

## Chapter 826

Being a scatterbrain, I had walked further than I had originally planned. Soon, the roads began to look foreign to me, so I headed back.

“You ugly devil! You look like an illegal immigrant. You stink like the trash you belong in!” A chorus of jeering voices came from an alley nearby. Curious, I inched forward for a closer look.

I caught sight of a gang of delinquents surrounding a man on the floor. They looked to be dropouts, around fifteen or sixteen years of age.

One of them held up a bucket of unknown contents. “Make way, make way. The main course is here!” he yelled excitedly.

The boys scattered as the bucket-toting boy emptied its contents onto the man on the floor. In an instant, he was drenched from head to toe.

The boys shouted with laughter.

I frowned with disapproval. The man on the ground had his head between his knees. He looked to be of a strong build, but his clothes were torn and ripped. His most striking feature was the darkness of his skin.

He looked like a harmless, homeless man to me. The kids appeared to have more plans to drench him, so I yelled out “The cops are coming!”

They were children, after all. At the sound of my voice, they bolted.

When it was silent all around again, the man on the ground slowly looked up. His gaze was cold, but he gave no indication that he had been bullied.

I froze in shock when I recognized him. Danny again! How did he end up like this?

After a brief deliberation, I walked in to the alley.

At the sound of my footsteps, he turned to look and froze in surprise at the sight of me.

“Are... are you alright?” I asked as I don’t know what else to say.

Danny looked away and squeezed the extra water out of his shirt. “I am fine!” he answered brusquely.

I took a deep breath as I felt some sorrow in my heart.

I fingered my purse and took out all of the money that I had. It wasn’t much, but I gave it all to Danny. I’d even included my phone number. “This is for you. My number’s here, if you need my help, feel free to call me.”

He did not reach out to take it, but kept his eyes fixed on me. I placed the money and my number on the ground next to him and left promptly.

It wasn't that I was being compassionate or anything, but during my time in Venria, Danny had aided me and allowed concessions despite not doing them so openly. Without him and his kindness, I may not even have made it back here alive.

A cab took me back to the villa, where I found Ashton reading in the yard. He ignored me and remained absorbed in his book.

It was noon. I wandered to the kitchen and found lots of food in the kitchen.

I took some out and whipped up a quick meal for myself. After that, I went upstairs to the bedroom. I originally planned to do some light reading but I fell asleep due to exhaustion.

Several hours later, I woke up and realized groggily that it was already late afternoon. The remnants of my lunch had been cleared away.

There was nobody in the villa. I sat for a while in the living room and returned upstairs soon after. I'd been sleeping the entire day and I had no desire to continue.

The sky grew dark, thunder growled threateningly. Before long it had begun raining again. The gale swept the fine mist indoors and plummeted the temperature inside the villa.

Summer called to tell me what had happened in her day at school; it was the little things that bothered children. I let her speak until she tired herself out.

I hung up soon after. After a day and a half spent sleeping, I wasn't able to fall asleep in a hurry. My mind on inspecting the Lavelian Village project the following day, I texted Rachel and Marcus to inform them of the inspection tomorrow.

It was midnight when the sound of an engine came from below. I knew it was Ashton without looking. Since we have not been on the best of terms these few days, it would be better for us both if I dropped off to sleep quickly to avoid a confrontation.

The door opened and shut, followed by the flick of the switch of the bedside lamp. The tap in the bathroom came on and then off. Finally, the bed on his side sank as it bore his weight.

Suddenly, I felt my waist being hugged with Ashton's breathing in my ear. I didn't expect him to. Maybe he felt something different about me today.

"You're not asleep?" he said quietly.

I sighed as the pretense fell apart. "No," I whispered.

The bedside lamp was still on. Ashton flipped me around to face him. It's a good sign that we haven't fought yet. "Let's talk about things?" he asked.

## Chapter 827

We were supposed to discuss what happened the night before!

“What would you like to talk about?” I probed carefully.

“Why didn’t you pick up my call last night? Who was the man you met in the alley?” he asked calmly.

“I’ve told you, my phone was off, and the man was an old friend!” It made not much of a difference whether he knew about Danny or not. I’ve decided that he would be better off not knowing.

Ashton narrowed his eyes in displeasure. “Scarlett, I’ve told you before. I don’t like it when you lie to me.”

I gazed at him and chuckled coldly. “Lie to you? Who’s lying to whom now? Ashton, let me ask you this. Where were you that night when I was at the morgue? Who were you with?”

He pursed his lips, clearly unhappy. “Why are you bringing this up now?”

“Why not? You’re bringing up things from yesterday! I can do it just like you.” I did not know why I was this upset. Maybe the thought of him being

with Rebecca as I lay there dying made me feel awful. I had thought that he had brought back those hairy crabs for me from his business engagement. It made me feel like a fool that he was out there giggling with Rebecca while I waited for him at home.

He exhaled with dissatisfaction. "Scarlett, do we have to interact with this much hostility every time?"

"We don't have to interact at all!" I was much happier if none of us spoke, to be honest. The silence wasn't a big deal anyway.

I rolled over and faced my back towards him. I had so much unhappiness that I wasn't able to express and it hurt to hold it in. To make things worse, I couldn't drift off to sleep.

I became angrier when I felt his hand moving on my body. I flung off the quilt and sat up straight in bed. "Mr. Fuller, if you desire a woman's company, feel free to contact Ms. Larson, who I'm sure would be delighted to oblige. If you're not willing to ask her, I don't mind doing it for you!"

I snatched up my phone to dial Rebecca's number. Ashton glared at me with anger. "Scarlett, what are you saying?"

"I'm looking for someone who can satisfy you!" I retorted. "What is it?" came Rebecca's voice from the other end.

“As you wish, Ms. Larson, Ash needs you very much right now. Please could you come over to our villa? If you need to be paid for your services, I will transfer you the money.” I was reckless and abandoned all restraint.

There was a moment of silence on her end as she was shocked. “Scarlett, what the hell are you doing?” she raged. “There’s a limit to throwing insults, you know!”

“Is the money insufficient?” I asked mockingly. “Aren’t the expenses that he’s paid for you over the years enough for you to spend one night with him? Haven’t you always told him that you love him? Why wouldn’t you come to him now when he needs you?”

“Scarlett, you...” I did not hear what came next, because at that moment Ashton had snatched my phone from me and hurled it across the room, where it was smashed to pieces upon impact with the floor.

We stared at each other, both of us in such a rage. Even Ashton was not as adept as concealing his emotions as he usually was, and looked murderous.

“Why did you humiliate her for?” he said coldly. “You could have directed your anger towards me and told me straight to my face if you didn’t want me to touch you. What did she do to you to deserve this?”

“Why? Does your heart break for her?” I asked sarcastically without any fear towards him. “Isn’t what you need the most right now is for someone ladylike and gentle? What’s wrong, are you resentful to me for exposing

your harbored love for her over all these years? What am I to you? A replacement of her for you to lie to and do whatever that you please?"

"Replacement? Lies?" Ashton's handsome features were contorted with hurt. "After all these years, is that what you see it as?"

"Isn't it?" I laughed derisively, feeling my vicious surge of anger wearing him down. "Do you think that I'm unaware of why you refused to let me go all those times? It's because I'm a Moore, and the goddaughter of Louis. It's because of my identity that allows you to have unobstructed access and connections all over K City and even all over the world. Ashton, you don't have to hang on to me for these benefits under the pretense of loving me. Even if we were separated, the Stovalls and the Moores won't deny you access to your privileges. If you want Rebecca, you can have her and keep your connections. You don't have to sneak around anymore. I don't mind it at all."

"You don't mind?" Ashton gave a sarcastic laugh.

He glared at me with his bloodshot eyes which radiated the power of unspeakable anger. His hands were balled into fists in an effort to contain it within his body. In the dead quiet of the night in our bedroom, the atmosphere was chilling.



## Chapter 828

Noticing his balled-up fist, I braced myself for it to land on me. But it didn't.

After a long moment, he turned his gaze on me. In his eyes, I could see a mixture of sorrow, disappointment, and despondent.

“Very well!” he finally uttered the only words he could muster and slammed the door shut as he left the room, resulting in a loud bang that reverberated throughout the house.

This is going to be another sleepless night...

The next morning, despite having very little sleep, I had to be at Lavelian Village for a site inspection.

When I arrived at the meeting point, Rachel and Marcus were already there, which caught me by surprise. The reason being I did not expect Marcus to make an appearance in a task that was usually carried out by the site supervisor.

“Ms. Stovall, I hope you don't think the world revolves around you just because you're the president's wife. If you can't even arrive at a meeting on time, I suggest you just assume the role of a housewife, since Mr. Fuller already has more than enough to support you.”

Rachel made a snarky comment on account of my tardiness. But I did arrive late, so there was no point in me getting back at her.

Pursing my lips, I ignored her remark and took over a project checklist from Leedon before turning to Marcus. “Mr. White, shall we do a walk-around to familiarize ourselves with the site perimeters?”

Marcus nodded. He glanced at Rachel indifferently but didn’t say anything. After a moment of silence, his gaze fell on me and he asked, “Are you very busy lately? You look overworked.”

“Oh, I’m alright. Just didn’t sleep well that’s all,” I replied while shaking my head.

This turned out to be a major undertaking as it not only involved a thorough inspection of the construction security, but we also needed to coordinate with departments from different companies. We had spent the whole morning covering the inspections for a few bases.

To avoid future misunderstandings, the three of us carried out the assessment together and had to achieve consensus on every single inspection detail. As such, we were all tuckered out by noon and were resting in a visitors’ room outside the base.

It was about noontime and everyone decided to break for lunch. I was feeling all drained out from sleep deprivation and walking all morning.

“Let’s take a break and have something to eat,” Marcus’ voice rang from in front of me. I lifted my head to see him dressed in a black suit while holding a white takeout container.

“It’s your favorite chicken casserole,” he said while holding out the container.

I let out a slight smile. “Thank you, Mr. White. You’re right on time.” I took over the food and started devouring my lunch.

Marcus found a seat next to me and sat down quietly while I munched on my lunch. He waited till I was almost done with my food before he spoke slowly. “We’ve covered pretty much all of the important aspects this morning. Why don’t you take time off this afternoon to get some rest? Sleep deprivation takes a heavy toll on your health.”

I sighed a little. “I’m fine. Don’t worry.”

He tilted his head in my direction. “Did you have a row with Ashton last night?”

I was hesitant for a brief moment before I swallowed my food and replied with a smile, “Just normal fighting like every other couple. We’ll be okay eventually.”

He pursed his lips. “What did you guys argue about?”

Finally finished my food, I looked at him with amusement. “What, are you a marriage counsellor now?”

He smiled softly while passing me a glass of water. “You should consider yourself lucky that I’m about to give out free advice today.”

I took a sip of water and replied, “We’re really okay. It’s just one of those trivial things all couples encounter. Oh yeah, the Harvest Festival is approaching. Are you going back to K City?”

He thought about it for a moment before replying, “Yeah, I will.”

I nodded and fell silent.

Even though the sun was blazing hot today after the downpour from last night, I still politely declined Marcus’ suggestion for me to take a nap at the hotel after lunch.

Nonetheless, I started to feel a dull pain in my abdomen and winced a little. Marcus noticed my discomfort and walked up to me. “Are you alright?”

Shaking my head, I put my hand over my lower belly. “Just a little twinge in the tummy. Might have been the food this morning.”

Marcus frowned as he stood up. “Come, I’ll bring you to the hospital for a quick check-up,” the man said while holding onto my arm.

I shook my head again, thinking that it might also be my menstruation since it was about that time of the month. Before I could reject, I noticed from the corner of my eyes that the frame of the sunshade awning above us was coming off.

After a few seconds, I finally realized what a perilous situation we were in. Before I could utter another word, Marcus was already one step ahead and was about to pull me away from where we stood.

However, before I managed to take another step, my stomach had a sudden cramp and I froze on the ground. Seeing that the awning was about to fall, I pushed Marcus away and yelled, "Go! Go without me!"

## **Chapter 829**

In the next split second, as though on reflex, Marcus took one big step toward me and used his body to shield me from behind. What happened next was me hearing a loud thump as the awning fell on top of us, followed by Marcus' low grunt behind me.

Everything went dark at that moment. When I snapped back to reality after a few seconds, I realized we were both trapped under the big sunshade awning, hence the darkness.

Marcus was still holding onto me. I asked worriedly, “Marcus, are you okay?”

He replied weakly from behind me, “I’m okay. Don’t worry. I’m sure someone will come to our rescue soon. Are you hurt anywhere?”

I shook my head, but my body was trembling from the shock. Luckily, before long, I finally heard a commotion just outside where we were trapped.

Suddenly, I felt a warm stream of liquid slowly trickling down my back. Sensing that something was off, I asked in a shaky voice, “Marcus, are you okay? Where are you hurt?”

His voice was weak and shaky, and I could tell he was just trying to reassure me when he said he was okay.

I panicked and started yelling, “Help! We’re here!”

When I tried to check on Marcus again, he didn’t answer me. I grew more distressed as I could feel more warm liquid flowing down from his direction. “M-Marcus, are you okay? Don’t fall asleep, talk to me. Please, wake up! Help! Please hurry up!” I was already sobbing uncontrollably.

“Ms. Stovall, we’re doing all we can right now. Don’t you worry,” a voice rang outside.

After a while, the workers finally managed to retrieve us from under the fallen overhang. As Leedon was about to help Marcus up, he was stunned for a few seconds when he saw the state Marcus was in before he fired away, "Quick, get our medical officers and call an ambulance!"

Upon hearing that, my eyes widened and I dared not move any muscle.

When the ambulance finally arrived, the medical staff carefully removed Marcus from above me and placed him on a stretcher. I was later helped up by Leedon, panting so heavily that I couldn't utter a single word.

All I could do was stared at the pool of blood from where we were trapped earlier. My brain seemed to have stopped processing everything else that was happening around me.

I didn't know how I had arrived at the hospital. The world seemed to pass me by in a blur as I stood outside the ER while doctors and nurses flitted in and out through the door. I had wanted to stop them to ask about Marcus, but my body wasn't listening to my command.

In my stupefied state, I remembered someone trying to pull me aside, but to no avail as I simply stood frozen on the ground with my eyes fixated on the light above the ER door. I finally managed to breathe a sigh of relief when the light turned red.

A few minutes later, the ER door swung open and a doctor walked out. I approached her, wanting to ask for Marcus' status. However, when I

opened my mouth, I realized I couldn't make any sound from my sore throat.

The doctor's gaze shifted from my face to my body and she furrowed her brows. "Miss, are you injured?"

I shook my head and tried to muster all my energy to reply to her. "I'm... fine." My words came out all muffled.

She looked behind me as she spoke, "I think you guys should get her checked out to make sure she's okay."

It wasn't until then that I realized most of my light-colored top was covered in blood. No wonder the doctor asks me to get checked out.

I followed the doctor's gaze and was surprised to see that it was Joseph she was speaking to. I had no idea when or for how long he had been here. He nodded at the doctor and turned to me. "Mrs. Fuller, Mr. White's condition has stabilized. We should get you checked out by a medical staff now."

I nodded. The moment I relaxed, my vision went dark before I lost all consciousness.

When I came to, I was already lying on a hospital bed. A nurse was inserting an IV drip attached to my arm as she explained, "She passed out due to suddenly relaxing after a prolonged fight or flight response, causing



the adrenaline rush to stop abruptly. To top things off, she is experiencing her menses at the moment, so her hormones are all over the place. She'll be okay after some proper rest."

I realized the nurse was not talking to me. I tilted my head and saw both Ashton and Joseph in black suits. The latter nodded after the nurse's reminder and sent her off.

Ashton's dark eyes fell on me for a brief moment and then slowly shifted away.

As I regained my full consciousness, my mind was once again flooded by images of Marcus in a pool of blood. Without thinking much about my row with Ashton from earlier, I asked, "How's Marcus? Is he okay?"

Upon hearing my question, Ashton's expression immediately turned sulky. His dark eyes fixed steadily on me as he spoke coldly. "So that's all you care about."

## **Chapter 830**

I frowned at his snarky remark, but still wanted my question answered. "Has he come out from the ER yet? Is someone looking after him?"

Instead of replying to my burning questions, Ashton continued to stare coldly at me. His gaze was filled with despair and a hint of sad irony. After which, he left the room without uttering another word.

Despite knowing he was upset, I had no choice but to check on Marcus myself. As I sat up from my bed and attempted to remove the IV drip from my arm, the door swung open.

Joseph walked in and saw what I was doing. He darted to my bedside and stopped me. "Mrs. Fuller, the doctor just said that you have to rest. You can't remove the drip."

I furrowed my brows and asked, "Joseph, can you help me check on Marcus? I'm really worried about him. Is someone taking care of him?"

Joseph sighed helplessly and said, "Mrs. Fuller, sometimes it baffles me how you manage to overlook all that Mr. Fuller has done for you. Knowing that Mr. White has injured himself trying to protect you, do you not think Mr. Fuller will take good care of him? After being told of your accident on site, he dropped everything and rushed to the hospital in the first instance. But he was met with his stunned wife being worried sick for another man, not responding to his calls when he tried to speak to you. When you passed out all of a sudden, Mr. Fuller even fell into a full-blown panic mode that I've never witnessed before. Knowing you'll be worried for Mr. White's wellbeing, he has made sure that Mr. White receives the best care he can get in this hospital. Mr. Fuller has even hired a personal nurse to look after Mr. White. And after all that he's done for you, your first words after coming to were all about Mr. White. Don't you think that's a bit too cruel to him? After all, he is your husband, and despite the very little emotion he lets on, he does feel jealous and sad just like every other guy."

I was overwhelmed and at a loss for words. Biting my lips, I tried to digest the information that had been dumped on me.

Looking at my bewilderment, Joseph sighed again. “Mr. White’s condition has been stabilized. But he hasn’t come to as the anesthetic hasn’t worn off. He is being looked after by doctors and nurses so you don’t have to worry about him. More importantly, you really need to get some rest yourself.”

As Joseph helped me back onto my bed, my mind kept flashing back to all the things that he had just said to me. A pang of guilt rushed into my chest. In retrospect, I did hurt Ashton’s feelings for being insensitive.

Since I couldn’t fall asleep right away, I waited till the nurse came to remove the IV drip before I decided to take a walk.

Ashton was nowhere to be seen, hence I decided to check up on Marcus. After checking for his room number and arriving at his ward, I was relieved to see that a nurse was looking after him. The nurse greeted me with a smile.

Marcus was still unconscious from the effect of the anesthetic. His forehead was injured and his body was covered in a blanket, hence I turned to the nurse and asked, “How is his wound?”

“The doctor just came by to check on him. She said that he has sustained an injury to his head, but she’s not sure at this stage if he suffers from a

concussion. A metal rod pierced through his right ribcage, but luckily, it missed his vital organs. There are a few other scratches but they are just superficial wounds. Judging from his current condition, he's going to be hospitalized for a considerable amount of time."

My body shuddered at the mention of his ribcage being pierced by a metal rod. That must have been where most of the blood came from. My hands started trembling and my legs turned wobbly as I relived the incident in my head.

I forced my weakened legs to move to his bedside and sat down, losing my bearings. If it wasn't for him, the metal rod would have run through my body instead. Human lives are indeed very fragile and short. And yet, in the span of my very short life, he has saved me twice; this time he even risked his own life for me. It's not easy to just stop worrying about him like everybody else has been saying.

"Ms. Stovall, why don't you get some rest yourself? I'll be here to take care of Mr. White," the nurse said.

I shook my head a little. "I'm okay. Besides, I've already rested more than enough. I might as well stay here. Please let me be."

Sensing I was not going anywhere, she decided to stop persuading me.

"In that case, Ms. Stovall, I'll take a walk outside. Please call for me should you need anything," she said while heading out.

I nodded before I suddenly thought of something and called after her, “May I know how I should address you?”

“My name is Layla Lane,” Layla replied with a smile.

I nodded. “Is it okay if I call you Layla?”

“Sure,” she said before leaving the ward.

After Layla left the room, I turned to Marcus. It was impossible to not be moved by what he had done for me.

I felt suspended in time, trying to decipher what I was feeling in my gut. Slowly, I came to the realization that I had been avoiding people who had displayed the slightest amount of kindness or affection toward me; people such as Ashton, Marcus, and John. It was as though I was incapable of accepting any kind of compassion.

For some reason, I kept looking for every little detail in my life to push Ashton away; subconsciously trying to sabotage every meaningful relationship I have had. A disembodied voice at the back of my mind kept telling me that there had to be a reason why they approached me, be it I could be useful to them, or that I could help advance their own motive. Whatever the reason, I was convinced that I was undeserving of true love.