

Chapter 1091

He scooped a bowl of soup for me. "I tried it once by chance in A City and liked it. So, I wanted to make some and share it with you."

Accepting the bowl from him, I took a sip and complimented him, "Congratulations, Mr. Fuller, your cooking skills have improved!"

He served me some eggs. "Bon appétit." Is that a bashful smile?

With a gleeful grin, I lowered my head. Everyone acts differently when they're in love. Take Ashton and me for example, we're a couple who enjoys simplicity. Yet, it's all these trivial things that help us build solid memories.

After breakfast, Ashton drove us out of the villa. Sitting on the passenger seat, I looked out at the landscape through the car window. The gloomy horizon in K City had finally cleared up, revealing a bright sky that was scintillatingly blue.

"It's so rare to see a sunny day when it's almost the end of the month. Oh yeah, Christmas is just around the corner. I wonder if it will snow by then." It usually snowed in K City. I'm sure it'll make the joyous seasons even merrier.

As I thought further, I started making plans for Christmas. We'd never really celebrated Christmas over the years.

Meanwhile, Ashton continued driving, his eyes fixed serenely on the road. "Do you have any Christmas present in mind?"

Pursing my lips, I looked at him sideways. "Mr. Fuller, have you noticed what has become of us? Our lives are too mundane and dull, just like a couple who have lived together for decades. There's no longer any excitement."

Furrowing his brows, he pulled over. His deep eyes stared at me. "So, you're trying to tell me that we should seek pleasure?"

Seeing that he had pulled over suddenly, I could not help but ask, "Why did you stop the car out of the blue? Aren't we heading to Aunt Sally's?"

He leaned over and quipped, "Let's delve deeper into this business."

"What business?"

"Pleasure-seeking business!"

I was stupefied and then broke out into laughter. "That's not what I meant. I just wanted to tell you that we're doing good. You..."

"Which part is good?" He looked me in the eyes and teased openly. I was taken aback for a moment and glared at him in the next minute. "Can you stop, Ashton?"

He was surprised at my sudden roar. "I'm just saying. Don't overthink things. Aren't we on our way to see Aunt Sally? What if there's bad traffic ahead? With you pulling over now, when will we be able to arrive at her house?"

He was still in a daze. Thus, I pushed him back to his seat and continued, "Focus on the road and stop dreaming!"

Heeding my call, he ignited the engine again. As the car was revved to life, he turned to me with knitted brows. "When did you learn the trick of changing a topic so fast?"

Pretending to be ignorant, I tried to divert his attention, "What about? Did I? I was just reminding you to stay focused on a task and not to run wild with your imagination, okay?"

As I spoke, I gently moved his face to the front, gesturing him to concentrate on his driving. Then, I said sternly, "Anyway, it was just a passing comment. Don't take it to heart. If you continue behaving like this, it's hard for me to chat with you about anything under the sky."

"Okay!" he replied attentively, like a fool.

Sally had since moved back to K City. Thankfully, the journey was quite smooth as the distance was short.

She bought a condominium in a residential area located in the city center. When we arrived, we were greeted by Sally and Jim. They had been waiting for us downstairs. With a faint smile, Sally asked, "Were you stuck in traffic? We've been waiting for you for such a long time. Come, let's go upstairs!"

Holding my hand, Ashton and I greeted Jim with a nod and followed them to their house.

It was a three-bedroom unit. Though not very large in size, it was very cozy. There was a vase of vibrant flowers on the television cabinet. I could not tell if they were real or fake, but the bright colors seemed too good to be true.

“Those are handmade flowers by your Aunt Sally. She gathered some twigs from the neighborhood and then made the flowers out of tissue paper, dyed them in colors, and voila, she turned them into a unique decoration piece,” Jim took the time to share with me.

I was very impressed and approached it for a closer look. From afar, they looked just like real flowers.

Ashton followed suit and smiled lightly. “It’s hard to tell that these are fake if you don’t examine it carefully.”

Sally joined us after serving the dishes. “Jim blended the colors excellently. That’s how they can look identical to the real ones. C’mon, let’s dig in. I have some more of those flowers in my bedroom. I’ll let you bring some home later.”

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At the table, Sally gazed at us while serving us. “I see that Fuller Corporation has expanded very well. It’s operating at a large scale now and has a very solid foundation. You two should start focusing on building your own little family. I mean, you need to spice things up. Don’t just leave Summer with the Moores. You need to keep her by your side more, educate, and develop her as she grows up. Don’t be lazy.”

Feeling ashamed of myself, I nodded profusely. “Noted, Aunt Sally.”

We should have kept Summer with us more. There’re too many things going on earlier, but I guess it’s time to bring her home now.

While I was still thinking about this, Sally ran to the bathroom all of a sudden, leaving Ashton and me perplexed. Jim calmly followed her in, and they took a while before returning to the table.

I blurted, "Did you eat something bad and have a tummy upset, Aunt Sally?"

Smiling, Sally explained, "I'm all right. This is just a temporary symptom. Things will get better after a month or two." She took her seat.

Jim served her some dishes and took care of all her needs.

Ashton stayed silent at the side. Meanwhile, I frowned at him. He's such a log, not knowing how to care for his aunt.

After lunch, Jim and Ashton enjoyed a good cuppa while Sally and I watched television after doing the dishes. Suddenly, Sally pulled me aside and asked, "Letty, age is catching up with the both of you. Do you plan to have children?"

I was momentarily stunned by her abrupt question.

Upon hesitating, I answered, "Aunt Sally, I can't conceive."

Gasping, her smile stiffened as she said helplessly, "What a pity! Life must be tough on you two."

I pressed my lips together tightly, unsure of how to reply. Let bygones be bygones.

After some time, Sally appeared to be unwell again. I asked again, "What's wrong, Aunt Sally? How are you feeling?"

She shook her head slightly. "I'm okay. I'm too old for this, that's why... Letty, have you thought about having a child through alternative means?"

I was completely baffled and tried to clarify, "Aunt Sally, we talked about this and..."

She interrupted me, "Test-tube baby, honey! Now that technology is so advanced, giving birth yourself isn't the only way to have a baby. You can consider getting pregnant via in vitro fertilization since the walls of your ovaries are thin."

I stared at her with a blank expression. "Aunt Sally, Ashton may not agree to this. We're not young anymore. Moreover, we already have Summer."

She shook her head and continued to convince me, "This isn't about age. Look at me. If it can happen to me, you can handle it too. The Fullers are a big family, running multiple corporations. It'd be a plus point to have more children around to add cheers to your days, accompany you when you travel, and also to help out in the family business."

I picked up the main point in her speech. "Aunt Sally, are you pregnant?"

She said admittedly, "Yes, I'm three months pregnant. It's not quite stable yet. Jim and I are planning for the wedding, but we dare not break the news to Ashton. Hence, the delay."

I recalled Ashton expressing his disapproval of the union between Sally and Jim. The main reason being Jim related to the Murphy family, and Ashton is wary of them.

I asked Sally earnestly, "Aunt Sally, do you know that Uncle Jim is one of the Murphys?"

Maintaining her composure, she answered, "Yes, I know. I'm also aware of the conflicts between Ashton and Armond. However, these are their battles in the corporate world. Your Uncle Jim hasn't been involved in the business for some time now. He's just an old professor, leading a simple life. He's been a lone wolf all these years. Having known me now, we just want to continue living our days happily. Letty, please find time to talk to Ashton and advise him to consider my situation. I'm no longer young, so it's not easy to have finally met a man I can depend on for the rest of my life."

Putting myself in Sally's shoes, I could empathize with her. I just didn't know how to bring this up to Ashton. With Armond being sentenced to jail, there was a need for a new successor to manage the family matters. Thus, we couldn't guarantee that there would be no further conflict between the Murphys and the Fullers. At this point, the future remained uncertain.

Two hours had passed when Ashton and Jim ended their coffee session. They seemed to have enjoyed themselves.

Jim then suggested, "We'd love to dine out with you this evening if you don't already have a prior engagement."

After some small talks, we bid them goodbye.

As we exited their condominium, I grabbed Ashton by the hand and asked inquisitively, "What did you talk about with Uncle Jim just now?"

He flipped my hand around and squeezed it into his. "We chatted about the Murphys. I passed the contract to him to hand it over to Mr. Muphy. Then, we also concluded his marriage with Aunt Sally."

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The news was a bolt from the blue. Rejoicing, I held on to his arms tightly. “Really? You’re amazing, Ashton. In this case, Fuller Corporation won’t be implicated in Armond’s crime, and neither will this affect Aunt Sally and Uncle Jim.

“Oh, by the way, Aunt Sally is three months pregnant. Help them out wherever you can. She also suggested for all of us to return to J City along with Uncle Charlie and Aunt Helen during the new year.”

He nodded and planted a kiss on my forehead. “Why are you beaming with joy when Aunt Sally and Jim are the ones getting married? Silly girl!”

I chuckled loudly. “I don’t know why, either. I just feel over the moon. Aunt Sally has been living all by herself over the years. Now that she’s met her Mr. Right, it’s something worth celebrating. In addition, she’s got a baby. These are all wonderful news.”

Ashton let out a thin smile and looked at me. “Do you want another child?”

His question startled me, then I parroted him, “Can we have another child?”

He smirked. “As long as you want one, we’ll have it at all cost, regardless of the method. Scarlett, it’s been a roller coaster ride for us to be where we are now with each other. Have no regrets. Whatever you want to do, just tell me, and I’ll do my very best to make it happen, okay?”

A warm, fuzzy feeling evoked in me as soon as he said that.

I thought about what Sally said and elicited his response, “Ashton, Aunt Sally suggests for us to try in vitro fertilization. You...”

He nodded and agreed immediately as if he was expecting this. "I'll contact a well-known expert in the country and consult him about this. Just leave this to me."

I thought he would turn down the idea, but he agreed right away, which made me quite astounded.

My phone rang that instant; it was Nora. Her voice was low, and she sounded dejected. After a long pause, she said, "Scarlett, I'm leaving for A City today. I wanted to leave quietly but decided to give you a call in the end. I'm still wearing the bracelet. About the child, I regret it so much, but there's nothing I can do about it. I once felt that as long as I kept deceiving myself with positive thoughts, you wouldn't be mad at me. However, I realized that I was wrong. I'm defeated by my guilty conscience. I don't have that peace within me. So, I called to apologize. I'm sorry, and I know that my words mean nothing to you, but I must do it in order to get through this ordeal. I also want to plead on Armond's behalf, so please have mercy on him, if possible."

Clenching on my phone, I could not help but feel miserable for her. I was lost for words. Moments later, I asked, "Where are you right now?"

"Airport."

I glanced over at Ashton, who simultaneously switched directions and headed to the airport.

Then, I said over the phone, "Nora, it's all in the past. We'll all be fine. I know what to do about Armond. Please wait for us at the airport. We're on our way to send you off."

I hung up while Ashton sped off.

When we arrived, I saw Nora with her suitcase. Only those who were very familiar with her could recognize her at one glance since she had a mask on.

I approached her and gave her a bear hug. “Do think of me when you’re back in A City. Take care!”

Burying her head in my neck, she nodded. “You arrived in a flash! Initially, I just wanted to bid farewell over the phone. I didn’t mean for you to come all the way to the airport.”

“I know, but we’re just nearby. So, we came. Do you have any future plans in mind?”

Her first experience in love cuts her the deepest. It will probably take a long time for her wounds to heal properly.

She shrugged her shoulders and said casually, “Not really, but I intend to go to Lightspring. My Grandpa has given me a large sum of money, so I want to open an inn over there. I’ll bring my Grandpa along, make a big yard for him to cultivate plants and crops, and accompany him every day.”

I was a bit green with envy of the life she described. “Hmm... That sounds like an ideal life. Ashton and I will visit you when we’re free.”

We chatted for a while more before it was time for her to board the flight. Before she left, I took a deep breath when I hugged her for the last time.

Life was, indeed, full of ups and downs.

It was already quite late in the evening when we stepped foot into K University. Since Ashton and I did not have a specific itinerary, we headed straight to the library.

Though it was not very crowded, our appearance seemed to have caught everyone's attention. Ashton was a man of few words, so he quickly found a place and sat down quietly.

Meanwhile, I was searching high and low for some books on the shelves but to no avail. It was my first time here, and I was not very familiar with how the resources were arranged.

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Right then, a handsome young man who looked around twenty years old approached me.

He smiled brightly at me, and I subconsciously responded with a gentle grin.

"Are you looking for something?" he asked.

I nodded. "I was looking for some materials for legal research, but my effort was in vain." It's probably because I'm not familiar with this library.

He looked at me and explained gently, "Most of the books here are scattered. There are more professional resources in the reading room next door. You don't seem to know this place well. If you don't mind, may I show you around? Maybe I can help you find the books that you're looking for."

I thanked him with a nod and a smile, "That would be wonderful!"

Just as he had described, I found the books I wanted in the reading room next door. When we were exiting, he asked, "You don't look like you're from this university. Are you here for an exam or a Ph.D. student?"

I chuckled. "I'm just here to borrow some books. You look really young. A junior?"

He nodded. "I'm going to be a senior soon. Can I have your phone number, please? You remind me of someone."

Amused, I asked, "Is this a pick-up line used by young boys nowadays?"

He denied, "No, you really looked like the celebrity I had always liked a few years ago. You two are so alike. She's seemingly quitted the entertainment world. I liked her very much, so when I first saw you, I thought you were her."

As soon as he said that, I knew that he must have mistaken me for Nancy. Hence, I told him, "I'm sorry, but I don't think I can give you my contact number."

Confused, he asked, "Why?"

I pointed at Ashton, who was walking toward me, and laughed. "My husband doesn't allow me to chat with strangers, let alone exchanging contacts. Hence, I'm sorry, but I can't give you my number."

Looking at Ashton from afar, the young man looked somewhat disappointed. He then nodded reluctantly. "It's okay then."

Without saying another word, he left.

Looking at Ashton, I ran toward him and fell in his arms, smiling. "Mr. Fuller, do you know what I was up to?"

He arched his brow, "What were you doing?"

"There's a junior asking me for my number!" I bragged, "But I told him that I'm married, and my hubby is irreplaceable."

He took a glance at the young man who had left. Then, he gazed at me. "It seems like I shouldn't let you wander around in the future. You might get kidnapped when I'm not being watchful."

Holding onto the handrail, I climbed upstairs. He hugged me all the way, and we found a seat together.

It felt good to be in a vibrant place as if we were young again.

Nick's wedding was carried out smoothly, but I did not see Jackson there. I called him multiple times and even tried contacting him through other means but to no avail.

At the wedding, Nick said to his bride, "Meeting you has been the best thing that's ever happened to me. Thank you for giving me a home." It was a simple yet powerful statement.

I think that people have a bias toward simplicity as they grow older. When we're young, we often assume that the ending will be sweet, regardless of how the love story goes. Then, we became oblivious of the fact that not everyone who's in love is tolerant.

Many years later, I met Jackson in M Country during a business trip. With a faint smile, he said calmly, "It's been a while." That was the end of our conversation.

As we grew older, our days became simpler. John married Emma. Although he did not do it out of love, he enjoyed leading a simple life and spending ordinary moments with her.

Cherish the person you love in your memory. I believed Emma would understand this very well. John deliberately treated Emma better as if he was compensating for another person. However, Emma took it as a consolation and considered herself blessed. In a way, she was lucky to have a man like John who made attempts to pamper her. The only less-than-ideal part was that she had never truly fallen in love with him. He was way better than he appeared to be.

For me, that was the best ending. At least, John didn't need to face any challenges and bear the pain that life threw at him all by himself.

During Christmas season, Ashton wanted to bring me along to Joe's wedding. I was surprised at the news, but I was happy for Joe, nonetheless. No matter who he chooses to spend the rest of his life with, I'm certain that as a responsible adult, Joe is more than ready to lead a life of purpose.

It was also during Christmas when I received news from the rehabilitation center that Rebecca was found dead from a suicidal drug overdose. Ashton was the first one who got the news. He fell silent for a long time before squeezing out a few words through his lips, "Give her a beautiful funeral service."

And, that was it.

After years of entanglement, the last thing he heard was her death. I was shocked to the core. Indeed, I was really shaken.

Everyone had their own fate. Perhaps, Rebecca made the wrong decision since the very beginning.

Ashton and Sally were planning to spend the new year in J City. Before the year ended, Ashton cleared his schedule and brought me to the Moore residence to pick Summer up. Having spent a few months recuperating there, Summer's health seemed to have improved a lot.

Somehow, she became quiet after recovering from the illness. Upon knowing that we were going to J City, Summer asked in anticipation, "Mommy, are we going to the cemetery to see Grandma and Aunt Macy?"

I froze for a moment and instantly nodded. This is great! Summer remembers Macy.

In the meantime, Hannah heard that we were leaving for J City, so she called to say goodbye. I was overjoyed when I discovered that she was pregnant and shared a lot with her.

As soon as I hung up, Ashton held me in his arms. "We'll pay a visit to the hospital right after the new year. We, too, will have our own child very soon."

I nodded, feeling really contented and peaceful. To me, it doesn't matter anymore whether I have a child or otherwise. The best is yet to come, and I look forward to it.

Then, it was the new year.

It did not snow in J City on new year's eve.

But instead, what greeted us were bewitching lights, incredible decorations, lively streets filled with bustling crowds, and a thick festive atmosphere.

Apparently, it was the first time that the Fullers had gathered as a big family. Charlie's head had turned white. He said to me, "Scarlett, it's not easy for you two to get together. The luckiest thing in life is to reunite with the one that you love. It's a tremendous blessing to be able to watch the fireworks while hugging your one true love."

I nodded in agreement. Suddenly, I noticed the wrinkles creeping up at the corner of Ashton's eyes. It finally dawned on me that he had aged.

It had been a long and winding road throughout this journey we called life. We had walked it slowly and arduously. Looking at him silently, I only hoped that we could carry on peacefully in our remaining days.

Seeing the winter skies lit up by the colorful fireworks, Summer let out a gleeful, festive cry. I lay my head on Ashton's chest. "Ashton, what's your new year wish?"

Looking handsome as ever, he stared at me in the eyes and exclaimed, "To have you with me, day after day, year after year."

I could not contain my joy. We locked eyes as I repeated after him, "To have you with me, day after day, year after year."

What an ideal ending to a perfect night!

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It was the first new year that I actually felt so blissful for the first time in my life. Ashton, Summer, and I spent another week in J City before returning to K City.

When we were about to depart, Charlie walked out with Summer in his arms. They were still frolicking around.

Summer had put on some weight during the festive seasons. Thus, it was quite a challenge for Charlie to carry her all the way. Although he was panting and looking slightly exhausted, he did not admit to it. He was playing a fool with Summer and making her laugh boisterously.

“Let me carry her, Uncle Charlie.” Ashton stepped forward, wanting to take over and relieve his uncle.

The latter did not hand Summer over immediately. He fixed her scarf, gazed at Ashton and me, and sighed as he finally passed Summer over to Ashton.

“Summer, do call me more frequently once you’re home. Will you remember this?” Charlie grinned from ear to ear.

“Yes, I will, Grandpa Charlie!” Summer was very well-behaved, adorable, and likeable by all. Saying goodbye to her made Helen and Sally teared up.

Macy would be so relieved and delighted to know that Summer is loved by all her elders.

Heaving a sigh, Charlie looked at both Ashton and me and reminded us, "I won't nag you further, but do look after Summer and be careful on the road. Ashton, do remember to bring Scarlett and Summer to visit the Moores. Uphold the good virtues and proper mannerism as you should. Don't let others criticize the Fullers for displaying bad etiquettes."

I laughed at his comments, knowing that Cameron and Zachary were not so petty about these things. Then I assured him, "We don't live very far from them, so it's not a big deal to travel to and fro. They can see Summer whenever they like."

That was also the reason why Ashton and I wanted to spend new year's in J City.

Compared to the other relatives, Charlie was quite lonely. Since we stayed quite a distance from them, I often felt bad for not being able to be around them. This new year, it was inevitable for us to bring on the merry and keep them company during the festive seasons.

Drooping his head, Charlie continued to lecture us, "Visiting the elders during festivity has got nothing to do with how far or close you're from them. Don't mix the two up. Good manners begin at home. These are the unsaid rules that you should be mindful of, so don't take these things lightly. You two are still too young!"

"Rest assured that I'll bring them over and pay a visit soon," Ashton eased the situation while I leaned on him and obliged like a good wife.

Over thousands of years, families in Chanaea continued teaching the next generations how to preserve traditions of rich culture and practice customs of good social etiquettes. There were especially evident in the area of developing harmonious relationships. Courtesy was deemed as a precious element in enhancing human bonds and bridging generational gaps. These concepts might not be easily understood by the younger generations, but they were definitely valued by heart amongst the seniors.

With that, Uncle Charlie nodded satisfactorily while lowering his head. Time stood still as everyone remained in silence. A somber atmosphere enveloped the place when it was time to bid each other goodbye.

Just then, Helen broke the silence unexpectedly, "All right, all right, it's time to go. Otherwise, you'll be late for your flight. Go now."

Everyone became alert once again and hurriedly ushered us into the car.

The chauffeur started the engine and drove us to the airport as we parted ways in a hurry.

I stared at the rearview mirror and saw Charlie and the rest waving at us under a towering tree. Their actions gradually slowed down, and moments later, their silhouettes vanished from my sight. We left with an extremely heavy heart.

I can't remember which poet has said this before, that life is a constant replay of farewells. It's made up of countless collections of moments when you send your beloved off so that the reunion becomes invaluable. The only thing is that no one knows when the next reunion will be.

Ashton noticed that I was feeling glum, so he passed Summer over to me.

The intelligent Summer stretched out her arms to me and requested, "Mommy, carry me!"

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How could I still feel downcast when the little angel is around? I sat her on my lap and gave her a hug. “Summer, shall we spend each new year with Grandpa Charlie and his family?”

“Yes! I’ll get lots and lots of presents!” Giggling, she clapped her hands happily. Her crescent-shaped eyes looked very adorable.

“Little miss greedy!” I pinched her nose gently and then joked with Ashton, “I wonder who she takes after.”

Macy was a strong iron lady who owned a bar and bought her own house. She was also very outstanding in managing her finance, but she wasn’t an avaricious woman. That woman knew how to control her income and expenditures in order to have a more comfortable life.

As for Jared, he’s highly unlikely to be a money-grubber. The Crest family once monopolized the entire daily essentials industry. It definitely wasn’t exaggerating to say that they regarded money as manure. Besides her facial features, there wasn’t an area that Summer takes after him.

Ashton chuckled while turning to look at us.

I observed how gentle and loving he was as he stroked Summer’s head. An image flashed up in my head while I visualized Ashton holding our baby affectionately. The more I thought about having a test-tube baby as Sally had mentioned, my desire for it grew even stronger.

When we arrived in K City that evening, we had dinner with Cameron and Zachary to make up for the New Year's Eve celebration.

Summer had already fallen asleep on Ashton's shoulders when we finally got home. After tucking her into bed, we went back to our room to wash up and retire for the night.

It had been quite an exhausting day. Yet, I still spent some time researching on my computer about in vitro fertilization when Ashton was taking a shower.

"What are you reading?"

I was so focused that I did not hear Ashton's footsteps approaching. His voice startled me.

Immediately, I switched off the computer and pretended as if nothing happened. "Nothing, really. Are you done?"

I was not sure if he saw my screen. One of the research journals that I read says that the success rate for women in an ideal health condition to become pregnant via in vitro fertilization is up to sixty percent. That's the average result achieved by a healthy adult woman. Unfortunately, I'm not able to contribute to that statistics.

"Hmm," Ashton gave me a quick reply. Subsequently, he placed a glass of warm water on the table as well as some pills that he had put inside a bottle cap.

Sally was very concerned about us. On the second day of the new year, she took me to see a doctor, who concluded that I was weak. I was told that it would take a while for me to be in the pink of health, and the only shortcut was to consume some prescribed pills daily. With that, the chances of me getting pregnant again before reaching thirty years

old would be higher. Since then, I had been taking the medication, and it was about a week now.

I swallowed the pills as usual and drank some water. Then, Ashton carried me to bed.

The week after the new year was a public holiday. Since we had a day off, we planned some visitations for Summer.

First, we went to the Stovall residence, where Summer received a big present from Louis. She was on cloud nine and brought so much joy to everyone at home.

Emma looked rather matured as she donned a new look and had her hair tied up. I caught a few sweet interactions between her and John when she was standing next to him. I doubt they got married just because they found each other compatible. John caught me observing him in secret like a paparazzi and rolled his eyes at me.

At the same time, Summer was spoiled rotten by the Stovalls in J City. After opening her present, she made Louis play snowball fights with her. The strong and tough man obliged as she already had him wrapped around her little finger.

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We sat around the sofa, in a circle. Looking out the French windows, we could see how gleeful Louis was, having some good fun with Summer. He was just like a playful big kid.

Moments later, as everybody quietened down in the living room, John blurted, "Have you heard? Armond's out."

Upon hearing the news, my heart sank. I was very surprised, and at the same time, confused because it was a different ending to what I had in mind.

When Ashton's lawyer was analyzing the case, he stated very clearly that Armond was charged for multiple crimes, namely intentional assault, illegal possession of firearms, and inflicting cruelty against national Class 1 protected wildlife species. He should have been jailed for at least fifteen years. Why was he released?

I huffed as I felt a cold chill running down my spine the moment I recalled the dreadful incidents at the villa.

Just then, Ashton's big hand patted mine to console me. I lifted my head to look at him. I could read from the message through his gaze. Stay calm. I took a deep breath and tried to hold myself together. Then, I plastered a smile on my face so that he would not get too worried about me.

Seeing that we did not react to him, John continued to share his thoughts solemnly, "He got away when he was on parole for medical treatment. I've inquired about this and found out that it was the Venrians who did it. They don't care about their own safety and will only work for money. It's so bold of Mr. Murphy to use a million to sacrifice a few lives in exchange for Armond's freedom. No whistleblower and nothing leaked beforehand. Right after the prison break episode, the police ambushed at the Murphy Residence, only to find out that the Murphys have absconded with the money and went abroad."

"Does it mean Armond will never ever return?"

I was panic-stricken. As soon as I popped the question, I could feel Ashton tightened his grip on my hand. However, I hid my emotions and tried to maintain a calm composure. "I was just curious. Can't the law punish him?" I attempted to cover up eloquently.

"You're too naive, Letty." Raising one hand, John mocked, "The law is also a set of systems. Hence, in that system, the winner rules. Although it looks like we have the upper hand, the dirty games played inside the prison are not as simple as we think. The prisoner can choose to write his own survival story in this system. As long as he can find a loophole within the law, he's able to start afresh, somewhere, somehow."

His analysis had helped me to understand some life concepts. There was nothing much that money could not do in this world. Armond had probably thought of his escape plan the moment I exposed his involvement in organ trafficking. He must have foreseen his downfall one day and had a backup plan prepared in advance.

When someone turns evil, the extent of horror and ugliness the person can demonstrate through his thoughts, speech, and deeds is beyond our imagination. I learned this the hard way from Jared.

Understanding the reality is one thing; being able to calm my anxious heart is another. Like a vine, fear creeps all over me and invades every cell in my body.

Suddenly, Ashton placed my hands in his palm and started rubbing them to give me warmth. Frowning, I looked him in the eyes.

"I'm here with you," Ashton asserted.

His voice was low yet soothing. Those clear eyes of his were resolute, and they comforted my apprehensive heart.

Ashton had saved me once from Armond. He could definitely save me again and protect me from harm.

Although the devil is prowling, Ashton is the light unto my path. As long as I follow him, I shall not fear.

That assuring thought made me feel better. A faint smile settled upon my face as I locked eyes with Ashton and was met with his unswerving gaze.

Chapter 1098

Seeing that, Emma teased us, “You guys are so sweet together.”

Ashton and I laughed at the same time as if we had planned it.

“Tsk... tsk... tsk...” John shook his head. “Only the two of you would do something like that. Your public display of affection is not welcomed here. But I won’t stop you, so please go get a room!”

“Arghhh!”

Emma gave him a tight slap on the arm, upon hearing his passing remark. John groaned in pain. With a scowling face, he commented, “Mind your manners, woman! Are you trying to kill your husband?”

John had a reputation that preceded him. Anyone who saw his long face would tremble in fear or bow reverently to him, regardless of who it was. Yet Emma was different. She

faced him head-on as if she had gotten permanent immunization against his vehemence. Impatiently, she rolled her eyes and confronted him boldly, "Who allowed you say such derisive things?"

John's expression became sullen after being refuted by Emma. Wanting to regain some dignity, he stood up abruptly and glared at her, intending to intimidate her. "Trust me. I'll kick you out of the house if you dare to point one more finger at me."

Those two had an agreement when they got married. They vowed to give each other freedom and not to meddle in the spouse's private affairs. Thus, I always thought they were a match made in heaven. Faced with their sudden argument, I felt rather overwhelmed and did not know how to respond to it. I wondered if they were really upset with each other.

Even so, Emma ignored him completely. She scoffed at him and then pulled me upstairs, "How ridiculous! Letty, come with me. I have a gift for Summer, but I forgot to bring it down."

My hands were tied, so I could only follow her upstairs. John roared a few times, asking for her to stay. However, she proceeded upstairs without even turning her head, as if his scolding were music to her ears. I was quite impressed.

Emma then brought me to their room. I waited on the sofa while she went ahead into her bedroom. Moments later, she returned with a vintage sandalwood box in her hands.

"Open it and take a look." She passed me the box.

As I opened the box, I saw a shiny anklet lying on a sponge bed.

“Your brother told me that Summer has gone through a lot of hardships even at a young age. I felt so troubled and wanted to gift this to her. This anklet is said to protect a child from harm and shoo away bad luck. Legend has it that kids who wear one before the age of nine will be kept in safe hands for a lifetime.”

“You’re so thoughtful, Emma.” Holding the anklet, I was deeply moved.

My first impression of Emma was open-minded, sharp-tongued, and placid. She’d often say things that cause everyone’s jaw to drop. Thus, I expected her to stay the same and do things as she pleased after marrying John. Now, I felt like she fit the role of John’s wife very well.

When we were in the living room just now, I had noticed that Emma sincerely liked John a lot. It was practically written all over her face. I suspect John felt the same way about her too, just that he hadn’t realized it yet.

“As long as you like it.” Feeling smug, Emma patted my shoulders.

Summer fell asleep when we were heading home. Cradling her in my arms, I looked out of the window and sank into deep thoughts. My mind was in complete disarray. “Distraught over the news about Armond?” Ashton leaned over, took his coat off, and draped it over my shoulders. He even fixed the corners.

Tugging at his jacket, I lowered my head and hugged Summer tightly. Sighing, I replied, “It’s not entirely because of him. I feel that I didn’t take good care of Summer, causing her to suffer so much.”

Chapter 1099

If Macy was still around, Summer would have lived as an ordinary girl, even though she would grow up in a single-parent family. Conversely, since the day she started living with me, she had gone through so much, including undergoing a bone marrow transplant and a kidney transplant at such a young age. She almost lost her life.

I had done so little for Summer. Even the idea of wearing this anklet was Emma's idea. I had not even prayed for her in the last five years she was with me, and to call myself her "mother" was just irony.

Will Macy forgive me?

After a moment of silence, Ashton looked me in the eyes and stated confidently, "You've given her a home."

I did not respond to that but merely stared at the anklet Summer was wearing.

We would officially return to work in two days' time. Hence, Ashton and I decided to spend the next day resting at home.

Yet, he still woke me up early in the morning.

"What is it? Didn't you say we aren't going anywhere today but to rest at home?" I propped myself up and rubbed my bleary eyes.

"Something urgent came up. Do get ready to leave in half an hour." Ashton got off the bed to get changed.

“Huh? What happened?” Yawning, I was very reluctant to crawl out of the comfortable sheets.

The winter season was the best time for sleeping in. When we were in J City, I had to wake up super early to either accompany Charlie for meditation or go for a morning jog with Sally. As a result, I worked out a lot and have been looking forward to slumbering when we got back to K City.

I did not get any response from him, so I peeped through one eye.

He was putting on a necktie in front of the full-length mirror, fitting it snugly into the collar point. Each of his movements was very pleasing to the eye.

What a treat! The eye candy woke me up instantly. However, his next line had me wishing I was still asleep.

“Professor Zidd came back last night, so he has some time for us today.”

The name was no stranger to me.

When I was surfing the net for in vitro fertilization a few nights ago, I stumbled upon a headline: Professor Zidd, the father of IVF in Chanaea. It was a thousand-word article. Even without clicking on the link to open it, one could tell how much of an expert Professor Zidd is.

So, Ashton did see what was on my screen, but he pretended otherwise and made these arrangements secretly.

I was quite touched that he took notice of everything I said or did and paid attention to even the slightest detail. Then again, I had to admit that I was clueless about the next steps.

I wouldn't reject the idea of in vitro fertilization, but I would feel helpless at the thought of trying when the result was already pretty clear. The world's average pregnancy rate for in vitro fertilization was less than sixty percent. My body had always been weak, and my uterus had been severely damaged. In addition, I had had two miscarriages. These factors further reduced my chance of getting pregnant by half. Thus, I was unsure if I should fight for the remaining thirty percent chance of success.

Even if the process was a success, there would not be a guarantee that another miscarriage wouldn't happen, considering my current health condition.

Once we walked into the first step of the process, there was no turning back. I had fallen into despair twice. Hence, I could not even bring myself to imagine having to go through the torment of losing my flesh and blood for the third time.

My heart still throbbed in pain when I thought about how my firstborn struggled to survive inside my body and suffocated in his last agony.

That was why I hid it from Ashton when I was researching for the information.

I spaced out on the bed and seemingly returned to the dreadful moment when I had a miscarriage. Depressing air lingered around me as the heart-rending tragedy flashed up in my mind again.

Chapter 1100

Suddenly, a familiar warmth on my wrist brought me back to reality. I regained my senses and was met with Ashton's tender and affectionate gaze.

He was down on one knee by my bedside, with one hand holding my phone. His deep eyes stared at me intensely.

"I know you're worried about the success rate and that all our effort might be in vain. I know you're also afraid that some bad people would appear again, wanting to harm you and our child. However, Letty, don't give in to fear. Think about how I rescued you in the nick of time and also think about Aunt Sally's advice. I'm here with you; we're all here for you. God won't let you go through it again. We won't fail this time. Try it once more, for my sake, okay?"

I studied his expression, but I could not tell if Ashton wanted a kid so badly. Anyhow, I was somewhat convinced by him.

God won't do this to do for the third time. Everyone deserves a chance to be a mother. There should be a limit to the number of times fate can toy with me.

After contemplating, I changed my clothes and asked Mrs. Eriksen to take care of Summer while Ashton and I headed to Kingston Hospital in K City.

Ashton drove, instead of the chauffeur. Sitting on the passenger seat, the thirty-minute journey felt like a century-long.

At the hospital, I finally saw Professor Zidd, whose picture I had only seen in an article. He had a high hairline, a white lab coat on, and reeked of disinfectant, but the man was very amiable.

Professor Zidd casually asked us a few questions and then requested Ashton and me to go for a body check-up.

Ashton had to get his sperms and semen tested, whereas I had to undergo all of the important gynecological tests. Besides the basics, I had to go for routine blood analysis, diagnostic curettage, basic endocrine hormone determination test, and an anti-sperm antibody test. Ashton spent a large sum of money and took me to complete all the required examinations at the nearby private hospitals within the shortest time. Then, we returned to Kingston Hospital with the medical reports.

Professor Zidd studied my medical records for some time and then removed his glasses. With a serious expression, he asked, "Mrs. Fuller?"

"Yes." I clasped Ashton's hand tightly. My palms started sweating while waiting for Professor Zidd to go through my records. I had to hold onto something for support and fight back the tears in my eyes.

"Your situation is rather complicated because you've had two miscarriages caused by accidents during the fetal period. The fetus in your womb struggled for too long and consequently affected your uterus adversely. For now, let's not discuss whether we can successfully stimulate your ovulation. Currently, the reports show that your womb is temporarily unable to provide an ideal environment for the survival of an embryo."

Although I had expected it, I could not help but gulp to suppress my urge to bawl my eyes out. "In that case, Professor Zidd, did you mean that I don't stand a chance to get pregnant even via in vitro fertilization?"

I mumbled through the second half of the question and ended up sobbing. I had no idea how I managed to get them all off my chest.

I could sense a desperate desire in me, longing to be a mother. Previously, I was told that my chance of getting pregnant was slim, but there was still a small probability it

could happen, and it did! This time, I was being declared definitive infertile with a zero chance of having my own baby. I was beyond grief, and my heart died on the spot. Hope is a kind of faith, invisible and intangible, yet, it can motivate a person to continue living.

Subconsciously, my fingers dug into Ashton's palm. It seemed that I could only use this way to draw some strength from him in order to maintain my composure.

A deafening buzzing sound rang in my ears just then. Right before the moment I was going to collapse, Professor Zidd's hoarse voice said gently, "No, that's not true. There's no absolute answer to the question asked."