

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce c 6

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When the bedroom door creaked open, Vincent automatically reached over and flipped off the lamp. The room plunged into darkness, the only light coming from the faint glow of the hallway.

He pulled his robe off one shoulder, his voice flat-no warmth, no greeting. “It’s late. Let’s get this over with. I have plans later.”

The light from the hallway seeped in, falling on the figure at the door, making it look blurry and indistinct. A beat of silence. Then, a nervous voice spoke up, not Scarlett’s. “Mr. Stewart... it’s me. Freya.”

Vincent froze. He reached over and turned the lamp back on, squinting at Freya standing in the doorway, her hands folded tightly in front of her. “She’s not back yet?”

Freya nodded, her face flushed. “No, Mr. Stewart. Not yet.”

The air in the room turned thick with tension.

Freya could tell Vincent was angry-she'd worked for the Stewarts long enough to recognize that tight jaw, that cold glint in his eyes. She tried to soften the blow. "Mrs. Stewart usually comes home by six. Last month, she was here early. Maybe something came up at the hospital?"

Vincent knew what she was trying to do, but he just shrugged. "Got it."

Freya hesitated, wanting to remind him to get some rest early, but before she could, Vincent

swung

his legs over the bed and stood up. She clamped her mouth shut-now wasn't the time.

Five minutes later, he was dressed and heading for the door, his keys in hand. Freya followed him downstairs, still vaguely feeling that she had forgotten something.

It wasn't until Vincent's car disappeared around the corner that she smacked her forehead. She'd forgotten the things in the study that Scarlett had told her about.

In the car, Vincent had just pulled out of the neighborhood when his phone rang. It was Sabrina. His face softened instantly-all the sharpness gone, replaced by a gentle warmth he'd never shown Scarlett.

“What’s wrong?” he asked, his voice low.

Sabrina’s voice was soft, almost apologetic. “Vincent, I have a big concert tomorrow night—you know how important it is. But Vanessa’s kindergarten has a parent-child event tomorrow afternoon, and I... I can’t make it.”

Chapter 6 Three Months of Silence

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She didn’t need to say more. Vincent knew what she wanted. “I’ll have Scarlett go. Don’t worry

about it.”

Sabrina let out a relieved sigh. “Thank you. I already talked to Vanessa-she’s excited. Just let Scarlett know, okay?”

“I will. Go practice. You’ll be great.”

He hung up and pulled over to the side of the road, reaching for his phone to text Scarlett. But when he scrolled through his contacts, he paused. He couldn't find her number.

Only then did he suddenly realize-Scarlett hadn't taken the initiative to call him in what seemed like ages.

Back when Scarlett was staying home full-time to take care of Vanessa, she'd call him every day to ask if he'd be coming home for dinner. He rarely did, and even when he did, he only spent time with their daughter.

After they started talking about having a second child, she'd still check in every now and then to ask if he was coming home, but he didn't answer every single one of her calls. Sometimes he'd hang up, other times he'd just let the phone ring until it stopped. Yet whenever he needed to reach Scarlett, he'd always found her contact info easily.

But now, after scrolling through several pages, that familiar number was nowhere to be seen. He had no idea how long he'd been scrolling before he finally found her number—and the last call log entry was from three months ago.

Had it really been that long since their last contact?

Vincent couldn't even remember whether he'd answered Scarlett's last call to him or not.

He dialed it, expecting it to ring. Instead, a cold automated voice played, "The number you are trying to reach is unavailable. Please try again later."

Vincent frowned. That had never happened before. He tried again-same result. He called four more times, each time getting the same message, before giving up. He didn't have her video chat info saved, either-they'd never used it.

In the end, he sent her a text, "Vanessa has a parent-child event at Sunshine Kindergarten tomorrow at 2 PM. She wants you to go."

He hit send, then pulled back onto the road. Scarlett was probably just busy at the hospital, he told himself. She'd see the text eventually and go-she always did what he asked. She was good

at that.

Chapter 6 Three Months of Silence

Meanwhile, in the countryside, it was nine o'clock. Scarlett had just finished her last health check at the small town school, packing up her medical bag and saying goodbye to the teachers.

She was staying in the school's teacher dorm—a tiny room with a single bed and a small desk- but it felt more like home than Oakland Villa ever had.

She washed her face, changed into pajamas, and collapsed onto the bed, her phone tossed onto the nightstand. She'd set it to silent earlier, too tired to deal with work emails or calls. Within minutes, she was fast asleep.

The next morning, she was woken up by her phone buzzing. She groaned, grabbing it—expecting it to be her alarm-but it was a calendar reminder, “Richard's birthday.”

Every year, she'd wake up at 5 AM to hit the market, buying fresh ingredients for a feast. She'd spend the entire day in the kitchen, cooking Richard's favorite dishes, then spend the evening serving guests, smiling and pretending to be the “perfect daughter-in-law”.

This year? She deleted the reminder with a single tap. She wasn't doing that anymore. She wasn't going to be the Stewart family's unpaid cook and entertainer.

She rolled over and went back to sleep, then woke up again at ten, ready for the day.

Friday afternoons were slow at the clinic-she'd be off by two.

She'd decided to drive back to her parents' house that night. Tomorrow was her father's birthday, too—something she'd forgotten for the past five years, too busy celebrating Richard's. This year, she was going to make it up to her own father.

She had no idea about Vincent's text. It was buried under a pile of notifications from the hospital and the rural clinic, unread.

She arrived at her parents' house around six, the smell of her mom's famous beef stew wafting through the door. The living room was full-her dad, Henry Theron, reading the newspaper, her mom, Diana Theron, stirring a pot in the kitchen, her brother Nathan and his wife Violet folding laundry, and her niece, Clara, sitting on the floor playing with a puzzle.

Clara looked up when Scarlett walked in, her eyes widening. She dropped her puzzle pieces and ran over, wrapping her arms around Scarlett's legs. "Auntie! You're home!"

Scarlett knelt down, pulling Clara into a tight hug and kissing her cheek. "I am. Did you miss

me?"

Clara nodded, burying her face in Scarlett's neck. "So much! I told Mom to save you smoked salmon-you love that, right?"

She locked her arms around Scarlett's neck, gave her a kiss too, and then yelled toward the kitchen, "Mom! Auntie's here! Can we have the smoked salmon now?"

Chapter 6 Three Months of Silence

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At the sound of her voice, both Nathan and Violet came out of the kitchen.

When they saw it was Scarlett, the surprise in Nathan's eyes faded away in the next moment- he'd never approved of her marriage to Vincent, had warned her about the Stewarts, but she'd never listened. Noticing his stern expression, Violet nudged him in the elbow before turning to Scarlett with a smile, saying, "It's good that you're back-dinner will be ready soon."

Clara stepped in front of Violet, took her hand, and said, "Mom, Auntie loves smoked salmon

the most! Last time I wanted to eat some, you insisted that we had to wait for Auntie to come back first. Now that Auntie's back, can I..."

Violet tapped Clara's nose and said fondly, "You little glutton-I'll make some for you, then."

Clara jumped for joy, clapping her tiny hands, her two ponytails swinging back and forth nonstop.

Nathan, however, didn't even glance at Scarlett. He just frowned and scolded Clara coldly, "You're wasting your warmth on someone who's cold to you, yet you still keep fawning over them."

Scarlett has a very happy family-her parents, elder brother, and sister-in-law all love her very much. But she had poured all her energy and love into the Stewart family, even devoting herself to that family without any regrets or complaints. Yet those sacrifices never got her as much as a thank you; instead, they only hurt her own family's feelings.

In fact, she was too ashamed to come back tonight. But when she knew the love from her family was real after all-her tough-talking but soft-hearted brother and father, her mother who wept for her every night, her gentle and sensible sister-in-law, and her cute, lively niece...

She decided she should hold onto those who loved her and gave her warmth.

The Stewarts? Their coldness, their lies, their indifference? It was time to let it all

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