

TSBMMOUS 161

Chapter 161: She Returned The Ring And Broke Up With Him

Ayla went downstairs and got into Lucas' car, hurriedly leaving the company. He drove her back to her original apartment.

"Lala."

Lucas had prepared two cups of tea, placing them on the table.

They had been sitting on the sofa for over ten minutes but neither of them had uttered a word. Ayla had no clue what he wanted to talk to her about.

Was it about their past or their future together? She just couldn't wrap her head around it.

Lucas put down his teacup and sat next to her.

"What happened today was nothing but an unfortunate misunderstanding," he remarked and put his hand on hers.

She looked up at him.

He said that she had misunderstood the incident earlier today.

But who on earth would've been mistaken? Haley was certainly pregnant, and Lucas was definitely the father.

And he still insisted that it was a mistake? Was it just her imagination or was she really wrong?

'No, that's impossible'

Ayla could tell from Haley's eyes just how much she loved Lucas.

That woman probably loved him so much that she was willing to do anything for him, including giving birth to their child, even if they didn't end up together.

"Lucas, you've been with her for a long time, haven't you?"

Ayla withdrew her hand and placed it on her lap.

She might've slept with Lucas for once after she was drunk, but that didn't necessarily mean they'd be together forever, but Haley's case was different. For a moment, he was reluctant to speak.

'Maybe I have known her for a long time?' Lucas nodded.

"I've known her for more than ten years." He and Haley grew up together.

Back when he was under Tatum's wing, he had an inhuman life.

At that time, he barely had anything to eat, he didn't have enough clothes to wear, and he couldn't have enough sleep.

The only person that stuck by him through it all was Haley. Lucas had lost his parents and his family.

From the heir of the Collins family, he turned into an orphan living under someone else's roof.

Every misfortune he endured was caused by Brian, so he wanted to take vengeance upon him. He wanted him to give back everything that belonged to him.

"You never even mentioned Haley's name to me once." Ayla had never asked him about his past.

From time to time, he would tell her about his childhood and youth, but he never mentioned anything about Haley.

"That's because I don't want you to misunderstand me. I've always known that Haley liked me, but I never liked her back. I've always thought of her as my sister,"

Lucas explained in a hurry.

He knew that Ayla must've misunderstood him.

Besides, it was obvious that Haley wanted to make her think that she had a relationship with Lucas.

On top of that, he knew that Haley had sent spies to keep an eye on him.

But he couldn't do anything to stop her.

Tatum was the man who raised him, and Haley was his closest confidante.

However, that didn't mean she was the one he loved the most.

Lucas had thought that he would live in hatred for the rest of his life.

When he heard that Brian had gotten married, he sent people to investigate it.

He paid special attention to what had happened in Molly and Toby's wedding.

Ayla happened to be there, and their later frequent interactions made Lucas fall in love with her.

Because of her, he had a change of heart.

He decided that after he had gotten his revenge, he would leave everything behind for Ayla.

But before he could succeed with his plans for revenge, she almost lost her life because of Tatum.

It was also because of this very reason that Lucas decided to cast aside his hatred and take her far away from everyone that could hurt her. Ayla stared at him intently.

"Have you ever considered that you lied to me, not because you were afraid that I would misunderstand you, but because you couldn't understand yourself?" She told Lucas the naked truth.

How much love was there actually between them? During the first year in Italy, she had a miserable life, fighting against the drug addiction, and then when she recovered, all of her attention was focused on designing.

Their bond wasn't that strong.

And they got engaged just because they had slept with each other after she got so drunk that night.

Was it fair for her to make him take responsibility for her own blunder? She wasn't that kind of person. And so, ending it now would be the better course of action.

"No! I don't love her! I just think of her as my sister," Lucas blurted out.

Ayla took out the ring from her bag, putting it on the tea table.

"Do you remember what I said when we bought this ring together? If one day, you find a more suitable lover, you can tell me, and I would set you free."

"Lala, I'm telling you, it's impossible for me to fall in love with Haley!"

Lucas knew that she wanted to get out of their relationship, but he hadn't given up yet. Why would she do that? Did she really not love him? Or had she decided to get back together with Brian?

"Miss Green is pregnant," Ayla remarked.

It was a fact, and they all knew that.

"But I won't take responsibility for it. She was the one who set me up that night. And then I mistook her as you, so I had s*x with her. I never imagined she'd get pregnant."

It was something that was beyond Lucas' wildest imagination.

Ayla let out a sigh.

"Even if it was just a mistake or an accident, she's still pregnant with your child. Will you really just let her do this alone? Do you know how much a woman needs someone by her side when she's pregnant?"

She had gone through the same kind of loneliness.

Back then, in order to protect her child, she chose to run away, but in the end, more people got involved and ended up getting hurt.

And at the end of all that misery, she lost her child. She lost it.

Tears streamed down Ayla's cheeks.

Lucas didn't think it all through. He never saw it from Haley's point of view.

All he wanted was to make Ayla happy, and she was the only one he wanted to marry.

But when she said those words as tears fell from her eyes, Lucas felt less of a man.

It was terrible of him to consider not taking responsibility.

'Is a mistake supposed to make me suffer for a lifetime? I don't want that to happen!'

"But I don't love her. You're the only one I love."

Lucas pulled Ayla into his arms, holding her so tight that it almost looked like he wanted to shackle her to his body. He truly hoped that they could never be separated again.

Sadly, it was a misguided hope.

Ayla picked up the ring, placing it onto his palm.

“Don’t hurt Miss Green anymore.”

With that, she stood up. Now that she had made herself clear, it was time for her to leave.

Lucas embraced her again.

“Please give me some time. I’ll solve this problem.”

“You’re going to solve it, you say? What are you planning to do? Are you going to ask her to get an abortion? Are you really willing to let an innocent life suffer because of your mistake? Don’t be heartless! Besides, I don’t deserve your love anymore because I’ve decided to be with Brian.”

In the end, she was left with no other choice but to mention Brian as an excuse.

She thought that it was the right thing to do.

Chapter 162: Forget The Pain After Getting Drunk

“No! You’re lying! You told me that you hate him! How could you go back to him? I don’t believe it! I refuse to believe it!”

Lucas shouted at Ayla. She said that she was going back to Brian’s side, and that from now on, she would be with him.

‘It’s a lie! They’re nothing but all lies!’ Lucas refused to believe any of her words.

For such a long time, he had believed that the bond he made with Ayla over the past two years was enough to make her move on from her few months of marriage with Brian.

Besides, in those short-lived months, she was miserable.

“I’m not lying to you. I still love him. I can’t bring myself to forget about him, so I’ve decided that I want to start over with him,” she said sternly.

‘Perhaps this is enough to make him believe me!’ she thought.

Lucas held Ayla’s hand, refusing to let her go. He pressed his lips against hers. He wanted her, all of her. He had thought that he could keep her by his side by making her believe that they had s*x that night in Italy.

But the moment Brian reappeared in her life, she turned her back on Lucas.

The kiss felt painful to Ayla.

It wasn’t a kiss born out of love, but of hatred. He hated her for wanting to leave him and for not reciprocating his love.

Then so be it! If hatred could eventually make him happy, it was a sacrifice she was willing to make.

Lucas leaned closer to Ayla's ear, and whispered, "Lala, you're mine. You can only be mine!"

If he would let her go after he enjoyed her body one last time, Ayla decided that she would just let him do it.

However, before he could proceed, the doorbell rang.

"Lucas, that might be Miss Green."

Ayla pushed Lucas away. She didn't want to cause an even greater rift between him and Haley.

Remorsefully, Lucas ruffled his messy hair as he went to open the door.

However, the person at the door wasn't Haley, it was Brian!

"What are you doing here?"

Lucas blocked the entryway of the door, preventing him from entering. His tone was unfriendly, because there was no need to be affable towards him.

They were rivals in love after all.

"I'm here for Lala."

Brian seemed to know Ayla very well.

The moment Haley told her that she was Lucas' fiancée and hinted that she was pregnant, Ayla had probably decided to leave Lucas.

"She's not here. You've come to the wrong place."

Still, Lucas wouldn't allow Brian to come in. His arrival would only ruin everything.

Upon hearing Brian's voice, Ayla decided to use him to her advantage this time. She went to the door, and said.

"Don't stop him. I asked him to come pick me up."

It was obviously a lie.

But the anger and resentment that had been built up in Lucas' heart made him unable to see through her lie.

Before he took Ayla to this apartment, he didn't even tell her where they were going.

Besides, ever since they got here, he never saw her contact Brian once.

"Lala, are you done talking to him? If you're finished here, come home with me."

Brian noticed that Ayla's lips were swollen, making him furious.

“Wasn’t she here to break up with him? Or did she actually come here to reconcile with him instead?”
Ayla nodded.

“Well, Lucas, as you can see, I was telling you the truth.”

If she was actually telling that truth, then Lucas should stop seeing her.

Ayla’s presence would only bring unhappiness to him and Haley.

And perhaps, Ayla had no future in the first place.

Lucas wanted to stop her, but Brian had already escorted her to the elevator.

And as the doors of the elevator close, Lucas cried out in anger. Ayla didn’t utter a word until the car was far away from the apartment.

“I want to drink,” she said.

Brian glanced at her. He had been wondering why she appeared so calm.

But it seemed that she was not that calm after all. He had no objections to her request, so he drove her to a bar.

By nine in the evening, there were not many people in the bar.

But under the sound of heavy metal music and the glistening lights, Ayla drank one glass after another.

The strong liquor stimulated both her stomach and her heart.

Everything was over.

After she got drunk, she could just forget everything that ever happened! Brian stayed by Ayla’s side and didn’t stop her from drinking.

If she wanted to get hammered, then he would let her do whatever the hell her heart desired.

Whether she still had feelings for Lucas or not, she had decided to give up on him.

And now, the only thing she could do was to come back to Brian obediently. Ayla poured a glass of wine for Brian.

“Brian, come on! Drink with me.”

“You’ve already drunk so much.”

Brian had thought that she was a light drinker, but she was actually capable of drinking the large bottle of wine herself.

“I know. I just want to get drunk right now. Did you know? People say that you’ll forget all the pain you’re feeling after getting drunk. That’s why I want to get drunk. You won’t be so mean as to not buy me a drink, would you?”

Ayla struggled to keep her eyes open, and saw the man before her clearly.

“If I don’t pay for it, and leave you here, the boss of the bar will be more than happy.”

Nobody would refuse such a beautiful woman.

“You men are all terrible people!” said Ayla.

As she flailed her body around, she accidentally knocked over the wine glass and spilled it all over Brian. But she didn’t seem to realize what she had done.

Her body was so close to him.

“All men are trash.”

Brian took the glass from her hand.

“Okay, I get it. You’re in a foul mood today, so I’ll let you say whatever the hell you want. I don’t blame you.”

“Doesn’t she know that she might make mistakes if she’s this hammered? She is only inviting trouble to herself”

Brian never thought of himself as a gentleman, nor did he think of himself as a man of decency.

This woman indeed lacked a sense of awareness to danger.

Perhaps it was because he was the one with her right now, so she wasn’t that worried that something might happen to her.

Ayla leaned into his arms.

“Mr. Clark, come on. Why are you letting me drink by myself?”

Sometimes, becoming inebriated was another form of relief and escapism from reality.

There were so many things going on in her head that she probably couldn’t let go.

Was this foolish woman trying to drown her sorrows in alcohol? Brian looked at Ayla and sighed.

He always cared about her more than anything else.

And now that they were back in each other’s lives, they were bound to cherish one another, wouldn’t they?

“Lala, that’s enough. I’m taking you home, so stop drinking.”

Brian pulled her up from her seat.

If she kept this up, there would be no end to this farce.

“No! I want to keep drinking. I want to get so drunk that I’ll forget everything that brings me pain! I feel so miserable in here!”

Ayla pointed at her heart.

Did it hurt that much? Perhaps it did.

But maybe, she just felt lost right now.

‘Maybe I won’t feel any more pain if I get hammered’

Chapter 163: Brian’s Manipulation

Upon seeing that Ayla was about to reach for the glass again, Brian thought that she was planning to drink herself to death. It was already generous of him to allow her to drink this much, and yet she still wanted to keep drinking.

Although, how could he expect a drunk woman to be aware of her actions? Before Ayla could firmly grasp the glass, Brian snatched it away from her hand and drank it himself.

“My wine...”

Ayla was drunk.

The looming fear she always had whenever Brian was around, had been cast aside by her mind.

Despite the strange glances they were getting, he picked her up and brought her outside the bar.

A gust of cold wind blew past them, causing Ayla to shiver involuntarily. She snuggled up to him, and called out Lucas’ name subconsciously.

“Ayla!”

Brian had been trying to make up for all the suffering he had put her through, and he had been gentle to her all this time.

But despite all of his efforts, she still couldn’t move on from Lucas. He then opened the car door and threw her into the back seat, causing her head to accidentally hit the door.

“Ouch!”

As she rubbed her aching forehead, sobriety gradually came to her.

“Why are you being so crass against me?”

Ayla rolled her eyes at Brian.

“You did that on purpose, didn’t you?”

“Ayla! Don’t push your luck just because I’ve been treating you well lately!”

He clasped her neck tightly with his hand.

Had he lacked compassion for her, he would’ve strangled her without uttering a single word.

However, Brian couldn’t bring himself to hurt Ayla. He knew that she had used him as an excuse to escape Lucas this afternoon, but Brian was willing to do it for her. He had gone the extra mile by letting her know about Lucas and Haley’s relationship.

Brian even returned Ayla's ring to her as a compromise because he knew that if he kept forcing her to do his bidding, it would only push her further away from him.

And so, the only viable course of action was to back away for now.

Just as he had expected, his plan succeeded.

Aye confronted Lucas, and returned the ring to him.

They finally ended their relationship, which had never been clear in the first place.

On top of that, Brian appeared at the perfect time to ask Ayla to leave Lucas.

However, despite everything that had happened, she still couldn't forget about that man.

She even called out Lucas' name when she was drunk.

No matter how generous Brian could be, he couldn't tolerate it when the woman of his dreams cared about another man.

Ayla felt that it was getting harder and harder to breathe, and she was about to lose consciousness.

Women were always unpredictable, but Brian was much more capricious than them.

He was so kind to Ayla this morning, but now, he was ready to squeeze the life out of her neck.

Being with him was like accompanying a tiger.

For a moment, Brian couldn't mollify his anger.

But a few moments later, he decided to loosen his grip on her neck and slam the car door on her side. Then, he went to the driver's seat and finally drove the car.

As of this moment, Ayla was still inebriated. She turned her gaze towards the passing scenery.

Right now, her heart was filled with sadness. She had told Lucas that they could never be lovers, and that they could only be friends.

Those cold, unfeeling eyes on Brian's face showed that he was furious when he saw the absent-minded woman.

He stepped on the gas, speeding along the street.

Brian was doing it on purpose.

'She's bold, isn't she?' he thought.

He wanted to let Ayla know that whenever she was by his side, she should carefully think about her actions.

She gripped the door's safety handle tightly.

Earlier, she had had too much to drink, and now she had an upset stomach.

If Brian kept driving at this speed, no matter how much she endured or how badly she wanted to avoid sullyng his car, she would still throw up.

With his foot on the brake, the car was halted in front of the apartment building.

The car slid across the street before it steadily came to a stop.

Unfortunately, the ten million dollars' worth car was now damaged.

Ayla opened the door, struggling to get out.

As soon as she got out, she immediately started vomiting.

Brian stood next to her, handing her a box of tissues.

"Are you going to drink this much again?"

He wanted her to know that there was no benefit in infuriating him.

It took Ayla a long time before she could recover from it.

While she was squatting on the pavement, she glared at Brian.

"It's none of your business!"

He was driving so fast that nobody could bear it, not to mention that she was drunk.

And to make it worse, he deliberately did that to make her suffer.

'Is this what he wanted to happen?' she said in her mind.

Brian helped Ayla up.

"Do you think you can take advantage of me just like that? You'd better forget about that man!"

'Is he jealous or something? I don't even think it's necessary for him to get jealous. Brian can have any woman he wants. Why should he get jealous because of a woman he had once abandoned?' Ayla thought.

Besides, she had been in a relationship with Lucas.

Even if she took it upon herself to end their relationship, she still couldn't forget him.

Whether she could forget Lucas or not was her own business. It had absolutely nothing to do with Brian.

"What? Are you not convinced? Do you need me to tell Lucas that you still love him and that you just broke up with him for his sake and Miss Green's?"

Brian carried Ayla to the elevator, as if he was carrying a child. His words silenced her.

Indeed, she used him to her advantage today, but it was he who came of his own volition.

Brian took Ayla into the apartment and dragged her to the bathroom.

"Make sure to wash yourself before you go out!"

She was aware that she was a complete mess right now, and she could smell that she was reeking of alcohol. She couldn't stand it, not to mention that fastidious man, Brian.

Perhaps, she was the only person that Brian could be this tolerant of.

In her eyes, he was always trying to control her and everything around her.

That was why she had always thought that he didn't treat her well.

However, she had only seen him become merciless towards other people.

Soon, she finished washing herself.

As soon as she stepped out of the bathroom, she was enclosed in such strong arms.

"You..."

"Do you think I'll let you off the h**k?"

Since she had used him earlier, she must pay the price until he had satisfied his l**t.

"I've never thought about it that way."

Certainly, Ayla knew that.

Otherwise, he wouldn't have been so kind-hearted to help her escape Lucas.

When she said that she wanted to drink, he immediately brought her to a bar.

And she did have a few drinks, but wasted the rest.

The wine was definitely expensive, but Brian was never short on cash anyway! Due to her foul mood, she wanted to get hammered.

Sadly, she paid a high price for it.

Brian picked Ayla up, went into the bedroom, threw her onto the bed, and got on top of her.

She stared into his eyes, and said, "Mr. Clark, you planned all of this, didn't you? When you returned my ring, you knew that even if I went to see Lucas, I wouldn't have come back to him, right?"

Everything that happened earlier was not a coincidence.

Brian had manipulated all of it.

And now that he had weaved a web to trap her, she had no other choice but to obey his desires.

Chapter 164: He Cared About This Fashion Show As Much As She Did

Ever since that night, Ayla didn't bring up everything that happened anymore, and Brian never bothered her whenever they were in the company.

Besides, if she didn't contact him on her own, they would hardly ever see each other.

She was happy with this kind of setup.

At the moment, Brian was sitting in his office.

It had been over two days since he got the drug from Jaime, and a medical test report came along with it.

From the report, he learned just how powerful the drug was.

The reason Ayla had a high fever from time to time was because of this drug's side effects.

While he was deep in thought, he heard a knock on the door.

He stashed the drug into the drawer of his desk, and said, "Come in."

It was Anna.

She had brought a document.

"Brian."

"Take a seat."

Brian took the document from her and carefully read it.

"Tomorrow is the first day of the fashion season. Make sure that nothing goes wrong."

Sitting across him, Anna asked, "Brian, are you worried about Ayla?"

"Why would you think that? If something happened on the very first day of the fashion season, our company will suffer the consequences," Brian remarked.

In the past two days, even if he didn't do or say anything, Anna could tell what was going on in his mind.

She poured a cup of tea and placed it in front of him.

"Brian, with me around, everything will go smoothly."

Anna knew that the coming event was vital to the Clark Group's future.

Therefore, for the sake of the company, she must not let anything go wrong during the event.

Glancing back at her, Brian said, "Alright. You can go back to work now."

He had already left this matter into Anna's hands, so he didn't plan on interfering.

Not long after, she left his office.

But instead of going back to her own office, she decided to drop by the Design Department.

Anna approached Ayla, and said, "You and Linda have to go to the venue of the event in advance tomorrow. Would that be fine with you?"

If she was being honest, Linda was unwilling to go because the event had nothing to do with her.

Moreover, she didn't want to see Ayla's triumphant look there.

Linda walked up to Anna.

"Miss Anna, going there in advance isn't a problem for me, but I can't say the same for Ayla."

Based on her tone, she was obviously envious.

She absolutely loathed Ayla, but she had to go there tomorrow, and it was unavoidable to see her smug face once the event had taken off.

Linda knew that Brian was doing everything in his power to help Ayla.

And according to his plan, she would become a popular designer from tomorrow on.

Ayla stared at Linda. It seemed that they were fated to be enemies.

This woman had never liked her.

She did this while they were still in Italy, and she was doing it again now that they were in Antawood.

Anna turned to Linda.

"Miss Linda, what are you implying?"

"Nothing."

Linda decided to go back to her seat.

The following day, Ayla arrived at the department store Prario early in the morning.

But not long after, Brian also appeared.

They shared a bed, so sneaking out without him noticing her was impossible.

However, he didn't let her notice him.

In reality, he also cared about this fashion season event, just as much as she did.

It was already nine o'clock, and the place was full of people.

So many people attended because it was a big event hosted by the Clark Group.

Even though the venue was small, all of the attendees had a good background.

The dressing room was bustling.

All the stylists were busy doing hair and makeup for the ten models, and even Linda was there to help them.

Ayla came out of the dressing room.

She had checked the outfits yesterday, making sure that there were twenty in total.

But now, she found that one of them was missing.

‘What on earth happened?’ Ayla quickly went to the underground warehouse, and Linda followed suit.

She kept searching around the warehouse. She was certain that she had put everything in place yesterday, but one of them went missing out of the blue.

How could she not get agitated? Meanwhile, Brian was busy keeping the guests entertained.

Many of them attended the event for him and the Clark Group.

Naturally, they were also curious about the group’s mysterious new designer.

The Clark Group was a novice in the fashion industry, but it quickly rose through the ranks due to its partnership with one of the biggest brands in Italy, Starlight Fashion Hub.

‘Mr. Clark, I’ve heard that your new designer is talented. We’ve seen the leaflet, and we think her works are incredible!’

A middle-aged man approached Brian.

He was the editor-in-chief of a fashion magazine, and he also happened to be the boss.

Obviously, he wanted to partner up with the Clark Group.

If their magazine could publish an issue about the Clark Group’s fashion trend, their revenue would certainly grow exponentially!

‘Really? You have good taste. Perhaps you can provide us with a bit of advice later,’ Brian remarked with a smile.

While the two of them were chatting, Anna came over.

‘Brian, it’s about time to start.’

He shifted his gaze towards her and nodded.

He noticed that Hayden, Miley, Toby, and Molly had attended the event.

Actually, he wasn’t surprised to see them here.

If Hayden was here, his wife would definitely come with him.

After all, during such an occasion, many enchanting women were present.

As for Toby, Brian knew that he came for Ayla.

And since he was coming, Molly would definitely be there to keep an eye on him.

Brian decided to approach Hayden and Toby.

‘Mr. Smith, Mr. Brown, I’m honored that you graced this event with your presence!’

Hayden shook hands with him.

‘How could I decline your gracious invitation?’

Before long, the group of people seated themselves in the front seats.

Brian gave Anna a look, indicating that she could begin the show.

As soon as she entered the dressing room, she couldn't find Ayla anywhere.

"Ellie, where's Miss Woodsen?" she asked.

'What on earth is she doing at a time like this?'

"I have no idea. I just saw her moments ago. Maybe she went to the bathroom?"

Ellie was also busy, so she didn't notice where Ayla might've gone.

"Never mind. Let's just begin."

Anna didn't want to keep the guests waiting.

During this time, Linda came over, and said, "Doesn't Ayla know how important this event is? Where could she have gone on such an important day? How could she disappear right when the event is about to begin?"

Anna glanced at Linda, and asked, "You didn't see her either?"

"I was busy. I can't keep an eye on her all the time. Today is a big day for her. Maybe she's somewhere putting on makeup?"

After saying that, Linda walked away.

Anna didn't think too much about it anymore.

Maybe when it was time for her to show up, she would naturally appear.

Brian went into the lounge, followed by Hank.

"Mr. Clark."

"Tell Anna to come here."

As he sat in the lounge, lighting up a cigarette, he felt that something was amiss.

Ayla should be with him right now instead of managing things backstage.

Even if he was avoiding him, now was not the right time.

She wasn't the kind of person who would act unprofessional in the workplace.

Chapter 165: Who Did This To Her

Anna hurried to the lounge and saw Brian there.

"Brian!"

"What's going on?"

His intuition told him that something had happened to Ayla.

Anna went to the sofa and sat down.

“Brian, Ayla’s missing. I can’t find her anywhere. On top of that, there are only nineteen dresses in the dressing room. One of them is missing.”

“How on earth did that happen? Ayla came here to do an inventory check to make sure that everything was alright, didn’t she? One dress went missing, and Ayla is nowhere to be found. Have you searched for her already?”

Uneasiness spread throughout Brian’s heart.

“I’ve already searched every nook and cranny of the venue, but I didn’t see Ayla anywhere.”

Even Anna was getting anxious now. If one of the dresses went missing, the fashion show wouldn’t be able to proceed smoothly.

Those twenty dresses that Ayla designed weren’t the only ones to be displayed today; other brands from this shopping mall will be shown as well.

If Ayla didn’t show up, the media reporters would stir up rumors about this.

This ordeal would definitely stain her image.

“I’m going to look for Ayla. You deal with the other affairs,” Brian said to Anna as he put out his cigarette.

“Brian, I...”

She knew that he was worried about Ayla, because since there were so many guests at the venue, it would be so much worse if he wasn’t there with them, wouldn’t it?

“I know what I’m doing.”

Brian knew how worried Anna was about him, but he was also worried about Ayla’s safety.

If he had known this would happen, he wouldn’t have asked Ayla to help with backstage affairs. He would’ve told her to stay by his side the entire time.

Brian walked along the corridor, step by step.

His eagle-like eyes gazed at every corner, hoping to find Ayla.

While walking, he kept calling her number.

But no matter how many times he called her, nobody was picking up.

He walked towards the exit and made his way into the underground warehouse.

A faint sound reached his ears, so he pressed on to look for its source.

At this time, Ayla was currently locked in the warehouse.

The door was locked from outside. She had been knocked unconscious with a hard object, and her phone fell to the other side where she couldn’t reach it.

Ayla only woke up because her phone kept ringing.

Brian stood at the door of the warehouse and heard the phone buzzing.

“Lala? Lala!”

He knocked on the door, continuously calling out Ayla’s name, but he didn’t hear a response. Then, he noticed the small lock on the door.

This door was originally intact, and there was no need to install a lock from outside.

Clearly, someone had done this on purpose.

Brian couldn’t waste any more time.

Whether Ayla was in the warehouse or not, at least he was sure that her phone was there.

With his strong legs, he kicked the door repeatedly.

Sadly, his efforts were in vain.

The door was firmly locked.

The sound of his kicks attracted the security guard of the warehouse.

“Mr. Clark? Is that you? How can I help you?”

“Call someone to help me break this door down! Now!”

If Ayla was truly inside, he would worry about what might’ve happened to her.

“Yes, Mr. Clark.”

The security guard immediately ran to follow his command.

After a while, the guard returned with a bunch of keys and a hammer.

Using the hammer, he broke off the small lock and finally opened the door.

This warehouse used to be tidy, but it was now in shambles.

There were clothes and hangers scattered all over the floor.

However, Brian still didn’t see Ayla.

All he found was her phone, lying on top of a pile of clothes.

At last, he found her in a corner amongst a different pile of clothes.

There was blood dripping down her forehead. She must’ve gotten hit by something heavy, and lost consciousness.

“Lala, Lala!”

Brian picked her up and took her out of the warehouse.

“Get the car and drive it to the gate.”

“Yes, Mr.,-Clark.”

One of the guards took the car key from him and was about to run to the underground parking.

Brian stopped him for a moment, and said, “For the time being, don’t tell anyone about this. We have to keep this a secret.”

He didn’t want to cause a big scandal due to Ayla’s injury. He believed that one of the company’s employees was the culprit.

As for that person’s identity, he was ready to investigate.

After putting Ayla in the back seat of his car, he drove as fast as he could to the hospital. He brought her to the emergency room and sat on the bench outside the door.

Her blood was all over his clothes, and his eyes were laden with worry.

‘Who dared to hurt Lala during such an important day?’ Brian took out his phone and dialed Hank’s number.

“Hank, I’m in the hospital right now. Lala got injured. Keep an eye on what’s going on at the venue. I think there won’t be any more problems as long as you work with Anna. As for me and Lala, make up an excuse and don’t let the media know that she’s injured.”

If those reporters found out about this, it would not only affect them, but also the company.

“Understood, Mr. Clark. I’ll take care of it.”

After hanging up the phone, Hank went back to work.

About half an hour later, Ayla’s wound had been treated, and she was sent out of the operating room.

“Doctor, how is she?”

“Mr. Clark, Miss Woodsen only suffered minor injuries. The reason she was unconscious for a long time was because she was locked up for too long. The person who hurt her probably didn’t want to kill her.”

The doctor examined Ayla’s wound and gleaned it was caused by a hard object, possibly an ashtray or something of the same material.

Brian only felt relieved when he heard that she was fine. He thought that she was capable of handling everything, but he didn’t expect that someone was plotting against her. He had no clue how many people this stubborn woman had offended.

Perhaps he was the reason this happened? He sat at her bedside, watching the live broadcast of the fashion show on TV.

It was more successful than he thought.

By the time she woke up, the show was already over.

“What am I doing here?”

Ayla touched the bandages on her head, wondering what had happened to her.

'Why does my head hurt so much? Brian stood by the bed, looking at her.

"You're finally awake. Do you not remember what happened?"

He thought that she might have an idea who had done this to her.

Ayla shook her head.

"I don't remember anything."

"Then what do you remember?"

Brian looked into her eyes.

"Do you remember when you got hit? What was the last thing you were doing before it happened?"

Bit by bit, her memories came back to her.

"I remember that I went backstage to check the dresses and realized that one of them was missing. I thought I must've left it at the warehouse, so I went ahead and looked for it. But after searching for a long time, I couldn't find it. After that, my head started to hurt, and I can't remember what happened next."

Ayla believed that someone must've hit her head with something hard, but she didn't say it.

Chapter 166: One Step Ahead Of Him

Brian knew that Ayla only said half the truth.

Was she hiding something from him? Or maybe, she really didn't know who it was, so she didn't want to jump to any conclusions.

"Is that all?" he asked in a cold voice.

Ayla nodded.

"What else is there to say? What do you think happened?"

She knew that Brian might not believe her, but she really had no clue who followed her into the warehouse and knocked her unconscious.

Even if she had her suspicions, she still had no evidence to prove it.

Brian could tell that Ayla didn't want to say anything else, so he decided not to probe further.

Besides, she could do what she wanted.

Even if he wanted to interfere, she probably wouldn't let him.

"Fine. Just get some rest!"

When Brian was about to leave the ward, Ayla stopped her.

"Mr. Clark, how's the fashion show?"

He stopped in his tracks, and said, "How are you still in the mood to care about the event?"

Based on the tone of his voice, he was definitely unhappy about it, possibly angry.

"I..."

If Ayla hadn't gone to find the missing dress because she cared so much about the fashion show, this might not have happened.

"Well, the fashion show is over. You don't have to think about it anymore. Just focus on your recovery! Let's talk about it when you're feeling better."

With that, Brian left Ayla alone in the ward.

She got up, turned her gaze towards the window and then glanced at the time. It was already afternoon.

The fashion show was over.

She recalled everything that happened in the dressing room.

The dress did go missing.

Perhaps someone did it on purpose because she had already double-checked everything in the morning.

But after she left the room for a while, one of the dresses went missing.

This only proved her suspicion that someone had deliberately done this to assault her.

Ayla didn't want to randomly draw out scenarios.

There were a lot of people who could've entered the backstage dressing room.

She couldn't suspect everyone, could she?

'Maybe it's Linda?' she wondered.

'But did she really have a motive to do it? She wouldn't benefit anything from it if she screwed up the fashion show.

Instead of going back to the company, Brian went to the department store Prario.

Anna and Hank were still waiting there, but the other staff had already left.

"How's it going? Have you checked what I asked you to?"

As he stood at the door of the underground warehouse, Brian looked at the mess.

Someone had deliberately messed things up.

Ayla wasn't a fool.

Even if she was looking for the missing dress, there would be no need to remove all those clothes from their packing bags.

“Mr. Clark, we haven’t found anything. The surveillance equipment had just gotten replaced a few days ago and it hasn’t been properly installed, so it didn’t record anything,” said Hank.

In that case, it meant that nobody would be able to figure out the identity of the culprit.

Brian walked inside the warehouse, picking up the clothes on the floor one by one.

“I see. If you haven’t found anything, then you can go. Don’t let the public know about this.”

“Understood, Mr. Clark.”

Hank nodded in response.

Anna walked to Brian’s side, and said, “Brian, you have a suspect in mind, don’t you?”

Although he wasn’t saying anything, he had some suspicions of his own. He glanced at her.

“You heard me, right? Just go back first. And don’t forget to ask someone to fix the surveillance equipment here. I don’t want a similar incident to happen again.”

After saying that, Brian walked away.

He went back to the hospital and found Ayla in a trance. He could tell that she was contemplating.

The fashion show went on as planned, albeit with some minor alterations to the program, but she wasn’t able to attend it.

On top of it all, she never found the missing dress.

It was only natural for her to have doubts.

However, there were only a limited number of things that she was able to pay attention to.

Before Brian could cut off her “wings” to stop her from flying away, someone did it before him.

Ayla heard a knock on the door.

“Mr. Clark,” she greeted.

“Are you here for me?”

Raising his eyebrow, Brian thought that he wasn’t the one she was waiting for.

“I want to leave the hospital.” Ayla had asked the doctor to discharge her already.

She didn’t suffer any major injuries, so there was no need to stay here any longer.

Besides, she had a mountain of work to finish.

Staying here would only delay her work. Walking to the bedside and glancing at the bandages on her forehead, Brian asked, “Do you really want to go back to work with a gauze on your forehead?”

“But I don’t want to stay here!” She displayed her stubbornness again.

“I won’t allow you to go back to the company like this. It will affect the others’ productivity.”

Brian looked at her and thought, 'Can't she just get some rest for a day?'

Ayla looked back at him.

"Can I at least go back to the apartment?"

Staying at the hospital wasn't something she wanted.

Being here would only make her feel weak.

In the end, Brian agreed to her request. If he didn't agree, Ayla would probably leave by herself in secret.

At least she was willing to ask for his permission this time.

Not long after, he drove her back to the apartment.

"Stay at home and rest. You should keep in mind the consequences of sneaking out," Brian warned.

Ayla actually wanted to go back to Prario's warehouse to have a look.

She didn't want to do anything other than that, but Brian could see right through her plans.

"Answer me! Why aren't you saying anything?"

Brian held her chin, trying to make her speak, but Ayla didn't seem to be listening. She probably wouldn't listen if he wasn't going to get angry.

"I got it," she replied.

She then shook off his hand from her chin. She had no choice but to reluctantly agree to his request.

"Good. Don't forget your promise!" Brian remarked.

He wanted to stop her from doing what she might be planning.

Her head was still injured.

What on earth was she planning to do? After watching him leave, Ayla breathed a sigh of relief and leaned against the sofa. She had heard what Brian said to the servant in the living room before he left.

Going out today might be too difficult for her.

Once he was done dealing with Ayla, Brian went back to the company.

But instead of going to his office, he visited the Design Department.

And as expected, this department was the busiest of all.

Even Anna was there to help out.

When he appeared, Linda quickly approached him.

"Mr. Clark, today's event was incredibly important. It's a pity that you missed it."

"Is that so? Linda, you seem quite delighted. Don't you think that something's wrong since Miss Woodsen isn't here today?"

Brian went to the sofa and sat down. His sharp gaze swept across everyone in the department. His words silenced everyone.

Nobody dared to utter a word.

“Do you have any idea where she might be?” Brian said to Linda.

A faint smile appeared on her lips.

“Mr. Clark, why are you looking at me like that? I was busy backstage. I didn’t see Miss Woodsen at all.”

Brian waved his hand in dismissal.

“I see. Anyway, that’s all I wanted to ask. You can carry on with your work now. Anna, come to my office.”

Chapter 167: Tell The Truth

Brian and Anna left the Design Department together, and when they left, the department returned to its lively state.

“Linda, you’re no match for Ayla and Anna. Mr. Clark obviously came to see Ayla, and the one he took with him is Miss Anna.”

The person speaking was obviously shaming Linda, and it definitely didn’t make her happy. She scoffed and returned to her desk.

‘Who does Ayla think she is? There’s no way I’ll ever lose to her!’

Upon their arrival at Brian’s office, Brian and Anna sat facing each other.

“Brian, is Ayla okay?”

“So you already know?”

He figured that it was highly likely that she had asked Hank about it. Since Jaime wasn’t here, Brian’s go-to guy in handling things was Hank.

“I asked Hank.”

Anna stared directly into Brian’s eyes, and said, “Don’t get mad at Hank. It’s my fault that things went down like this.”

She had been in the entertainment club for so many years.

And through that experience, she had seen many things that made her think this wasn’t an accident.

Turning his gaze towards the window indifferently, Brian said, “I see. You can go back to work now. Tomorrow, you’ll get even busier. I don’t want something like this to happen again next week.”

Anna wasn’t the only one he was addressing, he was also speaking to himself.

Fortunately, Ayla didn’t get injured seriously this time. But next time she might not be so lucky.

‘No! It definitely won’t happen again!’

As she sat alone in the apartment, Ayla started to feel bored.

The second she left her room, the servant called out to her, "Miss Woodsen, would you like something to eat or drink? I'll fetch it for you."

Ayla sat on the sofa.

"No, it's fine. I just wanted to go out for a walk."

"But, Miss Woodsen, you're still injured. You should probably stay in bed to recuperate," the servant said as she approached her.

It took Ayla a while before she decided to go back to her bedroom without saying a word.

Not long after she returned, her phone started buzzing.

Brian must've been the one who placed her phone on the tea table.

Upon seeing the caller ID, she knew that she never saved this unfamiliar number.

After hesitating for a moment, she decided to answer it.

"Hello?"

"Lala, it's me," said Toby.

It turned out he was the one calling her. He was probably worried about her.

"Toby? How did you find out my new number?"

It had been quite a while since Ayla changed her number.

Brian was actually the one who replaced it for her, and she honestly didn't care that much. He could do whatever he wanted to do, couldn't he?

"You don't have to know how I got your number. That's not important. Anyway, are you okay? You're supposed to show up on the first day of the fashion season, but you didn't. What happened?"

Toby was looking forward to seeing Ayla during the event, so he attended, but unfortunately, he never saw her there.

Moreover, Brian suddenly left with a grim expression on his face.

And because of that, Toby thought that something terrible must've happened to Ayla.

Upon hearing his voice, Ayla wondered if he found out what had happened to her.

The fact that she didn't show up at the event must've caused a lot of trouble.

That was probably why Brian didn't allow her to go out.

"I'm fine, Toby. I just went home early because I was not feeling well," Ayla said flatly.

She didn't want Toby to find out about her injury.

And now that she treated him like a brother, she didn't want him to worry too much.

No matter who the culprit was, Ayla wanted to figure it out herself.

Toby wasn't convinced by her words.

However, judging by the sound of her voice, she might be okay.

"Good. It's a good thing you're fine."

He was currently sitting in his office, and heaving a sigh of relief.

It was great that nothing bad happened to her.

They hadn't seen each other for a while, and he thought that he could at least see her from a distance.

Sadly, he didn't get to see her at all, so he was worried about her.

"Toby, if you're free some other day, you can bring your wife along with you and have dinner with me—but only if it's convenient."

Ayla didn't want to cut off her ties with Toby. She regarded him like her own brother and family, so she considered Molly as her sister-in-law.

He hesitated to give an answer for a moment.

Although he wasn't sure what to tell Ayla right now, he felt compelled to tell her the truth.

"Molly is pregnant. She's been staying at home lately and reserving her strength. She may not have time to go out," he said indifferently.

The joy of Molly's pregnancy had faded.

It turned out that he still couldn't move on from Ayla.

"Really? That's great news! You should spend more time with her."

Ayla was sincere when she said those words, and she had finally cast her feelings for Toby aside.

When she fell in love with Brian, she realized that her love for Toby wasn't that of romance; it was more of family affection.

Just when he was about to respond, Molly opened the door to his office.

"Molly, aren't you supposed to be resting at home?"

Molly glanced at the phone in Toby's hand and saw how startled he was. She realized that she shouldn't have come here. She also figured why he went to Prario today.

He probably just wanted to see Ayla.

And since he didn't get to see her, he wasn't satisfied.

He didn't even have the common decency to drive Molly home, so he told the driver to take her home instead.

But what did he do? Toby couldn't wait to call Ayla as soon as he returned to his office.

Molly was pregnant with his child, but all he could think of was that b***h, Ayla.

Meanwhile, Ayla heard Toby call out Molly's name from the other end of the line, so she decided to drop the call without saying anything.

"Honey, who are you talking to? Did I disturb your conversation?" Molly rubbed her stil-flat belly and looked at Toby.

He put away his phone, and said, "No, actually, I'm already finished with the phone call."

He didn't want her to think too much.

Molly was still in the early stages of her pregnancy, and the fetus wasn't in a stable condition.

The doctor advised her that she should reserve her strength and stay in bed.

Molly didn't ask further.

If Toby really was keeping in touch with Ayla, what on earth should she do to stop it? Was she going to divorce him while she was pregnant?

'No way! I'm not going to do that!'

Moments later, after Ayla's phone call with Toby, Brian came home.

Upon seeing that she was holding a phone, he showed no interest in who she might've talked to. It didn't matter.

As long as she obediently stayed home, he had no objections.

"You're back."

When she saw Brian in the room, Ayla approached him.

"Aren't you the least bit happy that I'm home?"

He looked at her and gently touched the bandage on her head.

"Does it still hurt?" Ayla shook her head.

"Not anymore."

Upon hearing that she was okay now, Brian carefully examined her expression.

Whether she had been seriously injured or not, she probably wouldn't make any compromises, nor would she cry out in pain.

Perhaps she had suffered so much pain that such meager pain no longer made her bellow?

"Lala, tell me the truth, what kind of pain can you honestly say would actually hurt you?" Brian kept staring at Ayla as if he would melt her.

When would she tell him the truth? Didn't she have any plans of telling him what she had gone through during those two years?

Chapter 168: I Haven't Fully Recovered

The truth? Was there even one between them? And was it necessary to speak of it? Brian wanted to understand Ayla's pain, but did she still feel pain like an average person? The pain she had suffered during that one year was more than she had in her whole life.

For so many times, she had been suffering so terrible that she thought she might die.

But in the end, she suffered through one great pain after another.

"Lala, tm the only one who'll stand by your side no matter what, understand? I'm the only person you can say whatever you want to," Brian said to her.

Ayla looked up at the man before her.

'Would he be willing to be my only one?' The person who could've been the one for her didn't end up accompanying her for a lifetime.

She was truly scared of her fate.

Ayla neither agreed nor refused. She just didn't know how to react right now.

During their conversation, the servant knocked on the door and said, "Mr. Clark, the chicken soup is ready."

"Go and have some chicken soup." Brian glanced at Ayla. She had never compromised on anything.

On the other hand, because he excelled in the field of business, never had he made concessions for anyone he had ever met.

But when he met Ayla, he allowed her to do whatever she desired.

Ayla sat at the table, staring at the delicious soup. She then took a sip, and felt disheartened.

Brian looked at Ayla from across the table and he wondered if he could get this woman back or not.

Even if he forced her to stay by his side, she would never offer him her heart.

They lived under the same roof and slept on the same bed, and yet they treated each other so awkwardly.

That night, Ayla was sleeping with her back turned against Brian.

On the other hand, he leaned against the headboard, reading a financial magazine leisurely.

Ayla hadn't said a word to Brian for the whole night.

After glancing at her, he went into the study and looked for the drug in the drawer.

It seemed as if there was nothing he could do for her other than to avenge her.

Ayla got up, pacing back and forth in the room.

Feeling dizzy, she touched the back of her head and cried out in pain.

'I won't be able to go to work tomorrow, will I?'

Going to work might be difficult because of how much pain she felt. Then, Ayla left the bedroom. She noticed that the light in the study was still on.

'Is he angry at me? He's not such a stingy man, is he?'

She was well aware that Brian did all of this for her, so she went to the study to express her gratitude.

Upon seeing her, he asked, "What's up?"

It was already late. Why hadn't she gone to bed? Did she come here to say good night?

"Actually, it's nothing important."

Noticing that Brian quickly closed his drawer, Ayla figured that she might've interrupted something.

'I think it would be better if I don't say anything'

"Well, since you're already here, come in!"

Nobody was allowed to enter Brian's study, and even Ayla hardly ever went here.

As she stood at the door, she was surprised for a moment before she managed to walk in.

"What's the matter? Did you wake up because you missed having me by your side?"

How shameless he was! Before she could move back, Brian embraced Ayla.

"Mr. Clark, I'm just here to say thank you." She was held so tightly that she could hardly breathe.

"Thank me? I don't wanna hear that. I prefer something more practical."

Brian flashed a devilish grin.

Ayla didn't even think of struggling. If she did that, it would only worsen her migraine.

"Mr. Clark, need I remind you that I still haven't fully recovered?"

"Since you're aware of that, perhaps you should go back to bed and get some rest? It's getting late."

When Brian told her that, her heart softened.

"How can I go to bed if you won't let go of me?" said Ayla.

Judging by his words, she could tell that he wanted the opposite of what he said.

Seconds later, Brian carried Ayla out of the study and into the bedroom.

After resting for three days, she went to the hospital for a follow-up examination.

Once she confirmed that there was no more problems with her body, she went back to the company.

Her presence surprised everyone in the Design Department.

Ellie went to her desk, and asked, "Miss Woodsen, are you feeling better now?"

Ayla nodded with a smile.

"I am, thanks for asking."

Meanwhile, Linda also smiled upon seeing her.

"Ayla, don't think that you can come to the company only when you want to, just because you have a connection to Mr.Clark."

Glancing back at her, Ayla said, "Miss Linda, don't you think you care so much about what I do with my life? I didn't come here to work, and I've asked for a sick leave.I don't think I need your permission for that.After all, you're neither the manager of this department, nor the design director anymore."

Her words served to enrage Linda, but she knew that she couldn't do anything about it.

What Ayla said was correct.

Linda didn't hold either of those positions of power.

The reason Brian kept this position vacant was because he didn't want to create a conflict regarding who would be in charge of the Design Department, considering that it had only been created a few months ago.

Technically, Anna was in charge of this whole department.It made things a lot easier to deal with.

Moreover, through this fashion season, the most talented designer would be chosen as the design director.

Brian and Anna stood at the door, listening to the office conversation.

Hearing Ayla's words did not anger him at all.It only made him smirk.

He loved the way that she refused to admit defeat in the face of adversity.

Anna noticed the smile on his face.

She thought that Brian was indulging Ayla too much.

"Brian, you're so taken with Ayla.Do you think she'll even care about your feelings for her? Are you sure she loves you?" Anna said, feeling a bit angry.

"It's none of your business."

No matter what Ayla did, as long as she stayed by his side, Brian cared about nothing else.

Moments later, he and Anna entered the office.

When Ayla saw the two of them, she thought that they might've heard the conversation she had just now.But she didn't say anything.She just glanced at them and went back to her desk.

Brian cast Ayla a glance.

Yesterday, she received permission to work from the doctor.

This morning, she left the apartment without even saying anything to him, and went to the company.

Perhaps she was afraid that he wouldn't allow her to go back to work right away, so she quickly went to the company before he could wake up.

"Why are you so eager to go back to work?" Brian asked, leaning against the desk with his hands.

Ayla looked up at him, and said, "The doctor said I can go back to work."

"I know. I'm not deaf."

Brian was starting to feel pissed off with her non-compliant attitude.

"Then why bother asking?"

Ayla picked up a brush, and said, "Anyway, Mr. Clark, I suggest you go back to your own work. There's no need to concern yourself with me."

"Never said I was concerned about you," Brian answered with a cold glance.

He was just trying to show some concern, but she blatantly rejected him.

In that case, there was no more need for him to care about her.

Suddenly, Ayla stood up.

"I hope so." She picked up her handbag and started walking away.

Chapter 169: A Kiss In Return

"Where are you going?"

Before Ayla could walk away, Brian grabbed her arm. She didn't try to struggle at all.

"Mr. Clark, pulling my arm like this when we're in the office is inappropriate. I suggest you let me go. Don't forget what you promised me last time."

Ayla had gotten adept at threatening Brian.

But he didn't mind. He would let her do what she wanted to do for now.

During daytime, he submitted to her rules, but at night, it was the other way around.

As he let go of her hand, he said, "Do you need me to drive for you?"

"That's not necessary."

With that, Ayla walked out of the office without even glancing back at him.

Brian knew her well.

Even if she didn't say a word, it didn't necessarily mean that she wasn't going to do anything about what happened in the warehouse.

Once Ayla had gotten out, she hailed a cab to Prario and went straight to the underground warehouse.

When she told the guard her name, he opened the door for her.

If it weren't for the fact that Brian had informed the guard ahead of time, maybe she wouldn't have been able to get in.

As she stood at the door of the warehouse, she saw the messy pile of clothes on the floor.

'Was there a thief here?'

"What the hell happened here?" she asked the security guard.

"Miss Woodsen, this happened on the day you had an accident. Mr. Clark told us not to move anything, and I wait for you to examine the situation," said the guard honestly.

It turned out that Brian had deliberately let the mess be.

The scattered clothes all over the warehouse were caused by the same person who assaulted Ayla.

Perhaps Brian already had an idea who the culprit might be, but he just didn't have enough evidence.

"Oh, I see. It's alright then. Carry on with your work. I'll clean this up."

Even if Ayla had no clue who did this, she still needed to clean it all up.

Maybe she might find the missing dress here.

She then squatted down, folding each of the clothes one by one, and arranged them by their original order.

Around ten minutes later, Brian also arrived at the warehouse.

He probably followed her here because he knew that she would definitely come here, whether it was for the missing dress or finding clues that might lead to the identity of her assailant.

"What are you doing here?"

Just as Ayla tried to pick up the clothes, a familiar hand reached out for the same one she was reaching for.

And as she expected, it was Brian.

"I'm here for the same reason as you have," he said flatly.

Then, he helped her pick up the clothes one by one.

It took them an hour and a half to finish cleaning up the warehouse.

Seeing as they had gotten everything in order, Ayla felt disappointed.

"The missing dress isn't here."

"You don't have to worry about that anymore. I've already asked the factory to make another one."

Brian didn't think that it was that big of a deal that the dress was missing.

Besides, it was definitely not an accident that the dress suddenly went missing.

Someone had certainly done it on purpose.

When Ayla raised her head to look at him, he didn't seem to be that interested in what was happening.

Did he really not care about anything? If he didn't care, then there was no need for him to assist her.

And yet, he still lent her a helping hand without a word.

"Is helping me worth it to you?"

Ayla didn't like how this felt. She felt like she was almost drowning in his love.

This feeling was what she feared the most. Was it possible that Brian would manage to steal her heart again?

"Of course, it is. But I don't offer my assistance for free." Brian held her waist, pulling her closer to him.

He leaned over, passionately kissing her to the point that she almost suffocated. Her refusal offered no resistance to his aggressive kiss. His lips and tongue had an irresistible charm that rendered her unable to refuse.

It even made her want to continue.

She never felt the same way from Lucas' soft and delicate kiss.

Brian's was much too wild and domineering, tearing down her defenses like it was nothing.

That was why he was the winner.

No matter what the subject might be, he would beat her.

In all aspects, he was much more powerful than her.

Brian enjoyed seeing her so intoxicated by I**t.

Whenever she was being like this, he would have the confidence that he could keep her by his side forever.

"How does it feel? Did you like it?" Brian's deep and charming voice pulled Ayla back to reality.

'Did I lose control just now? Was one kiss from this heartless man enough to make her lose her mind?

"You're blushing, so I'm going to assume that you enjoyed it," he said complacently.

Suddenly, he saw something twinkling in his peripheral vision. He decided to let her go, and then he walked towards the wall to pick up an earring.

What Brian held in his hand was a crystal earring.

Despite its simple shape, it still looked elegant.

It was definitely not cheap, and ordinary folk wouldn't be able to afford an earring of this quality.

Not long after, Ayla also took a look at the earring.

It was Linda's! Moreover, this same earring was the latest series of a well-known brand in Italy this year. Only a limited number of it was distributed worldwide.

Back then, Linda had pulled some strings and managed to reserve a pair of the earrings.

Ayla didn't expect to see this earring here.

"You know whose earring this is, don't you?"

Judging by the horrified look in her eyes, he could tell that she knew who owned it.

Glancing back at Brian, Ayla said, "It's none of your business. Although, do you mind giving me that earring?"

She wanted to sort this problem out herself.

Unfortunately, he shook his head in refusal.

"What are you planning to do with it? Don't tell me that you're the one who dropped it?" said Brian.

He was only trying to protect this woman, but she was so stubborn. It was just an earring; it probably didn't mean anything significant.

"That's not mine."

It was true.

Ayla didn't have an earring like that, and she had no reason to lie to Brian.

"Then you know who owns it. If you tell me who the owner is, I'll consider giving it to you. Otherwise, I won't."

He knew that the only way to get an answer out of her was to force it out of her. He was only doing this to keep her out of danger.

This kind of thing had already happened once, and he wasn't going to let it happen again.

But Ayla's radar for danger was terrible.

All she could do was to pretend to be unafraid in front of him. He had to stop her from endangering herself.

A faint smile appeared on her face.

"Is that so? Then what if I manage to take it myself?"

If Ayla told Brian that Linda owned this earring, this problem might escalate into a catastrophe. She didn't want Yareli to suffer just because of Linda's antics.

That was why Ayla wanted to solve this on her own.

"If you manage to pry it from my hands, it's all yours."

Brian folded his palm, firmly hiding the earring in his hand.

Ayla looked at him and lost her confidence upon seeing the devilish grin on his face.

Chapter 170: Please Him

Ayla didn't want to play hardball with Brian. If he had no intention of giving the earring to her, she probably wouldn't be able to take it from him.

"What? What's on your mind? Hmm?"

Noticing that Ayla was absent minded, Brian leaned closer to her ear, whispering with a devilish grin on his dashing face.

'What do I have in mind? There's no way I can keep anything from him, can I?' Ayla wasn't in a rush to solve this problem.

Besides, sooner or later, she'd be able to get the earring from him.

"Since there's nothing else notable to do here, I'm leaving."

She grabbed her handbag and left the warehouse.

On the other hand, Brian just stood there, watching Ayla walk away.

His stern face was incredibly hard to read.

On her way to leave the warehouse, she deliberately slowed down.

'Didn't he follow me? Why didn't he stop me?' Normally, he would've continued pestering her.

Did he get mad at her because she wouldn't tell him the identity of the owner of the earring? After counting three seconds, she turned around, and said, "Mr. Clark, aren't you going back? Or are you planning to guard this warehouse?"

She had a bright and charming smile on her face.

Chuckling, Brian replied, "Of course, I will go back. But if you want to go back in my car, you have to go upstairs with me first."

In reality, he didn't have anything else to do here.

But in order to save face and stop her from acting so proud, he was going to pretend to be here for an inspection of the shopping mall.

In truth, he wanted her to follow him, so that he could keep an eye on her.

In her ten-centimeter-high stilettos, Ayla followed Brian closely.

Although she was reluctant to do it, she tried to force a smile.

Brian turned sideways, casting Ayla a glance.

Seeing that she was rubbing her ankle and having trouble catching up to him, he stopped.

"Are you tired?" he asked.

“No. Why would I be tired?”

She immediately stood in attention and smiled again.

“Really? You’re not?”

Brian just wanted her to stop pretending to be strong in front of him, but she was too stubborn to admit that she needed a break.

“Of course, Mr. Clark. You don’t seem to be the least bit exhausted. How can I complain that I’m tired? Right?”

Looking back at him, Ayla straightened herself, refusing to admit defeat.

Even if she knew that Brian did this on purpose, she didn’t say anything about it.

After hearing her response, he continued looking around the shopping mall. He even stopped for lunch at the staff canteen. He didn’t take Ayla back until they got off work.

And even then, they didn’t go back to the company.

He took her back to their apartment directly.

As soon as they arrived, Brian went to his study.

On the other hand, Ayla went back to her bedroom, sitting on the sofa cross-legged, and massaging her sore ankles.

It was so cruel of him to make her walk all day long.

The long hours of tidying up the warehouse had already drained her, and then she had to walk around the shopping mall for more than half a day.

She felt like she almost lost a fraction of her life just because of that damned earring.

At this point, she wasn’t even sure that it was worth all that effort.

Up until now, Ayla hadn’t gotten the earring yet.

When she opened the drawer of the bedside table, she found two pills inside.

These were the sleeping pills that the doctor prescribed her for her insomnia a few days ago.

As soon as Brian came in, he noticed that she was staring at the drawer.

“What’s up? What made you so upset?” Ayla rolled her eyes at him.

How could she not be upset about this? If there was a reason to be happy, she would be.

But there wasn’t any.

“Ayla!” Brian shouted.

‘This woman is so unpredictable,’ he thought.

Earlier this day, she was happily following him around to please him. She probably did that because she wanted] to get the earring from him.

Brian wasn't a fool.

He already knew the identity of the earring's owner.

However, he had his own way of dealing with things.

"What is it, Mr. Clark?"

Quickly closing the drawer, Ayla looked at him .it seemed that she really couldn't hide her thoughts from him.

"Time for dinner," said Brian.

Every time she acted this stubborn, it made him so angry.

Nobody had ever been capable of easily making him angry.

After their dinner, Brian went back to his study.

Meanwhile, Ayla sat in the living room, feeling quite anxious.

About five minutes later, she went back to the bedroom. And after hesitating for a long time, she went into the kitchen with the two pills in her hand.

Meanwhile, Brian was on a video call with Jaime using his laptop.

All of a sudden, Ayla knocked on the door, carrying a cup of aromatic coffee.

"What's up?" He raised his head to look at her.

His voice was as cold as it always was.

"I don't have anything better to do, so I made you a cup of coffee." Ayla smiled, putting the cup on his desk.

"Did I disturb you?"

"What do you think?"

Brian glanced at her with a knowing look. He figured that she was probably trying to play a trick on him.

Otherwise, she wouldn't have been so kind as to make him a cup of coffee.

He wasn't a fool, so he could read her like an open book.

"I'll leave now, so you can enjoy your coffee in peace."

After saying that, Ayla left the study and closed the door behind her. She pressed her ear against the door, carefully listening to the sounds coming from inside.

"Boss, did Miss Woodsen have a change of heart or something? Why would she make you a cup of coffee?"

It turned out that Jaime had heard their conversation because he didn't end the video call.

Brian picked up the cup, breathing in the aroma of the coffee.

"She won't be so kind to me."

He then turned around, pouring out the contents of the coffee.

Moments later, the video call ended and Brian closed his laptop.

Ayla wanted to solve this problem herself, but he wouldn't allow her to do so.

He took out the earring from the desk drawer and stared at it.

When Linda sprained her ankle last time, he noticed her wearing this same earring. Her habit of tucking her hair behind her ear was actually the reason he managed to see it.

Since no sound was coming from inside the study, Ayla pushed the door open and came in. She found Brian fast asleep on his desk.

But little did she know that he wasn't actually asleep. He was just resting his eyes, and waiting for her to come in.

Ayla opened the drawer and found the crystal earring inside.

She then picked it up and held it in her hand.

'What does Linda want from me? Doesn't she have enough already?' she thought.

Why was Linda doing this to Ayla? How would she benefit from this crime? Afterwards, Ayla set the earring down on the desk to open another drawer.

Upon opening it, she was frozen in shock.

What she found in this drawer was far too familiar to her.

There was no way that she could ever forget what it was.

But why did Brian have one of these? Ayla knew that Brian was involved in this kind of business, but she couldn't figure out why he would keep one of these things around at home.

With trembling hands, she bit her lower lip, carefully picking up the syringe. She had thought that she would never see this wretched thing again in her life.

Underneath the syringe, there was a medical report.

When Brian opened his eyes, he saw her pale face.

He was sure that she knew about this sort of drug.

Moreover, judging by the horrified look on her face, she was terrified of that thing.

"What are you doing?" Brian said to her all of a sudden.

Ayla's hand slipped, causing her to drop the document.

