

Chapter 816

“It’s not a big problem, but if it’s not dealt with soon, we’ll face technical problems in the later phase. Besides, something is off with the structure of the base. What do you guys have in the underground? Is it a garage or a warehouse?” Marcus asked.

I was a little bewildered by his question. “There’s nothing underneath. Why?”

He frowned. “Normally, there will have something built underneath with this kind of structure.”

He seemed to have realized something as he kept quiet and pondered for a moment. However, he did not ask further as he looked at me and asked, “Do you want to grab lunch together?”

I shook my head. “No, thanks. I...”

He arched his eyebrow and cut me off, “So, you plan to avoid me forever? We are business partners after all. It’s totally fine to have a meal with business partners, right?”

With his personality, I knew that if I continued to find excuses, he would also continue trying to talk me out of it. Therefore, I complied. “Okay. I know we can grab something to eat behind here. It’s nothing much, but it

can fill our stomachs. I still have a lot to do in the afternoon, so I don't want to waste time going to restaurants that are far away from here."

He nodded with a smile. "Sure."

The on-site canteen was one of the temporary facilities built for the convenience of the employees here. It was not big, but it was sufficient for us. The hotel was too far away from the base as it took about an hour for a round trip. It would be better to let everyone rest during the break time instead of traveling on the road.

Thus, Armond decided to build this facility and hired a chef to prepare meals for all of us. It was quite convenient.

The canteen was almost full when we reached there. I found us a place to sit and saw Marcus bringing me a glass of juice. "It's freshly squeezed."

I nodded and thanked him.

After we got our meals, we ate quietly and did not chat much.

We still had some time left after finishing our lunch, and I initially thought about resting in my office until the break time ended. However, he suggested, "You should be familiar with this place by now. Why don't you take me around the site as a walk after our meals?"

I pursed my lips. "Why don't you go ahead by yourself? We only have fruit plantations nearby." With that, I turned around and headed to my office.

But he grabbed my arm and stopped me. I frowned and raised my voice. "Let go of me!"

He paid no heed and said, "I know you don't want to see me or spend time with me. However, as your business partner, Ms. Stovall, can I request you to take me for a tour here as a survey?"

"You're just using work as an excuse!" I flung his arm away in irritation. "Let's go."

What we had nearby the base was just pear trees. Most of the pears had ripened, and the fruit farmers were harvesting them to sell them in the market.

After walking for a while, Marcus said, "You don't have to treat me like this, Scarlett. I never have the intention of destroying your life. Is it possible for us to be friends again?"

I stopped and turned to look at him. "Do you think that we can get along now?"

He gazed at me with a sincere look. "I know that you don't want me to bother you because you're worried that I might affect your relationship with

Ashton. And I also understood that you don't love me. You don't need to repeat yourself; I get it."

I pressed my lips together and did not say anything because what he said was right.

Then, he continued, "Actually, I really want you to be happy. I initially thought that with Ashton's cold attitude, it was impossible for him to make you happy. That was why I wanted to be one who gives you happiness instead. But from what I can see now, he is not as bad as I thought he would be. If so, why can't I give both of you, my blessings? So, I've thought it through and decided to stay by your side as a friend. As long as you're happy with your life, I won't pester you anymore."

Taken aback by his words, I looked at him and faltered. "You..."

He gave me a sad smile. "So, can you promise me not to keep your distance? Scarlett, I've lost so many of my loved ones. I don't want to lose you too. No matter how terrible I am, my care for you is sincere. Since I can't be your life partner to protect you, can you at least treat me like a brother? Please don't treat me like a stranger and ignore my existence."

My heart ached as I listened to his confession. Looking at him, I nodded and replied, "I'm sorry, Marcus. I owe you my life. Whatever you want me to do, I can do it for you. The only thing I can't do is to be with you. Even after all the things we had gone through, he still loves me and protects me. It's such a blessing to have Ashton as my husband. Thank you for loving me, Marcus. But I'm not worthy of your love. There are people who need you

more than me. Camelia should have given birth, and she is a good girl. Since you've married her, you need to be responsible to her and the baby."

He nodded and smiled bitterly, seemingly ready to let go of the past. "I know. Since I can't give happiness to the one whom I love the most, it's better to give it to the ones who need it. This is for the best."

Chapter 817

We should not be too adamant in life. Otherwise, we will be the ones who suffer in the end.

We chatted for a long time during the stroll. When we were back at the base, he turned towards me and said, "Since we've reconciled, can I invite you for dinner tonight? Don't overthink about it. It's just that I'm not familiar with this place yet, and since I'm just going to be here for a day or two, I want to take this chance to spend time with my close friend. It would be better to eat with a friend than eating alone."

Looking at his innocent and expecting gaze, I could not bring myself to reject him. I nodded and replied, "Sure."

As Marcus went back to the base with a smile, I suddenly realized that Ashton might be back at the Lavelian Village tonight.

But I can't take back my words. I sighed at the thought.

The work I had in the afternoon was a breeze.

When I was ready to leave the office in the evening, Marcus came and leaned against the door, smiling at me. "Seems like you're busy with work every day."

I nodded in reply and packed up. Looking at my phone, I realized I had not received any message from Ashton since morning. Is he buried in work?

Marcus brought his car today and parked it at the gate of the base, so we walked out from the base together and got into his car. Whistling to himself, he seemed to be in a good mood. He looked at me and asked, "Do you know any good restaurants here? You've been here longer than I do."

I shook my head. "Nothing special. I seldom go out after work."

It was getting dark, and Ashton still had not contacted me. Hence, I sent him a WhatsApp message: Have you taken your meal? [L SEP] After the message was sent, I looked out the window and spaced out.

Since I did not have any recommendations, Marcus decided to have our dinner at the hotel. As soon as I sat down in the restaurant, my phone vibrated.

It was a WhatsApp call. Looking at the caller ID, I could not help but frown. It was Joe. Nevertheless, I answered it. "Hi, Mr. Quinn."

"Where are you?" He sounded a bit anxious.

I replied, "I'm at the restaurant in Lavelian Village Hotel. Why?"

"Come to the entrance and bring Ashton back to your room. His arm is hurt. Thank you."

I was caught off guard for a moment. Ashton is hurt?

Before I could ask him more, he had hung up the call and left me speechless. How straightforward!

By the time I put down my phone, Marcus had ordered food for us. Looking at him apologetically, I stood up and said, "I'm sorry, Marcus. Something urgent came up. I need to leave now."

With that, I took my bag and left. Even when he was calling for me to come back, I still continued to rush to the exit and apologized to him again. I was worried sick about Ashton.

At the entrance on the ground floor, Joseph helped Ashton out of the car. I went towards them and saw the bandage on Ashton's arm. "What happened? Why is he hurt?"

Joseph paused for a second before answering me, "We had a car accident just now. Don't worry, the doctor had applied some medication on the laceration wound on his arm."

I frowned, thinking if I should help him. After all, it was his arm that was injured, so he should be fine walking without support. But in the end, I went forward and helped him.

As soon as we walked into the hotel, we saw Marcus striding towards us. Upon seeing the bandage on Ashton's arm, he knitted his eyebrow and looked towards me. "We will have our meal next time."

With that, he turned and left.

Ashton took a side glance at me and questioned, "You were having dinner with him just now?"

I nodded. "We had just ordered our food when Joe called me and said that you're injured."

His gaze darkened immediately as he looked at me coldly. "So, I disturbed both of you?"

I sensed the rising anger in his tone. "You're overthinking. We were just having a meal."

"How am I overthinking?" he snapped, looking a little angry.

Sighing, I pressed the elevator button and glanced up the ceiling. If we continued this conversation, it would just end up becoming a heated argument. Hence, I changed the topic. "You must be hungry. Let's order room service and eat together in our room. What would you like to have for dinner?"

Just then, the elevator doors opened, and I helped him into the elevator. "Anything will do," he responded nonchalantly and kept quiet after that.

Hmm, he seems to be in a bad mood. I guess it's because of Marcus. I had bodyguards following me today, so I supposed they had reported my whereabouts to him. Ashton had always been possessive, so he must be irked by the fact that I had spent most of my time today with Marcus.

Even so, I was not angry with him. His moodiness was understandable, especially now that he was in pain. Bringing him back to our room, I asked in a warm tone of voice, “Did the doctor ask you to change the dressing? Did he prescribe any medicine?”

He shook his head. “Nope.”

Seeing that he did not have any medicine with him, I figured his injury was not too serious, but I still opted to order room service and let them send our dinner to our room.

When I saw him walking towards the bathroom, I asked, “You want to take a bath?” I don’t think he can bathe with his injured arm.

He turned around and furrowed his brow. “I need to pee.”

Taken aback, I glanced away awkwardly and kept quiet. But as I thought that he might need some help, I asked out of concern, “Can you manage it yourself?”

Chapter 818

He lifted a brow at my question and fixed his eyes on me. “You can help me if you want.”

His answer caught me completely off guard – I blushed and hesitated, not knowing what to say. I expected him to say he can manage by himself!

“So, do you want to help?” he asked in a low voice, waiting for my answer.

He is my husband, after all. We’ve been living together for a number of years, and we still have more years to come. One day, he would fall sick, and I might become ill as well. No matter how embarrassing it is, we have to take care of each other because we are a couple, not to mention he is wounded now.

After rationalizing my decision, I heaved out a sigh and accompanied him to the bathroom.

As he stood in front of the toilet, I bent down, biting my lip, and unfastened his belt buckle. Then, I unbuttoned his pants and proceeded to the zip.

When I was about to pull it down, he grabbed my hand and spoke with a raspy voice, "It's okay. I can do it myself."

I breathed a sigh of relief and rushed out of the bathroom.

Suddenly, his phone rang on the bed. I took a look at the screen and saw that it was Rebecca calling – she probably wanted to ask about his injury. Thus, I did not pick up the phone.

However, it kept ringing, and Ashton was still in the bathroom. He heard the ringtone as well and shouted, "You can answer it."

I pursed my lips and hesitated for a moment before picking up the phone. As soon as I put the phone against my ear, I heard Rebecca crying, and her anxious voice came from the other side of the line. "Ash, are you feeling better now? I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to throw a tantrum and caused you to get hurt. How I wish I was the one who got hurt instead. I promise you – I will always listen to you and won't do anything rash."

Oh, so he got hurt because of her?

I continued to hold the phone at my ear and remained silent. She continued to sob over the phone. "Ash, are you still angry with me? I'm sorry. I will..."

"The only thing you need to do is to stay away from him," I cut her off, a hint of anger in my voice.

She went quiet for a while and gradually stopped her crying. "Scarlett, why did you answer Ash's phone? How could you simply pick up someone else's phone? You're so rude."

I scoffed and said sarcastically, "Oh? Why aren't you crying anymore? Where did your saccharine voice go? Was it because Ashton is not on the line? Your acting skills don't seem to have improved over the years. Oh, and I'm sorry to tell you that it was Ashton who asked me to answer his phone. He's currently in the bathroom, unavailable to pick up your call."

She snorted contemptuously; her voice laced with jealousy. "Scarlett, stop your smugness. Even though I'm not married to Ashton, I'm still someone he cares dearly. You can see it for yourself. Today he could have protected himself, but he still chose to protect me and got himself injured. Yes, maybe he truly loves you and cares about you, too. But he has grown accustomed to having me by his side. Therefore, in the years to come, I'll continue to be the barrier between you and him."

I was not angry with her words, but I found them utterly ridiculous. So, I asked cheerfully, “Rebecca, aren’t you tired of this?”

She was speechless for a second before answering, “As long as it makes your life harder, I’ll never ever be tired.”

“Okay!” I nodded. “I wish you luck.”

With that, I ended the call and put the phone aside.

I was about to turn around when someone hugged me from behind, startling me. As I caught a whiff of a familiar scent, I knew that it was Ashton. “Do you always walk without a sound?”

He chuckled. “Yeah. Don’t you know that?”

Well, he’s right.

I turned around and looked at the bandage on his arm. “Don’t bathe tonight, Ashton. I’ll get some hot water and wipe down your body instead. Taking a bath might make the bandage wet and delay the healing of the wound.”

He curled his lips into a smile. “Alright.”

As I entered the bathroom to get a basin of water, he sat on a chair and looked at me silently, seemingly lost in his thought.

“Why are you looking at me like that? What’s on your mind?” I asked.

He gave me a faint smile. “I thought you’d be angry after talking with Rebecca just now, but you seem so calm now. I’m surprised.”

After wiping his hand, I put the towel down into the basin and glanced up at him. “Let’s say you have several investment projects on your hand now. Which kind of investment project would you be most worried about?”

He fell silent for a while and answered, “The ones that I don’t fully understand and lack confidence in.”

I nodded in response. “It’s true that I used to be wary about your relationship with Rebecca, but that’s because I was not sure if you cared about her out of responsibility or out of romantic interest. However, now, I’m sure that you won’t have any romantic feelings for her. It’s not only because of me but also because of Joe. You know that Joe loves Rebecca, and she knows it, too. Even if you don’t consider my feelings, I’m sure you would consider about Joe’s.”

Chapter 819

His expression turned sombre. “Are you not confident in my love for you? Why do you think that I would not consider your feelings?”

“That’s the worst-case scenario,” I replied truthfully.

“What’s the most favorable one?”

“You’d care about me and reject all the other women for me.”

He laughed and leaned towards me. “Scarlett, I love you more than you’ll ever know.”

However, I pushed him away, stood up, and glanced at his injured arm. “Ashton, this is the second time you get hurt because of another woman. To be honest, I’m not happy about it.”

As soon as I finished speaking, I took the basin to the bathroom and took a shower.

When I got out of the shower, I noticed a bouquet of roses in the room. It was rather beautiful. Ashton sat on the bed and grinned at me. "I know saying sorry is not enough to cheer you up, so I got you flowers. At least it's pleasing to the eye."

I gave him a nonchalant shrug. Indeed, flowers always make women happy.

"I pity your personal assistant, Joseph." It must have been difficult for him to get flowers at this hour and send them to our room in such a short time.

Chuckling, he scooted over and patted the spot next to him. "Come here."

Looking at the clock, I realized that it was getting late. It's time to turn in.

After I applied my skincare products, I went to lay down beside him and saw that he had not slept yet. He seemed to have something to say, so I asked, "Is there anything troubling you?"

He nodded and said in a serious manner, "I'm not sure about your attitude towards Marcus. It worries me."

I was stunned for a second before it dawned on me the meaning behind his words. "Marcus and I are only friends and business partners. Apart from that, we won't have any other relationship."

Satisfied with my answer, he smiled and pecked me on the lips. Due to his injury, he did nothing more and went to sleep.

I was completely exhausted after such a long day. As soon as I closed my eyes, I drifted off to sleep.

Since Ashton had injured his arm, he would definitely need help in his daily routine activities. Therefore, I planned to wake up earlier than usual to attend to his needs. However, when I woke up the next day, the spot beside me was empty, and the sound of running water came from the bathroom.

I quickly got out of bed and saw him struggling to twist a towel. He cursed under his breath and furrowed his eyebrows in frustration.

I held back my laughter and walked to his side. Taking away the towel in his hands, I said, "I've told you to call me whenever you need help. It's hard to do this alone."

When he saw me coming in, his frown disappeared instantly. “Did I wake you up?”

“Nope.” I wring the towel dry and raised my hand to wipe his face. “I usually wake up at this hour. Besides, it’s my husband who got hurt. How could I not get up early to take care of him?”

With his hands on the sink, he leaned back and lowered his head slightly so that I could reach him easily. Enjoying my “service,” he suggested, “You should be my private caregiver today. What do you think?”

Although it sounded as if it was a request, I knew that it was a command. Hence, I nodded. “No problem. Hmm, but you have to go to the city to work. I can’t leave Lavelian Village at the moment.”

He nodded in response. After thinking for a while, he said, “I won’t go to the city today. I’ll stay here.”

I gave him an “OK” hand gesture. After both of us were done freshening up, I went back to the room to change my clothes. Since the weather was good and there would be less work today, I figured wearing a dress would not be a nuisance. Therefore, I took out a dress that I had not worn for a long time from the wardrobe.

It was a nice knee-length dress that enhanced the slenderness of my legs. Besides, since I seldom wore bottoms that exposed my legs, the skin tone of my lower limbs was quite fair. My legs looked long and fair in this dress.

Then, I went to the dressing table and applied some light makeup. Otherwise, I would look bland in this outfit. A moment later, Ashton came out from the bathroom and landed his gaze on my legs, frowning.

I paid no heed to his frown and continued my makeup. When I was ready, he had also changed into a well-pressed suit, looking smart and dashing. I took my bag and said, "Let's have breakfast at the restaurant downstairs."

He nodded in response. Bending down to put on my shoes, I suddenly noticed that he was still frowning at me. "What's the matter?" I asked, puzzled.

He pursed his lips. "Nothing."

There were not many people by the time we arrived at the restaurant. Placing my hand at the crook of his arm, I brought him to a table by the window and sat down.

On a fine morning like this, the village against a backdrop of rolling hills and lush green forests was a pretty sight to behold.

With such a spectacular view of the natural scenery, my mood improved significantly. After ordering some food, I put my chin on my hand and continued to admire the beautiful scenery outside the window.

A few minutes later, I noticed that Ashton was looking at me. I thought that he needed my help, so I turned to him and asked, "Do you need anything else? I can take it for you."

Chapter 820

He shook his head. "You're not allowed to wear skirts anymore!"

Before I could react, he had draped his coat over my thighs to my chagrin.

I was also distinctly aware that everyone around us who was having breakfast glanced toward us more often than was necessary. Do I look indecent?

I examined my dressing again, but I didn't find anything overtly inappropriate. "Do I look strange at all?" I pleaded with Ashton.

He nodded solemnly. "Yes. You're too beautiful, that's the problem."

I was flabbergasted for a moment and burst into laughter the next. "Where did you learn to say things like that?"

He took a sip of water at length. "Just don't wear skirts this short again."

"It looks good on me," I pouted. "Why can't I wear it?"

"It's too short!" Ashton said brusquely.

Nora said that Ashton's reaction like this was a common ailment amongst men. They would try to restrict their wives' freedom to dress provocatively to the best of their ability but would enjoy looking at skimpily dressed women out in public.

"Rebecca and Rachel wear short skirts often and I think they look nice," I said deliberately. "Why can't I do the same? You can ogle at others but why can't I let others ogle at me? Ashton, you're being unreasonable."

"Do they have anything to do with one another?" Ashton fixed his beady eyes on me.

“Yes, they do,” I said after some thought.

“Don’t you think that you’ve gotten fat recently?” he said critically. “Your fat thighs will be more obvious in a short skirt.”

“I actually thought that I’ve gotten skinnier!” I protested after a shocked silence.

However, I wasn’t actually sure if that was the case. “Have I really gotten fat?” I asked Ashton suspiciously.

“A little!” he replied seriously.

Sometimes, we girls can feel very insecure about our looks. It felt even more so for me because Ashton had never called me fat before until now. If it had merited a mention from him, perhaps there was some truth in it.

“Alright, I won’t wear short skirts ever again,” I promised. I’d look awful in them being as fat as he said I was.

Ashton gave a satisfied smile.

The waiter brought over the breakfast we ordered. It was mostly what I enjoyed eating, but now that my plumpness had been pointed out, I felt self-conscious and didn’t have much of an appetite. “Here you go,” I said as I pushed the plates toward Ashton.

After that, I helped myself to a glass of milk. “Why aren’t you eating?” Ashton asked with a frown.

“I need to start losing weight,” I said. “With a controlled diet, I should be able to slim down with time.”

We girls prioritize our figures and petite sizes anyway. It was well worth it to be able to fit into our favorite clothes.

Ashton wasn’t pleased. “You should be full in the morning,” he chastised. “How are you going to lose weight if you don’t eat regularly? We can go for a walk tonight to burn off those extra calories if you like.”

He pushed the pastries back in front of me. “Finish all of it.”

“I really don’t want to!” I protested. My appetite was virtually non-existent.

“You must!” he said sternly. “Caloric restriction is the worst way to lose weight. We can go to the gym tonight if you’re serious about it.”

I pouted in defiance, but ultimately relented.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw a figure approaching us. It was Marcus.

Ashton saw him too. “Good morning, Mr. White!” he said pleasantly.

“Good morning, Mr. Fuller!” Marcus replied with a polite smile.

Marcus’s gaze fell on me, and his smile was radiant. “Good morning, Letty! You’re looking more beautiful today than you ever have!”

I was stunned with flattery. It’s in our nature to enjoy compliments.

“Mr. Fuller, would you mind if I joined you?” It sounded like a request, but Marcus sat himself down and summoned the waiter before waiting for Ashton’s approval.

Ashton pursed his lips but did not say anything.

I noticed that Ashton had a stain on the corner of his mouth, so I leaned over and wiped it off for him. It wasn’t deliberate but I thought that it was inconvenient for his arm, so I took it upon myself.

He was taken aback by my gesture. “You’re too old to be having food all over your face,” I teased.

Perhaps my sudden action had startled him, but he seemed to enjoy it. His eyes twinkled with mischief, and he looked to be in a great mood.

However, I was suddenly aware that Marcus frowned at both of us and averted his eyes to our interaction, as though he was offended that we were acting like lovers in front of him.

It would be awkward for him to voice his displeasure, so he decided against it and had his breakfast in silence.

After breakfast, Ashton came back to the base with me under the pretense of requiring my care. The majority of his documents and meetings were converted to a video format for his convenience, rendering him to be able to work from the office entirely.

I had my own tasks to do but was occasionally called by him to pour him a glass of water or to send documents as his arm was causing him issues.