

Chapter 1041

“Scarlett, how dare you threaten me? Who do you think you are? What right do you have to boss me around and meddle in my life...” Countless life experiences taught me not to waste my breath on quarreling with b*tches as I would only be degrading myself by doing that.

After hanging up the call, I turned off John’s phone and turned around to go back to the bedroom. That was when I saw Ashton leaning against the door frame, looking at me. His arms were folded across his chest and there was a smile playing on his lips. “It seems like you really went easy on Rebecca back then.”

I rolled my eyes at him and said indignantly, “Were you eavesdropping on me? Mr. Fuller, since when have you stooped so low?”

He cracked a grin at me and walked to my side. Draping a muscled arm over my shoulders, he led me out of the guest room and into our bedroom. Then, he pressed me on the bed and stared at me fervently. “Shall we continue where we left off?”

I looked at the clock on the wall and reminded him, “It’s already well past midnight, Mr. Fuller. Don’t forget how much work you have to do tomorrow!”

He raised his brows and leaned forward. His warm breath tickled my ear as he continued seducing me. “But if I don’t settle things now, I’m afraid I won’t be able to concentrate on anything tomorrow.”

This man!

I found myself unable to resist his temptation and relented, “I need to shower first. I’m all sticky with sweat after going out the whole day.”

He didn’t object, but after pulling me up from the bed, he looked at me with a devilish glint in his eyes. “Let’s shower together, hmm?”

I was rendered speechless, but knowing his temperament, there was no way he would allow me to refuse.

...

When I woke up the next day, Ashton wasn’t in the villa anymore.

There were too many matters he had to settle at Fuller Corporation, so it was expected that he would leave early.

However, what I never expected was seeing John—a wealthy and influential man—making breakfast in the kitchen with an apron wrapped around his waist so early in the morning.

It took me quite some time to snap out of my daze and formulate a sentence. “Mr. Stovall, it seems like you’ve been dealt quite a heavy blow, huh?”

Hearing my voice, he looked over his shoulder at me. Perhaps it was because he had slept his hair the previous night, a section of it was curled

up at a funny angle on the back of his head. Compared to his usual cold temperament, he looked a lot softer around the edges right then.

“Go wash up first, then come and eat breakfast,” he instructed with a spatula in one hand, seemingly in the middle of frying some eggs.

I was initially going to say something, but seeing the look he was giving me, I glanced down and realized that I was still in my nightdress. Hence, I quietly turned around to go upstairs and change my clothes.

By the time I came downstairs again, he was already done making a breakfast consisting of toast, bacon, and eggs. I had to admit that he did quite a good job.

“Try some and see if it matches your taste,” he urged, adding another egg to my plate.

I bowed my head and took a bite, seriously savoring the taste. Then, I looked at him and sincerely expressed my appreciation. “Wow. It’s really delicious. Do you make eggs often?”

He shook his head and I noticed the hint of sorrow in his eyes. “I learned it just recently. When Hannah was pregnant, she always said that she wanted me to try my fried eggs, but I didn’t know how to fry eggs. Later on, I managed to learn it, but I didn’t get the chance to cook for her. So I thought I might as well cook for you today. Anyway, eat up.”

I sighed and looked at him. “She said she doesn’t hate you but is very grateful to you. You were the one who gave her a different life and she doesn’t regret meeting you.”

He nodded. “I know.”

Seeing his lonely and sad figure, I pressed my lips together and added as an afterthought, “Yvonne called you last night. I answered it for you. You’re not actually planning to marry her, are you?”

He nodded indifferently and responded, “Mm.”

Faced with his lukewarm response, I couldn’t help from prodding further. “You’re not really going to marry her, right?”

He grunted nonchalantly again, as though he didn’t care about this matter whatsoever.

Bang! I slammed down my cutlery and pinned him a stern stare. “John, I don’t care why you want to marry Yvonne. I will never agree to it. You obviously know how scheming and manipulative she is. If you let her marry into the Stovall family, how are you going to face Kiki in the future? Marriage isn’t something to take lightly. I’m not against you marrying another woman. You should consider properly what kind of woman you want to build a family with. Not to mention, you have a son—a son whom you share with Hannah. If you marry a woman just for the sake of marrying, have you ever thought about how it’d impact Kiki’s life?”

Taken aback by my abrupt outburst, he met my gaze. “It doesn’t matter who I marry. It makes no difference!”

“Yes, it makes no difference, but if you bring back a conniving woman like her into the Stovall family, when Uncle Louis gets older in his years, can you really feel at ease placing Kiki in Yvonne’s care? Can you guarantee that she won’t find ways to get herself knocked up and do something malicious to Kiki? Even if you want to get married, at least think about what kind of woman you need in your life. Don’t just settle with whatever is convenient. All I can say is that you cannot marry Yvonne. I won’t allow it and if you insist, then this is the end of our sibling relationship.”

Seeing me getting all worked up, he released a chuckle and sighed helplessly. “Fine, I won’t marry her. Don’t worry about it. It’s so rare to see you this concerned about my personal life. From now on, Kiki will be under your care and guidance. I’ll just stay unmarried.”

Chapter 1042

Now he’s just taking it too far. I was left speechless by his statement and wanted to advise him against that. However, after some deliberation, I decided to just let it be. Hence, silence stretched between us for a while. “Don’t contact Yvonne again from now on. We don’t even know how many men she’s slept with. It’d be troublesome if you get down with something because of her.”

When I picked up the call the previous night, I could clearly make out the sound of a man's breathing on the other end of the line. I wasn't an ignorant child or a brainless fool. Of course, I knew what was going on.

I can't believe she had the audacity to call John when there was another man right beside her. Does she take John as a fool? Or does she think she's some kind of hot stuff everybody wants a piece of even after being used over and over again?

Noticing the fury on my face, John sighed again and said, "Alright, alright. I'll listen to everything you say from now on, okay? You can stop worrying now. I'll make sure that woman stays far, far away from me."

Observing that he wasn't all that concerned about Yvonne, I released a sigh of relief and continued eating my food. He still had work to do at his company, so he left soon after.

I dropped by the hospital to visit Summer. Although the surgery was a success, it was a major surgery after all. Hence, I had to go to the hospital every other day to observe her post-operation recovery.

"She's recovering well. Let's try our best to maintain the progress. If she doesn't have a relapse within the next five years, she can be considered in the clear. Just be mindful to maintain a healthy daily routine, and she'll be fine."

The doctor gave a few simple instructions after examining Summer and left soon after. Cameron and Zachary sighed in relief. These days, everyone had their hearts in their throats, afraid that something undesirable might happen.

Seeing as Summer was out of danger, we gradually felt our nerves loosen.

“Scarlett, Nick is in K City. He wanted to meet up with you both if you have the time. Although the two of you aren’t related by blood, you’re still siblings in name and friends as well. Since you haven’t been in contact for such a long time, you should invite him to your place for a meal and hang out with him more often.” Cameron tugged me toward the door to the ward and spoke in a hushed voice.

I was surprised and asked, “He’s in K City? Is he here for work?” Indeed, we haven’t seen each other in a very long time. So many things had happened in the past few years that we gradually lost contact.

“Okay, mom. I’ll contact him.” There would be a lot of catching up to do. It also got me wondering if Jackson followed him here. After so many years, I had no idea how the two of them were faring.

John called me to invite Ashton and me for lunch later, saying that he wanted to thank us for taking him in the previous night. I immediately refused him, but like a child, he pulled the family card on me.

Helpless, I ended up accepting his invitation. Done with her checkup, Summer went back with Cameron and the others. After seeing them off, I made my way back into the hospital and went to the washroom. When I came out, I accidentally bumped into someone and hurriedly bowed my head to apologize, “Sorry, I didn’t look where I was going. Are you—”

When I looked up to see Kristina, I was visibly stunned and blurted out, “What are you... Are you sick?”

My eyes traveled to the medical report in her hand and I blinked in surprise.

She pursed her lips and shot me an indifferent glance before entering the washroom with a frosty expression, seemingly disinclined to talk to me.

Out of curiosity, I checked the department on this floor and furrowed my brows in perplexity. Internal medicine? What kind of illness does she have? After hesitating briefly, I didn’t give the matter any further thought and prepared to leave.

I was so done with John. He offered to buy us lunch but asked Ashton and me to wait for him at his company, saying that his car was hit by someone and he needed to hitch a ride with us.

Well, I didn’t believe him, not even for one second. God knows how many cars were in his villa’s basement parking and could easily pick one. He’s a nutjob.

Fortunately, Fuller Corporation wasn't very far from his company. Ashton and I drove there and waited for him in the driveway. After giving him a call, I recounted the encounter with Kristina at the hospital. Ashton wasn't interested in such things, but he still listened attentively and replied, "I don't find it that odd. Maybe she was down with gastric or something."

I gnawed on my bottom lip and mused, "She looked really pale and vomited pretty badly too. It seemed like she was pregnant, but not really either. If I'm not mistaken, she's Dr. Ludwick's niece and comes from quite an impressive background. Oddly, she looked like she was really short of money."

He frowned slightly and glanced at me. "That's her own business. You don't need to concern yourself over it."

I twisted my lips together and eyed him. "Ashton, are you finding me a nuisance already? So much so you don't even wanna make casual talk with me?"

He squinted at me with an amused smile playing on his lips. "Am I not talking to you now?"

That was how women were. We liked to make casual talk about other people's lives, just for the fun of it. I gave him a sidelong glance and retorted, "Are you really? You're giving me half-assed replies and you're not even trying to hide it."

He stifled his smile and was contemplating what to say next, but my attention was drawn to the scantily-clad woman at the entrance to John's company. Although she was wearing a fox fur sweater, it barely covered her body. She was so exposed that if one didn't know any better, one might think she was from a brothel.

Chapter 1043

"Is she looking for John?" I pursed my lips in displeasure.

Ashton placed his hand on the steering wheel and raised his brows.
"Seems like it."

Things were about to get interesting.

"C'mon. Let's go watch the show!" I got out of the car and strode toward the company's lobby, going after the skimpily dressed Yvonne. Even if she was here to see John, she should at least have the decency to dress properly. But the way she was dressed right then seemed out of character, even for her.

"Miss, do you have an appointment?" Yvonne was stopped by the front desk.

“I’m looking for John. Don’t even try to stop me.” Yvonne seemed slightly off and everything the front desk personnel said to her fell on deaf ears as she rushed in.

However, she seemed to have overlooked the fact that there were security guards here. She was hauled out of the lobby by them and politely warned against trespassing. Otherwise, they would have no choice but to get physical with her.

However, Yvonne remained undeterred. Even the security guards’ stern warning failed to get through to her and once again, she charged into the lobby like a madwoman. The guards were startled but quickly formed a barricade outside the entrance.

Seeing that there was no way to enter, Yvonne panicked and started yelling hysterically, “John! I want to see John! How dare you stop me? When I see him, I’ll make sure he fires all of you!”

The guards remained unmoved. Ashton and I watched for a while longer and grew bored. I simply took out my phone and dialed for John. The call was connected very soon.

“Hey, Letty. Are you guys here already? I just got out of a meeting. Give me a minute. I’ll be down soon,” John said over the phone and I could vaguely hear another voice beside him, probably his secretary reporting to him about work.

I hummed a response, not surprised that he assumed I was calling to rush him, when in fact, I wanted to ask him about Yvonne. Hence, I cut straight to the chase. "Someone's looking for you downstairs. She seems very desperate."

He was quiet for a moment before querying, "Yvonne's downstairs?"

I didn't give him a direct answer. "It's getting late and I'm starting to feel hungry. You should come down as soon as possible."

He didn't probe further, only giving me a perfunctory response before ending the call.

Never one to be interested in such matters, Ashton was looking at his phone with an impassive expression.

Meanwhile, Yvonne was still shouting at the entrance, but no one paid any attention to her. I surmised all the employees were given prior notice not to entertain her.

John came down shortly after, looking very flamboyant with a black coat over his suit. As the president of the company, he certainly looked his part with his cold and domineering presence.

Spotting me, he immediately walked in my direction and completely ignored Yvonne who was still shrieking at the top of her lungs by the entrance. He

looked at me with a faint smile. “Did you wait long? I hope you’re not too hungry.”

I shrugged my shoulders, then pointed at Yvonne instead of answering his question. “Aren’t you going to deal with that? You’re not worried that it might damage your reputation?”

He narrowed his eyes at Yvonne beyond the entrance with a look of disgust in his eyes. Turning back his gaze to me, he said blandly, “This woman is stepping more and more out of line. It’s quite annoying, to be honest.”

With that, he walked toward the entrance, stopping in front of Yvonne to look at her with a stony expression.

When Yvonne saw him, she immediately ran toward him but was stopped by the security guards. Vexed, she yelled at them angrily, “Are all of you blind? I know Mr. Stovall! Why the hell are you stopping me? Get out of my way!”

The guards were unfazed, looking at her dispassionately while maintaining their stance.

Seeing this, she looked at John and said aggrievedly, “John, look at them. How can they bully me like this? You have to fire them later and teach them a lesson.”

John sneered at her, “Teach them a lesson? Why should I?”

“They’re bullying me. Shouldn’t you do something about it?” Yvonne replied matter-of-factly.

John scoffed in response, “So what if they’re bullying you? What does it have to do with me?”

Yvonne stiffened slightly from embarrassment. “John, what are you talking about? We’re going to get married soon. Why are you saying all this?”

Impatience lined John’s features and he said in a clipped tone, “I thought I’ve made things clear. It looks like I was not clear enough. Fine, I’ll say it one more time. If you still don’t understand, then I’ll have to do something to make you do.”

Without waiting for her reply, he raised his brows and continued, “Don’t show up in front of me ever again. This is my last warning to you. I’ve already given you what there is to give. You can consider it a reward for the past few days—I don’t really care. Now take the money and get lost from my sight. Permanently.”

Yvonne’s eyes reddened all of a sudden. “Why? I didn’t do anything wrong. I listened to you and did everything you wanted. You said you’d marry me. Do you think you can kick me to the curb with just a few words? How dare you?”

Chapter 1044

John's lips curled in distaste. "It seems like you're not aware, but I, John Stovall, always do whatever I like. These are my final words to you. Don't ever appear before me. If I see you coming to the Stovall residence or my company again, don't expect to get away unscathed. I can get really creative when it comes to tormenting people, so you better do as I say."

Tears rolled down Yvonne's cheeks as she stared at John pitifully. "John, I don't know what I did wrong, but don't force me to leave. Just tell me what I did wrong and I'll immediately change. As long as you don't make me leave, I'll do whatever you ask me to do!"

Irritated by her persistence, John sneered, "Are you sure you'll do whatever I ask you to do?"

Yvonne nodded profusely. "Yes! As long as you don't force me to leave!"

"Then just die," John ordered, behaving like a ruffian. He was never one to think before speaking. Hence, he had said that to her on a whim.

Thinking he was being serious, Yvonne peered at him expectantly. "Does this mean I can stay by your side as long I die?" She looked like she was actually taking his words seriously.

John nodded and cocked a brow. "Yes. Go on, then."

With that, he looked past her at Ashton and me. “Let’s go. I’m starving.”

Before we could respond, a loud noise came from the pond outside Stovall Corporation, and following that, we saw the water inside splash a few meters high.

I realized with a start that it was Yvonne. Whipping my head toward John, I exclaimed, “I think she jumped in!”

John glanced back fleetingly but remained aloof as he replied blandly, “Mm, I guess so. C’mon, let’s go for lunch now.”

Then, he walked out without a care in the world. Ashton didn’t even bat an eyelash. Meanwhile, I was flabbergasted.

Similar to me, the security guards outside and the front desk personnel were taken aback. Looking dumbly at the pond, one of them cautiously asked, “Mr. Stovall, how should we deal with this?”

John’s brows knitted together in annoyance. “Deal with it as you see fit, of course. Send her to the hospital if she doesn’t die and if she does, call the funeral home to take her away. Make sure to make it a grand funeral. I think she’d like that very much.”

Without faltering in his steps, he directly got into my car.

The security guards and I were wearing similarly stunned expressions.

But none of us protested. Instead, we looked toward the pond to see Yvonne struggling pathetically in the water. The weather was so cold and I couldn't imagine how she brought herself to jump into the pond like that. In short, I just couldn't wrap my mind around the whole thing.

It must be freezing in there!

In the car, I couldn't stop myself from glancing at John. "You—"

He suddenly looked at me and cut me off, "Uncle Louis arranged a blind date for me. It's this afternoon. Help me assess her later. If she's suitable, I'll get someone to prepare for the wedding."

I was taken aback and stared at him blankly for a while. After recovering from my surprise, I asked, "You're going on a blind date later?"

He nodded curtly. "It's a friend of Uncle Louis'. She's almost the same age as you. Married and divorced. No kids. Uncle Louis asked me to meet her."

I was utterly floored by this revelation and scowled at him. "Why the hell are you bringing us along for your blind date?" I really thought that he genuinely wanted to buy us lunch, but it turned out that he was taking Ashton and me along to be his third wheel.

He shrugged nonchalantly. “You know I’m not into all these things. Besides, I’m a bad judge of character, so I need your help. If you think she makes the cut, I’ll prepare for the wedding. Anyway, we’re of equal social standings, that’s for sure.”

I felt like he had completely given up on satisfying his emotional needs. All he wanted right then was to find someone suitable to be his wife in name.

After giving it some thought, I looked at him again and said, “John, you can wait until you’re more emotionally stable to think about what kind of wife you want, then only go on blind dates. By doing this, you’re not only being irresponsible to yourself but that woman as well.”

He frowned at that. “You’re so weird. You don’t like Yvonne, but now you’re saying I’m being irresponsible to another woman by going on a blind date with her. What exactly do you want me to do? I’ve already lost a good relationship. Do you still think there’s a chance for me to find love again?”

I mirrored his frown and was slightly stunned because I detected a hint of accusation in his tone. “So are you saying I shouldn’t interfere in your life?”

He pressed his lips together as pain flashed across his eyes. Gazing at me with an anguished look on his face, he apologized, “Sorry, I didn’t mean what I said, but I just really don’t know what I should do. I’m completely lost now. I’ve lost the most important thing to me and I’m a complete mess now.”

Sighing, I felt my heart clench painfully while seeing the agonized state he was in. I shot a helpless glance at Ashton and he coincidentally looked at me reassuringly before comforting me in a steady voice, "Let's just go with the flow. Many times, people appear in our lives for a reason. It's all fate, so let's allow fate to take its course."

Since when did this guy become so religious?

However, there was indeed some truth in his words. Hence, we could only think this way for the time being.

After regaining control of my emotions, I glanced back at John and advised, "John, since Uncle Louis arranged this date for you, you should take it seriously. When we get there later, treat her respectfully and politely, regardless of what you think about her. Don't be distant or cold. It doesn't matter whether you like her or not, make sure you behave yourself."

Chapter 1045

He nodded and leaned back in his seat. Sighing, he closed his eyes with exhaustion. A relationship can really take an emotional toll on a person.

As the car came to a stop in front of our destination, we got out of the car, and John stood nonchalantly at the side. Seeing the unconcerned look on

his face, I nudged him with my elbow and said, “No matter what, you need to treat this seriously, okay? You’re not a child anymore. Since you’ve promised Uncle Louis, you need to respect yourself and your date later.”

“I know.” He looked at me expectantly. “Are you coming with me?”

I shook my head and held Ashton’s hand. “Nope. My husband and I will sit at the side while you talk with the lady. If I see you disrespect her, I will not bother to care about your matters anymore. You can do whatever you like.”

He pouted and nodded obediently. “Okay.”

John was about to head to the table that Uncle Louis had booked when Ashton and I were stopped by the host of the restaurant. Apparently, in order to enter this high-end restaurant, Ashton and I would need to make a reservation in advance.

John glared at the host. “What do you mean they can’t enter? You know what? Fine. We’ll leave. Tomorrow I’ll shut down this lousy restaurant!”

He then grabbed my hand, ready to leave. I was rendered speechless by his childish behavior. Thankfully, Ashton stayed calm and stopped John. “You should go in first. We will go in later.”

John frowned. “Why? Are you guys planning to leave me here alone?”

“I’ll call the owner of this restaurant and let him arrange a table for us. If not, Scarlett and I can’t go in,” Ashton replied.

John pursed his lips. “You know the owner?”

I knew John was just stalling for time. Fed up with his behavior, I crossed my arms and said, “John, go wait for us inside. Or else, we will leave immediately. This has nothing to do with us anyway. Now I’ll give you three seconds to move. Three, two…”

“I’ll go in now!” he shouted and stomped angrily away. As he went inside, he kept turning around and looked at me with puppy-dog eyes. “Scarlett, both of you must come inside, okay? Otherwise, I would be very sad.”

If we weren’t at a public place, I would have punched him to death.

Unable to continue looking at his immature behavior, I rolled my eyes. I then turned to Ashton and saw him on a call with the owner, saying, “Is Tasty Elements your restaurant?”

Seeing the curiosity in my eyes, he put his phone on speaker. A voice came from the other side of the line. “Yeah. I invest it for fun. You want to go there?” Is he Joe?

Ashton replied, “Yup. I’m in front of the restaurant now. Tell your staff to let me in.”

With that, he passed his phone to the host. The host took it over tentatively. Before he could say anything, Joe shouted, “Are you out of your mind? Why did you stop the customers from entering?”

The host was still baffled. “Um, hi. May I know who you are?”

Silence came from the other side of the phone, and Joe eventually said, “Give the phone back. You’re fired.”

Then, he hung up.

Three minutes later, a chubby man came out of the restaurant and smiled obsequiously at us. “Hi, Mr. Fuller and Mrs. Fuller. I’m so sorry for the inconvenience caused. Please come in. According to Mr. Quinn, your meal is on the house today, so please enjoy yourselves and order whatever you want to try!”

He then ushered us into the serene, classy restaurant, and we selected a table right next to John’s.

As Ashton ordered food for both of us, I cast my gaze on the lady sitting opposite John. She seemed gentle and virtuous, albeit a little cold and distant.

I continued to observe them. John seemed to have nothing to say, and the lady did not speak much as well. They continued to eat gracefully as if they were not at all affected by each other’s presence.

I then looked towards John and shot him a look, signaling him to find something to chat with his date. But he merely stared back and stuck out his tongue at me. Looking at his puerile behavior, I almost jumped out from my seat and beat him.

“Is she your sister?” the lady said. She was not loud, but the three of us heard her well. John and I froze immediately, and she continued, “Let’s eat together. The more the merrier.” As soon as she finished speaking, she stood up with her bag and walked to our table.

Then, she raised her hand and summoned the waiter. “Hi. Can you move us to this table? We’d like to eat together. Thank you.”

Seeing that she had sat down beside me, John rubbed his neck and joined us as well, embarrassed.

“Hi. My name is Emma Lyons. I’m thirty-three years old, a divorcee without kids, and I can no longer conceive. Currently, I’m working as a professor at K University. I guess you know about my family background, so I don’t need to say more about it. As for my past relationship experience, my ex-husband was the only romantic partner that I had. My current income is thirty thousand per month. I have cars and some properties. Therefore, I’m financially independent.” After Emma finished introducing herself, she met John’s eyes calmly.

Chapter 1046

John hesitated for a moment before replying, "I'm John Stovall, thirty-five years old, not married, but I have a son. He is still an infant. My income is not bad, and I owned several companies, cars, and other properties. Besides, there's someone I love."

I was flabbergasted. What is he doing? Why did he say that?

Emma nodded and turned to me. "So John is also looking for a partner for marriage, just like me. As his sister, do you have anything to ask? You can ask me whatever you want to know about."

Me?

Taken aback, I gave her an awkward smile and said, "No, I think you've misunderstood me. I'm not here to judge if you're suited for John. This is a private matter between you and him, so it's not up to us to decide. If everything goes well, both of you are the ones who are getting married, not us. We are just bystanders."

Emma pursed her lips and did not respond.

John also turned quiet all of a sudden.

Seeing their behavior, I sighed inwardly. I could feel a headache coming.

After a pause, I looked at them and asked, "Would you like to go for a walk together? Maybe you guys can find a café and chat about each other's hobbies and lifestyle."

"No, thanks. My hobby is reading, and I don't have any other hobbies," Emma replied curtly.

John also gave a terse answer. "I like to sleep with young women and spend money on them. Other than smoking and drinking, I have no other hobbies."

I took a deep breath and shot daggers at him. Is he out of his mind!

To my surprise, Emma replied, "Great. We wouldn't interfere with each other's life then."

What!

I stared wide-eyed at both of them, and it suddenly dawned on me that they're perfect for each other.

Feeling like a third wheel, I started to rack my brain for an excuse to leave.

However, Joe suddenly appeared in the restaurant with a pretty lady beside him, who looked about twenty years old. Her clothing and bag were all high-end products, unlike the women whom he would casually date.

As soon as they entered the restaurant, they found us and came towards our table. It seemed like Joe was here for Ashton. They clapped each other on the back and greeted one another. Then, they sat down at our table, and now we were a group of six.

When Joe saw me, he was stunned for a second before saying hi to me. I initially thought that I would need to introduce Emma to him, but he said, "Hi, Ms. Lyons. What a coincidence. What brings you here?"

"I'm here for a blind date." Emma was still as straightforward as ever.

Joe rubbed his nose, looking a bit uneasy. Something is not right.

I looked at Joe and smiled faintly. "Mr. Quinn, are you not going to introduce the beautiful lady to us?"

He smiled and gave a simple introduction. "She is Zelene Harrett, my fiancée."

That took me by surprise. I did hear the rumor saying that he was engaged, but seeing his fiancée with my own eyes caught me completely off guard.

In just a few days, he had already gotten over Rebecca and found himself a socialite fiancée. Well, I did not expect him to be so level-headed.

Zelene looked at us and smiled politely. "Hello, everyone. Nice to meet you all."

"Seems like you have high standards in choosing your partner. Not only do you want someone with good family background, but also a young, good-looking appearance. No wonder you told my father that we were not suitable for each other," Emma said casually, making everyone's jaw dropped.

Her words obviously meant that she had gone on a blind date with Joe before, but they did not get together in the end. And he probably chose Zelene because she was younger and more attractive than Emma.

What a small world!

Coming to think of it, the social circle of the elites in K City was indeed not large. There were not many prominent families here, so it was quite normal to have a situation like this.

I glanced towards John subconsciously, but he looked completely unperturbed. I guess he doesn't care about Emma at all.

Joe explained, "Oh, Ms. Lyons. Don't tease me like that. I'm not that superficial, and it's not because of the reason you've mentioned. Although I

don't have a lot of yearnings in life, I still hope to find love. But Ms. Lyons, you had told me that you didn't want to have any romantic relationship. So, I don't think we are suitable for each other. And that's why I went to see Mr. Lyons and told him so."

Emma did not respond and looked at him impassively as if she was just blurting out her observation and could not care less about Joe not choosing her.

The dinner had not started yet, and the atmosphere was already so awkward that I could cut the tension with a knife.

However, Zelene was completely indifferent as if she was not involved in the situation. She ordered her food politely and turned to me. "Mrs. Fuller, do you want to order anything? The steak here is really good. Do you want to try it?"

Chapter 1047

I smiled. "Since you have recommended it, I will definitely try it. Ms. Harrett, you seem to be very familiar with this restaurant."

She replied with a smile, "Not really, but I've been here a few times. So, I remember the ones that I like and always recommend them to friends that come here."

Surprisingly, Zelene was nothing like Rebecca. With Joe's personality, I thought he would find someone similar to his ex-crush, but Zelene and Rebecca were like chalk and cheese.

After chattering for a bit, I stood up from my seat and headed to the restroom. When Ashton saw me leaving, he quickly stopped his conversation with Joe and wanted to accompany me, but I declined as I did not want to interrupt them.

A few minutes later, I stepped out of the restroom and bumped into Joe, who was leaning against the wall of the corridor. I thought he was waiting for someone, but I looked around and saw no one. Hmm, who is he waiting for?

After hesitating for a moment, I walked towards him and asked out of politeness, "Are you waiting for Ms. Harrett?"

He lifted his gaze and looked at me coldly. "I'm waiting for you."

I furrowed my brows, puzzled. "Why?" I don't think we have anything to talk about. Joe had never liked me. All these years we rarely interacted with one another even though he was my husband's close friend.

"Can I help you with anything?" I asked, stopping in my tracks.

He arched an eyebrow and cut to the chase. "Can we talk somewhere else?"

I don't think I have a choice, do I? So, I nodded and gestured. "Sure."

As we arrived at the stairwell, he put his hands in his pockets and leaned his tall figure against the wall, giving off an aura of grimness. I remained silent and stared at him, waiting for him to speak first.

After a pause, he lit a cigarette and took a long drag on it. "Were you the one who reported Rebecca to the police?"

I frowned. Gosh, is he here for Rebecca? I thought he had moved on! Apparently, he still cares about her.

"I found her by accident, so I called the police," I told him truthfully. That night, Hannah and I went to the alley out of curiosity. I never thought Rebecca would be like that.

He exhaled slowly and cast an icy gaze at me. "Ashton has given his heart to you. What else do you want from her? Why do you have to push her over the edge? You just want her to die, don't you?"

Hearing his accusation, I was stupefied. I could not help but ask, “Mr. Quinn, don’t you think there’s something wrong with your logic? She was the one who committed the crime. I did not force her to do it. And I have never harmed her. That night, I saw her purely by chance. I called the police because she was doing something terribly wrong. I don’t think there’s anything wrong with that. Are you expecting me to ignore what I saw and let her continue to ruin herself?”

He scoffed, “It’s up to her to decide what to do with her life. Besides, you could have solved the problem in another way, but you chose the one that made her suffer the most. You caused Ashton to completely give up on her and took away the light in her life. Scarlett, you’re even more wicked than I thought.”

I blinked in bewilderment. What? Is there something wrong with him? What does he mean by “you can solve it in another way?” Exasperated, I said, “So, you think that it was my plan to get her arrested so that Ashton would give up on her? Joe Quinn, you’re freaking ridiculous! What makes you think that I would use my precious time to do something that would bring me no benefits but harm?”

Then, I continued, “To be honest, I don’t care about Rebecca at all; she isn’t worth my attention. She’s nothing but a woman who only knows how to cling onto men and leech off them. She could have improved herself over the years, but she didn’t. Even if Ashton likes her, I don’t think any man could put up with a woman like her for long. What kind of man could tolerate her and love her forever? Speaking of which, Joe, didn’t you give up on her as well? What makes you think that you have the right to question me?”

Taken aback, he stubbed out his cigarette and stared at me blankly. After a long while, he replied coldly, "Don't change the topic. It's your fault. You didn't have to send her to the police, but you showed no mercy and did it anyway. Her reputation and her life are ruined because of you. Even if she could get out of jail one day, how can she survive in society? Scarlett, you're such a cruel woman."

"Hahaha!" I couldn't help but burst out laughing at his preposterous reasoning. How ridiculous can he get?

Chapter 1048

He was stunned by my sudden outburst of laughter, furrowing his eyebrows at me. "What are you laughing about? Do you find this funny? Did I say something wrong?"

It took me a long while to calm down, wiping away tears from my eyes. "There's no way you believe the words that are coming out of your mouth, right?" I said sarcastically. "How could you say such a thing so confidently? You say that she'll lose everything if she goes to jail, but I honestly want to ask you: are you absolutely sure that you have no way of getting her out of there? Is the Kane family so powerless that they can't rescue a single person from prison? Besides, did you think that she was really going to become famous, even if she hasn't been sent to jail? Of course not. Everyone in our circle is aware that she's your and Ashton's precious little doll. Did you think that she would find a partner among us when you let her fly out of the nest? You know more than anyone else that she's just going

to end up relying on some old man's money to survive and become nothing more than a toy.

“Admit it. You've fallen out of love with her a long time ago and started to resent her. Why else would you tell her such horrible things at the hospital? You wanted to force her to leave you, yet didn't want to be stuck with the reputation of an asshole, so you just let go of her reins and watched as she made mistake after mistake, until she'd finally reached the point of no return. You are half the reason why she's turned out this way. You were satisfied with the outcome, but you despised the thought of having to take responsibility for your actions! So, in an act of fake self-righteousness, you came to interrogate me and pushed all the blame onto me, making me out to be the villain in the situation. Although, to be honest with you, you really shouldn't have wasted your efforts. Even if you force me to take the blame for your actions, you'd still be regarded as a scummy human being in other people's eyes. So please quit the whole good guy act, or I might just throw up.”

I hadn't meant to verbally abuse him, but I couldn't stop myself.

Joe was flushed all the way up to his neck in anger, and I let out an internal scoff at the sight. Nothing about this man was genuine. He'd already committed so many evil acts, yet still insisted that his hands were clean. How ridiculous!

There was no point in continuing the conversation any longer. “You better watch out!” I warned, turning on my heel and walking away.

“You have some nerve—forcing other people to take the fall for you!” he roared out from behind me. “No wonder Ashton is head over heels for you! You’re a conniving, sneaky witch!”

I glanced back over my shoulder at him, flashing a polite smile. “You flatter me, Mr. Quinn. Look, if you really can’t let go of this, I have a suggestion for you: wait until she gets out of prison, then you can bring her back home to be your precious little doll once more. But by that time, she’d be old and wrinkly, and you’d probably refuse to take her in. There’s no way you could appreciate a woman like that, right?”

After saying so, I left him and headed for the restaurant. Ashton was already waiting outside for me, approaching me as soon as he spotted me. “What took you so long?”

Looping my arm through his, I said cheerily, “Just met a familiar toilet and had a chat with him, so I figured I might as well take out the trash! My mood’s greatly improved, and I feel so refreshed.”

“What are you talking about?” His eyebrows knitted together.

“I meant to say that I had a nice trip to the loo!” I grinned.

Sighing in exasperation, he flicked my forehead lightly. “Watch your mouth.”

Joe, who was trailing behind me, brushed roughly past us as he stormed off towards the lobby, spitting out, "Shameless woman!" as he did so.

"What did he say?" Ashton looked at me, perplexed.

I shrugged. "It's about Rebecca. He didn't want to abandon her in a distasteful manner and wanted to keep his image squeaky clean. When that plan failed, he got frustrated and took out all his humiliation on me."

Ashton's lips pursed as he stared at the back of Joe's silhouette. "He's getting married to that woman from the Harrett family soon, so it's about time he moves on from Rebecca. The Kanes and the Harretts' future business cooperations will benefit each other greatly."

I wasn't interested in any of Joe's business. "Rebecca's life has all gone down the drain. She didn't have any good people around her, and she didn't have a career of her own," I lamented.

The worst thing a woman could do was to entrust all of herself to a man and spend all of her time and energy on him only to get dust in return. Then, there was nothing she could do except to wait until she had become useless to him and get thrown away like an old rag.

Perhaps Rebecca's misfortune had started from the moment Parker entrusted her to the group of friends.

The poor woman had never gotten a chance to plan her life out properly. She had not only lost her pride and independence because of love but had now also lost the motivation to continue living. There was nothing more she could do now except be another rich man's eye candy, but her beauty could only last for so long. She had already ruined her own life with her own two hands.

"I have to go to A City tomorrow to handle some things," Ashton suddenly spoke up. "It's time we start living for ourselves too, Scarlett."

Chapter 1049

A little surprised by his words, I squinted my eyes at him. "A City?"

The corners of his lips quirked up into a smirk. I could see the bloodthirst and fury swimming deep in the depths of his eyes, even if he was doing his best to hide them.

"We can't let the child's pain be for nothing, can we?"

Oh. He was finally going to make a move on Armond. After a slight pause of hesitation, I asked, "Can I come with you?"

"Why? Will you miss me too much when I'm gone?"

I nodded, smiling up at him. "I guess. So, how about it? Can I go with you?"

As long as the issue with Armond was left unresolved, we would both have sleepless nights. Although we would have preferred to live a peaceful and mundane life, we knew that we might face even more pain and suffering in the future if we didn't handle the issue as soon as possible.

So, Ashton agreed to let me accompany him on his trip.

Joe didn't even stay for the remainder of the meal, merely telling Ashton the date of his and Zelene's engagement before dragging her away with him. It seemed that their marriage had been confirmed.

I hadn't expected two weirdos like John and Emma to get along, but to my surprise, they exchanged contact details before they left, and even made plans to eat dinner together tonight at the Stovall residence. John later approached Ashton and me to inform us that he wanted to host a small party to celebrate Kiki's birthday, thus coming up with the idea of inviting everyone over to the Stovall residence for dinner.

Hannah and Chandler were likely to be there because of Kiki. Hannah had also moved on from everything, so what was John's motive in bringing Emma along?

After leaving the restaurant, Ashton handled some work issues before going to the shopping mall with me to make sure that we didn't show up to Kiki's birthday party empty-handed.

We strolled around the mall for a bit, where Ashton ended up choosing a Transformers toy as well as a customizable black race car. His reasoning was that all children enjoyed driving around tiny vehicles of their own, and the Stovall residence's yard was large enough for Kiki to do just that.

We bumped into some familiar faces as soon as we left the mall. It was Sally, and with her was the professor that we'd seen once before at the restaurant, Jim.

Having met once prior to that, the atmosphere between us wasn't as awkward anymore. Sally waved at us, politely inquiring, "It's rare to see Ashton in the malls. Did you come to buy something in particular?"

Ashton nodded, but said nothing.

His dark gaze fell upon Jim, an unrecognizable emotion in his eyes as he stared at the man. I didn't understand these sorts of non-verbal cues between men, so I chose to ignore them.

I couldn't help but feel like Sally was glancing down at my tummy on and off as she spoke. "I know we've all been incredibly busy recently, but I've been thinking if we should all return to J City and celebrate the new year as a family. Ashton, you know Uncle Charlie and Aunt Helen are getting older with no children to accompany them. Besides, you're usually so occupied with work that you rarely visit them. It'd be nice to take a break for a family reunion. I doubt you've even been to the old Fuller family home these past few years."

Ashton nodded, simply replying, "We'll see."

"By the way, Jim and I are planning to hold a wedding soon," Sally told him, sounding slightly apprehensive. "Do you have any opinions about that? We're both in our late forties already, and we want to start living a happy life..."

"Have the Murphys agreed to you two being together?" Ashton interrupted, turning his attention to Jim.

"That is solely between your aunt and me," Jim answered, as elegant and self-composed as ever. "The Murphy family has no business interfering with our relationship."

The Murphys?

There were very few "Murphy" families in K City. Was the Murphy family he mentioned the same as the one on my mind?

Ashton's mouth quirked slightly, but the rest of his expression revealed no emotion. "Maybe you should wait until next year. It's still too early to make this decision."

Sally's face fell, presumably feeling as confused as I was. "What are you talking about, Ashton? There's nothing problematic between Jim and me, so I didn't think you'd oppose our relationship."

“Scarlett and I are busy. Let’s talk about this another time. I suggest you ask him about his family and find out more about his background before deciding on anything.” Not wanting to continue the conversation any further, he tugged on my arm and we left the mall.

While in the car, I spoke up, “Let’s make a stop at the local pet shop. I think Kiki would like to have a small puppy friend to play with.”

He nodded in response, pressing the gas pedal and driving off.

We sat in silence for a while before I stole an uncertain look at him. “Are you sure Uncle Jim is one of the Murphys that we know of?”

Ashton made a sound of admittance. I continued on, “Did you find out after looking into him, or did you know since the beginning?”

Even though the Murphys had a lot of children and Armond was likely one amongst many descendants, they had always been a very lowkey family that rarely made any public appearances.

Chapter 1050

“The Murphys have many children, but there is only one who controls the family fortune and business,” Ashton explained while driving. “Robert Murphy and Armond aren’t immediate family members. Robert has three sons—all three of whom are not employed at the Murphy Corporation. The rest of his grandchildren have all also started up their own businesses in fields of their own choosing. Jim is Robert’s third son and loves literature, so he focused solely on learning literature and arts since young.”

“So, Armond is...”

“He’s Robert’s eldest’s son’s grandson. He was chosen to inherit the family business because he has a strong interest in business and earning money. Unfortunately, Armond was so determined to make a profit that greed consumed his morals, bringing lots of trouble to the Murphy family. That’s why the Murphys have fallen far from what they used to be in the past.”

“I see.” It made sense that not every child in a large family would have the talent to go into business. Some would prefer arts, some would prefer research, and others would prefer to live on their parents’ money and not ever having to work for a living. If you wanted your family to continue expanding and growing, you had to pick and choose among those children the best candidate to manage the family business. Sadly for the Murphys, Armond has no virtues in his business dealings.

There were always blurred lines between right or wrong. Once someone was cornered, they would resort to whatever methods possible to get out of that. Armond was way too ambitious and predatory, and as a result, the Murphy family hadn't expanded as well as his elders had expected.

“But even so, it shouldn't affect Aunt Sally and Uncle Jim's marriage much. After all, Jim didn't take part in his family's fight for power.”

“Idiot.” He chuckled, giving me a sidelong glance. “It's impossible for a family to expand if it's solely reliant on one person. It relies on everyone in the family's hard work and effort. If nothing happens to the Murphys, they naturally stay out of each other's business, but once problems arise, the family name becomes everyone's top priority. They will each utilize all their power and resources to defend their fellow relatives. It's just like a country; everyone usually minds their own business, but if it comes down to a life-or-death situation, we'll band together and do our best to contribute even the slightest of efforts for our country.”

He has a point.

Once the Fuller family tries to take on Armond, it will become a full-on war.

At the pet shop, I bought a month-old golden retriever puppy so small that it could fit in one of my palms. I was clueless about how I should take care of it properly. The staff kindly wrote down a list of possible situations and what to do when facing those situations on a piece of paper for me. He also

advised me to visit the pet shop again any time if I was truly at a loss. They also gifted some dog food and toys along with my purchase.

The sky outside was already dark as I left the pet shop, having given the Stovall residence's address to the staff and requesting for them to send the puppy to the house. Then, Ashton and I got in the car and headed for the hospital. Summer had gone through her check-up last night and wanted to come home tonight to sleep in her own bed. Cameron had been busy with her own work, so I had no choice but to hire a caregiver for Summer, who had insisted on returning back to the Moore Residence and on Ashton personally picking her up from the hospital.

When we got there, I waited downstairs in the lobby, resting my sore legs while Ashton went upstairs to her ward.

I didn't expect to see Kristina stumbling into the hospital lobby. She seemed to be in an incredibly bad shape, barely taking a few steps into the building before collapsing onto the floor. Luckily, several observant nurses immediately noticed her and hauled her away to the ER.

Out of curiosity, I followed them over.

Standing at the entrance to the ER room, I waited for one of the nurses to come out before asking, "Excuse me, is the woman inside alright? What happened to her? She looked to be in a horrible condition."

“Of course she looks horrible, she has lung cancer,” the nurse sighed, shifting the weight of some medical instruments in her arms. “It’s already in its late stages. We kept asking her to come to the hospital for treatment, but her family didn’t take any of our advice to heart. She’s finally come back after her health has deteriorated this much, but I suspect she doesn’t care much for her own life at all.”

“Lung cancer?” I did a double-take. “How could she have gotten lung cancer? What happened?” Kristina had grown up in a healthy, clean environment. Usually, lung cancer patients were workers at chemical plants or had lived in an environment with a lot of dust and air pollution. But Kristina’s life hadn’t been like that at all!

“It was caused by a respiratory tract infection. Probably because of long-term contact with some sort of chemical. Are you her friend? Advise her to receive treatment and don’t let it drag on any longer. It won’t do her any good at all if she continues like this.”

I nodded, in a daze as I watched the nurse walk off. How could Kristina have gotten lung cancer, of all things? I couldn’t believe it.

It was only when Ashton called my phone to ask where I was that I realized what we’d come to the hospital for. I quickly rushed back down to the lobby and spotted him helping Summer into his car. “What happened? I thought you told me that you’d be waiting in the lobby,” he asked when he saw me.