

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 461

Joseph had been staying in the villa these few days. So, when he saw the luggage in my hand, he immediately called Ashton.

Then, he halted me in my tracks and gave me a perplexed look. "Mrs. Fuller, are you going somewhere? Why don't I give you a ride?"

I shook my head. Smiling faintly, I said, "It's alright. I've already called a cab. It'll arrive soon."

Indeed, the car arrived soon after.

Sally probably never expected me to leave so hastily. So, when she saw the car, she panicked and turned pale. Tugging on my hand, she hurriedly said, "Scarlett, no. You don't need to leave so soon. I..."

"What Ms. Fuller said was true. I should have known better." I cut her off. With that, I got into the cab.

Joseph was puzzled, but he could not stop me by force. In the end, he hopped into his car and followed me.

Previously, John had given me a house in K City. I thought I would never use it, so I had never gone there. Now that I was in need of a place to stay, I hailed a cab and headed there.

The house was located some distance away from the city center. The place was spacious with a stylish interior design. However, because it had been unoccupied for quite a number of years, it inevitably had a musty smell.

I did not expect the first person to visit my new place would be Marcus. When I saw him, my expression immediately turned cold.

I looked at him in disdain and spoke in an irritated tone. "Why are you here?"

He seemed to be happy to see me here. Glancing at the room behind me, he nodded approvingly. "Do you feel comfortable living here?"

I pursed my lips and ignored his question. "What do you want?"

He was completely unaffected by my unfriendliness. He grinned and asked, "May I come in?"

I pondered for a while before stepping aside. He came in and sat on the sofa in my living room. I did not serve anything to him, not even a glass of water. If it wasn't for our friendship in the past, I wouldn't even let him in. After our last encounter, the relationship between us is no longer the same.

"Four years ago, after we parted ways in M Country, I came back not long after. After knowing that you'd left the Fuller family, I looked for you everywhere. I always wondered if you're fine and where you'd gone. Every year, I wander in various cities to search for you. But at the same time, I was afraid of meeting you." He spoke calmly and gently, unlike the way he had talked that day. "Scarlett, you have no idea how much I missed you."

If we reunited four years ago, I would calmly ask him how the accident happened, why did he go to M Country, and why didn't he come back after he survived the accident. But I'm no longer interested to know any of the answers. Now, I just want him to leave.

I took a deep breath and said, "I don't know your purpose in pestering me. But if you're planning to use me to join hands with the Moore family, I'd like to tell you that it's not going to work. Four years ago, I didn't acknowledge them as my family. What makes you think that I'd return to them now? As for the Stovall family, I think John hates you as much as Ashton despises you. As such, he is even less likely to cooperate with you. What I want to say is that bothering me would not bring any benefit to you."

Since he's a businessman, I shall analyze the benefits for him.

Silence filled the living room momentarily. He then reached out to take my wrist before pressing my palm onto his abdomen. What I touched was his scar. "Four years ago, I brought you back to Clermont from the hospital. You were mentally unstable after you lost your child. And you would often sit on the balcony alone, staring blankly into the distance. If there was no one around you, you'd try to jump out of the window. Afraid that you'd hurt yourself, I locked all the windows in the villa. Later on, you would wake up in the middle of the night to look for a knife and cut yourself. One time, you almost hurt yourself. I went to grab the knife in your hand and let you stab it into my body. The moment you saw my blood, you fell unconscious for several days."

He was as cool as a cucumber, but I felt a sudden wrenching pain in my heart. It had been so long that I have almost forgotten that period of time.

He continued, "After you woke up, I asked the housekeeper to store away all the knives and sharp tools in the house. I thought that without these things, you couldn't hurt yourself anymore. I never expected that you would bang your head against the wall to kill yourself. In order to make sure you're safe, I forced myself to stay awake so I could watch over you every night. I was afraid of losing you."

people would always choose to forget the most painful moments in their life. For me, that period of time was the most torturous moment of my life that I would choose to forget.

As he recalled the moments that we shared, my heart ached terribly. But I could not bring myself to speak a word to interrupt him.

I withdrew my hand and wanted to say thank you to him, but it sounded too shallow at this moment. So, I chose to remain silent.

He was still smiling, but there was now a hint of hostility in the way he was looking at me. "You got better day by day after that. And I naively thought that you would not have any hope in your relationship with Ashton again. Scarlett, I know you don't love me. But so what? We have a long time to bring love and joy into our relationship. However, you still choose to be with him in the end."

He then laughed sarcastically and mocked, "Scarlett, you never learn your lesson, do you?"

I had nothing to refute him. Pursing my lips, I fell silent.

He scoffed. "I didn't want to hurt you. But Scarlett, do you know how I got through the nights after my parents passed away? Every night, my parents would appear in my dreams. My mother would yell at me, saying that she was cold while my father would tell me that he was lonely. Then, I'd be wide awake for the rest of the night, haunted by those dreams. How I wish you're by my side to accompany me like how I'd taken care of you back then. But every time I opened my eyes after the nightmares, there's no one else but me in my lonely, hollow room."

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As Marcus looked at me, I could see his expression darkening. "Do you know how it feels to struggle alone in the darkness?"

I pursed my lips. I wanted to apologize but the words were stuck in my throat.

"Scarlett, I used to love you. But now, I hate you as much as I loved you in the past."

I couldn't believe these words would come out of Marcus' mouth. Stunned, I was lost in my thoughts for a long while.

When I was back in high school, I learned about the law of conservation of energy in physics. Later, I learned that in political materialism, it was also believed that conservation was everything.

Back when we were young and naive, we thought that everything we learned in school was purely about astronomical geography. Thinking it over then, I finally came to the realization that we had actually learned life lessons throughout those years without even noticing it.

There was no such thing as unconditional love in this world. It was impossible for love to exist without attached conditions. In fact, love was all about to give and take. The relationship between two people was designed to be an exchange process. If you enjoyed receiving all the love and affection from your partners without making any effort to return back, the uneasy feeling in your heart would never fade away.

I would probably never be able to face Marcus in my lifetime.

He's right. He was the one who got me out of hell. So why didn't I reach out my hand when he was in hell?

After he left, I stayed up all night sitting in the living room. I was in no position to judge Marcus. Every step he took was him trying to find peace in his heart.

September in K City was neither too cold nor too hot, but the cool breeze in the middle of the night was enough to keep people awake.

It was a sleepless night for me.

After I had left Ashton's side, it didn't take him long to show up. It wasn't something beyond my expectation. Hence, I wasn't surprised at all.

I didn't have to worry about Summer as the housekeeper and driver were responsible for taking care of her.

Ashton came at seven o'clock in the morning while I was still sitting on the sofa. I had no idea how long I had been sitting there, but it was probably a few hours since my body felt stiff and numb.

I opened the door when I heard the doorbell rang. It had only been a night since Ashton and I last saw each other. As our eyes met, I noticed that there was stubble on his chin. He looked haggard as if he had gone through the vicissitudes of life.

"Can I come in?" He sounded distressed.

I nodded and made way for him.

He looked at me with a gentle gaze. "I'm sorry."

I smiled faintly. "I'm not mad." After all, Sally was the elder in the Fuller family. There was nothing much he could do.

He pulled me into his arms, enveloping me in the tobacco smell on his body. "It won't happen again."

It sounded like a promise, as well as an assurance.

I hummed faintly in response. At that moment, I felt a sense of peace and relief to be able to lean on him.

I began to feel sleepy. I closed my eyes and asked, "If you're not busy today, can you stay with me for a while?"

He answered with a slightly indulgent smile, "I'm not busy. We have all the time in the world."

I knew that there was no way he wouldn't be busy. After all, Marcus had the intention of targeting Fuller Corporation. He was dying to see the downfall of Fuller Corporation. Hence, he would not miss out on any opportunity to pick on Ashton.

Even though I knew that he was lying, I simply pursed my lips and smiled faintly. It didn't matter. Life was a long journey. At some point in our life, we just had to live for ourselves, even if it was just for a few days.

It was actually quite a good option if we could just live our lives in peace and serenity like that.

By the time I woke up, night had already fallen. Unknowingly, I had slept for the whole day.

Ashton was leaning on me. He chuckled softly when he noticed I was awake. "What were you dreaming of?"

"I dreamt of a beautiful sea of flowers." I dreamed quite often recently. In my dream, Macy, Grandma, and Grandpa were there, as well as my child who had grown up.

Noticing how absent-minded I looked, he reached out and pulled me into his arms. "Initially, I kept the villa just for you. If it triggers some bad memories, how about we move to a new one?"

I was amused. "How bold of you. Aren't you afraid of being captured by the paparazzi and being branded as a spendthrift?"

He rested his chin on my cheek, his stubble prickling me. "I don't mind being the subject of some gossip for you."

I stopped teasing him and simply smiled in response. Then, I got up from bed. There was nothing much in the house since I had just moved in.

Hence, I decided to order a takeout.

In the living room, he was working on his laptop, while I was studying some documents. The atmosphere was peaceful and harmonious.

Not long after, Joseph sent Summer over and he brought some daily necessities as well.

While the two of them were talking about work in the study, Summer was leaning in my arms. She raised her head and looked at me. "Mommy, I think I got myself into trouble today!"

I was shocked for a moment before I put down the book in my hand and looked at her. I asked in a gentle tone, "What happened?"

Looking like she was on the verge of tears, she pursed her lips and said. "I accidentally pushed a kid down the slide. I didn't mean it! It's just that he had been sitting there for a long time, and many other kids were waiting to play on the slide. So, I nudged him gently. I never thought he would lose his balance and fell down."

"How is he now? Did someone send him to the hospital?"

She nodded. "Mr. Campbell sent him to the hospital. He gave them a lot of money as well. Mommy, I know I was wrong."

"It's not right to hurt someone and we should always apologize for our mistake. But Summer, I knew you meant well, it's just that the way you handled the situation was wrong. Have you thought about how you are going to deal with the situation if the same situation were to happen again in the future?" Since it had already happened, there was no point in me to keep blaming her. What I could do was to let her know that we must take responsibility for our actions.

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Summer lowered her eyes and thought about it seriously. After a while, she answered, "I will tell him that he shouldn't sit there and block other people's way. We must play together with the other kids. Also, I shouldn't push him."

She paused for a while and asked, "Mommy, how much do I owe Mr. Campbell? Is it a lot?"

From Summer's point of view, the money that Joseph had spent didn't belong to her. Subconsciously, she probably doesn't treat Ashton as her family.

I pondered about it for a while and said, "I will pay Mr. Campbell back. But Summer, remember this, as you grow older, so will I. There will come a day where you have to learn how to deal with your problem wisely. Okay?"

She nodded. I could tell she was feeling rather guilty for hurting people as she was leaning in my arms silently.

By the time Ashton and Joseph came out, Summer had already fallen asleep. Joseph greeted me before leaving.

Seeing that she was asleep, Ashton wanted to carry her back to the bedroom. However, the moment he touched her, Summer woke up.

Perhaps she was still feeling groggy, Summer didn't notice Ashton right away and she said, "Mommy, I saw Uncle John at the hospital today. He was with a lady."

I was stunned for a second. I couldn't help but look at her. "Do you know what they are doing at the hospital?"

After blinking a few times, Summer finally saw that it was Ashton who was carrying her. She couldn't help but feel shocked. She then greeted, "Mr. Fuller."

Ashton nodded. Then, he carried her back to the sofa and gestured for her to carry on answering my question.

Summer thought about it for a moment and said, "Uncle John said he brought the lady to see the baby. There's a baby in her tummy!"

I suddenly recalled John's condition in R Province last time, I already had some guesses by then. However, who was the lady?

It was getting dark. Summer fell asleep soon after she had her dinner. I couldn't sleep as I had been sleeping a bit too much during the day.

Ashton received a call. It seemed that something urgent had come up at Fuller Corporation. Thus, he had to rush over to handle it.

After saying goodbye, he left.

The following day, after knowing that she had been blacklisted by Fuller Media, Nancy Goldstein was on her way to the top of Fuller Corporation's building to attempt suicide. She even made up false stories about the past between me and Ashton and spread them to the media.

Thanks to her, Ashton and I had turned from being a divorced couple after years of marriage to me being an easy-going sl*t who wouldn't stop pestering Ashton for the sake of money.

Everything from my past four years ago were all revealed as well.

The media wouldn't say no to any news related to Ashton. According to Nancy's statement, there were many versions of what had happened between Ashton and me, and it was all a mess.

I didn't care about those news at the beginning, but I had neglected Summer.

Whenever Ashton and I picked Summer up from school, we would always keep a low profile. Nonetheless, it was inevitable that we would catch the attention of other people eventually.

Kids were pure beings by nature. However, it was unavoidable that they would imitate whatever they saw or hear from the adults.

Summer was already in the hospital when I received the call.

It wasn't until I got to the hospital that I found out Summer was upset because someone had been bad-mouthing me. Therefore, she got into a fight with them.

Since it was a brawl between kids, it was not a serious fight. They were simply pushing each other when they ended up hurting themselves accidentally.

There was gauze wrapped around Summer's forehead. She looked lost as tears streamed down her face. The moment she saw me, she sobbed while hugging me tightly. "Mommy, they are all bad people. I don't want to go to school. They are all bad people."

We had underestimated the influence of an artist, as well as how terrible the consequences the rumors could bring.

I didn't know how to make Summer feel better besides holding her in my arms. My heart ached to see the little girl crying like that.

Four years ago, I was filled with resentment. In the end, my parents were the ones who got hurt. Hence, I left K City and went to R Province.

Now that I was back after a long time, I couldn't believe that my kid ended up being dragged into this mess. If I continued doing nothing, I would probably bring more harm to Summer.

I was holding Summer in the cab while calling Marcus.

When he picked up the call, I could tell that he was busy by the sounds of his computer clacking away from the other side of the line. Despite that, he answered in a gentle tone, "Have you eaten?"

"Let's meet up," I said while heading to White Corporation.

There was silence on the other end for a few seconds. Then, he answered, "Sure."

The car stopped outside White Corporation's building. Summer had long since fallen asleep after crying on my shoulder.

I was at the large waiting area of White Corporation. There were two good-looking receptionists at the front desk.

I didn't approach them as I knew Marcus well. He would come down himself.

About five minutes later, he came downstairs.

He knitted his brows when he saw Summer sleeping. He reached out to carry Summer but I avoided him. "Let's talk somewhere else. Or should we just stay here and talk?" His presence had already caught the eyes of many people at the company.

He frowned. "Let's go to my office. There's a lounge there. Summer can have a rest on the bed."

I nodded in agreement. I wasn't willing to let him hold Summer. I followed him upstairs by using his personal elevator.

I hadn't been here for almost four years. White Corporation seemed to be twice larger than before. Even the president's office had been upgraded to a two-story office. It looked atmospheric and luxurious.

After laying Summer down on the bed, I took a seat in the conference room. He instructed his secretary to pour me a cup of tea. Since it was my first time to be there, the secretary couldn't help but take a few more glances at me. I could imagine people were trying to find out everything about me at the moment.

"Would you like something to eat later?" It seemed like he didn't care about why I was there. Instead, he was more concerned about what I wanted to eat.

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I pursed my lips and ignored his question. "I would willingly accept if you want to take revenge against me, or even humiliate me. But, Marcus, the kid is innocent. I only have one purpose for coming back to K City. All I want is a bright future for Summer. She is just a kid, and she doesn't know anything at all. However, you're an adult. You have to understand that you shouldn't hurt innocent people even if you have some evil thoughts in mind, especially a kid."

He furrowed his brows and was baffled. He was clueless about what I had just told him. "Revenge? Humiliate you? Why would I do that?"

I shrugged. "The only reason I can think of is that you hate me. I understand that, and I'm willing to accept it. But the kid is innocent. I don't want to drag her into this mess."

After a moment of silence, he raised his eyes to look at me. "You think that I was the mastermind behind all these? You think I was the one who held the press conference when Nancy attempted suicide?"

"Isn't that so?" There weren't many people around me. There was nobody else who had the ability to persuade Nancy to give up her own future by framing me. I couldn't think of anybody else, except for him.

Marcus sneered abruptly in disdain. "Scarlett, what kind of person am I to you? It seems like I am just a joke to you. How ridiculous! Since when have I become such a despicable person?"

"It's not despicable. As a businessman, you are not short of money. People spend half of their lifetime, greedily chasing for something they couldn't get. I am willing to accept your grievances and resentments. Besides, it was obvious that you are using Sally to chase me out of the Fuller family. That's why you've been keeping Sally with you for years. Honestly, you don't have to do that. Even if I couldn't stay at the Fullers, Ashton and I can still be together somewhere else. Ashton may respect Sally since she was his aunt, but there's a limit to a man's patience. If you crossed the line, we both know what he would do."

Marcus snickered. His laughter was rather cold and mocking. He fixed me with a dark and piercing stare. "Scarlett, you are way smarter than you were four years ago."

I pursed my lips. I didn't take his words as a compliment.

He paused for a moment before continuing with his legs crossed, "It's true that I've given Sally a hint. My intention was simple. I don't want you to live together with Ashton because I'm jealous. As for what happened to Nancy, I'm not that kind of unethical person to cross someone's limits as you thought. This has nothing to do with me. Believe it or not, that's all I have to say. I understand how much Summer means to you. So, I won't do anything to hurt her. Rather, I will protect Summer. I don't want you to be upset and heartbroken. Scarlett, I love you. I was in love with you four years ago, and I still love you now. As for Nancy, I will take care of it. As long as you agree to separate from Ashton, trust me, your life would be better. I will even pave the way for Summer's future."

I frowned. His words sounded off to me. I answered indifferently, "There's no need..."

"Ms. Alvarado, you're here!" There was a voice coming from outside the door.

The voice interrupted me.

It's Camelia!

I was stunned for a moment, and my heart dropped. I turned around and saw Camelia with her blonde hair. She was standing at the door and I had no idea when she had come in.

She looked different compared to the first time I met her. She had gained some weight now and her tummy was slightly swollen. It seemed like she was pregnant. She pulled up her blonde hair into a ponytail and stared at me with her blue eyes in surprise. She was at a loss and didn't know what to do.

Subconsciously, I got up and greeted, "Camelia."

She looked at me in disbelief and tears started to well up in her eyes. "You and Marc know each other?"

She looked at Marcus. Her voice became hoarse, "So, the room that you have been stopping me from going in was hers? She is the woman that you're willing to protect with your life? The name that you've been calling out in the middle of the night is hers? Is she the reason why you couldn't return to your senses every time you're woken up by your nightmare?"

Marcus furrowed his brows with a displeased look on his face. "Who let you in?" His voice was filled with displeasure and disdain.

Camelia smiled, but her eyes were overflowing with tears of grief. "You want me to get lost? You want me to leave, so you can live happily ever after with her?"

I pursed my lips and heard some noise coming from the lounge. Summer might have been awoken by their voices.

I wasn't planning to explain. I stood up and looked at Camelia. "I'm sorry to be here. I shouldn't have come. I have my own family and kid, and there is someone that I love."

As soon as I finished speaking, I turned around and headed to the lounge. Summer was indeed awake. She got down from the bed with her fluffy hair looking a bit messy.

When she saw me, Summer ran toward me immediately before she could even steady herself. "Mommy, did you quarrel with someone because of me?"

Stunned, I shook my head as I scooped her into my arms. "No, Summer. I didn't. It has nothing to do with you. It's something else that I need to deal with as an adult."

Summer seemed to be blaming herself. She buried her head into my chest and mumbled, "Mommy, did I cause you a lot of trouble?"

I shook my head once again. It killed me to see her like that. I started feeling lost. The purpose of me bringing Summer back to K City was to give her a bright future. But things didn't go as planned. Did I choose the wrong path?

After coming out from the lounge, Camelia was obviously not in a good mood. The way she stared at me was not the same as four years ago.

“Since you already have your own family and child, why are you still in his life? You have no idea that your presence has shattered my happily ever after, do you?”

Marcus was displeased. He gave Camelia a cold-eyed stare. “Enough! You’re in White Corporation. This is not a place for you to cause troubles.”

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Camelia sneered. “I’m causing trouble? I didn’t know you were so concerned about your reputation. Marcus, you were the one who courted me. You even told me you want to get engaged with me. I’ve been longing for love and marriage for four years. But my hopes were all dashed. You ruined my life! I had the most terrible experience with you. And now, you find me annoying because I keep pestering you?”

Summer was hiding behind me as she was a little afraid to see Camelia screaming.

Seeing that I had said what I had to say, there was no point in me staying there anymore.

I left with Summer, not wanting to get involved in their drama.

We headed back to the residence. Just as I reached the entrance, I heard the sound of someone coughing from the stairs.

It sounded familiar to me.

Summer could recognize the sound right away. She let out a smile immediately. “Mommy, it’s Mr. Fuller!”

Then, she let go of me and ran toward the stairs.

I followed behind her and caught Ashton stubbing out the cigarettes in his hand. He looked pale and haggard.

Summer was quick to wrap her arms around his legs as she greeted him.

He carried Summer up and noticed the wound on her forehead. Ashton's gaze darkened instantly. "Did something happen in school?"

Before I could say anything, Summer answered right away, "They were talking bad about Mommy. So, I got into a fight with them."

Ashton pursed his lips as an icy gaze flashed across his dark eyes. His voice was deep and magnetic when he said, "Good girl, Summer. Next time, you can fight but you can't hurt yourself, understand? You must learn how to protect yourself."

Summer nodded. She probably thought that Ashton was right. Besides, he didn't blame her for getting into a fight. Hence, she answered cheerfully, "Got it! I'll make sure to protect myself if I got into a fight in the future."

I was speechless.

I couldn't help but look at Ashton, "I've never seen anyone who teaches their daughter to fight."

He raised his eyebrows. "Sometimes, fists hurt more than words. Summer is turning five years old soon. It's time for her to learn martial arts. I'll get Joseph to get in touch with some instructors."

I pursed my lips and remained silent. For some reason, I thought what he said made sense.

Back in the house, Ashton was accompanying Summer while I was busy preparing a meal. None of us brought up the topic about Nancy.

After we finished eating, and Summer had fallen asleep, Ashton looked at me intently before pulling me into his arms.

He asked in a hoarse voice, "Where have you been?"

I leaned into his arms, allowing him to hold me tight. I was silent for a moment before answering his question. "I went to look for Marcus at White Corporation."

His body went slightly stiff upon hearing my words. He then asked again with his deep voice, "Why are you looking for him?"

"Just to have a little chat." I didn't know how I should tell him. I couldn't find the appropriate words to say. Hence, I chose to avoid it.

He didn't try to force me. He fell silent for a moment and said, "No matter where you're going, remember to bring your phone with you in the future. Also, make sure I can reach you by phone."

I froze for a second. I suddenly realized that my phone was out of battery during the day. Therefore, it must have switched off by itself after I reached White Corporation.

I looked up and responded with a faint smile. "Alright!"

He wrapped his arms around me. Looking solemn, he said, "I will deal with Nancy. Scarlett, no matter what others tell you, you must remember that I'm your husband. I am the father of your kid."

Seeing how stern and serious he was all of a sudden, I couldn't help but feel shocked. "To be honest, I don't care about what other people say. I'm just worried about Summer. She still has to go to school. Besides, she is quite sensitive. I'm afraid that she will be affected by those nonsense in school."

He buried his face into my neck, his tone was laced with guilt as he uttered, "I won't let something like this happen again."

I smiled faintly. He was a man who was standing at the pinnacle of success. He had always been high-profile. If he could accept the compliments and admiration from people, he should also learn to deal with rumors and all the criticisms. It was natural and inevitable.

The news about Nancy was soon covered up by other news releases within a few days. It was all water under the bridge. After all, everyone had their own lives to live. Nobody would waste too much of their time on rumors about someone else.

It was mid-September. Ashton redecorated the villa in order to let Summer grow up in a better environment. He even transferred her to another school.

I found out later that the initial preschool that Summer went to had been shut down by the Education Ministry. As for what the reason was, I had no idea.

However, those matters had nothing to do with me.

On the weekend, Ashton got Joseph to help me out with moving. Summer's stuff had already been moved.

As for myself, there was nothing much for me to pack. I was basically just changing a place to live. It was almost of no difference to me.

We finished moving in the evening. Then, I received a call from Ashton. His tone was gentle as he said, "Joseph will send some ingredients over later. You might need to prepare some dishes."

I responded in acknowledgment. Ashton had dismissed the housekeeper due to Sally's surprise visit last time.

Now, only part-time cleaners would come over during weekdays to tidy things up. They would only cook occasionally. Both Ashton and I knew how to cook. So, we would do the cooking on our own if we got the time. Days like these were rather carefree.

He paused for a short while and continued, "No, scratch that, you might need to prepare more dishes. I'm still in a meeting. So I'll get Joseph to help you. There'll be guests joining us for dinner tonight."

Surprised, I asked, "Is it someone I know?"

He hummed a response, "Yes. We're family. Some simple home-cooked meals will be fine."

After hanging up the phone, I started getting confused and curious. I had just moved into a new place. Who would come over to have a meal?

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Joseph delivered several dishes over and saw me while I was arranging the books in the living room. As he moved, he asked, "Are you preparing for the exam, Mrs. Fuller?"

I nodded. "I've wanted to take the exam for a while but had to postpone it after everything that's happened. Now that I finally have the time to, I might as well do it."

He smiled. "That's good. It's nice to be able to do the things you like."

It was rare to hear a typically aloof man like Joseph uttering such words.

When Ashton returned with Summer, I was just about to cook after having washed the vegetables.

Noticing me in the kitchen, his slender figure came up to me from behind and held onto me clingily. "Each time I see you in the kitchen, I think I'm the world's luckiest man."

I couldn't help but laugh. "Don't be silly. Who's coming over later?"

"John and his fiancée, who's also your future sister-in-law," he said with a smirk, leaning down to kiss me on the lips when he caught me giving him a sidelong glance.

I swerved in time to avoid it, chiding, "Stop it. Joseph and Summer are around."

"Just five seconds," he said in a husky voice.

But it was never only five seconds with him. Had it not been for the vegetables in the frying pan, it would've taken several more five seconds than one hand could count.

Just as I was done cooking, the sound of a car engine sounded from the outside. Hearing that, Summer dashed energetically toward it.

When she saw John get off the car, she jumped on him without any consideration and shouted in excitement, "Uncle John!"

He walked over to the passenger side and pulled open the car door with Summer in his embrace.

I never imagined that the woman who would appear in sight was Hannah Anne.

Having only met her a few times four years ago, it seemed like she hadn't changed much. She was as gentle and elegant as she used to be, albeit instead of the tight-fitting dress she used to love, she now wore a loose-fitting one.

Well, I guess she's not a stranger.

She turned toward me and smiled faintly. "Ms. Stovall, it's been a while."

I returned to my senses and approached her, taking her hand in mine. "It's been a while indeed. The dishes are ready. Let's eat first."

As the four of us took our seats, John glanced at Ashton for a bit before resting his gaze on me. "If you're used to living in the apartment in the city center, then don't shift anymore. A house shouldn't be left vacated for too long anyway."

I froze. It was obvious he was indirectly telling me not to live with Ashton.

Ashton naturally understood as well, knitting his brows slightly as he placed a slice of meat onto my plate. He smiled faintly. "Eat more. You seem to have lost weight these days."

It was meant to imply that I had lost weight from living alone with no one to care for me.

I pursed my lips silently. I had originally thought the two of them could have a meal in peace. It seemed that was merely my wishful thinking.

Needless to say, Summer was unable to understand the adults' conversation. Perhaps children tend to gravitate toward expectant women as she had been chatting with Hannah.

At times, she could be particularly precocious. She tugged at Hannah and said softly, "Ms. Anne, do I have to call you Aunt Hannah in the future?"

As soon as she said so, it drew John's attention away from me. He looked at Summer and said, "Be good, Summer. Let me know what you want to eat. Don't bother Ms. Anne too much."

Persistent, Summer tilted her head and asked, "Uncle John, Mommy says once you get married, I'll have to refer to your wife as Aunt. Are you and Ms. Anne getting married?"

John frowned, pursing his lips. "Kids shouldn't talk so much during mealtime. Eat your food."

He clearly didn't want Summer to probe. At that, everyone at the table paused.

Hannah smiled bitterly. As a mellow and docile woman, she merely lowered her head and kept quiet, bottling her feelings to herself.

I furrowed my brows. The way John was behaving was incredibly hurtful. No matter what, Hannah was already pregnant. He shouldn't be unbridledly hurting her that way.

"Summer, be good and eat your food," I said. Looking at John, I scooped some dishes onto his plate and questioned, "Do you still remember you picked up a puppy in the field when I was eleven?"

He seemed to be taken aback at my abrupt change of topic but still responded, "Yes. It was such a long time ago."

"Do you still remember what happened to the puppy?"

He thought about it for a moment. "I let you keep it, but you only raised it for a couple of months before giving it away when you had to go to school in the county."

I nodded. "At that time, I thought it was troublesome to bring it with me. Hence, I gave it away. But when I tried to look for it later, I couldn't find it anymore. All these years, I've always wondered—if I hadn't sent it away but let it stay in the yard to accompany Grandma, perhaps I won't feel so guilty every time I'm reminded of it."

He remained silent for a while and filled my plate with some meat before muttering, "It's all in the past."

"Mommy used to have a puppy? Was it like Snowfluff?" Summer interrupted, staring at me curiously.

Smiling, I nodded.

"Then I won't lose Snowfluff next time. I'll take care of it well so that I won't have any regrets in the future," she stated proudly.

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My smile faltered as I subconsciously turned toward John and said, "John, even Summer could understand the theory. Stop living in a world of your own."

He pressed his lips together and didn't respond.

As a normally quiet person, Hannah never spoke much either.

After the meal, when we moved to have tea in the yard, Summer pestered Hannah to look at the flowers at the rear of the house.

As I sat across John, I decided not to beat around the bush. "When do you plan to hold the wedding?" I asked.

He furrowed his brows. "What wedding?"

"Your wedding with Ms. Anne, of course. Are you planning to get a marriage certificate after she has given birth?"

He shrugged nonchalantly and replied, "I don't plan to get married. I do want the child since it's mine, but I have no plans to marry her. After the delivery, I'll give her a sum of money and transfer the guardianship of the child under you. It's the same thing as when Summer was transferred to you."

Listening to him, I was momentarily speechless from the wave of anger. Had it not been because the tea in my hands was scalding hot, I would have splashed it right in his face.

"John Stovall! Do you have any idea how irresponsible you are? I already feel sorry for Summer, yet you're planning to let your child be born into a single-parent family? Moreover, what's so bad about Hannah? She's elegant and magnanimous. The only reason you could degrade her this way is because she loves you. Don't wait for the day when she has given up that you realize what exactly you did wrong!"

Indifferent, he sipped his tea and leaned against the chair, speaking in a leisure tone, "She wants money—I'll give her money. She gives birth to my child, and I give her money in

return—is that not taking responsibility? Besides, I’m sure you’ll dote on the child the same way you love Summer.”

I—

Unable to hold back, I splashed the cup of tea in my hand in his direction and yelled, “Stop dreaming! I won’t raise your child. Since you’ve decided to keep it, as a man, you have the obligation to make her your wife!”

I was infuriated beyond reason. In an attempt to suppress my anger, I whirled around and headed toward the rear of the house.

It had been a long time since I last got that agitated. Bumping into Ashton, who had just come down from the second floor, he questioned, “What happened?”

“Men are all good-for-nothing!” I answered furiously, having yet to calm myself down.

Ashton was speechless. A short while later, when I’d calmed my emotions, he chuckled. “Not mad anymore?”

I nodded, looking at him somewhat awkwardly. “Earlier—”

“I get it. Was it about John and Ms. Anne?” He smiled in understanding.

“For a woman such as Hannah, once he has missed it, he’ll never find it again. Rather than cherishing the gem he has, he’s decided not to get married. Sc*mbag!”

With an arm outreached, he took me aside to rest on a chair and said gently, “Are you mad because he doesn’t know how to cherish her or because of how he feels toward you?”

I was stunned for a minute when I glanced up into his fervent gaze. It took a while for me to find my voice and said, “His feelings for me aren’t romantic but like siblings. It’s just that he’s yet to realize it.”

I understood precisely how well John treated me. All these years, he had considered everything about me in his heart. In outsiders’ eyes, it seemed to be no different from a relationship between man and woman. But having gotten involved in a real relationship, how could I not know what John’s feelings were for me? We knew each other since we were

young and lived through the hard times by each other's side. Having spent those years together, how could I not differentiate between family and love?

We were both lonely at heart. Without Grandma and Macy, the only person we had to depend on were each other.

If he were to feel romantically for me—based on his personality—he would've made a move a long time ago.

Ashton watched me for a long time without saying a word.

Standing in his shoes, I could understand what he was worried about and said in assurance, "I was mad because he couldn't see through his own feelings. I fear it'll take him losing the most important person to him before he finally gets himself together. I was mad about how clueless he was." Pausing, I grabbed his hand and got serious. "Ashton, we're not kids anymore. Having lived for nearly half my life, I'm clear about what my heart wants. I merely don't wish for John to live in regrets, that's all."

Despite all that I said, Ashton only stared at me dispiritedly, staying quiet. I searched his face but couldn't figure out what his true thoughts were. Believing that he was mad, I added, "Ashton, you can't be this petty."

His lips curved, a hint of amusement shining in his eyes. "What do I have to do to not be considered petty?"

Realizing that he was teasing me, I shot him a glare and refused to communicate further.

Before I could stand up and get away, he plopped me down onto his lap and encircled my waist, his voice laced with amusement. "How about we let them handle their own problems while we live our own lives?"

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I sighed. Wouldn't that be nice? But John was family to me after all.

"Hannah is a really good woman," I said. "Once John loses her, it'll be forever."

Leaning his head on my shoulder, Ashton said moodily, "What can you do then?"

"If Uncle Louis finds out, perhaps he could let Hannah into the Stovall family." John had always been respectful to Uncle Louis.

He lifted his head to stare at me thoughtfully. "You've investigated Hannah's past?"

I frowned, confused about his question. "Even if her background's inferior, Uncle Louis isn't one to be bothered about it. Otherwise, he wouldn't have acknowledged me publicly and entered me into the Stovall's family register."

He raised his brows and said, "Louis may not care about the girl's family background, but he'll care about her personal experiences. These past thirty years, you've had a clean record being the Moore family's daughter, my wife, and a graduate. These could make Louis accept you, but Hannah doesn't have those."

"Even though she didn't graduate college nor marry into a wealthy family, she's elegant and dignified. That alone will satisfy Uncle Louis."

Holding me, he smiled weakly. "Things aren't always as simple as it seems, Scarlett."

Out of nowhere, Summer ran over and insisted that Ashton play with her. Unable to decline her, they left alongside each other.

I remained seated in the chair, uncertain what sort of past Hannah had that could make Uncle Louis unable to accept her.

In the evening, at the villa's entrance, John stared deeply at me and said, "Since you're back to K City, you should take Summer home. After all, you and Mr. Fuller are divorced. The longer you stay here, the more tongues will wag."

I blanked out slightly. Deep inside, I knew he was unwilling to see me and Ashton living together without clearing up our situation.

Ashton didn't say a word as he sent them off politely.

Having played for an entire day, Summer was exhausted and fell asleep right on the living room floor.

I was then backed into the doorframe and caged in by him. “Four years ago, I didn’t sign the divorce agreement. We’re still lawfully married. Is it not okay for a married couple to live under the same roof?”

Looking at his willful appearance, I burst out laughing. Tilting my head, I said, “It’s fine, that’s why I’m staying.”

He smiled softly, his eyes reflecting his happiness. Had it not been for Summer waking up groggily in the living room, he probably would’ve been unable to restrain himself.

Fall in K City was occasionally gloomy and uncertain.

On Tuesday, I had stayed in the villa revising for several consecutive days, bored from having been alone for some time.

After getting a change of clothes, I went to peel some fruits in the kitchen before sending them to Summer at her school. However, I was denied access and had to send them to Ashton at Fuller Corporation instead.

The skies were overcast. Luckily, Ashton had given me a car to drive and the traffic was relatively smooth.

When I arrived at Fuller Corporation, I stopped to allow myself to take it all in. Four years ago, it was merely one of the many inconspicuous companies in the industry. Yet now, it had turned into a multi-story building with its name hanging strikingly on the front.

As soon as I found a parking lot, a bolt of lightning struck and rain began to pour. I initially thought the rain wouldn’t be heavy and carried the lunch box with me while I headed toward the Fuller Corporation building. But when I finally made it after a sprint, I had gotten fully drenched.

The dark skies lit up whenever lightning struck. The bad weather didn’t seem to be stopping any time soon.

A group of passersby was taking shelter right at the entrance when I squeezed past them to make it into the lobby.

Having learned my lesson, I didn’t approach the reception but pulled out my phone to give Ashton a call.

Several missed calls showed on my phone screen, all of which were from Ashton while I had been in the rain. Before I could call him back, the phone rang again. I moved aside in order not to block the path and answered it.

“What happened?” His deep voice sounded hurried as if he had been anxious.

Watching the heavy downpour outside, I said distractedly, “Nothing.”

All of a sudden, an ear-splitting clap of thunder rang out, so deafening that the surroundings shook.

Through the phone, Ashton coaxed in a low, soothing voice, “Don’t be afraid, I’ll be right there.”

“Mr. Fuller, this will—” It sounded like it was Joseph beside him.

“Postpone it!”

Standing in the lobby, I froze, momentarily forgetting to move. “Are you in a meeting?”

“Mm,” he hummed in response. When another clap of thunder sounded, he spoke again, “I’ll be home in fifteen minutes.”

It seemed he remembered that I was afraid of thunders. But having lived through R Province’s unpredictable weather for four years, I had long gotten used to it—having spent many nights embracing Summer through them. Although I was still scared, it was no longer a crippling fear.

Hearing his anxious tone, I couldn’t help but assure him in a light voice, “I’m alright, you—”

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Before I could finish my words, he had come out of the president’s personal elevator and zoomed through the crowd hastily. His typically refined and imposing self was sweating in a panic.

His good looks never failed to make him stand out in the crowd.

Lowering the phone, I headed toward his direction and fell into his embrace, my arms finding their way around his waist. I leaned against his chest and said, "I'm alright. I don't fear the thunder."

It had been years since. Witnessing him being so worried caused my heart to clench.

Surprised by my unexpected appearance, he pulled me in and gave me a tight hug. But when I returned to my senses, I couldn't help but be embarrassed as I recalled that this was the Fuller Corporation lobby and I had dashed into his embrace in the presence of everyone.

My face flushed when I lifted my head and realized all the pairs of eyes that were staring at us. "I was bored alone at home so I brought you some fruits."

He chuckled, tucking a stray of hair of mine behind my ear as he held me. "Let's go to the office and eat them then."

Under the gaze of others, I entered the elevator with him, sighing on the inside. Gossip was bound to spread within the Fuller Corporation's employees in no time.

Joseph had been teetering anxiously when we reached the office area. At the sight of Ashton's return, his face broke into a wide, relieved grin. " Mr. Fuller, will you speak with the Starlight Group? Mr. Parker is exceptionally difficult. Since they initiated the meeting, they must be planning to collaborate with the Fuller Corporation."

As he was only an assistant, all he could do was make suggestions.

I had already known he was in the middle of a meeting. Seeing as Joseph had asked, I turned toward Ashton and said, "I'll wait for you in the lounge."

He glanced at the weather outside, seeing that the rain had reduced to a drizzle. Turning his head back to me, he lightly tapped me on my nose and said, "All right. I'll be back very soon."

There were two floors dedicated to his office. With the meeting room being on the other, I headed into the visitors' room.

Approximately five minutes later, Joseph came in with some fruits and tidbits. "Mr. Fuller doesn't usually eat these, so there aren't too many of them in the office. Feel free to have whatever you like while you wait."

As it had been years since we last met, I had a distinct feeling that Joseph was no longer as small-minded as he was before.

Smiling, I accepted them with both hands. I was aware Ashton didn't like eating fruits. If it weren't a must for him to eat them, he wouldn't have touched them at all.

Therefore, not having fruits nor tidbits in the office was very normal.

About twenty minutes later, Ashton returned and saw that I had peeled the fruits on the table but hadn't eaten them. He furrowed his brows. "You didn't like it?"

I shook my head, picking up a piece of fruit with a toothpick before holding it by his mouth. "I was waiting for you."

He reached out to cuddle me, looking slightly apologetic. "The meeting later could take a while. Will you be bored alone here?"

I knew he was busy. This trip was meant as a stroll with no intention to disturb his work. With a smile, I said, "Not at all. I'll go fetch Summer from school later."

He nodded, planting a kiss on my forehead. Feeling slightly fatigued, he held me and shut his eyes to take a short rest. No words were needed to be spoken between us. As time passed, our love had integrated into the little details. Mutual understanding, care, and tolerance between each other were the crux to spending a long life with your partner. To rip into each other's throats would only end in tragedy.

When Joseph knocked and entered, Ashton had already been asleep for an hour. He studied Ashton's closed eyes and steady breathing. In a hushed tone, he said, "He's asleep?"

I nodded. "Is it time for the meeting?"

He hummed in response, lifting his wrist to check the time on his watch. "There's another meeting in M Country ten minutes later. Mr. Crest has just arrived," he said with urgency.

Mr. Crest?

“Jared Crest?” I asked instinctively.

He nodded.

Didn't he say he was going to W City for development?

“If you're tired, then rest in the lounge,” Ashton said, his voice slightly hoarse. It took me a second to realize he had awoken and was smoothing out his clothes.

With no concern of our presence, Joseph said directly, “The company in M Country has sent all the information to me. Mr. Crest has handed both the hospital and film matters to me. As of now, everything's on stand-by for you for handover.”

Ashton stood up after taking care of his clothes. “Everything that's handed over from Jared, pass them to Joe. Let Joe handle them.”

“Got it.”

Seeing as he was about to leave, I stood up and called out, “Wait!”

He smiled as he watched me walk toward him. “Can't bear for me to leave?”

I shot him a playful glare and chuckled. “Your hair's tousled and your necktie's slanted.” I lifted a hand to fix them.

He smiled. “Jared's about to go to W City. The handover work is complicated, so it'll likely take some time. If you need anything, look for Joseph.”

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I nodded my head and pushed him forward. “Go!”

Rushing for his meeting, he left without another word. I decided to read for a bit in the office as I was bored.

Suddenly, I could hear the noises of an argument outside. Curious, I got up to see what the commotion was about.

It turned out to be Nancy whom I hadn't seen in a long time. She looks different today. Her hair is a mess and she looks haggard. Although she's dressed in branded clothes, they always look cheap on her for some reason.

Two secretaries were barring her from entering the huge office area. "Ms. Goldstein, we can't let you in if you don't have an appointment with Mr. Fuller."

Despite her image was utterly ruined, Nancy showed no signs of giving up against the secretaries who blocked her path. She screamed hoarsely, "Tell Ashton I want to see him right now."

A commotion like this wouldn't solve anything. After all, this was a huge company, and the secretaries had other work to do.

I shouldn't meddle in this though. Joseph just left and I'm unaware of the proper protocol.

So after some thought, I turned and prepared to head back to the office to kill time.

"Scarlett, stop right there!" I'd only taken a few steps when my name was called.

Turning back, I caught Nancy's gaze on me. She was still fuming as she spat out, "Aren't you so pleased with yourself right now? You think you're better than the rest of us just because you married into money."

I furrowed my brows in displeasure.

My gaze fell on her disheveled clothes. It's going to be exhausting if I talk to her from here. Since she's already seen me, I guess I should just confront her.

I walked forward and stared at her calmly. "Ms. Goldstein, try not to lose some sense of elegance even if you've fallen on hard times. Don't you think you're degrading yourself like this?"

She actually has decent qualities—she’s young and pretty with a great educational background. Even if her path to stardom has become hopeless, she’ll still have many opportunities. She wouldn’t find herself in dire straits.

She laughed coldly, a hollow gaze in her eyes. “Degrading myself? Are you talking to me from a winner’s perspective right now?”

I shrugged. “Think what you please.”

She sneered, “Ashton treated me like a substitute. How well do you think he’ll treat you, huh? No one will ever match up to that crush of his.”

She’s just degrading herself by being caught up in this whole idea of who among us is the substitute. What’s the point in bringing up this issue now? She’s just doing this because she can’t accept defeat.

As I stared at her, I couldn’t help but say, “Although I have no clue how you appeared in his circles or caught his attention, it’s meaningless now for you to be fixated on this idea of which one of us is the substitute. I would’ve helped you if your words were kinder, Nancy. But if you can’t at least be civil, then I’ll have to return an eye for an eye. The baseless rumors you spread about me last time gave me a lot of trouble. As the victim, it’s only right that I take steps to defend my name.”

Nancy’s expression darkened. “Who can you blame but yourself for your promiscuity? Everything I said was true.”

I nodded, though I wasn’t yet enraged at her words. “My marriage to Ashton seven years ago was a valid union. I don’t know who tipped you off about that incident four years ago, but it only takes a bit of common sense to understand what really happened. Just because I didn’t make a fuss about it doesn’t mean I’m weak. I merely thought it wasn’t worth my time and effort to deal with such matters.”

The two secretaries who’d heard my every word couldn’t help but exchange loaded glances. They seemed shocked, likely by the news of Ashton and my marriage.

I looked at Nancy and continued, “One must always think of the repercussions before taking action. If I were you, Nancy, I’d pack my bags immediately and bring my mother to a safe place where we could live quietly for some time. Maybe spend some time planning my future and stop pestering the Fuller Corporation. Ashton’s patience is limited. Once he’s

concluded his business, no one can guarantee how brutal he can be when it comes to tying up loose ends.”

Nancy’s face paled. “What do you mean?”

“She has explained it so well! Ashton only killed your dreams of stardom instead of forcing you into a dead end. If you continue creating a fuss like this, he might get annoyed and ruin your entire future.” A woman’s voice cut in.

I was startled for a moment and turned around. I didn’t know when Emery had shown up. Dressed in a stylish black suit, she stood next to the lift with her arms crossed.

Cheekily, she watched my reaction to her arrival with a barely discernible smile on her face. Her lips curved upwards as she laughed out loud. “I haven’t seen you in four years and you seem fatter now.”

Isn’t she being too straightforward? Who starts a conversation like that!

I couldn’t help but laugh as I replied, “The environment in R Province is great.”

She shrugged and walked towards me. “I guess that’s true. Your complexion does look amazing.”

She paused for a moment and looked at Nancy, who hadn’t recovered her composure. “Hey Miss, you’re twenty-six this year, right? Think you’re such a hotshot after being a celebrity for a couple of years? Oh right, weren’t you in the news a couple of days ago for climbing to the top of that building? But nothing happened? I guess you were just making a scene!”