

TSBMMOUS 131

Chapter 131: Misunderstood

After leaving the hospital, Brian went to Ayla's studio. The night had fallen, but the lights in the studio were still on.

When he went upstairs, he found that she was immersed in drafting her designs. She didn't even notice him.

Brian gleaned that Lucas hadn't come to see her again.

With Haley by his side, he would certainly be unable to sneak out to visit Ayla.

Because Lucas knew that in order to protect her, he mustn't come to see her.

Neither Tatum nor Haley would tolerate Ayla's existence.

Stepping into her office, Brian said, "Don't you have any plans on going home anytime soon?"

His abrupt appearance made Ayla raise her head in panic.

But within a few seconds, she managed to regain her composure.

"Oh, it's you. What are you doing here at such a late hour, Mr. Clark?"

She stood up to approach him. He then went to the sofa and stared at her.

"What? Are you going to lose your temper again?"

"It's so late. You're not here to discuss work with me, are you?"

Ayla wasn't sure what to feel when she saw him again.

"No, it's not about work. I just want to have dinner with you. Would you give me the honor of doing so?"

They hadn't seen each other for a few days, so he assumed that she hadn't eaten well in the past few days.

At first, Ayla wanted to refuse, but she decided to accept it instead.

"Sure! It would be mighty ungrateful of me to decline Mr. Clark's invitation." Brian took her hand and remarked, "You're a glib-tongued woman."

If this would make her happy, then he would gladly allow it.

The past few days had been feeling empty without her bickering with him. Together, they walked to a restaurant.

Brian had already prepared everything.

At a table by the window, one could have a clear view of the dazzling night cityscape.

There were also candles and flowers that adorned the table.

Turning her gaze towards him, Ayla remarked, "I've never realized that you can be romantic. I'm impressed!"

She went to her seat and sat down.

Sitting across her, Brian asked, "Is that so?"

It was hard for her to believe that this was the Brian she used to know.

In the end, she just decided to enjoy everything that he had prepared.

"It looks like you've had a lot of spare time on your hands, considering you were able to prepare all this."

When she saw him elegantly drinking wine from a goblet, her heart skipped a beat, but she just flashed him a grin.

"In the future, I might not have the time to enjoy a leisurely dinner," he said flatly.

Ayla paused while she was holding a fork.

What did he mean by that? Was he saying that he was giving up completely? Would he never see her again? Brian noticed her reaction, but he didn't comment on it because there were some words that shouldn't be said right now. An overwhelming sense of loss arose in Ayla's heart.

"I see. I guess I should thank you for inviting me to this great dinner."

'Is this the last dinner we'll have? Is this why he disappeared for so many days?' she wondered.

Looking at the smile on her face, Brian knew that it was insincere.

All he said was that he wouldn't have the time to have a leisurely dinner in the future. Did she misunderstand him?

"What? Do you want to have dinner with me every day?" he said, trying to figure out what was on her mind.

They had been away from each other for two years, but so what? Ayla wasn't the kind of person who could easily let go of the past and move on.

She had always been soft hearted.

Perhaps this was why Clayton took advantage of her, and unscrupulously sold her in his biological daughter's stead to pay for his debt.

Using the fork, Ayla rolled up the spaghetti, and said, "Mr. Clark, you think too much."

Everyone knew that he and Anna were engaged.

She knew how much Anna had done for him, and she didn't want to make things difficult for her.

Both of them had a mountain of things on their minds. It was supposed to be a romantic dinner, but in reality, the atmosphere was awkward.

When their awkward dinner was done, Brian drove her home.

"Thanks for sending me back," Ayla said after they arrived at her apartment. "Go upstairs,"

Brian remarked. He had no intention of getting out of the car.

Turning to look at him, she asked, "By the way, did something happen to Anna?"

She could tell that if it weren't for Anna, he wouldn't have given up so easily.

Brian lit up a cigarette.

"She's in the hospital right now.

"Is her condition serious?"

Suddenly, Ayla realized that the reason her days had been so peaceful was because of Anna's hospitalization.

However, she was worried about her.

"She's fine. She'll be discharged in a couple of days."

He looked quite calm as he took a drag of his cigarette.

His face was as still as a lake, showing no signs of what lay beneath the surface.

Ayla nodded.

"I see. That's good then. I'll be heading home now. You should go back and take care of her right away."

She then got out of the car and walked into the apartment complex.

After she left, Brian got out of his car and leaned against it. He didn't leave until she disappeared from his sight.

Meanwhile, Toby was sitting in his study. He had been restless ever since he met Ayla that day.

Brian's appearance also made him worry about her. Not long after, Molly came in, carrying a cup of coffee.

"Honey, it's late. Here's your coffee. Do you really have to stay up late tonight?"

She had been working in the company for two years now.

During that time, she saw how Toby bid for many losing businesses in order to vent his anger of losing Ayla.

Molly wondered if he knew that signing those contracts meant that he wouldn't be able to make any profits.

“Yes, there’s something wrong with the municipal government’s project that we signed last time.”

Back then, Toby knew how determined Brian was to acquire that project, but he managed to win the contract with the lowest bidding price.

But now, there was a problem with the company’s turnover, and the project was halted; it was inevitable, considering the low budget.

“Honey, if we can’t do it anymore, we can subcontract the project to another company to solve our company’s current problem,”

Molly suggested as she sat across him.

Toby shook his head.

“I don’t want to do that.”

Once he openly subcontracted the project, Brian would get it in the end. And if that happened, all of his previous efforts would be in vain.

“You did it for that woman, didn’t you?”

Molly couldn’t understand why she loved him wholeheartedly and let him do whatever he wanted for the past two years.

Perhaps he had never loved her in the first place, and used her to replace someone in his heart. He didn’t love her, but for the position of Deputy CEO of the Smith Group, he married her and got his current position.

Maybe that was all he wanted? All that he wanted were the privileges he enjoyed now.

He didn’t marry her for love. In fact, the marriage might be worthless to him.

“Molly, let’s not talk about her, okay?”

Toby had kept Ayla in his heart all this time, but he just wanted to think of her secretly.

“No! That’s because she’s back!”

If only Ayla died two years ago, Molly would’ve lived her life happily as Mrs. Brown without any worries.

But now, that woman had returned so glamorously. Molly felt uneasy that Ayla could take him away from her at any moment.

Chapter 132: Love Needs Fairness

As he sipped his coffee, Toby looked at Molly and said, “So, what if she’s back?”

Everything had changed.

Even if he was still in love with Lala, she didn’t need him anymore.

“Do you mean that you don’t love her anymore?”

Molly refused to believe him, because if she was deeply in love with someone, she wouldn't get over them so easily.

Just as she loved Toby, she knew that he had someone else in his heart. She was also aware of the fact that their marriage only served to fulfill his goals.

Molly's relationship with him was nothing more than this.

Despite being married for nearly three years, they never had children. He had never asked to have one because he didn't wish to have a child with her.

"Molly, enough. Can we please stop fighting about Lala?"

Toby had grown tired of it. He didn't want to talk to Molly about Lala anymore because talking about her only hurt him.

"I'm not messing around. Have you ever loved me all these years?"

Molly stared at him intently.

Although she knew that his answer was no and that it would hurt her to hear it again, she still wanted to ascertain it.

"Molly, you're my wife. Aren't you bored of asking me such questions?"

Toby got up to hold her arms with his hands.

Looking up at him, she said, "Bored? Is that all I am to you? A boredom? If you don't love me at all, then you shouldn't have married me in the first place!"

"Molly!"

When Hayden went upstairs, he heard that Toby was arguing with his daughter.

"Are you done fighting?"

"Dad? What are you doing here?"

Knowing that he was in poor health, Molly couldn't bring herself to tell him what she was thinking.

"I heard you two arguing again. Am I not allowed to see what's going on? It's so late already. Why are you even fighting?"

Hayden knew that his daughter felt wronged because of Toby, and he also knew Toby's past with Ayla, but it was all over now.

If they kept on quarreling about it, it would never end.

He had been married for more than twenty years. He knew how to maintain a marriage.

No matter how tolerant he was, as long as Miley had no patience, they could never be happy together.

Glancing at Toby, Molly said, "Dad, nothing happened between me and Toby. Let me escort you back to your room. Isn't Mom home yet?"

"No, she's out playing cards with Mrs. Hicks. I doubt she's coming home anytime soon," Hayden said helplessly.

Whenever he came home late, Miley would make a fuss about it.

But whenever he came home early, she was out playing cards, and she wouldn't come back until midnight.

Toby sat alone in his study.

What Molly said to him had moved his heart.

He wasn't sure how to repay his debts of gratitude, but maybe he should start by letting go of his past and begin anew with Molly.

Ayla also cared about Toby's happiness and whether he had a complete family or not.

But would he be able to grant Molly a complete and happy family? Walking out of the study, he went back to the bedroom.

"Molly, you have to trust me. I'll always be with you in the future."

Turning to look at him, Molly answered, "That's good enough for me."

Indeed, it was enough.

Someday, he would truly fall in love with her.

Ayla woke up early.

Although her room was small, she still felt empty somehow. She stood in front of the floor-to-ceiling window, crossing her arms.

The weather was good today, but her mood wasn't.

Meanwhile, Anna was lying in her bed, while Brian sat on the sofa. She had almost recovered, so she wanted to leave the hospital. She wanted to go back with him and help him manage the company.

This was what she was willing to do for him.

"Brian, don't you have a meeting this morning? You should go to the company. Maria will bring me breakfast later. You don't have to worry about me," Anna said to him as she sat upright.

Brian glanced at his watch and put away his laptop.

"Okay, then I'll go now. Have a good rest. I'll come back once I'm done with work."

As soon as his car drove out of the hospital, it brushed past a taxi.

Ayla heard that Anna had been suffering from gastrointestinal pain, so she cooked some millet porridge for her.

She knew that when someone was having a stomachache, it could cause them tremendous suffering to the point that it could kill them.

Ayla knocked on the door.

Thinking that it was Maria, Anna said, "Come in!"

When she raised her head, she found that it was Ayla who came in carrying a thermos bottle.

"It's you. What are you doing here? Have you come here to laugh at me?"

Anna didn't want Ayla to see her so haggard.

"I heard that you were hospitalized, so I came to visit you. I bear no ill intentions."

Standing by the bed, Ayla filled a small bowl with porridge and gave it to Anna.

"Have some porridge. I made it myself."

Anna looked at the steaming millet porridge and said, "So he told you that I was in the hospital, huh? You two seem to be on really good terms now."

She sounded a bit sarcastic when she said that.

Even though Brian had been with her lately, she still believed that it was all an illusion, but she was willing to immerse herself in that illusion.

"I'm the one who asked him. He didn't take the initiative to tell me."

Anna didn't take the bowl from her. She just looked at her indifferently.

"I'm afraid you might've poisoned that porridge."

"I'm not a fool, Anna. I have no need to kill you just because of a heartless man."

After saying that, Ayla put the bowl in Anna's hand.

"Eat it. It's not poisoned."

"Why did you come to see me?"

Anna picked up the spoon and ate slowly.

"Your cooking skills have improved."

Standing up, Ayla replied, "I only have myself to depend on. If I didn't treat myself well, I wouldn't have been able to survive all these years."

"I honestly never imagined that you were still alive. Back then, everyone believed that you drowned in the sea."

Anna remembered that at that time, Brian had gotten shot and was bleeding so much, and yet he kept looking for Ayla.

If he hadn't fainted from blood loss and been sent to the hospital, he might've died on that island.

"Right! I thought I would die too!"

When Tatum injected that drug into her body, Ayla believed that she was bound to die. If she weren't useful to him, she might've gotten killed at once.

Anna looked at her blankly. She realized that Ayla must've gone through a lot all these years.

Otherwise, she wouldn't have such mixed feelings about what happened years ago.

"But it's okay. It's all in the past. Just get some rest! It's time for me to get back. I'm afraid of earning your displeasure if I don't go to work on time."

Ayla picked up her handbag and was about to leave.

"Thanks for the porridge."

Anna was also a woman who had suffered through so much.

When she saw Ayla, she didn't want to treat her as an enemy even if they couldn't be friends.

Perhaps love needed fairness and mutual affection.

Chapter 133: Everything Is Predestined

Ayla left the ward smiling. She and Anna were in the same emotional boat.

It was indeed sad and unfortunate that both of them were in love with the same ruthless man. She returned to her studio.

Noticing Hayden downstairs, she enquired, "Uncle Hayden, what brings you here?"

"I went upstairs to your studio but you weren't at your office," Hayden said with a soft smile.

He hadn't seen her in a while but after witnessing the disturbing quarrel between Toby and Molly the night before, he was driven to have a word with her.

They went to a cafe and ordered coffee.

"Uncle Hayden, is something disturbing your peace of mind?"

Ayla was deeply concerned because Hayden looked far more haggard than he did at their previous meeting.

"It involves family matters," he said blandly.

"Uncle Hayden, just relax. There's no need to stress. Everything will improve. Let's please change the topic."

She could read him like a book.

Something was amiss.

Hayden gazed at her and reminisced about his first love.

The woman's figure was etched in his mind. However, years had elapsed and much had changed. Maybe it was time he let go of the past and forgot about her.

"Good idea. You have always been so sensible."

Unfortunately he didn't get an opportunity to broach the subject he wanted to with her.

After leaving the cafe, Ayla returned to her studio.

Soon after commencing work, she received a call from Italy.

"Wenny, how are you?"

"Miss Evans, I'm fine, thank you. I have handed the first season's design drafts to Mr. Clark. He seems to be perfectly satisfied with them. He has even started making the formal sample clothing," Ayla reported to Yareli.

"Well that's certainly good news. But are you burning the midnight oil and neglecting yourself?" Yareli asked, somewhat concerned.

Not only had she called to enquire about her but she also planned to go to A City.

"How could I do that? I'm absolutely fine!"

Ayla's passion for her work kept her vibrant and uplifted her spirits.

"Okay, great! I will be going to Antawood with Linda tomorrow," Yareli told her.

She was content that relations between her company and the Clark Group were proceeding smoothly.

Brian was prepared to expand the cooperation with Starlight at a very reasonable price. It would work to her advantage. She had focused on developing her business in Italy because she was determined not to return to A City.

But with the new developments, it was necessary to make a comeback.

Even if it meant bumping into someone she would rather not see, this was a risk she had to take.

It had been so many years, and perhaps that man had already forgotten about her and moved on.

Secretly, she nurtured the desire to go back to Antawood to see that man whom she cared about but had abandoned.

The moment she heard Yareli say that she was going to Antawood with Linda, Ayla knew that Brian was behind this move.

Whatever his intention in doing this, she had to prepare to face it.

The first thing that Brian noticed when he entered the ward was the presence of an unfamiliar thermos bottle alongside Anna's thermos bottle.

"Who visited you?" he asked.

"Ayla," Anna said flatly.

"What was she doing here?"

He reclined on the sofa. He wasn't at all surprised that she had visited.

"She brought me some porridge." Anna looked at Brian.

She detected the slight change in his eyes when he talked about Ayla.

"Well," Brian replied indifferently.

Anna got out of bed and said, "Maria brought me a change of clothing. Please would you help me with the hospital discharge?"

Even if Brian only had Ayla in his heart and no space for her, she wouldn't let Ayla take him so easily. She would make it an uphill battle for her.

Brian drove her back to the villa.

"You can rest here for a few days. It's such a relief that Maria is here to manage everything. If you drink again, be fully aware of the consequences!"

Seeing that Brian was about to leave, Anna held his hand and asked, "Do you care about me? It's not that I want to give up on myself... It's just that I'd rather drown my sorrows in alcohol and forget the heartbreak. Can you understand that?"

Perhaps he didn't understand, or maybe he had never understood what heartbreak was.

But Anna understood fully the impact of a broken heart. She had experienced both love and heartbreak.

But she didn't want any more emotional turmoil that would shatter her fragile heart into tiny pieces.

"Anna, you need to realize that I saved your life. Don't do anything without my permission."

He had saved her life back then. He wasn't going to let her harm herself like this.

Besides, when he had been striving for his business, Anna had traded her body to help him achieve his goals.

Anna looked at him and hugged him around his waist.

"Thank you for saving me. Maybe everything is predestined."

She was helplessly in love with him. She would bear the brunt of his torture as part of her destiny and fate.

“Anna, have a good rest. We shall chat further when I come back,” he said, freeing himself from her embrace.

“Are you going to see Ayla?” She glared at him.

It was already late. He went out to see Ayla on the pretext of business.

She knew he wanted to see Ayla to find out more why she had visited Anna in the hospital.

Wasn't that true? He didn't reply.

She knew that she had guessed right.

“Go ahead!” Anna flung her arms up in the air.

If he wanted to go to his precious Ayla, he was welcome! Even if she was successful in keeping them apart, she couldn't erase Ayla from his heart.

He left without a backward glance.

She was deeply hurt that he did not turn around to acknowledge her. She had never occupied even a tiny fragment of his heart.

But Anna was still hopeful that someday he would appreciate her intense love for him. She wanted nothing more out of life save the day when he would reciprocate her love.

Ayla was still busy working on the design drafts.

There must be a very important reason why Yareli was coming to Antawood.

Brian and Yareli would both have their own agendas.

Brian reached Ayla's studio.

“Ayla.”

“You are here.”

She put down her brush and looked at him. She knew that Anna would have told him about her visit to the hospital.

That was the reason he had come to meet her.

“Did you know that I was coming?” Brian walked to the sofa and sat down.

“I didn't know. I just had a hunch,” she said indifferently.

Whether he came or not made no difference to her.

“Your hunch was right.”

Gently puffing away on his cigarette, he told her, “Miss Evans called me. She is concerned that you might be overburdened by the workload. In order for the fashion show to run smoothly, I also asked Linda to come and assist you”

They eventually ended up discussing work-related matters. They hadn't talked shop this pleasantly since they met again.

Chapter 134: If You Don't Love Me, Then You Hate Me

Ayla fanned away the smoke before her face, and said, "Mr. Clark, thank you for being so considerate. Should I be happy that I have boss like you?"

"No, because your workload hasn't been reduced. I've reached a verbal agreement with Ms. Evans, so there will be a lot more work for the fashion season," said Brian.

"Then I guess I must congratulate you, Mr. Clark," she remarked.

"You're gonna be a lot busier in the following days. Try not to come by. If you have any concerns regarding my work, please contact my assistant during working hours."

Brian put out his cigarette on the ashtray.

"You're really talking to me in a professional tone now, huh?"

"Our relationship is strictly professional now, isn't it?"

Ayla kept a safe distance of one meter from him.

"In that case, shall we talk about more private matters?" he replied.

Everything that happened between them was something that neither of them could pretend like it was something that never happened, even if she kept refusing to admit it.

Ayla smirked.

"Mr. Clark, you should keep in mind that my name is Wenny now, not Arlene."

She was fortunate that she played Arlene's substitute perfectly back then.

Later, he found out that her real name was actually Ayla.

"I refuse to believe that, so you're not who you claim to be." Brian saw right through her.

She wanted to break away from him, but he wasn't going to allow that to happen.

"What do you want?" said Ayla.

"Isn't it better if you just stay with Anna? Why are you so insistent in getting me involved? I don't love you anymore. Do you not understand that?"

Hearing that made Brian stand up and pull her into his arms.

"Who the hell told you that I want to be with Anna? Are you trying to be a matchmaker or something? I don't want her. I never have, and I never will."

"I just told you that it's none of my business, so keep me out of it. Is it so hard to understand that? It's impossible for us to have a relationship now. Two years ago, when I became Mrs. Clark, I was nothing but a substitute. It was all fake!" Ayla exclaimed.

However, he still held her tightly in his arms.

"And I've told you that you're my wife, and you always will be. Oh, by the way, Ms. Evans doesn't know about our previous relationship, does she? Perhaps I should tell her. What do you think about that? Do you think she'll agree if I ask her to let me keep you as an official employee of the Clark Group? She'll definitely agree, won't she?"

A smirk appeared on his lips. It was just a faint smile, but it was enough to send shivers down her spine. She didn't want anyone else to know of her former relationship with Brian.

"You can't tell her."

"Why not? Huh? I'm allowed to do whatever I want. It's not up to you."

He was done playing with her.

This time, he was determined to get her back.

"You're the devil. Is there anything else you can do besides threatening me?"

Ayla didn't want to appear so weak or powerless against him.

"Blackmailing you is the best way to deal with you. Or do you want me to force myself on you?"

Once more, he embraced her as tightly as he could.

Ayla pushed him away and slapped him across his face.

"Don't touch me! You're not allowed to touch me!"

Lucas is with another woman now, and he has abandoned you.

Why do you insist on being chaste for him? Did you ever do the same for me in the past two years? Even if I owed you and hurt you before, you should know that I don't like women who are flirtatious and sleep with one man after another.

Brian was out of ideas. He didn't know how to convince her to come back to him.

"Fine. If you refuse to listen to me, then I'll do everything in my power to have you!"

Upon hearing this, Ayla tightened her clothes.

"Brian Clark, what do I have to do to make you let me go?"

As he stood in front of her, Brian's eyes were filled with malice.

It was hard to see through him and figure out what he was thinking.

His eyes were so frightening.

By this point, she could no longer keep pretending to be fearless.

Her courageous facade crumbled before him.

Why was Brian doing this? Why would he keep forcing her like this? Was he determined to drive her insane?

“Come back to me, back to where you belong.”

He had never intended to let her go.

Even if everyone believed that she died in the sea two years ago, he never had any intention of being with another woman, let alone had another wife.

“Mr. Clark, was there ever a place for me? Did you ever have a place for me in your heart? No! You never did!” Ayla had been trying so hard to earn his love, but she never succeeded.

When she disappeared, it symbolized her complete separation from him.

“Ayla, do you have to consider yourself always right?”

When did he say that he didn't have a place for her? When did he not give her a chance to have his heart? Ge) He had given her his heart, but she disappeared.

For two long years, she was gone, and he kept looking for her, waiting and hoping that she was still alive! But she didn't want to have anything to do with him anymore, not even a bit.

“I'm not considering myself always right. I just have a clear estimation of who I am.”

Ayla leaned against him and said weakly, “Don't tell Ms. Evans about our past. Please.”

“Why don't you want others to know of our past? Are you embarrassed about it?”

Anger and resentment resided in his heart. He was in love with this woman, but he just couldn't say it out loud so easily.

Or maybe he wouldn't be able to say those words in his whole life.

The only thing he could do was to use his actions to get everything that he ever wanted.

“Yes. It was the worst part of my life. I sacrificed everything I had, but what did I get in return? Nothing but pain and suffering! It even cost me my life!”

Ayla's biggest mistake was falling in love with this man, but she was still not firm enough.

Brian held her again, and said, “If you're so embarrassed by it, then so be it! If you don't love me, then I'll make you hate me! That way, you'll remember me for the rest of your life, carrying your hatred for me to your grave.”

After saying that, he kissed her overbearingly. She tried to move away, but she was too late.

“Do you really have to do this?”

Ayla should've pushed him away. She shouldn't have allowed him to touch her body like this.

"You forced my hand! If you'll be able to remember me forever because of your grudge against me, I don't mind if you hate me!"

Brian tore off her chiffon dress and pressed her against the sofa.

"No, stop! Don't do it. I won't hate you! You'll only make me want to kill you!"

But no matter what Ayla said, it was useless. She couldn't defend herself from Brian.

While he was indulging himself, he noticed the scar on her back. He knew that this scar was due to Tatum shooting her two years ago.

After such a long time, the scar still continued to exist.

Gently, he stroked it.

"Does it still hurt?" he asked.

His deep and caring voice made her tremble. Did it hurt? Perhaps it did hurt when she got shot.

However, compared to the drug that Tatum injected into her, that wound was nothing. But she wasn't going to tell him about it because it wasn't necessary!

Chapter 135: I Could Promise Anything Else, Except This One

Ayla's body was pressed firmly on the couch making it difficult for her to ignore Brian's probing eyes. She looked away instead to evade his questions.

"Why don't you answer me? Does it hurt?" Brian asked as he searched her eyes for answers that her mouth wasn't willing to give.

Bending his head down, he gently kissed Ayla's scar. His lips left a trail of moisture that was impossible to ignore.

That scar would remain etched on her skin for a lifetime and it was a clear representation of what he owed her.

"It hurt," Ayla nodded.

No matter how painful the physical wounds were, they all belonged in the past now.

What kept her hurting was the emotional trauma he put her through. "I'm sorry."

Brian spoke softly.

He remembered how she got that scar and no amount of apologies could turn back time and erase it.

Still, he wouldn't give up easily trying to win her heart. Biting her lower lip, Ayla pleaded, "Why can't you set me free? Why?"

Tears welled up in her eyes, a mixture of pain and anger that she couldn't quite release.

"I can promise anything else, except this one,"

Brian said with finality. Ayla gasped in horror and exclaimed, "You devil!"

"So don't ever try to escape from me. Now that you're here, I will never let you go again. If ever you try to leave, I will come find you, understand?" he repeated as he gazed at her pointedly.

There was no sense arguing with him at this point.

Ayla broke free from his grasp and plucked the torn dress from the floor to cover her body.

Brian draped his suit jacket on her shoulders and said, "I'll ask someone to bring clothes for you here."

"No, thanks. There's no way for me to afford it," she countered to decline the offer.

Ayla didn't want to be regarded as a sexual partner.

She tried her hardest to recover from her bitter past and becoming like this would only waste her sacrifices.

"Well, if you hate me that much, it means that I'll be always in your heart." Brian grinned at her.

At the back of his mind, he thought, "You can hate me. It is better to hate me than to forget me"

Ayla turned to him with blazing eyes.

"No way! You don't have a space in my heart or in my mind. I don't love you and I don't hate you either. I feel nothing for you at all. Should I be grateful that you agreed to let me have that operation? Need I remind you that no matter how many times we have s*x, I won't bear another child ever again and that's because of you," she stated as a matter of fact with poison in her words.

His coercion would only make her feel more indifferent. If he would keep her shackled to him, she could very well give him a taste of his own medicine.

"You..." Brian was at a loss for words as he stared at her unbelievably. He thought Ayla just wanted to stir up trouble and provoke him. Wasn't she afraid that he would shoot her?

"Mr. Clark, I've already finished what needed to be done. You should go back now," she said dismissively.

Ayla shrugged the black suit jacket off her shoulders and let it fall to the floor. She didn't need it or anything from him at all!

"Are you sure you're going out dressed like that?" he asked incredulously.

Brian really wanted to teach her a lesson because of how stubborn she was being, but he chose otherwise when he saw the fresh bruises on her body.

Ayla let go of her torn clothes and threw back a question.

"Then what do you want me to do?"

Brian took her in his arms and reminded her possessively, "I'm the only one who can see your body. Do you understand that?"

No other man would ever touch her, much less lay a finger on her! Ayla chose to keep her mouth shut, not wanting to argue anymore.

She plopped down on the couch and not long after, Brian came back carrying a new set of clothes.

“Get dressed. I’ll take you to dinner,” he ordered.

Ayla shook her head in reply.

“No, thanks. I prefer to eat instant noodles.”

She would lose her appetite if she had dinner with him.

Brian had already changed his clothes for dinner as well, but for now, he would give in to her wishes.

As soon as she put on the new clothes, he said, “Okay, fine! Instant noodles, then. Let’s not wait any longer. I’m getting hungry.”

Before she could say anything, he pulled her out of the studio and went to her apartment.

As they slurped on the noodles, the awkward silence in the room was too unbearable for one’s comfort.

Ayla only had a few bites and Brian went on his way shortly after finishing the food.

Her tense nerves finally relaxed the moment he left.

It was like a huge boulder was lifted off her chest and she could finally breathe again.

Not wanting to waste any second, she headed to the bathroom and stripped off the designer dress that Brian gave her.

She tossed it into the trash can where it rightfully belonged.

Then she lay in the bathtub, hoping the water and soap would cleanse whatever he left on her body. She didn’t want to keep on feeling this way anymore.

But what could she do if he really wanted to continue with this? ‘Isn’t there anything I can do for him to give up completely?’ she thought hard with her eyes closed.

Brian hated flirtatious women who would sleep with many men the most.

Did she have to resort in doing that to make herself the kind of woman he hated, so he could finally let her go? If so, how far was she willing to go to do it? This plan was to set herself free from him completely.

‘Would this be worth it in the end?’ Ayla asked herself over and over.

It all depended on whether her heart was ready to endure it all. Meanwhile, Lucas drove to Ayla’s apartment. He was a bit hesitant to go at first, since he wasn’t sure if he should pay her a visit. He actually missed her so much, but he couldn’t come see her constantly anymore. He could only drive to her place at midnight.

As he reached the building, he craned his neck upwards to look at her apartment.

‘How are you doing, Lala? Will you hold on like you did before? Or will you come back to Brian without hesitation and throw yourself into his arms the moment he shows up?’ he murmured to himself.

In the past few years, Lucas had been with Ayla every day. He should have faith in her.

Knowing how badly Brian hurt her, she wouldn’t turn around easily.

But what faith he had slowly dissolved when Lucas saw that Brian’s car had just driven away from the apartment.

‘Why did Lala allow him to stay that late?’ he asked himself in pure disbelief.

After taking a few calming breaths, Lucas decided to call Ayla but there was no answer. He also tried reaching her through landline to no avail.

Stepping out of the car, Lucas strode towards Ayla’s apartment and pounded on the door.

In the distant quiet of the bathroom, Ayla was too tired and sleepy to hear the knocks and doorbell ringing outside.

Perhaps she was tired both physically and mentally, so she fell asleep unknowingly.

At last, Lucas found a tool to open the door. He searched the entire apartment and finally found her in the bathroom.

“Lala, there you are.”

Looking at the subsiding steam on the bathroom mirror, it was clear that the water had already cooled down.

He carried her out of the bathtub immediately, and when he saw the hickeys and bruises all over her body, he knew what Brian had done to Lala again.

Lucas clenched his jaw and willed himself to keep his rising anger at bay. Ayla was stirred awake by the chill she felt.

With her eyes fluttering open, it took a second for her to recognize him.

“Lucas, is it really you?”

She must be dreaming, right?

“Why did you fall asleep in the bathtub? You will get sick again if you catch a cold.”

As always, Lucas worried about her health. He picked up the bathrobe and draped it on her.

Ayla tightened the robe and asked, “Why are you here?”

“If I didn’t come, you would have been sleeping in the bathtub all night. Then you’ll get sick and it would take days for you to recover again.”

Lucas led her out of the bathroom and motioned her to sit on the sofa.

Then he took the hair dryer and aimed it at her long wet hair to dry it faster.

Ayla kept quiet because she didn't know what to say.

Should she tell Lucas that she was forced to have s*x with Brian again tonight? Perhaps, in the future, would she allow Brian to have her body for as long as he needed? And should she even take the initiative to seduce him so that she could become the kind of woman he hated one day?

"Lala, have you met Brian?" Lucas finally asked to break the long silence. He had already seen the evidence and there should be no way for her to lie about it.

Ayla nodded without meeting his eyes, "Yes, I met him."

They did meet, although it had an underlying meaning.

They were involved in each other again and it would last for who knew how long. This time, it looked like Brian wouldn't let Ayla go and he would do everything in his power so she couldn't get away. All she could do was face him.

Chapter 136: How Could She Forget

Lucas saw the look on her face.

"He raped you again, didn't he?"

Ayla turned her gaze away from him. She couldn't do anything when Brian threatened her and forced her to have s*x with him.

"You shouldn't have given him the chance to rape you again! It has been more than two years. Haven't you forgotten how he hurt you?"

Lucas helped her dry her hair as he gazed into her eyes.

Why couldn't she forget about Brian? Were all the things he did for her during the past two years meaningless to her? Did she forget everything between them the second Brian reappeared in her life? And was she planning to get back together with him? Ayla got up and looked back at Lucas.

"I've never forgotten about it. How could I forget it? How could I cast aside the most painful experience I've ever gone through?" She loathed Brian.

And she hated him for raping her without considering how she would feel.

In doing so, he made her disgusted with the idea of coming back to him, and prevented her from ever giving her heart to him.

"Lala, just stay away from him. We should go back to Italy. What do you think?"

All Lucas wanted to do right now was to get her as far away from this place as possible. He didn't want her to have anything to do with Brian ever again.

Although he knew that they were bound to meet in Antawood, he didn't expect that things would spiral out of control so soon after they saw each other.

Ayla looked back at Lucas.

'Leave?' What would happen to that woman if they left? Would he really just give up on her? If she made him give up on someone again because of her, then what did that make her? She didn't want to burden him.

During the past two years, she had lived by one principle. She had worked hard to make herself independent, but she knew how much she was indebted to him.

Back when she had a relapse every single day and was unable to live on her own, Lucas stood by her side without hesitation and helped her through many painful nights.

Lucas told her that she was his happiness, so she accepted his proposal.

But before she could even learn to love him back, Brian barged into her life again and forced himself on her, regardless if she wanted it or not.

"Don't you want to leave, Lala? Let's leave and go back to Italy together, alright? Or if you want to go to another country, I'll go with you. We can also go to a place where nobody knows us. It will be just the two of us, together."

Lucas held her hand. He was trying to tell her that she should just forget about Brian, the man who put her through so much suffering.

If the two of them left, he'd also forget about Tatum.

For Ayla's sake, he could forego his hatred and revenge.

All he wanted to do right now was to protect her. With hopeful eyes, she gazed back at him.

She wasn't sure if she could just run away.

Two years ago, it was only because everyone had believed that she was dead that she enjoyed a carefree life.

If she disappeared and "died" again, would Brian believe it? No, definitely not. "It's getting late. You should go back. Ms. Evans will come to Antawood tomorrow. I have to pick her up at the airport."

Ayla couldn't let him stay the night, and she knew he had to leave to accompany another woman. Lucas nodded.

"I'll leave after you fall asleep." It had been a long time since he spent time with her.

He had promised her that he would accompany her and love her for the rest of his life, and he hoped that he could keep this promise.

Moments later, Ayla lay on her bed.

However, after what happened tonight, she was having a hard time falling asleep.

“You know what? I was so happy during these past two years. With you by my side, I lived a good life. I felt like there was still hope for me to continue living.”

She recalled every detail of her life in the past two years.

If Lucas weren't there, she might've given up long ago.

And yet she survived, and Lucas had given her everything that she now had. “Silly girl, what are you talking about?”

Lucas was lying beside her.

“Are you filling up your head with foolish notions just because you can't fall asleep?”

Ayla shook her head.

“No, it's just that I'm so lucky that I met you.”

As for the things that she was never fortunate enough to have and the things she had lost, she didn't want to care about them anymore.

For the rest of the night until she finally fell asleep, Lucas listened to everything she wanted to say about the past two years.

He didn't leave her until it was almost the break of dawn.

Even though he didn't want to, he had to leave her to keep her safe. He couldn't let Haley find out about Ayla.

Tatum wanted to intercept Brian's goods once again.

Although Jaime was the one who handled it all the time and not once in the past two years had Brian dealt with those deals personally, maybe this time would be different. It was already surprising that Brian had tolerated Tatum's antics for two years, but Lucas could see that the man was just waiting for the perfect opportunity to get rid of Tatum once and for all.

Lucas didn't approve that Tatum was still doing shady business, but he owed him so much, and he also had to avenge his family.

The moment he came back to the hotel, he saw that Haley was sleeping on the sofa.

“Haley.” Lucas tried to wake her up.

Whether he was here or not, she would probably stay in his room.

“Lucas, you're back. Where have you been? I was worried about you all night.”

After saying that, she threw herself into his arms. Pulling her away from him, he responded, “Haley, stop it. Go back to your own room. I need to sleep.”

“Sleep? Who did you fool around with last night?”

Haley noticed the dark circles around his eyes. Was he up all night?

“Haley, stay out of my business.”

Then, Lucas pushed her out of his room and closed the door.

If she hadn't come to Antawood with him, he wouldn't have allowed Brian to take advantage of Ayla.

When Haley returned to her room, she took out her phone to call someone.

“What did you find? Have you found out the mysterious woman that Lucas had been seeing lately?”

“Miss Green, Mr. Collins has been going to an apartment on a regular basis, but outsiders aren't allowed in that apartment complex, so we can't figure out who the woman is,” said one of the bodyguards that Haley sent to follow Lucas around.

“Just keep an eye on him. I don't believe that woman can elude my spies. If I find out who that b***h is, I'll make her life a living hell!”

Haley swore menacingly.

“Yes, Miss Green. I'll continue following Mr. Collins.”

“Good. You do that. Follow him until you find out who that woman is.”

She refused to believe that that woman had captured Lucas' heart.

No matter what relationship that woman had with him, she was going to destroy her.

She was going to make sure that she would be the only woman in his life, and nobody would be able to take him away from her.

In the past, she had disobeyed her own father so many times because of Lucas.

Now, she had to prove that her efforts led to something instead of getting nothing in return.

No matter what happened, she was determined to get all that she wanted to have.

Chapter 137: Wait And See

The next morning, Ayla was done packing up and was about to go out when the doorbell suddenly rang. She opened the door and found out that it was Brian. She thought maybe it was the most polite he had ever been.

“Mr. Clark? So you do know how to use the doorbell. I thought it was not you,” Ayla said indifferently.

Her clothes made her look more slender and taller.

She was wearing a high-necked shirt with black lace, slim black trousers, and light-colored high heels.

Brian stared at her for a moment and said, “Shall we go out now?”

“I'm so sorry if you have to pick me up, Mr. Clark. Though I can go to the airport by myself,” Ayla said.

She smiled indifferently as if nothing had happened yesterday.

Last night, Brian sent her back and left after.

But this morning, he could see how she smiled leisurely.

Had she forgotten what happened yesterday, or was she just trying to turn a blind eye to him? He wanted her to hate him and remember him, but she would not let his wish come true, would she? Or if it was not hatred, then it must be love.

Ayla looked out the window while sitting in the passenger seat. The car was speeding on the road.

No one spoke while on the way.

Brian was not the type of man who would initiate talking or saying sorry even though he had forced Ayla to have s*x with him last night.

As for Ayla, to avoid everything that might happen, all she could do was act as if nothing had happened.

The car finally stopped at the gate of the airport.

Ayla saw that Yareli and Linda were already waiting there.

“Wenny.”

Yareli looked deep into Ayla’s eyes and said, “Thank you for all your hard work these days.”

“Ms. Evans, that’s what I should do.”

Ayla shook her head and smiled. “You’re so awesome, Wenny. You’ve just been in Antawood for a month, and only by the twenty design drafts you already won the favor of Mr. Clark. You are not that simple a figure!”

Even with the presence of Yareli, Linda teased Ayla anyway. Ayla was about to say something when Brian came over and said, “Miss Linda, your design is also excellent. With you and Ms. Evans here this time, I’m sure that our Clark Group’s fashion season will be more successful.”

After Linda heard what Brian said, there was a wave of joy that crossed her heart. She thought that if Mr. Clark would like her, she would not need to work hard as a designer anymore.

“Mr. Clark, since you said so, I will make sure to do my best. I just hope I won’t disappoint you.” Linda said those with a smile on her face.

She walked up to Brian but didn’t hug him.

The woman just stretched out her one hand.

Brian also stretched out his and firmly shook hands with Linda.

He thought that this woman was not that simple, though she was capable in work. He had known her a little since they had a talk with each other in Starlight several times.

Brian appreciated such capable women.

While Ayla was watching the two talking, her intuition told her that Linda had a crush on Brian. She thought it was good for Brian if there was another woman who would accompany him.

After all, he was also a man who liked a novelty.

Ayla realized that if Linda was here, maybe she could finally leave then.

In the car, Linda sat in the passenger seat voluntarily without asking anyone.

Ayla was just relaxed and didn't feel angry at all.

Yareli also noticed what was happening.

She could see that Wenny was so indifferent about the situation, so Yareli didn't speak and just remained silent.

Besides, when she was in Italy, she knew that Wenny already had a boyfriend.

However, Yareli also noticed how Brian looked at Ayla affectionately.

To see such an eager look on Brian's cold face had made her a little surprised. Ayla saw the surprise in Yareli's face, so she said, "Ms. Evans, please have a rest! It was such a long flight. You must be very tired."

She also noticed Brian's gaze at her. She could feel how unhappy he was right now, but she still pretended not to know anything.

"I'm fine, Wenny." Yareli looked at Ayla and added, "I used to travel around by plane. So for me, there is no jet lag at all."

Brian drove the car and stopped over to the hotel. He said, "Ms. Evans, you can stay here for these days. Come and have a look. See if you are satisfied with it."

Yareli looked around at the cozy presidential suite and said, "Mr. Clark's arrangement is always so considerate. You always make me feel at home whenever I come here."

"I'm glad to know that you're satisfied with it. You can take a good rest now. The meeting is scheduled for tomorrow morning. Is that okay with you? What do you think?" Brian smiled and said to Yareli.

She nodded and said, "Of course, no problem. You can go and take a rest too, Linda!"

"It's my first time here in Antawood, Ms. Evans. I want to go out for a walk, but I'm not sure if Mr. Clark is willing to go with me, so I will get familiar with the environment here." Linda flashed Brian a sweet smile.

"Mr. Clark, are you willing to have a walk with me?" she asked.

However, Brian turned and looked at Ayla.

Then Ayla said, "Mr. Clark, since Linda has said that, I think you should go for a walk with her to help her get familiar with the environment. It will be helpful when you are working together in the future."

After hearing what Ayla said, Brian spoke with a calm smile.

“Okay.You can come with us then, Wenny.Remember when you first came here? I was too busy with my work at that time to accompany you to get familiar with the environment here.Since I’m free today, I’ll take you out for a ride.”

Brian was aware that Ayla was just trying to push him into someone else’s arms.

Well, she had to stop because he wouldn’t let her get her own way.

Also, it was just a tour around Antawood.

Then why not go with them? But Brian saw how Ayla shook her head and refused.

“I’m sorry, Mr.Clark.I’m afraid I’ll turn you down for now because I’m not free for today,” she said.

He hesitated for a moment and said after, “Since you’re not free today then Miss Linda, let’s just go for another day.Is that okay with you?”

Linda gritted her teeth and glared at Ayla, thinking that this woman would only hinder her plans.

But when Linda faced Brian, she just smiled and said, “It’s okay, Mr.Clark.Since you have said so, then I’m not going to force you.”

Ayla shook her head as she turned around and walked out of the room.She just wanted Linda to get along well with Brian.

But he had caused trouble to Ayla.She knew that her unintentional words had only made Linda hate her even more.

It looked like Brian was trying to give Ayla a pretty hard time. Well...They would wait and see what would happen.

Brian sincerely smiled when he saw that Ayla was walking quickly towards the elevator.

He followed her.

She couldn’t escape from him at all.

No matter how many tricks she had, he wouldn’t let her succeed and do what she wanted.

While standing in the long corridor, Linda watched the two stride into the elevator.

It hadn’t been that long since Wenny came here, yet she had already wrapped Mr.Clark around her fingers.

Linda felt like the other woman had just given her such a considerable embarrassment.

However, Linda was not weak and easy to be bullied.

It was better for Wenny if she wouldn’t dare to compete with Linda because Wenny was not qualified at all! Yareli came out and looked at her.

“Linda, is there something wrong?” she asked.

Linda just shook her head and said, "Oh, nothing. I have to go now, Ms. Evans. I still need to prepare for the meeting tomorrow."

Yareli knew what could be running on Linda's mind right now. However, she just didn't say anything because she didn't want her official business to be affected.

So she just nodded and said, "Right, I know. You should go ahead."

Linda turned around and started to walk back to her room.

Chapter 138: I Don't Want To Be Mistaken For A W***e

As soon as Ayla went downstairs, Brian caught up with her and grabbed her arm.

"What's the matter with you? Were you trying to set me up with Linda? Do you really not care?"

"Mr. Clark, I think it's inappropriate of you to hold me like this in public."

Ayla glared at him.

Was he aware of what he was doing right now? This was the hotel's lobby.

Numerous people were coming and going, and she didn't want them to mistake her for a w***e.

"Is that so? I don't care about other people's opinions. Don't you know who owns this place?"

Brian proudly stood at the center of the lobby, showing no intention of letting her go.

As of this moment, Ayla was powerless.

So what if he owned this place? Yes, she cared about what other people thought of her, and she didn't want to be seen with him. But was this reason enough to stop him? Why couldn't he just listen to her?

"Let me drive you back to your office."

After saying that, he carried her to the car parked outside and drove her to work. Ayla sat in the office for the entire day, but she practically did nothing.

What Lucas said to her last night was still clouding her mind.

She was still debating whether to leave or not. She had two choices: she could either leave or cater to Brian's whims.

However, she was aware of the fact that leaving wouldn't be easy.

And even if she did try to leave, Brian might be able to catch her and drag her back.

When night fell, Ayla received a call from Yareli.

They were supposed to have dinner together.

"Wenny, we haven't seen each other for over a month. It looks like you've lost some weight. You must've been having difficulties working on your own," said Yareli.

"It's fine. I'm used to it. I was born in Antawood. I am not a stranger to this place, and I've gotten accustomed to it," Ayla replied casually.

"Actually, Wenny, I have something to ask you. It's fine if you don't want to answer me," Yareli asked after hesitating for a long time.

Brian had made a name for himself, and she knew what kind of person this man was.

Wherever he went, he was capable of getting everything he desired. Wenny was a simple and kindhearted girl. It would be harmful for her to stay around Brian.

"Ms. Evans, it's fine. Ask away."

There was nothing she couldn't tell her.

Perhaps many people had noticed that something was going on with her and Brian.

Taking a sip of water, Yareli said, "Wenny, are you familiar with Mr. Clark?"

"I guess so. I've had contact with him before I left Antawood to live in Italy," Ayla replied flatly.

"But it's all in the past now. All I have with him now is a professional relationship," Yareli nodded.

"That's good to know."

Business was business, and it must not have any emotional attachments.

By the time Ayla returned to her apartment, it was already quite late. But then she noticed that Brian was waiting for her outside the building.

"Mr. Clark, what are you doing here?"

"Am I not allowed to drop by? Did you go out with Ms. Evans?"

It seemed that he was always aware of her whereabouts.

"Yes, Ms. Evans asked me to have dinner with her. I'm sorry to have kept you out here in the cold, Mr. Clark," Ayla smirked.

Why didn't he just go into her apartment this time? Slowly, he approached her to hold her in his arms.

"For you, waiting out here is worth it."

As Brian embraced her, she didn't try to resist. He then stared into the distance.

Over the past few days, he noticed that there were two people who had been watching anyone that came in and out of the apartment building.

If he hadn't warned the security team in advance, those people might've been able to sneak in already.

Who could've been investigating Lala? Perhaps it was Haley. She was not a simple woman.

Whether she was just investigating whom Lucas was dating or helping Tatum gather information, he wasn't going to let Ayla get hurt again. It was only when the suspicious car left that he finally let her go.

"There's a meeting tomorrow morning. Don't forget to attend."

Afterwards, he went back to his car.

Seeing that Ayla was still shocked beside his car, he said, "You should try to avoid meeting with Lucas for the time being."

After watching his car leave, she finally went back to her apartment.

'What did he mean by that? Was he aware that Lucas is visiting me every now and then?' Haley looked at each of the pictures that her men had taken, but she couldn't gather anything useful.

That woman looked familiar. She remembered that this woman was the same person that she accidentally knocked down along the road last time.

This woman was indeed beautiful. She thought that she must've seen her somewhere before. Otherwise, why would she think that she looked familiar?

"Is this woman really meeting this man these past few days? Didn't you say that you spotted Lucas there?"

Haley had a hunch that this woman had something to do with Lucas.

"Miss Green, the woman and this man have been caught on camera being intimate for the past few days. They don't appear to be just friends."

"I see. Continue keeping an eye on Lucas. I have to know who that woman is."

While Haley was staring at the photos, her doorbell rang. Stashing the pictures away, she went to open the door.

"Lucas? Why are you here?"

"Didn't you just say that you're hungry? I went downstairs to get you some food."

Lucas noticed that she was a little flustered. She was either hiding something from him or doing something that she couldn't let him know.

"Thank you. Let's go to the canteen to eat, okay? I also want to have some drinks."

Haley couldn't let him in her room right now. She wasn't going to let him see the photos in her room nor the two men hiding there.

Lucas had no objections.

"Sounds great. Let's go!"

The two of them went downstairs to the canteen for a midnight snack.

When he went back to his room, he remembered how flustered she was earlier.

Right now, he was so worried about Ayla.

And so, he dialed her number and it didn't take long before the line connected.

"Lala."

"Lucas, it's you!"

In all honesty, Ayla was surprised to hear from him. She thought that he wouldn't have the time to call her.

"Yes, it's me. Haven't you gone to bed yet?"

Lucas could tell based on her voice that she was anxious. Perhaps she had gotten apprehensive due to Brian pestering her.

"I can't fall asleep." Ayla had a lot on her mind.

It was only natural that she was restless.

"Lala, how have you been lately? Have you noticed anyone following you around?"

Lucas was afraid that Haley had sent people to stalk her. If Tatum found out about her, the consequences would be dire. "No. What's going on? Why would you say that?"

His questions were strange.

And so was Brian's warning earlier. She thought that it wasn't a coincidence, and that she might've been targeted by someone. But to her memory, she hadn't offended anyone here. She was just a simple designer, and she had never formed any enmity with anyone.

If there was really someone targeting her, there could only be one cause, and it was Brian.

Maybe it would only bring her trouble to be entangled with him? However, Brian told her not to meet with Lucas for the time being, which only meant that this matter also had something to do with him.

Chapter 139: Provocation

Looking out of the window, Lucas said, "I see. You should be careful whenever you go outside. Once I'm done with work, I'll come to see you."

He wanted to ensure Ayla's safety!

"Okay."

She had promised him that above all, she would cherish her own life.

There was a time when she almost lost her life, but now, she would never discard her life so easily.

"Lala, if you really want to leave this place and go back to Italy, or maybe anywhere else, as long as you desire it, I'll make it happen. Everything will be fine," said Lucas.

He had long wanted to take Ayla away, and at present, it seemed to be his only choice.

If Tatum were to come back, or if Haley found out that Ayla was here, there would be no more turning back for Lucas. Ayla was hesitant to do it.

This time, she didn't promise him anything.

"Lucas, do you really think we can just run away like that? Do you think Brian will let us go so easily? Of all people, you should know that the only reason I was able to go to Italy without any problems was because Brian thought I was dead. But this time, do you think I'll be fortunate enough to escape?"

It was her fate that she couldn't avoid some people, and some things were destined to happen.

If she were able to escape from her fate, then she shouldn't have returned again, and she shouldn't have been found out by Brian. Therefore, her best bet was to convince him to let go of her, so that she could finally have some peace of mind and avoid getting Lucas into trouble.

Ayla's words had left Lucas stunned.

Indeed, it would not be as easy as he had thought. She had escaped once, but doing it a second time was indeed difficult.

"Lucas, let's go to bed. I'll take care of it. Do you trust me?"

Ayla wanted Lucas to believe her, but could she believe him too?

"Yes. Lala, you have to trust me too. You're the only woman I love, and nothing can change that."

He knew that she was aware of his relationship with Haley, but he couldn't explain it to her for the time being, so these words were all he could say to her. If two people loved each other, didn't it mean that they must trust one another? No matter what? Taking a deep breath, Ayla said, "Lucas, I'll believe whatever you say."

She had faith in Lucas.

After being with him for two years, he was the only person she could truly trust. The morning meeting was held in the Clark Group's largest meeting room.

Yareli and Linda arrived at the company together.

Brian was the one who sent someone to pick them up, and he personally picked Ayla up.

He also noticed that there were two people spying on her from across the apartment.

"Let's go!" Brian ignored the spies and continued to stay close with her.

"Actually, it's not a big deal if you don't come to pick me up. I already know where the Clark Group is."

Ayla stepped into the car.

She noticed that there was a car parked across the apartment, and it seemed that this same car had been there for many days.

Was it because of this that Lucas and Brian told her to be careful whenever she had to go out? She knew Brian well, and he would never treat her like this.

There was no need for him to be so secretive, just like what he was doing now.

For the rest of the drive, he didn't say a word.

But when they arrived at the company, Ayla broke the silence.

"Do you really want us to go back to the old days?" Brian just looked at her.

She wasn't the type of person that would compromise easily. It was obvious that she just wanted to know his thoughts, but he hoped that she could see through him herself. Because she probably wouldn't believe anything that came out of his mouth.

"It's fine if you don't want to tell me. Just forget it."

With that, Ayla got out of the car. 'What a stubborn woman! But no matter how stubborn she could be, she is still softhearted,' Brian thought.

In the meeting room, all of the senior executives of the Clark Group were there.

Naturally, Anna was also there.

Upon seeing that she had gotten out of the hospital, Ayla smiled at her briefly.

Over the past few years, Anna had helped Brian so much.

They were a good match, and they should be together.

Ayla knew what Anna was thinking right now, and she didn't want to compete with her for anything. After the meeting, Ayla and Linda stayed to finish the preparation of the fashion show together.

Offering her hand, Linda said, "Mr. Clark, I'm hoping that our companies will have a fruitful partnership."

Brian looked back at her.

"Linda, with your help, I think this fashion season will go splendidly!"

Anna was displeased that Linda was flirting with him without hesitation because she knew that Linda was ambitious and completely different from Ayla. No matter how Ayla felt for Brian, she wouldn't show it in front of so many people.

Anna knew that the reason Yareli asked Linda to be here was to lessen Ayla's workload.

After taking a glance at Ayla, Brian turned to Yareli and said, "Well, Ms. Evans, let's take a look at the new studio, shall we?"

He was determined to get Ayla back.

No matter what happened, as long as she was in the Clark Group's building, he would be able to rest assured. Ayla didn't have any choice but to follow him.

If it were possible, she'd rather not be in the same building as him.

But it didn't seem like she had any choice.

Compared to Ayla's current studio, the spacious office she was in right now was far better.

It was luxurious and elegant, and nobody could say that this was just a simple office.

Smiling faintly, Linda said, "Mr. Clark, it seems that you spared no expense to prepare all of this!"

The moment Brian found out that Wenny was actually Ayla, he had intended to keep her by his side. And no matter what she wanted to do, he would allow her to do it.

"I'm glad you like it, Miss Linda."

There was a faint smile on his face that could barely be seen.

Walking over, Anna held Brian's arm intimately.

"Miss Linda, I'm in charge of this project. If you run into any problems or you have any concerns in the future, I'd like to let you know that you can come to me anytime."

Linda wasn't afraid of her at all.

Anna had been engaged to Brian for a year, and yet other women could still stay close to him, which only meant that he didn't give a d**n about his fiancée! Men were fickle creatures.

What they desired more was a sense of novelty, and Linda was the kind of woman that men dreamed of having.

"Miss Anna, it may be true that you're in charge of this project, but Mr. Clark is still the boss of Clark Group. Besides, he still has the final say in everything. Don't you think so, too, Mr. Clark?"

Brian had no interest in the quarrel between women, not to mention that the woman he cared about wasn't involved in the fight.

"You..." Anna was pissed off.

In the Clark Group, nobody dared to do this to her other than Brian.

Linda was so full of herself.

Did she dare to challenge her authority just because she was pretty? Wasn't she afraid that Anna would make her life miserable?