This Time.	I Will Get My	v Divorce. Mr	Chapter 254

With that in mind, Toby fished out his phone and called Sonia's number only to hear a cold automated voice answer in her stead, monotonously informing him that her phone had been switched off.
Tom heard it as well and cleared his throat. "Well, that shouldn't stop you, President Fuller. Why don't you look for her and explain things to her in person?"
Toby's eyes glimmered at this, and for a brief second, he almost took Tom's advice.
But the next moment, he shook his head and said, "No. I want to go over to the Gray Residence and personally expose Tina for putting on an act all these years."
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"Yes, sir. I'll bring the car around immediately," Tom said with renewed fervor as he adjusted his glasses and left to get the car ready.
Meanwhile, Toby clicked into his phone gallery and found the two pictures of Sonia that the boutique assistant had taken previously. His eyes were dark with a gentle longing as he muttered to himself, "Six years we were married. Why didn't you ever tell me that you were my pen pal?"
If she had only given him some kind of clue that would make him realize she was Maple, then he never would have treated her the way he had!

He was pulled from his thoughts when his phone vibrated with a new message.

He glanced at his screen and saw that Tom had sent him a text, which read, 'President Fuller, I've brought the car around for you. I'll be waiting at the main entrance of the company.'

Toby locked his phone without replying and shoved it into his pocket, then marched out of the office.

On the way to the Gray Residence, the sky seemed to break with a sudden torrential downpour, which was swiftly followed by fog that blurred the road ahead.

Tom was carefully maneuvering the car as he mumbled, "President Fuller, have you noticed how odd the weather has been for the past few days? The forecast said that it would be sunny, but the rain has proved relentless nowadays, not to mention the thunderstorm last night. Apparently, floods and earthquakes have been happening in certain regions as well."

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"I don't see what's odd about that. Those things happen every year," Toby remarked plainly as he stared at Sonia's photo, his thumb caressing her face over the phone screen.

Tom chuckled dryly. "I was only making an observation, but you're right to say that there isn't anything odd about it at all."

Hearing this, Toby ignored him, and he was about to drown in his own thoughts when he saw a figure standing on the road ahead.

The figure was dressed entirely in white, and he was holding up a black umbrella as he stood in the middle of the road, making no effort to dodge Toby's car whatsoever.

Tom saw this, too, and though he honked several times to signal the person to move away, it was to no avail.

"What's wrong with him?" Tom frowned and grumbled sullenly, "Does he have a death wish or something? Why the hell is he standing in the middle of the road instead of dodging oncoming cars?"

"Stop the car!" Toby barked in a low voice. Judging from the way he refuses to budge, chances are he's waiting for us.

The car screeched to an abrupt halt. Tom and Toby leaned forward due to the inertia, thereafter falling backward into their seats once more.

Tom turned to glance at Toby and asked hastily, "Are you alright, President Fuller?"

"I'm perfectly fine!" Toby glowered at the unmoving figure ahead and snapped irritably. Then, pinching the space between his brows, he ordered imperiously, "Unlock the door."

Incredulous, Tom demanded with wide eyes, "Are you getting out of the car?"

Presently, they were on one of the quieter streets of Eastbourne. There were hardly any cars that passed by the area, and as of now, the entire stretch of road was completely empty save for their car and the mysterious figure ahead.

Where the hell did that person come from? More to the point, why is he blocking our way? There's no telling if he's good or bad, so it's too dangerous for President Fuller to get out of the car now! With that in mind, Tom turned to cast Toby a concerned look before advising solemnly, "President Fuller, I don't think you should be getting out of the car. We don't even know the guy. What if he turns out to be some wicked psychopath or something?"

"Grab the pistol and wait for me in the car. You can fire shots the moment something goes awry," Toby instructed ominously with narrowed eyes. He was going to get down from this car no matter what.

I'm going to see for myself what this man is up to!

Tom knew that there was no dissuading Toby when he had already made up his mind. Sighing, he opened up the storage compartment in the car and carefully drew out a pistol, then assembled its parts while nodding as he said, "Roger that, sir. I'll keep an eye on him."

Toby hummed curtly in response and opened the car door, then took out an umbrella from the side before walking toward the middle of the road. He stopped in front of the man, who slowly lifted the edge of the black umbrella to reveal an extraordinarily handsome face.

However, the impact of beholding such a beautifully-chiseled face was lost on Toby, who remained expressionless. As far as he was concerned, the man before him did not boast incredible good looks, and he demanded icily, "Who are you, and what the hell do you want?"

"You should go back the way you came," the mysterious man said with an equally cold and distant voice.

Toby narrowed his eyes suspiciously. "What are you talking about?"

The man sighed like he was already growing tired of their exchange. "Do you really have to go and expose Tina for pretending to be Maple? Can't you just keep going on like this? It's not too bad, right?"

Upon hearing this, Toby widened his eyes and clenched his fists, turning more hostile by the second. "How do you know what I'm about to do?"

The man sighed again. "Just turn the car around and pretend you never found out about Tina's lies."

"Why the hell should I?" Toby was boiling with rage, and the fire in his eyes leaped wildly as he went on to say, "She lied to me for six whole years, and now you want me to just play along with her deception? You're so protective of her. Could you be the one behind that mysterious force that has been manipulating me all this while?"

"I'm not trying to protect her; I'm just keeping a promise to someone really important to me. That person is irrevocably in love with Tina, which leaves me no choice but to manipulate your thoughts," the man explained with a somewhat tired shake of his head.

"So it is you!" Toby had only been guessing, but now that the truth had revealed itself, he was seized with insurmountable rage. He carelessly threw the umbrella aside and reached out to grab the man by his shirt collar.

Meanwhile, the moment Tom saw how things had escalated, he understood immediately that the man in white was no friendly entity.

He quickly poked his head out of the open car door and aimed the gun at the man's head, ready to fire a deadly shot as soon as the man made to hurt Toby.

Outside, Toby no longer looked like his usual put-together self after the rain soaked him to the bone.

However, he couldn't care less about his appearance and merely stared at the man with red-rimmed eyes as he hissed insidiously, "You've been controlling my every thought because of this special person of yours." He spat out a bitter, humorless chuckle. "How dare you? How dare you manipulate me to achieve your own purposes? You took away my rights to pour my heart out to my one true love and let me become Tina's puppet! I didn't get to have a say over my own thoughts and feelings!"

The man paid no mind to the hand that was grabbing his shirt collar, and he appeared unfazed by Toby's harsh gesture and pointed accusation. He looked as cold as he had been earlier—almost robotic.

"I did it because Tina loves you, and the person most important to me is in love with her. He wants her to be happy," the man explained monotonously.

Toby scoffed. "And just because of that, you decided to help him out?"

The man nodded once in affirmation. "That's right."

The next second, Toby's fist hurled forward in a brutal attack as he shouted angrily, "So all because someone important to you is in love with Tina, you decided to manipulate me—a person that has absolutely nothing to do with you—into loving Tina? What kind of bullsh\*t reason is that?"

The man frowned slightly and stepped to the side, easily dodging the oncoming punch. Judging from the way he avoided Toby's punches without losing his breath, it wasn't hard to tell that he dabbled extensively in martial arts.

"I admit that what we did was wrong, but everyone has their dark sides, and I don't mind caving into mine by manipulating and sacrificing everyone if it could make him happy." The man's pale gray orbs were fixed on Toby as he added steadily, "Besides, what's so bad about loving Tina? Love is but a chemical reaction, after all. Who you love doesn't matter at all."

"It doesn't matter?" Toby was disgusted by this, and his lips curled into a spiteful smirk as he countered, "So, do you think it's a chemical reaction that you care so deeply about that special person of yours? If that's the case, he shouldn't matter to you at all, am I right?"

The question stumped the man, whose eyes widened in surprise.

Toby, on the other hand, had no interest in what the man might be thinking as he ordered in a thunderous voice, "I want you to stop controlling me right now!"