sofa. Without concern for whether Vanessa was properly situated in bed, Scarlett reached over and turned off the main lights..

Only the soft glow of the bedside lamp remained, casting dim shadows throughout the room while still illuminating everything within.

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Awakened Housewife Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 95

Chapter 95 Vanessa's Tantrum and Scarlett's Heartbreak

52

Finished

Vanessa was clearly fuming, but in the end, she could only flop onto the mattress with a resigned sigh.

Children's tempers flare quickly but fade just as fast. Besides, Scarlett had never held that much significance in her world anyway. By tomorrow, Sabrina would be back to indulging her with treats and attention, and today's disappointment would be completely forgotten.

The moment her head hit the pillow, Vanessa drifted into a deep, untroubled sleep.

Scarlett, however, found sleep utterly elusive no matter how she tried.

The more she replayed Vanessa's dismissive attitude, the deeper the wound in her heart grew.

Finally, she pushed herself upright on the couch, the suffocating feeling becoming too much to bear.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, she was gripped by an intense craving for alcohol.

Even during the times when Vincent had completely ignored her, she had never considered drinking-back then, she'd still had Vanessa by her side.

But now, she truly felt she had nothing left to lose.

She threw a light jacket over her shoulders and slipped quietly from the room.

As she passed Vincent's study, she noticed the door stood slightly ajar, light spilling into the hallway, shadows shifting mysteriously within.

Her initial intention was simply to check if Vincent was working late, but when she peeked through the crack, her blood ran cold. Sabrina was perched directly on Vincent's lap, her slender arms wrapped possessively around his neck, her face tilted downward-they were unmistakably locked in an intimate kiss.

Scarlett jerked her head away as if burned, her heart hammering violently against her ribs. She fled downstairs as quickly and silently as her trembling legs could carry her.

Logically, she had known for a long time that Vincent and Sabrina had crossed every boundary. But witnessing their intimacy firsthand struck with a visceral force that mere imagination could never replicate.

The image of their entwined figures was now seared into her mind, an indelible brand of betrayal.

She made her way to the kitchen, poured a generous glass of wine, and stood staring out the dark window, swirling the deep crimson liquid as she reflected on her marriage to Vincent. The entire arrangement now seemed utterly pathetic and absurd.

In one swift, desperate motion, she threw her head back and drained the entire glass.

The alcohol failed to numb the pain. Instead, the dam finally broke, and silent sobs wracked her body.

She clutched at her chest, a chaotic storm of panic and desolation raging inside her.

Just then, her phone vibrated on the counter.

She glanced down-it was Nathan calling.

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Chapter 95 Vanessa's Tantrum and Scarlett's Heartbreak

It was still relatively early, just past eleven.

Finished

Not wanting Nathan to detect her distress, Scarlett took several deep, steadying breaths before answering. "Hey, Nathan."

She strained to keep her tone even, but a faint tremor still betrayed her.

Nathan, perceptive as always, chose not to comment directly. Instead, he asked, "It's getting late. Why aren't you home yet? Clara keeps asking for you."

His words felt like another twist of the knife in Scarlett's heart. Her own daughter showed her nowhere near the affection her little niece did.

She paused, collecting herself before replying, "Vanessa isn't feeling well, so I'm staying with her tonight. I'll be home tomorrow evening."

Nathan was clearly not convinced. She could hear his hesitation through the line, but in the end, he simply said, "There's a package for you at the door."

That reminded Scarlett of the bracelet Damian had mentioned. "Could you sign for it for me?" she asked.

"Sure," Nathan agreed.

An uncomfortable silence stretched between them.

Scarlett was just about to say goodbye and end the call when Nathan spoke first, his voice laced with concern. "Scarlett, be honest with me. Is Vincent pressuring you into something?"

“No,” Scarlett answered a little too quickly.

Truthfully, the arrangement she had with Vincent didn’t impose upon her daily life significantly.

Vanessa was, after all, her child. Taking care of her was her responsibility.

Another heavy silence filled the connection.

Finally, Scarlett said she needed to go and ended the call.

After hanging up, she mechanically washed her wine glass and returned it to its proper place.

She stood there for a long moment, allowing the cool night air from the window to soothe her heated skin, before finally turning to head back upstairs.

But as she turned, she froze. Vincent was standing there, not far away, dressed in his pajamas. His hair was still damp and dripping, as if he hadn’t bothered to dry it properly after his shower.

Scarlett started violently, her heart leaping into her throat, but she quickly schooled her features into a mask of composure.

“You... you’re still awake?” Her voice came out hoarse, edged with an unintentional chill.

Vincent’s gaze was intense and unreadable. “Yes,” he replied flatly.

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18:13 Thu, Jan 8

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Chapter 95 Vanessa’s Tantrum and Scarlett’s Heartbreak

Finished

Scarlett couldn’t decipher his mood, and frankly, she no longer cared to try. “I’m heading up,” she stated, moving to brush past him and exit the kitchen.

“Wait.” His voice stopped her in her tracks.

Scarlett paused but didn’t turn to face him. “What is it?”

Her mind began racing again, conjuring unwelcome images.

Back in the study, Vincent and Sabrina probably couldn't keep their hands off each other. Maybe they'd even... consummated their passion right there on his desk.

By now, Sabrina was likely passed out from exhaustion.

Vincent's

eyes remained fixed on her stiff back. "Is Vanessa feeling any better?"

"Yes, she's asleep now," Scarlett replied tonelessly.

Judging by Vanessa's behavior earlier, it hadn't really seemed like she was suffering from the cold Vincent had mentioned.

But whether she was truly ill or not, Scarlett wasn't willing to take any chances.

If Vanessa really was sick and I wasn't here... what would happen then?

Vincent's voice remained devoid of emotion. "Okay."

Scarlett understood that signaled the end of their exchange.

Any further conversation would only descend into more painful, awkward silence.

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18:13 Thu, Jan 8

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Awakened Housewife Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

Silent Dreams Never Die — 96

Chapter 96 A Birthday Request

Finished

She was just about to walk away when Vincent's voice cut through the silence. "Grandpa's birthday is this weekend."

Scarlett froze momentarily, only then recalling that Xavier's birthday was indeed approaching.

Among all the members of the Stewart family, Xavier had been the only one who had ever genuinely looked out for her.

Because of that, ever since marrying Vincent, Scarlett had personally overseen the arrangements for Xavier's birthday celebration each year without fail.

Besides Xavier's birthday, she had also been responsible for organizing Richard's birthday events.

But there was a distinct difference-Xavier's birthday held greater significance for her. His gatherings were always intimate, family-only affairs with no outsiders invited.

Richard's parties, in contrast, were always crowded with business associates and acquaintances.

Truthfully, Scarlett had always preferred planning Xavier's celebrations.

Firstly, because he sincerely cared about her wellbeing. Secondly, she had committed to memory all the intricate dietary preferences and quirks of the Stewart family members.

After a prolonged silence, Scarlett finally responded in a quiet voice, "I understand."

Whatever Vincent's underlying reason for reminding her, she found she no longer cared enough to speculate.

She would certainly contribute to Xavier's birthday in some way, but she had no intention of exhausting herself as she had in previous years.

Perhaps concerned that his message hadn't been sufficiently clear, Vincent added, "Grandpa specifically requested your cooking."

Richard's birthday celebration earlier in the year had already been problematic. Vincent didn't want his grandfather's occasion to become another disaster.

Whatever reasons Scarlett might have for resisting involvement in the party preparations, he assumed that as long as he explained the situation clearly, she wouldn't outright defy his request.

Scarlett considered this for a moment before stating, "I'll prepare one dish."

In previous years, she had cooked the entire meal single-handedly. This year, she would contribute only

one course.

Even with this limited commitment, Vincent accepted her terms. "Alright."

Scarlett was somewhat taken aback by his ready agreement. He hadn't pressured her to do more.

Yet she felt no particular gratitude. She simply told him, "You should get some rest now."

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18:13 Thu, Jan 8

Chapter 96 A Birthday Request

But then Vincent unexpectedly asked, "Have you decided what gift you're getting for Grandpa?"

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In the past, she had always handled this matter, planning far in advance. This year, it had completely slipped her mind.

After several seconds of silence, she informed Vincent, "Let's each choose our own gifts this year."

"But..." Vincent began to say more, but Scarlett showed no interest in continuing the conversation. Without another word, she turned and left the kitchen.

She didn't hesitate for even a moment, proceeding directly upstairs.

Vincent watched her retreating figure, a complex mixture of emotions stirring within him.

He remembered how in previous years, regardless of whose birthday it was, she would always consult him first, asking what type of gift would be most appropriate.

She would present him with various options, though she would ultimately make the final decision herself.

But this year, she hadn't prepared anything in advance. She wanted them to handle their gift-giving separately.

For the first time, Vincent actually felt somewhat at a loss.

He was a formidable force in the business world, but when it came to the practical matters of daily life, perhaps Scarlett had been the one who truly understood how everything worked.

Soon enough, Xavier's birthday arrived.

Scarlett had been inundated with work all day, seeing one patient after another without pause. Even when her official working hours had ended, she remained occupied with medical responsibilities.

Her phone had been vibrating persistently in her bag for some time, but she hadn't had a spare moment to answer it.

By the time she finally finished her duties, the clock already showed six-thirty in the evening.

After thoroughly washing her hands, she retrieved her phone and saw the numerous missed calls-all from Vincent.

She hadn't forgotten the significance of the day. That Vincent had been trying to reach her came as no surprise.

She returned his call, and his voice carried a distinct edge of annoyance. "What have you been doing all this time?"

He sounded as though he were interrogating a subordinate.

Scarlett replied in an even tone, "I was attending to a patient."

Vincent's irritation seemed to intensify. "So the patient takes precedence over Grandpa's birthday?"

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Thu, Jan 8

Chapter 96 A Birthday Request

Scarlett stated simply, "The patient comes first."

Of course, Xavier held significant importance in her heart as well.

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She had never forgotten how kindly he had treated her throughout her five years of marriage to Vincent.

But if forced to choose between professional duty and family obligation, her identity as a physician demanded that her patients take priority.

Vincent clearly had no desire to argue the point further. He said, "I'm waiting for you downstairs."

Scarlett responded, "Understood."

She gathered her belongings and collected the gift box she had prepared earlier.

When she reached the hospital entrance, she spotted Vincent's Rolls-Royce parked directly out front.

He hadn't brought a chauffeur today-he was sitting behind the wheel himself.

Scarlett hesitated for several seconds before opening the door and sliding into the back seat.

In the past, she would always occupy the front passenger seat. Now, such distinctions no longer seemed to

matter.

Seeing Scarlett deliberately choose the back seat, Vincent's brow furrowed slightly.

Was she treating him like some common driver?

But with time pressing and the birthday celebration already underway, Vincent didn't have leisure to debate seating arrangements. He simply started the engine and began driving toward the old family estate.

Scarlett sat quietly in the back, holding her carefully wrapped gift box, watching the city scenery slide past the window.

She didn't inquire what gift Vincent had selected, nor why Vanessa wasn't accompanying them in the car.

She used to worry about every detail, to oversee every aspect of family life. But no one had ever truly appreciated or even acknowledged her efforts on the family's behalf.

So now, she had resolved to put her own needs and peace of mind first.

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18:13 Thu, Jan

Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begs

Dylan

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 97[982 words]

Chapter 97 The Only One Who Cares

Finished

The entire journey to the Stewart Manor passed in complete silence. Neither of them attempted to bridge the growing distance between them, the quiet inside the car becoming increasingly oppressive.

Halfway through the drive, Xavier called. "Scarlett, has Vincent picked you up yet?"

"He has, Grandpa."

"Good, good. No need to rush on the road. Just come back safely when you can."

Scarlett lowered her head slightly, her voice softening. "Understood, Grandpa."

After ending the call, Scarlett glanced at the car's clock-it was already seven in the evening.

Knowing Xavier's habits, he would typically retire for the night in just over an hour. Yet because he was waiting for her, the family hadn't even begun discussing dinner.

Scarlett felt profoundly grateful for his consideration, but anxiety also prickled at her-she still needed to prepare his birthday dish upon arrival.

If she waited until reaching the Stewart Manor to start cooking, dinner would be delayed even further. Fortunately, she had committed to only one dish. If time grew too short, she could always prepare a cake instead.

As for the birthday gift, she had selected it with Claire's help—a pair of exceptionally soft-soled flat shoes. While not extravagant, Scarlett had invested considerable thought into choosing something both practical and comfortable.

By the time they arrived at the Stewart Manor, the clock had already struck seven-thirty.

As she entered through the front door alongside Vincent, Amanda's complaining voice immediately reached them from the living room.

“Scarlett has truly crossed the line this time. Does she even realize what day it is? Not only did she fail to come home early to help with preparations, but she's actually late and making the entire family wait for her. Honestly, I doubt she holds any genuine regard for us.”

The moment Amanda's complaint concluded, Scarlett and Vincent stepped into the living room.

Besides Amanda and Richard, Vincent's sister Lucy Stewart had also returned for the occasion. Vincent's younger brother Luke Stewart remained conspicuously absent.

Scarlett wasn't the only one running late, yet Amanda consistently singled her out for criticism.

Scarlett nearly laughed aloud at the blatant unfairness. Was this targeting not completely intentional?

When Amanda noticed Scarlett and Vincent entering together, she shot Scarlett a glare that could kill.

But Scarlett simply ignored her and directed her attention straight to Xavier.

She approached him, her smile gentle and warm. “Happy birthday, Grandpa. Please forgive my lateness— I've kept you waiting.”

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Chapter 97 The Only One Who Cares

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Xavier's face lit up with genuine delight at the sight of her. "You're here, Scarlett! Come, sit right here beside

me."

Within the Stewart family, Xavier had never concealed his disapproval of Amanda's behavior. When she had been criticizing Scarlett moments earlier, he hadn't even bothered to acknowledge her remarks.

Now that Scarlett had arrived, Xavier's happiness was palpable, while Amanda could barely contain her displeasure, rolling her eyes repeatedly.

Scarlett took the seat beside Xavier as he insisted. He studied her carefully, his voice filled with grandfatherly concern. "You've grown thinner, child."

"No, Grandpa, you're mistaken. I've been eating quite well, truly."

Scarlett hadn't actually lost any weight, but in the eyes of her elders, she always appeared too slender.

Xavier didn't press the matter, simply stating, "Be sure to eat a little more tonight. I instructed the cook to prepare all your favorite dishes."

Tears welled in Scarlett's eyes as she nodded. "I will, Grandpa."

Xavier then turned his attention to the visibly irritated Amanda, his tone sharpening. "Where is Luke? Why hasn't he returned home yet? What kind of mother doesn't ensure her son attends family gatherings?"

Amanda was his daughter-in-law, and even Richard wouldn't dare speak back to Xavier, let alone her.

Being publicly chastised in this manner dealt a severe blow to Amanda's pride.

She lowered her head and muttered defensively, "Xavier, I'll call Luke immediately."

With that, she hurried out of the living room.

Xavier watched her departure with clear disapproval. "She can't even manage her own household properly, yet she's quick to find fault with others."

Scarlett remained quietly seated until Xavier's temper had cooled before rising gracefully. "Grandpa, I'll go prepare you a cake now."

Every year for Xavier's birthday dinner, Scarlett would traditionally cook an entire table of dishes. This year marked the first exception.

In previous years, Xavier would always express concern for her, advising her not to spend so much time cooking. He'd insist that young women shouldn't hover around stoves too much—that the heat would damage their complexion and make them appear worn.

But for Vincent's sake, Scarlett had always disregarded this advice.

Now, as she prepared to enter the kitchen once more, Xavier wouldn't hear of it.

"It's merely a slice of cake. What does it matter whether we have it or not? You are Vincent's wife. You should remain seated here and allow others to serve you."

Scarlett looked at Xavier with profound gratitude, her smile gentle but determined. "Grandpa, your

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Chapter 97 The Only One Who Cares

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birthday comes only once each year, and I rarely have opportunities to visit. Please allow me to do this small service for you—it's my way of showing respect."

Seeing her unwavering resolve, Xavier finally relented. “Very well, but remember-you’re permitted to cook only once annually on this occasion.”

Scarlett smiled and agreed, “As you wish, Grandpa.”

Just as she turned toward the kitchen, she remembered something important. Retrieving the gift box she had brought, she presented it to Xavier. “Grandpa, I purchased a pair of soft-soled walking shoes for you. You can wear them during your daily walks or fishing trips. I sincerely hope they bring you comfort.”

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Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

Dylan

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 98[951 words]

Chapter 98 The Unwelcome Gift

52

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Xavier accepted the gift box, his eyes crinkling at the corners with genuine pleasure. “Excellent, you always know exactly what to choose, Scarlett. I truly appreciate this, I really do.”

Scarlett’s gaze drifted sideways, taking in the array of extravagant gifts displayed on the nearby table.

There were pieces of agate, strings of pearls, emerald ornaments, antique vases, and even what appeared to be original famous paintings...

Every conceivable luxury was represented, each item undoubtedly worth a small fortune.

Her own humble offering was by far the most modest present there-the kind that might normally cause someone embarrassment.

Though Xavier claimed to like it, Scarlett understood he was primarily expressing sympathy for her situation.

Vincent had remained seated on the sofa since arriving at the Stewart Manor, head bowed as he fiddled with his phone. It was impossible to tell whether he was handling work matters or exchanging messages with Sabrina.

Scarlett observed him discreetly. He showed no apparent interest in what she had prepared for his grandfather.

As for Lucy, she didn't harbor the same active dislike toward Scarlett that Amanda did, but neither was she particularly warm. She maintained a polite, somewhat distant civility and nothing more.

Beyond greeting Scarlett when she first entered, Lucy hadn't spoken another word to her.

Amanda had three children. Vincent was the eldest, while Lucy and Luke were twins, with Lucy being born first, thus claiming the position of older sister.

Both Lucy and Luke were only twenty-two, still completing their university studies. Lucy was pursuing medicine, while Luke was majoring in finance.

However, when it came to their academic approaches, Lucy demonstrated clear focus and dedication, whereas Luke seemed content to merely drift through his studies.

Despite being twins, their personalities couldn't have been more different.

When Scarlett entered the kitchen, the household staff greeted her with respectful murmurs of "Mrs. Stewart".

She acknowledged them with a nod before setting to work preparing cake for Xavier.

Midway through her cooking, Luke finally returned home.

The young man sported shockingly blond-dyed hair and several letters tattooed along his forearm-likely someone's initials.

Luke bore no resemblance to Vincent's composed demeanor. He radiated restless adolescent energy, like a youth who hadn't quite matured, carrying a distinct air of rebellion.

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Chapter 98 The Unwelcome Gift

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He strode into the living room and offered greetings to each family member in turn. “Grandpa, Dad, Mom, Vincent, Lucy.”

After completing his perfunctory greetings, his eyes scanned the room. Not spotting Scarlett, he collapsed onto the sofa beside Vincent, throwing his legs up onto the coffee table and leaning his head back against the cushions with an audible sigh.

Luke looked particularly pleased with himself. “Excellent, Scarlett’s cooking again. I’m definitely in for a treat tonight.”

Lucy delivered a sharp kick to his shin. “Get your feet off the furniture. And stop acting so entitled-Scarlett isn’t the family housemaid.”

As the youngest member of the Stewart family, Luke was undoubtedly the most indulged, which had cultivated a certain brattish quality in his behavior.

This also meant he generally did whatever he pleased.

Within the Stewart family, aside from Vincent himself, Luke feared no one.

So when Lucy kicked him, he barely flinched, not even bothering to open his eyes to look at her.

Xavier observed Luke’s behavior and tapped his cane sharply against the floor. “Luke, go assist with bringing the dishes out from the kitchen.”

Luke protested immediately, “Grandpa, I’m not a servant. Let Scarlett handle it.”

Xavier’s voice hardened. “She is not a servant either.”

Seeing Xavier’s rising anger, Luke reluctantly straightened his posture.

He wasn’t exactly afraid of Xavier, but Xavier was a family elder deserving of basic respect.

Still, he couldn't resist muttering under his breath, "It's not like she hasn't done it all before anyway."

Xavier's hearing wasn't what it used to be, so he missed Luke's quiet remark, merely continuing to glare at Luke with evident displeasure.

Vincent overheard Luke's disrespectful comment about Scarlett but showed no visible reaction.

To be perfectly honest, Luke wasn't entirely wrong-Scarlett had performed these tasks countless times before.

With the evening growing late, Richard finally called everyone to the dining table.

Scarlett still hadn't emerged from the kitchen, but Xavier acquiesced to Richard's suggestion.

If they delayed any further, dinner would stretch unreasonably late.

Everyone took their seats, yet Scarlett remained conspicuously absent from the kitchen.

Xavier began to grow concerned, turning to Vincent with instruction. "Go check on Scarlett in the kitchen. Tell her to stop fussing over perfection and come join everyone for the meal."

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Chapter 98 The Unwelcome Gift

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Vincent responded coolly, "Grandpa, she'll emerge when the cake is finished. There's no need for us to wait for her."

Xavier's expression darkened considerably. "If you refuse to go, then I will do so myself."

He began the laborious process of pushing himself up from his chair.

Worried about Xavier's mobility, Vincent quickly rose to his feet. "Grandpa, I'll go."

Xavier offered no argument, merely nodding his consent..

When Vincent walked in, Scarlett had the cake done and was already decorating it.

Hearing footsteps behind her, she turned and spotted Vincent. “The cake is almost done,” she informed him.

Vincent’s expression remained cold, his tone distinctly unfriendly. “Stop obsessing over details. Grandpa is waiting for you to join everyone at the table.”

He felt distinct annoyance toward Scarlett. He had provided her ample advance notice about Xavier’s

birthday and specifically mentioned that Xavier wanted her to cook.

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18:14 Thu, Jan 8 G

Awakened Housewife Ignore Betrayer’s Begs

Dylan

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 99[998 words]

Chapter 99 Scarlett’s Simple Birthday Cake

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Scarlett had agreed to the request with a smile initially, but when the actual day arrived, she hadn’t prepared anything elaborate-just a single cake.

Honestly, even a child could manage cake this simple. Who would truly appreciate such a basic offering?

Scarlett could practically feel Vincent's mounting irritation radiating behind her, but she couldn't summon the energy to meet his gaze. She simply stated, "Understood. Please take your seat. I'll be out momentarily."

Vincent remained standing behind her, his patience visibly fraying.

He had no desire to create a scene with Scarlett at Stewart Manor, so he drew a deep, steadying breath, attempting to quell his rising frustration.

Once he had regained some composure, he finally declared, "I'll wait for you here."

The cake was nearly ready regardless-what difference would a few more minutes make?

True, the cake itself was nothing extraordinary, but it had to be acknowledged that no one else had even considered stepping foot in the kitchen to contribute.

Ignoring him, Scarlett focused on putting the final decorations on the cake.

Just as she reached to carry the plate, Vincent suddenly interjected, "Allow me."

Scarlett offered no resistance. "Very well."

They exited the kitchen together and entered the dining room, where Vincent placed the cake directly before Xavier.

Scarlett's eyes swept the table, taking in the already seated family members, and realized with a sinking feeling that no place had been left for her.

She merely lowered her head with a faint, resigned smile and turned to fetch a spare chair, intending to position herself at the far corner of the extensive table.

But before she could sit, Xavier suddenly addressed Luke sharply, "Luke, move over immediately. Scarlett will sit beside Vincent."

Luke's face contorted with displeasure. "Grandpa, why should I be the one relegated to the corner?"

"Why shouldn't you? You're a person, and Scarlett isn't? In this household, even if you personally had to eat on the floor, Scarlett would never be consigned to a corner. We have never mistreated our daughters-in-law. You and your brother would do well to remember that."

Though his words were directed at Luke, the underlying message was unmistakably intended for Vincent.

Grumbling under his breath, Luke reluctantly stood and shuffled to the corner seat.

Scarlett wanted to reassure Xavier that such a minor seating arrangement wasn't worth his agitation, but she found no opportunity to speak.

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Chapter 99 Scarlett's Simple Birthday Cake

As Luke moved, Lucy also wordlessly vacated the seat adjacent to Vincent.

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Xavier looked up at Scarlett, his expression brimming with grandfatherly affection. "Scarlett, come now, sit here beside Vincent."

Scarlett glanced toward Vincent. He remained seated in stoic silence, offering no comment.

Had this occurred in the past, Scarlett would have felt a sharp sting of hurt.

Now, she simply accepted it as the norm.

Once she had taken her seat beside Vincent, Xavier finally gave the signal for the family to begin their meal.

Xavier instructed Vincent, "Vincent, serve Scarlett some of her preferred dishes. Look how thin she's become."

Vincent offered no argument, quietly complying with the request.

He selected a tender rib and placed it in Scarlett's bowl, followed by a plump shrimp.

Scarlett looked down at the food now occupying her plate and murmured softly, "Thank you."

Her voice was so quiet only Vincent could possibly hear, but he didn't so much as glance in her direction, let alone offer any acknowledgment.

The meal proceeded largely in silence. Periodically, Scarlett could feel Amanda's hostile gaze burning into her from across the table.

She paid it no mind, keeping her head lowered as she ate.

Luke took a single bite of a dish and immediately spat it back onto his plate with a grimace. "Ugh, this isn't Scarlett's cooking."

Scarlett finally offered an explanation. “I prepared only the cake for Grandpa tonight. None of the other dishes is my work.”

Luke’s expression darkened considerably. “Then what were you doing occupying the kitchen for so long?”

In previous years, Scarlett had always prepared the entire banquet herself, and Luke had consistently relished every dish.

But tonight was distinctly different. He had returned home specifically anticipating Scarlett’s culinary efforts.

Scarlett set her fork down deliberately and met Luke’s gaze directly. “I didn’t arrive at the house until seven- thirty.”

Luke’s frown deepened. “What? You didn’t get here until seven-thirty? Today is Grandpa’s birthday! Shouldn’t you have returned last night to prepare? What kind of granddaughter-in-law does that make you?”

Scarlett maintained eye contact with Luke. “I have professional responsibilities. I couldn’t return any earlier.”

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Chapter 99 Scarlett’s Simple Birthday Cake

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Luke’s irritation escalated, and he slammed his fork onto the table. “You have a job? What possible job could you have? My brother provides more than enough allowance to sustain you for years! Why humiliate yourself publicly and create the impression our family mistreats you?”

But Scarlett was no longer the passive woman she once had been. She held Luke’s gaze unflinchingly, enunciating each word with deliberate clarity. “If you’re genuinely concerned about whether I’ve been mistreated, perhaps you should direct that question to your brother.”

Luke was momentarily rendered speechless. He turned toward Vincent with a frustrated appeal. “Vincent, look at how Scarlett speaks to me-she shows me no respect whatsoever.”

Vincent glanced up briefly. “Eat your meal.”

Xavier had been quietly observing Luke's complaints about Scarlett. He had restrained his temper initially, wanting to see precisely how far Vincent would go.

But the more Luke spoke, the more unreasonable he became, and Xavier's anger steadily mounted.

Finally, Xavier slammed his fork down sharply, the sound echoing through the room as he glared directly at Luke. "Scarlett holds a maternal-level position of respect in this family. If you cannot show her the deference she deserves, then you are no longer welcome here."

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Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begg

Dylan

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce - Silent Dreams Never Die — 100[894 words]

Chapter 100 The Truth in Silence

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Before the entire Stewart family, Xavier completely lost his composure with Luke, publicly humiliating the young man on the spot.

Luke, still young and impulsive, couldn't bear the public shaming. He slammed his cutlery onto the table, shot up from his seat, and stormed out of the dining hall without uttering another word.

Witnessing the scene, Amanda immediately rose to her feet. "Luke!" she called out, preparing to follow him.

Xavier's voice cut through the tension like a whip. "No one is permitted to follow him today. Anyone who dares will no longer be welcome in this household."

Amanda froze mid-step, one foot already toward the doorway, before reluctantly withdrawing.

As the family elder, Xavier commanded respect, particularly since Richard himself held his father in high esteem.

Seeing Amanda stand down, Xavier continued, his voice heavy with disapproval. "The fundamental issue is that he's been thoroughly spoiled. Everyone has been treating him like a crown prince."

Scarlett remained quietly seated, neither touching her food nor contributing to the conversation.

Both Vincent and Lucy maintained an equally stony silence.

Richard attempted to diffuse the situation. "Father, please don't allow a youngster's behavior to upset you. Today is your birthday celebration. Let us simply enjoy our meal."

Xavier drew a deep, steadying breath, visibly attempting to cast aside his foul mood. His gaze softened as it fell upon Scarlett. "Scarlett, you must eat properly. Have some more food."

Scarlett looked up at him, her expression brightening with a gentle smile. "Thank you for your concern, Grandpa."

After Luke's dramatic departure, the family gradually resumed their meal.

This time, however, complete silence prevailed. Everyone picked quietly at their food, the atmosphere becoming palpably strained and uncomfortable.

Scarlett could feel Amanda's gaze periodically burning into her, as if the woman wished to communicate something-perhaps a silent warning for her to remain cautious.

But Scarlett found she no longer cared about Amanda's opinions. She deliberately ignored Amanda, refusing to even glance in her direction.

When they finished the birthday cake, Xavier carefully wiped his mouth and turned his attention to Scarlett and Vincent. "Scarlett, Vincent, the two of you should remain here tonight. I've already instructed the staff to prepare the upstairs rooms for you."

Scarlett was on the verge of declining when Vincent preempted her. “Grandpa, you should consult Scarlett directly. Let her make the decision.”

Superficially, it sounded like the considerate words of a devoted husband, but Scarlett immediately

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Chapter 100 The Truth in Silence

discerned his true motive.

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He was avoiding refusing Xavier directly and facing potential reprimand, so he had deftly passed the responsibility to her.

If she were the one to decline, Xavier would likely not make an issue of it.

Scarlett couldn't help but acknowledge inwardly-Vincent truly covered all his bases.

Strangely, the refusal she had been about to voice transformed after Vincent's intervention. “If Grandpa wishes us to stay, then we shall stay,” she found herself saying.

She lifted her eyes to Vincent as she spoke, a faint, enigmatic smile touching her lips, something mysterious and unreadable flickering in their depths.

Vincent met her gaze, recognizing her deliberate response, yet instead of taking offense, he mirrored her slight smile. “As you wish.”

His lack of refusal and seemingly accommodating attitude visibly pleased Xavier.

“Excellent, then it's settled. I'm growing tired, so I shall retire for the evening now.”

With that, Xavier took up his cane and pushed himself to his feet.

Richard also stood. “Father, allow me to escort you to your quarters.”

But Xavier waved him off dismissively. “That won't be necessary. Scarlett can assist me.”

He turned to Scarlett. “Scarlett, come help me.”

Scarlett promptly rose and carefully supported Xavier as they left the dining room.

Upon reaching Xavier's private chambers, Scarlett helped him settle comfortably into his chair.

Just as she prepared to take her leave, Xavier suddenly posed a quiet question. "Scarlett, speak to me truthfully now. Has Vincent been treating you poorly?"

Xavier's genuine concern for her wellbeing touched Scarlett deeply.

Yet some matters simply weren't worth creating further drama over. Particularly now, having already resolved to divorce Vincent, the question of his treatment felt increasingly irrelevant.

Thus, Scarlett assured Xavier, "Grandpa, Vincent has not done me any harm."

Xavier was clearly not convinced. "Come now, Scarlett, don't attempt to deceive me. I've lived long enough to recognize these things."

Regardless of how Xavier pressed, Scarlett held firm to her statement. "Grandpa, Vincent treats me quite adequately. He truly hasn't mistreated me."

Xavier couldn't discern how much truth her words held, but his heart ached sincerely for Scarlett.

After considerable reflection, Xavier decided not to pursue the matter further. He reached out and patted Scarlett's head gently, his voice thick with compassion. "Scarlett, you have endured more than your share of

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Chapter 100 The Truth in Silence

hardship."

Scarlett smiled and shook her head gently. "Grandpa, I am perfectly fine. Truly."

Recognizing he would glean nothing further, Xavier finally dismissed her.

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When Scarlett emerged from Xavier's room, she discovered Vincent waiting outside her door. He held an unlit cigarette between his fingers, leaning restlessly against the hallway railing, his posture suggesting simmering impatience.

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18:14 Thu, Jan 8

Awakened Housewife: Ignore Betrayer's Begg

Dylan