

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce

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Scarlett was holding Clara's hand, just steps from the hospital exit, when she collided with someone. It was Amanda—her face flushed with anger, still fuming over Vanessa's allergy scare and the ruined birthday dinner.

Amanda didn't even glance up before snapping, "Watch where you're going! Are you in such a hurry you can't see straight?"

When she finally looked at who she'd bumped into, her glare sharpened. It was Scarlett. Her temper flared even hotter, but before she could unleash another rant, Scarlett simply stepped around her, pulling Clara along. Violet followed, giving Amanda a polite, tight smile as she passed.

Amanda stood frozen for a second, then spun around, yelling after them. "Scarlett! You're just gonna leave your kid again? What kind of mother abandons her sick child?"

Scarlett didn't stop. She'd heard this before—from Amanda, from Vincent, even from Vanessa. But this time, it didn't sting like it used to. She'd spent five years feeding Vanessa, tucking her in, calming her nightmares, missing work to attend her doctor's appointments. If that made her a "bad mom", then she didn't want to be a "good" one anymore.

Amanda cursed under her breath, but by the time she'd worked up another shout, Scarlett and the others were already out of earshot. She huffed, turning back to Vanessa's hospital room.

Inside, Vincent was holding Vanessa, rocking her gently. Amanda stormed in, slamming a bag of takeout oatmeal on the nightstand. "I thought you had work to finish at the office," she snapped. "Why didn't you make Scarlett stay with her own daughter?"

Vincent set Vanessa down on the bed, tucking the blanket around her. "Vanessa comes first. Work can wait until tomorrow."

Amanda scooped the oatmeal into a bowl, her voice sharp. "You need to do something about Scarlett. She's ignoring Vanessa, skipping family dinners-she's practically asking for a divorce."

Vincent took the bowl, stirring the oatmeal slowly. He didn't look up. "She'll get over it. She always does." He figured Scarlett was just upset about seeing him with Sabrina at Ravenshade Villa. A few days of silence, and she'd be back to her usual self-quiet, compliant, ready to apologize for "overreacting".

He fed Vanessa a few spoonfuls, then suddenly remembered-this week was probably Scarlett's ovulation window. If they could conceive their second child soon, he wouldn't have to keep making these monthly trips to Oakland Villa. He handed the bowl back to Amanda. "Mom, stay with Vanessa for a bit. I need to find Scarlett."

Amanda thought he was going to scold her, so she nodded eagerly. “Good. Tell her she can’t

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keep acting like this.”

At the hospital entrance, Scarlett, Violet, and Clara stood by the curb, waiting for a taxi. Violet could see Amanda’s words had hurt Scarlett-her shoulders were tight, her jaw clenched-but before she could say anything, Clara spoke up.

“Auntie, I’m sorry,” Clara said, her voice small. She looked up at Scarlett, her eyes guilt. “I shouldn’t have yelled at Vanessa. She’s your daughter, and I made her cry.”

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Scarlett knelt down, brushing a strand of hair from Clara's face. Her heart ached-not just for Clara's kindness, but for the contrast with Vanessa. "You didn't do anything wrong, Clara," she said softly. "If anyone's to blame, it's me. I spoiled Vanessa too much."

Clara threw her arms around Scarlett's neck. "Don't be sad, Auntie. I'll always love you, no matter what."

Scarlett's throat tightened. She hugged Clara back, then stood up as a taxi pulled over.

Violet smiled at her. "You've really changed, Scarlett. For the better."

Scarlett let out a tired laugh. "Took me long enough, though."

"Better late than never," Violet said, squeezing her arm. "Let's go home."

Scarlett nodded, bending to help Clara into the taxi. But just as she was about to climb in herself, a cold, familiar voice called out.

"Scarlett."

She froze. It was Vincent. She turned around, her expression neutral-no joy, no hurt, no longing. Just indifference. Like he was a stranger she'd bumped into at the grocery store.

“What do you want?” she asked.

Vincent walked closer, his hands in his pockets. “Let’s grab a bite together.”

Scarlett blinked. In five years of marriage, he’d never once asked her to dinner. Not for their anniversary, not for her birthday, not even for a casual meal. She didn’t delude herself into thinking this was a romantic gesture. He’d probably found the divorce papers she’d left in the study and wanted to negotiate. Or maybe he was just trying to guilt her into staying.

Either way, she didn’t mind. She needed to talk to him about the divorce anyway.

“Okay,” she said.

She turned to Violet and Clara. “Violet, take Clara home. I’ll catch a ride later.”

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Violet hesitated, then nodded. She knew Scarlett needed to handle this on her own. The taxi pulled away, and Scarlett climbed into Vincent's car.

The drive to Oakland Villa was silent. Scarlett stared out the window, watching the city lights blur

past. She didn't ask where they were going-she didn't care. When the car stopped in front of the Oakland Villa, she followed Vincent inside, still saying nothing.

He led her upstairs to the master bedroom. Scarlett assumed he was going to talk about the divorce, but instead, he started unbuttoning his suit jacket.

She spun around, her face hot. "What are you doing?"

Vincent paused, a smirk tugging at his lips. "You didn't think I brought you here for dinner, did you?"

Scarlett's blood ran cold. She should have known. This room, this bed-they'd never been about intimacy. Only about making a baby.

"I thought we were here to sign the papers," she said, her voice steady.

Vincent's smirk faded. "What papers?"

Scarlett let out a bitter laugh. He hadn't even looked at the divorce agreement. "They're in the study. Go check for yourself."

Vincent stopped unbuttoning his shirt. For once, he didn't argue. He turned and left the room, heading for the study.

Scarlett let out a breath, running a hand through her hair. But just as she was about to sit down, her phone rang. It was her friend, Claire Wright.

She answered immediately, "Claire? What's wrong?"

Claire's voice was slurred, thick with tears. "Scarlett, I'm so drunk... Can you come get me? I'm at that bar. I'm scared I'll pass out."

Scarlett's heart dropped. She didn't hesitate. "I'll be there in ten minutes. Send me the exact address."

She hung up, grabbed her bag, and rushed downstairs. Freya was walking out of the staff room, wearing a coat.

“Mrs. Stewart?” Freya asked, surprised to see her.

“I have to go,” Scarlett said, hurrying toward the door. “If Vincent asks, tell him the divorce papers are in the study. If he has issues, he can call me.”

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Freya nodded, still confused, but Scarlett was already gone.

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