

## Chapter 1071

Holden leaned back against the sofa with a devilish expression on his face. “Don’t bother, for I’m pressed for time. But then, I also feel like enjoying myself, and I can’t help desiring to grope a woman, so I’ll just do it here.”

Argh! What a shameless man!

I pursed my lips and said nothing further.

After turning up the thermostat in the office, I watched as the woman removed her leggings while seated on Holden’s lap. Subsequently, the two of them started getting it on right there without any qualms.

Lifting a hand, I massaged my temples as I felt a headache coming on. Then, I made a video call to Ashton, and fortunately, he answered in mere seconds.

I turned the camera to face Holden, whereupon Ashton’s brows furrowed. In a terse voice, he drawled, “You came to my office to have fun, Mr. Taylor?” The moment his voice fell, the two people who were initially a tangle of limbs sprang apart.

Raising a hand, Holden wiped the lipstick off his lips before he swung his gaze at me with a frown. “What are you doing, Scarlett?”

I merely shrugged in response. “I think it’s more appropriate for my husband to discuss business with you.”

At that, his brows creased slightly. He then pushed the woman off him and snapped coldly, "Take the money and leave!" In the next moment, he took out a check from his wallet and threw it at her. After picking up the check, the woman quickly left.

Thus, it was only Holden and me in the office then. Glimpsing that Ashton was in the car, I couldn't help asking, "Where are you going?"

"I went to prison to pay Brandon and Abe a visit."

Hearing that, I nodded in acknowledgment. Now that Holden was back to normal, I ended the call with Ashton. I then looked at Holden and said, "Can we talk business now, Mr. Taylor?"

It was clear as day that he was rather chagrined. Pursing his lips, he sprawled on the sofa as though he was boneless as he groused in a weak and languid voice, "I didn't eat breakfast when I came out in the morning, so I'm starving and don't have any energy to talk."

Nodding with a faint smile, I dialed the secretary's external line. In no time, Stella picked up the call. "Hello, Mrs. Fuller, this is Stella here. Is there anything I can assist you with?"

"Please order a bountiful breakfast spread. I'd like an American breakfast and a set of continental breakfast. Thank you." After I had finished speaking, Stella was noticeably taken aback, but she promptly concurred, "Sure. I'll get right to it."

When I hung up the phone, Holden closed his eyes while reclining on the sofa. I wasn't in a hurry either, merely continuing to review the documents in hand with my head lowered, scanning through all those that needed to be approved, one by one.

Stella's efficiency was exceedingly impressive, for she delivered the breakfast over not long after. It was a very lavish spread. After placing it on the table, she cast Holden a perplexed look before leaving.

At the sight of the breakfast on the table, Holden didn't continue picking trouble with me. Instead, he stared at me and offered, "Why don't we eat together?"

Flashing him a faint smile, I declined, "No, thanks. I've already had breakfast, so please help yourself, Mr. Taylor."

The man's elegance seemed as though it was in his blood, for even his movements as he enjoyed breakfast were extremely elegant. After taking a few bites, he stopped eating and pinned his eyes on me while sitting on the sofa.

Sensing his gaze, I lifted my eyes and looked at him with a faint smile. "You're done eating, Mr. Taylor?"

In turn, he arched an eyebrow. "You're much more patient than Ashton Fuller, thus less irritating."

At that, I frowned slightly. "Mr. Taylor, this isn't the first time Fuller Corporation is collaborating with the Taylor family, so you actually didn't have to go to such lengths."

Nonetheless, he chuckled at my remark. "You and your husband are truly interesting. Okay, let's go and take a look at the factory as well as the processing materials. If there's no problem, then this matter is settled."

Unbidden, I breathed a sigh of relief. Phew! Thank God this guy isn't making trouble anymore. If he were to continue with his ridiculous act, I might have truly gone crazy!

After putting everything away, I left the office with him. Stella was right outside the door, so she greeted us when she saw us exiting the office. Thereafter, I ordered, "Later, go in and clear the table. Then, reserve a hotel room for Mr. Taylor and arrange dinner for him. Mr. Taylor is from Moranta, so take note of that."

I uttered those words in a mere whisper, so Stella nodded imperceptibly. Cautiously stealing a peek at Holden, she then nodded and replied, "Okay, will do."

While we were waiting for the elevator, Holden looked at me with a frown. "From what I remember, we're considered friends, so why are you so distant with me? Have I done something unreasonable? Or do you feel that you don't know me anymore after having not seen me in such a long time?"

Huh? This man is really childish.

Staring at him, I answered in exasperation, "Of course we're friends, Mr. Taylor. However, I don't think you have considered me as a friend today. Otherwise, why would you have brought a beautiful woman to my office and started getting it on with her in front of me? If you'd regarded me as a friend, shouldn't you have greeted me right away before discussing business as a matter of course?"

Upon hearing that, he lifted a hand and rubbed his nose in slight embarrassment. Chortling, he then countered, "I just wanted to meet you again in a unique way after so long. That was just a trifling intrusion earlier, so don't take it to heart."

I merely shrugged. "Of course not. As you said, Mr. Taylor, we're friends. Since we're friends, I naturally won't take that to heart. But to be honest, Mr. Taylor, you don't have to go so far when you choose a woman next time. That woman is stunning, but I don't think she's your cup of tea."

## Chapter 1072

Giving a light cough, Holden stared at me and drawled, "Don't you think it's rather inappropriate for you to discuss women with me so blatantly? Do you talk to Mr. Fuller in such a manner as well?"

I shook my head in response. "Of course not. He doesn't parade women in front of me so blatantly. Besides, I have some say in the kind of woman he likes. Furthermore, judging from his current demeanor, I think he probably won't be like you for the time being."

Upon hearing that, his brows furrowed slightly. "For the time being? So, you don't trust Ashton Fuller all that much either!"

"Well, not exactly. It's just that no one can guarantee what happens in the future, so I only pay attention to the present. As long as he loves and cherishes me presently, that makes me the happiest. As for the future, we shall see what happens then. It's something that hasn't happened, after all, so no point fussing over it!"

Just then, the elevator doors opened, and I stepped in with him. He agreed with my sentiments, but he looked at me and murmured, "Scarlett, I think you're being too optimistic and rational. It's not really a good thing."

At that, my brows scrunched together. "What kind of love is considered irrational?" Ashton gave me sufficient sense of security, hence the reason for my seemingly rational and calm demeanor.

After pondering for a moment, he replied, "That friend of yours. I think her love is truly irrational. She's so fanatical about her man that it's a bit maniacal. I really don't know how to describe her."

Which friend of mine?

For a moment, my mind stalled. I couldn't figure out who he meant, so I stared at him blankly.

Frowning, he explained, "I meant that woman whom you had me pick up at Moranta back then. Well, the one who was particularly noisy and chattered endlessly. Isn't she the woman who loves Armond to the point of no return?"

Nora?

When I realized who he meant, I couldn't help sighing. "That's different. She's inherently a zealous girl, and she's love-starved. When she first met Armond, she was initially trying it out with him, but she later invested herself increasingly more into the relationship, so she naturally lost herself."

Nora truly loved Armond, growing to care for and cherish him all the more. Back when they first got together, she didn't really care about him all that much, and it didn't matter even if she lost him. But as time went past, she seemed to have focused all her emotions and feelings on him. The more attention she gave him, the more she became devoted to him.

This is indeed true.

I pursed my lips and said nothing further.

Holden, on the other hand, seemed deep in thought, but I didn't bother inquiring about it.

When we stepped out of the elevator, I spotted Rachel in the lobby. She was a beautiful woman—the kind of devastating stunner who turned heads and stood out among beauties. Once, I felt that it was a shame that she didn't become an actress as such a bombshell would definitely be the center of attention in the entertainment industry.

“Oh wow, a goddess!” Holden couldn't help exclaiming as he noticed Rachel.

Tugging at me, he asked, “Is she an employee here?”

“Ashton recruited her from abroad. She's responsible for the technical research of AI development, so she's both a project manager and a researcher. She's a woman with both brains and beauty,” I replied with my eyes fixed on Rachel.

While we were talking, Rachel looked in our direction. She was a beauty besides being a fashionable woman who was skilled in dolling up. Right then, she was wearing a white shirt and a black leather skirt coupled with a camel coat. It was professional yet not drab, showcasing her perfect figure. Hence, her appearance always attracted much attention.

“It's been a long time, Ms. Stovall. You seem to have lost weight!” She gazed at me with a red box in her hand. In turn, I flashed her a smile and replied, “You've gotten increasingly beautiful as well.”

At my compliment, she giggled before shifting her gaze to Holden. Then, she turned back to me and inquired, “Who is this gentleman here?”

“This is Mr. Taylor, the president cum chairperson of Moranta International Trading,” I introduced. As I did so, I noticed that the red box in her hand seemed to contain sweets.

After listening to my introduction, her eyes lit up. In the next instance, she greeted, "Nice to meet you, Mr. Taylor. Besides having achieved so much at a young age, you're also exceedingly handsome. You're truly an exemplary model for youths today, Mr. Taylor!"

Her remark had Holden guffawing in delight. Gazing at her, he blurted, "You're really good with words. May I have the honor of knowing your name? And do you mind me asking you out to dinner sometime?"

He smiled brightly at her. His smile was alluring, friendly, and gentle. In fact, it was so dazzling that I couldn't help wondering whether he was trying to enchant her with his charm.

Looking at him, Rachel smiled faintly as she replied, "You flatter me, Mr. Taylor. I'm Rachel Zimmer, and it's a pleasure to make your acquaintance. But don't worry about dinner since a meeting is destined in itself. I hope that you'll still be here in K City during my wedding. I'm looking forward to seeing you there!"

As she said that, she took a handful of sweets out of the red box in her hand and placed them into his hand. Then, she even took out a wedding invitation from her handbag and handed it to him. "Do honor me with your presence then, Mr. Taylor!"

Holden was stunned for a moment, and he clicked his tongue while holding the sweets in his hand.

Subsequently, Rachel handed me a bag of sweets and a wedding invitation. Looking at me, she said, "You'll wish me well, yes? I hope you and Mr. Fuller will attend my wedding then. I'm looking forward to seeing you both!"



## Chapter 1073

She's getting married?

That was something that surprised me.

Holding onto the wedding invitation, I froze before saying, "Aren't you too quick? You're marrying so soon."

She gave me a faint smile. "It's not really. I'm almost thirty, and it's about time for me to get married. Moreover, I'm lucky to meet someone who loves and adores me. So it's not too soon. The time is just right."

Looking at the blissful smile on her face, I could not help but smile at her too. "Then, let me congratulate you on your wedding. We'll be there on time."

The smile was still on her face when she handed the wedding invitations to the other coworkers. After Holden and I left, he muttered under his breath, "F\*ck, I can't believe a beautiful woman like her is getting married soon. This is ridiculous. Right as I found a woman whom I'm interested too. What a pity."

After we got in the car, I rolled my eyes at him. "Can't you have a semblance of normalcy? You're treating love as a game. Aren't you afraid of karma being right around the corner? One day, if you meet a woman you truly love, you might suffer if you keep this up."

He leaned back on the chair before answering coldly, "That kind of woman you speak of will be someone I'll never meet. I'm born free, and I live freely. No woman will affect me in this life."

I kept quiet when I saw his confident look. No one in this world could predict the future, and all we could do was take one step at a time.

I remained quiet as I drove. After all, there was nothing to talk about. When we reached the factory, Holden schooled his features and entered the building with me. Fuller Corporation did not have many factories, and most were focusing on technological devices. Most of the staff they hired were technicians. Furthermore, in the past two years, most of the work in the factory was done by machinery. Thus, there were few people in the factory.

The one who was in charge of the factory was a middle-aged man in his forties. As we had told him about our visit beforehand, he came to greet us when we reached the doorway. After a brief exchange of greetings, he then brought us to the processing room.

“So far, the batch of products seems fine. I’m here to take a look at them for myself, then I’ll tell the rest back at the Taylors that everything’s fine. We can sign the contract right away, but I have a request—I want to bring some of the samples back. That way, I’ll be able to convince at the board of directors meeting.”

Looking at me, Holden then asked, “Is that all right?”

I nodded. “Sure.”

Ashton had told me about this before that day, and it was a request that was fine with me. After showing him around the factory and answering his questions, the two of us then left the factory.

By the time we left, it was already afternoon. Holden asked, “Aren’t you planning to show me around in K City? Why don’t you bring me to try some specialties in K City?”

Glancing at him, I replied, "In a bit. I've arranged a hotel room for you. If there's anything you need, feel free to call me. I'll send someone to resolve any issues you have as soon as possible."

He nodded but then queried, "Can I not live in the hotel?"

"Of course." As I gripped onto the steering wheel, I continued, "Although the hotel room is reserved for you, you have the freedom to choose whether you live in it or not. There are many nightclubs around the city center. Pretty women, models, and unpopular celebrities often roam the area. Of course, it's fine if you're interested in popular celebrities instead. However, that might be a challenge, and it'll depend on how capable you are."

He pouted. "Am I that terrible of a person to you? What do you mean by unpopular celebrities and models? Do I look like that kind of person to you? I don't want to live in the hotel because I want to live in your house. I've asked others to send my luggage there. Honestly, is Ashton that stingy? Why isn't he hiring a housekeeper for such a large house? It's so big and empty!"

Hearing him, I pursed my lips. "If you're not used to living in hotels, you can live in our house. I'll hire a housekeeper."

Almost immediately, he grinned. "That sounds about right."

When he saw me driving toward the metropolitan area, he wondered, "Where are you heading to?"

"Didn't you say you want to try K City's specialties? I'm bringing you there now. It's time for lunch. Aren't you hungry?" When I peeked at him from the corner of my eyes, I realized he was staring at me.

“Let’s skip the specialties. Bring me back to the villa and just make me some simple food. I bear no high hopes for K City’s specialties,” he responded nonchalantly as he leaned back on the chair again.

The corner of my lips twitched in annoyance. Unable to hold myself back, I huffed, “You don’t have some ulterior motives, do you? You’re so eager to go to my house.”

Glancing at me, he chuckled. “What ulterior motives can I possibly have? Even if you gifted me those things in your house, I won’t even want it. What motives can I honestly have? I just want to eat the food you make. Is there something wrong with that? Since the contract is signed, and we’ve done everything that’s necessary, are you planning to let me go back now?”

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## **Chapter 1074**

My brows furrowed. "No. I was just wondering why you suddenly have the craving for the food I make. By the way, how is your mother?" I casually asked.

To my surprise, his expression darkened. "Are we going back to your place or not? If we're not, let me get down from the car. I'm going back to the hotel."

What's wrong with him? He's just unreasonably angry right now.

I fell silent and drove straight to the villa instead. Right as he got down from the car, he made a call. Soon, someone brought his luggage over. When he saw me looking at him, he lifted a brow and questioned, "I'm starving. Why aren't you making anything yet?"

For a moment, I was speechless.

I entered the villa and began preparing some food for him.

Dragging the suitcase behind him, he glanced around the house before asking, "Where will I be staying in?"



“There are bedrooms on the first and second floor. Have a look at them yourself. You can live in whichever room you prefer.” Cleaners were often hired to clean the house, and I rarely stayed here whenever Ashton was not around. Therefore, the interior of the house seemed silent and dead. Now that I think about it, Holden’s right. I should hire a housekeeper for this house. Summer is recovering well. If I bring her here, the house will be livelier.

After Holden looked around the house, he commented, “This house is worth tens of millions, but look at the state of it. How busy Mr. Fuller must be.”

Then, he queried, “Your bedroom is on the second floor?”

I nodded. “Yes.”

When I saw him carrying his suitcase upstairs, I voiced, “Mr. Taylor, I’ll be going back to the Moore Residence at night, and I won’t be coming back here. Is there anything you need? If so, do tell me, and I’ll get the things you need later.”

Standing in the middle of the stairs, he turned around to stare at me with widened eyes. “What do you mean by you’re going to Moore Residence and not coming back? Are you going to make me stay in this house all by myself while you enjoy a sweet home somewhere else? Scarlett, do you have a heart? How can you just leave me here by myself?”

His words were giving me nothing but a headache. “Mr. Taylor, I’m supposed to go back to the Moore Residence anyway. Ashton isn’t home, and I rarely sleep here. You’ll be fine living here. There’s a car in the garage, and you can drive yourself anywhere you wish to go. If you really don’t want to go out of the house at night, I’ll prepare something for you to eat later. In a while, I’ll get a housekeeper to come here and prepare your meals. Don’t worry.”

He scoffed. “What do you mean by don’t worry? I’m very worried. What’s the difference between living here and living in a hotel? No. You have to stay here tonight, or else I won’t sign the contract. I won’t listen to anything else from you.”

At that point, I have no words for him. Why is he so childish?

“Mr. Taylor, let’s put aside how inappropriate it is for us to live under the same roof and talk about how I’m also a married woman. Do you really think it’s appropriate for us to live together?”

“What’s wrong with that? I’m not asking you to share a bed with me. I don’t care. You have to stay here tonight, and it won’t matter even if you call Ashton. Also, I don’t want to eat anything else but the pasta you make. It’ll be the same at night; you have to cook for me. Otherwise, I won’t sign the contract. You can mull over this yourself.” With that said, he stormed off to the bedroom.

Speechless at his words, I fell silent. It was not that it was inconvenient for him to live in the villa—the villa was big enough for another person to live in, not to mention the fact that I had once lived under the same roof as him—but that I was worried about Armond.

Ashton had told me Armond would come to me for that box. However, with the current situation, it would be impossible for Armond to ask for the box from me directly. Instead, he would be trying to get the box secretly.

This villa was our primary residence. He would not be able to do anything if no one was around at night. However, if someone was, I was worried that he would use me to threaten Ashton to hand over the box to him.

After placing his things in the bedroom, Holden went downstairs. When he noticed that the pasta was almost done, he took a bowl to put it beside me. Staring at the pasta, he asked, “Do you know how to make anything else?”

I shook my head. "No. I only know how to make this."

He frowned. "I knew it. How can a woman like you know how to make anything else but pasta? I've really overestimated you."

He knows nothing else but how to infuriate others. Spinning around to shoot him a glare, I then huffed, "Any more rubbish from you, and I'll throw you out. I'll get Ashton to discuss the contract with you. I'm not a shareholder of the Fuller Corporation. You can do whatever you like; it's none of my business."

He clicked his tongue. "You ungrateful woman. How can you get angry just because I'm speaking the truth? Look at the other women. They either do makeup or they make sure they present themselves well. Now, look at you. You're bare-faced all the time, and with the kind of lifestyle you lead, I'd say you're going to have menopause earlier than the rest."

## **Chapter 1075**

"Ah!" Unable to hold back, I stomped his foot, and he yelped. "Scarlett, what in the world is wrong with you? Why did you step on my foot? It hurts like hell!"

"Keep running that mouth of yours, and I'll do it again. The pasta's done. Add anything you like, but don't put too much of it. Otherwise, it'll taste bad." He's just like a kid sometimes. How childish.

After a moment of hesitation, he raised his head to look at me again. "I don't know what to add. Help me add something. I've never done this before."

Shooting him a look of disdain, I groaned. "Did you just crawl out from under a rock? This is the first time I've seen a man who can't even do something as minor as this. Ashton's so much better than you. No wonder you haven't found a good girlfriend even though you're already at this age."

Apparently, my words stunned him, for he whined, "What do mean by I haven't found a good girlfriend even though I'm already at this age? It's because I'm not looking for one, okay? If I wanted to, I'd have found one already. I have a house, a car, and money. Moreover, I'm handsome. I can have anyone I want. I'll look for a girlfriend tomorrow." With that said, he brought the bowl to the dining table and whipped his head to the side. "It's not like everyone's the same as your Ashton."

Despite finding the way he was mumbling under his breath hilarious, I managed to stop myself from laughing. "But truthfully, have you found no one you really like all these years?"

Freezing, he then muttered, "No. I did meet some, but they're not suitable for marriage. All they do is ask for money from me. So they're suitable for me to have fun with. I'm looking for a woman who isn't greedy for my money."

That's not what he should be thinking. Thus, I said, "That's the wrong idea you have. At a certain age, other than loving you, girls have to have monetary desires. Do you really expect her to have no desire for anything?"

He clicked his tongue in frustration. "Can't she just want me?"

"Even if she only wants you, she still needs to live. Do you think by wanting you, she can pay her bills? Asking for money from you is a sign of her reliance on you. I'm sure you've come across women who never asked any money from you, but I'm also sure you never cherished them, did you?"

The corner of his mouth twitched. "How did you know about that?"

I pressed my lips tightly together. "Of course I'll know about it. That's how people like you are. You can't find a sense of accomplishment from girls who want nothing from you, so you'll neglect and chase her away. In the end, you'll be left with those who'll ask for things from you. However, once you spend more time with those girls, you'll start assuming that they're only around for your money. Then, you'll break up with them. Hence, at the end of the day, you're the one who's trapping yourself in this cycle."

Many men were like that. They spent their money on women, not because they loved the woman, but because they could find a sense of accomplishment from them. After all, at a certain point in life, people needed others relying on them to feel like they were succeeding in life.

Holden narrowed his eyes at me and questioned, "What about you? Does Ashton give you money to spend?"

I nodded honestly. "Of course. I'm not working right now, so what can I possibly do if I don't use his money? He's not like you. Our walk-in closet has the latest clothes of the season because he buys them all for me. He also buys me pieces of jewelry and bags. Although he did not love me as much at the start of our marriage, this has always been a habit of his. I only wore some of these clothes, but he still keeps the wardrobe updated every season. Furthermore, his card is with me until now."

He scrunched up his face and muttered, "No one can be as generous as Ashton. A whole wardrobe of a season's clothes is worth millions. I'd rather give hundreds of thousands to those women and let them pick the clothes they like."

I shrugged. "That's why I said you're different from Ashton. His love has always been subtle. I'm blessed to be his woman in this life of mine."

As he dug into his pasta, he mumbled, "If you were my wife, I'd do the same."

Instantly, my brows knitted, and I asked, “What did you say?”

Slowly stuffing more pasta into his mouth, he uttered as he looked into my eyes, “I said the pasta is great. I want more at night.”

In response, I rolled my eyes at him. I did not have an appetite for food, so I only had a few mouthfuls before I went to the fridge, looking for milk. Right then, Ashton called, informing me that the housekeeper he had just hired had arrived.

Thus, I stepped out of the villa to bring the housekeeper in while Holden continued with his food.

The new housekeeper was a simple woman in her forties. She greeted me when she saw me and told me her name was Nelly. After I briefly explained to her the situation, she nodded and began her work in the villa.

After Holden finished his serving, he even took mine, seemingly still hungry. When I noticed it, I stiffened, and he commented, “You cooked too little. Make more tonight.”

## **Chapter 1076**

What could I say to that? I only nodded in response.

I had nothing to do in the afternoon, so naturally, I did not go to the office. However, what surprised me was Armond. He had called me and went straight to the point—he wanted to meet me

I pursed my lips before replying, "There's no point for us to meet. Mr. Murphy, what you're looking for is not with me."

His chuckles traveled out of the speakers. "You're overthinking this. I just want to invite you to a meal. Nora is here in K City, and you were once close friends. Are you not going to have a meal with her now that she's here?"

Sensing something else lying behind his friendly tone, I frowned before answering, "I'll invite her another day. I won't interrupt your meal with her."

"Scarlett, I heard you've rented a small place for Shane's parents. I've met with the two today, and they told me they want to thank you personally by inviting you to a meal. Is that inconvenient for you? If you reject, the two might be upset."

His words made my heart skip a beat. Why did Armond go to see Sasha's parents? Did Shane cross Armond?

"Armond, they're old. What are you trying to do?" Until now, I still could not figure out to what extent of cruelty Armond could tolerate.

"Nothing, really. I'm just free recently, and I was thinking of getting a meal with someone. Scarlett, will you join me? Should I come and pick you up or are you going to drive?"

Tamping down the fury in my heart, it took me a while of silence before I uttered, "Send me the address."

Once again, I heard him laughing. “Hahaha! Scarlett, aren’t you an exceptionally nice girl? I really like that about you.”

My lips pursed as I ended the call. Then, I called Ashton.

It took a few rings before the call went through. “What’s the matter, Scarlett?”

“Armond called me. It seems like he has found Sasha’s parents, and he has gotten Nora to come to K City. I don’t know what his aims are, but I’ve agreed to meet him. How are things on your side?”

Ashton inhaled sharply. “Brandon’s been in a foul mood ever since he found out about how his daughter has been treated. He’s hesitating. Something seems off about Abe. It’s as if he’s been drugged. When I saw him, he’s only half-conscious, so I couldn’t get anything from him.”

I frowned. Thinking of Hailey, I said, “Ashton, perhaps there’s someone who can help. Look for Hailey. Her father should have seen Armond in the past. As long as Hailey’s the one to talk to her father, things will be much easier.”

After a moment of contemplation, I added, “By the way, before meeting with Hailey, look for Fawn, Amy, and Jody Falker. They’re all victims among the children. Hailey can’t come to a decision. If you ask them to come with you, she might be able to make up her mind. Also, will you be able to come up with a plan to protect Hailey’s father? At the end of the day, he’s still involved with the organ trafficking incident. Once the investigation is done, I don’t think he’ll be able to say that he’s innocent in it.”



After a moment of silence, Ashton replied, "I'll try my best. Armond should be looking for you for that box. Hold on to it. If you have to, then give him the box. The box is useless to us, so it's best if you don't get into a conflict with Armond."

I understood why he said those words, so I hummed in agreement. After ending the call, I was about to leave the house.

When Holden saw me about to leave, he darted to my side. "Where are you going? Why aren't you bringing me along? You can't be dating another man behind my back, right?"

I nodded as I looked at him. "That's right. I'm going to have a secret date with another man. Do you want to join me? It'll be exciting."

For reasons beyond me, he blushed. "No way, Scarlett. Are you really that shameless to do something like this behind Ashton's back?"

Rendered speechless for a moment, I then asked, "Are you coming with me? If you're not, I'm going to leave now."

Promptly, he nodded and entered the car before I did. When he turned back to look at me, there was a smug expression on his face. "How can you possibly leave me out of such a thrilling matter? Just the mere thought of it makes my heart race."

Ignoring his excitement, I started the car. The address that Armond had sent to me was a villa in the suburbs.

Bringing Holden with me was part of the plan. If anything did happen, he would be useful.

When he realized we were heading toward the suburbs, Holden muttered, "Wait, why are you driving toward the suburbs? Shouldn't we be going to a hotel?"

I pursed my lips for a moment before replying, "We're going to a villa in the suburbs. Only fools go to the hotels."

"Holy sh\*t! Scarlett, you're one brave girl. Does Ashton know about this? When did you start doing this? Aren't you afraid of contracting some disease? How many men are there? Are their figures as good as mine? Why didn't you ask me to come along to such a fantastic gathering before today?"

Irritated by his rambles, I shot him a glare. "Shut up or get down from the car. Also, things aren't what you think they are. Armond has invited me to a meeting in the suburbs. I'm a little worried, so I brought you along. Don't be a coward later."

## **Chapter 1077**

He was taken aback by my words for a while. After a beat, his eyes widened comically before he gasped in disbelief. "Scarlett, you set me up?"

I nodded honestly. "You can think of it that way if you want to. If you're scared, you can leave the car right now. I won't stop you."

He gritted his teeth before hissing, "This has nothing to do with whether I'm scared or not. You clearly know I have no way to go back if I were to get down from the car now. Moreover, do I look scared? Armond's nothing but a dumbass. Why should I be scared of him? I just don't want to see him."

I nodded again. "Well, then. Since you're not afraid of him, be quiet and follow me there. Take it as if you're protecting me, and I'll owe you a favor. How about that?"

He scoffed, "How are you going to return me the favor? Tell me more. If I like it, I'll even take Armond down, not to mention protecting you."

My mouth hung open for a while before I managed to voice, "What do you want? I'll try my best to fulfill it."

He mulled over my words. "Why don't you cook for me for a week? I don't want pasta every day. I'll definitely puke by the second day."

His request was reasonable and simple, but it still stumped me. With a frown, I muttered, "Mr. Taylor, have I ever told you I can't cook? Other than making pasta, I don't know how to make anything else. Are you sure you want me to cook for you?"

He glowered at me. "If you don't know how to cook, then learn. I don't care. That's my request, and nothing else will work."

"Okay, then." I had to agree first; whether or not my cooking would be edible was another matter.

When we finally reached the villa, I was transfixed. This villa is humongous. The villa in K City's suburbs usually have specific limits for their size, but this house is evidently thrice the size of the normal villa. This isn't a villa; this is a manor!

The Murphys are filthy rich. This villa is worth hundreds of millions. Are they planning to live in it? Do they plan to use it for something else?

After entering the compound, I had to drive a distance before I reached the villa itself. By then, there was someone waiting for us by the doorway. “The size of this villa is comparable to the Taylor residence. The Murphys are truly affluent if they can build such an enormous villa in a place like K City, where the population density is high.”

When I took a good look at the villa, I realized I had to agree with him. The place looked newly built, and it would be impossible for them to build a place like this legally; they must have bribed the authorities and pulled some strings.

After entering the living room, I noticed it was so empty I could even hear the echoes of our footsteps. We then followed the maid up into a room on the second floor. Right as we entered the room, we were greeted with the sight of a gigantic folding screen.

Facing the folding screen, the maid respectfully announced, “Sir, they’ve arrived.”

The person behind the screen hummed in response before muttering, “You can leave now.” Then, he said, “Ms. Stovall, you’re quite punctual. It seems like I’m still important to you.”

I frowned but stayed silent. All I did was take in my surroundings. Sometimes, it was not a good thing when a house was too big, especially when the house was not lively. It would be like stepping into a haunted house.

It was eerie.

When Armond walked out from behind the folding screen, his gaze landed on Holden, and he frowned. “Mr. Taylor, you’re here too?”

Sounding exactly like a ruffian, Holden drawled, "Yes. I wanted to take a walk, and I ended up here. Mr. Murphy, your house is quite big. What's it for? Keeping babes?"

It was easy for Holden to set someone ablaze with fury in seconds.

However, Armond only smiled. As he stared at me, he asked, "Ms. Stovall, why don't you take a seat while we chat? It's been a long while since we had a good chat."

Pressing my lips into a thin line, I then said, "Didn't we agree to have a meal together? Where are the others? Were you just joking with me, or did you think that my time isn't worth anything?"

"Of course not," he responded before chuckling. "They're all upstairs. I have some things I'd like to discuss with Ms. Stovall, so I'm meeting you here."

As he spoke, his gaze trailed toward Holden. "Mr. Taylor, if you don't mind, could I have a word with Ms. Stovall alone? I've prepared drinks and snacks upstairs. You can try out K City's specialties there."

Holden glanced at me, his thoughts obvious; he was asking what he should do next.

When I stared at Armond, I speculated that he must want to ask for the sandalwood box from me, so I said, "Mr. Taylor, please greet Nora and the others for me upstairs."

Holden tensed for a brief second before nodding. Then, he left the room and headed upstairs.

At that moment, the two of us were the only ones left in the spacious room. After Armond sat down and crossed his legs, he lifted a brow at me. "Are you not going to sit for the talk?"

I was silent as I sat down on a chair and waited for him to speak.

## **Chapter 1078**

As expected, he soon said in a low voice, "Ashton must be progressing well in A City."

His abrupt topic made me sit transfixed for a moment. Then, I frowned. "You can be straightforward with me, Mr. Murphy."

He snorted, "You know what I want. Scarlett, honestly, I like you a lot. My mother asked me about you a while back, talking about how your stomach will be bigger soon. She even asked me when I'll be preparing for the wedding and when I'll marry you. To be frank with you, if you're meeker and more obedient, I'll be more than willing to let you keep the baby. However, you're too cheeky; you registered that girl, and you even adopted her. What you've done upsets me. Once I'm upset, I'm prone to do bad things. So, I'm sorry, I could not stop myself from getting rid of that baby in you. You won't hate me for this, will you?"

For a moment, his nonchalant tone made a murderous urge sprout in my mind. At that second, I wanted to strangle him to death; in seconds, I had already murdered him in a hundred ways in my mind.

However, I did nothing but look at him, waiting for him to utter all those words I despised. However, he did not continue. "You don't need to record what I've said."

These things are useless to you. Scarlett, for me to be in my position, I can't be a fool, so stop those pointless things you're doing, okay?"

My heart skipped a beat as I tensed. In the next second, I schooled my features to look calm. "What are you talking about? I don't understand what you're trying to tell me. I'm not doing anything pointless for those disgusting acts of yours. I know karma will come for you soon."

He raised a brow at my reply before rising to his feet. Walking to my side, he leaned his face closer to mine as he smiled menacingly.

When I saw his bony fingers reaching toward me, I could not help but hold my breath. Swiftly, he removed my earpiece and mocked, "Don't worry. I won't do anything to you. There isn't any need for you to wear these unnecessary things. It'll only affect our conversation."

With that said, he threw it out of the window. My mouth was set in a hard line, feeling rage boiling in my gut, but still, I looked at him calmly.

He soon returned to his chair. "I know you hate me, but that's fine. If I can't get you to love me, it'll be equally thrilling to have you hate me. You shouldn't blame me for what happened to the kid; you should be blaming yourself. If you didn't appear, no one will do anything to you. But, Scarlett, you were too stupid to save someone who's completely unrelated to you. That's why your kid's dead. This is the ending you've brought upon yourself, and the only thing you can blame this on is how you've stuck your nose into someone else's business."

"Shut up!" I roared. "Armond, have you never thought about how you'll end up? I used to think that you're a gentleman, but boy was I horribly wrong. You're a scum that has no morals nor principles. No one will ever love you. You want that box, don't you? I'm going to tell you now that I'll never give it to you. I'd rather burn the box myself than hand it to

you, so stop thinking of getting it. I want to see you destroy the Murphy family and yourself.”

Unfortunately, it seemed like he was not as angry with my words as I was with his. His gaze on me remained tranquil, but it took him a while before he said, “Scarlett, you know I don’t want to do anything bad to you. I hope you’ll be good and give me the things I want. That way, I won’t hurt you or those that you’re concerned about. If not, I can’t guarantee your and their safety. You must be curious about what this villa is for. Have you heard of a snake’s nest? I’ve loved them since young, but my grandfather did not like them. So, I could only secretly keep them. The third floor is where they reside. If I press on the switch, those upstairs will be together with my pets. As for whether they’ll live or die, I won’t know. After all, I’m not quite sure whether those pets I have are venomous or not.”

My eyes were wide as I stared at him in disbelief. “Armond, you shameless man!”

He nodded in agreement. “I, too, think of myself as shameless. But Nora’s with me. Say, why do you think she loves me that much? At the start of our relationship, we didn’t like each other that much, and I never have any romantic feelings toward her. Why is she enamoured with me?”

My hands clenched into fists as I scavenged through my brain for what I should do. I knew nothing about how many snakes Armond had kept. Since young, I was deadly afraid of these soft creatures. I was not sure whether we could escape the place in time if those creatures were released. If the worse did happen, he could easily dismiss his responsibility in the matter by claiming that it had only been an accident. All he needed to do was pay for the medical fees and remove the snakes. He would lose nothing in this.



## Chapter 1079

At that thought, anger curled in my chest.

“At the very least, Nora truly likes you. How can you possibly use her to threaten me? Armond, you’re shameless beyond imagination,” I snarled as I tried to look for my phone in the pocket.

He sneered, “Truly likes me? What’s the use of that? If she isn’t the one I want, what’s the point of her true feelings? She’s still useless. Am I right?”

I was sure that the man was insane. To him, everything he did not like, did not want, and did not care about, was nothing but a burden. He would never cherish those things.

Has Holden realized that something is off? At that thought, I was about to call my father with the phone in my pocket.

However, before I could, a hand stopped me. A wide, emotionless smile was on Armond’s face as he leaned close to me. “I wouldn’t do that if I were you. Isn’t the sandalwood box useless to you? Why are you stubbornly holding on to it instead of giving it to me?”

Retracting my hand as I clenched my jaw, I then moved away from him and sneered, “Will you let them go if I give you the sandalwood box?”

He raised a brow. “Of course. You know my aim is a simple one. Furthermore, I don’t really want to hurt them. Scarlett, no one is born a villain.”

As I stared at him, I knitted my brows. “All you need is Nora if you want to threaten me. Why did you invite Sasha’s parents here? They’re old people who are useless to you. Why do you have to torment them?”

He lowered his gaze. “I’m not using them to threaten you. It’s a mere coincidence that they’re here. Shane owes me too much, so I’ll have to invite his parents over so that he’ll pay up soon.”

I pursed my lips. “Why don’t you just kill him?” He’s destroying someone’s family, but he won’t even stop at that. Why can someone like him continue to live in this world?

He shrugged and said instead, “Give me the box. You know I really need the things in it. If you give it to me, you can take the people away.”

I muttered, “Let them come down here first. The box isn’t with me right now. Also, you know that even if I want to take Nora away, she won’t come with me.”

He narrowed his eyes. “So what are you trying to tell me?”

“I’ll give you the box, but you have to let them go first. You know well that Sasha’s parents are useless to you. That b\*stard Shane has no morals to speak of, so he won’t care about his parents. That’s why you should just let the two go and let them enjoy their last decades peacefully. Leave Shane to the police. Let them stop him from making society worse.”

However, he sneered, “These things are out of my control. Scarlett, honestly, I don’t trust you much. You’ve fooled me once, so no matter what happens this time, you have to give me the box. It’s fine even if you don’t have it with you now. I’ll give you a chance to go back and get it. Once you get it, give it to me, and I’ll let them go.”

My brows furrowed. Ashton had swapped the box once, and I had no idea where it was now. Looking at him, I confessed, "It's not that I don't want to give you the box, but that I don't know where it is. When I gave you the box back then, I didn't even know it had been swapped."

He narrowed his eyes again, the upset evident on his face this time. "You mean, you don't know where the box is?"

I nodded. "Yes."

Immediately, a scowl grew on his face. "Then, I'm sorry. Since you don't have the box, we'll have to talk again when you find it. You might as well stay here for the next few days. Don't worry; I will treat you well."

I froze before frowning. "Armond, what do you mean? Are you trying to lock me up here?"

He shook his head before smirking at me. "No, of course not. How can this be considered as locking you up? I just want you to stay here for a few days. Ever since the villa was revamped, no one has come for a stay. It's quite dead in here. Since you're all here, it's a good opportunity to liven up the place.

As he spoke, he reached out to press the call bell. Soon, someone came upstairs—a middle-aged man. When Armond saw him, he said, "Spencer, I'll have to trouble you to take care of my friends for the next few days. Thank you."

With that said, he stood up and walked out of the room.

I hastily stopped him. "Armond, this is illegal. Let us go."

“We’ll talk again when you find the box. I’m tired now. Spencer will lead you to your room. You don’t need to think much about anything; you just need to stay here. I’m sure Ashton will help you with the box.”

## Chapter 1079

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## **Chapter 1080**

In my fury, I glared at him. However, he ignored me and left without sparing another glance at me.

The only ones in the room were Spencer and me. When the man turned to look at me, he smiled. "Ms. Stovall, your room's on the fourth floor. You..."

"Take me to the third floor," I interrupted. Then, I walked out of the room. Armond's villa was massive to the point one would take minutes just to go from one end to the other end of a floor. Spencer frowned, seemingly hesitant about leading me there.

Hence, I said, "Take me there. Since he wants to keep me here, he can't possibly stop me from going anywhere."

Spencer was taken aback by my words for a moment. A beat later, he nodded.

The layout of the third floor differed from the second floor; the third was locked by a steel door. At the sight of that, I grimaced. "Where are my friends? Have you locked them all in there?"

Spencer smiled before answering, "Of course not. Your friends are all on the fourth floor, Ms. Stovall. This floor is where he keeps his pets. They used to come out from there and scare the rest, so he locked them all in here."

I nodded. "Are they all snakes? Does he keep anything else?"

The smile remained on Spencer's face as he replied, "Mr. Murphy likes to collect rare animals, so he almost has all kinds of creatures. He has had them for years now. Ms. Stovall, would you like to take a look?"

As I could not see anything from behind the steel door, I dared not answer him immediately. It would be fine if the creatures were locked up as the animals in the zoo, but it would be dangerous for me to enter if they were free to roam anywhere they pleased.

After brief contemplation, I replied, "No need. Spencer, please take me to the fourth floor instead."

He nodded before leading me to the floor above ours. The villa was huge, and the structure of it was reminiscent of a noble castle of ancient times. It was grand but empty.

The stairs looked complicated. I did not know whether it was built that way to display the designer's capability.



The moment I entered, I saw a lavish living room decorated with statues of Venus and saints. I was startled when I realized there was even a statue where one of the saints was breastfeeding a baby.

Perhaps it was because I knew not how to appreciate art, so I felt nothing when I looked at the statues.

There was a couch and a table in the living room. Holden was by the window, staring outside. For a moment, I wondered what he was thinking about.

However, I breathed a sigh of relief when I saw him. It seemed like Armond had not done anything to him. When he heard my footsteps, he turned to look at me. "Armond's house is built weird."

"Huh?" I froze in my spot for a moment. "Like how?"

"Do you see that greenery there? Don't you find it odd?" He raised his arm to point at the green patch downstairs, but no matter how long I looked at it, I found nothing odd about it.

Thus, I looked at him, perplexed, and asked, "What's odd about it? It looks fine to me. Is it some kind of Fengshui setting? When have you learned that?"

He gave me a look before replying, "Nope. It's the growth of the plants. Can't you see any problems with them?"

I looked back at the spot, but still, I could not see anything strange about it. It was winter then, and most of the plants had wilted. The only ones that did not wilt were the pines, which thrived in all seasons.

He sighed. "The growth of the pines is all different from each other. Don't you see it?"

His words made me look closer again. He was right, there were dozens of pines in the courtyard, but the ones in the middle had wilted. Meanwhile, the ones planted by the sides were still fine.

"Is it because the soil isn't as healthy in the middle?" I asked.

He shook his head. "The soil here is all the same. The courtyard is enormous, and it's far from the villa. It's unlikely that the villa has blocked the sunlight from reaching the plant. In other words, either there isn't enough soil in the middle, or something is buried there."

"A cellar?" The villa had no underground parking lot, so the only thing I could think of was a cellar.

He turned to stare at me in silence for a moment. "I don't think a villa like this needs a cellar. It should be a warehouse, meant to store something."

When I thought about Abe and Armond's relationship in Venria, I could not help but say, "For example, kyanine? Armond was quite close to Abe back in Venria. However, K City has strict rules about kyanine. How is he planning to sell them?"

Holden rubbed his nose, seemingly speechless for a moment. "What in the world is in that skull of yours? A huge villa like this usually has basements built for refuge from disasters. Even normal villas have them; they're just converted into underground parking lots."

After Holden tapped my head, I frowned. "You were so serious about your observation, so that's why I thought about kyanine instead. What else did you think I was going to think about when I saw that solemn look of yours?"

