

## Chapter 1031

Unfortunately, Rebecca had given chase. Bemused, Hannah exclaimed with a short laugh, "This woman is really something!"

I found Hannah's utterance rather abrupt. Before I could respond, I caught sight of Rebecca standing just behind us, staring at us somewhat unsteadily.

Realization dawned upon me when I saw the car parked right outside the alley. Hannah's irrational calmness now made complete sense.

By the time Rebecca recovered her wits, it was far too late. The policemen were already converging on her and caught up within a few steps.

"What are you doing? What right do you have to arrest me?" Rebecca shrieked. Her cries fell on deaf ears as she was handcuffed and thrown into the car.

Hannah pointed back to the alley in the direction from whence we came. "Officers, there's still a whole crowd waiting inside! Get them quickly!" she cried.

Seeing that her shouts of abuse had no effect on the implacable policemen, Rebecca turned the full brunt of her rage towards me. "Scarlett, I won't forget this! Watch out! I won't let you get away with this!"

Hannah and I merely turned onto another path and went on our way. Rebecca's yells of abuse faded gradually into the distance. I shook my head in amazement, then turned to Hannah and asked, "Did you already have the police on standby since the beginning?"

Hannah nodded with a look of satisfaction. "Prevention is always better than cure when dealing with nasty matters like these. It was dangerous enough to drag you along with me. If I hadn't headed in with my guard up and anything had happened to you, I wouldn't be able to live with myself."

I marveled at the intricacies of Hannah's planning. I was about to continue, but Chandler's car pulled up beside us. I didn't think it would be right to retain Hannah with me when the lovebirds had clearly reunited, so I merely waved goodbye to her and headed back to the villa.

Summer was just shakily getting back on her feet after the illness. Cameron fussed over Summer like a mother hen, so she was insistent on having her. She had intended to become Summer's sole caretaker. Ashton, meanwhile, was still in Moranta. I wanted to pop by the villa to grab a couple of things before making my way over to the Moore Residence. When I'd gotten out of the car, I stopped short at the sight of Ashton driving out of the garage.

After more than ten days of being apart, I took a double-take when I saw Ashton. He got out of the car and flashed a disarming smile at me. "Did you go shopping?" he asked casually, glancing at the snacks I held in my hand.

I froze for a second, then ran into his waiting arms. I pressed my cheeks, raw from the cold, onto his warm chest, saying hoarsely, "Why did you come back all of a sudden? When did you arrive in K City? Why didn't you tell me? I would have come to fetch you!"

Ashton patted me tenderly. In a low voice, he murmured, "It's too cold outside. I didn't want you to freeze to death." He disentangled himself, then pulled me towards the car. "Let's make a trip to the police department!"

Ashton lightly planted a kiss on my forehead, then bundled me into the car. In the warmth that filled the car, I opened my bag of snacks and offered one to Ashton, asking, "Have you eaten anything?"

Before I'd finished, I'd borne the snack towards his mouth. Ashton glanced at the snack hovering threateningly near his lips, then at my eager expression. Chuckling, he opened his mouth and ate the snack dutifully. As he ate, he replied, "Hannah's wedding is in a few days. I was afraid that you'll be lonely going by yourself."

"Did you come back to be my plus one, then?" I asked, feeding myself. I didn't usually have much of an appetite when I was around, but was strangely invigorated by Ashton's presence.

Ashton smiled. "Yep!" he said. Then he continued concernedly, "Didn't you eat dinner?"

I laughed genially. "I did! I just wasn't hungry at the time, so I bought some snacks to eat on the way home. I only bought these snacks because they're so delicious."

Ashton looked helplessly at me. "Snacks aren't good for your health. You should... Oh!" As he was speaking, I stuffed another snack into his mouth to forbid him from continuing. "I know snacks aren't healthy! I don't eat them usually. It's my first time in a long while, so don't worry, Mr. Fuller!"

Ashton sighed dramatically. "I've only been gone a few days, and you've stopped taking care of yourself! You've lost weight."

I tilted my head and stared him down. "Right, when are you planning on going to Moranta? How's it going over there? Are we going to leave that matter with Armond just like that?"

Ashton gaze was focused intently on the road ahead. His brow wrinkled ever so slightly as he replied, "I'll head back after Hannah's wedding is over. You stay in K City and take care of yourself."

I chewed on my lip. Ashton seemed to have cultivated a borderline obsession with my health. Every interaction we had was sure to consist of an order to take care of my health like how Ashton had just emphasized.

The car sped towards the police department. Looking out of the window, I felt tremendously unsettled. The baby lay like a solid, invisible presence between Ashton and me. He'd wanted a child with all his heart, desperately. But all the desire in the world could not and would not bring our baby back.

We screeched to a halt at the entrance of the police department. Ashton looked at me, then ordered, "Stay in the car where it's warm. I'm going in to deal with a couple of things and will be out in a while. Stay right here, OK?"

## **Chapter 1032**

Before I could ask Ashton what pressing affairs he was attending to, he'd already gotten out of the car and shut the door behind him. I reclined in my seat, feeling the warmth of the radiator suffuse the car.

Memories of the baby and what had happened then crowded my mind, and Ashton's business at the police department was set aside. After a while, I picked up my phone and dialed Cameron's number.

She picked up almost immediately. "Scarlett, didn't you say you were coming back soon? Why aren't you back yet? Where are you? I'll get your Dad to go over and pick you up," she answered anxiously.

"There's no need! I'm with Ashton. I don't think I'll be heading back tonight," I replied.

Cameron grunted in acknowledgment, then asked, "Why did he suddenly come back? How are things going in Moranta? Zachary said that Boris was getting news about the Murphys and how difficult they were to handle. Why did Ashton come back at this crucial point in time?"

I sucked in a breath of warm air and felt it settle in my lungs before exhaling gently. I then said uneasily, "Hannah's getting married. Ashton was worried that I wouldn't be comfortable going alone and came along to accompany me. He was needlessly worried."

"That's good! I was thinking anyway that if you could come over a little later, I'd whip up a light supper for you. I can't rest easy not knowing if you've been taking good care of yourself nowadays," Cameron fretted.

There was no malice in Cameron's tone, merely an infinite supply of concern and tenderness.

I knew what she was thinking and replied slowly, "Mom, did the doctor say whether I would still be able to conceive?"

Cameron was flabbergasted. She hesitated for a long while before saying, "My dear, Summer is doing fine now. She'll recover with enough care. Mr. Fuller treats you well. When he's back from Moranta, the three of you can be reunited as a family again and take care of each other..."

"Mom, did the doctor say I won't be able to conceive ever again?" I repeated doggedly. I already knew what the answer was but had to hear it spoken out loud. My hope for a miracle had gradually faded along with each day that passed.

The other end of the line was dead silent for a long time. At last, Cameron said kindly, "Don't worry too much about being able to have babies. Your womb was the only thing that was affected. With technology being so advanced these days, you can still opt for in vitro fertilization. Don't let not being able to conceive get you down! Everything will be all right."

In vitro fertilization?

A thought sprang to mind. I quickly said into the phone, "Mom, there's something I have to do. I'll be hanging up first!"

I ended the call, breathing rapidly. My mind raced feverishly. Gazing at the police department entrance where Ashton had vanished into and I wondered. Would Ashton be willing to try?

I cracked open the car door slightly. The frosty wind immediately gnawed at my exposed face. Shivering slightly, I kept my arms tucked tightly against my chest as I hurried into the police department.

Police officers were milling about the main lobby inside. I looked around cautiously but saw no sign of Ashton. I'd approached the front desk and was about to ask for him when I heard a loud roar from behind the metal screen. "I don't want to stay here, Ash! I didn't do it! Please don't leave me here! I didn't do it!"

The high voice sounded oddly familiar. Rebecca?

I walked closer to where the shouts were emitting from. The guard sitting in front of the door jumped up hastily, barricading my way. "Miss, you are not authorized to enter."

I smiled at him politely, then informed him, "My husband's in there. He came in without me just now."

Ashton must somehow have heard my voice from amidst the surrounding ruckus, and opened the door. He looked thunderous. When he caught sight of me, his tense features instantly softened. "What's wrong? Isn't it cold outside?" he asked worriedly.

Rebecca was sitting on a chair in the room just behind Ashton, looking utterly disgraced. I didn't think it was possible for her to be more humiliated than she had been, but I was clearly wrong. "What's she doing here?" I inquired, gesturing towards Rebecca.

It felt a little cruel of me to ask when I knew perfectly well what had happened to Rebecca.

Rebecca indeed gave me a look of tremendous indignation. She practically spat, "Scarlett, stop being so hypocritical! You know more clearly than anyone else what I'm doing here. You landed me here! I didn't do anything at all. You're evil!"

"You'd better shut your mouth," Ashton growled. Frightened by the harshness with which he'd issued the threat, Rebecca's face turned ashen, and she fell silent.

I, too, was not exempt from the solemn effect that warning had, even though it had not been directed to me. My heart pounded in my chest.

A sudden hush descended upon the room. Ashton glowered at Rebecca, saying distinctly, "Nobody forced you to make those choices you made. I've given you what you were due, so don't come to me using your brother's name anymore. I am not obliged to you. Since you've committed a crime, then do your time. When you're released, don't come and bother me any further. I don't have the time to spend on people like you who I have absolutely no business with."

Ashton spoke these utterly brutal words with a leer that revealed the extent to which he despised Rebecca.

Rebecca's eyes had gone red. Stammering, she said, "Am I a nobody to you then? Someone who's merely a waste of your time and who you have no business with?"

### **Chapter 1033**

Ashton frowned with disgust. "I appreciate people who have self-respect and who know right from wrong. You're none of these. I didn't come here today to help or visit you, but to tell you not to ever call me again.

I had never seen Ashton behave so brutally to anyone. Rebecca looked equally thunderstruck. She gazed at Ashton in dismay and disbelief.

Rebecca remained that way for a long time. Unfortunately, Ashton was unmoved, he just grabbed hold of me and stormed out of the room.

The officer in charge of the investigation followed us hurriedly. With a nervous smile on his face, he stuttered, "Mr. Fuller, about Ms. Larson..."

"Do what you have to do. Don't contact me about anything regarding her ever again. I'll pay for her this once, but I'm not interested in hearing about her, whether she is alive or dead," Ashton replied coldly. I shuddered. It seemed like Rebecca was already dead to him at that moment.



The policeman gaped at Ashton speechlessly. However, he maintained his professional veneer and ushered us out courteously.

When we'd gotten back into the car, Ashton reached out and took my hand in his. He gave a short sigh, then remarked, "Your hand feels so cold. How could you have been so disobedient?"

Ashton's words stemmed more from concern than reproach. I raised my head and met his gaze. "I didn't mean it. I just thought of something that I wanted to discuss with you right away, so I headed straight in. I didn't think that you'd gone in to meet Rebecca!"

I said this with a twinge of regret. If I'd known Rebecca would be there, I wouldn't have gone in to subject myself to her verbal abuse.

Ashton transferred my hands onto his stomach. Beneath his shirt, I could feel his firm, taut muscles. I reeled. What is Ashton doing? I wondered, startled.

Ashton laughed gently at my baffled face. "Do you feel warmer?"

Of course! My heart raced. We'd been married for years, but I suddenly felt shyness overcome me.

Ashton continued gazing at me. In a mellow voice, he urged, "What did you want to discuss with me just now? Was it about something interesting that happened?"

He looked at me expectantly. I rehearsed my opening in my mind once, then thought better of it. "After Hannah's wedding is over, can you accompany me to the doctor's for a visit?"

Ashton furrowed his brow. "What's wrong? Did something happen? Are you feeling unwell?" he demanded.

I shook my head. "No, it's... I would like to do a checkup. Don't you always remind me to take care of my body?" I retorted.

Ashton gazed at me intently, then agreed. "OK!"

After feeling that my hands were sufficiently warmed, I withdrew my hand. Flustered, Ashton asked, "Is something wrong?"

"I'm warm enough. Let's go home now," I replied. "We can't sit here forever, can we?"

Ashton smiled, then started the car.

The car flew past multiple homes, their warm lights forming many beacons in the dark. I pressed my lips together in a thin line, resolving not to raise the matter regarding in vitro fertilization with Ashton just yet. We'd been married for so many years now and had gone through so much together. I was lucky enough to be married to Ashton. Having a child was merely the icing on the top of the cake. After the multiple mishaps that had occurred, I didn't think I had the courage to carry another child. More accurately, I didn't believe either that I would be able to conceive ever again. Hence, in vitro fertilization would be the most feasible way for Ashton and me to have a baby of our own.

A smile flitted across my face at the thought. It was a procedure I'd never actually given much consideration to before.

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Hannah had no family but only a few friends in K City, so Chandler's house was more than enough to accommodate her guests. Chandler's house was situated at the

outskirts of K City in a village that hadn't yet been touched by the rapid development the rest of the city had been subjected to.

Hannah called me over to the hotel the very first night. She insisted on me doing her makeup the first thing the very next morning when we'd have to wake up at the crack of dawn to start getting her ready to be a bride.

Ashton, however, felt apprehensive about me leaving his side. Like a chaperone, he escorted me to the hotel. I'd already set aside the dress I intended to wear for the wedding, having already agreed to be Hannah's bridesmaid.

The next morning, Hannah donned a phoenix coronet as her bridal headpiece, and I was tasked with matching her makeup to the grandeur of her outfit. Hannah, however, constantly distracted me with her constant protests about the tightness of her dress.

Ashton appeared after a while when his video conference had ended. He stood in the doorway, gaping at us for a while, then exclaimed, "You look fantastic!"

Hannah tossed her head. "Of course, she looks fantastic! Scarlett has such a perfect face, with those refined features of hers. She's the very picture of a classical beauty! She looks like absolute royalty in that dress of hers. Anyone might have mistaken her for a princess all dressed up for her debutante ball. If I were a man, I'd have fallen in love with her at the first sight," Hannah declared, sighing enviously.

I was embarrassed by Hannah's generous compliments. Smiling at Ashton, I said modestly, "The dress is pretty cumbersome. It's a little difficult to walk around in."

## Chapter 1034

Ashton smiled as he took my hand in his and said, "Don't worry, I'm by your side and I'll carry you if you can't walk anymore."

Hannah shot him a look and said, "Quit it with the public display of affection."

Ashton and I exchanged glances with a smile.

Hannah and Chandler's wedding were a little extraordinary as they wanted to jazz up their wedding. With everything prepared, Chandler and his entourage, entered the hotel and headed to Hannah's hotel room. The groom knocked politely on the door three times and announced, "My dear wife, I'm here."

His terms of endearment caused everyone to burst out laughing. Hannah couldn't help but cover her mouth with her hand and chuckled too. The bridesmaids were standing by the door and proceeded to play some wedding door games with the groom to challenge his love for the bride.

The merriment lasted a few minutes before the bridesmaids agreed to open the door. As soon as the door opened, the groom and groomsmen rushed into the room together. The groomsmen quickly whipped out red envelopes to divert the attention of the bridesmaids as the groom headed straight for the bride. Chandler, who was holding a bouquet of fresh red flowers, strode fast to Hannah's side. He was supposed to kneel on one knee to present the bouquet to the bride, but in his excitement, he knelt on both knees.

His blunder caused another burst of laughter in the room.

Hannah, who was sitting on the edge of the bed, wore a stunning wedding gown. At the sound of the crowd's laughter, she curiously moved the veil to the side. She couldn't help but burst out laughing at the sight of Chandler on both knees.

One of the groomsmen hollered, "Hurry! Claim your bride!"

"That's right!"

After being prompted by his groomsmen, the nervous Chandler looked at Hannah. He blushed and stuttered, "M-My dear wife, let's go home."

Having said that, he sheepishly handed the bouquet to Hannah with both hands. As Hannah took the bouquet from him, the bridesmaids teased, "The bride is so quick to accept. But we're not done grilling with the groom yet."

Hannah smiled and looked at Chandler with gentleness in her eyes. "It hasn't been easy for him ever since our paths crossed. So that's enough of tormenting him."

After hearing that, I instinctively turned and looked at Ashton. Subconsciously, I leaned into his chest and was lost in thought. It had not been easy for us too. For us to be together, life had thrown us curve balls and tough challenges.

Chandler crouched by the bed, and then Hannah got up from the bed and leaned her upper body onto his back. Amid the blessings in the room, I overheard the inarticulate Chandler saying as he carried her on his back, "My dear wife, let's go home."

Oh, such sweet words!

And then, we followed Chandler and Hannah and made our way out of the hotel. Right at the entrance of the hotel, a dozen red Audi cars parked behind the wedding car. The wedding car was red too, and there was a woven of fresh flowers in a big heart-shaped decorated on the car's bonnet.

It was about forty minutes' drive from the hotel to Chandler's house. As arranged, Ashton and I sat in one of the convoy cars behind the wedding car. Just when we were about to reach Chandler's house, there were red balloons and ribbons decorated on both sides of the asphalt road that served as a guide to the house.

When the car came to a stop, the groomsman in the driver's seat turned around and looked at us. "We're not far from the groom's house. The groom's family has prepared a palanquin for the bride to enter the house in it, and she's going to ride in it from here."

I was taken aback for a moment and got out of the car as everyone else. There was an air of novelty in the decorations of red heart-shaped balloons and ribbons on both sides of the road. Further up along the road, there were decorations of bouquets of red flowers instead of red balloons. And since fresh flowers were expensive in the winter, they used hand-woven flowers instead.

I was right behind Hannah when she stared at the decoration of red flowers on both sides of the road. She was caught by surprise and turned towards Chandler. "These flowers..."

Chandler smiled and said, "My parents handmade them. They began weaving two months before the wedding. Initially, they wanted to use these all the way, but they couldn't weave sufficient flowers on time. That's why we only use it for this section of the road."

Hannah was stunned, and then she blushed. "Why didn't you tell me earlier? We could have helped out and eased the burden of Mr. and Mrs. Coleman. They're getting old, and this kind of work is very tiring for them."

Chandler ruffled his hair and said with a smile, "Why are you still calling them Mr. and Mrs. Coleman? You'll have to address them as Mom and Dad from now on."

A blush spread across Hannah's cheeks when she heard that.

I studied the beautiful hand-woven flowers decorated on both sides of the road. Although these flowers were artificial, each of these flowers was hand-woven with love and respect for Hannah. There was nothing more important than love and respect for one another between two people. These small details in the decorations were enough to touch our hearts.

Hannah got into the palanquin and was carried into Chandler's house at a distance of nearly a kilometer.

The palanquin-bearers lifted the palanquin carefully and slowly followed Chandler, who was riding on a horse in front of them. The handsome horse trotted to the sound of beating drums and gongs as they headed towards Chandler's house.

The big group of bridesmaids and groomsmen followed behind the palanquin and cheered. The joyful commotion caused those in the neighborhood to come out of their houses and watched the wedding celebration.

## **Chapter 1035**

A wedding ceremony is a symbol of two souls joining together as one. The committed couple will live together under the same roof and share life fully. Marriage is more than a wedding ceremony and rings. Love, respect, and kindness are the ingredients to a happy marriage. It's about committing to a life of loving faithfulness to one another.

Life is a journey filled with lessons, hardships, heartaches, joys, celebrations, the people we meet, and special moments that will ultimately lead us to our destination—our purpose in life.

I used to think that Hannah would never be able to love someone else after being so deeply in love with John, but I was wrong. Even though she had left John for good, he had a special place in her heart. But it didn't stop her from giving her heart wholly to Chandler.

Her past relationship with John was nothing more than just a memory. She had moved on and fell in love with Chandler, and that was all that mattered.

Their wedding was an unforgettable one.

One fine day she would look back at their wedding day with no regrets.

The palanquin stopped in front of Chandler's house, which was situated in the suburbs. It was a detached house with a red main door, and there was classic wedding decor on the exterior. Chandler's parents were already waiting by the gate to welcome the bride.

They came forward and greeted everyone with twinkles in their eyes and a joyous smile on their faces.

The guests and the master of ceremonies spread out and stood on both sides of the gate. With a loud voice, the emcee announced the official start of the wedding ceremony.

It was followed by the loud sound of gongs before the master of ceremonies went on to extend wedding wishes to the couple.



Next, the matchmaker guided the groom to help the bride to get off the palanquin. As the bride and groom held hands, they both crossed over a fire plate. As I took in the novelty of the wedding ceremony, I turned to Ashton and said, "I didn't know that there are so many etiquettes at a wedding."

He chuckled and leaned closer to me to explain, "Crossing over the fire plate signifies getting rid of the unhappiness of the past, and it's supposed to bring good luck to the bride."

I smiled and teased him, "How do you know that?"

Instead of answering my question, he asked, "Then what kind of wedding would you like?"

I answered with a smile, "When it's Summer's turn to get married, I'll have to think hard about the perfect kind of wedding to arrange for her."

As parents, it was what we hoped for.

He lifted his hand to my forehead and asked, "I was asking about you. What kind of wedding would you prefer?"

Seeing that he was serious, I answered with an embarrassed smile, "A grand wedding then, if I were to remarry."

I recalled that on our wedding day, Grandpa had actually ensured the wedding decorations were perfect. My emotions were running high that day, and I was completely focused on being a happy bride.

When I saw him brooding, I couldn't help but ask, "What are you thinking?"

He raised his eyebrows and motioned me to look at Hannah.

Hannah had crossed over the fire plate and was about to hold some oranges in her hands, which symbolized good luck. I turned to look at him and asked, "Is there any difference between the wedding customs in J City and K City?"

"Yes." He nodded in reply.

I had wanted to question further, but it was my turn as the bridesmaid to hold the bridal umbrella for the bride. It was customary for the bridesmaid to open the umbrella for the bride as it symbolized the bride bringing many descendants to the groom's family.

After a series of rituals and customs, I helped Hannah through the front door. There was a courtyard in Chandler's house and was surrounded by beautifully decorated white walls. The wedding ceremony was to take place in the living hall.

To welcome the bride, a red carpet was rolled out in the hall. When we entered the living hall, I handed Hannah's hand to Chandler.

Hannah leaned closer to me and whispered in my ear, "Scarlett, I think I left my phone in the bridal car. Can you help me to get it now before the bridal car leaves?"

I nodded and went out to retrieve the phone from the bridal car. Just when I was about to head back into the house with the phone, I caught sight of a familiar black Bentley.

## Chapter 1036

It's John!

I was not surprised to see him, but I was not expecting to see him either.

His luxurious car was especially conspicuous. I walked to the car, raised my hand, and tapped on the window. Not long after, the window lowered.

He seemed to have lost some weight since we last met, and there were dark circles under his tired eyes.

"Don't you want to go in?" I asked as I studied his pale face.

He shook his head and pressed his lips together. Then he asked, "Does he love her very much?"

I shrugged and said, "They're perfect for each other. By the way, Uncle Louis is here too. I saw him go in together with Kiki. Why don't you go in? You're practically part of her family now."

He looked uncomfortable as he stared at the door. "I'd better not go in. She looks beautiful. Please convey my message to her, and I wish her well. I blew my chance with her, and if we were to meet again..."

"I don't think she ever wants to see you again. You blew it, and there's no point crying over spilled milk now. You're my brother, and I do wish that you will live a happy life. If

you really want to settle down and have a family, you'll have to find the right partner. Yvonne is not the right one for you. It has nothing to do with her family background. If you think that you can't heed my advice, then I'll suggest you consult Uncle Louis about her. The answer is deep in your heart."

Having said that, I walked off with the phone in my hand. I wasn't going to stick around and chat with him. I had to get back inside to resume my role as the bridesmaid and join in with the toast.

Back in the living hall, I handed the phone to Hannah and went to stand next to Ashton. He looked at me and asked, "Saw someone you know?"

I was taken aback and nodded. "John's outside."

Just then, the master of ceremonies announced the commencement of the tea ceremony for the bride and groom to pay their respects and show their gratitude towards their parents.

Chandler's parents went to sit on the chairs at the center of the living hall, and the bridesmaids and groomsmen stood on both sides of the chairs. It was a lively atmosphere as the house was full of guests.

The master of ceremonies started off the tea ceremony with good wishes to the married couple.

I had attended other weddings before, but none like that. So naturally, I was filled with curiosity about their customs and watched in awe as Hannah and Chandler paid their respects to their parents.

Hannah was blessed to have met someone who truly loved her.

I saw the twinkle in Hannah's eyes as she smiled up at Chandler and said to myself, "John really blew his chance."

As they exchanged rings, I felt a little sorry for John. On the other hand, I was very happy for Hannah to have met the right one.

After the tea ceremony ended, I accompanied Hannah to the newlywed's room on the second floor. The room was huge and the interior was beautifully decorated, giving off a unique and intimate atmosphere. The couple's bed was set with fresh sheets. There were a few children who were curious about the bride.

They gathered outside the door and were asking for sweets. Fortunately, Hannah came prepared and took out a bag of sweets. After she had distributed the sweets to those children, they went away merrily. Catching her breath, she took out a cocktail gown from the wardrobe and said with a grin, "I didn't know it could be this tiring. Thank goodness I will only marry once. Otherwise..."

I quickly interrupted her and said, "Shush! It's your big day—only good vibes."

She looked at me and burst out laughing. "I did not expect that from you at all, Scarlett. By the way, where's Mr. Fuller? He must not like it to be in such a lively environment."

I chuckled. "He's out there with Uncle Louis. Don't let his cool appearance fool you. I think he's probably enjoying the celebration."

Otherwise, why would he be so focused on observing Chandler and Hannah's tea ceremony?

Suddenly, there was a sound of knocking on the door. I got up to open the door. It was Chandler's mother, and she was holding a platter of assorted food. She looked at me with a smile and said, "Hi, you must be Ms. Stovall. I'm Chandler's mom. Chandler is busy attending to the guests, and he's afraid that you girls might be hungry. So I've brought you some food. Please have something to eat before the toasting session. It's not good to drink on an empty stomach."

## **Chapter 1037**

I quickly stepped aside and said with a smile, "Come on in, Mrs. Coleman."

Chandler's mother was nearing fifty years old. I heard from Hannah that Mrs. Coleman was well-known for her profession of embroidery. She had a pleasing, submissive, gentle air about her.

She placed the food on the table and reminded us to fill our tummies before she left the room.

Hannah, who was starving, wolfed down a few bites of the food after changing into her cocktail gown. Before she could finish her food, a red-faced Chandler came to the room and tugged her away for the toasting session.

When I got out of the room, I saw Ashton leaning against the wall with his arms crossed. He must have been waiting for me. When he saw that I had changed into a different set of clothes, he raised a brow and asked, "Why have you changed your clothes?"

"It's not easy to walk in that dress." I didn't want to get stepped on all night.

I was confused as he stared at me. “Were you expecting me to keep wearing that?”

He chuckled softly and didn’t say anything further. Chandler, who had gotten himself a little drunk after a few glasses of wine, blurted out, “Mr. Fuller wanted you to look beautiful...”

“That’s enough. Let’s go. You haven’t eaten, so let’s go get something to eat.” Ashton took my hand and made our way out. Chandler looked stunned at being cut off in mid-sentence.

Chandler and Hannah proceeded to the first floor for toasting. Louis, together with Kiki, had their stomach filled, and he seemed to be in a good mood today. It was obvious he had a little to drink.

He looked at me and asked, “What was it like when you got married to Mr. Fuller?”

I was taken aback for a moment before answering with a smile, “It was Grandpa who arranged it, and it was a beautiful wedding.”

Louis stared at Ashton and said, “I’ll say, Mr. Fuller, should you give her a wedding? Or maybe a wedding anniversary celebration? Isn’t that what all girls want?”

Ashton chuckled and answered, “Do you have any suggestions, Uncle Louis?”

I watched them banter back and forth like children before saying with a laugh, “We’ve been married for many years. There’s no need for another wedding.”

“You can’t say that.” Louis continued, “As husband and wife, other than caring for and loving each other, you have to spice things up a little.”

Ashton nodded with a smile and said, “You’re right, Uncle Louis.” Then, he looked at me with his dark eyes and said with a smirk, “Let’s get acquainted all over again, Ms. Stovall. I’m Ashton Fuller.”

I frowned and let out a smile involuntarily. “What are you up to?”

“He’s proposing to you. Can’t you tell?” Louis said loudly, waving his glass of wine about for emphasis.

I was dumbfounded. Suddenly, I saw Ashton moved the chair away from him, and with a ring in his hand, he got down on one knee.

This was completely unexpected and a little too sudden. Initially, there was a picture of Hannah and Chandler on the stage’s big screen. But it was replaced with a photo of a young woman.

Isn’t that picture taken when I first entered J University? I was only eighteen years old at that time. That picture was taken at the entrance of J University’s library, and I was holding a book that I just borrowed from the library.

“Some people are destined to be together at first sight.” Ashton’s voice resonated. “That year, you were eighteen years old, and I had just taken over Fuller Corporation at the age of twenty-three. You were a fresh-faced and gentle girl. You weren’t my type at all, but that first sight of you was etched deep in my mind. Joe took that photo of you unintentionally, and I’ve grown attached to it for many years.”



I looked back at the man who was kneeling in front of me. At that moment, my heart began to flutter.

The hall grew quiet as the guests listened to Ashton. “When I saw you for the second time, it was in the Fullers’ living room. You begged my grandfather to treat your grandmother’s illness. He then asked you if you would marry me. At that time, you nodded and agreed. I knew you didn’t want to marry someone you didn’t know, but I felt relieved knowing that you were going to marry me. Marriage was useless to me, so it didn’t matter who I was going to marry. But I was kind of excited when I got to know that I was going to marry you. It was not my original intention to force you to marry me. That was unfair to you. So after getting married, I was hardly home. It’s not that I didn’t want to see you, but I was worried that you would be uncomfortable being around someone like me who doesn’t show affection. I told you before that you can divorce me when you meet someone else that you love. The Fullers will not mistreat you. But I never thought that you would stay in the Fullers for three years. The funny thing was, the longer you stayed in the Fullers, the harder it became for me to keep my feelings to myself. You have no idea how happy I was the night when I found out that you were pregnant. I knew then, with a child, our bond would be unbreakable. That’s why I thought of many ways to keep you by my side.”

## **Chapter 1038**

Listening to him reminisce about the past, I was suddenly transported back to the day I received my ultrasound report and found out I was six weeks pregnant. It was years ago, but I felt like it only happened yesterday.

He continued speaking, “I almost lost it when I found out that you privately aborted the child, but thank God Dr. Ludwick said you were alright and that you actually lied to me.” He sighed in fond exasperation before moving on, “You really are a naughty girl, you know that? I didn’t call you out on your lie. I thought that as long as we had a child, you wouldn’t leave and everything would turn out fine. I thought we could live happily as a

family, and that's why I made a decision I'll never be able to forgive myself for. All these years, I've unintentionally hurt you and failed to give you a sense of security. I didn't love you enough and hurt you more times than I can count. Scarlett, I... Even though I'm not exactly a thoughtful or gentle guy, are you still willing to spend the rest of your life with me?"

Staring at the ring he was holding out in front of me, I pursed my lips. "Ashton, you seriously suck at sweet-talking—even your proposal is so sad and pathetic. You're lucky I like you, or I wouldn't be bothered listening to your nonsense."

The crowd erupted with laughter and Hannah's teasing voice sounded. "Yeah. You know he's bad at everything. Yet, he's the only one you want. Ms. Stovall, just quit the act and say yes to your dear Mr. Fuller!"

Following that, everyone else unanimously urged, "Say yes!"

I studied Ashton in front of me, my lips twitching slightly. "You're proposing to me with only a ring? What's worse, this is Hannah and Chandler's wedding. Are you here to give them your blessing or crash their wedding?"

The crowd burst into laughter again. One of the guests' children even brought over the flower basket Chandler's parents weaved, placing it beside Ashton. It was obvious that it was to replace a bouquet of flowers.

Without missing a beat, Ashton took the flower basket. Perhaps he felt that it wasn't fitting that I carried a flower basket in my hands, he stood to his feet and left the venue. Everyone in the hall was momentarily stunned by his abrupt departure.

Fortunately, he returned several minutes later with a large bouquet of bright red roses in hand. As a handsome and captivating man, he painted an arresting sight while holding a large bouquet of flowers.

He walked to my side, got down on one knee, and gazed at me with passion in his eyes. “Scarlett, I’m an idiot, but you’re the only one that I want in life. I will love you in my own way and also in yours. We still have decades left to live. Are you still willing to continue this decades-long journey hand in hand with this idiot?”

Stifling my smile, I watched this man, who had always been apathetic and stingy with his words, suddenly saying so much in one go. I bet it wouldn’t be too far-fetched to claim that this was probably the most he had said in one breath in his entire life.

“What are you waiting for, Scarlett? Put your hand out for him to slip the ring on!” Hannah impatiently urged beside me. Before I could react, she grabbed my hand and pushed it forward.

The ring, warm from Ashton’s grip, was smoothly slipped onto my finger. Our mini-interlude enlivened the already blissful occasion and everyone applauded to offer us their blessings.

The wedding was very lively and joyous.

Only when the sky darkened did the guests disperse. Hannah tugged on my arm as she tried to persuade me to stay in the suburbs for the night. Although Ashton didn’t say a word, from the way he kept a tight hold on my hand, I could tell that he wasn’t accustomed to living in such conditions.

After politely refusing, Hannah sent me to the door and we chatted briefly. Before leaving, I hesitated slightly and decided to say, “Hannah, John came today. He wanted me to offer you his blessings. He said thank you for taking care of him for so many years and that he was lucky to have known you.”

Hannah looked dazed for a moment and her eyes dimmed slightly. After some time, she replied, "I do resent him, but I have to thank him too. If I didn't meet him, I wouldn't be who I am today. I'm grateful to him for allowing me to become who I am now. If he hadn't brought me to K City, perhaps I would've lived on the border all my life just like those war-torn women. I'd either be a corpse left in the wilderness or made into an object for man to violate however they liked. Scarlett, thank him for me. I don't regret meeting him, and I certainly don't regret falling in love with him. I sincerely hope that in the future, someone can build a warm and beautiful home with him."

I took in a deep breath and nodded with a smile. "I'll definitely pass on your blessing to him. You have to live happily too, alright?"

After bidding her farewell, I got into the car and noticed that Joseph was at the wheel. Glancing to my side to look at Ashton, I suddenly felt the palpable changes in our lives.

Without realizing it, we no longer spoke of dreams or hobbies. Instead, it was home, stability, and an ordinary life that we sought.

I wondered if this was what happened when people reached a certain stage in life.

## **Chapter 1039**

"Penny for your thoughts?" Ashton took my hand in his, breaking me out of my daze. His palm was pleasantly warm and I couldn't help but look up at him with a content smile. "I was wondering whether my hubby is getting old."

In between words, I lifted my free hand to the corner of one of his eyes and gently touched the smile lines there.

“Call me that again, hmm?” He raised the front seat barrier before cupping my face with both hands. His obsidian eyes flickered alluringly as he spoke in a deep and sultry voice.

I was stunned for a moment before asking in confusion, “Call you what?”

He pressed his lips against the corner of my mouth and said in a husky voice, “Don’t you know how you should call me, honey?”

My cheeks flushed a crimson red due to the way he addressed me. It was clearly a very common form of address between married couples, but somehow, it sounded so seductive coming from him. My thoughts were scrambled and I felt a tingle run down my spine, forming goosebumps all over my skin.

Being pressed against his body, I could smell the faint fragrance of his shower gel. Realizing that he was about to smash his lips against mine, my eyes widened and I quickly evaded him.

Laying in his arms, I chastised, “Stop it, Ashton. Joseph is driving.”

He hugged me close and rested his chin on my shoulder. “Mm. Then, call me again,” he demanded in a deep voice.

I blinked in bewilderment and called out, “Hubby.”

He didn’t release me but tightened his arms around me instead. “Mm, again.”

I was speechless but gave in to his request anyway. To my chagrin, he kept this childish act up.

After calling him over and over again throughout the ride, I leaned against his shoulder, slightly tired. “Ashton, why did you propose to me all of a sudden? And why did you buy such a big ring? It’s so flashy.”

He reached out to touch my ring and smiled. “Joe said that girls like rings—the bigger the better. I asked him to get pink diamonds from Smealand. I didn’t know what you liked but wanted to give you a surprise, so I left it to the design team. Don’t you like it?”

I studied the diamond on my finger and smiled. “It’s very flashy. I’d look like the daughter-in-law of a crazy rich woman whenever I wear it out.”

The corners of his lips arched upward. “As long as you like it, it doesn’t matter what others think.”

The car pulled to a stop in front of our villa. After a whole day of activity, I was quite exhausted. Sprawled in Ashton’s embrace, I was reluctant to get up. Hence, he carried me down the car and into the villa after giving Joseph some instructions pertaining to Moranta.

As soon as we entered the foyer, he pressed me against him and started kissing my neck. Caught off guard, I only started pushing him away after several seconds. “Ashton, stop...”

His breathing came in short and heavy pants. “When was the last time we had sex, mm?” Why does he sound like he’s complaining?

For a moment, I couldn’t find the words to refute him. He took advantage of my surprise to seal my lips with his, backing me from the foyer toward the living room. Suddenly, a

faint scent of alcohol invaded my senses, which got me suspicious. “Ashton, did you drink today?”

Deeply absorbed in our kissing session, he uttered in a slurred voice, “No. I was with you the whole time. You kept telling me not to drink, right? I’m a good boy. If you don’t allow me to drink, then I won’t.”

With that, he started to behave like a beast out of its cage, kissing me all over. Although I was shrouded in a haze of passion, my mind still registered the smell of alcohol in the room.

Sensing something amiss, I spoke up once again. “Ashton, do you smell alcohol? It’s really strong. Is there something wrong with the wine cellar at home?”

It was obvious that Ashton was losing control of himself as he groped me and whispered hoarsely, “Not likely.”

I raised my hands to push him away and emphasized, “I really do smell alcohol. Let’s go check the wine cellar—”

Before I could finish my sentence, a voice sounded in the dark living room. “There’s no need for that. I’m the one who’s drinking. You both go ahead and don’t mind me.”

I shrieked in fright as my heart almost leaped out of my chest.

Luckily, Ashton reacted quickly and switched on the lights. In the spacious living room, a red-faced John was holding a bottle of half-drunk whiskey in his hand while sprawled on the edge of the sofa. From his unfocused eyes, it was apparent that he was completely wasted.

“John!” I snapped back to my senses and felt my racing heartbeat gradually returning to normal. Restraining my anger, I said through gritted teeth, “Why are you here? Are you crazy? What the hell are you doing here so late at night?”

Ashton was also slightly baffled at the sight of this inebriated intruder. Glancing at the man on the ground, he asked, “What’s wrong? Why did you drink so much?”

I pursed my lips and grumbled, “Why else? He feels miserable because Hannah got married today.” Peering at him, I didn’t bother suppressing my temper as I yelled, “But seriously, if you feel miserable and need to drown in your sorrows, couldn’t you have done it somewhere else? Why the hell did you come here?”

Perhaps he was triggered by my words, John raised his gaze to me and croaked out in an aggrieved tone, “Letty, are you scolding me too? Do you think I deserve this too? I think I do, but the pain in my heart is so unbearable I can hardly breathe. I never want it to end this way. I just... I just didn’t know how to make her stay!”

## **Chapter 1040**

This man, who was over thirty and stood at five-feet-nine, started crying as he spoke, looking so aggrieved and pitiful. “You think I don’t know I should’ve cherished her well? But since I was a kid, no one taught me how to love. I thought that giving her the best living environment and materialistic life was enough. She knew that I didn’t approach any of those women and they were the ones who threw themselves at me. I...”

I watched as his tears and snot dirtied the sofa and the floor. Sighing helplessly, I softened my tone and said, “Alright, I know how much you’re hurting now and I also know that you never wanted things to turn out this way, but this is all in the past. She’s found her home now and gets to live the life she’s always wanted.



No one is blaming you, John. But since there's no way to change any of this, stop torturing yourself. When you meet another woman whom you love again, just make sure you tell her and give her a sense of security. Don't be caring one moment and distant the next."

"There won't be another woman!" He lay limp on the floor and bawled like a child. In a choked voice, he said, "There won't be another woman who'd spend a decade with me for nothing just like she did! I brought this upon myself, Scarlett! I deserve this!"

For a while, I couldn't think of the right words to comfort him. He was crying so hard that his body shook from it. After some hesitation, I decided to relay Hannah's words to him. "John, the stupidest thing a person can do is realizing someone's worth after they're gone because it is completely meaningless. Regardless of how sad and regretful you are, you should know that you don't always get second chances. Hannah is now married to someone who loves her dearly. You should do the same; start your own life and live how you want to. You shouldn't destroy your future by dwelling on the past "

I had said everything that I could. Despite not knowing if these words could get through to him, but it was really time that he moved on.

His unexpected appearance left Ashton and me in a bind. He was so drunk that he could barely walk, so allowing him to go back at this hour was out of the question. Hence, we could only let him rest here for the night.

Ashton supported him to the guest room while I poured a glass of warm water for him. After making sure he drank a few sips, I finally breathed out a sigh of relief. Noticing that his phone kept ringing, I inadvertently glanced at the caller ID—it was Yvonne.

This woman was really persistent. Pursing my lips, I picked up the phone and swiped to answer. A gentle and saccharine voice immediately drifted over the phone. "Mr. Stovall, where are you? Why didn't you answer my call earlier? I'm really worried about you. I went to your house and rang the doorbell a few times, but you didn't answer. Is something wrong? Are you okay?"

If it weren't for the unusual sound of breathing on the other end of the line, I would have actually believed that this woman genuinely cared about John. I spoke into the phone in a flat voice, "Yvonne, you've leeches off quite a lot from my brother, but enough is enough. He'll never marry you. The Stovall family will also never accept you. Greed is the downfall of men."

"Ms. Stovall?" On the other end of the line, there was shock in Yvonne's voice. "Are you with Mr. Stovall? I don't understand what you just said. Is Mr. Stovall okay?"

"Let's get on with it. How much money do you want?" I didn't have much patience for a woman like her and it was apparent from the bite in my voice.

The line was silent for a while before Yvonne feigned confusion. "Ms. Stovall, do all rich people like using money to insult a person's dignity?"

I chuckled humorlessly. "Of course I'd never use money to insult a person with dignity. The question is, do you possess dignity, Yvonne? You've been hounding my brother these days and I bet you've spent quite a lot of his money. He doesn't really care much about money and has always been generous to women.

I think you've benefited quite a lot from him. Since that's the case, you should be smart enough to know that it's time to pack up and get lost. Stop hanging around him. You should know, I'm not a very nice person. If you insist on waiting until I step in, then the consequences might be worse than you could imagine."

It was clear that Yvonne was displeased on the other end of the line. “Ms. Stovall, what’s the meaning of this? Mr. Stovall and I sincerely love each other. All of you look down on me, but none of you can interfere in Mr. Stovall’s marriage. It’s his own business and he’s the one who gets to make the decision. To put it bluntly, you’re just a b\*stard child. Who are you to make decisions for Mr. Stovall?”

“What is the reaction of the man lying next to you after hearing you say all this?” I taunted. Glancing at the passed-out John on the bed, I couldn’t help but feel upset for him. “Yvonne, I’m a woman myself. I know exactly what you want. I could also tell at first glance what kind of person you are. As long as I want to, I can dig out every single detail of that messy private life of yours.

The only reason I didn’t lay a finger on you is that you were there for John recently, but that’s where my gratitude stops. It’s important to know your limits. If you don’t give up your greedy ambitions and force me to show my hand, then please prepare yourself for what’s to come.

I won’t just force you to leave John without getting a single cent from him, I’ll also make you return everything he’s given you since day one. So Ms. Wilde, you better watch your back.”