

TSBMMOUS 71

Chapter 71: Ayla Ignores Brian

Ayla looked at Molly totally aghast. Then she stared at Toby quizzically. She said, "Get up, Mrs. Brown. I promise not to ever see him again!"

After all that had transpired recently, there was certainly no reason for her and Toby to ever see each other again.

Toby tried to interject but Ayla knew that anything he uttered at that moment would further exacerbate the problem.

She instructed him, "Mr. Brown, take your precious wife home! We are in a public place now."

Ayla was not in the least bit concerned about anyone's opinions about her.

But she knew at the back of her mind that if the daughter and son-in-law of the prestigious Smith Group continued to misbehave in public, they would promptly feature in the following day's news broadcast. Ayla then made a hasty exit from the shopping mall.

Lyle, who had been patiently awaiting her at the gate, hurried forth to assist her with her bag.

He immediately detected that something was amiss.

Deeply concerned, he enquired, "Miss Woodsen, are you all right?"

Lyle was horrified to see her swollen face and the bloodstain at the corner of her mouth.

She had been in the mall for barely an hour.

What could have possibly happened to drive her into this tragic state?

"I'm just fine, Lyle. Don't mention a word about this to Mr. Clark," she pleaded.

Ayla slumped against the seat helplessly.

She gently closed her eyes and introspected.

Tears cascaded down her burning cheeks.

She was consumed by old emotions of heartbreak and bitterness.

Past pain of misery resurfaced.

Coupled with this emotional torture, she had reached a new low of extreme pain and helplessness.

Meanwhile, after quickly assessing the gravity of the situation, Toby swept Molly off to a nearby hotel.

Miley, on seeing them safe, gestured to the driver to take her back home.

Molly was visibly disturbed. She couldn't bear to look Toby in the eye.

"Molly,"

Toby comforted, "please don't be angry. You know that I had lost all contact with Lala. Was all this embarrassing drama even necessary? And in full view of the public?"

Toby asked her with some concern in his voice as he sat beside her. He was genuinely worried about Ayla.

Four months into her pregnancy and he did not notice a baby bump.

Chances were great that she had miscarried.

Brian had clearly misunderstood the relationship between Toby and Ayla.

He refused to believe that the innocent baby that Ayla was carrying was his.

How Ayla must have suffered back then listening to the baseless accusations snarled upon her.

She looked like a weak, sick lamb.

Surely the Clark family had enough servants to carry out menial tasks! Why on earth was she asked to go out and purchase the vegetables?

"In what way was she embarrassed? It was I who was embarrassed! I was the one who was subjected to humiliation! My husband made a beeline for another woman in public! Am I nothing to you? Be honest with me. You owe me that much. If you no longer love me then admit it. You didn't have to feel obligated to marry me just because I gave up my virginity to you. That's not your responsibility! Did you take responsibility for Ayla? Did You?"

Molly finally took a breath after this tirade. She was fully aware that Ayla and Toby had lived together in that apartment.

It would be naive to believe that they had not had sexual relations. She was aware that people wouldn't easily forget those who had sexual relations with them.

She also knew that Toby had married her so soon only because she had given herself to him so early in their relationship. Besides, there was one thing confusing Molly.

She hadn't taken any contraceptives recently, but why hadn't she fallen pregnant yet? Toby cradled Molly in his arms and lovingly remarked, "Molly, I am truly sorry. Let's put this unpleasant episode behind us and move forward with renewed strength and trust. I am your husband ...and always will be."

He had been indecisive in the past.

He had only decided to give up on Ayla because he saw how she was pressured and tortured by Brian.

He was nothing without the Smith family. Molly gazed into Toby's eyes.

"Are you absolutely sure? Do you really mean it? Can you promise never to see Ayla ever again? Not to even think about her? Can you erase every memory of her? If you make every attempt to avoid her then there will be no more run-ins between Ayla and me,"

Molly concluded.

She confessed to herself that she had made many a sacrifice to sustain this love, but at the end of the day, was he really worth it? Toby slowly inhaled a deep breath of fresh air.

Then, taking her in his arms as gently as a newborn, he whispered convincingly, "Yes, I promise."

He recollected lying in pain in that diseased hospital bed. Molly was the only person who had stood by him and helped him get back on his feet.

She was destined to be a major part of his life.

Toby's words brought a beam of sunlight to her face.

With a sensual smile, she teased, "Shall we spend the night in the hotel? We should not head home. You know how inquisitive my parents are."

Molly knew in the depths of her being that she truly loved Toby. She had always been a caring, protective, somewhat possessive lover, but it had all been in the name of love. She would always treat him this way...

cover him with the hues of the powerful rainbow. Meanwhile, Ayla had returned to the villa and was packing the fridge.

Maria said affectionately, "I'll take over now. You get some well-deserved rest, Lala."

Maria only called her "Lala" when no one else was around. Ayla replied sweetly, "It's okay. I need to keep busy right now. Thank you."

She wanted to wash out all disturbing thoughts from her mind.

The sooner she reconciled her thoughts, the less desperate she would be. Suddenly Maria pulled Ayla towards her.

"How in heaven's name did you bruise your face so badly? Oh no! Your lips are also swollen!" she cried.

"Oh, it's nothing," Ayla lied.

"I accidentally walked into a wall and got a nasty bump." Ayla's lies literally ate her up. She knew that Maria was unconvinced.

"You know me better than that, Lala. Tell me what happened. I can't bear to see you in such pain. Who did this to you? How can anyone be so harsh?"

Maria tenderly nestled Ayla on the sofa.

She then went to the fridge and returned with an ice pack which she wrapped in a towel and dabbed on her face. Ayla took the ice pack and reassured Maria, "I'm fine, really. I'll be as good as new in a twinkling."

"Mr. Clark will not be too happy when he finds out." Maria's eyes scaled Ayla.

"Ayla is too kind hearted. She distances herself from conflicts as a rule. What could have possibly transpired at the mall that resulted in her sustaining such an ugly wound?"

"Please don't mention anything to him. He doesn't need to know. I'll ensure that I'm back in my room before he returns."

Ayla was determined not to run into Brian that day.

"What must she not mention to me? Why don't you want me to know?" asked Brian.

He had overheard their conversation in the living room.

Mortified, Ayla stood up.

The ice pack crushed to the floor.

"Mr. Clark, we were not expecting you back so soon!" she stammered.

He had returned much earlier than expected.

Brian noticed the bruise on her face.

"What happened to you?"

"I accidentally walked into a wall and got a bump."

No one believed the story she had cooked up.

"Do you take me for a fool?"

Only a ghost would believe that she had sustained that injury from walking into a wall!

"I'm going to my room," she said as she tried to retreat.

The last thing she wanted was to be confronted by Brian.

"Ayla Woodsen!" he screamed in an earth-shattering voice.

Mercilessly, he pulled her towards him.

"Hey! Let go of me!" Ayla said sketchily.

He acted as if he hadn't heard her.

She couldn't fathom out what he was thinking as his demeanor was so calm.

He lit a cigarette and smoked unhurriedly.

"May I go now?" she asked with awkward impatience.

"No!"

Brian refused to allow her to retreat into the secret comfort of her room. He had a business trip. He came home early from work to pack his luggage.

Was Ayla going to play hide-and-seek with him all her

“I’ve completed all my work.” She thought, ‘Now he has no reason to keep me prisoner here any longer!’

It was still early.

Surely he wouldn’t go to bed now.

She didn’t see he would need her in anything.

As Brian choked the life out of his cigarette, he instructed her to pack a traveling bag for him as he was going on a business trip.

Was this what she was reduced to? A mere servant? With some degree of relief, she replied, “Okay. How long will you be away for?”

With slow measured steps, they proceeded upstairs together. She packed a small suit case with his necessities. His eyes dug like a dagger into her back. How could she be so cold and unfeeling to him now?

“Your suit case is all packed now.” She placed it beside him.

“Aren’t you curious to know where I’m going? And with whom?”

He resented her indifference.

He felt he was losing control over her, like a wounded lion lost its prey to a powerful predator. Ayla smiled indignantly, “I’m not in the least bit interested.”

They both knew that this relationship had no future.

Neither of them had invested any emotions.

After all, this was only a marriage in name.

He held her in his arms.

“You did it on purpose, didn’t you? Do you think it’s proper for you to refuse me? What’s the point of acting like this?”

Chapter 72: The Pain Numbed Her And Made Her Cold

‘What’s the point?’ Ayla sneered.

Right now, everything was pointless to Ayla.

If he wanted to tell her something, he would.

But if he didn’t want her to know anything, or if he was going to take another woman on a business trip, then it was better if he didn’t tell her.

“What time is your flight?”

Ayla said to him after a long time of hesitating to speak.

Was she beginning to care about him? She had barely ever asked him about anything, not even what he wanted for dinner.

But no matter what she cooked, Brian never complained.

As he rested his chin on her slender shoulder, he said, "Send me off at the airport."

She didn't have the right to refuse him. Her face was a bit swollen, but she didn't feel any pain. They were seated at the back of the car.

Ayla looked out the window at the vast snowy land.

"It's so beautiful," she muttered. This winter, she had lost everything, and her heart was sealed in ice, causing it to become colder than snow.

She felt so numb that the only way she could fall asleep was through taking sleeping pills every night.

If it weren't for Brian putting pressure on her, she might've swallowed all the pills to forget everything.

Embracing her, he said, "Accompany me on the business trip."

The sound of his voice was so calm and certain, but somehow, there was still a bit of doubt in it.

Ayla shook her head.

"I'm not used to it."

Never had she left this city, and she didn't have any plans to do so either.

At least not right now.

"You're so stubborn. I'm starting to believe that you only agreed with Arlene to be her substitute and marry into the Clark family because of my wealth."

Nobody in this world could be richer than Brian.

He was enjoying a good life, but that was only because he made greater efforts than everyone else.

"That's right. I'm tired of being poor, so I came after your money."

Ayla didn't deny his claim.

Maybe he wasn't the only person thinking that.

Perhaps Toby, Arlene, and all the members of the Smith family were of the same mind.

She was a girl who had nothing.

What else could she want other than money? Didn't she choose to do this because she wanted to have more? But despite what she said, Brian didn't get mad at her.

"As long as you don't displease me, I'll give you whatever you want."

He was never stingy with money.

Ayla just looked at him in silence.

‘Do I still hate him? Maybe not anymore’

In the lobby of the airport, there were many people passing through.

The chauffeur was standing beside Brian and carrying his suitcase.

When Brian was about to board the plane, his travelling companion still hadn’t appeared.

Ayla was confused.

Was he planning to go on this business trip on his own? Didn’t he bring anyone else with him? As Brian walked forward with a suitcase in hand, a slender hand suddenly grabbed him.

“Are you alone?”

The sound of her voice was laden with concern.

“I am.”

This was the first time he went on a business trip without Anna. He wasn’t sure why he did so, but he just felt like going alone.

“Oh, then you can go inside! Don’t be late for your flight.”

As soon as Ayla stopped Brian, she instantly regretted asking him a question.

She even wished she could bite her tongue off.

Seeing that she awkwardly turned her head away, he pulled her into his arms and kissed her amidst the crowded airport hall. Ayla’s mind went blank because of his sudden kiss, and her eyes widened in surprise.

She allowed him to kiss her until she couldn’t breathe.

Afterwards, he backed away from her and walked into the entryway without glancing back. It took her a while to regain her composure and go back to the car.

After he left, Ayla wasn’t as relieved as she imagined she would be.

It was almost the Chinese New Year, so she was very busy every day.

Even though Ayla was staying at the servants’ quarters, she was able to manage the whole villa well. Everything was done.

She did all the cleaning herself, including cleaning Brian’s room.

“Lala, dinner is ready.”

When Maria went upstairs, she found Ayla cleaning the study with a duster cloth. Ayla nodded.

“Okay. I’m coming!”

Then, the two of them sat at the dining table and had dinner.

“Maria, have you received any calls recently?”

Brian never seemed to call the landline phone of the villa whenever he was out on a trip, and Ayla's cellphone hadn't been used for a long time because she had nobody to contact. Shaking her head, Maria answered, "No, Mr. Clark usually doesn't call when he's on a business trip."

Ayla shifted her focus back on the dishes, but she didn't have an appetite. "It's New Year's Eve in two days. Mr. Clark didn't mention when he would be coming back,"

Maria added.

As a maid who had been working here for many years, she had gotten used to it.

Brian never stayed at home during Chinese New Year, so the villa was usually deserted and tranquil.

"I see."

Ayla put down her chopsticks.

"It's fine if he doesn't come home."

This way, she could spend the Chinese New Year with her baby.

It had been cloudy for two days.

On New Year's Eve, a heavy snowfall ensued.

Ayla was wearing a simple dress as she squatted in the backyard.

"Baby, Mommy's with you right now. How are you? Are you mad at me? Why aren't you appearing in my dreams anymore?"

No matter how much time had elapsed, the wound in her heart still hadn't healed. Moments later, Maria came over to put a thick coat on her.

"It's getting late and the snow is getting heavier.

You should go back inside, or else you're gonna catch a cold."

"I'm fine. I haven't spent time with my baby for a long time, so I want to be with him for a little bit longer today."

Ayla knew how it felt to be lonely, so she didn't want her baby to experience the same thing.

Maria decided not to say anything anymore.

Throughout the whole villa, this place was the only cold and quiet one.

It was completely devoid of the happiness and excitement brought by the festival.

No matter how beautiful the fireworks were or how much laughter there was, Ayla seemed like she didn't want to partake in anything.

Tears rolled down her cheeks as she fell to her knees on the snow.

As time passed by, she just sat there, motionless.

So much pain ruled her heart that it turned numb and cold. Little by little, a tall figure approached her, but she didn't notice that person at all. Brian was wearing a black overcoat, and the cold breeze blew past the hem of his coat.

His legs looked really long and powerful wearing those pants. He came home in a hurry.

He had worked day and night for so many days just so he could come home and celebrate the Chinese New Year with her.

However, she didn't seem to be prepared to welcome him.

Maria mentioned that Ayla had been here for several hours.

He heard her sobbing.

Her petite body was trembling, and a thick layer of snow had formed over her head and shoulders.

"Do you want to die or something?"

Brian walked over, pulling Ayla up from the snow.

Upon seeing his frowning face, she thought that she was seeing things due to the tears blurring out her vision.

"Why are you always so grumpy? I also get angry, but I'm not qualified to vent my anger, am I?"

She touched his face with her hand, and said, "I don't want to see you. I just want to stay with the baby."

He grasped her hand tightly.

Due to his motion, her coat fell to the ground and she shivered because of the cold.

"Ouch! It hurts!"

It was only then that Ayla finally saw him clearly.

It turned out that she wasn't hallucinating.

He dragged her to the living room of the villa and threw her on the sofa.

"Are you awake now?"

Ignoring the pain, she curled up on the sofa, and said, "I didn't know you were back."

"Go upstairs and take a hot shower. And don't show up in front of me while you're still shivering," Brian roared.

"Did you just come back?"

Ayla approached him, wiping the snow off his clothes.

"I didn't think you'd come home."

“This is my house.I can come back whenever I want.”

On the way back a few moments ago, Brian thought about what she might be doing.

She should’ve been having a good time while he was away, especially now that it was the New Year’s Eve today.

But it turned out that she was just sitting in the backyard on her own.

Brian was upset because of that.

Ayla rubbed her hands together and said, “You haven’t eaten anything, have you? Do you want me to c**k for you?”

“It’s not midnight yet.Did he make sure to come back on time?”

“That’s not necessary.” Brian took off his coat and sat on the sofa.

Chapter 73: She Was Drunk But Didn’t Make A Scene

Instead of going upstairs to take a shower, Ayla headed for the kitchen.She reached into the refrigerator and took out the dishes for the supposed dinner tonight.

Then, she placed them on the dining table.

“Here you go.Have a taste,” she said as she approached Brian.

It was Chinese New Year’s Eve, and people were supposed to have a family reunion dinner tonight.

But unfortunately, Ayla was all alone.

As such, she lost her appetite.

While staring at Ayla, Brian also entered the dining room and took a seat.

Then, his eyes shifted to the dishes on the table.

“Did you prepare all of these yourself?” She nodded.

“Yeah, I did.Why? Is there anything you don’t like?”

Since she wasn’t busy, she decided to make dinner for New Year’s Eve.

Unfortunately, she found herself alone that night.

After picking up his chopsticks, Brian tasted the dishes.He looked at her with an impressed look.

“They taste fine.”

As she met his gaze, Ayla politely answered, “Enjoy your meal.I’ll leave first.”

She had no reason to stay in the main villa since he was already home.

“Wait.Who told you to leave?”

A hint of coldness was in his voice.

“Fetch me a bottle of wine.”

If she had known that he was going to ask for alcohol, Ayla would have left earlier.

Instead of preparing dinner for him, she would have shut herself in her room.

Unfortunately, it was too late to change her mind.

With a frown, she headed to the wine cabinet.

After getting a bottle and a glass, she went back to him.

“Should I pour you a glass?”

It seemed so natural for him to be served by her.

As such, he nodded at her.

Since his several meetings swamped his schedule, it had been a long time since he had a decent meal.

He decided to enjoy himself tonight with the delicacies and wine in front of him.

While pouring wine for him, Ayla cursed in her thought, ‘I hope you drink too much that you’ll die. I don’t want to see you ever again’

However, when he noticed that the glass was full, Brian told her, “Drink it.”

“What are you saying?”

She was dumbfounded by his order.

At first, she thought she heard him wrong.

Drinking that much wine would be too much for her.

She would be asleep almost immediately.

“I want you to drink that glass of wine.”

Repetition of his words was Brian’s worst pet peeve.

Nonetheless, the woman in front of him seemed so disobedient that he had to tell her the same thing twice. With a confused expression, Ayla shook her head.

“I don’t want any alcohol tonight.”

The last time she got drunk, she had no idea what she did. She didn’t want to get drunk again.

“Why don’t you like it? Do you want me to pour that down your throat?”

He grabbed the glass and drank it. Then, he poured it full again.

No matter what happened, he wanted Ayla to taste it.

“Have some. Tonight, you will drink. I will not let you go until you take a sip. Don’t worry. Even if you do something stupid, I’ll keep it a secret.”

He moved the glass a little bit closer to her.

“Just go to the entertainment club if you want someone to accompany you while drinking.”

With a scowl, Ayla drank the wine.

“I know it’s supposed to be a family-reunion night. Nonetheless, I shouldn’t be the one accompanying you.”

Brian kept quiet and took another glass instead.

While eating, the two of them sat face to face and shared a conversation.

Meanwhile, Ayla only drank a little.

When she noticed that Brian already had enough, she placed her chopsticks down. She walked to the kitchen counter and prepared him a cup of coffee.

After handing him the cup, she said, “I remember that you like this.”

Aside from coffee, Brian wouldn’t drink any other beverage that Ayla offered.

They sat comfortably in the dining room.

Finally, the bell rang at midnight.

The night sky was filled with fireworks.

Ayla stood up and admired the beautiful scenery.

As a finale, a huge firework had the brightest explosion in the sky.

Then, nothing else followed.

Despite their beauty, fireworks only lasted for moments.

They were like something precious that people would never get.

For a long time, Ayla had closed her heart from anyone around her.

As long as she remained distant and unattached, no one could emotionally hurt her.

However, the man in front of her had the key to her heart.

He was the one who could make her sad.

Even before she fell in love with him, her heart already had an emotional scar.

“Those fireworks are beautiful. Do you enjoy watching them?”

“Well, women like to watch pretty things, right?” Brian looked at her with a curious face.

However, she shook her head.

“Actually, I don’t.”

At that moment, he remembered watching the fireworks display on one New Year’s Eve with Anna.

She mentioned that the view of beautiful fireworks exploding in the night sky seemed so enjoyable and enchanting.

The event had a sentimental impact on her.

But Brian left almost immediately that night. However, he never expected that he would be watching the fireworks with Ayla now after so many years.

Despite the previous incidents, they could still face each other so calmly.

“Although they are gorgeous, fireworks always disappear in an instant. Their beauty won’t last forever.”

As she stared outside the window, Ayla realized that many people still enjoyed watching fireworks. She did like them at some point, but not anymore.

Then, he picked up a glass.

After playfully pinching her cheeks, he urged her to drink the wine.

Although she was already a bit drunk at that point, Ayla didn’t cause a scene.

When he noticed her dizzy expression, Brian carried her upstairs.

Ayla dared not to refuse him as she already knew that there was no escape for her tonight.

As they entered the huge room, their path was illuminated by a lamp on the floor.

Given the mood that they had, his sexual urges began to tingle. She knew she couldn’t change her destiny.

For now, she did not need contraceptives because her body couldn’t bear a child anymore. She wasn’t sure whether this was good news for him or for her.

With uncontrollable I**t, Brian almost lost his mind.

The woman in his arms was so captivating that he didn’t dare let go. The longer he stared at her, the more his urges became uncontrollable.

“Hey, Mr. Clark.”

However, Ayla couldn’t bear the torture.

With trembling lips, she pleaded him to stop.

Nonetheless, he remained unfazed and dared to continue.

All of a sudden, a ringtone echoed from his pocket.

The unexpected call interrupted them.

With reddened cheeks, Ayla pushed him away.

“Mr.Clark, please answer your phone.”

A frown flashed across his face.

After putting on a night robe, he finally swiped right on his screen.

“Who is this?”

“Hello, Brian.How are you?”

Anna’s voice echoed from the speaker.Immediately, Ayla recognized who was calling.

That voice was something she would always remember.

At that moment, Ayla drowned from embarrassment as she realized how shameless she was.

She felt like Anna was Brian’s legitimate wife while she was the mistress.

All Ayla could do was wrap herself with the blanket and hide her face.

“Hey, what’s up? It’s already late yet you are still awake.Is something wrong?” he asked in his usual calm tone.

As she heard his soothing voice, Anna replied, “Where are you, Brian? I thought you’re going to have some business meetings tonight?”

“I’m at the villa right now since my meetings are canceled.”

On the other side of the phone, Anna suddenly became bothered.

Brian never stayed in the villa on special days or during festivals before.

Usually, he spent his free time with her in the entertainment club.

However, even though she was at the club, he was spending New Year’s Eve in the villa with Ayla.At that moment, Anna recognized how complicated Ayla was as a woman.

“Why are you at the villa? I think it’s better if you’re here with me.”

Since he was abroad on a business trip, Anna had been waiting for Brian.

However, instead of visiting her at the entertainment club, Brian went to the villa and stayed with Ayla.

“Don’t worry.I’ll visit you there tomorrow.Why don’t you tell the others to manage the club for tonight so that you can rest early?”

he coaxed over the phone.Anna’s lips curved in a wry smile.

“Brian, you know it’ll trouble me if someone else is managing such a big entertainment club.Moreover, the holidays are the best time for business since we have a lot of customers these days.”

She was trying her best to improve his business.

However, he replied in a dull voice, "I understand. See you there tomorrow."

After ending the call, a sigh escaped his lips.

Then, he looked at Ayla who was pretending to be asleep under the blanket.

"Just sleep here tonight."

At last, her stiffened body relaxed as she breathed a sigh of relief.

Chapter 74: Anna's Boastful Nature

Ayla sat up and said, "I don't want to stay here."

She despised living there, more so after Anna called Brian.

Brian advanced towards her and angrily threw back the covers.

"Then don't sleep tonight!"

How could this woman be so ungrateful? She was clearly taking advantage of his kindness.

Brian had ruthlessly tortured her throughout the night.

She felt too weak to beg for mercy. On Chinese New Year's Day, Ayla only awoke at noon. She was in Brian's room. Her body wracked with pain, making any kind of movement difficult.

She promised herself that she would not act tough in front of him in future for her own safety. On the other hand, Brian seemed unperturbed.

Lounging in a black robe, he looked laid-back, yet elegant, as he savored a glass of red wine.

"Are you awake? Get up! Quit pretending to be asleep!"

Brian had noticed her eyelids flutter, but she quickly pretended to fall into a slumber again.

Ayla awoke, draped herself in the thin quilt then picked up the phone.

She requested Maria to bring her a fresh set of clothes.

The maid came up from the first floor, clothes in hand and greeted Ayla warmly, "Good morning, Mrs. Clark."

She took the clothes and disappeared into the bathroom.

After a while she stepped back into the room, beautifully adorned.

As Brian placed his glass down, he instructed her, "Go downstairs and prepare lunch if you are ready. We have to go out this afternoon."

She knew that she would be forced to accompany him, but she had no idea that he would take her to the entertainment club.

“Are you working on the first day of the Chinese New Year?”

She stood at the door, fearing to go beyond. The parking lot of the entertainment club was choked with various cars.

The club was pretty lively even for the daytime.

“No,” he replied softly, as he walked in, holding her around the waist.

As they pushed the door and entered the luxurious private VIP room, Ayla was consumed by nausea.

She was allergic to the smell of alcohol and cigarettes and swooned into a bout of coughing. Anna was heartbroken to see Brian holding Ayla so lovingly.

Nevertheless, she approached him and with a smile, she said, “Welcome, Brian! Everyone is waiting for you!”

Brian’s entry into the vibrant and lively private room was followed by a sudden hush, as everyone stood up and respectfully addressed him as Mr. Clark.

“Please, continue to play.”

He then looked at Ayla and asked her, “Can you play mahjong?”

She shook her head.

“No.”

Such games were alien to her.

She was a virtuous girl who spent her time studying and working.

“Anna, teach her to play mahjong.”

Brian sat on the sofa and poured himself a glass of wine.

“But I don’t wish to learn how to play mahjong.”

She didn’t want to become addicted to gambling like he had. She regarded gambling as one of the worst vices known to mankind.

Wasn’t Clayton destroyed because of his gambling tendencies? The Woodsen family was ruined by gambling alone.

Brian walked to the automatic mahjong table and remarked, “Observe carefully. You will learn quickly. It will be useful to you in the future.”

He asked Ayla to sit next to him.

As she stared at this conundrum, her mind wandered off.

When they were young, Clayton always took Arlene to the amusement park or ski resort for two weeks at a time.

However, Ayla was expected to remain in the little house behind the Woodsen family's villa, reading or cleaning. She was not accustomed to such rowdiness.

Brian extended his hand out to her.

Taken aback, she asked, "What's the matter?"

"Get me a cup of tea."

He knew how easily she became absent-minded when she was around him.

"Okay."

When Ayla jerked herself back to reality, she quickly brought him a cup of tea.

But before she could hand it to him, someone bumped into her and the tea spilled all over her.

Brian immediately held her hand and asked, "Why are you so clumsy? Did you burn yourself?"

His sudden concern frightened her.

"I'm fine. The tea is not hot."

She pushed his hand away.

A crowd of people gathered around them.

Was it appropriate for him to behave like this? He looked at her and enquired, "Are you sure you are all right?"

At that moment, Anna hastened forward and said, "Miss Woodsen, come along with me. I'll get you a change of clothes. I have a wardrobe of new clothes. It will fit you perfectly."

Ayla looked at Brian, seeking permission.

"Go with her. A change of clothes is necessary."

They traipsed off to another room on the same floor.

The room was breathtakingly beautiful and of a magnificent standard.

The European-styled interior, with an exquisite imported crystal chandelier that emitted a strange brilliance, was overwhelming.

"Come in and have a seat. I bet you are not used to being suffocated by so many men drinking and smoking all around you."

Anna continued with her annoying chatter.

"It actually doesn't matter," replied Ayla.

If she had a choice, she would never have come there.

"I guess if you really want to be with Brian then it doesn't matter where you end up, right?"

Anna walked towards the wardrobe.

She asked, "Miss Woodsen, what kind of clothes do you prefer? Feel free to select whatever you wish to wear. Brian has spoiled me rotten by buying me such a huge selection of clothing. My wardrobe is bursting at the seams as a result of his generosity. There's more for you to choose from. Ayla glanced at the designer clothing that shimmered in the wardrobe. Was Anna just being boastful? Well Anna had picked on the wrong person. Ayla was far from impressed. She looked on disdainfully.

"No, thanks. I would rather wear my own clothes."

She examined the tea stains on her clothes and said, "These stains are barely noticeable. I can wash them off when I go home."

Anna handed her a beige overcoat.

"Here, slip this on. If Brian finds out that you haven't changed, I'll be in hot water."

Obviously she was pretending to be kind.

Ayla smiled.

"Okay, thank you,"

She put on the beige coat.

Anna said admiringly, "It fits you perfectly. Brian has always had great taste."

She continued to make small talk. Ayla just smiled and quipped, "I'm ready. Let's go!"

She didn't want to engage in silly banter with Anna.

There was no sense to this kind of war between them. She dismissed Anna's words.

She cared less about Brian and his relationship with Anna.

Ayla returned to Brian's side.

"I didn't expect Anna's clothes to fit you so well," he remarked as he glanced at her indifferently.

"Really?"

Ayla forced a smile.

She couldn't be bothered whether it fitted her or not. She had only changed because he had insisted she do so.

Personally, she felt more comfortable in her own clothes. Evidently, he was good at playing mahjong.

His winnings had increased whilst she was away.

He had much more chips than his three opponents now.

She was still distracted when he pushed down the mahjong tiles and declared, "I win!"

His tone remained unchanged, however, his opponents' expressions were questionable.

"Mr.Clark, are you trying to extort money from us?" asked Tayson, who was sitting opposite Brian.

"I can't help it if you are unskilled."

Brian scooped up the pile of chips he had won.

"Mr.Clark, are you trying to impress the beautiful lady beside you?" James asked, unwilling to admit defeat, Brian looked at her.

"Are you Lady Luck?" He spoke softly yet audibly enough for everyone to hear.

Ayla was lost for words.Her silence elicited a response from him.

He stood up and said, "Now it's your turn to play.I'm too embarrassed to win any more.Play to win or lose.It makes no difference."

Chapter 75: She Was Up To Something

It was easy for Brian to say something like that.

He told Ayla to sit on his seat.

She felt pins and needles on her sweating palms.

Was she actually going to play mahjong now? She didn't even recognize any of the mahjong tiles.

Not ten minutes after she sat down, she had almost lost all of the chips Brian had won earlier.

To her, it felt like she just willingly gave the other three opponents all the money.Meanwhile, Brian just drank and smoked nonchalantly.

He hardly cared about the money at all.

It didn't matter how much she lost because he could afford it.

All he wanted was to alleviate her boredom.

However, he realized that this woman had absolutely no affinity for gambling.

Ayla lost again and again, and now, she really had no more chips on hand.

She turned to Brian and helplessly shook her head.

"Mr.Clark."

"Mrs.Clark, it's not a big deal.I can lend you three hundred chips."

"I'll lend you five hundred, Mrs.Clark."

“Well, I’ll lend you all my chips!”

Ayla sat there as the three people at the mahjong table earnestly offered her chips with a wide grin on their faces.

Their sinister smiles sent shivers down her spine.

“Do you want to lend her your chips or just give them to her?”

Brian walked over, staring daggers at the three men.

“We’ll give them to her,” they all said in unison.

Even though they had won a lot, their opponent had no clue how to play mahjong.

It would be an embarrassment to them if they took money from their boss like that. Ayla looked at Brian.

He had pushed her into a pit of suffering, while he and Anna were talking and laughing happily.

But it didn’t matter that much because he was wealthy, so she was in charge today.

“There’s no need to do that. It’s Mr. Clark who will pay for the money you’ll lend me.”

Ayla smiled at them.

Such leisurely days were a rare occasion for her. She was set to go back to school in half a month.

Without objecting to her words, Brian kept on drinking.

Anna clung to his arm, and the two of them looked very intimate.

For the duration of the entire afternoon, Ayla lost tens of millions of dollars.

If she had known that they’d be betting so much, she wouldn’t have laid a hand on the mahjong tiles.

After the game, Brian took her to a restaurant.

However, she didn’t look so happy ever since they left the club.

“What’s up with you? Are you scared?”

He took a sip of tea and looked at Ayla.

She was also drinking a beverage. She hadn’t drunk anything warm yet, but this afternoon, she was sweating all over.

“I’m not an idiot. You did it on purpose, didn’t you?”

Ayla didn’t know how she made it through the whole afternoon.

Was she just trying to relax or was she causing herself some trouble? Moments later, the waiter arrived, and Brian looked at the steak that he had brought.

“Let’s eat!”

Ayla glanced at the medium rare steak on her plate, and thought that it was still a bit b****y.

She couldn't move her knife and fork because she felt nauseous.

The following second, she ran to the bathroom and threw up in the toilet.

She had been sitting at the mahjong table the entire afternoon, but she hadn't eaten anything.

Apart from drinking a few glasses of water and losing a mountain of money, she hadn't touched any food.

But when she laid eyes on the steak, she immediately wanted to vomit. When Ayla came back to her seat, her steak had been replaced by a cup of coffee and a plate of pasta. Brian held a cup of coffee as well, drinking it elegantly.

If Ayla wasn't famished, she still wouldn't want to eat the pasta.

However, she was already hungry earlier, and then she threw up upon seeing the steak just now.

Now, she really wanted to eat something, and the pasta on her plate looked appetizing enough for her. It was late at night by the time they got back to the villa.

Upon arrival, Ayla went to her room in the servants' house.

However, as soon as she sat down, her phone started ringing.

"Who told you to go back to your room?"

It seemed that Brian really wanted to torture her.

And it didn't seem like he had anything better to do this week.

"Mr. Clark, I'm about to sleep. Can we please just talk about this tomorrow?" Ayla answered.

She was indeed too tired to endure more of his antics.

Last night, she was too tired because of what he did, and it almost felt like she had lost her life.

Afterwards, she spent an entire afternoon, playing in the entertainment club.

Even though she was so tired, she didn't feel any pain in her heart.

Perhaps the more preoccupied she was, the less bad memories she remembered.

After hanging up, she walked towards the small pile of soil in the backyard.

"Baby, I'm sorry that I couldn't accompany you today."

She stood there, murmuring to herself for a long time before she decided to go back to her room.

Staring at the light in her room through the window, Ayla frowned. She seemed to recall turning the light off when she left.

Moreover, she was worried that Brian would call her again, so she unplugged the phone line as well.

Did she somehow forget to turn off the light when she went out earlier? As soon as she pushed the door open, she saw the man leaning against her bed.

He was wearing a night robe, looking charming and seductive.

Her heart trembled upon seeing him.

Pursing her lips, she entered the room.

“Mr.Clark, it’s late.Why did you come to my room to smoke?”

Brian knew whenever Ayla was lying to him because she was a bad liar, and she wasn’t smart enough to fool him!

“Didn’t you say you had gone to bed? Is it your ghost who was sleeping here?”

He took another drag of his cigarette.

She could see how displeased he was based on his expression.

“Mr.Clark, whether you want to see me or a ghost, I really want to rest,” Ayla said with a smile.Brian noticed that she was wearing a thin coat when she came from outside.

He must’ve seen her take off her coat the second they came back to the villa.

That coat cost more than ten thousand dollars, but she didn’t seem to like it.

“Go to my room in the main villa.”

After saying that, he stood up and left her room.

As she watched him walk away, Ayla knew that he was here to trouble her.

Was she afraid? She would be lying if she claimed that she wasn’t.

But what was she afraid of? She had gone through so many obstacles that it rendered her fearless of almost everything.

Perhaps it was because he could do whatever he wanted! Brian sat on the sofa in his room with a cigarette between his fingers, waiting for Ayla to arrive.

If he hadn’t been in a good mood for the past two days, he would’ve dragged her to his room as usual.

How could he have the time to wait for her to come to his room? After an hour’s delay, she finally came to his room.

“Mr.Clark.”

Brian saw that Ayla hadn’t changed her clothes, nor taken a shower. She was holding a glass of milk.

“Please drink this,” she said.

“I don’t drink milk.”

He preferred to drink coffee.Was this woman challenging his authority on purpose?

"I'm here to apologize. You lost a lot of money today because of me."

If she hadn't played, he wouldn't have lost millions in cash.

Perhaps to him, money wasn't an object, but she still needed to express her apology. It took Ayla an entire hour to reach this conclusion.

She decided to ingratiate herself with him. But Brian didn't buy it.

"No need," he said.

When he saw her standing at the door and hesitating, he immediately knew that he shouldn't drink this glass of milk.

Even though Ayla wouldn't poison him, no matter what she added to the milk, he wasn't going to drink it. She held the glass tightly, and said, "Just have some! You drank too much wine today."

Did she actually care about him? She felt that anyone who heard what she said would think that she gave a d**n about him.

Creasing his forehead, Brian asked, "Are you implying that you care for me?"

Why did he think that she was up to something?

"Yes."

Ayla held back her nausea.

Was it really necessary for her to do this?

"Fine. I'll have some."

Brian took the glass of milk, holding it firmly in his hand.

It did seem that she had put a lot of effort and thought into it. Standing by the sofa, Ayla watched as he just held the glass of milk and looked at it.

Seeing that he didn't seem like he was going to drink, she said, "You should drink it now. The milk won't taste good if it's cold."

Swiveling the glass in his hand, Brian looked at her closely.

"It's too much for me to finish alone. Drink the other half."

As soon as he finished talking, he noticed a change in Ayla's expression. She obviously wasn't adept at trickeries, but she insisted on showing it to him today. Should he just cooperate with her?

"No, no. I've already had some."

Ayla wouldn't drink the milk because she didn't want to spend the night with him. And so, she urged him to drink it alone.

Chapter 76: A Glass Of Milk With Sleeping Pills

Brian put the glass down.

“Then I’m not drinking it. It’s getting late. You should go to bed.”

Upon seeing that he didn’t drink the milk, Ayla felt disheartened.

‘My plan failed, didn’t it?’ He pressed her against the sofa, holding her in his arms.

“What’s going on? You were smiling at me earlier and you even served me milk. Is there something you want me to do? Or maybe you’re asking for more s*x?”

‘How perverted he is! Isn’t there any other thought going on in his head?’ Ayla cursed in her mind. Or was he so h***y that he wanted to f**k her again?

“What are you thinking of? Have you made up your mind?”

Brian had always been aloof and devoid of emotion, and the mere sound of his voice was enough to weaken her knees.

Impatiently, Ayla answered, “Drink the milk and you can do anything you want to me.”

Since she had said that, he was certainly going to drink the milk. His lips evoked a charming smile. And like a poppy flower, it enticed everyone, including her.

Ayla stared at the glass of milk without blinking.

However, disappointment was written all over her face.

“Fine. I will.”

After saying that, Brian kissed her lips. She tightly grabbed the edge of the sofa as his kiss was so intense and passionate.

“Tell me, did you miss me?”

He didn’t need an answer to know that Ayla didn’t miss him; not even a little bit. Picking up the glass of milk, he said, “Answer me. Then, I’ll drink the milk.”

Ayla nodded in response. He had forced her into doing it anyway.

After seeing her nod, Brian smiled before he took a big gulp of the milk.

However, he didn’t swallow it right away.

Instead, he pressed his lips against hers, transferring the milk into her mouth.

Ayla had long known that he wasn’t a simple man to deal with.

When she was having a hard time breathing, she accidentally swallowed the milk which was laced with two sleeping pills.

Upon seeing Brian’s devilish grin, she finally realized that she could do nothing against him.

The only thing she could do now was to accept her fate.

When she was sound asleep, he picked Ayla up.

It turned out that she had added sleeping pills into the milk.

The only time this woman shut up was when she was asleep.

For the first time since the abortion of the baby, she finally resisted him, and she didn't even use a good method.

Even if he had ingested the sleeping pills himself, it would only buy her one night of freedom from his grasp.

It still wouldn't be enough to escape him for a lifetime.

She was still too naive.

Meanwhile, Toby, along with Molly, went to a ski resort in the suburb.

"Honey, will you be spending the New Year with me alone every year from now on?" she asked.

"Aren't you happy that we came out to have some fun?" Toby asked, holding Molly in his arms.

He took her here for the holiday because she enjoyed skiing.

"Of course, I am. As a matter of fact, I'll be happy wherever I am, as long as I'm with you." Molly believed that he loved her now, and their relationship was improving.

"Then we can stay here for half a month before going home."

Toby was learning to love her, and treat her well, but he wasn't going to let her have a baby before he was certain that he truly loved her.

Looking him in the eye, Molly replied, "Okay. Only the two of us are here. I want to be sure of something. Why haven't I gotten pregnant? Is it because of my poor health?"

Her words left Toby petrified for a moment.

Then, he smiled and said, "It's all gonna be alright. Don't worry. Just let nature take its course, okay?"

"But it's been so long since we've tried making a baby. If I can give birth to a son like you, I'll live a happier and more fulfilling life."

She leaned against his chest as they sat on a cable car in the skiing resort, staring at the snowy horizon.

Toby didn't say anything, and just kissed her cheek.

The reason they left the city and went to the ski resort was so that he could forget all about Lala.

He didn't want to fill his head with thoughts of her anymore. It would help to ease his pain if he could forget about her temporarily.

When Ayla woke up, she realized that she was in a familiar room. Her memory of what happened last night gradually came back to her. She dug her own grave last night, and jumped directly into it.

Panting heavily, she pulled up the quilt and looked around.

Fortunately, Brian wasn't beside her.

Otherwise, she'd feel ashamed of herself.

Ayla thought that he must've already left, but when she went downstairs, she saw him drinking milk, which was different from his usual habit.

It was like the sun was rising in the West.

"This milk isn't good either," Brian said flatly, hinting at something.

Ayla wasn't an idiot. She gathered why he had said this to her, but she pretended like she heard nothing.

Although, what Brian said was true.

Indeed, the milk wasn't tasty, and it smelled a bit strange.

"Mrs. Clark, I warmed the milk for you," Maria said to Ayla as she walked out of the kitchen.

Ayla frowned.

"I don't want any milk today. I'll have coffee instead."

Merely hearing the word "milk" was enough to humiliate her.

Turning a page of his newspaper, Brian said, "Well, you have to go out later, so don't drink any milk. It'll be unfortunate if you end up feeling sleepy for the rest of the day because of it."

It was obvious that he was satirizing her.

Scoffing, Ayla went into the kitchen to get a cup of coffee.

However, it didn't taste good, so she added some sugar and milk into it.

Sadly, it still didn't taste good. It was far too bitter.

Sure enough, different people had different preferences.

At the thought of being taken back to the entertainment club for an entire afternoon, Ayla felt her skin crawl.

However, the matter of her visit today was different from that of yesterday.

As soon as she entered the room, she was served tea, water, and some desserts.

Brian's men kept addressing her as Mrs. Clark. She wasn't that close to them yet, was she? They had only met yesterday! The only other time she saw them was on her so-called wedding half a year ago.

How could they act so familiar with her now? Brian looked at her and said, "They think you're a God of Wealth."

She lost so much money to them yesterday.

How could they not be happy to see her? Perhaps they were hoping that she'd lose more money to them today.

Ayla shook her head.

"I'm not gonna gamble today. I'm afraid that one day, I'll be the one who'll burn all your assets away."

"You're not capable of doing that yet."

This time, Brian played mahjong himself, and he dragged Ayla to sit beside him and serve him tea and desserts.

In such a lively place, Anna was definitely present.

She walked to Brian's side, putting her hands on his shoulders and looking at his cards.

"Miss Woodsen, you should practice some more. Although Brian is wealthy enough, that doesn't mean you can throw his money away just like that," Anna taunted Ayla.

Brian didn't partake in their conversation and just focused on ending this round.

"I win."

Ayla got up from her chair and said, "I'm not interested in gambling. Miss Anna, if you like it so much, you can join the game and enjoy all you want."

Seconds later, Jaime appeared.

"Mr. Clark," he greeted.

Brian glanced at him, stood up, and said to Ayla, "Play the game for me."

However, she didn't move nor respond.

Instead, Anna sat down in his place.

"Anna, please go easy on us."

As soon as they saw Anna sit at the mahjong table, they all pleaded for mercy before the next round even began.

It seemed that she was also an experienced gambler.

Brian and Jaime had entered the small room, so Ayla didn't have to pretend to be interested in the game anymore. She sat on the sofa alone, holding a pillow in her arms.

"How's it going?" Brian asked, staring at the other man.

Jaime handed over a document, and explained, "Mr. Clark, Clayton has returned from abroad two days ago. He went to Las Vegas to gamble, and he lost all his money."

"I've already guessed it. He's not lucky enough to make money through gambling. Let him have a good time for the next two weeks, and we'll talk about it at a later date," Brian said coldly.

Jaime nodded.

“When I investigated Clayton, I found that the chairman of the Smith Group, Hayden, was also investigating him. It seems that it had something to do with Miss Ayla Woodsen.”

Chapter 77: Meeting Lucas By Chance Again

Brian frowned at the thought that everything had something to do with Ayla. He shouldn't have underestimated her.

“Mr. Clark, shall we investigate this matter as well?”

Although Jaime's opinion of her had improved, he was still a bit worried. Because Ayla, the adopted daughter of the Woodsen family, had stirred up a ruckus and it hadn't subsided yet.

“No, that's not necessary. There are a lot of people doing it already. Sooner or later, the truth will come out. You can rest for a few days. You shouldn't go running around working all the time.”

Brian patted Jaime on the back.

“I'm alright, Mr. Clark. I think you should keep an eye on Miss Ayla Woodsen. I'm worried that she has ulterior motives.”

He was still suspicious of Ayla's true identity.

No self-respecting woman would subject to being a substitute bride unless she was up to something.

“I got it. It's not that big of a deal. If you have some spare time on your hands, watch over the TH Gang for me. If you see them making any moves, tell me right away.” Brian turned his gaze towards the window.

He was going to be busy in the coming days.

Nodding, Jaime replied, “I understand.”

“Let's have dinner together,” Brian remarked as he went out of the room.

Jaime followed him and watched him approach Ayla, hoping that she wouldn't cause Brian any trouble. She was sitting on the sofa lazily.

When she noticed that Brian had returned, she bolted upright.

“Do you...want something to drink?”

Ayla said reluctantly as she turned to the glass in front of her.

Looking at her, Brian asked, “Are you planning on tricking me again?”

He wasn't worried about Jaime's warning because this woman was neither conniving nor capable of trickery: Ayla looked back at him.

“I'm not.”

That was because she didn't want to fall into the trap that she prepared again. Should she feel lucky that she had put sleeping pills into his milk instead of laxatives?

"Why don't you drink that glass of wine first to prove that you didn't do anything to it?"

It seemed that he was taking advantage of the situation. Ayla tried to drug him last night, but he didn't end up drinking any of the milk. And now, he was asking her to show her sincerity by drinking the wine she was offering.

Despite her reluctance, she gulped it down to prove her innocence.

"Incredible. Your drinking capacity has improved drastically!"

Brian got up and walked towards Anna.

While his attention wasn't focused on her, Ayla spat out the wine in her mouth into the trash can.

There was no way she could drink that much alcohol! Besides, she didn't want to get drunk and lose face in front of Anna.

All of a sudden, she was shocked by her own thoughts.

Why did she start caring about what that woman would think of her? Ayla turned her gaze towards Anna and Brian.

They were sitting together intimately.

Perhaps they were the perfect match after all.

If it weren't for her, the two of them would've been together, wouldn't they? Brian was sitting on the sofa in the living room and reading a newspaper, while Ayla was cleaning the room on the second floor.

During the first half of the month, she had been staying with him every day in the entertainment club; eating, drinking, playing games, and gambling.

At last, she understood that this life was majorly different from hers.

However, she was still grateful because he helped her get back to school.

It was good to have both power and influence.

The school administration didn't dare to speak of her performance in the last semester, so she was able to continue her course.

On top of that, Brian even paid for Ayla's tuition.

He said that she could go back to school, but he wasn't going to allow her to stay outside for too long. She should be glad that he didn't stop her from taking up part-time jobs.

Every day, Ayla went to school, and the driver sent her back and forth. She had no objections to that setup.

It had been more than half a month since Brian went on his business trip to America. He didn't call her once, but she was used to it.

She walked alone in the campus, carrying a large pile of books. She worked part-time in the library, so her classmates were always asking her to borrow books for them at the library, and she would take the books back after they had finished reading.

At the corner of the stairs, Ayla's gaze was lowered, so she was oblivious to her surroundings. She didn't even notice the person turning from the other side, causing her to bump into the man and accidentally dropping her books to the floor.

"Sorry, I didn't see you there."

On his first day at this school, Lucas had already bumped into someone by accident.

Without even casting him a glance, Ayla picked up the books one by one.

Suddenly, the two of them reached out for the same book at the same time.

As soon as their hands touched, Ayla drew hers back.

"Here you go."

Lucas handed the book to her.

However, when he realized that it was Ayla, he was surprised.

"It's you! What a coincidence!"

He was able to recognize her, but when he saw the confusion on her face, it didn't seem like she remembered him.

Ayla took the book from him and asked, "Have we met?"

It wasn't because she had a bad memory, it was just that she couldn't think of a striking impression that this man left on her.

"Allow me to carry those books for you."

As a gentleman, Lucas couldn't let her carry all those books herself, so he offered to do it.

Looking at him, Ayla said, "Just give them to me. I need to take those books back to the library."

"It's fine. I'm on my way to the library to take a look at it. I'll take them with me," he said with a smile.

Besides, he needed to familiarize himself with the campus anyway.

Meanwhile, Ayla was still in shock. She pondered where she had met this man before.

"Why are you still standing there? Lead the way!" said Lucas.

"Alright. The library's on the third floor," she replied.

The two of them walked side by side along the stairs until they finally reached the library.

"Thank you for your help," Ayla said politely.

Smiling, Lucas replied, "You're welcome. Oh, by the way, I'll reintroduce myself to you. My name is Lucas Collins."

"Lucas Collins?"

Ayla looked at his smiling face. She finally remembered that she had seen this man on the night that Toby was married, but she didn't pay him much mind back then. It was only when she heard his name that she remembered who he was.

"Do you remember me now? We met at the wedding," Lucas reminded her.

Embarrassed, Ayla nodded.

"That's right. Hello, Mr. Collins. It's nice to meet you."

"So, can you tell me your name now?"

Lucas propped his arms onto the table and stared into her eyes.

"I'm Ayla Woodsen."

She didn't tell him her name on Toby's wedding party. Now, she would feel embarrassed if she didn't introduce herself again.

"It's a nice name. May I call you Lala?"

Lucas didn't hesitate to say her nickname endearingly.

Taking a few steps back, Ayla asked, "Mr. Collins, what brings you here?"

He touched his glasses and said with a gentle smile, "You can call me by my first name. I think you'll find out who I am soon enough. We'll meet again soon."

After saying that, he left.

At this time, the head librarian appeared and said, "Hi, Lala. A new batch of books will arrive tomorrow. You can sort these books out now and make a list for tomorrow."

The head librarian was a middle-aged woman. She had been working at this college for many years now.

Although she looked strict, Ayla thought that she was a good person.

"Yes, ma'am. I'll get them once I'm done here."

She smiled and put the books back to the shelf one by one.

For the rest of the afternoon, she worked at the library because she didn't have any classes.

By the time she was done working, it was already dark. She quickly ran downstairs because there was nobody else here during the night, and the lights weren't that bright. She was running so fast that she eventually stumbled and fell to the floor. Her palm had gotten cut due to the accident.

"Are you okay?"

In the dim light, someone approached her. Standing up, Ayla said, "I'm fine, Mr. Collins. Why are you still on campus at this time of the night?"

Outsiders weren't allowed to stay here during the night.

Noticing the concern and uneasiness in her eyes, Lucas swallowed back the words that he was about to say.

"I, uh...I got lost when I was walking around the campus."

Chapter 78: She Forgot Her Promise To Him

Regardless of how sore her hands felt, Ayla grabbed her bag, and said, "How about this, Mr. Collins? I'll help you get out of here. Outsiders are not allowed to stay in the school for too long, so I'll just tell the guard you were here to help me with the work in the library."

Thinking that her suggestion was reasonable, Lucas said, "Thanks for your help."

"It's no big deal. Anyway, let's move it!"

Ayla flashed him a beaming smile.

Perhaps she was the type of girl who would easily trust people.

She showed her Student ID to the guard and said something to him, and then she and Lucas ran out of the school quickly.

"It's okay now. You can go home quickly. I'm going home, too."

Lyle must've been waiting for a while now, so Ayla had to get home as soon as possible.

As soon as she turned around, Lucas grabbed her wrist.

"Lala, you helped me. How about I treat you to dinner?" he asked.

Glancing at her watch, she said, "I'm sorry, Mr. Collins, but it's getting late, and I have to go home."

Lucas looked at the car nearby and saw a middle-aged man step out of it.

"It seems that someone has come to pick you up, so never mind. But maybe we can just have lunch together at that restaurant tomorrow. Would that be fine with you?"

He pointed at an ordinary restaurant across the campus.

Lucas seemed that he knew her well. If he suggested a high-end restaurant, she might've declined right away.

However, a simple meal at a simple restaurant was something she couldn't refuse. When Ayla returned to the villa, she insisted on staying at her room in the servants' house. The main villa was dark, indicating that Brian hadn't come home yet.

It looked like he had become quite busy after his vacation.

Maria cooked dinner for her and asked her to eat before she went back to her room.

Meanwhile, Lucas was holding a glass of red wine in front of the French window of his apartment.

He didn't expect to run into Ayla today. It was as if they were fated to meet each other.

"What's the matter, Lucas? Are you not in the mood?"

A voluptuous woman approached, taking the glass from his hand, and drinking it down in one gulp. She then kissed him and transferred some of the wine into his mouth.

"What are you doing here?"

Lucas pulled her away from him, his eyes turning colder than before.

"I heard that you were back, so I came to see you."

This woman was close enough to him that she had a spare key to his apartment.

"Sunny, next time, don't come by without my permission."

Lucas went to the sofa and sat down.

Sunny Connell sat beside him, and asked, "Mr. Collins, are you starting to like another woman?"

Continuing his drink, he didn't respond to her question.

That woman suited his preferences well, and he did like her very much.

"But that woman isn't here tonight, so just let me have fun with you instead!"

Sunny had been with Lucas for more than five years now, so she knew him well enough. He put down his glass, pressed her against the sofa, and removed her scant clothes.

Sunny was a sexually active woman.

Her curvaceous figure was very inviting and she could make any man surrender to her wiles.

After having s*x, she put on her nightgown and leaned against Lucas.

"Aren't you going back to Thailand this time, Lucas?"

"Why are you so interested in my personal affairs?"

He had been traveling around all these years.

"Hey, I was just asking casually. There's no need to get upset," she responded.

"Just go home! I have something to do tomorrow."

This was the first time that he prohibited her from staying overnight in his apartment. Sunny did not go against his wishes.

"Judging by your reaction, it seems that you really care about this new woman. Well then, I won't bother you anymore. Remember to contact me whenever you have time."

On the table, she put down a piece of paper that had her new address written on it.

Afterwards, she changed her clothes and left.

Ayla had classes for the entirety of the morning, and she had one more class in the afternoon.

Afterwards, she must go to the library to work.

And because of how busy she was, she had forgotten that she promised to meet up with Lucas at the restaurant today.

Meanwhile, he waited for her at the restaurant for an hour, but she never showed up.

When he went to the school's cafeteria, he found Ayla sitting alone and eating rice with vegetables.

Wasn't she supposed to be Mr. Clark's woman? Her way of living was surprisingly simple.

"Lala, you'd rather eat cafeteria grub than to have lunch with me, I see. That makes me really sad!"

Lucas sat across her.

It was only when Ayla saw him that she finally remembered her promise to have lunch with him.

"Sorry, I forgot."

Embarrassed, she looked him in the eye, and said, "You probably haven't had anything to eat yet, have you? Let me buy you some food instead."

She really didn't mean to abandon him like that; she just forgot.

Lucas looked at her stir-fried vegetables and tofu soup, shaking his head.

"Do you want me to eat that? Besides, I don't think there's any more left."

"I'll treat you some other day then. I'm really sorry for what happened today," said Ayla.

"You don't have to apologize. If you want to treat me a meal, you just have to be sincere."

Ignoring the gazes of other students, Lucas led her out of the cafeteria and then they left the school together.

Ayla noticed his firm grip on her hand.

"Mr. Collins, please let me go. This isn't good."

She had had enough of rumors, and she didn't want to add another scandal to her name. However, Lucas ignored her plea and brought her to the restaurant across the school. The two of them went to the VIP room on the second floor.

"Mr. Collins, can you let me go now?"

Ayla's wrist was starting to hurt.

Letting her go, Lucas helped her to her seat.

“This restaurant looks good, but the dishes are served rather slow. Are you okay?”

His question embarrassed her.

Nodding her head, Ayla said, “I just had lunch.”

She didn’t have that much appetite anymore, so she wouldn’t be able to eat all the dishes he ordered.

It was too much for her.

Pouring her a cup of tea, Lucas said, “Have some tea first. We can eat slowly.”

Afterwards, Ayla poured him a cup of tea as well.

“I’m really sorry for what happened, Mr. Collins. To make up for it, today will be my treat.”

“It’s fine. We agreed yesterday that I’ll pay for the meal. I’m the man after all. How can I let a student like you pay the bill?”

How could Lucas allow her to pay for his meal? No matter how much money Brian gave her, he wasn’t going to let her pay. The two of them looked at the home-cooked dishes served by the waiter.

“Let’s eat! Why are you just sitting there?” Lucas picked up some food for her.

Staring at the dishes that had been served, Ayla was touched.

All of them were her favorites.

He locked his eyes on her and thought, ‘She’s not only a simple woman, but she’s also easily moved. Why would Brian keep her by his side? He must’ve made a big mistake.’

Later that day, while Ayla was busy in the library, Lucas entered.

When the head librarian saw him and was about to greet him, he cut the librarian off.

“Pretend like you don’t know me. Is Ayla inside?”

“Yes, she’s the only one working in here today.” The head librarian nodded at him.

“Don’t let anyone else in.”

Heading straight inside, Lucas closed the door behind him. The head librarian shook her head helplessly. The new vice-principal of the school was really weird.

Why was he so interested in Ayla? Meanwhile, Ayla was organizing the new books alphabetically and neatly placed them on each shelf.

All of a sudden, someone took the books from her hand.

“Why are you carrying such heavy things by yourself? Let me help you.”

Ayla was startled when she saw him.

“Mr.Collins, what are you doing here again? I’m afraid you won’t be able to get out tonight.”

“With you here, how can I not go out? Big deal! I’ll treat you to another meal!”

Lucas took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, and placed the books into the shelf for her.

“Mr.Collins, I don’t need your help.I can do it.You don’t know the proper way to organize these books.”

Ayla was more than capable to do it on her own.

Moreover, Lucas was wearing an expensive suit, so it wasn’t appropriate to ask for his assistance.

“Then you can teach me how to sort them, yes?” Lucas handed her some books.

“Where should I put these?”

Realizing that he wasn’t going to take no for an answer, Ayla gave up.

Chapter 79: Challenge His Principle Little By Little

With Lucas’ help, Ayla finished two days’ worth of work by nine PM.As she stared at the neatly organized bookshelves, a smile appeared on her face.Lucas said to her, “Isn’t it good that I helped you?”

“Indeed! Thank you very much.It’s getting late, we should go!” Ayla walked out of the school along with him.

“It’s really late.Would you like to have dinner with me?” he said, leaning against the car.She wanted to refuse him, but when she saw how exhausted he was, she didn’t have the heart to reject him this time.

“Sounds great!”

Lucas drove Ayla to a high-end western restaurant for dinner, and Lyle followed behind them.

“Would you like to have steak or pork chop?”asked Lucas.

“Either is fine,” Ayla said, smiling.

She really didn’t care either way.

In truth, the choices didn’t matter because she never liked western food.

Looking at her, Lucas said, “I’d suggest you try the spaghetti.They make an amazing spaghetti here.”

“Okay.” She nodded.

In front of him, she acted very reserved.

“Lala, has your chauffeur been following you all this time?”

Lucas glanced at the car outside, wondering what kind of relationship Ayla had with Brian.

Was it purely a sexual relationship?In that case, Brian didn’t have to keep her by his side, and she didn’t seem to be willing to accept his affection.

If Ayla willingly accepted everything that he had given her, then she wouldn't have chosen to eat cafeteria food, and she wouldn't work at the library for money "Yes. It is already late in the evening, and Lyle gets worried about me."

In reality, she just didn't want to talk about Brian.

"With a luxurious car like that, you probably don't have to eat such crude lunches in your school cafeteria. Aren't you afraid of being undernourished?" asked Lucas.

"Not at all."

Ayla began eating the spaghetti. She needed to save money.

Even though it was difficult to earn money, she still wasn't going to touch Brian's money.

It was already nearing midnight when they finally left the restaurant.

Instead of Lucas, she asked Lyle to drive her home.

Lucas, on the other hand, returned to his apartment, only to find that the door was already open and someone was sitting on his sofa.

"Dad," he said.

"Where have you been? Did you go see that woman again?"

The man had his back to him, and all the lights in the room were dimmed.

"I did."

Lucas sat in front of the man, who was his adoptive father.

"Why didn't you tell me that you were coming?"

"I can drop by whenever I want. You'd better be careful around that woman," his adoptive father warned him.

Although he had only seen Ayla's photo, he could tell that she was the kind of woman that could entice any man.

"Dad, it's none of your business."

Lucas enjoyed spending time with Ayla, and liked the feeling of being with her.

However, he had been getting closer to her these days, and if Brian really cared about her, he would soon come back.

Ayla had been sleeping soundly, but she suddenly felt something itchy. She moved her hands around, trying to get rid of the uneasiness she felt.

However, this feeling soon spread across her face.

When she felt something cold, she finally decided to open her eyes and saw that a man was on top of her.

“What...what are you doing here?” Brian’s shirt was still neat, but the two buttons of her blouse had been unbuttoned.

“Who were you with when I was away? Huh?”

Brian was aware that she had been coming home very late these days, and that she was spending time with a man.

And so, he came back to see what was happening.

“I...”

Ayla was about to deny his words, but she realized that he was right.

It was true that she had been spending a lot of time with Lucas, but they had a purely platonic relationship.

Brian didn’t want to hear any explanation at all.

What fresh hell did she invoke during his absence? After he left, Ayla went into the bathroom to wash away the traces he had left on her.

Because of his return, she got up early to prepare breakfast.

When Brian came downstairs, he smelled the aroma of coffee.

He was far too busy these days that he hardly got enough sleep.

“Mr.Clark, here’s your coffee.”

Wearing a housecoat, Ayla gave him his morning coffee and newspaper.

“Go change your clothes.I’m driving you to school today.”

Brian took a sip of his coffee, not bothering to even cast her a glance.

Soon, they were in the car, and he was driving as if he was taking his time.

Ayla figured that he was deliberately driving slowly because he wanted her to be late.

As soon as the car stopped, she got out of the car without saying goodbye and ran towards the school gate.

Brian took out his phone and called Jaime.

“Jaime, find out who’s been hanging out with Lala.”

“Yes, sir,” Jaime replied.

For an entire week, Ayla didn’t meet up with Lucas.

Apart from doing the part-time job at the library, she went home on time.

Meanwhile, Lucas was in the office on the school building's second floor, watching her enter the car, and then he went back to his seat.

"Lucas, it's late. Why don't you get off work already?"

A middle-aged man came in. He was the school's principal.

"I want to stay in the office for a little bit more in hopes of learning more about our school."

The main reason Lucas managed to be hired as the school's vice-principal was because of his talents, and his connections to Hayden.

"Let's go! Have a cup of coffee with me, would you?" said the principal.

Soon, Ayla arrived at the villa.

Since Brian hadn't returned yet, she ate by herself and went back to her room.

Maria knocked on her door, and walked in.

"Are you busy at school lately? You shouldn't overwork yourself. Remember that your health is most important."

"I'm fine. Goodnight, Maria!"

Ayla leaned against the bed.

She realized that she had been quite busy recently. Not long after Maria left her room, the sound of a car could be heard from the garage.

Ayla opened the door and said, "It seems that Mr. Clark is back. I'll go and greet him."

She noticed that he was drunk.

"How much did you drink today?" she asked.

Ayla supported him to the sofa in the living room.

"I didn't drink much."

"It's lucky for me to still stay sober after a whole night of drinking with my clients" he thought.

Judging by the foul odor of alcohol exuded by his body, she knew that he was lying. She could only imagine how much alcohol he had drunk. She made him a cup of honey water and said, "Here. Drink some of this honey water."

Brian waved her hand away.

"I don't want to."

"I don't care whether you want to or not!" said Ayla.

She then noticed that there were red lip marks on his white shirt.

He ate and drank all night, made out with a woman, and got angry at her the second he arrived at home.

In all honesty, she didn't really care if he suffered through a hangover or not. All of a sudden, Brian grabbed her and had her lean on his chest.

"Why are you so stubborn? You do have a bad temper."

They both wore thin clothes, and at this moment, their bodies looked intimate.

Chapter 80: Deliberate Arrangement Or Coincidence

Brian stared at the woman in front of him for a long moment before saying, "Are you waiting for me to come back?"

He was probing, but his steely tone was ruthless.

Ayla merely looked at him wordlessly. She wasn't waiting for him, but she knew he didn't want to hear that. Her only option was to remain silent.

"Why don't you say something?"

Brian tightened his grip on her waist, his fingers digging painfully into her flesh.

"No," she said.

She knew he would be upset, but she didn't want to lie to him.

This was how they got along with each other.

Brian cocked his head as his gaze bore into her and said, "You are getting bolder and bolder with each passing day."

Although he was drunk, he still could steadily steer her towards the second floor. His swift movement made Ayla almost believe that he was sober.

The next morning, Lucas was standing at the school gate, a light gray overcoat around his shoulders as he waited for Ayla to show up.

As Brian drove, Ayla looked out of the window, annoyed.

She wouldn't be late for class if he hadn't forced her into s*x this morning.

Luckily for her, it was wintertime and she could wear a turtleneck to cover the hickeys.

Facing her classmates would have been mortifying otherwise.

The car stopped at the school gate.

Brian's eyes found the figure waiting at the gate, but he didn't say a word to Ayla.

Instead, he drove away the moment she got out of the car. Ayla, on the other hand, hadn't noticed Lucas.

But when she turned to find him leaning leisurely against the gate, she was stunned.

“Why are you here, Mr.Collins?”

Lucas made a show of looking at his wristwatch and said, “You are late today.”

Embarrassed, Ayla lowered her eyes to the ground.

“Why are you still standing there? Come on in!”

He took her hand and led her into the school square where Ayla noticed a crowd had gathered.

She frowned.She hadn’t gotten any notice about a meeting.Heads turned and whispers broke out as they walked in, hand in hand.Ayla withdrew her hand at once and sighed.She was afraid that she would be misunderstood again.

However, she didn’t seem to hate Lucas holding her hand.

Instead, she had felt the warmth of family.She stood among the crowd, dazed.

Soon enough, the principal made the announcement that Lucas would be the new vice principal.

Ayla looked at the stage, shocked, trying to process what the principal was saying.

When it did sink in, a sense of betrayal descended upon her.

She felt cheated.Lucas saw Ayla hurry out of the gathering without meeting his eyes.She seemed frightened.

Sure enough, she avoided him for the next few days.

Lucas finally caught up with her outside the library, where he had been waiting for her for three hours.

She spotted him the moment she walked out of the library, and pursed her lips.

“Are you still angry with me, Ayla? I didn’t mean to lie to you,” Lucas said desperately, stepping in her path to stop her from leaving.

Ayla looked up at him and said, “I should call you Principal Collins, shouldn’t I?”

She had ignored him because she didn’t want him to be involved in any kind of gossip.She didn’t want her classmates talking about him behind his back.

But it seemed inevitable.

Jealous women were horrible.

They could make up random stories without any truth to them.

They had spread the rumors that Ayla was going to dump the old man who kept her his mistress, that she was hooking up with the new vice principal, and that the two stayed at school late, had dinner, and went back home together.

Ayla never explained anything to them, because she couldn’t stop them from talking.

“I don’t mind if you call me Lucas,” he said, flashing her a charming smile.

Ayla looked at his joyful smile that lit up her world like a ray of sunshine.

She was a woman who needed warmth and Brian was always cold and sneering to her.

Lucas gently touched her face and said, "Ayla, I don't care what anyone says. Maybe I want what they say to be true."

Ayla stared at him, stunned. Was she hearing correctly? How could he think that?

"How is that possible? I'm married."

The big diamond ring glinted on Ayla's finger.

Brian had forced her to wear it, saying that he didn't want other men to get close to her.

Shaking his head, Lucas took off the ring and said, "This ring is too loose for you. You are still a student. You shouldn't be wearing such a monstrosity."

He pocketed it and said, "Let's go. I've been waiting for you for three hours. Would you like to have dinner with me?"

He didn't give Ayla the chance to refuse.

Before she could say anything, he had steered her into his luxury sports car and driven away from Melody Road.

"I...I can't eat outside. I want to go back."

It took Ayla a long time to utter these words.

"No. You've been busy all day and it's now eight at night. I know you didn't eat much at noon. If you don't eat now, your body will become weak" Lucas said, his eyes never leaving the road.

Despite not being with her at all times, he seemed to know everything about hers. He not only knew that Brian had driven her to school these past couple of days, but also knew that she needed to go back on time.

But today, he was making her break this rule.

Lucas ordered a hearty meal and said, "Eat, Ayla. You shouldn't waste food."

Ayla sighed. She had no choice but to pick up her chopsticks and eat.

Brian and Anna sat at a different booth in the same restaurant. Their seats were next to the window, overlooking the entrance. They had seen Ayla walking in hand in hand with Lucas.

"Brian, you shouldn't keep such a woman by your side anymore," Anna said.

She looked up at Brian, concerned, for his face had darkened with gloom and rage.

One small action on Ayla's part had the power to change Brian's mood, and this in turn scared Anna and filled her with unease.

Brian picked up the glass in front of him and downed the drink in one gulp. He had seen that man at the school gates that day.

Did he have a purpose for doing this? He knew Lucas, the only son of the once famous Collins family.

But Brian heard nothing else about him in the past few years, except that Lucas shared a close bond with Hayden.

It was also because of Hayden that he had become the vice principal of the school.

However, was Lucas' sudden appearance a coincidence or a deliberate arrangement that Hayden had orchestrated? Brian remained silent.

Anna persisted in her questions.

"Do you just let her do whatever she wants?"

He had never let a woman do such things and this realization caused him to burst out, "Leave her alone!"

Brian was stunned at the strange feeling suddenly taking over his heart.

But he tried to remain indifferent and suppressed it, unwilling to talk. When Ayla and Lucas walked out of the restaurant together, they came upon Brian holding Anna in his arms.

This unexpectedly sent daggers into Ayla's heart.

Brian didn't say a word.

Instead, he merely walked away, Anna plastered to his side.

Anna, however, turned to look at Ayla, sneering disdainfully at her.

Noticing Ayla's dazedness, Lucas asked, "What's wrong, Ayla? Do you know that man?"

"No, I don't," Ayla said, shaking her head.

It didn't matter if she knew him or not.

She should have known that Brian still maintained intimate relationships with many women.

How could she expect him to belong only to her? But the more important question was: why was she so heartbroken", Ayla didn't know how she went back to the villa.

Lucas had dropped her but she couldn't remember the drive back home. Maria hurried out as she spotted Ayla coming in.

"You're back, Ayla. Mr. Clark is back too. He seemed to become very angry when he realized you hadn't returned yet." Ayla nodded.

"I see. I'll go in and see him."

She had thought that he would spend the night with Anna and would return only tomorrow. Now that she knew he was in the villa, she didn't know how to face him. But she couldn't escape it either. Could she?